



# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

## EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

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*November 2020*

<b>THE DESIGN OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR EUSDR .....</b>	<b>1</b>
STATUS QUO OF THE EUSDR COMMUNICATION .....	1
WHY A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE EUSDR? .....	3
THE ROLE OF THE DANUBE STRATEGY POINT (DSP) IN FACILITATING AND FURTHER ENABLING EFFICIENT EUSDR COMMUNICATION .....	4
<b>THE AIM OF EUSDR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>MISSION STATEMENT, VISION AND SLOGAN .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>EUSDR GENERAL AND SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>TARGET GROUPS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE MESSAGING .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>KEY MESSAGES .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CHANNELS, METHODS AND TOOLS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ANNEX 1 .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Contributions &amp; involvement of the main EUSDR stakeholders.....</i>	<i>24</i>



# THE DESIGN OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR EUSDR

## STATUS QUO OF THE EUSDR COMMUNICATION

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The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is a macro-regional strategy (MRS) adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission together with the Danube states and stakeholders to jointly address common challenges in the region.

EUSDR provides a sustainable framework for policy integration and coherent development of the Danube Region. The Strategy sets out actions to become a model for regional cooperation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The successful implementation of the Strategy must be accompanied by committed, targeted and efficient communication.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region addresses a wide range of issues divided among 4 Pillars and 12 Priority Areas (PAs) and covers 14 states (EU members states and non-EU states).

The Strategy's targets and strategic goals are currently being aligned with the objectives of the European Cohesion Policy. In this context, the national authorities responsible for territorial, economic and social cohesion have the opportunity to embed (where appropriate) the macro-regional approach, the strategic goals of EUSDR into the respective national priorities.

The political support for the whole process is crucial and the communication activities need a stronger engagement and cooperation of different political levels (European, national, regional and local) to increase the visibility and to enable a boost of political commitment to the Danube Strategy.

The main challenge for the EUSDR is that political commitment is still weak and has been losing momentum over time. This can be illustrated by the fact that it has been difficult to encourage participating countries to apply for the presidency of the Strategy. As the Strategy is a long-term process, it is vital that capacity and resources continue to be provided to implement the Strategy and strengthen national coordination mechanisms.<sup>1</sup>

Among the challenges that hinder a better implementation of EUSDR, the Report mentions: formalised embedding of EUSDR's actions into the national/regional EU funding programmes, increased horizontal exchange among PAs, poor administrative capacity of PACs and SG members, a lack of political and administrative support and backing for individual PACs to implement a broad set of targets, a reluctance in initiating participatory governance. A committed and targeted communication is an important tool to overcome these challenges. The communication should be all stakeholders' responsibility, emphasising the potential benefits, which the EUSDR shall bring.

The revision of the EUSDR Action Plan<sup>2</sup> and the embedding preparations for the upcoming programming period 2021-2027 represent a window of opportunity and might offer a tool to increase the impetus of the Strategy and the commitment of the states to the EUSDR.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 - COM(2020) 578 final

<sup>2</sup> Revised EUSDR Action Plan: SWD(2020) 59 final - COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT - ACTION PLAN - replacing Staff Working Document SEC(2010) 1489 final accompanying the COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS European Union Strategy for Danube Region



The EUSDR must help towards drawing a picture of the prosperous future of the Danube Region in its social, environmental and economic cohesion. Thus, a narrative of the Strategy and its most successful stories must be strategically and efficiently communicated.

## WHY A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE EUSDR?

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The foundation of EUSDR Communication Strategy was laid down when the EUSDR was adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. Since then several channels have been used for external communication of the EUSDR.

Therefore, the current Communication Strategy is not built from scratch. Its foundation is represented by the channels, methods and tools that have proven efficient in communicating with EUSDR external target groups. The necessary changes should concentrate on increasing the efficiency and impact of these channels, by redesigning them to better respond to the needs of the selected strategic target groups. Only in those cases where the current communication channels do not cover the respective needs (as identified under the section Effective messaging), additional tools need to be considered.

Moreover, all EUSDR communication activities should demonstrate responsibility for the environment and a sustainable future by giving preference to digital channels and formats (e.g. websites, social media, e-newsletters, e-mailing campaigns, e-presentations, e-infographics, e-posters). Printed formats may be accepted in limited numbers, for live events, but, whenever possible, paper free events should be preferred.

The most valuable and efficient channel for the external communication is mass media. Therefore, EUSDR should build a stronger relationship with traditional and new media alike, in order to reach general public by wide coverage.

Specific instruments for EUSDR external communication are indicated under chapter 7 of the present Communication Strategy.

At the same time, efficient internal communication channels are necessary in helping to implement all EUSDR activities, by streamlining information exchanges, reaching agreement and a more coordinated response on various aspects involved and supporting their smooth implementation. Another key element related to internal communication refers to its contribution to streamlining end-to-end horizontal cooperation among PAs, starting with target setting and dissemination of information about PACs actions, which can contribute to increasing the coherence of all activities.

## THE ROLE OF THE DANUBE STRATEGY POINT (DSP) IN FACILITATING AND FURTHER ENABLING EFFICIENT EUSDR COMMUNICATION

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Starting from September 2018, the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) operates with offices in Vienna and Bucharest until the end of 2021. The project is implemented as partnership of the City of Vienna (Austria) and the Ministry of Public Works Development and Administration (Romania), each hosting one office.

