**,ALIGNMENT OF FUNDING –**

**Operative programmes for EU SDR**

## Topics and intervention areas of the Priority area “Quality of Waters” (PA4) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region relevant for coordination in the course of the alignment of funding with the European Structural and Investment Funds as well as other financing schemes of the European Union for the 2014-2020 Multiannual FinancialFramework

Priority Area 4 “To restore and maintain the   
quality of waters” (PA4)

June2014

Version: v.6draft for consultation following the 7th meeting of the Steering Groups of Priority Area 4 and 5 of EU SDR and incorporating SG member and DG RG remarks

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Background

The Council conclusions on added value of macro-regional strategies[[1]](#footnote-2) reiterated one of the underlying tasks of the countries of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the European Commission: to align available financial resources[[2]](#footnote-3) at the EU, national and regional level with the objectives, roadmaps and implementation plans of macro-regional strategies and to embed these objectives into the programming documents of the new 2014-2020 programming period in a coordinated way. Ministers of Regional Development agreed during the Second Annual Forum of the EU SDR that a cross-cutting programming and implementation process is necessary to ensure tangible results envisioned by the Strategy. The Regulation laying down common provisions of European Structural and Investment Funds[[3]](#footnote-4) (ESIF) reinforced the mandate of the countries participating in Macro-regional Strategies to align the financing, Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes with the content and measures adopted in respective Strategies. These Partnership Agreements need to be **negotiated between the European Commission and national authorities**, following their consultation of various levels of governance, representatives from interest groups, civil society and local and regional representatives. Currently most Partnership Agreement negotiations are still on-going with the Commission. Once the Partnership Agreements are concluded with the Member States, they need to draw up and submit their **“Operational Programmes”** (OPs) breaking down the investment priorities and objectives of the Partnership Agreements into concrete actionsat the latest 3 months follow the submission of the Partnership Agreement. Once the OPs are adopted, they will be implemented by the Member States and their regions and then the MS will need to select, implement, monitor and evaluate project according to the priorities and targets agreed with the Commission.

**In order to provide a timely assistance in this process, and to identify joint priorities Priority Areas 4 „Quality of Waters” (PA4) and 5 „Environmental Risks” (PA5) took several steps to help facilitating this process** as described in the ANNEX I. to this document and **prepared this guidance document** for the water management stakeholders in the Danube countries.

Goals of the document[[4]](#footnote-5)

Priority Area 4 and 5 helps facilitating the process described in chapter “Background” by providing this strategic aid to

* contribute to the macro-regional facilitating of the coordination of efforts and funding;
* confirmation of national priorities from the macro-regional perspective of the EU SDR (with relation to the inclusion of national "implementation legs" of convergent and complementary actions and intervention topics in “country specific” Operational Programmes);
* to support bridging gaps and on-going efforts needed to be speeded up or promoted (inter alia supporting priority interventions of partner organizations facing bottlenecks and barriers).

Scope of the contribution to drafting and implementing the Operational Programs and the consultation process

A clear understanding of how the programming of OPs fit into the Strategy process (what is the task of this stage and what is not) is essential to provide meaningful contribution to major partners of programming, the current document is designed for the water quality and risks management experts.

**Task of the OP programming stage are to**

* + - 1. In broad terms to help transposing the strategic content of the EU SDR to the operational programmes

1. help the programming process of OPs and design of financial tools for the 2014-2020 MFF;
2. prepare and enable OPs for funding, supporting relevant EUSDR activities by tailoringOPs for water quality and risks management related support

Tasks of other stages and hence not to be done within the framework of preparing this guidance document are

1. the identification of policy priorities and actions of the EU SDR and implementation plans (done through adoption and endorsement of the Action Plan and adoption of the Roadmaps);
2. theselection of projects or funding decisions (will be done by appropriate OP committees and bodies and authorities at the implementation stage of the Operational Programmes).

The task of the consultations following the 7th meeting of Steering Groups aims are therefore primarily to

* **identify proposed elements that are not relevant** to river basin / sub-basin level efforts identified in Roadmaps or their national legs in at least one of the partner countries;
* **identify missing intervention areas or indicative interventions** that are crucial for river basin / sub basin wide efforts and are relevant in at least one of the partner countries;
* **propose interventions** that are addressing major bottlenecks or constitute substantial contributions to RB/SB level efforts and therefore should be subject to special efforts for coordination of funding between the relevant national and regional authorities of the different countriesalong with coordinated interventions (coordination of funding is not necessarily equal to providing additional funding).

