

# EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) Need Assessment on the engagement in Steering Groups (SGs)

## Annex IV

Improving capacities and enhancing participation  
(online survey)



In order to analyse the needs for improving capacities and enhancing participation at the level of the EUSDR Priority Areas an online anonymous survey was launched by the Danube Strategy Point. The EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators were asked to online answer a defined set of questions reflecting on their direct experience regarding EUSDR implementation. A copy of the online survey is included in the present Annex IV. The call to the PACs for online participation was sent by email.

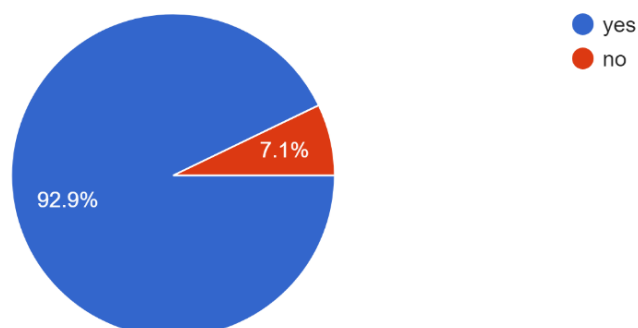
The survey was launched on 23 November 2020 with 14 anonymous answers received within the deadline (1 December 2020).

As the survey was answered anonymously, the received information cannot be associated to a certain Priority Area, but gives a general overview on the effects of staff fluctuation, participation and decision making, stakeholder involvement, communication and/or the need for capacity building, reflecting the key topics identified in the Operation Evaluation<sup>1</sup>.

In the following part, the questions of the survey and the received answers are presented. The presentation is based solely on the 14 anonymous answers received.

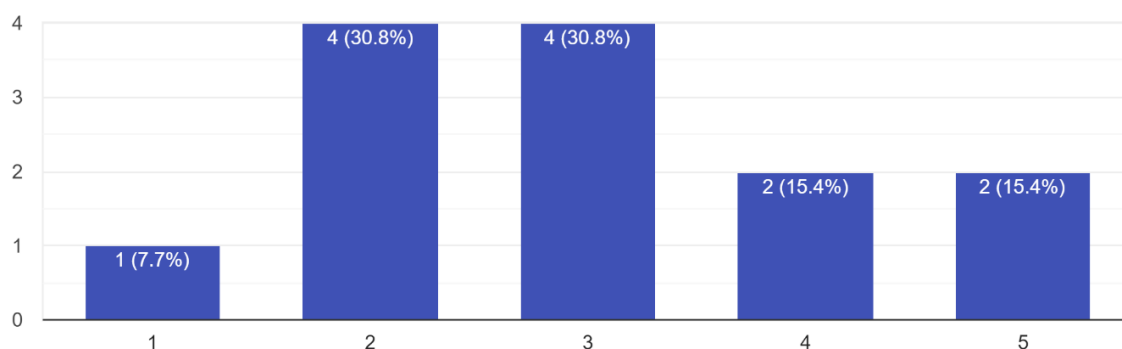
**Q1. Was the EUSDR Priority Area you are currently coordinating affected by staff fluctuation (including SG members)?**

Out of the 14 respondents, only one respondent (7.1%) affirmed that the coordinated EUSDR PA did not face staff fluctuation. 13 respondents (92.9%) confirmed that they faced changes in the designated staff and thus were affected by staff fluctuation (including SG members).



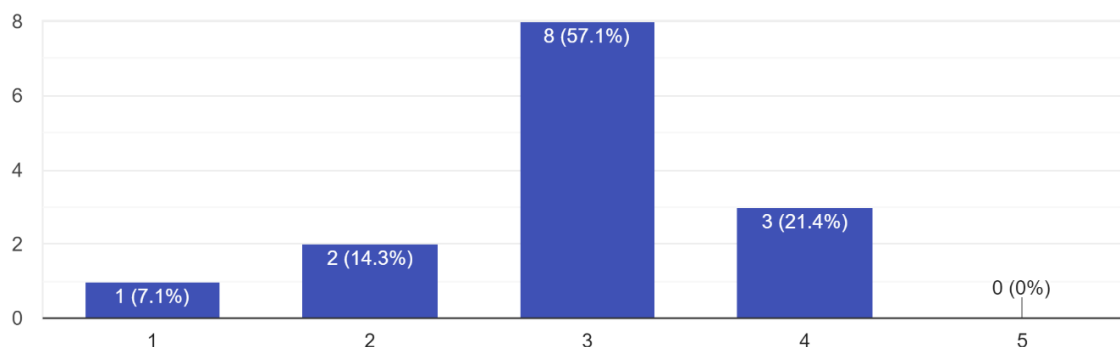
<sup>1</sup> Cf. Metis (2019). [Online](#).

