

**Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup>  
Steering Group meeting  
EUSDR, PA4 - To restore and maintain the quality of waters**

**DATE: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**VENUE: Water Research Institute, Bratislava, Slovak Republic**

**Main objectives of the meeting were:**

1. To discuss the recent activities related to PA4 and give information on the planned events
2. To present the information about the Danube Transnational Programme
3. To present the information about the upcoming Annual Forum 2015 in Ulm
4. To inform the participants about the cooperation with non-EU countries
5. To inform about the START 2 initiative

The meeting was attended by the SG members or their substitutes of the following Danube countries: AT, CZ, HU, HR, SK, BG, UA, RO and DE and by the representatives of ICPDR, DSP, DTP and GWP (the detailed list of participants is attached).

The meeting was chaired by PAC SK Assistants Ms Andrea Vranovská / Ms Alena Kurecova. The minutes were taken by Ms Alena Kurecová (PAC SK Assistant).

**The final meeting agenda was the following:**

09:30 – 09:35	Welcome by Mr Vladimír Novák, PAC 4 SK and introduction of the agenda
09:35 – 09:45	Welcome by Mr László Perger, PAC 4 HU
09:45 – 09:55	Welcome by Mr František Koločány, (The Slovak Republic Government Office, Department of Cross-cutting Priorities – National Coordinator)
09:55 – 10:00	Introduction of participants
10:00 – 10:20	Information on latest news by EU representative (Mr Frithjof Ehm)
10:20 – 10:50	Information about the Danube Transnational Programme (Mr Gusztav Csomor)
10:50 – 11:05	Information on the Danube Strategy Point and information about the new contracts with DSP (Mr Matija Vilfan)
11:05 – 11:20	<b><i>Coffee break</i></b>
11:20 – 11:35	Information on ICPDR activities (Mr Raimund Mair)
11:35 – 11:50	Information on Sava Commission Activities (Ms Alena Kurecová)
11:50 – 12:00	Summary of the activities done since 9th SG meeting (Ms Andrea Vranovská)
12:00 – 12:30	Presentation on non-EU members visits and possibilities of cooperation in water sector (Mr László Perger, Ms Alena Kurecová)
12:30 – 12:45	START 2 – information about PA 10 initiative (Ms Andrea Vranovská)
12:45 – 13:45	<b><i>Lunch break</i></b>
13:45 – 14:05	Information about the Annual Forum in Ulm (Mr László Perger, Ms Alena Kurecová)
14:05 – 15:30	Current projects – topical information
15:30 – 15:45	<b><i>Coffee break</i></b>
15:45 – 16:05	Projects asking for LoR and voting regarding the granting the letter
16:05 – 16:25	Others (2 <sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Conference, Budapest)
16:25 – 16:30	Closing session (PACs)

**1. Welcome, introduction, agenda**

The 10<sup>th</sup> PA4 SG meeting was opened by PAC4-SK **Mr Vladimír Novák**. He warmly welcomed all participants, introduced the agenda and opened the meeting with giving the floor to **Ms Andrea Vranovská**, PAC4-SK assistant who chaired the whole meeting. The next speaker was **Mr László Perger**, PAC4-HU, who mentioned that the alignment of

funding is the key activity of the strategy and there has been a lot of progress recorded in this field. He highlighted the assistance provided to non-EU countries which is currently very important and underlined the cooperation with the Joint Research Centre. Last but not least he mentioned the organization of stakeholder conference in Budapest on 19-20 November 2015 where financial issues will be dealt with. **Mr František Koločány**, the Slovak Republic Government Office, Department of Cross-cutting Priorities – National Coordinator, had few words about the upcoming Annual Forum 2015 which was organized at the end of October 2015 in Ulm. He highlighted the water protection as one of the priorities of the Slovak EUSDR Presidency in 2016. He invited the participants to the next EUSDR Annual Forum which will be held on 3.-4.11.2016 in Bratislava. He mentioned the Danube Transnational Programme where the first call was currently opened from 23 September till 3 November 2015. This program is going to support the EUSDR implementation. At the end he added that the Interreg programs will probably incorporate the issues of migrants flowing to Europe. Then every participant introduced himself round.

## **2. Presentations of DG Regio, Danube Transnational Programme and Danube Strategy Point**

**Mr Frithjof Ehm**, DG Regio, introduced himself and expressed the hope for smooth cooperation. He also works for the Alpine Strategy and he deals with environmental topics. In this context he underlined that the Commission has the intention to create thematic linkages between and among the strategies; genuine coordination is necessary. He also mentioned the Annual Forum in Ulm where approximately 30 workshops will be happening simultaneously. He mentioned one of his main tasks is to give help for the priority areas such as in the organisation of the Pillar B stakeholder conferences.

