

Report to the European Commission

**Implementation of the EUSDR Priority Area 06 to preserve biodiversity,
landscapes and the quality of air and soils**

**Reporting period
July 2014 – June 2015**



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Priority Area 06 (PA 06) is entitled “Biodiversity” and as it covers a large variety of topics, it could be considered as one of the broadest Priority Areas in the EUSDR, by “preserving biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils” as the full title reads. Nature and a rich biodiversity form the green backbone of the Danube Region, which provides highly attractive natural spaces and diverse habitats for animals and plants. It provides large areas of specific ecosystems, which in some cases have an outstanding significance for Europe, as the Danube Delta impressively exemplifies. The Danube Region features diverse landscape pattern of wetlands, meadows, riparian forests, steppes, natural and virgin forests and mountains, with some of the peaks raising up to 2 654 m of altitude. These natural regions and their biodiversity provide the Danube Region with a green infrastructure and ecosystem services. Danube Region’s natural heritage provides a source of well-being and prosperity and at the same time call for joint activities for their protection and development. Among other important intergovernmental initiatives closely linked to PA 06 mandate are the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention).

Coordination and cooperation is the key for implementing Priority Area 06 and this specifically means that the PACs closely collaborate with stakeholders, networks, NGOs, the science community, authorities and other intergovernmental initiatives to jointly develop concrete actions and projects, in coordination with the PA6 Steering Group. The horizontal exchange with other sectors and thus other Priority Areas is another core element of PA 06. As already stated in the previous report, continuity within the approach of Priority Area 6 (PA6) characterizes the reporting period July 2014 – June 2015. Emphasis has been laid on the work with the established task force and to set up a new task force on invasive alien species. Furthermore, direct links and cooperation between PA 06 and the Joint Research Centre of the EC were established. Furthermore and to build a permanent umbrella for all these activities, concrete next steps to develop a stakeholder network organisation for topics related to PA 06 to already pave the way beyond the EUSDR have been taken. Further next steps for this “coordination centre” are expected for the second half of 2015.

This Report on implementation of the EUSDR Priority Area 6 to preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils, prepared by PAC 6 (BY and HR) was endorsed by the Steering Group members by written procedure according to the established Rules of procedure. We would express our appreciation to SG members from HU and CZ for their contribution to the Report. Report is hereby submitted to the European Commission (DG REGIO and DG ENV). Integral part of this report is Annex 1 *Roadmaps to implement each action*. Annex 2 *Projects approved by the Steering Group* is excluded because, in this reporting period there were no additional projects with issued Letter of Recommendation.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

2.1. Policy development

2.1.1. Work on the policies

Concrete measures, activities and conferences on EUSDR policy that PAC6 has undertaken or participated at, in the period from July 2014 till now comprise the following:

26-27 June 2014, Vienna: 3rd Annual Forum of the EUSDR. The major event of the EUSDR brings the opportunity to present the state of play and to exchange with other key actors from the EUSDR as well as with representatives from the policy level, stakeholders, NGO's, organisations and others. PA 06 organised a Panel Discussion "Crossing Borders, Crossing Sectors: Sustainable Navigation on a Healthy River", jointly with PA 01a. The purpose was to highlight and discuss the need for sustainable inland navigation and nature protection along the Danube in order to bridge the often conflicting positions of representatives from the navigation and environmental fields. The EUSDR provides an excellent platform to overcome these platforms by project-based integrative solutions, based on the targets of Priority Areas 1a and 6. The first annual forum in Regensburg in 2012 marked the starting point of an open and constructive dialogue, when a first joint podium discussion has been organized by PAC1a and PAC6. In the meantime, first concrete project developments were started and the efforts and opportunities has been presented at the 4th Meeting of the Joint Statement Group of the Danube Commission, Sava Commission and ICPDR in February 2014. The panel discussion in Vienna reflected co-operation and integrative approaches and fostered a lively discussion with the audience.

