**EUSDR PA4 Additional information to the Progress Report 2017**

**Progress on PA targets**

PA 4 continually works on activities, some of them also included in PA4 coordination project financed by DTP, to achieve the targets of Priority Area 4 "To restore and maintain the quality of waters". This is a long- term process which could not be filled in one reporting period. Anyway, the remarkable achievements have been reached and the activities and projects are still ongoing.

Referring to particular targets the following success was accomplished: **Target 1**: to achieve the management objectives set out in the Danube River Basin Management Plan The requirements of Water Framework Directive are incorporated into national River Basin Management Plans and unified to Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP). The activities and projects aim to reach good water status. The flagship projects of PA4 – DanubeSediment and JoinTisza -financed by Danube Transnational Programme are the important milestones in achieving this target by practical activities performed in Danube river basin to keep WFD requirements. The project partner, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) cooperates with PA4 in managing and implementing DRBMP.

**Target 2**: to reduce the nutrient levels in the Danube River to allow the recovery of the Black Sea ecosystems to conditions similar to 1960s

Important steps have been taken recently to reduce the nutrient levels from agriculture. The main aim is to decouple the sustainable agriculture production from increase of water pollution. PA4 organised workshop on better communication and understanding of water and agriculture sectors that was followed in 2017 by ICPDR activities in this field. ICPDR prepared the baseline study on awater pollution from agriculture and economic study of the measures proposed. The first draft of Guidance document on sustainable agriculture will be prepared soon and the proposed measures will be discussed on workshop planned on 2018.. The guidance document is aimed to be the policy recommendation how to cope with the problem of agriculture water pollution. The remarkable improvement of water quality in Danube river basin will positively influence the Black Sea natural ecosystems.

**Target 3**: to elaborate a Danube Delta Analysis Report as a step towards completion of the Delta management Plan

All the steps taken in Danube river basin towards achieving the good water state have the impact on Danube delta. Because of its unique conditions, PA4 plans to elaborate the Danube Delta Analysis Report as a pre-step to Delta Management Plan. The activities to reach this goal are ongoing.

**Target 4**: to elaborate, adopt and implement sub-basin management plans, such as Sava, Tisza and Prut sub basins

PA4 closely cooperates with International Sava River Basin Commission which is responsible for preparation, adoption and implementation of Sava River Basin Management Plan (2014). Regarding other sub-basin, the significant steps have been taken towards preparation of 2nd Tisza River Basin Management Plan especially via implementation of JoinTisza project. Moreover, project partner, ICPDR, hosts the permanent representative of JoinTisza project. The JoinTisza project manager is the Priority Area 4 coordinator from Hungary, so the activities are tightly connected and followed by PA4.

**Target 5**: to secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species.

PA4 supports the activities connected to protection of sturgeon species via issuing Letter of Support to the Danube Sturgeon Task Force on 29 May 2017 and reinforces the projects related to sturgeon population protection.

**Progress on PA actions**

Success in PA4 Roadmap actions:

1 Implementation of the Danube River Basin Management Plan – ongoing: implementation of flagship projects DanubeSediment, JoinTisza and preparation of projects LIFE IP MEDER, WETLANDMONITOR

2 Strengthening the cooperation at sub-basin level – ongoing: cooperation with ISRBC, implementation JoinTisza project, direct involvement of PAC4 as project manager; preparation of project TRIMONITOR

3 Supporting the information collection systems already developed by ICPDR - ongoing

4 Boosting major investments in building and upgrading urban wastewater treatment facilities – ongoing: participation at workshop on wastewater treatment, facilitation on non EU states cooperation

5 Establishing the buffer strips along the rivers and promotion of alternative collection and treatment of waste waters in small rural settlements – ongoing: participation at workshop on wastewater treatment, facilitation on non EU states cooperation

6 Improvement of the dialogue and cooperation between agriculture and environment sectors aimed at reduction of agricultural pollution – ongoing: cooperation with ICPDR on Guidance document on sustainable agriculture, preparation of workshop on dialogue between water and agriculture sectors

