



EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT OF EUSDR PRIORITY AREA 7

"To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)"

Reported period: from 07/2015 to 06/2016

(FINAL VERSION)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	ACTION
AT	AUSTRIA
BA	BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA
BG	BULGARIA
BMBF	FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
CZ	CZECH REPUBLIC
DE	GERMANY
DFCN	DANUBE FUNDING COORDINATION NETWORK
DR	DANUBE REGION
DRRIF	DANUBE REGION RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND
DSP	DANUBE STRATEGY POINT
DTP	DANUBE TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMME
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
EUSDR	EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION
FP	FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME
HR	CROATIA
HU	HUNGARY
ICT	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES
M	MILESTONE
MD	MOLDOVA
ME	MONTENEGRO
PA	PRIORITY AREA
PA7	PRIORITY AREA 7
PAC	PRIORITY AREA COORDINATOR
R&D&I	RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION
RIS3	RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGIES FOR SMART SPECIALISATION
RO	ROMANIA
RS	REPUBLIC OF SERBIA, SERBIA
SG	STEERING GROUP
SI	SLOVENIA
SK	SLOVAK REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA
STI	SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
UA	UKRAINE
WG	WORKING GROUP

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Priority Area 7 (PA7) " To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)" – as a part of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) Pillar C – Building prosperity *continued in its efforts focused on steering a number of stakeholders in higher education, research and ICT in the Danube Region towards common EUSDR objectives and specific PA7 targets.*

The PA7 of the EUSDR has a very horizontal character; higher education, research and innovation are not only highly relevant issues per se, but they also form an integral and essential part of other priorities, from energy, water and environment, to mobility, culture and security.

Therefore, the most intensive work of PA7 coordinators and the Steering Group (SG) is focused on dissemination, networking and creation of the framework that will boost motivation and commitment of stakeholders to the EUSDR.

PA7 activities are focussing on actions i.e. to improve the performance and quality of education and training systems, to foster cooperation between key stakeholders of labour market, education and research policies, to foster creativity and entrepreneurship, to support lifelong learning and learning mobility, to promote social cohesion, active citizenship and to empower actors on all levels in the Danube Region, to improve cross-sector policy coordination, to fight poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities (especially Roma and immigrants) and to promote gender equality.

The realisation of stakeholder conferences and several thematic events as well as SG group meetings has proven effective in order to boost co-operation and collaboration of relevant stakeholders from countries in the Danube Region. The outcomes of the events (e.g. reports, development of project ideas) contributed to the sustainable development and to the progress of PA7 activities.

To the most important outcomes and successes in the reported period belong activities connected with the new funding possibilities for the EUSDR Research & Innovation, specifically:

- 1) German Ministry of Education and Sciences (BMBF) "Danube Call": Call for proposals under the Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Science and Research - Regulations for funding an ideas competition for the establishment and development of innovative R&D networks with partners in the Danube States, with participation of HU, MD, and RS as co-funding partners;*
- 2) Establishment of Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN); and*
- 3) Agreement on the pilot multilateral call for funding scientific and technological cooperation projects in the Danube Region (to be launched on 15 July 2016) with participation of AT, CZ, RS and SK.*

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?

*The main PA7 activities remained focused on a **wide dissemination and policy level advocacy for the EUSDR, PA7 targets and obtaining support for the most relevant PA7 actions**; i.e. supporting common research and innovation (R&I) projects (recognition of the strategic projects); supporting common funding activities; peer reviewing of Research and Innovation Smart Specialization Strategies (RIS3); supporting cooperation among education and research institutions and industry.*

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

These chosen policy areas lead to the fulfilment of the PA7 objectives and milestones resulting from EUSDR Action Plan and PA7 Roadmap which are regularly updated and agreed by PA7 SG taking into account the outcomes of the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) feasibility study and present results of the Danube INCO.NET project.

The EUSDR and PA7 are getting more recognition in the local policies, internationalization strategies of university and research institutes, in the agenda of respective ministries. Emphasize is put on cooperation and joint partnerships of regional institutions. Together with new funding possibilities (in the last year BMBF call, EUREKA E!DI call, possible COST cooperation, Multilateral call and newly established Danube Funding Coordination Network) this steering of policy orientation towards DR brings more initiatives and projects with strong regional focus.

Finally, this framework approach of coordinated activities at all levels of policy making may well provide synergy of relevant stakeholders and their actions strongly in favour of PA7 targets. Having in mind that reaching PA7 targets is possible only through coordinated actions of numerous regional stakeholders in education, research and ICT.

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?

Visibility:

The trend of interest for EUSDR, policy level recognition and visibility of the PA7 targets and actions among stakeholders keeps rising (with the involvement of the public, academic-intellectual and private sectors). It ensures that EUSDR and PA7 are being discussed among diverse audience. The attention is drawn to the PA7 actions, both those set in the Action Plan and the ones being dealt with under the flagship and other relevant PA7 projects. This year we even came up with the idea to provide lectures for university students focused on the macro-regional strategies implementation – the EUSDR in particular (the pilot subject is being implemented at the University of Economics in Bratislava).

