

ANNEX II to the EUSDR Implementation Report 2020-2021

Overview of progress per Action of the EUSDR Action Plan 2020

Final version, December 2022





PA 1a Waterway Mobility

ACTION 1: Contribute to improve waterway and port infrastructure & management (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Regular updates of the National Action Plans as a tool for monitoring the implementation status of the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan. The National Action Plans are the basis for data-based discussions among the waterway administrations of the Danube Region and provided topical input for the Danube Ministerial Conclusions. Meetings of the waterway administrations within Working Group 1 and bilateral meetings between individual authorities and the PA 1a Technical Secretariat in order to gain input for the ongoing update the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan.	The Danube Ministerial Conclusions were signed in a written procedure in June 2020 by ten Transport Ministers of the Danube Region, who reconfirmed their commitment to implementing the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan and agreed to take the necessary measures foreseen in the plan. This continuous policy process keeps the topic of fairway rehabilitation and maintenance on the political agenda of the Danube Ministers of Transport. The EU's involvement in this ongoing process enabled an investment offensive, boosting the realisation of the Master Plan. In recent years, more than 70 million EUR have been invested through EU co-financed projects within the Connecting Europe Facility, national Operational Programmes and the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) between 2014 and 2022. Key implementation projects – FAIRway Danube and other EU co-financed initiatives – were started and constitute a major share of the necessary investments. The results of these efforts are starting to bear fruit on the ground – fairway conditions are improving at several critical waterway sections.	The annual survey of waterway users is carried out and enables statements to be made about the satisfaction of waterway users with the maintenance of the waterway and fairway information services provided in the Danube Region.	The Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan will be updated. Danube Ministerial Conclusions are planned to be signed in June 2022, adopting the updated Master Plan.

ACTION 2: Foster business development (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Due to the pandemic situation only one business-to-business event was conducted in 2021 in a digital format. With a diverse range of topics - from the latest data from transport and logistics to the	During the event, over 400 participants made use of the online stream for at least one of the sessions.	Progress cannot be monitored by any indicator, as business development and transport decisions are a result of a wide variety of influences. It is not	For autumn 2022 the next Danube Business Talks are planned as a hybrid event in Linz. PA 1a is involved in shaping the agenda for the event and

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
activities of PA 1a - the popular conference Danube Business Talks was well received by sector representatives. The aim of the event was to show that cargo shipping in particular had proven to be crisis-proof and to discuss new ways to integrate Danube navigation into logistics networks.		possible to filter out the share of PA 1a's activities in such decisions.	representatives of the Technical Secretariat will participate as speakers.

ACTION 3: Facilitate fleet modernisation (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Elaboration of Policy Recommendations on Fleet modernisation, taking into account the results of the GRENDEL project, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for the Partnership on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport (WATERBORNE, June 2021) and studies initiated by the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR).	In 2021 PA 1a elaborated a Policy Recommendation on Fleet modernisation addressed to the public entities of the Danube riparian states and aiming to provide guidance on possible short- and long-term measures to improve the environmental and economic performance of the Danube fleet. The Recommendations were discussed during a Steering Group meeting and distributed among the Steering Group members and other interested stakeholders. Two promising recommendations were elaborated: the creation of national aid schemes and the development of a strategic research agenda including technology pathways.	The results of the "Policy recommendation on fleet modernisation" have been synchronised with study commissioned by the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) and link has been established with the PLATINA3 project, the implementation platform for the European Action Plan to promote inland navigation. Anchoring fleet modernisation measures in Operational Programmes for EU Structural Funds or in other facilities such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility has not been successful so far, given the general political priority for themes related to inland navigation.	Further lobbying will be needed to secure sufficient funds for fleet modernisation measures through EU Structural Funds. The set-up of a dedicated European fund for fleet modernisation is foreseen in the NAIADES Programme. For this, PA 1a will deliver input from the Danube perspective through the PLATINA3 project.

ACTION 4: Support the further roll-out and enhancement of River Information Services (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Following several complaints from the shipping industry, PA 1a has taken up working with the relevant national administrations in a Working Group to optimise the service "Notices to Skippers (NtS)". One Working Group Meeting was conducted in November 2021, followed by bilateral meetings in which particular national improvements to the services were discussed.	Based on the analyses by PA 1a and the meetings held, the NtS messages have already been made more user-friendly in some countries.	Progress is monitored by the working group's achievements and improved user-friendliness of the services. Sector representatives are essential members of the Working Group and summarise the issues encountered at Working Group meetings, directly addressing the responsible authorities at this platform.	Further bilateral and Working Group meetings will be conducted in order to further improve the notices to Skippers services.

ACTION 5: Contribute to the enhanced quality of education and jobs (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 1a supports the Danube-wide application of EU Directive 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation. EU Directive 2017/2397 foresees the implementation of National Crew Databases that are to be connected to one European system. Given the short time frame for the implementation of these national databases and the lack of coordination between the countries, PA 1a coordinated with the national authorities in the Danube Region responsible for the implementation of the national databases to find suitable technical solutions. Although ultimately each country had to commission its own database, the technical specification that the Austrian PACs had prepared for their own database was sent to some Danube countries. In addition, a joint meeting and several bilateral meetings were held and information from the Commission (DG MOVE) was passed on to the Danube countries through PA 1a.	As each country is ultimately responsible for the transposition and implementation of EU Directive 2017/2397, PA 1a provided support, information and made itself available as an exchange platform. The transposition and implementation of the directive was only completed in time in individual European countries.	Progress is largely measured by whether EU Directive 2017/2397 is implemented in the Danube riparian states.	PA 1a will continue to facilitate the implementation of the provisions of Directive 2017/2397 in all Danube riparian states.

ACTION 6: Contribute to the simplification, harmonisation and digitalisation of administrative processes (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Involvement of other PAs: Action 6 is a joint Action between EUSDR PA 1a and PA 11. The cooperation is close and well-working.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 1a is engaged in the reduction of red tape in Danube navigation. Multiple and nationally differentiated border controls are neither effective for the border control authorities nor time-efficient for the shipping sector. The joint PA 1a & PA 11 Working Group on Administrative Processes was continued, biannual meetings are conducted. In 2020, the work programme for the next 5 years was elaborated and discussed within the Working Group.	Border controls (only relevant at the external borders of the EU and the Schengen area) benefited from the work of the joint Working Group between PA 1a (Inland Waterways) and PA 11 (Security), which focuses on the simplification, harmonisation and digitalisation of administrative processes connected to Danube navigation. By 2018, three often used control forms were harmonised in the Danube Region - the so-called DAVID forms - and endorsed by both Steering Groups of PA 1a and PA 11. During the reporting period the harmonised DAVID forms were intro-	Progress is measured by the Working Group's achievements: the introduction of DAVID forms in individual countries; in the future, the digitalisation of border control processes and reporting obligations.	The work programme for the coming 5 years foresees 8 measures to be implemented jointly by PA 1a and PA 11, among them the implementation of a transnational electronic registration and time management tool (short: TERM).

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	duced in Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, by that replacing the previously used national forms. Using the same border control forms when travelling along the Danube constitutes a big advantage for the shipping industry.		



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 (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
There are five TEN-T Core Network Corridors (CNC) crossing the Danube macro-region. Progress on implementation was carefully followed also by attending the CNC fora of two corridors: Mediterranean and Baltic-Adriatic. No special activities were needed since the lead in coordination of TEN-T CNCs is hands of EU coordinators.	At the end of 2021 when the European Commission added "Western Balkans Transport Corridor" to the list of the most important TEN-T routes. The new corridor is included in the proposal of revised TEN-T Guidelines that are expected to be adopted by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament in 2023. EUSDR PA 1b believes that it contributed significantly to adding this corridor among TEN-T transport corridors and this way contributed to better connectivity between the EU and the Western Balkans.	Implementation of TEN-T standards on all corridors is progressing well and it is believed that they will be completed by 2030. The good results are based on commitments of national authorities and financial support from the EU funds, in particular Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).	To further support implementation of TEN-T and extension to neighbouring countries.

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 (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Initiative to establish a new Rail Freight Corridor (RFC) linking the Black Sea ports (Constanza) with the Northern Adriatic ports (Koper/Rijeka) has started in 2013 by Romania and Slovenia. It is supported by all other Danube Region countries. Progress is slow, yet PA 1b believes it will bring results in years to come.	Promotion of the initiative at several events.	Little progress made in last two years in spite promotion of the initiative at number of events.	Continuation of efforts to find financial means to carry out a feasibility study or market study.

ACTION 3: To enhance cooperation between air traffic stakeholders in order to improve regional connectivity and prepare a plan to implement shorter plane routes (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
No action taken and no project started in 2020 and 2021.	No achievements made to be linked to PA 1b work.	No progress made.	To monitor air transport development and in particular regional air connectivity. Publication on airport infrastructure in the Danube Region is planned with the aim to make visible possibilities for developments and business opportunities for commercial and general aviation. Special attention is to be paid on ATM (within SESAR project) and FABs in the EU and non-EU member states.

ACTION 4: To ensure sustainable metropolitan transport systems and mobility (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Following the rule of subsidiarity for urban and sub-urban transport activities are focused on exchange of best practices between the capital cities and other conurbations at PA 1b events.	Support of projects that are focused on sustainable transport in urban areas and promote walking, cycling and other means of micro-mobility. PA 1b contribution to sustainable urban transport is not measurable.	Due to the fact that sustainable transport systems and mobility are high on political agenda and a great number of stakeholders is active in this field progress is visible in the entire macro-region.	No special action needed. It is only important to keep the momentum. In terms of urban mobility EUSDR PA 1b might focus on energy efficiency in transport and modification of public transport (from lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic).

ACTION 5: To improve the regional/local cross-border infrastructure and the access to rural areas by facilitating secondary and tertiary transport infrastructure (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 1b supports all projects dealing with efforts to improve regional and cross-border infrastructure and services. PA 1b contributed by active participation at several events organised by Interreg project implementers, e.g. Crossmoby project, Adripass project, etc.	Several pilot projects were implemented by transnational projects, e.g. Austria - Slovenia	Progress is slow, yet visible.	To involve Steering Group members into creation of list of most needed cross-border links in terms of social, environmental and economic value.

ACTION 6: To develop further nodal planning for multimodality (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The Steering Group monitored and exchanged information on nodes that need to be developed and those that are main cause of congestion, as well on those that need to develop terminals in order to enhance multimodal transport and improve logistic services.	Not measurable.	There are many efforts at national level to improve transport nodes and use of multimodal and intermodal transport services. Major differences are seen between the Danube Region countries of the upper Danube Region and lower Danube Region. In order to achieve a similar level of performance related to the construction of multimodal terminals and business models for logistic services exchange of knowledge, best practices and new financing opportunities are needed. Progress cannot be seen by 2030, while with common efforts significant progress can be made by 2050.	Continuation of promotion of multimodality and intermodality, as well as enabling experts and interested stakeholders to meet and PA 1b events. No concrete projects foreseen.

ACTION 7: To develop further Intelligent Traffic Systems by using environmental-friendly technologies, especially in urban regions (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 1b monitored and supported activities of Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) projects on national and macro-regional level. Among projects special attention was paid to two: - OJP Danube and SMACKER.	Implementers of ITS technologies were contributing at events organised by PA 1b.	ITS deployment is progressing well in EU member states due (also due to Directive 2010/40/EU) while encouragement to use directive in non-EU member states is too narrow.	To follow closely the deployment of ITS at EU level and enable deployment in non-EU countries.

ACTION 8: To raise awareness for road safety and encourage exchange of best practices (Strategic Objective: Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Involvement of other PAs: There are attempts to join forces with EUSDR PA 11. It is expected that first joint activity (probably a road safety event) start in a year or two.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 1b coordinators (PACs) and SG members monitored and supported activities and projects on national and macro-regional level. In particular PA 1b cooperates well with UNECE ITC and EIRA-EuroRAP on issues related to urban road safety and safe road infrastructure. Joint events (conferences) were organised in 2020 and 2021.	PA 1b contributed to the implementation of the Interreg DTP project RADAR that focused on road safety related issues in the Danube macro-region. In addition the Lead Partner (EIRA-EuroRAP) representative presented the SABRINA project to the Steering Group members at SG meetings (e.g. 20 th SG meeting in June 2020). SABRINA focused on cycling infrastructure that gains importance due to increased use of bicycles for commuting and pleasure.	Road safety in the Danube Region countries is generally improving, yet it is far from reaching "vision zero". Progress is slow and difficult to measure. It is not possible to say to what extent PA 1b activities (such as awareness rising, contributions to exchange of best practices, networking with stakeholders) added to overall safety on macro-regional transport infrastructure.	To continue monitoring and supporting road safety initiatives carried out by local, regional, national, macro-regional and European stakeholders.



