



**International Scientific Forum
„Danube-River of Cooperation“**

ASSOCIATION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF COOPERATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN DANUBE REGION AND SERBIA

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SUMMARY OF THE FINAL DOCUMENT

**OF THE 25TH CONFERENCE “DANUBE – RIVER OF COOPERATION”
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 24-26, 2014 – IN THE CITIES ON THE DANUBE IN
SERBIA: BAČKA PALANKA, BELGRADE AND SMEDEREVO
UNDER THE TITLE**

DANUBE STRATEGY: FROM IDEA TO THE IMPLEMENTATION -FROM THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO INVESTMENT PROJECTS-

The International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation" (ISF "DRC"), an interdisciplinary association of experts and researchers dedicated to improving international cooperation in the field of sustainable development and sustainable use of natural, cultural and historical resources in the Danube basin marked its jubilee of quarter century work with the 25th Conference “Danube – River of Cooperation”. The conference was organized in cooperation with the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning of the Republic Serbia, the Regional Development Agency "Bačka", the Institute of International Politics and Economics, the city administration of Smederevo.

The aim of the conference was to promote important projects and project ideas for Serbia, related to the priority areas of the EU's Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The conference was successfully achieved this goal and promote important projects and project ideas in the field of sustainable development in Serbia.

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I – The Course of the Conference:

First day in Bačka Palanka (at Business Club Grand)

President of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, Ms. Maja Gojković opened the work of this international gathering. She **pointed out that for Serbia the cooperation within the EUSDR is a valuable experience and a strong impetus to European integration, that is the first foreign policy priority of the Republic of Serbia.**

The President of the Parliament **as the latest confirmation of the necessity of cooperation in the Danube river basin stated the disastrous floods in May, which affected Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, requiring the cooperation of the population and local authorities, regardless of administrative borders between these countries.**

Ms. Gojković said that **this international conference is one of the forms of cooperation, especially in the preparation and implementation of specific development projects.** At the end of her speech she gave the recognition to the **International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation"** for the persistence in efforts to draw public attention to the importance of the Danube and the importance of regional and neighborhood cooperation, during the whole period of the past 25 years.

Alexander Đedovac, president of Bačka Palanka municipality welcomed the participants by expressing satisfaction that the first day of the jubilee conference of the Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation" is held under his patronage. He also spoke **about the results and development plans of the municipality he heads.**

Dr. Erhard Busek, former Vice Chancellor of Austria, president of the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe, and President of the Austrian Economic Council pointed out that the Danube Strategy is an important step of the European Union, which is among other things an instrument for deepening cooperation between the countries and populations in the Danube basin. He **emphasized the importance of networking and connecting people, economic and other resources in the Danube region, stressing that Serbia has a very important role in the cooperation with EU Member States in the framework of the Danube Strategy.** As a very good example of cooperation between Serbia and the EU member-states and other countries in the region, Busek stated development projects in the Sava river-basin. His opinion is, that this example showing well that Serbia could cooperate at a very high level with countries in the region, and it is important from the standpoint of the Danube Strategy.

Mr. Branislav Bugarski, Provincial Secretary for International Cooperation and Local Self-Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, stressed the **importance of cooperation** between micro-regions, local governments, and the regional and neighborhood cooperation **for the realization of investment projects.**

Mr. Srdjan Vezmar, Director of the Regional Development Agency Bačka in the capacity of co-organizer, expressing the wish to continue project- cooperation with the International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation", **stressed that the Agency he is heading gives full support to local governments on the territory of Bačka region in creating projects.** One such project will be establish a destination management company named "Danube", that will be the only one of its kind in the Danube river basin, with the participation of nine local governments in cooperation with the Regional Development Agency Bačka.

At the end of the opening session **Dr. Edita Stojić Karanović** introduced the basic set of objectives, activities and **results of activities of the International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation" during the past quarter-century,** especially **pointing our the earlier cooperation with cities in Vojvodina,** Novi Sad, Sombor, Apatin, Subotica, Kanjiža, Vršac, Bela Crkva, Kovin, Pančevo, etc.

In the plenary working session presenters were: **Djordje Bajilo,** architect who informed the Conference **about the General project of floodplain- management of Bačka Palanka;** **Fran Mikuličić,** MBA, associate to the Regional Development Agency "Bačka" talked **about destination management company "Danube";** **Nebojša Subić,** president of the Cycling Federation of Vojvodina presented the project EURO VELO 6 and the **development of bicycle corridor along the Danube** and through Fruška Gora hills; Mr. **Milan Vučinić** from Cluster of transportation and logistics Vojvodina talked about **the future of logistics centers and ports on the Danube.** Mr. **Slobodan Spasić** (RDA Bačka) presented the **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve "Mura-Drava-Danube"** bringing changes in the approach to the ecology, economy and culture; **Nataša Kuburović,** MSc. director of the Agency of Engineering and Consulting Services for Sustainable Development, spoke about the project platform **"Ecological aquatic oasis",** while **Szilvássy István,** president of the Association of Hungarian Settlements and Regions Developers presented the **international multi-project "Danube Pearls" and other project proposals for regional and cross-border cooperation between Hungary, Serbia and Croatia.**

The first day of the conference ended with a tour of planned projects on the coastal area of Bačka Palanka and the country estate Principovac in Ilok (Croatia). Crossing the border again, the participants of the conference visited the site of the planned project of bike info center, the open-air museum House Savić as a cultural monument of great importance for Serbia, and visited the winery "Gaston" in Neštin (Serbia).



