



# Guidance Paper for Embedding the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) into EU Programmes

## **FROM PROGRAMMING TO IMPLEMENTATION**

April 2023



**Slovenian Presidency**  
of the EU Strategy  
for the Danube Region



## Contents

1. Introduction and background .....	2
2. Cross-Priority Area cooperation in EUSDR Embedding .....	3
3. Embedding EUSDR in non-EU countries .....	4
4. Cross-MRS cooperation in EUSDR Embedding: example of Slovenia.....	6
5. Update on monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the embedding process .....	7
6. Conclusions and recommendations.....	10

## 1. Introduction and background

By design, macro-regional strategies (MRS) such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) do not have their own funding. Successful implementation of a Strategy therefore depends on the one hand directly on its absorption and generation of EU, national, regional and other public and private funds. On the other hand, MRS comprise a variety of complex thematic policy fields, which means that in the implementation process, it is vital to align and streamline EUSDR priorities and to create synergies with other instruments and funding sources in order to secure a sound implementation of the goals set.

The described process has been referred to as embedding of MRS into EU funding. In the EUSDR, the embedding process has been one of the top priorities of the Croatian (2020), Slovakian (2021) and Ukrainian (2022) EUSDR Presidencies and continues (now) with the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency (2023). The embedding process, that can also be referred to as funding of implementation, has on the EUSDR side been set-up as a hand in hand process starting from the revision of the EUSDR Action Plan (2020) and the programming phase for 2020+ funding. The continuity on the EUSDR Presidencies side and continuous efforts on all EUSDR core-stakeholder levels have certainly been core prerequisites for a successful and comprehensive implementation of the EUSDR in the next funding period.

With the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency in 2023, the embedding process pursued in continuation of the priorities of the previous EUSDR Presidencies will be taken up and the focus of the joint embedding efforts on the implementation phase will be intensified. A focus will be placed here above all on embedding in cross-cooperation between the Priority Areas (chapter 2).

Embedding with special focus on non-EU countries as further priority of the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency will be put forward. EC/DG REGIO and involvement of DG NEAR will be involved in preparing a comprehensive approach on specific situation when it comes to embedding the EUSDR in EU (IPA III, NDICI) and national/regional programmes (chapter 3).

According to the European Commission<sup>1</sup>, the priorities, measures and projects identified by the EU programme authorities as relevant for the MRS should be implemented in a coordinated and synchronised manner in the MRS countries. The Slovenian EUSDR Presidency would like to share its experience and cross-MRS knowledge gained from the participation in three macro-regional strategies (chapter 4).

Comprehensive monitoring mechanisms of the embedding process are helpful to maintain the activities of all relevant stakeholders and political support, at local, regional, national and supranational levels. In addition, monitoring helps EUSDR key implementers to understand the weaknesses and strengths of the embedding process and to initiate appropriate support measures for the Strategy, thus further necessary steps for this process are presented (chapter 5).

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<sup>1</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. SWD(2022) 397 final; p. 8. [Online](#).

## 2. Cross-Priority Area cooperation in EUSDR Embedding

In previous programming and the current and ongoing implementation phase of the EUSDR embedding process, “Guidance documents were prepared, notably by the Croatian, Slovakian and Ukrainian EUSDR Presidencies, together with the EUSDR Embedding tool prepared by the Danube Strategy Point [DSP]”<sup>2</sup>. The EUSDR priorities to be embedded in were streamlined from 85 Actions of the EUSDR Action Plan to 36 *EUSDR shortlisted strategic topics to five thematic areas*, following EUSDR shortlisted strategic topics covered by national/Interreg programmes<sup>3</sup>. Based on the five thematic areas prioritised for EUSDR embedding<sup>4</sup>, dedicated workshops were held in the newly established *EUSDR Embedding Week*<sup>5</sup>.

The EUSDR Embedding Week, organised by the DSP, took place for the first time from 11 to 15 July 2022 in an online format. On each day, one thematic workshop brought together EUSDR stakeholders and the programming and managing authorities (MAs), to facilitate matchmaking between relevant stakeholders, provide a forum for joint dialogue between programmes and the EUSDR and to discuss ways on how to embed the EUSDR into the respective programmes.

The EUSDR Embedding Week addressed the potential and challenges of embedding from multiple angles, bringing together among others at a virtual table speakers representing the Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency, the European Commission, the Technical Support to the Implementation and Management of ENI CBC programmes (TESIM), funding programmes, MAs, programming authorities and EUSDR National Coordinators (NCs) and Priority Area Coordinators (PACs).

