

MEASURING THE ADDED-VALUE OF THE EUSDR – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) endorsed in 2011 by the European Council. With its introduction, a new type of cooperation arose in the Danube Region. The cooperation's main goals are to better connect the region, protect the environment, build prosperity and strengthen institutional capacity and security.

In the last decades, the Danube Region underwent considerable changes following the downfall of the Iron Curtain, the Balkan and Kosovo wars, the European enlargements in 2004 and 2007, just to name the most important ones. Drawing on diplomatic-political cooperation (e.g. Danube Cooperation Process), cooperation bodies addressing specific issues (e.g. Danube Commission), and various EU (structural) funds initiatives, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region presents the first cooperation initiative targeting this perimeter in a range of fields of cooperation with a comprehensive aspiration.

Macro-regionalization means to develop solutions in the course of ongoing cooperation. Based on the three No's regarding new EU budgets, EU institutions and EU regulations, the EUSDR is characterized by a flexible set-up, bottom-up elements, and a sector centered governance in Priority Areas. The cooperation is based on non-binding documents setting out joint strategic goals. Macro-regional cooperation brought a new mindset into regional cooperation moving alongside other arenas of cooperation and combining political, operational and administrative elements.

Against the background of an EU wide macro-regional dynamic, and the initiation of discussions on EU Cohesion policies post-2014, the future role of EU macro-regional strategies (MRS) is under discussion more than ever (Gänzle & Kern 2015, Sielker 2016). After five years of implementation, it is time to take stock of the current achievements and question the role the EUSDR for the Danube region. This process is closely related to the question which role MRS can take over in the wider EU framework and how they can be better linked to Cohesion Policies and other territorial cooperation formats. Nevertheless, the strength of the macro-regional cooperation so far was to allow a sui-generis development of this concept.

First attempts to evaluate the added-value date back to the 2013 internal evaluation on macro-regional governance by the European Commission (COM 2013) and the revision of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy in 2012/2013. Most recently, the European Commission and Interact have launched a series of studies and workshops to explore ways to measure the added value of MRS and to position them in the wider EU context. This comprises in particular the monitoring of indicators and targets in the Baltic Sea Region (Spatial Foresight 2016) and the initiative to identify Best Practice Examples in the framework of the Danube and Baltic Sea Region macro-regional strategies (e.g. study launched by Interact).

In the course of this ongoing process, the European Commission (DG REGIO) took the initiative to launch a participatory workshop, which was organised with the support of the Danube Strategy Point in October 2016. The EUSDR's participatory workshop is aimed to initiate a discussion with the macro-regional stakeholders on evaluation and measuring the added-value of the EUSDR. The objective of the workshop was to better understand what added-value the macro-regional strategy has brought to the Danube Region and, in particular, to discuss ways forward to measure and evaluate these achievements. The workshop was attended by National Coordinators, Priority Area Coordinators, Representatives of the Permanent Representations to the EU of several countries, funding programme representatives, European Commission representatives, consultants, academic experts and the Danube Strategy Point. The European Commission's initial statement by Andrea Mairate highlighted the Workshops goal to identify ways forward to, first, monitor the development of the region, second, to monitor EUSDR related activities and the action plan, and third, to identify how the strategy contributes to the development of the region.

The workshop focussed on participatory elements to identify stakeholders' needs and views towards approaching the exercise of evaluation. This discussion paper, presented in an earlier version at the workshop, is part of this process, and aims to provoke discussions on the wider added-values of the strategies and initiate discussion about the characteristics of EUSDR evaluation, involvement of further stakeholders such as ESPON and JRC, who presented platforms, and tools to support monitoring activities.

Following the introduction, we present slightly provocative postulates to stimulate discussions – one postulate focusses on the evaluation challenge as such, three postulates concentrate on the specific added value in MRS contexts. We conclude with a view on possible future steps.

