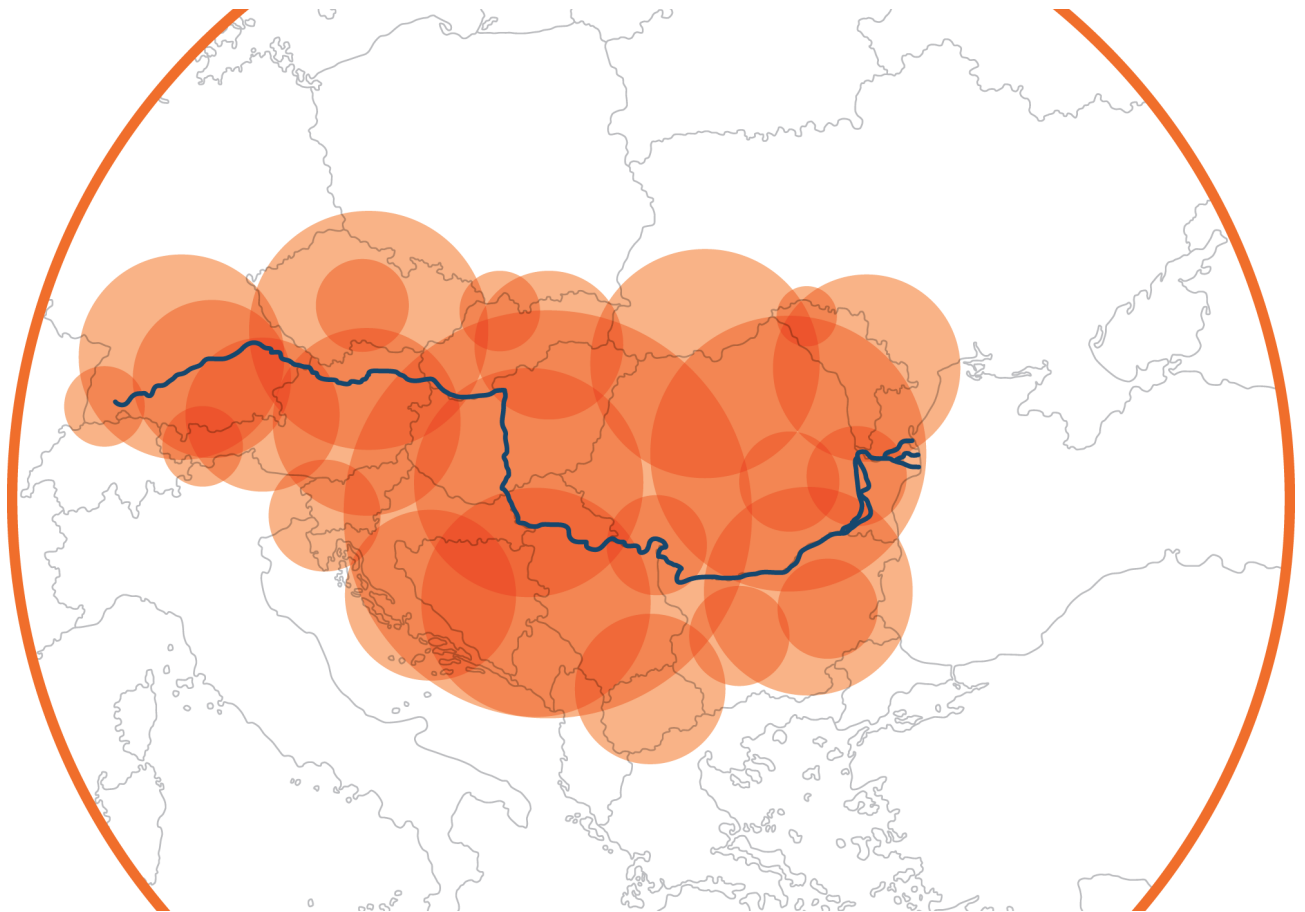


## 2<sup>nd</sup> Danube:Future Milestone Report

Reporting period  
01/05/2015 - 31/12/2017



[www.danubefuture.eu](http://www.danubefuture.eu)  
[management@danubefuture.eu](mailto:management@danubefuture.eu)

## BACKGROUND and AIMS of Danube:Future

Danube:Future is a networking activity which aims at supporting the sustainable future of the Danube River Basin by integrating the social sciences and humanities into a long-term perspective. The initiative started in January 2013 and was approved as EUSDR Flagship Project by the EUSDR PA7 Steering Group on September 23, 2013.