**Mr Gusztav Csomor**, DTP, had a presentation about the Danube Transnational Programme. He introduced the budget and priority axes and the budget lines connected to axes. From the environmental viewpoint the Priority Axis 2 is important with the title Environmental and culture responsible Danube Region. This axis includes 4 specific objectives. The first call has 2 steps and the first step is open from 23 September till 3 November 2015 (15:00 CET). The second step will be approximately in April-May 2016. The second call might be possibly expected in autumn 2017. Regarding the number of partners, at least 3 partners from 3 different countries are needed, there can be different types of partners. Regarding eligibility, bodies by private/public law are acceptable. There were some questions raised by participants concerning the topics how to apply, how to select the project partners, what to do to make the projects eligible for funding, etc.

**Mr Matija Vilfan**, DSP, presented the new body Danube Strategy Point whose idea was born in 2014. It was set up and opened in July 2015 and it is located in Brussels. There are 6 colleagues working on 4 major focus areas. The DSP role is to support the National Contact Points for the strategy with information and to support Priority Area Coordinators. DSP officers are in a close contact with DG Regio and other EC directorates. DSP has developed the webpage which serves as an information platform supporting vertical and horizontal

communication and coordination with EC and among priority areas. DSP performs evaluation and monitoring how far the strategy comes and develops an interlinkage to all macro-regional strategies.

### **3. Presentations on the information about ICPDR and ISRBC activities and summary of activities done since the last SG meeting**

**Mr Raimund Mair** who is the ICPDR Technical Expert on River Basin Management gave the presentation about the ICPDR activities. ICPDR coordinates the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and the EU Floods Directive on basin-wide level. River Basin Management is dealt within the WFD, there are 15 contracting parties. The second River Basin Management Plan for the whole Danube River Basin will be finalised and adopted in December 2015. Mr Mair provided some examples of the Danube River Basin Management Plans as topic of urban waste water treatment, measures on agriculture, connectivity and fish migration and inter-sectoral cooperation. Implementation of EU Floods Directive is very important for the Priority Area 4 and 5. The First Danube Flood Risk Management Plan finalisation is expected in December 2015. The cooperation of the EUSDR and the ICPDR can be displayed in the Priority Areas 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. Finally Mr Mair introduced ICPDR meetings and events and invited the SG members.

**Ms Alena Kurecová**, PAC4-SK assistant, had a presentation instead of Mr Samo Groselj, Sava Commission, who could not participate in the meeting, however, he sent the presentation about the current ISRBC activities. She mentioned the achievements in adopted 1<sup>st</sup> Sava River Basin Management Plan and 2<sup>nd</sup> Sava River Basin Analysis Report. She emphasised the cooperation of Sava Commission with PA4 in preparation and implementation of projects as Towards the assessment of ecological status of water bodies in the Sava River Basin (STAWA) and Establishment of Sava GIS. The activities of Sava Commission are focused on Water and Climate Adaptation Plan for the Sava River Basin; establishment of sediment monitoring system and consideration of intersectoral linkages.

**Ms Andrea Vranovská**, PAC4-SK assistant, had a presentation about the activities within EUSDR Priority Area 4 which have been performed since the 9<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting organized in Budapest. She briefly introduced the PA4 support to START and TAF DRP projects, mentioned EUSDR events and Ulm Forum and provided short overview on non-EU visits (Serbia, Bosna I Hercegovina, Moldova and Ukraine). All these topics were presented in detail in the following Agenda items. She also introduced PA4 priorities during EUSDR Slovak Presidency in 2016.

### **4. Presentations on non-EU countries visits, START 2 initiative and Ulm event**

**Mr Perger** informed about Bosnia and Serbia visits which were organized by the Hungarian side. The goal was to define basic problems and concentrate on mutual cooperation mainly focusing on waste-water treatment problems of the two countries. The visits were organized at the beginning of summer 2015. Among important aims was the discussion between EU

and non-EU representatives, inquiry how they plan to proceed and find the solutions for funding. Water directorates of non-EU countries were employed and the detailed reports will be prepared about these visits till the end of the year. One of very important findings was the fact that only 30% of waste water is treated and the rest contaminates waters. The contact with the European Investment Bank is envisaged, since a huge amount of money is needed.