POSTULATE 1: MEASURING THE EUSDR SUCCESS IS A CHALLENGE SUI GENERIS

The EUSDR has invoked a number of developments since its endorsement in 2011. Implementation within the Priority Areas started in 2011/2012. New political developments such as the Danube Parliamentarian Conferences or the Danube Ministers meetings are just examples for the current dynamic. Moreover, EU funding schemes now explicitly refer to MRS. One of the funding schemes, the new Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020 integrating ERDF, ENI and IPA funds covers this particular region. It launched its first call in autumn 2015. Already the first Annual Forum in Regensburg attracted several hundred participants, illustrating the vivid participation and human resources dedicated to this new cooperation. Since then, the Annual Forums have become a major landmark in the strategy's life, not only in terms of number of participants but also because this demonstrate growing interest from the stakeholders in the ground. In 2015, the Danube Strategy Point was set up. The task is to better steer the process and support the Priority Area Coordinators and the European Commission, as well as the National Coordinators. Amongst others, it should also support and facilitate the discussions on the evaluation model for the EUSDR.

These different types of activities indicate that through the EUSDR existing ways of cooperation changed, new stakeholders were involved and that a new dynamic has developed. Without a doubt, the EUSDR has led to a higher visibility of activities and bottlenecks of political and territorial cooperation.

Targets of the EUSDR were concretized in the first year of implementation by the Priority Areas and were revised in the first half of 2016. Table 1 summarizes the comprehensive ambitions of

the EUSDR: 4 pillars and 12 policy areas of cooperation pave the way towards implementation. 57 concrete targets are defined on the level of the Priority Areas (PA):

EUSDR Objectives			
Objective 1 Connecting the Region	Objective 2 Protecting the Environment	Objective 3 Strengthening the Region	Objective 4 Building Prosperity
PA 1a – Mobility - Inland Waterways	PA 4 – Water quality	PA 7 – Knowledge Society	PA 10 – Institutional Capacity
Increase cargo by 20 % by 2020 compared to 2010	Achieve Objectives of Danube River Basin management Plan	Increase effectiveness of investment in R&I through min. 2 coordinated activities dedicated to EUSDR	Improve World Bank governance indicators in comparison to 2011
Solve obstacles to navigability of the Danube and its tributaries and establish effective waterway infrastructure management by 2020	Reduce nutrient levels	Increase no. of EPO and PCT patent applications by 20 % by 2020 filed from Danube Region	80 % of EUSDR countries involve national, regional and local authorities, as well as CSOs through national EUSDR consultations
Develop efficient multimodal terminals by 2020	Elaborate Danube Delta Analysis Report and complete Data management Plan	Enhance regional research and education co-operation to reach 20 % academic mobility in region by 2020	UPDR of UPDR stakeholders organizations involved, and at least one Urban Danube Project
Implement River Information System and exchange of data by 2020	Secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species	Increase annual co-publications by 15 % by 2020	Increase average absorption rate of EU funds in comparison to 2007-2013
Solve shortage of qualified personnel and harmonize education standards	Elaborate and implement sub-basin management plans for Sava, Tisza and Prut	Develop RIS 3 by 2020 in all Danube countries	
PA 1b – Mobility-Rail, Road and Air	PA 5 – Environmental Risks	PA 8 – Competitiveness	PA 11 – Security
Support efficient freight railway services and improved travel times	Address challenges of water scarcity and droughts and climate adaptation	Improve innovation and technology transfer by new measures by consulting services by chambers etc.	Enhance police cooperation to improve security and tackling serious and organized crime as well as strengthening efforts against terrorism threats
Support fully functional multi-modal TEN-T Core Network Corridors by 2030	Support implementation of Danube Flood Risk Management Plan to achieve significant reduces of flood risks by 2021	Establish Cluster network focusing on bio-based industries and analysis of smart specialization strategies	Develop strategic long-term cooperation between law enforcement actors by 2020
Support improvement of efficient multimodal terminals at sea, river and dry ports and ensure connectivity and integration by 2030	Update database of accident risk spots	Improve technological knowledge and implementation of environmental technologies through best-practices in the area of e.g. sewage treatment, solid waste management	Improve border control systems, document inspection management
Improved regional air connectivity and implementation of Single European Sky initiative		Improve capacity building to enhance competitiveness in rural areas and agricultural sector	Promote rule of law and fight corruption
Facilitate improvement of secondary and tertiary roads		Best practices models and pilot projects for vocational training	
Support safe and sustainable transport and mobility		Improve entrepreneurship education, in SMEs through lifelong entrepreneurial learning system in line with SBA for Europe	
		Improve business support of SMEs for international cooperation	
PA 2 – Sustainable Energy	PA 6 – Biodiversity, landscapes, quality of fair and soils	PA 9 – People and Skills	
Help achieve national targets for 2030 climate and energy targets	Halt the deterioration of status of all species and habitats by 2020	Contribute to higher employment rate tackling youth and long-term unemployment	
Remove bottlenecks in energy to fulfil Energy Union goals	Establish green infrastructure and restoration of 15 % of degraded ecosystems by 2020	Improve educational outcomes and skills	
Better interconnect by joint activities	Identify and eradicate invasive alien species and prevent new establishments by 2020	Increase higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market	
	Secure viable populations of Danube sturgeons and other indigenous fish species by 2020	Closer cooperation between educational, training and labour market and research institutions	
PA 3 – Culture, tourism, people to people			
Develop a Danube Brand			
Implement harmonized monitoring system of tourism data			
Develop cultural routes			
Develop green tourist products			
Create a “blue Book” on Danube cultural identity			
Ensure preservation of cultural heritage and natural values by networks and clusters			
Promote exchange and networking in contemporary arts			