Furthermore, cooperation partners of PA 06 as WWF, ICPDR and the SONДАР project were present with exhibition stands, including a 9 meter long life-size model of a *Huso huso* (Beluga Sturgeon) high on the main audience hall.

Entire reporting period:

EU Macroregional strategies – need to establish synergies

Not directly linked to PA 06 but more general to the EUSDR and experiences made so far, it should be noted that in the current reporting period 2014-2015, EC, states and regions were (and still are) intensely developing the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The Bavarian State Ministry for Environment and Consumer Protection, together with the Bavarian State Chancellery, is actively involved in the preparation of the EUSALP and member in the accompanying EUSALP Steering Group, actually with the same division in which PAC 06 is settled. This enabled several synergies, based on the policy and governance work in EUSDR, to make use of good and best practice; e.g. the Task Forces as established in PA 06 have been a role model for the envisaged "Action Groups" of the EUSALP, with the objective to gather different stakeholders and authorities (as well as funding programme representatives) in the future EUSALP Action Groups, which shall be the main body for EUSALP implementation.

Additionally, implementation of the EU Adriatic-Ionian Strategy (EUSAIR) started, overlapping partly the Danube Region countries. Already in this reporting period, PACs6, with their experience from the EUSDR, were involved in contribution to the development of the Action plan and functioning of the Strategy on the operational level, eg functioning of the Thematic Steering groups.

It can also be stated, that the recognition and awareness of macro-regional strategies has in general been strengthened on policy level due to the ongoing developments with the newly established EUSAIR and the upcoming EUSALP. At the same time, it shall be highlighted that each macroregional strategy (MRS) has its own approach in development and implementation and that there is no on-size-fits-it-all especially as regards the internal and external governance. Since all strategies have environmental pillars with similar objectives deriving from EU biodiversity strategy for 2020, especially regarding Natura 2000 network, green

infrastructure, restoration of degraded ecosystems, invasive alien species combat etc; we as PACs6 see an opportunity in positive horizontal exchange and communication between strategies in order to achieve the environment-related targets set out in action plans across all EU macroregional strategies. We feel there is a strong need to establish firm synergies and to avoid duplication of the work. Therefore, we welcome the first Common Conference of the EU macro-regional strategies which will take place in the beginning of 2016.

Table 1: Events related to policy level with participation of PAC6

DATE	EVENT, Place
26-27 June 2014	3 rd Annual Forum EUSDR, Vienna (AT)
08 December 2014	Information Event of City of Munich for ETC Programmes 2014-2020; Presentation of EUSDR by PAC 06

2.1.2. Improvements compared to previous report

- Generally higher awareness and interest on MRS on policy level can be noticed.

2.1.3. Outline on the future

As already highlighted in the previous report, PACs 06 together with some of the PA 06 stakeholders identify a missing link between PA 06-related activities taking place on the ground and the policy level. Additionally, in some countries of the Danube Region, topics concerning biodiversity and nature protection are not considered with the same importance than others. To find ways to overcome this situation, based on the EUSDR as a given legitimation, became an overall objective of PA 06 (more details on this see chapter 2.2.1.).

2.2. Process

2.2.1. PAC6 organisation, Steering Group, PA6 Stakeholder Network (“Coordination Center”)

PAC6 cooperation: The cooperation among the PACs of PA6 is continuously carried out well and in a sound complementary way in terms of regional focus, stakeholder involvement and interrelation with national, EU and international policies and regulations. The exchange between PACs is functioning well by e-mail communication on a daily basis and by organising PAC6 meetings when needed.

No PA 06 Steering Group meeting took place in the current reporting period; the next meeting is planned for autumn 2015. The Danubeparks Network has officially requested PA 06 to become an official observer of the PA 06 Steering Group.

PA6 Stakeholder Network – Feasibility Study and next steps

The idea of a **PA6 Stakeholder Network** has already been mentioned in the 2nd and 3rd PA 06 report and was intensely further followed in the first half year of 2015. Based on a feasibility study on the potentials and needs of a Stakeholder Network on Biodiversity in the Danube Region, closely related to Priority Area 06 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region / EUSDR which has been contracted by PAC6 (BY), a follow-up study was contracted to PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2015.