Second day in Belgrade (at the Institute of International Politics and Economics)

Konstantinos D. Moussouroulis, Director-General for Regional Policy of the European Commission opened the work of the conference. In his speech, he **emphasized the importance of regional initiatives of the European Union, including the Strategy for the Danube region, which is of great importance not only for the members but also for the countries of the Danube basin which are not EU members.** This importance is reflected - he said - **not only in the sphere of achieving economic progress and sustainable use of natural resources, but also in a more efficient solving of common problems in all areas of life.**

Dr. Erhard Busek pointed out that the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region has a major role in the development of transportation and the economy,** but it should not be underestimated the potential of the Danube **in the fields of tourism, agriculture and other industries, and the development of science and technology.**

Dr. Duško Dimitrijević, director of the Institute for the International Politics and Economics, in the capacity of the host greeted the participants expressing satisfaction that the quarter-century anniversary of the "Danube - River of Cooperation" is marked **in this institution, in which this project was initiated and implemented on the basis of decades of researches by Dr. Edita Stojić, scientific advisor to the Institute.**

At the end of the opening session **Dr. Edita Stojić Karanović** spoke about the quarter of a century of the International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation" - with special emphasis on the role of the Institute for International Politics and Economy, citing circumstances of generating the project at the end of the 80s of the last century, as well as difficulties but also successes in achieving the basic objectives of the Forum during the 90s. All those years **goals unchangeable were and remain: promoting regional cooperation in the sustainable use of natural resources, and disseminate knowledge and raise awareness about the Danube as the most important natural resource of Europe that requires international cooperation.**

In the framework of Belgrade plenary working session speakers were:

His Excellency Dr. Ján Varšo, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, who presented the views of his country on the EUSDR. He stressed that **it is necessary to have tighter project cooperation both in research and in finding solutions to common problems that exist,** for example in the field of transport and water management.

Dr. Zoran Milivojević, a career diplomat and member of the Joint Serbian-Romanian Committee for the Iron Gate, spoke about the status and prospects of integration processes in the Danube region;

The presentation, entitled **Protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage in the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia,** whose authors are **Mr. Dragan Dunčić, Director of the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning and Dr. Milica Dobričić, Head of the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning** showed the segment of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (PPRS) from 2010 to 2020.

It was presented a paper on the **importance of the Danube Strategy for Bulgaria**, authored by **prof. Dr. Bogdan Stoyanov and Mila Tančeva, MA**, both from the university, "Asen Zlatarov" of Burgas, Bulgaria.

The main thesis of Professor **Dragoljub Todić** and Dr. **Marko Nikolić**, from the Institute of International Politics and Economics in their presentation titled **Danube Strategy and International Law Protection of Biodiversity** is that **the issue of protection of biodiversity is not adequately emphasized in the Danube strategy**.

Jelica Gordanić, MA, research fellow at the Institute for the International Politics and Economics, spoke about the role of NGOs in the process of achieving the goals of the Danube Strategy, stating that an active and well-organized civil society can improve public services and strengthen public trust towards them. It was pointed out that **the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the Danube strategy is crucial to its success**.

The research of professor Slobodan I. Marković, and **Marija Mitić, MA**, both from the Faculty of Legal and Business Studies, Novi Sad was also presented, with the message, that **corporate citizenship is a prerequisite for achieving the Danube Strategy**.

After the plenary session the workshop on the cross-border and macro-regional multi-project proposal "Danube Pearls" cultural and historical sights of Belgrade (Kalemegdan, Nebojša Tower, the location at the mouth of Sava into the Danube) were visited, as they could be involved in this project proposal. The author of this project proposal **István Szilvássy**, President of the Association of Hungarian Settlements' and Regions' Developers also **informed participants about the request in a joint letter of the International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation" and the Association of Hungarian spatial planners addressed to the prime ministers of Serbia and Hungary - to provide support to this and similar regional projects**.



