

Rules of Procedure of the Steering Group
for the implementation of
Priority Area 4
To Restore And Maintain The Quality Of Waters
of the European Union Danube Region Strategy

Adopted by the Steering Group at 2nd Steering Group Meeting on 7 November 2011 in Budapest

Preamble

A Steering Group (hereinafter referred to as SG) for the implementation of Priority Area 4 “To Restore and Maintain the Quality Of Waters” (hereinafter referred to as “PA4”) of the European Union Danube Region Strategy (hereinafter referred to as “EUSDR”) coordinated by the Priority Area Coordinators (hereinafter referred to as PACs) designated by Hungary and Slovak Republic has been established on the basis of the following documents:

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions (8.12.2010., COM(2010) 715 final);
- Accompanying Action Plan of the European Commission (8.12.2010., SEC(2010) 1489);
- European Parliament Resolution of 21 January 2010 on a European Strategy for the Danube Region (P7_TA-PROV (2010)0008);
- Council Conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (3083rd General Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 13 April 2011), and;
- Guidance to the Priority Area Coordinators of the European Commission – DG REGIO

Rule 1: Setting up the Steering Group

1) The SG shall be set up at the first SG meeting, held with the participation of members/observers delegated by the Member and Non-Member States from the Danube Region, interested in the implementation of PA4.

2) The SG has the competence to create subcommittees and working groups, to deal with specific tasks having a clear and time-limited mandate.

Rule 2: Members and other parties

1) Members of the SG are appointed by the 14 EU Member and Non-EU Member States (The eight EU-Member States: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Hungary, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia, with the Non-EU Member States from the Danube Region: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine and Serbia) are entitled and encouraged to participate in the work of the SG through the National Contact Points.

2) Each State is entitled to delegate more members depending by the National Contact Point decision (at least one member or one substitute member) but with only one voting possibility per country in the SG (see also the Rule 7). PACs are also considered as members.

3) The representatives of the European Commission - DG REGIO and DG ENVIRONMENT and other relevant DGs (depending on the ad-hoc issues in the agenda) are permanent invitees to the Steering Group meetings.

4) The representative of International Commission for the Protection of the Danube Region (ICPDR Secretariat) has a special status within the Steering Group as a permanent observer, being invited to all Steering Group meetings.

5) PACs from other Priority Areas of the Pillar Environment (PA5 and PA6) will be invited to each Steering Group meetings as observers to ensure horizontal exchange and synergies among the Priority Areas.

6) Any member of the Steering Group may invite an advisor to meeting, if considered. In such case prior notification of the PACs is necessary.

7) Other actors interested in the implementation of PA4 can attend Steering Group meetings upon invitation, based on issues of the agenda, as guests.

Rule 3: Chairmanship

The PACs shall jointly chair the meetings.

Rule 4: Secretariat of the SG

The appointed PACs of PA4 shall also provide secretarial support for the SG, meaning:

- (a) organization of the SG meetings;
- (b) communication with and towards SG members and observers;
- (c) circulation of agenda and other working documents prepared for decision-making;
- (d) preparation of the minutes of results of the meetings;
- (e) any other relevant administrative tasks.

Rule 5: Tasks of the SG

1) The SG provides advice and assistance to the PACs, makes technical decisions, serves as a forum for dialog, discussion regarding the implementation of Priority Area 4 in the Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. - It acts also as a network of national counterparts.

2) The SG, while taking overall guidance from the EUSDR, the connected Action Plan, as well as, from the Annual Stakeholder Forums and the decisions of the High Level Group, and other important and relevant policy documents on the regional or national level, particularly providing the following main tasks, shall:

- (a) establish the Rules of Procedure , consider and review it, if necessary;
- (b) consider and agree on the breakdown of actions to operational steps, agree on concrete deadlines and responsibilities;
- (c) consider and agree on the general procedures and criteria for selecting flagship projects under PA4 and approve any revision of those criteria in accordance with implementation needs;
- (d) approve targets based on the Communication from the Commission and further on adopt any proposed modification of these targets;
- (e) examine the results of implementation, particularly the achievement of the targets set for PA4 and propose corrective measures, if necessary;
- (f) consider and approve the Annual and Final Reports on implementation before being submitted to the European Commission;
- (g) agree on any simple amendments made to the Action Plan, as well as, any revisions or amendments to it or the list of Flagship Projects prior to their submission to the European Commission or the High Level Group;
- (h) be informed about relevant communication or information and publicity actions undertaken by the Members of the SG;