Enhancing cooperation among DR countries:

The EUSDR has been established as a mechanism for the better coordination of activities in the Danube Region. It focuses at a more effective spending of existing resources but in principle no extra funds have been made available. Therefore the main objectives in the reported period were building funding network and cooperation with the existing European grant schemes as well as synchronising cooperation among

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?

education and research institutions and industry in the DR in order to foster multilateral collaboration in research, education and ICT.

Concrete achievements:

-Multilateral Call

The pilot Multilateral Call on scientific and technological cooperation for 2017-2018 will be open in July 2016. The overall aim of this call will be to support project cooperation among the following participating Danube region countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Republic of Serbia and Slovak Republic. The Call will be open to all scientific disciplines and thematic areas, including social sciences as well as humanities and has the following aims: contribution to scientific advancement in the above mentioned countries by funding researchers' mobility in the frame of joint research projects; contribution to research capacity development in the region; supporting the advancement of cross-border research cooperation; and provision of opportunities for young/female researchers and developing their scientific careers.

-DFCN

The aim of the meeting is to lay the basis for a flexible, but sustainable coordination structure supporting the cooperation of stakeholders interested in funding and performing joint S&T activities in the Danube Region. (More information about DFCN can be found in part 3 Funding of the Report)

-Cooperation with Joint Research Center (JRC)

Close cooperation with the EC Joint Research Center speeded up activities regarding Smart Specialization in the Danube Region, as well as Danube Innovation Partnership, and Reference Data and Service Infrastructure for the Danube Region, all three horizontal activities of the JRC in the Danube Region. They complement four thematic clusters established by the JRC with the focus on the key resources of the Danube Region, namely water, land and soils, air, and bioenergy.

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)?

The representation of partner countries in the PA7 SG and active participation of national representatives in the work of SG and its Working Groups (WG) has not recorded much of a progress in the last year.

Not all EUSDR member countries participate actively in the SG, attend meetings, or even take active part in the e-mail correspondence between meetings. Responsibility of each partner country would bring more power to the SG and enable taking decisions that are obligatory for participating countries, instead of its current almost pure consultancy capacity.

Although some countries still lack active participation in the work of the SG (e.g. Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine), their stakeholders manage to find the way to take active part in the PA7 projects, initiatives, RIS3 platform and/or other activities. As a result of new funding possibilities with clear DR focus this trend should continue and improve in the future.

The activities of the flagship projects and other supporting projects are important for the implementation of activities on the ground. Successor projects to those ending or their prolongation (e.g. Danube-INCO.NET ends on 31/12/2016) need to be planned and support of all actors is needed (after the funding of the Coordination and Support Action in FP7, no such action is foreseen in Horizon 2020; an initiative under the Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence work programme for example could be envisaged).

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)?

For successful PA7 coordination in the future a better representation of EUSDR countries in the SG and common recognition of the PA7 targets at national level are still considered a challenge.

Regarding the already agreed plans the PA7 will put more focus on:

- Better recognition and awareness of PA7 targets among relevant audiences and stakeholders, including targeted presentations of scientific, research and innovation activities in the Danube Region on webpages, media, invited contributions in journals and at conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures, etc.*
- Providing a concrete outline of activities of the different WGs supporting the new targets set*
- Scaling up funding mechanisms and providing policy level support to strategic projects applying for research and mobility funds under EU and regional grant schemes (Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, ETC programme Danube 2014 – 2020, etc.)*
- Advancing scientific co-operation and networking in the Danube Region towards a potential COST Targeted Network*
- Providing promotion and support for new project ideas and proposals highly relevant for the Danube Region*
- Strengthening collaboration with the JRC in providing scientific support to EUSDR*
- Strengthening horizontal links with other PAs, regular communication and exchange of news with other PAs*
- Interlinking with other European macro-regional strategies and platforms that focus on research, innovation, education and ICT (e.g. Adriatic-Ionian, Balkan (Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, WISE), Black Sea (BSEC), Baltic, etc.)*
- Smooth technical management of PAC activities and SG coordination, preparation of the new technical assistance grant application within DTP*

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)
1. To increase the effectiveness of investment in R&I through establishment of a funding coordination network aiming to initiate a minimum of 2 dedicated EUSDR activities each year (e.g. joint calls; joint strategic project proposals (within a multilateral framework)).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newly established target
2. To increase the number of EPO and PCT patent applications filed from the Danube Region by 20% by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newly established target
3. To enhance regional research and education co-operation to reach 20% of academic mobility within the region by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newly established target
4. To increase the annual output of co-publications in the region by 15 % by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newly established target
5. To develop RIS3 in all Danube countries (or their regions) by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newly established target
OLD PA7 TARGETS:					
1. To invest 3% of GDP in Research and Development by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This target is "too ambitious" to be achieved in defined

