



# Guidance Paper for Youth Participation

Danube Region

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### A short development history of the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation

The revised Action Plan of the EU Danube Strategy aims at improving the quality of life for the inhabitants of the Danube Region. In doing so, the strategy defines the strong involvement of civil society and youth as a strategic objective. Against this background, the 6<sup>th</sup> Danube Participation Day in Bucharest (that was held back-to-back with the 8<sup>th</sup> EUSDR Annual Forum) marked the starting point to discuss the rejuvenation of the EU Danube Strategy. The results of the 6<sup>th</sup> Danube Participation Day provided the basis for the draft of the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation.

Representatives from youth networks, civil society organisations, public authorities, research, and the EUSDR Governance contributed to the draft Guidance Paper through a multistage consultation process. The draft version of the Guidance Paper was presented and discussed at the 7<sup>th</sup> Danube Participation Day. The results of the 7<sup>th</sup> Danube Participation Day have been integrated in the finalised Guidance Paper for Youth Participation. The final draft of the Guidance Paper was endorsed by the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2021.

## Executive Summary

The *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* aims at contributing to involve young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Strategy. Thereby, the paper addresses two purposes:

- (1) Providing guidance to youth initiatives and young people to pro-actively shape development in the Danube Region;
- (2) Starting a discussion in the EUSDR Governance and beyond on a long-term sustainable perspective for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

Against this background, the paper defines major **factors** for successful youth participation. In the course of a multi-stage consultation process, stakeholders from the Danube Region identified needs and activities that are linked to the following **factors** to enhance youth participation:

- Capacity building
- Communication
- Cooperation

For the sake of operationalisation, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* provides a framework to structure and prioritise activities. In doing so, the framework should support stakeholders in the capitalisation on existing initiatives, detecting “blind spots” of youth participation, and generally develop activities to create a beneficial environment for youth participation.

The framework that is presented in the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* clusters activities addressing capacity building, communication, and cooperation according to **project ownership** (bottom-up and top-down initiatives) and **dimensions** of youth participation (EUSDR Governance – cross-border initiatives – local initiatives) in order to facilitate stakeholder mobilisation and define areas of intervention.

## Introduction

The *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* aims at launching a fruitful and future-oriented discussion among the broad intergenerational arena of decision-makers, practitioners, civil society, and academia on how to better integrate youth perspectives into the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

Hence, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* focuses on the integration of youth in the development of the Danube Region. Thereby, the paper seeks to contribute to the rejuvenation of the EU Danube Strategy through intergenerational diversification of stakeholders.

Against this background, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* aims at serving two purposes:

- (1) Providing guidance to youth initiatives and young people to pro-actively shape development in the Danube Region (by making use of macro-regional strategies);
- (2) Starting a discussion in the EUSDR Governance and beyond on a long-term sustainable perspective for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

Consequently, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* is designed to shed light on

- **BENEFITS** for both young people/youth organisations and the EUSDR Governance that can stem from youth participation;
- **NEEDS** of young people and youth initiatives to engage in developing the Danube Region;
- **POTENTIALS** for young people and youth initiatives to participate in shaping the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and its implementation.

As a result, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* does not present definite solutions, but offers a framework to capitalise on existing good practices, prioritise tasks and develop innovative approaches to youth participation.

The *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* addresses both EUSDR professionals and stakeholders as well as youth initiatives and organisations that either are operated by or represent young people between 15 and 29<sup>1</sup> years of age. Furthermore, the guidance paper addresses young politicians, professionals active in project development and young researchers.

However, this does not exclude any other youth organisations or young people, who are interested in participating in the EU Danube Strategy and its actions.

## Cooperating with the youth in the Danube Region – Why does it matter?

*Why would young people benefit from participating in macro-regional cooperation?*

With its comparatively low degree of formalisation, macro-regional strategies provide a platform for exchange and cooperation across sectors, administrative levels and across different generations. In doing so, macro-regional strategies have the potential to offer a playground to experiment with

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<sup>1</sup> The age group definition follows the EC Communication on Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy, COM(2018) 269 final.

different approaches and policy innovations to enhance quality of life ranging from transport to environment, from culture and tourism to competitive economies, and from education and labour market to research.

