

The representatives of international institutions, national, regional, and local radio and television stations (state-owned, public, and commercial), printed media, news agencies, internet providers, and mobile telephone media, bodies of public administration and local self-governments, economic, cultural, educational, and scientific organizations, civic organizations, and other organizations interested in developing media connections and the free flow of information throughout the Region, independent media workers, experts in fields of media activity, the participants of the Founding Conference of the Danube Media Network, held on 29.1.2010 in Novi Sad, have adopted the following

FOUNDING DECLARATION OF THE MEDIA NETWORK OF THE DANUBE REGION

INTRODUCTION

The development and strengthening of cooperation between countries of the Danube region by applying and implementing the Macro-regional Strategy of the European Commission for the Danube Region, is one of the most significant tasks of the European Union in the process of complete affirmation of the regionalization policy.

The Danube Region is a heterogeneous area in economic, social, ecological, religious, and cultural terms; however, these differences can be transformed into a common value through cooperation.

The states in the Danube Region share numerous common resources, and are mutually connected. The Danube Strategy has been envisioned as a means of fostering greater prosperity, safety, and peace for inhabitants of the Region, particularly by increasing cross-border, trans-regional, and trans-national cooperation and coordination.

The Strategy rests on the following three pillars:

1. Promotion of close ties and communication systems (particularly in the field of transport, energy, and information),
2. Preservation of the environment and prevention of natural disasters,
3. Strengthening of potentials for social and economic development.

The following objectives and priorities of the Strategy are of particular prominence:

- promoting transport infrastructure and energy connections,
- protecting the environment and combating pollution,
- advancing economic cooperation and sustainable development, as well as cultural cooperation and tourism,
- developing common and individual cultural values
- increasing cooperation and understanding between different religions
- fostering cooperation in the area of prevention of natural disasters (floods, etc.),
- intensifying cooperation in the security sector.

Simultaneously, the Strategy also focuses on issues related to education, as well as national and regional identity.

In order to finalize the complex plans of the Danube Strategy, it is necessary to ensure an uninterrupted flow of information between countries of the Region and the European Union and its institutions.

The Strategy can be successfully implemented only if information about all its segments is available to participants in the process of cooperation: individuals, institutions, and organizations on the international, national, and local level.

The functioning of a democratic community of European nations, and cooperation within the Danube Region are inconceivable unless activities are open to complete public scrutiny, and unless it is possible for every individual to become an active participant in the free flow of information.

Current situation

There is currently no organization which could coordinate the cooperation between media institutions of the Danube region. There is neither a coordinated exchange of daily information, nor a comprehensive exchange of television and radio broadcasts, special economy-related and other information. There is no media strategy for the promotion of the Region.

Bilateral cooperation between media institutions is infrequent, and mainly limited to particular projects or events.

Large-scale information systems of the Western world primarily cover the countries of the Danube Region, and particularly the countries of middle-eastern Europe, during special events. Information on social development, daily life, economy and culture-related issues, is rarely covered by global news agencies and television systems.

The stated countries are unable to use their own resources to break down this media wall, and many areas lack the awareness of the importance of strengthening information channels and intensifying media promotion.

The disproportion in the development of media systems in upper Danube and lower Danube countries could result in different interpretations of the objectives of the Danube Strategy, and ultimately, further intensification of differences in social development.

Danube Media Network

Proceeding from the primary objectives of the Macro-regional Strategy of the European Commission for the Danube Region, and the significance of media cooperation within the Region, the participants of the Conference in Novi Sad support the initiative for founding the Danube Media Network.

The primary objectives of the Danube Media Network are: strengthening cooperation, understanding, and coordination among states in the Region, promoting economic, cultural and other values, preserving the cultural heritage of the nations living in the Region, presenting the values of the Danube Region to the entire world, as well as spreading the European spirit, standards of behavior, and unity in the Region.

Among the instruments for achieving the stated objectives, the following are particularly important:

- creating a media strategy for the presentation of the Region;
- creating a system for exchanging programs and other information between RTV and other media institutions;
- developing cooperation between media centers;
- enhancing cooperation and the flow of information between various parts of the Region;
- developing regional and local RTV studios and other media institutions.

The accomplishment of these objectives is meant to contribute to the improvement of the quality of living in the Region, as well as economic and cultural advancement, strengthening of democratic relations, peace, and safety.

The national minorities living in the Region will have the special opportunity to promote their cultural values through the Danube Media Network, thereby strengthening their position in accordance with European standards.

The Danube Media Network will create the opportunity for Roma communities to forge mutual connections, be informed about their own position, and initiate the resolution of their most acute problems.

All Network participants will have the opportunity to significantly enrich their program content by providing information and other media materials from the Danube Region.

The countries of the Region will have the opportunity to launch more of their own information, as well to promote their own plans within the Danube Strategy, and their economic, cultural, and other social values.