D:F focuses on the **Sustainable Development of the Danube River Basin (DRB)**. Sustainability problems transcend disciplinary boundaries and therefore need inter- and transdisciplinary approaches. Sustainable development of riverine landscapes is particularly challenging, as rivers are fragile, dynamic and interlinked ecosystems. D:F seeks to contribute to the sustainable development of the DRB by encouraging the humanities to add their expertise to interdisciplinary dialogue. Environmental humanities are a new area of research whose potential for fostering sustainability transitions has not yet been tapped<sup>1</sup>. Both societal and natural legacies limit the possibilities for future developments. A host of interdisciplinary methods is necessary to deal with human legacies, both cultural and natural.

The project is divided into 3 Modules:

- **CORE MODULE**, aimed at offering support to members and partners of D:F, through several online tools. Within the core module, an open-access knowledge base to which capacity building and research projects can contribute, increasing their visibility and accessibility, was established.
- **CAPACITY BUILDING MODULE**, aimed at enabling and empowering young academics and scholars working in extra-university contexts to gain experience in interdisciplinary research and foster the integration of their expertise into international projects. D:F develops training courses focusing on cultural and natural heritage, institutional capacity-building for green jobs, and strengthening regional networks.
- **RESEARCH MODULE**, aimed at contributing to the sustainable development of the Danube Region with particular emphasis on the roles of cultural and natural heritage and contributions from humanities and social sciences.

The official website is: [www.danubefuture.eu](http://www.danubefuture.eu)

Figure 1 gives an overview of the tasks undertaken during the second phase. Note that while the project timetable is given until 2020, the last two years are planned as a transition to a permanent establishment or the closing of operations.

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<sup>1</sup> But see the recent Special Issue on Humanities for the Environment:  
[http://www.mdpi.com/journal/humanities/special\\_issues/humanities\\_environment](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/humanities/special_issues/humanities_environment)

