

Progress Report

on the implementation of projects financed by EUSDR technical assistance

Project title	PA4 SK Support (Supporting the Slovak coordination of Priority Area 4 "To restore and maintain the quality of waters" of the European Strategy for the Danube Region)
Project acronym [optional]	PA4 SK
Project number [for DSP use]	
Priority Area (PA) addressed	Priority Area 4 "To restore and maintain the quality of waters"
Type of Report	☐ Interim Progress Report☐ Final Progress Report
Reporting Period	01/10/2015 – 29/02/2016

1. Contacts

Contact person for the project	Dr. Andrea Vranovská Chy Much
Phone	+421 2 5934 3230
E-Mail	andrea.vranovska@vuvh.sk

Výskumný ústav vodného hospodárstva Nábr. arm. gen. L. Svobodu 5 812 49 BRATISLAVA

29.4.2016

2. Short summary of the project

The main outputs of EUSDR Priority Area 4 (PA4) "Maintain and restore the quality of waters" is to coordinate and manage the implementation of the PA4 targets elaborated in detail into 14 actions of action plan (Roadmap). The main activities are focused on supporting the protection of water resources, assistance in the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD), improvement of fish migration, promotion of measures addressing agricultural pollution, facilitation of sub-basin activities. PA4 provides assistance in project generation, partnership search, networking, alignment of project funding, dissemination and deepens synergies with international organizations (ICPDR, Sava Commission, Carpathian Convention, etc.)

The project outputs contribute to smooth implementation of PA4 activities aiming at improvement of water quality in the Danube Region. Within the first period of project implementation, the Slovak PA4 team focused on the coordination, management and monitoring of PA4 objectives. Slovak team promoted PA4 success during the EUSDR events such as Stakeholder Conference (November 2015,





Budapest), Brussels Danube Network meeting (February 2016, Brussels) and organised the 10th Steering Group meeting (October 2015, Bratislava) and internal working group PA4 HU-SK, ICPDR and Sava Commission meeting (February 2015, Bratislava). It supported the projects generation, facilitated the project consortia (especially in the Danube Transnational Program - DTP - call in autumn 2015) and searched for financial possibilities for projects implementation (new call within INTERREG Central Europe). Within the first call of the Danube Transnational Programme PA4 submitted 2 strategic projects (JOINTISZA, Danube Sediment) and one project focused on wetlands utilisation in post-mining areas (MINEWATERLIFE). Dissemination of PA4 achievements is underlined by preparing the update of brochure on PA4 activities. Moreover, all events and documents are mentioned at PA4 website www.danubewaterquality.eu which is constantly updated. The essential topic of water pollution from diffuse agricultural sources was elaborated into the brochure which will be printed soon. The brochures will be distributed during the events organised by PA4/EUSDR. Within planned PA4 activities for this period there was prepared the questionnaire on urban waste water treatment sent to all Danube countries and consequently there was made an assessment of questionnaire results developed in a short report. PA4 considers crucial to extend its attention to Non-EU countries cooperation, especially through supporting the project ideas related to transformation of WFD and UWWT principles into Non-EU members' legislation within the next calls of financing mechanisms.