These targets are operationally broken down into concrete actions that are in some cases broken down into milestones. Only by having a look on these objectives, the challenge of monitoring the success of the EUSDR is obvious. Up-to-date evaluation conducts sophisticated analyses that differentiates needs, objectives, results, and outputs (cp. DG Regio 2011, Gaffey 2013). However, applying this system to MRS would mean that MRS are as consistent as the programming documents of funding programs which is not the case. In particular, the targets do not argue on the same level of concretization. Some targets can easily be measured (e.g. “rise of annual co-publications by 15 %”), others might still be operationalized with regard to quantifiable outcome (e.g. “fight corruption”). Second, in many cases a concrete schedule or deadline has not been defined but depends on political dynamics and opportunities. Third, there is no “input” defined with regard to the targets – following the three no’s, the quality and quantity of resources is left open. Very obviously, a simple input-output-analysis cannot be sufficient with regard to measuring the EUSDR success. Instead, a more open and flexible approach has to be developed that respects the still fuzzy and complex character of the EUSDR implementation process.

Evaluating MRS might have some parallels to European cooperation programmes (cf. INTERACT Programme 2012). But again, the differences are considerable: cooperation programmes have a fixed time frame; they have a predefined budget; the institutional procedure is much more experienced. Due to the open, soft, and dynamic character of MRS, the analytical lens needs to be chosen careful. This is even truer for the Danube case, where five years of implementation are still a short period, and where the political and territorial diversity is enormous, and the activities are strongly routed in processual, evolutionary elements.

Evaluating the achievements of the goals set, as a recurring exercise, as well as revising the strategy set-up as periodic exercise, necessarily need to draw on the Priority Areas involved in the strategy. Evaluating and monitoring the EUSDR needs on the one hand to monitor the progress and the political commitment to achieve the targets set in each Priority Area. On the other hand, the contribution of the Priority Area to the overall EUSDRs aims and visions should be detected.

Measuring the impact and added-value of the strategy and monitoring the regional changes draw upon a wider set of influences. Whereas the identification of the territorial monitoring can as well be linked to the political strategies goals and priority areas, measuring the added-value of the strategy remains a complex endeavor.

Setting-up a measuring systems means as well to identify the ambition of the Danube macro-region and its strategy. Hence, we approach the macro-regional characteristics, with their specific potentials and added-value via three postulates. We than present short illustrative boxes in an attempt to identifying ways to measure these wider implications.

