

CHAPTER V

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

OF THE PROJECT DANET –

REPORTING THE RESULTS

§1. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN CROATIA

1.1. Program of the International Conference in Croatia

On the 17-20 June 2011, 48 participants, senior citizens and people in charge of the participating organisations, from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Romania and Slovenia met in the Leca education centre of POUZ in Brodarica, Croatia, to discuss and to elaborate the issues handled in the frame of the four national panels and to identify common issues of transnational importance.

The participants from Bulgaria were:

- ✓ Assoc. Prof.Emiliya Velikova,PhD, Pr. Assist. Prof. Milena Popova, Yordanka Peneva, MSc, from the University of Rouse;
- ✓ Yordan Kazakov, MSc, Mrs. Tsvetanka Petrova, Mrs. Reni Koleva, Mrs. Veska Uzunova, Mrs. Ivanka Novakova from the Union of Pensioners'2004 - Rouse.

This “cross-national panel” provided opportunity for getting to know each other and for the promotion of communication and exchange amongst the older citizens and forms an important basis for continuing web-based discussions.

The meeting in Croatia provides conditions for presenting the results of training under the project through participating of all representatives of the partners in:

- ✓ small working groups for discussing the panel themes;
- ✓ educational game for presenting united Europe and the Danube region;
- ✓ international social evening for presenting songs, dances, culinary samples, home-made clothes, souvenirs, etc. of the Danube region

The participants had to apply their knowledge and skills which were formed and developed in the training process of the national panel discussions. They had to present solutions of the questions set by the project: Active Ageing, Identity, Migration, and Environment.

*CHAPTER V: International Conferences of the Project DANET –
Reporting the Results*

International Conference in Croatia, 17-20 June, 2011



Results of Training under the Project DANET, Emiliya Velikova



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1.2. Results of the Workshop “Active Ageing”

The leader of the Panel I was **Dušana Findeisen**

She reported the results as follows.

Main question

In Panel I we started by addressing the definition of active ageing and the European policy in this field. The main question discussed was whether *working longer as planned by national reforms and European policies is a good thing, be it on personal or/and on social level, or it is not a good thing.*

The participants seemed to agree that times have changed and that the situation is quite different now from the situation in Otto Bismarck's times: then life lasted 63 years on average, and retirement age was fixed at 65. Nowadays it happens in some countries that people spend up to fifty years retired. From the social point of view working longer is a good solution but not systematically; in countries where the rate of unemployment of young people is low, the fact that older people should work longer might cause serious social frictions.

In some European countries retirement age is not mandatory, but working longer is culturally unacceptable and it is a shame for older people to work longer.

If older people were to work longer, huge public campaigning and education would be needed, social changes should be induced and cultural changes should take place as well. National reforms and laws in this field should be accompanied by additional measures for older people not to be squeezed out of the market, getting long-term ill or ending up on social aid allowances. In case of companies going bankrupt there is little chance for older workers to get a job, or even to enter the labour market. In that case they have to spend the last years spending their savings. Older people should be encouraged to have savings... and younger people educated to have some.

Basically everybody should be free to either work longer or to get retired.

It would be interesting to have studies addressing older workers' reasons and conditions and motives to stay at work longer.

The Bulgarian representatives in the group suggested that couples should be able to get retired simultaneously.

Personal priorities in later life

The participants in the Panel were asked to state their priorities in old age. In pairs and in threes the discussion gave the following results: The majority considers healthy ageing a priority, then comes personal growth and finally social engagement. Social engagement is less present for a very simple reason: society is not used to having active older people. Changes are needed in all generations and the relations between generations are to be transformed by means of policies, education, guidance and public campaigning.

1.3. Results of the Workshop “Identity”

The leader of Panel II, **Alexandru Strunga**, reported the following.

The participants in this transnational workgroup discussed the Sustainability of Cultural Heritage and National and European Identity.

