**Minutes of the 5th**

**Steering Group meeting**

**of**

**PA4 - To restore and maintain the quality of waters – of the EUSDDR**

DATE: 5th June 2013

VENUE: Hotel Sorea Regia, Kráľovské údolie 6, Bratislava, the Slovak Republic

Main objectives of the meeting were:

- to discuss on the integration of “A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources”to the work of PA4,

- to discuss about the strengthened cooperation with DG ENV

- to get informed about the plans of JRC for the scientific support of PA4 and to decide about the co-operation with JRC,

- to get informed about the progress on the establishment of Danube Programme (Transnational Fund),

- to review the progress and state of tasks drawn up in roadmaps, amend/modify roadmaps in case of any need,

- to issue the Letter of Recommendation/Merit for nominated, debated and agreed projects, if any,

- to discuss and decide about the Common Communication Strategy of PA4,

- to discuss on recent activities related to PA4 and give information on the planned events till the end of 2013.

The meeting was attended by the SG members or their substitutes of the following Danube countries: AT, CZ, DE (also representing PA6), HU, RO, SK, and by the representatives of ICPDR, GWP, IAD (the detailed list of participants is attached – **Annex 1**).

The meeting was chaired by PACs Radoslav Bujnovsky (SK) and László Perger (HU), minutes were taken by Ms. Andrea Vranovská and Ms. Alena Kurecová (SK).

The final agenda of the meeting is attached (**Annex 2**).

**1. Welcome, introduction, agenda**

The 5th PA4 SG meeting was opened by PAC-SK Mr. Bujnovský. Within the introductory part a short welcome speech was presented by hosting country (Mr. Koločány - deputy of NPC Slovakia from the Governmental Office of the Slovak Republic and Ms. Kučárová on behalf of the General Director of Water Section at the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak republic) as well as by high level representaties of co-PAC country and DG ENVI (Mr. Medgyesy – Hungarian Government Commissioner and Ms. Behrendt Kaliarikova from the Directorate General for the Environment). They highlighted the importance of EUSDR from the viewpoint of the Danube Region development and stressed the ongoing activities related to next programming period.

After that the participants introduced themselves.

**2. Presentation of the proposed agenda, approval of the agenda**

Mr. Bujnovský shortly presented the proposed SG meeting agenda. As the Ms. Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper (HU) could not attend the meeting for health reasons, therefore the communication strategy of PA4 was excluded from the agenda of SG meeting. This change was accepted and the agenda was approved by participants.

**3. Presentation on the special requirements of “A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources” to the PA4**

Ms. Behrendt Kaliarikova (DG Environment) presented the Blueprint requirements for water management and use improving. She highlighted the necessity to solve problems related to implementation of EU water policy that consist mainly in *i)* Insufficient use of economic instruments, *ii)* Lack of support for specific measures, *iii)* poor governance, and *iv)* knowledge gaps. To solve this problem, Blueprint policy options embrace:

- continuation in enforcement of legislation

- early action for uptake in 2015 RBMPs

- use of the new policy options (voluntary options, regulatory options, conditionality, and funding priority).

Ensuring correct WFD implementation in the second RBMP period (Follow up RBMP assessment) is the core issue in solving immediate problems related to improvement or maintenance of water quality. Assessment of PoMs and integration of EU Water Directives represent the inherent part of this process. Close coordination with ICPDR helps in the correct implementation of EU water acquis, in particular WFD, UWWTD and ND in DRBD.

Mr Mair (ICPDR) confirmed the importance of the Blueprint document having complex character than can be very helpful in the implementation of projects within the whole Danube Region and the integrated character of solution is still more necessary.

Mr. Schrittwieser (AT) stressed the role of ICPDR at solution of problems defined in Blueprint that concern especially the PA4 and PA5 activities.

Mr. Balnus (DE) noted the existence of synergies not only within the PAs of second EUSDR pillar. It is the base for application of integrative approach at problem solutions. He highlighted the need of project examples that illustrate the application of integrated approach in practice.