*So, how do young people and youth organisations benefit from the EU Strategy for the Danube Region?*

#### **Better access to resources to engage in projects that are embedded in a wider policy framework**

The EU Danube Strategy sets out a framework of actions and targets to boost development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Danube Region. Thereby, interregional projects and initiatives play a major role. Young people and youth organisations benefit from better access to funding information, policy networks with experienced partners, and information to develop projects and initiatives. Particularly, through engaging in the various networks in the EU Danube Strategy, young people are able to access knowledge that facilitates the search for suitable funding, competent partners, and initiatives for better coordination and alignment of their activities.

Likewise, these projects gain wider recognition through the macro-regional platforms as well as create a potentially bigger impact through the embedding in the EU Danube Strategy. What is more, the EU Danube Strategy offers the opportunity to move young people's efforts out of a "youth bubble" and mainstream their perspectives into other EU policies, such as EU Cohesion Policy or Accession and Neighbourhood Policy.

#### **Building capacities to engage in transnational decision-making processes**

Approximately one third of the EU population are children or young people (0-29 years old). Hence, the perspective of young people and youth organisations that are representing them, play a significant role in the design of a strategy that aims at improving quality of life. The EU Danube Strategy has the potential to provide a platform to engage in shaping concrete policies and their implementation. Thus, the strategy is offering a framework for capacity building regarding the formulation of positions, lobbying, and exchanging with different stakeholders in the policy-making process.

For young people, this offers a unique opportunity to gain the skills to actively engage and shape policies by conveying their perspectives and positions to the macro-regional decision-making process.

#### **Contributing to a cultural shift towards more intergenerational cooperation**

Being part of designing youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy offers a chance to develop a good practice model that could be transferred to different policy frameworks. In any case, a functional *modus operandi* for youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy increases the capacities of young people and youth organisation (as well as the capacities of further stakeholders) to engage in intergenerational policy design. On a mid-term and long-term perspective, this might lead to a shift of political culture towards stronger intergenerational participation.

Young people can benefit from the exchange of experience with established stakeholders. Furthermore, their active engagement allows for a better alignment of youth policies with other mainstream policies and vice versa. Eventually, this exchange strengthens mutual understanding and facilitates the ability to cooperate and coordinate across cultures and generations within the EU Danube Strategy and beyond.

*Why would the EU Strategy for the Danube Region benefit from involving young people?*

The Action Plan of the EU Danube Strategy<sup>2</sup> aims at contributing to enhance the involvement of civil society and youth in the development of the Danube Region. Hence, the participation of young people and youth organisations constitutes an essential element to ensure the sustainable design and implementation of the EU Danube Strategy by taking the needs and perspectives of young people into account.

*The EU Strategy for the Danube Region and its governance concretely benefits in the following ways:*

#### **Getting insights from affected stakeholder groups to design and implement tailor-made activities**

Involving young people and their representing organisations in the design and implementation of the strategy contributes to better policies that are addressing and affecting youth. By offering young people an opportunity for participation, decision-makers get valuable insights into needs and challenges of young people. It is worth noting, that the more diversified groups of young people can be involved, the more accurate the picture gets.

With children and young people accounting for around a third of the EU's demographic, young people are representing a significant share of inhabitants. This is why involving young people and youth organisations supports the endeavour to develop a long-term perspective that includes concerns and aspirations of young people. In doing so, this ensures a broad ownership and supports the future continuation of the strategy across generations. Hence, the strategy's ability to involve actively young people can be a significant factor for a long-term success of the strategy.

#### **Opening up for new ideas for a stronger orientation towards the future**

A stronger emphasis on intergenerational cooperation creates innovative potential. Opening up for new stakeholders with different perspectives on the region's development introduces new ideas (from young people) to the EU Danube Strategy. This increases the innovative spectrum of development in the region. Furthermore, involving young people in the EU Danube Strategy allows for a strong orientation towards a mid- and long-term perspective of the strategy. This is particularly relevant in light of the long-term timeframe of development strategies that need to attract and mobilise stakeholders over a long period in an innovative process. Involving young people in the implementation of the strategy can help approaching challenges differently. Likewise, using young people's drive for change should be channelled in a constructive way to make real progress for development in the region.

