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Workshop 2 „Sustainable Development“**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Compared with other European macro regions the Danube Region is the one including the greatest number of capital cities. But not only capital cities are rather evenly distributed over the territory, also a great number of large and medium-sized cities (and also smaller towns) structure the Danube Region revealing a relatively polycentric structure. **The balanced urban structure offers a great potential for sustainable development.** It is a good starting point for many forms of functional networks supporting local and regional development . Such kind of polycentrism will directly support territorial cohesion and provides the foundations for balancing the European core-periphery pattern. With the majority of the Danube Region's population living in cities and urban regions, the issue of sustainable development is necessarily linked to urban development – rightly understood as sustainable urban development, which means to take into account **all three dimensions of sustainability: the ecological, the economic and the social dimension (-very often neglected).**

(Leipzig Charta)

In this context I would like to recall the Leipzig Charta on Sustainable European Cities. End of 2007 the ministers responsible for urban development in the member states agreed on principles and strategies for urban development policies. The guidelines evoking form the Leipzig Charta are of importance for any further strategies concerning sustainable urban development. These guidelines for instance point to the promotion of high-quality public spaces, the improvement of energy efficiency, the modernization of infrastructure networks as well as educational policies. The Charta demands to pay attention to the cities' neighbourhoods upgrading the physical environment and strengthening the local economy and local labour market policy. All these issues should be taken into account by the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region. They must be supplemented though by the transnational dimension and adapted to the specific situation of the Danube Region.

(Urban development issues with transnational dimension)

Let me give you a few indications what I consider as necessary elements of a strategy for our macro-region in order to foster sustainable urban development.

(*priority action – Quality of urban life*)

Prosperity and social inclusion are still unevenly distributed in the Danube Region and at risk of becoming even more unevenly distributed. This is also true for large and medium-sized cities. **Convergence of economic development alone will not suffice to achieve any substantial improvement in quality of life.** In order to narrow the gap regarding prosperity and social inclusion

within the Danube Region we also need **well-functioning public services** of general interest, such as access to cultural, social, education and health services for all citizens. It will also be necessary to take effective measures against social exclusion, no matter whether they are driven by economic or other considerations. Essential aspects of a cities' quality of life are efforts to encourage urban identities and create an attractive environment for inhabitants and visitors, for instance through urban renewal programmes.

(priority action – Migration)

The issues of demographic change (population ageing) are similar in all countries of the Danube Region. But there are major differences in migration patterns: whereas many large and medium-sized cities are centres of international and national immigration, there are other places which suffer from an increasing exodus of their inhabitants. (However,) the **consequences of migration movements** in all these regions **are among the greatest policy challenges of our times**. They revolve around issues of how to integrate these migrants and ensure tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the places where they live.

Cooperation between the regions of destination and origin, both frequently located within the Danube Region, and **exchange of experience about migration policies** would be a great advantage.

(priority - Labour Market)

The expiry of transitional arrangements governing new Member States' access to the labour markets of other Member States will result in a fully-integrated labour market for almost the entire Danube Region in 2011. In order to harvest the full potential of this **positive step in European integration** **appropriate guidance and compensatory mechanisms** need to be created. They will only be promising if created at the macro-regional level and if the urban agglomerations – the prime destination of labour migration are fully integrated in the implementation of these mechanisms.

(priority - Development at multimodal nodes)

Functional urban regions and specialised locations are the engines of economic development in the Danube macro-region. Full use of this potential requires the targeted and effective development of top-level sites boasting good basic conditions, such as multimodal, well-functioning international and intraregional connections. Only targeted and transnationally agreed locational development will enable the Danube Region to become **a competitive Global Economic Integration Zone (GEIZ)** on European Scale.

(priority action - Innovative and sustainable urban and regional development)

Almost all cities and regions of the Danube macro-region are facing grave challenges to their further development. The nature and source of these challenges vary a lot, but what they have in common is the need for innovative and sustainable solutions. This applies to urban development, where matters such as **climate change mitigation** and **social aspects** as well as **sustainable mobility** play a major role and have repercussions on services of general interest (childcare, health, social services, etc.). The growing interlinkage within urban-type spaces and between urban and rural spaces requires **new forms of cooperation between individual levels and across administrative borders**.

