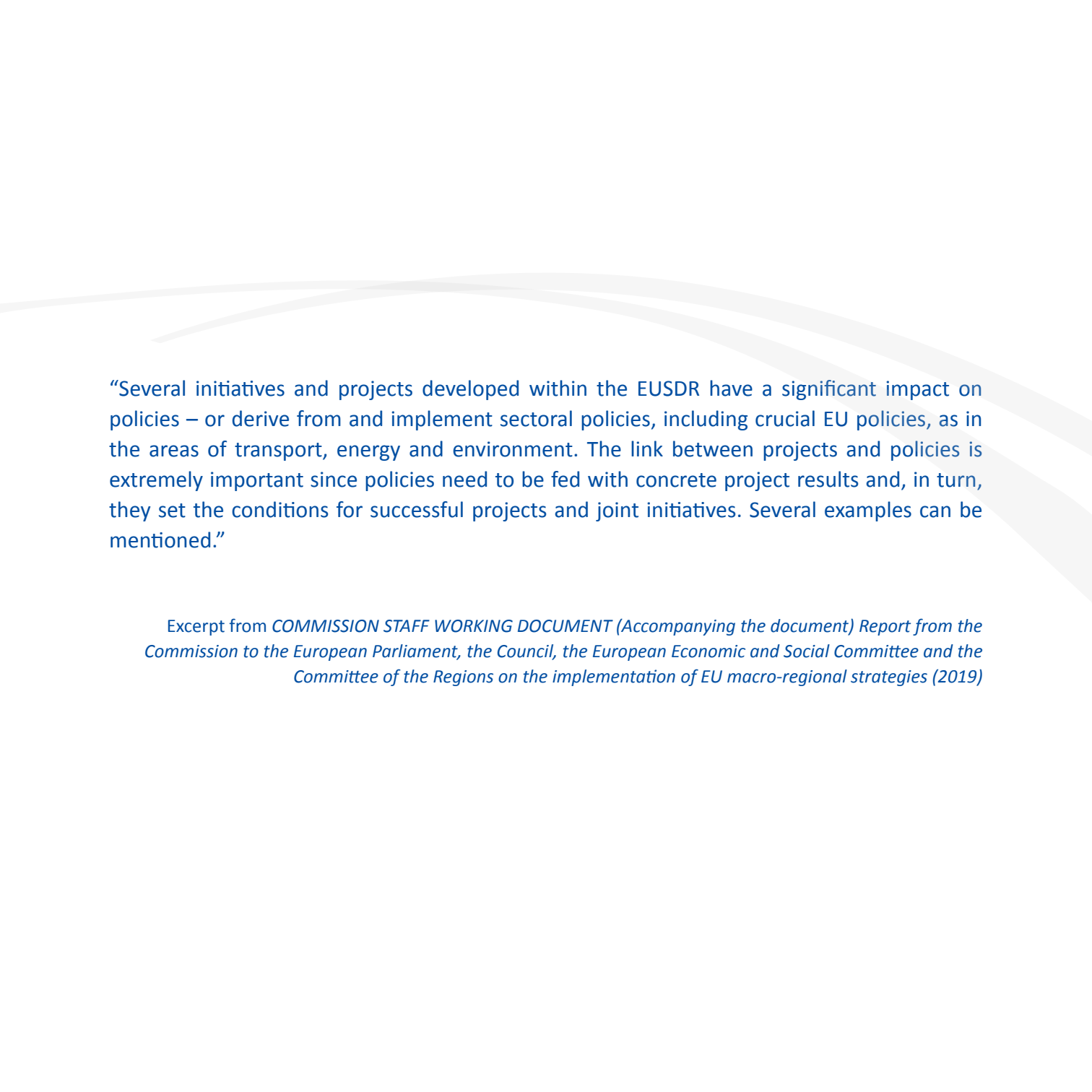


**EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION**  
**the cooperation one can see**





“Several initiatives and projects developed within the EUSDR have a significant impact on policies – or derive from and implement sectoral policies, including crucial EU policies, as in the areas of transport, energy and environment. The link between projects and policies is extremely important since policies need to be fed with concrete project results and, in turn, they set the conditions for successful projects and joint initiatives. Several examples can be mentioned.”

Excerpt from *COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT (Accompanying the document) Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (2019)*



**Germany**

**Czech Republic**

**Austria**

**Slovenia**

**Croatia**

**Bosnia and  
Herzegovina**

**Montenegro**

**Ser**





**Slovakia**

**Ukraine**

**Hungary**

**Moldova**

**Romania**

**Serbia**

**Bulgaria**



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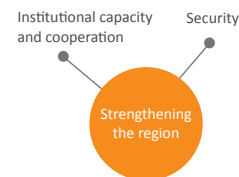
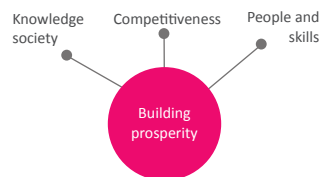
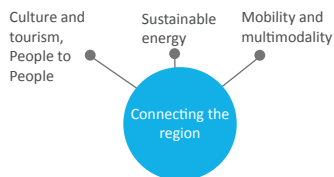
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# EUSDR: A Macro-Strategy for the Development and Protection of the Danube Region

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) was designed to address common challenges faced by EU Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The addressed issues cannot be handled solely at national level because of their transnational and strategic nature. The Strategy creates synergies and facilitates cooperation and networking of all stakeholders, aiming at a more efficient use of existing resources.

The EUSDR unites nine EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia) and five non-EU countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine) and is home to 115 million inhabitants.

The Strategy covers four major thematic fields: connectivity, environment protection, building prosperity and security, reflected in thematic priority areas, jointly coordinated by designated institutions in the EUSDR countries, namely Priority Area Coordinators.



# Danube Strategy Point – a Secretariat for the Danube Region



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The EUSDR proved to be a successful way of improving the integration and coherent development of the Danube Region.

The Danube Strategy Point (DSP) is the supportive body for all stakeholders involved in the Strategy. It encourages cooperation between stakeholders and other actors (funding facilities, civil society, local / regional / national authorities), makes the Strategy visible for as many people as possible and documents its added value for countries and people.

The DSP – in close cooperation with National Coordinators (NCs), Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), the EUSDR Presidency and the European Commission – stimulates the process of evaluation and monitoring of EUSDR, supports the implementation of the Strategy and provides means for stakeholders' capacity building.

Since autumn 2018, the DSP operates as an Austrian and Romanian joint project (offices based in Vienna and Bucharest), financed by Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (DTP).

Further details:





# CONNECTING THE REGION – SMART AND SUSTAINABLE





Aiming to contribute to sustainable, inclusive and smart growth through measures implemented in the fields of transport, energy, culture and tourism, EUSDR focuses on improving the overall connectivity in the region.

