**EUSDR PA7 Newsletter – Wrapping Up the Year 2021 and Wishing You Happy and Healthy New Year!**

Dear readers,

With the end of the year slowly approaching, please have a look together with us at the main activities, events and initiatives, which allowed us to continue cooperation with various stakeholders and to accomplish the tasks, which are summarized in our second Newsletter.

We hope you will find it an interesting reading and we are also looking forward to the further collaboration and exchanges in 2022.

On behalf of both PA7 coordination teams, we would like to wish you a prosperous New Year!

**PA7 HIGHLIGHTS**

**Promotion of Danube region researchers and innovators – first online stream | 10 March 2021**

**The PA7 started with public online streaming with the main aim** to **promote renowned Danube Region researchers, scientists, innovators, and their topics of interest in the appealing form to a wider public.**

The pilot event organized in March as a moderated online discussion with the [**Director of the Institute of Neuroimmunology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the scientific director of Axon Neuroscience, Associated Professor Norbert Žilka, DrSc.**](https://www.sav.sk/?lang=en&doc=user-org-user&user_no=3501) Participants had the possibility to learn whether Slovakia is developing its own vaccines, why there are actually so many vaccines, and which one seems to be “the safest” or when we can potentially anticipate younger people could get the shot, and much more.*​*

The online stream is available at the [**following link.**](https://www.facebook.com/DanubeKnowledgeSociety/videos/431850701259421)

**PA7 Workshop on Introduction of the Analysis on Participation of the Danube Region Countries in Horizon 2020 and its follow-up | 18 June 2021 | Online**

**The main aim** of the workshop was to discuss the [**results of the survey on Danube Region (non)participation in Horizon**](https://knowledgesociety.danube-region.eu/participation-of-the-danube-region-countries-in-horizon-2020-analysis/) **2020** with the relevant stakeholders using interactive online format; to exchange best practices and lessons learnt from the region; to pose questions and discuss the upcoming challenges and opportunities related to Horizon Europe from the perspective of the Danube Region.

As a follow-up activity of the Workshop the [**PA7 Recommendations for Increasing Participation in EU Framework Programme for R&I HORIZON EUROPE**](https://knowledgesociety.danube-region.eu/eusdr-pa7-recommendations-for-increasing-participation-in-eu-framework-programme-for-ri-horizon-europe/) were disseminated and published, and an Online Info Day and Virtual Matchmaking event on supporting the participation of Danube Region researchers in Horizon Europe part for [**“Widening participation and spreading excellence“**](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence_en).

**PA7 event on Facilitating Research and Innovation Cooperation in the Danube Region | 28 October 2021 | Online**

This [**initiative**](https://widening-cooperation-danuberegion.b2match.io/page-3751)aimed to **bridge potential applicants from the Danube Region in upcoming Horizon Europe “Widening” calls** in order to foster participation in this programme.

**At the Infoday** the main conditions of the addressed Horizon Europe “Widening” calls with a special concentration on the various novelties, new possibilities and actions were presented by Mr Stefan Weiers from the EC DG R&I (Head of Sector 'Widening, ERA and Research Infrastructure Programming’). In addition, some of the so far successfully implemented “Widening” projects in previous EU framework programmes were presented with enough time dedicated to Q&As, so that as many issues as possible could be clarified.

The Infoday is supplemented by the possibility of [**continuous (long-term) virtual matchmakings**](https://danube-region.eu/virtual-matchmaking-tool-dedicated-to-support-danube-region-researchers-in-participation-in-the-upcoming-horizon-europe-widening-calls/) (B2B) meetings **open until 15 March 2022** (the end of the last submission deadline of the targeted Horizon Europe “Widening” calls). The bilateral virtual matchmaking (B2B) meetings provide prospective applicants or researchers an opportunity to meet and discuss ideas for joint projects and to build consortia.

