

**Declaration on Vienna's role in implementing
the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)**

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Declaration on Vienna's role in implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

**adopted by the
Committee for European and International Affairs
of Vienna City Council
in its meeting of 10 October 2011**

1.Preamble

Paragraph 1:

On 24 June 2011, the conclusions of the EU Council for General Affairs on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region were endorsed by the European Council. Following the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, it is thus the second macroregional strategy to officially progress from the preparatory phase to the implementation phase. The objective of this large-scale strategy, which encompasses 14 states from the source of the Danube to the Black Sea, is to improve cross-sector coordination of the relevant stakeholders, programmes and activities in this region and hence to add value to the overall development.

Paragraph 2:

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which consists of a Communication from the European Commission (EC) accompanied by an Action Plan, was developed in 2010 on the basis of an intensive consultation process and comprises a total of eleven Priority Areas, grouped under four Pillars: Connecting the Danube Region, Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region, Building Prosperity in the Danube Region and Strengthening the Danube Region.

Paragraph 3:

The preparations for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region were completed in the first half of 2011. The EC will continue to play a leading role in the strategic coordination of the implementation process while preserving the principle of subsidiarity. However, a key role has been assigned to the Member States (together with the Non Member States), their National Contact Points and the Priority Area Coordinators, to the various international, national and regional organisations concerned and to the regional and local authorities, also involving civil society. On the basis of nominations from the individual states, the EC has designated two Priority Area Coordinators for each of the eleven Priority Areas.

Paragraph 4:

The City of Vienna was intensively involved in the development process for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The EC took account of Vienna's interest (see also the „Vienna Declaration on Europe 2011“, Paragraph 24) in assuming the Coordinator function for Priority Area 10 „To step up institutional capacity and cooperation“. Together with Slovenia, Austria (Vienna) was designated as Coordinator of this Priority Area.

Paragraph 5:

With reference to the above as well as to the „Vienna Declaration on Europe 2011“, the Committee for European and International Affairs of Vienna City Council notes the following activities initiated by the Municipal Administration of the City of Vienna with regard to Vienna's role in implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region:

2. Vienna's role in implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Paragraph 6:

Transnationally coordinated macroregional strategies such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which follow the Multi-Level Governance approach, i.e. which aim at maximum possible involvement of all the different levels of administration, the private sector and civil society, also offer the potential to create added value for the development of the greater region and for European Cohesion Policy. Within the framework of the development process for the Danube Region Strategy, therefore, Vienna from the very outset advocated the important role of the cities and regions and the eminent function of the conurbations in the development of the Danube Region. The Action Plan took due account of the urban dimension and the necessity for greater cooperation among the regions and cities. This provides a very good basis on which to further expand Vienna's long-standing involvement in networks of cities and regions, such as, for example, the ARGE Donauländer (Working Community of the Danube Countries) or the Council of Danube Cities and Regions, but also its cooperation agreements with other cities, with the support of the representative offices of the City of Vienna.

Paragraph 7:

The finalisation of the ambitious Strategy for the Danube Region is seen as a first step. The success of its implementation will be measured in terms of how positively the results make themselves felt among the people of the Danube Region. Expectations in the various subregions of the Danube Region naturally vary, depending on their respective problems but also on their available potentials. Ultimately the aim is to maintain and enhance prosperity and quality of life, and this at any rate entails, inter alia, maintaining social balance, a sufficient number of jobs of suitable quality, an active gender equality policy and a correspondingly well-educated population, functioning public services of general interest, and, first and foremost, protecting the environment and preserving the Danube ecosystem. This not only requires concrete projects in the various Priority Areas. Appropriate measures must also be undertaken to raise public awareness of the diversity and the potential of the Danube Region. Local points of contact with a positive image, such as, for example, the Donau-Auen National Park, or cultural and/or tourism activities which highlight the cultural diversity of the Danube Region, are all excellently suited for this purpose.

Paragraph 8:

Building upon the activities initiated within the framework of the Danube Region process to date, Vienna will be involved in implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in a twofold capacity: as Priority Area Coordinator for the transnational implementation of Priority Area 10 („To step up institutional capacity and cooperation“) and through its participation in cross-border, transnational projects.

Paragraph 9:

Priority Area 10 primarily entails stepping up institutional capacity (exchanging know-how through cooperation among all levels of public administration and in resolving administrative problems, etc.), advancing the development of civil society, fostering regional cooperation (strengthening urban and regional networks through knowledge transfer with regard to modern technologies and strategies, intensifying cooperation among metropolitan areas, in cross-border regions, etc.) and optimising the use and availment of financial resources. Within the City of Vienna, responsibility for the transnational coordination function to be exercised jointly with Slovenia lies with the Chief Executive Office; this function comprises the tasks specified by the EC within the scope of the overall organisation of the implementation process in accordance with the conclusions on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Essentially these tasks involve setting up working structures, cooperation with the relevant interested stakeholders (e.g. with regard to implementation of projects and/or further development of the Action Plan), involvement in disseminating and publicising results and monitoring and/or reporting to the EC. On 1 July 2011 the constitutive meeting of the transnational Steering Group for Priority Area 10 was held at Vienna City Hall and the implementation process was officially launched.

Paragraph 10:

Vienna sees this function as an opportunity to build upon its role as a key player and business region, to make a contribution to embedding the urban dimension more firmly within the Danube Region as well as within EU Cohesion Policy 2014 - 2020, to successfully position its own projects, and, in particular, as an opportunity to help establish structures and general conditions that collectively ensure the development of sustainable, well-functioning cities throughout the entire Danube Region. For Vienna and the Viennese population, improving the living situation in the neighbouring states brings greater job security and generates a boost, for instance in the fields of research and culture, in tourism and in terms of exports.

Paragraph 11:

Alongside this important coordinating role, Vienna will launch or participate in concrete projects via interested municipal departments and/or associated enterprises of the City of Vienna in line with the thematic foci defined in the Danube Region process to date under the various Priority Areas of the Action Plan. The main fields of interest identified so far are improving eco-friendly mobility and multimodality, promoting the use of sustainable energy sources, restoring and maintaining the quality of water and managing environmental risks, investing in people and skills, cooperation in education and training, and, under Priority Area 10, intensifying cooperation among the metropolitan regions and exchanging urban and environmental technologies and strategies among the cities and regions. Through appropriate coordination and networking activities on the part of the Chief Executive Office and by leveraging the relevant networks of regions and cities in which the City of Vienna is actively involved, impetus is to be created for further projects supported by EU funding that will be of benefit to Vienna and the Danube Region.

Paragraph 12:

The EUSDR implementation process should also be used to anchor Vienna's objectives with regard to strengthening the urban agenda in EU policy (see the "Vienna Declaration on Europe 2011", Paragraph 29) and, in cooperation with other cities and networks of cities, in the relevant national policies, more firmly within the discussion process regarding the various EU Cohesion Policy Programmes 2014 - 2020.