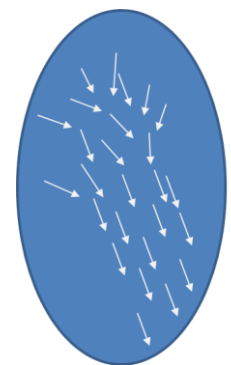
THE OBJECTS TO MEASURING: POTENTIALS AND ADDED-VALUE

POSTULATE 2: “THE STRATEGIC DIMENSION IS THE ADDED-VALUE”

It is not by accident, that macro-regional strategies are entitled *strategies*: The overall political objective is to increase cooperation in order to develop towards a more competitive and sustainable region within Europe. Regional development is influenced by a multiplicity of overlapping layers of cooperation, and an important potential of MRS is the long-term, content-based, and cross-sectoral approach.

In the case of the EUSDR, transnational cooperation focusses on policy fields of common strategic importance, like in particular inland waterway maintenance, labour market, security, or economic relations. In order to achieve long-term goals and a sustainable development of the Danube Region, strategic orientation is the key to make a difference. In the Danube region, this type of cooperation, with their strategic, visionary components was completely new on this scale. This certainly led to the enlargement of networks, a better understanding of the challenges and to a better visibility of ongoing activities. All in all, this lead to the recognition of the region as a political arena. Much of the added-value of the Danube cooperation within the first five years is of soft or fuzzy characteristics. These fuzzy characteristics are an advantage and a challenge at the same time. Thus, in further implementing the macro-regional process, the following points gain importance:

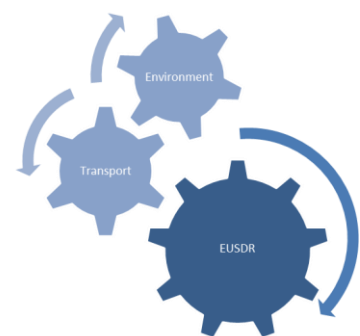
The EUSDR should keep and further develop its strategic orientation: With its guiding documents, the strategy and the Action Plan, the EUSDR provides a strategic stimulus to an overall, common goal. The added-value of these documents is the potential to coordinate policies and a wide range of implementation activities that contribute to the achievement of the overall goals concretised in pillars and targets (see table above). The challenge is to steer the implementation of the wide diversity of activities, ideas and projects where the strategy can give guidance. In general, a strategic orientation must be concrete enough to be worked towards, and open enough to allow political progress. Formulating visions and scenarios can be a helpful tool in triggering the debate and further develop the strategic orientation.



Own elaboration based on Wiechmann 2008

The EUSDR links the political with programmes and projects: The added-value of the EUSDR is that it links at the same time political goals with concrete project activities and their stakeholders, and the respective funding sources. The challenge is to ‘translate’ the strategic aims, which are hence one important element of MRS implementation, and to ensure political commitment for these activities. This includes a strong political element, which necessarily draws on other levels. MRS are neither funding programs nor projects themselves, and they do not intend to replace any of them. On the contrary, in order to achieve its strategic targets, implementation activities need to link the political with the projects. The key is to further develop the strategic goals and closely interact with all political levels and actors to bring projects and policies closer together.

EUSDR means cross-sectoral coordination: MRS formulate objectives that focus on different policy fields (transport, environment, innovation, ...). These objectives suggest a strong sectoral implementation as the key to achieving the macro-regional goals. However, the coordination of these sectoral issues with regard to the overall aim is as well important; the EUSDR objectives have to be embedded in existing policy frameworks; on the EU but as well on the national levels. The challenge is, however, that so far the Priority Areas pursue implementation activities somewhat detached from one another, even if cooperation increased over the last couple of years.



