

Foreword

As Minister of the Regional Executive of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) in charge of Education and Research, it is a pleasure to support novel and significant initiatives in the field of university post-graduate education. I believe it is a good practice for local and regional authorities to support such projects both financially and politically.

The FVG Region has long been active in promoting knowledge and research through direct and close cooperation with the three regional universities (University of Trieste, University of Udine and SISSA – International School for Advanced Studies) and the research centres of FVG, a networked system of knowledge-sharing and model of cooperation, already successfully tested.

The European Social Fund (ESF) is an essential and strategic tool to foster productivity and competitiveness, and Education and Research are pivotal for the whole socio-economic structure and development of the territory. In this context the DIAnet International School is an interesting initiative because it promotes scientific and educational cooperation, for and among young people coming from different European regions, overcoming any usual regional geographic limit.

The transnational scope of the DIAnet International School, and in particular its connection with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, is important for the FVG Region, because this innovative project is consistent with the Region's geo-political perspectives projected towards the Danube macro-region, where Friuli Venezia Giulia plays an important role thanks to its geographical position and cultural heritage.

We therefore welcome these initiatives, and particularly this first edition of the DIAnet International School, a project supported by the FVG Region with the European Social Fund, and we wish the next editions to be equally successful, so that the results achieved by this project can be of strategic relevance and offer a vision beyond the limits of the university and research system and beyond the same geographic borders of the FVG region.

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Introduction

The objective of this publication is to collect and disseminate the proceedings of the first edition of the DIAnet International School which was held in Gorizia, Italy, between 13th and 22nd April 2013. The core is made up by the works produced by the participants in the School that are basically project proposals along the lines of the Danube:Future project, which is closely related to the DIAnet International School as the following paragraphs will try to explain. Before and around the School participants' efforts and results, are the contribution and involvement of many people and institutions, on which this introduction wants to shed a light, thus defining the perspective and context within which the DIAnet International School has been conceived and shaped, and the scope and objectives that drive and direct its development.

The University of Trieste is a member institution of the Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference (AARC) and of the Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC). In the academic year 2010/11, when the Chair was held by the University of Trieste, the AARC brought on a strong synergic action towards the EU Commission thanks to the close collaboration with the DRC. A joint letter by the then Chairperson of the AARC, Professor Francesco Peroni of the University of Trieste, and by the then President of the DRC, Professor Vladimir Vesković of the University of Novi Sad, was addressed to Mr Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, and endorsed a joint activity of the two Rectors' Conferences which led to the possibility of having a trans-national cooperation between the universities of the Conferences within the European Danube Strategy. The Agreement between AARC and DRC to develop joint projects was formalised and approved by the EU Commission in the "Action Plan" document of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), specifically in the Priority Area 7 – *Knowledge Society*.

Although Italy is not included in the EUSDR, the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) – because of its geographical inclusion in the Danube River