

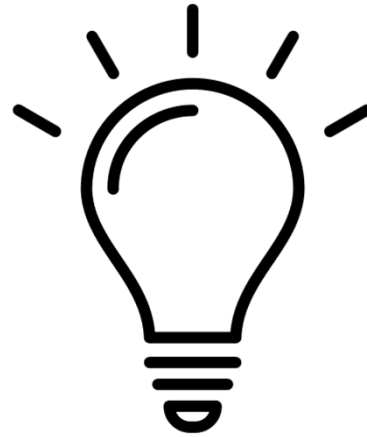


# **EUSDR: PROCESS/IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION**

26-27 June 2025, Düsseldorf

## Agenda

- What is an MRS?
- MRS vs Programme
- Evaluation of MRS vs Programme
- EUSDR Evaluation
- Q&A



## WHAT ARE MRS?

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## What are MRS?

A 'macro-regional strategy' is an **integrated framework** endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds among others,

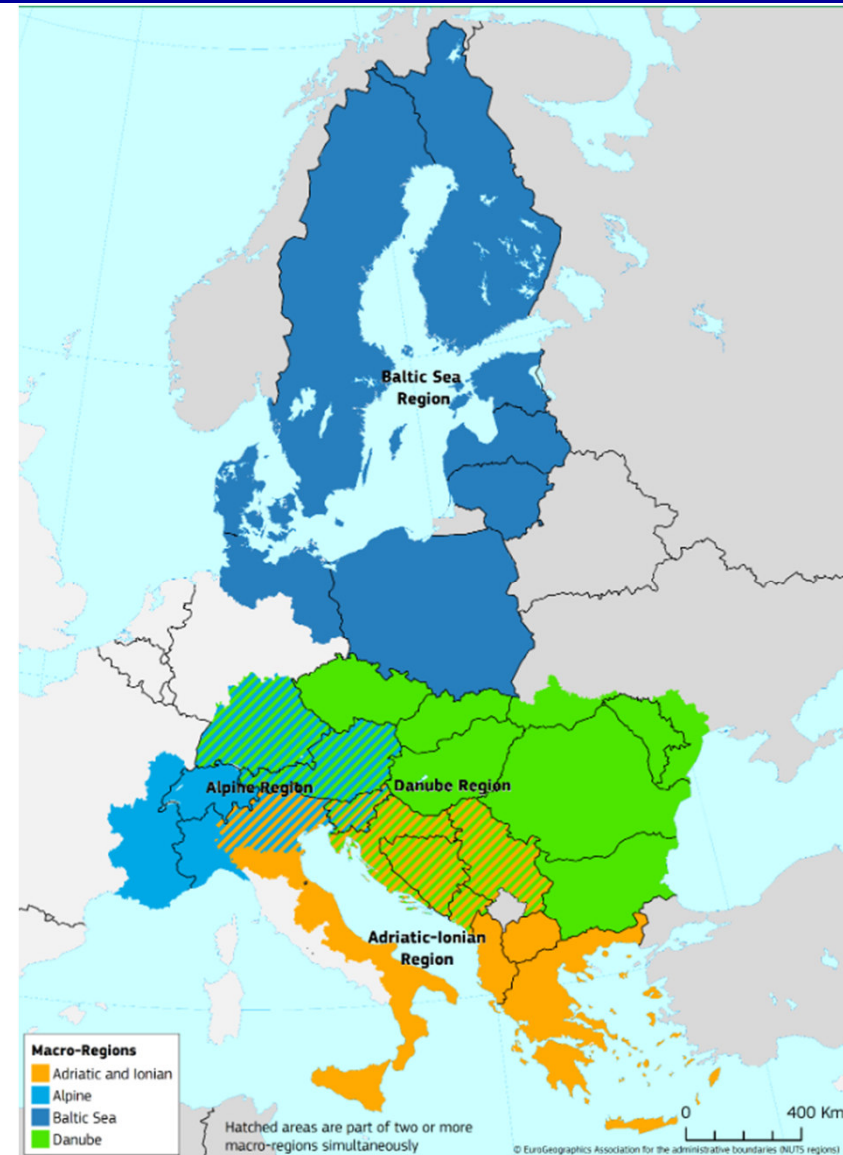
- to address **common challenges**
- faced by a **defined geographical area** relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area,
- which thereby benefit from **strengthened cooperation** contributing to achievement of **economic, social and territorial cohesion**.

### 3 NOs of the MRS

- **No new legislation:** MRS **do not create** new laws or regulations. Instead, they aim to better implement and coordinate existing EU, national, and regional legislation.
- **No new funding: no dedicated** new EU funds. They aim is to better align and optimize the use of existing resources (EU, national, regional) to address common challenges.
- **No new institutions:** They rely on **existing** governance structures and stakeholders to facilitate cooperation and implement their action plans.