If so, how much would you say it hinders the impact of the work of the Priority Area at national level (please scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much))?



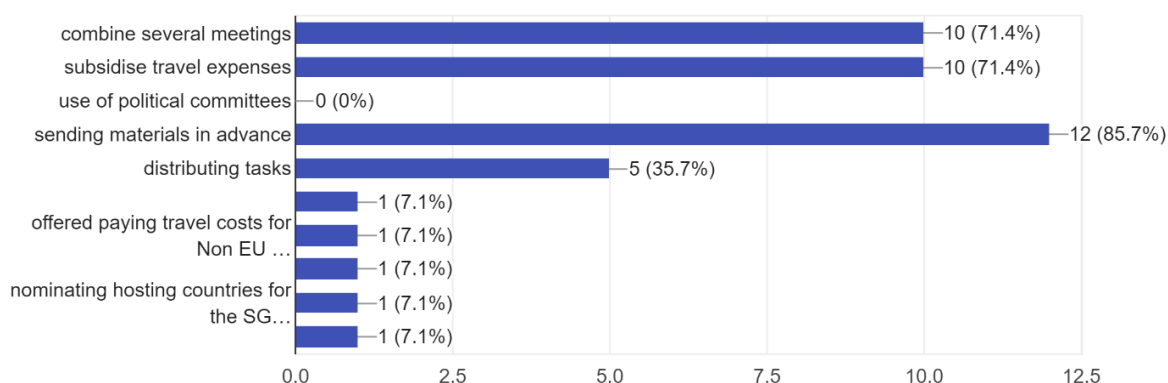
The 13 respondents confirming within Q1 that the EUSDR PA they are currently coordinating, faced staff fluctuation in the past, ranked the impact from [2] *little* (4 respondents, 30.8%), [3] *medium* (4 respondents, 30.8%), [4] *high* (2 respondents, 15.4%) and [5] *very high* (2 respondents, 15.4%). One respondent referred to [1] *being none* (7.7%). The impact of staff fluctuation in terms of influence of the PA work at the national level may therefore not be considered strong.

Q2. How would you rate the overall involvement and commitment in the EUSDR Priority Area you are currently coordinating (please scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high))?



Out of the 14 respondents, regarding the involvement and commitment in the coordinated EUSDR PA, one respondent (7.1%) ranked it as being [1] *very low*, two respondents (14.3%) ranked it as [2] *low*, eight respondents (57.1%) ranked it [3] *medium* and three respondents (21.4%) ranked it [4] *high*. None of the respondents considered the involvement and commitment as being [5] *very high*. Hence, the overall involvement and commitment in the currently coordinated PA is considered quite compensated.

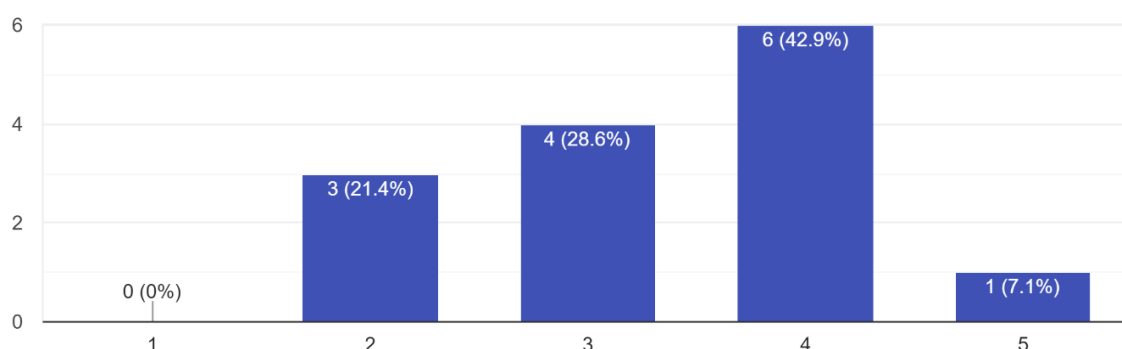
Q3. When encouraging participation and decision-making in the SG, which of the following options have been used (several options possible)?