Mr. Medgyesy (HU) thanked for the comprehensive presentation and the definition of important tasks that are related to EU water policy implementation and especially those related to water quality and PA 4 activities. He emphasised that we face a multiple challenge, like for example the climate change and a management challenge and PA4 SG and EUSDR countries have to give the reply to this by using the full potential of EUSDR. Our task is to prove that a sustainable water policy and river basin management exists. EUSDR has the most of the tools needed for this. The time period is critical, we have the Blueprint, we have a co-operation within the river basin, the WFD implementation is taking place, CIS is further developed, but we need to address the funding gaps using all the possible financing tools. The alignment of funding is essential from this point of view, the Partnership Agreements have to be finalized.

**4. Presentation on the initiative of JRC for the scientific support for EUSDR, the future activities of Danube Water Nexus**

Mr. Fehér (GWP SEE), in the absence of Mr. Bidoglio (JRC), who could not participate at the meeting, provided the information on recent initiatives of JRC at scientific support of EUSDR through flagship clusters aiming to provide policy makers with the appropriate scientific support to tackle interlinked policy issues. JRC has identified flagship clusters aiming to provide policy makers with the appropriate scientific support. Mr. Fehér listed JRC priorities in the Danube Region - Environmental protection; Irrigation and agriculture development; Navigability and Energy production. The cluster “Danube Water Nexus” is the nexus closely connected to PA4 of Danube strategy which provides many possibilities for cooperation. JRC expects the future cooperation as the collaborative work on building on existing experience deriving from national projects and international initiatives; establishing a Transboundary Modelling Partnership and facilitating joint building of assessment capacity. Moreover Mr. Fehér introduced the Road map of upcoming objectives from September 2013 up to December 2015 and the proposal of methodological framework of Water-Agriculture-Energy-Ecosystems Nexuses. He clarified next steps to be fulfilled – search for partners, search for financing and build consortium for proposal submission.

Mr. Perger emphasized the importance of collaboration with JRC and asked everybody what their views of working with the JRC are.

Mr. Tóth (HU) suggested starting the cooperation with the JRC at a sub basin level firstly.

Mr. Medgyesy (HU) said that being involved in the process itself is very important; he stressed the detailed development of the models. The he suggested to organize one extra meeting between regular SG meetings and to invite also Dr. Giovanni Bidoglio who is the Head of Water Resource Unit.

Mr. Balnus (DE) referred to the existence of a risk originating from the two areas, he emphasised that for him as a PAC is not easy to get adapted to the double activity coming from the SG and from the JRC. The organisation and the content are both of questions. The world of JRC activities and the world of EUSDR and SG is very different, currently PA6 does not have contact with JRC. The approaches should be harmonised, contacts should be established, maybe this year.

Mr. Fehér (GWP SEE) noted that PAs have real possibility to influence the functioning of the Water Nexus through analysing of trade-offs and stakeholder negotiations.

Mr. Medgyesy (HU) said that besides the trade-offs analysis there is necessary to formulate the requests addressed to JRC.

Ms. Behrendt Kaliarikova said that Blueprint is closely involved in cooperation with the JRC.

Mr. Perger (HU) emphasized the strong need of JRC in the process and suggested the Steering Group to be the governing body for the JRC.

**5. Presentation and discussion about the progress of the establishment of “Danube Programme” for financing the activities and projects of EUSDR**

Mr. Perger (HU) informed the participants about the progress in the Danube Programme preparation as one of the financial tools for the Danube Strategy. He explained that the Danube Transnational Programme is directly linked to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. It would cover the same geographic areas as the EUSDR. The proposed Programme strategy is aligned with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy  and it is  framed  by  the  11 “Thematic Objectives” (TO) with “Investment Priorities” (IP) proposed by the European Commission for the 2014-2020 Programming Period. Among the thematic priorities the Danube Programme is linked with PA4 actions as No 1 “Strengthening research, technological development and innovation”; No.6 “Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency”, and No.11.”Enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration”.

Mr. Kiss-Parciu (HU) explained the role of Budapest contact point for the Danube Strategy in the framework of projects facilitation and their implementation.  He explained the linkage to EIB (financial experts) and JAPERS group (technical experts) which are helping in project selection, distribution and searching for their financing.