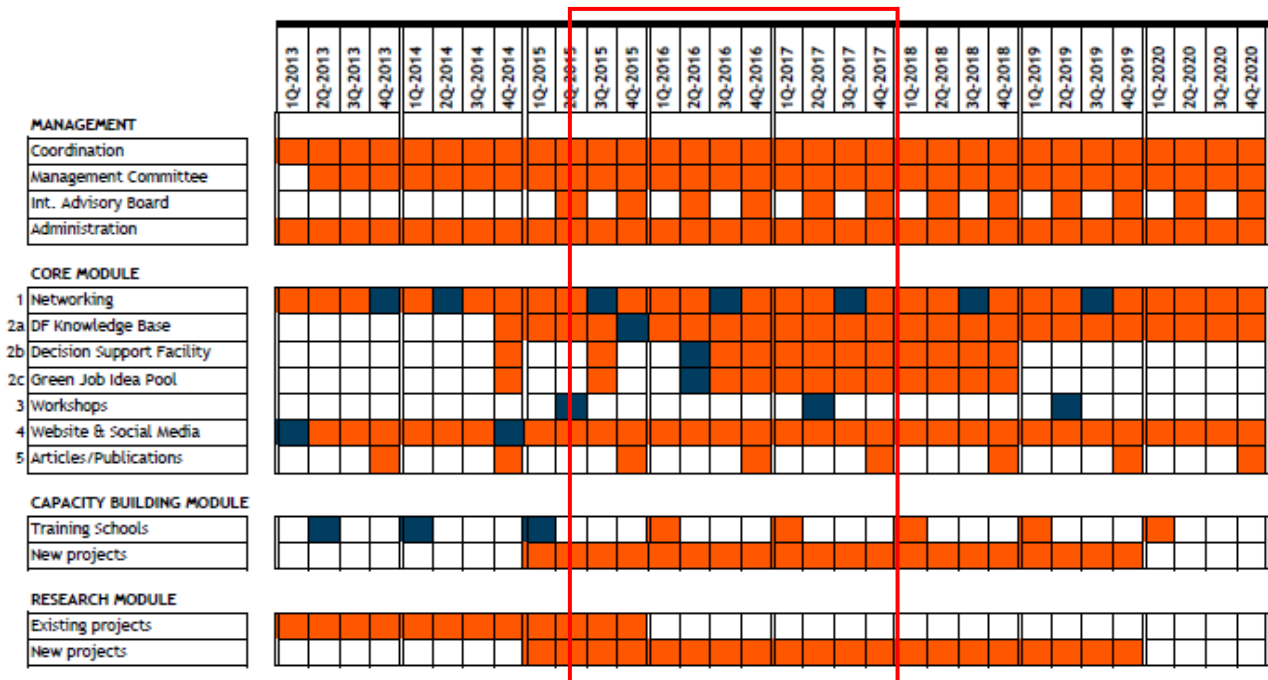


Fig. 1: Project tasks and timetable of Danube:Future (as planned since 2013) indicating important steps, i.e. milestones, for specific activities in blue.

## CURRENT MANAGEMENT and ORGANIZATION

The project is managed by the **Core Partners** and their representatives. Currently these are: Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt (AAU), University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU), University of Trieste, University of Novi Sad and University of Ruse. Each partner contributes **in-kind** through their representatives in the **Management Committee**.

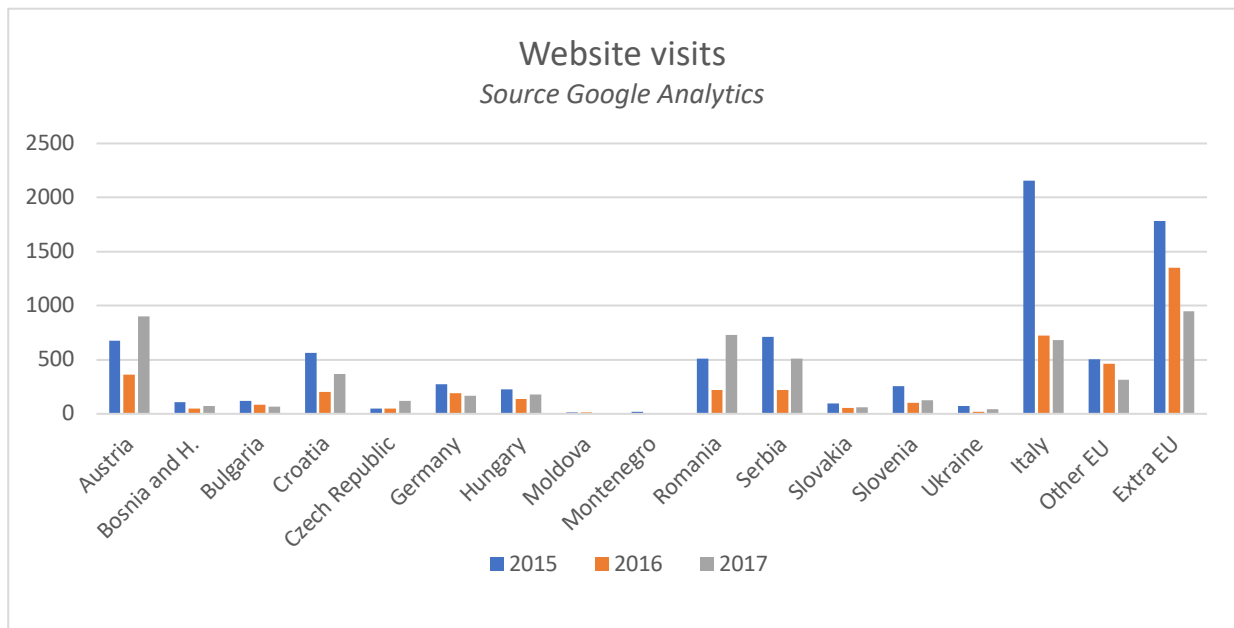
Danube Rectors Conference and Alps-Adriatic-Rectors Conference are **Endorsing Partners** and their **members are beneficiaries** of the D:F project. The “Project Regulations” available on the website detail all aspects of the management, including criteria for the Cooperation Agreement.

