

EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Invitation to submit an offer

Evaluation of the effectiveness, communication and stakeholder involvement of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)



Table of content

1. Background and context.....	1
2. Awarding procedure.....	2
3. Specification of services	2
Governance/operational evaluation	2
4. Evaluation questions	2
a. Methods and available data	3
b. Time schedule and coordination	3
5. Required qualifications of the evaluation experts and award criteria.....	3
6. Required content of the offer	4

1. Background and context

The Danube Strategy Point is a Secretariat of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (henceforth to be referred to as “EUSDR” or “the Strategy”). Following the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the EU Strategy is macro-regional strategy (MRS), which was proposed by the Commission in 2010¹, adopted by the Council of the European Union and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. A 'Macro-regional strategy' is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment 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.

The EU Funding Agency of the City of Vienna, as the lead partner of the project “Danube Strategy Point” (DSP), carries out procurements of external services needed to support and enhance the governance and implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. As a project of the Danube Transnational Programme, the DSP works in close cooperation with the European Institutions, especially the European Commission /DG Regio, the National Coordinators and the Priority Area Coordinators of the countries participating in the EUSDR.

The DSP has elaborated an evaluation plan, which sets out the evaluation approach for the entire period of the existence of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, taking into account existing reports, studies, and academic literature on the EUSDR. The plan is meant to enhance the governance of the EUSDR and enable the key implementers of the Strategy to take appropriate policy decisions to improve the EUSDR'S implementation and have an impact on the revision of its Action Plan. It sets out the framework to properly plan and implement quality evaluations with the aim to secure the Strategy's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact.

To support the implementation plan proposed by the DSP, a Steering Group (SG DANUVAL) was set up composed by Representatives of the Commission, National Coordinators, one Priority Area Coordinator per pillar and invited experts. The SG DANUVAL fulfils the following functions:

- Representing the Strategy's key implementers and stakeholders and allowing their participation in the implementation of the evaluation plan;
- Providing expertise to support the implementation of the evaluation plan, e.g. by providing input on the evaluation questions, the terms of reference for the selection of evaluation experts; facilitating whenever possible access to information, data and/or data sources useful for the evaluations; reviewing the evaluation reports; proposing and monitoring of follow-up measures based on evaluation findings, ensuring a smooth transition from evaluation one (operational/governance) towards evaluation two (impact/policy).

This awarding procedure is aimed at selecting a service provider to conduct the operational evaluation of the Strategy's operational structures as such, the effectiveness, partnerships and stakeholder's involvement in the EUSDR.

¹ COM(2010) 715

2. Awarding procedure

The present procurement procedure with the EU Funding Agency/DSP as Contracting Authority is based on Austrian procurement law. According to this law (article 46 of Bundesvergabegesetz 2018 in connection with Schwellenwertverordnung 2018) the present service contract will be awarded via direct contracting. The contract will be set up based on Austrian law and concluded with EU Funding Agency/DSP. Herewith all interested companies are invited to submit an offer, via e-mail to office@eusdr-dsp.eu by **4 March 2019 1 pm** (Central European Time).

3. Specification of services

Governance/operational evaluation

- Elaboration and carrying out of the operational evaluation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, its processes and work flows among the key implementers of the EUSDR as well as towards key target groups of the Priority Areas;
- Appraise the progress of the Strategy in reaching its goals and in enhancing cooperation as well as in territorial, economic and social cohesion in the Danube region;
- Identification of well-functioning processes in the EUSDR stemming from the macro-regional approach and analysis of potential learning and spill-over effects;
- Take stock of the existing knowledge about the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (analysis of existing studies, documents, reports, academic literature);
- Develop appropriate conclusions for the future revisions of the Action Plan of the EUSDR, including an executive summary with the main arguments/results;
- Identification of obstacles in the implementation of the Strategy and development of recommendations how to overcome them;
- Identification of potential additional stakeholders;
- Identification of cross-funding policy processes and project chains that were the result of the EUSDR.

The target audience of this evaluation included the following groups:

- Key implementers of the Strategy (NCs, PACs, Steering Group Members);
- European Commission, especially DG Regio (but also DG EMPL, DG MOVE, DG HOME, etc.);
- Authorities involved in the management of funds (e.g. ESIF OPs' Managing Authorities and JSs).
- Other stakeholders, where relevant.

4. Evaluation questions

The Evaluation questions shall follow the ones defined in the Evaluation Plan.

