

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

The requirement to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is based on the **Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment** adopted by the Council of the European Union on 27th June 2001 (further in the text – SEA Directive). The assessment object of the SEA is the Danube Transnational Co-operation Programme 2014. The SEA of the Co-operation Programme is planned and carried out in line with the relevant EC Directive and the national legislations.

The environmental report is based on the “Regional analysis of the Danube Region” (version dates on 10th March 2014), on the decision of the 7th meeting of the Danube Programming Committee in Ljubljana concerning Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities (25-26th March 2014), on the decision of the 9th meeting of the Danube Programming Committee in Split (3-4th July 2014) and on the Draft Co-operation Programme Version 3.0 (22nd July 2014).

In this non-technical summary, we present an overview of the methodology and process of the strategic environmental assessment, highlighting the SEA’s main findings and recommendations. We also summarize how environmental aspects and results of the evaluation of potential transboundary effects have been taken into account and been integrated into the Programme.

Current state of the environment

The Danube Region covers 14 countries (9 EU countries: Austria, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia as well as 5 non-EU-member countries: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Republic of Moldova) plus the ‘Danubian’ regions of Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria) and Ukraine (Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Bukovyna and Odessa Oblast).

Taking in consideration the main objectives of the programme and the characteristics of the region, most important issue of the area is water management, including flood risk prevention and the biodiversity conservation of the Danube river basin. The air and climate issue and the climate change is also a key issue. Water dependent sectors such as agriculture, forestry, navigation and water related energy production are likely to have troubles under the foreseen future conditions. The programming area needs improvement in the connectivity to TEN-T network also in order to create environmentally-friendly transport systems. Smart energy distribution networks need development on regional level in a way to result in increasing energy efficiency and in better usage of potentials of renewable energy sources.

Programme objectives and priorities

The Co-operation Programme (OP) reinforces the targets of the Europe 2020, thus aims to contribute to the sustainable growth, to reduce energy consumption and to increase the use of renewable energy. These targets are well reflected under the 4 Priority axes (PA) and the programme's specific objectives (SO). 8 of formulated specific objectives will contribute to environmental (e.g.: transnational water management, restoration of ecological corridors) and sustainability (e.g.: green transportation, smart and clean energy networks, increasing renewable energy usage and effectiveness of energy use) issues, while 4 specific objectives refer to innovation, social responsibility and governance issues.

Priority axis 1: Innovative and socially responsible Danube region

Specific objective 1.1: Improve framework conditions and a balanced access to knowledge

Specific objective 1.2: Increase competences for business and social innovation

Priority axis 2: Environment and Culture responsible Danube region

Specific objective No 2.1: Sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources

Specific objective No 2.2: Restoring and managing ecological corridors

Specific objective No 2.3: Transnational water management and flood risk prevention

Specific objective No 2.4: Improve the preparedness to disaster risk management

Priority axis 3: Better connected Danube region

Specific objective No 3.1: Environmentally-friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas to TEN-T

Specific objective No 3.2: Improve energy security and energy efficiency

Priority axis 4: Well governed Danube region

Specific objective No 11: Increase institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges

Specific objective No 12: Governance of the EUSDR

Methodology of impact assessment

The strategic environmental assessment process has been composed based on the following steps:

1. Identification of the environmental authorities in all partner states
2. Screening statement – decision on whether the SEA is required or not
3. Determination of the Scope and consultation on that
4. Preparation of the Environmental Report
5. Consultation on the Environmental Report with environmental authorities and the public

6. Decision on the transboundary effects
7. Integration of recommendations from the consultation process
8. Monitoring of the significant environmental impacts
9. Information about the Decision
10. Approval of the document

The choice of environmental issues is based on the SEA Directive. The environmental situation analysis is to be prepared regarding all environmental issues identified. The identified environmental issues are water (surface waters, ground water), soil and geological medium, biodiversity, flora, fauna, air and climate change, landscape and cultural heritage, population and human health, energy resources, mobility and transport.

The SEA process started in parallel with the elaboration of the Co-operation Programme. All partner states have been involved throughout the whole SEA process (see detailed list of the environmental authorities having been consulted with in chapter 4.3.). The requirement for the SEA in case of the Danube Transnational Co-operation Programme had been presented in the Scoping Report. (The environmental authorities had agreed on the fact that the programme will have a significant impact on the environment and the elaboration of the SEA is necessary.) The determination of the environmental report's scope and level of detail had been presented in the Scoping Report and a consultation with the environmental authorities took place. The content of the environmental report follows the requirements of Annex I of the SEA Directive. The SEA process and the environmental assessment have been carried out by the same team of experts in all partner states, Scoping Report and environmental report are joint single reports written in English language. At the beginning the SEA process the Programming Committee agreed on the availability of the documents to be consulted and the duration of the consultation periods.