The first part of the discussion focused on the question: “Which are the values that are the center of the European Identity from an intergenerational perspective”. We agreed that there are several *core values* that are in the heart of the European civilization: Greek culture, Roman law and Christianity, as well as humanism, democracy and Universal Human Rights make up some of the most substantial parts, which we have all in common in *our* societies. However, in the context of the globalization process, there is the risk of ignoring (and maybe even forgetting) by the young generations the rich cultural heritage that exists at local, regional and national levels. And here is *one of the most important roles* that *seniors* have in the European society: to build a bridge between the past, present and future, helping the youngsters (and also other groups of people i.e. immigrants) to get in contact with the aforementioned values and to build identities. This role is of utmost importance especially in Central and Eastern Europe where there are a lot of people who emigrate (thus causing dangerous demographical phenomena

especially in the rural areas). Our participants also agreed that a very important problem is the *awareness* of seniors concerning their European (and Danubian) identity: how can we build bridges between seniors scattered all over Europe and how can we create liaisons between cultures which are sometimes relatively different (i.e. Eastern Europe vs. Western Europe)? In this respect we share the understanding that New Media and the Internet will have a *major* impact in constructing a cultural common ground for our seniors. We appreciate in this context, especially the importance of *Danube Region* as an intersection of populations, cultures and values that helps creating a regional and European identity and bringing people together. The Danube may be the *perfect example* of understanding this cooperation: we share similar traditions, customs, languages that are illustrating our belonging to a *greater family*.

In the second part of the discussion we analyzed the economic underpinnings of our societies and their respective influences on seniors and culture. It is obvious that the financial difficulties, low quality of life, being part of vulnerable groups (like the romani population or immigrants) can create big differences between European seniors. Moreover, the growing proportion of seniors from the total population can create pressure on the current economic establishments (i.e. pension system). In our discussion we concentrated on how to transform these apparent obstacles and barriers into *opportunities* for further development. Our participants agreed that the seniors' education can make the difference in this case but only in a European (cross-national and regional) cultural context and intergenerational setting, using New Media. We must involve the seniors in the civil society *making our voices heard* by the leaders of our communities.

In the third part of the discussion we've tried to identify some concrete ideas for our transnational panel and especially for the European parliamentarians we'll meet in Strasbourg, in the context of the Danube Strategy:

- ✓ Creating a system of *mobilities* for the seniors who live in the Danube Region.

- ✓ Creating *transnational projects and competitions* for the seniors from our region and also prizes (the Danube Poet, Composer, Musician, Writer, Actor, Scientist and so on).
- ✓ Developing a great *network* of public and private institutions in the Danube Region with the aims of helping seniors involve more in their communities and creating joint transnational projects for seniors' education (we need a substantial interaction in the virtual space as well, i.e. Website or social network for Danube seniors).
- ✓ Regional and local initiatives for helping seniors cope with financial difficulties.
- ✓ Involving *universities* in the process of seniors' education.
- ✓ Creating a *Danube third age university* (or maybe even a virtual third age university) to help seniors connect and share values.
- ✓ Creating an *educational strategy* for the seniors from Danube region.

1.4. Results of the Workshop “Migration”

The leader of the Panel III, **Jasna Čurin**, reported the following.

Migrations constantly accompany a country's development. Their effects can be positive, but also negative in character. Positive effects can be enhanced, while the negative ones can be decreased through different measures that need to be implemented by the state, on the one hand, and NGOs, on the other, as well as by the citizens individually.

In order to decrease the emigration rates, especially emigrations of experts and young people, a state should first of all create conditions that would reduce the citizens' need to go to other countries. The measures include, first of all boosting economic development and increasing the employment rates, then creating conditions for self-realisation of the youth, balancing regional development, i.e. de-centralising ('de-metropolisizing') economic and social activities, etc.

In order to stimulate immigration of deficient occupations, a state should create favourable conditions for learning the languages that are spoken in the country, as well as providing conditions for professional development. In addition, it would be useful to create a kind of ‘Dos and Don’ts’-list for every-day life activities in the new environment, as well as to introduce a trial period stay for immigrants prior to making their final decision of staying somewhere permanently.