7 Legislating the limit of phosphates in detergents - ongoing

8 Treating the hazardous substances and contaminated sludge with the best available technology and developing the remediation measures - ongoing

9 Assuring the proper control and progressive substitution of problematic substances for Danube Region – ongoing: preparing project Plastic cup for Clean Waters

10 Reducing water continuity interruption for fish migration in the Danube River Basin – ongoing: supporting Danube Sturgeon Task Force and projects

11 Promoting the measures to limit water abstraction - ongoing: preparing project DEEPWATER CE

12 Strengthening awareness and facilitating exchange of good practice in integrated water management issues - ongoing

13 Promoting measures aimed at knowledge deficit reduction, developing and transferring tools, methods and guidelines concerning the safeguarding of drinking water supply – ongoing, preparing project EARTH

14 Strengthening the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Maritime Spatial Planning practices on the Western shores of the Black Sea – ongoing

**Progress on PA milestones**

P4 Roadmap includes 14 actions which are divided into 63 milestones. Although up to 2016 more than the third have been completed (23), the activities of PA4 in 2017 were devoted to continuation of achieving the targets via fulfilling milestones.

PA4 activities in 2017 contributed to the following milestones:

A1, M2 Facilitate the alignment of funding and the support of the JPM of 1st and 2nd Danube River Basin Management Plan – continually informing the relevant stakeholders on alignment of funding via seminars, SG meetings and website

A2 M3 Strengthening of cooperation in the Tisza River Basin – prolonged cooperation with Tisza Office, implementation of JoinTisza project, submission of new project – TRIMONITOR

A2 M10 Development of the 2nd Sava River Basin Management Plan – finished 2nd Sava River Basin Analysis Report

A3 M5 Establishment and completion of the SavaGIS – remarkable steps in data filling

A4 M2 Financial planning for programme implementation and A4 M3 Technology developments and A4 M5 Promoting best practices in WWT and Programme of Measures for solid waste management and wastewater treatment for small settlements and A8 M4 Knowledge transfer in treating hazardous substances - organised international workshop on waste water treatment issue organised in November in Bucharest also supported cooperation with non EU countries

A6 M2 Implementation of action plan – prepared baseline knowledge and economic studies towards effective communication of water and agriculture sectors in decoupling agriculture production and water nutrient pollution, Guidance document on sustainable agriculture in process

A9 M2 Inventory on emissions, discharges and losses of priority substances – steps taken in forming knowledge base on pharmaceutics in water

A10 M4 To carry out an assessment for restoration of the sediment balance in the Danube – implementation of DanubeSediment project

A11 M4 Pilot projects based on best practices of milestone n°1 and promotion – submitted new project DEEPWATER CE

A12 M3 Organisation of the Danube Art Master as a basin-wide competition among schools and youth care facilities – events connected to EUSDR Hungarian Presidency and photo competition

A12 M5 Information exchange on the progress, achievements and current events of EUSDR PA4 to strengthen of general awareness – regular participation in relevant ICPDR and CC events to exchange experience, organisation of Seminar focused on water issue back to back AF in Budapest

The work in 2017 is assessed more than satisfactory, although many of the milestones are ongoing and prolonged to upcoming period. The implementation of the actions via organisation of events for dissemination experts’ knowledge, looking for new solutions, facilitating financing possibilities, fostering projects generation form this viewpoint means the important way of proceeding.

**Main achievements with regards to funding sources and opportunities for EUSDR**

PA4 searches for funding possibilities to new project ideas. It regularly informs at Steering Group meetings and updating PA4 website www.danubewaterquality.eu on open calls from various EU financial mechanisms. The stakeholders are informed mainly on open calls for projects within the funding programs LIFE, INTERREG Central Europe and INTERREG Europe, Horizon2020 and Danube Transnational Programme. Moreover, the start-up financial possibilities are also highlighted (under DTP or Danube Strategic Project Fund under EUSDR PA10).