ONEP's website constitutes the platform for the documents to be available: <https://www.nth.gov.hu/en/activities/european-territorial-cooperation/danube-transnational-programme-new-transnational-cooperation-programme-for-2014-2020>. Comments could have been sent to the following e-mail address: danube@nth.gov.hu. Non-reception of comments has been considered as approval of the document.

Consultation actions on the SEA:

- Consultation held in all countries
- Harvesting of comments
- Proposal on how to integrate the comments into the programme and reasoning of why certain comments were ignorable
- Amendment of the Programme: taking into account the results of the consultation process in all participating countries
- Drafting of the information note/Statement

The participation of the relevant stakeholders in the SEA process was of major importance, since environmental impacts are closely related to social, economic and cultural aspects. The inclusion of stakeholders in the SEA is vital in order to incorporate their perspectives and opinions. The consultation process gives opportunity to stakeholders (i.e. institutions, environmental agencies, NGOs, representatives of the public and those target groups who will potentially be affected by possible environmental impacts of the implementation of the Co-operation Programme) and to the public to express their opinion on the draft co-operation programme and draft environmental report.

Possible environmental impacts of the programme

The formulated specific objectives and actions of the Danube Transnational Co-operation Programme 2014 will contribute to environmental (e.g.: transnational water management, restoration of ecological corridors) and sustainability (e.g.: green transportation, smart and clean energy networks, increasing renewable energy usage and effectiveness of energy use) issues. These will lead to direct and most likely positive effects on the environment. While in case of priorities, such as innovation, social responsibility and governance long-term, indirect effects are to be foreseen, e.g. the spread of new environmental technologies, progress towards a more environmentally-conscious society or a more effective and conscious applying of sustainable development issues as an organizing principle of region's governance. The support of actions linked to the improvement of transport system and preparation of strategic investments in regional transport infrastructure, the encouragement of sustainable freight transport, waterway maintenance and management could lead to an increase in land take, fragmentation of habitats and additional impact through air and noise pollution on sensitive areas. Environmental awareness should be emphasized and is required to be taken into account during the implementation of these type of projects.

The impact matrix represents the test of the objectives of the programme against the SEA objectives, which shows the synergies and inconsistencies.

		Priorities and specific objectives									
		PA1: Innovative and socially responsible Danube region		PA2: Environment and Culture responsible Danube region				PA3: Better connected Danube region		PA4: Well governed Danube region	
		SO1.1: Improve framework conditions and a balanced access to knowledge	SO1.2: Increase competencies for business and social innovation	SO2.1: Sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources	SO2.2: Restoring and managing ecological corridors	SO2.3: Transnational water management and flood risk prevention	SO2.4: Preparedness for disaster risk management	SO3.1.: Environmentally-friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas to TENT	SO3.2: Improve energy security and energy efficiency	SO4.1: Multilevel- and transnational governance	SO4.2: Governance of the EUSDR
Water (surface waters, ground water)	Reducing organic, nutrient and hazardous substance pollution, prevention of accidental pollution incidents	L	0	0	K+	L+	L++	K+	L+	L++	L+
	Improvement of the ecological and chemical status of surface waters and groundwater	L	0	L+	L++	L++	L+	L+	L-	L+	L+
	Promoting sustainable use of water resources by appropriate controls over the abstraction of fresh surface water and groundwater	L	K	L+	L+	L++	L	L	L-	L+	L+
	Prevention from and reduction of flood risks (Common approach in assessment and mapping of flood-risk)	L	K	L	L++	L++	L++	0	0	L+	L+
	Improvement of waste water treatment and the reduction of nitrate pollution (e.g. nitrates from agricultural sources or industrial recharges)	L+	0	L	K	L	L+	0	0	L+	L+