#### **Improving mutual learning and stakeholder mobilisation**

A key function of the EUSDR Governance is mobilising stakeholders to implement the strategy's actions and targets. This only works, if stakeholders understand how they can actually contribute and connect concrete activities to the strategic framework. Hence, involving young people and youth organisations contributes to mutual learning on how to engage in the strategy and implement its actions and targets. Furthermore, establishing meaningful participation supports young people to learn engaging in a European governance framework and helps counteracting frustration in political participation. Additionally, involving youth triggers a learning experience for both, young people and youth organisations as well as the EUSDR Governance. Eventually, this also helps representatives of the EUSDR Governance recruit competent players that carry on the development process.

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<sup>2</sup> SWD(2020) 59 final

## How to connect young people and the EU Danube Strategy?

Involving young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Strategy requires suitable framework conditions for meaningful participation. This is not only relevant for the implementation of the EU Danube Strategy “on the ground”, but also in interacting with Priority Areas, national EU Danube Strategy stakeholder platforms, and funding programmes.

In the course of a multistage consultation process, the following **factors** proved to be decisive for meaningful participation: *Capacity building – Communication – Cooperation*.

These factors represent groups of activities that are considered to be particularly crucial to drive youth participation within the EU Danube Strategy.

### Capacity building

The skill set forms the basis for active engagement of young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Strategy. Hence, building capacities for participatory governance and cooperation is an essential step towards meaningful youth involvement. Against this background, the following elements need to be considered when we build capacities for young people and youth initiatives:

- Stepping up **networking skills**;
- Boosting **leadership & empowerment**;
- Fostering skills for (transnational) **project development**;
- Improving **digital & media literacy**;
- Supporting skills for **message framing & advocacy**



**Networking** is a crucial skill in macro-regional cooperation. The ability to work together with different stakeholder groups helps young people and youth organisations to gain information, coordinate activities, and find competent partners. A particular focus lies on intercultural communication, which not only refers to the cultural diversity within the Danube Region, but also to different institutional cultures, such as public authorities, non-governmental organisations or academia.

**Leadership and empowerment** are valuable capacities for young people to get active and voice their opinions. Hence, we need to build confidence in young people that their positions and actions are valued. At the same time, investing in leadership skills also means to show young people how to inspire their peers and other stakeholders across all age groups and encourage youngsters to be determined and ambitious in pursuing their goals.

**Project development** plays a key role in framing actions and creating initiatives in a way to facilitate financing. This includes to teach young people how to make use of different funding frameworks as well as increasing their entrepreneurial skills.

**Digital and media literacy** refer to the ability of acquiring and processing information. Despite the widespread belief that youngsters are digital natives, this is not true for all young people. In the past years, the access to and use of the internet steadily increased throughout Europe. However, some countries in the Danube Region are still well below the EU average when it comes to internet access.



This divide gets even bigger between urban and rural areas.<sup>3</sup> Against this background, building young people's capacities in the area of digitalisation and to bridge the digital divide is essential for youth participation.

Likewise, at a time where we can access a myriad of news and media channels, the ability to think critically and qualify the information that we receive is essential to make evidence-based decisions. Hence, investing in young people's media competence and critical thinking means to invest in people, who formulate well informed positions – now and in the future.

**Message framing and advocacy** are important skills for young people to make their voices heard. The ability to formulate opinions, needs, or solutions in a way that they can be processed in a political discussion can make the difference in impacting on a decision-making process. Hence, capacity building for young people needs to address governance procedures and the ability to engage in discourses. Likewise, practical capacities such as communication skills are equally crucial to help young people to get their message across.

Potential measures to support the youth in the Danube Region would be mentoring programmes that enhance intergenerational exchange and provide guidance to young people. Furthermore, (online) training modules could be used to introduce young people to the EU Danube Strategy and how to engage with the framework. Additionally, intercultural exchange programmes support building capacities for engaging in a macro-regional environment. Finally, initiatives to enhance language skills are a fundamental capacity building measure that caters to all other capacities and is a stepping stone to engage in a macro-regional environment.

