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EUROPEAN UNION

Danube Transnational Programme



APPLICANTS MANUAL

for EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators

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A stream of cooperation



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FOREWORD

This manual outlines the framework for the implementation of the direct financial support offered by the DTP to the EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators, as defined under Specific Objective 4.2 of the DTP Cooperation Programme. The defined rules are based on the relevant European Regulations and have been harmonised with the other transnational programmes.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Audit Authority
AF	Application Form
CA	Certifying Authority
CP	Cooperation Programme
DTP	Danube Transnational Programme
EC	European Commission
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EUSDR	EU Strategy for Danube Region
GoA	Group of Auditors
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession
JS	Joint Secretariat
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NCP	National Contact Point
NC	National Coordinator of EUSDR
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PA	Priority Area
PAC	Priority Area Coordinator
PP	Project Partner

- PRaG Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU External actions
- SG Steering Group
- SO Specific Objective

GLOSSARY

Applicants Manual

The Applicants Manual is part of the Application Pack intended to provide applicants detailed and specific information about the programme, project requirements, eligibility rules, application and assessment processes, project implementation principles and to guide them through the drafting of the project proposals.

Beneficiary

A beneficiary is an entity receiving EU funds for the implementation of a project.

Co-financing

In general terms, it refers to the situation when there are 2 financing sources for the same project or activity. In the EU programmes environment, usually there are 2 or more sources of financing. In case of Danube Transnational Programme, financing is provided from EU funds (ERDF, IPA II or ENI) and national co-financing: state contribution and/or own sources (can be public or private) of the project participant and/or other contribution (e.g. regional/local/other sources).

Cohesion Policy

Cohesion policy was enshrined in the Treaties with the adoption of the Single European Act (1986). It is built on the assumption that redistribution between richer and poorer regions in Europe is needed in order to balance out the effects of further economic, social and territorial integration.

Control system (centralised/ decentralised)

The Control system is set up by each Partner State in order to carry out verifications at national level with regard to the use of ERDF/ IPA/ ENI funds against established procedures in terms of delivery of products and services according to the approved Application Form, verification of the reality of claimed expenditure, ensuring compliance with the terms of the Commission decision on the programme, compliance with the national and Community rules on eligibility of expenditure, public procurement, state aid, protection of the environment and equal opportunities. The control system may be centralised, i.e. a central body is appointed by the respective country to carry out the control activities, or decentralised, i.e. the controlled project partner appoints its controller (however, in this case, limitations on the selection of the controller may be imposed by the Partner State).

Controller

The Controller is the private or public body or individual designated by the Partner States to carry out control activities with regard to the use of ERDF/ IPA/ENI funds.

Coordination

Coordination is the synchronization and integration of activities, responsibilities, and command and control structures to ensure that resources are used most efficiently in pursuit of the specified objectives.

Durability

Durability of projects outputs and results refers to the long-lasting effect of the project achievements beyond project implementation timeframe.

Eligible costs

Eligible costs are the project-related costs reported by the beneficiaries which are in line with the applicable programme eligibility rules and which are reimbursed from ERDF or IPA II funds.

European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

Effective from 2014 to 2020, the ENI is one of the instruments providing direct support for the European Union's external policies. It will support the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and turn decisions taken on a political level into actions on the ground.

ERDF, IPA and ENI co-financing rate

ERDF, IPA and ENI co-financing rates are the 85 percentage applied to the eligible expenditure of each individual partner resulting in the amount of co-financing to be reimbursed.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The ERDF is one of the five Structural Funds and it is intended to help to reduce imbalances between regions of the Community. The Fund grants financial assistance for development projects in the EU regions. In terms of financial resources, the ERDF is by far the largest of the EU's Structural Funds.

Flat rate

Flat rate is a level of payment that is the same in all cases, calculated as percentage of a certain amount.

Intervention Logic

The intervention logic is the backbone of the project and the programme, demonstrating the link in terms of existing challenge/ need, objectives, expected results and outputs. The project intervention logic will have to show how the intended change will be achieved through planned activities.

Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance II (IPA II) is the means by which the EU supports reforms in the 'enlargement countries' with financial and technical help. Prepared in partnership with the beneficiaries, IPA II sets a new framework for providing pre-accession assistance for the period 2014-2020. For the purpose of this Manual, the acronym IPA is used.

Lead partner (LP)

The Lead Partner is the project partner having full financial responsibility for the entire project and being responsible for the overall coordination of the project, including proper reporting of progress to the Joint Secretariat as also stipulated in the Subsidy Contract.

Macro-regional strategy

A macro-regional strategy means an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the ESI Funds among others, 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 (according to Article 2(31) of the CPR).

Partner States

Partner States are the 14 countries included in the DTP and in the EUSDR.

Priority Area Coordinators (PACs)

Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) drive the day-to-day implementation of the EUSDR, on the basis of the work of the respective Steering Groups, which decide on the joint work within the Priority Area.

Project Partner

Project beneficiary, as referred to in Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013, of EU funds (ERDF, IPA or ENI).

Programme Priorities

The Programme Priorities are the thematic areas around which the programme is structured.

Progress Report

The Progress Report is the report to be submitted by the Lead Partner to the JS at the end of each reporting period outlining performed activities within the period as well as associated eligible expenditure. It documents the progress of the project and serves as reimbursement request.

Real costs

Real costs represent the expenditure actually incurred and paid (as opposed to lump sums or sums resulting from applying flat rates) and supported by invoices and other documents of equivalent probative value.

Reporting period

A reporting period generally covers one year period at the end of which the Lead Partners (Project Partner 1) will have to submit a detailed Progress Report. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the cash flow of the PACs, they can submit interim progress reports, based on a reduced activity report, up to 4 times per year, according to their needs.

State contribution

The state contribution is the national public contribution representing a certain percentage of the eligible expenditure to be secured by the Partner States in accordance with national regulations.

Subsidy Contract

The Subsidy Contract is the contract signed between the MA/JS and the Lead Partner (Project Partner 1) of each project stipulating the provisions to be observed by both parties during the implementation of the project.

Target group

The target group consists of those individuals and/or organisations towards which the project aims are directed and which will therefore be directly or indirectly affected by the project activities and results. Even if target groups may not necessarily receive funds and be directly involved in the project implementation, they may exploit project outcomes for their own benefit. In the case of SO4.2 – Support to PACs, the following target groups shall be considered: the PAs Steering Group members and the PAs stakeholders.

PART 1: DANUBE TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMME

I. General Objectives

The Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) is a financing instrument with a specific scope and an independent decision making body. The DTP supports the policy integration in the Danube area in selected fields under the CPR/ ERDF Regulations. The strategic vision is “policy integration” in specific fields of action below the EU-level (not duplicating efforts in policy integration at the EU-level e.g. TEN-T) and above the national level. Transnational projects should influence national, regional and local policies (policy driver).

In order to achieve a higher degree of territorial integration of the very heterogeneous Danube region, the transnational cooperation programme will act as a policy driver aiming to tackle the common challenges and needs deriving from specific policy fields. Therefore, transnational cooperation is expected to deliver tangible results through the development and practical implementation of policy frameworks, tools and services. To this end, the programme looks to promote concrete pilot investments.

The programme supports the following priorities addressing transnational key challenges and opportunities in the Danube Region:

1. Innovative and socially responsible Danube Region
2. Environment and culture responsible Danube region
3. Better connected and energy responsible Danube region
4. Well governed Danube region

A detailed description of the actions to be funded under priorities 1-3 and 4.1 can be found in the Cooperation Programme.