The DSP is a strategic working unit for the core EUSDR stakeholders and beyond, supporting the political and operational level of the EUSDR. The DSP thus has a coordinative function for the Strategy, easing the communication and coordination among the (TRIO) Presidency, the EC, NCs, PACs, further stakeholders and the wider public. Its primary role is to support the EUSDR implementation, communication, monitoring and evaluation and interlinking with the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP). Furthermore, DSP offers technical support to PAs and supports the development of capacities of all actors involved, taking into account the multiple challenges posed by different fields, especially non-EU countries. Through various activities in those areas, DSP also provides necessary information, feedback and proposals for streamlining the operational and political decision-making processes. The DSP seeks to promote the EUSDR within the Danube Region, but also on European level. DSP encourages alignment with funding instruments and collaboration with strategic actors and other MRS.

Since EUSDR visibility is still low, one of the important tasks of the DSP is to increase its visibility by implementing communication measures for the whole Danube Region. The DSP also serves as a strategic support for all EUSDR stakeholders, which can find here a professional point of contact and communication to foster the Strategy effectively and efficiently.

In this context, DSP provides a joint and dedicated approach to the EUSDR communication, laid down in this Communication Strategy (focusing on both external and internal target groups), with streamlined implementation based on a dedicated guide.

## THE AIM OF EUSDR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Communicating EUSDR progress is a crucial activity within the macro-regional process. With an overall aim to explain the EUSDR work and increase commitment to the macro-regional cooperation that EUSDR fosters, it is vital for the Communication Strategy to promote EUSDR achievements and benefits. Therefore, all responsible parties involved in EUSDR implementation need to collect evidence about the changes in the macro-region brought by EUSDR or where EUSDR contributed, to identify concrete achievements and to communicate EUSDR's added value in relation to other policy frameworks.

Consequently, the Communication Strategy becomes an integral part of EUSDR, through its **overall aim to communicate EUSDR vision and goals for the Danube Region (both internally and externally) and promote the work within EUSDR to increase support for the EUSDR macro-regional cooperation.**

The context in which the Communication Strategy is implemented will continue to:

- ✓ improve the culture of cooperation;
- ✓ facilitate the connection of existing institutions to share know-how and best practices;
- ✓ improve dialogue and cooperation with international organisations;
- ✓ strengthen coordination between policy makers and institutions at national level;
- ✓ intensify thematic cooperation with the five non-EU Danube countries.

At the same time, the increase of national political impetus for EUSDR should further emphasise the benefits of EUSDR, once included on the political agenda.

Political support for the multi-regional cooperation process that EUSDR fosters is crucial and the communication activities need a stronger cooperation of the different political levels to increase the visibility and raise the political ownership and commitment to the Danube Strategy.

Elements that may support the communication of EUSDR:

1. highlighting that common 'grand challenges' need joint solutions;
2. creating the sense of a shared region;
3. strengthening commitment to and ownership of the EUSDR at political level and among decision makers on national, regional and local levels;
4. fostering efficiency by using common resources and knowledge and, therefore, bringing added value;
5. intensifying the exchange of information and best practices among actors implementing the EUSDR.

In the end, the Communication Strategy will encourage and enable effective engagement with stakeholders and increase political ownership through:

- ✓ embracement of a common, positive narrative to which as many actors as possible can relate and
- ✓ continuous promotion of success stories and projects.

## MISSION STATEMENT, VISION AND SLOGAN

**Vision:** *Together we build a prosperous region with a healthy environment, equal societies and high living standards*

The vision consists of **two major components**: core idea (values and purpose) and envisaged future.

The vision statement offers a plan for the future. In the case of EUSDR, the vision statement reflects the message about **what the strategy wants to achieve**. For this reason, it is reflected within a **vision statement**.

The core idea defines the EUSDR, it **gives it an identity**. The identity **reflects the motivation of EUSDR stakeholders to perform their tasks**, the ideals that they uphold while performing their duties. Hence, the **vision statement** supports all EUSDR stakeholders in their joint activities and collective aspiration of working for a prosperous region (*What motivates us to work for EUSDR? What are the ideals that we are inspired to uphold as we perform our tasks/ duties according to our positions within EUSDR?*). The vision is important to be shared among the EUSDR stakeholders for cohesion and as a reminder of their work together purpose.

EUSDR **core values** refer to a set of *guiding principles* as essential elements that the strategy lives by. Core values do not change. The vision also settles the **EUSDR's values**: cooperation, sustainability, social and cultural diversity, prosperity and safety.

The **core purpose** states clearly **why** EUSDR exists.

The envisaged future refers to:

- ✓ what EUSDR aspires to achieve or to become in the future
- ✓ what it would be like for EUSDR to achieve its goals at the finish line up ahead, regardless of the timeframe.

**Mission statement:** *EUSDR is connecting people to improve quality of life through sustainable development in the Danube Region.*

This **mission statement** supports internal stakeholders to **connect** with their own internal structures and external target groups to **identify** the area of activity and the specificity of EUSDR.

The mission statement supports internal stakeholders in explaining to the external target groups how their work leads to achieving the vision.

**Slogan:** *Danube Region Strategy – Prosperity through Diversity*



This one single catchphrase can be added to the Danube Region Strategy wording, keeping in mind the EUSDR brand. The slogan influences wide target groups to "**stop-and-think**" as a necessary first step toward recalling the **brand promise** - to protect and develop a region for all countries involved. It is also predictable supporting the brand and its vision.

The slogan is **memorable**, using **simple words** that may easily be attached to the phrase *Danube Region Strategy*. It also considers the importance of a clear, non-confusing message, evoking a positive feeling – all countries teaming together as partners with joint efforts for prosperity; no one is alone, no one is left behind, regardless the level of development. Rhythm and rhyme (alliteration) were also considered to ensure an easy to remember slogan.