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. (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: When organising the workshop on NECPs EUSDR PA 2 contacted EUSDR PA 1b to suggest a panellist to the transport section. They suggested the representative of the Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure who accepted the invitation and was one of the invited experts. The representatives of EUSDR PA 1b participated at the workshop.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
During the period PA 2 was focusing the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) of the Danube Region countries. A study was commissioned with the purpose to evaluate the targets, measures and expected outcomes laid down in the documents. The analysis focused on the planned development of sustainable energy systems receiving special attention in NECPs. As a follow up of this study, PA 2 has prepared 4 policy briefs in the topics of electricity, natural gas, heating and cooling and transport. The policy briefs cover individual DR national energy and climate strategies related to these topics and the expected developments in the Region. Based on the policy briefs two international expert workshops were organised by PA 2 covering the 4 topics. To summarise the main findings and results of the studies and workshops in the topic, PA 2 commissioned a final study highlighting the most important recommendations. The purpose of the report is to provide targeted policy recommendations based on the analysis of DR national strategic documents to address the most significant policy gaps that will unlock the transformation of energy systems and services in line with the Paris Agreement keeping the rise in global temperature at or below 1.5 °C. This should not only support stronger DR climate	Comparative assessment of the National Energy and Climate Plans of the Danube Region countries, 4 policy briefs in the topics of electricity, gas, heating & cooling and transport, 2 international expert workshops, NECP policy recommendations for the Danube Region countries; 1 winning project (European Energy Award) and 2 submitted projects: HyEfre at Interreg Central Europe, Innovance in LIFE.	Preparation of an extensive analysis, 4 policy briefs and a policy recommendation to support the use of renewable energy sources in the Region and to help reaching the national emission reduction targets; 1 winning project (European Energy Award) and 2 submitted projects: HyEfre at Interreg Central Europe, Innovance in LIFE.	Follow-up of the developments in the field of NECPs such as revision of NECPs and preparation of NECPs of the non-EU countries, following funding opportunities and supporting project generation.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
ambitions manifested in the revision of national strategic documents but should also aim to ensure their delivery. PA 2 also supported project ideas in this field such as European Energy Award along the Danube (EEA) and HyEfre project (to increase energy efficiency in Central Europe via hydrogen and biomethane integration and waste heat minimisation), Innovance (alternative funding solutions for geothermal 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 (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>During the period the CZ coordination started working on an energy efficiency in buildings study. It is still under preparation. The representative of DG Energy expert in the Renovation Wave was invited to the SG meeting of PA 2 in June 2021 to present the most important developments in the field.</p> <p>The NECP study, one of the policy briefs, one of the workshops and also one part of the final recommendations study is focusing on heating and cooling and energy efficiency in buildings.</p> <p>The HU coordination takes part in the SET-UP project. „Smart Energy Transition to Upgrade Regional Performance“. It focuses on the possible tools for balancing the power grids, mainly on battery storage and hydrogen.</p>	<p>Energy efficiency and heating & cooling part of the comparative assessment of the National Energy and Climate Plans of the Danube Region countries, policy brief in the topic of heating & cooling, an international expert workshop focusing on heating & cooling aspects of the NECPs of the Danube Region countries, energy efficiency and heating & cooling section of the NECP policy recommendations for the Danube Region countries study</p>	<p>Preparation of an extensive analysis, a policy brief and a policy recommendation to promote energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in buildings and heating systems</p>	<p>Finalisation of the energy efficiency in buildings study, organisation of an international expert workshop to present and discuss the findings of the study, energy efficiency in industry study; the HU coordination has started the preparation of a feasibility study to share best practices with Western-Balkan countries in the field of decarbonisation of the district heating system; an e-learning material will be prepared based on the study and workshops will be organised in Western-Balkan countries to help them to decarbonise their district heating system</p>

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 (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development; Improving Mobility and Connectivity)

Involvement of other PAs: When organising the workshop on NECPs EUSDR PA 2 contacted EUSDR PA 1b to suggest a panellist to the transport section. They suggested the representative of the Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure who accepted the invitation and was one of the invited experts. The representatives of EUSDR PA 1b participated at the workshop.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The NECP study, one of the policy briefs, one of the workshops and also one part of the final recommendations study is focusing on the decarbonisation of the transport sector. Also the PACs follow closely the developments in the field of hydrogen, including utilisation of hydrogen as an alternative fuel.	Transport part of the comparative assessment of the National Energy and Climate Plans of the Danube Region countries, policy brief in the topic of transport, an international expert workshop focusing on transport aspect of the NECPs of the Danube Region countries, transport section of the NECP policy recommendations for the Danube Region countries study	Preparation of an extensive analysis, a policy brief and a policy recommendation to promote the decarbonisation of the transport sector.	Preparation of projects in the field of alternative fuels, following the developments in the field of hydrogen.

ACTION 4: To improve energy efficient, cost efficient and innovative low-carbon technologies, including smart solutions while respecting the principle of technological neutrality (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development; Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The HU coordination takes part in the continuation of SET-UP project „Smart Energy Transition to Upgrade Regional Performance“. The main project's objective has been the improvement of energy performance of the 6 partner regions based on an interregional exchange regarding the regional competencies on smart grids. The continuation focuses on the possible tools for balancing the power grids, mainly on battery storage and hydrogen.	Under development	Under development	Implementation of the study

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 (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
No activity during the period	-	-	PA 2 is currently working on a study to analyse the natural gas dependence of the Danube Region countries and the possible ways to replace natural gas with other energy sources.

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 (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development; Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
No activity during the period	No	No	-

ACTION 7: To explore new and innovative solutions of (subsurface) energy storage (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>PA 2 continued working on subsurface energy storage. In 2020 an e-brochure was published, which highlights the needs and drivers for energy storage. The document also provides a brief description of the main energy storage technologies and applications at various time scales, ranging from seconds to months, as well as storage sizes, ranging from tens of kWh to tens of GWh, and highlights the substantial role of subsurface energy storage as a large-scale solution.</p> <p>The PACs follow closely the projects in this field. PA 2 HU coordination is a project partner in DanuP-2-Gas project that promotes generation and storage strategies for renewables. They also supported the HyEfre project proposal that aims to increase energy efficiency in Central Europe via hydrogen and biomethane integration and waste heat minimisation. It is currently under evaluation in the Interreg Central Europe programme. PA 2 is also project partner in the SET-UP project „Smart Energy Transition to Upgrade Regional Performance“, in the topic of hydrogen storage.</p>	<p>An e-brochure has been published on the PA 2 website. PA 2 is project partner in the DanuP-2-Gas and SET-UP projects and supports the HyEfre project proposal.</p>	<p>Study on subsurface energy storage has been published. PA 2 follows closely the projects in this field such as the Aquamarine project https://mfgt.hu/en/Akvamarin</p>	<p>PA 2 will continue supporting project ideas in the topic of subsurface energy storage and follows closely the implementations</p>

ACTION 8: To encourage exchange of information and best practices to improve cooperation, create synergies and to initiate joint projects with other macro-regional initiatives and relevant stakeholders at European and global level (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 1b, PA 4, PA 5, PA 6

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The PA 2 coordination put special emphasis on cooperation with other PAs and also third parties, such as other regional and macro-regional cooperation, international organisations, NGOs, agencies, universities, SMEs, etc. As such PA 2 cooperates with other PAs at EUSDR level (PA 1b, PA 4, PA 5, PA 6) and the Danube Strategy Point, with EU institutions (EC, DG ENER) and other institutions (Joint Research Centre, Energy Community, Carpathian Convention Secretariat, etc.), managing authorities of different funding programmes and other stakeholders. Accordingly, PA 2 participated at events organised by UNECE, European Commission, funding programmes, DSP, Interact, EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region, etc.	Cooperation with Energy Community on NECP workshops, cooperation with PA 1b on NECP workshops, continuous discussions with PA 4, PA 5 and PA 6, common participation with PA 4, PA 5 and PA 6 at the Planet Budapest Sustainability Expo with a booth, continuous discussions with Carpathian Convention, participation of DG ENER at the SG meeting of PA 2 in June 2021	Joint event with Energy Community	PA 2 has just started a cooperation with EUSALP in the topic of hydrogen and initiated a common workshop with EUSAIR in the topic of energy efficiency in buildings

ACTION 9: To encourage project generation related to the energy field (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 2 follows continuously the project opportunities in the field of energy and disseminates the information to its stakeholders. The HU coordination was active in the programming of the SK-HU CBC programme and achieved to include the energy topic into the priorities of the programme. During the reporting period, PA 2 HU coordination participated in the implementation of the DanuP-2-Gas project (promoting generation and storage strategies for renewables). The continuation of the project, HyEfre has been submitted to the next Central Europe call (to increase the efficiency of green hydrogen production by utilising waste heat). PA 2 HU coordination will be strategic partner in the project. HU coordination also takes part in the 1-year continuation of an Interreg Europe project, called SETUP „Smart Energy	PA 2 is an associated strategic partner in DanuP-2-Gas project (3 rd call of DTP), supported and participated in the Visegrad Fund project V4Green Universities, supported the Hódthermal project that got funded under EUCF, takes part in the 1-year continuation of SET-UP project as a partner (Interreg Europe project), supported the European Energy Award along the Danube project (got funded in Baden-Württemberg), supported the LIFE project INNOVANCE which is under evaluation, and supported the proposal HyEfre which is under evaluation under the Interreg Central Europe programme.	PA 2 is partner in 2 projects, supported 4 successful project proposals during the period and 2 proposals supported by PA 2 are under evaluation	A follow-up project proposal of DanuP-2-Gas project has just been submitted to the Interreg Central Europe call (HyEfre), PA 2 will closely follow the actual calls and project ideas and continuously inform SG members and stakeholders. PA 2 will seek for promising project proposals and will keep supporting them.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Transition to Upgrade Regional Performance“, in the topic of hydrogen storage. PA 2 organised a project development workshop in October 2021 in order to discuss with SG members and experts how to improve the project generation activity of PA 2. HU coordination also organised a project financing conference for Hungarian stakeholders together with PA 4 and PA 5.</p> <p>PA 2 supported the European Energy Award along the Danube project (got funded in Baden-Württemberg) and the LIFE project INNOVANCE (alternative funding solutions for geothermal projects) which is under evaluation.</p>			



PA 3 Culture & Tourism

ACTION 1: Promote sustainable tourism in the Danube Region and capitalise on EUSDR projects in the areas of culture, nature and tourism

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Workshop on the Promotion of sustainable socio-cultural tourism via cultural routes and cycling routes; Embedding the PA 3 Action 1 in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the National Operational Programmes.	The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration capitalised the European experience in developing cycling routes and included in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan an investment for developing the EuroVelo 6 and EuroVelo 13 in Romania, as well as a reform regarding the governance in the field and the certification process.	The results of the workshop will be used in the Study regarding the network of possible cycling routes in Romania and in the certification; The reform, consisting of establishing the regulatory framework and the National Velo Coordination Center, that is part of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan was fulfilled. The investment for developing EuroVelo 6 and EuroVelo 13 is ongoing.	Finalising the Study regarding the network of possible cycling routes in Romania and in the certification. The investment for developing EuroVelo 6 and EuroVelo 13 is ongoing.

ACTION 2: Support and promote cultural tourism in the Danube Region

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Workshop on the Promotion of sustainable socio-cultural tourism via cultural routes and cycling routes;	The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration was involved in the selection process for the development of cultural routes in Romania within an inter-ministerial working group coordinated by the Ministry of Investments and European Funds. The development of cultural routes will be financed through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.	The list of cultural objectives that will be financed as part of the cultural routes in Romania was finalised. The investment for developing cultural routes in Romania is ongoing.	The investment for developing cultural routes in Romania is ongoing. The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration will organise, together with the co-coordinators, a workshop regarding the Innovation and digitalisation practices for interpretation, communication and marketing strategies

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

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Post COVID-19 „leave-no-one-behind” recovery solutions in the area of Culture and Tourism workshop - finalised in March 2021.	The main achievement consists of putting the needs in the fields of culture and tourism on the current agenda of governmental stakeholders. The Post COVID-19 „leave-no-one-behind” recovery solutions in the area of Culture and Tourism	The contribution of innovative and creative tourism to support sustainable local development workshop - ongoing	The contribution of innovative and creative tourism to support sustainable local development workshop - ongoing

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The contribution of innovative and creative tourism to support sustainable local development workshop - ongoing	workshop contributed to gathering best practices, solutions in the post-covid context, taking into account that tourism was the most affected economic sector during the pandemic crises.		

ACTION 4: Develop a “Smart Destination Danube”

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
-	-	-	-

ACTION 5: Promote and encourage the development of the cultural activities and creative sectors

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
-	-	-	-

ACTION 6: Promote cultural heritage in the Danube Region

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Conference on Heritage Innovation technology	N/A	The conference will be organised in November 2022.	N/A



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).

Involvement of other PAs: Potentially within Pillar 2.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Based on the study completed in 2019 PA 4 planned to organise the international pharmaceutical conference on 7 December 2021, online.	Although the topic about pharmaceuticals was attractive for audience, there is not systemic monitoring of pharmaceuticals in the water and currently insufficient legislation in place.	Due to aforementioned reasons the workshop had to be re-scheduled on pharmaceuticals to the later period, in the year 2023 onwards.	The workshop will be organised when the changes in legal setting will materialise in the Danube countries.

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

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
A study was initiated by PA 4 HU via Trenecon on sewage sludge in the Danube Region in 2020 that provided a solid base for discussion at the sludge workshop on 10 June 2021.	Study on sewage sludge completed, related workshop which obtained a Green Week Label was organised.		Continue discussions with DG ENV on the outcome in the revision phase.

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

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Following the activities (workshops in previous periods) - starting the preparation of a brochure with case studies on sustainable agriculture.	Information gathering	Cooperation and support from ICPDR, collection of data.	Preparation of brochure of case studies

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

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
To contribute to the topic of resource efficiency, effective water consumption and drinking water quality from source to tap: a leaflet was originally foreseen to be prepared in 2022.	Due to the new Drinking Water Directive, the leaflet was prepared earlier than planned.	Leaflet prepared, dissemination ongoing.	Further dissemination

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

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Preparation of fish migration restoration activities (working meeting and document). A leaflet was prepared on migratory fish in 2021 cooperating with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force.	Information collection. Leaflet prepared.	Support from ICPDR, beginning of data collection.	Facilitate fish passes construction to enable fish migration Disseminate leaflet further.

ACTION 6: CLIMATE CHANGE: Promote measures to adapt to climate change impacts in relation to water quality and quantity. (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The study on facts, activities, measures and their financial assessment in connection with water retention in urban areas in the Danube Region (2020) The conference - Climate Change Adaptation: Challenges and Opportunities in Water Management, organised by SK PCY on 27.9. 2021 in Bratislava. Water retention leaflet focused on best practice examples of water retention in the Danube countries (2021).	Study prepared, conference organised, leaflet distributed	Climate change topic was promoted among decision makers, experts and the public.	Due to climate change impacts to follow the topic by further related activities.

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

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
A funding workshop was held on 9 December 2021 to continue providing information on the alignment of funding possibilities.	PA 4 exploits the funding opportunities of the EC centrally managed programmes and collects information on water related financing needs.	Funding brochure will be developed in 2022.	Continue providing information on funding possibilities.