3. What activities have been carried out / implemented so far?

Activity 1	Coordination, management and monitoring
Outputs	The PA4 team works on daily base to coordinate and manage the PA4 activities in accordance with the work plan of this project. On 31 October 2015 the Grant Agreement N°2012CE160AT124 finished and simultaneously on 1 October 2015 this PA4 SK Agreement came into force. Therefore, part of the activities performed by PA4 in October 2015 overlap in these two contracts and partly they were financially covered by the first Agreement mentioned above and by this project. In October 2015 PA4 SK organized 10 th Steering Group Meeting in Bratislava (20/10/2015 - Minutes and List of Participants – See Annex Va-1). The SG meeting provided an opportunity to inform SG members on news in EUSDR management (information on EC and DSP), ICPDR and PA4 achievements, PA4 plans for upcoming period, information on PA4 projects and procedure on Letter of Recommendation (LoR) granting. PA4 prepared and actively participated in 4 th Annual Forum workshops and JRC conference organized as its side event in October 2015 in Ulm, Germany (see link http://www.danube-forum-ulm.eu/danube-forum-ulm/pages/10788-workshop-details-presentations#ws14). Within the Annual Forum program our priority area prepared three workshops - "Protecting the environment in the Danube Region: Integrated horizontal co-operation", "Improvement and cooperation possibilities in the water sector with non-EU countries" (see also link http://www.danubewaterquality.eu/news/annual-forum-ulm) and "Setting water management priorities until 2021 - The ICPDR Danube River Basin Management Plan- Update 2015". Within the PA4 working plan, PAC4 SK team actively participated in the 2 nd Stakeholder conference, organized by Hungarian PA4 coordination team in Budapest (November 2015), focused on networking and partner search for the new project ideas.



PA4 organized the **trilateral working group meeting** among PA4 SK-HU, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and Sava Commission in Bratislava on 3 February 2016. Since the contract on the implementation of EUSDR was split among PA4 SK, PA4 HU and ICPDR, the main objective of the meeting was to inform the partners on achievements and future plans for 2016 in PA4 activities implementation and inform about the projects preparation. The Minutes of the meeting and List of Participants – See Annex Va-2.

Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg to the European Union in cooperation with the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the European Union organized **Brussels Danube Network meeting** on 12 February 2016 in Brussels. PA4 representative was invited in the context of the current Slovak Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, to present the PA4 aims during Slovak EUSDR Presidency and the work plan for upcoming period. The presentation of PA4 SK – see Annex Va-3.

In accordance with PA4 SK working plan, Slovak part was supposed to organize the 12th SG meeting in the second half of 2016 in Bratislava. At the request of Hungarian PA4 Co-coordinator, Slovak Part decided to organize the upcoming 11th Steering Group meeting back to back another event (PAC Meeting and 5th Financing Dialogue) on 25 May 2016 in Bratislava. Moreover, PA4 SG meeting will be taking place together with PA7 "Knowledge Society" SG meeting. Slovakia is one of PA7 coordinators. This is the change in project plans that the organization of the SG meetings was shifted by the Hungarian partners and the 12th SG Meeting will be organized in Budapest in autumn 2016.

In January 2016 the Final Report on PA4 activities (Technical and Financial Part) within the Grant Agreement N°2012CE160AT124 was prepared for EC. Moreover, the Slovak version of the Report on PA4 activities in 2015 was prepared for the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic.

Activity 2	Supporting the projects and searching for financial possibilities
Outputs	Support to the projects prepared within PA4 or related PAs (especially PA5) is provided continuously. PA4 facilitates the partners search and networking for the related projects (on request related to open calls) and disseminate the information on financial possibilities and partnership search at meetings, conferences and workshops. It provides daily assistance in dissemination of project partners search requests by email correspondence. The applier sends the short description of the project idea by email to priority area coordinators and their teams distribute the demand among SG members and internally in the water sector in Slovakia/Hungary. Moreover, the networking, alignment of funding and partners search was highly promoted by PA4 in cooperation with PA5 by organizing the 2nd Stakeholder Conference in November 2015 in Budapest. PA4 representatives actively presented good examples of the projects implementation as well as the project ideas intended for partners search and cooperation. The Agenda of the Conference in is Annex Va-4. Two big projects considered strategic for PA4 were prepared within the first call of the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) - Danube Sediment and JoinTisza. The Danube Sediment is focused on sediment data collection, sediment data



analysis, setup of sediment balance, review of key drivers and the impacts of significant pressures on sediment quantity for the Danube River, sediment regime and measures, and development of the Danube Sediment Management Guidance. The project lead partner is Budapest University of Technology and Economics (Hungary) and there are 14 more partners plus 7 associated partners in the project.

