



The ABC of Macro-Regional Strategies

An EUSDR Implementation Toolkit

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1. MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES – THE BASICS

1.1. What are macro-regional strategies?

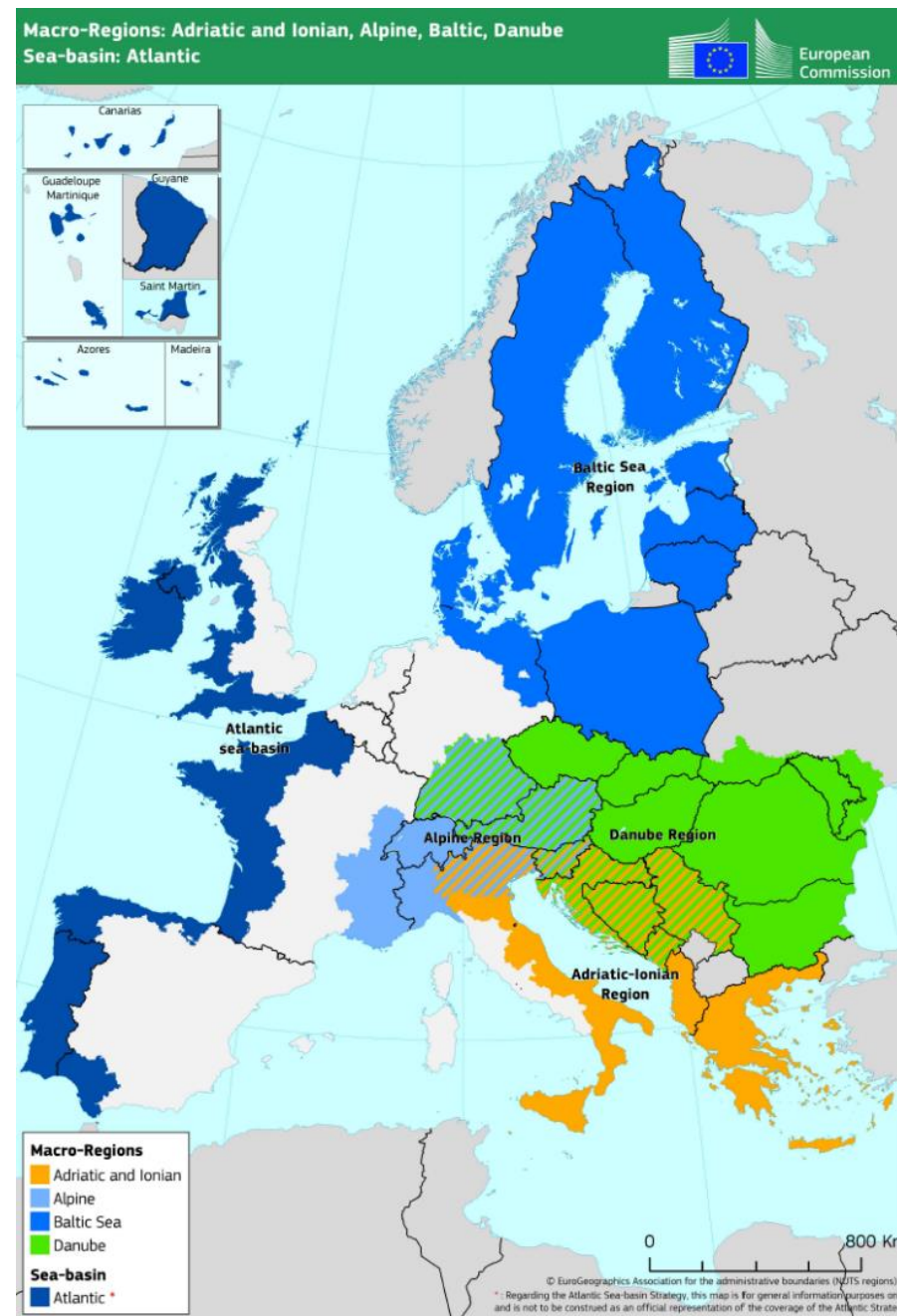
A European Union (EU) macro-regional strategy (MRS) is a policy framework which allows countries located in the same geographical region to jointly search for solutions to problems or to better use potentials they have in common when addressing challenges beyond national borders (e.g. pollution, navigability, worldwide business competition, etc.) According to the factsheet published by the European Commission, by doing so, they benefit from strengthened cooperation, with the aim of making their policies more efficient than if the issues are addressed individually only. The process of implementing MRS is as important as the result, therefore **must be inclusive** and **bottom up to ensure ownership**. With joined forces and strengthened cooperation, contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion there is tangible benefit for the whole Region.¹

Macro-regional strategies were initiated and requested by EU Member States (and in some cases non-EU countries) located in the same geographical area via the European Council and, following the European Council request, the Strategies were drafted and adopted by the European Commission, as mentioned in the factsheet.

The four EU macro-regional strategies adopted so far are:

- the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), in 2009;
- the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), in 2010;
- the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), in 2014;
- the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), in 2015.

¹ EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES, A qualified non-paper by key stakeholders in the four macro-regional strategies, <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/MRS-non-paper-EP-REGI-Chair-March-19.pdf>



All together they comprise 19 EU Member States and 10 non-EU countries:

- Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden;
- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

1.2. Pillars & Priorities of the macro-regional strategies

Regarding its priorities, „all adopted macro-regional strategies are accompanied by a rolling Action Plan to be regularly updated in light of new, emerging needs and changing contexts.”

All of them are actively contributing to the EU priorities such as:

- The EU Green Deal
- An EU stronger in the World
- An EU closer to citizens

The 2021-2027 EU legal framework reinforces their synergies with the Interreg transnational programmes, namely Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Interreg Danube Region, Interreg IPA Adrion and Interreg Alpine Space, which are funding projects and are supporting the governance”².

1.3. Key Features & Actors

Macro-regional strategies are frequently linked to the so called “three NOs”: no new legislation, no new financing, and no new institutions. However, these three NOs could be viewed as a large YES: to coordinate existing funding and mobilise the institutions for the implementation of the Strategies. This idea encourages usage of innovative methods for creating and implementing European policies and promotes the integration of Europe.

The macro-regional strategies' goals address common challenges and involve multiple levels of actors. Importantly, they are strategic, long-term, and jointly agreed upon by the involved countries and/or the core stakeholder groups.

According to the factsheet, *each Strategy involves a broad range of actors at various levels (international, national, regional, local), sectors (public, private, civil society) and fields of expertise, thereby providing a platform for consistent multi-country, multi-sectorial and multi-level governance.*

Each Strategy has slightly different governance arrangements to account for regional differences and involves a diverse range of actors:

- **At European Union's level:** The European Commission leads the strategic support and coordination of the Strategy's key delivery stages at EU level. Furthermore, a High-level group of EU macro-regional strategies meets yearly to consider and report on the implementation and the overall approach for all EU macro-regional

² https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/

strategies, with representatives from all 27 EU Member States and non-EU countries involved in the Strategies.

- **At national/regional level:** National Coordinators are in charge of overall coordination and support for Strategy implementation in their home country;
- **Thematic/area level:** Thematic Area Coordinators (coordinators of policy/priority areas, horizontal actions, pillars or actions) represent the macro-regional interest in thematic fields.

