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PRESS RELEASE

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Six new scientific clusters to support Danube strategy

The European Commission and scientists and policy makers from the 14 Danube Region countries have today launched six scientific clusters to support economic development in the region. The six clusters will focus on: water; land & soil; bio-energy; air; data exchange & harmonisation; and smart specialisation. Presented at a high-level meeting in Bratislava today, the clusters will provide scientific evidence to support the Danube Strategy, and will also serve to foster scientific cooperation across the region. The launch event today was attended amongst others by the Slovak Prime Minister H.E. Robert Fico and the Vice President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič.

Speaking at the launch, Maroš Šefčovič, Vice President of the European Commission, said: *"The EU Strategy for the Danube Region aims to boost growth and jobs in the area through better policy making and funding. Science can really help by providing evidence-based data to policy makers, helping them to make informed decisions for a region that boasts enormous geopolitical and economic diversity."*

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, said: *"This is an excellent example of transnational science and policy cooperation, setting a benchmark for the EU and beyond. These clusters can boost scientific and economic performance in the region."*

The water, land & soil, bio-energy and air clusters will look at these key resources in relation to identified needs: environmental protection, irrigation & agricultural development and energy. The data cluster is meant to facilitate the exchange and harmonisation of clear and comparable data in areas such as biodiversity, river morphology, flood and drought risks, soils, crops or energy resources and potential. It will also set up a common data access point for the whole region - the first operational version should be available by December this year. The smart specialisation cluster will study how to concentrate resources on key scientific priorities based on the economic potential of the Danube region rather than spreading efforts and investment too thinly.

The clusters will bring together the scientific community from the 14 Danube countries, involving most of the Academies of science in the region, the Danube Rectors Conference (which involves 54 universities) and many other research organisations. The partners will take part in the cluster(s) of their choice, according to their priorities and expertise. Participation remains open to other interested parties. The clusters will foster cooperation not only among scientists, but also between scientists and policy makers, and will encourage a better uptake of scientific results in policy-making. While the scientific community will meet regularly, policy makers will be updated once a year.

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Background

Other political attendees at the event in Bratislava today were: the Minister of State for economic strategy of Hungary, Zoltán Cséfalvay; the Federal Minister for Science and Research of Austria, Karlheinz Töchterle; the Minister Delegate for higher education, scientific research and technological development of Romania, Mihnea Costoiu, and the Member of the European Parliament, Edit Herczog.

The EU Strategy for the Danube region was launched in 2011 ([IP/11/472](#)) after a request 2 years earlier by EU governments. It focuses on 4 priorities: connecting the Danube region, protecting the environment, building prosperity and strengthening the region. The European Commission has recently published a progress report on the Danube region strategy ([IP/13/307](#)), where it calls to move up a gear after a good start.

The "Scientific support to the Danube strategy" initiative was launched in November 2011 by the European Commission's in-house science service, the Joint Research Centre (JRC). It focuses on 4 priorities: environment protection, irrigation & agricultural development, navigability and energy production.

The 14 countries in the Danube Region are: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova. The region is home to over 100 million people.

Links

- Second high level conference "Scientific support to the Danube strategy" initiative (Bratislava, 16 May 2013):
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=2470&obj_id=4480&dt_code=EVN&lang=en
- Background information on the JRC "Scientific support to the Danube strategy" initiative and the flagship clusters:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=1410&obj_id=16440&dt_code=NWS&lang=en&ori=HLN
- First high-level conference - "Scientific support to the Danube strategy" initiative (Brussels, 24 April 2012):
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=3910&obj_id=4120&dt_code=EVN&lang=en&ori=HLN
- EU strategy for the Danube region:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/danube/index_en.cfm