It must be noted, however, that **continuous coordination for the EU DRS will be necessary** throughout the implementation stage of the OPs as well as the further gradual unfolding and implementation of the Actions and Roadmaps.Note furthermore that the goals of alignment of funding in RBMP and FMP related areas of the EUSDR Action Plan shall contribute as best as possible to the implementation of measures / lines of action enshrined / closing of knowledge gaps identified in the forthcoming plans as priority interventions and that all other concrete projects are based on best available information as of June 2014 (i.a. assuming that they will be part of the forthcoming plans.)The consultations on the alignment of funding was on-going for almost a year and were on the agenda at 3 different working sessions of PA4 and PA5 Steering Groups and at several ICPDR working groups. The members of the Steering Groups, Danube States representatives and stakeholder organisations, such as the ICPDR, the Sava Commission and the European Commission had an opportunity to discuss and consult the prepared draft documents. The remarks of the consultation period were taken note of and were incorporated into the document.

Approach of the guidance document “Topics and intervention areas of the of PA4 and PA5 relevant for coordination in the alignment of funding for the 2014-2020 MFF”

Due to the broad range of water related interventions for the next multiannual financial framework and the various stages these interventions are in various countries it is not foreseen or even practical to compile for each country and operative programme an exhaustive list of planned interventions or projects within the framework of the Priority Area. Rather the range of interventions that are relevant to be considered in programming, derived from the actions and roadmaps is to be compiled.

There are four basic aspects of relevance criteria to be met simultaneously, three of them addressed by this document:

* **time relevance**: foreseen interventions (or part of them) are to be started, coordinated or implemented during the 2014-2020 period;
* **financial relevance**: foreseen intervention need to have at least one element that needs EU (or EIB) co-financing in at least one of the participating countries;
* **co-ordination relevance**: intervention or the financing of the intervention need to be coordinated or is a part of a coordinated effort according to an action / roadmap. Please note that coordination relevance applies also to the definition of the common objectives that are written in the Action Plan and Roadmaps.

The fourth element is country relevance (linked to overall relevance or the aforementioned three aspects). As national relevance varies by countries this element is not addressed by this document and as a rule of thumb there are no country specific recommendations in this document.

Composition of the proposal

The basic category to be covered by this guidance document is a **topic / intervention** area relevant for consideration in the programming process. A topic/intervention areais a broad category that allows foreseeing the type/direction of interventions as well as the potential sector / actors involved in the intervention. It is an essential input for programmers in order to accommodate the subject within respective OPs while respecting the delineations of intervention areas between various OPs. In some cases intervention areas might be “nested”: some more detailed intervention areas might be highlighted within another intervention area. That happens when part of a broad task or legal obligation is planned in a more detailed way than the remaining elements to be unfolded later due to a later deadline or a sequential process.

In some cases **intervention areas are very wide**(i.e. framework activities, river basin management) and noted to provide “broad support” to general or framework/umbrella activities. This cannot be avoided where foreseen interventions are too numerous to be covered in programming documents or will be identified at a later stage due to the normal course of legal obligations and later deadlines. Broad support in this case covers support for the process of meeting the obligations and deadline (generally an institutional support). Attention should be provided to the timeframe of the programming procedure: when interventions are identified between 2014-2020 such interventions might also be relevant for funding before 2020.

The next category to be covered is **indicative intervention**. Indicative interventions are more concrete examples for the programmers (i.e. Update of the Sava River Basin Analysis (2nd cycle) that provide an explanation of focus on specific target groups, territories, particular themes or issues. Many of the proposals for actions and projects conform to this broad category. This is not an exhaustive list, it is indicative only.

Aside from interventions **horizontal questions**(i.e. complex green infrastructure) could be listed. These are “messages” to OPs not primarily linked to water related issues on what kind of water related cross cutting criteria and factors to be taken into account when addressing and supporting other sectorial interventions and investments.

Detailed methodology

As agreed in the 6th meeting of the Steering Group of the Priority Areas 4 and 5 the efforts of the PA4 and 5 SGs of the EU SDR are focused to delivering the PA specific content rather than meeting the technical criteria of preparing and drafting Ops. The document prepared therefore need not follow the templates for Partnership Agreements and various Operational Programmes. It should however help delineation and allocation of tasks between various OPs though by narrowing down areas in order to identify the most needed actions in the given PA. An optimal balance between narrowing and broad, flexible content is essential.

Arguments for broadening the scope:

* necessary for some major "umbrella" activities;
* unavoidable where interventions are too numerous;
* unavoidable where specific interventions are unknown (not planned yet) and not anticipated with high level of confidence.
* itprovides greater flexibility for programming, delineation and implementation options in a complex system of Operational Programmes.

Arguments for narrowing:

* some decisions on OPs in the first stage of design and adoption are restrictive in terms of future scope, so a narrower intervention might provide a higher confidence in terms of future eligibility.