On the topic of encouragement and decision making in the Steering Group, the most common option is to send materials in advance (indicated by 12 respondents , 85.7%), followed by combining several meetings (indicated by 10 respondents, 71.4%) and subsidising travel expenses (indicated by 10 respondents , 71.4%) as well as distributing tasks (indicated by five respondents , 35.7%). None of the respondents indicated that the use of political committees is an option they have used so far.

Other options, each of which was indicated by one of the respondents, include: trying to explain everything clearly, in an understandable way (as not all countries have the same knowledge and commitment), sending reminders and using an individual approach, nominating hosting countries for the SG meetings, organising individual meetings with SG members on priorities and expectations as well as subsidising travel expenses for representatives from non-EU countries.

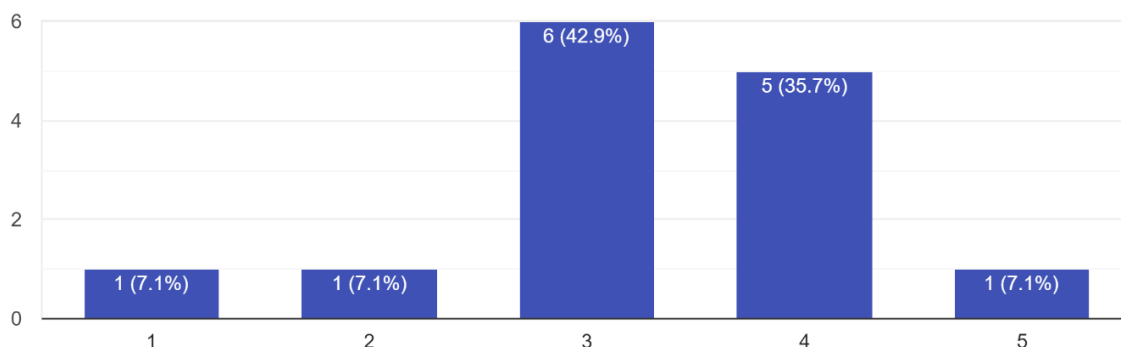
Q4. How much would you estimate the involvement of EUSDR stakeholders influences the efficiency of achieving the expected results within the Priority Area you are currently coordinating (please scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high))? \*



On the direct influence of the involvement of EUSDR stakeholders in achieving the expected results at the level of the PA, none of the respondents considered it as being [1] *very low*, three respondents (21.4%) indicated it as being [2] *low*, four respondents (28.65%) considered it as being [3] *medium*, while six respondents (42.9%) considered it as being [4] *high*. Only one respondent (7.1%) referred to it as being [5] *very high*. Hence, the overall involvement of EUSDR stakeholders influencing the

efficiency of achieving the expected results within the coordinated Priority Area can be considered as average high.

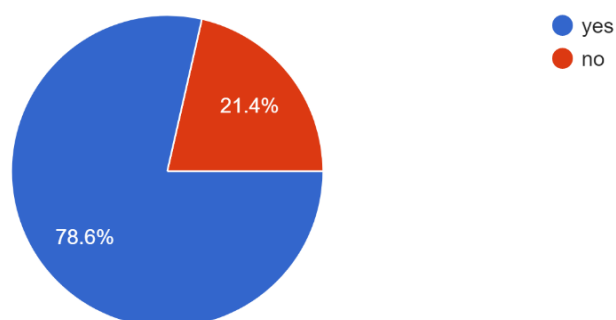
Q5. How would you rate the communication on EUSDR matters (except concrete projects) within the SG (please scale from 1 (very weak) to 5 (very good))?



Regarding the communication on EUSDR matters, with the exception of concrete projects, at the level of the coordinated PA, one respondent each (7.1% per case) considered it as being [1] *very low* or [2] *low*, while six respondents (42.9%) considered it as being of [3] *medium* level and five respondents (35.7%) considered it as being [4] *good*. Only one respondent (7.1%) considered it as being [5] *very good*. The respondents to the online survey are thus relatively satisfied with the communication flows within the SG.