The aim of the second project named "Strengthening cooperation between river basin management planning and flood risk prevention to enhance the status of waters of the Tisza River basin" (JoinTisza) is to improve integration process of transnational water management and flood risk prevention, and to integrate results into the next river basin management planning cycle (2021) under the relevant EU legislation. The goal is better integration of measures regarding already existing (river basin management and flood management) plans and utilise outcomes of the proposed project. The lead partner is the General Directorate of Water Management (Hungary) and expected number of project partners is 18. Both projects passed through the first step of the first call.

PA4 was also involved in preparation of the project "Utilisation of postmining wetlands and lakes in the Danube Region" (MINEWATERLIFE). The main objective of the project is to improve the effectiveness of postmining wetlands and lakes sites management as a lever for local, regional and transregional development via enhancing integrated environmental management for the preservation and sustainable use of natural heritage in mining areas achieved through transnational cooperation. The project was submitted in the first call of DTP, but unfortunately it did not pass through the first step. The project was granted LoR by PA4 in the past and PA4 will support its implementation under another relevant financial mechanism.

Priority Area 4 supports relevant projects via issuing the Letters of Recommendation/Letters of Merit (according to applied projects). At 10th Steering Group meeting (20/10/2015), SG members approved issuing the Letter of Recommendation to the following projects - "Strengthening cooperation between river basin management planning and flood risk prevention to enhance the status of waters of the Tisza River basin" (JoinTisza) and "Sustainable sanitation in small settlements of the Danube Region" (SANDANUBE).

SG members asked for more detail information on project "Water Quality Monitoring: Setting up methodological framework for testing, monitoring and neutralisation of micro-pollutants of low biodegradability in natural surface waters of the Danube region" (WAQUM). This project was not granted LoR at 10th SG meeting (in detail see Minutes of 10th SG Meeting – Annex Va-1).

Activity 3	Organisation and participation at PA4 related meetings and events
Outputs	 PA4 SK team organised and/or actively participated in the following events: Slovak PA4 team organized 10th Steering Group Meeting in Bratislava (20/10/2015) - Minutes and List of Participants – See Annex Va-1. The main objective of the regular SG meeting was to inform SG members on news in EUSDR management, ICPDR and PA4 achievements, PA4 plans for upcoming period, information on PA4 projects and procedure on Letter of Recommendation (LoR) granting. PA4 prepared and actively participated in 4th Annual Forum workshops and JRC conference organized as its side event in October 2015 in



Ulm, Germany (see link http://www.danube-forum-ulm.eu/danube-forum-ulm/pages/10788-workshop-details-presentations#ws14). Within the Annual Forum program our priority area prepared the three workshops - "Protecting the environment in the Danube Region: Integrated horizontal co-operation", "Improvement and cooperation possibilities in the water sector with non-EU countries" (see also link http://www.danubewaterquality.eu/news/annual-forum-ulm) and "Setting water management priorities until 2021 - The ICPDR Danube River Basin Management Plan- Update 2015".

- PAC4 SK team actively participated in the 2nd Stakeholder conference organized by Hungarian PA4 coordination team in Budapest (November 2015) focused on networking and partner search for the new project ideas see Annex Va-4
- PA4 SK organized the trilateral working group meeting among PA4 SK-HU, ICPDR and Sava Commission in Bratislava on 3 February 2016 with the aim to inform the partners on achievements and future plans for 2016 in PA4 activities implementation and inform about the projects preparation. The Minutes of the meeting and List of Participants see Annex Va-2.
- PA4 SK representative participated Brussels Danube Network meeting on 12 February 2016 in Brussels to present the water priorities during the Slovak Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The presentation of PA4 SK – see Annex Va-3.