The third day of the Conference in Smederevo (at the Regional Center for Professional Development of Education Workers) was **opened by Dr. Erhard Busek**, former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, president of the Institute for Central Europe and the Danube Region and president of the Assembly of the Austrian Economic Council. In his speech, **Dr. Busek praised the Forum „Danube – River of Cooperation“ persevering in the efforts to bring attention in Serbia to the importance of Danube as the most international river, the river that is on the first place in the world based on the number of countries it flows through. Talking about the Danube Strategy of the European Union, dr Busek stressed that all countries of the Danube region, including Serbia, need to connect more intensively through projects, in order to improve as much as possible and as soon as possible their economic strength, solve problems related to managing environmental risks, as well as those related to transportation.**

On behalf of the host, the Conference was greeted by Deputy-Major **Bojan Teofilović**. He **said that the motto with which the project that evolved into the wide forum started a quarter of a century ago - „Danube - River of Cooperation“ - today is the motto also of Serbia. He added that he considers this Conference to be one of the most important gatherings in Serbia.**

On behalf of the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning of the Republic of Serbia (RAPP), as the co-organizer of the Conference, the participants were greeted by **Djordje Milić**, Vice-Director of RAPP.

The President of the International Scientific Forum “Danube – River of Cooperation” (ISF “DRC”), **Edita Stojić Karanović**, said that during the past 25 years several thousand people took part in the activities of this Forum, with the interest for the development of international cooperation in the area of improving sustainable use of natural resources, first of all the river Danube itself, which is the most important natural resource in this part of Europe. She announced the **intention of the ISF “DRC” to turn in future with more attention to investment projects in all areas where the emphasis so far was on research and on raising awareness of the importance of sustainable use of natural and cultural-historical resources. The recently proposed project in the frame of the Priority Area 5 of the Danube Strategy regarding improving the preparedness of the population and the local administrations for the avoidance of the catastrophic losses in floods was also mentioned.** Also, old project ideas are still valid, such as connecting Danube with the Aegean Sea through Velika Morava and Vardar, which entails previous melioration works in the catchment of Velika Morava, which would improve the sustainable economic development of Serbia.

The **Director of the Directorate for Construction, Urbanism and Building of the town of Smederevo, Nenad Krčum**, introduced the main characteristics of Smederevo and the **ideas of urbanism strategies adapted to the local conditions and needs** in the framework of development policy and especially sustainable development. He presented the **project of Marina Smederevo**, too.

Engineer **Zoran Gavrilović**, expert of the Water Management Institute “Jaroslav Černi” and member of the International Scientific Forum “Danube – River of Cooperation”, talked – accompanied by a striking presentation - about the **anthropogenic natural sediments in river streams as a growing problem in Serbia**.

István Szilvássy, president of the Alliance of Hungarian Settlement and Space Developers, talked about the **international multi-project “Danube Pearls”** as well as other project proposals related to the **international and local bilateral cooperation of Smederevo and Kovin**.

After the plenary sessions the participants visited on the Danube bank and in the Smederevo Fortress the localities of the projects presented at the plenary session.

The Conference was closed with the festive dinner where the conclusion of the 25th Conference “Danube – River of Cooperation” were adopted. The official announcement of the best projects presented at this three-days conference was postponed until May 11th 2015 due to incomplete documentation of some projects.



II – Conference Conclusions:

With 25th Conference “**Danube – River of Cooperation**” - held from September 24 - 26, 2014 in Bačka Palanka, Belgrade and Smederevo, under the title “**Danube Strategy: From Idea to the Implementation: From Theoretical Considerations to Investment Projects**” – the cycle of a quarter century of activities of the *International Scientific Forum “Danube – River of Cooperation”* was rounded. The conference marked the 25 years of working on the popularizing results of scientific research on the ecologically based use of natural resources and all other development and cultural goods in the Danube basin, as well as of promoting the importance of Danube, as the most integrative international river in the world, predetermined for the international cooperation that will lead to the sustainable development of the countries in its catchment area.

The fact that with this Conference the *International Scientific Forum “Danube – River of Cooperation”* marked its quarter of the century long work on the very same goals that are set in the Danube Strategy of the European Union, adopted on the bases of *European Parliament Resolution of January 21st 2010 on the European Strategy for the Danube Region*, confirms the correctness of our initial – and through quarter of a century unchanged – goals. This represents the greatest moral acknowledgment for the existence and unwavering work of the *International Scientific Forum “Danube – River of Cooperation”* during the past 25 years.

With the intention to make this jubilee conference a step forward to affirming the strategic role of Danube and the tributaries of its large catchment area in cross-border and regional cooperation, this Conference emphasized the discussion of the current state of regional, cross-border, bilateral and local development projects. With this, the *International Scientific Forum “Danube – River of Cooperation”* started a new phase of activity, of stronger engagement in initiating new forms of cooperation and new projects, in the spirit of the same goals that it espouses for years. The events of the past quarter of a century in the Danube catchment area – both those painful, like war and natural devastation, and those positive ones, aimed at engaging in cooperation for ensuring sustainable development – confirmed not only the correctness of past activities, but also the necessity of moving from words to actions, of generating development and investment projects that will prevent social and natural disasters and ensure better life for all inhabitants of the Danube catchment area.