The slogan consists of the main feature that make the Danube Region unique: **diversity** at all levels:

- it has the highest degree of diversity as regards the environmental conditions and the economic and demographic characteristics considering the 14 countries/ nations and 12 languages;
- there are clear differences between the Western countries and the Eastern countries in terms of general development, urbanisation, income levels and many other well-being indicators and it is the only initiative that stretches from Western Europe to Eastern Europe;
- all 14 nations are united by the unique Danube river, the most important river in Central and Eastern Europe; it comprises the Danube Delta – a unique territory in terms of biodiversity, landscapes, age, dynamics.

Of the four macro-regional strategies, EUSDR is the most ambitious one, if we consider the highest number of participating states and the second highest number of Priority Areas. The Strategy itself is the only one combining different cultures and diverse mindsets and in doing so, the participating states are not only connected by the Danube from West to East, but they are also overcoming the geographical barrier of the river from North to South. The Strategy has the biggest responsibility in terms of catering to the needs of the biggest population (115 million) of all MRS. It is the most engaged MRS in forming close ties with non-EU countries, as it has the highest number of non-EU participating states. Participating states are proactive in supporting a united Europe.

The slogan helps EUSDR to **position** among other similar initiatives in the region. The possible EUSDR USP (unique selling proposition): *It is the EU macro-strategy committed to using a multitude of resources and making joint efforts for joint prosperity in the entire Danube Region.*

The slogan complements the logo and is **consistent** with the name of the Strategy and projected image. It reflects the EUSDR vision (core values and goals) and is related to everyday life situations. It is **not time related** and the wording can stand the test of time.

EUSDR slogan **stands alone** and is **targeted** to be used in English, but it also works in official languages of the Danube Region either as translation or paraphrase.

The slogan must be included in all communication materials (printed/ electronic) as part of the general EUSDR logo.

The PAs individual logos remain the same and the slogan will become an additional optional separate sentence combined with graphic elements (the symbol of the river, the bridge and the EU stars, using the correspondent pillar's colour, as appropriate) to be used as a footer in documents and

presentations and on the bottom of any printed materials (give-aways like folders, agendas, notebooks, or informative materials - brochures, fliers, leaflets, maps etc.).



## EUSDR GENERAL AND SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

In line with the overall aim, the general objectives (GO) of the EUSDR communication and their related specific objectives (SO) position and promote the EUSDR vision and goals for the Danube region (both externally and internally).

### External communication

Externally, the intervention is done gradually, in two phases.

The **first phase** concentrates on activities and tools meant to build awareness (under GO I) so that promoting the general idea of transnational cooperation to address the common challenges in the Danube Region (SO I.1.) or, more explicitly, by promoting EUSDR as an EU-enabled and driven macro-regional cooperation framework for the Danube Region (SO I.2.).

External communication	<b>GO I. Awareness raising about EUSDR</b>
	<b>SO I.1. Promote the general idea of macro-regional cooperation to address the common challenges in the Danube Region.</b>
	<b>SO I.2. Promote EUSDR to stakeholders as a EU-enabled and driven macro-regional cooperation framework for the Danube Region.</b>

In the **second phase**, the communication efforts are clearly targeted at sharing concrete information on cooperation and funding prospects and encouraging stakeholders' engagement (under GO II). Stakeholder engagement can be enhanced by:

- promoting stakeholders' active involvement and connection with EUSDR coordination network (SO II.1.),
- providing information about relevant initiatives and stimulating involvement in policy development (SO II.2.) and
- stimulating cooperation and initiatives that promote EUSDR (SO II.3.)

External communication	<p><b>GO II. Information sharing on cooperation and funding opportunities &amp; stakeholders' engagement</b></p> <p><b>SO II.1. Activate stakeholders (in the region) and connect them to the EUSDR coordination network through invitations to events, surveys, consultations.</b></p> <p><b>SO II.2. Inform stakeholders about relevant policies &amp; initiatives in order to enhance capitalisation and coordination, as well as their involvement in policy consultations and development.</b></p> <p><b>SO II.3. Inform project promoters and other stakeholders about the cooperation and financing opportunities for the Danube Region, so they identify common needs and develop new projects or initiatives that promote the EUSDR vision and strengthen its results.</b></p>
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## Internal Communication

Internally, the Communication Strategy focus is to facilitate better the internal understanding of EUSDR processes and activities, as well as their results (under GO III) by streamlining end-to-end horizontal cooperation among priority areas (SO III.1.) and improving the quality of work across all EUSDR structures (SO III.2.).

Internal communication	<p><b>GO III. Better internal understanding of what is going on to enhance work quality, effectiveness &amp; efficiency</b></p> <p><b>SO III. 1. Streamline end-to-end horizontal cooperation among Priority Areas, starting with target setting.</b></p> <p><b>SO III. 2. Improve the quality of EUSDR structures work by better understanding of each other and sharing more information</b></p>
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## TARGET GROUPS

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Directly related to the various communication objectives, the target groups' segmentation has the role to help focus communication on those stakeholders that, if adequately addressed by awareness raising measures or effectively informed and engaged, could best promote the general aim of the Communication Strategy – *increased support for the EUSDR macro-regional cooperation*.

A proper segmentation would also help with the selection of the right channels, activities and the most efficient messages, together with the definition of appropriate reach indicators for the monitoring and evaluation phase, which would make communication interventions more efficient.

