



Cabinet of the President

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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GSPI

**The Danube Strategy.
Integrating Europe. Benefiting our citizens.**

by Mercedes Bresso,
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Bucharest Summit on Danube
Bucharest, 8th November 2010



President (Traian) Băsescu,
Prime Minister (Emil) Boc,
Minister (Teodor) Baconschi,
President (José Manuel Durão) Barroso,
Honourable Excellencies,

It is an honour for me to represent the Committee of the Regions at the **Bucharest Summit on Danube.**

Dear Prime Minister Mr Boc, thank you for your kind invitation.

I am particularly pleased that Romania can count on your experience and that of President Băsescu. As previous Mayors of Cluj-Napoca and of Bucharest, you can further develop your country together with your regions and cities.

Honourable Excellencies,

The Committee strongly supports the European Union Strategy for the Danube River, being **the first European Institution to have delivered a report** on it, already in October 2009.

Our works started **before** the mandate having been given to the Commission by the European Council, **thanks to our dedicated rapporteur, Minister Mr Reinhard, and our Danube Intergroup.**

Today, I would like to concentrate on **two aspects of the Danube strategy:**

- 1) its value for the **European project;**
- 2) **the concrete actions and concrete benefits for our citizens.**

Firstly, the Danube Region is an integration laboratory for Europe.

It is within the Danube basin, as well as on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, that we consolidate the achievements and the next steps of the Union enlargement.

It is through the Danube Strategy that we can boost the Europe 2020 agenda from the bottom, by rooting it at local and regional level.

Indeed, **macro-regions** can bring the new Treaty objective of territorial cohesion into facts, creating a critical mass of European action on a given place.

Moreover, **multilevel governance of the Strategy** allows to pool political commitments, competences and resources across all levels of government.

In this regards, **local and regional authorities realise 70% of public investment**. They are key actors to transpose European legislation, to implement structural funds, to engage citizens.

Indeed, to make the Danube Strategy a success story.

Regions and cities are also on the forefront **to ensure full respect of the fundamental rights** set in our Treaties; therefore **to combat** all forms of discrimination against ethnic groups, **to preserve** the rights of minority groups.

At the next Plenary Session, our Committee will adopt an opinion proposing **practical measures for better integration of the Roma population**.

In this regards, I appreciate that the **Danube Strategy intends to be inclusive**, through promotion of cultures, people-to-people contacts, social investments.

I also praise the fact that the action plan would step up institutional capacity and cooperation, where the **European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation** can become the most solid vector to deliver the multiple projects of the Strategy.

This leads to my second point, **concrete actions, concrete benefits for citizens**

Since long time, the Danube has been an axe of civilisation and trade. A web of waterways across which a number of towns, cities and regions have flourished.

However, our citizens are increasingly faced with economic and environmental **challenges**. Only an integrated strategy can lift their **quality of life**.

Indeed, **sustainable development** of the Danube can create **green jobs**.

As example, I just mention **local projects on renewable energies**. Like those developed under the **EU Covenant of Mayors**, which has topped 2000 adhering towns, just when the Romanian municipality of **Satu Mare** joined in.

Coordinated risk prevention and stronger civil protection is another issue.

As underlined within the Budget Review, we must upgrade the **EU Solidarity Fund**. Making it robust, rapid and eligible for all kinds of major disasters.

This would be, for our citizens, a tangible sign of both solidarity and effectiveness of Europe. As it is also the case for a strong cohesion policy addressed to all regions.

In this regards, **the Europe 2020 strategy** can really take-off, also within the Danube Region, **only if a strong European budget is put into place**.

On this issue, the CoR will present its proposals at its “**Territorial Dialogue** on the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy”, which will take place in Budapest, next 8th March, **under the Hungarian Presidency**.

You all are warmly invited to contribute with your macro-regional experience.

Honourable Excellencies,

today, the Committee is here to testify that we fully share the objectives set by the Summit final declaration. **Let’s develop the Danube Region together!**