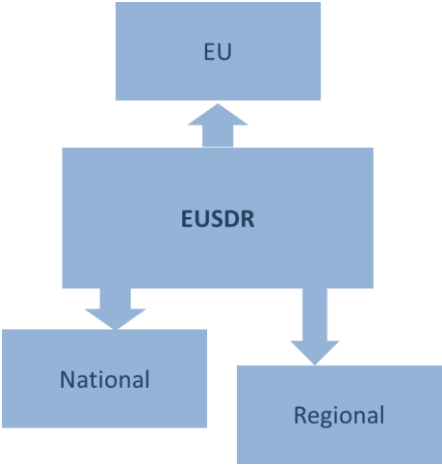
Own elaboration

One example is the coordination of needs in logistics and shipping at the Danube River where the Priority Area 1a and Priority Area 11 have cooperated with regard to administrative

documentation. This is just a small operational example where coordination between the Priority Areas is an added-value of the strategy and thereby contributing as much to the achievement of the objectives of PA1a (increase cargo transport) as well as to PA 11 (improve border control systems). The macro-regional idea to tackle functional challenges in the same geographic area inherently needs cross-sectoral coordination alongside strategic goals.

The EUSDR implementation is a multi-level challenge:

Currently, the focus lies much on the strategic orientation of European politics, including the mobilisation of funding for EUSDR implementation, which means on the EU level in particular Cohesion and ETC funds. This is also true for the CEF funds, where a full alignment is not in place yet. At the same time, the interface with regional and national politics is less prominent. Enhancing the multi-level character of the EUSDR remains a challenge. During the past five years of developing the EUSDRs governance, the identification of joint objectives and the start of discussion around transnational projects is an added-value in itself. In the coming years, the activities might go further: In order to fully use the MRS potential, the links with the national and international policies could be strengthened, in particular by linking planning documents and domestic funding programs systematically to EUSDR objectives. This however is a politically challenging multi-level task due to the national different priorities.



Own elaboration

Strategic approaches provide an added-value to the EUSDR by allowing cooperation between different levels, different policies, different stakeholders and balancing implementation activities under the guidance of long-term objectives.

Added value	Measurement
Strategic orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative shifts of the political agendas ▪ Updates of the EUSDR visions and targets ▪ Change of mind set of civil servants (self-assessment/questionnaires) ▪ Number of new initiatives
Linking the political with programmes and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integration of MRS objectives in domestic and European documents/projects, in particular regarding sectoral policies ▪ Alignment of funding, e.g. by domestic and European investments implicitly referring to EUSDR objectives ▪ Number of strategic projects
Cross-sectoral coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Horizontal coordination activities ▪ Joint activities and projects ▪ Number of actors, networks, meetings, projects with reference to EUSDR objectives ▪ Identification of policy coherence
Multi-level governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of ownership and leadership at all levels ▪ Participation of all levels ▪ Involvement of upper and lower political stakeholders, e.g. the ministers meeting ▪ Citizen engagement

POSTULATE 3: “THE PLACE-BASEDNESS IS THE ADDED-VALUE”

MRS are explicitly perceived as “laboratories of a new place-based approach to Cohesion policies” (EP 2015), i.e. they are meant to tackle specific goals in the region, and thereby concretise the EU’s overall goals. The focus on place-based strategies is very much interlinked

with the drive towards smart specialisation – both approaches certainly aim to turn territorial diversity into strengths in support of the EU 2020 strategies and other pan-European strategies. The EUSDR certainly helps to *prevent a ‘one-size-fits-all-approach’* and, instead, considers the territorial characteristics. The strategy is based on the political priorities. So far, many activities have addressed the challenges and potentials related to the Danube river (e.g. navigation). Moreover, transport bottlenecks, facilitating economic cooperation and intensifying civil society exchanges have been important activities ‘on the ground’. The coming years might have a close look on the regional diversity, disparities, and on the very specific and place-bound types of cooperation.

MRS are described as place-based as the core of macro-regional cooperation is to address the functional challenges of the region. It is true that this approach is unique in the context of European territorial cooperation and European strategies in general. However, implementing a place-based approach needs to go further. A place-based approach in the context of territorial cooperation necessarily has two sides of a coin: the institutional and the territorial side.