Joint efforts of the Danube Region's countries led to significant progress as regards the coordination in infrastructure works, operation of transport and energy systems, exchange of best practices on clean energy and promotion of Danube culture and tourism. Effective coordinated planning, financing and implementation of measures contributed to the achievement of important steps for overcoming the main bottlenecks identified in the region.

The following section presents projects and initiatives contributing to sustainable and effective improvement of the region's connectivity.





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# Mobility and Multimodality: Inland Waterways

Following ambitious objectives, the Priority Area 1A – Waterways mobility concentrated on increasing the cargo transport on the river, improving navigability, considering the specific characteristics of each section of the Danube and its navigable tributaries and establishing effective waterway infrastructure management.

Priority Area 1A focuses on:

- developing efficient multimodal terminals at river ports along the Danube and its navigable tributaries to connect inland waterways with rail and road transport,
- implementing harmonised River Information Services (RIS) to facilitate the international exchange of relevant data,
- solving the shortage of qualified personnel of inland navigation,
- harmonizing educational standards in inland navigation field.

To meet all these challenges, Priority Area 1A, mobilises and brings together relevant stakeholders, monitors relevant policy developments, formulates policy recommendations and promotes project development.

Priority Area 1A closely cooperates with Priority Area 11 (Security), in order to reduce the administrative barriers in Danube navigation, with Priority Area 6

(Biodiversity, landscape and quality of air and soils) to fulfil the objectives of the "Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin" and with Priority Area 1B to achieve better connection of ports to their hinterlands.



Further details:



# Daphne: Danube Ports Network

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Waterways transport on the Danube needs modern infrastructure leading to a more competitive low-carbon economy in the region. Despite the 70 ports functioning along the Danube, only few display a level of infrastructure, facilities and technologies that provide high-quality transport & logistics services with reduced negative effect on the environment.

Poor access infrastructure linking the ports to other major transport modes (roads and rail) and obsolete port infra & superstructure, outdated equipment and insufficient waterway maintenance are key obstacles. All the structural and bureaucratic deficiencies result in little cargo volumes and reduced service quality. Diverse legislation applicable in the region leads to a high

diversity of ownership and administrative models, making private investments and provision of high-quality services rare and difficult.

DAPHNE – Danube Ports Network is the first project to focus on improving the performance of the Danube ports with the aim to turn them into buzzing economy centres, by analysing topics such as port legislation & funding, port administration & management, port development & strategy, as well as port network formation.

To eliminate the differences and to ensure full potential of the Danube ports as nodes for state-of-the-art, cost-effective logistics and centres for regional development, DAPHNE proposed an integrated approach and identified harmonised solutions.



The main focus was to establish recommendations for legal provisions that facilitate the implementation of port infra & superstructure and help ports run their full potential as eco-friendly multimodal hubs. One of the innovative features refers to eco-improvements for the Danube ports and to preparation of a future “green port policy”.

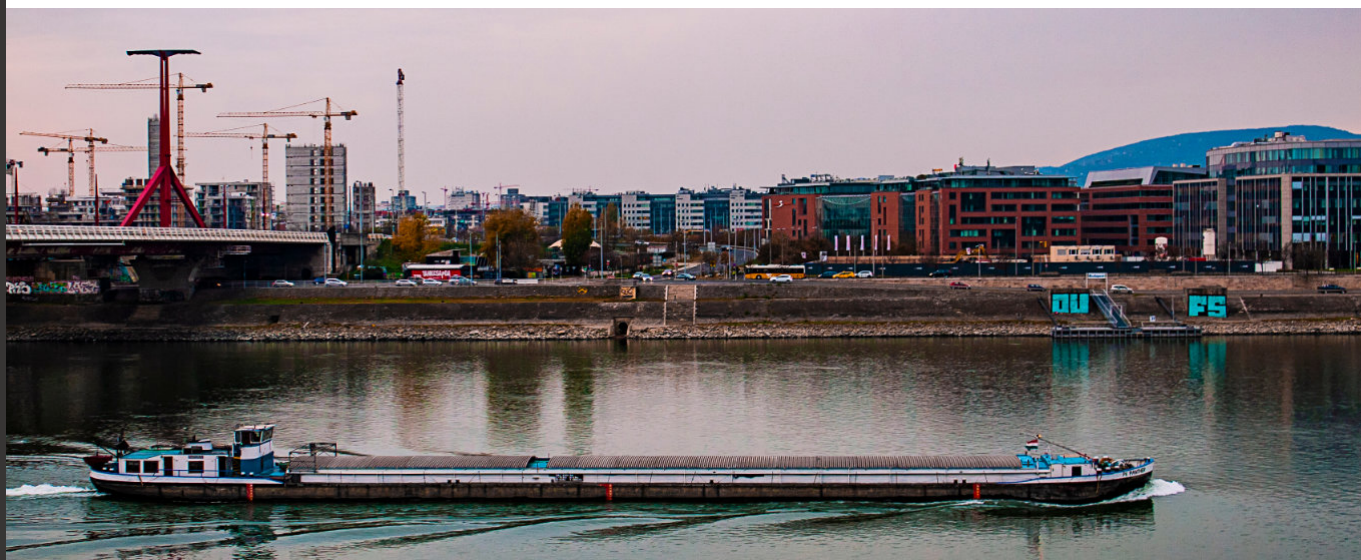
A pilot deployment for the port IT community system was developed and implemented in three Danube ports (Enns - Austria, Bratislava - Slovakia and Novi Sad & Smederevo – Serbia). This innovative system optimises port and logistics

processes through single data submission, connecting transport and logistics chains. It enables intelligent and secure exchange of information between port community members.

A transnational Danube Port Development Strategy was elaborated, supported by an Action Plan facilitating the transition process in the entire region. Establishing the "Danube Ports Network", open for all actors in the region, offered new opportunities for delivering tailored solutions to common challenges.

**Financed** by INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme

**Partners** from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine



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Further details:



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# Transport by Rail, Road and Air in the Region

Developing transport infrastructure is the key to foster economic growth in the Danube Region. Priority Area 1B – Rail – Road – Air Mobility deals with mobility and multimodality in road, rail and air transport, supporting better and more intelligent connections, with respect to environment protection and efficiency.

The mobility infrastructure in the Danube Region is to be improved by implementation of the so-called TEN-T priority projects, Rail Freight Corridors and investments into regional air connectivity.

Actions were taken to:

- enhance cooperation between air traffic stakeholders,
- ensure improvement of sustainable metropolitan transport systems,
- improve regional and local cross-border infrastructure,
- secure access to rural areas,
- further develop multimodal nodal planning,
- enhance Intelligent Traffic Systems by using environmental-friendly technologies, especially in urban regions.



Further details:



# Smart Solutions for Low-Carbon Mobility Policies in European Cities



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Macro-strategies prove their relevance in planning and implementing cross-regional projects. Urban pollution impacts beyond the borders of the countries. Improving conditions for urban transport is one of the challenges that European cities must deal with. Despite already in place restrictive rules in the European urban transport, especially in city centres, there is an urgent need to search for new functional solutions in the urban areas.

