

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUSDR

Activity 5.2

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## The EUSDR Strategy

EU Macro-Regional strategies are offering an approach for resolving emerging problems and challenges that exists in certain functional areas and that cannot be solved without the cooperation between countries, regions or municipalities. There are four Macro-Regional strategies: EUSDR, EUSAIR, EUSALP and EUSBSR.



EU Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR) was adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in 2011.

The area covered by the Strategy is mainly the basin of the Danube River. It stretches from the Black Forest (Germany) to the

Black Sea (Romania-Moldova-Ukraine) and is home to around 115 million inhabitants. Involving 14 countries, it is the largest and most diverse macro-regional strategy: nine EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, parts of Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), three Accession Countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia) and two Neighbouring Countries (Moldova, parts of Ukraine). It is among the most heterogenous regions in Europe, from unbalanced economic development through intra-regional disparity when it comes to connectivity and accessibility to the vast natural, cultural (both material and immaterial), and ethnic heritage diversity. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube_en)



Picture 1. EUSDR participating Countries<sup>2</sup>

The main challenge of the Strategy is 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.*<sup>3</sup>

As such, Danube Region Strategy addresses a wide range of issues; these are divided among 4 pillars and 12 priority areas<sup>4</sup>:

PILARS	PRIORITY AREAS
<b>Connecting the Region</b>	Waterways Mobility
	Rail-Road-Air Mobility
	Sustainable Energy
	Culture & Tourism
<b>Protecting the Environment</b>	Water Quality

<sup>2</sup> Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube_en)  
<sup>3</sup> [https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EUSDR\\_Consolidated-Input-Documents\\_AP-Revision\\_2019.pdf](https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EUSDR_Consolidated-Input-Documents_AP-Revision_2019.pdf)  
<sup>4</sup> <https://danube-region.eu/about/priority-areas/>

	Environmental Risks
	Biodiversity, Landscapes and Air & Soil Quality
<b>Building Prosperity</b>	Knowledge Society
	Competitiveness of Enterprises
	People & Skills
<b>Strengthening the Region</b>	Institutional Capacity & Cooperation
	Security



Picture 2. EUSDR Pillars and Priority Areas

## EUSDR Governance

The Governance of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region consists of the High-Level Group on macro-regional strategies, the National Coordinators, the TRIO Presidency, the Presidency, the Priority Area Coordinators, the Steering Groups, the Working Groups, the European Commission and the Danube Strategy Point in implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

The High-Level Group (HLG) on macro-regional strategies (MRS) advises the European Commission (EC) on the coordination and monitoring of macro-regional strategies. It is made up of official representatives from all EU Member States and the non-EU states participating in the MRS.

The National Coordinators (NCs) are the focal point on the national level and they form the decision-making body of the Strategy. They are the core strategic decision-makers within the governance structure of the EUSDR. They also have a strategic coordination function of the Strategy within their state.

The TRIO Presidency include regular coordination between the incumbent Presidency, the past and the future Presidency. The TRIO Presidency has a clear supportive role for the incumbent Presidency. It is done to secure coherency, ensuring strategic stability and greater continuity of the work between Presidency cycles.

The Presidency is done on a rotation principle and is taken over by an EUSDR participating state for a one-year period. The Presidency via rotation principle follows the alphabetical order of the participating states with their official English name.

The Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) coordinate twelve Priority Areas (PAs) that represent the Danube Strategy's fields of action. The twelve PAs are grouped into four Pillars. The PAs represent the most important and vital components of the Strategy. PACs and the SG members represent the expertise in the respective sector and drive forward the overall process, identifying key sectors for action and adopting the most suitable goals to implement actions. Each Priority Area is managed by two or more PACs coming from different Danube Region states. Each participating state should be authorized as Coordinator of a Priority Area, if willing and able to do so.

The Steering Groups (SG) are the central executive and decision-making bodies at PA level regarding objectives, formats and emphases of cooperation and future developments. SG members are “the expert drivers of the day-to-day implementation”, who decide on the joint work within the PA together with the PACs and who provide advice and assistance.



