

# “PRIORITY AREA 06: BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPES, AIR AND SOILS”

## DTP-PAC2-PA6

### PA 06-02

# REPORT ON CROSS MACRO-REGIONAL MEETING ON FOSTERING SYNERGIES ACROSS MRS CONTRIBUTION TO BIODIVERSITY

<b>Event name</b>	<b>FOSTERING SYNERGIES ACROSS MRS CONTRIBUTION TO BIODIVERSITY</b>
<b>Event type</b>	Meeting
<b>Date of the event</b>	17.11.2022.
<b>Work Package</b>	T2 Cooperation and coordination
<b>Activity</b>	A.T2.4 Fostering synergies across MRS contribution to biodiversity
<b>Deliverable</b>	Report on cross macro-regional meeting on fostering synergies across MRS contribution to biodiversity

**Zagreb, November 17<sup>th</sup> 2022**

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# REPORT ON CROSS MACRO-REGIONAL MEETING ON FOSTERING SYNERGIES ACROSS MRS CONTRIBUTION TO BIODIVERSITY

## Background

2

The Cross macro-regional meeting on fostering synergies across MRS contribution to biodiversity was held on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2022 in a virtual format with the attendance of 19 participants.

Meeting of thematic coordinators of the EU macro-regional strategies (hereinafter: MRS, Strategy) dealing with biodiversity was initiated by the coordinators of the Priority Area 6 “Biodiversity and landscapes, quality of air and soils (PA 6) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). There is a need and a potential for synergetic implementation of the thematic activities across different MRS, so the meeting had a focus to foster an exchange of experience and explore further collaboration potential across the MRS related to the topic of biodiversity.

The meeting was held within the framework of the DTP Project, Code and Acronym “DTP-PAC2-PA6”, co-financed by the INTERREG VB Danube Transnational Cooperation Program for the period 2014 – 2020, and as a follow-up meeting of the [thematic coordinators of the EU macro-regional strategies](#) held in Zagreb (2019), which was focused on ecological connectivity as a cross-cutting subject in MRS.

In 2019 MRS meeting concluded that there is a need for fostering an exchange of experience and exploring further collaboration potential across the MRS since the sharing of “know-how” is underlined as added value for cross-MRS collaboration. Coordination and joining efforts were pointed out as crucial considering the partial overlap of the macro-regions, already existing cooperation platforms and many initiatives, but as well as limited and unstable funding available. It has been stressed that it is important to work further on how to join efforts to bring achievements to the policy discussions in the macro-regions; how to utilize MRS key governance actors to lead on this process. Additionally, since 2019 there has been a lot of development on the policy level in the field of biodiversity so the continuation of searching for synergetic approach in MRS implementation is needed in order to capitalise the existing knowledge and move fast forward towards overarching goals.

This cross macro-regional meeting was attended by representatives of 3 MRS (thematic coordinators in the field of biodiversity) representatives of protected area networks, European Commission, Bavarian and Croatian EUSDR National Coordinators as well as the Danube Strategy Point. EUSDR PA 6 coordinators underlined that there is obvious need and benefit to share experiences and practices of many processes and initiatives implemented throughout the years as well as to gather existing knowledge on biodiversity. With regards to recent biodiversity policy and countries obligations for nature protection, this meeting aimed at showcasing MRS potential to contribute to 30-10 protection and EU restoration targets throughout well establish networks of protected areas. Moreover, meeting looked into existing initiatives that have the potential to be transferred across macro-regions as easily applicable solutions, and identifying further possibilities for cooperation. The main focus of the meeting was to discuss on potential for closer collaboration, networking and exchange between the MRS thematic coordinators and existing networks of protected areas.

## Fostering synergies across MRS contribution to biodiversity

The PA Coordinators gave an overview of **relevant policy framework** in the context of how can fostering synergies across MRS contribute to biodiversity. It was underlined that nature does not know no boundaries and this is why this cooperation is crucial.