The starting point of the first study and main assumptions were that networking supranational, national and local stakeholder could significantly improve the impact and visibility of PA6 related topics. Single and isolated activities on local and regional level will be transferred to a transnational framework which raises their significance. A strong stakeholder network could raise the efficiency, coordination and visibility of the individual activities and the linkages of a stakeholder network to the policy level can be attained more easily than by single and individual activities. Also the policy level could benefit from a direct contact point to address when it comes to PA6-related activities (also beyond EUSDR).

Thus, the stakeholder network shall close the gap between policy level and implementation level on topics with PA6 relevance. In this context it has to be stated that the intention of the “Stakeholder Network” goes beyond the mere networking of relevant as the often missing link to the policy level shall be closed as well.

The first study clearly pointed out that the demand and commitment for an international Stakeholder-Network uttered by the Stakeholders themselves is very high. The success very much depends on the organization and localization in order to find broad acceptance and to safeguard its efficient work. In this respect, it is crucial to find wise ways to include already existing organizations.

The first study was finalized by March 2014, followed by a stakeholder network meeting in May 2014 with the PA6 stakeholders of took place in Vienna in order to discuss and reflect on the main findings of the study and also to further define the needs, requirements and next steps.

Follow-up study in 2015

In order to prepare next steps for establishing the stakeholder network organization, a follow-up study has been contracted by PAC 06 to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The purpose of this study is to further specify organizational, financial and legal issues with the objective to come closer to the initiation and establishment of the foreseen “organization”, which in the meantime was renamed to “Coordination Center”. Furthermore, the thematic and operational focus and thus the mission statement of the Coordination Center shall be clearly defined. Beside desk researches, PwC also lead interviews with several of the PA 06 stakeholders and conducted a workshop with the PA 06 key contacts in May 2015 in Munich. The current key contacts represent the current four main pillars of PA6 implementation: Biodiversity, Green Corridors, Soil Protection and Sustainable Development & Awareness Raising.

During the workshop, several key questions on the issues mentioned above were raised and discussed with the participants. The results of the workshop and the entire study are expected for end of June 2015 and the respective next steps

will be derived from the study results. It is also foreseen to present and discuss the results during the upcoming 4th Annual Forum in Ulm.

2.2.2. Integrative approach with other PACs

As mentioned in all previous PA 06 reports, the integrative approach among all Priority Areas is considered to be one of the major added values of the EUSDR and has always been in focus of PA 06, despite several drawbacks. It is therefore very welcomed that a stronger horizontal exchange is one of the key issues of the upcoming 4th Annual Forum, organized by the current EUSDR presidency of Baden-Württemberg.

Table 3: PAC and EUSDR related events with participation of PAC6

DATE	VENUE
12 February 2015	PAC 06 meeting, Stuttgart (DE)
13 February 2015	PAC meeting, Stuttgart (DE)
12 May 2015	2 nd PA 06 Stakeholder Network Meeting, Munich (DE)

2.2.3. Progress made since the last reporting period on the governance of PA

- Continuity in PA 06 cooperation
- Contracting follow-up study on organizational, financial and legal issues of a PA 06-related permanent “coordination center”, close exchange with PA 06 stakeholders

Potentials for improvements:

- Horizontal exchange and cooperation on level of PACs definitively has strong potential for improvement and will be further promoted by PAC6.
- Strengthen involvement and coordination of the Steering group members and their role within the Priority area.

2.2.4. *Outline on the future regarding PA governance*

Further exploring the potentials of the Coordination Center will be in focus in the second half of 2015, including its embedment in given structures and policies.

Enhancing the involvement of the PA6 Steering Group into the PA6 decision making

Enhancing information sharing with the PA6 Steering Group on the outcomes of Task Forces and meetings organized by PA6.