In this context, the primary target groups have been split into the following main categories:

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Institutional / Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• national ministries and other national governmental institutions,</li><li>• regional governments,</li><li>• managing authorities,</li><li>• the European Commission (any other DGs except DG REGIO, which is part of EUSDR internal governance) and other EU institutions and agencies, EU Delegations, etc.</li></ul>
Civil society / business sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• project representatives, including flagship project representatives, DTP projects and potential beneficiaries,</li><li>• regional networks and multipliers such as chambers, etc.</li><li>• educational and research institutions.</li><li>• mass media (which, in turn, will inform various individuals) and other influencers</li></ul>
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EUSDR structures: DSP, Steering Group members (SGs), Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), National Coordinators (NCs), DG REGIO, Working Group (WG) leaders and members, EUSDR Presidencies (TRIO)</li></ul>

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## EFFECTIVE MESSAGING

The connection between the strategic communication objectives, the main target groups to receive messages and information about EUSDR and the most effective messages that would influence target groups' attitude towards EUSDR vision and goals and drive their active involvement in its processes is presented in the following logical framework:

### GO I. Awareness raising about EUSDR

<b>SO I.1.</b> 	<b>Promote the general idea of transnational cooperation to address the common challenges in the Danube Region</b>
<b>Target groups</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• project representatives, DTP and other potential beneficiaries,</li><li>• educational and research institutions,</li><li>• mass media (informing also various individuals) and other influencers</li></ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	successful stories demonstrating how macro-regional cooperation addresses the common challenges in the Danube Region

<b>SO I.2.</b>	<b>Promote EUSDR to stakeholders as an EU-enabled and EU driven macro-regional cooperation framework for the Danube Region</b>
<b>Target groups</b>	<p><b>Institutional/ Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• national ministries and other national governmental institutions,</li> <li>• regional governments,</li> <li>• managing authorities,</li> <li>• European Commission (any other DGs except DG REGIO which is part of the internal governance), other EU institutions and agencies, EU Delegations</li> </ul> <p><b>Civil society/ Business sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• project representatives, including flagship projects representatives, DTP projects and potential beneficiaries,</li> <li>• educational and research institutions,</li> <li>• mass media (informing also various individuals) and other influencers</li> </ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• success stories presenting what EUSDR is doing (fact based, impact driven, well written and illustrated) that can activate institutions when their support is needed (funding, political or legislative support, time to participate to meetings, consultations etc.),</li> <li>• current project representatives are interested to show what they do and are proud of it,</li> <li>• educational and research institutions are interested in specific information on their field of education and research related to Danube Region and common challenges EUSDR is addressing,</li> <li>• future project representatives &amp; journalists are interested in good project examples (fact based, well written and illustrated)</li> </ul>

## GO II. Information sharing on cooperation and funding opportunities & stakeholders' engagement

<b>SO II. 1.</b>	<b>Activate stakeholders (in the Danube Region) and connect them to the EUSDR coordination network through invitations to events, survey, consultations</b>
<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Civil society/ Business sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• project representatives, including flagship project representatives, DTP projects and potential beneficiaries,</li> <li>• educational and research institutions,</li> <li>• mass media (which, in turn, will inform various individuals) and other influencers,</li> <li>• NGOs</li> </ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	Information on any recent studies, technical events conclusions, prior consultation results etc. demonstrating specific & common needs in the region and/or funding opportunities to address them than can attract further interest and participation
<b>SO II.2.</b>	<b>Inform stakeholders about relevant policies &amp; initiatives in order to enhance capitalisation and coordination, as well their involvement in policy consultations and development</b>
<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Institutional/ Government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• national ministries and other national governmental institutions,</li> <li>• regional governments,</li> <li>• managing authorities,</li> <li>• European Commission (any other DGs except DG REGIO which is part of the internal governance) and other EU institutions and agencies, EU Delegations</li> </ul> <b>Civil society/ Business sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• project representatives, including flagship projects representatives, DTP projects and potential beneficiaries,</li> <li>• educational and research institutions,</li> <li>• mass media (informing also various individuals) and other influencers</li> </ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	Information about the complex topics (technical subjects related to EUSDR) “translated” into simple, clear, easy to use and adapt communication material & tools (infographics/ posters/ presentations/ webpages/ audio & video” ID cards”) than can attract further interest and participation



<b>SO II.3.</b>	<b>Inform project promoters and other stakeholders about the cooperation and financing opportunities for the Danube Region, so they identify common needs and develop new project or initiatives that promote the EUSDR vision and strengthen its results</b>
<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Institutional/ Government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>managing authorities</li> </ul> <b>Civil society/ Business sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project representatives, including flagship projects representatives, DTP projects and potential beneficiaries,</li> <li>educational and research institutions,</li> <li>mass media (informing also various individuals) and other influencers</li> </ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	First-hand information on future project funding opportunities (calls for proposals) that promote the EUSDR vision and strengthen its results

### GO III. Better internal understanding of what is going on to enhance work quality, effectiveness & efficiency

<b>SO III.1.</b>	<b>Streamline end-to-end horizontal cooperation among PAs, starting with target setting</b>
<b>Target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EUSDR structures: Steering Group members (SGs), Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), National Coordinators (NCs), DG REGIO, WG leaders and members, EUSDR Presidencies (TRIO), Danube Strategy Point (DSP)</li> </ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	Fulfilment, clear ownership and responsibilities for the EUSDR communication tasks between the respective sectors (PAs)

<b>SO III.2.</b>	<b>Improve the quality of EUSDR structures work through better understanding of each other and sharing more information</b>
<b>Target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EUSDR structures: Steering Group members (SGs), Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), National Coordinators (NCs), DG REGIO, WG leaders and members, EUSDR Presidencies (TRIO)</li> </ul>
<b>Effective messages</b>	Fulfilment, clear ownership and responsibilities for the EUSDR communication tasks for both within the respective sectors, but also between different stakeholders of the governance structure by providing relevant information on own work

## KEY MESSAGES

It is natural that a message is not always perceived and understood by a receiver in the same way the sender intended it. Influencing the perceptions and transporting a message in a way that the message is understood by people is not an easy task, especially when communicating throughout borders, different cultures and languages. However, developing key messages that are clear, concise, correct, honest and positive will put you in control of the information that is 'out there' and allows you to influence your target groups in the most effective way.

