

FUNDA

Enhancing Institutional Capacities for Managing Functional Urban Areas in the Danube Region

Baseline study on strategic documents and legislation in functional urban areas in the Danube Region

FUNDA Project Meeting
online – 12 February 2026

PP06 - Regional Development Agency South-West Oltenia
Sorin Cosmulescu

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Project Title: FUNDA (Enhancing Institutional Capacities for Managing Functional Urban Areas in the Danube Region)

In Period 1 (April 1 - September 30, 2025) – Project Partner No. 6, RDA SW was responsible for developing the format of the Research Protocol on the FUNCTIONAL URBAN AREAS Baseline Study and the consolidated FUAs Baseline Study, with collaboration and contributions from all Project Partners.

Adopted terminology: "research protocol" is a document that describes the rationale, logical framework, objectives, methodology, statistical considerations, and organization of the research subject.

PP06 RDA SW developed the Research Protocol, which was presented at the kick-off meeting organized by the Lead Partner LECHNER Non-Profit Ltd. in May 2025 in Budapest.

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The format and content of the Protocol were finalized through discussions and proposals with all project partners, and the PP06 RDA SWO developed the document in an updated version in May-June 2025. Based on this Research Protocol, in the first period (April 1-September 30, 2025), the 11 project partners developed and finalized the FUA Baseline Study.

Project partners:

- 1. Lechner Non-profit Ltd. / Hungary – Lead Partner**
- 2. West Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Nonprofit Ltd. / Hungary – PP2**
- 3. Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency / Bosnia and Herzegovina – PP3**
- 4. Regional Development Agency for Podravje – Maribor / Slovenia – PP4**
- 5. Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia / Slovenia – PP5**
- 6. Regional Development Agency South-West Oltenia / Romania – PP6**
- 7. Regional Development Agency of Pilsen Region / Czechia – PP7**
- 8. LOCAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES «PRIKARPATTIA AMALGAMATED TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT AGENCY» / Ukraine – PP8**
- 9. CESCIBalkans Novi Sad / Serbia – PP9**
- 10. Chisinau Town Hall / Moldova – PP10**
- 11. Know-How Prešov / Slovakia – PP11**

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- 1. FUNDA – Functional Danube Areas Baseline Study – Key Findings & Added Value**
- 2. Presenter: Sorin Cosmulescu, PP6 RDA SW**

Message: “Brief presentation of the main results of the Baseline Study, focusing on what we learned across the Danube Region and how these findings support the next phases of FUNDA.”

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What the Baseline Study Covers

Scope of the Study:

- 1. Mapping strategic documents, legislation & planning frameworks**
- 2. Understanding how Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) are defined and governed**
- 3. Compared definitions and governance models of FUAs**
- 4. Identified gaps, challenges, and opportunities across the Danube Region**
- 5. Providing a shared knowledge base for all FUNDA pilot activities**

Message: “The study provides a comparable overview of how FUAs are understood and managed in each partner country. It gives us a shared starting point for all thematic pilots. It aligns all partners around the same concepts and tools.”

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Key Findings Across the Danube Region

1. Different FUA definitions

- Some countries have formal legal definitions
- Others rely on statistical or functional criteria
- Several countries have no official FUA framework

2. Governance fragmentation

- Overlapping competences
- Limited inter-municipal cooperation
- Weak coordination between local–regional–national levels

3. Need for harmonised tools

- Planning instruments differ widely
- Lack of shared methodologies for FUA planning
- Digital tools unevenly developed

Message: “Despite differences, all countries face pretty similar governance challenges, especially fragmentation and lack of harmonised planning tools.”

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Good Practices Identified

☐ *Examples of promising approaches:*

- Cluj Metropolitan Area (RO) – strong inter-municipal cooperation
- Budapest Agglomeration (HU) – advanced spatial planning tools
- Vienna Region (AT) – long-term metropolitan governance
- Maribor (Slovenia) – integrated mobility planning
- Serbia & Bosnia-Herzegovina – emerging FUA initiatives

☐ *Common success factors:*

1. Clear institutional roles
2. Stable cooperation structures
3. Data-driven planning
4. Political commitment

Message: “These examples show that successful FUAs rely on continuity, data, and stable cooperation frameworks.”