SOLEZ (solutions for low emission zones) proposes an innovative approach: in eight cities dialogue between local administrations, residents, tourists

and private transport companies was encouraged in order to identify and develop low-carbon mobility measures - smart services and products - enhancing quality of urban transportation. Therefore, by raising awareness on common urban mobility problems, SOLEZ created a ground for stakeholders to jointly elaborate a low-carbon urban mobility strategy and related action plans.

Different pilot actions were implemented:

- smart parking solutions in Brno (CZ), Gdańsk (PL), Žilina (SK), Vicenza (IT) and Dubrovnik (HR),



- value-added services in Turin (IT), Graz (AT), Gdańsk (PL), Vicenza (IT), Sárovar (HU),
- planning the city bus transport electrification in Dubrovnik (HR) and Žilina (SK).

For example, a pilot action addressing the parking problem around the city was developed in Brno (CZ). As the bus lines are insufficient for commuters to Brno, people park their cars at the railway stations close to the city. Despite the existence of car parks within the municipalities of Brno functional urban area, a systematic approach and standardization of Park&Ride solution was needed. A software tool was developed for flow traffic detection, to ensure a combination of flow traffic detectors and parking calibration occupancy detectors. This tool provides parking occupancy information and helps commuters compare travel times by car and train and decide for the best solution.

SOLEZ contributes to ensuring sustainable metropolitan transport systems and mobility. It also develops Intelligent Traffic Systems by using environmentally friendly technologies in line with the operative models proposed in Priority Area 10, Urban Platform Danube Region.

**Financed by** INTERREG Central Europe Programme  
**Partners** from Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia



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Further details:

# Sustainable Energy

A sustainable future is what we need to create for the next generations. We live in an era of great technological developments, but at the same time these require a great deal of resources. Civilizations evolve, living conditions improve, but at what cost?

Most of the energy we use comes from fossil fuels, severely polluting our region. This should be reduced as much as possible in the Danube Region as well, by encouraging the use of sustainable energy.

The Priority Area 2 – Sustainable Energy follows a three-fold approach:

- ensures the coordination of regional energy policies in order to exploit the full potential of an integrated energy market,
- is instrumental in the integration of the energy markets of the non-EU countries and supports them in the implementation of the EU energy acquis,
- supports cutting edge technology developments, aimed to increase the energy efficiency of the region and enhance the use of renewable energy sources.

Image(s) Danube Transnational Programme\_DARLINGe

Further details:





# Renewable Resources for Green Energy



Photo credit: Danube Transnational Programme, the DARLINGE project



Climate change and energy supply management are global challenges. Therefore, countries should be looking at renewable resources such as wind, water, sunlight and heat, carbohydrates in plants or geothermal waters that can satisfy our energy needs.

In the Danube Region, one of the causes of pollution is the massive use of fossil fuels in the heating sector, making it the major energy consumer: households heating and hot water alone account for nearly 80% of total final energy use in Europe. The EUSDR countries mostly use fossil fuels (gas, coal) for heating. Combustion of fossil fuels directly impacts people's health. This significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions amplifying

unfavourable trends in climate change, making these countries' energy security vulnerable and dependent on the supply of imported resources.

The Danube Region is rich in thermal springs – a renewable alternative source of energy. It is widely available, since underground heat is global. Being a base-load energy source, it provides a 24/7 delivery with predictable outputs, irrespective of weather conditions and has huge untapped potentials which can also be economic boosters.

The DARLINGE (Danube Region Leading Geothermal Energy) project was developed to make the energy mix more balanced by increasing the sustainable and energy-efficient use of deep

geothermal waters in the heating sector. The most important output of DARLINGe is the development of a joint transnational strategy for the uptake of geothermal heating and cooling in the Danube Region. Since there is no such strategy at EU level, the Transnational Danube Region Geothermal Strategy is a significant step towards the region's transformation into a low-carbon economy.

The project pursues an approach to renewable heating technologies. Hence, geothermal heating systems could reduce the use of fossil fuels by providing a real option for decarbonising the heating sector.

DARLINGe team mapped the rich deep geothermal energy resources and the heat demands to be matched in the central and south eastern part of the Danube Region, encompassing southern Hungary, north eastern Slovenia, northern Croatia, northern parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, northern Serbia and western Romania – altogether about 95,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

Science-based solutions and management tools were delivered to decision makers at local, regional and national levels for a responsible management of the environment.

**Financed by** INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme

**Partners from** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia



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## Culture and Tourism Connect People

As the Danube Region offers manifold heritage of history, cultures, ethnicities, religions, societies and states, Priority Area 3 - Culture, Tourism and People to People contacts identifies ties to promote further cooperation.

Topics such as tourism development, cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue are typically inter-related, benefiting from the integrated approach the EUSDR brings. Therefore, this thematic area aims at preserving and promoting the culture and historical heritage of the Danube Region.

Hence, the set activities reach out to ensure the sustainable preservation of cultural values and natural heritage by developing relevant cultural clusters, networks of museums, interpretation and information centres, to promote exchange and networking in the field of contemporary arts and strives to create a “Blue Book” on Danube cultural identity.

With regard to tourism objectives, the measures aim at developing the Danube Region as a European brand, supporting the implementation of a harmonised monitoring system dedicated to tourism, developing new and supporting existing cultural routes relevant to the Danube Region, developing environmentally friendly tourism products along the Danube Region.



Further details:



# Danube Cultural Cluster – Association for Strengthening the Cultural Cooperation of the Danube Countries

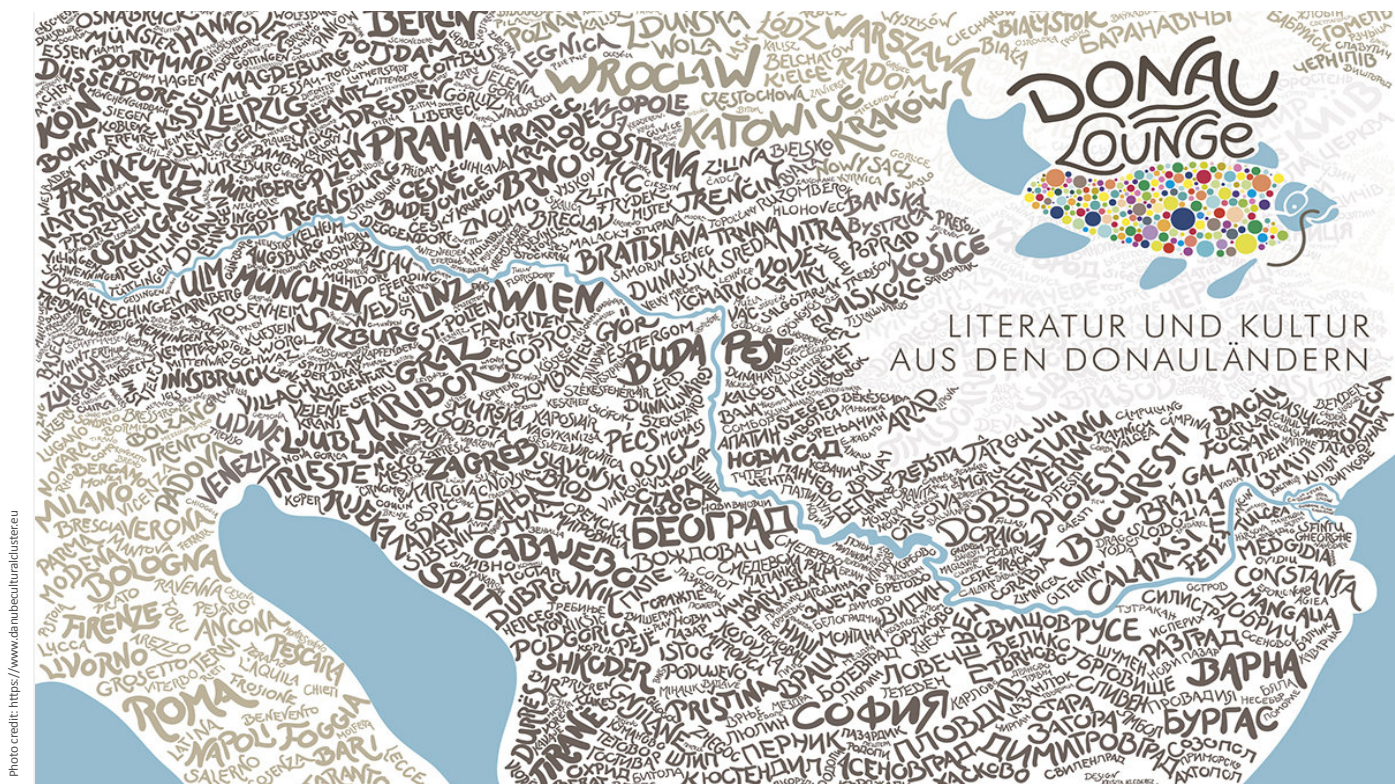


Photo credit: <https://www.danubeculturalcluster.eu>

The Danube Region offers a highly diverse cultural heritage. The concept of macro regional strategy can prove its strength when it comes to joining forces and working together for all countries involved.

Danube Cultural Cluster Association (DCCA), an example of joint efforts, addresses all countries in the Danube Region. Established in Vienna, in 2012, DCCA was developed to represent the interests of contemporary cultural and creative projects and to

create a communication, promotion and cooperation platform. Therefore, it generates own projects in order to enhance the Danube as a quality cultural brand.

Today, the DCCA is engaged in numerous international and cultural events and partnerships. In 2019, the Danube Cultural Cluster gathered 13 members representing six Danube countries. The members mutually support each other's transnational activities and projects.



The cluster ensures promotion of hidden heritage places and contemporary artistic and digital interventions. It also contributes to joint cultural policymaking and strategy development in the Danube Region.

The DCCA acts as an associate partner in the project Danube Culture Platform – Creative spaces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (financed by INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme). CultPlatform21 brings an important contribution to joint cultural policy making and strategy development in the Danube Region. The project bridges hidden heritage places and contemporary artistic and digital interventions and is linked to the development of cultural routes.

The DCCA's most successful international initiative is the Donau Lounge: a regional, contemporary literature and culture programme. It was developed along with its own stand and program for the Danube area's international book fairs. The Donau Lounge started in 2012 and has been featured 15 times altogether in Vienna (AT), Târgu Mureş and Bucharest (RO), Budapest (HU) and Lviv (UA). In November 2019, the Donau Lounge stage and programme celebrated its 7<sup>th</sup> birthday at BUCH WIEN – Vienna International Book Fair. During the event, 35 authors and guests from 11 countries of the Danube Region presented their latest publications or took part in panel discussions and readings.



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**Partners** from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia.

Further details:



# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT – CLEAN AND GREEN





The Danube basin is characterised by complex and yet fragile ecosystems and habitats underpinning all human activities. Since climate changes, sustainable use of natural resources and the overall preservation of the quality of environment were identified as main challenges in the Danube Region, the EUSDR proposes specific cooperation activities for restoring and maintaining water quality, managing environmental risks and preserving biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soil.

Stakeholders across the Danube Region developed joint measures to protect and restore the quality of often invaluable natural assets forming a wide variety of interrelated and interdependent ecosystems.

At the same time, integrated activities were designed in order to prevent, prepare for and respond to natural and man-made disasters.

The following section illustrates several relevant initiatives for preserving the natural heritage and increasing the preparedness in case of disasters.



## Clean Waters

Restoring and maintaining the quality of waters is the main focus of Priority Area 4 – Water Quality, which supports activities related to drinking water supply safety, supports the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD).

This thematic area follows four major topics:

- making steps to achieve the management objectives set out in the Danube River Basin Management Plan,
- reducing the nutrient levels in the Danube River to allow the recovery of the Black Sea ecosystems to conditions similar to the 1960 status,
- elaborating a Danube Delta Analysis Report as a step towards completion of the Delta management Plan,
- securing viable populations of Danube sturgeon species.

All these contribute to the promotion of measures addressing agricultural pollution, micro-plastics, emerging substances including pharmaceuticals in water, hazardous waste and facilitation of sub-basin activities, as well as to the improvement of fish migration.

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Further details:



# Cooperating on River Basin Management



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Water is a crucial element of our living environment; therefore, a sustainable and responsible management of our water resources is not only a possibility, but our duty.

The challenge in the Tisza river basin is that a sizeable population resides in the area with a significant number of inhabitants living directly on the floodplain of the river. These people not only enjoy the beauty of the river basin but also face its harshness: relentless floods, severe excess water inundations, enduring water scarcity in the dry season and disastrous pollutions.

The JOINTISZA project was developed to enhance the status of waters of the Tisza river basin, focusing on water management and flood protection. The

first step towards this goal was the basin characterisation, including water status assessments and updated information on significant water management issues. In parallel, an evaluation of water demand and groundwater status was carried out. Measures were proposed to sustain balanced water quantity management and achieve good water status. The project also ensured that flood risk management planning is more embedded in the River Basin Management (RBM) planning process by developing a strategy based on the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan and Tisza Flood Risk Management Plan.

The success of tackling this problem lies within the cooperation of the Tisza riparian countries. These states joined their efforts to harmonise approaches



and act jointly for the sake of their citizens. Since JOINTISZA is the first ever such cooperation of the Tisza countries, it could lead to further collaboration in other fields as well, in the region.

A detailed RBM plan could be the basis for emergency cases measures, as it addresses the water management issues by a common guide for decision makers, experts and provides answers in critical situations.