Ms. Behrendt Kaliarikova (DG Environment) emphasised the added value of the Danube Programme, but she mentioned that this is not the only programme the DS projects could be financed from. EC supports and appreciates the coordination in programming within EU fund structures, for instance the Danube Transnational Programme.  She underlined that each Member State has to set priorities and thematic objectives in partnership agreement. EC needs the feedback from Member States to adjust program criteria for the next period.

Mr. Medgyesy (HU) highlighted the necessity of “financial engineering” to ensure the project financing before the rules for the programming period are set up. He mentioned that the Danube Programme is aimed at the small project focused on cooperation, but not at big investment projects. Therefore it is necessary to be oriented to all the financial tools to provide project financing. Moreover, it is necessary to find main priorities and the main goals of the programme.

Mr. Kiss-Parciu (HU) agreed with necessity of projects prioritisation.

Mr. Mair (ICPDR) remarked that the original SEE Programme did not cover the same geographic area as the Danube Programme. Danube Programme is tailored for EUSDR.

**6. Round table discussion on the involvement of SG Members in the programming process 2014-2020**

Mr. Perger (HU) addressed the participants to inform about their involvement in the programming process 2014-2020 and informed about of state of play in Hungary, from the point of view of a PAC. He said that the responsible ministry was provided with all the relevant information about EUSDR, which is needed to be included in the Partnership Agreement. Mr. Jakob Schrittwieser from Austria explained that water sector is involved in the preparation of Partnership Agreement in Austria. The Ministry is in close relationship with Operational Programmes, they could make comments and suggestions. They are also involved in the Rural Development Programme where they could include the measures of RBMP. The EUSDR is definitely included in the Partnership Agreement.

Mr. Medgyesy (HU) commented from a government’s perspective and showed that in Hungary there is a systematic embedding of EUSDR into the programing process. He added that at this Steering Group meeting the participants are representing their governments and not their institutions. He proposed to the participants to contact the programmers and provide them with data on EUSDR to make sure they have the necessary input.

Ms. Behrendt Kaliarikova (DG Environment) emphasised that EC needs cooperation with expert to appoint the main problems and objectives to be achieved in the upcoming programming period 2014 -2020 and are enabled to incorporate the Strategy to the programming.

**7. Review of progress and state of tasks drawn up in roadmaps**

This part was moderated by Mr. Bujnovský. Attention was paid to the tasks that should be completed by the end 2013. Responsible representatives provided short information (Mr. Mair, Mr. Perger, Mr. Bujnovský, and Mr. Costache). The state of fulfilment of actual tasks (Actions and relevant roadmaps) is enclosed (Annex 3).

Mr. Mair, and subsequently Mr. Medgyesy, emphasized the need to discus also on preparedness of PA4 group for the tasks in the future period and in advance to solve the possible problems. It was agreed that the abovementioned issues will be included in the agenda of next PA4 SG meeting.

**8. Discussion and decision on new projects, project ideas, donation of LoRs and LoMs**

Discussion led by Mr. Perger. The project proposals, to receive LoRs, were discussed as follows:

- Danube River Research and Management (DREAM)

- Development of a coherent ecological monitoring system and management of water resources in the river basins of Tisza, Prut and Siret, which are the part of the Danube River Basin

- Fortification of Danube River's banks from the Ukrainian side, first of all within settlements.

To the DREAM project proposal there was short discussion. Mr. Perger assessed the project as very comprehensive and focused on building the infrastructure for a set of research. He considered the project as relevant for PA4 and fulfilling the labelling criteria for LoR. Mr. Schrittwieser (AT) added the other explanation information on the proposed project. Subsequently the SG members agreed with giving LoR to DREAM project.

The project proposal “Development of a coherent ecological monitoring system and management of water resources in the river basins of Tisza, Prut and Siret, which are the part of the Danube River Basin” was considered as complex. Some parts seemed very general or ongoing parts of other projects/activities. Mr. Tóth (HU) proposed to divide this project proposal into several projects with exclusion of some parts (e.g. accreditation of laboratories). This suggestion was generally accepted by SG members with the fact that there is possible assistance of PA4 SG members in the preparation of these project proposals.