The institutional setting of the EUSDR is open to bottom-up and territorially anchored activities. In that sense, a place-based approach necessarily is *stakeholder-based*. The successful roll-out of regional policies relies to a great extent on the relationship with stakeholders (Sielker 2016). In the case of MRS, without the impetus of own funds, they reveal a strong dependence on relatively strong stakeholders. There is no such thing as ‘objective’ regional priorities. Hence, the macro-regionalisation tends to strengthen those stakeholders to whom the results are favourable to. Therefore, MRS need to better acknowledge their stakeholder-driven approach. This could in return enhance the stakeholder involvement. *Decentralised decision-making* is certainly an efficient way towards using the potential of endogenous potentials. It is important to directly involve stakeholders from all scales of the multi-level governance system as they often know best the endogenous potentials and they can help to secure efficient implementation activities. Within the EUSDR, particularly transnational cooperation formats focussing on policy-issues have found their place in the strategies, often as observers to the Steering Groups. Interestingly, political-diplomatic cooperation, such as the Central Europe Initiative or the formerly the Danube Cooperation Process (last meeting in 2007), have a less clearly defined link to the EUSDR.

The territorial diversity of the EUSDR is enormous, and needs to be taken into account. *Evidence based* policy is a promising basis towards place-based developments: It is important to understand the specific potentials and challenges that are geographically differentiated to a high extent. The macro-regional monitoring system of the Baltic Sea Region might be a prominent example in this respect, even if the link to the specific MRS objectives is a more indirect one.

Added value	Measurement
Place-basedness – the territorial side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification and awareness of regional bottlenecks, e.g. via self-estimation of Steering Groups or reference in EU and national policy documents. ▪ Influence of improved knowledge on regional characteristics and interrelations in policy-making, e.g. through a territorial monitoring ▪ Evidence-based decision-making, e.g. in projects decisions by funding programmes
Place-basedness – the institutional side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement of key stakeholders ▪ Number of (new) regional stakeholders contributing the implementation process

POSTULATE 4: “THE INTEGRATIVE DYNAMIC IS THE ADDED-VALUE”

MRS are located at the transnational level where they have triggered a remarkable political dynamic. They have developed as a new level of European integration, involving EU member states and regions, third countries, and EU institutions. This is a contrast to the development in the past decades, when European integration has mostly been debated on the Pan-European level with regard to a) the division of labour between the domestic, the multi-lateral and the supranational level (multi-level governance), and b) with regard to third countries and new member states. Macro-regional cooperation is integrative in a threefold way: politically, institutionally, and territorially:

The *political* integration is closely linked to the strategic function of MRS: They provide a joint document addressing concrete fields for cooperation. Here, the political novelty lies in the joint effort within the Danube Region to target common priorities. This prioritisation is an added-value and gives a guideline as to the allocation of funds and has enhanced the political commitment towards certain policy fields. The new conference for the Danubian Parliamentarians shows the regional integration on the political level. The two Danubian Declarations by the transport ministers and by the environment ministers are an example for this new level of political integration. Nevertheless, the challenge is that these impetuses do not remain rhetorical exercises. Other examples would include a better alignment of macro-regional objectives with national strategies.

Through its governance structure, new cooperation between the different stakeholders has been initiated. This relates as well to high-level politicians who attend the Annual Forums, the ministers’ meetings or the representation of ministerial representatives in the Steering Groups. Most importantly, through the Steering Groups a new level of *institutional integration* was achieved within the Danube region. The Steering Groups provide the links between the operational implementation and the national ministries. They are the first networks of this kind to link ministries within the region in a coordinated and organised way. Through the Priority Area Coordinators a kind of ‘secretariats’ and ‘voices’ of this thematic cooperation have been developed. The institutional integration is particularly strong regarding the administrative and political stakeholders in the EUSDR. Depending on the Priority Areas, the link with regard to operationally active stakeholders could be further exploited.

The political and institutional dynamic certainly is a positive trend. At the same time, the macro-regional level is a complex platform and not all stakeholders are capable of using this new level for agenda-setting or have the financial means to participate in the various meetings all over the Danube Region. Some networks have enlarged and gained new interest groups, or are better connected within the regions; others are under pressure. The visibility of the networks involved has increased and was upscaled; for others, the *raison d’être* is currently discussed. It is important to develop a sustainable institutional setting that insures broad participation and allows efficient procedures.