For the Governance/operational evaluation, the following examples of questions are to be considered:

- Which workflows and process among key actors have worked well and ensure the added value of the Strategy?
- Which are the possible success factors or necessary/sufficient conditions in view of transferability of good practices (wherever possible)?
- Which workflows and processes among key actors need to be improved or re-organised in order to safeguard efficient and synergetic implementation procedures?
- Which are success factors for large involvement of the Steering Group in the Priority Areas? What are the main obstacles for the involvement of the Steering Group and how to overcome them?

- Which are the gaps and obstacles in the implementation and would be needed to close them?
- Does the Strategy/do the Priority Areas involve additional partners that increase the added value or impact of activities?
- Have the Strategy's structures been efficient in ensuring a well-functioning communication flow in the whole Danube Region?

a. Methods and available data

The experts interested in the present contract shall present in their offers the most suitable and effective methods, allowing to reach the objectives of the evaluation and to provide comprehensive answers to the evaluation questions. The methods shall then be discussed and refined with the EU Funding Agency of the City of Vienna/DSP as contracting authority, which is supported by the SG DANUVAL in evaluation matters.

b. Time schedule and coordination

The following time schedule is foreseen for the governance/operational evaluation:

Mid-March 2019	Kick-Off meeting	
4 April 2019	Joint Meeting with ESPON, Vienna Presentation and discussion of the Inception Report	
26 April 2019	Submission of draft results to the DSP	
March-May 2019	Interviews with PACs/NCs/other relevant stakeholders	Document analysis
23/24 May 2019	Presentation of draft final report at the PAC-NC meeting in Bucharest	
3 June 2019	Deadline for comments by SG DANUVAL	
10 June 2019	Submission of the final report to the EC and key implementers	

The DSP will be in charge of coordinating the evaluation work and ensuring quality review. Evaluation findings will be discussed in the SG DANUVAL, which will agree on potential follow-up measures and propose them to the NCs.

The expert(s) shall be available for 4-5 meetings with the DSP/SG DANUVAL to discuss the evaluation concept and the evaluation findings. The working language of the EUSDR is English, thus work and papers done and produced in the framework of the present evaluation must be in English.

5. Required qualifications of the evaluation experts and award criteria

Evaluation experts interested in the present contract shall have

- Qualified knowledge and practical expertise in the evaluation and analysis of macro-regional strategies;
- Qualified knowledge of the cohesion policy of the EU, including the European Territorial Cooperation goal;
- Experience and skills in qualitative research/analysis as additional qualification as qualitative methods professional English language skills.

These qualifications shall be met specifically by the single experts involved in the evaluation and not only in general by the organisation submitting the offer. In case the tenderer proposes a team of experts to carry out the evaluation, an experienced project manager should be appointed, who will

take the role of a leader or be a coordinating expert. The project manager as well as the other members must:

- Hold a Master's degree or equivalent;
- Demonstrate proven experience in evaluation of macro-regional strategies;
- Demonstrate proven experience in project management;
- Demonstrate proven experience in team management (concerns evaluation project manager).

The following criteria will be applied to assess the offers:

Experience and qualification of evaluation expert(s) 40%=40 points;

Methodology proposed/compliance with EUSDR Evaluation Plan and terms of reference 40 %=40 points;

Price 20 % = 20 points.

6. Required content of the offer

Please make sure that the offer is in English and contains:

- information about experiences and qualification of the proposed evaluator(s);
- information on the methodological approach;
- information on calculated person days and calculated daily rate;
- a detailed calculation of costs;
- a detailed work plan.

The offered price shall be a lump-sum which covers any costs arising from the complete delivery of the services described above such as office and material costs, travel and subsistence costs, costs for any subcontracts, overhead costs, taxes, charges. Additional costs will not be reimbursed. VAT is to be indicated separately and prices have to be indicated as fixed prices. The total price should be expressed in Euro (EUR), excluding VAT. For orientation, the DSP/EU Funding Agency has estimated to spend an amount not exceeding EUR 40.000 (excluding VAT) on the operational evaluation of the EUSDR.

No reimbursement of costs arising from the elaboration and submission of the offer will take place.

Please be aware that the EU Funding Agency/DSP as contracting authority may request additional documents to verify the authorisation of the company to deliver the service, its professional reliability as well as its financial, economic and technical ability to perform the services.

The offer signed and scanned shall be submitted by 4 March 2019 1 pm (Central European Time) via e-mail to office@eusdr-dsp.eu.

For questions please address an e-mail to joerg.mirtl@eusdr-dsp.eu until 28 February 2019 c.o.b.