

EUSDR Joint PA 4 – PA7 11th Steering Group Meeting

Summary Minutes

25 May 2016

Historical building of the Slovak National Council

Bratislava, Slovakia

First part of this meeting was exceptionally organized as a joint meeting of the Priority Area 4 and 7, since both priority areas co-ordinated by Slovakia decided to use the opportunity to organize their Steering group meetings back to back NCP-PAC Meeting and the 5th Financial Dialogue organised by the Slovak Presidency of EUSDR.

The main objective of the meeting was to inform each other (PA4 and PA7) on ongoing and planned activities of both Priority Areas and on important (flagship) projects. In separate session of PA4 there was given an overview about the on-going activities of the priority area on water quality (PA4) of the EUSDR, the ICPDR and the Sava Commission. Moreover, the new concept of strategic projects was introduced. The separate session of PA7 included the information about Interim Progress Reports on the implementation of projects financed by the EUSDR Technical Assistance, information on up-dated PA7 Targets, state of the art of the PA7 working groups and common forthcoming joint activities, followed by the discussions on labelling of PA7 Strategic Projects and on preparation of the PA7 Workshop during the 5th Annual forum of the EUSDR.

The meeting was hosted by the Slovak partners in Bratislava in the city centre (Historic Building of the Slovak National Council) at Župné square. Considering both priority areas, the representatives of all Danube countries except for Bosnia i Hercegovina and Montenegro participated.

Regarding the participation on behalf of PA4, eight countries were participating at the meeting – Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Austria, German, Czech Republic, Moldova and Ukraine. The SK and HU PAC Teams, the ICPDR Secretariat, the Sava Commission, the GWP, European Commission, Danube Strategy Point representatives as well as project representatives were also present at the meeting.

Regarding the participation on behalf of PA7 – steering group representatives of the following countries were present – Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Moldova. The SK and RS PAC teams, Working Group leaders and projects coordinators (DREAM, Danube Future, DO-IT, INT-VET, and Danube INCO.NET) were also represented.

AGENDA

Morning section (Joint Meeting of PA4 + PA7)

09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30 – 10:00	Welcome by PACs7 (SK+RS), PACs4 (SK+HU), EC
10:00 – 10:15	Information by EC representative
10:15 – 10:45	Information by DSP representative – Strategic Projects
10:45 - 11:00	5th Annual Forum of in Bratislava - <i>Frantisek Kolocany</i>
11:00 – 11:15	EuroVienna Project Management – PA 10, Presentation on the new website EuroAccess Danube Region - <i>Julie Dalmoro</i>
11:15 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:30 – 12:00	Information by PA4 about implemented and upcoming activities
12:00 – 12:30	Information by PA7 about implemented and upcoming activities
12:30 – 13:30	Information by PA4-PA7 on ongoing and upcoming projects (appx. 30 minutes each PA) for PA7: <i>DREAM (SAS tbc.)</i> , <i>Danube Future (University BOKU)</i> , <i>DO-IT (University Maribor)</i> ; <i>INT VET (L.Pitlova)</i> ; <i>HINO (t.bc)</i> , <i>Danube INCO NET(Elke Dall)</i> , <i>Multilateral call and COST (Martina Hartl)</i> - every presentation max. 5 min.
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch Break</i>

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by all priority coordinators – **Mr Vladimír Novák** (SK PAC 4), **Mr Štefan Chudoba** (SK PAC 7), **Mr László Perger** (HU PAC 4) and **Ms Dijana Štrbac** (RS PA7) **on behalf of Mr Viktor Nedovič** (RS PAC 7) who was apologised.

2. Information by the European Commission

The next speaker was **Mr Frithjof Ehm** from DG Regio who besides the introductory words mentioned two specific events. The first was the meeting of DG Enviro and DG Regio which was organized in Brussels on 12 April 2016 where Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper from PA 4 HU introduced the whole work of Priority Area 4 and 5. The main idea of the meeting was to settle the cooperation of both directorates in the field of EUSDR. The second event mentioned by Mr Ehm was Sarajevo Technical Conference which was organized some weeks ago for the countries of Western Balkan related to environmental issues. The conference was understood as the support for non-member states of the European Union. **Ms Ann-Jasmin Krabatsch** from DG Regio offered a brief summary of PAC and NCP meeting which was held on 23 May 2016 in Bratislava.

