

DT1.3.2

Policy recommendation adaptation to macro-regional strategies

Policy recommendation adaptation
to macro-regional strategies

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Scope

Present document is a key deliverable developed by seven PROSPECT2030 Partner Regions within the framework the Interreg Central Europe project entitled “PROmoting regional Sustainable Policies on Energy and Climate change mitigation Towards 2030” funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme under Thematic T1 “Assessment of availability and use of public funds supporting climate change mitigation”.

The overall output of this paper is a set of policy recommendations concerning the fine-tuning of the focus of public funds planned within the 2021-2027 programming to allocate to climate change mitigation measures at macroregional levels. PROSPECT2030 is concerned by four EU macroregional cooperation frameworks, namely Alpine (EUSALP), Adriatic-Ionic (EUSAIR), Baltic (EUSBR) and Danube (EUSDR) regions. Therefore, the present document addresses policy recommendations for all these macroregional strategies or action plans.

1.2. Audience

They primarily target of the document include:

- the stakeholders (e.g. relevant government services, regional and local authorities, their organizations, researchers, representatives of energy generation, transmission and distribution companies, financial institutions, green/climate NGOs, advisors) in the transnational regions concerned (or in the countries provided that entire countries) are who are contributing to the macroregional programming, action plan development, implementation monitoring and ex-post evaluation; and
- decision-makers at EU level (e.g. relevant services of the European Commission, CINEA, EUROSTAT, representatives of International Financial Institutions, EU research organizations) involved in the transnational programming and implementation monitoring.

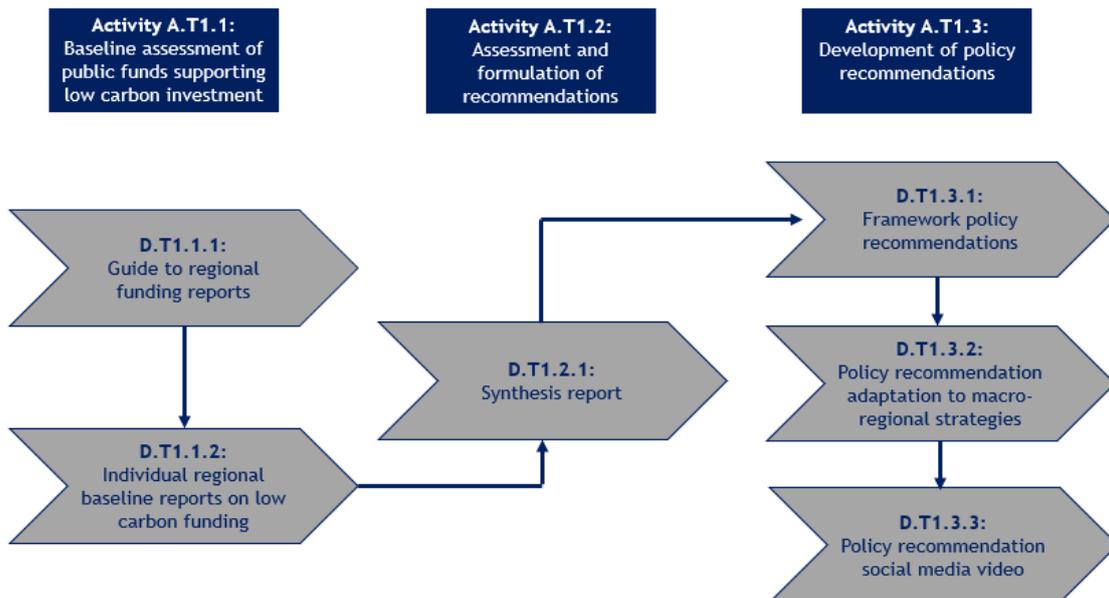


2. INTRODUCTION

A 'Macroregional strategy' is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, 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 wider objective of Thematic T1 “Assessment of availability and use of public funds supporting climate change mitigation” (T1) of PROSPECT2030 is to deliver policy recommendations for the decision-making on the use of public funds, in particular ERDF funding dedicated to support the green transition. Policy recommendations are developed at EU, macro-regional, national and regional levels.

The structure of Thematic T1 is illustrated by the figure below.