PA 5 Environmental Risks

ACTION 1: Provide sufficient support for development and execution of risk management plans for different hazards (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 4

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Taking part in ICPDR relevant expert group meetings (flood protection and river basin management) twice a year, and taking part in the revision and updates of the Danube basin Plans (flood and river)	Provide sufficient support for the development and execution of risk management plans for different hazards	The revision and updates of the Danube basin Plans (flood and river) are in progress	Danube Flood and River Basin Management Plans update

ACTION 2: enhance the capacities, extend the coverage of basin-wide or regional forecasting and warning systems, and develop rapid response procedures (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 4

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Taking part and supporting the DAREFFORT DTP project which focused on the development of the Danube Hydrological Information System (Danube HIS) on a basin-wide level. Discussions and agreement with ICPDR regarding the organisation of the Danube Forecasting Forum (biannual).	Successful finalisation of the DAREFFORT project, and initiation of the involvement of 2 countries in Danube HIS.	Enhance the capacities, extend the coverage of basin-wide or regional forecasting and warning systems, and develop rapid response procedures	Extension of Danube HIS to the remaining Danube countries. Organising the Danube Forecasting Forum (DAFF): the DAFF will be organised by EUSDR PA 5 (2023), ICPDR (2025) and EC JRC – EFAS (2027), respectively.

ACTION 3: Strengthen disaster prevention and preparedness among governmental and non-governmental organisations (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Enhancing Democracy, Sound Administration and Strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 5 Disaster Management Working Group (DM-WG) initiated numerous activities. There were 3 DM-WG meetings and several workshops with the attendance of stakeholders from disaster	5 disaster management related projects have started thanks to the work of the network and the support of the PA 5 DM-WG. Several joint events were conducted with projects, such as DiMaND, PROFOUND, DAREnet.	The progress was better than anticipated. The work of the DM-WG boosted the activities related to Action 3.	Continuation of certain projects (DiMaND, PROFOUND, RISKHUB) is planned. A glossary of disaster management terms will be developed to support common understanding.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
management. The project support was active during the period.			

ACTION 4: Decrease human impacts that evolves natural risk factors resulting in environmental damages (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 5 jointly with ICPDR initiated a project development focusing on tailings management facilities. A concept was developed and potential partners were selected. An introduction workshop was organised in order to start the discussions.	Initial engagement of stakeholders in the Tailings Management Facilities project concept and development of Concept jointly with ICPDR APC EG representatives.	The concept was developed and a workshop was held with the potential partners to develop a project proposal focusing on Action 4.	PA 5 continues the support of the establishment of the consortium to apply for funding focusing on TMF and plans to coordinate and finance the project generation and proposal development.

ACTION 5: Anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change; Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 2, PA 4, PA 6

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Supporting the nature-based solutions, supporting the LIFE-MICACC project. PA 5, jointly with PA 2, PA 4 and PA 6 hosted a booth at the Planet Budapest 2021. Planet Budapest 2021 Sustainability Expo and Summit was a joint event of the Visegrád Countries on sustainable development. It aimed to raise awareness of adverse environmental, social and economic practices among the general public, especially young people, and to show that these negative changes, which overshadow the future of humankind, are still reversible. The event took place between 29 November and 5 December 2021 in Budapest, with public programmes starting from 30 November.	Successful joint communication of the importance of sustainable development and actions are taken to anticipate impacts of climate change in public events and through project support.	The progress is satisfactory.	It is planned to support new project proposals. In the framework of the PA 5 PAC project, a study will be developed on water retention.



PA 6 Biodiversity & Landscapes, Quality of Air & Soils

ACTION 1: Establish transnational cooperation and harmonisation of the strategic management documents between protected areas on river systems in the Danube basin (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 1.1: Establish the 5-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve "Mura-Drava-Danube" (TBR MDD) with effective management aiming at natural dynamic processes of Mura, Drava and Danube rivers</p> <p>A.1.2: Strengthen the participatory cross-border management (RO-UA-MO) of the Danube Delta promoting sustainable development and biodiversity conservation</p> <p>A.1.3: Establish cooperation and harmonisation of the management plans between protected areas on transboundary Western Balkan rivers of the Danube basin (e.g. River Sava, River Drava, River Una, River Morava)</p> <p>A.1.4: Develop (in a participatory manner) a Danube Masterplan for the Conservation and Restoration of Biodiversity Values for mainstreaming into inland navigation programmes and integration with the navigation Master Plan for the Danube (Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and its navigable tributaries)</p> <p>A.1.5: Strengthening the Danube River Network of Protected Areas (DANUBEPARKS): strengthening the structure, building up the new office hosted by Nature Park Kopacki rit (HR), beside the existing office in Austria (hosted by Donau Auen National Park), enlargement of the DANUBEPARKS Network by three new members: Lonjsko Polje Nature Park, Mura-Drava Regional Park in Osijek-Baranja county and Comana Nature Park.</p>	<p>A.1.1 On 16 September 2021, UNESCO designated the Mura-Drava-Danube as the world's first „5-country biosphere reserve“, which represents a historic step towards an international model for regional conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable development. Stretching across Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia, the biosphere reserve covers 700km of the Mura, Drava, and Danube rivers and almost 1 million hectare in the so-called „Amazon of Europe“ – making it the largest riverine protected area on the continent. With its rare floodplain forests, gravel and sandbanks, islands, oxbows, and riverine meadows, the new reserve sustains extraordinary biodiversity as well as the livelihoods of 900 000 people.</p> <p>A.1.5 The gained know-how from protected areas management in the Danube Region and the transnational approach (DANUBEPARKS) has been systematically exchanged with other protected area networks. The continuous exchange of experience with ELBE PARKS, the Network of Protected Areas along the Elbe river, has resulted in the submission of a joint project in the Erasmus programme, with main focus on visitor centres, rangers and volunteers.</p>	<p>A.1.1 under the lead of WWF, in July 2020 the DTP project lifelineMDD was launched, aiming to improve ecological connectivity through a cross-sectoral partnership and the implementation of restoration measures; WWF organised a successful mid-term conference 24-26 November 2021, bringing together the scientific community working in and on the UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube.</p> <p>A.1.3 Croatia is currently in the process of preparing N2k management plans along Drava and Sava rivers. On Sava River there is network of protected areas which is collaborating quite actively. On Una River the agreement about future collaboration was signed between Una National Park and the Public Institute responsible for N2k site in Croatia in regards to the large carnivores corridor.</p> <p>A.1.4 Preliminary discussions on the concept within PA 6.</p>	<p>A.1.1 The development of a strategic integrated approach to river restoration in the transboundary bio-corridor based on scientific studies of bio-indicators fish and river birds and abiotic framework conditions sediment transport and climate change.</p>

ACTION 2: Build capacities of national and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, expert and scientific community in the environment related matters (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Involvement of other PAs: DSTF has an important interface not only with EUSDR PA 6 of which DSTF is a part, but also with EUSDR PA 4 (Water Quality) with which EUSDR PA 6 cooperates closely in view of the important role of water management in sturgeon conservation, including in the ICPDR.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 2.1: Strengthen horizontal knowledge transfer and access to environmental data between national authorities responsible for nature conservation (especially those of neighbouring countries)</p> <p>Activity 2.2: Strengthen cooperation and knowledge transfer between scientific community and different stakeholders</p> <p>Activity 2.3: Facilitate experience exchange of participatory management of Emerald Network sites aiming to restore and/or maintain conservation values while fostering benefits for local people</p>	<p>A.2.1 Within the DTP project Connectgreen, which was implemented under the lead of WWF and in close cooperation with the Carpathian Convention (CC), the ecological corridors database was completed. By integrating it into the CC database CCIBIS, these data have become available for use by nature conservationists, spatial planners, decision-makers, students and other stakeholders. (www.ccibis.org).</p> <p>A.2.2 In 2020 DSTF published a scientific justification for multi-decadal bans on taking Danube sturgeons in the wild (fishing and by-catch). Such bans are necessary to ensure that the species on the verge of extinction do not become extinct. The document was submitted to Ministers and authorities responsible for fisheries, nature conservation and water management in the Danube Basin as well as the wider Black Sea basin.</p> <p>Also in 2020 and 2021 DSTF contributed to the DTP project "MEASURES", focusing on the conditions for migratory fish species in the Danube Basin. These include governance issues that should be addressed to ensure that the scientific recommendations will result in effective transboundary conservation measures. The project has provided input to policy in the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and in individual Danube countries.</p> <p>Throughout 2020 and 2021 DSTF has worked closely with the Secretariat of the ICPDR, Danube country Governments and observers from civil society to develop the 2021 Update of the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP). The DSTF provided substantial contributions to this</p>	<p>A.2.1. Within the frame of the ConnectGREEN DTP project, a knowledge transfer conference for protected area professionals from all Carpathian countries and interested experts on the different aspects of ecological connectivity was successfully conducted. The Conference helped to strengthen the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas and shared the tools developed during ConnectGREEN and triggered lively discussions on experience exchange.</p> <p>A.2.2. For an overall assessment of progress in sturgeon conservation see reply on Action 3.1 below.</p>	<p>A.2.1 By the end of 2022, the DTP project Save-GREEN will deliver a comprehensive capacity building programme including tools for conducting Strategic Environmental Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and cost-benefit analysis taking ecological connectivity into account, and a handbook of best practices for planning and implementation of mitigation measures.</p> <p>A.2.2 As there are now again bans on sturgeon fishing in place throughout the Lower Danube and Black Sea basins, DSTF decided to disband its Working Group on fishing bans. There are however nevertheless issues with respect to ensuring effective enforcement of the bans which Danube countries will have to address. As conservation measures are now gradually being introduced in key areas it will become important to be able to monitor the development of populations to assess whether the measures taken are effective and sufficient. Population monitoring is currently very scant and where it exists, there is little or no coordination between actors and even less across national borders. As the Danube sturgeons are migratory and transboundary species any population monitoring scheme will have to be aligned across national borders and preferably cover both fresh and marine waters to provide meaningful and reliable results. DSTF has therefore established a Working Group to develop proposals for a Danube Basin-wide system for monitoring of sturgeon populations. The WG has developed a discussion paper with proposals for such steps which are under discussion with the country representatives in the SG of PA 6.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	<p>Plan on issues related to sturgeons which are considered by the ICPDR to be a 'flagship species' for the Danube.</p> <p>Throughout 2019, 2020 and 2021 DSTF has had contacts with the EC/DG MARE and members of the European Parliament. DSTF and WWF presented sturgeon issues related to their marine environment and on IUU and by-catch to the GFCM Black Sea Working Group in July 2021. Following the discussion a pilot project for assessing by-catch in the BS was agreed and suggested to the 44th annual session of the General Fisheries Council of the Mediterranean under the auspices of the UN's FAO, where a new Resolution GFCM/44/2021/5 on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of sturgeons in the Black Sea was adopted.</p> <p>It is important to supplement the efforts to reduce sturgeon mortality in the Danube Basin and limit as much as possible sturgeon mortality in the Black Sea so as not to offset the benefits of sturgeon fishing bans in the inland waters of the Danube Basin.</p> <p>A.2.3 The Interreg DTP project "Transdanube Travel Stories" builds a network with 10 partners from 7 countries. 6 new international tourist trails were developed including Sustainable Tourism Mobility plans.</p>		<p>Contrary to water management where transboundary cooperation and joint and aligned implementation of measures has been established for decades, there is little such tradition in the policy area of nature conservation and biodiversity. The next crucial step will be to establish cooperation between the relevant national authorities in order to develop and implement aligned monitoring methods and to ensure that there is a joined-up interpretation of the results from individual countries. This will be crucial for making progress, and DSTF relies on the assistance of the PA 6 SG to help catalyse this development.</p> <p>On the follow-up of the 2021 Update of the DRBMP (see Actions 3.1, 5.2 and 5.3.) DSTF will support the process set to start under GFCM to provide further clarity about the size and potential impact of bycatch on sturgeon populations. DSTF will additionally raise the need for habitat protection in the Black Sea region with BS stakeholders.</p> <p>A.2.3. In the framework of DTP project "Transdanube Travel Stories" the „experience tools“ will be developed to help visitors to experience the story of these trails by using environmentally-friendly means of transport and therefore limit the negative, transport related consequences of raising tourist numbers.</p>

ACTION 3: Develop and/or implement conservation action plans and/or management plans for endangered umbrella species of the Danube Region (Strategic

Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Involvement of other PAs: A.3.1 DSTF has an important interface not only with EUSDR PA 6 of which DSTF is a part, but also with EUSDR PA 4 (Water Quality) with which EUSDR PA 6 cooperates closely in view of the important role of water management in sturgeon conservation, including in the ICPDR.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Activity 3.1: Implement the Danube-related measures from the Pan-European action plan for sturgeon conservation	A.3.1 The Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons (2018) and the Sturgeon 2020 programme (2012) provide the overall umbrella for DSTF actions and priorities. The Galati conference in 2019	A.3.1 There has been substantial progress in terms of commitment and the practical consequences will depend on the vigour with which these commitments are implemented. DSTF will	A.3.1 With respect to preventing capture of wild sturgeons, DSTF will focus on ensuring support for implementation and enforcement of existing