During EUSDR Annual Forum held in October 2017 in Budapest PA4 organised the financing workshop. This was focused on providing the participants with information about different financial mechanisms (LIFE, Central Europe, DTP and Horizon2020) and they also had an opportunity to pose specific questions related to water related project ideas.

The representative of the Priority Area 4 „Water quality“ of the Danube Strategy presented the funding possibilities for projects financing at the International Workshop on Wastewater Management in the Danube River Basin which was organized by the ICPDR in cooperation with the Priority Area 4 on 28-29 November 2017 in Bucharest and also at the TAIEX Multi-beneficiary Workshop on Funding Opportunities for the Water Sector on 7 December 2017 in Brussels.

The financing of PA4 coordination is ensured by DTP project for 2017-2019.

PA4 strongly concentrates its activities into searching for funding and preparation of new project ideas to be able to achieve the PA4 targets and roadmap actions aiming at maintaining and restoration of water quality in the Danube river basin.

The following projects with PA4 participation were submitted in

- 2nd call of Danube Transnational Programme: SIMONA, Danube Floodplain, Measures, DAREFFORT

- SMF DTP call: Industrial and municipal sewage sludge treatment innovation network + Examination and assessment for the ecological condition of the Tisza River’s subsided longitudinal section - JOINTISZA Survey

- 3rd call of INTERREG Central Europe: DEEPWATER-CE, WETLANDMONITOR, Trimonitor, EARTH, Plastic Cup, -LIFE: LIFE IP MEDER Ensuring the projects financing from EU financial mechanisms and pre-financing of project realisation seem to be the key factor of successful EUSDR implementation.

**Lessons learnt with regards to funding sources and opportunities for EUSDR**

Regularly updated information for stakeholders about alignment of funding (via SG meetings, stakeholder seminars, PA4 website) supported the new project generation.

• Supporting partners search and facilitation of project preparation helped development of new project ideas – new projects submission in 2nd DTP call (4 projects), 3rd INTERREG Central Europe call (5 projects), Seed Money Facility DTP call (2 projects)

• Necessity of capitalisation strategy on projects out of DTP financing with the aim to wider use the outputs and support of their sustainability.

• Trilateral meetings between ICPDR-EUSDR-Sava Commission facilitated the better harmonisation of tasks among the three organisations.

• Joint SG meetings (especially PA5 and PA7) might have a value of further networking with other priority areas and ease the participation of EC and DSP.

• In case it is possible, PA4 meetings organised back to back with ICPDR core events should be better attended by countries. This initiative is highly respected by the members of the SG.

• If available, PA4 SG meetings should be organised in synergy with other relevant EUSDR events, as the EUSDR Annual Forum, to ease SG members’ participation.

• Participation at flagship project SG meetings – DanubeSediment, JoinTisza, DriDanube and Camaro D provided important information on steps taken

• Active participation at ICPDR relevant meetings helped to coordinate work and actions implementation

**Challenges**

• Pre-financing of projects implemented through different financial mechanisms (LIFE, Interreg Central Europe, Interreg Danube Transnational Programme, etc.). In case of Interreg all activities in the project are pre-financed by partners and after reporting period 85% of the budget is reimbursed and 15% is paid from own sources. The whole process of reimbursement can take 9 months or even more, depending on length of reporting period. In case of small enterprises, NGOs or companies this system is liquidating, they cannot afford to implement the project although have a good idea. Supposing this co-financing rate is maintained, it would be helpful if some pre-financing tools existed during the project implementation. Teams of priority areas coordinators permanently focus on networking and project partner search. They often witness how possible project partners were discouraged by co-financing rate.

• Public procurement process in the project implementation. It can be fully understood that 3 offers are needed when choosing some specific service to make it as cost-effective as possible (e.g. printing company, graphic designer, venue of the conference, etc.). However, in some cases, for example when organizing some meetings and refreshment is provided during coffee breaks, this process makes no sense because of low costs. The whole public procurement process is even more complicated at national level that is special for each state.

• Update of SG members (in cooperation with NCs) to ensure their active participation during SG meetings. Stronger involvement of Danube states to support SG members related to financing their participation and active engagement is necessary.