- The platform – was created by a group of committed stakeholders (representing relevant multi-level governance levels) for the intent of interacting on macro-regional issues;
- The work plan (or road map) – was developed and agreed way to cooperate and reach the set objectives, targets, and indicators.

Principles of macro-regional relevance, trans-nationality, complementarity, and influence or change are applied through the macro-regional process.

1.4. How do macro-regional strategies work?

The macro-regional process: characteristics, instruments

According to the input paper published by Interact, 'How do macro-regional strategies deliver: workflows, processes and approaches', macro-regional process is a number of jointly established development processes that aim to create a broad impact and achieve objectives (targets and indicators, where defined) of the priority/policy within the MRS.

The macro-regional process has a greater impact on cohesion, is linked to various policies, and encourages stakeholders to work together (single or complex, depending on the topic). It assists in interconnecting various single projects and activities, taking up their results, and developing new joint initiatives for macro-regional benefit through strong stakeholder involvement. As a result, it ensures the continuation and transferability of actions at the macro-regional level.

Three fundamental components make up the macro-regional process:

- The Strategy —is dedicated to 'breaking silos' through transnational and cross-sectoral cooperation;



1.5. Implementation of macro-regional strategies

The same [paper](#) names instruments considered when building up and implementing a macro-regional process:

- labelled EU-funded projects;
- single projects;
- project clusters;
- existing thematic networks, working groups, task forces etc.;
- programme arranged and provided tools in an effort to reach an adequate portfolio of projects;
- programme support structures with open access to MRS coordinators (e.g. Interact Capitalisation networks, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platforms, capacity support structures under the MRS, project platforms under the programmes).

An MRS cannot be successful unless it is the outcome of political resolve to achieve cooperation among all levels of governance, especially national and regional, while also including the other socio-economic actors on the ground. Depending on the Regions' proficiency in national governance systems and their areas of specialisation, the plan should be the outcome of a debate process that includes them. In exchange, the Regions must actively participate in the MRS planning and implementation stages.³



³ TECHNICAL PAPER FROM THE CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT, https://www.cpmr.org/pub/docs/395_tp-mrs-sbs-cpmr-022013.pdf

2. EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION – FRAMEWORK FOR COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Introduction

Concept, timeline of strategy adoption



© Danube Region Programme (fmr. Danube Transnational Programme)

In 2009, Romania and Austria promoted among the EU Member States and non-EU countries in the Danube basin the idea of a new approach regarding regional cooperation, in the form of an EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), with the Baltic Sea Region Strategy as a pioneer. The European Parliament passed a Resolution on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region in January 2010, followed by an Opening Conference for the process of public consultation on the EUSDR, which brought together over 300 representatives of the civil society, the banking and business circles, as well as local, regional and national public authorities from all the riparian states⁴.

The Danube Region Strategy was formally created on 13 April 2011 when the EU Council endorsed the Communication and the accompanying Action Plan of the EUSDR at the General Affairs Council (Council Conclusions). The EUSDR Action Plan was revised in 2019-2020 by the partner countries and approved by the European Commission.

There are 14 participating countries in EUSDR: 9 EU countries - Germany (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg lands), the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, 5 accession countries - Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine (Odessa, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi and Zakarpattya oblasts), Republic of Moldova.

According to the EUSDR Action Plan, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) provides an integrated framework for strengthening this cooperation between nations. Bringing together 115 million people, it has an important integrative and cohesive function. Reports of the European Commission acknowledge that, since its creation in 2010, the Strategy has

⁴ <https://cultureandtourism.danube-region.eu/danube-strategy/history/>

successfully generated structures, projects, and networks to tackle common challenges.

The EUSDR is an integrated policy-framework taking into account the different economic, social and territorial situations within the Danube basin and thus providing a further tool for implementation of EU cohesion policy. Cooperation in this macro-region is essential to address and to overcome challenges that the states can better address jointly than alone. Cooperation across EU borders in the Danube region remains crucial. Accordingly, macro-regional strategies build on strategic elements, such as the common goals and a common governance structure, and also have a political element with concrete implementation measures. Cooperation takes place on the basis of activities and actions related to strategic objectives of the Strategy, which describe the strategic and long-term changes that are expected to be achieved in a longer time frame.

2.2. The Challenges we are facing

The European Commission lists the following Danube Region's main challenges:

- environmental threats (water pollution, floods, climate change),
- untapped shipping potential and lack of modern road and rail transport connections,
- insufficient energy connections,
- uneven socio-economic development,
- uncoordinated education, research and innovation systems,
- shortcomings in safety and security.

These are thematically addressed by the Strategy's 12 Priority Areas. Better coordination and cooperation among the affected countries and regions is needed to address these challenges in a joint manner.

2.3. The 12 Priority Areas

12 Priority Areas (PAs) have defined 85 actions, as synthesised in the following table, as per the EUSDR Action Plan revised in 2020⁵:

| PILLAR 1: CONNECTING THE REGION | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| PA 1a Waterway Mobility | ACTION 1: Contribute to improve waterway and port infrastructure & management |
| | ACTION 2: Foster business development |
| | ACTION 3: Facilitate fleet modernisation |
| | ACTION 4: Support the further roll-out and enhancement of River Information Services |
| | ACTION 5: Contribute to the enhanced quality of education and jobs |
| | ACTION 6: Contribute to the simplification, harmonisation and digitalisation of administrative processes |
| PA 1b Rail-Road-Air Mobility | ACTION 1: To bring to completion the TEN-T (rail and road) core network crossing the Danube Region, overcoming the difficulties and the bottlenecks, and taking into account environmental, economic and political challenges, particularly in the cross-border sections |
| | ACTION 2: To support the implementation of the Rail Freight Corridors (RFC) forming part of the European rail network for competitive freight (Reg. 913/2010) with extension to candidate and neighbouring countries |
| | ACTION 3: To enhance cooperation between air traffic stakeholders in order to improve regional connectivity and prepare a plan to implement shorter plane routes |
| | ACTION 4: To ensure sustainable metropolitan transport systems and mobility |
| | ACTION 5: To improve the regional/ local cross-border infrastructure and the access to rural areas by facilitating secondary and tertiary transport infrastructure |
| | ACTION 6: To develop further nodal planning for multimodality |
| | ACTION 7: To develop further Intelligent Traffic Systems by using environmental-friendly technologies, especially in urban regions |
| | ACTION 8: To raise awareness for road safety and encourage exchange of best practices |

⁵ EUSDR Action Plan, <https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EUSDR-ACTION-PLAN-SWD202059-final-1.pdf>

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| PA 2 Sustainable Energy | ACTION 1: To further explore the sustainable use of clean biomass, solar energy, geothermal, hydropower and wind power to increase the energy independency and to promote and support multipurpose cross border RES utilisation projects |
| | ACTION 2: To promote energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in buildings and heating systems including district heating and cooling and combined heat and power facilities |
| | ACTION 3: To promote decarbonisation and reduction of air pollutants in the transport sector, regarding both public and freight transportation by developing the infrastructure for alternative fuels |
| | ACTION 4: To improve energy efficient, cost efficient and innovative low-carbon technologies, including smart solutions while respecting the principle of technological neutrality |
| | ACTION 5: To enforce regional cooperation with the aim of supporting the implementation of projects connecting energy markets with a focus on the projects of the Central and South Eastern European Energy Connectivity (CESEC) initiative |
| | ACTION 6: To exchange best practices and to develop activities to decrease energy poverty, to increase the protection of vulnerable consumers and to empower consumers to engage in the energy market |
| | ACTION 7: To explore new and innovative solutions of (subsurface) energy storage |
| | ACTION 8: To encourage exchange of information and best practices to improve cooperation, create synergies and to initiate joint projects with other |