2.2.5. *Work on actions and projects*

Apart from the ongoing work with the existing Task Forces, a new Task Force on the topic of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) has been established and held two meetings. Continuity could be achieved within the Danube Sturgeon Task Force by a fifth meeting in September 2014 and by support from the TAF-DRP and START. The Bavarian Task Force on maintaining and developing biodiversity along the Bavarian stretch of the Danube finalized the first draft of the “Masterplan” as a mid-term vision and action plan to pursue the objectives. Finally, cooperation between PA 06 and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the EC could be established by two meetings on the topics of soil (in Ispra) and Air (in Munich).

Fifth Danube Sturgeon Task Force meeting in September 2014 (Bucharest, Romania). The 5th meeting of the international Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF) focussed on several key issues:

- Reporting on the output of the Technical Assistance Facility project (TAF) acquired by DSTF from the EUSDR;
- Discussions on the need to prolong the sturgeon fishery ban;
- Planning future joint applications – START - EUSDR proposal
- Adaptation of DSTF for the future and election of a new coordinator

Mrs. Cristina Sandu, as current coordinator of the DSTF reported on the DSTF activities in 2014:

Participation in several events to promote the project Sturgeon 2020: (1) meeting of the RO committee of the EUSDR; (2) ICPDR – RBM meeting; (3) IAD 40th conference; (4) EUSDR 3rd Forum; (5) experience exchange with EUSBSR.

The output of the TAF project comprising: (1) a comprehensive list of stakeholders in the DRB; (2) environmental legislation in support of Sturgeon 2020: Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on International Trade with Endangered Species (CITES); (3) pilot activities

The TAF project support acquired in 2013 from the EUSDR PA 10 aimed to support the further development of DSTF network, by including relevant stakeholders, identifying legislation that may support or hinder the implementation of Sturgeon 2020 program and developing draft project concepts to foster its implementation. Four pilot activities were considered to be further developed, and the responsible teams presented the current status of these activities.

During the 5th meeting, a smaller delegation of the DSTF had the opportunity to meet the **Romanian Minister of Environment, H.E. Attila Korodi**, where several issues were presented and discussed: (1) the EUSDR support for sturgeon conservation, (2) more support needed from the Danube countries, especially for reopening migration routes and for habitat protection, (3) on-going efforts at EU level for sturgeon restoration, while Lower Danube is the only basin where they still occur in their natural habits (4) Sturgeon 2020 encompasses not only measures for environmental protection, but also for socio-economic development, (5) DSTF offered its support for any problem concerning sturgeon conservation (in particular monitoring activities and identification of economic alternatives/incentives for fishermen communities). The minister stated that Romania intends to prolong the sturgeon fishery ban and kindly invited DSTF to provide a list of concrete measures that need to be supported by the Romanian MoE (short and long term), indicating also a contact point to address further problems,

which was provided to the Minister after the meeting.

The 5th meeting was also used to discuss and further prepare the START project application, which in the end was approved by the START programme.

Masterplan for Bavarian Danube

After several meetings of the integrative Bavarian working group in 2014, the draft of the “Masterplan Bavarian Danube” was finalised in January 2015 and is currently in its revision round. The working group includes representatives of NGOs as well as local and regional authorities and administration, which is remarkable and an achievement of the EUSDR momentum, including the PAC6 role of the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection. Its objective is to develop a mid- and long term vision for the Bavarian Stretch of the Danube with focus on enhancing biodiversity and nature protection as well as with an action plan, based on a detailed deficit analysis and pilot projects. The Masterplan has two major parts; the first part formulates a sectoral vision for defines elements of the Danube stretch, analyses the current situation in Bavaria and formulates objectives. In the second part, a comprehensive description of 14 key projects concretely formulates proposals for concrete activities. The finalisation and publication of the Masterplan is foreseen for the second half of 2015.

