

ENHANCING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE DANUBE BASIN: STRONGER TOGETHER

EUSDR specific event on water, emergency response and disaster risk management

Background

In recent years, the Danube Region has witnessed a series of unforeseen catastrophic events caused by severe floods, storms and fires. Therefore, effective, cooperative and fast emergency planning and response is vital. A lack of coordination and response to disasters can have serious and long-lasting impacts on a community and can also lead to more death tolls. Disaster management can help to enhance the ability of emergency responders to save lives. Appropriate infrastructure and training guarantee for the local communities to better deal with disasters in the future.

This event is strategically aligned with the core principles of EU macro-regional strategies (MRS), which emphasise the importance of cooperation, coordination, multi-level governance, and partnership across sectors and national borders.

The primary objectives of this event, taking place under the auspices of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian EUSDR Presidency, are to advance the dissemination of EUSDR Priority Area-5 (Environmental risks) and Priority Area 10 (Institutional capacity and cooperation) activities, particularly in the domains of water management, emergency response and disaster management, and to foster stronger engagement and involvement of EU candidate countries within the Danube region. By enhancing communication, consultation, and coordination mechanisms, the meeting seeks to strengthen existing cooperation frameworks and establish new networks that address shared challenges, thus contributing to the overall resilience and sustainability of the Danube Region.

Objectives and main goals:

Strengthening Regional Cooperation

- Foster cross-border collaboration in environmental risk management, disaster response, and institutional capacity building.
- Enhance the involvement of EU candidate countries in EUSDR PA 5 and PA 10 activities, with the active participation of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian EUSDR Presidency (BA PRESIDENCY).

Showcasing EUSDR PA 5 and EUSDR PA 10 Achievements

- Present key PA 5 project results in flood risk management, disaster resilience, and climate adaptation.
- Highlight PA10 initiatives on governance, institutional cooperation, and civil protection coordination.
- Share best practices and innovative approaches to preparedness and response.

Integrating EU Candidate Countries

- Address challenges in water management, disaster preparedness, and emergency response.
- Align regional strategies with European policies to support the EU enlargement process.

Water, Disaster Risk, and Institutional Capacity Building

- Promote transboundary cooperation in drought, flood risk, and crisis response.
- Advance nature-based solutions, innovative prevention methods, and civil protection frameworks.

Improving Coordination and Communication

- Strengthen engagement with national agencies, Steering Group members, and international partners.
- Explore funding opportunities and project collaborations supporting PA 5 and PA 10 objectives.

Key Activities:

Knowledge Cafés Forum: Interactive sessions to engage stakeholders in identifying gaps, challenges, and best practices in environmental risk and disaster management. Given the distinct approaches of water management (prevention-oriented) and disaster risk management (crisis-oriented), discussions may run in parallel to ensure focused contributions.

Expected Outcomes:

- Strengthened cooperation mechanisms and regional networks
- Enhanced integration of EU candidate countries into EUSDR PA 5 and EUSDR PA 10 initiatives, fostering cross-border partnerships
- A concrete action plan to improve the participation of EU candidate countries in macro-regional strategies
- Identification of key priorities and a tentative project list for future collaboration

This consultation meeting represents a significant opportunity to solidify cooperation, share knowledge, and coordinate actions across the Danube region, ensuring a more resilient and integrated approach to manage environmental risks including disaster management.

Location: Mostar

Hotel Mostar

Address: Kneza Domagoja bb, 88000

Date: 3rd April 2025

Target groups: Responsible Ministries, Water Management Authorities, Disaster Management and Emergency Response, First responder organizations, institutions in charge of civil protection, Climate Adaptation and Environmental Protection, Local environmental NGOs focusing on climate adaptation, Academic and Research Institutions, Civil Society and NGOs, Agricultural Sector, Urban Planning and Development, Emergency healthcare sector, Private Sector.

Organisers:

The EUSDR PA 5 Hungarian co-coordination, as the main technical coordinator, in collaboration with the Bosnian and Herzegovinian EUSDR Presidency, the Republic of Croatia, and the EUSDR PA 10 Austrian co-coordination, with support of the Danube Strategy Point (DSP).