3. Information by the Danube Strategy Point

Mr Matija Vilfan from DSP presented the new concept of “strategic projects” which was developed by the DSP on the basis of suggestions and commitments of EUSDR Foreign Ministers. On March 2016 this concept was confirmed and finalised. The deadline for submission of the first round of projects was 30 April 2016. The purpose of strategic projects is to contribute to stronger and clearer strategic focus to the EUSDR activities, to encourage cooperation among the Danube states/regions, to establish strategic ground for projects/processes and to strengthen and improve communication. Strategic projects shall serve as pilot examples for possible strategic support for embedding projects in funding programs. Scope can vary from a single project to group of projects or the whole process (e.g. network or new cooperation mechanism). Strategic projects can be preparatory or investment projects and they have 5 assessment criteria. Identification and selection process is performed at 3 levels: PACs, DSP and NCPs. So far 30 projects altogether have been submitted from totally 3 priority areas (PA 1a, PA 9 and Pa10). The projects will be evaluated and sent to NCPs for assessment. Strategic projects are not an obligatory issue – PAs do not have to participate in this context. This concept is viewed as a tool to help to find financial sources. Their added values is better communication and flexibility of outputs as well as better reporting. If the project is labelled “strategic” there is an assurance that it will be given some extra points when it applies in the Danube Transnational Programme. Regarding other financial mechanisms, there are no guarantees.

Mr Pascu asked what will be the relationship of this concept towards current flagship projects.

ICPDR asked for more details about the selection of strategic projects and how will the application process look like? **Mr. Liska** said there are many valuable contributions within PA4 and PA5, but he also asked about the specific purpose of the strategic project labelling, and whether the clearer criteria for labelling will be set?

Ms Hartl commented that PA7 has not submitted any strategic project because it was not explained in an understandable way, but unfortunately it is not clearer right now either. She also raised questions how could this increase the visibility, what would be the roles of coordinators, and who actually decides at the end whether the project is strategic? **Mr Vilfan stated there is no reason for frustration.** There is no obligation to come up with a project, it is a tool that can be used and help to come to additional funding. In his opinion these projects will raise the visibility by getting together the tangible results of work of experts, contribute to the common targets or to renewal of the action plan, nonetheless the labelled project will get additional points by evaluation in DTP-Interreg programme or in other programmes, as well.

Mr Vilfan explained that it is up to the PAs to decide which projects will be submitted for labelling.

4. Information about the 5th Annual Forum hosted by Bratislava

Mr František Koločány (NCP SK) had the presentation about the upcoming Danube Strategy Annual Forum which will be held in Bratislava on 3-4 November 2016. It will have 2 specific topics – Water and Knowledge Society since Slovakia is involved in these issues within the Danube Strategy. On the first day morning there will be organized the meeting of ministers for research and innovation. Both days there will be 3 workshops running in parallel (6 workshops altogether – workshop 1: PA 7 knowledge society and related issues, workshop 2: PA 4 water, workshop 3: DG Regio governance and embedding, workshop 4: JRC, workshop 5: DTP second call, seed money facility and workshop 6: practical experience – Quo Vadis Danube?). After the workshops there will be awarding ceremony regarding young scientists which will be followed by closing plenary session.

5. Information about Euro Access

Ms Julie Dalmoro, PA 10 representative, introduced the new website called Euro Access. She clearly demonstrated how this website functions and why it is called a gateway to European Union funding. It is a really useful tool for searching funding area, type of funding, partners, etc.

6. Information about PA 4 and PA 7 activities

Ms Andrea Vranovská (PAC 4 SK Assistant) and **Mr Lászlo Perger** provided a detailed information about the activities of the Priority Area 4 according to the work plan. Next speakers were the representatives of the Priority Area 7 **Ms Ľubica Pitlová** and **Ms Dijana Štrbac** who provided the overview of related activities.

Ms Napotnik (RO) asked Mr. Perger whether all the papers he presented were circulated among SG members.

Mr Perger answered that all papers are regularly uploaded on the PA4 website.

Ms Vranovska added the all internal issues related to the PA4 activities will be discussed in the separate PA4 section after lunch.

