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## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

further to Question for Oral Answer B7-0240/2009

pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on a European Strategy for the Danube Region

**Michael Theurer, Ramona Nicole Mănescu**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on a European Strategy for the Danube Region**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the question of 3 December 2009 to the Commission on a European Strategy for the Danube Region (O-0150/2009 – B7-0240/2009),
  - having regard to Articles 192 and 265(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 18 and 19 June 2009, which called on the Commission to draw up a European strategy for the Danube region before the end of 2010,
  - having regard to the programme of the Council, prepared by the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies,
  - having regard to the Danube Forum set up within Parliament and its work,
  - having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, entitled 'An EU strategy for the Danube area', of October 2009,
  - having regard to the Espoo, Aarhus and Berne Conventions on environmental protection,
  - having regard to the Belgrade Convention regulating navigation on the Danube,
  - having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the River Danube links ten European countries - Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine - six of which are EU Member States,
- B. whereas the states along the Danube, with over 200 million inhabitants, represent an important fund of socio-economic potential within Europe,
- C. whereas the Danube region is an important crossover point between the EU's Cohesion Policy programmes, measures for applicant and potential applicant countries and programmes for countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy,
- D. whereas an EU Strategy for the Danube region is to be developed in the following cooperation areas: social development and protection, sustainable economic development, transport and energy infrastructure, environmental protection, culture and education,
- E. whereas that strategy could contribute significantly to improving coordination between regional and local authorities and organisations operating in the Danube region and would make for prosperity, sustainable development, job creation and security in the area,

- F. whereas the EU Danube Strategy, following the model of both the Baltic Sea Strategy and the Stockholm Conference on macro-regional strategy held under the Swedish Presidency, has the potential to promote regional and cross-border cooperation for further economic growth and to identify joint responses to common challenges,
- G. whereas the Danube region is a significant historical gateway unifying the west and the east of the EU,
- H. whereas there is a long history of cooperation in the Danube region: the European Commission for the Danube, founded on 30 March 1856 and originally based in Galați (Romania), was one of the very first European institutions, and is today based in Budapest,
- I. whereas the River Danube has almost become an internal waterway of the European Union following the 2007 enlargement and the Danube Region may make a substantial contribution to reflect the changes since that enlargement,
- J. whereas the Danube together with the Main Canal and River Rhine connects the North Sea with the Black Sea and has the potential to enhance the geostrategic position of the Black Sea region,
- K. whereas considering the Danube area as a single macro-region would help overcome the regional differences in economic performance and sustain integrated development,
- L. whereas the Danube Delta has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1991 and the Danube region includes several Special Protection Areas and Special Areas for Conservation within the Natura 2000 framework; whereas the Danube and the Danube Delta have a unique and fragile ecosystem, which is home to rare plant species that are under threat due to pollution,
1. Calls on the Commission to start, as soon as possible, broad consultations with all countries along the Danube, including those which are not EU Member States, in order to support the European unification process and to present the EU Strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010 at the latest;
  2. Urges the Commission to submit a proposal for an EU Danube Strategy in order to cover various aspects of regional cooperation on a horizontal basis, promote synergies and avoid duplication of work between different regional bodies and organisations;
  3. Believes that regional and local bodies, due to their closeness to the population and their awareness of its needs, should have an important role in designing, implementing and further developing the EU strategy;
  4. Urges the governments of the respective countries to support and facilitate the informing and consultation of NGOs, trade associations and civil society in both the establishment of the strategy and its future implementation;
  5. Supports the economic and social development of the Danube region as an EU priority area and the promotion of deeper regional integration in the Danube region as a dynamic

component of a wider European economic and political area;