Work on Soil Protection, deepened cooperation with SONДАР

PAC6 participated in the 22nd Conference of the Working Community of the Danube Regions on 25.-26. March in Tulln, which reunites the sustainability working group in cooperation with the Soil Strategy Network in the Danube Region and the SoPro Innovation Agency. The conference focused on “Sustainability and socio-ecological production as an incentive for regional economy in the Danube regions.” PAC6 highlighted the EUSDR / PA6 contribution to the process of SONДАР, its follow-ups and specifically the issue of social production, which generally also reflects the integrative approach of PA 06. The idea for a Coordination Center (see 2.2.1.) was presented as well. The event was an occasion to further discuss new project ideas and

the general next steps to be taken within the soil-related issues of PA 06.

Kick-off and 2nd meeting of DIAS – Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network

After a preparation meeting in March 2014, the kick-off conference of the new DIAS Task Force was held on 09.-10. October 2014 in Sofia, Bulgaria

The purpose of the meeting was to bring together scientists, stakeholders and authorities to discuss the status-quo, and most urgent present and future needs to efficiently tackle the issue of invasive alien species (IAS) in the Danube Region. The idea behind is to join forces, to establish a Danube Region-wide network and to develop a mid- and long-term strategy and work plan in order to significantly improve the situation, to establish links between science and policy level and to develop individual but coordinated projects in the single regions.

The Kick-off meeting was jointly organised by:

- Priority Area 06 of the EUSDR
- International Association for Danube Research (IAD)
- East and South European Network for Invasive Alien Species (ESENIAS)
- Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IBER-BAS).

The Workshop brought together 38 representatives from 10 countries (AT, BU, HR, DE, HU, RO, SRB, SK, TU, AU) the JRC, ICPDR and PAC 06. The participants represented research institutions, universities, environmental protection agencies, ministries, as well as NGO working with invasive alien species.

The Workshop had the following objectives:

- To establish the Danube Region Invasive Alien Species network (DIAS) as new initiative to tackle the issue of IAS in the Danube Region in a coordinated and efficient way

- To discuss the scope of tasks of DIAS, its internal and external organization, its relation to existing initiatives, networks, organizations and authorities
- To discuss guiding questions towards a DIAS strategy on key topics, such as: IAS species and pathways of introduction in the DRB; information system and knowledge dissemination; risk assessment and prioritisation; early detection and rapid eradication; management and restoration; and awareness rising
- To discuss the preparation of a DIAS strategy following the requirements of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the new EU Regulation on IAS prevention and management
- To initiate the preparation of the DIAS strategy and plan future work
- To explore options for cooperation and funding within the frames of ESENIAS, IAD and other organizations.

The participants agreed that the first step of DIAS activities should be the preparation of a Strategy for IAS in the Danube Region. The strategy will present the long-term vision of DIAS and will formulate the mission statement and objectives, representing the main idea – to connect people and connect data on IAS. The strategy will be a frame for the work to be done for the next 10 years, will define more concretely some topics and will define where are the gaps, and where DIAS can contribute. The strategy will follow and contribute to the **EU Regulation 1143/2014** on Invasive Alien Species, but at the same time will consider the specific demands of the Danube Region.

Some gaps and needs were discussed. The participants agreed that there is a need of development of a black list for the region. More data on distribution, biology, ecology and impact of alien species have to be collected. A common platform for data storage – open source and developing, including an interactive mapping tool, is needed for this purpose. At the same time it is necessary to go beyond the scientific goals and go to the implementation stage. More practical steps are necessary, such as: calculation of damages, identification of pathways, development of assessment methods (e.g. checking at ports),

formulation of measures, and development of indicators for each action (to measure if the action is successful or not). It is necessary to involve in the process not only biologists, but also economists and policy makers. IAS can be integrated in the EIA assessments.

The discussed topics during the meeting were used as a basis for the preparation of the DIAS strategy draft, the first topic being split into two: IAS - Species and interactions/ impact in the DRB and Pathways of introduction in the DRB.

