In its first contribution on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, published on 24 February 2010, Slovenia set forth general positions and principles on the creation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and its Action Plan. The non-paper comprises also concrete proposals of priority areas of cooperation within each of the originally proposed three pillars of the Strategy. All guiding principles, positions and proposals, set out in the above mentioned non-paper, remain unchanged.

The second contribution is a supplement to the first one, where some **concrete priority actions and flagship projects** under respective priority areas are proposed. Proposals can be divided into three categories: (i) the one where Slovenia expresses its interest of being a leading partner, (ii) the one where we see a real added value and would like to be an active partner from the very beginning of the implementation of the EUSDR Action Plan and (iii) the one where projects are proposed from non-governmental stakeholders.

In addition to the proposed, Slovenian institutions and stakeholders are open for cooperation in other priority actions and projects, which are to be proposed by other EUSDR partners.

As the Action Plan is an open document by nature, the projects mentioned in this paper are not the only ones, which are to be proposed by Slovenia. Additional projects of added value for a macro-region could also be proposed at a later stage of the preparation or modification of the Action Plan.

**SOME CONCRETE PROPOSALS**

The efficiency of the implementation of the Danube Strategy will be best measured by the success of concrete activities having tangible or beneficial effects for wider communities of citizens. Thus, the Action Plan should comprise clearly defined priority areas of cooperation, actions and agreed flagship projects. Preference should be given to those priority actions that are derived from the past activities and cooperation and promote an integrated approach to the implementation of the adopted strategies, commitments, arrangements, and thus contribute to the implementation of the Strategy in the priority areas of cooperation.

Accordingly, we propose the following priority areas of cooperation, actions and concrete projects under the Strategy:
PILLAR I: CONNECTIVITY AND COMMUNICATION

PRIORITY AREA: IMPROVEMENT OF TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

Of utmost importance for the development of transport in the region are Corridors V and X. Corridor V connects not only the Danube countries, but also the whole region with the South-Western Europe. On the other hand, it provides the possibility to connect the region with Russia and Asia. Corridor X connects the South-Eastern Balkans with the Western Europe, while also providing the possibility of connecting Europe with Turkey and Middle Eastern countries. Both Corridors enable the connection between the Danube region with the Adriatic Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the Black Sea. In the framework of these Corridors, considerable progress was made in the recent years with regard to the construction of highways, so that the Corridors connect all the countries in the region through road transport. The situation is rather different with regard to the more environment-friendly transport modes (railway and inland waterways), where the construction of modern infrastructure differs considerably between ‘the old’ EU Member States on the one hand and ‘the new’ EU Member States and third countries on the other hand. The latter should make a huge step forward in this area. Therefore, the following actions are required to achieve progress in this area:

− to speed up the completion of priority project No 6 (Corridor V: railway connection Lyon-Trieste-Divača/Koper-Divača-Ljubljana-Budapest-Ukrainian border) within the TEN-T network;
− in the new TEN-T policy for the period up to 2020, more attention should be paid to Corridor X (Salzburg-Ljubljana-Zagreb-Belgrade-Niš-Skopje-Veles-Thessaloniki), particularly with regard to railways and roads; the said Corridor represents a traditional transit route from the South-Eastern Balkan countries to the EU; this is especially important because the countries in the region share the aspiration to acquire membership of the EU;
− in the context of the ‘transport greening’ policy, navigability of rivers should be facilitated as much as possible, where appropriate from the environmental aspect. An important initiative in this field is the Sava River Basin Commission pursuing the aim of improving the navigability of the Sava River. In this context, Slovenia’s long-term goal is to develop a river port at the border-point between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia, which could be possible if the navigability of the Sava river from the point where it flows into the Danube river to Brežice would be enabled;
− the implementation of the proposed Transport Community Treaty between the EU and the Western Balkan countries will contribute to the harmonisation of national legislations with the transport acquis; this will help provide equal conditions for carriers in the market and thus facilitate the EU-integration process. The signatories of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region should strive for an early adoption and ratification of the Treaty. Under this Treaty, the setting up of a permanent secretariat has been planned. Slovenia is aware that the Secretariat of the Transport Community should start its operation as soon as possible. If no consent to set up the seat in one of these countries can be reached among the Western Balkan countries, the seat could also be in one of the Member States of the European Union. Slovenia is ready to host the seat of the Secretariat in Ljubljana;
− reduction of administrative barriers in crossing the borders could essentially shorten the travelling time; to this end, the countries should endeavour, while respecting the undertaken
commitments, to conclude agreements which will shorten and unify the performance of border control procedures; there are many possibilities to do so, particularly in the railway transport.