In addition, in the 2014-2020 programming period, the Programme provides support to projects strengthening the implementation of EU Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR, also Strategy). This support is provided within the framework of Priority 4, Specific Objective 4.2 “Support to the governance and implementation of the EUSDR”. Under this Specific Objective the Programme provides co-financing for the following types of actions:

- Support to Priority Areas Coordinators aimed at increasing the effectiveness of coordination and strategy implementation in each of the Priority Areas of the EUSDR
- Seed Money Facility providing support for preparation of complex strategic transnational projects contributing to the EUSDR, to be further financed by different funding sources existing in the region.

- Establishment and support of the EUSDR Strategy Point aimed at facilitating the information flow between EUSDR actors, as well as strengthening the capacity of the PAC in implementing and communicating the Strategy.

II. EUSDR and Programme support to macro-regional cooperation

Since its adoption in June 2011, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region facilitates cooperation between EU and non-EU Member States in the Danube macro-region tackling common challenges. The Strategy seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region.

The EUSDR is divided into 4 pillars and 12 Priority Areas. The EUSDR defines the examples of targets¹ for each Priority Area. The EUSDR Action Plan defines the actions to be implemented by all priority areas and includes examples of projects for each priority area as well. The EUSDR Action Plan is a rolling document, subject to regular review, as appropriate.

Each Priority Area is managed by at least 2 **Priority Area Coordinators (PACs)**², which are ensuring the implementation of the EUSDR. Their work is transnational, inter-sectorial and inter-institutional. PACs also support the reporting and evaluation of the EUSDR – they identify progress related to the improvements that actions and projects deliver and to achievement of targets. They also regularly provide information/ reports on their work. In doing all their tasks, PACs work together with PA's Steering Groups, which are “the expert drivers of the day-to-day implementation”, providing advice and assistance. Further to that, some Priority Areas created working groups, task forces, advisory bodies around sub-themes and tasks to support the work of the PACs and/or the steering groups.

The **National Coordinators (NCs)** are core strategic body within the governance structure. They have strategic coordination function within their national or regional government. The NCs coordinate and keep an overview of the participation of their country in the implementation of the EUSDR including all 12 Priority Areas. They also promote EUSDR and inform on national/ regional level the relevant stakeholders of key developments, on-going initiatives, including alignment of policies and funding.

The **Danube Strategy Point (DSP)** has been first established in 2015 and then its structure changed in 2018. Its primary role is to support the EUSDR implementation, communication, monitoring and evaluation and interlinking with DTP. Through various activities in those areas, DSP also provides necessary information, feedback and proposals for streamlining the operational and political decision-making processes.

¹ The EUSDR targets are reviewed and revised (if needed) by EUSDR bodies and finally endorsed by High Level Group made up of official representatives of all EU Member States (non-EU partners being invited as appropriate). For EUSDR such process was held in 2011 and a second one is ongoing in 2016.

² List of the current Priority Area Coordinators is provided in Annex I.

For the funding period 2014-2020, the thematic priorities 1-3 and 4.1 of the Danube Transnational Programme have been very much aligned with the objectives of the Strategy to maximise the synergies and leverage effects on other financing sources in the programme areas. The Danube Transnational Programme offers support for the EUSDR implementation, for example by financing projects directly supporting the EUSDR (as per assessment criteria defined jointly by the Programme and the Strategy) and their preparation (Seed Money Facility). In addition, as mentioned above, in this period the Programme provides direct support to the coordination activities of macro-regional cooperation.

III. Programme area

The programme area covers nine Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany with two lands Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and five non-EU Member States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and Ukraine with four provinces: Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankiviska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast, Odessa Oblast), being composed of 69 NUTS2 regions.

Geographically, the DTP area overlaps with the territory addressed by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, comprising also the Danube river basin and the mountainous areas (such as the Carpathians, the Balkans and part of the Alps). It is the most international river basin in the world. The area accounts for one fifth of the EU's territory and it is inhabited by approximately 114 million people. The variety of natural environment, the socio-economic differences and cultural diversity of the various parts of the area may be perceived as major challenges, but actually they represent important opportunities and unexploited potential.



Figure1. Programme area

IV. Legal framework

The Danube Transnational Programme was developed taking into consideration the broad policy framework channelling the development efforts on macro-regional, national and regional levels.

Please note: The relevant documents listed below are provided on the DTP website. The list is not exhaustive.

- *Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme document adopted by the European Commission on 20 August 2015.*
- *Structural Funds Regulations:*
 - Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006
 - Regulation (EU) No. 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006
 - Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal.
- *IPA Regulations:*
 - Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II)
 - Regulation (EU) 447/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA II)
 - REGULATION (EU) No 236/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2014, Common Implementing Regulation for External Actions
- *ENI Regulation*

- Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument
- *EGTC Regulation:*
 - Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings
- *Implementing acts and delegated acts adopted in accordance with the aforementioned Regulations,*
- *Directives of the Commission, European Parliament and the Council on public procurement.*

V. Management structure

The Danube Transnational Programme will use a shared management system to manage, coordinate and supervise its implementation, meaning that the Partner States and the Commission will be responsible for the management and control of the programme.

The **Monitoring Committee (MC)**, consisting of the representatives of each participating country, supervises the implementation of the DTP and selects the projects to be financed. Its overall task is to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the overall programme implementation process. To fulfil this task, the MC is going to be assisted by the Joint Secretariat (JS).

The **Managing Authority (MA)**, assisted by the **Joint Secretariat**, hosted by the Ministry of Finance, is responsible for the overall programme implementation by carrying out the functions laid down in Article 125 of the CPR as well as Article 23 of the ETC Regulation. The JS is the central contact point for potential project applicants and Lead Partners (Project Partner 1) of selected/ running operations.

The **Certifying Authority (CA)** is responsible for drawing up and submitting certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment to the European Commission and receiving payments from the EC. The CA shall use the payments received from the EC to reimburse the Lead Partners (Project Partner 1) in accordance with Article 132 of the CPR.

The **Audit Authority (AA)** is responsible for ensuring that audits are done in the framework of the management and control systems and are based on an appropriate sample of operations and on the annual accounts. The AA will be assisted by a Group of Auditors (GoA) comprising the representatives of responsible bodies of each Partner State.

National Contact Points (NCPs) are set up by each participating country to complement transnational activities of the MA and the JS and by involving stakeholders from the national

