

8th Meeting of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region | 9-10 March 2020 | Vienna

Introduction

Following the welcome by the Priority Coordinators of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region of the Priority Areas 9 “People and Skills” and 10 “Institutional capacity and Cooperation”, the topic of embedding macroregional strategies (MRS) into the Operational Programmes was discussed. PACs highlighted the opportunities of coordinating common challenges and of the mutual benefits of the strategic framework of MRS as a platform for joint planning & learning. The links of MRS and cohesion policy were addressed in a recent meeting in Brussels and in a study issued by DG Regio.¹

State of Play (annexes 1 & 2)

The organisers presented the new Action Plan of the EUSDR, adopted in April 2020² and developed on the potential synergies or the EUSDR with the planning and programming process of the ESF OPs in the Danube Region.

ESF MA are at varying stages of the programming process.

So far, the selection of Specific Objectives is based on:

- Country-specific recommendations
- Common Working Groups for Policy Objectives
- Consultation of line ministries and labour market institutions
- Stakeholder consultations

Open issues are:

- Budget/allocation of budget
- Shift/limitation of amount of Intermediate Bodies
- Actual implementation of the Just Transition Fund (JTF)

The co-financing rates are expected to range between 40% (e.g. DE, AT) and 75% (e.g. HR, SI). This might prove to be a challenge for civil society organisations to implement ESF+ projects.

In addition to the respective activities and progress in programming, participants discussed the procedural issues related to programming, such as the use of simplified

¹ See https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2017/macro-regional-strategies-and-their-links-with-cohesion-policy

² SWD(2020) 59 final

cost options, enabling conditions, interaction with the EC/desk officers, etc. Participants reflected on their respective management and control systems and discussed similarities and differences in a structured dialogue and exchange of experience.

Shaping the Future of Transnational Cooperation (annex 3)

The organisers presented an analysis focusing on the topical convergence of CSRs in the Danube Region and potential areas for transnational cooperation among the countries of the Danube Region.

Participants discussed potential topics for transnational cooperation, e.g.

- Women in the labour market;
- Digitalisation;
- Social Innovation;
- Social entrepreneurship;
- Roma inclusion;
- Ageing population;
- Life-long Learning.

These topics are going to be integrated into the ESF MA's vision paper.

Development of a Text Module on Transnational Cooperation (annex 4 & 5)

At the previous meeting the ESF Managing Authority Baden-Württemberg prepared a draft of a text module concerning transnational cooperation, which was discussed. This draft was prepared in accordance with Annex V of COM (2018) 375 final and refers to the support of transnational cooperation through ESF Operational Programmes. The draft includes a description of the benefit of transnational cooperation and examples of activities that contribute to this action as well as a concrete reference to the EUSDR and a clear link to the ESF MA Network in the Danube Region. As a result of the discussion it was suggested to shorten the text to have the possibility to concretise the actions.

Results of discussion:

- The group decided to keep a short and a long version of the text module
- The short module is supposed to be used for single measures in the OP and to concretise the measures and the involved countries/regions.
- The longer version could also be used for the strategy part of the OP.

- In case an OP is dedicating an entire priority on transnational cooperation, the MA will opt for a more comprehensive description in accordance with the respective requirements, which might be applicable for Bulgaria.
- The EC/DG EMPL should be addressed to discuss the expected content for transnational actions for the OPs to clarify the required level of detail for the description of transnational cooperation.

Outlook

- The next meeting will offer the opportunity to exchange on good practice examples that can be picked up for transnational cooperation in the ESF+
- MA Croatia will host the next meeting of the network of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region in 2020 (expectedly in September/October 2020)
- At this point of time the programming phase – esp. chosen priority axes and specific objectives – should be at much more advanced stage, which gives the opportunity to discuss cooperation in more detail.
- The next meeting will offer the opportunity to exchange on good practice examples that can be picked up for transnational cooperation in the ESF+ and on the embedding process within the EUSDR
- PA9 and PA10 will check possible dates and preferred venues and come back to the ESF MA Croatia as soon as possible.

Annexes

1. Presentation new Action Plan EUSDR
2. New Action Plan of the EUSDR
3. Analysis of joint topics for ESIF programming in the CSRs
4. Presentation – Text Module “Transnational Cooperation” within the Operational Programmes
5. Draft of a text module (short and long version)