Put forward in easily digested sound bites, key messages articulate EUSDR differentiation, value proposition and are the very essence of EUSDR's communication.

The key messages are linked to the challenges and priorities of the EUSDR or related to its general benefits. The list below contains some examples. Depending on the context and the target groups, other messages well adapted to the respective situations need to be developed by the relevant actors.

**Examples of key messages promoting success stories** that can illustrate what EUSDR and its objectives and values are all about:

*Did you know that EUSDR can contribute to connecting people in the region to achieve together their common wishes of.....?*

1. *getting clean waters*
2. *ensuring safe shipping services*
3. *creating safer and shorter travels on the road and railway*
4. *benefitting from sustainable energy*
5. *preserving their cultural and touristic heritage*
6. *taking care of the land and people*
7. *enjoying a rich and healthy wildlife*
8. *building a sustainable society, with a better quality of life*
9. *living in a knowledge society, with sustainable human resources development*
10. *having a sustainable business environment*
11. *living in societies with increased cooperation in fighting cross-border crime*
12. *benefitting from the improved performance of strengthened institutions.*

**Examples of key general message promoting EUSDR results through its flagship projects** (in easy-to-read language):

1. More than xx years of EUSDR have brought progress in the Danube Region and improvements in people's lives through projects like: FAIRway Danube, Fleet modernisation, Developing jobs and skills, Towards digitalisation of administrative processes in inland waterways.
  - a. FAIRway Danube: co-financed through the Connecting Europe Facility, this project involving the participation of seven Danube Region countries is aiming to implement parts of the 'Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and

its navigable tributaries' a critical element to deliver **safe and sustainable shipping on the Danube**.

- b. **Fleet modernisation:** GRENDL (2018-2020) is supporting Danube fleet operators and relevant public bodies in their efforts for the long-term Danube fleet modernisation. A key element of this project is the identification of investment needs at regional and national level, which will be then paired with effective financial instruments.
- c. **Developing jobs and skills:** The project aims to help EU member states from the region to implement on time (before January 2022) the EU directive on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation. To this end, a Policy Support Strategy for Nautical Education, with a detailed roadmap for the approval of training programmes, has been drafted in the Danube SKILLS project.
- d. **Towards digitalisation of administrative processes in inland waterways:** Building on the results of previous initiatives in the area, the project aims to further improve the administrative procedures and processes for streamlining Danube Inland Waterway transport so that the people and businesses benefit from safer and shorter travels in the region, which, in turn, leads to positive economic and social consequences.

#### List of key messages for each Priority Area

<b>1a Waterways Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>EUSDR stimulates sustainable waterway mobility</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR improves connectivity in the Danube Region through improving waterway networks and navigation</i></li> </ul>
<b>1b Rail-Road-Air Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>EUSDR stimulates sustainable mobility by rail, road and air</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR improves connectivity in the Danube Region</i></li> </ul>
<b>2 Sustainable Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>EUSDR promotes sustainable energy sources (biomass, solar energy, geothermal, hydro and wind power) and decarbonisation of transport</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR improves energy efficiency</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emission</i></li> </ul>
<b>3 Culture &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>EUSDR promotes "Danube" as a tourism brand</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR promotes sustainable tourism and a blue book of cultural products and traditions</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR promotes preservation of the cultural heritage</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR promotes and supports cultural routes</i></li> </ul>
<b>4 Water Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>EUSDR supports ideas and activities to improve water quality through preventing and reducing water pollution from different sources.</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR contributes to protecting water resources and safeguarding drinking water supply</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR assists to the implementation of sub-basin initiatives</i></li> <li>• <i>EUSDR enhances conservation measures of Danube migratory fish species</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>EUSDR promotes public awareness raising and education on water management</i></li> </ul>
<b>5 Environmental Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>EUSDR supports the assessment of disaster risks in a changing environment</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR increases public awareness in connection with environmental risks</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR improves the management of environmental risks for people's safety</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR encourages actions to improve disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR supports improved forecasting systems and better planning on floodplains to save life</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR focuses on the reduction of flood risks by rebuilding wetlands</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR facilitates networking in the field of flood management education</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR addresses the challenges of water scarcity and droughts through proactive measures</i></li> </ul>
<b>6 Biodiversity, Landscapes, Air &amp; Soil Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>EUSDR prioritises safeguarding biodiversity in the Danube Region.</i></li> <li><i>EUSDR contributes to air and soil quality improvement.</i></li> </ul>
<b>7 Knowledge Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Stimulates support for R&amp;D, productive innovation and smart specialisation for scientists, students and teachers</i></li> </ul>
<b>8 Competitiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>EUSDR contributes to increased enterprise competitiveness, digital and business skills</i></li> </ul>
<b>9 People &amp; Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Helps drive fair working conditions, promotes investments in education and skills and enhanced social protection and inclusion</i></li> </ul>
<b>10 Institutional Capacity &amp; Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Stimulates the improvement of the quality of public services/administration</i></li> </ul>
<b>11 Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Promotes the rule of law in the area of migration policy, trafficking in human beings, drugs and firearms.</i></li> <li><i>Systematically fights against corruption</i></li> </ul>

