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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

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on behalf of the PPE Group

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

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 192 and Article 265(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to the oral question on a European Strategy for the Danube Region (O-0150/2009 – B7-0240/2009),
  - having regard to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region,
  - having regard to the European Council of 18 and 19 June 2009, which called on the Commission to draw up, by 2010, a European Strategy for the Danube Region,
  - having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and the state of the debate on the future reform of Cohesion policy,
  - having regard to the Committee of the Regions opinion of October 2009 on 'An EU strategy for the Danube area',
  - having regard to the Council work programme for the next 18 months drawn up by the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian presidencies,
  - having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Treaty of Lisbon acknowledges territorial cohesion as an objective of the European Union (Article 3 TEU),
- B. whereas macro-regional strategies are aimed at making better use of existing resources to tackle issues of territorial development and identify joint responses to common challenges,
- C. whereas the Baltic Sea Strategy already provides a model for coordinating EU policies and funding in geopolitical territorial units – macro-regions – defined on the basis of specific criteria,
- D. whereas the Danube region, comprising 14 European countries both within and outside the EU – Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova and Ukraine – is an area where enhanced synergies between various EU policies – cohesion, transport, economic, energy, environment, enlargement and neighbourhood policies – can be developed,
- E. whereas the EU Strategy for the Danube Region should therefore combine economic, environmental, social and cultural elements,

- F. whereas the Danube is considered to provide a means of extending the European Union to south-east Europe,
- G. whereas the Danube is an efficient waterway that extends beyond the new Members States, providing an invaluable connection between the Black Sea region, the eastern Mediterranean region and the EU,
- H. whereas the Danube region constitutes an interconnected macro-region with heterogeneous economic capacities,
- I. whereas the economic development of the Danube region will significantly increase the economic wealth of this macro-region and stimulate employment,
- J. whereas the June 2009 European Council requested the Commission to draw up an EU Strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010,
1. Considers a European Strategy for the Danube Region to be an appropriate means of enhancing territorial development through closer cooperation in clearly defined policy fields in which genuine European added value has been identified by all governmental partners, and calls for that strategy to be developed as part of the European Territorial Cooperation objective; stresses that any macro-regional strategy needs to be incorporated into EU regional policy, which is a single policy applying throughout the EU; highlights the need to analyse the added value of this strategy for the attainment of the objective of territorial cohesion within the Union;
  2. Stresses the importance of drawing on the experience gained with the Baltic Sea Strategy in defining this new EU objective laid down by the Lisbon Treaty; reiterates, therefore, its call for the publication of a White Paper on Territorial Cohesion to complement the existing proposals by consolidating the concept and proposing practical means of helping to solve the growing problems that EU regions are facing;
  3. Points out that a European Strategy for the Danube Region should provide a dynamic, creative and trend-setting framework combining economic, cohesion-related, environmental, social and cultural elements, as well as internal security-related aspects;
  4. Calls on the Commission immediately to launch a broad consultation process with all the countries along the Danube River and to meet the end-of-2010 deadline for presentation of the strategy;
  5. Stresses the need to involve the relevant regional and local stakeholders in the Danube area in the preparatory process, in order clearly to identify what is needed in terms of both balanced, sustainable territorial development and capacity building in order to find solutions to common challenges, implement practical projects efficiently and provide a good-governance mechanism;
  6. Asks the Commission clearly to identify a 'governance structure' for a future Danube region policy; takes the view that implementation of this strategy must not impinge on regional and local government's responsibility for formulating and implementing regional policy in the Danube area;

7. Is of the opinion that the strategy for the Danube should be designed as an EU strategy with third-country participation, allowing an integrated approach to be adopted in addressing the challenges common to the individual states and regions and providing shared solutions for improving connectivity and communications systems, preserving the environment and fostering growth, job creation and security;
8. Calls on the Commission to make the strategy compatible with the EU 2020 Strategy and the Commission report entitled 'Regions 2020', in order to ensure that it may form part of the EU's responses to the major challenges of the moment, namely the economic crisis, climate change and globalisation;
9. Considers the existing earmarking criteria, as laid down under the Lisbon Strategy and the Göteborg Strategy, to be adequate;
10. Calls on the Commission to draw on the operational experience gained with the Baltic Sea Strategy; asks, accordingly, for an action plan to complement the document; is of the opinion that that action plan should include the following elements: environment-friendly upgrading of the Danube to a more efficient waterway, interconnection with the highly developed Rhine region via the Rhine-Main-Danube Axis, intermodality along the Danube, environment-friendly upgrading of hydroelectric facilities along the Danube, preservation and improvement of Danube water quality in accordance with the Water Framework Directive, stringent vessel safety requirements, development of environment-friendly tourism and improvements in the fields of education, research and social cohesion;
11. Calls therefore on the Commission and the Member States to cooperate in developing and enhancing the accessibility and navigability of the Rhine-Main-Danube Axis, which links the North Sea, via the Port of Rotterdam, to the Black Sea, via the Port of Constanta, by extending and modernising all infrastructure (ports, airports, road and rail) and creating a multi-modal transport system all along the canal;
12. Calls on the Commission to draw up thorough studies demonstrating the importance of inland navigation routes in lightening road and rail traffic, with a view to reducing sound pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;
13. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to boost all the energy capabilities in the Danube Basin and to conduct a thorough analysis geared to achieving an optimum, environment-friendly mix;
14. Calls on the Commission to support public-private partnerships for integrated programmes geared to solving the problem of degraded and polluted areas;
15. Calls on the Commission to foster more widespread use of modern information and communication technologies in inland navigation on the Danube (e.g. river information systems (RIS));
16. Calls on the Commission to take all necessary steps to ensure that an efficient, unified set of navigation rules is introduced for the Danube as swiftly as possible;

17. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to pay special attention to, and cooperate in protecting, local ecosystems, in particular the Danube Delta, by means of regional cooperation between Romania and Ukraine and international cooperation within the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River;
18. Urges the Commission to support research and development focusing on new technologies geared to enhancing forecasting and response capabilities in connection with flooding, extreme drought and accidental pollution;
19. Calls on the Commission to pay special attention to the Danube River's status as one of Europe's major drinking water sources when formulating the strategy, in line with its White Paper entitled 'Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action' (COM(2009)0147), since climate change will have a significant impact on the quality and availability of water;
20. Encourages the use of the existing operational programmes to finance projects under the strategy; urges all the parties concerned also to explore other, non-financial instruments that would facilitate the implementation of the strategy and have an immediate positive effect on the ground;
21. Stresses that authority over the content and organisation of the strategy must lie with the respective states and regions, in order to guarantee efficiency and identification with the planned activities;
22. Calls on the Commission to suggest topics of European interest and to support the states and regions in developing a European Strategy for the Danube;
23. Calls on the Commission to give the European Strategy for the Danube the same priority as it did to the Baltic Sea and Mediterranean Sea strategies;
24. Urges the Commission to provide Parliament with regular progress reports on the drafting of the European Strategy for the Danube Region;
25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the other relevant institutions.