Thematic T1 specifically aims to

- I. conduct a structured assessment of the utilization of public funds instrumental in the area of the development of the low carbon sector in seven selected target regions of PROSPECT2030 over the 2014-20 programming period;
- II. based on individual reports developed by the Lead Partner (LP) and relevant Project Partners (PPs) develop a Synthesis Report;
- III. develop policy recommendations on the use of public funds for climate change mitigation, and thereby to provide policy inputs for the programming for 2021-2027 in the area of green economic transition; and
- IV. subsequently adapt policy recommendations to fit the specific macro-regional strategies (EUSDR, EUSAIR, EUSBSR, EUSALP) of Central Europe.



The policy recommendations on macro-regional strategies primarily target the decision-makers at EU, national and regional levels, but also the local administrations, non-governmental organisations and other opinion leaders who may influence the programming for the next seven years.



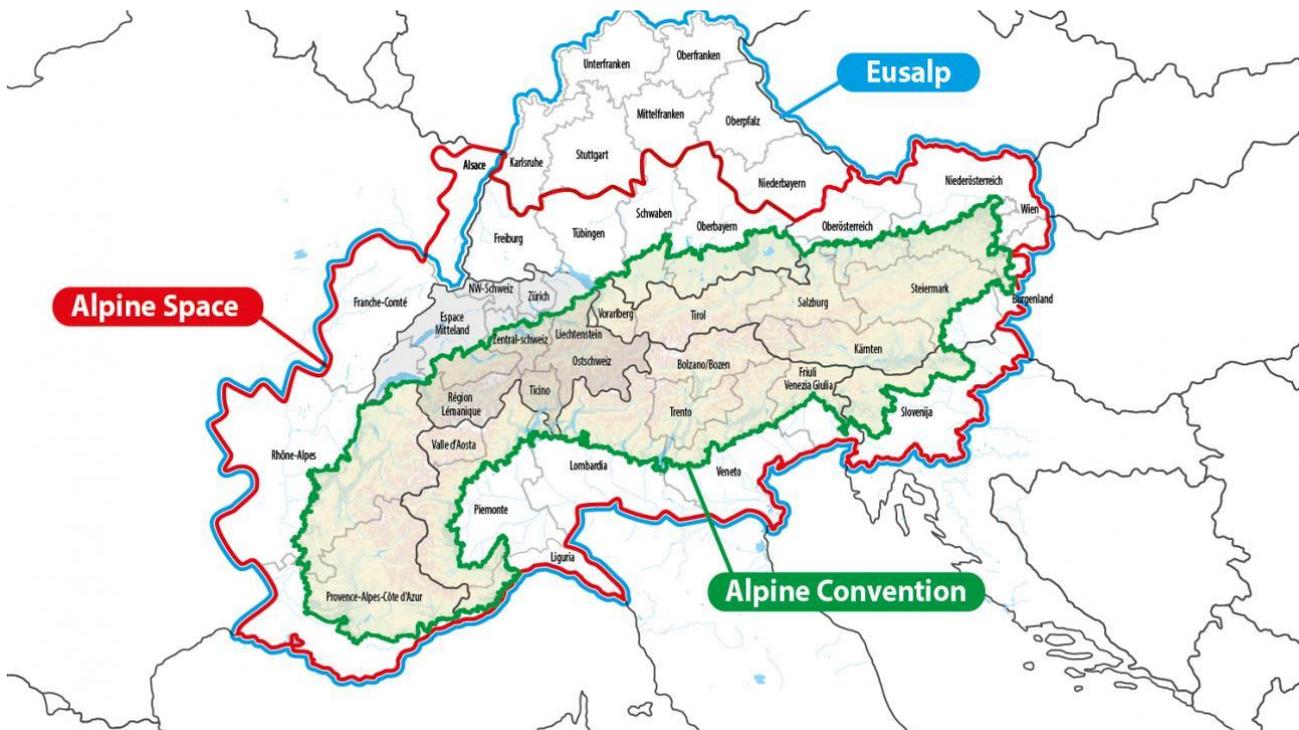
3. EUSALP MACRO REGIONAL STRATEGY

3.1. Description of EUSALP macro regional strategy

EUSALP is the macroregional strategy for the Alpine. It builds on the experiences of the already existing macro-regional strategies: the European Strategy for the Danube Region and the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

The Commission adopted a Communication and an Action Plan on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region on 28 July 2015.