Draft Agenda
ENHANCING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE DANUBE BASIN:
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EUSDR Cross-PA event on water, emergency response and disaster risk management
3 April 2025, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Timeframe	Topic	Details	Presenters/Contributors (tbc)
09.00 CET	Welcome coffee and registration		
09.30 – 10.30	Welcome remarks and the general framework	BA EUSDR Presidency and other BA institution(s), state and local	Midhat DŽEMIĆ Bosnian and Herzegovinian EUSDR Presidency Bakir DAUTBAŠIĆ , Secretary of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina Predrag ČOVIĆ , President of the Government of West- Herzegovina Canton Marija BUHAČ , President of the Government of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton
		Representative from Republic of Croatia	Stella ARNERI , Croatian EUSDR National Coordinator
		EC DG REGIO	Johan MAGNUSSON , European Commission, DG REGIO
		EC DG ECHO	N.N., European Commission, DG ECHO
		Enhancing EUSDR Engagement: Pathway to cooperation opportunities in the Danube Region	Robert LICHTNER , Danube Strategy Point, EUSDR
10.30 – 11.15	Objectives and Introductions	Introduction of EUSDR PA 5 and Disaster Management Working Group	László BALATONYI , EUSDR PA5 HU PAC Zsolt KELEMEN , EUSDR PA5 DMWG
		Introduction of EUSDR PA10 and the Cross-Border Emergency Health Care Task Force	Andreea PRASACU , EUSDR PA 10 AT PAC
11.15 – 11.30	Sustainable management of transboundary water resources	The regional perspective from the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans	Marv BARBULLUSHI , Regional Cooperation Council
11.30 – 11.45		Key outcomes and possible follow-up steps of the joint session between the ICPDR and EUSDR	Birgit VOGEL , International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
11.45 – 12.15	Regional and cross-border cooperation on the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia	Presentation of cooperation initiatives focusing on disaster risk management perspectives	Davor POLLAK and Iris BOSTJANČIĆ , Croatian Geological Survey

Implemented within the DRP-PAC-PA5 & PA10 project, co-financed by European Union Funds (ERDF) and Partner states and institutions.

12.00 – 12.30	Youth involvement	The Role of Youth Engagement for a Sustainable Future	Sára MOLNÁR , EUSDR DYC N.N., Croatian Educational Water Program for Young
12.30 – 13:30	Lunch break		
	Two parallel Knowledge Cafés Aiming to engage stakeholders in identifying challenges, gaps, and best practices. Given the prevention-focused approach of water management and the crisis-oriented nature of disaster risk management, parallel sessions ensure more targeted discussions.		
13.30 – 16.00	Water management		
	1) Individual introductions 2) Active involvement in EUSDR PA 5 Steering Group 3) Expert input 4) Discussions related to Water management Potential topics: Water and Flood Management System (BA & HR), Institutional Gaps, Bilateral Cooperation (BA & HR), Regional Wastewater System, Flood Risk Reduction, Nature-Based Solutions, Flood Forecasting, Danube HIS, Financing Opportunities, Public Awareness & Local Involvement.	Moderator: László BALATONYI , EUSDR PA5 HU PAC Speakers: Dragan ZELJKO , Executive Secretary International Sava River Basin Commission	
13.30 – 16.00	Emergency and disaster risk management		
	1) Individual introductions 2) Involvement in DMWG 3) Expert input 4) Discussions related to Emergency and disaster risk management: Disaster response and disaster preparedness Potential topics: Emergency Response System (BA), Disaster Management (HR & BA), Institutional Gaps (BA), Bilateral & Trilateral Cooperation (HR, BA), Cross-Border Disaster Risk Management (HR, BA), First Responder Cooperation (Healthacross, Heal Now), Disaster Preparedness (Exercises & Trainings, Croatia & BA, Magnitude (tbc)), Governmental & NGO Collaboration (Disaster Response), Financing Opportunities (HR, BA)	Moderator: Andreea PRASACU , EUSDR PA 10 AT Speakers: Danko BIONDIĆ , Head of the Development and Water Management Planning Sector Croatia Lejla ŠUMAN , AIMS Project Julia SCHÄFER , Magnitude Project Branimir ARAPOVIĆ , GRECALE Project Zsolt KELEMAN , PA5 Disaster Management Working Group	
16.00 – 16.10	Summary of the results and next steps	Introduction of results and the main points	Andreea PRASACU , EUSDR PA 10 AT László BALATONYI , EUSDR PA 5 HU PAC
16.10 – 16.20	Closing		László BALATONYI , EUSDR PA 5 HU PAC Midhat DŽEMIĆ , Bosnian and Herzegovinian EUSDR Presidency