The *territorial* integration of the region comes along with the political and institutional dynamic. It is hence at the same time a goal for cooperation as it represents an added-value, and it is a driving force for political and institutional dynamic. Territorial integration is first reflected by processes of convergence, which is one of the main goals of cohesion policies. Secondly, territorial integration means increased spatial dynamic across borders. This can exemplarily be reflected by the environmental status. The added value of the strategy may be the coordination of activities by environmental organisations. Another example is the connectivity within the

region, which exemplary can be measured by the number of trade goods shipped within the region or multimodal accessibility.

Added-value	Measurement
Political integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New discourse elements and story lines referring the EUSDR objectives ▪ No. of ministers meeting and effect of ministers declaration, e.g. via self-estimation
Institutional integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Setting up a joint Danubian territorial monitoring system ▪ Macro-regional institutional cooperation, e.g. no. of joint projects and website views ▪ Pro-active involvement of all Steering Group members, e.g. via monitoring of participation. ▪ Civil servants' sense of ownership and leadership as well as the change of mindsets of key stakeholders ▪ Number of regional stakeholders contributing to the implementation process ▪ Number of people participating in education programmes, exchange programmes as well as scientific or cultural exchange, e.g. in Danube Rectors Conference activities, PA 7 activities regarding the goal 'enhance regional research and education co-operation'
Territorial integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Influence of improved knowledge on regional characteristics and interrelations in policy-making, e.g. via monitoring of indicators such as GDP per capita, employment rate, HDI, volume of illegal discharges, volume of intra-regional trade goods ▪ Spatial dynamics across borders, e.g. increased accessibility ▪ Coordination of activities by environmental organisations ▪ Convergence, measuring e.g. the variation coefficient of multiple indicators.

RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOP AND WAYS FORWARD

The discussion has shown that macro-regional cooperation has brought political, institutional, territorial, and policy specific achievements. This wide variety of changes shows that some added-values are better measurable than others. The combination of evaluating 'soft' achievements and identifying measurable indicators is a challenge in the MRS context.

If we follow the arguments provided by the discussions around the particularities of MRS, we have to consider that introducing an evaluation system inevitably affects the focus of activities. This raises the question which dynamic and added-value is it that leads to EUSDR countries' commitment.

Existing examples of evaluation and monitoring in the EU context show the range of opportunities. The first macro-regional strategy in the EU in the Baltic Sea Region has addressed the question of monitoring of the overall development of the region by means of an ESPON Project. The BSR_TeMO project (Territorial Monitoring for the Baltic Sea Region) aims to support evidence-based policy making by developing an indicator system for the territorial development. One goal of this system was to understand territorial cohesion processes within the Baltic Sea Region in general. This project, however, provides background information only on the overall development and is not directly linked to the EUSBR activities and priorities.

For the EUSDR, the challenge is now to identify the preferred system to tackle the challenge. In this process, the following questions should be addressed:

1. What is the purpose of the evaluation?

Evaluation can serve the purpose of providing a better understanding of processes, control achievements, induce dialogue or provide legitimacy. The interest in evaluation varies by

stakeholders and levels. For the EUSDR the workshop indicated that stakeholders pursue a diversity of purposes including learning about the implementation process, to revise and further develop the EUSDRs institutional setting. The recent the revision of the PA's targets is just one example on how the insights of monitoring can be fed into political processes. The question on developing the mandates of the PAs, the governance structures, and the way how the three 'no's' can be dealt with, are just further examples. Monitoring is also a helpful tool in *positioning* the achieved success in contexts which are not directly part of the EUSDR. This can also help to convince less informed and/or engaged stakeholders. This purpose is predominantly of external character.

2. What exactly is object to evaluation and monitoring?

The postulates presented above already give an idea of the complexity of measuring the success, added-value and concrete achievements of macro-regional cooperation. The diversity of achievements will be a challenge to evaluate within a comprehensive system. Therefore, the coming months need to answer the question what shall be the object to evaluation. In general, the evaluation process should reflect on the diversity of achievements. Input, activities, and outputs have carefully to be concretised by means of indicators.