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)
					<i>timeframe, especially in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood¹ Danube Region countries. However the activities of PA7 (common flagship projects, creating funding network have contributed to fulfilment of this target).</i>
2. <i>Broadband access for all EU citizens in the Region by 2013.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>The SG concluded that this target cannot be influenced by the PA7 activities.</i>
3. <i>Increase the number of patents obtained in the Region by 50%.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. <i>Greater share of EU population age 30-34 with tertiary education – aiming towards 40% by 2020.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. <i>To reach 20% of academic mobility by 2020.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*Question 7: Based on the information provided in **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**, 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.*

PA7 targets resulting from the Strategy Europe 2020 are feasible only in a long term perspective and PA7 with its activities can only contribute to them. Activities and initiatives of the PA7 have satisfactory impact on achieving these targets but there are many other stakeholders/projects/policy decisions that can affect it.

¹ Classification of Danube Region countries according to their economic strengths and research and innovation systems and profiles available at <https://danube-inco.net/about/danubeinco.net>

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

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region has been established as a mechanism for the better coordination of activities in the Danube Region. It aims at a more effective spending of existing resources but in principle no extra funds have been made available. Therefore, in order to complete some of these targets, it would be necessary to have more financial and human resources engaged. Since the PA7 activities are limited in many ways, PA7 targets should be considered as the figures to which we are striving for.

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

In October 2015 PA7 Coordinators started discussion within the PA7 SG about the necessity of updating PA7 targets.

During the PAC meetings of 21 March 2015 and 8 May 2015, the issue of relevance of correct targets was raised in relation to the selection criteria of the DTP, referring specifically to the EUSDR targets in the assessment of project proposals, with a view to give extra points to proposals which implement the EUSDR.

Following recommendations of the European Commission DG Regio and the Danube Strategy Point (DSP), PACs and the SG have proposed in December 2015 the following “new” PA7 targets:

- 1) To increase the effectiveness of investment in R&I through establishment of a funding coordination network aiming to initiate a minimum of 2 dedicated EUSDR activities each year (e.g. joint calls; joint strategic project proposals (within a multilateral framework)).*
- 2) To increase the number of EPO and PCT patent applications filed from the Danube Region by 20% by 2020*
- 3) To enhance regional research and education co-operation to reach 20% of academic mobility within the region by 2020.*
- 4) To increase the annual output of co-publications in the region by 15 % by 2020*
- 5) To develop RIS3 in all Danube countries (or their regions) by 2020.*

These targets were endorsed by the EUSDR National Coordinators on May 23, 2016 and published on EUSDR web site.

In relation to the new PA7 targets, it is important to emphasise that the work of PA7 “Knowledge Society” has to be understood as a contribution towards these targets which depends on national/regional and EU framework conditions in the education, research, development and innovation areas.

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)
1.	ASP	ASP															
2.					ASP	ASP											
3.							ASP										
4.																	
5.																	

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;

Remark: Old actions are linked with new targets. PA7 Actions will be updated soon in accordance with the new targets.

<p><i>Question 10: Based on the information provided in Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden., 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.</i></p>
<p><i>The progress in implementing PA7 actions is very good, but having in mind formulation of PA7 actions it is not possible to conclude that certain action is completed. This is because the "cooperation", "coordination", "development" and "strengthening" are continuous processes.</i></p>
<p><i>Question 11: What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the progress in implementing the actions as previously planned?</i></p>
<p><i>Financial resources, higher engagement of certain SG members and including more stakeholders.</i></p>

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

There is a need of revising the actions so that they are in accordance with new PA7 targets. This process is still in progress and it will be finished by the end of 2016.

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	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)	(p)	(r)	(s)
A1	MSP	MCpp				MCpp			MSP		MSP						MSP
A2			MCpp	MCpp	MCpp		MCpp	MSP									
A3														MCpp			
A4																	
A5										MCcp							
A6																	
A7												MSP	MSP		MSP	MSP	
A8																	
A9																	
A10																	
A11																	
A12																	
A13																	
A14																	
A15																	

PA Actions (numbers)	Progress on milestones during the reporting period																
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)	(p)	(r)	(s)
A16																	
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 **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**, 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*

During the current reporting period the main activities of the PA7 (thanks to the implementation of projects supporting technical management of all activities and processes) linked to PA7 main targets, actions and thus milestones leading to their fulfilment, were the following:

- *coordination and effective PA7 governance – strengthening policy-level representation in the SG and decision-making (M1 + M2)*
- *PA7 as EUSDR horizontal priority – highlighting research, education and ICT in other PAs (M3 – M10; M17)*
- *scaling up funding mechanisms and opening new funding possibilities for R&I (M12 – M 15)*
- *support relevant R&I projects and large-scale collaborations, linking research infrastructure and centres of excellence in the DR (M16)*

PA7 set of milestones were identified on the basis of approved targets and are similarly feasible only in a long run. As stated above in Table 3 PA7 with its activities contributed or progressively contributes to their fulfilment.

