EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT OF EUSDR PRIORITY AREA 6

"To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils"

Reported period: from 07/2016 to 12/2016

(Final Version 28.04.2017)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
DG	DIRECTORATE GENERAL
DG ENV	ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE GENERAL
DIAS	DANUBE REGION INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES
DSTF	DANUBE STURGEON TASK FORCE
DTP	DANUBE TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMME
EC	EUROPEAN COMISSION
ESIF	EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
EUSDR	EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR DANUBE REGION
MS	MEMBER STATES
ICPDR	INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE DANUBE RIVER
IP	INVESTMENT PRIORITY
JRC	JOINT RESEARCH CENTER
MRS	MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGY
NBSAPs	NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS
NCP	NATIONAL CONTACT POINT
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
OPCC	OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME COMPETITIVENESS AND COHESION 2014 – 2020
PA	PRIORITY AREA
SG	STEERING GROUP
SO	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE
PA	PRIORITY AREA
SP	STRATEGIC PROJECT
TA	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TF	TASK FORCE

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Question 1: Summary of progress achieved during the reporting period.

In the current reporting period, PA 06 conducted three Task Force meetings (Masterplan Bavarian Danube, Task Force Air Quality and Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network) which contributed to the work process in the respective thematic fields. The Task Force Chairs of the existing seven Task Forces presented the stage of progress in the second PA 06 Steering Group meeting in 2016 which contributed to the further alignment of the TF activities with the policy level.

First working meeting of representatives of EUSDR, EUSALP, AlpArc, Danubeparks and Carpathian Network of Protected Areas on ecological connectivity marked the start for cross-MRS activities in this field.

The Masterplan Bavarian Danube, which has been jointly elaborated by civil society and authorities in Bavaria was finalized and approved by the Bavarian State Minister for Environment and Consumer protection. The public presentation and official kick-off of the implementation phase will follow in first half of 2017. The work process and strategic alliance between public sector, policy level and civil societies (NGO´s) is an exemplary instance of the added value of the PA 06.

The further integration of the civil society in the implementation process of PA 06 will be further strengthened by the Task Forces work and ongoing discussion on a wider coordination unit for PA 06 related topics, similar to the ICPDR´s work and mandate.

The existing PA 06 Task Forces represent the four targets and most of the Actions as laid down in the Action Plan:

- Danube Sturgeon Task Force – DSTF
- Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network – DIAS
- Danubeparks - Network of protected areas
- Soil Strategy Network in the Danube Region (SONDAR)
- Task Force on Air Quality
- Task Force on pesticides and chemicals
- Working Group Masterplan Bavarian Danube (currently focussing on Bavaria only).

In the reporting period, PACs were significantly engaged with administrative work related to the closure of DSP Technical Assistance and developing application of the new DTP PAC project.

2 PROGRESS OF THE PA

2.1 PROGRESS ON POLICY LEVEL

2.1.1 POLICY AREAS AT FOCUS

Question 2: What are the policy areas (important policy topics/thematic issues) that the PA selected as main focus (i.e. priority) for work during the reporting period?

(*no changes compared to last report*)

Focussing on currently six Task Forces, PA 06 selected the following policy areas:

- Biodiversity – aligned to COM (2011) 244 final „Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020"
- Invasive Alien Species – aligned to Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species
- Air Quality - based on Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe

(no changes compared to last report)

All mentioned policy areas are directly linked to the scope of Priority Area 06 and are directly contributing to the PA 06 targets. The reason to select these areas as priority ones are basically due to the emerging tasks and given starting points in these topics. It does not say that other areas are of less importance.

2.1.2 MAIN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS

Question 4: Based on what has been reported under section 2.1.1: what are the PAs' main policy achievements and developments during the reporting period?

(no changes compared to last report)

PA 06 is further building on stakeholders involved in different PA 06 topics, thus allowing the Strategy for its implementation "on the ground". Wide and organized stakeholder networks are growing, in this reporting period mainly through the Task Force works, which is proving to be a direct benefit generated by the EUSDR. This success also confirms the PA 06 direction from the beginning of the process: to open to the civil society, the stakeholders and their networks for the EUSDR implementation.

2.1.3 POLICY LESSONS LEARNED

Question 5: Based on what has been reported in sections 2.1.1and 2.1.2: what are the policy related lessons learned (positive or negative) from the PAs implementation during the reporting period (with focus on those that are important for the future EUSDR policy development)?