Harmonised measures of flood protection were also developed in order to improve the success of the activities that could save lives and properties. Using practical activities, the project team simulated a dike failure on Crasna river, which provided an opportunity for the experts of the countries to test themselves and their methods. It was a case study on the transboundary effect of the failure, demonstrating that using high accuracy topographical and hydrological input data will lead to the most objective results.

**Financed by** INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme

**Partners from** Austria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine

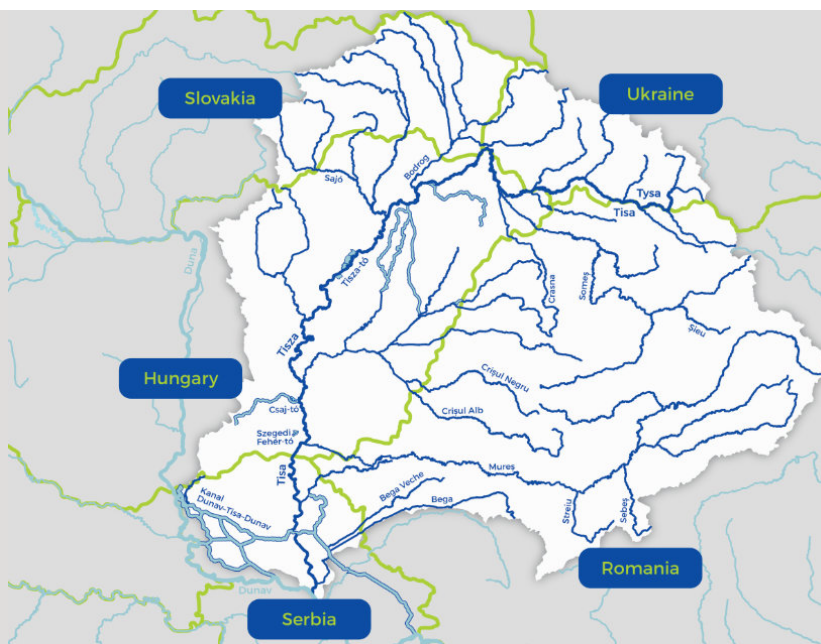


Photo credit: Danube Transnational Programme, the JOINTISZA project



Further details:



## Environmental Risks

Considering the events of recent history and predictions on general flood risk for the Danube Region, there will be an increase of floods as a result of climate change. Priority Area 5 – Environmental Risks addresses the challenges of water scarcity, droughts and flood risks.

The main focus of the work is to face the challenges of water scarcity and droughts in line with the Danube River Basin Management Plan, the report on the impacts of droughts in the Danube Basin in 2015 and the ongoing work in the field of climate adaptation. The cooperation with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) provides a platform to achieve common objectives. Therefore, in the past years, this thematic area contributed to the elaboration of the ICPDR Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Update 2018. It also supported project elaboration and implementation in the field of drought management and climate change related spatial planning, disseminated scientific results to anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change through research.



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In order to achieve reduction of flood risk events, Priority Area 5 provides and enhances continuous support to the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan. Even if the emphasis is on high water regime, drought and ice management are considered potential scarcities as well. Through the cooperation with Global Water Partnership, the Priority Area focuses on droughts.

Where prevention measures are not sufficiently effective and disasters occur, this thematic area supports the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region and fosters measures to promote resilience, preparedness and response to disasters.

Further details:



# Flood Response Innovation by and for Practitioners

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Floods are real challenges in the Danube basin, many of which occurred between 2002 and 2014. In 2010, one of the most severe floods affected mainly the central and eastern parts of the basin, resulting in 35 casualties, the evacuation of at least 15,200 people and an estimated total damage of 2 billion €. Floods in the Danube Region are per se a collective threat. Therefore, the practitioners must adapt fast to this increasing risk and must keep pace with an ever faster changing society.

The DAREnet project proposes flood response innovation by and for practitioners, targeting enhancement of the innovation capacity in the area of civil protection, with special focus on global flood resilience of the Danube Region countries. Hence, DAREnet developed a collaborative and structured network of practitioners in flood resilience in the Danube Region, supported by a continuously

evolving multi-disciplinary community of stakeholders (policy makers, academics, industry actors).

DAREnet Network and Community helps the flood practitioners to identify the associated innovation needs and opportunities and directs them towards necessary innovations. By providing a more accurate assessment of how research and innovation can contribute to strengthening flood response and resilience, DAREnet prepares the ground for effective innovation policies.

If you wonder how this project functions, let us imagine the following scenario: landslides caused by heavy rain. Using technologies for monitoring outgoing land masses becomes a research and innovation topic of a project working group. The analysis in the working group shows that the



reliability of the usual laser-based monitoring systems is limited under heavy rain. Several alternatives are assessed. The assessment indicates that radar-based monitoring seems to be the most promising solution, even if it requires additional research and development. This becomes a priority of the DAREnet Research and Innovation Roadmap.

Following the recommendation in the Roadmap, three flood management organisations, one research group specialised in signal processing and one SME specialised in radar technology formed a small team to outline an initiative for the development of a reliable affordable application. The initiative is open and communicated via the DAREnet Online Community Platform. This raised the interest of other countries and several other flood management organisations joined the team. The final outline of the initiative will become part of the DAREnet Research and Innovation Initiatives Portfolio.

This portfolio of innovation initiatives for practitioners will be promoted among key policy and financial actors at national, regional and European level to raise awareness of the crucial role of innovation in strengthening regional flood resilience.



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**Financed** by Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme

**Partners** from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, also including international organizations - International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), International Security and Emergency Management Institute Slovakia (ISEM), with participation of relevant organization from Poland and Belgium



Further details:

# Preserving Biodiversity and Habitats

Animal and plant species and their habitats are exposed to a multitude of anthropogenic factors and challenges along the Danube: pollution from untreated sewage, agricultural fertilisers, contaminated sites and waste disposal, as well as soil erosion from arable lands. Fragmentation of ecosystems, land use intensification and urban sprawl pose further problems to nature conservation in the Danube Region.

The loss of natural habitats caused by these factors puts pressure on fauna and flora and affects the overall quality of environmental health. Priority Area 6 – Biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soil addresses these challenges in concrete actions, considering ecological requirements in the Danube Region from a macro-regional perspective.

In this context, this thematic area focuses on:

- establishing green infrastructure and on restoring degraded ecosystems,
- identifying Invasive Alien Species,
- protecting and supporting endangered species, as the sturgeon and other indigenous fish species,

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Further details:





## Life for Danube Sturgeon



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Sturgeons are the most endangered fish worldwide, with few natural habitats left for them to call home. The reasons for the decline of the sturgeon are complex and connected with illegal fishing, Iron Gates dams and disruption of spawning migration, loss of habitat due to sand and gravel extraction and to straightening and channelisation of the river for flood prevention and/or for navigation. However, overexploitation is by far the most important cause.