## 4 MRS

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009)
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region (2010)
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (2014)
- EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (2015)

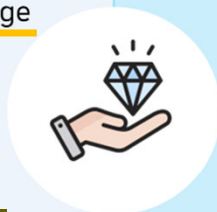




## Policy impacts (example of the EUSDR)

### *Unique added values of the EUSDR*

Stakeholders	Programmes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Focused approach on jointly <u>tackling common challenges</u> in the Danube Region</li><li>2 Platform for <u>fostering knowledge exchange</u></li><li>3 Formal and informal cooperation network in the Danube Region- <u>social capital</u></li><li>4 <u>Narrows gaps between 14</u> countries to look for common solutions and shape the future together</li><li>5 "<u>Laboratory of accession and gradual integration</u>", eye-level cooperation among all EU/EU accession countries</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Focused approach on jointly <u>tackling common challenges</u> in the Danube Region</li><li>2 Established platform for fostering cooperation and <u>knowledge exchange</u></li><li>3 Structured framework for promoting multi-level <u>governance and coordinated actions</u></li><li>4 Cooperation framework for concrete policy activities <u>aside from (national) policies</u></li><li>5 Policy platform for supporting the <u>enlargement process</u></li></ol>





## MRS vs Programme

### MRS

### PROGRAMME

#### TIMEFRAME

Long-term; no specific period

Specific (e.g. 2021-2027)

#### REGULATION

No specific regulation,  
Endorsed by European Council

Established by EU regulations  
(CPR, Implementing Regulations..)

#### FUNDING

No dedicated new EU funding

Specific budget

#### INSTITUTIONS

No new institutions,  
Facilitation points (DSP, FP)

Managing Authorities  
Monitoring Committee  
IBs, FLCs...

#### KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Multi-level governance approach:**

- *National Coordinators*
- *Thematic Coordinators*
- *Steering Groups...*

Managing Authorities,  
Monitoring Committee  
IBs, FLCs...





## MRS vs Programme

### MRS

### PROGRAMME

REVISION

Very time consuming, not very often

Less time-consuming

MAIN DOCUMENTS

Action Plan (broad)

