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### Sustainable development in the Danube river region

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#### Summary of the presentation

- The Cohesion Policy already makes a significant contribution to Danube - related through national and regional structural funds programmes. We have transport and environment programmes already in place.
- Structural Funds programmes are negotiated at national/regional level with individual Member States of the EU. Therefore the main programmes are also implemented nationally. There are very limited joint projects
- The Territorial Cooperation branch of the European Regional Development Fund allows for cooperation between several Member States. The Central Europe and South East Europe programmes each cover parts of the Danube. There is no single programme which covers the entire Danube River or Basin. There are also bi-lateral cross-border programmes along the Danube, in those areas where the Danube flows in or close to a border region
- However, there have been new developments in the recent past. In the summer of 2008, the Heads of Government of Austria and Romania have written to the President of the European Commission, asking for a more coherent and integrated approach to Danube-related issues. President Barroso responded positively to this and suggesting exploring ways in which this could be done.
- In October 2008, Commissioner Huebner announced her willingness to support the development of a **European Danube Strategy**, which could follow the work currently carried out with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- This process would require strong political support from all the Danube countries. Do they really want this? Do they want the European Commission to coordinate this work? Austria and Romania are currently seeking support from other Danube countries - they hope to obtain this support for the European Council of June 2009.
- A possible roadmap could lead to the presentation of such a strategy during the Hungarian Presidency in 2011.
- In the meantime, it is very important that we all continue to cooperate along the Danube. We must demonstrate that we can cooperate with each other, not only on transport issues, but also on environment and socio-economic issues. Demonstrating the added-value of the *Joint Statement* can only help us along the way.