

Representatives from the ELEVATE project actively participating at the International Danube Festival 2026 in Ulm

From **8th to 11th July 2026**, members of the educational network “**Danube-Networkers**” held a four-day meeting within the framework of the International Danube Festival 2026. Around 150 participants from 12 Danube countries took part. The meeting was organised by the ELEVATE partner **ILEU e.V.** and included a broad programme for different target groups on 8th and 9th July, followed by a joint conference on 10th July under the motto “**Democracy Needs All of Us**”.

Six **project partners of the Interreg project ELEVATE** – DCHS and SilWay, Slovenia; UrbaSofia, Romania; CoWorkLand, Germany; Kozodoj; and ILEU itself met to present ELEVATE’s aims and activities and to learn more about age-friendly structures and initiatives, as well as different political and social approaches in other countries.

For this purpose, ILEU organised a special programme on 8th and 9th July for ELEVATE guests, joined by participants from EU candidate countries. Wednesday morning was dedicated to **political, social and educational aspects**. Participants learned about the Ulm Senior Citizens’ Council, the Generationentreff Ulm/Neu-Ulm (municipal Seniors Center Ulm/Neu-Ulm) and educational opportunities for older adults (Senior Studies) at Ulm University.

In the afternoon, **services for older people in need of support** were presented, including the fall prevention programme of Bethesda Clinic and the “Daheim Dank Digital” project. A visit to the Friedrichsau senior residence complemented the programme and provided insights into practical support and housing services for older people.

The second programme day, **9th July**, was dedicated to **inclusion**. It included a visit to Habila’s Tannenhof facility in Ulm-Wiblingen. A guided city tour and a joint **Danube-Networkers Community Evening** offered further opportunities for international exchange and networking.

The highlight of the partnership meeting was the international conference “**Democracy Needs All of Us**”, held on **10th July** at the Edwin-Scharff-Haus in Neu-Ulm, with more than 150 participants from twelve countries of the Danube region.

At 19 roundtables, people of different ages and backgrounds discussed current issues related to democracy, social participation and European cooperation. Each table consisted of eight participants and focused on a different topic. In the second part, personal views and discussion results were further explored together with panelists, including representatives from politics, academia, education and public administration, each of them joined one of the tables.

At other roundtables, the results were presented through creatively designed “**Democracy Stools**”. At the end of the morning session, the results of all discussions were presented to the audience by the panelists and moderators. This innovative and interactive format, bringing older and younger people together in lively discussions and enabling an exchange of different points of view, was highly appreciated by all participants.

Participants also had the opportunity to experience multilingual translation provided by the artificial intelligence system **Wordly** in German, English and Romanian. They were impressed by both the functionality and the quality of the translation.

The ELEVATE project was presented during the conference’s poster session, giving participants the opportunity to learn more about the project and its activities.

In the afternoon, six working groups explored different democracy-related topics in greater depth. The ELEVATE partners participated in working group 4, **“Democracy Needs Age-Friendly Living Environments for All Generations and Backgrounds”**.

In this group, several presentations and examples of good practice were shared, showing how age-friendly living environments can support participation, inclusion and democratic life. **Irina Panait from UrbaSofia** presented the project **“ELEVATE – Forward to Age-Friendly Cities”**, its aims, approach and activities, highlighting the considerable joint efforts of the 17 project partners to advance the development of age-friendly cities and communities.

Together, participants discussed how age-friendly living environments, participation, care work and volunteering can contribute to an inclusive and democratic society.

The partnership meeting demonstrated the importance of **international exchange of experience, intergenerational cooperation and networking between municipalities and organisations** in developing age-friendly cities. At the same time, the meeting enabled the ELEVATE partners to gain new insights, strengthen contacts and place the topic of Age-Friendly Cities within the broader European context of inclusion, participation and democracy.