This Strategy concerns 7 Countries, of which 5 EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and 2 non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland), and 48 Regions. The EUSALP borders overlap partly with existing cooperation initiatives, such as the Alpine Convention and the Interreg Alpine Space. The latter provides the ideal landing framework of projects and ideas born in the EUSALP context.



The Alpine region is one of the largest economic and productive regions in Europe where about 70 million people live and work, as well as it is an attractive tourist destination for millions of guests every year. However, it faces several major challenges:

- Economic globalisation requiring the territory to distinguish itself as competitive and innovative;
- Demographic trends characterised by ageing and new migration model;
- Climate change and its foreseeable effects on the environment, biodiversity and living conditions of the inhabitants;



- Energy challenge at the European and worldwide scale. Its specific geographical position in Europe as a transit region but also as an area with unique geographical and natural features.

Better cooperation between the regions and States is needed to tackle those challenges.

The main added value of the Strategy for the Alpine Region will consist in a new relationship between metropolitan, peri-mountain, and mountain areas. EUSALP focus on the following three thematic priorities:

1. Competitiveness and Innovation
2. Environmentally friendly mobility
3. Sustainable management of energy, natural and cultural resources

The third objective focuses on ensuring sustainability in the Alps: preserving the Alpine heritage and promoting a sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.

One of the main features of the Alpine Region is its outstanding natural and cultural heritage. Natural resources, and strong and diverse cultural life are major assets of this region.

However, use of natural resources (like water or biomass), and exploitation of their potential (such as energy sufficiency or regional capacity for energy storage) need to be carried out in an environmentally friendly way.

At the same time, climate change could particularly affect the Alpine Region in terms of availability of resources and threats to population. Joint Regional responses are necessary to establish efficient management systems.

The main priorities of this Thematic Policy Area would be the following:

1. reinforcing Alpine natural and cultural resources as assets of a high-quality living area;
2. building further on the position of the Alpine Region as world-class in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable production of renewable energy;
3. Alpine risk management including risk dialogue, to tackle potential threats, such as those of climate change.

The core of the implementation level is the Action Groups and Action Group leaders. The Action Group leaders are the drivers of day-to-day implementation. Their role, capacities, resources and engagement are key elements to the success of the Strategy.

The Action Group 9 (AG)) has the goal to make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Under the work implemented by the AG9, several initiatives have been already undertaken, such as:

- Increasing energy efficiency in the enterprises of EUSALP Region;
- Transforming the Alpine Region into a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy.



With the latter EUSALP Action Group 9 seeks to establish a network of decision-makers, enterprises and experts in the field of energy efficiency in SMEs, exchanging good practices, developing and further supporting mechanisms to enhance energy efficiency measures for the SME sector. With the former, the set-up of a macroregional Energy Observatory is foreseen.

In the Manifesto of the States and Regions involved in the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) 12th June 2020 "Together to shape a sustainable and resilient Alpine region.", there is the call for accelerating the energy transition in the Alpine region, highlighting the following field of action:

- The reduction of energy consumption utilizing innovation and new materials;
- The stimulation of investments in the renovation and energy efficiency of buildings;
- The promotion of the construction of passive-energy and low-tech buildings using local and renewable materials;
- Research and innovation as well as the development of advanced products by local companies;
- The environmentally friendly production of decentralized renewable energies;
- The initiation of territorial cooperation on hydrogen and its necessary infrastructure;
- The gradual provision of the Alpine region with a transnational tool for observing and stimulating the energy transition.

Taking into account the policy framework above described, a set of policy recommendations has been defined. This is divided into three thematic parts, the first one is addressing the energy Observatory, the second the topic of Energy Communities and the third is covering more horizontal issues.

3.2. Energy policy recommendations for EUSALP

- **3.1.1. Energy Observatory and support to small and medium local Authorities**

Issues recommended to consider by the EAUSALP Programme:

- exchange of practices among regions in collecting, processing and disseminating energy and environmental data;
- define a common set of KPI at regional level in order to monitor the progress of the Regions toward carbon neutrality;
- monitor the progress in defining energy strategies at regional level in order to monitor the energy planning activities;
- organize technical workshops about understanding the future of energy systems (how to develop energy scenarios, what are the key elements to take into consideration, etc.);
- exchange of practices and procedures on how to support local authorities in developing and implementing Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans developed in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors or the European Energy Award;



- organize the EUSALP energy award in order to highlight the most successful practices/projects implemented by Local Authorities insisting in the macro region;
- peer to peer learning for local authorities committed in the Covenant of Mayor or similar initiative.