In line with the results of the matchmaking between the priorities of mainstream/national/Interreg programmes and EUSDR shortlisted strategic topics, resulting in five thematic areas prioritised for EUSDR embedding, topics related to *research & innovation, S3, cluster development, female entrepreneurship, energy efficiency, decarbonisation of heating & cooling systems, climate change, flood & disaster management, endangered umbrella species, green infrastructure and soil-related ecosystem services* were addressed during the sessions.

Several best-practice examples of successfully implemented projects were showcased and ideas for future projects and initiatives were discussed. The programmes also displayed the embedding measures that can be used in order to ensure high impact of the financial support in the Region. The EUSDR Embedding Week has highlighted the progress of the EUSDR Embedding process, but also the importance of joint and coordinated next steps, which was summarised in the *EUSDR Embedding Week Review*<sup>6</sup>.

With a focus on such complex and cross-cutting topics, which will remain high on the agenda in the whole Danube Region, the concept of the EUSDR Embedding Weeks highlights the importance of dialogue, exchange and coordination when it comes to the need to align funding across funding sources and creating synergies between different macro-regional stakeholders. This concept will be

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<sup>2</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. SWD(2022) 397 final; p. 8. [Online](#).

<sup>3</sup> Guidance Paper for Embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes. FROM ACTIONS TO FUNDING. May 2022. [Online](#).

<sup>4</sup> EUSDR shortlisted strategic topics as elaborated and provided by the respective PAs. The topics can also be relevant for other PAs. Shortlisted strategic topics from PAs that are not represented in the prioritised thematic areas overview can still be included in the embedding process and could be taken up in following EUSDR Embedding Weeks.

<sup>5</sup> <https://danube-region.eu/eusdr-embedding-week-a-week-of-successful-matchmaking/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://danube-region.eu/eusdr-embedding-week-review-edition-2022/>

continued in the embedding activities under the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency, so that "MRS key implementers [...] communicate more [...] with each other and develop more synergies for the implementation of macro-regional actions and projects"<sup>7</sup>.

In this respect, it is considered "beneficial to involve businesses and SMEs to identify cases and potential (clusters, smart specialisation platforms etc.)"<sup>8</sup> in the EUSDR Embedding Weeks 2023 in continuation of the first workshop sessions series.

The EUSDR Embedding Week 2023<sup>9</sup> will focus more on cross-Priority Area (PA) synergies and cooperation in overlapping and complementary thematic fields. To increase the uptake in the workshop sessions, directly managed programmes and programmes specifically targeting MRS shall be further exploited in this respect, where EUSDR "NCs [...] should encourage project promoters (e.g., macro-regional actors) to participate in calls for projects published by the directly managed EU instruments, including new funds such as the new direct funds of the CEF Digital programme"<sup>10</sup>.

Furthermore, under the initiation of the DSP, first steps have already been taken with regard to the integration of Horizon Europe EU Missions<sup>11</sup>, which is considered advisable by the European Commission<sup>12</sup>. In a first exchange, EC/DG MARE and the thematically relevant Priority Areas 4 (Water Quality), 5 (Environmental Risks) and 6 (Biodiversity, Landscapes and Air & Soil Quality) in the field of the EU Mission for the restoration of waters confirmed to deepen the embedding cooperation, and to coordinate possible future initiatives.

These efforts in creating complementarities between the cross-PA activities with EC/DG MARE will be addressed and further developed during the EUSDR Embedding Week 2023.

### 3. Embedding EUSDR in non-EU countries

In the EUSDR, non-EU countries work, by definition, on the same ground as EU Member States, also in terms of embedding. All EUSDR EU and non-EU countries have been actively involved in the process, the development of tools and the practical implementation.

For all five non-EU countries participating in the EUSDR the embedding exercise implied a strategic approach to planning and now also to implementation priorities at the national level, which are reflected in national/regional programmes as well as in the priorities of the national IPA III and NDICI financial envelopes. Embedding EUSDR priorities into the programmes of these countries is not limited to the Interreg programmes, which participated alongside the other Member States, but also directly

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<sup>7</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. SWD(2022) 397 final; p. 9. [Online](#).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> It may be considered to rename the Embedding week, in order to use a simpler and less technical term.

<sup>10</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. SWD(2022) 397 final; p. 9. [Online](#).