**Priority Action: Establishment of an international operational body in the field of transport**

In its first contribution to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) of 24 February 2010, Slovenia made an initiative on the establishment of a **joint international operational body** representing an important link between the EU Member States and the countries that have not yet joined the EU within the Strategy for the Danube Region in the field of transport.

Practically all written contributions of the countries in the region have so far listed improved internal cohesion of the region and its links to other macro regions as key priorities. They therefore share the finding that improved transport infrastructure is one of the key preconditions for development in the region.

It is well known that several bodies in the field of transport have been active in the Danube Region, such as the Danube Commission and the Sava Commission. The framework of the future transport contract for the Western Balkans includes plans for the establishment of a standing secretariat (now SEETO), where Slovenia is among the candidates should the Western Balkan countries have no success in reaching agreement. Regardless of the smooth operation of these bodies and relatively good intergovernmental cooperation, this part of Europe lacks coordination in its operation and thus lacks harmonised strategic planning in the field of transport and transport infrastructure.

If the proposed body is to be formed, our initial proposals are:
- the EUSDR countries shall identify all commissions and bodies active in the field of transport (including all modes of transport);
- the strategic plans of all Member States in the field of transport infrastructure planning shall be collected and reviewed;
- the existing methods for gathering information on transport flows and loads in the territory of the EUSDR countries shall be collected and reviewed;
- expert foundations and a common methodology for elaboration of a joint operational programme for the development of the strategic transport network of the EUSDR countries shall be prepared;
- the joint operational programme shall be based on gathering information on transport volume and expected transport flows.

The establishment of a joint international operational body will contribute to a faster and more systematic flow of information and good practice. It is particularly important to stress that in the field of transport the countries of the Danube region are strongly burdened by an unevenly developed infrastructure, especially in the field of railway transport.

By means of a coordinated approach, the European financial resources, which are earmarked for the elimination of development disparities, may be channelled to projects which ensure rapid cohesion in the field of transport. It should be noted that the European financial assistance for the development of transport infrastructure is granted not only to EU Member States, but also to other
EUSDR countries. Targeted financing of transport infrastructure would thus aim at efficient elimination of disparities across the entire area of the Danube region. The preparation of a common document would facilitate decision-making and monitoring of broader indicators of development and the achievement of the set objectives for financial institutions participating in decisions on projects, and increase value added of every invested euro.

The following structure is proposed for the operation of the joint international operational body:

- **transport ministers** define political guidelines for activities in the field of joint transport development. In this way they monitor and promote progress in the field of transport in the Danube region and also exchange opinions. They meet at least once every two years.

- **deputy transport ministers** supervise the work of this body in operational terms at least once a year, and, when required, also provide expert guidance and prepare common documents. Their tasks would include the contents and the framework agenda of ministerial meetings. High representatives of relevant regional bodies from the field of transport (e.g. the Danube and the Sava Commissions) and representatives of the European Commission can participate in these meetings.

- we also suggest the **appointment of national transport coordinators** who would meet when necessary, but at least twice a year. Their task would be to coordinate the methodology for drafting the operational programme of development and collect the necessary data in participating countries. These national coordinators would exchange information throughout the year.

