

The European Commission endorsed the final version of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), along with the accompanying Action Plan, on 8 December 2010. The Council of the European Union formally adopted the Strategy on 24 June 2011.

14 Danube Region countries took part in the EUSDR drafting process, 9 out of them are now members of the European Union (FR Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, R. Bulgaria, Romania, R. Slovenia, R. Croatia), while 5 are non-EU members (R. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine, R. Moldova). The Strategy is a platform for cooperation and acceptance of the EU acquis on the part of the candidate countries. The region covered by the EUSDR has a population of more than 115 million.

Web-presentation of the Strategy may be found at www.danube-region.eu.

The Danube Strategy is based on the **three basic thematic pillars**:

- a) connectivity and communications – transport, navigation, related infrastructure and energy;
- b) environmental protection, risk prevention (protection against floods in the first place) and sustainable use of natural resources;
- c) social, economic and institutional development, strengthening regional cooperation.

The Strategy defines **11 priority areas** within which projects will be implemented. Each priority area is managed by two countries as Priority Area Coordinators (PACs).

Priority area:

Countries:

1) improving mobility and intermodality

Inland navigable waterways:

Austria, Romania

Road, passenger and air transport:

Slovenia, Republic of Serbia

2) supporting sustainable energy development

Hungary, the Czech Republic

3) promoting culture and tourism

R. Bulgaria, Romania

4) water quality standard establishment and maintenance

Hungary, Slovakia

5) risk management in the area of environmental protection

Hungary, Romania

6) preservation of biodiversity, air and soil quality

FR Germany (Bavaria), R. Croatia

7) development of the knowledge society (research, education, information and communication technology)

Slovakia, R. Serbia

8) supporting increased competitiveness of enterprises

FR Germany (Baden-Württemberg), R. Croatia

9) investing in human resources and skills

Austria, R. Moldova

10) enhancement of institutional capacities

Austria, Slovenia

11) boosting security and fight against organized crime

FR Germany, R. Bulgaria

Since the beginning of the EUSDR implementation, a number of very important projects have either been launched or additionally developed. The major projects include the master plans for rehabilitation and maintenance of navigable waterways, creation of environmental protection networks, development of joint methodologies for natural disaster risk assessment and management, as well as the establishment of networks aimed at boosting security on the Danube. Owing to the Strategy, the dialogue in areas of culture, science and research has been improved in the region, as well as cooperation with the existing international organizations

(International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River – ICPDR, the Carpathian Convention). The Danube Financial Dialogue, as one of the successful platforms aimed at forging partnerships and involving monetary institutions in the promotion of regional projects, has also been established.

One of the important areas tangibly contributed by the EUSDR relates to the enlargement process and the neighbourhood policy plans. Thematic cooperation with 5 non-EU countries has been improved, the first European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) with a non-EU country has been established between Hungary and Ukraine, while a new coordination programme for 2015 was established, thus enabling Moldova to take part in the Strategy.

The Republic of Serbia was assigned the role of the Priority Area Coordinator for two fields: area No. 1b – infrastructure: rail, road and air transport (together with Slovenia) and No. 7 – science and knowledge society (together with Slovakia). Serbia has its own representative on each of the Monitoring Committees inherent in the priority areas of the Strategy.

The Fifth Annual Forum of EUSDR was held between 3 and 4 November 2016 in Bratislava. The next one, the Sixth Annual Forum, will be held in Budapest, between 18 and 19 October 2017.

Web-presentation: www.danube-region.eu.

On 24 September 2009, the Government of the Republic of Serbia passed the decision to form a Working Group for cooperation with the EU on the Danube Region. Representatives of the ministries and institutions competent for cooperation with the EU on the Danube Region, representatives of the Executive Council of Vojvodina and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry are members of the Working Group. The Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration used to chair the Working Group.