7. Information by PA 4 – PA 7 on ongoing and upcoming projects

Mr László Perger provided the information about the project Joint Tisza which is a strategic project. The project was submitted to the 1st step of the 1st call of the Danube Transnational Programme in 2015. It passed within the 1st step and was submitted within the 2nd step of the 1st call in 2016. The content of the project includes overexploitation, water regime modification, climate change, contamination and growing flood events. The project has 10 project partners and 6 work packages.

Mr Péter Bákonyi (PA 5) informed about the Danube Sediments project. The project was also submitted to the 1st step of the 1st call of the Danube Transnational Programme in 2015. It was successful within the 1st step and was submitted within the 2nd step of the 1st call in 2016. It has 14 project partners including universities, research institutes, water management bodies, etc. There are many associated strategic partners as well. The project has 6 work packages. The project deliverable include database of metadata and guidelines on the best practices.

Mr Igor Liška from ICPDR introduced the Danube Floodplain Project. This project is contributing to 3 priority areas altogether – PA 4, PA 5 and PA 6. It is the continuation of the Danube Flood Risk Project. The project objective is to reduce the flood risk through flood plain restoration along the Danube River. Target groups include flood managers, river basin managers, etc. The estimated costs are 3 million Euro and the project duration is 3 years minimum. The project will be submitted in early November 2016 within the 2nd call of the Danube Transnational Programme which will be one step application.

Mr Raimund Mair informed about the Danube Sturgeon Project. The project proposal will be submitted within the 2nd call of the Danube Transnational Programme. The project focus is safeguarding sturgeons in the Danube Region. The project fulfils a specific shared EUSDR target of PA 4 and PA 6. The project objectives are the following: creation of transnational knowledge pool based on existing knowledge, strengthening the Danube Sturgeon Network, safeguarding critical and potential habitats, communication of results and public awareness and building up basin-wide partnership.

Mr Richard Müller (GWP) presented the information about the SANDANUBE project. The project is focused on sustainable sanitation in small settlements in the Danube Region. Duration of the project is 8 months from 1 December 2015 till 31 July 2016. The total project budget is 24 000 Euro (Start contribution – 20 000 Euro). Expected results include bringing technical knowledge and waste water legislation to topical problems of small settlements.

The section about PA 7 ongoing and upcoming projects followed where the following projects were presented: Danube Future, DREAM, Do-IT, INT VET, and Danube – INCO.NET.

Ms Gertrud Haidvogl (BOKU Vienna) presented a project Danube:Future, which stands for a sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge for the interdisciplinary humanities. It targets all 19 countries in the Danube region and belongs to activities endorsed by the Danube Rectors' Conference and the Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference, which link 90 universities in the region, involving the largest possible institutional knowledge-producing and disseminating group of organizational actors. Ms Haidvogl introduced also the White Paper on research and capacity building needs, challenges and opportunities for the development of the sustainability-oriented knowledge society of the Danube River Basin (from July 2015) and other undertaken and newly planned activities within the project for 2016 and 2017.

Mr Kenderessy (Slovak Academy of Sciences) spoke about the EUSDR Priority Area 7 flagship project DREAM (Danube River Research and Management). DREAM is a compound of 14 countries with the goal to improve the river focused research infrastructure and cooperation of research institutes in the Danube basin. Mr Kenderessy introduced the project main cooperative activities and its achievements

Ms Lubica Pitlova (www.minedu.sk) presented an overview of the project INT-VET (Introduction of Elements of the Dual Vocational Education in the Slovak Republic) and the concept of the Danube Academy for Dual Education. The main goals and impacts of this project are fostering the national VET system reform, establishment of a Competence Centre for dual VET (Danube Academy), stronger and sustainable mobilisation of SMEs and companies for dual apprenticeships, and ongoing experience exchange for apprenticeships. The main aim of the Danube Academy should be education of teachers of technical subjects.

Representative of the University of Maribor introduced the main goals and achievements of the project DO IT (Danube Open Innovative Technologies), which are mainly to increase the number of high-tech companies and the competitiveness of SMEs in the region and creating new jobs with high added value and preventing brain drain. One of the successes mentioned is for example is a project titled DEMOLA awarded by prestigious Wharton Award for good practices in knowledge and technology transfer. At the moment also another project proposal is being developed for the DTC with the working title Made in Danube.

