

The status of EUSDR embedding in ESIF, in Romania

Following consultations conducted by the Ministry of European Funds with relevant Managing Authorities and EUSDR institutional actors, in November 2015-January 2016, two solutions were identified in order to encourage the EUSDR projects financed through the European Structural and Investment Funds:

1. Giving additional points to EUSDR projects, on the basis of specific selection criteria. The following criteria will be used in the case of Romania:

(i) **The EUSDR relevance:** the contribution of the project to the objectives of one/more Priority Areas. Compliance with this criterion can be awarded with 1 bonus point.

(ii) **The relevance for the macro-region (territorial impact),** assessed through (a) intensity and (b) proximity. Compliance with this criterion can be awarded with maximum 3 bonus points.

2. Monitoring separately the projects that fit into the EUSDR Priority Areas and objectives, by developing an evaluation mechanism which quantifies the projects' contribution to the EUSDR.

The situation for each Operational Programme is as follows:

Competitiveness OP: This OP already brings a contribution to the EUSDR, through the financing of the DANUBIUS project. Eventually (but not yet agreed) extra points could be awarded to EUSDR relevant projects in the fields of “research” and “information and communication technologies for public beneficiaries”, for the calls that will be launched in 2016. Similarly, the allocation of bonus points could be foreseen in the likelihood of a second call under the “Information and Communication Technologies actions for private beneficiaries” thematic objective (if there will remain unconsumed funds after the first call, which was open until the end of December 2015).

Human Capital OP: The Management Authority is still in the course of deciding which approach to take, namely, whether to grant supplementary points to the EUSDR projects in the counties along the Danube or whether to carry out a separate monitoring of projects that fit into the EUSDR, in which case the assessment would apply to the whole territory of Romania. In principle, most actions/interventions to be implemented within this OP will intrinsically contribute to the objectives of the Priority Area 9 of EUSDR.

Administrative Capacity OP: The Management Authority of this OP has opted for the separate monitoring of projects that fit into the EUSDR.

National Programme for Rural Development: An indicative allocation at national level could be foreseen for actions that contribute to the EUSDR objectives, plus a separate screening will be done for EUSDR-relevant projects located in the 12 counties bordering the Danube (the alternative approach, to ring-fence an amount for EUSDR projects implemented only in the 12 Danube counties, was opposed by DG AGRI). Giving additional points to EUSDR relevant projects would have implied changes to the whole Programme and complex consultations with the European Commission.

Fishing and Maritime Affairs OP: When assessing projects, consideration will be given to the relevance for the EUSDR objectives.

Regional OP: There will be a dedicated call for EUSDR projects in the fields of: energy efficiency, cultural heritage, road infrastructure and tourism, targeting only the 12 Danube counties. For the rest of the projects to be financed through this OP, it is envisaged to introduce, into the monitoring mechanism, indicators that quantify the project contribution to the EUSDR objectives.

Large Infrastructure OP: 3 (three) bonus points will be given to projects located in the 12 Danubian counties, for the thematic priorities 4.1 (Biodiversity), 6.1 (Renewable energy), 6.2 (Energy efficiency for industrial consumers) and 6.4 (Cogeneration). The transport projects will not be granted with bonus points, since the General Transport Master Plan already gives priority to the projects contributing to the Rhine-Danube-Black Sea corridor.

Territorial Cooperation OP: 2 (two) bonus points will be given to the territorial cooperation projects with Bulgaria and, respectively, Serbia, for projects complying with the “EUSDR relevance” criterion. The “macro-regional relevance” criterion no longer applies in this situation because the entire eligible area for the cooperation RO-BG and RO-SB is located on the Danube.

A similar approach (of giving maximum 2 bonus points), is foreseen for the territorial cooperation RO-HU, however this needs the agreement of the Hungarian National Authority and the approval of the Monitoring Committee, which is hoped for the first semester of 2016. A bonification of 3 points is very unlikely since the Danube proximity criterion is not met in this case.