In accordance with PA4 SK working plan, Slovak part was supposed to organize the 12th SG meeting in the second half of 2016 in Bratislava. At the request of Hungarian PA4 Co-coordinator, Slovak Part decided to organize the upcoming 11th Steering Group meeting back to back another event (PAC Meeting and 5th Financing Dialogue) on 25 May 2016 in Bratislava. Moreover, PA4 SG meeting will be taking place together with PA7 "Knowledge Society" SG meeting. Slovakia is one of PA7 coordinators. This is the change in project plans that the organization of the SG meetings was shifted by the Hungarian partners and the 12th SG Meeting will be organized in Budapest in autumn 2016

Activity 4	Implementation of Road map activities
Outputs	The implementation of the planned activity within this project relates to the question of waste water treatment in the Danube Region which is highly topical. To gain the information from all the Danube countries related to urban waste water treatment, PA4 SK prepared the questionnaire in accordance with Roadmap Action 4: To continue boosting major investments in building and upgrading urban wastewater treatment facilities across the Danube Basin, including measures to build capacity at the regional and local level for the design of such infrastructure; Milestone 2: Preparation of a financial plan for the implementation program on update for the UWWT and Milestone 3: To promote investments to foster penetration, where necessary, of improved UWWT technology based on research or already proved "state of the art" technologies. The outcome of the questionnaire was expected to reveal the financial needs of individual states of the Danube Strategy for completion of waste water treatment plants and sewerage systems ; amount of currently available



financial means from the Operational Programmes 2014-2020 and remaining costs needed to meet the Council Directive 91/271/EEC goals and gain the summary of available technologies. Questionnaire consisting of 8 questions was prepared and consequently sent to SG members.

Although reminded, only 5 countries replied (A, CZ, SK, BG, MD), the rest of data was searched in available data sources -

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database, ICPDR - The Danube River Basin District Management Plan – Update 2015, Annex 3 and 8th Technical assessment of the implementation of Council Directive concerning Urban Waste Water Treatment (91/271/EEC) report

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-

<u>urbanwaste/implementation/implementationreports_en.htm</u>.

We must emphasize that the data collected are reported to the reference year 2012, i.e. before finishing the financial period of Operational programs 2007-2013. Therefore, many of waste water treatment plants and sewage systems were under construction, not finished, and they were not registered in these reports. So the data provided (2012) should differ from the present state (2016). We expected, as EUSDR added value, to update the data on UWWT available in EU reports, but unfortunately due to very low level in countries feedback it did not happen. The evaluation report on waste water treatment questionnaire is in Annex Va-5.

Although planned on March 2016, PA4 SK announced the preparation of the brochure on effective reduction of diffuse water pollution by nutrients from agricultural land during the 10th SG meeting in October 2015. The topic is also relevant for PA4 partner – ICPDR – which will prepare the complete report on water pollution from agriculture in 2016. The aim of the brochure is to point out this problem and inform that diffuse water pollution from agriculture is considered as an important factor affecting the achievement of good water status under the EU framework directive on water. Selection and implementation of environmentally efficient and cost effective measures, which address the real problems of water pollution, is the basic precondition for improving the water quality at national and transnational levels. Cooperation on setting these measures is vital premise of success.

The text was prepared by Water Research Institute expert, Dr Radoslav Bujnovský. The draft of text was circulated among PAC4 HU team, ICPDR Expert Group Pressures & Measures and finally to PA4 SG members. The final version, which will be printed soon, is in Annex Va-6.

Moreover, the **brochure on PA4 activities** was updated, the text was consulted with Hungarian partner and currently public procurement for publishing has been set up. The information brochure involves, besides the introduction into European Strategy for the Danube Region, especially targets and activities of Priority Area 4, the recent PA4 activities as cooperation with non-EU Danube countries, plans for upcoming period and information on strategic PA4 projects (Annex Va-7).

Both brochures will be ready for dissemination during the conference "Effective Utilization of Water Resources in the conditions of climate change (Drought and Water Scarcity)" organised by PA4 SK on 17-18 May 2016 in Bratislava. Moreover, they will be disseminated at common PA4-PA7 Steering Group Meeting organised on 25 may 2016 in Bratislava, further in the future during the 5th EUSDR Annual Forum and other relevant water focused events.