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| | macro-regional initiatives and relevant stakeholders at European and global level |
| | ACTION 9: To encourage project generation related to the energy field |
| PA 3 Culture and Tourism, People to People Contacts | ACTION 1: Promote sustainable tourism in the Danube Region and capitalise on EUSDR projects in the areas of culture, nature and tourism |
| | ACTION 2: Support and promote cultural tourism in the Danube Region |
| | ACTION 3: Invest in sustainable quality products, services, innovative forms and infrastructure in the fields of tourism and culture, promote skills, education and creating jobs in the related areas |
| | ACTION 4: Develop a "Smart Destination Danube" |
| | ACTION 5: Promote and encourage the development of the cultural activities and creative sectors |
| | ACTION 6: Promote cultural heritage in the Danube Region |

PILLAR 2: PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

PA 4

Water Quality

ACTION 1: HAZARDOUS & EMERGING SUBSTANCES: Promote monitoring, prevention and reduction of water pollution deriving from hazardous and emerging substances (EU priority substances and watch list candidates as well as Danube basin specific pollutants candidates and others e.g. micro plastics-plastics, pharmaceuticals, PFOS)

ACTION 2: WASTE WATER: Continue boosting major investments in building, upgrading, maintaining and rehabilitating urban wastewater treatment facilities and promote alternative collection and treatment of wastewater in small rural settlements, including measures to build capacity at the regional and local level across the Danube basin

ACTION 3: WATER & AGRICULTURE: Promote prevention and reduction of diffuse pollution, promote nutrient retention, smart irrigation and water reuse, foster and develop an active process of dialogue and cooperation between authorities responsible for agriculture and environment to ensure that measures are taken to address diffuse pollution and ensure smart water use

ACTION 4: DRINKING WATER: Promote measures aimed at reducing knowledge deficits related to protecting water resources and safeguarding drinking water supply

ACTION 5: MIGRATORY FISH: Promote measures to enable fish migration in the Danube River basin

ACTION 6: CLIMATE CHANGE: Promote measures to adapt to climate change impacts in relation to water quality and quantity

ACTION 7: TOOLS: Enhance cooperation, increase and exchange knowledge and secure financing to water quality measures in the Danube Region

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| PA 5 Environmental Risks | ACTION 1: Provide sufficient support for development and execution of risk management plans for different hazards |
| | ACTION 2: enhance the capacities, extend the coverage of basin-wide or regional forecasting and warning systems, and develop rapid response procedures |
| | ACTION 3: Strengthen disaster prevention and preparedness among governmental and non-governmental organisations |
| | ACTION 4: Decrease human impacts that evolves natural risk factors resulting in environmental damages |
| | ACTION 5: Anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change |
| PA 6 Biodiversity and Landscapes, Quality of Air and Soils | ACTION 1: Establish transnational cooperation and harmonisation of the strategic management documents between protected areas on river systems in the Danube basin |
| | ACTION 2: Build capacities of national and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, expert and scientific community in the environment related matters |
| | ACTION 3: Develop and/or implement conservation action plans and/or management plans for endangered umbrella species of the Danube Region |
| | ACTION 4: Promote research to develop and apply the most appropriate methods for prevention and control of IAS and for management of the priority |

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| | pathways in line with the DIAS Strategy and IAS Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 |
| | ACTION 5: Anchoring the concept of EU green infrastructure in the Danube Region |
| | ACTION 6: Promote ecological connectivity through cooperation between macro- regional strategies |
| | ACTION 7: Enhance and/or maintain soil-related ecosystem services |
| | ACTION 8: Identify locations with obsolete pesticide and similar chemical remains and prepare a remediation plan and a risk management plan in the case of environmental accidents |
| | ACTION 9: Take measures to gradually reduce air pollution, with as a minimum step to respect the limit values for pollutants according to the Air Quality Directive |
| | ACTION 10: Stimulate the management and the ecological restoration of wetlands, particularly in the Danube Delta |

| PILLAR 3: BUILDING PROSPERITY | |
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| PA 7 Knowledge Society | ACTION 1: To promote coordination of national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in R&I, in research areas specific for Danube Region |
| | ACTION 2: To promote participation of Danube countries in EU R&I Programmes, in particular in Horizon Europe |
| | ACTION 3: To strengthen cooperation among universities, research organisations and SMEs in the Danube Region |
| | ACTION 4: To increase awareness and visibility of science and innovation in the Danube Region |
| | ACTION 5: To support exchange of information and experience sharing for the purpose of preparation of future strategic R&I documents applicable in the new programming period |
| | ACTION 6: To promote horizontal cooperation in science and technology across all PAs and other MRS |
| PA 8 Competitiveness of Enterprises | ACTION 1: To foster cooperation and exchange of knowledge between SMEs, academia, the public sector and civil society in areas of competence in the Danube Region |
| | ACTION 2: Establishment of an Innovative Digital Ecosystem in the Danube Region in order to support SMEs when tackling the challenges of a digitalised world |
| | ACTION 3: Improvement of framework conditions, support programs and capacity building of |

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| | stakeholders, to enhance the collaboration between cluster initiatives and regional innovation strategies, with an accent on rural areas |
| | ACTION 4: To improve business support to strengthen the innovative and digital capacities of female-led-SMEs |
| | ACTION 5: Enhance the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in the Danube Region SMEs |
| PA 9 People and Skills | ACTION 1: Intensify Cooperation in Labour Market Policies |
| | ACTION 2: Digitalisation and Innovation in the World of Work |
| | ACTION 3: Integration of Vulnerable Groups into the Labour Market |
| | ACTION 4: Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion for All |
| | ACTION 5: Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training Systems |
| | ACTION 6: Relevant and High-Quality Knowledge, Skills and Competences |
| | ACTION 7: Lifelong Learning and Learning Mobility |
| | ACTION 8: Inclusive Education, Equity, Common Values and Sustainable Development |

PILLAR 4: STRENGTHENING THE REGION

PA 10

Institutional Capacity and Cooperation

ACTION 1: To improve institutional capacities in order to provide high-quality public services

ACTION 2: To facilitate the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions

ACTION 3: To review bottlenecks relating to the low absorption rate of EU funds and Invest EU

ACTION 4: To support better coordination of funding

ACTION 5: To test and support innovative funding solutions (for local actors and civil society)

ACTION 6: To foster cooperation built on mutual trust between state and non-state actors to enhance well-being for the inhabitants of the Danube Region

ACTION 7: To strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region

ACTION 8: To enhance capacities of cities and municipalities to facilitate local and regional development

PA 11

Security

ACTION 1: Security offensive - Enhancing police cooperation with the aim of improving security and tackling serious and organised crime in the EUSDR countries and strengthening the efforts against terrorism threats

