
25th DRC Annual Meeting 2016 – final conclusions

Stressing the long history of the organisation established in 1983 in fostering the independence of academia in the Danube Region even before the fall of the iron curtain,

Believing that cross-border cooperation is nowadays more important than ever instead of building fences leading to walls in heads threatening the academic autonomy,

Convinced that the biggest enemy of universities is nationalism,

Keeping in mind the challenge but at the same time the opportunity of the special composition of the EUSDR countries (EU-members, (potential) candidate countries, ENP (respectively EaP) countries,

Taking into account the Novi Sad Declaration from 2010,

The participants of the Danube Rectors' Conference in the 25th Annual Meeting held at the Danube University Krems, Austria on 10./11. November 2016 agreed on the following final conclusions:

The DRC is one of the most important organisations for further ensuring stable growth of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), therefore we will focus in the future on:

- The DRC presidency becoming a permanent member in the PA 7 working group “higher education and mobility”

- Willing to become an observing member of the PA 7 steering group. Main goal is to support mobility and exchange in a more balanced way, especially to reach brain-circulation instead of brain-drain.
- Intensifying the collaboration with the JRC on the basis of the joint letter of intent from 2012
- Improving the cooperation mechanism with the Danube Strategy Point, the AARC and macro-regional strategies; defining and promoting joint actions
- Deepening the network to develop and support an increasing number of summer schools and joint programs by proactive use of the CEEPUS program
- Preparing the ownership for the capacity building program Danube:Future
- Being ready to contribute to integrate the EUSDR into the post-Horizon 2020 process
- Supporting the preparation work of the Horizon 2020 follow-up program, by stressing:
 - the undisputed relevance of pillar I of Horizon 2020 'Excellent Science' especially the European Research Council (ERC), the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) for the Danube region

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- nevertheless, DRC's concern related to the overall low success rates in Horizon and the aggravated situation for EU 13
 - that the EC should take concrete steps to better coordinate, align and develop synergies between its different funding mechanisms (e.g. Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds) and use the Structural Funds particularly for investments in capacity building. Therefore the EC should extend future regulations to all R&I activities in the Structural Funds and provide further region specific support measures too
 - nevertheless, the significance of excellence as the prevailing selection criterion for project selection in Horizon 2020
 - the need to top-up the budget of Horizon 2020 and to direct a significant amount to measure related to "Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation"
- Communicating successful initiatives within the DRC framework
 - Exploring the possibility to establish specified sub-networks within the DRC (e.g. CASEE and smart specialisation)

DRC Presidency
Krems an der Donau, 11. November 2016