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 3.2: Establish science-based cross-border monitoring and management of large carnivores</p> <p>Activity 3.3: Identify further endangered habitats and endangered umbrella species of the Danube Region and assess the need for development and/or implementation of their conservation action plans and/or management plans</p>	<p>co-organised by DSTF resulted in a Declaration setting out the main priorities for sturgeon conservation (prevention of taking wild sturgeons, conservation hatcheries and restocking, and restoring and protecting habitats and migration corridors). The following has been achieved to address these priorities:</p> <p>i) The DSRF fishing ban paper has contributed to the fact that Romania has issued an unlimited fishing ban for sturgeon and Bulgaria prolonged its ban until 2025. Fishing bans are therefore now in place across the Danube River Basin and the Black Sea basin with the exception of Austria (3 federal states), Croatia and Slovakia who regulate but still allow some fishing of Sterlet.</p> <p>ii) DSTF has helped facilitate development and financing of a conservation breeding and release programme in Romania - financed through national operational funds under the ERDF. DSTF has also supported a joint Austrian, Hungarian and Slovenian proposal for a conservation hatchery for all Danube sturgeon species submitted to the LIFE programme. It is awaiting a final decision on funding in 2022.</p> <p>iii) With the 2021 update of the ICPDR River Basin Management Plan there are plans to restore continuity at about 450 barriers throughout the Danube basin until 2027 with priority for establishing continuity for long-distance migrators. In addition, it now also contains a clear commitment by the ICPDR and its Contracting Parties to identify and protect habitats for migratory species and to ensure the protection of ecological corridors, including habitats and migration routes.</p> <p>A.3.2. The “International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians” was adopted by the Carpathian Convention Conference of the</p>	<p>where it has the possibilities remain vigilant with a view to ensuring that these commitments are implemented and to ensure that remaining gaps are filled.</p> <p>The progress in addressing the main priorities for sturgeon conservation is set out above.</p> <p>A special issue in the Danube are the two hydroelectric dams at the Iron Gate on the Serbian-Romanian border. These dams effectively isolate species in the lower third of the Danube Basin from the upper two thirds, and vice-versa preventing any species migration across this barrier. These dams are a particularly difficult obstacle to species migration. DSTF has been active in facilitating provision of EU funds for a European Parliament pilot study (We Pass 2) to provide by 2024 preliminary designs and costings for fish passage facilities at the Iron Gate. An expert assessment under a previous project (We Pass 1, funded by the Danube Transnational Programme) concluded that despite the complex topography at the location, constructing fish passage facilities at the Iron Gate is technically feasible.</p> <p>Considering the progress made in other areas, DSTF decided that the time had come to establish a Working Group on sturgeon population monitoring as set out above (see Action 2.2.).</p>	<p>bans and support the process of GFCM in establishing the knowledge base on marine bycatch and become an active voice when recommendations for fisheries management measures will be developed.</p> <p>With respect to conservation hatcheries and restocking DSTF will focus on following developments and on raising discussions about the need for sustained funding of hatchery and restocking activities which are likely to be needed for decades.</p> <p>With respect to ecological corridors, fish passage and habitats, DSTF will focus on ensuring in ICPDR together with Contracting Parties that a joined-up and effective transboundary implementation and concrete plans for habitats and ecological integrity that will result in a meaningful ecological network of habitats and migration corridors for sturgeons. A priority for DSTF in this respect will be to promote a closer involvement of nature protection authorities in the work of the ICPDR and water managers to restore and protect ecological corridors and habitats.</p> <p>As set out above, substantial work has already been carried out with a view to re-establishing fish passage at the Iron Gate. Similarly, there is a dam complex at Gabčíkovo in Slovakia blocking fish passage between the upper third of the Danube Basin and the remaining basin. It will be a priority for DSTF to assist ICPDR and Slovakia in finding solutions to restore fish passage at this location.</p> <p>Finally, for major projects such as re-establishing fish passage at the Iron Gate the question of financing of such major works will arise. DSTF will work together with stakeholders to facilitate equitable and timely solutions for raising the finance needed to implement the necessary measures.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	<p>Parties in November 2021. The Action plan provides an important tool for adequately managing and protecting Carpathian natural heritage and restoring the ecological connectivity in the region. By setting an example of transboundary coordination and a population-based approach to the conservation of large carnivores, this Action Plan will benefit the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube Region as well as Europe and beyond.</p> <p>A.3.3 The Danube Free Sky initiative has been launched in the frame of DANUBEparksCONNECTED. Building on the achievement of this Interreg DTP project, the Danube-wide LIFE Danube Free Sky project has been started, with the focus on priority bird species.</p>		<p>A.3.2 The Carpathian Convention works towards a transnational monitoring system for large carnivores with support of WWF.</p> <p>A.3.3 In the upcoming years, concrete conservation actions will be implemented together with the energy sector to minimise the impact of bird collision and electrocution of birds, and to strengthen the Danube as important bird flyway.</p>

ACTION 4: Promote research to develop and apply the most appropriate methods for prevention and control of IAS and for management of the priority pathways in line with the DIAS Strategy and IAS Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Involvement of other PAs: DIAS activities may have relation to EUSDR PA 4 (Water quality) and EUSDR PA 5 (Environmental risks).

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 4.1: Collect and analyse data about alien species in the Danube Region</p> <p>Activity 4.2: Develop an early warning and rapid response system, action plan(s) for the priority pathways at regional level and transboundary eradication plans for invasive species</p> <p>Activity 4.3: Strengthen cooperation and knowledge transfer between all interested parties (involved sectors)</p>	<p>A.4.1 DIAS contributed to the collection and analysis of data on invasive alien species in the frame of JDS4. The aim was to achieve comparable data along the Danube River, its main tributaries and adjacent standing water bodies in order to assess the current status in respect to bio invasions and to evaluate the impact caused by IAS. Different methods were used, for the first time including environmental DNA-based approach and recording with the smartphone App 'Invasive Alien Species in Europe' developed by EC Joint Research Centre (JRC). A total of 58 alien species has been reported and the results have shown that the DRB is under considerable influence by biological invasions. For future IAS monitoring, a combination of different methods and sampling of additional sites is recommended. The results are summarised in Chapter 10 of the JDS4 report of ICPDR.</p>	<p>A.4.1 DIAS has continued working with citizen scientists. BioBlitz events related to invasive alien species have been organised at European level under the COST Action CA17122 Increasing understanding of alien species through citizen science (Alien CSI). In Bulgaria, the BioBlitz surveys will be conducted on 20–22 May 2022. An event dedicated to the World Fish Migration Day is co-organised by DIAS and will be held on 21 May 2022 in the region of Pancharevo Lake, Sofia Municipality (the Danube River Basin). More information about the event can be found here.</p> <p>A.4.2 The Manual for the management of vertebrate IAS of Union concern prepared under the project 'Identification, assessment, sharing and dissemination of best practices for the humane management of invasive alien species' led by IUCN and funded by the EC, has been finalised</p>	<p>Update of the DIAS Strategy.</p> <p>Organisation of the next Joint ESENIAS & DIAS conference – it is planned to be held in person in Antalya, Turkey, in November – December 2022.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	<p>A.4.2 Testing, validating and updating of the 'Invasive Alien Species in Europe' app was conducted in the Lower Danube Region. It included three stages: (1) Testing the effectiveness of the app in Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia by organising information and field testing campaigns; (2) Improving and extending the functionality of the app and developing a list of the IAS of concern for the Danube River Basin; and (3) Testing the updated app during the JDS4 campaign. The developed new functionality of the app has allowed the recording of 64 species of DRB concern. The app has an important role in increasing public awareness on IAS issues, as well as in enlarging the participation and output of citizen science in the IAS early detection, monitoring and reporting in the DRB. More information can be found here.</p> <p>With respect to IAS management, a workshop with stakeholders 'Black Sea, Steppic & Continental (East) Regional Workshop' was held on 23–24 March 2021 online, organised within the project 'Identification, assessment, sharing and dissemination of best practices for the humane management of invasive alien species' led by IUCN and funded by the EC. A draft manual on measures available to eradicate, control and contain populations of vertebrate IAS of EU concern was presented. Based on their experience and expertise, participants discussed the proposed 32 measures for the management of 22 IAS (1 amphibian, 1 reptile, 4 fish, 5 birds and 11 mammals) in terms of their effectiveness, costs, humaneness, innovation, positive or negative side effects and their applicability in accordance with the current national legislation.</p> <p>A.4.3 DIAS together with ESENIAS organised the Joint ESENIAS and DIAS Scientific Conference and 10th ESENIAS Workshop entitled 'Ten years of co-</p>	<p>and will be presented at a conference and distributed with assistance of DIAS among all Danube countries.</p> <p>Several projects related to IAS management with DIAS participants are ongoing at national level:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project POIM2014 + 120008 – Adequate management of invasive species in Romania, in accordance with EU Regulation 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species (2018–2022) The project is coordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests of Romania and the University of Bucharest. The general objective of the project is to create the necessary scientific and administrative tools for the efficient management of invasive species in Romania, in accordance with the EU Regulation 1143/2014. 2. National Science Programme 'Protecting the environment and reducing the risk of adverse events and natural disasters', Working Programme I.7. Biodiversity, ecosystem functions and quality of living environment, Task 4. Development of national system for early detection and warning of invasive alien species (2018–2022). The project has been implemented by the Institut of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria. 3. Educational Capacity Strengthening for Risk Management of Non-native Aquatic Species in Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) (2020–2022) Funded by Erasmus+ Programme. 	

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	operation and networking on invasive alien species in East and South Europe', from 7–9 December 2021, online. One of the main topics covered was 'The Danube River as invasive alien species corridor'. DIAS communicated its activities and exchanged experience and information with interested parties at several public events, e.g. 11th Danube Academies Conference 2021 online; 43rd IAD Conference 'Rivers and Floodplains in the Anthropocene: Upcoming Challenges in the Danube River Basin' 2021 in Neuburg (Germany), Sava TIES 3 rd Training 'Preserving Sava River Basin Habitats through Transnational Management of Invasive Alien Species' 2021 online; and Workshop 'Enhancing advisory and participatory process in control, monitoring and management of IAS in Turkey' 2021, online.		

ACTION 5: Anchoring the concept of EU green infrastructure in the Danube Region (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 5.1: Development of a common approach to define and determine ecological corridors for key target species on land and improve the communication, knowledge and data sharing between Environmental, Transport and Spatial planning sectors on spatial integration of green and blue infrastructure</p> <p>Activity 5.2: Establish a network of linked protected areas and policy stakeholders to enhance ecological connectivity outside protected areas</p> <p>Activity 5.3: Pilot actions towards closing gaps of ecological corridors</p> <p>Activity 5.4: Stimulate the ecological restoration of wetlands along Danube Region (particularly in the Danube delta).</p>	<p>A.5.1 & A.5.2: ConnectGREEN project elaborated the "Methodology for Identification of Ecological Corridors in the Carpathians Using Large Carnivores as Umbrella Species" together with relevant stakeholders in the Carpathian Convention community. The Methodology was applied and a robust model network of ecological corridors across the Carpathians was developed and discussed with national experts in 5 of the 7 Carpathian countries. As ecological connectivity is not a nature conservation issue only, ConnectGREEN attempted to reach out to other sectors, in particular spatial planners and developed another useful tool, the "Guidelines on How to Use Spatial Planning Tools in Integrative Management of Ecological Corridors".</p>	<p>A.5.3 ConnectGREEN provided Action Plans for 4 pilot areas indicating the conflict areas and possible solutions to overcome the problems between wildlife and economic development. The plans were developed together with relevant stakeholders and it is hoped that they will implement them in the near future.</p> <p>A.5.2, A.5.3 and A.5.4 Under the Interreg DTP project DANUBEparksCONNECTED, the WILDisland initiative has been developed. A cross-sectoral partnership has been built, a Danube-wide inventory (over 900 islands, 147 island more or less untouched by human activities) form a network of dynamic riverine habitats.</p> <p>Building on these achievements, the LIFE WILDisland project has been developed and approved in 2021. It aims to strengthen ecological connectiv-</p>	<p>A.5.2, A.5.3 and A.5.4 between 2021 - 2027, over 14 million EUR will be invested by the Danube-wide consortium to restore 34 islands, 48 km of waterbodies, over 1,400 ha of wetlands, and to build up and to strengthen a Danube WILDisland habitat corridor.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	A.5.2 and A.5.3 DSTF's contribution to establishing ecological corridors is described under Action 3.1 above.	ity and preserve the natural wilderness thus improving the coherence of the NATURA 2000 network; restore natural processes, demonstrate good practice for cross-sector and cross-border cooperation; locate WILDIslands and identify commitments with relevant policy drivers, sectors and land managers to preserve their natural heritage and improve the conservation status of 1,267 ha of softwood riparian forests, restoring and maintaining a total of 34 islands and 39 SCIs along the Danube.	

ACTION 6: Promote ecological connectivity through cooperation between macro-regional strategies (MRS) (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 6.1: Establish the cooperation between the MRS approaches in establishing ecological connectivity and GI.</p> <p>PA 6 is contributing to fostering synergies across MRS focusing on contribution to biodiversity. In 2019, with the support of the INTERACT, the PACs organised a workshop with other MRS to initiate systematic sectoral exchange and cooperation of MRS with biodiversity as main topic. Thematic areas for initiation of this cooperation were recognised: ecological connectivity, actions/flagships planned, closer collaboration and exchange between MRS thematic coordinators, etc. This continued with different events. In September 2020 the PAC participated as the panellist in an online event organised by INTERACT – “The opportunities of the European Green Deal and the EU macro-regional strategies” in the session “Macro-regional actions contributing to the European Green Deal and the economic recovery: Ecological corridors to prevent genetic isolation (Blue and Green infrastructure): the business case for biodiversity”. The discussion was oriented to pointing out the possible solutions how to keep a</p>	<p>INTERACT online event “The opportunities of the European Green Deal and the EU macro-regional strategies” (September 2020)</p> <p>9th EUSDR Annual Forum (October 2020)</p> <p>International conference on ecological connections (“Protected Areas - Cornerstones of Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians and Beyond”</p> <p>The concept of „tiny areas“ as stepping stones in ecological corridors is well established in some countries of the Adriatic Ionian Region. In 2021, an experience exchange with partners and protected areas from the Adriatic Region has been developed, to raise the awareness and the capacity in the Danube Region. The MARTI project has been submitted in the Interreg Central Europe programme, bringing together protected areas networks from the Adriatic Region, DANUBEP-ARKS and the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas.</p>	<p>Meeting held in Zagreb, Croatia in 2019, triggered more cross MRS meetings indicated by different MRS coordinators facilitating the joint approach on the possibilities that MRS offer in terms of contributions to the European Green Deal.</p>	<p>PA 6 related topics do not stop at borders of the Macro-regions; the achieved targets have spill over effects or simply need cross macro-regional solutions, especially in terms of ecological connectivity or green corridors. Nature protection and biodiversity conservation are topics in all four macro-regions. In 2022 further cross MRS meeting will be organised on the initiative of PA 6.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>balance between economic interests and growth while getting more aware of environmentally responsible economy in a light of economic recovery caused by COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>PACs also participated in the 9th EUSDR Annual Forum (October 2020) as organisers and the moderators of the panel “The ecologic perspective of the sustainable regional development”, structuring the discussions around 3 main points: (i) “State of ecosystems in EU with a look on the Danube Region” - based on the report “Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services: An EU ecosystem Assessment”; (ii) “Why is ecological connectivity important to reach ambitious EU agenda” and (iii) “What MRS solutions are already out there”.</p> <p>EUSDR PA 6 has been represented at the international conference on ecological connections (“Protected Areas - Cornerstones of Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians and Beyond”) in Visegrád, Hungary in September 2021. The presentation showed that protected areas often overlap with the main active tourism routes, and this may need special attention.</p> <p>Accordingly, this will continue in 2022 with the organisation of the additional workshop, for the purpose of further foster synergies across MRS.</p>			