<sup>11</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe_en)

<sup>12</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. SWD(2022) 397 final; p. 10. [Online](#).

managed programmes, such as Horizon Europe, Life+, CEF, etc. Therefore, close coordination is needed between the concerned EUSDR NCs and National IPA III Coordinators/External Assistance Coordinators for sustainable and balanced regional development that includes the EUSDR objectives and actions.

In the implementation phase it will be crucial to further follow up on the outcomes via national level as well on the side of EU funds. EC wise the IPA III and NDICI funds have a comprehensive picture and can provide information and guidance, especially needed in the implementation phase of the embedding exercise.

The Article 63 (4) of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) that enables that „all or part of an operation may be implemented outside of a Member State, including outside the Union, provided that the operation contributes to the objectives of the programme”<sup>13</sup>, is an important tool for implementation of EUSDR relevant topics and also provides room for further strengthening joint implementation efforts on the overall EUSDR level. By this, the EUSDR also contributes to the EU enlargement and integration process as a regional cooperation tool.

The practical implications of Article 63 (4) should be further analysed and discussed. The EUSDR managing and programming authorities Networks (ERDF/CF, IPA/NDICI, ESF) would provide a good platform to follow up strategic and technical discussions, together with the respective programmes.

Also, the 4<sup>th</sup> Report on implementation of EU MRS confirms further need of coordinative and communication efforts as “a big challenge for EUSAIR and EUSDR is to combine several sources of EU funding (Cohesion Policy Funds, IPA III, NDICI and IPARD42 III) which work according to different regulations, methodologies, timing, and with different structures. MRS key implementers should increase efforts to make these different worlds communicate more with each other and develop more synergies for the implementation of macro-regional actions and projects.”<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, support and strategic guidance by EC/DG REGIO as well as active involvement of EC/DG NEAR would be highly beneficial in terms of guidance, information and monitoring.

The support and expertise of DG NEAR has been especially relevant for non-EU countries in terms of IPA III and NDICI funds. The Slovenian EUSDR Presidency would like to convey a meeting with both DGs, NCs and/or nominated national experts from the EUSDR non-EU countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Serbia and Ukraine to discuss the possibility of a joint approach and seek solutions (e.g. practical implications of CPR Article 63 (4)).

Further, for the intensification of the coordinative and communication efforts to combine several sources of EU funding (Cohesion Policy Funds, IPA III, NDICI and IPARD III) this issue can be tackled in a twofold approach: on one hand a reach out to national levels of non-EU countries via EUSDR NCs, on the other hand a joint focus discussion with the respective national and EU programmes / funding instruments on the issue.

The need for exchange and the potential for cooperation and coordination between all four macro-regional strategies is one of the priorities of the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency. Slovenia will act as a promoter and facilitator of macro-regional cooperation between all countries and all macro-regional

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<sup>13</sup> REGULATION (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council, p.220. [Online](#).

<sup>14</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. SWD(2022) 397 final; p. 9. [Online](#).

strategies. The joint approach to embedding across MRS with overlapping geographies can potentially bring further added value.

A cross-MRS approach, together with EUSAIR (overlap of three EUSDR non-EU countries BA, ME and RS), could also be considered useful and efficient. The Slovenian EUSDR Presidency will consult with the EUSAIR Presidency and work on a common approach to embedding that could further elaborate on the necessary steps, providing an effective cross-MRS approach as well an intensified cooperation and coordination between the two Strategies. Interact could provide a helpful platform to steer the process, together with both secretariats (DSP, FP) serving as first point of contact towards the respective MRS, in accordance with the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency programme.

The EUSDR Embedding Week 2023 (see chapter 2) will offer an excellent opportunity to link the two previous steps and to present concrete results and further focus on practical implementation steps while fostering a cross-MRS dialogue.

The EUSDR Embedding Week 2023 will contain (at least) one session that will focus on the embedding in non-EU countries, bringing together the national, EUSDR-thematic, EU and programme levels.

The event series will also provide a good platform to jointly look at the needs, present good case examples and look towards concrete needs on monitoring and evaluation of the embedding process.