(i) assist PACs through the individual activity of each member designated in the implementation of PA4 specifically, but not exclusively, in the following tasks: gathering data about existing projects, financing possibilities, new project ideas, monitoring projects, sending necessary data, information and input for the elaboration of the Annual Report, information and involvement of other relevant actors and stakeholders on the national level, including project partners, communication, multiplication and dissemination activities, etc.

Rule 6: Organisation of the meetings

1) The SG shall meet as frequently as it is necessary for the proper implementation of PA4, but at least twice a year either in Bratislava or in Budapest, in case if no other venue offered. Holding meetings back to back with ICPDR Head of Delegation Meetings might also be considered.

2) The members and observers shall receive the invitation and the draft agenda with the relevant details in a written form, through e-mail from the PACs at least one month before the due date or, in exceptional cases this deadline might be shorter.

Working documents will be distributed at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting - in exceptional cases, 5 working days before

3) Requests concerning the amendment of the draft agenda can come on behalf of any member in a written form to the PACs, latest 10 working days before the meeting. If there is evidence of urgency or in exceptional cases, the members may propose to modify the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

Rule 7: Steering Process

1) The Members of the Steering Group shall strive for consensus. Only the nominated SG members (or the substitute person with mandate) have the right to vote, but only one vote per country. Decision is made by the Members present at the meeting unless written procedure is applied.

2) Agreement on the targets of PA4 shall be taken unanimously. If agreements cannot be reached the PACs propose further actions for agreement.

3) Steering by written procedure

(a) Written procedure can also be used as a steering process of the SG, in exceptional cases. The written procedure is managed via e-mail.

(b) In this case the PACs send out the documents to the SG members/observers for consultation and/or approval. Members can give their written opinion on the proposal within 10 working days, although exceptionally a shorter consultation period might be requested, but not less than 5 working days.

(c) The proposal on relevant subject, consultation and/or agreement is approved if no objections expressed from the SG members having voting rights and having expressed opinion within the deadline. Silence is considered agreement.

(d) If members/observers of the SG have comments/amendments to the proposal, it shall be sent to all members, observers of the SG with a justification. The PACs shall summarise the comments/amendments and modify the original documents accordingly, if it seems to be necessary. The modified document shall be circulated by the PACs for a 2nd round

(e) Following the 2nd round of the written consultation, the PACs shall inform the SG about the result, such as:

- (ea) the modified document has, in the absence of any written objection, been agreed, or
- (eb) it has been rejected indicating the justification, or
- (ec) it has been adopted partially.

The document can be partly adopted if the document can be applied without the part on which the SG cannot reach a consensus. The other part of the documents on which consensus cannot be reached, shall be referred back to the next SG meeting. The document cannot be partly adopted if it cannot be applied without the missing part.

(f) In case the document cannot be partly adopted, and it is on an urgent matter, an extraordinary SG meeting can be conveyed. The meeting shall be organized within 15 working days. In case the proposal can be partly adopted the discussion on the remaining parts shall be postponed until the next SG meeting.

Rule 8: Communication, information flow

1) The PACs shall prepare the draft minutes of the meeting and send them to the members/observers of the SG not later than 15 working days after the meeting has taken place. The participants of the meeting may send comments to the minutes not later than 10 working days following the receipt of the document, sending them to all members/observers.

The PACs consider the comments and amend the minutes accordingly. If no objections have been made to the final version, the minutes are adopted.

2) Communication, including the circulation of working documents, among the members, observers and the PACs shall generally be done by e-mail

3) Agreed documents will be made available on the following web-page:
<http://groupspaces.com/WaterQuality/>

Rule 9: Working language

1) The official language of the SG related activities is English.

Rule 10: Expenses

Expenses related to the organization of the meetings of the SG, shall be covered by the co-ordinating and/or organising countries. Travel, accommodation and any other extra costs are to be covered by the participants.