During the kick-off meeting, the following issues were agreed upon:

- to initiate the preparation of the DIAS strategy;
- to follow the requirements of the EUSDR and the new EU Regulation on IAS prevention and management, and consider the demands of the region;
- Definition of sub-topics:
 - IAS - Species and interactions/ impact in the DRB
 - Pathways of introduction in the DRB
 - Information system and knowledge dissemination
 - Risk assessment and prioritization
 - Early detection and rapid eradication
 - Management and restoration
 - Awareness raising
- Cover the Danube Region as well as the adjacent region of the Black Sea, focusing on the main channel and selected pilot river basins
- Use available and confident data for the region and integrative approach
- Establish a strategy team

Soon after the kick-off meeting, preparation for the second meeting began. The second meeting was held on 24.-24. April 2015 in Budapest, Hungary, jointly organised by

- Priority Area 06 of the EUSDR

- International Association for Danube Research (IAD)
- Hungarian Hydrological Society, Budapest (HHS)

The meeting successfully dealt with the following issues:

- Definition and discussion of the DIAS mission statement, its scope of tasks and organisation;
- Sharing information on DIAS activities in the Lower, Middle and Upper Danube River;
- Linking the work of DIAS to the EU Regulation 1143/2014 on invasive alien species, which came into force from 1 January 2015;
- Follow up on the initiative to develop the DIAS strategy;
- Concretely planning future work and organisation of this work for the development of the DIAS network, including development of lists of alien and invasive alien species for the Danube Region, preparing common papers, DIAS website, etc., to enable sharing of data and other information on IAS in the region
- Discussion of possibilities for funding
- Seek further improvement of cooperation and networking on IAS in the Danube Region and collaboration with other European and global IAS networks and initiatives.

It is expected that the DIAS work with its strategy and work plan can actively contribute to fill the link between EU level (EU regulation), the national and regional authorities in the Danube Region and concrete activities on the ground.

Similar to the DSTF, it became obvious that there are several experts on IAS throughout the Danube Region. The DIAS Task Force can contribute to improve the transnational exchange, safeguard information flow and jointly work on those measures, which can be solved better in a coordinated and cross-border and / or transnational way.

Network of protected areas in Danube region

Danube Region has a great network of protected areas with a good communication and knowledge exchange which is an added value of the EU regional policy and backbone of nature protection in the Region. Such networks: DANUBEPARKS; SAVAPARKS¹, Dinaric arc Parks², Carpathian Network of Protected Areas³ (CNPA), with their joint monitoring of endangered species and habitats, visitors management and other joint activities are, respectively, contributing primarily to PA6 Action 3 but also are contributing to Danube Region capacity building, education and awareness raising on biodiversity conservation.

¹Declaration on development of Sava River Protected Areas Network was signed on 2 February 2015. http://www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr/new/media/2015/Sava_parks_declaration.pdf

² <http://www.parksdinarides.org/en/>

³ <http://www.carpathianparks.org/>

Fostering cooperation between JRC and Priority Area 06 in Soil and Air

As part of the European Commission's support to the implementation of the Danube Strategy, DG Joint Research Centre (JRC) has launched a programme to strengthen scientific and technical cooperation in the region in four thematic clusters ("nexus"): water, land and soils, air and bioenergy. Obviously there are several connections to Priority Area 06.

The JRC Initiative "Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy" supports PA6 in relation to soil issues. Based on its expertise and through new activities, the JRC Danube Land and Soil Nexus and its scientific partners provide support in various manners, such as sampling exercises to assess soil quality, modelling tools to predict the impacts of land management on soil quality, erosion and greenhouse gas exchanges, and studies on the preservation of ecosystems.

As part of the recent International conference on Land Quality and Landscape Processes, co-organised by the University of Pannonia, the JRC, the European Environmental Agency and the Chinese Academy of Sciences Institute of Soil Science, held in Keszthely, Hungary, from 2-4 June 2014, a workshop was organised on soil information in the Danube basin within the EU's Danube Strategy on **05.-06. February 2015 in Ispra, Italy**. The workshop, chaired by the JRC, facilitated an exchange of information and views among scientists and stakeholders involved in soil data generation and policy development relating to land management and land use. Participants to the meeting were key researchers on soil data in the Danube countries. PAC 06 has been invited to present the status and future direction of soil related issues within the context of the EUSDR.