#### 4. Cross-MRS cooperation in EUSDR Embedding: example of Slovenia

Slovenia is in the unique position of participating in three macro-regional strategies<sup>15</sup>, which can be seen not only as an opportunity but also as a big responsibility for the programming authorities. Good cooperation and information flow between the managing authority and all macro-regional stakeholders in the country is therefore essential. The key challenge in preparation of the Partnership Agreement was a comprehensive and harmonised list of priorities from all three macro-regional strategies that would be embedded in the Slovenian Programme. Simply summing up all 80+ priorities from the the EUSDR and the other two strategies would not have been an efficient approach. Consequently the national coordination of the three MRS in consultation with implementing bodies (line ministries) elaborated a harmonised list of 19 macro-regional priorities, which were relevant for all three MRS that Slovenia participates in, and were added to the first draft of the Slovenian Partnership Agreement.

A basis for good cooperation and consultation of the embedding process in Slovenia are annual **Financial Dialogues**, running since 2017. These events aim at a dialogue between the Slovenian authorities for programming the European Structural and Investment Funds (ERDF/CF managing authorities, implementing bodies and members of TF and MC of ETC programmes) and the key implementers of macro-regional strategies in Slovenia (National Coordinator of MRS, Priority Area Coordinators, Steering Group members, partner institutions and project implementers). The main task of the Financial Dialogues is to facilitate the identification of funding sources for the implementation of macro-regional priorities.

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<sup>15</sup> EU Strategy for the Danube Region, EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region and EU Strategy for the Alpine Region.

In particular the main activities carried out during the Financial Dialogues to exchange of information and best practices in embedding between all macro-regional strategies were structured as:

- Assisting MRS Steering Group members in mapping existing funding sources (programmes, financial instruments, other funding sources)
- Creating a common understanding on how to practically link the MRS priorities with Cohesion Policy Funds and IPA programmes.
- Establishing contacts with relevant managing authorities to explore possibilities for mobilising and aligning of the funding programmes with MRS priorities and establishing exchange of information.
- Facilitating match-making between MRS thematic Coordinators and potential flagship project owners with programme managing authorities.

The approach to embedding in Financial Dialogues was very similar to the embedding approach taken within the EUSDR. After determining a comprehensive list of 19 priorities relevant for all three MRS, a national »embedding tool« was developed, identifying possible financing sources and linking them to relevant objectives within each of the financing sources, in particular those of Cohesion Policy Funds. As a tool to facilitate thematic dimension of embedding, the Steering Group members could ask for individual consultations with relevant MAs. It was also identified that as regards some issues, additional consultations with the European Commission was needed, in particular in cases where some of the activities from interdisciplinary flagship projects might be financed from one source (i.e. ERDF) and/or from other (i.e. EMFAF). Thus, an analysis of four possible scenarios for implementation of embedding was made:

- Top down: financing sources for a particular MRS priority/action are determined on EU level.
- Bottom-up: from local and regional action up to national »mainstream« programmes.
- European Territorial Cooperation (CBC and TN) as the main sources
- Public – private partnerships

Results of the analysis have shown that a top-down approach is by far the most comprehensive and avoids possible gaps in terms of territorial and policy coverage.

## 5. Update on monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the embedding process

As outlined in the Guidance Paper 'From Actions to Funding' published by the Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency in May 2022<sup>16</sup>, a monitoring of the embedding process is needed in order to depict how EU funds and funding programmes contribute to the achievement of the EUSDR's objectives. Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the embedding process allows to identify good practice examples, to

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<sup>16</sup> Guidance Paper for Embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes. FROM ACTIONS TO FUNDING. May 2022. [Online](#).



show bottlenecks in the translation of the EUSDR and its Actions into EU funded programmes (EU and non-EU) and can show where further work may be necessary to get better results in the implementation of the Strategy as well as the funding programmes.

As of early 2023, the **programming process**, which was guided by the European Commission, is finalised. According to the *Common Provisions Regulation*<sup>17</sup>, each programme shall take into account macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where Member States and regions participate in such strategies. Moreover, the related types of actions and their expected contribution to each specific objective shall be set out. In the case of ERDF/CF and Interreg programmes, the EC/DG REGIO (Geographical Units) screened all (draft) operational programmes regarding these legal requirements and intervened with the respective authorities if MRS were not sufficiently embedded. DG REGIO further confirmed to follow the call from the Council conclusions from 12/2020 to report on the embedding process.

The Slovenian EUSDR Presidency emphasises the crucial role of the EC/DG REGIO (Geographical Units) as central information hub and follows the request raised by several EUSDR member states and EUSDR Priority Areas regarding a comprehensive report of the outcomes of the embedding process by the EC.