(no changes compared to last report, only shortened)

PA 06 consequently continues the approach of vertical and horizontal integration in various topics by its Task Forces. This significantly contributes to bring together actors and stakeholders from different branches (Civil Society, NGO´s, Scientific Community, Policy level) and different levels (local, regional, national, EU) in an open process. With this approach, different viewpoints on one common topics and different interests can contribute to develop joint and synergetic solutions in the long-term. The EUSDR provides an excellent platform and also demand for a stronger integrative approach, which also should be seen as one major strength and added value of the EUSDR as a whole.

2.1.4 FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Question 6: Based on what has been reported in section 2.1.3: what next steps and challenges for future policy development the PA finds important to share for further consideration discussion or development (incl. possible solutions to overcome the challenges)?

(no changes compared to last report, slight additions)

To further establish the Task Forces, to finalize their respective working programmes and to develop and apply for projects. In parallel to even stronger connect the Task Forces with the PA 06 Steering Group and to improve the connections of the policy level (Steering Group) to the implementation level (Task Forces).

Generally, the structures of the Task Forces could be stabilized by developing a coordination centre or a similar structure in mid- and long-term perspective. The upcoming PA 06 Steering Group Meeting in first half of 2017 will tackle this issue on governance. The intention behind is to stabilize the cooperation and enhancement of the links with civil society both with the implementation and policy level, which is a clear gap in most of the PA 06-relevant topics in the Danube Region.

2.2   PROGRESS ON PA'S TARGETS

Table 1: Progress on targets during the reporting period

PA Targets (number and wording of the target)	Progress during the reporting period				Clarifications
	Completed	Satisfactory progress	Delayed progress	Other	
(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*	*(e)*	*(f)*
Target 01: By 2020 strengthen the work on halting the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation in order to achieve a significant and measurable improvement, adapted to the special needs of the respective species and habitats in the Danube Region.	☐	☒	☐	☐	Having in mind that PA 06 targets are very comprehensive and as such are deriving from Strategic plan of CBD and EU 2020 biodiversity strategy, full accomplishment of the targets is not possible merely in the scope of macro-regional polices. That is why the PA 06 targets have been modified in 2016 as part of overall revision & update of EUSDR Targets with regards to all PAs, in the way that they confirm its contribution to overall EU and global biodiversity targets.
Target 02: Enhance the work on establishing green infrastructure and the process of restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, including soil, in order to maintain and enhance ecosystems and their services by 2020 in the Danube Region and to improve air quality.	☐	☒	☐	☐	
Target 03: Encourage achieving significant progress in identification and prioritization of Invasive Alien Species and their pathways in order to control or eradicate priority species, to manage pathways and to prevent the introduction and establishment of new Invasive Alien Species in the Danube Region by 2020.	☐	☒	☐	☐	
Target 04: Continue the ongoing work and efforts to secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species and other indigenous fish species by 2020.	☐	☒	☐	☐	

Question 7: Based on the information provided in Table 1, what is the PAs overall self-evaluation with regards to reaching the applicable targets? Any other positive experience or other important information to that respect that the PA considers necessary (or good) to be shared should be included here as well.

(no changes compared to last report)

All four targets are covered by respective Task Forces. Targets 1 and 2 are very broad, whereas targets 3 and 4 are focussing on specific topics, which are covered by the DSTF and DIAS.

The composition of the Task Forces can generally be seen as a positive experience, as in many cases for the first time actors from civil society, the scientific community and policy level from different regions and countries come together to jointly work on a common issue. This process characterizes the general approach of PA 06. The existing need to connect NGO´s and stakeholders from nature protection and biodiversity to the policy level has been the main driver for PA 06 implementation process and provides a solid ground to further develop concrete activities and project proposals. It has to be stated that this process took longer than expected and is still ongoing.

Question 8: What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the progress in reaching the targets as previously planned?

(no changes compared to last report, only shortened, slight additions)

Generally spoken, a stronger involvement of actors from all mentioned target groups would surely be a boost for all activities.

A stronger interlinkage with other macro regional strategies (MRS) is required, particularly with those with overlapping regions with the EUSDR (EUSAIR, EUSALP). Since these MRS feature environmental pillars with similar (synergized) objectives deriving from EU 2020 biodiversity strategy (especially regarding Natura 2000 network, green infrastructure, restoration of degraded ecosystems, invasive alien species combat etc.) the PACs of PA 06 see an opportunity in positive horizontal exchange and communication between MRS in order to accomplish the environment-related targets set out in action plans across the EU MRS. This will be pursue by PA 06 within the PAC DTP Project.

There is a strong need to establish more clear and firm synergies and to avoid duplication of work in a sense of action implementation and target achievement. A recent example is the project development on a potential Alpine-Danube-Carpathian ecological corridor ("ADC-NET"), which shall include elements and objectives from MRS (EUSDR, EUSALP), international organizations (Carpathian Convention, Alpine Convention) and stakeholder networks (Danubeparks, ALPARC).