Innovative and sustainable urban and regional development needs adequate planning tools. The **Urban Development Plan of the City of Vienna 2005** and the related process constitute such a tool. It treats with urban development in a **regional and international context** and also defines **new planning methods**, the so called **target area approach**. In this respect the focus lies on areas with specific demands and potentials. The development of the target areas is managed by coordinators and multidisciplinary project teams involving all relevant stakeholder by cooperative planning procedures. The Urban Development Plan specifies for the medium to long-term spatial development pattern, thus generating more security for private and public investors and better perspectives for the people.

This task of improved planning increasingly requires cross-border cooperation with neighbouring regions and countries, as has been begun to be realized in the framework of the European CENTROPE region.

But also other existing and new networks in the Danube Region may help to greatly accelerate the dissemination of innovations and enhance problem resolution capabilities in urban and regional planning and development.

(priority - Green technologies)

A particularly effective means of promoting innovative urban and regional development is the **use of environmentally-friendly technologies (green technologies)**. Their dissemination and further development will help to improve the productive capacity of cities and regions, while also protecting the environment and creating new jobs. Many experiences and innovative solutions can be found in water management, waste and sewage management, energy services aimed at SMEs and the household sector, but also in communication technologies and sustainable energy generation. Furthermore transport technologies, such as those used in public transport and traffic management systems, are a wide field of urban innovation.

One successful measure of the City of Vienna regarding housing is to provide affordable quality housing for all income brackets (**social housing**). Within this concept economic and ecological considerations like energy efficiency are just as important as architectural ones (building culture). Experimental projects, such as a car-free model estate, integration projects in order to encourage a social mix and passive energy houses are to further improve quality.

There exists already a **close cooperation between the city of Vienna and many capitals** within the Danube Region, particularly **on issues like urban technologies**. However, intensifying the exchange of know-how about environmentally-friendly technologies as well as taking measures for their implementation may greatly help to transpose an EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

(Governance Aspects)

Sustainable urban development needs to be governed in a participative way addressing all stakeholders and opening opportunities for involvement in decision making processes. Such a participatory approach is also necessary for the elaboration and the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. **Without involvement of the urban entities and their cooperative**

institutions in the development and implementation of the Strategy **its success appears to be rather doubtful.**

The existing networks of cities and regions should play an important role in the process of the development and implementation of the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region.

In this context I have to mention the **ARGE Donauländer**, which will hold a conference on 17 May 2010 in Vienna. The strategy for the Danube region will be the key topic besides the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the network.

Another important network in the Danube Region is **Council of the Danube Cities and Regions**, which has been established last year. This council has already adopted a declaration in order to define the active role of cities and regions with regards to the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region. **At a joint meeting on 3 November 2009 this both networks** have already **agreed to cooperate closely on that issue.**

I would like to refer to the well established city network **EUROCITIES**, which provides a platform for its member cities to share knowledge and ideas, to exchange experiences, to analyse common problems and develop innovative solutions.

Also the multilateral cooperation between regions like the **CENTROPE** project already mentioned **serves as a good practice example of governance within metropolitan regions.** Initiated in 2003, 16 cities and regions of Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary are working jointly on the development of the Central European Region. Based on the results and experiences made so far, **CENTROPE could certainly constitute a very interesting flagship project in the context of the Danube Region Strategy's Action Programme**, aiming both at deepening the co-operation within the cooperation area and spreading to other potential transnational networks of cities and regions.

I am very grateful that **Commissioner Hahn has pointed out (when taking office) the importance of urban policy for the European Union** and emphasized the necessity to bring cities more proactively into the regional planning process. The Danube Region Strategy constitutes a good opportunity for the Commission to go ahead with these intentions.

The challenges of sustainable urban development (as laid out briefly above) are obvious and pressing. The cities and their networks are willing and able to tackle these challenges. They expect to gain support for their efforts from national and EU level in order to yield even higher value added of their activities for the Danube Region and for Europe.

Thank you for your kind attention and I hope to see you again at the next Conference on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in Vienna and Bratislava on 19th until 21st April 2010.