Slovenia notes that this is a demanding, but very important task for the Danube Region, which could be accomplished in a most efficient and expert manner by the proposed joint operational body, for which Slovenia is willing to provide expert support and facilities. It may be noted that the establishment of a standing secretariat has already been suggested within the proposed transport contract for the Western Balkans. From an operational aspect, the joint international operational body should upgrade the operation of the proposed secretariat.

Slovenia proposes that the establishment and operation of this joint international operational body should be integrated in the EUSDR Action Plan as a priority action within the first pillar of the strategy. Slovenia is willing to take the lead role in the implementation of this action.

*Lead MS: Slovenia*

**Project proposal: Transport research in an enlarging European Union**

The general objective of the project is to organize the first brokerage event in Slovenia and a one-day conference aimed at addressing the common transport policy themes. The event would be organized in cooperation with the *European Transport NCP Alliance* (ETNA). Seven workshops are to be organized in the capitals of South-East European countries, in order to promote the participation of transport researchers form the area in the European Research Area. At a later stage, the aim is to organize a conference in Ljubljana, which would bring together young researchers from the countries of South-East Europe, focused on seeking the possibilities of integration of transport and research policies with special emphasis on exploiting opportunities within the 7th EU Research Framework
Programme. The proposed funding is focused in repaying of travel costs and accommodation of young researchers from the SE European countries at the conference in Ljubljana.

With the successful implementation of the project, meeting and cooperation of acting research networks within the EU institutions and researchers from South-East Europe in the area of transport is going to be established.

The project aims also at reducing the transport and research backlog in this area, which occurred due to historical circumstances, and therefore at greater territorial cohesion of the Danube Region. The project derives from the premise that some of the important transport policy issues and challenges are common to all countries of the region.

Lead MS: Slovenia
Potential partners: European Transport NCP Alliance (ETNA), the European Commission, the European Parliament
Timeline: the project can start at the end of 2010 or at the beginning of 2011

PRIORITY AREA: IMPROVEMENT OF ENERGY SECURITY IN THE REGION

Long-term energy security and sustainable energy policy form the basis for any successful development of the region. Slovenia will continue to actively strive for the soonest implementation of the Energy Community Treaty. In addition to this, concrete cooperation in the region should focus on the construction of an adequate energy infrastructure relevant for the region. This includes:

− Construction of gas and oil infrastructures, such as the South Stream pipeline, the so-called Gas Ring, and the Pan-European Oil Pipeline (PEOP). The listed projects are of vital importance, both for the Danube countries themselves and their connections with other macro-regions (Western Europe, Black Sea). In creating the so-called Balkan Gas Ring, we should not forget the role played by the Maribor Energy Community Gas Forum.

− Construction of the electricity transmission system connecting Slovenia and Hungary (transmission line 2 x 400 kV Cirkovce-Pince), vital for a more secure electricity supply for the whole region.

− Integral use of hydro-potential on the Sava River (enabling the navigability of the Sava upstream to Brežice) and possible hydro-power exploitation of the upper stream of the Mura River in the framework of a wholesome solution for the rehabilitation of dredging the river bed.

PILLAR II: ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND RISK PREVENTION

PRIORITY AREA: PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF CROSS-BORDER ‘DANUBE CORRIDORS’

Planning and construction of cross-border ‘Danube Corridors’, including the identification of floodplains and sustainable spatial planning and use of space, serve as the basis for the achievement of the goals set out in the EU Water Framework Directive and the Flood Directive. Such activities, which also concern the adaptation measures in response to the climate change, can only be
performed on the condition that the Danube countries give their consent to the cross-border arrangements with all their technical solutions and that the regional and local communities on the territory of which the activities are to be performed agree thereon.

Within this priority area, the importance and activities of the International Commission for the Protection of Danube River (ICPDR) and the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) should be emphasized.