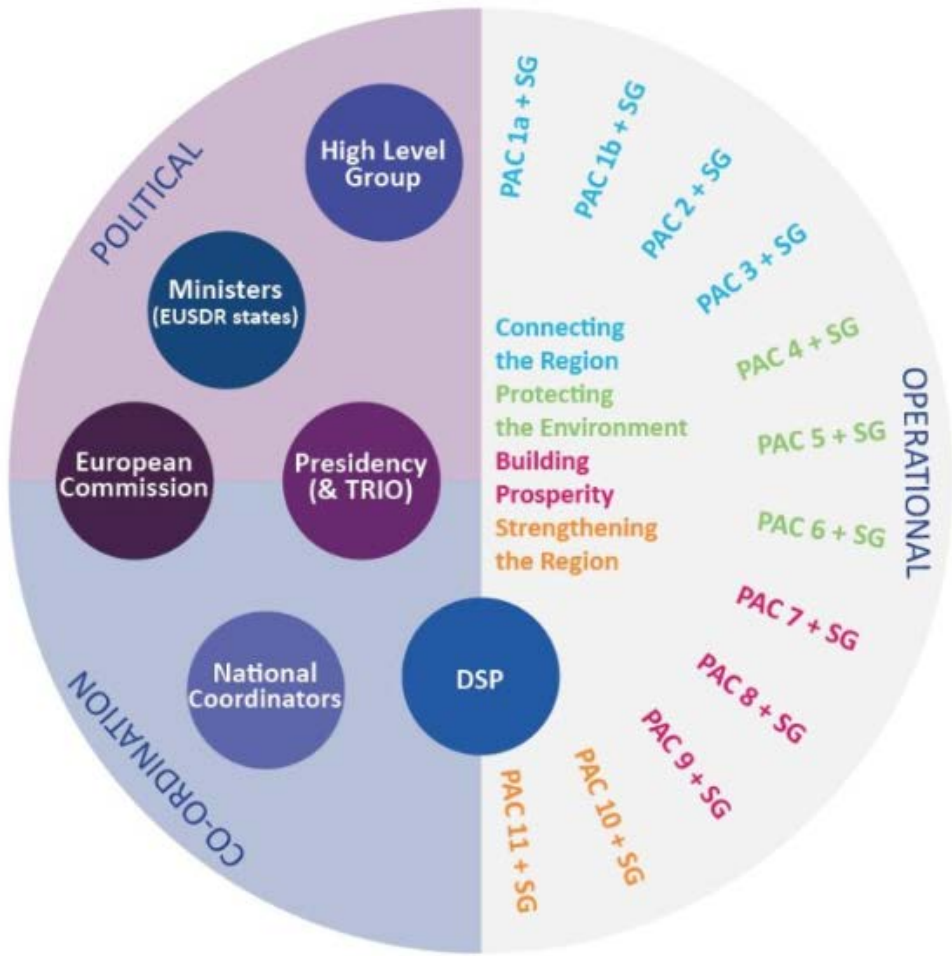


IMAGE SOURCE: ILLUSTRATION BY THE DANUBE STRATEGY POINT, AUGUST 2020

Picture 3. EUSDR Governance

## The EUSDR Strategy matching with SUSPORT project

The EUSDR addresses a wide range of issues in the region divided among 4 pillars and 12 priority areas, which build the backbone of the Strategy's structure. To address the issues and propose solutions, Strategy propose several specific objectives that cover the wide range of actions, strategic projects and processes suggested by the Pas.

The specific objective of EUSDR Pillar 1: Connecting the Danube Region have been defined in three parts<sup>5</sup>:

### **Policy Objective: Smarter Europe**

- Improving renewable energy production
- Increasing energy efficiency
- Enforcing sustainable and smart tourism
- Promoting the regions culture and sustain cultural heritage
- Enhancing ICT connectivity

### **Policy Objective: More Connected Europe**

- Improving transport networks
- Improving maintenance of inland waterways and navigation
- Stimulating sustainable mobility

### **Policy Objective: Greener, low Carbon Europe**

- Enhancing energy efficiency in SME
- Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> by decarbonisation of transport and alternative fuels
- Increasing sustainable energy sources like biomass, solar energy, geothermal, hydro and wind power
- Retrofitting and energy management of existing multifamily housing and public buildings

Transport is one of the main causes of climate change in the world – and the trends of greenhouse gas emission of the transport sector are unfavourable in the Danube Region, due to the transit role of the Region and the increasing dominance of the diesel-fuelled road transportation.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EUSDR\\_Consolidated-Input-Documents\\_AP-Revision\\_2019.pdf](https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EUSDR_Consolidated-Input-Documents_AP-Revision_2019.pdf)

The Rail-Road-Air Mobility (PA1b) of Pillar 1 works toward the following objectives:

**ACTION 1:** To bring to completion the TEN-T (rail and road) core network crossing the Danube Region, overcoming the difficulties and the bottlenecks, and taking into account environmental, economic and political challenges, particularly in the cross-border sections.

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**ACTION 7:** To develop further Intelligent Traffic Systems by using environmental friendly technologies, especially in urban regions.

**SUSPORT project has been fairly defined as EUSDR Strategy-coherent** as visible from defined actions. **SUSPORT project is enhancing environmentally friendly transports chains** providing a contribution on the overall knowledge on **improving the environmental sustainability and energy efficiency** in ports in the Programme area by improving cooperation of key stakeholders – institutions and long-term management activities in this area of work on both sides of the Adriatic Sea.