The Danube Media Network will provide significant support for increasing the presence of civic organizations and local self-governments in all segments of regional social development.

The Network will promote the idea and plans of the Danube Strategy, and the values of the entire Danube Region, within the Region and worldwide, particularly aiming at the rest of the European Union.

The Danube Media Network will contribute to the rationalization of activities, and savings in operations of media institutions and other members.

Organization of the Network

With the aim of setting up the organizational structure of the Danube Media Network, and in cooperation with other interested entities, the Radio-Television of Vojvodina and the „Sodalitas“ Foundation have founded the Association called Danube Media Network, in Novi Sad. The Association carries out all the activities related to operative administration and functioning of the Network.

The following entities are eligible for membership in the Network:

- international, national, regional, and local radio and television stations (state-owned, public, and commercial)
- printed media, news agencies
- internet providers and mobile telephone media
- bodies of public administration and local self-government
- economic, cultural, educational, scientific, and research organizations
- civic organizations
- other organizations interested in the development of media connections and free information flow throughout the Region
- independent media workers, experts in fields of media activity

Membership is gained by submitting a written application, and accepting the fundamental principles of Network activity, contained in this statement. This document does not imply any financial obligations.

The chief body which harmonizes the opinions of the Network is the Standing Conference of the Danube Media Network, consisting of Network representatives. The Standing Conference elects the president and vice-president for a two-year mandate. The Conference holds sessions at least once a year. Sessions are convened by the Council or the Association.

The chief body which harmonizes opinions, and the consultative body between two Conferences is the Network Council, which consists of a minimum of one representative from the territory of each state of the Danube Region, proposed by Members, one representative of the European Union, and one representative of the Radio-Television Vojvodina and „Sodalitas“ Foundation, each.

The Council has its president and vice-presidents.

Council members are elected by the Standing Conference. The First Council is elected by the Founding Conference. Council members are elected for a three-year period, with the possibility of re-election. The Council holds sessions as necessary via the Internet or live, in meetings convened by the president of the Council or the Association.

The Association carries out its activities based on guidelines provided by the Standing Conference and the Council.

The detailed rules of the Network's functioning are specified by the Council, pursuant to the proposal of the Association.

Every Network member concludes a membership contract with the Association.

Preposition for detailed organizing scheme, that includes the draft of the Statute, is to be prepared by the temporary Council, due to three months from the day of holding The Founders conference, and is to be distributed to all of the participants of the Founders Conference.

Functions of the Network

The system functions in textual, audio, photo, and video format.

The system implies the following activities:

1. Daily exchange of news by establishing a common database in the press-agency system. Every member fills the system with their information, and is free to use materials provided by other members, in turn.
2. Setting up the system database for event announcements.
3. Exchange of political, economic, cultural, and other analyses, reports, assessments, and other materials.
4. Setting up the textual, audio, photo, and video archive (news, documentaries, films, and other media). The Archive is used according to the rules to be defined by Network members.
5. Exchange of television and radio programs.
6. Establishing mutual production cooperation in creating television and radio projects. Providing mutual technical, technological, and personnel assistance. Creating and realizing joint projects.
7. Maintenance of the common Internet portal.
8. Publishing activities: professional and popular periodicals.
9. Promotion of economic, cultural, ecological, scientific, tourist, and other regional potentials.
10. Organization of expert seminars, conferences, and other events.
11. Exchange of personnel, mutual visits, as well as other means of cooperation.
12. Creating a communication network between various regional institutions.
13. Organizing the annual regional radio and TV festival.
14. Other activities in line with Network principles.

The system functions in the languages of the countries in the Danube Region, whereas the common language of communication is English.

The use of materials in the Network is essentially free of charge. Every member is entitled to use materials from the Network fund, upon observance of restrictions, if any.

Every member is entitled to request that special terms of use be observed by other network members with regard to particular materials produced by the member.

The above can imply restricted use, charging a price for use, as well as other requests in line with the international copyright acts.

Third persons may use Network materials on conditions specified by the Council, upon the proposal of the Association, provided that the copyright owner has not specified their own terms.

Every member is obliged to submit a certain number of minutes or materials to the Network on a monthly basis, depending on their production capacity. This minimum is set by the Association, pursuant to Council guidelines. The submitted materials may be taken from the Network member's regular production and broadcasting.

Network membership is revoked due to failure to comply with obligations or due to abuse of membership. Revocation of membership is subject to the Council's decision, upon the Association's proposal.

Individuals and legal entities with registered offices on the territory of the following countries may apply for membership in the Network system:

1. Germany
2. Austria
3. Slovakia
4. Czech Republic
5. Hungary
6. Slovenia
7. Croatia
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. Serbia
10. Montenegro
11. Romania
12. Bulgaria
13. Ukraine
14. Moldova

Media organizations from countries surrounding the Danube Region may also apply for membership, provided that they accept the membership rules of the Network.

