

Rules of Procedure of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region National Coordinators

Article 1

Preamble

The European Commission via two main documents adopted the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) on 8th December 2010: the Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions¹, and an accompanying Action Plan², a Commission Staff Working Document, which complements the Communication.

Article 2

Scope

These Rules of Procedure shall apply to all meetings and decision taking procedures of the National Coordinators (NCs) of the EUSDR.

Article 3

Empowerment of National Coordinators

NCs designated by participating EUSDR states shall be duly empowered by their respective national structures. NCs are core strategic decision-makers within the governance structure of the EUSDR. They also have a strategic coordination function of the Strategy within their state³.

Article 4

Presidency / TRIO Presidency

- (1) Pursuing a rotation principle, the EUSDR Presidency is taken over by the NC of an EUSDR participating state for a one-year period⁴ from January 1st until December 31st.
- (2) The rotation of the Presidency follows the alphabetical order of the participating states with their official English name^{5 6}.
- (3) The participating states may switch places for chairing the Presidency by their mutual consent. Art. 4 (2) remains unaffected.
- (4) Each Presidency will organise and chair at least one meeting of NCs, one meeting of Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) and one annual joint meeting of NCs and PACs, with the support of the EUSDR TRIO Presidency⁷ (formed by representatives of the former, incumbent and future EUSDR presidencies), the European Commission (EC) and the Danube Strategy Point (DSP).

¹ Communication European Union Strategy for the Danube Region: COM(2010) 715 final.

² Action Plan 2010: SEC(2010)1489/3; Action Plan 2020: SWD(2020) 59 final.

³ For more details on the functions of NCs, please refer to the *EUSDR Governance paper*.

⁴ Starting with 1st January 2024. Until then, the one-year-period (1st November – End of October) remains in place.

⁵ Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Hungary, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Ukraine.

⁶ Rotation principle following the alphabetical order starts 2024 with the letter A.

⁷ For more details on the EUSDR TRIO Presidency, please refer to the *EUSDR Governance paper*.

- (5) The Presidency will also initiate and follow up meetings with the PACs and support their requests for such meetings. These meetings can be organised back-to-back with the NC meetings, where appropriate.
- (6) The annual work programme of the Presidency including the priorities of the Annual Forum and of other major events will be elaborated in close cooperation with NCs beforehand.
- (7) In case the incumbent Presidency is, due to force majeure, unable to perform its duties and tasks as laid out in this document, this Presidency will immediately, but no later than 10 working days, inform the TRIO Presidency (past and future presidencies) and DSP about the situation and ask the remaining TRIO Presidency members to inform all NC representatives of the situation, initiate a written procedure to temporarily take over the Presidency duties and tasks as laid out in this document and agree to act together in agreement.

The decision is taken by all participating states with a quorum of 2/3, within 15 working days after the written procedure has been started. The appointed temporary Presidency (past and future presidencies) acts until the issue is resolved. Otherwise, the temporary Presidency acts until the future Presidency takes over as scheduled.

Article 5

Calling of NC meetings

- (1) Meetings take place as often as may be necessary (on-site, in digital or hybrid format), but at least once a year between two Annual Fora.
- (2) The Presidency, supported by the EC and the DSP sets venue (on-site, in digital or hybrid format), date, and duration of any meeting, after consultation with the TRIO Presidency.
- (3) The Presidency notifies the NCs of venue, date, and duration of meetings at least 30 working days prior to their beginning. In case of an extraordinary meeting according to Art. 5 (5), and if the urgency of the situation requires, this period may be shortened up to 15 working days. Notice of meetings will also be made by the DSP on the EUSDR website (www.danube-region.eu) and via e-mail.
- (4) After the notice referred to in point 3 above, the Presidency may decide, in exceptional circumstances and when duly justified, to change the date and/or place of an NC meeting.
- (5) The Presidency may call an extraordinary meeting upon request of at least five participating states.

Article 6

Composition of NC meetings

- (1) Each EUSDR participating state shall appoint an NC who becomes a permanent member of the NC meeting, until further notice of the participating state. NCs have the right to choose their representatives by appointment of substitutes or by sending delegated substitutes to the meetings. In justified cases, the participating states may nominate more than one NC. If appropriate, states may include the European Structural and Investment Funds coordinators into their national delegations.
- (2) Representatives of the EC, DSP and Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) shall participate in NC meetings in an advisory role (without voting right).
- (4) Further stakeholders from the EUSDR or other guests (technical experts, researchers, institutes, etc.), in an advisory role (without voting right), may be invited to participate in NC meetings by the Presidency, which consults the TRIO Presidency, if required by the agenda.
- (5) Upon proposal of any EUSDR participating state, followed by consent of all participating states, the Presidency may invite other participants as guests to the NC meetings or parts of it.

Article 7

Chairing of NC meetings

NC meetings shall be chaired by the NC or another representative of the incumbent Presidency. DSP and EC shall give support to the chair. The incumbent Presidency can delegate the chair to another representative of the TRIO Presidency in duly justified cases and with prior consent of the TRIO Presidency.