**PA7 Steering group meetings in 2021 | 2 June and 13 December 2021 | Online**

The **21st PA7 Steering group meeting** was organized on 2June 2021 with the main aim to introduce the results of the PA7 Survey on participation of the Danube Region researchers in Horizon 2020 by its lead author and discussion of its follow-up activities with the PA7 SG members and stakeholders. The past and ongoing activities of the revitalized PA7 working groups were presented by their leaders and the future plans were presented and discussed with the participants.

On 13December, 2021, PA7 organized the **22nd Steering Group meeting**. It was focused on the implementation of PA7 activities, continuation of the revitalized working groups, wrapping- up the Slovak EUSDR Presidency and exploring the new possibilities with the representatives of the current Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency.

All related documents and presentations are available [**here**](https://knowledgesociety.danube-region.eu/steering-group-meetings/).

**New Danube Region Programme Approved | 13 December 2021**

At the 10th Task Force meeting on 13 December 2021, Member state representatives approved **the final version of the cooperation programme 2021-2027**.

Read more on the programme’s priorities for the new period [**here**](https://www.interreg-danube.eu/news-and-events/programme-news-and-events/7083).

**Ongoing Survey on Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)**

Smart specialisation can make a valuable contribution to the better integration of the Danube Region, to stimulate the constructive use of regional diversity by avoiding uniformity and duplication in regional investment goals as well as help develop critical mass to tackle major common challenges.

Thus, the PA7 team and especially the Working Group on RIS3 development decided to **launch a survey on RIS3 development in the Danube region with the aim to collect best practices and initiatives related to smart specialisation strategies across the region**, and to prepare relevant evidence and follow-up initiatives.

The first preliminary results will be presented in 2022.

**EUSDR NEWS**

**10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region | 26-27 October 2021 | Hybrid Format**

The 10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region “Towards a Green and Digital Danube Region” was held in present form in Bratislava and online on 26 and 27 October 2021. The priorities of the **Slovak EUSDR Presidency** were in particular to **improve cooperation** between the countries involved in the Strategy, as well as thematic areas such as**climate change, biodiversity protection, digitalisation and innovation**.

Read more on the EUSDR Annual Forum in the sections below and in case you wish to gain a more in-depth insight into specific sessions, download the comprehensive summary report of the Annual Forum [**here**](https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/10th-EUSDR-Annual-Forum-Comprehensive-Summary-Report.pdf).

**Danubius Awards 2021 Ceremony | 11 November 2021 | Online**

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (BMBFW) and the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) honored the excellent scientists of the Danube Region for their commitment to their scientific work during the [**Danubius Awards 2021 Virtual Ceremony**](https://youtu.be/rI48h1yuba0) which took place on 11th of November 2021.

The scope of the Danubius Awards has always been to give visibility and recognition to the scientists’ community of the Danube Region. In the framework of the EUSDR they represent a chance to highlight the potential of the region in the area of sciences and research. You can find more information about the Danubius Awards 2021 Ceremony on the [**IDM website**](http://www.idm.at/projekte/preise/danubius-young-scientist-award).

**New Call for Proposals of the DTP to support ENI Projects in Moldova and Ukraine**

In January 2022, the programme plans to open a call for proposals addressing **institutional capacity building in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova**. More information on the call for proposals is available at the [**DTP Website**](https://www.interreg-danube.eu/news-and-events/programme-news-and-events/7036).

If you have more questions, please consult your DTP National Contact Point (NCP). Find your NCP [**here**](https://www.interreg-danube.eu/contacts/national-coordination-and-contact-points).

**SEASON GREETINGS**

We thank you all for your support, advices, valuable recommendations and contributions throughout the year and look forward to the upcoming opportunities and challenges in 2022!

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**OUTLOOK TO 2022**

March 2022 EU Macro-Regional Strategies Week (tbc)

June 2022 Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency Thematic Event 1 (tbc)

September 2022 Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency Thematic Event 2 (tbc)

October 2022 1st Youth Participation Day (tbc)

October 2022 9th Danube Participation Day (tbc)

October 2022 EUSDR Hackathon organized by the UA EUSDR Presidency (tbc)

October 2022 11th EUSDR Annual Forum (tbc)

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