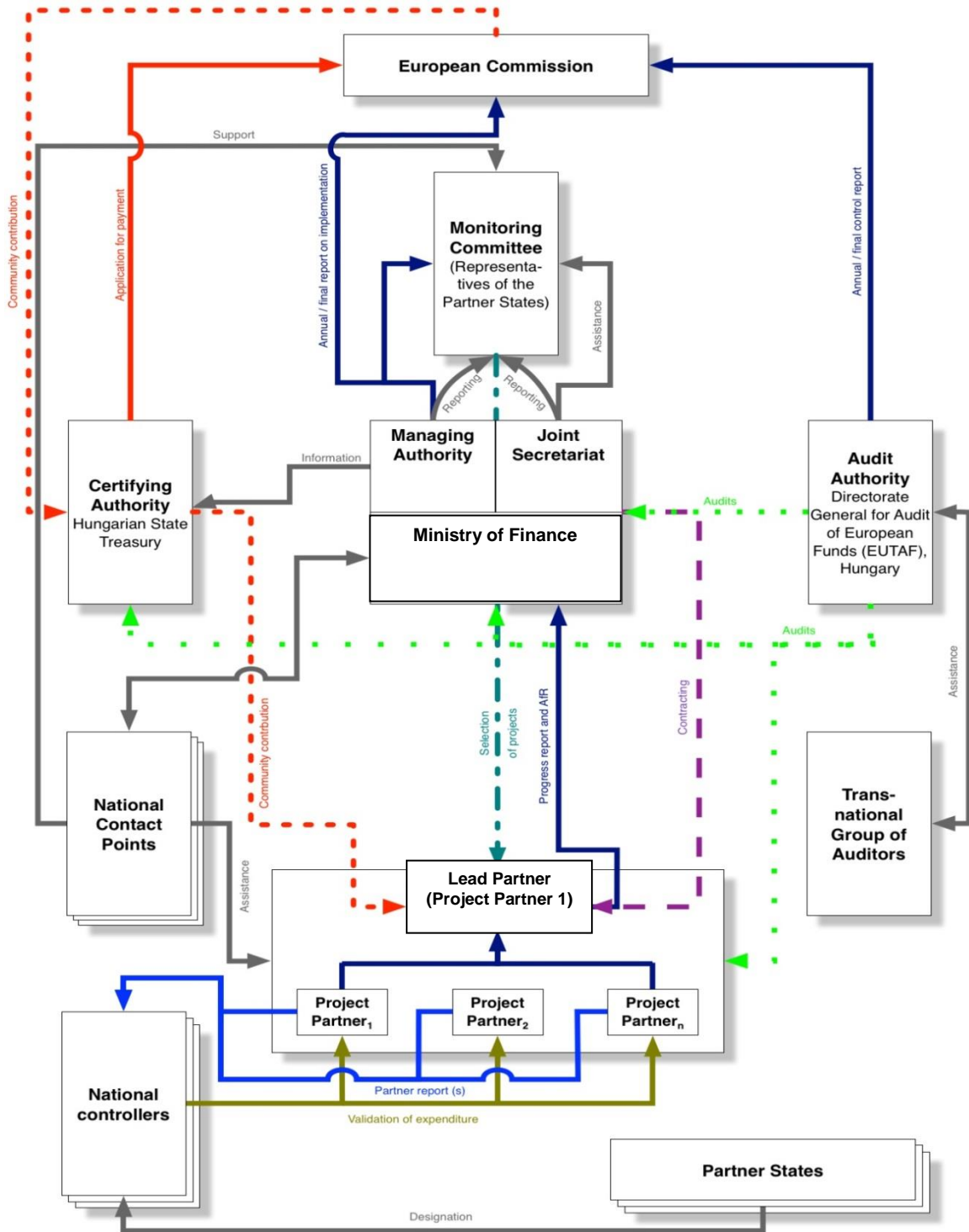
level as well as to contribute to the national and transnational programme management and provide guidance and advice to potential applicants and project partners concerning the national rules on public procurement, national FLC requirements and eligibility of expenditures.³

The **Lead Partners**, located in one of the DTP EU Member States, will be designated by the partners participating in a project to carry out the tasks laid down in Article 13 of the ETC Regulation. In particular, the Lead Partner shall assume responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid.

The **Project Partner(s)** carry out activities planned in the approved Application Form (AF) and agreed in the Partnership Agreement. Among their tasks, they submit reports of project activities to payment claims; assume responsibility of any irregularity in the expenditure which it has declared, repaying the Lead Partner any amounts unduly paid in accordance of the Partnership Agreement signed between the Lead Partner and the respective project partner; carry out information and communication measures for the public about the project activities.

Controllers will be designated by each Partner State to ensure the compliance of expenditure incurred by the project partners with the Community and national rules, by carrying out verifications within the meaning of Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation as well as Article 125(5) of the CPR, covering administrative, financial, technical and physical aspects of operations. Controllers shall be nominated in line with the national provisions of each Partner State. Each country participating in the DTP will be responsible for verifications carried out on its territory.

³ DSP will provide support to the PAC concerning the content related issues, on voluntary basis.



VI. Horizontal principles

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is fundamental for the implementation of economic and social cohesion policies also governing the Danube Transnational Programme.

Sustainable development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without endangering the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs. When applying for funding under the DTP, applicants should account for the impact of their project on economic, ecological and social aspects within the targeted region.

Applicants have to specify any possible environmental impact of their project on the following aspects: water, soil, air and climate, population and human health, fauna, flora and biodiversity, natural heritage and landscape.

Projects submitted under any Priority Axis are strongly encouraged to incorporate activities for tackling environmental concerns and reducing their environmental and carbon footprint, for example by:

- Contributing to energy efficiency, renewable energy use and reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- Contributing to efficient water supply, waste-water treatment and water reuse
- Contributing of green public procurement in a systematic manner
- Contributing to efficient waste management, re-use and recycling
- Contributing to the development of green infrastructures including Natura 2000 sites
- Contributing to reduced transport and mobility-related air pollution
- Contributing to sustainable integrated urban development
- Contributing to enhanced awareness of adaptation to climate change and risk prevention
- Contributing to more employment opportunities, education, training and support services in the context of environment protection and sustainable development

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Projects must promote equal opportunities for everyone and prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the transnational cooperation projects. Additionally, projects must account for the particular needs of the various target groups prone

to such discrimination and the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, when selecting service providers, suppliers or contractors, projects have to ensure equal opportunities for all interested parties and avoid limiting and discriminating with requirements or selection criteria. During project selection, each project will be subject to the verification of compliance with equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles defined in EU and national legislation.

Equality between men and women

The Danube Transnational Programme aims at promoting gender equality in line with the EU policies in this field. In the framework of their activities, projects have to ensure equal participation of men and women and gender mainstreaming and avoid generating discrimination of any kind.

VII. Environmental sustainability

The total sets of greenhouse gas emissions caused by an organisation, event, product or person define their carbon footprint.

Changes in our lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours towards more environmentally sound choices will provide a contribution to reverse this situation.

The Danube Transnational Programme, covering a wide area of 14 countries and over 114 million of inhabitants that agreed to interact and work together for the next years, has a considerable potential carbon footprint. However, in line with Art 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013⁴, the DTP would like to attempt to reduce any potential increase of carbon dioxide derived from the implementation of the DTP.

Experience of transnational programme implementation showed that two main factors, among others, directly contribute to increasing the carbon footprint of a programme: 1. excessive use of printed documents either for formal or informal use; and 2. extensive travels of the involved actors.

The actions planned to decrease the carbon footprint of the DTP are twofold. On one hand, a reduction of the printed paper needed for the implementation of the DTP and, on the other hand offsetting the CO₂ emitted during the travels of all actors involved in the DTP implementation.

Reduce – reuse – recycle principle

⁴ “The objectives of the ESI Funds shall be pursued in line with the principle of sustainable development and with the Union’s promotion of the aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment, as set out in Article 11 and Article 191(1) TFEU, taking into account the polluter pays principle.[...]”

The first step towards a greener direction should be taken during the procuring process: whenever procuring for activities which will produce documents and publications in general, a clear request of using only recycled paper should be indicated in the related ToRs.

Considering the significant number of events planned and expected to be organised throughout the project duration, it is strongly recommended to avoid distributing paper copy of materials used during the events (e.g. agenda, printout of PPTs, discussion documents in general) and make appropriate use of the electronic support.

The DTP ensures a considerable reduction of request of paper documents from the projects in all steps of implementation.

- Application phase: expressions of interest, application forms and all supporting documents will be requested in electronic format only. The signed paper version will be requested only for the signature of the subsidy contracts of approved proposals.
- Reporting phase: progress reports and declarations of validations will be requested in electronic format only. Applications for reimbursement will only need to be sent in the signed paper version. Copies of deliverables will be requested in electronic format only.