ACTION 2: Promoting strategic long-term cooperation between law enforcement actors along the Danube river by enhanced networking

ACTION 3: Improving the systems of border control, document inspection management and cooperation on consular related issues in the Danube Region

ACTION 4: Promoting the rule of law and the fight corruption

ACTION 5: Setting up a structure of Danube River Forum

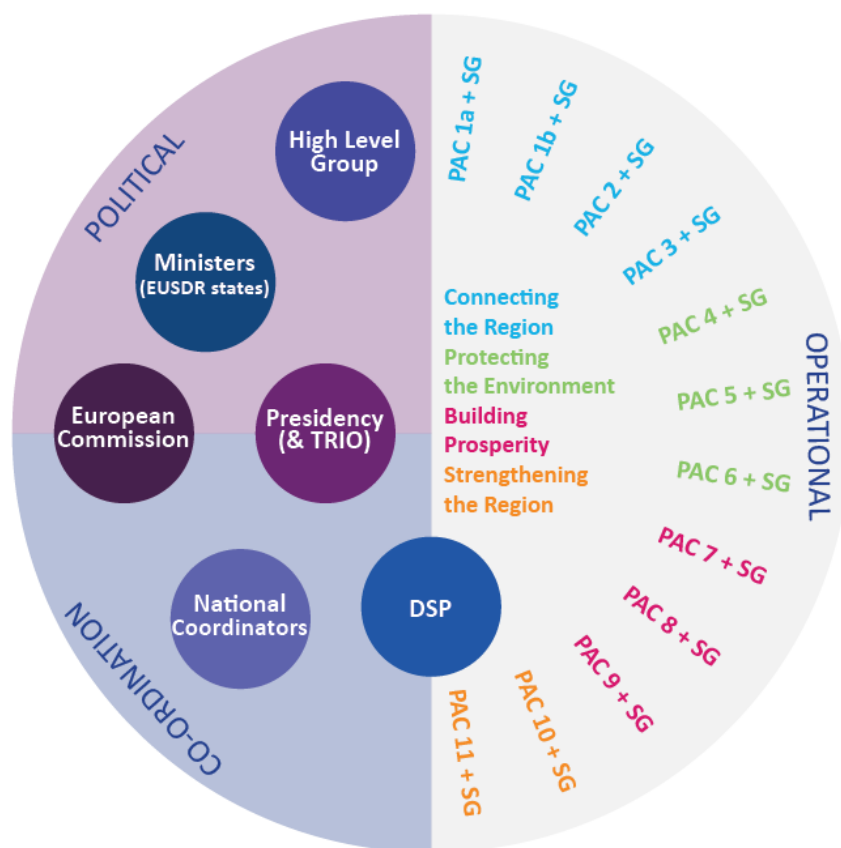
ACTION 6: Joint work with Priority Area 1a "Mobility: Waterways"

ACTION 7: Implementation of a Ministerial Conference every 3 years

2.4. Governance. How does the Strategy work?

Understanding the Governance scheme

The governance of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) plays a key role for the implementation of its actions and the achievements of its objectives, targets and overall goals, as stated in the [EUSDR Governance Architecture Paper](#), endorsed by National Coordinators in July 2020.



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High Level Group (HLG)

The High Level Group (HLG) on macro-regional strategies advises the European Commission on the coordination and monitoring of macro-regional strategies. It is composed of official representatives from all EU Member States and the non-EU states participating in the MRS.

The HLG ensures coordination and monitoring across all MRS, assesses progress made in their implementation and may provide policy orientation and strategic guidance.

It is the overarching forum where the approaches and practices in each MRS are compared to maximise the leverage and impact, according to the EUSDR Governance Architecture Paper.

National Coordinators (NCs)

The NCs are the focal point on the national level and they form the decision-making body of the Strategy. They are the core strategic decision-makers within the governance structure of the EUSDR. They also have a strategic coordination function of the Strategy within their state. NCs are appointed, and recalled, in written form by their government/ respective institution (e.g. line ministry). Each participating state has to officially nominate an NC and / or one or more deputies. They constantly keep the incumbent EUSDR Presidency and the European Commission updated as soon as changes occur. As the participating states are governing the EUSDR and they are the sole owners of the Strategy, the key role of NCs, with support of the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) upon request, is to coordinate, guide and monitor the participation of their state in the implementation of the EUSDR including all 12 Priority Areas (considering Steering Group and PAC meetings, etc.), and to liaise with their national line ministries and other relevant organisations to motivate them to consider and implement the EUSDR in their policy field.

EUSDR Presidency

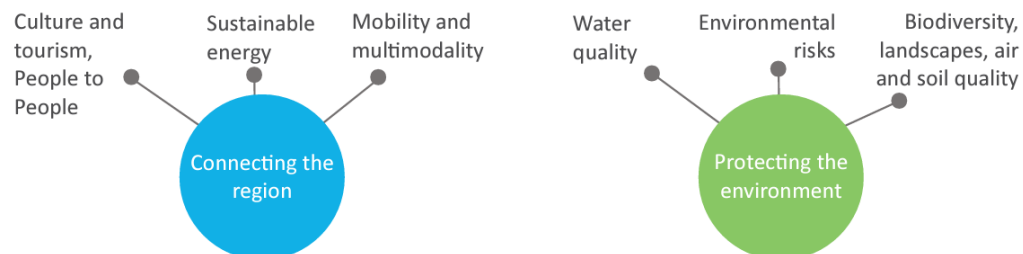
The EUSDR Presidency is taken over by a EUSDR participating state for a one-year period, following the rotation principle and in alphabetical order of the participating states with their official English name.

The EUSDR Presidency organises and chairs at least one meeting of NCs, one meeting of PACs and one joint meeting of NCs and PACs, with the support of the EUSDR TRIO Presidency and the DSP, in cooperation with the European Commission (EC). The incumbent Presidency is in charge of hosting the EUSDR Annual Forum, ideally back-to-back with a ministerial meeting where a ministerial declaration should be adopted in order to raise the political profile of the EUSDR, in cooperation with the EC and with the support of DSP.

TRIO Presidency

In order to secure coherency, ensure strategic stability and greater continuity of the work between Presidency cycles, regular coordination between the incumbent Presidency, the past and the future Presidency is pursued. The TRIO Presidency has a clear supportive role for the incumbent EUSDR Presidency.

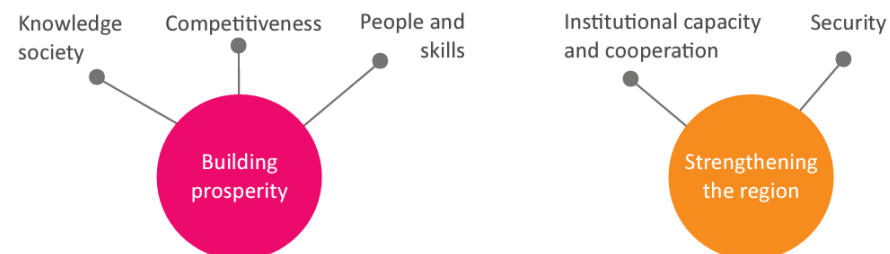
Regular exchange on strategic and coordinative issues has to be secured and TRIO meetings are held back-to-back with NC meetings and joint NC and PAC meetings.