ACTION 7: Enhance and/or maintain soil-related ecosystem services (ES) (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Involvement of other PAs: Within the activities at HOAL Petzenkirchen, a link between EUSDR PA 7 and PA 4 is established.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 7.1: Develop harmonised Soil Maps for the Danube Region</p> <p>Activity 7.2: Strengthen the implementation of shelter belts as biotope network systems</p> <p>Activity 7.3: Research on production potential of agricultural areas and application of appropriate agroecological measures</p>	<p>1) Interreg SYMBIO Network for drought-adapted and biodiversity-promoting management in town and country</p> <p>2) Production of video: Biodiversity through Hedgeplanting and Hedge maintenance;</p>	<p>1) Activities to combine wind shelter belts with ecological indicators including soil quality status have been progressing in 2021.</p> <p>2) Data collection on soil information within the LTER site HOAL Petzenkirchen has been continued</p>	<p>Organisation of the 29th Conference of the Working Group Sustainability / Soil Protection of the Working Community of the Danube Regions with the topic „EU Mission Soil Deal for Europe Best Practice Examples Integrated land use systems</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 7.4: Research on appropriate measures for climate change mitigation and/or adaptation</p> <p>1) Organisation of 28th Conference of the Working Group Sustainability / Soil Protection of the Working Community of the Danube Regions, 15-16 September 2021 in Tulln, Austria. The topic was "Soil Ecosystem Services in Agricultural Landscapes on the example of Hedgerows" - Contributions to Soil protection, to enhanced Productivity, Climate Change Adaptation & Biodiversity.</p> <p>2) Stakeholder participation in research project "EroWin" funded by the Austrian Climate Research Program (ACRP). The project deals with protection effects of windbreaks against wind erosion.</p> <p>3) Funding of several projects on ecological effects of wind shelter belts</p> <p>4) Support of data collection for the LTER site "Hydrological Open Air Laboratory (HOAL) Petzenkirchen. Extended information about activities on this soil and hydrological research site can be found here.</p> <p>5) Cooperation in research project on development of ecological indicators for wind shelter belts. Development of an indicator set to identify ecological workout of wind shelter belts.</p> <p>6) Support of Master thesis to study the ecological state of wind shelter belts in Lower Austria</p> <p>7) Cooperation in research project on the effect of wind shelter belts on soil quality (site Absdorf, Lower Austria).</p>	<p>3) Finalisation of Master thesis on ecological indicators for hedge rows (Alexandra Dürr, University of Vienna)</p>		<p>for multifunctional landscapes", 27- 28th September 2022 in Tulln, Austria. The draft programme may be accessed here.</p>

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 (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Activity 8.1: Identify locations with obsolete pesticide and similar chemical remains</p>	<p>The TFPC tried to contact and re-establish a network of stakeholders in the relevant countries, however despite several attempts and efforts</p>	<p>TFPC concluded with the work.</p>	<p>No further steps are foreseen.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Activity 8.2: Prepare risk management plans in the case of environmental accidents Activity 8.3: Prepare remediation plans	there was no response. Several activities have been provided (participation at the conferences, contact via e-mails, telephone contacts, etc.), financially supported by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia. Due to lack of interest on the 8.1. Activity TFPC concluded its work and does not foresee any further activity.		

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 (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Activity 9.1: Upgrade and further development of the monitoring network on air pollutants based on JRC air quality studies Activity 9.2: Report on air quality in the Danube Region Activity 9.3: Develop Air Protection Programme for the Danube Region	TFAQ concluded with the work.	N/A	No further steps are foreseen.

ACTION 10: Stimulate the management and the ecological restoration of wetlands, particularly in the Danube delta (Strategic Objective: Counteracting Climate Change)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
To implement management structures to monitor and counteract wetland losses, and to stop wetland losses and promote the restoration of degraded wetlands, with a particular attention to the Danube delta, both for its role in biodiversity conservation and animal migration, and for the relevance of these environments in pollution prevention and carbon dioxide sequestration.	A Danube-wide consortium coordinated by the BOKU University developed and submitted the Danube4all project in the Horizon Danube Lighthouse programme, aiming to bring together best-practice restoration experiences, to implement 3 three case studies, and finally, to elaborate a Danube Restoration Strategy.		



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 (Strategic

Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: When exploring good examples of academia-business cooperation for further implementation across the EUSDR, cooperation links with EUSDR PA 8 Working Groups (and other MRSs) will be established. When the new calls or publication possibilities for scientists, innovators and educators are/will be open, EUSDR PA 7 will approach all relevant PACs according to their fields of the interest.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>PA 7 has a Working Group specifically focused on the Coordination of Funding Mechanisms in the Danube Region. In this implementation period, the work of the Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN) is directly linked with the PA 7 Action 1 of the EUSDR Action Plan. Its activities are based on the recommendations of the DRRIF feasibility study and on the activities of the FP7-funded Danube-INCO.NET project, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular exchange of information, finding cooperation opportunities, identifying potential gaps in the funding mechanism landscape, and developing new joint activities as appropriate allowing for enhanced cooperation and coordination of funding in the Danube Region. • Integration of Danube countries into existing structures and networks at the European and multilateral level. • The range of potential future joint activities of the DFCN involves joint calls, support to the mobility of researchers, widening/twinning activities, organisation of joint events for researchers and policy-makers as well as funding agencies as part of the strategic dialogue an within the Danube Region. • Screening of the Horizon Europe Work Programmes for application possibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of the Multilateral Danube Call (coordinated by the BMBWF Austria) - 20 multilateral projects selected and funded in the period of 2020-2021 • Negotiations of the preparation and conditions of the next (third) multilateral call among potential partner countries started (the call is foreseen to be open again in 2022) • Support to the preparation and promotion of the new EUREKA Danube Call • Support to the EUSDR PA 7 flagship project DREAM (BMBWF) 	<p>Adequate.</p>	<p>According to the yearly plan of the Working Group on DFCN, the main priorities for the upcoming year are negotiations, preparation and successful implementation of the 3rd edition of the Danube Multilateral Call on Scientific and Technical Cooperation, as well as EUREKA Danube Call.</p> <p>Similarly, the WG will keep focused on cooperation and support of other Working Groups in fulfilment of the other Actions, organisation and co-organisation of meetings, seminars, workshops and matchmaking events supporting new cooperation and funding possibilities for the Danube Region researchers.</p> <p>The WG will also keep screening the Horizon Europe Work Programmes for application possibilities, continue RI mapping and exploit sharing concepts in the EUSDR (maybe in cooperation with ESFRI and or the JRC), consider a cross-border EUSDR COST info day.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering a EUSDR/PA 7 specific input to the ERA document(s). Screening the new ERA communication for potential activities within the EUSDR. If seed-money kind of funds are available – call for ideas for future flagship projects in the region. 			

ACTION 2: To promote participation of Danube countries in EU R&I Programmes, in particular in Horizon Europe (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Other PAs were informed about the EUSDR PA 7 activities in this Action and invited to share information about the EUSDR PA 7 survey, study, policy recommendations and organised networking events.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>- Launching two surveys – one for applicants and potential applicants for projects under Horizon 2020 and one for policy makers. The data collected are analysed in order to present participation of the Danube Region countries in Horizon 2020 and make comparisons between associated and candidate countries. The results are used for formulating policy recommendations that could increase participation of the Danube Region countries in Horizon Europe.</p> <p>- On the basis of the launched surveys, the analysis “Participation of the Danube Region Countries in Horizon 2020” was prepared. The analysis presents participation of the Danube Region in Horizon 2020, national support mechanisms for the framework programmes and attitudes of the researchers and policy makers towards it. It also includes recommendations for the national and EU policy makers. The study consists of four main parts: The chapter Participation in Horizon 2020 brings the quantitative and qualitative comparisons of DR countries’ participation in Horizon 2020, their success rate and cooperation among them and beyond the Region. The second chapter focuses on national Horizon 2020 systems, primarily on support structures for Horizon 2020 in</p>	<p>- Launching a survey in the Danube Region countries and drafting a study “Participation of the Danube Region Countries in Horizon 2020”. The study is exploring the strengths and gaps in terms of participation of researchers from particular countries in Horizon 2020 (and in other European grant schemes) and aiming to better understand the differences in national support mechanisms and at latter stage also formulate recommendations for improving the performance on macro-regional level in the upcoming Horizon Europe programme.</p> <p>- Organisation of information and networking events for the stakeholders from the Danube Region: 1) stakeholder workshop “Increasing participation of the Danube Region countries in Horizon Europe”; 2) widening event “Facilitating Research and Innovation Cooperation in the Danube Region”.</p> <p>- Enabling long-term virtual matchmakings (B2B) meetings for the targeted Horizon Europe “Widening” calls.</p>	<p>In accordance with the Action plan and DTP PAC project.</p>	<p>The plan is to continue with supporting the stakeholders from the Danube Region in their participation for the EU R&I Programmes. This includes improving capacities in preparing project proposals, fostering mutual learning and networking, promoting EU R&I calls.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>EUSDR countries. The third chapter assesses the results of the survey that was conducted among DR countries. The last chapter contains recommendation for increasing participation and a SWOT Analysis.</p> <p>As a continuation of these activities, a stakeholder workshop “Increasing participation of the Danube Region countries in Horizon Europe” was organised on June 18th 2021, where the results of the study, funding possibilities for the researchers from the Danube Region and new recommendations for policy makers were presented.</p> <p>- PA 7 also organised a widening event “Facilitating Research and Innovation Cooperation in the Danube Region” on October 28th, 2021, to bridge potential applicants from the Danube Region in upcoming Horizon Europe “Widening” calls. The event included information on the main conditions of the addressed calls, presentation of several successfully implemented projects and discussions.</p> <p>- The Info day was supplemented by the possibility of long-term virtual matchmakings (B2B) meetings open until 15 March 2022 (deadline of the targeted Horizon Europe “Widening” calls). The bilateral virtual matchmaking (B2B) meetings have provided prospective applicants or researchers an opportunity to meet and discuss ideas for joint projects and to build consortia.</p>			

ACTION 3: To strengthen cooperation among universities, research organisations and SMEs in the Danube Region (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development; Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Especially EUSDR PA 9 and PA 10.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
PA 7 has an active role in meetings and activities of Danube Rectors’ Conference (DRC). This included participation in the DRC Presidency meetings, DRC Presidency and Permanent Committee	Especially the usage of knowledge and results from the DTP projects focused on the capacity	Moderate.	PA 7 has a functioning Working Group on Higher education and mobility which has the following plans for the next period: interaction with academic institutions, exchange of best practices in

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Meeting, DRC Annual Conference and DRC General Assembly.</p> <p>The DRC Presidency and Permanent Committee and General Assembly meetings were focused on the activities performed throughout the year, as well as developments of the DRC network and other topics. During the DRC General Assembly 2021, the remarkable achievements of the past year were discussed. Two new DRC initiatives - the DRC Initiative Found and the DRC Strategic Foresight - have been agreed upon, two new members were welcomed in the network: the University of Reutlingen and the J. Selye University of Komarno as well as the financial budget for 2022 was approved.</p> <p>As part of the DRC Presidency, PA 7 participated in voting for the Danubius Young Scientist Awards and in Urgent appeal to European Governments and EU Institutions: Take Action for Afghanistan's scholars, researchers, and civil society actors.</p>	<p>building of VET partnerships in the Danube Region for the effective modernisation of VET systems across the region.</p> <p>Cooperation links with all projects thematic pole 9 of the DTP Capitalisation Strategy have been established: https://www.interreg-danube.eu/relevant-documents/dtp-capitalisation-strategy/thematic-pole-9-educational-governance</p>		<p>the Danube Region, harvesting of previously defined data, screening of possible opportunities, capacity building of HE institutions together with EU university alliances.</p>

ACTION 4: To increase awareness and visibility of science and innovation in the Danube Region (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Cooperation with all PAs in the sense of promotion of science and its visibility (not only on the macro-regional level but beyond) is crucial.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As response to the COVID-19 pandemic PA 7 strongly supported initiatives with strategic importance, as "EU vs Crisis", where the PA 7 team provided a global support to the organisation and handled the communication to the European Commission. The Hackathon was organised on 24, 25 and 26 April by the EC. - Organisation of a streaming live interview with a Slovak scientist (Mr Norbert Žilka) in March 2021 with the aim to support vaccination against COVID-19. Mr Žilka is the director of the Institute of Neuroimmunology of the Slovak Academy of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution to organisation of EU vs Virus Hackathon - Sharing information about importance of vaccination against COVID-19 	Moderate.	<p>Supporting events and initiatives aiming at promoting the Danube Region as an attractive place for scientific work and innovation in order to support brain circulation and prevent brain drain.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Sciences and the scientific director of the biotechnology company Axon Neuroscience, which develops a peptide vaccine against the coronavirus ACvac1. He is also involved in research of vaccines, new drugs and diagnostic tools for Alzheimer's disease. In the discussion, he answered questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccines in general and discussed people's mistrust towards the vaccination as such.			