The “Life for Danube Sturgeons” project aims at solving this transnational challenge, which requires a macro-regional approach. The ongoing project has all the prerequisites for success. It focuses on saving the sturgeon species still found in the Lower Danube and north western Black Sea Region by working with fishermen, law enforcement authorities and retailers.

With all target countries actively involved, successful project policy work has already resulted in some

major achievements and will continue to do so: Sterlets (one of the five sturgeon species found in the Danube) used to be found in Serbia but have become increasingly rare. Therefore, a fishing ban on sterlets was imposed in Serbia due to a broad campaign, supported by fishermen. Now, all sturgeon species are protected in all Lower Danube countries. Fishing with nets in the Ukrainian Danube Delta is now restricted to avoid sturgeon bycatch. Customs staff in Ukraine will be trained to stop illegal exports and imports of sturgeon meat or caviar.

An inter-ministerial agreement of all relevant law enforcement authorities was signed in Romania, enabling close cooperation of agencies by sharing personnel, equipment and financial resources, information exchange, common protocols, joint controls, etc.

In June 2019, 25,000 young sturgeons were released by WWF. Altogether 150 visits of sturgeon



advocates to fishing communities (25 villages) were organised so far in all target countries. The project has also helped to put in contact fishermen and scientists – several trainings on sturgeon identification and visits of sturgeon experts to fishermen communities were organised in Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine. In Bulgaria 26 fishermen in 5 communities were trained in research methods and some are involved in sturgeon monitoring activities, providing additional revenue.

A working group was developed to promote the sturgeon as local brand for tourism in Serbia, including a “Sturgeon Centre” with a permanent exhibition on the significance of sturgeons. Also, three business plans were drafted in accordance to resident businessmen’s interests in Ukraine.

Market surveys are ongoing in all target countries. In several cases poached fish and caviar was identified by “secret customers”. Results will be shared with relevant authorities to take measures.

**Financed** by EU LIFE Programme 2014 - 2020

**Partners** from Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine, together with Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority in Romania and IZW Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Germany



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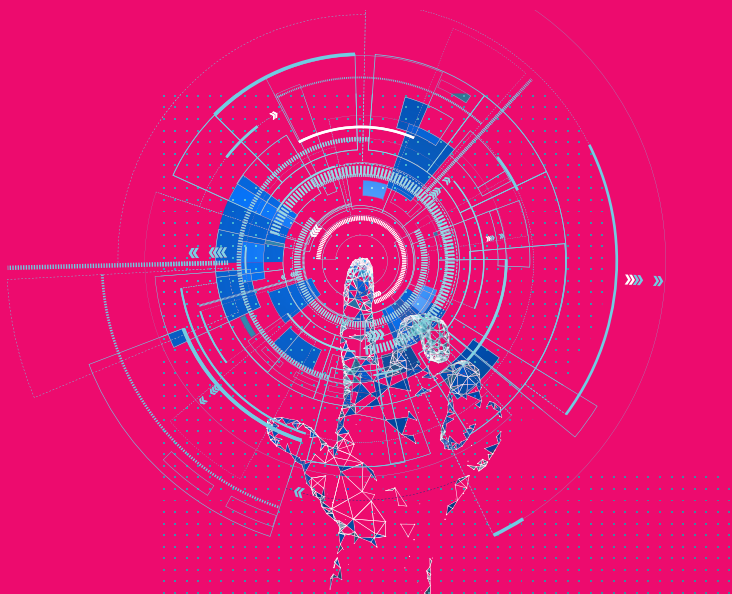


# BUILDING PROSPERITY – SMART, SOCIAL AND INNOVATIVE

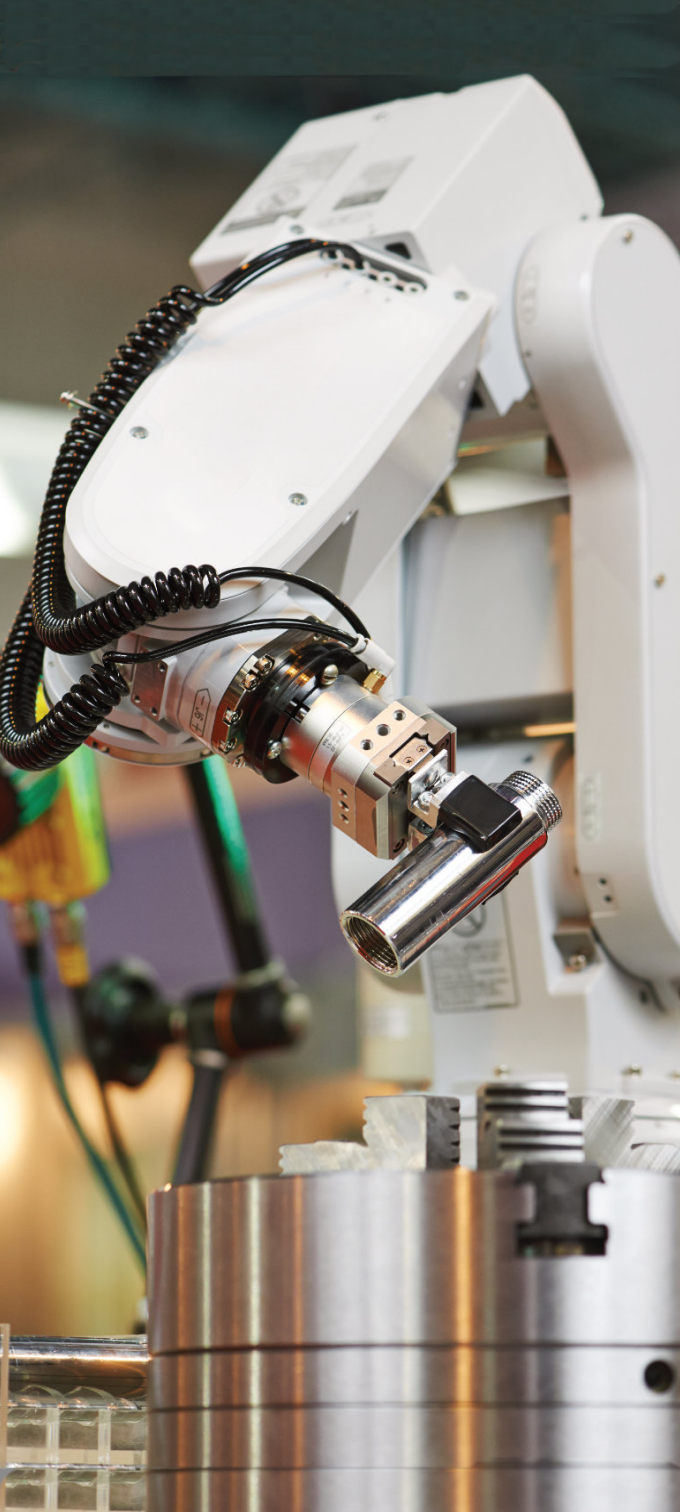


The Danube Region was often referred to as the most heterogeneous European macro-region. Its countries experience significant differences as regards innovation, information society, competitiveness, education, labour market and marginalised communities. Therefore, the thematic areas dedicated to prosperity building in the Danube Region aimed at improving the cooperation across the region by jointly developing projects for improving social and economic framework conditions.