Programme documents

Implementation tools

Flagships, projects

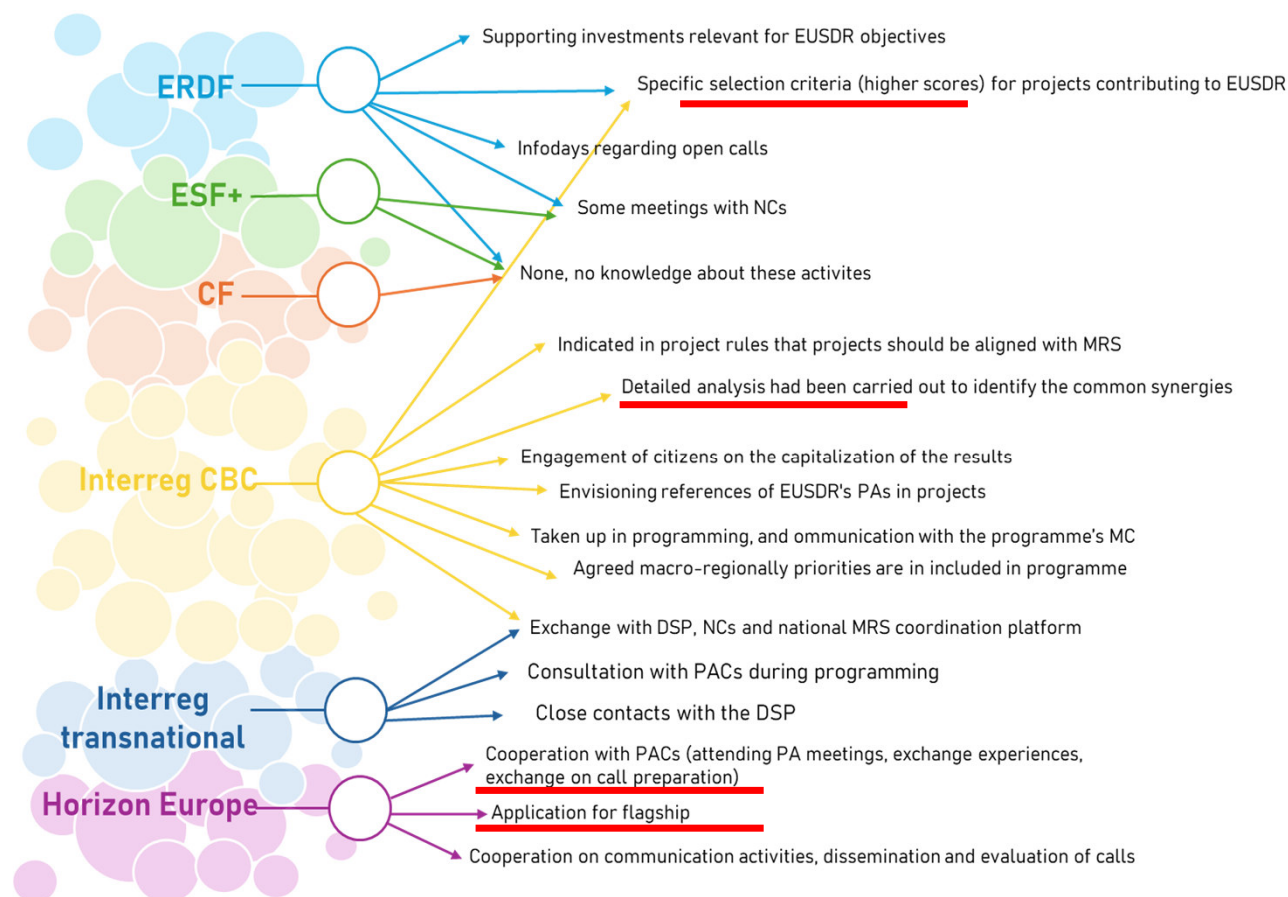
Projects, SPF

Outputs, results

Less tangible:  
Coordinated policies, common actions, strategic alignment

Concrete projects, more tangible results and outputs

## Involvement of programmes in MRS activities (EUSDR example)



## Interreg TN programmes a