

THEMATIC ISSUES

for the professional content of the first EU macro-regional strategies' workshop on Water

As the EU macro-regional strategies have put many efforts in the development of the significantly different parts of the regions, it is tangible to exchange experience on similar challenges.

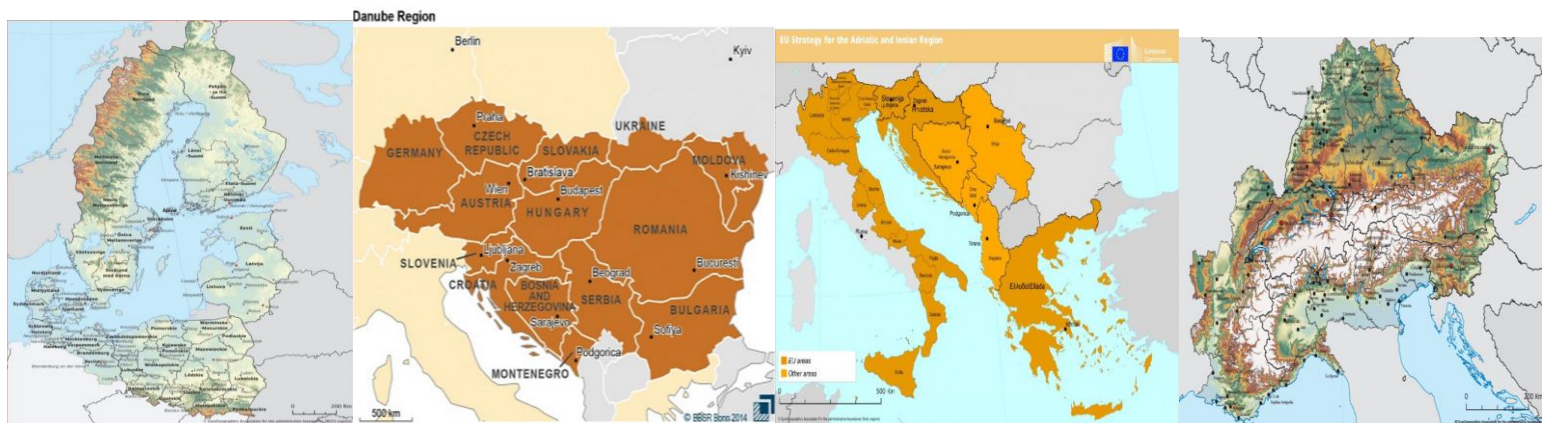
The **EU Strategy for the Danube Region** “Water quality” priority area (EUSDR PA4) has come up with an idea to initiate a discussion with the water experts across the EU macro-regional strategies – **Baltic Sea Region, Adriatic and Ionian, Alpine**, seeing a great potential in sharing the existing experience, facilitating networking and joining forces in addressing water related policy support measures.

As a first step, the EUSDR PA4 coordinators in cooperation with **Interact Programme** propose the **first get-together of experts working on water related issues within the EU macro-regional strategies**.

The workshop is aiming to introduce and exchange experience on water related activities, as addressed under the relevant thematic priorities of the EU macro-regional strategies, outline and discuss primary challenges, exchange best practices and lessons learnt. Furthermore, the objective of the workshop is to identify common issues, challenges, results and solutions in which all the Strategies are interested. Additionally, it will explore needs and ways of potential continuous cooperation across the experts of the EU macro-regional strategies on water related issues in the future.

We foresee that the outcomes of the workshop would be compiled in a summary note describing the identified common issues and experiences as well as priorities and potential for further exchange. Conclusions from the discussions would contribute to preparing a work plan for potential future activities across the EU macro-regional strategies.

The workshop will be opened by a joint session inviting experts from the macro-regions to share their experiences and lessons learnt (challenges and successes). The central part of the workshop



will be devoted to moderated round table discussions and followed up with a wrap-up session on the potential for closer coordination and cooperation across the EU macro-regions.

The presentations of the EU macro-regional strategies should give an overview on the experience of coordinators: challenges, goals and achieved solutions in the macro-regional strategy's thematic areas. We kindly encourage thematic coordinators to specifically focus on **water related priorities, actions** and **measures** established and used, **milestones**, roadmaps, concrete project examples; **financing** in the current period and beyond 2020; **governance** including decision making, cooperation, tackling members participation.