Likewise, representatives from the EUSDR Governance, including members from working groups and networks closely working with the EU Danube Strategy need to build capacities to engage in a meaningful dialogue with young people and youth organisations. Thereby, experiences from EUSDR stakeholders, who are already working with youth, as well as experiences from other macro-regional strategies could be helpful sources to develop respective capacities.

## Communication

Communicating the EU Danube Strategy is essential to raise awareness of the perspectives in the region and show the entry points for active engagement to contribute to the strategy's objectives and actions. Young people and youth organisations expect from the strategy's communication to:

- lower the threshold to **gain information**;
- **be involved** in the communication (not only as a target group, but also as multipliers to have a better outreach to the youth);
- **use communication channels** that appeal to young people;
- **get a clear understanding of the benefits** of engaging in the EU Danube Strategy;
- **learn what the EU Danube Strategy is** and how its governance work.



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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Eurostat (2020): Digital economy and society statistics - households and individuals, September 2020; [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital\\_economy\\_and\\_society\\_statistics\\_-\\_households\\_and\\_individuals](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals) (January 2021) | cf. Eurostat (2020): Being young in Europe today - digital world, July 2020; [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_digital\\_world#Conclusions:\\_what\\_future\\_for\\_young\\_people\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_world.3F](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world#Conclusions:_what_future_for_young_people_in_the_digital_world.3F)

**Lower the threshold to gain information about the EU Danube Strategy** and its implementation is a crucial aspect in the communication with young people. This includes a wide scope of methods and consideration on how to communicate. For once, we need to take a look at the accessibility of knowledge. This includes aspects such as technical barriers, accessibility of information for (young) people with disabilities or language barriers. The latter refers to both the ability to understand multiple languages and the use of technical terms in our communication. Information about the strategy should also be largely understandable for people, who are not experts in EU Cohesion Policy. Likewise, involving national and local stakeholders in the communication could help reducing the language barrier. Furthermore, local stakeholders are closer to the youth (and to civil society in general) and therefore have the ability to lower the threshold for engagement and communication. In this regard, reaching out to young people through schools and universities should be considered to facilitate gaining information.

**Involving young people in the strategy's communication** ensures that youngsters are both at the receiving end of communication as well as actively process and convey messages to peers and other stakeholder groups. This way the Governance of the EU Danube Strategy can prove that young people are viewed as serious partners in the implementation of the strategy and encourage young people and youth organisations to actively participate in the communication flow. Likewise, young people's involvement in communication facilitates the outreach to youngsters in the Danube Region. In doing so, public debates and the direct dialogue with the youth are powerful tools to establish feedback loops and facilitate intergenerational communication.

**Using communication channels that appeal to young people** needs to rethink our methods of communication and how the strategy's Governance is framing its messages. With the increased use of social media platforms and following young people's media consumption, the Governance of the EU Danube Strategy needs to consider to increase its media presence on Social Media platforms. This also requires a certain understanding on how to communicate on the respective platforms in order to achieve the desired effect. Likewise, there is a demand in more direct events, such as networking events or festivals. This way, the strategy appears more perceptible and creates a momentum of identification. Thereby, the EUSDR Governance should also think about ways to make communication about the strategy more "interesting" and "fun".

**Offering a clear message about the benefits of engaging in the EU Danube Strategy** must be in the centre of every communication strategy addressing young people. Young people and youth organisations need to get a clear understanding why their commitment and activities are relevant to achieve the strategy's goals and why they are benefitting from working with the strategy.

**Learning what the EU Danube Strategy is and how it works** should be one of the core messages to young people. Youngsters and youth organisations need to know how they can actually engage. Since a strategy is a rather abstract tool, it is all the more important to explain and inform in a way that leaves young people with a concrete idea of what the EU Danube Strategy is all about. Against this background, storytelling can be a helpful method to fill an abstract concept with life. At the same time, the macro-regional aspect can be used to create a sense of identification with the Danube Region. At a more advanced level, the EUSDR Governance needs to show, how the EU Danube Strategy links to other strategies and policies (e.g. European Youth Goals).