Priority Area Coordinators (PACs)

Twelve Priority Areas (PAs) represent the Danube Strategy's fields of action in which the Strategy is contributing to improvements (either through tackling the main challenges or through seizing the main opportunities). The 12 PAs are grouped into four Pillars:

- **Connecting the Region** (PA 1a Waterways Mobility, PA 1b Rail-Road-Air Mobility, PA 2 Sustainable Energy, PA 3 Culture and Tourism, People to People)
- **Protecting the environment** (PA 4 Water Quality, PA 5 Environmental Risks, PA 6 Biodiversity, Landscapes, Air & Soil Quality)
- **Building prosperity** (PA 7 Knowledge Society, PA 8 Competitiveness, PA 9 People & Skills)
- **Strengthening the Region** (PA 10 Institutional Capacity & Cooperation, PA 11 Security)



Each Priority Area is coordinated by at least two EUSDR participating states, by the so-called Priority Area Coordinators (PACs). The PACs represent the most important and vital components of the Strategy. PACs and the Steering Group (SG) members represent the expertise in the respective sector and drive forward the overall process. They also identify key sectors for actions and adopt the most suitable goals to implement actions.

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Waterway Mobility  | Rail-Road-Air Mobility  | Sustainable Energy  | Culture and Tourism  |
| Austria and Romania | Slovenia and Serbia | Hungary and Czech Republic | Bulgaria and Romania |
| Water Quality  | Environmental Risks  | Biodiversity, Landscapes and Air & Soil Quality  | Knowledge Society  |
| Hungary and Slovakia | Hungary and Romania | Germany (BY) and Croatia | Slovakia and Serbia |
| Competitiveness  | People & Skills  | Institutional Capacity & Cooperation  | Security  |
| Germany (BW) and Croatia | Austria and Moldova and Ukraine | Austria (Vienna) and Slovenia | Germany (BY) and Bulgaria |

Having the overview of the sector, they can identify key processes leading to fulfilment of the Strategy's goals through different actions and through selecting how to best implement solutions.

Steering Groups (SG)

SGs are the central executive and decision-making bodies at PA level regarding objectives, formats and emphases of cooperation and future developments. The SG represents the key national authorities in the relevant field.

SG members also support the PACs in reporting and evaluation of the EUSDR – they identify progress related to the improvements of the actions and

projects and achievement of targets. They also regularly provide information/reports on their work to their state's NC and the line ministers responsible for PA issues, ensuring a permanent communication flow at the political and operational levels of the Strategy.

Working Groups (WG) / Task Forces (TF)

PACs are in charge of setting up appropriate operational working structures, best suited to implement the actions, to agree on a work programme between the stakeholders involved and to trace progress achieved. For addressing these, PA sub-groups can be installed, such as working groups, task forces or advisory bodies around sub-themes.

European Commission (EC)

The overall role of the EC is that of a strategic adviser but it also plays a leading role in the strategic coordination of the Strategy and promotes that it is taken in due account in all relevant EU policies and instruments.

Having an essential role in all four EU macro-regional strategies through the EC Directorate General for Regional and Urban policy (DG REGIO), the EC strategically supports the implementation of the EUSDR in cooperation with the participating states, the Council and the European Parliament.

It also helps comparing the functioning of MRS and gives a possibility to promote alignment mostly between MRS and transnational cooperation programmes (also known as Interreg B), but also in case of other EU programmes. DG REGIO is also a key adviser when it comes to prioritising policies and strategic frameworks.

Danube Strategy Point (DSP)

As secretariat of the EUSDR and a strategic working unit, the Danube Strategy Point supports the implementation, communication, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of the EUSDR.

The DSP supports both the core strategic decision-makers (NCs) and the operational level (PACs) of the Strategy and works closely with the EUSDR Presidency.

The DSP enhances the connection of the Strategy to EU financial resources and to DG REGIO. DSP has a supporting function for the Strategy, easing the communication and coordination among the (TRIO) Presidency, the EC, NCs, PACs, further stakeholders and the wider public. Its primary role is to support the EUSDR implementation, communication, monitoring and evaluation and interlinking with DTP.

DSP also offers technical support to PAs and supports the development of capacities of all actors involved, taking into account the multiple challenges posed by different fields, especially non-EU states. The DSP is also responsible for the outreach to other MRS and initiatives in the region and beyond.

Danube Region Programme (DRP)

The DRP is considered as key partner for implementing the EUSDR objectives, as it is fully embedded with the EUSDR. Regular exchange takes place between the Strategy and the programme in order to ensure coherence of actions and joint efforts to support the Region. The programme provides financial support to the PACs, to the DSP, and to the EUSDR Annual Fora.

More information on the DRP is available online: <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/>

Chairpersons of the National Coordination Groups of the EU macro-regional strategies – EU MRS 4 (TRIO) Presidencies

Established by the EUSDR Croatian Presidency in 2020, the group of all four EU MRS Chairpersons of the National Coordination Groups meets (at least) annually, mostly at the occasion of the EU MRS Week that is organised by the EC (DG REGIO). The group of TRIO Presidencies from all EU macro-regional strategies exchanges on topics relevant for all 4 MRS and has the purpose of information exchange and mutual learning when it comes to processes, activities or goals that are relevant in the other MRS as well. The group follows a rotating chairmanship principle, where each year a Presidency from one MRS calls the meeting and proposes the agenda and concrete actions for discussion.

3. IMPLEMENTING THE ACTIONS

3.1. Understanding the process and implementation level



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The role of the implementing bodies (thematic/priority/policy steering or action groups) has grown noticeably, as these are the drivers of the day-to-day implementation of MRS action plans, as stated in the [Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies](#). *The MRS key implementers need financial, political and administrative support to fulfil their tasks. Therefore, further work is required to appropriately empower them with clear mandates and effective decision-making capacity, while ensuring that they have the resources, technical capacity and the skills needed. Progress has also been reported on the 'tools' supporting the implementation of the MRS, as mentioned in the Report.*

In order to provide the EUSDR Core Governance with administrative support and ensure institutional memory, the **EUSDR Danube Strategy Point** was re-established in September 2018 and since then acting as the secretariat and strategic supporting unit for all EUSDR core stakeholders as well as the outreach and communication centre.

According to the [briefing](#) of the Report mentioned above, the Commission observes that this increased stakeholder engagement at all levels, rekindled political commitment, and aided EUSDR's alignment with national policy. The paper emphasises how effective the Strategy has been at drawing politicians, government officials, and members of civil society organisations to the Danube area. It calls attention to the unique added value of the EUSDR in assisting non-EU nations with their preparation and actions towards their aspirations to join the EU.

3.2. The difference between transnational programmes & EU macro-regional strategies

Among Interreg there are four transnational cooperation programmes (TNPs) supporting MRS:

- Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme
- Interreg Danube Region Programme
- Interreg ADRION Programme (Adriatic-Ionian)
- Interreg Alpine Space Programme

These four programmes are linked to the respective four MRSs, which cover the four macro-regions.

Both MRSs and transnational programmes encourage the addressing of common issues through cooperation and require coordination of actions to identify solutions.