▪ 3.1.2. Energy Communities

The establishment of energy communities is a key step towards the decentralization of the future of the energy systems. It allows more participatory and democratic energy markets by engaging private citizens as producers, consumers and market players into their community, and thereby it can sensibly reduce the needs for large infrastructures and lower the final user expenses. Key measures with regard to promotion of energy communities identified at regional level include, in particular:

- support the establishment of innovative solutions, disseminating best practices and case studies at transnational level;
- define how to guidelines and catalogue of good practices that can be of inspiration for others;
- map energy communities' projects at macro regional level, setting up KPIs to compare data and achievements.

▪ 3.1.3. Horizontal issues

Recommendation for horizontal measures:

- set up task forces for providing comments and proposals for improvement during public legislative consultation phases at EU level;
- participate in working groups and lobbying activities related to Interreg Programs insisting on, at least, part of the EUSALP territory (Alpine Space, Central Europe, MED, transborder cooperation);
- support the project implementation of EU projects in the EUSALP area offering visibility;
- define a collection of regional energy actions template in order support the energy planning activities of regions;
- develop policy recommendations in order to address regional strategies to carbon neutrality in the medium-long term.



4. EUSAIR MACRO REGIONAL STRATEGY

4.1. Description of EUSAIR macro regional strategy

The macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was adopted by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in 2014.

The Adriatic and Ionian Region is a functional area primarily defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas basin. Covering an important terrestrial surface area, this Region houses more than 70 million inhabitants. The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region involves 9 countries, four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and five Accession Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia Serbia).

The Adriatic and Ionian Region covers marine, coastal and terrestrial areas as interconnected systems characterised with intensified movements of goods, services and people, and land-sea linkages with heavy impacts of unsustainable land-based activities on coastal areas and marine ecosystems.



The EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region is described in two documents: a Communication from the European Commission to the other EU Institutions, and an accompanying Action Plan which complements the Communication.

The European Commission prepared the Action Plan for the EU intervention in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. The Action Plan is a key output of the Strategy approach. Its aim is to go from “words to actions” by identifying the concrete priorities for the macro-region.

The Action Plan is structured so as to reflect the four pillars as well as the topics selected under each pillar. Accordingly, the Action Plan incorporates the following features:

- **Pillars:** These address the core challenges and opportunities identified as being of central importance for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
- **Topics under each pillar:** These represent the main areas where the macro-regional strategy can contribute to improvements.



- **Actions:** An action is the intervention which countries and stakeholders carry out in order to address the different topics.
- **Projects:** The Action Plan is not meant to list specific projects. It is meant to outline the scope of the Strategy (the pillars) as well as the topics (per pillar) on which cooperation should focus.

The pillars and topics of EUSAIR are described below.

Pillar 1 “Blue Growth”

The overall objective of the pillar is to trigger innovative maritime and marine growth in the Adriatic-Ionian Region by promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs as well as business opportunities in the blue economy sectors. This requires building on the regional diversity in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, and taking into account that there are various pathways to innovative maritime and marine growth. The specific objectives for this pillar are:

- To promote research, innovation and business opportunities in blue economy sectors, by facilitating the brain circulation between research and business communities and increasing their networking and clustering capacity;
- To adapt to sustainable seafood production and consumption, by developing common standards and approaches for strengthening these two sectors and providing a level playing field in the macro-region;
- To improve sea basin governance, by enhancing administrative and institutional capacities in the area of maritime governance and services.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives Pillar 1 will focus on three topics:

Topic 1 - Blue technologies;

Topic 2 - Fisheries and aquaculture; and

Topic 3 - Maritime and marine governance and services.

Pillar 2 “Connecting the Region”

The overall objective of “Connecting the Region” pillar is to improve connectivity within the Region and with the rest of Europe in terms of transport and energy networks. This requires thorough coordination of infrastructure works and improved operation of transport and energy systems between the countries in the Region. The specific objectives for this pillar are:

- To strengthen maritime safety and security and develop a competitive regional intermodal port system;
- To develop reliable transport networks and intermodal connections with the hinterland, both for freight and passengers;
- To achieve a well-interconnected and well-functioning internal energy market supporting the three energy policy objectives of the EU-competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability.