## CHANNELS, METHODS AND TOOLS

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Summarising the analysis of the recommended channels and tools for each of the general and specific objectives included in the EUSDR Communication Strategy, the following elements require special attention:

1. For **GO<sup>3</sup> I & SO I.1.**, in order to provide the respective target groups with relevant information, namely good quality stories demonstrating common challenges addressed in the Danube Region, the most useful channels are the EUSDR website and social media, activated through instruments like:
  - **one introductory self-explanatory webpage** (for target groups with low awareness about EUSDR like journalists, teachers/ professors, potential project promoters);
  - **video case studies** (up to 2 minutes) **for representative projects** posted online, on the EUSDR websites (tagged individually, so further distribution can be tracked), promoted on Facebook and YouTube and shared proactively with the journalists from the media database;
  - **online media campaigns promoting visuals (video spots and banners)** aiming to attract visitors to the website and to the social media platforms. The campaigns will develop all over the Danube Region and reach citizens from all EUSDR countries. Considering the key performance indicators (impressions, clicks, reach, views) targeted for the campaigns, more people will find out about EUSDR, raising their awareness on the Danube Strategy;
  - **smart application** to be uploaded on any device that uses Android, IOS or Windows Mobile as operating systems. This will contain information about EUSDR and will be linked with the website, in order to attract more visitors;
  - **fliers and brochures** presenting the pillars and the main targets/ actions of the priority areas together with concrete examples of how EUSDR objectives were reached by successfully implemented projects.

*Key performance indicators:*

- video materials produced;
  - case studies displayed;
  - website users;
  - followers on social media platforms;
  - impressions/ clicks/ reach/ views;
  - smart app downloads;
  - copies of fliers and brochures produced and disseminated
2. As regards **GO I & SO I.2.**, the online channels (website, social channels) are relevant for the specific target groups including the following instruments:
    - **concise info packs** as an annual year end e-brochure (fact based, impact driven, well written and illustrated), including a short video about EUSDR and success stories sent

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<sup>3</sup> GO – General Objective; SO – Specific Objective

to the contacts belonging to institutional & government target groups to encourage and enable them to advocate for EUSDR;

- **photo album of EUSDR representative projects** posted on a dedicated section of the EUSDR website – one photo/ project accompanied by a short description and a link to the project website;
- **travelling exhibition**, presenting EUSDR relevant projects; this exhibition can bring together projects that may display and/ or describe their results and impact in the Danube Region, facilitating the target groups access to all project in the same place and find information about the stories they contain.
- **short presentations about success stories**, posted on the EUSDR website (dedicated section for the gallery of projects), fact based, well written and illustrated and on the Facebook page;
- **press releases** announcing the most significant events sent to journalists and posted online on a dedicated section of the EUSDR websites, and on social media channels;
- **annual appointment of symbolic ambassadors of EUSDR** (bloggers, journalists, researchers active online) from each of the 14 countries, who would promote it in various contexts (mostly online – blogs, tweets).

*Key performance indicators:*

- video materials produced;
- photos/ projects displayed on the website;
- travelling exhibition;
- success stories presented;
- press releases elaborated and sent to the media;
- website users;
- people appointed as EUSDR symbolic ambassadors

3. For **GO II & SO II.1**, face-to-face events and online channels (website, e-mailing and social media) are relevant for the specific target groups, activated through instruments like:

- **summary of EUSDR studies, technical events conclusions, prior consultations results published on the EUSDR website**, under a dedicated section, and notifications sent to subscribers and project representatives, educational and research institutions (all contacts that accepted push communication) and journalists when updates take place;
- **annual events organised periodically in partnership with academia, on campuses of the most important universities** in the Danube Region (1 per country), which would also allow spreading information about EUSDR and available funding and collecting contact details from “non-institutional” target group;
- **newsletters** containing new relevant information about EUSDR;
- **key journalists invited to the EUSDR Annual Forum**, where they find out information about EUSDR and relevant projects.

*Key performance indicators:*



- materials produced and displayed;
  - participants to annual events (ex. Annual Forum);
  - journalists participating to annual events;
  - newsletters produced and disseminated;
  - website users.
4. Face-to-face events and online channels (website, e-mailing and social media) are relevant for the specific target groups of **GO II & SO II.2**, activated through instruments like:
- a set of simple, clear, easy to use **e-infographics** (presenting technical data, figures, in general, information tailored for informed stakeholders) **and posters for each priority area** and power point **presentations** or **audio & video presentations (“translating” EUSDR and other complex technical subjects)**, to be adapted and used as introduction for various events and strategic or political meetings;

*Key performance indicators:*

- materials produced and displayed;
  - website users.
5. Face-to-face events and online channels (website and e-mailing) are also relevant for the target groups of **GO II & SO II.3**, activated through instruments like:
- sets of **e-infographics or e-posters presenting the main funding opportunities** to be used in various events;
  - **e-brochures about EUSDR** and the **upcoming calls for proposals** published on the EUSDR websites, under a dedicated section and sent to subscribers;
  - **leaflets** promoting EUSDR actions.

