

PANEL AND FISHBOWL DISCUSSION

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A Shared Europe

Results from the Thematic Tables
10th International Partnership Meeting of the Danube Networkers
10 July 2026 · Edwin Scharff House, Neu-Ulm

Some of our findings are similar to points already made. We began with the insight that democracy is not only about politics and elections; it is part of everyday life. This led to the question: What does democracy mean for a shared Europe?

Democracy and participation must be learned. Encounters have particular added value because people from different backgrounds discover not only differences but also similarities. In the Danube region, we share geography, environmental conditions, cultural connections and comparable challenges. There are therefore good reasons to seek solutions together.

The means of doing so are already present in this room: youth initiatives, cross-border projects, joint discussions, celebrations and cultural encounters. Through personal experience, people learn to deal with different opinions and to work together. They can then take these experiences home and share them as multipliers.

Such initiatives broaden horizons and generate hope and positive energy. At the same time, they need resources. Organisers often struggle to convince political institutions and funders of the social value of these encounters because their medium- and long-term impact is difficult to measure.

We therefore need to demonstrate more effectively the enormous value of comparatively small encounter projects. Investment in direct contact between people produces a high social return.

Editorial note: This contribution was corrected and edited on the basis of an automatically generated transcript. Obvious recognition errors, technical interruptions, repetitions and purely organisational remarks were removed. The substance of the contribution has been preserved.