key source for MRS activities

The 2021-2027 legislation reinforce **their synergies with the Interreg TN programmes** where **MRS are funding projects** and are **supporting the governance**:

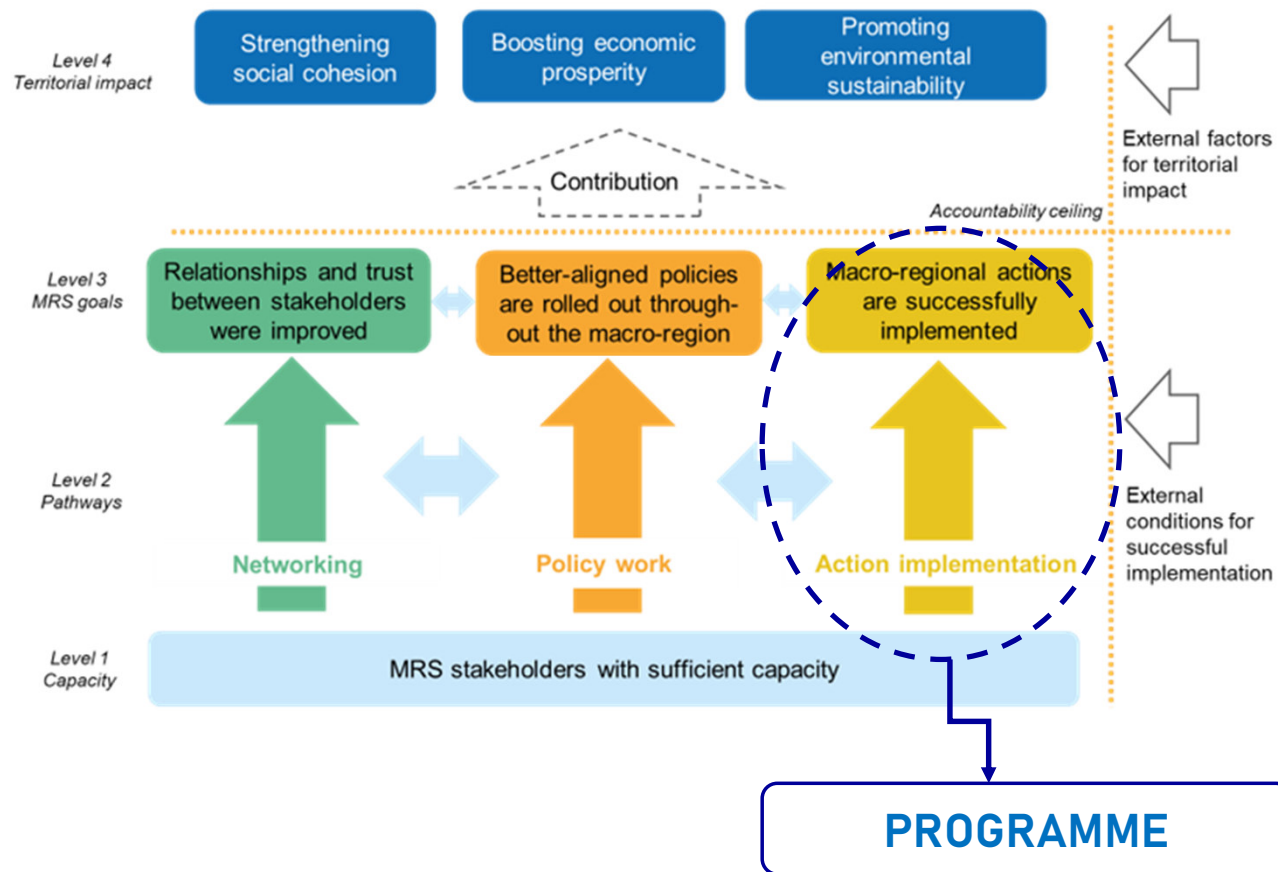
- Interreg Baltic Sea Region,
- Interreg Danube Region (e.g. DSP),
- Interreg IPA Adrion (e.g. FP),
- Interreg Alpine Space