In its 4<sup>th</sup> Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies<sup>18</sup>, the EC highlighted that “the process to align 2021-2027 national/regional EU funding programmes with relevant MRS priorities (embedding) was stepped up in all four MRS”. Furthermore, regarding directly managed EU programmes, the report points out that “[a]s a result of the dialogue within the Commission, references to MRS are included in some of the work programmes of the directly managed programmes and there are cases of calls specifically targeting MRS. The 2021-2024 work programme for the LIFE programme encourages the use of the MRS for Strategic Integrated Projects at transnational scale and for the coordinated implementation of Strategic Nature Projects. In 2021 the LIFE sub-programme “Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation” launched a first call for projects targeting the MRS. Two Horizon Europe work programmes 2021-2022 (“Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area” and “Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment”) refer to the MRS and to macro-regional thematic networks”.

From the EUSDR’s point of view, the outcomes of the programming phase have been summarised in ANNEX I to the EUSDR Implementation Report 2020-2021<sup>19</sup>, published by the DSP and endorsed by the EUSDR National Coordinators. The report gives an overview of relevant funding sources and available budget for EUSDR relevant objectives, shows examples of national/regional embedding efforts including first results, as reported by the EUSDR NCs, and provides an overview of embedding activities at thematic level, as reported by the EUSDR PACs. In addition, the intense efforts towards embedding the EUSDR into national and regional EU-funded programmes at Strategy level are illustrated in the EUSDR Implementation Report 2020-2021. The Implementation Report provides an overview of the main tools and processes established, such as the shortlist of strategic topics, the EUSDR Embedding

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<sup>17</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy. [Online](#).

<sup>18</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. SWD(2022) 397 final. [Online](#).

<sup>19</sup> EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) Implementation Report 2020-2021. [Online](#).

Tool or the establishment of managing/programming authorities' networks. More detailed information and all mentioned documents and tools can be found on the EUSDR Website<sup>20</sup>.

Analysing the results of the programming phase as part of an evaluation or targeted analysis could bring further insights and recommendations for improving the access to funding in a medium- and long-term perspective. Also, an analysis on cross-MRS level as well as exchange of best practice between the four MRS could help in this respect. To facilitate this process, the role of the four TRIO-Presidencies or programmes such as Interact or ESPON should be further explored<sup>21</sup>.

With the programming phase being finalised, the embedding process enters the **implementation phase**, where it is necessary to monitor the calls and projects with relevance for the Strategy and their impact in the EUSDR context.

The DSP is requested to continue to provide screening of respective calls, via EuroAccess, for monitoring purposes and for efficient and targeted dissemination of funding and call information to EUSDR stakeholders. This service includes a review of EU-Funding Programmes and related Working Programmes with special focus on the relevance for the EUSDR as well as a regular check of websites of different EU-Funding Programmes in order to identify calls with relevance for the EUSDR. Further, tailor-made overviews of EUSDR relevant calls are provided, depicting details such as the region, thematic focus, budget and, where applicable, specific selection criteria for stimulating EUSDR-relevant operations (e.g. extra points for projects with EUSDR relevance<sup>22</sup>).

The monitoring of projects can partially be covered by the EUSDR monitoring system, where PACs biennially report on ongoing projects in their respective PA, including funding sources and budget. As already outlined in the Guidance Paper 'From Actions to Funding' by the Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency<sup>23</sup>, PACs can only report on projects they are aware of/connected to. Hence, it will not provide the full picture, but an overview of the most relevant projects for the EUSDR. Also, if relevant, PACs can share further information on their embedding activities, main challenges in relation to funding and good practice examples.

As an additional source of information for monitoring the programming and implementation phases, the different **networks with/of programme-level stakeholders** (MAs, programming authorities, intermediate bodies etc.) can be utilised:

Based on the survey done during the Slovakian EUSDR Presidency in 2021<sup>24</sup>, it could be beneficial to conduct a short online survey among managing/programming authorities, in order to collect good practice examples of how the EUSDR is embedded into the final programmes as well as to get an outlook on what is being planned in the implementation phase, which can also be used for the preparation of the *EUSDR Embedding Week 2023*. Furthermore, different options of making use of the

<sup>20</sup> <https://danube-region.eu/projects-and-funding/embedding-2021-2027/>

<sup>21</sup> See also: 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. SWD(2022) 397 final. [Online](#).

<sup>22</sup> Guidance Paper for Embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes. FROM ACTIONS TO FUNDING. May 2022; p.8 [Online](#).

<sup>23</sup> Guidance Paper for Embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes. FROM ACTIONS TO FUNDING. May 2022. [Online](#).