### Priority Action: Development of the Sava River Basin Management Plan

By signing the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin the parties committed themselves to develop the common Sava River Basin Management Plan (SRBMP). The development of the Plan is one of the main tasks of the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) in the field of water management.

The activities towards this common goal already started in 2006. As the preparation of the Sava River Basin Analysis has already been completed, this priority action should be aimed at continuing the finalization of the SRBMP, as well as its implementation afterwards.

The overall objective of the action is to facilitate the approximation of the Sava riparian countries to the EU environmental *acquis* in the field of water management, in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000/6/EC) and Floods Directive (2007/60/EC). The objective aims to improve water quality and reduce pollution, as well as establish cooperation mechanisms between the countries in the areas of water protection, flood risk management, sustainable navigation and other sustainable uses of space.

*Potential partners: Slovenia, Sava Commission (ISRBC), Croatia, Serbia, BiH*

### Project proposal: A demonstration project of sustainable positioning of hydropower plants in the cross border segment of the Sava River

In the border section of the Sava River between Slovenia and Croatia (HE Krško - Zagreb County), both countries plan the positioning of a chain of hydropower plants, in order to achieve the EU Energy and Climate Package. The planned arrangements will change existing land use along the river. Therefore, both countries wish to strengthen cooperation in the design, planning and implementation arrangements, taking into account environmental and socio-economic objectives of both countries. Special emphasis will be put on the arrangements for the supply of safe drinking water in both countries, improving flood safety and reducing drought damages, reinstating of navigation and introduction of other sustainable transport modes (intermodality) in the impact area.

The implementation arrangements would allow adjustments to agriculture and fishery in longer dry periods and at the same time allow quality urban development along the river, in connection to other economic activities (shipping, tourism and recreation: boating, cycling). The project’s demonstration value is primarily in the integration of different uses of space (economic aspect), while taking into account the environment (including protected areas and habitat protection). This
The Mura River basin is shared by Austria, Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia. All four countries expressed the interest to enhance cooperation for implementation the objective of EU WFD. The Austrian upper stretch of the river is used for hydropower down to the Slovenian border. In 2008 all four countries started the hydrological study (on quantities) for more efficient water and flood management in trans-boundary context. The objective of DRAMURCI project is to involve the regional and local authorities and stakeholders in the implementation process of the Mura River Basin Management Plan.

The Drava River is shared by Austria, Slovenia and Croatia. Hydropower production is old tradition in all three countries. There is no hydropower production only on a lower section of the Drava River in Croatia, along the Hungarian border. The existing problem is how to mitigate the negative effects of hydropower use on a "natural" stretch of the river and how to enhance the ecological potential of the river’s "hydropower stretch". The objective of DRAMURCI project on the Drava River is to minimize the impact of hydropower on water environment and enhance trans-boundary water management.

Lead MS: Slovenia, Austria
Potential partners: Hungary, Croatia

PRIORITY AREA: COOPERATION IN COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

For some time now, one of the most topical subjects in the international relations has been the climate change. The Danube countries differ one from another in their specificities and their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and the climate-energy package of the EU. In spite of that or even thanks to it, the EU Member States and other countries in the Danube region have many possibilities of cooperation in managing the climate change.

As was the case with planning for the Baltic Sea region, the Danube countries could participate in the drafting of the Strategy and programmes for adaptation to the climate change. In most countries, the activities in this field have only started, while in some countries not even that.

PRIORITY AREA: CHEMICAL SAFETY

In the context of the environment protection policy in the Danube countries, disposal of the old stockpiles of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals in the Danube basin area has been planned. This implies primarily the establishment of cooperation among countries, potential use of
financial mechanisms, application of knowledge and technologies for an efficient action of disposing the old waste and, at the same time, the preparation of measures to prevent the creation of new burdens in the future. This priority area is in line with the recently adopted Resolution on improvement of health through sound management with obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals (on 63 WHA in Geneve 17 - 21 May 2010), which calls for action in this area¹.