Although this structure needs not to be followed throughout a process understanding the structure of an Operational Programme helps understanding what kind of input could be useful and how to prepare it. An operative programme consists in**priority axes** that are made of (hierarchic) **thematic objectives** and **investment priorities**. This determined first the underlying structure. **Specific objectives, result indicators, overview of interventions/actions and indicative interventions** as concrete examples are linked to these. To provide helpful contribution to the programming the intervention area should be the primary level of inputs. Intervention areas should be grouped by target sectors / actors / types of intervention. Broad categories are used also as "placeholders" for interventions to be determined later. Intervention areas must be complemented with both nested intervention areas (if any) and indicative interventions.

It is not needed to be supplied at this stage but **intervention areas might be complemented with specific objectives** (broad category but narrower than the axis/TO/IP). Intervention areas should “hint” at description of the type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives if defined. Indicative interventions should provide a more concrete understanding as described above.

More detailed categories, especially interventions at project level are not advised to be listed. There are many reasons for that:

* not all OPs might accommodate projects in the programme document;
* those that do can generally only include large scale projects of very specific qualities.

Please note, however, that the content of most projects proposed by partners during the programming consultation also qualify as indicative interventions.

An example of these categories using the ICPDR document of Significant Water Management Issues would be decimal level 2 and 3 (and 4) in combination typically could be used to define a specific objective. Many preliminary identified actions and coordination requirements would be roughly equivalent to intervention areas, but should be grouped foremost by sectors targeted by the actions. Multiple sectors (cross cutting areas) are also possible targeting multiple OPs or Priority Axes of an OP (various legs of interventions) or cross cutting interventions to be supported by single programmes. Results indicators (1-2 per specific objectives): can be linked to sector or objective. (Note that sometimes intermediary indicators are necessary where results are not expected to be directly measurable or attributed to intervention areas.)

**SUMMARY LISTIDENTIFYING JOINT PRIORITIES FOR EUSDR PA4**

The PA4 identified top priorities (topics) for PA4 and further discussed in the frame of the 7th Steering Group Meeting.According to the Action Plan of the EUSDR and in line with the Roadmap of PA4he following priorities shall be adopted and should be indicated in the OPs of the Danube countries according to their national priorities. Please note that provision of indication of possible cooperation models that might be used and possible more suited instruments could be envisaged for the different indicative interventions listed hereafter.The listed topics are divided according to main interventions areas and zoomed to indicative interventions as follows:

**Intervention areas** relevant from programming point of view of PA4 (top level):

1. Framework activities
2. Strengthening cooperation on sub basin level
3. Assessment and monitoring
4. Complex tasks and interventions for protection and sustainable use of water resources and aquifers
5. Address gaps in water infrastructure
6. Hydromorphological pressures
7. Information systems
8. Cross-cutting tasks
9. Scientific support

***Horizontal areas relevant to PA4 of EUSDR***

* Complex green infrastructure projects and coordinated planning (eg. in water and coast management, flood prevention, biodiversity) following a cross cutting approach (involving all affected sectors) should be encouraged in sectors contributing to the planning, use and restoration of water resources and water bodies.Such coordinated planning should always address (improve) the status of waters, hydromorphology, water resource management (quantitative and qualitative aspects) and biodiversity of water and related ecosystems.Additional interruptions in water bodies affecting sediment continuum or migratory species are to be avoided.
* Joint approach also to be ensured in a macro-regional scale in coordinating funds and activitiesrelated to the aforementioned projects, appropriately involving PA4 and its partners especially in EU DRS efforts throughout all priority areas.

In line with the listed intervention areas the following **indicative interventions** can be listed for PA4:

Intervention areas relevant for programming in Priority Area 4 (all levels, indicative interventions are listed with *italics*):

1. **Framework activities Preparation and monitoring of programmes of measures and implementation plans on a River Basin/sub-basin level[[5]](#footnote-6)**

## 1.1 Broad support to be provided to implementation of Water Framework Directive (also Reference to the Common Implementation Strategy is relevant throughout the OPs in the macro-region)

## 1.2 Broad support to addressing bottlenecks River Basin Management Planning, Joint Programme of Measures planning and review process on the basin / sub basin level. Indicative interventions:

### *2nd Morava River Management Plan*

### *Update of the Sava River Basin Analysis (2nd cycle)*

### *Preparation of the 2nd Sava River Basin Management Plan*

### *Complex ecological and hydromorphological target status for complex (intersectorial) planning*

*Developing pressure indicators*

## 1.3 Broad support on all level for RBMP, JPM and their priority interventionsto be adopted by the ICPDR on roof level and by respective countries on their level. Indicative interventions:

### *Address the bottlenecks in JPM implementation*

### *Broad support to be provided to the measures foreseen in the 2nd Danube River Basin Management Plan*

### *Implementation of the Sava RBMP*

## 1.4 Significantly strengthening cooperation on sub basin level. Indicative interventions:

## *Strong support to the process envisioned in the Tisza Group by the Ministers of the Tisza countries and in the Pro Tisza initiative*