*Key performance indicators:*

- digital and printed materials;
  - disseminated copies of printed materials;
  - website users.
6. The target groups relevant for **GO III & SO III.1 and SO III.2** may also be reached through both face-to-face events and online channels (e.g. *mailing list for all EUSDR governance structures*). These maybe prioritised as follows:

Main channels:

- **internal discussion group** (i.e. mailing list) for the whole EUSDR governance structure;
- maintain a general and up to date **list of EUSDR Stakeholders** (NCs, PACs, SGs etc.);
- **periodical meetings** (on virtual collaboration platforms and/ or face-to-face) with representatives from the other EUSDR governance structures, where **internal and external communication** is a topic on the agenda;
- **creating and sharing with the EUSDR governance structures an internal (and external) communication events calendar.**

### Secondary channels:

- **face-to-face or virtual sessions** for coordination and alignment across PAs during the target setting period;
- **quarterly virtual collaboration sessions** among PA representatives;
- **internal newsletter**, coordinated by DSP, with content provided by the entire EUSDR governance structure.

### *Key performance indicators:*

- group discussions;
- meetings;
- internal newsletters;
- events calendar.



I. Awareness raising about EUSDR		II. Information sharing on cooperation and funding opportunities & stakeholders' engagement			III. Better internal understanding of what is going on to enhance work quality, effectiveness & efficiency
<p>I.1 Promote the general idea of transnational cooperation to address the common challenges in the Danube Region</p> <p>I. 2. Promote EUSDR to stakeholders as an EU- enabled and EU driven macro-regional cooperation framework for the Danube Region</p>		<p>II.1. Activate stakeholders (in the region) and connect them to the EUSDR coordination network through invitations to events, survey, consultations</p>	<p>II.2. Inform stakeholders about relevant policies &amp; initiatives in order to enhance capitalisation and coordination, as well their involvement in policy consultations and development</p>	<p>II.3. Inform project promoters and other stakeholders about the cooperation and financing opportunities for the Danube region, so they identify common needs and develop new project or initiatives that promote the EUSDR vision and strengthen its results</p>	<p>III.1. Streamline end-to-end horizontal cooperation among PAs, starting with target setting</p> <p>III.2. Improve the quality of EUSDR structures work through better understanding of each other and sharing more information</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ one introductory self-explanatory webpage</li> <li>✓ single webpage per flagship project</li> <li>✓ project video case studies</li> <li>✓ online media campaigns</li> <li>✓ smart app</li> <li>✓ fliers, brochures</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ concise info packs</li> <li>✓ photo album of EUSDR representative projects</li> <li>✓ travelling exhibitions</li> <li>✓ short presentations about success stories</li> <li>✓ press releases</li> <li>✓ annual appointment of symbolic ambassadors of EUSDR</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ summary of EUSDR studies, technical events conclusions, prior consultations results published on the EUSDR website</li> <li>✓ annual events organised in partnership with academia,</li> <li>✓ key journalists invited to the EUSDR Annual Forum</li> <li>✓ newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ e-infographics and posters for each priority area and power point presentations or audio &amp; video presentations ("translating" EUSDR and other complex technical subjects)</li> <li>✓ leaflets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ sets of <b>e-infographics or e-posters presenting the main funding opportunities</b> to be used in various events</li> <li>✓ <b>e-brochures about EUSDR and the upcoming calls for proposals</b></li> </ul>	<p>Main channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ internal discussion group (i.e. mailing list) for the whole EUSDR governance structure</li> <li>✓ periodical meetings (on virtual collaboration platforms and/ or face-to-face) with representatives from the other EUSDR governance structures, where internal and external communication is a topic on the agenda</li> <li>✓ creating and sharing with the EUSDR governance structures an internal (and external) communication events calendar</li> </ul> <p>Secondary channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ face-to-face or virtual sessions for coordination and alignment across PAs during the target setting period</li> <li>✓ quarterly virtual collaboration sessions among PA representatives</li> <li>✓ internal newsletter, coordinated by DSP, with content provided by the entire EUSDR governance structure</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 1

### *Contributions & involvement of the main EUSDR stakeholders*

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There is a widespread consensus among the main actors of the EUSDR that the political momentum around the Strategy is somehow declining and that there is a need to re-boost it, in particular renewing ownership and commitment by the participating countries.<sup>4</sup> One of the main tools for backing this trend is a committed, targeted and efficient communication. The communication should be all stakeholders' responsibility, emphasising the potential benefits, which the EUSDR shall bring.

Moreover, the evaluation report developed by METIS<sup>5</sup>, contracted by DSP Vienna, pointed out specific findings:

- there is still homework to be done related to internal communication and the communication of results to the public and the political level,
- the visibility beyond the Strategy stakeholders is considered to be quite limited – Steering Groups are considered as the weak link in the chain,
- from the perspective of PACs and NCs, the DSP is understood as a major support to streamline and help in communication; at the same time, good communication requires close interaction between people working on contents and people responsible for communication.

Therefore, all core EUSDR actors belonging to the internal governance system – Foreign Ministries and/or Ministries (or governmental institutions) concerned with EUSDR, National Coordinators (NCs), EUSDR Presidency, TRIO Presidency, Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), Steering Group (SG) members, Danube Strategy Point (DSP), European Commission (EC) / DG REGIO and the High-Level Group (HLG) – have defined responsibilities regarding the EUSDR internal and external communication.

To facilitate a consistent and coordinated communication and to ensure the Strategy's effectiveness, all EUSDR governance structures must commit to a specific role, in line with their responsibilities. For example, to collect and disseminate relevant information to prepare communication materials according to the agreed rules when organising (public) events, to develop media relations with national media in all participating countries etc.