Ms Martina Hartl informed about the planned activities related to coordination of national funds within the Danube Region (mainly the Pilot Multilateral Call, which is planned to be open later this year on the basis of opening up the Bilateral Governmental agreements on scientific and technological cooperation with 4 partner countries, i.e. Austria, Slovakia, Serbia and the Czech Republic) and on behalf of **Ms Elke Dahl** presented shortly also the main outcomes of the project Danube INCO-NET. This project represents a coordination and support action funded under the 7th Framework Programme and addresses EUSDR in the field of research and innovation with the primary focus on PA 7 and PA8 while also supporting the policy dialogue, the creation of networks, and providing analyses and support to R&I activities. The main visions for the future are e.g. cooperation with the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, development of the concepts for triple helix cooperation, improvement of R&I systems in non-EU Member States (upcoming workshop on performance related R&I funding), co-development of proposals for further cooperation, etc.

8. Individual Section of PA 4

14.30 – 15.45 Memorandum of Understanding between EUSDR and Carpathian Convention (Alena Kurecová)

Information on ICPDR activities (Raimund Mair, Zoran Major)

Information on ISRBC activities (Samo Grošelj)

LoR granting procedure - SIMONA “Sediment-quality Information, Monitoring and Assessment System to support transnational cooperation for joint Danube Basin water management” (Andrea Vranovska)

15.45 – 16.00 Coffee Break

16.00 – 16.30 Information on the conclusions from the conference „Effective utilization of water resources in the conditions of topical climate change (drought and water scarcity)” (Alena Kurecová)

Short information from PAC meeting 23 May 2016 (Andrea Vranovská + information on financing from DTP - tbc)

Others

16.30 – 16.45 Closing Session (László Perger, Vladimír Novák)

A. Memorandum of Understanding between EUSDR and Carpathian Convention

Ms Alena Kurecová (PAC 4 SK Assistant) offered some facts about the Carpathian Convention at the beginning of her presentation. This convention entered into force in 2006 and it is signed by 7 countries – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. Furthermore, she mentioned related focuses, working groups, adopted protocols and the most important issues which are tackled by the Carpathian Convention. These issues are the following: sustainable improvement of the quality of life, strengthening of local economies and communities and protection of natural values and cultural heritage. The text of the Memorandum was sent by the European Commission to the Danube countries to make comments regarding all EUSDR priority areas with the deadline 15 January 2016. Only 4 or 5 priority areas replied including the Priority Area 4 and this last version with comments was circulated among all SG members before this meeting. Signing this document is not obligatory and PACs can freely decide whether to sign the memorandum or not, the document is not binding. Role of the European Commission in the whole process is just to facilitate the cooperation and exploit synergies. At the end Ms Kurecová offered an example of similar situation when the joint paper on cooperation and synergy between EUSDR PA4 and PA5 and ICPDR was signed. Mr Perger stressed that there are 2 main reasons why to sign the Memorandum, the first one is biodiversity and the second one is the fact that most of the Danube tributaries originate in the Carpathian and Alp Region. Since it was not possible to vote about this issues directly at the meeting (not enough SG members were present), it was agreed that the silent written procedure will follow.

B. Information about ICPDR activities

Mr Raimund Mair had a presentation about the second River Basin and Flood Risk Management Plans which were adopted in December 2015. These plans are addressing 6 years planning period from 2015 till 2021. He presented the progress in figures regarding pollution reduction and the transnational monitoring network. He showed the results of monitoring programs – ecological and chemical status and urban waste water treatment. He introduced the measures on restoration of hydro-morphology. He also mentioned Danube Ministerial Meeting held in February 2016 and the Danube Declaration 2016. ICPDR upcoming activities contain new water management cycle, lifting knowledge base to higher level, intensifying technical exchange, flood risk management and coordination with the Water Framework Directive, inland navigation – sustainable hydropower, adaptation to climate change (water scarcity and drought), sediment management – sturgeon, sub-basin activities and guidance document on sustainable agriculture. At the end he had a presentation on Danube GIS – main objectives.

