

# EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Invitation to submit an offer

Policy/impact evaluation, assessing instruments, tools and activities of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) for measuring the impact in the Danube region.



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## 1. Background and context

The Danube Strategy Point (DSP) is the Secretariat of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Following the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy (MRS), which was proposed by the European Commission (EC) in 2010<sup>1</sup>, adopted by the Council of the European Union and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The EUSDR addresses a wide range of thematic fields and objectives, which serve as the backbone of the Strategy's structure. According to the [EUSDR Action Plan](#) (SWD(2020) 59 final), they are grouped in 4 Pillars and 12 Priority Areas (PA). While Pillars express the core fields of action of the Strategy, Priority Areas are the 12 thematic areas in which the macro-regional strategy shall contribute to improvements through tackling main challenges and through seizing opportunities.

The governance of the EUSDR consists of the following levels and core stakeholders:

- Operational level, with Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) and Steering Groups (SGs)
- Strategic level, with National Coordinators (NCs), the Presidency (and TRIO Presidency), EC (DG REGIO), a High Level Group and Ministers (EUSDR states)

The EU Funding Agency of the City of Vienna, as the lead partner of the project "Danube Strategy Point" (DSP), carries out procurements of external services needed to support and enhance the governance and implementation of the EUSDR. As a project of the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP), the DSP works in close cooperation with the European Institutions, especially the EC/DG REGIO, the National Coordinators (NCs) and the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) of the countries participating in the EUSDR and beyond.

The DSP has elaborated an evaluation plan, which sets out the evaluation approach taking into account existing reports, studies, and academic literature on the EUSDR. The results of the evaluation should enhance the effectiveness of the governance of the EUSDR and enable the key implementers of the Strategy to take appropriate policy decisions to improve the EUSDR's implementation and revise the EUSDR Action Plan whenever necessary. It sets out the framework to properly plan and implement quality evaluations with the aim to secure the EUSDR's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact.

To support the DSP in the evaluation process, a Steering Group (SG DANUVAL) was set up, composed by representatives of the EC, NCs, PACs and invited experts. The SG DANUVAL fulfils the following functions:

- Representing the Strategy's key implementers and stakeholders and allowing their participation in the implementation of the evaluation plan;
- Providing expertise to support the implementation of the evaluation plan, e.g. by providing input on the evaluation questions, the terms of reference for the selection of evaluation experts; facilitating whenever possible access to information, data and/or data sources useful for the evaluations; reviewing the evaluation reports; proposing and monitoring of follow-up

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2010) 715

measures based on evaluation findings, ensuring a smooth transition from evaluation one (operational/governance) towards evaluation two (impact/policy).

**This awarding procedure is aimed at selecting a service provider to conduct the Policy/impact evaluation of the Strategy's instruments (tools) and activities (processes) for (measuring) the impact in the Danube region.**

## 2. Awarding procedure

The procurement procedure with the DSP (EU Funding Agency Ltd.) as Contracting Authority is based on Austrian procurement law. According to this law (article 46 of Bundesvergabegesetz 2018 in connection with Schwellenwertverordnung 2018) the present service contract will be awarded via direct contracting. The contract will be set up based on Austrian law and concluded with EU-Förderagentur GmbH/DSP. Herewith all interested companies are invited to submit an offer, via e-mail to [office@eusdr-dsp.eu](mailto:office@eusdr-dsp.eu) by **22 June 2021, 1:00 pm** (Central European Time).

## 3. Specification of services

The objectives of the policy/impact evaluation are:

- Elaboration and conduction of the policy/impact evaluation of the EUSDR, assessing its main instruments (tools) and activities (processes);
- Assessment of the actions and targets as defined in the [revised EUSDR Action Plan](#) and providing input for possible future revisions of the Action Plan;
- Appraisal of the progress of the EUSDR in reaching its goals as defined in the revised EUSDR Action Plan and thereby providing a basis for future impact evaluations;
- Identification of good-practice examples and obstacles in the [EUSDR embedding process](#) and development of recommendations how to improve the process;
- Assessment of the [EUSDR Communication Strategy](#) and development of recommendations how to improve the communication of the EUSDR;
- Appraisal of effectiveness and efficiency of the planned monitoring system for monitoring the progress and achievements (implementation) of the EUSDR and development of recommendations how to improve the tool (the current draft of the PAC reporting tool will be provided by the DSP);
- Identification of needs and obstacles in the implementation of the EUSDR and development of recommendations how improve the implementation;
- Development of appropriate conclusions and recommendations, including an executive summary with the main arguments/results.

The target audience of this evaluation includes the following groups:

- Key implementers of the Strategy (National Coordinators, Priority Area Coordinators, Steering Group Members);
- European Commission, especially DG REGIO (but also DG NEAR, DG EMPL, DG MOVE, DG HOME, etc.);
- Authorities involved in the management of funds (e.g. ESIF OPs' Managing Authorities and JSs);
- Other stakeholders, where relevant.

