

## JOINT STATEMENT

Adopted by the Seventh Conference of the Danube Parliamentarians

(Videoconference hosted by the Croatian Parliament, 28 October 2020)

The Joint Statement was adopted by the participants of the Seventh Conference of the Danube Parliamentarians, hosted by the Croatian Parliament in the framework of the Croatian Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Due to the challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the Danube Parliamentarians, acknowledging the importance of preserving inter-parliamentary cooperation and exchange, gathered for the first time via videoconference on 28 October 2020.

Considering that 2020 marks the 10th anniversary of the EUSDR;

Welcoming the efforts of all parties involved in finalising the EUSDR Revised Action Plan which aligned the Strategy with the new priorities and challenges of the Danube Region, and improved linkage of the Strategy to the new EU priorities as well as the updated EUSDR Governance Architecture document, introduced by the Croatian EUSDR Presidency;

Taking note of the European Commission Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies of 23 September 2020, which recognises the overall progress and underlines that in the current exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent economic crisis, cooperation among countries and regions is needed more than ever;

Bearing in mind that the Danube Region, as well as the whole Europe and the world, is faced with unprecedented challenges, the Conference focused on the smart and innovative solutions by supporting transnational innovation platforms, transfer of knowledge and SME clusters;

At the same time, the Danube Region is undergoing significant changes caused by climate change, floods, food insecurity and by decreasing bio-diversity that affect the sustainability of agriculture, industry, transport and tourism as well as the well-being of the people in the Danube Region;

Taking note of the ongoing process of embedding the EUSDR objectives into the Partnership Agreements and 2021-2027 European structural and investment funds, programmes and equivalent instruments for non-EU countries;

With regards to the aforementioned, Parliamentarians of the Danube Region

- Welcome the Multiannual Financial Framework & Next Generation EU proposals and additional efforts placed on projects focused on resilience and development through the Recovery plan for Europe. Emphasize the need to reach an agreement in order for the new financial perspective coming to force by January, 2021.
- Encourage the implementation of joint projects among participating countries which should include creativity and innovations underlining the importance of strengthening the role of regional development and creating synergies between macro-regional strategies and the Cohesion Policy.
- Underline the importance of self-resilience, which has become evident during the coronavirus pandemic, and consider that working together towards promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange in the fields of agriculture, new industries, small and medium sized enterprises should be a priority.
- Stress that encouraging local businesses and production in the region would boost the knowledge economy, technological innovation and strengthen human capital.
- Recall that negative demographic trends affect the whole region, and call for action that would encourage young people to remain in the region by raising competitiveness and developing local communities.
- Encourage the local, academic and economic community to cooperate and facilitate investments to ensure creation of high added value jobs. The Danube Parliamentarians consider that investing in the knowledge economy is not only smart, but also a vital part of sustainable development of the region.
- Considering that preserving and protecting the environment is vital in securing stability and sustainable development of the region, as well as for ensuring the well-being of its citizens, the Danube Parliamentarians fully support the EU's ambition to achieve the climate neutrality by 2050, and the European Green Deal, a new growth strategy which aims at cutting greenhouse gas emissions, investing and preserving Europe's natural environment while, at the same time, creating new jobs.
- Welcoming the renewed commitment to the continuation of the EU enlargement process, as expressed by the EU Member States at the Zagreb Summit in May 2020, the Danube Parliamentarians particularly support the Economic and Investment Package for the Western Balkans, which should boost economic growth in the region and accelerate its economic convergence with the EU.



- Having in mind that bridging the gap between the EUSDR needs and funding opportunities presents a crucial challenge, call on cooperation between the EUSDR countries and regions and their national and thematic coordinators on priorities in EU funding for the period 2021-2027.

The participants of the Conference agreed that the cooperation on all levels and sharing the experience and best practices are crucial in these challenging times. The technological possibilities such as video-conferences should be used to maintain the communication and cooperation channels open.

As agreed at previous conferences, the Conference of Danube Parliamentarians shall be organized on a yearly basis and shall be hosted by the Parliament of the country holding the EUSDR Presidency. Therefore, the Danube Parliamentarians are looking forward to the next Conference of Danube Parliamentarians in 2021, to be held in the Slovak Republic.