Both events mentioned above (Conference and SG meeting) are in a preparation phase.





Activity 5	Dissemination of PA4 achievements
Outputs	PA4 emphasises crucial importance of dissemination, so it provides information via the following means: • Email correspondence on daily base • PA4 website continually updated – www.danubewaterguality.eu which provides information on PA4 activities. In the section "News" there are launched the information and related documents to PA4 activities within reporting period such as the visit of a Bosnian water expert in Hungary; 10th Steering Group Meeting; Dr Baranyai Gábor, Transboundary waters; JRC Annual Event in Ulm; Annual Forum Ulm; Tisza Declaration; Stakeholder Conference - 2015 PA4 and PA5; Summary Stakeholder Seminar 2015; Trilateral Meeting 03/02/2016 Bratislava; Brussels Danube Network Meeting; The Danube Regional Strategy presented in EIP Water Conference 2016; Funding opportunities for water projects; Danube Declaration adopted in the frame of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of the ICPDR; World Water Day - 22 March 2016. The documents on SG meetings are available to registered users. • The output of the Activity 4 - report based on questionnaire data and available data sources on state of play on the assessment of financial needs of the Danube countries for the implementation programme on building and updating UWWT technology and BAT recording is available at web site http://www.danubewaterguality.eu/. • Prepared brochure on effective reduction of diffuse water pollution by nutrients from agricultural land informing on necessity of environmentally efficient and cost effective measures, which address the problems of water pollution from agriculture. The text prepared by Water Research Institute expert, Dr Radoslav Bujnovský, is already put into printing layout – see Annex Va-6. • Prepared updated brochure on recent PA4 activities such as the cooperation with non-EU Danube countries, plans for upcoming period and information on strategic PA4 projects (Annex Va-7). • Promotion of PA4 activities and aims of the Slovak EUSDR Presidency goals at the meetings – for instance Brussels Danube Network Meeting (A



Activity 6	Financial Control / Audit Activities
Outputs	Auditor's company was selected on the base of public procurement result. In accordance with the rules requested by the Danube Strategy Point, the Auditor's company RENTABIL BRATISLAVA ltd. performed the control on project's financial statement of costs within the period 1/10/2015 – 29/02/2016. The Financial Statement of costs is reported for Interim Payment Request within the Interim Report. The Auditors report is in Annex Vb and Vlb.

4. Auto-evaluationWhat are the lessons learnt so far?



planned time schedule of activities fulfilment. The weakness already occurred in project implementation which was low involvement of the PA4 Steering Group members in the Action Plan implementation, specifically UWWT questionnaire. PA4 SK prepared the questionnaire providing state of play on financial needs of individual states of the Danube Strategy for completion of waste water treatment plants and sewerage systems; amount of currently available financial means from the Operational Programs 2014-2020 and remaining costs needed to meet Council Directive 91/271/EEC goals and gain the summary of available technologies. Questionnaire consisting of 8 questions was prepared and consequently sent to SG members. Although reminded, only 5 countries replied (A, CZ, SK, BG, MD), the rest of data was searched in available data sources - for more details, see Activity 4. We realized that data available refer to year 2012, i.e. before finishing the financial period of Operational programs 2007-2013. Therefore, Weaknesses many of the waste water treatment plants and sewage systems were under construction, not finished, and the data provided can differ from present state. PA4 added value was the expectation that the result of guestionnaire will provide update of the available data. Unfortunately it did not come true. Other weaknesses which can occur in project implementation are supposed to be related to the public procurement, especially for the conference "Effective Utilization of Water Resources in the conditions of climate change (Drought and Water Scarcity). In March 2016 there were elections in Slovakia followed by establishing the new government and also accompanied by personal changes at the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and Slovak Government. The changes caused the postponing of administration processes at the Ministry. This transitional situation should be overcome soon and we expect a smooth implementation of the project activities.