Furthermore PAC 06 was given the opportunity to bilaterally discuss future joint activities with several representatives of the JRC. In the aftermath of this direct exchange, a working meeting with JRC representatives and both PA 06 PACs of the **Air Nexus** was held in **Munich on 11. May 2015**.

The JRC Initiative Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy is supporting PA6 in relation to

action 13 on Air Quality ("To decrease air pollutants"). Following discussions between PAC 06 and the JRC's Danube Air Nexus the JRCs FAIRMODE activities that had previously been identified as serving the action 13 on Air Quality are being included in the Danube Air Nexus.

Following the approval of the FAIRMODE 3 year road map in April 2014 a status report on the activities of the 4 working groups was produced in October 2014 and is available on the FAIRMODE website (<http://fairmode.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.html>).

During the PAC 06 – JTC meeting in May, several joint activities were discussed and will be further developed, based on the JRC approach and expertise and aligned on the air-related topics of Priority Area 06. Among others, the JRC proposes to hold a joint PA6-FAIRMODE workshop in the second half of 2015 that would examine firstly how to use the FAIRMODE and other infrastructures in support of Air Quality Regulation (ERLAP AQUILA and the European Environment Agency run EIONET) to support harmonisation of Air quality regulatory activities in the Danube Region (ideally before the end of 2015), and secondly how a targeted study by the JRC's Danube Bioenergy Nexus and Danube Air Nexus on biomass combustion emissions - exposure - health effects can be developed and widened under the auspices of PA6.

2.2.6. Improvements compared to previous report

Beside continuation and stabilisation, two major new additions to the regular PA 06 work can be notified, namely the new DIAS Task Force and the direct cooperation with JRC.

Table 4: Events related to projects and project development with participation of PAC6

DATE	VENUE
06 August 2014	4. Strategy Development meeting "Masterplan Bavarian Danube", Munich (DE)
02-03 September 2014	5 th Meeting of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF)
29 September 2014	5. Strategy Development meeting "Masterplan Bavarian Danube", Munich (DE)
09-10 October 2014	Kick-off Meeting Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network (DIAS), Sofia

	(BG)
05 February 2015	JRC Support to EU Danube Strategy Danube Land and Soil Nexus – Workshop to develop 250,000 soil database for Danube Basin using eSOTER methodology
23-24 March 2015	Second meeting of Working Group on Invasive Alien Species ("DIAS"), Budapest (HU)
11 May 2015	Working Meeting with JRC Air Nexus and PAC 06, Munich (DE)

priorities/measures have been embedded across different transnational programmes. This provides stakeholders more opportunities for project planning, and gives additional boost to the need for creating synergies between different macro regional strategies ad referred in the Chapter 2.1.1. of this Report.

Table 5: Transnational Cooperation Programmes relevant for Danube region countries with PA6 related Priority axes listed

Cooperation programme (2014-2020)	Thematic objective 6	PA 6 related Priority axes and Specific objectives
DANUBE	<i>included</i>	<u>Priority axis 2: Environment and culture responsible Danube region</u> Specific objective 2.1. Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources (6c) Specific objective 2.2. Foster the restoration and management of ecological corridors (6d)
CENTRAL EUROPE	<i>included</i>	<u>Priority axis 3: Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in central Europe</u> Specific objective 3.1. To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources (6c) Specific objective 3.3. To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places (6e)
ADRION	<i>included</i>	<u>Priority axis 2: Sustainable Region</u> Specific objective 2.1.: Promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage as growth assets in the Adriatic-Ionian area (6c) Specific objective 2.2.: Enhance the capacity in transnationally tackling environmental vulnerability,

2.3. Funding

2.3.1. Preparing the funding period 2014-2020

Danube Transnational Programme: In the recent reporting period, the programming process for the funding period 2014-2020 is more or less over, also the ETC Danube Transnational Programme is already developed and almost complete. In order to better define the links between the EUSDR and the programme, specific PAC-Meetings with participation of programme bodies were held. It is very favourable that the Danube Transnational Programme underlines its willingness to support EUSDR and PACs by different measures. Furthermore, details on the evaluation scheme and PACs contribution were discussed and concluded.

