

Decision Support Facility (pilot action)

Danube:Future is a flagship project of EUSDR, PA7 - Knowledge society, since September 2013. It is expected to have a **significant impact on the Danube Region**.

Danube:Future aims at developing interdisciplinary research and education in the Danube River Basin (DRB) as a basis for solving pressing environmental issues as well as for a sustainable future of the region. It fosters the latter by focusing in particular on the contribution of the humanities. A knowledge base for compiling outcomes from research and capacity building projects is being developed.

Danube:Future is a joint contribution of the Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC) and the Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference (AARC), **thus tapping the largest pool of institutionalized knowledge in the DRB** (more than 90 members in 15 Countries).

The possible role of Danube:Future in the (political) decision process

(Policy) decision makers - local, communal, regional governments, sectoral institutions on national levels - need information about development perspectives for their own communities. Information from many different scientific perspectives is needed in the decision process.

Danube:Future should contribute to decision making by providing a long-term-perspective on issues of sustainable development. Danube:Future, through the DRC and AARC members, should be able to offer a service for supporting local decision makers and public authorities.

EUSDR PA 10 Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects

The TAF-DRP is an EU grant scheme to develop project ideas relevant to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, into **“bankable/fundable” project concepts**. Bankable/fundable projects are mature enough to either apply for funding from donors (private, public) and/or to EU programmes, and/or to start implementation with own resources.

www.danubefuture.eu
management@danubefuture.eu

From June to December 2014, Danube:Future benefitted from the consultant service of METIS GmbH and Inforelais, Vienna. The result of the consultant service is a rough project outline for a pilot project which could be further developed for submission to the “DANUBE Operational Programme 2014/2020”.

THE PROJECT IDEA

Fragmented and incomplete (trans-sectoral) information for local and regional decision makers in charge of the protection of the environment (water) in the Danube area bear the risk of decision errors and - in the worst case - even worse effects on the environment.

Research institutes and universities dispose of a wealth of knowledge and information which is only partly available for decision makers (and the public). Exchange and co-operation between decision makers and the universities of the Danube area needs to be improved in order to allow for a permanent exchange.

New models are required to establish this cooperation and to find **new ways of governance, science-policy cooperation** and to **fill the existing knowledge gaps**.

The proposed project aims at testing in two important policy fields how these new models could work in practice and how a mainstreaming to further regional actors and topics could be managed in the Danube area:

- a) STURGEONS in the Danube: Danube Sturgeons are an important element of the Danube’s biodiversity as well as a valuable source of income and a part of cultural heritage. Due to overfishing, sturgeons have been brought to the brink of extinction especially in the last decades. In addition, hydro-morphological changes destroyed their habitats and hydropower dams act as migration barriers.

The remnants of wild sturgeon stocks in the Lower Danube and in the Danube Delta continue to be threatened by poaching and illegal caviar trade. The “Sturgeon Action Plan” aims at protecting and enhancing the remaining populations. At the same time, improving the economic situation of the fishery sector is a prerequisite for the future development of the region. These two targets have led to severe conflicts between ecologists and socio-economists. Sound analyses of the different potentials and their harmonization are required to develop the best solutions for the future. The Sturgeon Task Force is an important co-operation partner to co-develop and test a Decision Support Facility in this thematic area.

- b) TOXIC SEDIMENTS and ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACIES: Pollution is one of the main problems identified in the DRB. This relates not only to organic pollution and excessive nutrient input but in particular also to the risk of hazardous and toxic substances released into

rivers and sediments or stored in the latter from previous industrial activities and deposits. By 2009, a total of approx. 650 risk spots were recorded in the river basin, from which a hazardous equivalent of 6.6 million tons has been identified as potential danger. (All Data from ICPDR Danube Survey)

These risk spots not only need to be identified spatially. In the future, more detailed information about the specific substances is as necessary as an estimation and reconstruction of their quantities. This is a prerequisite for identifying priorities for remedial action. ICPDR might be an interesting and interested partner in this endeavor.

The project should last 3 years (2016 - 2018).

The objectives:

- To increase awareness of decision makers related to the potential and to the need for sustainable development (water management) in the Danube area
- To provide a systematic pool of information and knowledge with relevance for the sustainable development of the Danube area
- To develop, pilot testing and implement new forms of cooperation and information exchange between the world of science and the local and regional decision makers
- To create models for permanent cooperation between universities and decision makers

The partnership:

The partnership should consist of 8 to 12 partners, and observers. At least 3 financing partners from 3 Programme Countries:

EU-countries: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Germany: Baden-Württemberg, Bayern; Bulgaria, Romania

IPA-countries: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro

ENI-countries: Moldova, Ukraine (parts)

Other Countries: According to the Operational programme and Reg. CE 1299/2013

ERDF covers the 85% of each partner' expenditures (on a refund basis). The financial contributions of the partners are therefore 15%.

PARTNERS:

- 3 / 4 Universities specializing in Sturgeon and/or Toxic Sediments
- 3 / 4 Local / regional Authorities representing high-risks spots and working on strategies
- 3 / 4 Transnational stakeholder and institutions in the field of governance

OBSERVERS:

- International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)
- Danube Sturgeons Task Force
- ...

THE NEXT STEPS

- Consolidating the partnership (DRC, ICPDR, finding local authorities, talking with observers)
- Developing the project idea departing from the document
- Waiting the first call of DANUBE OP (middle 2015)
- Organizing a workshop with partners



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The logo for the Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP), consisting of an orange square with a white downward-pointing arrow and the text "TAF-DRP" in white.

TAF-DRP