From the perspective of the EUSDR Communication Strategy, including the general and specific objectives defined under this framework, it becomes crucial that the overall coordination of Strategy implementation is being facilitated by the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) in accordance with the Presidency (TRIO), DG REGIO, NCs and PACs.

From a formal point of view, DSP has the mandate to drive coordination and consistency of communication measures. DSP also has a responsibility to promote the EUSDR within the Danube Region, but also at European level, and to encourage alignment with funding instruments and collaboration with strategic actors and other MRS.

All EUSDR stakeholders promoting the Strategy shall **always** use the EUSDR visual identity in any communication/information material.

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<sup>4</sup> 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 (January 2019)

<sup>5</sup> Evaluation of the effectiveness, communication and stakeholder involvement of the EUSDR

## European Commission

DG REGIO may play an important role in the implementation of the EUSDR Communication Strategy. Due to its key function of promoting and facilitating the dialogue and involvement of stakeholders on EU level and within the Danube Region, DG REGIO may facilitate exchange of information, best practice examples and lessons learnt amongst EU institutions (line DGs, programmes, network platforms, funding facilities and other stakeholders) and across macro-regional strategies, contributing to the streamlining of processes and information exchange.

Therefore, DG REGIO could significantly help to boost the communication process by regularly updating information about EUSDR on the webpage and respective social media channels dedicated to macro-regional strategies, disseminating best practices, results and lessons learnt in relevant political events and also promoting regular updates of information on the EU Commission representations' and delegations' webpages for the countries involved in EUSDR.

## EUSDR Presidency (TRIO Presidency)

The EUSDR Presidency may have a significant role in promoting effectively the EUSDR and its visibility during the meetings, conferences, events and Annual Fora organised under their mandate by using the recommended guidelines and / or communication tools.

## National Coordinators (NCs)

NCs have a key role in promoting EUSDR and its visibility on national level. Their involvement in opening dialogues with relevant national / local stakeholders about key developments and on-going initiatives is crucial.

Promoting the EUSDR in relevant political events and reaching out to regions, municipalities, cities, business organisations, civil society, NGOs and academia is another valuable NCs' input.

NCs are in the best position to develop media relations activities with national media channels (media training and counselling might be of help).

NCs also serve as facilitators of EUSDR relevant information towards their national ministers' offices providing briefing and information for political actors in their respective states.

As NCs participate in many events where they promote EUSDR, they may proactively provide DSP with relevant information on EUSDR in order to disseminate it on appropriate channels.

NCs may also offer DSP valuable information for the production of online and offline materials, since they have frequent information exchanges with relevant programmes / financial instruments, aiming at better alignment of policies, resources and funding.

Better involvement of relevant stakeholders will be more efficient if the recommended guidelines and communication tools (webpage, social media, infographics, e-brochures etc.) are used.

## Priority Area Coordinators (PACs)

PACs have an interface and mediating function: they are in charge of coordination, implementation and communication in their specific Priority Area and they are responsible to enhance the visibility of PA results, particularly towards both Steering Group members and a wider public. Considering the above, PACs organise/participate expert, network and public meetings and events when they can use

the recommended guidelines and communication tools (Webpage, Social media, infographics, e-brochures etc.). They ensure that information about PA achievements is available and updated on respective PA webpages and the main site, when relevant.

They can also proactively provide DSP with accurate technical information (e.g. studies, technical events conclusions, prior consultations results, achievements etc.), identify and select the most prominent projects in terms of impact in order to be promoted in communication materials produced by DSP and distributed in all Danube Region countries.

PACs may identify relevant contacts and networks to be included in the list of stakeholders interested to receive information about EUSDR. They can also submit contacts of ongoing, finalised and emerging projects to DSP and NC (to help them obtain relevant stories/ project examples, photos to illustrate EUSDR achievements, etc.), in compliance with GDPR rules.

### **Steering Groups (SGs)**

SGs make significant contributions acting also as a link to other networks, such as international organisations (e.g. WTO, ICPDR, Carpathian Convention), NGOs, trade unions, chambers of commerce, universities, local authorities, thus helping to bring the Strategy "closer to the people". SGs may contribute with ideas on developments in their own field of expertise that should be communicated to a wider public, by sending them to the EUSDR external communication channels. SG-members are also vital thematic links on national levels in their fields. They act as focal points, communicating the messages of the strategy at national level and expressing the specific national viewpoints within the Steering Group, facilitating and supporting the constant exchange of information between the national and macro-regional level.

### **Danube Strategy Point (DSP)**

- DSP has the responsibility to ensure overall coordination of the EUSDR Communication Strategy.
- It should also make sure that the activities included in the annual communication plan are implemented as planned, also including the production of information and promotion materials – brochures, leaflets, newsletters etc.
- DSP is responsible for the EUSDR webpage ([www.danube-region.eu](http://www.danube-region.eu)) managing the page and uploading content.
- DSP is responsible for the accounts on the social media channels, uploading and sharing information relevant for EUSDR.
- Maintain a general and up-to-date list of NCs, PACs, EUSDR Stakeholders with names, organisations, contact details, planned yearly events and also present information on actual PA Steering Groups.
- In accordance with DTP communication guidelines, DSP provides guidance, by request, on the use of the tools supporting the communication activities such as information materials, usage of the visual identity rules, guidance about the usage of the online newsletters, social media and website or recommendation on events implementation.
- DSP provides professional advice to any other member of the governance structures implementing communication activities, when required.