Question 14: What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the progress in reaching the milestones as previously planned?

There is also a need of revising the milestones in the upcoming period so that they are in accordance with the updated PA7 targets and actions. In order to ensure realization of the identified milestones, responsibilities should be shared by all relevant actors. Only close cooperation of all responsible for the implementation of targets, actions and related milestones can bring visible results.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New web site is being developed (www.danubeknowledgesociety.eu) • Participation in the DTP kick-off event, Budapest, September 23-24, 2015 • International scientific conference “EUSDR in 21st century”, Belgrade, September 27-28, 2015 • National hearing of the Danube strategy, Novi Sad, October 20, 2015 • Co-organisation and facilitation of 10th PA7 SG meeting and joint PA7/PA8 SG meeting • Update of PA7 targets, their presentation to SG members, adopting their comments; delivering new PA7 targets to DSP and EC • 11th PA7 SG meeting in Bratislava and joint PA4/PA7 SG meeting • 4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR, October 29-30, 2015 • Meeting of the EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators, March 8, 2016 • Joint National Coordinators and Priority Area Coordinators meeting, March 23, 2016 • Participation at PACs meeting in Brussels, on January 14-15, 2016
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiation of the idea regarding a COST targeted network for the Danube Region in coordination with Danube-INCO.NET project • Participation in the COST Workshop in Novi Sad organized by the Danube-INCO.NET project • Initiation of a Multilateral Call on scientific and technological cooperation for 2017-2018 • Danube-INCO.NET General Assembly, December 2015 • DFCN workshop, Berlin in cooperation with the Danube-INCO.NET project • Participation in the JRC Annual Event on the Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy, October 27-28, 2015
A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WG on ICT took part in the preparation of a project within DTP call
A4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the SG meeting held in Ulm (September, 2013) SG members agreed on readjustment of the PA7 Roadmap, therefore the Milestones supporting implementation of this Action were skipped
A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danube S3 Workshop: “Gathering opportunities around RIS3 priorities”, Vienna, July 7, 2015 • S3 Workshop “S3 DESIGN LEARNING WORKSHOP” organized by JRC and Danube-INCO.NET project in Chisinau, Moldova on February 18-19, 2016 • The Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans, Sarajevo, June 2016.
A6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “SMEs development in the EU Strategies for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Danube Region”, Split, Croatia, March 10-11, 2016 • Danube – Connecting Serbia with Trans-European Transport and Energy Networks, Novi Sad, Serbia, April 19, 2016
A7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New leader of WG on Higher education and mobility was appointed • Several meetings at University of Belgrade offices have been organized

2.6 EUSDR STRATEGIC PROJECTS

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

<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>

Remark:

PA7 Steering Group and the PACs are still in the phase of choosing the approach in EUSDR strategic project labelling. In the future period, there is a need to distinguish labelling of PA7 flagship projects and EUSDR strategic projects and the responsibility of the actors in this process.

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.

The specific position of PA7 as horizontal priority seeks a wide synergetic outcome of many activities/projects and involved stakeholders to provide progress in regard to PA7 targets. During the reporting period some important steps were made considering DRRIF feasibility and Coordination of National Funds within the Danube Region working group, COST targeted network for the Danube Region, activities related to the coordination of funding in the frame of the project Danube-INCO.NET and multilateral calls in the Danube Region.

*On May 30, 2016 the **Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN)** was established on the basis of the work and achievements of the WG on the coordination of funding mechanisms in the Danube Region (DRIFF WG), outcomes and recommendations of the feasibility study on Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund and on activities of the FP7 funded Danube-INCO.NET project. The primary objective of the DFCN is to coordinate and synchronise national, bilateral and regional efforts in the Danube Region in order to foster multilateral collaboration in Research and Innovation. This should lead to the implementation of concrete joint funding actions for STI activities.*

Secondly, the aim of the network is to stimulate cooperation possibilities with running and forthcoming initiatives. To this end, existing and potential new instruments are used and/or consortia are enlarged by integrating partners from the Danube countries.

To achieve these objectives, the DFCN constitutes a multinational network for STI stakeholders from the Danube countries to regularly exchange information on and discuss about ongoing and planned initiatives. The multilateral nature of the network is of added-value for the transnational cooperation in the Danube Region and provides its members with opportunities for enhanced collaboration and with information on running programmes at national, regional or European level,

*The text of **Programme for Funding Multilateral Scientific and Technological Cooperation Projects in the Danube Region** was successfully approved by four participating countries (AT, CZ, RS, SK). The purpose behind this Programme was opening up the current bilateral agreements towards multilateral cooperation in the DR for better coordination and joint strategic use of financial resources. The Call will be open to all scientific disciplines and thematic areas, including social sciences as well as humanities. The projects will be supported for a period of max. two years from January 2017 until December 2018.*

The BMBF-Danube Call was launched by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in June 2015 and addressed all Danube countries. Its objective is to strengthen links between leading innovative regions upstream and the developing regions downstream. Funding is mainly dedicated to mobility and workshops. Hungary, Serbia and Moldova are co-funding the call. Projects will be supported for a period of two years.