C. Information about ISRBC activities

Mr Samo Grošelj presented Sava river basin management plan and the 2nd Sava river basin analysis report. Next he outlined significant water management issues, e.g. STAWA project, establishment of Sava GIS, other projects and public participation. Regarding STAWA project, it had START contribution and the final report was submitted in the mid-April 2016. The lead partner is Serbia and there are 5 more partners. The main finding is that a considerable progress has been achieved in this field. Among other projects there are the following: sediment management, consideration of intersectoral linkages, project WAPCOS and project Danube Wets Eco-tour.

D. LoR granting procedure – SIMONA (“Sediment quality information, monitoring and assessment system to support transnational cooperation for joint Danube Basin water management”)

Regarding this issue the silent written procedure was proposed since it was not possible to vote about this directly at the meeting - not enough SG members were present.

E. Information by the European Commission

Mr Frithjof Ehm had several remarks in the context of CIS work programme 2016 – 2018 which was agreed by the Water Directors on 25 November 2015 in Luxemburg. He mentioned upcoming EC meetings: water and marine directors meeting which will be held on 9-10 June 2016 in Amsterdam, Netherlands and the strategic coordination group meeting which will be organized on 29-30 September 2016 in Brussels, Belgium.

F. Information of the conclusions from the conference “Effective utilization of water resources in the conditions of climate change (drought and water scarcity)”

Ms Alena Kurecová offered the information about the international conference with the working title Drought and Water Scarcity which was held in Bratislava on 17-18 May 2016. The conference had up to 150 participants. The goal of the conference was to create the platform for experience exchange among experts dealing with drought and water scarcity issues and simultaneously it opened the space for the discussion about contributions of experts who could form the future trend of solutions directed to drought impact and water scarcity mitigation. The whole event had 5 sections altogether: Section 1: Legislation and Protection of Water Resources; Section 2: Meteorological and Hydrological Drought; Section 3: Water and Health; Section 4: Drought in Practice; Section 5: Measures against Drought. Following the contributions presented at the conference, it can be stated that in the Danube Region there is high level knowledge and experience regarding climate change in water sector manifested in drought and water scarcity. Currently, there is necessity to move from meteorological, climatological and hydrological assessment and modelling of possible scenarios to the solution of socio-economic and ecological impacts of these risks. Therefore, it is necessary to draft and to adopt a concept and a strategy with real measures starting in the legislation and ending in the technical solution for protection of health and safety of inhabitants, economic activity and environment.

Conference output is the experience that drought and water scarcity issues require a complex, cross-sectoral and systematic approach comprised of the measures related to increasing water consumption effectivity, retaining water in landscape using natural and technical approaches, adopting effective water management measures and charging water abstraction. These measures shall be adopted following the bottom-up approach - at a local level (as municipalities) up to national and transnational level of the Danube Region and other European regions. Conference had highly positive feedback from the participants.

G. Short information from PAC/NCP meeting 23 May 2016

Ms Andrea Vranovská provided the overview from the abovementioned meeting. She briefly introduced the agenda of the meeting and said a couple of words about the Danube Transnational Programme support to the Danube Strategy. In the upcoming period the technical assistance of priority areas will be financed from DTP, the call will be launched at the end of September 2016, the project proposals will be submitted at the end of October 2016 and the project itself will start in January 2017. The project duration will be 3 years with maximum budget 100 000 Euro per year. Project partners can be at least 2 partners from 2 different countries out of which the Lead Partner shall be EU member state. She offered a short information about strategic project and the annual forum which was mentioned by Mr Matija Vilfan and Mr František Koločány in detail in the main part of the meeting. Finally she stated that the output of all priority areas was evaluated by DSP on the basis of the interim report which was supposed to be submitted by 30 April 2016. Priority Area 4 was ranked among the most successful priority areas when it comes to performed activities and budget spending.

H. Closing of the meeting

Both coordinators thanked all the participants for active involvement in the SG meeting, appreciated the fruitful cooperation with all stakeholders in the implementation of PA4 activities and stressed the need for active networking in the performance of PA4 activities



within the roadmap. They expressed the hope to see all the participants in 5th Annual Forum on 3-4 November 2016 in Bratislava and everybody was invited to 12th SG meeting in the autumn 2016 which is planned to be held in Budapest.