To achieve these objectives, the pillar will focus on three topics:



Topic 1 - Maritime transport;

Topic 2 - Intermodal connections to the hinterland;

Topic 3 - Energy networks.

Pillar 3 “Environmental Quality”

This overall objective of the pillar is to address the issue of environmental quality, with respect to marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems in the Region. Environmental quality is essential for underpinning human activities in the Region and for ensuring economic and social well-being for its peoples. The specific objectives for this pillar are:

- To ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment by 2020 in line with the relevant EU acquis and the ecosystem approach of the Barcelona Convention;
- To contribute to the goal of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, by addressing threats to marine and terrestrial biodiversity;
- To improve waste management by reducing waste flows to the sea and, to reduce nutrient flows and other pollutants to the rivers and the sea.

Two topics are identified as pivotal in relation to environmental quality in the Adriatic- Ionian Region:

Topic 1 - The marine environment;

Topic 2 - Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.

Pillar 4 “Sustainable Tourism”

This pillar focuses on developing the sustainable and responsible tourism potential of the Adriatic-Ionian Region, through innovative and quality tourism products and services. It also aims at promoting responsible tourism behaviour on the part of all stakeholders (wider public, local, regional and national private and public actors, tourists/visitors) across the Region. Facilitating the socio-economic perspectives, removing bureaucratic obstacles, creating business opportunities and enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs are essential for the development of tourism. The specific objectives for this pillar are:

- Diversification of the macro-region’s tourism products and services along with tackling seasonality of inland, coastal and maritime tourism demand;
- Improving the quality and innovation of tourism offer and enhancing the sustainable and responsible tourism capacities of the tourism actors across the macro-region.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives the pillar will focus on two topics:

Topic 1 - Diversified tourism offer (products and services);

Topic 2 - Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation and quality).



Pillars



4.2. Energy policy recommendations for EUSAIR

▪ 4.1.1. Capacity building and efficient coordination of the blue growth sector

Bolstering capacity building and efficient coordination of planning and local development activities for improving marine and maritime governance and blue growth services focused on renewable energy systems. The Adriatic and Ionian Region needs to make better use of the skills that are available, equip people with new skills that are needed to enable the growth of a sustainable blue economy. Focus should be in pilot projects implementation related to renewable energy systems (sea energy utilization, floating photovoltaic power plants, offshore wind, etc.).

▪ 4.1.2. Energy efficiency improvements in the buildings sector

Wherever possible, energy efficiency improvements should be considered with a view to enhancing security of energy supply and to achieving a better degree of energy autonomy. The key goal of energy efficiency policy should be the integration of green and smart building solutions through comprehensive energy retrofit aiming to improve the overall energy and resource efficiency of buildings. Besides energy retrofit it is also important to emphasize the quality improvements of building construction and to also focus on combined seismic assessment and building retrofitting.

▪

▪ 4.1.3. Power networks and market for a green Adriatic-Ionian Region

There is a need for the development of an integrated power system and electricity market in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. The goal is at expanding and interconnecting national power systems,



creating power market coupling while exploring opportunities for large-scale deployment of low-carbon energy sources and grid digitalization.

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- **4.1.4. Decarbonization of the maritime transports sector**

International maritime transport is the backbone of the global economy. However, vessels release emissions that pollute the air and contribute significantly to global warming. Key issues recommended to address by the EUSAIR Programme:

- development of common methodology for assessing the carbon efficiency of vessels fleets;
- development of common risk assessment criteria for the use alternative fuels such as LNG, LPG, methanol, biofuels, hydrogen, ammonia, and setting standards for risk mitigation measures;
- exchange of best practices on the application of hybrid or fully electric solutions;
- establishment of a transnational consultative body on marine environmental protection;
- strengthening the maritime and marine governance structures.

- **4.1.5. Energy Communities**

Refer to section 3.1.2.

- **4.1.6. Horizontal issues**

Issues recommended to address at transnational level in the Adriatic and Ionian Region:

- strengthening innovation on utilization of the heat of sea water for heating and cooling;
- piloting and delivering other integrated smart energy solutions by combining several renewable options (hydro, wind and solar photovoltaic);
- development of e-mobility in the maritime and transport sectors.