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 (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development; Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Other PAs were informed about the EUSDR PA 7 activities in this Action and invited to share information about the EUSDR PA 7 survey, reports and policy recommendations.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
- Data collection and systematisation connected to RIS3 in the EUSDR – PA 7 offered a report on smart specialisation strategies in terms of identified S3 priorities and initiatives facilitating S3 cooperation. Among 14 Danube Region countries, 11 have adopted smart specialisation strategies. Non-EU countries and regions are also using S3 approach for developing strategies for national and regional innovation. The analysis has shown that the most frequent R&I priorities in the Danube Region are: Food, ICT and Health/Medicine. These overlapping priorities can be an indicator for potential industrial and/or scientific cooperation. S3 cooperation contributes to tackling common challenges and needs while avoiding uniformity and duplication in regional investment goals. This is especially relevant for lagging countries and regions which can improve their capacities through S3 collaboration. The report also explains the relevance of initiatives fostering S3 cooperation in the Danube Region: activities of Joint Research Centre, Danube Funding Coordination	The following reports: - Data collection and systematisation connected to RIS3 in the Danube Region - Analysis of RIS3 in the Danube Region - monitoring, evaluation & recommendations	In accordance with the Action plan and DTP PAC project.	PA 7 has a Working Group focused on RIS3 and its future activities will be related to screening the possibilities and funds for interregional cooperation in the Danube Region and for joining to JRC thematic platforms; organisation of the meetings with JRC on regular bases; organisation of capacity building workshops (in cooperation with JRC) for enhancing skills of the staff involved in RIS3 design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; organisation of the workshops on the basis of identified common priorities in the Danube Region with the focus on launching future joint regional actions and creating regional value chains.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Network, Call for multilateral scientific and technological cooperation in the Danube Region, DTP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching a survey for representatives of the Danube Region countries involved in RIS3 creation and/or implementation, monitoring and evaluation – to collect best practices related to smart specialisation strategies in the Danube Region in order to support countries and regions with relevant policy recommendations. - Analysis of RIS3 in the Danube Region - PA 7 drafted a report with the results of the survey on RIS3 launched in 2021. The analysis contains a description of RIS3 processes related to: RIS3 implementation, monitoring and evaluation, thematic platforms and macro-regional partnerships, challenges and achievements of RIS3, effect of COVID-19. The survey has shown that there are various possibilities for improvement of RIS3 processes in the Danube Region, both in EU and non-EU countries. Therefore, the final chapter focuses on recommendations for RIS3 policy makers based on the results of the survey. - Attending events organised by the JRC and dedicated to further development of Smart Specialisation Strategy in the region. - Participation in the events of the United Nations related to the Science, technology and innovation (STI) roadmaps for sustainable development goals (SDGs). 			

ACTION 6: To promote horizontal cooperation in science and technology across all PAs and other MRS (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Cooperation with EUSDR PA 8 and PA 9 as explained in the section “activities”.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
- PA 7 was leading (with support of PA 9 and DRC) the task force in all four macro-regions focused on home-schooling.	- Collection of best practices from the area of home-schooling and e-learning (https://knowledge-society.danube-region.eu/dtp-capitalisation-strategy/mrs-good-practices/)	Adequate	The focus will be on the following activities: implementation of joint activities with other PAs and MRSs; exploring the possibilities with JRC and DTP

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of a joint Steering Group meeting with EUSDR PA 8 (Competitiveness of Enterprises) in June 2020 with the aim to exchange views on the new actions and strategic themes of both PAs and find ways and linkages for enhancing future cooperation and better embedding of the EUSDR into EU Programmes. - Exploring possibilities for cooperation with the EUSAIR in the framework of S3 implementation. - Cooperation with the DTP thematic pole 9 on educational governance. - Cooperation with the DTP thematic pole 1 on Innovative ecosystem for SMEs - joining the policy dialogue workshop organised by DTP project Danube S3 cluster. - Attending various online events organised by the European Commission mostly related to paving the way for sustainable COVID-19 recovery and future resilience, and in that respect about the importance of opening data, exchange the data, future cooperation, building the platforms, opening of research infrastructures. - Communicating with Austrian EUREKA office about the necessity of stronger cooperation in the region especially when Austria starts with EUREKA chairmanship (July 2020). - Communication with the COST office concerning COST events. - Exchange of opinions with the Regional Cooperation Council and the Berlin process related to the research and innovation issues in the Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established cooperation with different PAs, MRSs, programmes, projects, institutions. 		<p>to manage the support to the common S3 priorities; organising the S3/TT workshops together with JRC; further contribution to the evidence of S3 development in different regions by JRC S3 Platform.</p>



PA 8 Competitiveness of Enterprises

ACTION 1: To foster cooperation and exchange of knowledge between SMEs, creative industry, academia, the public sector and civil society in areas of competence in the Danube Region (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
On 16 th November 2021, PA 8 organised in cooperation with the Consulate General of Hungary in Stuttgart a conference dedicated to sustainable value creation in the Danube Region including a pop-up fair. Objective of the hybrid event was to contribute to the sustainable transformation by presenting innovative approaches, best practices, new perspectives and further networking.	Networking and contacts were established.	The COVID-19 pandemic very much negatively influenced the whole governance. The meetings organised via online tools are effective, but many meetings had to be cancelled. Also the WG and especially the SG members were quite busy with their internal problems and had no time for the engagement within the PA.	

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 (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Within the Flagship project Danube Alliance a so called value chain generator is inserted that maps firms' resources and finds cross-regional & cross-sectoral supply chain opportunities.	Clusters or other interested enterprises, SMEs and institutions can use the value chain generator in order to find new partners to cooperate or to present themselves to others.	The value chain generator and the idea of the Danube Alliance approach in general was presented at several events and will be further presented and promoted. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively influenced the governance. Meetings organised via online tools are effective, but many meetings had to be cancelled. Also the WG and especially the SG members were busy with their internal problems and had no time for the engagement within the PA.	Further presentation and promotion as described above.

ACTION 3: Improvement of framework conditions, support programs and capacity building of stakeholders, to enhance the collaboration between cluster initiatives and regional innovation strategies, with an accent on rural areas (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>The idea of a unique Flagship project "Danube Alliance for a stronger European Value Chain" is under construction on this basis. Based on the support of PA 8 the project lead partner VDI/VDE received a kind of seed money from the State Ministry of Baden Württemberg and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Tourism. Based on the decision of the above ministries the project could start in January 2021. The following partners started the initiative: VDI/VDE, Steinbeis Europazentrum, University of Reutlingen and Biopro. One of the main aims of the project is to include partners from the Danube Region into the cooperation and to establish two labs: "Value Chains" and "Digital services", which should closely cooperate. Basically the following activities were undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development and validation of the value chain model for miscanthus and transfer in a simulation model, involving experts of the economy - modelling of the value chain network for sorghum, involving external experts of the economy - development of a working paper - presentation of the Flagship at several events. <p>A joint PA 7 and PA 8 SG meeting PA was organised targeting members of the Working Group of Clusters and Regional Development. The Coordinators of the Working Group were present at this meetings, sharing the information among its members.</p>	<p>The inclusion of cluster initiatives in the Danube Alliance</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic very much negatively influenced the whole governance. The meetings organised via online tools are effective, but many meetings had to be cancelled. Also the WG and especially the SG members were quite busy with their internal problems and had no time for the engagement within the PA.</p>	<p>The value chain models within the Danube Alliance models will be further developed and the network will be further expanded, especially in cluster.</p>

ACTION 4: To improve business support to strengthen the innovative and digital capacities of female-led-SMEs (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
An online Conference “Women&Men in the Construction sector in the Danube Region and beyond: Facing new challenges” was held on 9 th June 2020 with the aim of establishing better connections between small and medium-sized enterprises in the construction and related sectors. On 19 th May 2021 PA 8 hold a presentation during the international conference “Future of woman entrepreneurship” which was very well attended.	N/a	The COVID-19 pandemic very much negatively influenced the whole governance. The meetings organised via online tools are effective, but many meetings had to be cancelled. Also the WG and especially the SG members were quite busy with their internal problems and have no time for the engagement within the PA.	

ACTION 5: Enhance the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in the Danube Region SMEs

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
n/a	n/a	The COVID-19 pandemic very much negatively influenced the whole governance. The meetings organised via online tools are effective, but many meetings had to be cancelled. Also the WG and especially the SG members were quite busy with their internal problems and have no time for the engagement within the PA.	



PA 9 People & Skills

ACTION 1: Intensify Cooperation in Labour Market Policies (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 10 co-organises the meetings of the ESF MA Network

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The issue was being addressed in the framework of the Annual Stakeholder Conferences of PA 9 and in the PA 9 Steering Group meetings. Furthermore, meetings of the Network of ESF managing authorities in the Danube Region were organised.	A EaSI project called "SI PLUS" emerged from the ESF MA network. 2 meetings/year of the ESF MA were held to intensify the embedding process as well as transnational cooperation projects in the Danube Region.	The partners of the ESF MA Network have designed a common text module on transnational cooperation related to the EUSDR to be integrated in their respective ESF OPs.	Next steps are focusing on the development of transnational cooperation projects in the frame of ESF and EUSDR/PA 9.

ACTION 2: Digitalisation and Innovation in the World of Work (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The issue was being addressed in the framework of the Annual Stakeholder Conferences of PA 9 and in the PA 9 Steering Group meetings. Due to the pandemic, no meetings were held. However, partners implemented the Danube Region monitor that provides a basis for evidence-based indicators in the Danube Region. The Monitor will also be made available on the internet and regularly updated.	An international cooperation between trade unions and social partners in the Danube Region, the Digital Danube Network (DiDaNet), was completed. The project included partners from Austria, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine (Zakarpattia Oblast, Chernivtsi Oblast, Ivano-Frankivsk).	Progress stalled due to the pandemic	Organise an onsite meeting in the near future

ACTION 3: Integration of Vulnerable Groups into the Labour Market (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 10

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The issue was being addressed in the framework of the Annual Stakeholder Conferences of PA 9 and in the PA 9 Steering Group meetings. Under the EUSDR umbrella, marginalised communities	The topic of integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market is also one of the identified topics of the ESF MA Network.	Meetings have been held with PA 10 for the further planning.	A workshop related to this topic will be held in the framework of the upcoming stakeholder conference of PA 9, also with a view to organising an on-site meeting in the near future.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
such as the Roma can be addressed and a transnational element can be added to the intergovernmental and supranational efforts in this regard. Furthermore, the issue was addressed in the framework of the ESF MA Network.			

ACTION 4: Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion for All (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The issue was being addressed in the framework of the Annual Stakeholder Conferences of PA 9 and in the PA 9 Steering Group meetings. Furthermore, the issue was addressed in the framework of the ESF MA Network.	The topics of active inclusion in fighting poverty are also one of the identified topics of the ESF MA Network and will be addressed within the work of the Social Innovation Competence Centres (SI PLUS) in the respective countries.	The pandemic severely delayed the implementation.	A workshop related to this topic will be held in the framework of the upcoming stakeholder conference of PA 9.

ACTION 5: Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training Systems (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The resilience of education and training systems was addressed in the framework of PA 9 Stakeholder Conferences and Steering Group meetings. PA 9 actively cooperated with key partners, including the European Commission, the OECD, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and other macro-regional strategies (MRS). An update of the monitoring tool was commissioned ("Danube Region Monitor").	In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, PA 9 engaged in a dialogue on the resilience of education systems with the European Commission, the OECD, ERI SEE and MRS (e.g. the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region). New projects under the umbrella of PA 9 were started (see PA 9 Work Programme and EUSDR Implementation Report 2020-2021, chapter 3).	On track.	Updated monitoring tools will be made available in 2022. The PA 9 Stakeholder Conference in 2022 will revisit the topic of resilient and responsive education and training systems in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate change.

ACTION 6: Relevant and High-Quality Knowledge, Skills and Competences (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>PA 9 addressed the importance of digital skills in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (and beyond) in the framework of PA 9 Stakeholder Conferences and Steering Group meetings.</p> <p>In cooperation with the European Training Foundation, a Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence was launched in November 2021.</p>	<p>In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, PA 9 strengthened regional exchange on the promotion of digital skills through PA 9 Stakeholder Conferences and Steering Group meetings. PA 9 also raised awareness of the importance of green and digital skills by contributing to a workshop during the EUSDR Annual Forum in 2020.</p> <p>With the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence, PA 9 started an important new initiative that was developed through intensified cooperation with the European Training Foundation. The platform aims to support innovation and smart specialisation in the Danube Region. It provides a regional forum for policy dialogue on VET excellence in going green and social inclusion and aims to promote cooperation between Danube Region centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs).</p>	<p>On track.</p>	<p>A workshop on green and digital skills will be held during the Stakeholder Conference in 2022.</p> <p>A second meeting of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence is planned to be held in 2022.</p>

ACTION 7: Lifelong Learning and Learning Mobility (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Cooperation between VET and the labour market to promote transition from ET to work was discussed during a panel discussion at the PA 9 Stakeholder Conference in 2021.</p> <p>In addition, PA 9 co-organised two Danube Region eTwinning conferences in 2020 and 2021. The conferences offer a platform to enable schools to work together on projects in a transnational context.</p>	<p>PA 9 contributed to increased transnational cooperation among schools in the Danube Region by co-organising two Danube Region eTwinning conferences. The conferences could be successfully continued in an online format in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They brought together 37 teachers from 12 Danube Region countries in 2020 and 49 teachers from 13 Danube Region countries in 2021. A total of 23 school cooperation projects were developed by the participating teachers. The conferences support innovative approaches to teaching and learning and strengthen the digital skills of teachers through the use of the online eTwinning platform and other digital means of communication.</p>	<p>On track.</p>	<p>The next Danube Region eTwinning conference will be held in June 2022.</p>

ACTION 8: Inclusive Education, Equity, Common Values and Sustainable Development (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Cooperation with EUSDR PA 7 for the collection of good practices on remote schooling and digital education in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Cooperation with EUSDR PA 10 during the 7th Danube Participation Day.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Risks of increased learning losses, early school leaving and educational inequalities as a result of home schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed during PA 9 Stakeholder Conferences and Steering Group meetings. PA 9 in cooperation with PA 7 also collected and made available good practices on remote schooling and digital education in the context of the pandemic. Furthermore, PA 9 launched a Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence with a focus on the topics of going green and social inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, PA 9 contributed to EUSDR meetings, raising awareness of the importance of skills for the green and digital transition and the role of education for youth empowerment.</p>	<p>PA 9 succeeded in putting the topics of inclusion and equity at the centre of the regional exchange on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during PA 9 Stakeholder Conferences and Steering Group meetings. In cooperation with PA 7, good practices from the Danube Region were disseminated to support responses to the pandemic. With the launch of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence, PA 9 also started a new initiative to support exchange on the topics of VET excellence in going green and social inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, PA 9 highlighted the importance of green and digital skills during the EUSDR Annual Forum in 2020 and raised awareness of the importance of education for youth empowerment during the 7th Danube Participation Day (in cooperation with PA 10) in 2020 and at the EUSDR Annual Forum in 2021.</p>	<p>On track.</p>	<p>Effective education policies to support young people in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the war in Ukraine and climate change will be discussed during the PA 9 Stakeholder Conference in 2022.</p> <p>A second meeting of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence is planned to be held in 2022.</p>



