**Enhancing EU Accession Support for Candidate Countries in EU Strategies for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).**

6th November 2025, Sarajevo

**Background**

Enlargement and EU macro-regional strategies provide valuable frameworks for cooperation, regional development and integration, particularly within the context of the EU and its neighbouring regions.

Enlargement refers to the process through which the EU expands to include new countries as its members. This has taken place seven times in the EU’s history. The enlargement process involves various stages, including candidate status, membership negotiations and the accession. For new countries to join the EU, the acquis has to be implemented, which includes specific criteria of EU laws and standards. The enlargement of the EU contributes significantly to the spread of stability, peace and prosperity across the continent, promoting stability, economic growth, and democratic governance, which also leads to a more cohesive Europe.

EU Macro-regional strategies are frameworks that focus on specific geographical areas that encompass multiple countries, EU member states and EU candidate countries and their regions working together to address common challenges with joint efforts. These strategies are designed to enhance cooperation and cohesion in areas such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection of environment, sustainable economic development, education, transport connectivity, security etc.

Both EU enlargement and EU macro-regional strategies highlight the importance of collaboration and integration in achieving regional development goals and cohesion. They also emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to address issues that transcend national borders, ensuring that all countries within a region can benefit from shared resources and collective efforts.

**Objective of the Meeting**

To facilitate a collaborative dialogue among EU member states and candidate countries within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in identifying actionable plans for supporting candidate countries in their EU accession processes.

To create a structured platform for meaningful dialogue and cooperation, thereby enhancing the EU accession processes for candidate countries within the EUSDR and EUSAIR frameworks.

**Expected Outcomes**

1. A joint statement that articulates the commitment of EU member states, members of the EUSDR and EUSAIR, in supporting candidate countries, members of the EUSAIR and EUSDR, in their EU accession path;
2. A concrete work plan with designated responsibilities and timelines for follow-up initiatives;
3. Strengthened collaboration and among national coordinators of both MRS, enabling a supportive network for future interactions.

**Draft Agenda**

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks by the EUSDR and EUSAIR Presidencies (introduction of participants, overview of the meeting’s purpose and expected outcome);
2. Collaborative Framework for Support – identifying key areas where EU member states can offer support the EU accession countries (capacity building and institutional strengthening, technical assistance and knowledge sharing, alignment of financial support mechanisms (Team Europe approach, foreseen also in the first draft of the new EU MFF, which aims to further coordinate the actions, and pooling resources for common goals), enhancing regional cooperation;
3. Defining a Joint Position Paper - drafting a joint position paper that reflects the MRS wise commitment of EU member states to support candidate countries, outlining specific actions and collaborative efforts, seeking consensus on the language and scope of the statement;
4. Next Steps - establishing a timeline for implementing agreed actions, assigning responsibilities among EU member states and accession countries for follow-up tasks, planning for future meetings to assess progress and adapt strategies as needed;
5. Closing Remarks - summary of key points discussed and reaffirmation of commitment to support candidate countries, encouragement of ongoing dialogue and networking among participants.

Further Documents (detailed agenda, draft Joint statement, work plan) will be submitted in due time.