We encourage using best practice procedures that stress the reduction of the used paper, its reuse and the recycling through appropriate recycling bins.

Reduce:

- The circulation of printed documents should be reduced by using email wherever possible
- It is advised to always use both sides of paper. Printers and photocopiers should be set to copy double-sided as default

Reuse:

- Waste paper should be used and assembled into notepads
- It is advised to use designated containers to collect part-used waste paper. This can then be fed back through faxes/printers or used for rough working

Recycle:

- Confidential documents should be shred and sent for recycling
- All other used paper should be sent for recycling where possible

Carbon offset

According to a rough estimation that considered the experience of the past programming period, a minimum of 9,400 travels are expected during the Danube Transnational programme

and project implementation. Therefore, it can be expected that travelling for programme/project purposes will substantially increase the carbon footprint.

The DTP strongly suggests the project partners to previously assess the need for travel and to explore the alternative options, such as conference calls, online meetings, etc.

As often travels cannot be avoided, the DTP proposes to first trying to reduce the impact of the travel by combining events together (e.g. steering group meetings with working group meeting and stakeholders' event) and/ or by selecting the venue taking into consideration its accessibility (e.g. location easily reachable by train).

Another option that the DTP offers is the offsetting of the carbon emissions produced by the programme actors (programme bodies and project partners) when flying.

Carbon offsets are achieved through financial support of projects carried out by organisations that act as service providers of CO₂ compensation that reduce the emission of greenhouse gases in the short- or long-term.

Costs for compensating the CO₂ emissions are eligible for co-financing at programme level. Project actors are advised to read carefully the chapter on the eligibility of expenditures to make sure that programme rules are followed when purchasing carbon offsetting.

PART 2: SUPPORT TO EUSDR PRIORITY AREA COORDINATORS

I. Intervention logic

I.1. Objectives, results and outputs

The co-financing offered by the Programme is aimed at supporting the PACs in providing successful and effective coordination and strategy implementation in each of the Priority Areas of the EUSDR, thus helping them to reach the EUSDR targets and implement its Action Plan.

According to the Cooperation Programme, all projects submitted for the support of the EUSDR have to aim at *improving the governance system and the capabilities and capacities of public institutions and key actors involved in complex transnational project development to implement the EUSDR in a more effective way (specific programme objective 4.2 of the DTP)*.

When preparing the Application Form, clearly set main objective and specific objectives for the three years period covered by the proposal are needed.

In order to support the PACs in meeting the Programme objective, **the main objective** of the submitted proposals is pre-defined and shall be the same for all Priority Areas: *to ensure the implementation of a stable and effective governance system within EUSDR PA [number of the PA]*.

The specific objectives of the submitted proposals have to be linked to the main project objective as well as to the defined Programme Specific Objective 4.2.

In order to support the PACs in meeting the main project objective and Programme Specific Objective 4.2, the following **set of pre-defined specific objectives** is to be considered when preparing the project proposals:

- 1. To support the Steering Groups in implementing the EUSDR PA.*
- 2. To support communication and increased visibility of the PA and dissemination of PA's achievements.*
- 3. To support policy development and policy initiatives as well as usage of cutting edge knowledge (EU/ international, as appropriate).*
- 4. To enhance coordination between PA actors and to encourage involvement of key stakeholders in the PA activities.*
- 5. To facilitate the on-going and development of future projects initiatives for the PA, specifically project generation, partner search and identification of funding opportunities for the PA stakeholders.*

No more than three pre-defined specific objectives can be selected by a PA, when preparing and submitting a project proposal.

PACs have to define and describe the result that their proposal seeks to achieve through the planned activities (e.g. improved coordination activities with the line ministries of the EUSDR region, improved coordination with international bodies, etc.). The result defined by the PACs

has to contribute to the Programme result which is: *improved effectiveness of coordination and strategy implementation in each of the Priority Areas of the EUSDR.*

PACs should also define their **project outputs** in order to contribute to the Programme specific output indicators that capture their work and effort. The achievement of these outputs will be further reported in documents such as the DTP Annual Implementation Reports to the EC, programme evaluations, etc.

*Outputs tell what has actually been **produced** for the money given to the project. They should correspond to a **Programme output indicator** and directly contribute to the achievement of the project result.*

The **project output indicators applied for the PACs support are pre-defined** as listed below. They should reflect the nature of the activities chosen to be supported and the Programme’s ambition to advance.

PACs are expected to contribute to the output indicators listed below, but avoid selecting more than one indicator for the same output. Overall, PACs should contribute to at least three compulsory indicators: P07, P29 (automatically calculated as 1), and PAC01. Contribution to other output indicators is not mandatory but expected.

No.	Output indicator	Types of outputs to be recorded:
P07 (mandatory)	Number of documented learning interactions in finalised operations	The term “documented learning interactions” is defined as the process of acquiring/ enhancing the PA’s knowledge and capacity for transnational cooperation through, capacity building, training, exchange of experience or any other type of learning processes. <i>Example: joint training (seminar) organised by 2 PAs on capacity building or exchange of best practices and enhanced cooperation.</i>
P29 (mandatory)	Number of EUSDR PAs financed	<i>automatically calculated</i>
PAC01 (mandatory)	Number of policy measures undertaken within the SG	Number of policy reports, studies or recommendations developed within the PA
PAC02 (optional)	Number of project proposals supported within the PA	Number of project proposals supported within the PA

Besides the specific output indicators listed above, the PACs can contribute, if applicable, also to the Programme output indicators indicated below.

Indicator no.	Indicator
P01	Number of strategies for improving the institutional and infrastructural framework conditions for research and innovation developed and/or implemented

P02	Number of tools for improving the institutional and infrastructural framework conditions for research and innovation developed and/or implemented
P03	Number of pilot actions for improving the institutional and infrastructural framework conditions for research and innovation developed and/or implemented
P04	Number of strategies for increasing competences of employees in the business sector and strengthening entrepreneurial spirit developed and or/implemented.
P05	Number of tools for increasing competences of employees in the business sector and strengthening entrepreneurial spirit developed and or/implemented
P06	Number of pilot actions for increasing competences of employees in the business sector and strengthening entrepreneurial spirit developed and or/implemented
C026	No of enterprises cooperating with research institutions (EU)
C004	No of enterprises receiving non- financial support
P08	Number of strategies for improving transnational water management and flood risk prevention developed and/or implemented
P09	Number of tools for improving transnational water management and flood risk prevention developed and/or implemented
P10	Number of pilot actions for improving transnational water management and flood risk prevention developed and/or implemented
P11	Number of strategies for preserving and management of natural and cultural heritage and resources developed and/or implemented
P12	Number of tools for preserving and management of natural and cultural heritage and resources developed and/or implemented
P13	Number of pilot actions for preserving and management of natural and cultural heritage and resources developed and/or implemented
P14	Number of strategies for strengthening approaches to preservation, restoring and management of bio-corridors and wetlands developed and/or implemented
P15	Number of tools for strengthening approaches to preservation, restoring and management of bio-corridors and wetlands developed and/or implemented
P16	Number of pilot actions for strengthening approaches to preservation, restoring and management of bio-corridors and wetlands developed and/or implemented
P17	Number of strategies for improved cooperation and interoperability among the emergency response authorities and stakeholders developed and/or implemented

P18	Number of tools for improved cooperation and interoperability among the emergency response authorities and stakeholders developed and/or implemented
P19	Number of pilot actions for improved cooperation and interoperability among the emergency response authorities and stakeholders developed and/or implemented
P20	No of strategies for the improvement of transport and transport systems developed and/or implemented
P21	No of tools for the improvement of transport and transport systems developed and/or implemented
P22	No of pilot actions for the improvement of transport and transport systems developed and/or implemented
P23	No of strategies to improve energy security and energy efficiency developed and/or implemented
P24	No of tools to improve energy security and energy efficiency developed and/or implemented
P25	Number of pilot actions to improve energy security and energy efficiency developed and/or implemented
P26	Number of strategies for strengthening institutional capacities and transnational multilevel governance developed and/or implemented
P27	Number of tools for strengthening institutional capacities and supporting transnational multilevel governance developed and/or implemented
P28	Number of pilot actions for strengthening institutional capacities and supporting transnational multilevel governance developed and/or implemented

The definition of the Programme output indicators is outlined in the table below.