PA 10 Institutional Capacity & Cooperation

ACTION 1: To improve institutional capacities in order to provide high-quality public services (Strategic Objective: Enhancing Democracy, Sound Administration and Strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth)

Involvement of other PAs: Priority Areas are invited to participate in activities and networks and are involved depending on their expertise in a specific subject.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Organised meetings and capacity building activities within PA 10 (including Steering Group meetings, thematic discussions)</p> <p>Structural dialogue and preparation for stronger involvement of Youth (Organisation of the Extended Steering Group meeting (Guidance paper on youth participation) organised on 7 July 2020)</p> <p>Institutional participation and organisation of the Bled Strategic Forum organised on 31st of September 2020 under the title Challenges and Opportunities in the Post-COVID-19 World: Neighbours – Regions – Global World: Partners or Rivals?.</p> <p>The organisation of the participation day 2020, under the title Youth participation in the Danube Region, implemented on 21 October 2020</p> <p>Prepared and published Guidance Paper for Youth Participation, contributing to a strategical approach for the cooperation of young citizens of the Danube Region within the strategy</p> <p>Danube Local Actos Platform (D-LAP) meeting organised on 29 March 2021</p> <p>Organisation of the participation day 2021, under the title Digitalisation and Participation, implemented on 25 and 26 October 2021</p> <p>The organisation of the Young Bled Strategic Forum's first preparatory event implemented on June 30 and July 1, Young BSF second preparatory event organised on July 13 and the Young BSF</p>	<p>Within the reporting period 2020 and 2021, the activities within PA 10 included thematic discussions and consultations contributing to the sharing of best practices, the creation of strategical approaches for cooperation within the EUSDR. They have contributed to the capacity building of stakeholders active within the EUSDR governance and specific thematic fields. Local actor stakeholders, decision-makers, administration representatives and other stakeholders exchanged best practices within the established networks (D-LAP meeting, participation day organised on the topic of Youth participation in the EUSDR in 2020 and the topic of Digitalisation and Participation in 2021, within an online meeting on cross-border cooperation and other opportunities).</p> <p>Within the 8th Danube Participation day organised in 2021 on the topic of Digitalisation and Participation, the included stakeholders explored and further contributed to better cooperation and co-ordination in the field of open government and transparency, co-designing of policies, trust in (e)governance and (e)participation as well as accessibility and digital skills. The implemented activities directly address TARGET 1.1: Building capacities for efficient, effective and transparent public administration through e-Government/digitalisation of public services in a strategical approach of cooperation opportunities and challenges identification, stakeholders' exchange</p>	<p>PA 10 has achieved significant progress in connection to ACTION 1 and both underlined targets, through the enforcement of discussions and policy formation (in the field of youth engagement within EUSDR) that will be further developed in all parts of the Strategy and will contribute to more effective sustainable youth engagement in the EUSDR. PA 10 has also devoted thematic discussions and consultations on further capacity building opportunities, and thematic discussions on e-governance and digitalisation opportunities within public services, that will lead to further opportunities for cooperation within the EUSDR.</p>	<p>PA 10 activities will continue to include strategical and sustainable support for the creation of opportunities for best practice exchange, cooperation among stakeholders, co-development of joint standards within the EUSDR and broader in order to contribute to successful institutional capacity building and cooperation. Further attention will be devoted to the establishment of sound foundation for the involvement of civil society organisations in decision making processes (in new networks of cooperation and a toolkit of best practices for civil society engagement)</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>main event organised from August 29 until August 31, under the title Future of Europe: Youth at the Centre.</p> <p>Institutional participation and organisation of the Bled Strategic Forum organised on 1 and 2 September 2021 under the title The future of Europe.</p> <p>Organisation of the participation day 2021, under the title Digitalisation and Participation, implemented on 25 and 26 October 2021</p>	<p>of best practices and solution building within short and long term cooperation. The implemented activities will be followed by strategical contributions and best practice sharing in order to facilitate progress in the field of e-governance and the digitalisation of public services. The Danube participation day 2020 was devoted to youth participation, consultations with decision-makers and young generations facilitated the identification of the importance of youth involvement in decision making processes for all stakeholders involved and paved the way toward a stronger involvement of youth in the EUSDR. The engagement is continuing in the implementation of two networks devoted to young generations that will hold positions within the EUSDR governance structure. Discussions within the PA and activities of D-LAP meetings, SG meetings, Bled Strategic Forum and Young Bled Strategic forum facilitate the cooperation among cross border and cross-sector stakeholders and capacity building through interactive methods of participation.</p>		

ACTION 2: To facilitate the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: The ESF+ managing authorities network is jointly coordinated by EUSDR PA 10 and PA 9.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>PA 10 supported the exchange of best practices, discussion and cooperation on the topic of intensified cross border cooperation, the tackling of challenges (administrative, legal...) in closer cross border cooperation and supported the exchange of creative solution building for intensified networking and future cooperation. Among the activities addressing Action are:</p> <p>PA 10 online SG Meeting on cross-border cooperation & cross-border Services, organised on 16 September 2020</p>	<p>Cross-border and cross-sector stakeholder involvement in capacity building, exchange of best practices and long term networks for cooperation and solution building</p> <p>Stakeholders increased degree of knowledge in structural (theoretical) challenges on cross-border cooperation (in the form of administrative, legal ... barriers) and increased dialogue with stakeholders on the identification of most pressing challenges</p>	<p>PA 10 activities aim at the development of dialogue with stakeholders active within cross-border regions, the establishment of most pressing challenges and opportunities in order to build the efficient capacity building and sound exchange of best practices that address the best knowledge transfer solutions depending on the needs of stakeholders. In coordination within managing authorities' networks and other meetings, PA 10 supports the importance of cross-border cooperation and its impact, addressing the identified challenges in discourses of decision-makers, who</p>	<p>The next steps within the PA include the creation of new capacity building and network exchanges, to strategically support progress and solution building in the removal of barriers for cross-border cooperation in order to enable stronger engagement and opportunities for stakeholders in the future. We shall do so in the form of capacity building activities, sharing of information among stakeholders within our networks of communication, dialogue formation with stakeholders and policy advocacy.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Stakeholder consultations and dialogue building on the topic of cross border cooperation challenges, sharing of best practices and project ideas</p> <p>Support for capacity building of stakeholders (at local, regional, national and European level) active in border regions, and networking empowerment with the aim of closer cooperation and solution building</p> <p>Cooperation in projects, initiatives and networks that contribute to higher intensity of synergy building in border regions, and search for new opportunities of cooperation, with the aim of long term partnership and joint solution building</p> <p>Activities of ESF+ networks of managing authorities</p> <p>Contribution to the establishment of sound cooperation frameworks among different stakeholders working within PA 10 and EUSDR networks.</p>	<p>A higher degree of information on funding sources, networks of cooperation and partnerships that enable solution building and engagement towards the development of programmes and joint solutions</p> <p>Consultations with managing authorities on most pressing challenges and opportunities within the constructed financial mechanisms for the financial perspective of 2021-2027, intensively also on cross-border cooperation opportunities.</p> <p>Developed capacity building and consultation that enable a sound exchange among stakeholders and their future cooperation.</p> <p>Communication of funding opportunities, capacity building options and network establishments among PA 10 stakeholders, EUSDR stakeholders and participants within the cross-border cooperation activities alumni.</p>	<p>have the ability to improve circumstances through strategical investment and financial support. PA 10 also facilitates information sharing and the transmission of opportunities among interested parties of cross-border collaboration through regular updates on social media, PA 10 webpage as well as email.</p>	

ACTION 3: To review bottlenecks relating to the low absorption rate of EU funds and Invest EU (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: Priority Areas are involved on a basis of their expertise and interest that have a mutual opportunity for knowledge exchange and cooperation. Within the ESF+ Network of managing authorities, EUSDR PA 10 cooperates with EUSDR PA 9 at the capacity of secretariat and support of the network. Stakeholders from other PAs and governance structures within the EUSDR are invited to cooperation in various settings, networks and opportunities.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>In order to support capacity building, knowledge transfer, information circulation and a higher degree of cooperation development, PA 10 implemented various activities and events:</p> <p>Organised Webinar on EuroAccess Macro Regions Tool (on 12 January 2021 and 20 January 2021) for EUSDR PACs, PAC Teams, SG Members, NCs and NC Teams</p> <p>EuroAccess and Funding Mechanism presentations within PA 10 networks (Steering Groups, D-LAP meetings)</p> <p>Organised presentations and consultations at local, regional, national and cross border levels on</p>	<p>A higher degree of knowledge among stakeholders regarding available funding sources, methods of cooperation and synergy building as a direct effect of organised training activities, capacity building, discussions and networking among stakeholders included in the event activities</p> <p>A higher degree of familiarisation of stakeholders with the EuroAccess platform, enabling an exchange of best practices, consortium building and financial opportunities transmission with a higher potential of building sustainable and long term project initiatives.</p>	<p>The PA has organised events, discussions, webinars and other opportunities for the sharing of best practices, knowledge sharing, capacity building as well as participated in opportunities organised at the local, regional, national and European level by other stakeholders, in order to facilitate a structured discussion on the most pressing challenges in funding search and implementation. The activities include discussions with various stakeholders (active on different levels and topics of expertise) and comprehensive solution building through the sharing of best practices and opportunities that have a higher degree of success</p>	<p>Future steps include new activities and the inclusion of new stakeholders that will contribute to a higher understanding of potential financial instruments, and opportunities for cooperation and will contribute to new networking options among stakeholders, in order to empower better project and activities construction, more effective implementation and a higher degree of sustainability.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>funding opportunities and search for suitable project funding</p> <p>Cooperation within the ESF+ Network of managing authorities (coordinated by PA 9 and PA 10) as well as other networks</p> <p>Progress within the embedding process for closer integration of implementing programmes within funding sources of the upcoming financial perspective 2021-2027.</p> <p>Presentation of funding opportunities, grants, open calls and other mechanisms within the activities of PA 10 (with participation and presentation of implementing organisations)</p>	<p>Structural discussions and synchronisation within the ESF+ network of managing authorities, contribute to the sharing of best practices among key implementers and their advancement towards closer coordination of policy development.</p> <p>Established platforms for further cooperation, cross the border and cross-sector exchange of best practices/knowledge</p> <p>Progress within the embedding process of EUSDR</p> <p>Cooperation among MRS and joint solution building for shared challenges, leading to future cooperation and project constructions, as well as increased funding search.</p> <p>Participation in training activities and consultations at national (financial dialogues) and EU level</p>	<p>and sustainability. PA 10 further works in the empowerment of networks and effective information sharing through all of the networks at its disposal (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, webpage, newsletter and email).</p>	

ACTION 4: To support better coordination of funding (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: The ESF+ Network of managing authorities is jointly coordinated by EUSDR PA 9 and PA 10

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>In order to support knowledge transfer, information circulation and a higher degree of cooperation development, PA 10 implemented various activities and events:</p> <p>Organised Webinar on EuroAccess Macro Regions Tool (on 12 January 2021 and 20 January 2021) for EUSDR PACs, PAC Teams, SG Members, NCs and NC Teams</p> <p>Organised presentations and consultations at local, regional, national and cross-border levels on funding opportunities and search for suitable project funding</p> <p>Cooperation within the ESF+ Network of managing authorities (coordinated by PA 9 and PA 10) as well as other networks in strategic and long term discussion formation.</p> <p>Progress within the embedding process for closer integration of funding programmes 2021-2027.</p>	<p>Structural discussions and synchronisation within the ESF+ network of managing authorities, contribute to the sharing of best practices among key implementers and their advancement towards closer coordination of policy development.</p> <p>Established platforms for further cooperation, cross-border and cross-sector exchange of best practices/knowledge</p> <p>Progress within the embedding process of EUSDR</p> <p>Cooperation among MRS and joint solution building for shared challenges, leading to future cooperation and project constructions, as well as increased funding search.</p> <p>Participation in training activities and consultations at national (financial dialogues) and EU level</p>	<p>Established trust, cooperation, exchanged experience among stakeholders within the EUSDR and managing authorities (within the ESF+ Network of managing authorities) and other formats, that enable a structured approach towards progress, identification of joint challenges and opportunities leading towards a strategical approach to the creation of sustainable funding opportunities, and greater synchronisation of EUSDR proceedings and future planning within funding instruments.</p>	<p>Continued support for cooperation and facilitation of participation within established and new networks, further support for the embedding process and consultations with stakeholders in order to provide the exchange of ideas, exchange best practices and solution building based on joint challenges and opportunities.</p>

ACTION 5: To test and support innovative funding solutions (for local actors and civil society) (Strategic Objective: Enhancing Democracy, Sound Administration and Strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth)

Involvement of other PAs: Involvement and invitation of stakeholders from other PAs in potential areas of cooperation and synergies.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Organised Webinar on EuroAccess Macro Regions Tool (on 12 and 20 January 2021) for EUSDR PACs, PAC Teams, SG Members, NCs and NC Teams</p> <p>Organised presentations and consultations at local, regional, national and cross border levels on funding opportunities and search for suitable project funding</p> <p>Cooperation activities with AG 5 (EUSALP), PA Innovation (EUSBSR), EUSAIR Facility Point (Horizontal Issue Innovation) on Smart Villages.</p> <p>Support for projects, activities and initiatives supporting innovative funding instruments referring to needs of local actors and civil society organised within the EUSDR by different stakeholders</p>	<p>A higher degree of knowledge among stakeholders in available funding opportunities</p> <p>A higher degree of understanding for stakeholder needs and challenges in terms of funding opportunities</p> <p>Established networks of cooperation with potential for further collaboration, exchange of best practices and capacity building</p>	<p>Developed trust and networks for further cooperation among stakeholders within the EUSDR. The implemented activities enabled the participation of new stakeholders in the proceedings of the EUSDR.</p>	<p>Further capacity building, facilitation of best practice exchange and cooperation, organisation of dialogue in order to create innovative opportunities for funding and cooperation among stakeholders within the EUSDR.</p>