Despite these good developments, there might be a danger of too high expectations towards the Danube Transnational Programme from side of the EUSDR. The ETC programme is limited in overall available funds and at the same time, quite a long list of projects which has been developed in the past three years in all Priority Areas are waiting for the first call for projects. It is obvious that not all of the projects can be approved and this can lead to frustration and even competition among Priority Areas. To overcome this potential risk, horizontal exchange among the PACs could contribute to merge certain project ideas and to develop more integrative projects, which cover not only one PA. Another way out of the dilemma is to focus not only on the ETC Programme, even though it might be the most obvious one, but to apply at other EU programmes as well, depending on the topic of the project of course.

Additionally, we have to note as the positive outcome in this programming period regarding finding of biodiversity related activities, that

		fragmentation, and the safeguarding of ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian area (6d)
MEDITERANEAN	<i>included</i>	<p>Priority axis 3: <u>Protecting and promoting Mediterranean natural and cultural resources</u></p> <p>Specific objective 3.1. To enhance the development of a sustainable and responsible coastal and maritime tourism in the MED area (6c)</p> <p>Specific objective 3.2. To maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems through strengthening the management and networking of protected areas (6d)</p>
ALPINE SPACE	<i>included</i>	<p>Priority axis 3: <u>Liveable Alpine Space</u></p> <p>Specific objective 3.1. Sustainably valorise Alpine Space cultural and natural heritage (6c)</p> <p>Specific objective 3.2. Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems (6d)</p>

Regarding other European Territorial Cooperation programmes, such as Cross-border Cooperation programmes, PA6 related priorities/measures have mostly been embedded which gives an opportunity to stakeholders from neighbouring Danube Region countries to develop project ideas with a transnational impact contributing PA6 targets. Of course, for Non EU Member states similar opportunities could be achieved through Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

Another, important EU programme for co-financing projects relevant to PA6 Targets and actions is LIFE programme. The call for 2015 for action grants for this EU's financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU was launched on 1 June 2015 and covers

proposals for both environment and climate action sub-programmes.

START Programme: The first call of the START programme was successfully implemented by the colleagues from PA10 in the 2nd half of 2014. The preparation and the involvement of the PACs and the Steering Groups was very well prepared, the cooperation between the “Managing Authority” and PAC 06 was excellent. The high number of applications also revealed the high interest and awareness of several stakeholders (applicants) of the EUSDR and the specific START programme. In a technical seminar in March 2015, the experiences and lessons learned from the first call were reflected by the PACs and the responsible colleagues for START and TAF DRP from Euro Vienna.

The following projects were approved within PA6:

- Ex-situ survey to preserve sturgeon genetic diversity in the Middle and Lower Danube – Applicant: International Association for Danube Research (IAD), Austria
- Bee=Biodiversity – Applicant: VELES' VISION, Serbia

It is worth to mention that the IAD project on sturgeons is a direct follow-up of the “Sturgeon Protect”-project, which has been granted support by the TAF DRP facility and also a direct result of the 5th DSTF meeting as described above.

2.3.2. *Improvements compared to previous report*

- Good improvement in ETC Danube Transnational Programme preparation and exchange with EUSDR representatives.
- Successful implementation of START programme
- Successful implementation of biodiversity related measures across different transnational programmes.

2.3.3. Outlook on the future

The first call for projects of the Danube Transnational Programme will reveal whether the cooperation between EUSDR and the ETC programme is working well or might need some fine-tuning. Despite several differences, it will also be a showcase for other future relationships between MRS and ETC programme, e.g. in the Alpine Space.

Table 5: Events related to funding with participation of PAC6

DATE	VENUE
20 March 2015	PAC meeting (START / TAF-DRP), Vienna (AT)
08 May 2015	PAC meeting on ETC Danube Transnational Programme, Brussels (BE)