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The financial expectations linked to the EU Danube Strategy are increasing

Representatives of the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and of the fourteen countries participating in the preparation of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) met on 27 September in Belgrade. Potential sources for financing the Strategy were the main topic of the discussion. The Serbian government hopes that, as a result of this EU project, funds will become more available to it, for example for the development of transport infrastructure in the region.

The meeting was attended by the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn, the EIB president and fourteen coordinators, each representing one country. Eight EU member states – Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Bulgaria – and Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro as well as Moldova and Ukraine (actions to be taken as part of strategy are to extend over Ukraine's south-western provinces) participate on a regular basis in the preparation of the new macroregional strategy. The European Commission is to prepare a draft Strategy by the end of 2010, which will then be handled by the Council of the EU. The EUSDR is scheduled for adoption when the EU presidency is held by Hungary, which intends to treat the project as a priority issue.

Ways of implementing the strategy, priority projects and especially the sources of financing for the strategy were the major topics of discussion. The hosts have expressed great expectations regarding the latter. However, the EU does not envisage the allocation of a special budget for the EUSDR, at least in the present financial perspective (until 2013). The EUSDR is to create conditions for a sustainable development of the macroregion, using currently existing instruments and policies. However, it cannot be ruled out that the countries covered by the EUSDR will make efforts to obtain special funds for their implementation during a discussion on the future of the cohesion policy as part of the new financial perspective for the EU for 2014–2020. <MarSz, mag>