DTP-Interreg – grants on technical assistance for PACs

The question of funding of the cooperation structure of the Priority Area remains a challenge when it comes to the coordination of the Strategy. The Technical Assistance (TA) which was granted by the Commission to the PACs starting since 2012 has proven to be very supportive regarding funding of the coordination, networking and project development activities.

The technical assistance supports i.e. the facilitation of SG Meetings, WG Meetings and Stakeholder Conferences, and in particular supports the participation of non-EU member states at these events through covering travel and accommodation costs.

Danube-INCO.NET

Under the umbrella of Danube-INCO.NET project, which gives solid structure and speeds up some of the activities planned in the PA7, much has been done in regard to developing mechanisms for recognition and labelling of the most relevant project proposals for the EUSDR and PAs. Also the project strongly supported policy dialogue, establishment of Danube Technology Transfer Centres and coordination of funding mechanisms. Within the period reported on several dedicated events and activities were implemented, such as: clustering activities related to energy and bioeconomy research (e.g. with a focus on the EIT KICs in Berlin, 2. July 2015, by supporting the development and selection of pilot actions, kick-off of two dedicated pilot actions on bioeconomy research Vienna, 19. January 2016, and several workshops within these Pilots, e.g. 14. March 2016 in Vienna, 24. May in Timisoara), Policy Mix Peer Reviews of EUSDR non-EU country Bosnia and Herzegovina (implemented in 2015) and preparation of a PMPR in Serbia (2016), facilitation of priority setting e.g. in a workshop in Vienna, 18. September 2015, promoting coordination with other Priority Areas, e.g. joint PA7/PA8 meeting in Budapest 9. December 2015 and the meeting with almost all PAs with a focus on innovation and technology transfer on 9. June 2016 in Bucharest, support to the promotion of the smart specialisation concept (S3) e.g. at a learning workshop in Chisinau 18-19. February 2016, promotion of research cooperation with the EUSDR countries in different fora such as the Western Balkan countries Steering Platform, the annual conference of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators, etc.

Flagship projects

PA 7 - Flagship projects					
Title of project	Status	Financing		Total Budget	Countries involved
		Funding secured	Fund envisaged		
DREAM – Danube River REsearch And Management	implementation	various sources	various	69.600.000 EUR	AT, BG, CR, CZ, DE, HU, RO, SRB, SK, SL, UE
HINO - Health Impact of Nanotechnology	implementation	various sources	various	13.765.000 EUR	AT, BG, HR, DE, HU, IT, PL, RO, RS, SK, SI
Danube: Future - A sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge for the interdisciplinary humanities	first phase (2013 - 2015) completed	not specified for next phases	not specified	13.175.000 EUR (2013-2020)	AT, SR, SI, IT
DANUBIUS - Danube International Centre for Advanced Studies for River-Delta-Sea Systems	phase 1 is under implementation	no	various	200.000.000 EUR (2014 - 2020)	RO (Lead partner), At, RO, HU, SR, DE, MO, UK, SK, IT, ES, IE, GR, FR
National Authorities for Apprenticeship: Introduction of the Elements Dual VET in the Slovak Republic (INT VET)	implementation (pilot project: 10/2014 - 09/2016)	Yes	Erasmus +	312.717 EUR	SK, DE (BW), AT
DO-IT - Danube Open Innovative Technologies	implementation	Yes	SEE programme: SEE Technology	2.000.000 EUR	SI, DE (BW), AT, IT, SR, HR, HU, SK, RO

Flagship projects running under the PA7 are at the different phases of their implementation covered by various funding sources serve as a good practice to apply to large scale projects dealing with main PA7 targets.

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?

PACs, WGs, SG members and most relevant stakeholders remained active in seeking for funding possibilities for PA7 actions, and the improvement of the projects recognition, support and selection. PACs, WGs and SG members have actively participated in submitting project proposals for Danube Transnational Programme. Additionally, the PA7 flagship projects which are in the implementation phase and received funding through diverse funding schemes, serve as a good practice to apply to large scale projects dealing with main PA7 targets.