The project proposal “Fortification of Danube River's banks from the Ukrainian side, first of all within settlements” was considered rather as a project idea. It is necessary to finalize the content as currently the description suggests a national character.

**9. Information on recent activities related to PA4 and discussion on planned events (e.g. Stuttgart meeting) for 2013**

Mr. Perger informed the attendants about the planned events related to PA4:

- 11th Standing Working Group Meeting of the ICPDR (18-19 June 2013, Sarajevo, Bosna and Herzegovina)

- the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region in the programming process for 2014 -2020: Second joint meeting (21 June 2013, Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany**)**

- stakeholder conference “Transboundary water issues in a macro-regional context: the Danube basin (11-12 September 2013, Budapest, Hungary)

- The Budapest Water Summit (8-11 October 2013, Budapest, Hungary)

- ICPDR meeting (17-19 October 2013, Budapest, Hungary)

- EUSDR Annual Forum of (28-29 October 2013, Bucharest, Romania).

There is also expected the stakeholder meeting of PAs 4, 5 and 6in Romania. Till now the place and time has not been specified.

The next SG meeting is planned to be held in Budapest back to back with ICPDR meeting

Mr. Medgyesy emphasized the importance of the Stuttgart meeting as opportunity to understand the complexity of the process in next programming period and its relation to the EUSDR and activities of individual PAs and to identify concrete elements of co-operation. In this context, preparation of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes is considered as enormously important both from national and transnational viewpoint.

**10. Miscellaneous, closing session**

In the final part Mr. Bujnovský thanked the participants for active participation in the SG meeting and stressed the need for active co-operation at the performance of PA4 activities and their roadmaps as well as at the preparation of financial instruments for the next programming period (e.g. Danube Programme, Operational Programmes). PAC4 co-chair Mr. Perger expressed the thanks to organizers for a good management of SG meeting.

**Annex 2 Agenda of SG meeting**

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|  9.30 – 10.00 | Registration |
| 10.00 – 10.10 | Welcome, introduction of delegates and new members of SG (PA4-SK, NCP SK) |
| 10.10 – 10.20 | Presentation of the proposed agenda, approval of the agenda (Dr. Radoslav Bujnovský, PA4 co-PAC) |
| 10:20 – 10:45 | Presentation on the special requirements of “**A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources”** to the PA4 (Ms Dagmar Behrendt Kaliarikova, DG Environment) |
| 10:45 – 11:20 | Discussion about the integration of “**A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources”** to the PA4 (moderated by Dr. László Perger, co-PAC, SG members) |
| 11.20 – 11:45 | Presentation on the initiative of **JRC for the scientific support** for EUSDR, the future activities of Danube Water Nexus (Dr. Giovanni Bidoglio, JRC, Head of Water Resource Unit, substituted by Dr. János Fehér) |
| 11.45 – 12:20 | Discussion about the scientific co-operation between EUSDR PA4 and JRC Danube Water Nexus (moderated by Dr. László Perger, SG members, JRC, experts) |
| 12.20 – 13.10 | ***Lunch break***  |
| 13.10 – 13.40 | Presentation and discussion about the progress of the establishment of “**Danube Programme**” for financing the activities and projects of EUSDR (Dr. László Perger, SG members) |
| 13.40 – 14.20 | How the SG Members are involved in the programming process 2014-20? (round table discussion with SG members moderated by Dr. László Perger) |
| 14.20 – 15.20 | Review of progress and state of tasks drawn up in roadmaps (moderated by Dr. Radoslav Bujnovský, action leaders) |
| 15.20 – 15.40 | ***Coffee break*** |
| 15.40 – 16.20 | Discussion and decision on new projects, project ideas, donation of LoRs and LoMs (moderated by Dr. László Perger, SG members, experts) |
| 16.20 – 16.45 | Information on recent activities related to PA4 and discussion on planned events (e.g. Stuttgart meeting) for 2013 (Dr. László Perger, Dr. Radoslav Bujnovský) |
| 16.45 – 17.00 | Miscellaneous, closing session (moderated by Dr. Radoslav Bujnovský).  |