

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 07/2015 to 06/2016

(29 July 2016)

Revised Version as of 30. September 2016

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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 COMMISSION
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.

Priority Area 06 continues its approach to work with Task Forces, dedicated to specific PA 06 topics and which are composed by representatives from civil society, the scientific community and policy level from the Danube Countries. In the reporting period, the Task Forces were formally integrated in the PA 06 governance structure, as the chairs of the Task Forces were included as Observers to the PA 06 Steering Group. Furthermore, the way has been paved for two new Task Forces (on Air Quality and on Pesticides and Chemicals). Task Forces represent the implementation level of PA 06 and formally linked to governance of PA 06 / EUSDR. They are open and have a transnational focus on the Danube Region. 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).

Mid-term review of implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 has been published in October 2015.¹ The present mid-term review takes stock of progress in implementing the EU biodiversity strategy against the 2010 baseline. It aims to inform decision-makers of areas in which increased efforts are needed to meet the EU biodiversity objectives by 2020. Since PA 06 Action plan derived for the Strategy PAC will follow on the priorities identified by the Commission and MS and try to direct stakeholders to focus projects on identified priorities.

Within the 3rd call for Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP) managed by PA 10, three Projects aligned to PA 06 were assessed by the PACs and the SG and were finally approved.

START (Danube Facility Fund) is another PA 10 initiative helping EUSDR stakeholders / project idea owners to initiate and implement projects with relevance for the Danube Region in form of “seed money”. There were two calls for proposals and in the end of 2nd call (6 July 2015) there were 13 formally correct START applications for PA 06. They were assessed by the respective Priority Area Coordinators and their Steering Groups and two projects were selected to receive START funding (based on the rule two projects per PA).

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?

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”

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0478&from=EN>

- 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

Question 3: What are the main arguments for selecting those policy areas as priority ones?

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?

Biodiversity: Letter from three environmental NGO's, including Danube Sturgeon Task Force, to EC as regards navigation project in the Danube section Braila-Calarasi as serious threat to sturgeon migration, which raised political awareness on the issue. DSTF is well established as group for raising political awareness on sturgeon conservation.

The project STURGENE acquired by DSTF in the first call of START program successfully accomplished (April 2016), paving the way for future cooperation of Fishery, Biodiversity and Water management authorities for sturgeon (aquatic biodiversity) conservation. As a result, an extension of sturgeon fishery ban until 2021 was agreed informally between RO, BG, UA, RS relevant authorities. Two ministerial orders prohibiting sturgeon fishery entered into force in Bulgaria (January 2016) and Romania (April 2016).

An Expert Group on Sturgeon Conservation was set up in April 2016 under the coordination of the RO Ministry of Environment. Program Sturgeon 2020 presented in April 2016 at the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture to raise political awareness and further support for sturgeon conservation.

Invasive Alien Species: establishment of DIAS – Task Force and closing links between local activities and regional and national authorities. Contribution to fulfil Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014.

Air Quality: Establishment of new Task Force on Air Quality in the Danube Region in close cooperation with Joint Research Centre of EC and thereby contribute to bring down scientific excellency to local and regional implementation specifically in the Danube Region.

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 2.1.1 and 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)?

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 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)?

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 November 2016 will tackle this issue on governance. The intention behind is to stabilize the links and cooperation of civil society with the implementation level 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Target 04: Continue the ongoing work and efforts to secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species and other indigenous fish species by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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.

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?

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 biodiversity strategy for 2020 (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. 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 Carpathian – Danube – Alpine ecological corridor, which could include elements and objectives from MRS (EUSDR, EUSALP), international organizations (Carpathian Convention, Alpine Convention) and stakeholder networks (Danubeparks, ALPARC).

The conference “Promoting the EU macro-regional strategies in the Western Balkans – with specific focus on environmental issues” in April 2016 in Sarajevo was an excellent starting point to join forces in this respect. PA 06 was represented by SG member from Serbia in the conference.

T04 (sturgeon revival) requires also a stronger interlinkage with the Black Sea stakeholders, considering that 3 sturgeon species live in the Black Sea and migrate upstream the Danube River for spawning, and hence, need harmonized measures in both environments. Such a connection is in line with the effort of DG ENV for an integrated implementation of nature, water and marine directives. To foster the cooperation with the Black Sea area, the DSTF chair attended the 3rd Conference of the Black Sea in Odessa (14 June 2016), presented Sturgeon 2020 program and connected to DG MARE and DG Research & Innovation.

