

Position Paper (Stand 27.5.2014)

European Association „Danube-Workers for Europe“. Network for Learning in Later Life, Social Participation and Intergenerational Dialogue (DANET)

Danube-Workers for Europe (DANET) is a European not-for-profit association of educational organisations dealing with and promoting education and scientific research in the field of learning in later life, participation in society and dialogue between generations in Europe, particularly in the Danube Region. DANET will give new impetus to the development and implementation of common European policies related to learning, active ageing and social inclusion, particularly to experts involved in the implementation of the Danube Strategy in the area of social development

The European Association „Danube-Workers for Europe“ (DANET) aims at stimulating citizens from European countries to take an active part in social and economic development of their respective countries by cooperating with fellow citizens from other countries so that these goals could be achieved through whole Europe. The Association will also encourage citizens of Europe to take an active part in the implementation and further development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). DANET will particularly initiate local, regional, and transnational activities and projects supporting the development of the Danube Region.

DANET's aims and fields of activities are as follows:

- To provide access for older and younger European citizens to learning opportunities and to general education based on the transfer of innovative practice and recent scientific findings and theories. This will open up new opportunities, foster new knowledge and skills for participation of older and younger citizens in social and economic development of their countries and Europe and help reduce inequalities and social exclusion.
- To enable universities and other types of educational organizations in Europe to provide and improve accessibility to both formal and non-formal education for older and

younger generations in the context of lifelong learning vision and policy. A special focus of DANET will be on the countries of the Danube region.

- To provide grounds for highly professional national and transnational cooperation in the field of learning, education, participation in society and intergenerational dialogue. Participation in society includes voluntary activities and other forms of civil engagement, political participation, care for children, grandchildren and care for disabled old relatives.
- To implement and to disseminate new approaches and innovative methods in the field of learning, education, participation in society and intergenerational dialogue.
- To encourage and support senior citizens in Europe, particularly those in the countries of the Danube Region, to take an active part in civil society taking into account their individual needs, interests, aspirations and competencies as well as the needs and capacity of their communities. This will be in dialog and cooperation with younger generations.
- To promote the cross cultural setting and dialogue in Europe, particularly in the Danube region as an important resource for mutual understanding and respect for different population groups. Through their transnational and intergenerational cooperation citizens will contribute to designing peaceful and sustainable European future.
- To support older people to integrate their knowledge, skills and competencies into new mostly collective tasks, civil activities and actions thus contributing to resolving social and economic problems.
- To enable and/or encourage older people and other generations to preserve the natural resources in Europe, with a special focus on the Danube region. This will be done trough building environmental awareness and supporting acting aiming at environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- To promote access to a wide range of new technologies for citizens in Europe, particularly older people, younger people, women, people with disabilities and generally people living in rural areas. In addition to this, through its training, educational, research and consulting activities DANET will enable and encourage socially responsible and socially engaged use of new technologies in all generations. Thus DANET will promote fostering communities.

DANET has been involved in the area of education, adult learning, culture, social protection, environment and sports, taking into account individual and community needs in our ageing and knowledge based society. Through its activities DANET will be addressing demographic changes and particularly rapid changes in science and technology. Good practices will be promoted and exchanged. Through engaging qualified learning facilitators and multipliers from the field of general continuing education DANET will shape, test and promote advanced and innovative approaches and learning methods based on the use of the new technologies for older people and generally for all generations. The approaches and methods, as well as programmes, will be customized or devised to meet specific common learning needs of the target groups.

Face to face contacts are of primary importance to develop DANET's activities. Common projects, conferences, seminars and educational events constitute the basis for the members' cooperation and the DANET's cooperation with policy makers, educational providers, civil society organizations and companies.

A website, an interactive learning platform as well as an Internet magazine will be established enabling the dissemination of information, communication and cooperation.

DANET's official languages will be English and German, while translation into national languages will be provided whenever possible.

Danube-Workers for Europe“ will contribute towards creating the “Common House of Europe”

Background of forming and founding the association

In 2008, the Zentrum für Allgemeine Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung, ZAWiW (Centre for General Scientific Continuing Education) of the University of Ulm initiated cooperation between educational institutions and social and cultural institutes within the Danube region.

As a result the non-formal network “Danube Networkers” was established in order to promote seniors' education and active participation in society in intergenerational context in the Danube Region. Numerous universities and non-governmental organisations in the field of education, culture, social affairs and environment from 10 countries of the Danube region got involved (www.danube-networkers.eu). Parallel to the development of advanced training structures for older and younger people, groups of partner organisations from 5–6 Danube

countries devised and implemented transnational projects, involving large groups of seniors from different Danube countries. As a result of it numerous contacts and forms of cooperation took place. Steadily an even greater number of organisations got involved in devising and implementing conferences, qualification workshops and in issuing publications amply using Internet and interactive applications. Outputs and outcomes of these activities are presented on the projects' websites.

By establishing the European Association „Danube-Networkers for Europe“. Network for Learning in Later Life, Social Participation and Intergenerational Dialogue (DANET) opportunities for transnational cooperation with partner organisations within the Danube region and within Europe in general will be used. In this context and to this end general science based advanced education and research will play a prominent role.

Rationale-Sociopolitical Background

The Danube is the only large river in Europe running from West to East. Its 2857 km are an axis between Middle and Southeastern Europe adjoining 10 European countries, Croatia is the most recently introduced member of the European Union, Serbia and Montenegro are candidate countries. 115 million people are living in the countries along the Danube, countries united by millenniums of common history and great cultural wealth.

In the context of enlarging the European Union to the currently 28 members States the European Union created the concept of the so-called “macroregions” – European macroregions should be connected and fostered by an extensive development programme on the basis of their geopolitical position and common historical, cultural and economic grounds as well as their ecological challenges. In 2009 the European Committee enacted the first macro strategy: the EU-strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

In 2010, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission initiated a mission to strengthen the cooperation of the 14 countries of the Danube Region (in 2010 these were 8, today 9 EU countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovenia and 5 Non-EU-countries: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegowina, Montenegro, Ukraine, Moldavia) in the areas of transport infrastructure, mobility, environment, socio-economical development and safety. 5 international conferences and a public consultation provided the opportunity for

representatives of a range of relevant institutions and associations to be part of this process.
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/danube/index_en.htm.

The DANET members represented the “Danube Networkers” in all conferences and wrote in response to the public “Call for Papers” a statement „Lifelong learning programmes for older adults as a societal necessity in the Danube Region“. 60 institutions for cultural and adult education as well as other institutes from 9 Danube countries signed this statement.

Its purpose is to involve especially older people and their acquired competences (work, family and society) into designing tasks to be implemented in the future activities in the Danube region.

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