SUSPORT project partners performed **Territorial Needs Assessment analysis** that provides an **overview of the actions that can be carried out to improve environmental sustainability and the energy efficiency** of port operations in the Program Area. After that, **Best Practice analysis have been carried out to encourage exchange of information and improve cooperation** among partners and other stakeholders. Based on those results, Action Plans and concrete Pilot Actions related to environmental sustainability and energy efficiency of all ports generating freight transport in the Programme Area, as a powerful tool to enhance the ports' overall environmental performance at cross-border level, improving their role as green gateways and corridor roots for the transport of goods have been carried out. In this context, **ports tested several kinds of pilot actions** as follows, ensuring a consistent exchange of experiences and expertise:

- replacement of the existing lightning system with LED light bulbs
- installation of photovoltaic and solar thermal systems
- implementation of e-mobility measures
- improvement of the environmental performance of port buildings
- installations of sensors and stations to monitor noise, air and water quality
- pre-investment studies for on-shore power supply

The main Italian and Croatian ports in the Adriatic and Ionian Region were able both to lower the externalities of ports with the implementation of pilot action and to **strengthen the transnational institutional cooperation thanks to the adoption of a memorandum of understanding** among the

project partners, extended also to the Port of Koper, with the aim of strengthening the transnational institutional cooperation **for enhancing port environmental sustainability and energy efficiency.**

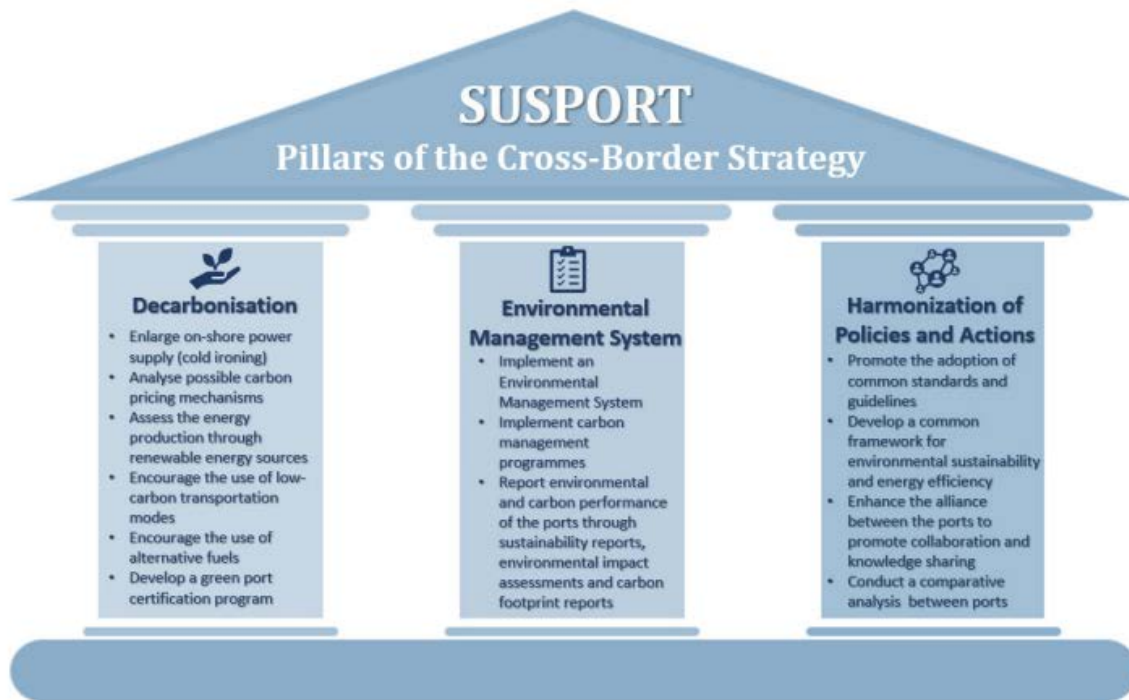
By design, macro-regional strategies (MRS) such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) do not have their own funding. Successful implementation of a Strategy therefore depends on the one hand directly on its absorption and generation of EU, national, regional and other public and private funds. 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. **To streamline this process, the *EUSDR Embedding Week* has been established.**

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. Several best-practice examples of successfully implemented projects were showcased and ideas for future projects and initiatives were discussed.<sup>6</sup>

As EUSDR Embedding Week has shown as successful tool, it is expected it will continue in the future. Since **SUSPORT partners have great experience in the matters addressed by the EUSDR strategy Pillar 1, it may be a good idea to use SUSPORT as a best-practice example in the future Embedding Weeks, especially the Cross-border Strategy of SUSPORT project.** This CB Strategy is highlighting the important needs to improve environmental sustainability and energy efficiency in ports and, as highlighted in previous chapters, in the EUSDR area:

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<sup>6</sup> [https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Guidance-Paper\\_EUSDR-embedding-process\\_04.2023\\_final.pdf](https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Guidance-Paper_EUSDR-embedding-process_04.2023_final.pdf)



Picture 4. SUSPORT Cross-border Strategy

**These pillars of the SUSPORT cross-border strategy can be considered as points of reference in the strategic definition process within national and transnational organizations and also as hints for the development of future Projects in the field of environmental sustainability of the Danube region.**

## SUSPORT policy recommendations for EUSDR

SUSPORT, according to its Project's experience and the cross-border strategy to improve ports environmental sustainability and energy efficiency, gathers some **policy recommendations for the EUSDR Strategy** that can sustain the strategic development process to foster the modernization of transport infrastructures and enhancing cooperation **in the logistic sector, to be presented to the EUSDR Steering Group no.1b on Rail-Road-Air Mobility of Pillar 1: Connecting the Region.**

With the main objective to **enhance logistic infrastructures environmental sustainability and energy efficiency**, the following policy recommendations have been identified and represent the high-level strategical heritage left by SUSPORT Project:

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION N°1: SUPPORTING AN INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE**

There is a need to sustain an **integrated governance**, that **enables a factual sharing of best practices**, analysing the situation, and developing action plans in the field of environmental sustainability and energy efficiency, to overcome the weak coordination and communication of all stakeholders, both in increasing competences at the local level and mutual learning among ports, inland terminal and other logistic infrastructure of different countries, and joint medium and long-term planning.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION N°2: REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS**

There is a need to sustain the objective of significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving climate neutrality by **introducing more ambitious policies aimed at reducing dependence on fossil fuels** and in synergy with the commitment to eliminate pollution. The activities planned and included in the action plan with this objective contribute to the fight against climate change through the implementation of green interventions allowing to guide the ports, inland terminal and other logistic infrastructure, as part of the overall logistic chain, towards that ecological transition that will lead to a zero-emission system.

Among the main initiatives regarding the related policy, the followings can be highlighted: the transition to new technologies and alternative fuels with low or zero "carbon footprint", the promotion of sustainable transport methods within the port such as a port-shuttle system or hydrogen powered trucks to transfer containers in the port area, the introduction of carbon capture and storage, etc.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION N°3: FOCUSING ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY & PROMOTING THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY**

Great attention, nowadays, has to be paid for taking successfully energy optimization related measures aimed at improving energy efficiency and promoting the use of renewable energy. These

measures are involving works, facilities, structures, and actions as a result of **investments made with the aim of improving energy efficiency and produce energy from renewable sources.**

Among the main initiatives regarding the related policy, the followings can be highlighted: the transition to new energy-saving lighting systems, solar panels and smart grids, electric and hybrid vehicles, the introduction of on-shore power supply (cold ironing system), photovoltaic systems, and the employment of alternative energy sources such as LNG and biomass, etc.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION N°4: INCENTIVE SCHEMES AND NEW RULES**

Public institutions have an important role to play in engaging actors in the logistic community to be more environmentally friendly and facilitate through initiatives the implementation of best environmental practices and the encouragement of measures aimed at improving energy efficiency and promoting the use of renewable energy. Within this overall framework of **policies**, which aim to **increasing environmental sustainability and energy efficiency** through the introduction of rules, priorities, facilitations, incentive mechanisms etc., the contribution to reducing GHG emissions is potentially high.

Among the main initiatives regarding the related policy, the followings can be highlighted: incentive schemes to support port operators investing in less energy intensive facilities/equipment and/or renewable energy sources, new rules or discounts on berth fees for efficient, low CO<sub>2</sub>eq vessels, etc.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION N°5: TO GENERATE A STRONG POLITICAL COMMITMENT**

One of the major challenges of all macro-regional policies is the **commitment of political stakeholders.**

EUSDR PA1b has 6 major objectives:

- I. Support efficient freight railway services and improved travel times for competitive railway passenger connections between major cities in the Danube Region by 2030.
- II. Support fully functional multi-modal TEN-T Core Network Corridors by 2030.
- III. Support the development of efficient multimodal terminals at sea, river and dry ports in the Danube Region and ensure their connectivity and access through the integration of all modes of transport and efficient logistics services by 2030.
- IV. Support improvement of the regional air connectivity and the implementation of the Single European Sky initiative.
- V. Facilitate the improvement of secondary and tertiary roads in the Danube Region.

VI. Support safe and sustainable transport and mobility in the Danube Region.

One of the targets is to **support removal of cross-border administrative, operational and technical barriers as well as supporting ITS deployment as well as research and innovation in the field of transport**. This is a hard goal to reach since each country has its own policy and limitations. As such, **Strategy needs to generate a political discussion with political commitment**.