An important area of cooperation under the proposed Strategy concerns the identification and joint action by the Danube countries in relation to substances classified under Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 as carcinogenic, mutagenic and toxic for reproduction, certain toxic, persistent and bioaccumulable substances or substances identified as having endocrine disrupting properties, with the view to reducing and/or replacing these substances in a more efficient way.

Project proposal: Cleaning (elimination) of obsolete pesticides

The project’s goal is to resolve the problem of obsolete pesticides and the burden of chemicals. It is consistent with at least one of the priorities of the ENPI programme which supports the European Neighbourhood Policy that concerns countries which are direct land or maritime neighbours of the EU.

The International HCH and Pesticides Association (IHPA) estimates that the total amount of obsolete pesticides is estimated at approx. 260,000-265,000 tonnes in Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union area only. For example, in EU-25 estimates are 22-24,000 tonnes, in South-East Europe 36-41,000 tonnes, and in the former Soviet Union area 199,000 tonnes (FAO, the first rough indication, 2005).

Lead MS: to be decided
Potential partners: Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine

Project proposal: Identification of and common actions of the Danube countries on dangerous substances for annex XIV and annex XV of the REACH regulation

Since the new European chemicals legislation, REACH, the main purpose of which is to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment with the goal of achieving sustainable development, and it is intended (preamble 6) to contribute to the fulfilment of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which can be achieved through a systematic approach to registration, authorization, evaluation, restriction and prohibition of the most dangerous substances, we propose that the Danube countries cooperate in this matter and speed up the implementation of REACH in this region. We are sure that cooperation on the identification of substances, possible subjects of authorization or restriction/prohibition, and common scientific and technical work on the preparation of dossiers and a subsequent proposal to the European Chemicals Agency for a further procedure according to the REACH regulation, would speed up the implementation of REACH in the Danube region. Such an approach would be more focused on the elimination of particular risks, established on the basis of scientific data (monitoring of the

substances in water and the environment), which particular substances could cause, and would lead to a safer environment.

Lead MS: to be decided

PILLAR III: INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITY AREA: INFORMATION SOCIETY

The priority areas of closer cooperation in the Danube region should also include cooperation in the field of information society, concretely as follows:

- Implementation and exchange of good practices within the project of the COBISS.NET library system (Co-operative Online – Bibliographic System & Services) used by the library systems in the Danube region.
- Promotion of the so-called ‘Living Labs’ concept in the field of ICT innovative services aimed at strengthening the knowledge-based economy and of the quality of research and technological development in the region.

One of very promising initiatives in this area is the initiative of the ALpe ADria INitiative Universities’ Network (ALADIN)\footnote{http://elivinglab.org/CrossBordereRegion/EuropeanInitiativeAmber&SilkRoads/#Conclusions}.

PRIORITY AREA: PROMOTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF MOBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REGION

One of the goals of the countries in the region in the field of higher education is also the enhancement of cooperation and support to greater participation of the Western Balkan countries and other third countries in the region in the existing programmes and mechanisms of mobility, mostly of students (enhancement of participation in the CEEPUS programme, EU programmes, direct cooperation of universities, university rectorship conferences, students etc.). In order to facilitate this, efforts have to be made towards eliminating barriers to mobility, especially in relation to the visa regime and the accessibility of study to third country citizens and improvement of study conditions.

Within this priority area, the importance of cooperation between universities in the region, especially activities of their networks, such as the Danube Rectors’ Conference and the Rectors Conference of the Alps-Adriatic Universities, should be emphasized.