5. DESCRIPTION OF EUSBR MACRO REGIONAL STRATEGY

5.1. Description of EUSBR macro regional strategy

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is the first macro-regional strategy in Europe. The area of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme covers eleven countries: eight EU Member States and three partner neighbouring countries. The Programme covers an area of around 3.8 million km² with a population of more than 103 million inhabitants. It stretches from central parts of Europe up to its northernmost periphery, comprising European metropolitan areas, while major parts of the programme area are counted as rural.



The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is the first Macro-regional Strategy in Europe. The recent Action Plan proposed by the Commission replacing the 2017 action plan considers that the three strategic objectives - i. Save the Sea, ii. Connect the Region and iii. Increase Prosperity - remain valid and in force. Each of these strategic objectives covers a wide range of policies and has impact on the other objectives - they are interlinked and interdependent.

The objectives are complemented by sub-objectives, which have been modified over time due to changes in circumstances and challenges. Most sub-objectives relate to more than one objective and they are also interlinked and interdependent. The current sub-objectives are:

- Clear water in the sea;
- Rich and healthy wildlife;
- Clean and safe shipping;
- Reliable energy markets;



- Good transport conditions;
- Connecting people in the region;
- Better cooperation in fighting cross-border crime;
- Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region;
- Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management.

The Action Plan identifies 14 policy area and actions to translate the EUSBSR objectives into results. Actions are implemented through activities. The policy areas and defined actions are summarized below.

Policy Area	Action
PA Nutri	<p>Action 1: Reduce nutrient emissions from agriculture and other diffuse sources</p> <p>Action 2: Reduce nutrient emissions from urban areas and other point sources</p> <p>Action 3: Develop and promote safe and sustainable nutrient recycling</p> <p>Action 4: Address nutrients already accumulated in the Baltic Sea</p>
PA Hazards	<p>Action 1: Prevent pollution and reduce the use of hazardous substances</p> <p>Action 2: Mitigate and remediate contamination</p>
PA Bio-economy	<p>Action 1: Strengthen the role and importance of the bio-economy for achieving increased sustainability, productivity and adaption to climate change as well as resilience, including climate resilience in ecosystems</p> <p>Action 2: Improving agricultural practices for sustainability and adaptation (e.g. to climate change) in a sustainable and resilient growing bioeconomy</p> <p>Action 3: Strengthen multiple use of resources through cross-cutting and cross-sectorial approaches to release potential and accelerate the development of a sustainable circular bioeconomy</p>
PA Safe	<p>Action 1: Providing reliable navigational conditions to the Baltic Sea</p> <p>Action 2: Developing winter navigation to meet future challenges</p> <p>Action 3: To be a forerunner in digitalisation and automation</p> <p>Action 4: Ensure accurate preparedness and response for maritime accidents and security issues</p>
PA Ship	<p>Action 1: Support measures reducing emissions from shipping including digitalization</p> <p>Action 2: Support research on emerging thematic challenges related to clean shipping and its impact on the environment and wildlife in the Baltic Sea</p> <p>Action 3: Support development of shore-side facilities to enhance clean shipping measures including infrastructure for alternative fuels</p>
PA Transport	<p>Action 1: Improve connectivity of the regions and cooperation with third countries</p> <p>Action 2: Development of measures towards climate-neutral and zero pollution transport</p> <p>Action 3: Facilitate innovative technologies & solutions in the Baltic Sea region</p>
PA Energy	<p>Action 1: Streamlining efforts on energy efficiency in the region by deepening regional cooperation</p> <p>Action 2: Further regional gas and electricity market integration including climate proof infrastructure development</p> <p>Action 3: Baltic synchronization</p>