3

The **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** is a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term umbrella framework that aims to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. It is the backbone of the European Green Deal and showcases EU ambition in international advocacy for global sustainable development. Strategy sets the numerous targets, where one of them is to legally protect at least 30% of the land and 30% of the sea in the EU - strictly protect at least a third of the EUs protected area, representing 10% of the EU territory and 10% of EU sea. By 2030, Strategy calls that for significant areas of degraded and carbon-rich ecosystems are restored; habitats and species show no deterioration in conservation trends and status; and at least 30% reach favourable conservation status or at least show a positive trend by 2030. In order to reach protected area targets, EU Member States are expected to submit to the Commission a list of existing protected areas (in addition to Natura 2000) which fulfil the criteria, initial pledge for new areas to be designated and the species conservation pledge. The Strategy also lays out a comprehensive plan of action to restore EU biodiversity. That is why the European Commission in June 2022 proposed a new Nature Restoration Law (NRL) that calls for binding targets to restore degraded ecosystems, in particular those with the most potential to capture and store carbon and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters. Once adopted NRL envisages for setting up ambitious national restoration targets defined via National restoration plan (30% by 2030, 60% by 2040, and 90% by 2050.)

Furthermore, MRS Coordinators gave overview of **Macro-regional Strategies and biodiversity objectives, and new developments on biodiversity objectives on macroregional level.**

**EU macro-regional strategies (MRS)** address challenges shared within a wider transboundary space approached as a functional area. They have the potential to be a catalyst for coordinated development and implementation of EU policies. The MRS are incorporated in joint development processes looking for a more effective way of addressing common challenges. As they involve neighbouring countries, MRS are not just tools for supporting integration within the European Union but also Europe at large. Currently, there are four MRS addressing challenges specific for different geographies and at different implementation stages. Each MRS has established its governance structure to address and better achieve its objectives and defined targets. However, the implementation of MRS depends not only on success and efficiency of the MRS governance but also on the engagement in the MRS delivery of its key implementers (internal actors) and external stakeholders.

In the context of biodiversity within MRS, there is well-established transboundary connection in a format of cooperation through networks of protected areas and the work done catalysed throughout those networks. Moreover, PA networks representatives gave an **overview of the PA networks**, information on the organisational structure and sustainability, identification for contribution to 30-10 protection and restoration targets, overview of existing incentives/projects/solutions easily applicable across MRS, potential for further collaboration also the role of MRS coordinators to help streamline the process.

## Stakeholders of the MRS with well-established network of cooperation

[Danubeparks](#) - The Danube River Network of Protected Areas was founded in 2014, brings together national and nature parks, biosphere and nature reserves (total 19 PA) from nearly all the Danube countries, including Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, and Germany. The mission of the DANUBEPARKS Association is to preserve, develop and restore the Danube River, its main tributaries, and surrounding wetlands. The Danubeparks intends for 2020 – 2026 anchoring and implementation of Danube-wide initiatives, as well as joint approach and policy work with other PA Networks.

[ALPARC](#) is the Alpine Network of Protected Areas, founded in 1995 to support the implementation of the Alpine Convention, in particular the Protocol on "Nature protection and landscape conservation" which brings together hundreds of protected areas of all kinds that are located in the Alps, from France to Slovenia. There are nearly 1,000 protected areas in the Alps, covering a surface area of over 53,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This makes up over 28 percent of land under the jurisdiction of the Alpine Convention. ALPARC especially emphasises [Joint Ecological Continuum Analysing and Mapping Initiative 2.0 On ecological connectivity](#).

[MedPAN](#) aims to promote the establishment, the operation and the sustainability of a Mediterranean network of Marine Protected Areas. The network is made of organisations. It counts to date 8 founding members, 70 members and 49 partners from 21 Mediterranean countries.