Having in mind that EUSDR is deriving and complementing existing EU environmental policies we strongly feel that active involvement of sectorial DGs is needed if we want 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.

Targets have been revised in Autumn 2015. They were approved by the PA6 Steering group between 16 October 2015 and 13 November 2015. The new revised Targets were adopted by the EUSDR National Coordinators and Commission on 23 May 2016 in Bratislava at the joint NC/PAC Meeting.

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		APD													
T2			ASP		ASP		ASP	ASP	ASP	APD	ASP	ASP	ASP	ASP	ASP	ASP	
T3						ASP											
T4			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.

The SG confirmed the existing actions in February 2016.

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									
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

<i>PA Actions (numbers)</i>	<i>Activities undertaken during the reporting period to progress on PA implementation</i>
<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>
<i>A1</i>	▪ Masterplan Bavarian Danube: final draft and revision. 1 lecture at stakeholder conference.
<i>A2</i>	▪ Masterplan Bavarian Danube: final draft and revision.
<i>A3</i>	▪ 1 workshop at EUSDR, 1 final conference (STURGENE project), 1 meeting of DSTF, 1 participation at PA 11 SG, 1 participation at the Black Sea conference, 1 workshop to plan an application to the Danube Transnational Program
<i>A4</i>	▪
<i>A5</i>	▪ Development of potential Carpathian – Danube – Alpine ecological corridor (Carpathian Convention, Danubeparks, ALPARC, Alpine Convention)
<i>A6</i>	▪ 1 meeting of DIAS
<i>A7</i>	▪ Discussion and initiation on new PA 06 Task Force on Pesticides and Chemicals, chaired by SI. Recruitment of TF members.
<i>A8</i>	▪ Discussion and initiation on new PA 06 Task Force on Pesticides and Chemicals, chaired by SI. Recruitment of TF members.
<i>A9</i>	▪ Development of potential Carpathian – Danube – Alpine ecological corridor (Carpathian Convention, Danubeparks, ALPARC, Alpine Convention)
<i>A10</i>	▪
<i>A11</i>	▪
<i>A12</i>	▪ 1 lecture at stakeholder conference
<i>A13</i>	▪ Preparation and implementation of expert workshop, initiation of TF Air Quality
<i>A14</i>	▪
<i>A15</i>	▪
<i>A16</i>	▪
<i>A17</i>	▪

2.6 EUSDR STRATEGIC PROJECTS

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

General Remark: in the Reporting Period, focus has not been laid on the identification of proposals for Strategic Projects as the PA 06 focus is still on the installation and establishment of the Task Forces. The Task Forces are then to be seen as the basis to develop strategic projects. This is partly already happening, as DSTF and TF Air Quality are already elaborating projects for major funding programmes (DTP, Call 2). The Danubeparks Network keeps developing and applying for projects as well. As this is an ongoing process and the competition is rather high, the requested details can be displayed in the next PA 06 report, in case the project(s) are approved.

At its last SG meeting in April 2016 it was decided that Task Forces could be included as proposals for strategic projects having in mind that the strategic projects concept also include processes. The formal proposal from the SG was not submitted by the end of the 1st deadline for Strategic project. Having in mind the conclusion of the last NC –PAC meeting (Bratislava, May 2016), the new call for SP will be in 2nd half of 2016.

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

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

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

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.

DSTF: Project development meeting on 23 June 2016 in Vienna as a direct result of the DSTF work, including START project Sturgene. Project Application foreseen for Call 2 of Danube Transnational Programme.

Please note that for the funding period 2014-2020 all the operational programmes (including national OP, ETC OP) have been adopted during the last EUSDR reporting period. Information on PA 06 funding opportunities from different ETC programmes was provided in the last PA 06 Annual Report. Since the information on the national financing of biodiversity was not provided in the last report a short information is provided in the Table below:

COUNTRY	National Operational Programme (s)	PA 6 related investment priorities (IPs) and Specific objectives (SOs) (if possible please provide the webpage)
AT	<i>Interreg Cooperation Programme</i> * AT-CZ * SK-AT * HU-AT	<p>Priority Axis 2: Environment and Resources</p> <p>Investment Priority IP 6c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing cultural and natural heritage (CZ, SK, HU)</p> <p>IP 6d: Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure (CZ, SK, HU)</p> <p>IP 6f: Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution (CZ, HU)</p> <p>www.at-cz.eu; www.sk-at.eu; www.at-hu.net</p>
BA		<i>No information provided</i>
BG		<i>No information provided</i>
CZ	<i>OP Environment 2014-2020</i>	<p>2.2.3 IP 1 of PA 2: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting efficient use of resources by taking measures to improve the urban environment, urban revitalization, recovery and decontamination of brownfields (including former military areas), reduction of pollution, and promotion of noise reduction measures</p> <p>SO 2.1: To reduce emissions from domestic heating contributing to the population's exposure to excessive concentrations of pollutants</p> <p>SO 2.2: To reduce emissions from stationary sources contributing to the population's exposure to excessive concentrations of pollutants</p> <p>SO 2.3: To improve the system for the monitoring, evaluation and forecasting the trends in air quality and relevant meteorological aspects.</p> <p>2.4.3 IP 1 for PA 4: Maintaining and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency by protecting and restoring biodiversity and land, with the support of ecosystem services, including via the NATURA 2000 network and ecological infrastructures</p> <p>SO 4.1: To ensure the favourable conservation status of the subjects of protection in the protected areas of national importance</p>

		<p>SO 4.2: To strengthen biodiversity</p> <p>SO 4.3: To strengthen natural landscape functions</p> <p>SO 4.4: To improve the quality of the environment in settlements</p> <p>www.opzp.cz</p>
DE	<i>Bavaria: OP Bayern ERDF 2014-2020</i>	<p>IP 4e: promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures</p> <p>SO 3.3: Reduction of CO2 release from boggy soils.</p> <p>IP 6e: taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures;</p> <p>SO 5.3: Revitalization of conversion areas, fallow land and vacant buildings</p> <p>SO 5.4: green and recreational areas</p> <p>www.efre-bayern.de</p>
HR	<i>Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014 – 2020 (OPCC 2014-2020)</i>	<p>SO 6c2 Increasing attractiveness, educational capacity and sustainable management of natural heritage sites</p> <p>IP 6iii Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure</p> <p>SO 6iii1 Improved knowledge on the state of biodiversity as a basis for effective monitoring and management of biodiversity</p> <p>SO 6iii2 Setting up the framework for sustainable management of biodiversity (primarily Natura 2000)</p> <p>SO 6iii3 Demining, restoration and protection of forests and forest land in protected and Natura 2000 areas</p> <p>SO 6e1 - Upgrade of air quality management and monitoring system according to 2008/50/EC directive</p> <p>(OPCC 2014-2020)</p>
HU	<i>Environmental and Energy Efficiency Operational Programme (KEHOP)</i>	
MD		<i>No information provided</i>
ME		<i>No information provided</i>
RO	<i>Large Infrastructure Operational Programme (POIM)</i>	<p>Priority Axis 4 - Environmental protection measures for the conservation of biodiversity, air quality monitoring and remediation of historically contaminated sites</p> <p>http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/poim-2014</p>
RS		<i>No information provided</i>
SI		<i>No information provided</i>
SK		<i>No information provided</i>
UA		<i>No information provided</i>

TF Air Quality: first project outlines as a direct result from TF Air Quality Meeting on 15-16 May 2016 in Ispra.

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?

Since the operational programmes have been adopted in the previous reporting period for this reporting period major activities were directed regarding operationalization and publication of calls. For DTP it is clear that they have their own targets and priorities and that applications coming from EUSDR / PA's need to follow the programme intervention logic. It is appreciated that DTP seeks for synergies with EUSDR and PA's.

START Programme (PA 10 & EuroVienna) proved to be very successful and necessary in order to prepare major projects and their application. Any Seed Money facility would be considered as useful also for the future.

New tool "Euro Access" as search engine for funding programmes is very useful.

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.

Flagship projects of PA 06 should be actively promoted at national level with the support of SG members and NCPs and embedded in the national funding programs (e.g. structural funds). The NCPs should support further connections with relevant ministries/stakeholders at national level in order to foster the implementation of these 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.

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 October 2015, the frequency of meetings was again set to twice a year. Clearer information exchange between PACs and SG Members has been discussed and agreed upon.

As a consequence, the April SG Meeting had a different setting based on the request and need of linking activities with the policy level starting from the SG members in the context of building the bridges between Task Forces and Steering group. Hence, the chairs of several of the PA 06 Task Forces presented the current state of play to the Steering Groups on the first day of the SG meeting, which was highly welcomed and appreciated by the SG Members.