Therefore, representatives from the EUSDR Governance should consider to launch informational campaigns that are addressing young people and youth organisations, establish platforms for communication and interaction with the youth that also create feedback loops from young people to

the EUSDR Governance, and offer formats for young people to meet, share experiences and knowledge. In doing so, the EUSDR communication measures need to ensure accessibility to knowledge, information, networks and services that also include the youth.

## Cooperation

Framework conditions for and access to cooperation are prerequisites for young people and youth organisations to shape and produce actual results and outcomes that are contributing to the objectives and actions of the EU Danube Strategy. Hence, it is important to reduce the barriers for young people to cooperation. This not only affects project development, but also access to stakeholders and potential partners as well as decision-making processes. Therefore, the entry points for cooperation need to be supported in the following areas:



- participation in **networks & platforms**
- **decision-making** processes (e.g.: in EUSDR Working Groups, Steering Groups, EUSDR Governance)
- **project development**

In view of supporting youth involvement in decision-making processes, transparent and accountable cooperation procedures and flat hierarchies that allow for interactions at eye-level are essential. Furthermore, establishing quota for young people in participatory platforms could be considered as means to boost youth involvement. Stronger cooperation with young people through project development requires suitable funding with low bureaucratic hurdles. Particularly, macro-regional cooperation could be initiated through cross-border projects that young people can identify with and see tangible results. This can be further reinforced through network cooperation that grants access to competent partners, support intergenerational collaboration, build bridges also with local and regional authorities, and provide exchange of experiences on good and bad practices to reinforce mutual learning.

In defining the key factors for youth involvement, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* seeks to promote a process of pushing forward the participation of young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Strategy. Furthermore, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* shall support the prioritisation of activities to strengthen youth involvement.

In doing so, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* is supposed to mark a starting point to:

- Increase the visibility of existing youth initiatives and youth organisations that are active in the Danube Region;
- Exchange knowledge and good practices on youth involvement within the Danube Region and beyond;
- Provide a platform to discuss approaches on how to engage youth in the EU Danube Strategy;
- Build capacities to empower young people and youth initiatives to participate in the EU Danube Strategy,
- Create new interfaces in the EU Danube Strategy to integrate further youth activities.

## What do we do to connect young people with the EU Danube Strategy?

The first step to youth participation is to define essential activities to involve young people and youth organisations. Against this background, stakeholders in the Danube Region identified three **factors** for effective youth participation: *capacity building*, *communication*, and *cooperation*. These factors summarise a number of activities or areas of interventions (e.g. increasing networking skills, lowering threshold to gain information about the EUSDR etc.).

The second step is to prioritise these activities. In doing so, we should look at the good practices and see what we can learn from them and how we can capitalise on the activities in place. Likewise, we need to take a look at existing initiatives in order to detect the “blind spots”, i.e. needs that are considered essential, but have not been addressed yet.

The third step is to define the level or **dimension** of activities. Activities in the area of capacity building, communication and/or cooperation may address different dimensions of youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy. Thus, the *factors* of youth participation can be applied within the EUSDR Governance, within cross-border youth initiatives, or by means of connecting local youth initiatives.

The fourth step is to gather and mobilise the different stakeholders in the strategy to implement these activities. As youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy requires both engaged youth and established EUSDR stakeholders willing to facilitate entry points for youth participation, we need to mobilise different **project owners**.

In the following, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* presents a selection of activities in the Danube Region (*good practices*) to showcase how the **factors** of youth participation are implemented in existing initiatives addressing different **dimensions** of youth participation through various **project owners**. The examples will be complemented with suggestions from youth representatives<sup>4</sup> that have been drafted in the course of the consultations prior to drafting the present paper.

The matrix for youth participation below is a visualisation aid to categorise activities that address one or more factors for youth participation according to project owner and dimension of youth participation.

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<sup>4</sup> The suggestions for activities to foster youth participation were drafted by representatives from youth organisations that are included in the Danube Youth Network and reflect the results of discussions in March 2020.