A **Project Coordinator** and a **Deputy Coordinator** represent the project at relevant events and provide guidance, support and manpower for all modules. These positions are contributed in-kind by the Core Universities. A **Project Administrator** supports the management and other partners involved. The Management Committee meets 2-3 times per year and makes relevant decisions for the implementation of the project.

## THE SECOND PHASE (*until autumn 2018*)

The second phase of D:F started in summer 2015 and is scheduled to terminate in autumn 2018. Partly, the second phase corresponds to a project funded by DRC (Fund for Incentives 2016). Until the end of 2017, the main activities and achievements are:

- **Implementation of the Danube:Future Knowledge Base.** Currently, the Knowledge Base offers English summaries of relevant publications, especially from those written in one of the national languages of the DRB-countries to make them available to a wider community. Each entry consists of an English abstract (in most cases, written by the team), standardized key words for topics, period, location; links to download if possible. By the end of 2017, ca. 200 publications are recorded;
- **Enlargement of the D:F Community** (currently 268 members);
- **Migration of the D:F web presence to DRC** in March 2017;
- **Online surveys** on the involvement of DRC and AARC universities in EUSDR-activities, sustainability research at the universities, interest in future discussion of links between SDGs and challenges in the DRB. Two different surveys addressed universities (international relations offices, rectors and vice rectors for research as well as teaching) as well as individual D:F members. The response rate for universities was about 26 % (24 out of 90 questionnaires sent) and about 12 % for individual D:F members (33 out of approx. 270 questionnaires sent).
- **Tentative application for funds**, Call “Danube Strategy Projects Fund”.
- **Bilateral project Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt and University of Ljubljana** “Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Grassland Management to Promote Alpine Sustainability”, funded by the Joint Excellence in Science and Humanities-Program of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.
- **Workshop on Traditional Ecological Knowledge** at the Institute of Social Ecology, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt in February 2017. Attendees from AAU Klagenfurt, BOKU Vienna, University of Ljubljana.
- **2017 Edition of the Interdisciplinary School in Krems (DUK)**, 25 PhD Students and Junior Researchers from 8 Countries, 4 project ideas developed;
- **Participation in the 2016** (Bratislava, with a stand) and **2017** (Budapest) **EUSDR Annual Fora**. Several books (DIAnet International Schools proceedings) and the White Paper were distributed among participants of the Forum;



In 2018, the fifth edition of the **Danube:Future Interdisciplinary School** is planned in Ruse, Bulgaria. Further **activities** intended for **2018** comprise the continuous expansion of the **Knowledge Base**, the preparation of **guidelines** for the D:F Interdisciplinary Schools, **Management Committee meetings** and **networking**. Other activities, in particular the **preparation of a “Lessons learned and way forward” Workshop** are specified below, as they will be planned depending on the long-term visions for D:F to be established in discussion with the presidency of DRC.

## LONG-TERM PROSPECTS of Danube:Future as a network

During the two pilot phases of D:F (01/2013 - 09/2015; 10/2015 - 10/2018) the project activities were mainly initiated and implemented by the core partners. Annual reports were delivered to DRC and presented during the DRC-Annual Meetings. To **strengthen the involvement of DRC** as organization and to better integrate a large number of universities represented therein, a **closer cooperation ensuring long-term support is envisaged after the pilot phase**. D:F operationalizes aims of DRC, as it improves education, research and networking in the DRB in sustainable development issues as a specific and highly relevant field.

The following sections offer details and first considerations with regard to this process. In particular, aims, tools and recommendations for the long-term organization of D:F and possible stronger collaborations between DF and DRC are presented.

### Long-term aims of D:F as network and related tools and services

The long-term goal of D:F is to promote international collaboration between sustainability

oriented researchers of the DRC universities and beyond in particular by

1. **Building capacity** for young researchers in the DRB;
2. **Taking stock and identifying research priorities and desired future directions** of Science Policy links;
3. **Promoting the visibility of international sustainability research** in the DRB;
4. **Maintaining and establishing the links between DRC and other important organizational and institutional players in the DRB**, especially towards EUSDR PA 3 (Cultural Heritage and Tourism), PA 6 (esp. Biodiversity) and PA 7 (Knowledge Society).