The NGO-sector has also a very important role in the context of migrations. NGOs should support and promote the concept of interculturalism as an important tool in harmonizing the community. In addition, they should influence the decision making processes in the area of migration policies, promote ecumenism, organise ecumenical activities and incent cooperation among religious communities in the country. Furthermore, they should organise different activities in the area of culture and art, which would foster learning about other ethnic minorities. Apart from that, NGOs are important in the area of providing psychological support.

In order to reduce the unwanted emigration, each citizen should carefully re-evaluate their decision to leave their home-land. Also, they should work on increasing their levels of tolerance regarding current problems in their home-land. Furthermore, they should inform themselves about the living conditions in the country they want to emigrate to, such as living costs, historical, cultural and art background, legislation, especially laws about foreigners, etc. In addition, it is very important to learn the official language(s) of the country they want to emigrate to.

Aiming to ease the integration of immigrants in their new setting, citizens should overcome the stereotypes and prejudices and accept the differences as a form of enrichment, and not as a cause for becoming distant.

1.5. Results of the Workshop “Environment”

The leader of Panel IV was **Harald Kutzenberger**.

He reported the following results.

Ecological education and awareness

- ✓ Empowerment of the older generation, eg. in public open universities.
- ✓ International exchange and cooperation of adult education within the whole Danube Region.
- ✓ Raising capacity of methods, eg. role models.

Inter-generational communication

Every young generation needs to be sensibilised for nature and sustainability:

- ✓ Elderly people support the youth to develop relation and respect towards the nature, eg. showing the beauty of local nature by common walks.
- ✓ Know-how transfer from old to young on the local nature and changes of the environment.
- ✓ Explaining the risks of hazardous technologies to the youth, eg. nuclear power.

Getting active on local level

Elderly people bring in their experience in their environment:

- ✓ Engagement of elderly people in ecological projects, eg. community gardens, separation of waste.
- ✓ Citizens´ participation in Local Agenda 21 helps to raise the motivation with elderly people to take responsibility for their personal environment and move political decisions.
- ✓ Analysing of the needs in the local environment and strengthening of the social community.
- ✓ Reflecting the personal way of mobility – adaptation related to the different needs and environmental aspects, eg. Car-sharing.

Implementation of sustainable development to public life

The older generation expects clear perspective and responsibilities for a natural and save future for their children and grand-children:

- ✓ Consequent securing of water resources in public hands.
- ✓ Raising awareness for the limited availability of resources.
- ✓ Developing hydro-power only by innovative engineering solutions (eg. pump-storage-plants) with little negative effect on the eco-systems and no huge dam constructions along the Danube and the tributaries with strong negative climate and eco-system effects.
- ✓ Step-by-step reduction of nuclear power in all Danube Region within 20 years – no more investment and substitution by renewable energy sources (solar, wind, water, etc.).
- ✓ No abuse of South-eastern Europe for the ongoing increase of energy use in central European countries.
- ✓ Establishing of state-of-the-art Environmental Impact Assessments.
- ✓ Adapting the public traffic in a flexible and innovative way in regions to keep up or develop cost-effective high quality – eg. nation-wide tickets for all traffic companies, adapting bus size, etc.

Foster natural and regional food production

In the upcoming programs on the Common agricultural policy (CAP) the following aspects need to be taken into account with priority:

- ✓ Regional, organic food is a main pillar of a healthy natural life style – it is necessary to raise the level of information for consumers to seasonal changes in the availability of products.
- ✓ Fair trade is a minimum standard for superregional products – eg. from Southern countries.
- ✓ Decentralised production secures the small scale structure of agriculture in Europe and reduces traffic – to develop the next period of support systems in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) it is necessary to integrate the ecological footprint of production and the farm size as factors.
- ✓ Securing the system of decentralised agricultural production in the property of farmers.
- ✓ There is no acceptance for genetically modified organisms (GMO)

1.6. Results of the Educational Game

The representatives of all partners took part in an educational game, based on brainstorming. They had to generate ideas and to develop presentations about united Europe and the Danube region.

The main aim was working in a team and applying the knowledge and skills of the participants.

There was also organised international social evening of the partners. All participants presented national songs, dances, culinary samples, home made clothes, souvenirs, etc.



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§2. FINAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN GERMANY

2.1. Program of the Final International Conference in Germany

The Final International conference of the project DANET was held 6-11 November, 2011, in Wiesneck, Germany.

