



European Union Strategy for the Danube Region

Priority Area Security

Ministerial Conference on Combating Terrorism in the Danube Region

Sofia, Bulgaria
21-22 January 2016

JOINT DECLARATION

The Ministers responsible for home affairs and authorised representatives of the respective Ministries of the Danube Region countries,

Gathered in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 21 and 22 January 2016 on the occasion of a Ministerial Conference on Combating Terrorism in the Danube Region,

In cooperation with the European Commission, EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator, Europol, SELEC, Hanns Seidel Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Danube Strategy Point,

Assessing the existing cooperation in the framework of Priority Area “Security” of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region as extremely successful,

Reiterating the decision from the Danube Security Conference in May 2013 to continue the active work on the main thematic areas for cooperation, while staying flexible and adjusting to the current challenges and needs in the area of security,

Endorsing the agreement reached within the Steering Group in 2015 to enlarge the scope of the cooperation with the areas of migration management and fight against terrorism,

Have agreed on the following:

Recalling the efforts in this area within the UN framework, as well as the ongoing EU and regional initiatives on countering terrorism and violent extremism¹, the Ministers pointed out that the Danube Region countries should find proactive and comprehensive responses and set realistic and feasible common counter-terrorism initiatives in motion.

The Ministers agreed that in order to achieve efficiency in countering terrorism, the cooperation in the areas of prevention, border security, critical infrastructure protection from terrorist acts and information exchange should be intensified.

¹ Such as the Salzburg Forum, the Brdo Process, Vienna conference (“Tackling Jihadism together. Shaping-Preventing-Reacting”), SELEC and the Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe (PCC SEE) initiatives among others.

Convinced that **prevention** is the best protection, the Ministers stressed that the Danube Region countries should focus on prevention of radicalisation, deradicalisation, counter narratives, as well as cooperation with civil society and close contacts with communities.

The Ministers reiterated their commitment to develop further the cooperation in the area of cyber security, considering it *inter alia* an important aspect of terrorism prevention. They outlined that counteraction to terrorist propaganda and recruitment of terrorists on the Internet is of key importance for eliminating the factors leading to terrorism.

The Ministers shared the view that the common preventive capacity of the Danube Region should be strengthened through coordination of the national prevention strategies, regular exchange of experience and best practices and joint specialised training of experts where possible.

Considering **border security** and effective border control as one of the main priorities in the fight against terrorism and taking into account the successful implementation of the *Setting up the Structure of a Danube River Forum* (DARIF) project, the Ministers discussed the possible follow-up measures aimed at further enhancement of real time exchange of information and setting up a network of national contact points within the Danube Region. At the same time they stressed that the follow-up measures should try to avoid as much as possible duplication and find synergies with already existing platforms at European and regional level where the Danube Region countries take part.

Taking into account that the **protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist acts** is an important issue in the context of the measures for preparedness and prevention, the Ministers agreed that appropriate measures to examine the weak spots of transport systems and to enhance the security of roads, trains, river ports and seaports should be applied. To this end the Danube Region countries should focus their efforts on applying a broader scope of security measures using the latest technologies. At a later stage other sectors of critical infrastructure could be considered to enrich the cooperation.

In view of efficient counteraction to terrorism, the Ministers reiterated the commitment to **enhance further the exchange of information and intelligence between the competent authorities** of their countries. The Ministers agreed that the existing information sharing tools should be used to the best possible extent in a more systematic manner.

Without duplication of the already existing channels, the Danube Region countries should consider the possibility to establish an informal expert network for sharing best practices and communication on the above topics. The Ministers shared the view that possible regular meetings of the appointed contact points would contribute additionally to enhancing mutual trust and achieving faster and more efficient exchange of information and intelligence.

To this end, the Ministers tasked their experts to consult further and propose specific common initiatives on countering terrorism in the Danube Region.

Sofia
January 22nd, 2016