*Still the issue of **EUSDR strategic project labelling** remains ambiguous for the SG members; therefore it still needs to be elaborated upon.*

*The specific **Danube Region - EUREKA Danube Region multilateral call** was open from March until June 2015. The call resulted from an initiative following the EUSDR, which aims at a closer collaboration by creating “synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region”. The call was opened to 11 countries of the DR (all EUREKA member countries in Central and Eastern Europe). It resulted in 88 applications from a total of 287 participants. Out of these, around 75 projects, prevalently involving Hungary, Romania and Serbia, will move on to the next stage which is the evaluation of applications by national funding bodies. According to officials managing the call, those encouraging results show that the macro-regional format was well received by the local industrial R&D community. Another similar initiative is planned to take place later in 2016.*

*Within the area of basic research the potential for setting-up a specific **COST Targeted Network Proposal** “Strategic scientific networking in areas of high societal relevance within the Danube Region” has been discussed and some preparatory actions have taken place (expert workshop in Novi Sad). However, a decision about the feasibility and necessity of such an activity has to be taken by the COST association.*

*AT, CZ, RS and SK agreed on opening up their bilateral agreements on scientific cooperation and prepared **multilateral call for funding joint STI projects**, which could serve as one of the positive examples of effective multilateral cooperation in the DR in the future.*

*Another positive example is the **BMBF Danube call** that was launched in June 2015 by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and was closed in September 2015. It aims at supporting the implementation of the EUSDR and fostering technology transfer and innovation. The objectives are also to develop research networks in the Danube region and to better connect the upstream and the downstream countries of the Danube. RS, MD and HUN are co-funding and letters of intent were signed. 63 project outlines were submitted and 18 projects will be funded. The evaluation was carried out by the lead agency principle.*

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 PA7 recognizes vast possibilities to funding strong Danube consortiums under EU funding schemes like Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+, together with the reinforcement of mobility programmes like CEEPUS and programmes which came as a result of coordinated actions like the Ulm Follow-up Working Group.

The EUSDR is implemented, among others, through projects and processes. EUSDR strategic projects

identification and implementation will contribute to stronger and clearer strategic focus of the activities and efforts undertaken within the EUSDR PAs, as well as flesh out the ambition and the future direction in certain policy area. As such the strategic projects could demonstrate the progress achieved in implementing the EUSDR and could strengthen and improve communication on the EUSDR strategic focus. These projects could also serve as pilot examples for desired future changes (e.g. possible strategic support for embedding them into funding programs/sources).

While there were good examples under FP7 to support EUSDR projects, Horizon 2020 so far has not yet taken up specific priority topics for the region or relevant coordination and support needs. It would be desirable to change this in the Work Programmes 2018/19/20. Furthermore, the next Framework Programme (“FP9”) should also allow for the follow-up of research and innovation priority actions of macro-regional strategies.

Beyond that, it still remains essential to develop a sustainable, simple and reliable funding mechanism that facilitates and supports the activities of the PACs.

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?

The coordination of the PA7 is continually led jointly by Slovakia and Serbia.

On behalf of Slovakia Dr Štefan Chudoba, Advisor to Minister, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic is PAC since autumn 2012.

On behalf of Serbia Prof Dr Viktor Nedović, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia took over the PAC role in February 2015.

The PAC support teams in Serbia and Slovakia support joint governance, coordination and communication with SG members and other stakeholders of the PA7.

Their work maintained defined tasks to go smoothly, both on internal level among PACs and their teams, as well as in the well-structured organization and hosting of the meetings.

In the Slovak Republic in August 2015 - Dr Jaroslava Szüdi, Assistant Professor from the University of Economics in Bratislava joined the PAC support team in Slovakia.

In the Republic of Serbia from September 2015 the holder of the TA Grant became University of Belgrade (while in previous period it was University of Novi Sad) and the new PACs supporting team was established.

To maintain good coordination with main stakeholders and strengthen links among SG members, both PACs have undertaken a number of activities. As seen from various parts of this report PAC teams, some of the most active SG members and support teams were very active on promotion of PA7 targets and actions fulfilment.

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 (BA/BW)	HR	HU	MD	ME	RO	RS	SI	SK	UA
10 th , Budapest, 9.12.2015	+	-	-	-	+/+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
11 th , Bratislava, 25.05.2016	+	-	-	+	+/+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-

4.2 COORDINATION AND COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

Question 21: Based on what has been reported in Section Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden., 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).

The PAC support teams in Serbia and Slovakia support joint governance, coordination and communication with SG members and other stakeholders of the PA7. Their work maintained defined tasks to go smoothly,

both on internal level among PACs and their teams, as well as in the well-structured organization and hosting of the meetings.

Establishing links with other PAs was mainly done through organisation of joint meetings, joint activities and project proposals. In December 2015 a joint meeting with PA8 SG and in May 2016 a joint meeting with PA4 SG was organised.

A dedicated workshop “Priority Areas Cross-fertilization perspective on Innovation and Technology Transfer Workshop” took place on 9. June 2016 in Bucharest, Romania under the lead of the Danube-INCO.NET project involving most priority areas.

Having in mind that PA7 is a horizontal priority of the EUSDR, the networking and involvement of relevant stakeholders, prominent experts and organizations, links with other PAs, education and research institutions, professionals, organizations are essential to reach progress regarding defined PA7 targets.