PRIORITY AREA: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELDS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY EFFICIENT ECONOMY, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN THE REGION

In the emerging Danube region, it is necessary to:

\footnote{http://elivinglab.org/CrossBordereRegion/EuropeanInitiativeAmber&SilkRoads/#Conclusions}
- strengthen cooperation under the established EU mechanisms in the framework of the EUREKA initiative and the implementation of its programmes;
- strengthen cooperation of SMEs and big enterprises in the Danube region;
- encourage entrepreneurship among the young people and the exchange of young researchers in the economic field;
- strengthen cooperation in all priority areas by more intensely promoting the ‘green economy’;
- enable more intense participation of the Danube countries in the EKO-INNO initiative, which is expected to encourage the implementation of new programmes and international calls for proposals in the field of eco-innovation and technological development.

**PRIORITY AREA: EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND COMPETITIVENESS**

The priority areas of closer cooperation under the Strategy should also include the exchange of good practices in the field of entrepreneurship and competitiveness, such as:

- promotion of entrepreneurship and creativity among young people (e.g. introduction of entrepreneurship in the regular school system, activities aimed at promoting creativity and entrepreneurship among the youth outside the regular curriculum etc.);
- encouragement of female entrepreneurs;
- encouragement of the innovative potential of SMEs;
- encouragement of the inclusion of design in the work of enterprises (production and services).

**Project proposal: Building Capacities for Policy Design and Implementation**

As economies in Southeast Europe (SEE) pursue sustainable growth within the framework of EU Accession and Convergence frameworks, they face important challenges in building implementation capacity. The crisis in global financial markets, which has begun to impact many emerging markets, including those in Southeast Europe, underscores the key role that strongly anchored medium-term economic and fiscal programs need to play in establishing credibility and in stabilizing confidence. For these economies, a natural anchor for such economic programs is the EU Accession and Convergence framework. However, questions had been raised—even before the crisis—as to whether countries had developed the internal strategy and coordination processes to fully benefit from the EU anchor as they prepared integrated medium-term economic programs. In particular, there was a concern that the design and implementation of fiscal policy needs to be better coordinated with the broad goals of economic convergence, in order to support both growth and financial stability.

Today’s global market conditions are an exceptional test for policies and in this context, some former transition economies have sought renewed arrangements with the IMF to stabilize their financial sectors and limit the impact of the current financial crisis on domestic economies. They are also seeking assistance with efforts to adjust fiscal frameworks to ensure medium-term fiscal sustainability during this extremely volatile period. Ultimately, the goal should be to ensure that an improved policy framework is established over the medium-term that will strengthen countries’ ability to recover from the financial and economic shocks to which they are being subjected in the current environment.
The overall objective of the Project is to build the beneficiary countries’ capacity for medium-term economic and fiscal policy design and implementation and to foster stronger internal and external policy anchor use for the medium term.

The Project will aim at strengthening capacity within the beneficiary countries and/or institutions, notably will build capacity in the areas of economic and fiscal policy design and implementation with a goal to increase countries’ capacity for the medium-term economic and fiscal policy formulation and economic and fiscal planning documents’ preparation (Pre-accession Economic Program, Economic and Fiscal Program documents and similar documents).

In addition, the project will support strengthening and, when possible, translation of best practices and standards into national practices. At the same time, the project will aim at creating the necessary prerequisites to strengthen regional cooperation among national authorities, including with those of the European Union, as well as to deepen the dialogues with the European Union and international financial institutions (IFI’s).

The initiative for the Project came from the countries in South East Europe and Turkey and was confirmed at the high level seminar Economic Stability and EU Convergence in Southeast Europe: Building Capacities for Policy Design and Implementation held in Washington in April 2009 and at the workshop Building Capacities for Policy Design and Implementation in Tirana, Albania, in December 2009 where the countries reiterated their support of the Project to be developed. The outcome is the proposed Project.

Lead stakeholder: Center of Excellence in Finance – CEF
Potential partners: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the European Commission, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Turkey, IMF, ECB, World Bank, Regional School of Public Administration, the Netherlands and Sweden.
Timeline: January 2011- December 2013

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**Project proposal: Southeast Europe Management Forum Bled - Kopaonik**

Southeast Europe Management Forum Bled-Kopaonik is continuing the tradition of the Miločer Economic Forum which was held continuously ever since 1993 under the auspices of the Serbian Economists Association. The Miločer Economic Forum was focused on key transition sub-processes in the region: privatization/restructuring, disinflation policy, institutional changes and reindustrialization.