As a result of the long-term coordinated activities of stakeholders, notable results were obtained in stimulating excellence in research and development, strengthening the cooperation between knowledge providers, boosting the transnational cooperation between innovation and business, improving business support, making use of the potential of the labour force and fighting poverty.







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## Knowledge Society

Priority Area 7 – Knowledge Society supports education, research and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Danube Region by promoting networking activities and by fostering cooperation in the fields of research and innovation.

As part of its key activities, this priority area:

- offers a Danube Region platform for exchange and dissemination of information and experience in the area of research and innovation (R&I),
- supports the participation of Danube countries in EU R&I programmes,
- focuses on promoting the Danube Region as a smart innovative region,
- fosters joint activities across EUSDR priority areas and capitalisation activities among projects.

A major achievement of this thematic area is the establishment of the Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN), which is committed to the alignment of existing funding programmes and initiatives in the Danube Region and to making them accessible to potential project partners. Also, the DFCN encourages joint calls of Danube Region countries to foster cross-border multilateral cooperation

Further details:



# Excellence in Research, Social & Technological Innovation Project Management (Excellence-In-RestI)

Photo credit: Danube Transnational Programme, the EXCELLENCE-in-ReSTI project



Despite having interesting innovative ideas, individuals and organisations in the Danube Region lack specific skills and knowledge necessary for the management of EU research and innovation projects. Therefore, good project ideas remain on paper and do not manage to get financed. Part of this problem is a lack of networking between knowledge providers, companies and policymakers.

Considering the above, the project EXCELLENCE-IN-ReSTI offers a blended learning training programme dedicated to young professionals and graduates interested in gaining education in the field of research management, social and technological innovation projects. The programme aims at motivating and fostering the implementation of EU-funded projects in the Danube Region.



EXCELLENCE-IN-ReSTI created ReSTI.academy, an innovative online training programme based on five learning modules devoted to spreading excellence in ReSTI management, leadership and administration. The training programme has already attracted a great number of young professionals and many institutions expressed their interest in applying. A one-year pilot blended learning programme has started in October 2018 and students and trainers worked together on testing and improving the five-module-curriculum.

Another important output is the EXCELLENCE-IN-ReSTI strategy and roadmap document, which provides a summary of current challenges to the management of science, technology and innovation projects in the Danube Region. The document reflects the views of regional and national decision and policy-makers involved in research and innovation.

Finally, the online EXCELLENCE-IN-ReSTI infodesk (<https://resti.academy/infodesk>) provides knowledge by experts and practitioners on all topics related to EU funding.

**Financed** by INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme

**Partners** from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia.



Photo credit: Danube Transnational Programme, the EXCELLENCE-in-ReSTI project



Further details:

# Competitiveness and Cluster Development

Priority Area 8 – Competitiveness of enterprises is dedicated to fostering competitiveness of enterprises across all Danube countries, considering different levels of innovation intensity across the region. In this context, transnational cooperation and networking among companies and business support institutions are of major importance.

Therefore, the thematic area supports cooperation and exchange of knowledge between Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), academia and the public sector in areas of competence in the Danube Region.

Just to name a few examples, the main focus falls on:

- training and qualification schemes for enterprises,
- improvement of the competitiveness of rural areas,
- removing cross border barriers and bottlenecks for businesses.

This thematic area is guided by the Small Business Act for Europe and its priorities in order to promote entrepreneurship, reduce regulatory burden for businesses and foster access to finance as well as access to markets and internalisation.

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# Women in Business



Photo credit: Bont Jurišić

In today's economy the potential of female entrepreneurs to boost economic development cannot be underestimated. Young women in the Danube Region have great entrepreneurial potential as 52% of the region's population are female and 30% of them are self-employed. However, they face specific challenges in starting and developing own businesses. Only 10% of young women in the Danube Region are at an early stage of business development and only 2% of them establish a business which lasts longer than 42 months. Moreover, the gender gap in Danube Region countries is visible both in self-employment and at all stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle.

The project WOMEN IN BUSINESS addresses these challenges, encouraging women who have business ideas in starting and developing their own companies. By identifying their needs and barriers,

young women are supported to become successful entrepreneurs. Further important areas in this context are improving policy measures for women entrepreneurship as well as entrepreneurial culture.

The project follows four stages of development: during the first stage, the specific needs of young women to become entrepreneurs were studied and available transnational support measures were identified.

In the second stage, good practices of women entrepreneurship were identified in the course of 6 transnational learning events in 6 countries, in order to elaborate training models for fostering young women entrepreneurship. One success story presented at the events referred to a young woman who decided to quit her job and start her own



business processing and producing pumpkin and pumpkin oil. Further examples of good practice and inspiration are described on the project's website.

Within the third stage, potential EU policy support was explored and a Policy Agenda for Young Women Entrepreneurship Support was developed.

In the last stage, four Women Entrepreneurship Centres will be set up and tested through transnational pilot actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania in

order to ensure adequate promotion of young women entrepreneurship and to support improvement of women's skills and knowledge. Also, a cooperation platform will be developed and a Transnational Strategy for Sustainability will be created.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS works to create a favourable environment for young women in the Danube Region, to help them develop successful businesses by using the right skills and adequate measures.

**Financed by INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme**

**Partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Hertzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia**



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## Investing in People and Skills

As many of the region's challenges know no borders, cooperation within the EUSDR seeks to create synergies and coordination between policies and initiatives, and ultimately also deals with the question of how we want to shape our future in Europe.

In this framework, Priority Area 9 – Investing in people and skills manages the key topics of education and training, labour market and marginalised communities. Education, training and modern labour markets are key drivers for more equitable and inclusive societies and for the well-being of its citizens. The Danube Region will only be prepared to face the changes and challenges ahead by further investing in people's skills and competences, in particular of disadvantaged groups. In this respect, the European Pillar of Social Rights, supporting quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning, quality employment and social inclusion plays a key role.

Efforts under the umbrella of this thematic area have already led to innovative approaches in cooperation in the fields of education, labour market and inclusion, both in projects and on policy level. It has successfully established a broad stakeholder network guaranteeing coordination between relevant actors in the region.



Further details:

## ■ Fair Working Conditions for All



Digital change and its impact on everybody's work are one of the biggest challenges today and for years to come. If not regulated, digitalisation could accentuate income differences, as well as limit access to social security systems not only due to cutbacks from decreasing contributions, but also due to the often-unstable nature of digital employment itself.

In short, the world of work is changing! This structural change is often at the expense of low-skilled, elderly, precarious and part-time workers.

