

European Strategy for Danube Region
Strategic projects – concept paper
FINAL

I Background information

In June 2014 Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Participating States of the EUSDR and the European Commission adopted a Joint Statement, where, among other things, they called on the EUSDR PAs Steering groups **to further develop a joint approach for labelling strategic projects for the EUSDR by the end of 2014.**

In January 2015 the EUSDR National Coordinators adopted the 2015 -2016 workplan for the Danube Strategy Point. **One of DSP's tasks** for the period 2015 -2016 refers to **“... support the implementation of flagship projects and to develop solutions...”.**

Considering also the ongoing process (2015/2016) of EUSDR targets and actions review and revision (which in turn would lead to review and eventually revision of the EUSDR actions and projects within the priority areas), **the following concept for EUSDR strategic projects is introduced.**

II Purpose of the concept for EUSDR strategic projects

The EUSDR is implemented, among others, through projects and processes. A EUSDR strategic project would frequently be a result of policy developments and discussions within a EUSDR Priority Area. Identification and implementation of “EUSDR strategic projects” aim at:

- contributing to **stronger and clearer strategic focus** of the activities and efforts undertaken within the EUSDR Priority Areas as well as **fleshing out the ambition and the direction an EUSDR PA** would have in certain policy area;
- supporting and further encouraging **joint cooperation** between EUSDR states and/or regions, which are **strategically important for the Danube region**;
- establishing the **ground to further consider the strategic projects/processes within the revision process** of EUSDR targets, actions, milestones and roadmaps;

EUSDR strategic projects **are projects with high impact and visibility** for the EUSDR. As such they could **demonstrate the progress achieved** in implementing the EUSDR and could **strengthen and improve the communication** on the EUSDR strategic focus.

These projects could also serve as **pilot examples for desired future changes** (e.g. possible strategic support for embedding them into funding programs/sources).

The “EUSDR strategic projects” labelling shall not replace and/or duplicate the existing labelling arrangements within the EUSDR PAs.

III Scope and criteria for EUSDR strategic projects

In terms of structure, a EUSDR strategic project can be:

- 1) Single project, contributing to a priority area;
- 2) Group of projects, contributing to a priority area;
- 3) Process, contributing to a priority area;

In terms of scope and readiness, a EUSDR strategic project can be:

- 4) **Preparatory project:** project for preparing future project (i.e. for preparation of analysis, feasibility studies and/or other preparatory studies, reports, applications for funding, procurement documents, etc. as needed). Such project is to be in planning/preparatory stage since January 2014 onwards.
- 5) **Investment project:** project consisting of construction activities, supply activities or consultancy activities or any combination between these activities as needed. Such project is to be in planning/preparatory stage or in implementation stage since January 2014 onwards. Investment project can be project for:
 - preparing and implementing future project;
 - implementing already prepared future project;
- 6) **Processes or other projects** for developing and establishing key solutions, new methodologies, new transnational cooperation and/or networking mechanisms aiming at influencing policy- and decision-making in a policy area. These have to include at least one project or one cooperation mechanism in support of the designed process that is to be in implementation stage since January 2014 onwards.
- 7) A project/process is in **planning/preparatory stage** in all cases, where:
 - activities for preparing future project/process are still ongoing (e.g. forming consortia, formulating the scope of the project/process, identifying the type, the scope, the size of the future activities and/or investments, preparing the necessary documents for them (e.g. studies, reports, analysis, applications for funding, procurement documents));
 - there is no funding contract signed yet for future project/process (i.e. the next stage of the project/process has not been approved for funding yet);

A project/process is in **implementation stage** in all cases, where:

- the preparatory activities are completed;
- the project/process has been approved for funding or has secured funding sources;
- the actual implementation has started or is about to start soon, pending signature of funding contract/cooperation agreement;

A EUSDR project/process would be a strategic one if it also fulfils the following criteria:

- 8) it clearly contributes to a EUSDR target;
- 9) it clearly and substantially supports the implementation of an EUSDR action;
- 10) it has evident and high macro- regional dimension (cooperation between and impact on at least 3 states and/or regions from Danube region);
- 11) it is approved/supported widely by the countries from Danube region;
- 12) it is realistic in terms of objectives, activities, timeframe and deliverables;
- 13) it has clear financing plan, linked to the activities, timeframe and deliverables of the strategic project;

Completed projects/processes are not to be considered and proposed for retroactive labelling as “EUSDR strategic projects”.

IV Identification and labelling of EUSDR strategic projects

The identification process would start in early 2016 and would have to run in parallel with the process of revising the PAs targets, actions (to be included in a revised EUSDR Action Plan), milestones and roadmaps. The revision of the EUSDR actions (Action Plan) including the identification of potential EUSDR strategic projects shall be coordinated by the Commission and assisted by the DSP for all PAs.

Each PA (PACs and SGs) would identify a limited number of EUSDR projects that are of strategic importance for implementing the PAs workplans and roadmaps. The identification process shall be completed with the preparation of Strategic Project Data Sheet (annexed to the concept paper) and its submission from the PACs to DSP.

Following that, again in early 2016, DSP shall assist in screening the projects/processes proposed by each PA against the criteria specified in Section III above. The projects/processes that receive positive result from the screening would be put forward for being labelled as “EUSDR Strategic projects”. They are to be included in the updated Roadmaps for implementation of each action that all PAs would have to prepare in 2016.

A EUSDR strategic project proposal would be considered as having received the label “EUSDR strategic project” when it is included in the up-to-date list of “EUSDR strategic project”. The DSP shall prepare and maintain “the list of EUSDR strategic project”, which shall be made available on EUSDR web page after being endorsed by the EUSDR National Coordinators.

In their planning & preparation and/or implementation the “EUSDR strategic projects” would have to be supported, monitored and evaluated as appropriate and feasible, by the respective EUSDR governance bodies through appropriate tools and means.

“EUSDR strategic projects” shall be managed and coordinated by the most appropriate body, depending on the nature and the scope of the project/process (e.g. regional or national authorities, private entities, non-governmental organisations).

After 2016 proposing and approving new EUSDR strategic projects shall follow the same process as described above, in coordination with Commission and with DSP assistance, who shall prepare and distribute further communications to this respect.