Type of outputs	
Strategy	<p>In the context of transnational cooperation, defining a strategy should have as starting point, a definition of joint problems/ challenges of the participating countries/ regions. The strategy should set up clear mid and long term objectives and priorities reflecting also the common vision of the Danube Region in the specific field. The involvement of the relevant stakeholders is crucial, since the strategy should be a reflection of their needs and ensure its sustainability and future implementation. Strategies should aim at policy integration in the Danube area in the selected fields and act as policy drivers below EU level but above national level.</p> <p>An action plan should break down the strategy goals and objectives into specific actions. It should include the sequence of steps to be taken, or activities that must be performed, for a strategy to succeed. Therefore, it should include a time line, the financial resources and a</p>

Type of outputs	
	<p>definition of the responsible actors.</p> <p>This type of output can relate either to the development of new or further improvement, revision and/or update of existing strategies/policies/action plans as well as their subsequent implementation. The following types of outputs should be included here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ strategic positions ➤ ministerial declarations, etc. <p><i>Each developed strategy/action plan, whether implemented or not, should be only counted once under the respective output indicator. Project management and communication-related strategies such as e.g. the project communication strategy should not be considered under this output indicator.</i></p> <p><u>Example: internet strategies, Danube Region renewable energy action plan, etc.</u></p>
Tools	<p>A tool is to be understood as the means for achieving a specific task. Tools should be jointly developed at transnational level and be innovative. Tools can be tangible (physical or technical objects) and intangible (methods, concepts or services). They comprise amongst others of analytical tools, management tools, technical tools, software tools, monitoring tools, decision support tools etc.</p> <p>To be effective, a tool must be tailored to end users' needs and the respective framework conditions and has to be comprehensive and durable.</p> <p>This type of output relates either to the joint development of new or further improvement and/or adaptation of existing durable tools as well as their subsequent operational implementation.</p> <p><i>Each developed tool, whether implemented or not, should be only counted once under the respective output indicator. Project management-related tools internal communication platforms and templates should not be considered under this output indicator.</i></p> <p><u>Example: policy recommendation papers; thematic studies and analysis</u></p>
Pilot actions	<p>A pilot action is to be understood as a practical implementation of newly developed solutions (e.g. services, tools, methods or approaches, even an investment). A pilot action has an experimental nature which aims at testing, evaluating and/or demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of a scheme. Therefore, it covers either the testing of innovative solutions or demonstrating the application of existing solutions to a certain territory/sector.</p> <p><i>The results and practices of pilot actions should be exploited on and transferred to other institutions and territories.</i></p> <p><i>A pilot action is limited in its scope (area, duration, scale etc.) and must be unprecedented in a comparable environment.</i></p> <p><u>Example: pilot implementation of innovative management models, pilot implementation of schemes, pilot application/ testing of new technologies, services etc.</u></p>

I.2. Work plans, activities and work packages

Activities proposed by the PACs should be organised in a Work Plan. The Work Plan is composed by three mandatory and one optional Work Packages. The maximum number of activities to be included in each WP is five. The activities to be included in each WP are pre-defined at Programme level. The Work Plan covers all three years of implementation. It is expected that the activities to be performed in 2020 are more detailed, while the 2021-2022 ones are (briefly) outlined in the Application Form. Given the dynamics of the PAC environment, in case new activities, not highlighted in the approved AF, will appear necessary in 2021-2022, these will be introduced in the project following the submission of a request for project modification and a consequent amendment of the Subsidy Contract.

The Programme is co-financing PACs' expenditure which should be directly linked to their role in the implementation of the EUSDR and its Action Plan. The activities proposed by the PA to be co-funded by DTP should be in line with the Work Plan prepared by all PACs (in a given PA) applying for DTP funding.

WP1 (mandatory): Management, publicity and communication: covers the “conventional” daily management activities (e.g. allocation of staff, planned travels but only related to project management – e.g. meeting with co-PAC(s), reporting, internal communication, general administrative support) and dissemination activities (e.g. posters, leaflets, update, content wise, of the specific PA website and other communication activities for better communicating PA's work and results, as well as those related to public debate(s) on the macro-regional approach). Attendance of coordination meetings organised by the DSP should be included in WP1. Furthermore, PACs are expected to cooperate with the DSP in the EUSDR evaluation, monitoring, communication, capacity building strategies and plans as adopted by NCs, as well as contribute to reports and publications about EUSDR.

Besides the above mentioned activities, the WP should also include the work related to the SG meetings and the EUSDR annual forum. In implementing their activities and fulfilling the Action Plan of EUSDR, PACs should follow the Rules of Procedure adopted by the NCs.

WP2 (mandatory): Policy development: includes the development of policy documents (e.g. joint ministerial statements), policy reports and studies, other reports impacting the policy within the PA's scope, etc.

WP3 (mandatory): Cooperation and coordination: comprises a description of the strategic coordination of the concerned Priority Area and covers the following type of activities:

- Coordination, cooperation and correlation with other PAs.
- Coordination, cooperation and correlation with EU institutions (EC, EP, CoR, EESC, etc.) and/ or other institutions (national, regional, international, as appropriate).
- Exploiting the funding opportunities of the EC centrally managed programmes.

- Cooperation between the PA (PACs and SG) and the authorities dealing with ESIF funding and more specifically with the Managing Authorities and the Monitoring Committees of programmes of interest to the PA.
- Stakeholder conferences, activities with national/ regional governance structures, other events, networks, platforms.

WP4 (optional): EUSDR strategic projects and other projects: covers the support of strategic EUSDR projects (e.g. identification, planning, preparation and/ or implementation, etc.) as well as support to other projects (e.g. identification, planning, etc.) that are in the focus of the PA (the PACs are not part of the consortium/ partnership), and covers the following type of activities (non-exhaustive list):

- organisation/ participation in meetings, working groups and other similar events with the PA's stakeholders in order to identify EUSDR strategic projects to be submitted to the DSP
- participation in events, workshops or bilateral meetings and other similar events in order to support identification of other projects relevant for the PA
- support for the strategic/ other project implementation through participation in meetings, bilateral discussion, workshops or other similar events