When it comes to differences, a TNP is a strategic financing instrument, result-oriented within given budget and set time period to co-finance transnational cooperation projects, while the MRS is a strategic framework for cooperation, without having a set timeline or funding.

The MRS priorities are agreed by the MRS member states, as owners of the Strategy, reflecting the specific needs of the area and not being restricted to a number of priorities, while each TNP selects up to four thematic objectives from the list provided in the Common provisions regulation (CPR). Also, TNPs

and MRSs are implemented and managed differently – TNPs provide co-financing for projects, while the MRS are based on the „No new EU funding” principle⁶.

For example, some of the differences between EUSDR and the Danube Region Programme can be seen here:

| EUSDR (MRS) | DRP (TNP) |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• policy framework for cooperation• no set timeline, no set funding• outcome focused• defines priorities and needed actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• strategic funding programme• given budget and set time period• result oriented• programme document |

3.3. Cooperation and stakeholder involvement

Strategic cooperation

The toolbox of collaboration and cooperation in the EUSDR offers a variety of different forms of strategic cooperation such as:

- **institutionalised cooperation** - formalised cooperation involving the institutions in the Region e.g. to overcome geopolitical differences from nine EU and five non-EU member states in the EUSDR

⁶ Interact (2017). Transnational programmes and EU macro-regional strategies. What is the difference? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2s9OM0C850>

- **political cooperation** - political Strategy that is based on cooperation and exchange with others to purposefully align benefits with cooperation partners e.g. for peace development with the involvement of European neighbour states as part of a political cooperation
- **functional cooperation** - multi-level governance structure enables cooperation across administrative/political spaces (functional relations) e.g. for better and more effective cooperation through a softer (not necessarily institutionalised) and more functionally oriented approach
- **soft territorial cooperation** - cooperation based on soft governance to address issues which established 'hard' (legislative or contractual based) structures may face difficulties with, e.g. through capacity building of actors involved or capitalisation on a convergence of interests
- **multi-level governance cooperation** - new forms of governance and cooperation in a highly complex multi-level environment (stakeholders are confronted with high levels of uncertainty) which can be addressed in an experimental way, e.g. operating through trial and error initiatives/actions
- **transnational cooperation** - initiatives across national borders e.g. to take up common emerging economic, social or environmental issues that cannot be solved by a country on its own (based on shared resources such as the Danube river)⁷

Cooperation at the operational level

As mentioned in the [EU Strategy for the Danube Region \(EUSDR\) Needs Assessment for closer cooperation between PACs and other relevant stakeholders](#), the Strategy includes cooperation at the operational level between and through the PACs and Steering Groups (SGs), which complements cooperation at strategic level, as described above in the subchapter *1.2 Governance. How does the Strategy work?*, including the EC (DG REGIO), the High-Level Group and National Coordinators (NCs) in the EUSDR. In this respect, governance plays a significant role as it describes “the process to be addressed - how and by whom the Strategies are implemented, joint actions initiated and financed”. The resulting roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders when cooperating in the Strategy are detailed in the EUSDR Governance Architecture Paper, which aims to improve coordination and cooperation in view of further enhancing the commitment to the Strategy and its effective implementation.

Communication Management

Communicating EUSDR progress is a crucial activity within the macro-regional process. With an overall aim to explain the EUSDR work and increase commitment to the macro-regional cooperation that EUSDR fosters, it is vital for the Communication Strategy to promote EUSDR achievements and benefits, according to the [Communication Strategy - EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#).

As mentioned in the Communication Strategy, the context in which it is implemented will continue to:

⁷ EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) Needs Assessment for closer cooperation between PACs and other relevant stakeholders, published by Danube Strategy Point (DSP), https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EUSDR_Need-Assessment-SGs_02.2021_final.pdf

- **improve** the culture of cooperation;
- **facilitate** the connection of existing institutions to share know-how and best practices;
- **improve** the dialogue and cooperation with international organisations;
- **strengthen** the coordination between policy makers and institutions at national level;
- **intensify** the thematic cooperation with the five non-EU Danube countries.

The importance of cooperation between PACs and other relevant stakeholders

The thematic elaboration of actions and the best possible use of resources to implement the EUSDR at Priority Area (PA) level are essential, as is the involvement of different stakeholders therein, according to the [*Needs Assessment for closer cooperation between PACs and other relevant stakeholders*](#). In the majority of situations, in order to achieve sustainable results, consolidated, functional and resilient multilevel governance (MLG) structures need to be established and further supported to develop sustainable macro-regionally relevant activities. Depending on the available resources, working groups, platforms and networks may be established with the purpose to focus on specific thematic topics and to propose transnational cooperation solutions to the macro-regional challenges.

3.4. Macro-regional implementation formats

The foundation of MRS implementation is the alignment of existing institutions, legal frameworks, and financial resources to enhance macro-regions' capacity to address common territorial concerns.

| The EUSDR develops and delivers on the five fundamental components and traits, such as: | Territorial challenges may be dealt with in different formats, such as: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectoral collaboration ▪ Policy impact in the selected thematic areas ▪ Flexibility of scope of the actions ▪ Multi-level governance and stakeholder engagement ▪ Alignment of funding resources to enable longer-term work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single projects ▪ Chains of projects ▪ Flagship and strategic projects ▪ Stakeholder dialogues ▪ Working groups & networks ▪ Collaborating with capitalisation platforms developed by funding programs |

Danube Strategy Flagships



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According to the Guidance Paper for identifying and listing Danube Strategy Flagships, a project or activity of strategic relevance that satisfies all of the following requirements may be given the designation of a Danube Strategy Flagship:

- Relationship to the EUSDR: links to or supports one or more of the priorities and actions listed in the EUSDR Action Plan for the relevant Priority Area.
- Macro-regional dimension: Involves a minimum of two EUSDR participants and has a significant macro-regional influence (effect) in a minimum of two Danube Region participants.
- The creation, consultation, and/or implementation process involves a variety of players and/or levels (supranational, national, regional, and local), including research institutes, civil society, and policy makers and implementers.

A Danube Strategy Flagship may be, e.g., a project (single or interlinked/continuous), a process, a network of relevant actors, a platform for exchange or a mix of them. A Danube Strategy Flagship may be in preparatory, implementation/ongoing or finalised stage. The utilisation of current financing sources is required for the execution of a Danube Strategy Flagship.⁸

Up to three Danube Strategy Flagships may be selected for each EUSDR Priority Area per year and promoted via EUSDR website, social media, publications and/or other communication tools for enhanced visibility. Danube Strategy Flagships strengthen internal and external communication of the Strategy and the visibility of the topics, initiatives and prospects in the Danube Region. They illustrate the progress achieved in implementing the EUSDR and demonstrate exemplarily significant improvement in the Region that is induced by cooperation.