6. Supports the establishment of business development networks and non-governmental trade promotion bodies which can coordinate and promote future development opportunities, especially for SMEs;
7. Considers it important to make the most of the opportunities offered by the economies of the Danube region with the aim of making it one of the most attractive areas in the EU and in the world;
8. Calls for improvements to the ecological status of the Danube, which is currently a polluted river, and for measures to reduce pollution and prevent further releases of oil and other toxic and harmful substances;
9. Notes that responsibility for the pollution of the Danube region lies with both the Member States and the other riparian countries through which the Danube flows; stresses that protecting the environment in the Danube basin is an important aspect which will have a bearing on the agricultural and rural development of the region;
10. Urges riparian states to give top priority to the establishment of shared hydrological and water quality testing facilities, without which many business developments cannot succeed;
11. Underlines the need to protect and enhance the fish stocks in the Danube; calls on the Commission to prepare a comprehensive plan for conserving and restoring the natural sturgeon stocks in the Danube;
12. Underlines the need for a coordinated approach aimed at more efficient and higher absorption of all the available EU funds in the States along the Danube, in order to be able to fulfil the objectives of the Strategy;
13. Underlines that the Strategy for the Danube Region should include measures to be implemented by the European Union, its Member States and all riparian countries;
14. Stresses the need to ensure the diversification of energy sources and calls on the Commission and all riparian states to increase cooperation in the energy field;
15. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and all the riparian countries to promote and implement joint projects on energy efficiency and renewable energy resources, in the light of the region's potential as a source of bioenergy, and to encourage the use of biomass, solar, wind and hydro energy;
16. Underlines that proper environmental impact assessments should be a prerequisite for all energy-related infrastructure projects, in order to guarantee that international standards of environmental protection are met, after consulting those partners which might be affected by those decisions;
17. Recalls the role of the Danube as a unifying factor in the region; suggests facilitating smooth border-crossing in the region;

18. Proposes the integration of the EU transport system with those of the EU's neighbouring countries in the Danube region and stresses the importance of making provision for co-modality projects;
19. Regards the inland waterway navigation system as an important aspect of the transport development of the region, whilst recognising the decrease in inland navigation, which is mainly due to the strong economic downturn, and emphasises the importance of eliminating the bottlenecks on the Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube waterway axis in order to improve navigation;
20. Stresses that ships can navigate only on 2411 km, 78% of the river's total length; stresses that work needs to be performed on the river, especially to stabilise the riverbed and maintain its depth, but also to deepen the waterway through dredging;
21. Stresses the need to rehabilitate and modernise the inland ports infrastructure along the Danube; considers that maintaining and improving the functionality of the 78 ports located along the river is vital to attract freight flows;
22. Supports the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) guidelines, which have designated the Danube as 'pan-European transport corridor VII', making it one of the main waterways for an east-west connection; supports TEN-T priority project no 18, stretching more than 3000 km from the North Sea to the Black Sea, through twelve Member States, which is intended to improve the capacity for inland navigation, but also to defend the river's habitat and environment; proposes that the Trans-European Network be upgraded in order to improve intermodality in the whole region and increase connectivity with the Black Sea through road and railway routes (freight corridors and high-speed railway lines);
23. Urges governments to invest in modern high-speed water transport methods for passengers and freight along parts of the Danube as well as across it in order to reduce the pollution caused by road transport;
24. Considers tourism, especially cultural tourism, an important instrument for promoting the economic growth of the region; encourages the development of a strong 'Danube brand';
25. Points out the exceptional economic interdependence of the states in the Danube region and stresses the importance of investing in ITC and in the development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and their research departments in order to ensure sustainable and efficient growth and to stimulate the growth of the green economy in the whole Danube macro-region;
26. Supports programmes aimed at improving the Danube multicultural environment by fostering multinational mobility, promoting cultural dialogue, generating forms of art and communication and of training and business incubator establishments in these sectors, and protecting the cultural and historical heritage as well as stimulating new cultural industries;
27. Supports science-based projects as well as university exchange programmes within the region and suggests that the universities in the region could form networks in order to

foster centres of excellence capable of competing at international level;

28. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve administrative arrangements in order to lessen the administrative burden inherent in developing more effectively and implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region;
29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to identify the priority projects for the Danube region;
30. Considers it appropriate to establish a Council to coordinate and monitor the application of the strategy, which should include representatives from the Danube countries and the Commission;
31. Supports the establishment of a special Danube bank with the participation of the countries concerned in order to provide investment to meet the aims of the strategy;
32. Calls on the Commission to work closely with the European Parliament in defining the priorities for the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and calls on the Commission to regularly inform and consult it on the status of the implementation of this strategy;
33. Proposes that an EU Danube Summit be held every two years and that its conclusions be presented to the European Council and Parliament;
34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the other relevant institutions.