Soil and geological medium	Prevention and reduction of soil contamination	L	0	L+	L+	L+	L++	L	L	L+	L+
	Help to maintain soil functions on the highest possible level (according to Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection (EC 2006a,b)	L	0	L+	L++	L++	L++	L-	L	L+	L+
	Promoting sustainable land-use (e.g. supporting of High Nature Value (HNV) farming, revitalization of brownfields, recultivation of old landfills)	L	0	L+	L++	L++	L++	L-	L-	L+	L+
	Reduce waste generation, increase waste recovery and recycling.	L	0	L	0	L	L+	L	L+	L+	L+
Biodiversity, flora, fauna,	Protection and promotion of natural habitats (e.g. within the NATURA 2000 network)	0	0	L+	L++	L++	L+	L-	L-	L+	L+
	Help to decrease the fragmentation of habitat or species (both aquatic and terrestrial), promoting green infrastructures, restoration of river continuity, wetland areas which are in direct contact with aquifers.	0	0	L+	L++	L+	0	L-	L-	L+	L+
	Help to stop and prevent the spread of invasive alien species.	0	0	L+	L++	L++	L	L-	0	L+	L+
	Promotion of common management of cross-border ecosystems and habitats	L	0	L+	L++	L++	L+	L-	L	L++	L+
Air, climate change	Reduction of air pollution (e.g. to prevent acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution)	L	0	L	L	0	L++	L+	L+	L+	L+

	Reduction of the GHG emissions (min. 18 % below 1990 in the period 2013-2020).	L	0	L	L	0	L++	L++	L++	L+	L+
	Improving common risk assessment and management system for natural and industrial risk sites connected to climate change	L	0	L+	L++	L++	L++	L+	L+	L++	L+
	Help to decrease vulnerability to the climate change (e.g. sustainable water resource management, green infrastructures, use of drought tolerant plants)	L+	0	L++	L++	L++	L++	L+	L+	L+	L+
Landscape and cultural heritage	Cooperate towards the protection, management and planning for quality and diversity of European landscapes	0	0	L++	L++	L++	L++	L-	L	L+	L+
	Increasing awareness of the value of landscapes, their role and changes to them promoting training and education in landscape policy, protection, management and planning.	0	L+	L++	L++	L+	0	K	L	L+	L+

	Protection and preservation as well as sustainable management and planning of European cultural and natural landscape	0	0	L++	L+	K+	K+	L	L	L+	L+
	Promoting of sustainable use of material resources	L	0	L+	K+	L+	L+	L+	L+	L	L+
Population and human health	Prevention from environmental noise exposure	L	0	L+	L+	0	0	L-	L	L	L+
	Prevention and reduction of diseases and negative health impacts caused by environment-related threats	L+	0	L+	L+	L++	L+	L+	K	L+	L+
	Reduce existing disparities in accessibility to the essential public infrastructures (such as potable water network, sewage system including waste water treatment, as well as waste management).	0	L	0	0	L+	L	L+	L+	L+	L+
	Compliance of water supplies, compliance for drinking water from small supplies, and risk-based approach for more effective quality control (drinking water quality parameters and values) has to be promoted.	L	L	L+	L+	L++	L	L	L-	L+	L+
Energy resources	L+	0	0	0	K	K	L++	L++	L+	L+	

	Increase of use of renewables (20 % of renewable energy by 2020)	L+	0	0	0	K	K	L++	L++	L+	L+
Mobility and transport	Reduction of carbon emissions deriving from transport (by 60 % by 2050)	0	0	0	0	K	K	L++	L+	L+	L+
	Promotion of environmentally sustainable transport (rail and inland navigation)	0	0	L+	L+	L	K	L++	L+	L	L+

Main results and recommendations

The presumably remarkable impacts of the interventions on the environment have been evaluated and as a result, the proposed measures have been presented as well. Relevant interventions need to be handled in a joint manner, with keeping an eye on the possible effects on the different intervention areas.

To achieve a higher degree of territorial integration, the Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme 2014 will act as a policy driver through the development and practical implementation of policy frameworks, tools and services and specific pilot investments. The majority of the specific objectives refer to improvement of institutional and infrastructural framework conditions and policy tools, capacity building, coordination and planning, thus the possible environmental effects of the OP will primarily be of indirect nature. Special attention should be paid to objectives and actions linked to improvement of transport system and preparation of strategic investments in regional transport infrastructure, promotion of sustainable freight transport, waterway maintenance and management. Supporting of these actions could lead to an increase in land take, fragmentation of habitats and additional impact through air and noise pollution in sensitive areas. The effective consideration of environmental and possibly other sustainability aspects has to be ensured, also in case of energy planning and coordination actions, in order to avoid negative side-effects of growing green energy utilization (e.g. one-sided biomass production, adverse effects on hydromorphology, noise, negative impact on landscape). Supporting these settlements is suggested only under strict control of and cooperation with authorities.