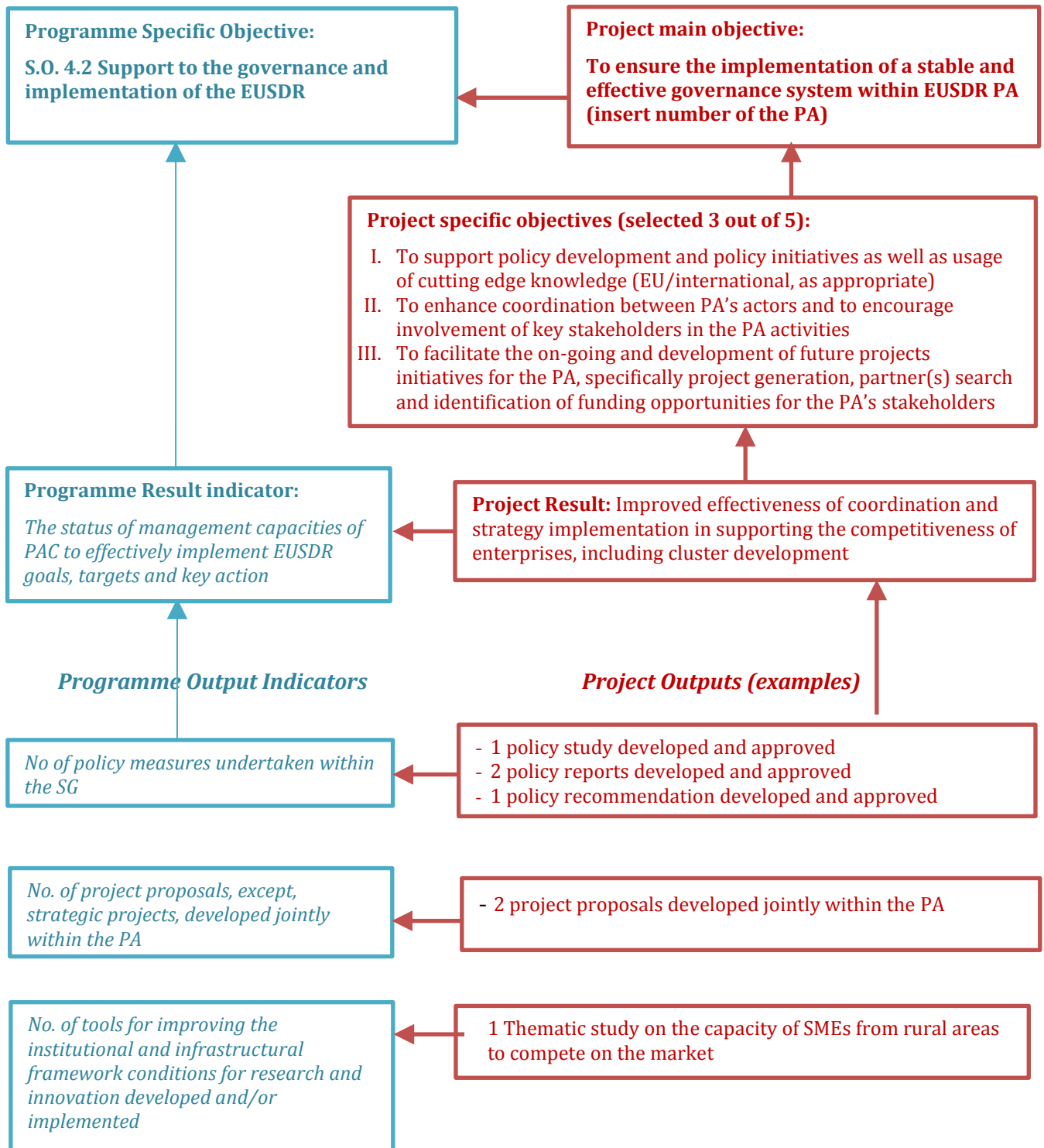
In order to avoid double financing, WP4 finances PA activities of support to other consortia/ partnerships in the identification/ preparation/ implementation of relevant (or strategic) projects for the PA. Direct involvement of the PACs in partnerships/consortia is not financed under this WP.

Project intervention logic glossary

Term	Definition
Project main objective	Describes the strategic and long term change that the project seeks to achieve for the benefit of the target groups.
Project specific objective	Describes the specific and immediate effects of the project and it can be realistically achieved within the implementation period.
Project result	Constitutes the immediate advantage of carrying out the project, telling us about the benefit of using the project main outputs. It should indicate the change the project is aiming for.
Project output	It tells us what has actually been produced for the money given to the project. It can be captured by a programme output indicator, and directly contributes to the achievement of the project results.
Project work package	Represents a group of related project activities required to produce project main outputs.
Project activity	Describes specific task performed for which resources are used. It is a work package component which may or may not result in a deliverable or an output.
Project deliverable	Is a side-product or service of the project that contributes to the development of a project's main output.

Programme intervention logic terminology is explained in the relevant EC regulations and guidance papers.

Example on how to link the project intervention logic to the programme intervention logic



II. Lead Partner Principle

According to the EU Regulation 1299/2013, art 13, the “Lead Partner principle” applies to Danube Transnational Programme.

This means that the Lead Partner (LP) should be nominated by the partners from amongst themselves.

Therefore, each EUSDR Priority Area has to appoint a Lead Partner who is responsible for the submission of the Application Form. In case of approval of the project, the LP takes over the full responsibility for reporting and communicating the project progress to the DTP MA/ JS. LP bears legal responsibility for the partnership and is also the link between the project and the MA/JS of the Programme.

According to Art.13 of the EU Reg. 1299/2013, the LP shall:

- Lay down the arrangements with other beneficiaries in a Partnership Agreement comprising provisions that, *inter alia*, guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid (a template is provided by the DTP).
- Assume responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire operation.
- Ensure that expenditure presented by all beneficiaries has been incurred in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the beneficiaries, and is in accordance with the document provided by the Managing Authority pursuant to Article 12(5) of the EU Reg. 1299/2013.
- Ensure that the expenditure presented by other beneficiaries has been verified by the responsible Controller where this verification is not carried out by the Managing Authority pursuant to Article 23(3) of the EU Reg. 1299/2013.

III. General rules for the eligibility of partners

Eligible applicants are the nominated EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators, listed in Annex 1, having one of the following legal statuses:

- Local, regional, national public body/ body governed by public law (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)
- International organisation
- Private body (including private enterprise registered in a EU Member State of the Programme area)

A. Local, regional, national public bodies⁵/ bodies governed by public law (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Bodies governed by public law

Bodies governed by public law as defined in Article 2(9) of DIRECTIVE 2014/24/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing DIRECTIVE 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014).

The definition of a body governed by public law is the following according to Article 2(1) of DIRECTIVE 2014/24:

'bodies governed by public law' means bodies that have all of the following characteristics:

- *They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character (being not relevant the industrial and commercial character)*
- *They have legal personality; and*
- *They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law*

B. International organisations

International organisations (having legal personality) acting under the national law of any DTP Partner State or under international law, provided that, for the purpose of the project, they fulfil the EU, programme and national requirements in terms of control, validation of costs and audits, can be considered as eligible for funding. In particular, these organisations should express in written form (through a form of Declaration) that:

- They agree to comply with applicable community policies, including the respect of principles on public procurement
- They accept the national control requirements set in the framework of the Danube Transnational Programme
- They agree to accept the controls and audits by all bodies entitled to carry out such controls in the framework of the Programme, including the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat, the Audit Authority and the European Court of Auditors as well as the relevant national authorities of the Member State in which the international organisation acting as project partner is located. Storage of all documents required for

⁵ E.g. ministries, municipalities, regions, etc.

these controls must allow performing them in the geographical area covered by the Danube Transnational Programme

- They assume the final financial liability for all sums wrongly paid out

C. Private bodies

In the context of this programme, the concept of “private bodies” means all organisations which are founded by private law such as (but depending on the country) chambers of commerce, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, private enterprises⁶. They may receive funding if they fulfil the following criteria:

- They have legal personality
- They make available the results of the project to the general public
- They apply the principles of public procurement

ATTENTION: Private enterprises coming from non-EU countries of the programme area are not eligible for funding.

