

The challenges ahead of the Danube Strategy of the European Union.

The Danube Strategy process of the European Union started five years ago in Ulm.

Since then, an annual forum has taken place in a city located in the Danube region to review and direct the process.

The first 3 events clarified the Danube strategy as such, classified the strategy into eleven priority areas and put forward the first projects after the dedication of new resources in 2014.

The **4th annual forum in Ulm** in October 2015 will focus on the appropriate support programs and funding in order to deal with the future challenges in the Danube Region.

It is a natural reflex that each of the 14 participating countries in the Danube Strategy tries to highlight their own, national interests and foster these interests with prestige projects.

Nevertheless, there is or must be a **common political understanding** of all the partners in the Danube strategy that the great challenges ahead in Danube Region can only be jointly overcome.

The most current example is the migration crisis which has hit the countries in the Danube region hard and demonstrates on a daily basis that each country is unable to deal with this challenge on its own; **not even Germany with its size and wealth**. A common European policy, a common European approach is needed to relieve the transit countries as well as the host countries. In addition to this we need initiatives to grow **together as a cultural region**.

Nonetheless, I would like to focus this morning on the scientific, technological and economic challenge for the Danube region **by comparing macro regions on other continents** and how we can respond jointly to this challenge.

Competitive Research Area - Danube Region

The Danube macro region, with its 120 million inhabitants needs to find its future place in global competition. The future can only be mastered if there are sufficient opportunities for the younger generation and future generations in education, in science and in vocational training in order to be able to compete on the global market.

A brain drain within the Danube region can be avoided by better cooperation and coherent development and **promotion of living standards and the labor market in the region.**

Therefore it is important that the Danube macro-region with its 120 million inhabitants **defines its own position** in global competition.

How then, is the development of macro-regions on other **continents of the world** such as **Asia?**

The region around Beijing is currently growing to form **the largest contiguous urban living space on the world** with a population of more than 140 million people.

The authorities are planning to develop a **new transport infrastructure with a giant port city and an urban Gigapole** consisting of several cities with 10 million inhabitants each, **all linked together by a seven circle ring road** with a diameter of more than 1000 Km.

The **Beijing region**, with its 140 Mio people will then cover an area which is only 1/10 of the size of the Danube region and, thanks to high-speed trains from the center to its margins, chinese businessmen and researchers, workers and citizens will be able to reach this centre from the entire region **within one hour.**

Such developments are **setting new global standards** for macro-regions.

In other words, in the future the entire Danube region must compete with Asian Gigapoles, which, in contrast to the Danube region, **do not grow linearly along a nearly 3000 km long river**, but circularly in five, six, seven rings surrounding a metropolis core of 20-25 million people.

This kind of conurbation necessarily **brings higher efficiency in the mass production of goods and also leads to economies of scale**, in particular in production and manufacturing. [*Satisfaction of a rapidly increasing population by copying goods and designs seems then more than probable.?*]

No one in Europe with its individualist tradition wishes to promote such a development and **pay the associated price of immense environmental damage**, pollution, collectivism, uniformity and limitation of privacy.

The pressure of urban life also induces new stress factors and changes people's behaviour .

Even if EU would be **determined to expand TEN high-speed corridors** along the 3000 km on Danube coast, the accessibility of an Asian gigapole will remain unattainable”

“This means that in order to compete with the infrastructural advantages of an Asian gigapole, the Danube Region **needs to focus more on its strengths, such as individualism, creativity and innovation.**

There must then be opportunities to channel this creativity into the economy, **through decentralised decision making** and as well **through best connected experts.**

Beyond **TEN programmes**, fostering high speed interconnectivity in the Danube Region, we need a concept of excellence, to **encourage innovation and creativity, based on research excellence** and leading to more patented technical solutions and **generic production** in Europe.

To meet these needs, a new high-performance information superhighway, together with cutting edge supply chains according to the needs of **industry 4.0.** are essential.

These requirements should lead to a new **funding initiative on nanotechnology** and BioSciences.

Medical research, inventions and services have a long tradition along the Danube, **underlined** by so many prominent names from the region in the history of Medicine (*id est just to remember Siegmund Freud, Semmelweiss University*) as well as the production of new and high quality pharmaceutical products at many locations in the Danube region (*lets look on Biberach - Ulm, Zagreb, Ljubjana etc*).

Medicine, medical technology and pharmaceutical research and production offer excellent chances for cooperation and the formation of a cluster along the Danube.

Together, we must develop progress in medicine and health, in particular in the field of Trauma Research and Trauma treatment, the fight against cancer, heart disease, alcohol and tobacco addiction, growth and degenerative diseases, more efforts for air cleanliness and intelligent locomotion.

All of these are only some of the contents from **the outstanding research programs of horizon 2020.**

However, we will only achieve convincing results with a common Danube Partner Network.

As accompanying measures, we must also deploy and **organize virtual university** research networks, such as the concept of the **German dual system** (i.e. education combined with work experience) along the Danube Region.

And we must harmonise and bring **Science and Industry much closer together**.

The best example is the convergence of the automotive and IT industries”.

The **car of the future is self-driving**, is part of a network, and it is harmonized with energy efficient engines.

It should be developed in **the leading automotive macro region** in the world near to, and along the Danube, where Daimler, Porsche, Audi, BMW, VW, Skoda, FIAT-ZASTRAVA, Dacia, Continental, Nokia, Siemens, Takata, KIT, HIU in Karlsruhe Stuttgart, Ulm, Ingolstadt, Munich, Dingolfing, Linz, Brno, Bratislava, Győr, Budapest, Kragujevac, Cluj, Pitesti **are lined up along the Strasbourg Danube Corridor as pearls on a chain**.

Furthermore, competitiveness between global regions also includes the **autonomy of energy supply** and promotion of energy efficiency. We therefore need more investments in battery technology to achieve independence from energies which are scarce in Europe, such as gas and oil.

Summary

Let me summarize , Beyond all understandable cohesion interests of the member states, resulting also from **the infrastructure gap** between the lower Danube regions and the upper Danube regions, I think that there are three main future tasks, arising out of the various interests of the member states.

We need an alliance for research policy, we need to manage the integration of migration and we need to increase awareness for cultural identity and cultural heritage.

These are the upcoming challenges for the future funding period in the Danube region.

Together, we can respond to it! Thank you for your attention.