

Resolution on a European Strategy for the Danube Region

2009/2812(RSP) - 21/01/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 20 January 2010, the European Parliament adopted by 544 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions a resolution on a European Strategy for the Danube Region.

The resolution had been tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/ALE, GUE/NGL, ECR and EPP groups.

Parliament calls on the Commission to launch, as soon as possible, broad consultations with all countries along the Danube in order to cover various aspects of regional cooperation and **to present the EU Strategy for the Danube Region no later than the end of 2010**. It recalls that the Danube links ten European countries – Germany, Austria, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine – six of which are EU Member States, and in a broader territorial context the region also comprises the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro. Members consider that a European Strategy for the Danube Region represents an appropriate instrument for enhancing territorial development through intensified cooperation in clearly defined policy fields in which genuine European added value has been identified by all governmental partners. The strategy should be developed as part of the European Territorial Cooperation objective

Parliament emphasises the need to **involve the relevant regional and local stakeholders** in the Danube region in the preparatory process. It calls on the Commission to identify the 'governance structure' of a future Danube region policy, taking the view that implementation of this strategy must not impinge on the responsibilities of regional and local government.

The resolution calls for improvements to the **ecological status of the Danube**, which is currently a polluted river. It notes that responsibility for the pollution of the Danube region lies with both the Member States and the other riparian countries through which the Danube flows. Riparian states are urged to give top priority to the establishment of shared hydrological and water quality testing facilities. Special attention must be given to local ecosystems. Parliament urges the Commission to support research and development focusing on new technologies geared to enhancing forecasting and response capabilities in connection with flooding, extreme drought and accidental pollution. The Commission is also asked to prepare a comprehensive plan for conserving and restoring the natural sturgeon stocks in the Danube.

Parliament considers that the **Baltic Sea Strategy** ([see COM\(2009\)0248](#)) **already provides a model** for coordinating EU policies and funding in geopolitical territorial units – macro-regions – defined on the basis of specific criteria. An EU Danube Strategy, following the model of the Baltic Sea Strategy, has the potential to promote regional and cross-border cooperation for further economic growth and to identify joint responses to common challenges. Asking the Commission to draw on the operational experience gained with the Baltic Sea Strategy, Parliament calls for an **action plan** to complement the document. The Action Plan should include the following elements: environmentally friendly use of the Danube by inland navigation; intermodality with other transport modes along the Danube through the improvement of all infrastructures (with priority for the better use of existing infrastructure) and by creating a multi-modal transport system all along the river; environmentally-friendly use of water power along the Danube; preservation and improvement of Danube water quality in accordance with the Water Framework Directive; stringent vessel safety requirements; development of environmentally friendly tourism and improvements in the fields of education, research and social cohesion.

The resolution goes on to propose **the integration of the EU transport system** with those of the EU's neighbouring countries in the Danube region and stresses the importance of making provision for co-modality projects. It regards the inland waterway navigation system as an important aspect of the development of transport in the region, and emphasises the importance of eliminating the bottlenecks on the Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube waterway axis and improving the entire intermodal transport system along the Danube. Parliament proposes that the **Trans-European Network be upgraded** in order to improve intermodality in the whole region and increase connectivity with the Black Sea through road and railway routes (freight corridors and high-speed railway lines). The Commission is asked to take all necessary measures to achieve as swiftly as possible an efficient unified system of navigation rules on the Danube.

With regard to **financing**, Members encourage the use of the existing Operational Programmes to finance projects under the strategy. They urge all parties concerned also to explore other, non-financial instruments that would facilitate the implementation of the strategy and have an immediate positive effect on the ground. Following consultation with local and regional stakeholders, Members suggest an EU Danube Summit be held every two years and its conclusions be presented to the European Council and Parliament.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Commission to work closely with it in defining the priorities for the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and calls on the Commission to inform and consult the European Parliament regularly on the status of the implementation of this strategy.