IV. Eligibility of expenditures

The rules on the eligibility of project expenditure are included in the *Annex Eligibility of the Expenditure* of the Implementation Manual.

V. Geographic eligibility rules

The Programme covers 14 countries, 9 of them EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany-Baden Württemberg and Bavaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and 5 non-member states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine with four provinces: Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankiviska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast, Odessa Oblast).

Based on the geographical location, the following two **types of partners** are identified:

- **Directly financed partners:** receiving financial contribution directly from the Programme (ERDF, IPA or ENI) and bearing full responsibility for their budget
- **Indirectly financed partners (Associated Strategic Partners –ASPs):** being **not directly** financed by the Programme but – eventually – “sponsored” by an ERDF Partner that is bearing the responsibility for their participation to the project.

⁶ In the context of the Danube Transnational Programme private enterprises refers to any type of profit making body, including SMEs

Associated Strategic Partner (ASP) in the DTP is an organisation whose participation is considered crucial for the added value brought to the work of the Priority Area. As an example, ASP can potentially be a strategic institution for the objective of the specific PA, which is interested to participate in the project in order to ensure the *leverage effect and durability of the results*.

ASPs are actors not contributing financially to the project and are located:

- **either in an EU country (inside or outside the Programme area)**
- **or in a Non-EU country of the programme area**

Their expenditure is limited to reimbursement from the Programme of *travel and accommodation*⁷ costs related to their participation in relevant (project) meetings, which shall be borne by the institution acting as ERDF “sponsoring partner” in order to be considered eligible. In line with the rules set in Article 20(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 EC Regulation, expenditures of the EU partners located outside the Programme area and non-EU partners of the programme area cannot exceed 20% of the ERDF PPs’ budget in total.

VI. Composition of the partnership

Organisations responsible for the coordination of the specific Priority Area of the EUSDR Action Plan as nominated by the EUSDR governance bodies are eligible to apply for the PAC support.

Each project has to involve at least **two financing project partners from two different countries** of the Programme area: the Lead Partner and at least another Project Partner. The Lead Partner has to be located on the territory of an EU Member State of the Programme area.

As a general rule, one project covers one Priority Area of the EUSDR; therefore, it should involve at least two PACs responsible for coordination of that PA. Furthermore, each Priority Area Coordinator can be represented in only one application.

The responsibilities of the Project Partners are listed below:

- Carrying out the activities planned in the approved Application Form (AF) and agreed in the Partnership Agreement
- Submitting reports on the progress of project activities and associated reimbursement claims
- Assuming responsibility for any irregularity in the declared expenditure, repaying the Lead Partner any amounts unduly paid in accordance with the Partnership Agreement signed between LP and the other project partner.

⁷ *Travel and accommodation costs for ASPs is reported under travel and accommodation BL of the sponsoring partner*

VII. Financial capacity of Project Partners and national co-financing

The Programme works based on the reimbursement principle. This means that Project Partners have to pre-finance their activities and the amounts paid are reimbursed after the submission and evaluation of the Progress Reports.

Under the Danube Transnational Programme, projects are co-financed by ERDF, IPA and ENI. The co-financing rate per partner is up to 85% for ERDF, IPA and for ENI partners. The remaining budget (15%) can be covered by state contribution (where applicable) and/or own sources (can be public or private) of the project partner and/or other contribution (e.g. regional/local/other sources).

Please note: State contribution has to be indicated in the AF only in case the Partner State provides national public contribution at state level for the projects selected by the Monitoring Committee, and therefore the amount is covered in total or partially by the state.

Each Partner State applies a different system in providing state co-financing. An overview on the national co-financing system of the Danube Partner States is available on the Programme website (<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/relevant-documents/programme-main-documents>). However, as more detailed information might be available at national level, Partner States, through the DTP NCP, should be contacted for further clarifications.

VIII. Duration of Projects

The maximum project duration (implementation of project activities) is **36 months**.

The project period shall be defined in the approved Application Form as a project start date and end date. However, the project start date shall not be earlier than **1st January 2020**.

IX. Visibility rules

For the purpose of project dissemination, projects organise different types of events and produce publications, documents and promotional materials for which the visual identity of the programme has to be respected, including the Visual Identity Manual.

The Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Annex XII, Article 2.2) requires all beneficiaries to follow a number of rules regarding the use of the logo of the European Union and the respective fund. The Danube Transnational Programme logo already respects all these requirements, and all approved projects are obliged to use it on all their communication materials, deliverables and outputs (both hard copy and electronic) as well as to display it in events.

In addition to displaying information on the Programme and EU support as described above, for the purpose of promoting the Strategy, PACs shall use the EUSDR Priority Area logo in all their written and audio-visual communication materials, deliverables and outputs. In order to

respect the Commission Implementation Regulation (EU) No. 821/2014, PACs are requested to include an additional EU emblem of at least the same size in height or width as the EUSDR logo.

However, the Danube Transnational Programme must always be visible in a prominent place and of a comparable size to other logos used.

Within six months after the approval of the project, each project partner has to place at least one poster with information about the project (minimum size A3), including the financial support from the EU, at a location visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building (Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Annex XII Article 2.2 paragraph 2.b).

The poster needs to stay visible for the whole duration of the project. The production costs of the poster need to be budgeted.

PART 3: APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

I. Application

EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators are expected to prepare the Application Form according to the provisions of their Priority Area and submit it through the eMS system within the deadline set in the Call Announcement. Detailed information on how to fill in the Application Form is provided in the EUSDR PAC Guidelines for the AF.

II. Assessment

The submitted proposals will go through an eligibility and quality check, both performed by the JS.

The **eligibility criteria** aim at confirming that the proposal has arrived within the set deadline and that the Application Form is complete and compliant with the requirements. Eligibility criteria are to be answered with YES or NO.

This phase will be carried out by the JS and assisted by the NCPs.

In case of missing documents, parts of documents and/or signatures, the LP will be awarded 5 working days from the **JS notification** for the completion of the documents.

The following table lists all eligibility criteria:

No	Eligibility criteria	Description
1	The AF has been submitted within the set deadline (date and time)	The AF has been submitted within the set deadline.
2	The amount per Priority Area is in line with the call provisions.	The total amount of the proposal is up to 300,000.00 EUR of EU funding.
3	The AF has been submitted through the eMS system	The AF has been submitted through the eMS system.
4	The AF is compiled in English	All parts of the AF are compiled in English, as the official language of the DTP.
5	Partnership is composed by at least two financing partners from at least two participating countries of which at least one (Lead Partner) is located in a Member State	Partnership complies with the minimum requirement for a transnational DTP partnership: at least two financing partners (receiving ERDF, IPA or ENI co-financing) from at least two participating countries, of which at least one (the Lead Partner) is located in a Member State.

6	Financing partner/s (ERDF/IPA/ENI) are eligible	The ERDF/IPA/ENI financed partner/s fulfil/s the requirements set in Part 2, section III (General rules for the eligibility of project partners) and Annex 1 of the Applicants Manual.
7	Completeness of Partnership Agreement	The Partnership Agreement is signed by all directly financed partners.
8	Completeness of submitted ERDF/IPA/ENI partner documents, including ASP	The documents (Declaration of co-financing and State Aid declaration and ASP Declaration) are filled in and signed by each partner.
9	At least 3 joint cooperation levels are indicated	According to Art 12(4) of EU reg. 1299/2013, among the four levels of cooperation (joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing) beneficiaries shall cooperate in the development and implementation of projects and in either the staffing or the financing of projects, or in both.