The bearer of the project and host of the future Network is the Radio-Television of Vojvodina, with headquarters in Novi Sad.

The „Sodalitas“ Foundation in Novi Sad is the creator of the Danube Media Network, and the leader of project realization in terms of executive production.

Network financing

The Network and Association finance their activities in the following manners:

- by competing for EU funding, as well as state and regional funding
- by sponsorship
- by commercial advertising (the Association and its members will be entitled to use the Network for posting commercial advertisements in certain cases and in the manner specified by the Council)
- by receiving voluntary donations from Network members
- by providing production services to Network members and third persons (outside the scope of regular Network activities)

The Association uses the above sources to cover the following costs:

- procurement, construction, installation, and maintenance of the basic technical and technological system of the Network,
- functioning of satellite connections,
- software development and maintenance,
- work of coordination center in Novi Sad,
- portion of costs for translating materials into English,
- drawing up general plans and projects,
- holding annual Conferences,
- functioning of the archive,
- internet portal,
- publishing activities,
- organizing expert seminars, conferences, and other events,
- organizing annual regional radio and TV festival

Members from the territory of the same state are responsible for initiating that the respective state covers the following costs using its own means or by grants received from various Funds:

- functioning of the connection system on its own territory,
- costs of the work of its own representatives in the Network.

Network members are responsible for covering the following costs:

- work of their own substations,
- translation of information and other materials into English,
- work of their own representatives in the Network,
- copyrights for submitted and taken over materials (as necessary),
- special production requirements outside the scope of regular Network functioning,
- sending and receiving materials on the territory of their own country,
- additional editing of materials to suit their own purposes.

The Association will set up a special fund for providing assistance to those members who are unable to fully cover their own costs within the Network (primarily intended for local media and civic organizations). The functioning of the fund will depend on the Association's income.

Every member has the possibility of competing for grants from various funds.

Technical and technological parameters

The Network functions by way of internal or coded internet connections, as well as satellite connections. The technical and technological center is located in Novi Sad, in the Radio-Television of Vojvodina.

The system functions as follows:

- Every member individually selects the news, information, and other materials for exchange. The materials are sent in edited or agency, semi-edited form (i.e. text to be published or just a set of information). They include a special script which contains the basic parameters for the material. The script is in English, and it contains translations of the statements and accompanying text (if a translation is unavailable, materials are sent to the coordination center in the original language).
- Selected materials are marked and categorized.
- Selected materials are uploaded onto the Internet system in broadcast quality.
- Materials lasting longer than 12 minutes can be sent by mail, in DVD or other compatible format, or by satellite channel (depending on financial ability, the Association provides the satellite channel for daily exchange of materials).
- Materials uploaded onto the internet network are archived in the Association's coordination center, and subsequently equipped, edited as necessary, and uploaded onto the user system.
- Materials remain in the user center for 30 days, after which they are kept in the archive. The terms of use for archived materials are specially defined by a decision of the Council.
- The system functions in written, audio, photo, and video format.
- The system also enables direct exchange of materials between individual members.

Network name and symbol

Name of Network and Association in Serbian: DUNAVSKA MEDIJSKA MREŽA.

Name of Network and Association in English: DANUBE MEDIA NETWORK.

Abbreviation: DA-ME NETWORK

Network logo:



Website: www.damenetwork.eu

Conclusion

The Radio-Television of Vojvodina is the regional radio and television centre of the Province of Vojvodina, a part of the Republic of Serbia. RTV has been functioning as a public media service of the multinational Vojvodina for over 35 years. RTV produces programs in ten languages: Serbian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Croatian, Roma, Bunjevac, and Macedonian. Programs in German have also been planned, which means that nearly all languages used in the countries of the Danube region are represented. Simultaneously, the minorities living in Vojvodina represent bridges between Serbia and their native countries. The authentic cultural diversity of its program makes RTV the richest media institution in Europe in terms of tradition.

The participants of the Founding Conference believe that it is the specific qualities of RTV that make it a suitable host for the DA-ME Network.

The „Sodalitas“ Foundation was founded with the aim of promoting multinational cooperation in Europe, and particularly in the Danube Region. It is the initiator of the entire project, and will coordinate basic activities.

Mutual relations, rights and obligations of all participants in the project are stipulated in the founding document, as well as in multilateral contracts.

Among other things, DA-ME implies the construction of a powerful technical and technological center in Novi Sad, capable of receiving, categorizing, editing, and classifying media materials, and distributing them to Regional centers. This system will also serve for exchange of economy-related information, and scientific, cultural, and other materials, as well as for the development of towns and states of the Danube Region.

The system is also used for cooperation between various economic, cultural, and university centers in the Region.

The cooperation between the state, public, and civil sector in the implementation of this project is of great significance.

The list of participants in the Founding Conference makes an integral part of the present Declaration.

Novi Sad, October 29th, 2010