

Conference and Intergenerational Dialogue of the Danube Networkers

The Danube Networkers are creating opportunities at the Danube Festival for young and older people from different Danube countries, who until now have only spoken to each other online, to meet in person.

By Beate Rose

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"Stand up for Democracy": Carmen Stadelhofer (right) from ILEU and her colleagues want to strengthen democracy in the Danube countries (archive photo).

Bringing people together and strengthening democracy. "That is our mission," says Carmen Stadelhofer, Chairwoman of ILEU, the Institute for Virtual and Real Learning in Adult Education. This mission is implemented through numerous projects carried out by the institute's eight employees and two Federal Volunteers at its premises at Weinhof in Ulm.

Nevertheless, the Danube Festival is the highlight. It gives participants from many Danube countries the opportunity not only to see each other on screen, but also to meet and get to know one another in person in Ulm. This is made possible by the Danube Networkers, whose coordinating office is run by ILEU.

"Intergenerational Dialogue in the Danube Region" may sound somewhat formal as a project title, but when Stadelhofer talks about it, it becomes clear how lively the exchange really is. The project focuses on dialogue between young and older people.

"German is the main language," says Stadelhofer. In particular, Ukrainian pupils who learn German at school are given the opportunity to use their language skills through language tandems.

The project began as a pilot in autumn 2025. There are now 48 language tandems, with young people based in Ukrainian cities such as Kyiv or Odesa and German senior citizens living in Baden-Württemberg or North

Rhine-Westphalia. The project has since been expanded, and young people from countries including Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are now also taking part.

Twenty-four of them will meet their language partners in person in Ulm on Wednesday, 8 July. The tandem partners will finally get to know one another face-to-face at the institute's premises at Weinhof.

City Tours and a Conference with a New Format

The Danube Networkers have organised a wide range of activities for the Danube Festival, which starts today, 3 July. On Wednesday, 8 July, city tours entitled **“In the Footsteps of Democracy”** will take place between 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Democracy will once again be the focus of the conference on Friday, 10 July. Under the motto **“Democracy Needs All of Us”**, the event will take place at the Edwin-Scharff-Haus from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Neu-Ulm's Mayor, Katrin Albsteiger, will welcome the participants. Workshops will address topics including women's self-image in Europe and age-friendly living environments.

Stadelhofer herself is particularly curious about two aspects of the event. An AI-based system will display participants' statements simultaneously on a screen in several languages of the Danube countries.

A new format will also be tested in which decision-makers and public figures listen to the concerns and ideas of conference participants. Among those who have agreed to take part is Ulm's First Mayor, Martin Bendel, who is also one of the Managing Directors of the Danube Office Ulm/Neu-Ulm.

“At our events, civil society from the different countries is present. It is wonderful to experience that.”