The purpose of the **quality criteria** is to assess the quality of the eligible project proposals. Quality criteria are closely linked to the specific objectives and results of the DTP CP. Each quality criterion is assessed on the basis of sub-criteria, with each being scored from 0 (not present / missing) to 5 (very good). The score of the main question is an average of the scores of the related guiding questions.

Score	Description
0	None The information requested is missing (either not filled it in or not provided in the text). The information is provided but reflects the inexistence of a requirement.
1	Very poor The information provided is considered as not relevant or inadequate
2	Poor The information provided lacks relevant quality and contains strong weaknesses
3	Fair The overall information provided is adequate, however some aspects are not clearly or sufficiently detailed
4	Good The information provided is adequate with sufficiently outlined details
5	Very Good The information provided is outstanding in its details, clearness and coherence

The sub-criteria are defined using a set of questions to be answered by the assessor. Due to the complex requirements of transnational projects, these questions cannot be answered with yes

or no. The assessor must assess to what extent and to which level of quality the proposal answers the questions and then, the assessor gives an appropriate score.

Assessment main questions	Guiding questions	Score
<i>Are the challenges of the PA well identified, described, addressed and in line with the scope of the Call?</i>	To what extent are the challenges of the PA identified and described? Are they connected to the scope of the Call for Proposals?	Up to 5 points
	To what extent is the proposal addressing the identified challenges?	
<i>Is the proposal clearly contributing to the EU Strategy for Danube Region?</i>	To what extent are the activities clearly described and directly contributing to the achievement of the PA and EUSDR objectives?	Up to 5 points
	Is the proposal involving relevant target groups?	
<i>Is the intervention logic coherent with the Programme SO 4.2 and internally well-structured?</i>	Is there a clear and logical link between the challenges, objectives, activities, outputs and result?	Up to 5 points
	Are the proposed activities expected to reach the planned result?	
	Is the proposed work plan realistic?	
<i>Do the partners have clear and balanced roles in the partnership?</i>	Is the role of the partners clearly described?	Up to 5 points
	Is the partners' involvement in the project balanced?	
<i>Is the project budget coherent and realistic?</i>	Is the overall budget realistic compared to the proposed activities?	Up to 5 points
	Is the budget appropriately distributed between the PPs?	
	Is the budget of WPs and BL coherent with the planned activities?	

Project proposals have to receive a minimum 60% to be recommended by the JS for selection. Proposals might be selected for approval with or without conditions (to be fulfilled within the deadline set by the JS).

Project proposals scoring less than 60% will be recommended by the JS for re-submission.

III. Support for the development of applications

The DTP shall assist and support PACs throughout the development of project proposals and submission of the AF.

During the **project proposal development phase and when the call is open**, the Joint Secretariat (JS) shall:

- Organise seminars to disseminate information on application procedures and rules of the programme
- Provide consultations in the JS premises, written or phone feedbacks to received questions
- Offer PACs technical assistance and support (e.g. for the re-submission, if necessary)

Throughout the application process, the DTP shall ensure full transparency and non-discriminatory access to the same information to interested parties, regardless of their location.

IV. Complaint procedure

Assessment and selection procedures set in this manual offer a fair and transparent consideration of all received proposals.

The rules set in this section are aimed at providing a transparent complaint procedure against decisions taken by Programme authorities during the project assessment and selection process⁸. Lead Partner is defined Lead Applicant for the purpose of the complaint procedure.

1. The Lead Applicant is the only one entitled to file a complaint.
2. The right to complain against a decision regarding the project selection applies to the Lead Applicant whose project application was not selected for the Programme co-financing during the project assessment and selection process.
3. The complaint is to be lodged against the communication issued by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat based on the decision by the Monitoring Committee as the MA/JS' communication is the only legally binding act towards the Lead Applicant during the project assessment and selection process.
4. The complaint can be lodged only against the outcomes of the eligibility assessment performed by the JS, supported by the NCP and approved by the MC.

⁸ In case of appeal to the judiciary system against the decision of the programme authorities during the project assessment and selection process, the court of Hungary has the jurisdiction on the matter.

5. The complaint should be lodged in writing by e-mail to the Managing Authority of the Programme within 5 calendar days after the Lead Applicant had been officially notified by the MA/JS about the results of the project selection process. The complaint should include:
 - a. Name and address of the Lead Applicant;
 - b. Reference number and acronym of the application which is a subject of the complaint;
 - c. Clearly indicated reasons for the complaint, including listing of all elements of the assessment which are being complained and/or failures in adherence with procedures limited to those criteria mentioned in point 4;
 - d. (e)signature of the legal representative of the Lead Applicant (scanned signatures are accepted);
 - e. Any supporting documents;
6. The relevant documentation shall be provided for the sole purpose of supporting the complaint and may not alter the quality or content of the assessed application. No other grounds for the complaint than indicated in point 4 will be taken into account during the complaint procedure.
7. A complaint will be rejected without further examination if submitted after the set deadline or if the formal requirements set in point 5 are not observed.
8. In case the complaint is rejected under provisions set in point 7, the MA/JS conveys this information within 10 working days to the Lead Applicant and informs the Monitoring Committee.
9. Within 5 working days after the receipt of the complaint the MA/JS confirms to the Lead Applicant in writing having received the complaint and notifies the Monitoring Committee.
10. The Managing Authority, assisted by the Joint Secretariat examines the complaint and prepares its technical examination regarding the merit of the complaint.
11. The complaint will then be examined on the basis of the information brought forward by the Lead Applicant in the complaint and the technical examination prepared by the MA/JS by the Complaint Panel.
12. The Complaint Panel is the only body entitled to review a complaint against a decision regarding assessment and selection of projects co-financed by the Programme.
13. The Complaint Panel comprises of 3 members of whom one is the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, one is member of the Monitoring Committee and the third one is member of the Managing Authority or Joint Secretariat (not involved in the assessment).
14. The members of the Complaint Panel are appointed by the Monitoring Committee.

15. Impartiality of members of the Complaint Panel towards the case under review has to be ensured. If this cannot be provided, the distinct member shall refrain from the distinct case's review and be replaced by another impartial member.
16. The Joint Secretariat acts as the secretariat for the Complaint Panel and provides any assistance necessary for the review of the complaint.
17. The Managing Authority shall provide the Members of the Complaint Panel no later than 10 working days after the receipt of the complaint with a copy of:
 - a. The complaint with the technical examination by the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat
 - b. The original application and all supporting documents that were taken into consideration by the relevant bodies during the project assessment and selection process;
 - c. All documents relating to the assessment of the application in question including checklists and the record of the Monitoring Committee's decision;
 - d. Any other document requested by the Members of the Complaint Panel relevant to the complaint.
18. The Complaint Panel will have 5 working days to provide a binding decision through written procedure.
19. The decision if the complaint is justified or to be rejected is taken by the Complaint Panel by consensus. In case it is justified, the case will be sent back to the Monitoring Committee to review the project application and its assessment. The Complaint Panel has to provide the Monitoring Committee with a written justification with explicit reference to the criteria established in the Complaint Procedure
20. The decision of the Complaint Panel is communicated by the MA/JS in writing to the Lead Applicant and the Monitoring Committee within 5 working days from the receipt of the Complaint Panel decision.
21. The complaint procedure, from the receipt of the complaint to the communication of the Complaint Panel's decision to the Lead Applicant, should be resolved within maximum 30 calendar days.

The decision of the Complaint Panel is final, binding to all parties and not subject of any further complaint proceedings within the Programme based on the same grounds.

ANNEX 1 List of PACs

PA	Country	Legal entity	Legal representative	Contact person /PAC	Support to PAC	Email