Southeast Europe Management Forum Bled-Kopaonik will focus on finding solutions to challenges involving leadership, sustainable development, innovations, new ways of communication, new forms of organization, entrepreneurship, corporate governance and ethics and above all search for synergies in the Region and beyond. The co-organizers of the Forum are IEDC-Bled School of Management, the Serbian Economists Association and the Serbian Association of Corporate

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3 http://www.cef-see.org/
Directors. Co-organizers plan to invite other relevant international organizations to participate, for example Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe.

The mission of the project is to exchange experience, best practices and understanding of actual challenges as well as to encourage new initiatives, projects and programs focused on the development of the economy and society at large in the Region, thus contributing to the Region’s competitiveness in the global economy.

*Lead stakeholder: IEDC-Bled School of Management*

*Partners and potential partners: Serbian Economists Association (SES), Serbian Association of Corporate Directors (UKDS)*

*Timeline: 2010-2015*

**PRIORITY AREA: IMPROVEMENT OF FOOD SECURITY IN THE REGION**

By unifying technical standards and norms and consequently reducing technical barriers to trade in agricultural products, food security in the Danube region could be essentially improved. In this context, Slovenia has a vital interest in closer cooperation with other partners in the Danube region with regard to both the establishment of the food security system and the rural development in the wider sense.

*Priority action: Exchange of good practices in the provision of food safety and quality*

The mutual exchange of good practices by competent authorities and food businesses operators in relation to tracking and monitoring procedures and implementation of measures throughout the entire food chain from “field to table”, i.e. from the production - primary production, manufacture, processing, transport, storage and trade (import, export, distribution) of food and feed to the table - consumer’s plate, may largely contribute to ensuring an equivalent level of protection of human health, a consumer and consumer interests in relation to foodstuffs, as well as reducing technical barriers to trade in agricultural products in the Danube region.

On the basis of past positive experience with cooperation in regional projects, the exchange of good practices in ensuring food safety and quality it is to be carried out through annual conferences on food safety and quality with the participation of all countries of the Danube region. Slovenia proposes a rotating system of organizing conferences on an annual basis. A conference would take place every year in a different country of the Danube region. Thus the costs of organizing a conference would be covered by every Member every few years, in line with its national financial plans. Furthermore, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) should join, as it would certainly have an interest to participate in the transfer of skills and standards in the Danube region countries. In Slovenia, some conferences on the issues of food security were organised in cooperation with the EFSA in 2008 and 2009, during the AGRA International Fair in Gornja Radgona.

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4 http://www.iedc.si/
The action could address different issues of strengthening scientific and technological cooperation and joint training in the system “from farm to fork”, unifying technical standards and norms, transfer of knowledge and experience in the quality of agricultural production schemes, exchange of experience of operators in relation to good hygiene practices, comparison of organisation and functioning of services in the field of food safety and closer cooperation of laboratories and the implementation of official controls. The conference theme would be different each year, depending on the interest and needs of an individual country of the Danube region. Moreover, considering a specific topic, various competent authorities (ministries, agencies, inspectorates) and food business operators (farmers, agro-industry) would participate at the annual conference.

In order to promote such action, Slovenia is willing to organise at least one conference on the topic, which would be financed from the national budget.