To pursue these goals, D:F offers the following tools and services:

1. **D:F Interdisciplinary Schools** are designed to bring together PhD-students from different countries and disciplines to train them in interdisciplinary research by developing joint project ideas. The schools support in particular the implementation of Goal 1. D:F Management suggests that a school be held every other year. DRC-Summer Schools and D:F-Interdisciplinary schools could alternate in the future.
2. **D:F International Workshops** are held to allow exchange between junior and senior researchers from different countries and disciplines to formulate research agendas and to present them in joint policy documents. The White Paper developed during the 1<sup>st</sup> DF International Workshop was the first such document issued. D:F workshops facilitate specifically Goal 2. D:F Management suggests to organize such an event every third year, in 2018, 2021 and so on.
3. **D:F Webpage and D:F Knowledge Base**: the webpage is the main platform to inform about project activities and includes also social media accounts (twitter, facebook). The Knowledge Base was developed to compile knowledge on sustainability research and education and to offer researchers a platform to promote and inform about their activities. The webpage and the Knowledge Base assist especially Goal 3.
4. Existing **networking** links to relevant players in the DRB, including in particular EUSDR (attendance of Annual Fora), EUSDR-PA 7 (attendance of steering group meetings) and EUSDR PA 6 (links to Sturgeon 2020 as PA 6-flagship project). On an irregular basis, contacts and exchange was established to Danube INCO-Net, ICPDR-International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, IAD (International Association for Danube Research, lead of an expert group on Environmental History and Long-term Socio-Ecological Research), JRC, Danube Commission as well as to non-DRC universities and research centers of the DRB and to the neighboring European Macro-Regional Strategies, in particular the Alpine Strategy and the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy. These activities support especially D:F Goal 4.
5. D:F links and supports the community of researchers in the DRB from DRC and Non-DRC universities, which are already engaged in joint publications and research projects. This community supports all Goals of D:F.

## Envisaged changes to the current organizational structure

At present, DF is mainly carried out by the five core partner universities, which provide staff for the different management functions. The latter comprise the **Project Coordinator (PC)** and the **Deputy Coordinator (PC-D)** who are responsible for providing leadership for the network; the **Management Committee (MC)**, which decides on DF activities, the **Project Administrator (PA)** assisting the PC, PC-D and the MC and the **Webpage and Knowledge Base Administrator**. Since March 2017, the Webpage and Knowledge Base is hosted and administered by DRC via IDM as seat of the DRC General Secretary.

In 2013, D:F set out to establish an **International Advisory Board**, but it was never activated. It is composed of experts with different experiences and of different nationalities. The IAB was intended to offer advice on matters of development of D:F, to increase the international visibility of D:F and to allow it to benefit from the experience of a high-ranking interdisciplinary group. Having outstanding scholars representing different specializations and involved in different networks assisting in the development of D:F as a major initiative in interdisciplinary environmental humanities was seen as being of great value for the project.

**If DRC becomes a major player, the organizational structure and management of the network should reflect this change.** D:F is not proposing a plan for these changes, as such a plan should be a joint endeavor. To secure the long-term existence of D:F, the following tasks and functions are deemed important:

- **Principal Coordinator and a deputy responsible for the project.** Some kind of **management board** for managing the project; PC, D-PC or a board member should be responsible to inform about new calls and initiate suitable projects as well as for supporting regular joint publications at the science-policy-interface;
- **D:F representation at important institutions and organizations**, in particular EUSDR and EUSDR-PAs (attendance of meetings, processes and working groups, reporting, etc.);
- **Project Administrator** for daily activities and support of the PC & PC-D and Board (e.g. preparing updates of the website and knowledge base, supporting partners in developing specific projects, training schools or workshops, minutes and archive, technical publication support);
- **Web-Page and Knowledge Base Administrator** for maintenance and technical support for security updates of the website and content management (output of projects, publications);

In addition, **personnel resources have to be planned at the respective organizing DRC-universities for:**

- **Interdisciplinary Schools** for junior researchers, every other year: Local organizing committee, program and selection committee, D:F School Board to ensure that the D:F model is followed.
- **Workshops**, envisaged every 3 years: local organizing committee, documentation, editors/editorial board;



We suggest discussing the possible new organizational structure with DRC-universities' representatives during a "Lessons Learned and Way Forward"-Workshop (see below) to be organized during the next DRC Annual Meeting.