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 mailing list.

It was also agreed to change the Rules of Procedure as regards the inclusion of observers accordingly.

Task Force chairs are asked to report regularly about their activities to the SG.

TA Budget can be used for reimbursement of travel / accommodation costs for participation to SG meetings.

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
10/2015	x			x	x	x	x				x	x		
04/2016	x			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).

PA1a: continued exchange, especially as regards sturgeon conservation measures and fairway constructions and maintenance. PA 06 has been involved in the PA 1a "Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan" by commenting the draft.

PA 04, PA 05: Pillar 2 cooperation since beginning of EUSDR (joint labelling system, joint workshops). In reporting period, PA 06 contributed to PA 04 Workshop during EUSDR Annual Forum.

PA 11: Participation of PAC 06 in Steering Group Meeting of PA 11 and proposal for cooperation on wildlife crime. This has been approved by PA 11 SG and will be continued in 2nd half year 2016.

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).

PA 06 continued cooperation with Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the EC, specifically by a joint expert workshop in May 2016 in Ispra, in which the Task Force on Air Quality was established.

Links to authorities on national, regional and local level are partially provided by Task Force members. In particular, the connection initiated by DSTF with Fishery authorities in BG, RO and UA provides a good basis for further conservation measures in the Lower Danube, where wild population of long distance migratory sturgeons still exists. Also, the interlinkage with Black Sea stakeholders, especially with DG MARE, should be pursued in order to ensure a future harmonization of measures with EUSDR priorities. The establishment of an EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region was suggested to facilitate the EUSDR – Black Sea cooperation.

Involvement of relevant institutions as observers to PA 06 also provides stable and direct links.

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).

On case by case basis, PAC 06 got in contact with DTP (national contact point) for general or specific questions as regards project development and application. Same applies to Task Force members in regards to recent project developments.

Information on the national methods/tools interlinking the specific projects/calls to the macro-regional policies is provided in the table below:

COUNTRY	National Operational Programme (s)	Is there any methods/tools interlinking the specific projects/calls to the macro-regional policies
AT	<i>Austria: Interreg Cooperation Programme</i>	The Cooperation Programmes pays attention to the EUSDR both in the programming process and in the implementation phase.
BA		<i>No information provided</i>
BG		<i>No information provided</i>
CZ	<i>OP Environment 2014-2020</i>	No. Priority area 6 EUSDR corresponds by its character to the content of priority axis 2 and 4 of OPE 2014-2020, but there is no preference set for EUSDR related projects (e.g. extra points).
DE	<i>Bavaria: OP Bayern ERDF 2014-2020</i>	Projects which support the EUSDR or EUSALP are selected preferential for funding compared to projects with equal evaluation apart from that.
HR	<i>Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014 – 2020 (OPCC 2014-2020)</i>	For investment priorities for PA 06 financing (provided in the table in the chapter 3.1.) HR will include selection criteria extra points for contribution to the MRS goals.
HU		<i>No information provided</i>
MD		<i>No information provided</i>
ME		<i>No information provided</i>
RO		<i>No information provided</i>
RS		<i>No information provided</i>
SI		<i>No information provided</i>
SK		<i>No information provided</i>
UA		<i>No information provided</i>

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).

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).

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 biodiversity strategy for 2020 (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. 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.

The conference “Promoting the EU macro-regional strategies in the Western Balkans – with specific focus on environmental issues” in April 2016 in Sarajevo was an excellent starting point to join forces in this respect. PA 06 was represented by SG member from Serbia in the conference.

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.

The fact that a new Task Force has been initiated by Steering Group member from SI, who will also be a member of this TF which will be chaired by the director of the National institute of the public Health, is an excellent progress in this direction, as the Task Force work becomes an integral part of the policy level from the beginning on. The SG members have nominated the experts to participate in the work of the new TF.

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.

Civil Society involvement is crucial. In order to raise interest and awareness of the EUSDR, communication to the outside world is very important, like “What is your benefit being involved in the EUSDR” and to communicate the direct benefits and advantages of the EUSDR to the public and to NGOs etc. In this sense, EUSDR should move away a little bit from indicators which normally are not very interesting for the outside world but to sell lively and interesting success stories. The status of certain milestones in the roadmap is surely not very interesting for the Civil Society. Processes should be highlighted as well, as well as concrete examples of projects achievements/plans (e.g. regularly updated factsheets posted EUSDR webpage).