Chances are that routine work will eventually be replaced by automation and low-skilled workers will not have a chance to find employment due to poor digital qualification. The number of new atypical precarious forms of work is increasing (e.g. crowd work, agency work, platform work) and workers are facing challenges such as poor working conditions, poor safety at work, inadequate remuneration and low social security.

Fostering close cooperation of social partners in the Danube Region in order to create appropriate



education and retraining programs, fair legal frameworks and regulations (especially for atypical forms of work) could actively help to prevent precarious work conditions, unemployment among low-skilled and elder workers and ultimately poverty. Technological possibilities must not be used to circumvent effective regulation in the world of work.

The Danube@work project brings together social partners of four countries in the region to explore the needs of workers concerning fair legal frameworks and regulations and in order to prevent their exploitation in the course of the a new “industrial revolution”.

For example, the relation between platform-customer and worker is not defined by law. Therefore, even if a platform acts as employer, when it comes to “benefits” for workers or the protection of worker’s rights, the platform often declares they are only a facilitator, perceiving workers as self-employed.

To face such challenges, Danube@work created a network of national experts on digitalisation within the trade unions in all partner countries to exchange knowledge and spread information about digitalisation. It further organised seminars on collective bargaining, worker’s protection and relevant topics regarding “digital workforce”.



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Further details:





# STRENGTHENING THE REGION – EFFECTIVE, SOUND AND SAFE



The Danube countries share the goal of improving the functioning of democratic institutions, public administrations and central, regional and local organisations to provide a safer and more secure environment for their citizens. To reach the above-mentioned goal, joint actions were initiated aiming to ensure better political, civil and administrative structures, to improve the multi-level governance mechanisms, to facilitate the administrative cooperation of the cross-border communities, to fight against corruption and organised crime.

The following section reveals how joint initiatives meant to facilitate cross-border cooperation and fight against organised crime were put in practice, highlighting the added value of the results.







# Institutional Capacities & Cooperation

This priority area serves as an information and communication hub for local, regional, national and European stakeholders working in the field of institutional capacity building, participative governance and spatial development.

Priority Area 10 – Institutional Capacities & Cooperation aims at

- addressing institutional capacity-building at local, regional and national level,
- involving civil society in public governance,
- enhancing local development and better spending,
- increasing absorption rates of EU funds.

This thematic area supports initiatives to promote participatory policy design and implementation including different stakeholders and facilitating good governance on all levels.

Important emphasis has been laid on support and development of financial instruments for small-scale projects, matchmaking between project promoters and financial institutions and empowerment of different project ideas that are looking for support (through [www.EuroAccess.eu](http://www.EuroAccess.eu)).

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Further details:



# Models for Cross Border Cooperation



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State borders in the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian regions have undergone change several times during the last century, causing trauma and lack of trust between the nations. Because of the small territory of the countries (even in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans) a large part of the population lives along state borders and institutions and enterprises operate close to these. However, people and businesses on either side are separated from neighbouring territories in legal, administrative, economic and socio-cultural terms. This results in a huge disadvantage for territories along borders compared to those centrally located.

The SECCo2 project provides a solution to facilitate cross-border cooperation in these regions. On the one hand, SECCo2 Platform ([www.secco2.eu](http://www.secco2.eu)) is dedicated to share knowledge and information on successful cross-border cooperation (CBC) models. On the other hand, through its Young Leaders Platform, the project creates opportunities for the next generations to develop a more tolerant environment across the two macro-regions.

Using this platform as an online meeting point (one stop shop), CBC actors can share information, build partnerships, launch joint projects and access



existing useful knowledge and materials on their topic of interest. The platform is a CBC tool-kit providing e-learning contents, access to financial resource portals (<https://www.euro-access.eu/>) and a digital library with studies, policy documents and further materials on cross-border cooperation – all these aim at improving the capacities of the local stakeholders.

While developing this platform, SECCo2 organised the 10th edition of the International Youth Forum & Conference on Cross-Border Cooperation, in Tivat (Montenegro), in order to reinforce the Association

of European Border Regions' Young Leaders Platform (a group of youngsters from all over Europe).

Based on the project's results, the discourse on cross-border cooperation and an adequate environment for partnership building within the two macro-regions will improve. These improvements should also contribute to the level of mutual trust among the nations and contribute to long-term peace within the regions.

**Financed** by Danube Strategic Project Fund financed by the European Commission and the City of Vienna

**Partners** from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Serbia

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Further details:







## A Safer Region

Security in the Danube Region is one of the most important elements for the smooth cooperation among strategy stakeholders. Without a certain level of safety and a stable environment in the region, cooperation in all other fields would be significantly affected.

Priority Area 11 – Security contributes to the sustainable development within the Danube Region as security is inter-related with all other aspects of the Strategy, focusing on:

- enhancing police cooperation,
- developing strategic long-term cooperation between law enforcement actors along the Danube River,
- improving systems of border control,
- promoting the rule of law and the fight against corruption.

Joint initiatives on security resulted in safety and security improvements along the European Transport Corridor VII. In 2017, this thematic area specifically focused on illegal fishing and breaches of waterway transport rules. Furthermore, cooperation on bomb disposal is being organised by the Central European CBRN-E Training Centre located in Hungary.

Cooperation between Priority Area 11 and Priority Area 1A continued on the basis of the jointly developed Manual on Border Controls and Recommendations for Improved Border Controls. Also, the cooperation with Priority Area 10 contributes to developing joint initiatives in the field of human trafficking.



Further details:



## Fighting Organised Drug Crime



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The market for methamphetamine (meth) is getting bigger and bigger in the European Union. Meth is a strong stimulant causing significant health risks for its users. Latest trends show that within Europe, basic material (so-called chemical precursors) for meth production is trafficked mostly from the Balkans to the Czech Republic and Poland. Meth is also increasingly produced in Germany and the Netherlands. The European illegal drug market

might also experience increased inflows of meth produced in Mexico or Europe by Mexican Organised Crime Groups (OCGs).

Considering the huge dimension of the international organised drug crime, this issue needs to be addressed transnationally. For this reason, the National Drug Headquarters of the Police of the Czech Republic initiated the project Collaboration

for Dismantling Drugs Distribution and Illicit Laboratories (CO3DIL), focused on illegal production of synthetic drugs, notably crystal meth.

The main goals of the project are to reduce the quantity of drugs trafficked, distributed or produced in the EU, to disrupt OCGs, to dismantle clan labs and arrest perpetrators. In order to make the project a success, as many countries as possible need to get involved. For the time being 5 riparian countries (CZ, PL, SK, BG, RS) are involved in the project, supported by the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the US.

The project supports operational meetings in criminal cases and coordinates joint field actions and security measures on main highways across the involved countries. CO3DIL facilitates fluent flow of operational information and intelligence exchange. It also brings together law enforcement authorities of EU member states and third countries with the aim of disrupting the illicit production and distribution of synthetic drugs and chemical precursors trafficking.

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