## MRS VS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

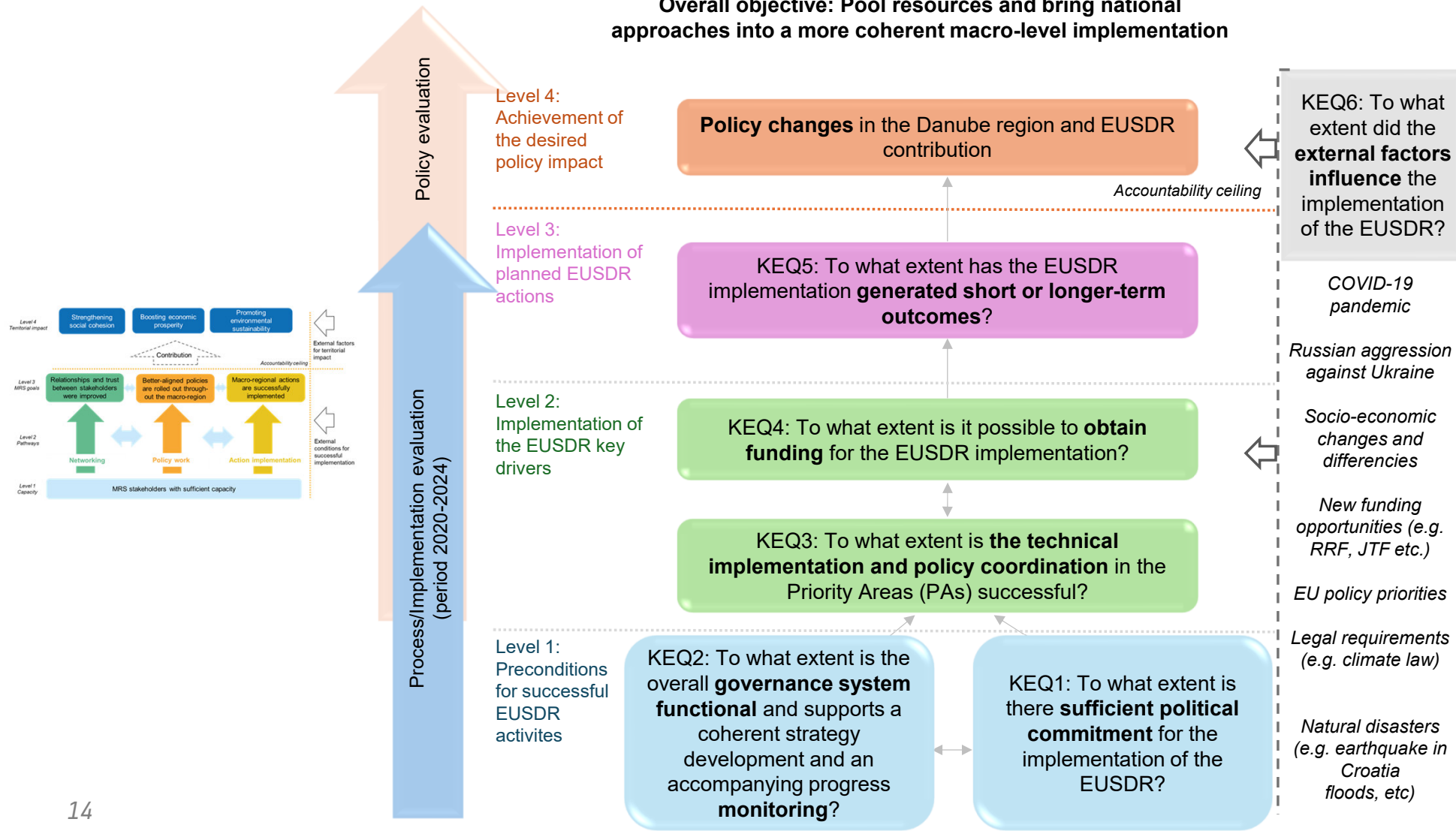
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## Impact model of MRS