<sup>24</sup> Surveys among the managing authorities (MAs), programming authorities and National Coordinators (NCs): [https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EUSDR-embedding\\_survey-ERDF-and-CF\\_01.2022\\_Priorities-and-EUSDR\\_draft\\_EUSDR-website.xlsx](https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EUSDR-embedding_survey-ERDF-and-CF_01.2022_Priorities-and-EUSDR_draft_EUSDR-website.xlsx)

project assessment and/or monitoring systems of managing/programming authorities should be further discussed and explored.

Possibilities of monitoring projects via programme/managing authorities include, for instance, identifying and labelling of projects having EUSDR impact or awarding extra points in the evaluation process for EUSDR relevant projects. Further information on monitoring of projects via programme/managing authorities can be found in the Guidance Paper 'From Actions to Funding' by the UA EUSDR PCY<sup>25</sup> or in the consolidated paper on 'Monitoring of Embedding the EUSDR into EU Funds and Funding Programmes 2021-2027' published by the DSP<sup>26</sup>.

Once the implementation phase has progressed further, the DSP is requested to analyse relevant information on (EU) funding for the EUSDR (collected e.g. via EuroAccess, EUSDR monitoring system, MA Networks as well as, where available, monitoring data and evaluations at programme level) and summarise it in a respective report.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

The Danube Region Strategy and all its relevant stakeholders have taken comprehensive and targeted steps to align and jointly address its embedding needs at all levels. This was accomplished by the streamlined update of the EUSDR Action Plan as well as within the programming frameworks through a participatory and systematic approach to revision and programming (elaborated tools<sup>27</sup>). Hence, in the embedding process of the EUSDR, significant goals have already been achieved. This was also noted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies.<sup>28</sup> The provisions on macro-regional strategies in the EU regulations for the period 2021-2027 are transparent and coherent.

Furthermore, in terms of embedding EUSDR topics into programme priorities, specific guidance/assistance has been provided that included bottom-up initiated activities by EUSDR PAs for the implementation of the EUSDR so that programmes can better understand the EUSDR or EUSDR-related intervention logic (shortlisted strategic topics and five thematic areas prioritised for embedding)<sup>29</sup>.

The general difficulties mentioned above, which could be overcome in systematic embedding, require further in-depth development, which will be taken up and continued by the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency. For this purpose, the cross-PA and cross-MRS embedding is to be deepened on the implementation level with explicit consideration of non-EU countries. Of particular relevance in the processing of the embedding endeavours is also the use of monitoring and evaluation activities for further determining programme contributions to the EUSDR.

As MAs/programming authorities rely on bottom-up initiated actions with macro-regional relevance to contribute to the EUSDR, potentially interested national or regional/local actors will be well informed and involved in the already existing EUSDR MA/programming authorities Networks

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<sup>25</sup> Guidance Paper for Embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes. FROM ACTIONS TO FUNDING. May 2022. [Online](#).

<sup>26</sup> Paper on Monitoring of Embedding the EUSDR into EU Funds and Funding Programmes 2021-2027. October 2021. [Online](#).

<sup>27</sup> <https://danube-region.eu/projects-and-funding/embedding-2021-2027/>

<sup>28</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. SWD(2022) 397 final. [Online](#); p.8.

<sup>29</sup> <https://danube-region.eu/projects-and-funding/embedding-2021-2027/>

(ERDF&CF, IPA&NDICI, ESF). The Networks will also further increase the awareness raising on the EUSDR among relevant stakeholders.

The Slovenian EUSDR Presidency will ask the DSP, on behalf of the EUSDR, to continue with the organisation of the EUSDR Embedding Week in an online format.

*Envisaged activities under the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency*

	<b>Envisaged activity</b>	<b>Estimated calendar*</b>
<b>1</b>	EUSDR MA/programming authorities Networks meeting (ERDF&CF and IPA&NDICI)	10 May 2023
<b>2</b>	Survey among managing authorities (MAs), programming authorities and programmes from EUSDR MA/programming authorities Networks	May 2023
<b>3</b>	Joint EUSAIR and EUSDR discussion on cross-MRS planning and improving the alignment of the existing EU funding instruments and the EU investment plans with macro-regional priorities, together with DG REGIO and DG NEAR	May 2023
<b>4</b>	Organisation of the EUSDR Embedding Week 2023 (online)	12-16 June 2023

\* Preliminary proposal; changes and adjustments are possible.