⁸ Guidance Paper for identifying and listing Danube Strategy Flagships, <https://danube-region.eu/download/guidance-paper-for-identifying-and-listing-danube-strategy-flagships/?wpdmdl=9535&refresh=62fe6adb3679f1660840667>

3.5. Available funding

Embedding – What it is and how it works

The EUSDR allows countries and regions to ensure a stronger and more efficient policy coherence, regarding both the programme design and implementation, among all territorial levels concerned (from EU to macro-regional, national, regional and local as appropriate), according to the [Guidance Paper for Embedding the EU Strategy for the Danube Region \(EUSDR\) into EU Programmes](#). *Embedding is expected to increase programmes' impacts through better cooperation and coordination, in addition to providing the MRS with the means to achieve their objectives. It will also allow beneficiaries of EU funds to achieve better results with their action while contributing to the strategic objectives of the MRS, as quoted in the [EUSDR Embedding Leaflet](#).*

The EUSDR embedding process requires that the main priorities selected by PACs contain the following elements:

- Macro-regional relevance within the proposed priority and added value for the whole Danube region

- Linkage to the Annexes D of the European Semester Country Reports 2019 and 2020
- Consistency with highly possible priorities to be set at the national/regional level
- Alignment with the ESIF Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives
- Inclusion of horizontal themes, if possible⁹



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⁹ Guidance Paper for Embedding the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) into EU Programmes, https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Guidance-Paper_EUSDR-embedding-process_04.2020_final.pdf

Relevant funding programmes

There are both mainstream programmes and European territorial cooperation programmes available in the area.

[EuroAccess](#) provides information on these and more.

Available funding sources¹⁰

The list of financing sources provided here is not all-inclusive; in addition, national and regional programs should be considered.

| FUNDING SOURCE | OBJECTIVES/FIELDS | MANAGEMENT | AVAILABLE BUDGET 2021-2027 (EUR) |
|--|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)</u> | A smarter, greener, more connected and more social Europe that is closer to its citizens. | Managing Authorities | 226 billion |
| <u>Cohesion Fund (CF)</u> | Environment and trans-European networks in the area of transport infrastructure (TEN-T) (37% of the overall financial allocation of the expected to contribute to climate objectives). | Managing Authorities | 48 billion |
| <u>European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)</u> | Employment, social, education and skills policies, including structural reforms in these areas. | Managing Authorities | 99.3 billion |
| <u>European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)</u> | EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (second pillar). | Managing Authorities | 95.5 billion |
| <u>European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)</u> | Innovative projects ensuring that aquatic and maritime resources are used sustainably. | Shared and direct management | 6.108 billion |

¹⁰ <https://danube-region.eu/projects-and-funding/eu-funding-instruments/>

| | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|---|
| <u>European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) – Interreg</u> | Territorial cooperation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-border cooperation; ▪ Transnational cooperation; ▪ Interregional cooperation; ▪ Outermost regions' cooperation. | Managing Authorities | 1 billion |
| <u>Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)</u> | Territorial cooperation supporting beneficiaries in adopting and implementing the political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic reforms required to comply with Union values and to progressively align to Union rules, standards, policies and practices ('acquis') with a view to future Union membership, thereby contributing to mutual stability, security, peace and prosperity. | Managing Authorities | 14.2 billion |
| <u>Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)</u> | Territorial EU cooperation with all third countries, except for the pre-accession beneficiaries and the overseas countries and territories from the geographic programmes. | Managing Authorities | 79.5 billion |
| <u>Horizon Europe</u> | Research and innovation. | EU centrally managed | 95.5 billion |
| <u>Single Market Programme (SMP)</u> | Strengthening the governance of the internal market, supporting the competitiveness of industry and in particular of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting human, animal and plant health and animal welfare and establishing the framework for financing European statistics. | EU centrally managed | 4.2 million Plus 2.000 million under the InvestEU Fund |
| <u>Erasmus+</u> | Education, training, youth and sport. | EU centrally managed | 26. 2 billion |

| | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <u>Creative Europe</u> | Safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage. | EU centrally managed | 2.44 billion |
| <u>Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)</u> | Promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through infrastructure investment at European level in transport, energy and digital sectors. | EU centrally managed | CEF Transport: 25.81 billion CEF Energy: 5.84 billion CEF Digital: 2.07 billion |
| <u>InvestEU</u> | Supports sustainable investment, innovation and job creation in Europe, in the field of sustainable infrastructure, research, innovation and digitalisation, SMEs, social investment and skills. | EU centrally managed | 372 billion |
| <u>LIFE Programme</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nature and Biodiversity; ▪ Circular Economy and Quality of Life; ▪ Climate change mitigation and adaptation; ▪ Clean energy transition. | EU centrally managed | 5.43 billion |
| <u>JUST Transition Fund</u> | Support for regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union's 2030 targets for energy and climate. | Shared management | 19.2 billion |
| <u>Asylum and Migration Fund</u> | Strengthening and developing legal migration to the Member States in accordance with their economic and social needs, and promoting and contributing to the effective integration and social inclusion of third-country nationals. | Shared, direct or indirect management | 9.88 billion |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--------------|
| <u>Internal Security Fund</u> | Improving and facilitating the exchange of information between and within competent authorities and relevant Union bodies, offices and agencies and, where relevant, with third countries and international organisations. | Shared management by the Member States and direct/indirect management by the Commission | 1.93 billion |
| <u>Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy</u> | Supporting effective European integrated border management at the external borders, facilitate legitimate border crossings, to prevent and detect illegal migration and cross-border crime and to effectively manage migratory flows. | Shared management by the Member States and direct/indirect management | 7.39 billion |
| <u>Digital Europe Programme</u> | Support and accelerate the digital transformation of the European economy by bringing digital technology to businesses, citizens and public administrations. | EU centrally managed | 7.59 billion |

4. KEEPING TRACK OF THE PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE EUSDR

Monitoring and reporting the progress and achievements at the level of Priority Areas (PAs) has been on the agenda of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region for a long time. In the past, Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) were delivering reporting information to two main EUSDR stakeholders:

- The European Commission (EC) - Questionnaire for MRS for Thematic Area Coordinators;
- The Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) - Additional Information Annex.¹¹

In 2022, the EUSDR National Coordinators (NCs) endorsed a new monitoring concept, developed by the DSP in close cooperation with all EUSDR main stakeholders. The new monitoring system, including an online reporting tool, brings together different reporting strands (EC, DTP¹² and EUSDR-level) by offering one comprehensive reporting template reflecting the progress and achievements of PAs at a glance. The biennial reports submitted by the PACs via the online tool provide the basis for several reports and follow-up activities, i.e.:

- The EC uses the inputs for the preparation of the Commission reports on the implementation of macro-regional strategies (the previous reports can be found [here](#)).

- The NCs are being provided with a further basis for decision-making, gaining support for strategic coordination and for keeping an overview of the participation and achievements within the EUSDR.
- The DSP uses the inputs for the preparation of the EUSDR Implementation Reports (the previous reports can be found [here](#)).
- Furthermore, the outcomes of the reporting provide data for future evaluations, give enhanced grounds for the DSP to support the PAs in a more targeted manner etc.



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¹¹ Reporting on the Progress and Achievements of the EUSDR Priority Areas, EUSDR Monitoring Concept, February 2022

¹² Other than PAC project reporting to DTP

An evaluation plan, setting out the evaluation strategy of the EUSDR, was established in 2019 (to be regularly updated). Until 2022, the EUSDR has decided to conduct two evaluations: 1) A governance/operational evaluation, assessing the effectiveness, communication and stakeholder involvement of the Strategy; and 2) A policy/impact evaluation, assessing EUSDR instruments, tools and activities for measuring the impact in the Danube Region.