# EUSDR Process/Implementation Evaluation

Overall objective: Pool resources and bring national approaches into a more coherent macro-level implementation





## Monitoring

### MRS

### PROGRAMME

Monitoring: EU level

NC reporting (to DG REGIO)

SFC (to the Commission)

Monitoring: MRS

PAC reporting (internally)  
Beneficiary reporting (to FLC, MA)

Monitoring: Financial

Project reporting (to FLC, MA)

Project reporting (to FLC, MA)



## Evaluation

### MRS

### PROGRAMME

TYPE OF EVALUATIONS

Process, Impact, Communication

Process, Impact, Communication

REGULATION

No specific regulation

e.g. CPR

Evaluation stakeholders

Evaluation Steering Groups,  
Governance Board (e.g. NC-PAC)

Mainly Monitoring Committee

EU level

DG REGIO prepares bi-annual  
reports on MRS implementation

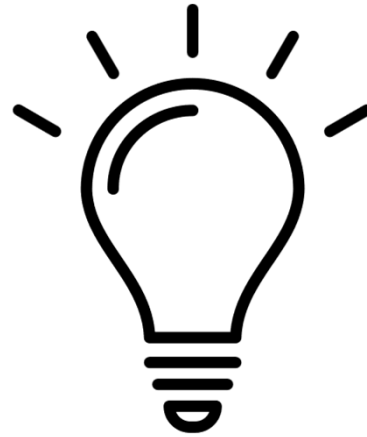
Interim and ex-post evaluations  
(for those covered by CPR)

Methods

Various methods are a **MUST**  
**Need time** for a comprehensive  
evaluation

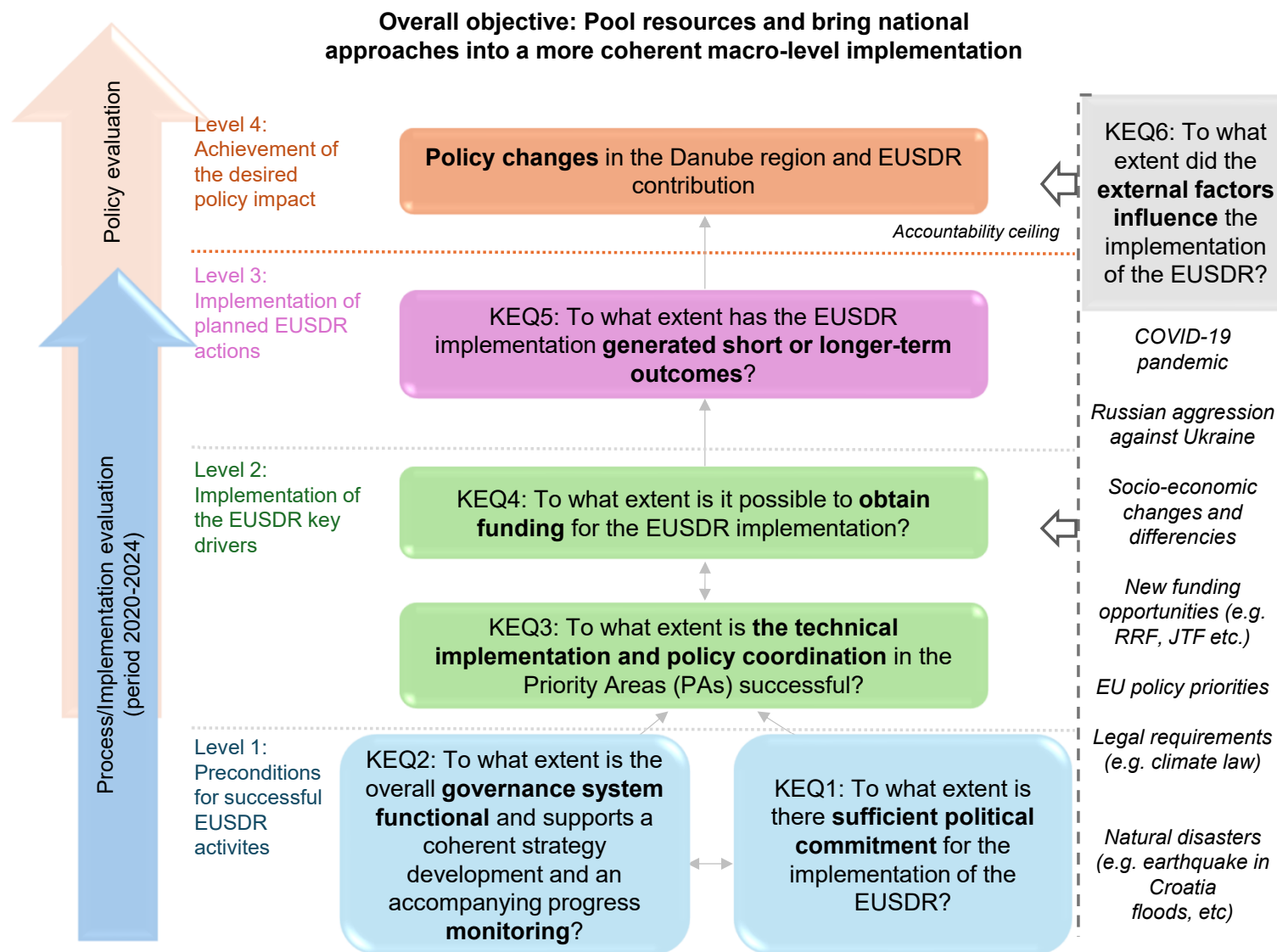
Could be less demanding  
(depending on the programme,  
country)