Additionally, to be able ensuring sustainability of the processes and dedication to the targets need for sustainability in funding was recognised especially by the TF of PA6.

Having in mind that EUSDR is deriving and complementing existing EU environmental policies, PA 06 recognizes that active involvement of sectorial DGs of the EC is needed in order to achieve the goals set up by macro regional strategies and be embedded and harmonised with all relevant processes.

Question 9: Are there any plans (or needs) for revising/updating the list of targets, applicable for the PA? If so, please provide details.

Currently there are no such plans.

2.3 PROGRESS ON PA'S ACTIONS

Table 2: Progress on actions during the reporting period

PA Targets (number)	Progress on action for reaching the targets during the reporting period																
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13	A14	A15	A16	A17
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)	(p)	(q)	(r)
T1		ASP						ASP					ASP	ASP	ASP	ASP	
T2	ASP		ASP		ASP		ASP		ASP	APD	ASP	ASP					
T3						ASP											
T4			ASP	ASP													

Legend:

ASP	actions, whose implementation is satisfactory progressing (according to what was initially planned in the Roadmap);
APD	actions, whose implementation is progressing with delays (comparing to what was initially planned in the Roadmap);
ACcp	actions completed in current reporting period;
ACpp	actions completed in previous reporting period(s);
ANS	actions, whose implementation has not started yet;

Question 10: Based on the information provided in   Table 2, what is the PA's overall self - evaluation regarding the progress in implementing the actions? A positive experience or other important information to that respect that the PA considers necessary (or good) to be shared should be included here as well.

Progress was made for most of the PA 06 Actions. It must be stated that some of the actions are very specific, whereas some others are rather broad and more comprehensive. The specific actions (e.g. A15) are covered by most of the Task Force on their specific issue.

Due to the broadness of T02, most of the Actions are displayed there.

Question 11: What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the progress in implementing the actions as previously planned?

It should be considered though, that the Actions adopted in the Action Plan are diverse in their scope. It is difficult to measure achievements and full implementation for some Actions due to their comprehensiveness, as they go beyond the mandate and scope of EUSDR (e.g. Action - "To contribute to the 2050 EU vision and 2020 EU target for biodiversity"). Those Actions should be more considered as guiding overall concepts or as long-term Vision.

Question 12: Are there any plans (or needs) for revising/updating the actions, applicable for the PA? If so, please provide details.

Further guidance from EC is expected on this specific topic.

2.4 PROGRESS ON MILESTONES

Table 3: Progress on milestones during the reporting period

PA Actions (numbers)	Progress on milestones during the reporting period									
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)
A1	MSP	MSP	MSP							
A2	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MCpp			
A3	MSP	MSP	MSP	MCcp						
A4	MSP									
A5	MSP	MSP								
A6	MSP									
A7	MSP									
A8	MSP									
A9	MCpp	MSP								
A10	MPD	MSP								
A11	MSP									
A12	MSP									
A13	MSP	MSP								
A14	MCpp	MSP	MSP	MSP						
A15	MSP									
A16	MSP									
A17										

Legend:

MSP	milestones that are satisfactory progressing (according to what was initially planned in the Roadmap);
MPD	milestones that are progressing with delays (comparing to what was initially planned in the Roadmap);
MCcp	milestones completed in current reporting period;
MCpp	milestones completed in previous reporting period(s);
MNS	milestones, whose implementation has not started yet;

Question 13: Based on the information provided in   Table 3, what is the PAs overall self - evaluation regarding the progress in reaching the milestones? A positive experience or other important information to that the PA considers necessary (or as good) to be shared should be included here as well
Nothing additional to the information provided in the previous reports.
Question 14: What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the progress in reaching the milestones as previously planned?
Nothing additional to the information provided in the previous reports.

2.5 PROGRESS ON ACTIVITIES

Table 4 Activities undertaken to progress on PA implementation

PA Actions (numbers)	Activities undertaken during the reporting period to progress on PA implementation
(a)	(b)
A1	▪ Masterplan Bavarian Danube: Meeting and final draft approval.
A2	▪ Masterplan Bavarian Danube: Meeting and final draft approval. Working Meeting on bio-corridor Alpine – Danube – Carpathian.
A3	▪ Project development on Sturgeon conservation for Danube Transnational Program
A4	▪
A5	▪ Working Meeting on bio-corridor Alpine – Danube – Carpathian. (Carpathian Convention, Danubeparks, ALPARC, Alpine Convention)
A6	▪ 4th meeting of Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network (DIAS)
A7	▪ Videoconference of Task Force on Pesticides and Chemicals. Recruitment of TF members
A8	▪ Videoconference of Task Force on Pesticides and Chemicals. Recruitment of TF members.
A9	▪ Development of potential Carpathian – Danube – Alpine ecological corridor (Carpathian Convention, Danubeparks, ALPARC, Alpine Convention)
A10	▪
A11	▪
A12	▪
A13	▪ 2nd meeting of Task Force Air Quality, scoping of project proposal.
A14	▪
A15	▪
A16	▪
A17	▪