	Action 4: Increasing the share of renewable energy including marine renewable energy
PA Spatial planning	Action 1: Strengthening territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea region through land based spatial planning Action 2: Ensuring coherent maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea
PA Secure	Action 1: Build capacities for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in emergency and crisis management Action 2: Strengthening mechanisms for joint strategic and operational actions protecting human beings and societies from criminal threats Action 3: A common societal security culture in the Baltic Sea region
PA Tourism	Action 1: Transnational tourism development in remote and rural areas Action 2: Investing in people, skills and technology in the tourism industry Action 3: Protection and sustainable utilization of cultural heritage and natural resources in tourism destinations
PA Culture	Action 1: Promoting the Baltic Sea region cultural and creative industries, encouraging creative entrepreneurship Action 2: Promoting Baltic Sea region culture and European values, using culture for sustainable development Action 3: Preserving the BSR's cultural heritage, strengthening regional identity
PA Innovation	Action 1: Challenge-driven innovation Action 2: Digital innovation and transformation Action 3: Co-creative innovation
PA Health	Action 1: Promoting active and healthy ageing to address the challenges of demographic change Action 2: Promoting a Health in all policies approach with focus on the impact of environmental factors, and especially climate change on human health Action 3: Increasing stakeholder and institutional capacity to tackle regional health challenges.
PA Education	Action 1: Preventing early school leaving and improving transition from school to work Action 2: International excellence and wider participation in science and research Action 3: A labour market for all, using resources of longer lives Action 4: Recognising potential - easing the way for migrants

5.2. Energy policy recommendations for EUSBR

▪ 5.1.1. Energy security and safe energy supply

Increasing independence and a reliable, secure and sustainable energy supply system is a challenge for countries in the Region. This can be achieved through close cooperation, increasing the share of renewable energy and reducing the need for energy from traditional sources. Key issues recommended to address by the EUSAIR Programme:

- evaluation of the efficiency and reliability of a system based on an increased share of renewable energy;
- feasibility study for investment in development of alternative/renewable energy sources;



- exchange of good practices in the production and use of energy from renewable sources in the national energy systems;
- establishment of an advisory body to facilitate cooperation in building an independent energy system.
- **5.1.2. Energy Communities**

Refer to section 3.1.2.

- **5.1.3. Horizontal issues**

Issues recommended to address at transnational level in the Baltic Sea Region:

- promotion of local energy and climate planning (SECAPs) according to the methodology of the Covenant of Mayors;
- strengthening the research and development sector to develop and test new renewable energy technologies in electricity, heating and cooling, and transport systems;
- development of international cooperation for sector integration to increase the cost effectiveness of the system;
- implementation of pilot solutions reducing air pollution and increasing the use of energy from renewable sources;
- development of cross-border initiatives on the region's offshore wind potential or development and management of the electricity grid.



6. EUSDR MACRO REGIONAL STRATEGY

6.1. Description of EUSDR macro regional strategy

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission, together with the Danube Region countries and stakeholders, in order to address common challenges together. The Strategy seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region.

The area covered by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region stretches from the Black Forest (Germany) to the Black Sea (Romania-Ukraine-Moldova), and is a home to 115 million inhabitants. The Danube Region covers nine Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany - Baden-Württemberg and Bayern, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and five non-EU Member States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and four provinces of Ukraine), being composed of a total of 69 NUTS-2 regions.



The development strategy of the Danube Region is based in four Priority Areas and a set of specific objectives.



Priority Area 1: A SMARTER DANUBE REGION

The smarter Danube Region is to be achieved through reinforced innovation, further development of digitisation, guiding the economic transformation process and support to small and medium sized businesses.

Specific objectives:

- Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies;
- Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

Priority Area 2: A GREENER, LOW-CARBON DANUBE REGION

The overall goal is to implement the commitments of the Paris Agreement and to invest in energy transition, renewable energy and the fight against climate change.

Specific objectives:

- Promoting renewable energy;
- Promoting climate change adaptation, and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches;
- Promoting access to water and sustainable water management;
- Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.

Priority Area 3: A MORE SOCIAL DANUBE REGION

The strategic objective of the pillar is to deliver on the European Pillar in Social Rights and support quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare.

Specific objectives:

- Enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to high quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy;
- Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and online education and training;
- Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation.

Priority Area 4: A BETTER COOPERATION GOVERNANCE IN THE DANUBE REGION

The improved cooperation across the Danube region is anticipated to be triggered by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the Danube region

Specific objective:

- Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies.



6.2. Energy policy recommendations for EUSDR

▪ 6.1.1. Increase the social participation in decision-making processes

The social acceptance of the projects related to the energy transitions is a key factor to accelerate the decarbonisation process. In general, the majority of the European citizens appreciate the sustainability policies and the more intensive exploitation of renewable energy sources in order to phase out fossil fuels, but they are often against investments if these are planned to be realized in their close neighbourhood.

This opposition is to a large extent attributed to the lack of comprehensible and quality information and the low efficiency of the conventional communication channels. This calls for new solutions based on Virtual Reality in the social acceptance. The innovative IT-based communication techniques are recommended to be addressed at transnational level in order to facilitate their rapid development and exchange of best practices.