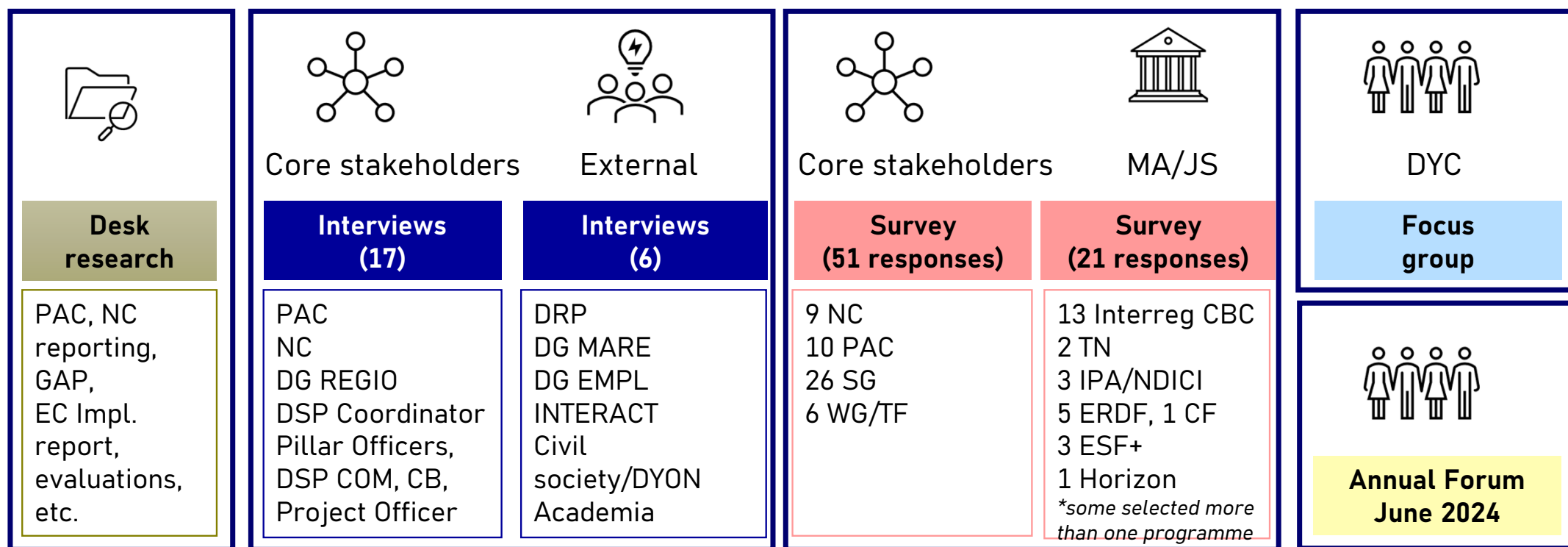


## EUSDR EVALUATION

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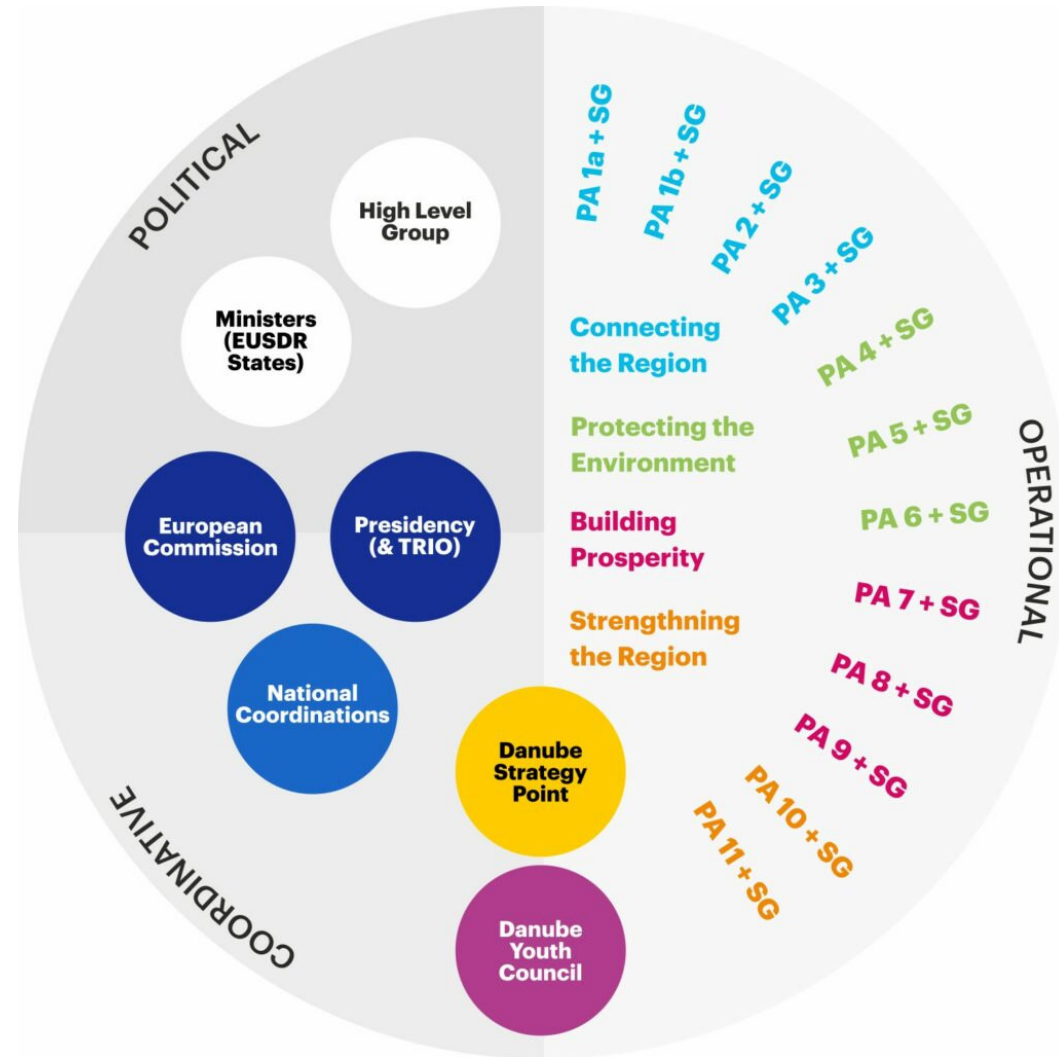
## A mix of data collection methods was **crutial**