2.6 EUSDR STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Table 5: Projects identified and proposed by PA (PACs + SG) as EUSDR strategic project (SP)

In the Reporting Period, focus has not been laid on the identification of proposals for Strategic Projects. The process is still not clear, as partially discussed during PAC meeting in January 2017.

Application process within Danube Strategic Project Funds is still ongoing.

Title of project proposed by PA as ESDR SP during the reporting period	Date of PA meeting when the project was approved as potential ESDR SP	To which PA target the project is relevant?	Main project activities of the EUSDR SP	Targeted funding source(s) for the SP
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)

Question 15: Were any of the projects included in Table 5 already approved for funding during the reporting period? If so, please complete Table 6 below with the information only for those projects.

Table 6: Proposed EUSDR strategic projects, which were approved for funding

Title of project proposed by PA as ESDR SP, approved for funding	Total amount of approved funding	Approved funding source(s) for the EUSDR SP
(a)	(b)	(c)

3 FUNDING

3.1 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN TERMS OF FUNDING

Question 16: What is considered as PAs main achievement/s with regards to funding sources and opportunities for EUSDR projects? Short analysis relevant only to the duration of the reporting period needs to be provided.

DANUBEparksConnected and LENA have been approved within 1st Call of DTP, both projects having direct link to PA 06. Further projects with PA 06 relevance are coop MDD, and ECO KARST.

Project Developments (mostly for DTP) are in the progress for DSTF and TFAQ. Requests for new Danube Strategic Projects Funds.

3.2 LESSONS LEARNED

Question 17: What are the lessons learned (positive or negative) during the reporting period, with regards to funding sources and opportunities for EUSDR projects and what responses to those the PA considers as relevant?

Nothing additional to the information provided in the previous reports

3.3 THE FUTURE

Question 18: Based on what has been reported so far in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, what next steps and challenges in terms of funding sources and opportunities for EUSDR projects that are important to be shared for further consideration, discussion or development (incl. possible solutions to overcome the challenges)?

Please answer also the same question with respect to better alignment of funding to support the PA and the EUSDR in general.

The newly introduced Capitalization Strategy of the DTP is a very valuable initiative in order to link DTP funded projects with the EUSDR and by this tightening the links between EUSDR and DTP, enabling synergies and filling gaps. EUSDR can provide a proper strategic framework for embedding DTP projects.

It would be useful if the DTP Joint Secretariat devotes a contact person per Priority Area (see example of the EUSALP and Interreg Alpine Space 2014-2020). It might also be useful to include representatives from DTP and other funding programmes to e.g. Steering Group meetings, or (even better in the case for PA 06) to the Task Forces (or similar working groups in other PA´s).

EU-steered funding programmes (LIFE, HORIZON 2020) need to be stronger and more clearly linked to the MRS.

Also we have to consider that a vast of national priorities funded by the national OP are contributing to the PA 6 targets, and to include national project with transnational impact (eg. establishment of Natura 2000 network).

4 GOVERNANCE

4.1 ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONING OF PA

Question 19: Describe shortly any significant changes that have occurred during the reporting period on PA's governance in terms of organisation and functioning of PACs and SGs?

In SG meeting in April 2016, the chairs of all existing PA 06 Task Forces were included as Observers to the PA 06 Steering Group and thus will be invited to upcoming SG meetings and included in the SG mailing list which proves to be one of the basic and efficient communication tools of the SG of the PA 06. Accordingly, the Rules of Procedure as regards the inclusion of observers have been revised accordingly in the SG meeting in November 2016.

Question 20: Please provide in Table 7 the requested information on attendance (+/-) of Danube countries at SG meetings held during the reporting period.

Table 7: Attendance of SG meetings

SG meeting	AT	BA	BG	CZ	DE	HR	HU	MD	ME	RO	RS	SI	SK	UA
11/2016	X				X	X	X					X		
Task Forces	DSTF	DIAS	TFAQ	TFPC	DP	SONDAR	MP							
11/2016	X	X	X	X	X		X							

4.2 COORDINATION AND COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

Question 21: Based on what has been reported in Section 2.5, please provide short description on what has been achieved with the undertaken activities for coordination, cooperation and establishing links with other PAs? Please describe also any methods/tools that are put in place as a result (if applicable).