[The Carpathian Network of Protected Areas \(CNPA\)](#) was created in December 2006 as a means of implementing the Carpathian Convention and has increased the potential for cooperation within the massif and with neighbouring mountain areas. The Carpathian range extends from Austria to Serbia, covering most of Slovakia and Romania and parts of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine. The Carpathians form a natural bridge between western and Eastern Europe for species migration and genetic exchange. They contain some of the intact ecosystems and are home to a wealth of indigenous species. The Carpathian landscape has largely been shaped by a long tradition of mountain agriculture and sheep farming.

## Focus of the meeting

This meeting gave an opportunity for further discussion on how can MRS thematic coordinators and existing structures across MRS can assist the existing initiatives lead by PA networks and bring those results to the policy level, ensuring additionally visibility and needed political support. Governance structures across MRS (Steering group/Thematic Steering group/Action group) which have the members from the line ministries across all countries in MRS should streamline message to the policy level. In some cases, this has shown to be working well.

However, some difficulties remain. Insufficient capacity (financial, human, and technical) needs to be resolved to be able to dedicate to long term goals. One of the proposed solution would be ensuring long term dedicated staff (efficient to procure project management services) for each PA Network.

## Recommendations for the cross-MRS collaboration

### What can we change to do even better in this decade

Unquestionably, the closer collaboration, networking and exchange between the thematic coordinators of different MRS and already established PA networks is needed to unlock the full potential of the MRS implementation.

Since the EU member states are nationally working on their pledge process for the 30-10 target of the protection land and sea, but also for species conservation, it was suggested that PA outreach to the nature authorities, in case the PAs are not involved in the process, especially regarding defining proposals for strict protection, new area for designation and specific species conservation activities that PA can commit to deliver till 2030. For example, in practice, PAC6 EUSDR with the Sturgeon TF developed the recommendation to include the priority measures and actions for Sturgeon protection as Danube umbrella species, and this was sent for consideration to the relevant authorities, National coordinators and EC.

The PA networks are fit for purpose for reaching 2030 biodiversity goals and to showcase the results on the field. Also, they are a good way to communicate what can be done and how, showing high quality of implementation.

Meeting concluded that there is this potential to produce catalogue what is done across PA networks and present concrete potentials for the macro-regions. It was suggested that in the next steps we will try to define tangible, if possible quantifiable results across PA networks contributing to 2030 biodiversity targets.

### Communicating and cooperating efficiently is the key

There is a lot of existing experience on the ground. Activities of PA networks are a big added value but sometimes have difficulties to be connected to the policy level. It needs way forward that could bridge the ideas and actions of networks to policy and make it more of a priority. This support could come from existing MRS structures.

All MRS have rotating Presidency setting priorities throughout the Presidency programmes. Role of thematic coordinators should be to reach out to the Presidencies in order to get more priority and visibility, also on political level.

Also use the cross MRS cooperation both on the level of NC and thematically (as this meeting today) – ultimately, the approach has to be bottom-up. To attract the policy level it is necessary that the work done (via projects and project results) shows clear contribution to the set targets across MRS.

### To be efficient – *aim high start low*

Meeting expressed positively on further cooperation. Joint topics of common interests need to be discussed across MRS. Since this comes, as additional obligation along with usual workload, the benefit of collaborations should be clearly identified (in a form of mutual/joint objectives/agendas).

### Next steps:

- PA networks defining most important existing and future activities that are in progress or will be implemented and they can commit finalising 2030 (prepared by PA networks)
- Catalogues the activities or initiatives that can be applicable across MRS and further showcase/promote those as easily applicable solutions (prepared by PA networks, consolidate and disseminate by DSP/ thematic coordinators )
- Organise a follow-up meeting to present the outcomes
- Organise meeting with the MRS thematic coordinators with the supporting structures across MRS on how to catalogues and promote results
- Where possible, based on the planned activities identify areas across PA networks with the potential to have quantifiable targets (e.g. *potential to pledge the number of hectares (ha) to be restored and or well managed across different PA networks until 2030*). Split them to short and long term milestones.