5. Are there any foreseeable risks for the implementation of the action? Are there plans to improve the implementation and if so how?

At present we do not foresee the risks for the project actions implementation, we expect the project activities to be performed in time.

The possible risk in postponing of the implementation due to election and consequent government change is mentioned in weaknesses (Chapter 4). The result of elections in March 2016 caused the personal changes also in executive posts at the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic. Water Research Institute is the organisation established by the Ministry and its administration and decision process is to a large extent dependent on the Ministry. Therefore, the public procurement for the orders higher than 3000,- EUR without VAT must be approved by the Ministry prior to starting. This situation occurred in the case of conference "Effective Utilization of Water Resources in the conditions of climate change (Drought and Water Scarcity)" planned on 17-18 May 2016 in Bratislava, but the administration standoff is already solved and the conference will take place in planned time. This transitional situation should be overcome soon and we expect a smooth implementation of the project activities.



6. How is/was the action publicised?

Have the results been disseminated so far? How are/were the key stakeholders of the Strategy involved and informed?

PA4 is fully aware of the importance of PA4 achievements dissemination, announcement of meetings and events, information on relevant reports and documents, information on projects (new project ideas, implemented projects, and projects applying/granted by Letter of Recommendation or Letter of Merit) and information on possible financial mechanisms.

The stakeholders and relevant groups involved in PA4 field of activities are first of all representatives of EC, DSP, Joint Research Centre (JRC), ICPDR, Global Water Partnership (GWP), Sava Commission, Carpathian Convention, EUSDR NCPs, PAs involved in environmental pillar of EUSDR (PA5 "To manage environmental Risks", PA6 "To preserve biodiversity, landscape and the quality of air and soils") and other relevant PAs (especially PA10, PA7), PA4 Steering Group members, institutions involved in water management in particular states and local administration.

The stakeholders are informed about PA4 via email communication and via the following means:

- > continually updated PA4 website www.danubewaterquality.eu
- the output of the Activity 4 report based on questionnaire data and available data sources on state of play on the assessment of financial needs of the Danube countries for the implementation programme on building and updating UWWT technology and BAT recording available at web site http://www.danubewaterquality.eu/. (Annex Va-5)
- brochure on effective reduction of diffuse water pollution by nutrients from agricultural land informing on necessity of environmentally efficient and cost effective measures, which address the problems of water pollution from agriculture. It will be printed and distributed during PA4 events and related events organised by PA 4 coordinators (Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Water Research Institute, Directorate General of Water Management) see Annex Va-6.
- brochure on recent PA4 activities and plans for upcoming period. It will be printed and distributed during PA4 events and related events organised by PA 4 coordinators (Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Water Research Institute, Directorate General of Water Management) and information on strategic PA4 projects see Annex Va-7.
- Published article about Priorities of Slovak EUSDR Presidency in water sector in Water Management Journal 1-2/2016, in Slovak (Annex Va-8)
- Published information on international conference "Effective Utilization of Water Resources in the conditions of climate change (Drought and Water Scarcity)" organised by PA4 SK, 17-18 May 2016 in Bratislava in Water Management Journal 3-4/2016, in Slovak (Annex Va-9)
- Promotion of PA4 activities and aims of Slovak EUSDR Presidency goals at the meetings for instance Brussels Danube Network Meeting



List of Annexes:

Annex Va-1: Minutes of 10 SG Meeting, List of participants

Annex Va-2: Minutes of bilateral meeting, List of participants

Annex Va-3: PA4 presentation on Danube Network Meeting

Annex Va-4: Agenda of the 2nd Stakeholder Conference

Annex Va-5: Report on questionnaire

Annex Va-6: Agriculture brochure

Annex Va-7: PA4 information brochure

Annex Va-8: Water Management Journal 1-2/2016

Annex Va-9: Water Management Journal 3-4/2016

Annex Vb and VIb: Auditor's Report and Certificate