Nothing additional to the information provided in the previous reports.

Workshop on horizontal PAC workshop currently under preparation (for first half of 2017).

Question 22: Based on what has been reported in Section 2.5, please provide short description on what has been achieved with the undertaken activities for coordination, cooperation and establishing links with EU institutions (EC, EP, CoR, EESC, etc.) and/or other institutions (national, regional, international, as appropriate). Same applies also for activities for using the funding opportunities of the EC centrally managed programmes. Please describe also any methods/tools that are put in place as a result (if applicable).

Nothing additional to the information provided in the previous reports.

Question 23: Based on what has been reported in Section 2.5, please provide short description on what has been achieved with the undertaken activities for cooperation between the PA (PACs and SG) and the authorities dealing with ESIF funding and more specifically with the Managing Authorities and the Monitoring Committees of programs of interest to the PA. Please describe also any methods/tools that are put in place as a result (if applicable).

PAC 06 (BY) became regular member of the German National Committee of the Danube Transnational Programme.

PAC 06 established regular contacts to JS of DTP as regards the project application process for the DTP PAC 06 project.

4.3 ACTIVITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Question 24: Based on what has been reported in Section 2.5, please provide short description on what has been achieved with the undertaken activities for involvement of stakeholders, incl. civil society (e.g. stakeholder conferences, activities with national/regional parliaments, other events, networks, platforms, etc.). Please describe also any methods/tools that are put in place as a result (if applicable).

(*no changes compared to last report*)

Involvement of Civil Society is one of the basic principles of the implementation of Priority Area 06, reflected mainly by their participation in the Steering Group and the composition and organisation of the Task Forces. The Task Forces are generally open to any stakeholder interested in the topic and willing to contribute to the implementation of the respective work programme. This is communicated at any occasion (e.g. Annual Forum, Workshops, Conferences, websites).

4.4 PUBLICITY AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Question 25: Based on what has been reported in Section 2.5, please provide short description on what has been achieved with the undertaken activities for better publicity and communication (e.g. publications, website developments, etc.). Same applies also for activities for better communication of PA's results and work as well as those related to public debate(s) on the macro - regional approach. Please describe also any methods/tools that are put in place as a result (if applicable).

(*no changes compared to last report*)

Task Force Chairs promote the Task Force work and results on various events.

The websites include information and documents emphasizing major aspects of their activity.

4.5 LESSONS LEARNED

Question 26: Based on what has been reported so far in Section 4: what are the lessons learned (positive or negative), in terms of PA governance during the reporting period and what responses to those the PA considers as relevant?

(See question 8)

A stronger interlinkage with other macro regional strategies (MRS) is required, particularly with those with overlapping regions with the EUSDR (EUSAIR, EUSALP). Since these MRS feature environmental pillars with similar (synergized) objectives deriving from EU 2020 biodiversity strategy (especially regarding on Natura 2000 network, green infrastructure, restoration of degraded ecosystems, invasive alien species combat etc.) the PACs of PA 06 see an opportunity in positive horizontal exchange and communication between MRS in order to accomplish the environment-related targets set out in action plans across the EU MRS. There is a strong need to establish more clear and firm synergies and to avoid duplication of work in a sense of action implementation and target achievement.

4.6 THE FUTURE

Question 27: Based on what has been reported so far in Section 4: what next steps and challenges for better PA governance in the future that the PA finds important to be shared for further consideration (incl. possible solutions to overcome the challenges)?

The existing structures within PA 06 (Task Forces, PACs and Steering Group) are a solid basis to ensure a consequent link from concrete activities on the ground (Task Forces) to the policy level (represented by

Steering Group members). To further stabilize the links and communication and information flow and to extend it to actors beyond TFs and SG is one main objective of the PA 06 governance system.

Exchange among PA´s has been proposed by PA 06 since the beginning. Due to several reasons however, there is still a lack of consequent PA exchange. It seems that there is a need for a more formal horizontal exchange, as most PACs state that it is out of their capacities to foster a horizontal exchange. In order to reduce the complexity, an exchange based on the four Pillars would make life easier, as the Pillar-internal exchange among PA´s partially already exists. During the PAC Meeting in January 2017 this issue has been uttered by several PACs. As a consequence, PA1a, PA6 together with the DSP is organizing a horizontal PAC workshop in first half year 2017 to overcome these obvious shortcomings.