Article 8

Decision-making and voting rules of the NC meetings

- (1) Decisions can be taken only by NCs or their delegated / appointed substitutes and if NCs of at least more than half of the states participating in the EUSDR are present (50% + 1 rule).
- (2) Decision-making in an NC meeting will be done by consensus among all participating state delegations. According to the “*one state one vote*” principle, each participating state delegation shall have one vote. In case of opposition by one or more state delegations, the Presidency, or a representative appointed by the Presidency decides whether the decision is postponed or defeated. Votes cannot be delegated to other states. State delegations have the right to abstain from voting. An abstention does not count against unanimity.
- (3) The Presidency can initiate a written decision-making process (written procedure) by sending a draft decision and related documents to all state delegations, which shall have at least 10 working days to respond in writing to the Presidency. In case of issues, which require national coordination, the period can be adapted to those needs. In the absence of any reaction, it will be deemed as a silent agreement. The use of written procedures should take due account of holiday periods.
- (4) If a written objection is raised, the matter shall be discussed bilaterally between the Presidency and the participating state delegation raising the objection and, in case no solution is found, it shall be put on the agenda of the next NC meeting.
- (5) After the written response period of 10 working days has expired, the Presidency shall inform all NCs whether the decision is deemed to be taken or whether objections have been raised. The Presidency shall decide whether defeated and postponed items will be placed on the agenda of the next NC meeting.

Article 9

Agenda of the NC meetings

- (1) The Presidency, together with the TRIO Presidency, shall draw up a provisional agenda for each NC meeting. The draft agenda shall be sent to all participating stakeholders at least 15 working days before the beginning of the meeting.
- (2) The draft agenda shall indicate for each item whether a written document shall be provided by the Presidency. Documents for discussion at NC meetings shall be sent to NCs at least 10 working days (15 working days in case of foreseen vote) prior to the meeting, unless exceptional duly justified circumstances require circulating a document closer to the date of the meeting.
- (3) The draft agenda shall contain items from NCs submitted as a request for inclusion on the agenda and received by the Presidency. The provisional agenda shall also indicate items for which the Presidency may request a vote.
- (4) Any request to put an item on the agenda (except for points under “any other business / AOB”) must be communicated to the Presidency, or a representative appointed by the Presidency at least five working days before the date of the meeting. If there is evidence of urgency, the members can propose to add other items to the agenda at the meeting itself. Their final inclusion will be subject to approval by NCs at the meeting.
- (5) If a request for changing the provisional agenda is made, the Presidency shall send to the NCs the revised agenda including all items on which a decision shall be taken.
- (6) The final agenda is adopted at NC meetings as the first item of the agenda.

Article 10

Minutes of the NC meetings

- (1) The Presidency, supported by the EC and the DSP, shall be responsible for drafting the minutes of the meeting. It will circulate, after consulting the TRIO Presidency, provisional minutes to the NCs within 10 working days following the meeting.
- (2) The Presidency shall amend the provisional minutes on the basis of the comments received within 10 working days from the date of circulation of the provisional minutes and will send out the final minutes within 30 working days following the NC meeting at the latest.

Article 11

Confidentiality

Discussions at NC meetings, as well as related communication material included in working documents and the EUSDR internal information system shall be treated strictly confidentially, unless unanimously decided differently. This does not apply to consultations NCs carry out within their state administrations and related bodies. To support communication and information flow among EUSDR NCs and PACs, PACs are granted access to NC meeting documents via the EUSDR intranet and vice versa. Beyond this, the rule of strict confidentiality remains in place.

Article 12

Working language and communication

- (1) Communication among NCs shall be done in English by electronic means. The working language of NC meetings is English. Any documents which are sent to the Presidency, or a representative appointed by the Presidency, shall be transmitted in English by e-mail.
- (2) Any possible effort shall be done to ensure the correctness and effectiveness of communications.

Article 13

Joint NC and PAC meetings

- (1) Joint NC and PAC meetings serve the purpose of better aligning the activities within the Strategy and to improve the communication between national and thematic stakeholders.
- (2) Joint NC and PAC meetings are considered as extended NC meetings with the addition of PACs and take place at least once a year. Therefore, Articles 4 to 12 of the present Rules of Procedure apply.
- (3) NCs, PACs and members of their teams as well as EC, DSP and DTP can attend the joint meetings.
- (4) In addition to Art. 5 (5), in this specific case, the meeting can be called by the Presidency, supported by EC and DSP, following also a request from at least five PACs (with no regard to the coordinated PA).
- (5) In addition to the decision making (Art. 8); In case a quorum of 2/3 of present PACs oppose an NC decision, the Presidency will launch a written procedure among NCs on the opposed matter taking into account the justification by PACs raised during the meeting.

Article 14

Revision

- (1) The NC Rules of Procedure are adopted by unanimous decision.
- (2) After their adoption, the NC Rules of Procedure may be amended by unanimous decision.