These activities aim to encourage networking and joint projects towards development of Knowledge Society in the Danube Region, with the special reference to new funding opportunities within the Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, new Danube Transnational Programme, and other eligible sources.

Overall involvement, motivation and real contribution of SG members to the work done varied among the countries. Again it was obvious that countries were not equally committed to the EUSDR PA7. There are still states which do lack interest in activities or neglect their obligation to have proper representation in each SG of the EUSDR. Also, not equal policy-level representation among members of the SG prevents some major and for the partner states obligatory decisions to be taken. This could lead the way to SG transformation from decision making to consultancy/hearing body without real power in its hands. In these circumstances the new approach to EUSDR governance should be considered.

On the other hand there are partner states which contribute much to speeding up the activities and process within the Danube strategy. Among the most active in the reported period was again AT, together with SI, HU, DE (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria and federal level) and CZ, and coordinating countries of RS and SK.

The involvement and support provided by the DG Regio, especially Mr Marco Onida and Ms Ann-Jasmin Krabatsch was highly appreciated and very much relevant to PACs work.

On the reporting issue, financial reports and interim payment the assistance of the DSP team was of the utmost importance.

Their coordination very much appreciated also in regard to the preparation of the new ETC Danube Programme, the establishment of collaborative framework between PACs and the Programme Secretariat in Budapest and the design of the calls aiming at EUSDR targets.

Question 22: Based on what has been reported in Section Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden., 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).

Regarding the coordination and cooperation with the EU institutions and other relevant institutions it can be mentioned that one of PA7 flagship projects was submitted within the EU Erasmus+ Programme – Call for proposals EACEA 13/2014 “National Authorities for Apprenticeship” and it was recommended for co-financing until 12/2016.

Close collaboration with the EC Joint Research Center speeded up activities regarding Smart Specialization in the Danube Region, as well as Danube Innovation Partnership, and Reference Data and Service Infrastructure for the Danube Region, all three horizontal activities of the JRC in the Danube Region.

Collaboration with Danube-INCO.NET project and its partners on various policy and communication

activities. The project is funded directly by DG Research and Innovation, DG JRC is one of the partners in the project (through IPTS) and it reaches out to many stakeholders through its bi-weekly newsletter which is also received by members of the EP, of several DGs of the European Commission as well as national stakeholders (overall more than 13.000 recipients).

Cooperation possibilities of the newly established DFCN with JPIs (Joint Programming Initiatives, i.e. JPI Urban Europe, JPI MY, BL) as discussed during the joint Workshop with Danube-INCO.NET in May 2016 in Berlin.

Cooperation with the University of Economics in Bratislava in order to teach students of the Faculty of National Economy about the EUSDR and other macroregional strategies.

Question 23: Based on what has been reported in Section Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden., 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).

To maintain good coordination with main stakeholders and strengthen links among SG members, both PACs have undertaken number of activities. Some of the most important dissemination and policy level activities are listed in the forthcoming section of this Report. PACs, some of the most active SG members and support teams were very active on promotion of PA7 targets and actions.

Having in mind that PA7 is a horizontal priority of the EUSDR, the networking and involvement of relevant stakeholders, prominent experts and organizations, links with other PAs, education and research institutions, professionals, organizations are essential to reach progress regarding the defined PA7 targets.

Although countries state in their documents the intention of using and implementing the ESIF for supporting the targets of the EUSDR, until now there were no significant achievements obtained in this aspect.

Cooperation with COST Association has been initiated.

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).

S3 Workshop “S3 DESIGN LEARNING WORKSHOP” organized by JRC and Danube-INCO. NET project in Chisinau, Moldova on February 18-19 2016

A workshop on setting up a DFCN took place on May 30 and 31, 2016 in Berlin, Germany. The event was jointly organised by the Danube-INCO.NET project and the coordinators and actors of Priority Area 7 (PA7) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Local organisers were DLR Project Management Agency and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. DFCN was established by agreement of its members (nominated by the Danube countries). Workshop participants discussed cooperation possibilities with external experts from Joint Programming Initiatives (Urban Europe; and More Years, Better Lives) and from Era-Nets (IraSME, PLATFORM for Bio-economy Era-Net Actions, and CoBiotech). First steps in the cooperation were agreed upon and will be followed up until the next DFCN meeting in autumn 2016.

PAC from Serbia has established cooperation with the NGO European Movement Serbia and was invited to take part in international conference „Danube – Connecting Serbia with Trans-European Transport and Energy Networks“ on April 19th 2016 in Novi Sad, Serbia and to present results of the Priority Area 7. During this conference it was agreed to prepare a chapter about PA7 that will be published in one of the publications of the European Movement Serbia. Also, other possibilities for cooperation have been

discussed.