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Insights Relevant for the FUNDA Pilots

Baseline Study supports all pilot activities by:

- 1. Providing comparative evidence for designing pilot actions**
- 2. Highlighting legal and institutional gaps to be addressed**
- 3. Offering criteria for selecting good practices**
- 4. Supporting the development of the Participatory Planning Guideline**
- 5. Guiding the design of the FUNDA Co-Hub & Monitoring System**

Message: “The Baseline study is not just descriptive — it directly informs the pilots and the tools we are developing in FUNDA. It is the foundation for pilot activities ”

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Focus on Pilot FUAs

Key elements from the national context:

- 1. No formal national definition of FUAs**
- 2. Strong need for multilevel governance mechanisms**
- 3. High potential for business infrastructure development**
- 4. GIS tools essential for evidence-based planning**
- 5. Stakeholders are open to digital & participatory methods**

Message: “Pilot FUA benefit directly from the Baseline Study, especially in identifying governance gaps and opportunities for digital tools.”

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Added Value for the FUNDA Project

The Baseline Study provides:

- 1. A shared conceptual foundation for all partners**
- 2. A common language for discussing FUAs**
- 3. A reference point for evaluating pilot progress**
- 4. A basis for the Transnational Strategy and FUANET**

Message: “In short, the Baseline Study is the backbone of the project. It ensures that all partners move forward with a shared understanding.”

Objective of this Baseline Study

- ❑ A comparative assessment of national legal frameworks and planning methodologies for FUA was carried out.
- ❑ Collection and analysis of existing regional development strategies, spatial and urban planning documents from 11 partner regions.
- ❑ To develop a standardised methodology for the delimitation of FUA, based on EU-wide definitions (OECD, ESPON, EEA Urban Atlas).
- ❑ Facilitating evidence-based governance and integrated urban development through FUAs.

Why FUAs are important in the Danube Region

- ❑ FUAs stimulate economic development, cross-sectoral innovation and spatial cohesion.
- ❑ Challenges: fragmented planning, uneven capacity, blurred boundaries.
- ❑ The need for harmonised criteria, legal clarity and support tools for decision-makers.
- ❑ Objective: To build a comprehensive knowledge base to inform future governance models.

- ☐ National and local legal requirements for the establishment of Functional Urban Areas (FUA) in the participating countries
- ☐ Planning methods and methodologies available for FUAs
- ☐ Existing strategies on FUAs in the countries of the Danube Region
- ☐ Establish a common format for FUNDA project partners to collect similar information available at regional (and local) level in the field of FUA;
- ☐ To facilitate the integration of data collected from FUAs in partner regions;
- ☐ To build/develop an overview of the current situation regarding the situation and potential of the FUs in the partner regions.

Capacity and development potential of FUAs in the partner countries

- The potential of FUAs in the region to develop and grow continuously was analysed.

Conclusions on the development of FUAs:

- The process of development and growth of FUAs – description
- The analysis of the FUAs situation in each region of the project partners will be carried out taking into account both the analysis of the results obtained by processing the statistical data, and the conclusions drawn during the working group meetings.



SWOT ANALYSIS of FUA operations in the Danube regions



Its goal is to discover possible similarities between the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FUAs in each region. The existence of these common elements can be useful in the process of developing policies that improve the potential of the business sectors of the FUs in the project partner regions.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Advantages related to competitiveness of sectors in FUAs	What do we need to improve to bring progress to FUAs in our region?	Where are the good opportunities that appear for FUAs in our region?	What obstacles stand in our way to facilitate FUAs situation?
What exactly are we doing right at this moment?	What exactly are we doing insufficiently or wrongly?	Where are the interesting trends that we are aware of?	Are the conditions of the imposed framework changing?
What relevant resources do we have access to?	What should we avoid?		Do technological changes threaten the development of the region?
What exactly do people see as our strengths?			Do we have financial problems?

Baseline Study - Long-term impact and integration

- ❑ **It strengthens institutional capacity in spatial planning and functional integration.**
- ❑ **It supports alignment with the 2030 Territorial Agenda and EU Cohesion Policy.**
- ❑ **Empowers partners to influence policy instruments**
- ❑ **It facilitates transnational cooperation on urban governance in functional territories.**

Website Baseline Study ;
<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/funda/library>

THANK YOU!

Interreg
Danube Region



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<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/funda>

ADR Sud-Vest Oltenia

Web: <https://www.adroltenia.ro/>

Aleea Teatrului, nr. 1, Craiova, 200402, Romania

Sorin Cosmulescu

sorin.cosmulescu@adroltenia.ro