#### 4. Evaluation questions

The Evaluation questions shall follow the ones defined in the Evaluation Plan. For the policy/impact evaluation, the following examples of questions are to be considered:

- What influence does the COVID-19 pandemic have on the implementation, impact and communication of the Strategy? What has changed and what should be adapted for the future?
- Are the actions and targets as defined in the revised EUSDR Action Plan coherent, realistic, appropriate and relevant? What should be modified and when (next Action Plan revision)?
- How are the Priority Areas proceeding in reaching (or planning to reach) their set targets? What should be changed in order to ensure that the objectives will be achieved?
- What (policy) impact can be expected to be generated by the Strategy?
- How does/can the Strategy contribute to wider policy objectives (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals, European Green Deal, Digitalisation, Post-Covid Recovery, EU enlargement process and neighbourhood policy etc.)?
- How efficient is the EUSDR embedding process in terms of programming (planning phase)? Which role is the Strategy (EUSDR and MRS in general) going (expected) to play in the Partnership Agreements and EU funding programmes 2021-2027?
- What tools and processes would be helpful to improve the implementation of the EUSDR? How practicable and efficient will the planned monitoring system (based on the current draft of the PAC reporting tool) be for monitoring the progress and achievements of the Strategy?
- Are the measures agreed in the Communication Strategy appropriate for the selected target groups? Do the EUSDR’s communication measures reach the relevant target groups efficiently?
- Which narratives have been successful in promoting the EUSDR on the political level?

##### a. Methods and available data

The experts interested in the contract shall present in their project proposals the most suitable and effective methods, allowing to reach the objectives of the evaluation and to provide comprehensive answers to the evaluation questions using sound scientific methods. The project proposals shall be presented and discussed with the DSP as contracting authority.

##### b. Time schedule and coordination

The following time schedule is foreseen for the policy/impact evaluation:

Beginning/Mid July 2021	Kick-off meeting
Beginning of August 2021	Inception report
August – November 2021	Data collection and analysis
30 November 2021	Interim report
15 December 2021	Deadline for comments by SG DANUVAL
December 2021 – March 2022	Revision and adaptation to new developments (particularly regarding the EU programming process)
15 March 2022	Draft final report
30 March 2022	Deadline for comments by SG DANUVAL
13 April 2022	Submission of the final evaluation report to the DSP

The DSP will be in charge of coordinating the evaluation work and ensuring quality review. Evaluation findings will be discussed in the SG DANUVAL, which will agree on potential follow-up measures and propose them to the NCs.

The expert(s) shall be available for 3-4 meetings with the DSP/SG DANUVAL to discuss the evaluation concept and the evaluation findings and for 1-2 meetings to present the (preliminary) results to the EUSDR stakeholders. Depending on the pandemic situation, the meetings will be online or in person. The working language of the EUSDR is English, thus work and papers done and produced in the framework of the present evaluation must be written in English.

## 5. Required qualifications of the evaluation experts and award criteria

Evaluation experts interested in the present contract shall have

- Qualified knowledge and practical expertise in the evaluation and analysis of macro-regional strategies;
- Qualified knowledge of the cohesion policy of the EU, including European Territorial Cooperation;
- Experience and skills in quantitative and qualitative research methods/analysis as additional qualification as qualitative methods professional English language skills.

These qualifications shall be met specifically by the single experts involved in the evaluation and not only in general by the organisation submitting the offer. In case the tenderer proposes a team of experts to carry out the evaluation, an experienced project manager should be appointed, who will take the role of a leader or be a coordinating expert. The project manager as well as the other members must:

- Hold a Master's degree or equivalent;
- Demonstrate proven experience in evaluation of macro-regional strategies;
- Demonstrate proven experience in project management (at least three years of experience);
- Demonstrate proven experience in team management (concerns evaluation project manager).

The following criteria will be applied to assess the offers:

Experience and qualification of evaluation expert(s) 40 % = 40 points;

Methodology proposed/compliance with EUSDR Evaluation Plan and terms of reference 40 % = 40 points;

Price 20 % = 20 points.

## 6. Required content of the offer

The offer, in English language, must contain:

- information about experiences and qualification of the proposed evaluator(s);
- information on the methodological approach;
- information on calculated person days and calculated daily rate;
- a detailed calculation of costs;
- a detailed time and work plan.

The offered price shall be a lump-sum which covers any costs arising from the complete delivery of the services described above such as office and material costs, travel and subsistence costs, costs for any

subcontracts, overhead costs, taxes, charges. Additional costs will not be reimbursed. VAT is to be indicated separately and prices have to be indicated as fixed prices. The total price should be expressed in Euro (EUR), excluding VAT. For orientation, the DSP/EU Funding Agency has estimated a budget for the Policy/impact evaluation not exceeding EUR 39.000,00 (excluding VAT).

No reimbursement of costs arising from the elaboration and submission of the offer will take place.

Please be aware that the EU-Förderagentur GmbH/DSP as contracting authority may request additional documents to verify the authorisation of the company to deliver the service, its professional reliability as well as its financial, economic and technical ability to perform the services.

**The offer signed and scanned shall be submitted by 22 June 2021 1:00 pm (Central European Time) via e-mail to [office@eusdr-dsp.eu](mailto:office@eusdr-dsp.eu).**

For questions, please address an e-mail to [office@eusdr-dsp.eu](mailto:office@eusdr-dsp.eu) until 18 June 2021 1:00 pm.