



## Joint Statement of Ministers responsible for Research and Innovation of the participating countries of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

*Bratislava, 3 November 2016*

We, the Ministers responsible for Research and Innovation of the participating countries of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (hereinafter referred to as „EUSDR“) met on 3 November 2016, at the occasion of the 5th Annual Forum of the EUSDR taking place in Bratislava, and agreed on the following statement.

We express our commitment to continue providing political support to the Research and Innovation activities carried out at national and regional level, with a specific focus on the macro-regional and transnational level. We agree to reinforce the alignment of funding from all relevant sources, to develop and support existing funding coordination mechanisms, enhance international cooperation, promote investment in human capital, minimize brain drain while ensuring brain circulation, strive to bridge the innovation divide and promote smart specialisation strategies.

We underline that, with its cross-cutting nature, Research and Innovation stimulates development in many other sectors, offering new knowledge, approaches and practices.

We acknowledge the work done and efforts made by the EUSDR stakeholders to promote Research and Innovation in the countries of the region. Education, science, research, innovation and the overall development of a knowledge-based society count among the most important challenges and key priorities in the region, therefore, they are in the centre of attention of the EUSDR strategy. We call upon all the stakeholders - the European Commission, national and transnational authorities, universities, academies of sciences and other public and private research institutions - to continue in their efforts in these areas.



We acknowledge that the support to Research and Innovation from the European Structural and Investment Funds (hereinafter referred to as „ESIF”) and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) has become a priority in a number of countries and these efforts should continue throughout the current ESIF period 2014-2020. We emphasise in this context that relevant legislation lays down the obligation for the Operational Programmes to contribute towards the implementation of macro-regional strategies, wherever applicable. Nevertheless, it is necessary to implement this objective and continue searching for possibilities to fund Research and Innovation activities from ESIF and other sources. In this respect, the Danube Transnational Programme with its prior concern to develop and test new approaches in order to meet actual challenges represents an important, but not the only instrument for the EUSDR.

We agree that mobilising adequate financial resources to increase the quality of Research and Innovation in the Danube countries plays a crucial role, especially in the less developed parts of the Danube region. To this end, Danube region countries shall focus on development of Research and Innovation funding coordination mechanisms and support already existing initiatives which enable coordinating national efforts and resources of involved / interested regions. Furthermore, a better use of available funding should be aimed at. This would enhance the countries' further integration into the European Research Area and foster multilateral cooperation in Research and Innovation.

Cooperation in the framework of the European Research Area and international cooperation, even beyond the geographical reach of the Danube region, is of fundamental importance. We thus stress the importance of international cooperation among universities, academies of sciences and other research institutions and stakeholders. Practical implementation of the transfer of innovation and technologies is one of the highest priorities for us. It is crucial for the mutual benefit of the stakeholders in the Danube region.

We acknowledge that human capital, such as scientists, researchers and other experts working in the field of Research and Innovation are the most important



assets in making the Danube region more competitive within Europe and on the global scale. Sufficient financial support for scientists and researchers should be ensured to promote investment into human potential and capacity building through research, education and training in the Danube region. Loss of talented researchers and scientists represents a special challenge in many Danube region countries. Researchers and scientists often leave their countries, finding better working conditions abroad. Such brain drain deteriorates the situation and diminishes the number of researchers in the region. We highlight that specific attention has to be paid to the support of young researchers. The responsible authorities at national and transnational level shall envisage to: motivate young talented researchers and help them develop their ideas through sustainable and effective funding schemes, create an appropriate research environment enabling sustainable career trajectories and ensure a work-life balance, also taking into consideration the Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers presented at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Research and Innovation in Bratislava on 19 July 2016.

Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation represent a concept which helps concentrate effort and resources on specific areas where Europe and its countries and regions can take the lead on the global competitive market. In some Danube countries/regions, these strategies have already defined areas where the scientific and research institutions can be particularly efficient and effective. We therefore support further development and implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategies in the entire Danube region, as well as mutual exchange of achievements among partner states and institutions.

Following the meeting of Ministers for Research and Innovation in the Danube Region held on 8-9 July 2012 in Ulm which called for a targeted use of opportunities available for the support of Research and Innovation programmes and instruments, identification of areas in which a Danube region can benefit from smart specialisation and building on results of the feasibility study of the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund, we agreed today on the following steps:



- To enhance coordination of national efforts in the Danube region by fostering multilateral cooperation leading towards the implementation of concrete joint funding actions for Research and Innovation activities, such as supporting the Danube Funding Coordination Network established in May 2016 to advance these activities;
- To support innovation and technology transfer in order to provide for mutual benefits within the EUSDR region in the areas of promotion, development, dissemination, protection, transfer, licensing and commercialisation of technology and innovation in the Danube region;
- To promote investment into human potential and capacity building in the Danube region through research, education and training by giving support to young researchers, raising attractiveness of scientific career via mobility schemes, innovative research approaches, and interdisciplinary scientific work as well as developing or further supporting instruments aiming to minimize brain drain while ensuring brain circulation in the region;
- To support further the development and implementation of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation and foster networking and capacity building activities concerning the implementation of these strategies in the entire Danube region;
- To allocate sufficient resources and capacities for better coordination and governance of the EUSDR at national or regional levels in order to provide for the necessary political backing for its implementation;
- To ensure continuous participation of experts from relevant ministries or public institutions in the steering groups and the respective working groups of the Priority Areas related to Research and Innovation.