The EUSDR Operational Evaluation, which was carried out by Metis on behalf of the Danube Strategy Point and published in June 2019, revealed that cooperation structures and new partnerships had been established, workflows and communication flows were satisfactory, but Steering Group involvement and spill-over of the EUSDR agenda to the national level could be challenging. Strategic project labelling was not being undertaken at that moment.¹³

The EUSDR impact evaluation, which was carried out by Spatial Foresight and published in May 2022, answers nine evaluation questions structured along four themes: (A) implementation, (B) impact, (C) communication and (D) effects of COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation builds on the complex intervention logic of the EUSDR and its recent alignments, namely the revised EUSDR Action Plan 2020. The theory-based evaluation focuses on changes envisaged by the Strategy and looks to identify and assess the processes behind the changes.

According to the evaluation's findings, the activities and targets of the updated EUSDR Action Plan 2020 are practical, relevant, and cohesive for the implementation.

For impact, it has been determined that: all of the policy areas addressed by the Strategy, particularly environmental, international, and regional development policies, can be expected to experience an impact from the EUSDR. All PAs are anticipated to see significant consequences, specifically a shift in capacity.

It has been determined that improved public awareness of the EUSDR indicates that communication has been successful. New strategic documents have improved external communication. The majority of communication strategies are suitable for the two external target audiences of "Institutional/Government" and "Civil society/business sector."

Regarding the pandemic, COVID-19 had a big impact on how the updated EUSDR Action Plan 2020 was carried out in 2020 and 2021. Travel restrictions, tourism, the economic downturn, disrupted global value chains, and new EU tools were among the areas most affected by the pandemic. These have altered how the implementation of the updated EUSDR Action Plan 2020 can be understood. Many stakeholders noted favourable effects from digitalisation, cheaper travel expenses, and wider outreach due to digital/videoconference formats for meetings and conferences, despite the evident negative consequences on interpersonal interaction, networking, and coordination.¹⁴

¹³ EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) -Implementation Report 2019 - Final version

¹⁴ Policy/impact evaluation of EUSDR instruments, tools and activities for measuring the impact in the Danube Region, Final report, https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/EUSDR_ImpactEvaluation_Final_report_220511.pdf

5. Annexes

EUSDR Useful links

EUSDR KEY DOCUMENTS

[Council conclusions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies \(2020\)](#)

[Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies \(COM/2020/578 final\) and the accompanying Annex \(SWD/2020/186 final\)](#)

[EUSDR Governance Architecture Paper](#)

[Rules of Procedure of the EUSDR National Coordinators](#)

[COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT ACTION PLAN](#)

[EUSDR Implementation Reports](#)

EMBEDDING EUSDR INTO EU PROGRAMMES 2021 – 2027

[Guidance Paper for Embedding of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region \(EUSDR\) into EU Programmes](#)

[Monitoring of Embedding the EUSDR into EU Funds and Funding Programmes 2021-2027](#)

[Guidance Paper for Embedding the EU Strategy for the Danube Region \(EUSDR\) into EU Programmes - FROM ACTIONS TO FUNDING](#)

DANUBE STRATEGY FLAGSHIPS

[Guidance Paper for identifying and listing Danube Strategy Flagships](#)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

[EUSDR Policy/Impact Evaluation 2022](#)

[EUSDR Operational Evaluation 2019](#)

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

[EUSDR Needs Assessment for closer cooperation between PACs and relevant stakeholders](#)

[EUSDR Needs Assessment on the engagement in Steering Groups](#)

[EUSDR Governance](#)

[EUSDR Priority Areas](#)

[EUSDR Contacts](#)

COMMUNICATION

[EUSDR Communication Strategy and Visual Identity](#)

EUSDR Abbreviation glossary

| | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| A | | |
| AF | Annual Forum | |
| AMF | Asylum and Migration Fund | |
| B | | |
| C | | |
| CBC | Cross Border Cooperation | |
| CEF | Connecting Europe Facility | |
| CF | Cohesion Fund | |
| CoR | European Committee of the Regions | |
| CoE | Council of Europe | |
| Council | Council of the European Union | |
| CPR | Common Provisions Regulation | |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation | |
| D | | |
| D-LAP | Danube Local Actors Platform | |
| DCSF | Danube Civil Society Forum | |
| DG | Directorate-General | |
| DG REGIO | Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy | |
| DG NEAR | Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations | |
| DR | Danube Region | |
| DRC | Danube Rectors' Conference | |
| DRP | Danube Region Programme (former DTP) | |
| DSP | Danube Strategy Point | |
| DSTF | Danube Sturgeon Task Force | |
| DTP | Danube Transnational Programme | |
| DYC | Danube Youth Council | |
| DYON | Danube Youth Organisations Network | |
| E | | |
| EBRD | European Bank for Reconstruction and Development | |
| EC | European Commission | |
| EEAS | European External Action Service | |
| EEEF | European Energy Efficiency Fund | |
| EESC | European Economic and Social Committee | |
| EGD | European Green Deal | |
| EGTC | European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation | |
| EIB | European Investment Bank | |
| EIP WB | Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans | |
| EP | European Parliament | |
| ERA | European Research Area | |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund | |
| ES | European Semester | |
| ESF+ | European Social Fund plus | |
| ESIF | European Structural and Investment Funds | |
| ESPON | European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion | |
| ETC | European Territorial Cooperation | |
| EU | European Union | |
| EUI | European Urban Initiative | |
| EUSAIR | EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region | |
| EUSALP | EU Strategy for the Alpine Region | |
| EUSBSR | EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region | |
| EUSDR | EU Strategy for the Danube Region | |
| EU MRS Week | EU Macro-regional Week | |
| F | | |
| G | | |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation | |
| H | | |
| HLG | High-Level Group | |
| I | | |
| IPA | Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance | |
| ISF | Internal Security Fund | |
| J | | |
| JASPERS | Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions | |
| JRC | European Commission Joint Research Centre | |
| K | | |
| L | | |
| LoI | Letter of Intent | |
| LoM | Letter of Merit | |
| LoR | Letter of Recommendation | |
| M | | |
| MA | Managing Authority | |
| MFF | Multiannual Financial Framework | |
| MLG | Multi-level governance | |
| MRS | Macro-regional strategies | |
| MRS HLG | Macro-regional strategies High-Level Group | |
| MS | Member states | |
| N | | |
| NC | National Coordinator | |
| NDICI | Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (former ENI) | |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation | |
| NUTS | Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics | |
| O | | |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development | |
| OP | Operational Programme | |
| P | | |
| PA | Priority Area | |
| PAC | Priority Area Coordinator | |
| PCY | Presidency | |
| PPP | Public-Private Partnership | |
| Q | | |
| R | | |
| R&D | Research and Development | |
| REACT-EU | Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe | |
| RoP | Rules of Procedure | |

| | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| RTD | Research and Technology Development |
| S | |
| SBS | Sea Basin Strategy |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SG | Steering Group |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprises |
| SWD | Staff Working Document |
| T | |
| TA 2030 | Territorial Agenda 2030 |
| TEN-T | Trans-European Transport Network |

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| TF | Task Force |
| TRIO, TRIO-PCY | Incumbent, past and future Presidency |
| U | |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| V | |
| W | |
| WG | Working Group |

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