PAC from Serbia has established cooperation with Slovak Ambassador in Serbia and agreed to organise next SG meeting back-to-back with an event that will be organised by the Slovak Embassy in October 2016.

Slovak PAC team presented the activities on PA7 and various seminars, workshops and conferences in Slovakia and abroad, from which can be mentioned:

Slovak PAC team established cooperation with the University of Economics in Bratislava, where students of the Faculty of National Economy during both semesters acquired information about implementation of the EUSDR.

Ms Pitlova presented the activities of the PA7 at the Brussels Danube Network Meeting on February 12, 2016. The meeting was hosted by Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU and its main aim was to present the program of the Slovak Presidency for 2016 in EUSDR.

Ms Szudi prepared a contribution on the EUSDR implementation in Slovakia at the IX multidisciplinary scientific conference of the Catholic University in Ruzomberok, which took place in Poprad on April 21-22, 2016.

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).

The following activities were undertaken:

- *Preparation of publications regarding the PA7:*
 - *PA7 flyer and brochure development (in cooperation with Danube-INCO.NET)*
 - *Chapter on PA7 in a publication that will be published by the European movement in Serbia*
- *Web site presentation*
 - *Promotion on PA7 activities on GroupSpaces web page, EUSDR web page and Danube-INCO.NET web page (including support to the regularly sent newsletter by Danube-INCO.NET and its social media appearance on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn)*
- *Development and launch of new PA7 web site (www.danubeknowledgesociety.eu)*
- *Dissemination of PA7 activities/results through email communication with PA7 SG members, representatives of PA7 flagship projects, JRC and other relevant stakeholders*
- *On a national level, PA7 activities were discussed with EUSDR National Coordinators and national SG members from other PAs.*
- *Participation on the following national and international events:*
 - *Danube S3 Workshop: "Gathering opportunities around RIS3 priorities", Vienna, July 7, 2015*
 - *DTP kick-off event, Budapest, September 23-24, 2015*
 - *International scientific conference "EUSDR in 21st century", Belgrade, September 27-28, 2015.*
 - *National hearing of the Danube strategy, Novi Sad, October 20 2015.*
 - *JRC Annual Event on the Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy, October 27-28 2015.*
 - *4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR, October 29-30, 2015.*
 - *Danube-INCO.NET General Assembly, Budapest, December 10, 2015.*
 - *Brussels Danube Network Meeting hosted by Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU, February 12, 2016.*
 - *S3 Workshop "S3 DESIGN LEARNING WORKSHOP" organized by JRC and Danube-INCO.NET project in Chisinau, Moldova on February 18-19, 2016*
 - *"SMEs development in the EU Strategies for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Danube Region", Split, Croatia, March 10-11, 2016.*

- *Advancing scientific co-operation and networking in the Danube Region –Towards a potential COST Targeted Network, Novi Sad, April 5, 2016.*
- *Danube – Connecting Serbia with Trans-European Transport and Energy Networks, Novi Sad, Serbia, April 19, 2016.*
- *Workshop on Danube Funding Coordination Network, Berlin, May 30-31, 2016.*
- *Workshop on European Research Area and Innovation Union, Chisinau, Moldova, June 23, 2016.*

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?

Both PACs support team offered governance, facilitation and communication with SG members and other stakeholders of the PA7. Their work maintained defined tasks to go smoothly, both on internal level among PACs and their teams, as well as in the well-structured organization and hosting of the meetings.

To maintain good coordination with main stakeholders and strengthen links among SG members, the PACs have undertaken a number of dissemination and policy level activities. Since PA7 is a horizontal priority of the EUSDR, the networking and involvement of relevant stakeholders, prominent experts and organizations, links with other PAs, education and research institutions, professionals, organizations are essential to reach progress regarding defined PA7 targets.

Stable and excellent collaboration continued with SG members from AT, Danube-INCO.NET project coordinated by Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) in Austria and including 18 partners from almost all EUSDR countries and with JRC.

Representation of partner countries in the PA7 SG and active participation of national representatives in the work of SG and its WGs has been slightly improved but still it is not on a satisfactory level. As different WGs show a diverging level of activities, a concrete outline of activities of individual WGs supporting the newly set (updated) targets should be envisaged. Concrete proposal for monitoring the new targets and potential progress in this respect needs to be included.

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 most important challenge will be ensuring better participation of SG members on PA7 SG meetings, email communication, discussions and activities.

One of the ways for enabling fruitful SG meetings will be creating “innovative” meeting agendas in a way to provide more space for a discussion rather than for individual presentations.

Including more stakeholders in PA7 activities through their collaboration in PA7 WGs may be also a meaningful instrument.

The macro-regional strategies (Baltic-Sea, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian, Alpine Region) follow the “no new instruments, no new legislation and no new institutions” approach, but it should indeed be possible to introduce support activities for implementing these strategies through Horizon 2020 complementing the efforts of e.g. DG Regio as well as the efforts undertaken at the national and/or regional level.