The main activities of the Final Conference were as follows:

- ✓ Workshop: Danube Networkers in Touch with European Politics
- ✓ Reporting the project results from the partners with focus on the main thesis from the DANET panel work and expectations from the project DANET and its political actions.
- ✓ Preparation for the meeting with the members of the European Parliament.
- ✓ Dr Karlheinz Dürr, Director of the State Centre for Civic Education Baden-Wuerttemberg, Wiesneck, Germany: lecture “Civil Society and European Identity”.
- ✓ Acad. Dir. Carmen Stadelhofe, Director of ZAWIW of Ulm University, Germany: lecture “Danube Strategy and Civil Society in the Danube Region and the DANET project”.
- ✓ Mr. Heinz Kälberer, the Head of the Service Institute East-Europe of the Baden-Württemberg Foundation: Presentation of the aims and activities of the Service Institute
- ✓ Mrs. Andrea Brendel: Creative workshop on the DANET results.
- ✓ Christian Rapp and Anna Sitnikova: Introduction to the method and the rationale of the European role game. Moderation of an European role game “Participation of Older Citizens in the European Union”.
- ✓ Mrs. Elisabeth Jeggle and Mr. Michael Theurer, Germany and Mrs. Silvia-Adriana Ticau, Romania, members of the European Parliament: Presentation of the results and theses from the seniors’ project groups followed by discussion.

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- ✓ Mr. Akos Toth, Hungary, Council of the Young Citizens Danube Network: Introduction of the Young Citizens Danube Network.
- ✓ Dr. Uwe Berndt: lecture “A history of conflict and cooperation in the three-country region between Germany, France and Switzerland as outlook for the Danube Region“
- ✓ Prof. Steinhoff: Introduction the programmes for education of seniors at the University of Education, Freiburg, Germany. Presenting the international projects of the University.
- ✓ “Get-to-know-each-other” activities.

Final conference, 6-11 November, 2011 in Wiesneck, Germany





Mrs. Elisabeth Jeggle

Germany, member of the European Parliament

Mr. Heinz Kälberer

**the Head of the Service Institute East-Europe of the Baden-
Württemberg Foundation**

Assoc. Prof. Emiliya Velikova, Ph.D.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Education
University of Rousse, Bulgaria**

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2.2. New Goals

Austria

Migration – dialogue between home and hostage countries: realistic information, regional development at home.

Euro atom – step-by-step reduction of nuclear power in all Danube countries within 20 years; no more investments!

Support renewable energies.

Regulate finance markets – support SME structures as basis for regional economic power.

Support decentral structures in a dominant concentration process (organic production, GMO, SME).

Germany

Stronger support long-life learning in old age.

Codetermination in political decisions.

Retirement on demand.

Prevention of social exclusion by poverty, illness – structural changes.

Croatia

Active Ageing - it is necessary to change the public image of the third age people (especially in Croatia).

European and National Identity – to be open to learn about each other and offer the possibility of learning in international summer school (e.g. in Croatia).

Migration as a Challenge – benefit from cultural diversities.

Ecology / Environment – to joint all actions regarding Danube region and keep it for the future generations.

Slovenia

Equal access to voluntary activities regardless of age.

Access to health and healthy ageing is needed. Personal responsibility is to be encouraged.

Active ageing is not just a policy. It is a way of life. Legislative and cultural changes are needed.

Pluralism of values – not just work.

Romania

Arts as means of promoting active ageing.

Entertainment areas for seniors along the Danube.

Creating new titles for Danube seniors with important cultural contributions.

Developing new attitudes towards older age.

Bulgaria

Active ageing – activities that counteract the fear of ageing and boost confidence of the third age generation.

Active involvement of pensioners in the legislation, especially where the interests of this age group are concerned.

Active intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experience with the aim to preserve cultural heritage and national identity, as well as aging evolution of European identity.

Educating the third generation and helping the individual core in the condition of economic crisis.

Exchanging groups of pensioners with the purpose of learning about the culture, nature, history and everyday life “Be a host – be a guest”