▪ 6.1.2. Strengthening regional green governance at NUTS 2 level

Most beneficiary countries of the Danube Region cooperation are traditionally unitary states characterized by strong central governments and administrative power at lower territorial levels, and by low-pace a regionalization process. In the Danube countries (except Austria and Germany), there are limited governance responsibilities at NUTS 2 level which is the prime beneficiary of the EU cohesion and regional policy. Therefore, it is recommended that the transnational support to the green economic transition considers the governance aspects and supports the creation of the regional institutional framework for the energy transition and climate resilience area.

Ideally, regional governance structures supporting the green transition should

- develop regional environmental/energy/climate short-, medium- and long-term strategies, road maps, action plans;
- support the national programming with collection and analysis of energy and climate data, engaging local stakeholders, monitoring of the state of affairs with regard to EE and RES investments as well as developing policy inputs;
- initiate, design and coordinate/implement regional projects, in particular high added value projects such as international cooperation and technology transfer projects;
- provide technical support for the local stakeholders (municipalities, homeowners, SMEs, NGOs, etc.) in project design, attracting funding (grants/loans) and implementation;
- support local governments to adhere to the timely implementation of their climate and energy commitments;
- promote the sustainable exploitation of local renewable energy potential;
- monitor funding opportunities;
- raise awareness and provides targeted trainings for key stakeholder groups (in particular EE and RES);
- promote innovative financing tools and public-private partnership (energy performance contracting, leasing, crowdfunding, etc.) and public-private partnerships in order to mobilise private resources at large; and
- promote specific cooperation networks such as for instance energy communities, renewable energy clusters or energy financing competence centres.



- **6.1.3. Development of Energy Communities**

Refer to section 3.1.2.

- **6.1.4. Horizontal issues**

- promotion of local energy and climate planning (SECAPs) according to methodology of the Covenant of Mayors.



7. INFORMATION SOURCES

EUSALP

- <https://www.alpine-region.eu/node/276>
- <https://www.alpine-region.eu/objectives>
- <https://www.alpine-region.eu/action-group-9-energy>
- <https://www.alpine-region.eu/strategic-implementation-initiatives/increasing-energy-efficiency-enterprises-eusalp-region>
- <https://www.alpine-region.eu/strategic-implementation-initiatives/transforming-alpine-region-model-region-energy-efficiency-and>
- https://www.alpine-region.eu/sites/default/files/uploads/page/24/attachments/eusalp_manifesto_-_together_to_shape_a_sustainable_and_resilient_alpine_region.pdf
- https://www.alpine-region.eu/sites/default/files/uploads/page/24/attachments/annex_to_the_2019_eusalp_joint_declaration_191121.pdf

EUSDR

- <https://danube-region.eu/>
- https://www.interreg.de/INTERREG2014/EN/INTERREG/SixProgrammeAreas/DanubeRegion/danuberegion_node.html
- file:///C:/Users/YOUR-C-1/AppData/Local/Temp/Executive%20Summary%20revised_13_10_2015.pdf
- <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52010SC1489>
- https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/cooperate/danube/eusdr_actionplan_sw_d202059_en.pdf
- https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube/

EUSAIR

- <https://www.adriatic-ionician.eu/>
- https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/adriatic-ionician/
- https://www.euro-access.eu/regions/eusair_-_adriatic_ionician_region
- <https://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/eu-strategy-adriatic-and-ionician-region-eusair>
- <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/about-program/eusair-macroregional-strategy/>
- <https://www.europeansources.info/record/eu-strategy-for-the-adriatic-and-ionician-region/>
- [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2020\)132&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2020)132&lang=en)

EUSBR

- <https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/>
- https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/baltic-sea/
- <https://interreg-baltic.eu/about/eusbsr/>
- <https://vasab.org/eusbsr/>
- https://www.euro-access.eu/regions/eusbsr_-_baltic_sea_region
- <https://helcom.fi/baltic-sea-action-plan/partners-in-action/eusbsr/>
- https://www.ndphs.org/?eusbsr_introduction
- https://www.eib.org/en/projects/regions/european-union/eu_strategy_for_the_baltic_sea_region.htm



- <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/european-union-strategy-baltic-sea-region>