Lead MS: Slovenia
Potential partners: EUSDR countries, European Food Safety Agency (EFSA)

**PRIORITY AREA: ENHANCEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION IN THE REGION**

One of the objectives of cooperation in the Danube region should concern the optimisation and enhancement of bilateral and multilateral scientific and technological cooperation. In this context, Slovenia would like to stress the importance of strengthening cooperation in the following areas:

- construction and joint action regarding the important regional research infrastructure (regional cooperation under the ESFRI and within the ‘Salzburg Group’);
- development of human resources and mobility of researchers, lecturers and students in the region (strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the basis of calls for proposals, also under FP7, ERA-NET, COST, ESF etc.);
- encouragement of cooperation between the science and research sphere and the economy by transferring quality knowledge in the region (strengthening of bilateral and regional cooperation under programmes EUREKA, JTI, ETP, ESA etc.);
- improvement of the science governance in the region.

**PRIORITY AREA: PROMOTION OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE**

Intercultural dialogue is a vital instrument of finding solutions to some of the major challenges our society faces today and a significant factor of fostering open and inclusive societies based on fundamental European values. Relevant activities have already been under way in the Danube region; further cooperation in enhancing intercultural dialogue should build upon them:

- Ljubljana Process: the concluding phase of the IRPP/SAAH project that was launched in 2003 and has been jointly implemented by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. This project has proven how important it is to have an integrated approach to the cultural heritage management; it represents an incentive to build bridges among various ethnic and religious communities throughout the whole region, contributing to promotion of reconciliation, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- Balkan Incentive Fund for Culture: Slovenia has been participating in this project as one of the partners; it intends to set up an information platform that would contain data on multicultural culture programmes and initiatives in the region, enable exchange of experiences and good practices and thus circulation of information;

- Active participation in the Council of Ministers for the Culture of South-Eastern Europe, a forum for cultural exchange based on the conviction that common cultural values, exchange of experience and heritage represent a unique instrument of maintaining peace, prosperity and coexistence in the region.

**Project proposal: Continuation of the “Ljubljana Process”**

The proposed project is a continuation (concluding phase) of the IRPP/SAAH project that was launched in 2003 and has been jointly implemented by the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

The aim of the project is to prove the importance of an integrated approach to the management of cultural heritage (cultural heritage as a driver of sustainable development) and help to build bridges between different ethnic and religious communities in the region, thus promoting reconciliation, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

*Lead MS: to be decided*

*Potential partners: the European Commission, the Council of Europe, Slovenia and other EUSDR countries*

*Timeline: 2011-2013*

**Project proposal: Information Platform for South East Europe and Contact Point for Balkan Incentive Fund for Culture (BIFC)**

The aim of the project is to establish a platform which will offer information on multilateral cultural programmes and initiatives in the region and enable the exchange of experience, good practices, as well as ensure a good flow of information.

The project aims:

- to collect and distribute information and conditions for the use of funding programmes in the field of culture, including the programmes of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the Central European Initiative, UNESCO and other intergovernmental and international organisation and cross-border initiatives;
- to assist and guide BIFC grants in developing their projects, and initiate synergy between the grants and the projects, whenever appropriate;
- to enhance balanced geographical support between capitals and other cities in the Balkan region;
- to share knowledge and experience gained through the support from the BIFC, and encourage research and development work within the projects;
- to strengthen the visibility and advocacy of the Balkan Incentive Fund for Culture and its objectives in the entire region of the Western Balkans.
- to support the cultural sector in the Western Balkan region, and provide adequate services to facilitate and foster its cross-border cooperation;
- to strengthen existing cultural networks of cooperation in the region, and support the creation of cultural advocacy platforms on local and regional levels;

**Lead MS: Slovenia**

**Potential partners:** European Cultural Foundation (ECF), Human Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS), Open Society Institute (OSI), Open Society Foundations of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania

**Timeline:** 2010-2012 (the first phase)

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**Project proposal: Active Cooperation in the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe**

The forum of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe has already been established. The project’s aim is to enhance cooperation within the forum and therefore contribute to maintaining peace, prosperity and harmony in the region through cooperation projects in the field of culture (sharing cultural values, exchanging experiences and the heritage).

**Lead MS: to be decided**

**Potential partners:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, as well as Albania, Greece, Macedonia and Turkey

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