Project owners	How can youth contribute to EUSDR?	What support can EUSDR provide for youth?	
<b>Dimensions of youth participation</b> 			
<b>D1: Danube Strategy Governance</b> 			
<b>D2: Cross-border Youth exchange in the Danube Region</b> 			
<b>D3: Support and connect local youth initiatives</b> 			
<b>Factors for youth participation</b>			

Table: Matrix for Youth Participation in the Danube Region

### Youth Participation in the Danube Strategy Governance

Initiatives such as the EUSALP Youth Council as well as further endeavours to involve youth in the macro-regional decision-making processes in the Baltic Sea Region, Adriatic-Ionian Region, and in the Danube Region are proof that there is a common understanding of the role of youth to build inclusive long-term development strategies. This requires both, platforms for dialogue and co-creation in the procedures of macro-regional strategies and young people with the capacities to engage accordingly.




Despite the rather recent attempts to put greater emphasis on youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy, there are some examples on how representatives from the EUSDR Governance create access for young people.

### Good practices from the Danube Region

#### Youth Platform | Priority Area 9 “People & Skills”

In 2014, Priority Area 9 “People & Skills” launched the EUSDR Youth Platform to gather stakeholders in the Danube Region from the formal and informal education sector to exchange on social cohesion and explore opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation. The platform aims at facilitating project development in the framework of Erasmus+ and other programmes. The platform members meet on a regular basis to address challenges young people face across the regions to foster social cohesion.

 <https://peopleandskills.danube-region.eu/>

Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
		

## Young Bled Strategic Forum | Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity & Cooperation”

The Young Bled Strategic Forum (Young BSF) is an annual conference bringing together young leaders to engage in discussions and develop out-of-the-box solutions to challenges in the Western Balkans. The Young Bled Strategic Forum is a unique meeting place for a diverse array of young leaders, entrepreneurs, influencers, thinkers, and social activists, offering them a platform to share their visions, exchange ideas and connect with each another. The Young Bled Strategic Forum is connected to the Bled Strategic Forum and serves as a facilitating platform for young leaders to engage in discussions with established high-level politicians, researchers, and entrepreneurs. The Young BSF has a special focus on cross-regional cooperation.


 <https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/bled-strategic-forum/>

Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
		

## Danube Youth Participation Project

"Danube Youth Participation 2019-2021" is the networking project of long-term active NGOs in the Danube Region to develop a sustainable, resilient, open, accessible, and self-organised Danube Youth Network (DYN). The main focus of the project is on youth participation, sustainability, empowerment and social inclusion. The future DYN is going to be effectively managed by young professionals with different backgrounds through a transparent bottom-up process supporting, connecting and building capacities of youth and local NGOs in the Danube Region. The project receives financial support by the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg. #DanubeYouth

 <https://www.instagram.com/danubeyouth/?hl=en>

Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
		  

Suggestions from youth initiatives on youth participation in the Danube Strategy Governance	
How can youth contribute to EUSDR?	What support can EUSDR provide for youth?
Seeking actively cooperation with existing transnational platforms for youth cooperation in the region.	Identifying and actively addressing youth initiatives and networks (with a cross-border/ transnational dimension).
Formulating a macro-regional youth perspective in view of the EU Danube Strategy and the Guidance Paper on Youth Participation to promote within the EUSDR Governance	Identifying possibly interfaces for youth involvement and activities within its working structure.
Engaging in the development and formulation of positions on youth (through active participation in the political decision-making through youth	Assisting youth initiatives and networks to use the macro-regional dimension, methodology and Strategy for its works.

networks such as the Danube Youth Network, Young Bled Strategic Forum etc.)	
Revitalizing the Danube Parliamentarian Network.	Involving young people through a structural dialogue with political decision-makers.
Contacting national EUSDR representatives & platforms	Supporting young leaders, initiatives and projects in the Danube countries, also with dedicated funding.
	Empowering young people and providing them with a “training ground” to access the EUSDR structures.
Cooperating with other macro-regional strategies	Cooperating with other macro-regional strategies

### Cross-border Youth exchange in the Danube Region

Boosting exchange and cooperation across borders is the essence of macro-regional problem-solving. Hence, initiatives for youth participation need to equip young people and youth organisations with the skills to establish cross-border networks and capacities to develop solutions that address the challenges in the Danube Regions. At the same time, representatives from the EUSDR Governance and other established stakeholders in the Danube Region need to facilitate support structures for youth exchange, so young people have suitable platforms for their commitment.

