

Rules of Procedure of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region Priority Area Coordinators

Article 1

Scope

Meetings of PACs offer the opportunity for these important actors of EUSDR to:

- Harmonize their approach towards the big variety of strategic tasks, actions, activities and projects,
- Enhance cooperation between the priority areas thus improve the leverage of EUSDR-actions,
- Exchange technical, organizational and financial items of general interest for PACs,
- Identify the necessities of deepening the involvement of other stakeholders and actors in the macro-region,
- Clarify ways of enhancing the cooperation with other MRS and how to use synergies,
- Propose the types of projects with strategic importance to the NCs,
- When invited by NCs, contribute as PACs, representing the Steering Groups of priority areas, to important items of the EUSDR, which are on the agenda of National Coordinators, e.g. Revision of the Action Plan, Communication Strategy, Evaluation Strategy and Monitoring,
- Contribute on any other items, the NCs asked PACs to deliver proposals.

Article 2

Calling of meetings

(1) Meetings take place as often as necessary (on-site, in digital or hybrid format), but at least once a year.

(2) The Presidency of the EUSDR (hereafter: "The Presidency"), supported by the European Commission (EC) and the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) fixes 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 PACs of venue, date, and a preliminary draft agenda duration of meetings at least 30 working days (15 working days for online format) prior to their beginning. Notice of meetings will also be made by the DSP on the EUSDR website (www.danube-region.eu).

(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 or place of a PAC meeting.

Article 3

Composition of PAC meetings

- (1) Incumbent Priority Area Coordinators, officially appointed by the relevant authorities from EUSDR participating countries, have the right to participate to PAC meetings.
- (2) PACs have the right to substitute their representatives by appointment of substitutes or by sending delegated substitutes to the meetings based on a written notice sent to the DSP.
- (3) Representatives of the EC and of the DSP shall participate in PAC meetings in an advisory role (without voting right).
- (4) A representative of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme shall participate in the PAC meetings in an advisory role (without voting right).
- (5) National Coordinators (NCs) or other stakeholders from the EUSDR may be invited to participate in PAC meetings by the Presidency, which consults the Trio, in an advisory role and if required by the agenda. They will have no voting right.

Article 4

Chairing of meetings and decision-making

PAC meetings shall be chaired by a representative of the partner state holding the Presidency. DSP/EC shall give support to the Chair.

Article 5

Decision-making and voting rules

- (1) Decisions can be taken only by PACs or their delegated / appointed substitutes and if at least more than half of the PAs are represented (50% + 1 rule),
- (2) Decision-making in a PAC meeting will be done by consensus. Each Priority Area has one vote. In case of opposition by one or more Priority Area, the Presidency, or a representative appointed by the Presidency decides whether the decision is postponed or defeated. Votes cannot be delegated to other PACs. PACs have the right to abstain from voting. An abstention does not count against unanimity.
- (3) A written decision-making process can be initiated by the Presidency or (in minimum) by two Priority Areas from different pillars. DSP, on behalf of the Presidency, will send a draft decision and related documents to all PACs, which shall have 10 working days or 15 working days, if necessary to consult Steering Groups, to respond in writing to the Presidency. In the absence of any reaction, it will be taken as a silent agreement. The use of written procedures should take due account of holiday periods.
- (4) If a written objection is raised, all PACs shall be informed about the objections and reasons for it. The Presidency shall discuss bilaterally with the Priority Area raising the objection and, in case no solution is found, it shall be put on the agenda of the next PAC meeting.
- (5) After the working days' limit has expired, the Presidency shall inform all PACs whether the decision is deemed to be taken or whether objections have been raised. The Presidency will decide whether defeated and postponed points shall be placed on the agenda of the next PAC meeting.

Article 6

Agenda

- (1) The Presidency, after consulting Trio and the EC, with the support of DSP shall draw up a provisional agenda for each PAC meeting. DSP shall send the draft agenda on behalf of the Presidency to all participating stakeholders at least 15 working days before the beginning of the meeting.
- (2) The draft agenda shall indicate for each point whether a written document shall be provided by the Presidency. Documents for discussion at PAC meetings shall be sent to PACs at least 10 working days or 15 working days, if necessary to consult Steering Groups 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 PACs submitted to the Presidency for inclusion on the agenda. 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") must be communicated to the Presidency, or a representative appointed by the Presidency at least 5 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 the PAC meeting.
- (5) If a request for changing the provisional agenda is made, the Presidency will send to the PACs the revised agenda including all items on which a decision shall be taken.
- (6) The final agenda is adopted at PAC meetings as the first point.

Article 7

Minutes of the PAC meetings

- (1) DSP, on behalf of the Presidency, shall draft the provisional minutes of the meeting. The Presidency will consult the Trio, and adapt the provisional minutes. DSP will circulate this adapted provisional minutes to the PACs within 10 working days following the meeting.
- (2) The Presidency supported by DSP 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 DSP will diffuse the final minutes within 30 working days following the PAC meeting at the latest.

Article 8

Confidentiality

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

Article 9

Working language and communication

- (1) Communication among PACs shall be done in English by electronic means. Working language of PACs meetings shall be English. Any documents which shall be 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 10

Revision and enforcement

- (1) Rules of procedure of the PAC meetings are adopted by unanimous decision by PACs and by National Coordinators (NCs).
- (2) After their adoption, rules of procedures of the PAC meetings may be amended by unanimous decision.
- (3) These rules of procedure shall apply to all meetings of the PACs of the EUSDR.

Endorsed by PACs on 22 January 2019
Approved by NCs on 4 March 2019
Adapted on 29 September 2021

Explanatory memorandum

Priority Area Coordinators are important actors of EUSDR.

According to the EUSDR **Action Plan** (endorsed by the EC in 2011) the *coordination of each priority area is allocated to a Priority Area Coordinator* (twinned between two participating countries of EUSDR). *PACs are at the heart of making the Strategy operational, and bear a central responsibility for its success. They work on its implementation, in close contact with the Commission, with all stakeholders involved, especially other countries, but also Regional and Local Authorities, Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Bodies. The Priority Areas ... represent the main areas where the macro-regional strategy can contribute to improvements (either through tackling the main challenges or through seizing the main opportunities). For each priority area the Action Plan presents the issue and indicates main problems.*

The Governance of Macro-regional Strategies (MRS), based on the **Commission Report of 20 May 2014 on the Governance of Macro Regional Strategies and the Council Conclusions of 28 November 2014**, is based on three levels: (1) political leadership, (2) coordination, and (3) implementation. PACs are identified as belonging to level (3) as “key implementers”, empowered by the Member States.

Specific governance rules are contained in the **Joint Statements by Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EUSDR adopted respectively in Vienna on 26 June 2015 and Brussels on 13 May 2015**.

According to the 2014 Ministerial Joint Statement, *The National Coordinators shall convene for regular meetings and serve as an interface between the political level and the Priority Areas...The National Coordinators shall meet at least twice in the time span between two Annual Fora.*

According to the 2015 Ministerial Joint Statement, *The Presidency will organise and chair at least two meetings of NCs. NCs serve as the link between the political level and the Priority Areas and take own decisions or prepare decisions to be taken at political level. The meetings of the NCs will be prepared, chaired and followed up by the Presidency.*

The Presidency will also organise and follow up meetings of the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) and support their initiatives for such meetings. These meetings can be organised back-to-back with the NC’s meetings, where appropriate.

The Danube Strategy Point (DSP) shall support the political and operational level of the EUSDR. It will serve as a strategic working unit and a service centre supporting the implementation, communication, monitoring and evaluation of the EUSDR.