## *Sava*

## *Prut*

# Assessment, monitoring and information systems

## 2.1 Knowledge gaps and assessment related to RBMP, PoM, review, Blueprint and significant issues or emerging issues in the 2014-2020 period. Indicative interventions:

### *Hydrological study of the Sava RB*

### 2.2 Address the significant knowledge gaps in order to enable Danube Countries to plan and assess impacts of sustainable management of Danube and tributaries’ sediment for a range of end user sectors (drinking water, flood management, biodiversity, navigation, etc.). Indicative interventions:

*Danube Sediment project*

*Project towards a sustainable sediment management in the Sava RB*

### 2.1.2 Address knowledge gaps on hydromorphology related issues and hydropeaking

## 2.2 Monitoring and preparedness. Indicative interventions:

### *Support for addressing knowledge gaps and lack of data in hazardous and emerging substances*

### *Water quality monitoring and early warning system- (Sub) basin*

### *Support for coordinated compilation of national inventories on discharges, emissions and losses*

## 2.3 Complex monitoring of water bodies. Indicative interventions:

### *Examination of biodiversity and evironmental status of sediment, water and biota in the Sava River Basin*

### 2.3.1 Complex hydroecological assessment of sub-basins*.* Indicative interventions:

*Complex Tisza Hydroecological Status Report*

## 2.4 Socioeconomic impact assessment and decision aid for complex water management planning

## 2.5 Improve information systems to support tasks of the EU SDR. Indicative interventions:

### *Sava GIS 2nd and 3rd stage*

### *Support for the improvement of consistent spatial and monitoring data for addressing the needs of planning and scientific support to the water related strategic interventions in the DR, inter alia in the context of climate change*

# Complex tasks and interventions for protection and sustainable use of water resources, bodies and aquifers (Some tasks common with PA5 and PA6)

## 3.1 Water bodies (Morphological alterations)

### 3.1.1 Implementation of sediment management plans with complex financing following the resolution of knowledge gaps (potentially part of complex interventions)

### 3.1.2 Address hydromorphological alterations and restore river continuity*.* Indicative interventions:

*Planning and implementation of fish migration aids based on common priorities*

*Furthering efforts on Iron Gate*

*Support to planning and rehabilitation of longitudinal and lateral connectivity of rivers and ecosystems (incl. wetlands and inundation zones): also see PA5 floodplain related issues*

*Morphological restructuring of modified river beds*

*Sturgeon 2020 project*

## 3.2 Aquifers. Indicative interventions:

### *Protection and sustainable use of water resources from alluvial aquifers in Sava River Basin*

*Strengthening transboundary cooperation and management by developing common conceptual models for transboundary groundwater bodies of basin wide concern.*

*Strengthening cooperation on the transboundary aquifers*

*Enhanced understanding and description of groundwater and surface water interaction – in particular concerning GW-dependent aquatic ecosystems*

### *3.2.1 Mitigate diffuse pollution from agricultural sources*

# 4. Address gaps in water infrastructure

## 4.1 Water supply

### 4.1.1 Identification of most efficient interventions to improve climate resilience of water supply systems

### 4.1.2 Establishing and upgrading water supply systems and networks to EU standards and improve climate resilience

## 4.2 Wastewater treatment and sewerage

### 4.2.1 Settlements under 10 000 PE (non-MS) and 2000PE

*Program for optimized deployment of UWWT for 10000PE-2000PE and 2000 PE> settlements*

*Planning and dissemination*

*optimized development framework*

*Pilot projects for 2000 PE> UWWT investments*

### 4.2.2 Establishing and upgrading UWWT systems and networks to EU standards, reduce organic pollution

*Introduction of nutrient reduction in existing and new UWWTPs*

### 4.2.3 Upgrade of the sewerage network

# 5. Cross-cutting tasks*.* Indicative interventions:

### *Sediment Balance Project*

### *System for collection, treatment and disposal for hazardous waste on Sava river (follow-up for CO-WANDA)*

### *Master Plan for the development of Eco-Tourism in the Sava RB*

1. GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting, Luxembourg, 22 October 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The European Structural and Investment Funds include the following funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Under the new financial rules, Member States are required to draw up and implement **strategic plans with investment priorities** covering these five ESI Funds. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. **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 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006; **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 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Please note that a separate set of documents are being prepared for the programming experts of the Danube countries. The PA4 and PA5 experts note that this kind of priority setting methodology is unique and believe that it can be used as a model for other priority areas as well. This model will cover the envisioned or potentialcooperation models for the respective interventions as well as the appropriate stage of coordination. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Especially related to the 2nd RBMP in some EUSDR countries and a broad support for the preparation of the 3rd RBMP in all countries [↑](#footnote-ref-6)