### Good practices from the Danube Region

#### Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF)

The Danube Strategic Project Fund was a small-scale funding facility aiming at supporting the implementation of transnational strategic projects aligned with the objective of the EU Danube Strategy, with a specific added value at the interfaces between cohesion and enlargement/neighbourhood policy. Furthermore, the Danube Strategic Project Fund aimed at boosting projects that supported young people in the Danube Region. The funding facility was co-financed with funds provided to the European Commission by the European Parliament and the City of Vienna and was managed by the Priority Area 10 Coordination of the EUSDR (City of Vienna) in close cooperation with EuroVienna, affiliated entity to the City of Vienna. The Danube Strategic Project Fund supported youth-oriented initiatives such as the e-learning platform ELEDAN addressing environmental education for primary and secondary schools, a macro-regional career guidance promoting inclusive vocational education and training (I-VET) or the DIY-ACCEL support scheme for young entrepreneurs.

 <https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/dspf/>

Project owners



Dimensions of youth participation









Factors of youth participation



## SECCo2

The SECCo2 platform aims at facilitating to exchange and share expertise on cross-border cooperation and build partnerships for transnational and cross-border projects developed by young professionals. In doing so, SECCo2 aims at fostering the representation of youth in cross-border cooperation and is interconnected with the Young Leaders' Platform of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the E-DEN Portal, an online toolkit for Cross-Border Cooperation by the Council of Europe. The SECCo2 platform includes an e-learning type toolkit on relevant EU policies, cross-border cooperation structures and their legal background as well as provides access to funding databases like EuroAccess MacroRegions and analyses on cross-border obstacles and best practices. The initiative was launched by the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI).





 <https://secco2.eu/>

Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
 		 

## International Danube Youth Camp

The biannual international youth camp (*Internationales Donaujugendcamp*) provides a series of events that address a historical or contemporary motto. The youth camp attracts about 80 young people from all Danube countries for a week of exchange, seminars, workshops, theatre and arts in order to promote mutual learning, sharing experience and cooperation.





 <https://www.dzm-museum.de/projekte/internationales-donaujugendcamp-europa-sind-wir/> | DE

Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
 		

## The Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurship (RISE)

The Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs (RISE) aims at opening new spaces of reconciliation for the youth of the Western Balkans through social entrepreneurship. The project is supposed to increase the number of cross-border interactions around social entrepreneurship. Hence, RISE strengthens the capacity of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Western Balkans through local support structures that are promoting innovative and social projects and project leaders. In addition, the project aims at encouraging reconciliation through social entrepreneurship that leads to a strong and dynamic community of young social entrepreneurs. The RISE project is implemented by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

 [https://www.rycowb.org/?page\\_id=7816](https://www.rycowb.org/?page_id=7816)





Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
		 



## GoZero Danube

The youth project "Go Zero, Danube!" contributed to a clean and healthy Danube, involving the affected countries. In three international youth meetings, the youth dived into the topics of waste prevention, upcycling and zero waste and learns practical solutions developed to protect the planet. The participants were encouraged to participate in networks on long term perspective and to participate in educational work beyond the project as multipliers.





 <http://starkmacher.eu/en/projects/gozero-danube/>

Project owners	Dimensions of youth participation	Factors of youth participation
		 

## #danubemovements online bootcamp

Global challenges, such as climate change, the distribution of resources or human migration are transnational challenges that require trans-institutional solutions. They cannot be addressed by any government or institution acting alone, but rather by collective movements of different actors coming together to create a positive change. The #danubemovements bootcamp provides a platform for young people to make a change and fight for their ideals. During four online sessions in a period of two weeks they have the possibility to network with one another and realising own projects to make their commitment visible. Supported by campaigning experts from Germany, Serbia and Romania, the participants learn from scratch how to plan and implement promising movements.