In the context of the EUSDR, the Priority Areas and the different countries show very different frameworks, and their contributions to EUSDR achievement need to be contextualised. The Priority Areas have developed their own targets as part of the bottom-up approach of the macro-regional framework. These targets hence, are in one way or the other guidance as to the aspiration of the EUSDR countries in these policy fields. The workshop highlighted that most aspects have to be treated on the EUSDR level, while others have to position issues on the European level, sometimes a comparative perspective of the existing MRS can be helpful.

3. What is the timeframe for evaluation and monitoring?

Within the framework of macro-regional cooperation a differentiation in short, middle-and long-term results may be one way forward to analyse the different dynamics. Whereas political developments often lead to a better integration in a long-term perspective, activities within the Priority Areas may address short-term implementation activities.

4. Monitoring on which level?

Within the EUSDR, measuring and evaluation can be employed in the Priority Areas, on the EUSDR level as such, in the national countries and in relation to other EU programmes. The governance structure of the EUSDR provides by itself different levels. The role of the DSP, the NCs, the PACs, the SG and the EC in terms of evaluation need to be clarified. One question to ask is, whether the EUSDR wants to make use of other EU programmes and institutions, such as the JRC or ESPON as a way to implement the activities.

5. How to evaluate?

The tools for evaluation and measuring depend on the formerly asked questions. This may vary in the concreteness, in the use of an indicator-based programme, the methods used (e.g. self-evaluation versus external evaluation, score-boards vs. qualitative, etc.). More detailed questions like what timeframes in monitoring would be most appropriate, what share of self-assessment and external evaluation, and which concrete tools (benchmarking, score-boards, qualitative shift mapping etc.) have hardly been discussed.

The participatory workshop aimed to initiate the discussions about ways forward to evaluating and measuring the added-value of the EUSDR.

The participants of the workshop widely welcomed the call for evaluation and monitoring of the macro-regional results and added-values despite, or maybe even because of the macro-regional complexity cutting across existing funding logics, governance levels and sectors. However, the workshop discussions revealed diverging stakeholders expectations towards the developments ahead. In short, the workshop has highlighted the need for a multifaceted approach to evaluation and measuring in order to grasp the macro-regional achievements and to make use of this momentum to enhance the EUSDR's efficiency. Most notably the four strands of debate discussed were the measuring of the impact and added value, the monitoring of changes within the region, the evaluation of achievements of the targets set, and the revision of the strategy:

1. *Measuring the impact and added-value of the MRS*: The EUSDR is considered to have brought new dynamics towards a more effective policy-making and cooperation into the Danube Region. Measuring this often 'intangible' added-values of the strategy is a challenge, but considered as a vital part of this new type of cooperation.
2. *Monitoring of changes within the region*: Observing the general developments within the regions via a territorial monitoring was deemed as an important measure to keep track of regional developments, such as GDP per capita, multimodal potential accessibility or gross expenditures on R&D or soil sealing. ESPON can provide the scientific platform for implementation and DG JRC can provide support with the database within its DSRDI platform.
3. *Evaluation of the achievements of the goals set, and activities within the Priority Areas*: Evaluating the progress of the EUSDR and its Priority Areas is considered as important. The implementation of the EUSDR is based on Priority Areas, which have revised their targets in the first half of 2016. As illustrated above the targets set differ in their concreteness, which depends on the different policy fields as well as on the political ambitions. This measure is strongly related to the EUSDR governance.
4. *Revision of the strategy set-up and governance*: Apart from evaluation and the measuring of the achievements of the strategy, particularly stakeholders involved in the macro-regional governance such as some Priority Area Coordinators and National Coordinators suggested that this momentum could be used to launch a debate on the revision of the strategy. Such an exercise could reconsider whether all Priority Areas are needed, targets are accurately set and identify ways to increase effectiveness.

The EUSDR's activities depend on the Priority Areas, the supports from the national level and the coordination with other programmes and policies on the EU level. As a result, the question what is measured and how it is measured in order to evaluate the macro-regional progress is an on-going discussion, which necessarily needs to involve all relevant stakeholders and acknowledge the diversity of processes, which are taking place under the macro-regional roof.

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