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 (Strategic Objective: Enhancing Democracy, Sound Administration and Strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR PA 10 cooperates with other PAs and relevant stakeholders, depending on the topic of activities and the field of expertise in which new stakeholders can contribute at a partnership capacity. EUSDR PA 10 cooperates with EUSDR PA 9 in the preparation of support for Young representatives of the EUSDR and established representative bodies, as well as within thematic events and discussions implemented.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Cross-border cross-sector cooperation and trust building among different stakeholders is supported within various activities:</p> <p>The organisation of the Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP) meeting in 2020</p> <p>Institutional participation and organisation of the Bled Strategic Forum on 31 September 2020 under the title Challenges and Opportunities in the Post-COVID-19 World: Neighbours – Regions – Global World: Partners or Rivals?.</p>	<p>Inclusion of new stakeholders within the proceedings of the EUSDR, creation of long term partnerships and facilitation of cross-sector cross border cooperation</p> <p>Creation of engaging activities within the digital sphere (as a direct adjustment to the COVID-19 pandemic)</p> <p>Closer inclusion of youth and civil society in the proceedings of the EUSDR and exploration of participation in the future</p>	<p>Implemented online and physical activities enabling the exchange of best practices, cooperation of stakeholders with different skills and expertise from the field of state and non-state representation and capacity building all resulting in a higher degree of trust among cooperating partners and a higher degree of confidence for effective policy-making and effective cooperation.</p>	<p>Continued support for stakeholder involvement within different levels of the EUSDR. Within the possibilities of the post-covid-19 pandemic, significant effort needs to be invested in the organisation of national participation days as important civil society engagement mechanisms that were not implemented within the calendar years of 2020 and 2021 due to health and logistical restrictions.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>The organisation of the participation day 2020, under the title Youth participation in the Danube Region, implemented on 21 October 2020</p> <p>Danube Local Actos Platform (D-LAP) meeting organised on 29 March 2021</p> <p>The organisation of the Young Bled Strategic Forum, including two preparatory events (on 30 June to 1 July and on 13 July), implemented from 29-31 August under the title 'Future of Europe: Youth at the Centre'.</p> <p>Institutional participation and organisation of the Bled Strategic Forum on 1 and 2 September 2021 under the title The future of Europe.</p> <p>Organisation of the participation day 2021, under the title Digitalisation and Participation implemented on 25 and 26 October 2021</p>	<p>Joint solution building and policy creation between state and non-state actors through implemented activities and events</p> <p>Increased capacity building of stakeholders, contributing to higher inclusion and cooperation</p>		

ACTION 7: To strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region (Strategic Objective: Enhancing Democracy, Sound Administration and Strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth)

Involvement of other PAs: EUSDR Priority Area 10 cooperates with other PAs and relevant stakeholders, depending on the topic of activities and the field of expertise in which new stakeholders can contribute at a partnership capacity. The EUSDR PA 10 cooperates with EUSDR Priority Area 9 in the preparation of support for Young representatives of the EUSDR and established representative bodies, as well as within thematic events and discussions implemented.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>The involvement of civil society and young representatives of the EUSDR was one of the main focuses of PA 10, supported by multiple activities, events, capacity building programmes, online discussions and consultations, policy papers and other supporting means. The activities organised within the period 2020-2021 include:</p> <p>The extended SG meeting (Guidance paper on youth participation) on 7 July 2020</p> <p>The Danube Local Actos Platform (D-LAP) meeting in 2020</p> <p>Institutional participation and organisation of the Bled Strategic Forum on 31 September 2020 under the title Challenges and Opportunities in the</p>	<p>The achievements of the PA include a strategic approach towards the involvement of civil society, young members of the EUSDR and other stakeholders. PA 10 continued to work on the issue through thematic research, consultation and published recommendations, as within the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation further elaborating both the necessity for youth participation and mutual benefit for engagement of young EUSDR members and opportunities to secure such participation. Furthermore, the strategic support and discussions within different networks and most recently within the Danube Youth Council Task Force will enable more comprehensive participation of young stakeholders</p>	<p>The activities of the PA have successfully implemented the foreseen activities for further presentation of opportunities for stakeholders within the EUSDR, and have contributed towards their stronger involvement. On a yearly basis, the PA organises D-LAP meetings in order to support further collaboration of stakeholders within the network, exchange of best practices and information sharing and prepare the annual Participation day. PA 10 has contributed to further cooperation of stakeholders with the preparation of Young BSF and BSF activities in 2020 and 2021. Strategical involvement and representation of young EUSDR representatives are supported by a Task Force that includes PA 10 representatives. The Task</p>	<p>PA 10 will continue to support further opportunities and integration options within EUSDR for local actors, civil society representatives and representatives of young generations. Strategic cooperation will additionally include the establishment of networks within an online platform titled bridging the gap, which will enable a sustainable sharing of information and cooperation within an online platform. Further activities within the PA events foresee the publishing of a strategic paper on best practices for civil society engagement enabling an overview of good practices of civil society engagement in decision-making processes. The PA will continue to organise thematic activities</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Post-COVID-19 World: Neighbours – Regions – Global World: Partners or Rivals?’</p> <p>The participation day 2020, under the title Youth participation in the Danube Region, on 21 October 2020</p> <p>Prepared and published Guidance Paper for Youth Participation, contributing to a strategical approach for the cooperation of young citizens of the Danube Region within the Strategy</p> <p>Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP) meeting organised on 29 March 2021</p> <p>Strategic support to and cooperation within the Danube Youth Council Task Force, devoted to the establishment of strategic bodies for youth participation within the EUSDR</p> <p>The Young Bled Strategic Forum, including two preparatory events, from 29-31 August under the title ‘Future of Europe: Youth at the Centre’.</p> <p>Institutional participation and organisation of the Bled Strategic Forum on 1 and 2 September 2021 under the title ‘The future of Europe’.</p> <p>Organisation of the participation day 2021, under the title Digitalisation and Participation on 25 and 26 October 2021</p>	<p>within the EUSDR, with their participation in high-level discussions and networks.</p> <p>The PA organises various activities, capacity building opportunities and exchanges of best practices devoted to civil society and young participants, and through established networks contributes to the education, capacity building, vocational skills acceleration and other support for all involved stakeholders. PA 10 has proceeded to do so within the activities of the D-LAP meeting activities in 2020 and 2021, Participation day activities organised in 2020 and 2021, Young Bled Strategic Forum and Bled Strategic Forum in 2020 and 2021, thematic discussions referring to the participation of Young generations within the EUSDR organised in 2020 as well as other thematic activities.</p> <p>The main achievements of the PA 10 in ACTION 7 is therefore the strategic foundation setting for stronger involvement of civil society and youth within the Danube Region and the implementation of activities for all stakeholders, enabling an open and safe environment for further participation and cooperation within the EUSDR in a strategic and sustainable way.</p>	<p>Force has gained momentum within the years 2020 and 2021 with discussions regarding the establishment of two new bodies within the EUSDR governance (Danube Youth Council and Danube Youth Organisation Network) with further work still to be implemented.</p>	<p>ties involving all stakeholders, implementing traditional events (participation day, D-LAP meeting, Young Bled Strategic Forum and Bled Strategic Forum) as well as other new activities depending on the needs and wishes of stakeholders. The PA will continue to promote opportunities and possibilities of cooperation on the PA 10 webpage, social media and other networks to engage more representatives and organisations within the activities.</p>

ACTION 8: To enhance capacities of cities and municipalities to facilitate local and regional development (Strategic Objective: Establishing and Enforcing Knowledge Society, Stimulating the Economy and Fight Poverty)

Involvement of other PAs: Cooperation with PA 9 within the network of Empowerment Roma and with PA 11 within the network on Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings.

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>Consultations with stakeholders and event preparatory setting for future implemented activities</p> <p>Cooperation within DANUBE Local Actors Platforms and support for projects that contribute to the support within cities and municipalities, with strategical research and technical assistance towards social development and better solutions for territorial challenges.</p>	<p>Established cooperation, trust and planning activities for future programme implementation</p>	<p>Established partnership and programme outline among implementing stakeholders with further planned activities within the continuation of the programme.</p>	<p>Implementation of activities and events in the continuation of the programme period.</p>



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 (Strategic Objective: Enhancing Democracy, Sound Administration and Strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>A conference on fight against Hybrid Threats organised in April 2021</p> <p>A Anti-Drug Conference held in October 2021</p> <p>CO3DIL Project led by the Czech Police Headquarters</p>	<p>On 21 April 2021 "Hybrid Threats: Definitions, Understanding, Counteracting in the framework of EUSDR (National Experience and Regional Approach)" expert meeting was successfully held online. The event took place within the framework of the DTP-PAC2-PA 11 project and was co-organised by the Ministry of Interior, Sport and Integration of Bavaria, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the PA 11 Coordination Bureau. Among the participants were more than 30 representatives from 9 countries: Ukraine, Slovak Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary and a representative of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Finland). The aim of the meeting was discussing current threats, understanding definitions of hybrid threats and establishing a network for further cooperation to strengthen the security of the Danube Region. The participants presented strategic documents and exchanged best practices. During the first working panel, participants presented and discussed hybrid threats in the security sector of Ukraine, an analysis of the security environment and Slovakia's countermeasures to mitigate hybrid threats, and results of the research study by State Research Institute under Ministry of Interior of Ukraine with the classification of hybrid threats in the civil security sector. The participants also paid</p>	<p>On 26 October 2021, SELEC organised online the Anti-Drug Trafficking Conference with the participation of nearly 60 experts from SELEC Member States, Danube Region countries as well as representatives of SELEC's operational partners and observers. The representatives of SELEC highlighted that drug trafficking continues to be a regional challenge, and took the opportunity to express appreciation as regards the relentless efforts of the law enforcement authorities to counter drug trafficking in Southeast Europe. Some of the latest drug trafficking joint investigations conducted under SELEC's auspices were mentioned. During the conference the experts presented new trends, modi operandi, investigative methods, successful cases related to drug trafficking conducted with the support of SELEC.</p> <p>The 2021 Report on Drug Trafficking in Southeast Europe drafted by SELEC based on the contribution of the Member States was presented. The Report provides a comprehensive overview of the drugs situation in Southeast Europe in 2020 and supports the Law Enforcement Authorities in completing their understanding of this multifaceted and ever-evolving threat.</p> <p>The conference was organised in the framework of the DTP-PAC11-PA11 project.</p>	<p>These events were very highly appreciated by participants and contributed to the establishment of expert networks even though held in an online environment. The next steps should be to continue the implementation of the measures laid down in the DTP project for PACs support.</p>

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	<p>attention to the cyber component of hybrid aggression and discussed measures of counteracting cyber threats. The second part of the meeting was dedicated to countering disinformation as a part of hybrid threats. Participants touched upon new challenges on counteracting disinformation, fake news and their impact on democracy, measures that are undertaken by the participating states to counteract propaganda and disinformation. Among others, the participants agreed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further cooperation in counteracting hybrid threats, - sharing best practice in order to develop countermeasures and formulate a joint response to the mentioned threats, - raising awareness and creating special mechanisms for the exchange of information, - ensure resilience by addressing strategic and critical issues such as cybersecurity, countering organised crime, critical infrastructure (energy, transport), efforts to combat violent extremism, information security, etc., strengthening the resilience of the society, and monitoring the capacity of security actors on prevention of escalation of crisis in public safety and civil protection; - the importance of crisis prevention, response and recovery by identifying and implementing effective procedures, as well as by studying the application and practical implications of interdepartmental communication capabilities, in cases of large-scale and significant hybrid attacks; - increasing cooperation with foreign and international partner organisations; - discussing possibility of joint trainings for the personnel of law enforcement institutions for increasing capacity in counteracting hybrid threats 		

ACTION 2: Promoting strategic long-term cooperation between law enforcement actors along the Danube River by enhanced networking (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
During the reporting period the planned DARIF operations were cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemics.	n/a	n/a	n/a

ACTION 3: Improving the systems of border control, document inspection management and cooperation on consular related issues in the Danube Region (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
No activities were implemented	n/a	n/a	n/a

ACTION 4: Promoting the rule of law and the fight corruption (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
No activities were implemented	n/a	n/a	n/a

ACTION 5: Setting up a structure of Danube River Forum (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
The DSRIF operation could not be organised during the reported period due to the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, according to the Hungarian members of the SG, the implementation of the Joint Operation will be most probably conducted in 2022	n/a	n/a	n/a

ACTION 6: Joint work with Priority Area 1a “Mobility: Waterways” (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: Both PAs - EUSDR PA 1a and PA 11 are actively involved

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
Work was active and went on according to plan.	DAVID forms introduced. A plan agreed until 2025 The steady results of the work of PA 11 and PA 1a are one of the good examples for best practices that created long-term platforms for cooperation between various actors along the Danube Region	Horizontal cooperation and involvement in cross-cutting issue was set as a priority for all PAs, the DSP and the rotating Presidencies of the EUSDR. The steady results of the work of PA 11 and PA 1a are one of the good examples for best practices that created long-term platforms for cooperation between various actors along the Danube States	As per the agreed plan until 2025

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
	<p>(port administrations, border control authorities, customs, associations of ship-owners, etc.)</p> <p>One of the most visible and tangible result achieved in the reporting period is the introduction of the DAVID forms which aim is to facilitate inland navigation and remove administrative burden on ship-owners and related business but at the same time keeping high standards of border controls.</p>	<p>(port administrations, border control authorities, customs, associations of ship-owners, etc.)</p> <p>One of the most visible and tangible result achieved in the reporting period is the introduction of the DAVID forms which aim is to facilitate inland navigation and remove administrative burdens on ship owners and related business but at the same time keeping high standards of border controls.</p> <p>The implementation of the DAVID cover the territory of 9 EUSDR members states, namely Austria, Germany, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia (first phase countries that implemented the forms by the end of 2020) and Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine (the second stage countries that introduced the forms in the end of 2021).</p>	

ACTION 7: Implementation of a Ministerial Conference every 3 years (Strategic Objective: Stimulating Sustainable Development)

Involvement of other PAs: This event was foreseen as a high level forum of the political level - namely the Ministers of Interior of the 14 EUSDR participating states

Activities	Achievements	Progress	Next steps
<p>The 3rd Ministerial Conference of the Ministers of Interior under to motto Quo-Vadis Danube Strategy was planned for the beginning of April 2020 in Brussels. Invitations were sent but due to the COVID-19 pandemic it had to be cancelled despite its progress stage of preparations. In addition it was planned to use the event as a kick-off for the Action Plan. It was planned that each of the three PACs will make an introduction on the past, present and future development of the Strategy.</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>A new planning is foreseen for the first quarter of 2023</p>