Q6. Do you experience a need for more capacity building in the PA you are currently coordinating?\*

11 out of the 14 respondents (76.8%) confirmed that they experience the need for more capacity building at the level of the PA. Three of them (21.4%) considered there is no need for more capacity building at the level of the PA. Hence, the majority of the respondents to the online survey experience the need for more capacity building at the level of the PA.



Q7. Please describe how do you think that activities of the Steering Group could better support the work of the Priority Area Coordinators and enhance the impact of the EUSDR at national level?

When describing how the activities of the Steering Groups could better support the work of the PAC and enhance impact at national level, the following possible actions<sup>2</sup> were received by the respondents

- changing of best practices; support of PA at the national level by SG members; enhance visibility of EUSDR at national level by SG members
- active participation in order to know the needs and interests of SG Members
- Steering Group members should distribute the information or take more action at national level. Thus the overall activity of PACs is enhanced
- Firstly we have to achieve the involvement of all Steering Group members and their commitment in EUSDR tasks. Then we have to perform networking exercise for them for better project partner search to better contribute to the Danube Region Development.
- Members to ensure participation at SG meetings, reply to issues raised, link embedding to relevant national OPs, share information with lead ministries.
- Steering Group members could report more to Priority Area Coordinators what is going on at national level in terms of PA relevant projects and activities. When asking questions or for their opinion, SG members often do not respond. This seems to be connected to a very low political commitment towards the EUSDR in many countries. There is very few independent input by SG members regarding the further development of the Strategy or the PA. While PACs are the driver of the PA by definition, there could still be more proactivity on the side of the SG members.
- For SG members, participation in the PA activities is an additional task and often they do not find sufficient time to be involved more active. Participation to the PA activities should be discussed at national level, underlying the impact of participation at PA activities, added value for the institution and country.
- mutual learning, support EUSDR at national level including involvement in common activities, best practice exchange, enhancing political commitment, supporting visibility of the PA activities and EUSDR as a whole
- Increasing the communication flow among the SG between meetings (not only in view of PAC to SG member communication, but also vice versa & communication among SG); define & execute role of SG members as national focal points of the PA (through e.g. better outreach to national stakeholders, distribution of information etc.)
- SG members actively involved in DTP PAC projects (having clear tasks, roles and relevant reward for its fulfilment); it needs to be properly discussed

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<sup>2</sup> Please note, that Q7 was an open question and the answers listed are copied directly from the individual responses.

## Survey

### EUSDR Priority Areas - improving capacities and enhancing participation

This is a concise survey on the capacity needs and human resources.

This survey is answered anonymously.

When answering please consider your entire experience within the EUSDR. The survey covers the last 10 years of EUSDR implementation.

1. Was the EUSDR Priority Area you are currently coordinating affected by staff fluctuation (including SG members)?

Choose: yes/ no

If so, how much would you say it hinders the impact of the work of the priority area at national level (please scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much))?

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. How would you rate the overall involvement and commitment in the EUSDR Priority Area you are currently coordinating (please scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high))?

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. When encouraging participation and decision-making in the SG, which of the following options have been used (several options possible)?

- ☐ combine several meetings
- ☐ subsidise travel expenses
- ☐ use of political committees
- ☐ sending materials in advance
- ☐ distributing tasks
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How much would you estimate the involvement of EUSDR stakeholders influences the efficiency of achieving the expected results within the Priority Area you are currently coordinating (please scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high))?

1	2	3	4	5
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5. How would you rate the communication on EUSDR matters (except concrete projects) within the SG (please scale from 1 (very weak) to 5 (very good))?

1	2	3	4	5
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6. Do you experience a need for more capacity building in the PA you are currently coordinating?

Choose : yes/ no

If so, which of the following do you consider helpful (several options possible)?

- ☐ step-by-step empowerment
- ☐ Strategy building (work plans)
- ☐ training sessions and workshops
- ☐ expert involvement
- ☐ distributing tasks
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Please describe how do you think that activities of the Steering Group could better support the work of the Priority Area Coordinators and enhance the impact of the EUSDR at national level?