 <https://danubemovements.eu/about/>

Facilitators of youth participation	Level of youth participation	Element of youth participation
		 

Suggestions from youth initiatives on youth participation in Cross-border Youth exchange in the Danube Region	
How can youth contribute to EUSDR?	What support can EUSDR provide for youth?
Actively participating and co-organizing national and Danube Participation Days in the EUSDR countries.	Assisting youth initiatives and networks to use the macro-regional dimension, methodology and Strategy for their work.  Investing in the development of more youth exchanges and cross-border cooperation in the Danube Region.

## Support and connect local youth initiatives

Local youth initiatives provide low thresholds for youth engagement and support the identification of young people with their region and/or their commitment to a cause. Additionally, local youth initiatives build capacities that can be useful to tackle the challenges that are addressed in the Danube Strategy. Hence, supporting and connecting local youth initiatives can be a means to have a broader outreach to young people. At the same time, addressing local youth initiatives widens young people's perspectives of similarities and shared challenges in the Danube Region.

### Good practices from the Danube Region

#### TRINA Orchestra Season III 2019 - 2022

The TRINA Orchestra is an initiative organised by the music schools of the twinned towns of Gerstetten (DE), Cébazat (FR) and Pilisvörösvár (HU), funded by the French-German Youth Office and the Baden-Württemberg Foundation. This musical, cultural and social youth exchange program offers students the opportunity to get together and learn about their cultural differences and similarities. Around 100 young musicians spend over a week together with intensive rehearsals and discovering each other culture. Finally, the young musicians perform a concert together. The ticket sales are donated to social projects.

 <http://www.trinaorchestra.eu/>

Facilitators of youth participation



Level of youth participation



Element of youth participation



#### Participative construction of playgrounds | Stuttgart - Budapest

Students from the area of education in Stuttgart (DE) and Budapest (HU) joined forces to creatively develop and build a new playground with local residents in a village close to Budapest. The initiative was coordinated by KuKuk Kultur that is creating artistic playgrounds for children with a particular focus on children from deprived neighbourhoods, refugees and asylum seekers, social centres or schools and institutions for the handicapped. The playgrounds are developed and built in a participatory process, mostly together with teenagers and young adults. Students of education from Stuttgart and Budapest joined forces to creatively develop and build a new playground together with local residents in a village close to Budapest. In return, the students benefit from the inter-cultural exchange.

 <https://www.kukuk-kultur.de/home-english/projects/hungary-2019/>

Facilitators of youth participation



Level of youth participation



Element of youth participation



#### Danubius Young Scientist Award

In 2011, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research and the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) created the Danubius Award to honour extraordinary academic achievement in relation to the Danube Region. Since 2014, the award is extended to the

achievements to young scientists through the Danubius Young Scientist Award. Each year, the award is granted to 14 scientists, one from each country of the Danube Region. In doing so, the initiative aims at highlighting the scientific work and talent of young scientists, enhance the visibility of the scientific community in the region, and encouraging young scientists to continue their academic efforts in examining the versatile questions for the Danube Region.

 <http://www.idm.at/projekte/preise/danubius-young-scientist-award>

Facilitators of youth participation	Level of youth participation	Element of youth participation
		

**ÖREK 2030 – Young Experts**

The Austrian Conference for Spatial Planning launched an initiative that involves young people in the elaboration of the Austrian Spatial Development Concept until 2030 (*Österreichisches Raumentwicklungskonzept, ÖREK 2030*). Following a tender, 18 young experts were selected to participate in the draft of the 10 years concept for spatial development. In doing so, the young experts are expected to make sure to complement the process with youth perspectives with a particular focus on social and technological challenges as well as climate change. The initiative showcases intergenerational cooperation for future-oriented spatial development.

 <https://www.oerok.gv.at/oerek-2030/young-experts> | DE

Facilitators of youth participation	Level of youth participation	Element of youth participation
		

Suggestions from youth initiatives on youth participation to support and connect local youth initiatives	
How can youth contribute to EUSDR?	What support can EUSDR provide for youth?
Making use of the European Solidarity Corps and ERASMUS+ programmes to become part of the European family and to promote European values.	Establishing a micro-financing approach for small-scale granting of bottom-up youth initiatives.  Connecting Youth with existing formats like the D-LAP and the Urban Platform etc., via online conferencing.



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