The following table gives an overview of required annual personnel resources and budgets. For staff costs no figures are given as they differ between Danube countries. Costs for services, travel and accommodation are based on experiences from 2013 and 2017 and refer to Austrian or Italian standards.

MANAGEMENT		PERSON MONTHS (Min/Max)	MIN BUDGET per year	MAX BUDGET per year	NOTES
Scientific project coordination	Project Coordinator and a Deputy part-time/full-time	3 months / 6 months	depends on country	depends on country	1
	Deputy Coordinator	3 months / 6 months	depends on country	depends on country	1
Board	le. 10 members, 2-3 meetings per year via Skype plus face-to-face meeting during the DRC-Annual Meeting. Personnel costs and costs for travels & accommodation;		10.000,00	25.000,00	1
Administration	A project administrator (part-time/full-time)	6 months / 12 months	depends on country	depends on country	1
	Supporting staff (part-time/full-time)	0 months / 6 months	depends on country	depends on country	1
International Advisory Board	travel costs for meetings		0	5.000,00	
<b>CORE MODULE</b>			<b>MIN BUDGET</b>	<b>MAX BUDGET</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Networking	Participation in relevant events, travel costs		4.000,00	7.500,00	
Website	Hosting, maintenance, implementation		1.500,00	5.000,00	
DF Knowledge Base / WIKI	Editor role (scientific person)	2 months / 6 months	depends on country	depends on country	1
	Implementation costs		2.500,00	5.000,00	
Workshops	Offering accommodation, food / and travel cost		15.000,00	28.000,00	2
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING MODULE</b>			<b>MIN BUDGET</b>	<b>MAX BUDGET</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Training school	8 days, 28 participants (no fee)		45.000,00	60.000,00	3
<b>NOTES:</b>					
1. Costs could be covered by in-kind contribution of Universities except travel & accommodation					
2. At least one event every 3 years					
3. At least one edition every 2 years					



## Way Forward after Phase 2

With the experiences gained, we are positive that the benefits from the D:F network should and can be sustained building on the considerable effort already undertaken.

### Benefits for DRC-Universities and the sustainability sciences in the DRB

D:F offers several benefits to DRC-universities and their individual scholars involved in research on natural and cultural heritage, long-term sustainable development and related inter- and transdisciplinary approaches. Among others these are:

- Capacity-building for your young researchers, opening opportunities for international cooperation via the D:F international Schools and creating networks;
- Access to scientific literature and crossing of language borders via the Knowledge Base;
- Access to an international community of researchers via the Knowledge Base, the International Schools & the Workshops;
- Access to and participation in organizations relevant for the Danube and DRB; possibilities to interact with European research agendas and plans for the DRB via the Workshops and publications;
- Closing gaps between Upper and Lower Danube via Capacity Building also for teachers at the D:F international schools and all other issues mentioned above.

### Lessons learned & Way Forward Workshop as joint activity of DRC and D:F in 2018

To ensure the long-term success of D:F as an activity of the present management and the DRC, we suggest to organize a 1-day workshop during the next DRC-Annual Meeting in Bratislava in November 2018. The workshop would engage representatives of DRC-universities who are interested to become active in D:F. Whether participants come from the IROs or from the rectorates is subject to discussion and decision by DRC.

During the workshop, the PC and D-PC and the MC will offer an introduction to the lessons learned during the duration of the project. They will present and discuss guideline documents for the different D:F-tools (D:F-Interdisciplinary Schools, Webpage and Knowledge Base, White Papers) and present possible options for the future organizational structure of D:F. It will be important to ensure active participation of the DRC member universities with already ongoing involvement and interest in D:F by via inputs and discussions.

### Mid-Term Future Suggestions

We would envisage that DRC universities might be interested in reflecting their role vis a vis the macro-regional Strategies of the EU on a more general level. Among the strategies, the BALTIC Strategy and initiatives related to it (e.g. Baltic 2020 Strategy) are a case in point. A workshop addressing this issue with a resulting paper of recommendations could be useful for DRC. D:F could contribute its experiences with the EUSDR to such a workshop.