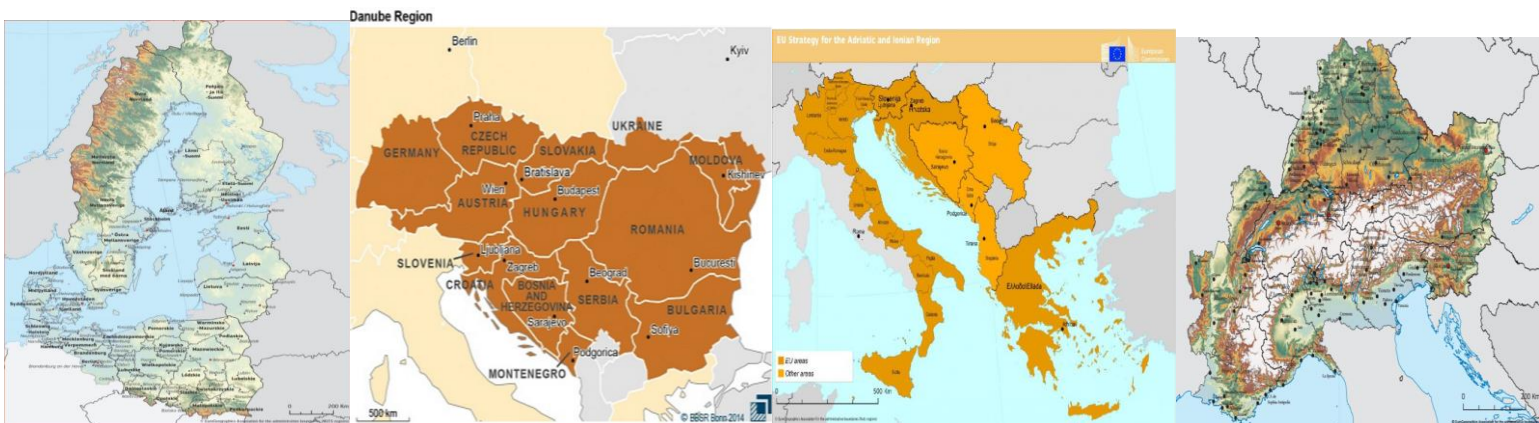
In particular, the workshop would focus on **freshwater related matters and common freshwater marine problems** (e.g. nitrates, plastic pollution, migratory species and adaptation to climate change). We have listed a number of topics that would be given specific attention during the presentations and round table discussions:

1) Water quality

- All regions are suffering from different kind of pollutions. From the organic and nutrient pollution to the hazardous substances the main goal is reduction of pollution, or in some cases, the ban of toxic matters in freshwaters.
- Plastic (macro- and micro-) pollution is an emerging contamination source. Both solid plastics and particles ones cause lots problem for water quality and, built-up in food-chain, for biodiversity as well.
- Integrated and smart water resources management has high relevance in all regions. Planning and raising awareness in macro-regional level about natural water retention, water use needs in relation to water demand and supply and their effects on water quality as well as price and value of water are significant challenges.

2) Environmental risks

- Droughts and water scarcity are affecting more and more different areas of Europe at least seasonally. The most affected regions could provide their best available practices of forecasting and experience.
- Flood events and their damaging consequences have high relevance in all regions. In mountainous regions flash-floods, in low-land areas large floods are causing many harmful events. Prevention, forecast techniques and/or eco-friendly solutions, like water retention on floodplain areas, are good bases for exchanging experiences and moreover are suitable to comply with 2000/60 WFD and 2007/60 FD EU Directives, too.



3) Biodiversity

- Freshwater availability, both quality and quantity, are inevitable conditions for restoring and maintaining biodiversity. There are many solutions for assuring and conserving biodiversity, but it is sure that achieving good status of freshwaters and transitional waters is one of the most important conditions of conservation.
- Water related ecosystems are key elements of nature conservation. They are very sensitive to the lack of water and to changes in water quality. Despite the methodological suggestions found in EU CIS Guidance Document No. 31 (on Ecological flows in the implementation of the WFD) there are very limited practice in calculation and application of ecological water flow.
- Migratory fish species, like sturgeon, the flagship species of the Danube river are losing their living space with hydromorphological changes in rivers like the breaking of longitudinal continuity. Measures to improve the situation could however be established.

Climate change puts an additional layer on the risks threatening good water quality and quantity. Measures and actions to adapt to climate change could increase resilience of macro-regions and reduce the negative effects and assist in solving challenges occurring in all three categories above.