## Geographical coverage was **crutial**

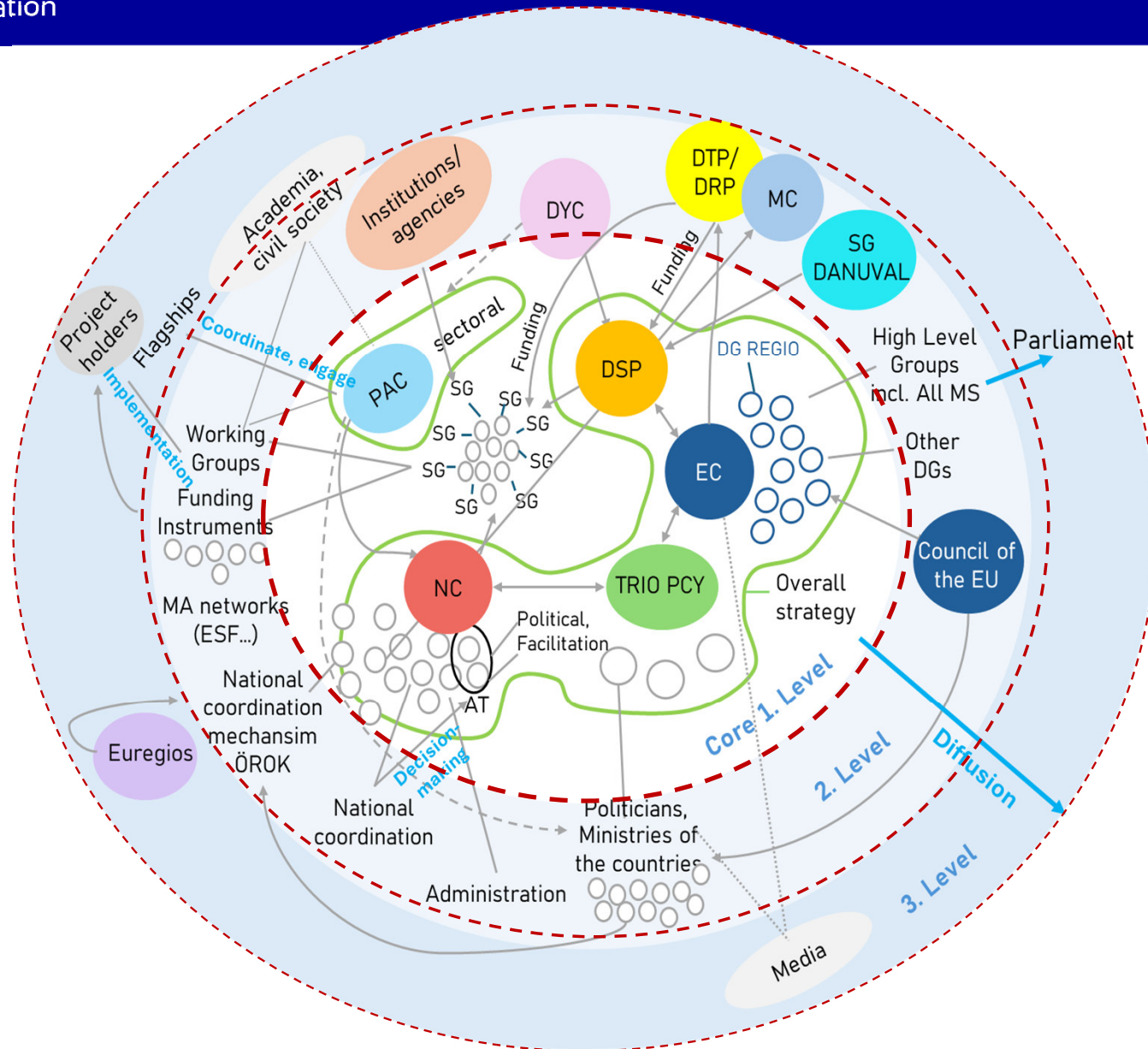


## EUSDR Governance Structure





## “Soft” Governance Structure



## Challenges and limitations

- **Need some time** to first understand the „soft“ organisational structure of MRS
- **Agreeing on consolidated answers** (e.g. one answer for each NC, for each PAC)
- **Survey response distribution and potential bias**
  - **Core stakeholders:** one consolidated answer for each NC, PAC. However, for SGs was not possible
  - **Programme survey:** dominated by Interreg CBC programmes (62% of respondents).
- **Uncertainty** about the future EU Cohesion Policy
- **Limited baseline data** from previous EUSDR evaluations (e.g. no previous data, new bodies such as DYCs established, etc.)
- Evaluation often **perceived as an “audit”**
- **Follow-up** – limited resources for implementing recommendations so we **prioritised** them
- Some expected **“impact”** evaluation results
- Nr of interviews **higher** than initially planned (for better coverage)

# THANK YOU !

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## Main conclusions and recommendations

### Main findings & conclusions

- **Political commitment:** increased particularly in **EU accession countries**
- **EU institutions:** Except DG REGIO, low involvement from line DGs
- **Best practices:** (TRIO) Presidency, Annual Forums, national coordination platforms, Governance Architecture Paper, etc.
- **Main funding sources:** Interreg TN, Horizon, etc.
- **Russian war of aggression against Ukraine:** EUSDR as a platform for cooperation and solidarity
- **Funding** remains challenging
- **Low engagement of SG members** (officials working at national institutions)
- **Action Plan revision:** A flexible approach is needed for regular checks of the relevance of the Plan

### Main recommendations

- Need for more **internal and external awareness** on MRS (e.g. to politicians, programmes, etc.)
- Focus on **topics with the highest transnational relevance** (especially for post-2027 MFF)
- Better use MRS as a **platform for capitalisation**