**Ms Kurecová** informed about Ukraine and Moldova visits which were organized by the Slovak side. At the end of September the experts from both countries were invited to Bratislava for 2 days visit. They spent the first day at the Water Research Institute where they heard presentations on legislation, waste water treatment and drinking water supply prepared by Slovak experts and then they had a chance to present themselves. The fruitful discussion showed the burning needs and problems of Moldova and Ukraine and opened several possibilities of future cooperation. The second day there was organized an excursion to waste water treatment plant in Bratislava – Petržalka. Both countries Moldova and Ukraine have very bad status concerning water quality and drinking water supply or waste water treatment. Therefore, there is the whole scale offering the mutual cooperation, e.g. preparation of concepts, methodologies, and harmonization with the EU legislation. Ukraine needs to invest a lot into the infrastructure, there exists the European Neighbourhood Instrument (fund) where Moldova and Ukraine are eligible applicants.

**Ms Vranovská** had a presentation about the START 2 initiative where she informed about TAF-DRP and START projects.

Regarding START projects, there were 205 applications submitted in total, 164 applications passed the Formal Check and they comprised all 14 Danube Region countries. The most lead applicants came from Serbia, followed by Slovenia, Romania and Croatia. Within PA4 there were 9 projects submitted, 7 of them passed through Formal Check. PAC4 teams proposed the ranking of the projects to SG members. The countries which did not respond were automatically considered to approve the PACs proposal. The first two projects - CleanRiver - creation of feasibility study for improvement of wastewater treatment facilities in Ukraine (proposed by NGO Transcarpathian Agency for Investment, Innovation and Development, Ukraine) and Sustainable sanitation in small settlements of the Danube Region (SANDANUBE, proposed by Global Water Partnership Slovakia) - were sent to PA10 EUSDR which administrated the whole process. These two projects were adopted for the financial support.

Regarding TAF-DRP, within PA4 only 2 projects were submitted - Development of integrated management system for real time monitoring of water quality in the Danube Delta (MQDELTA, proposed by Romania) and Construction of Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment Plant in Hirbovat (CSSWTP, proposed by Moldova) - and they were adopted for the support of consultations.

**Mr Perger** informed about the Ulm event regarding the activities organized by Hungarian side. Namely it will be the workshop about the horizontal cooperation between the Priority Area 4, 5 and 6 focused on environmental protection in the Danube Region. The environmental dimension of the EUSDR is prominent and the EUSDR can play an essential role in promoting sustainable development and environmental protection. Integration and

coordination between EUSDR Environmental Pillar Priority Areas and between the Environmental Pillar and the other Pillars is a key element for the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of the Strategy. The most important global megatrend is the change of our climate system. The workshop will demonstrate that the Danube Strategy plays a coordinating role in this field.

**Ms Kurecová** informed about the Ulm event regarding the activities organized by Slovak side. Namely it will be the workshop about the co-operation possibilities in the water sector with non-EU countries. PA4 is particularly focused on building tight relations among the Danube countries, especially non-EU countries, with the aim to concentrate on their water-related problems. The aim of the event is to provide comprehensive information on PA4 activities, especially on new technologies in water supply and water treatment, experience in water sources protection and on-going projects with the aim to find common solutions to water related problems in the Danube River Basin. Finally she mentioned the workshop which will be organized by the ICPDR regarding the Danube River Basin Management Plan 2015.

## **5. Presentations on the current projects and LoR granting procedure**

The following current projects were presented: JoinTisza, Sediments, Iron Gate, Transboundary water cooperation in the EU, MINEWATERLIFE and Clean River.

**Ms Diana Heilmann** presented the activities within Tisza River Basin. She mentioned the big river basin area of 157,186 km<sup>2</sup> covered and the length of the Tisza River of 966 km. The Tisza river basin involves Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Serbia. She introduced the preparation phases done in cooperation with ICPDR (Tisza River Basin Analysis) and cooperation with Carpathian Convention. Ms Heilmann introduced the project Strengthening cooperation between river basin management planning and flood risk prevention to enhance the status of waters of the Tisza River basin. (JoinTisza) which was submitted within the 1<sup>st</sup> call of Danube Transnational programme. Expected project period is 30 months, the lead partner is General Directorate of Water Management (Hungary) and expected number of project partners is 18. The overall aim 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 to better integrate measures of already existing (river basin management and flood management) plans and utilise outcomes of the proposed project.

**Mr. Péter Bakonyi** introduced the history of project proposal preparation. The project SEDIMENTS was submitted within the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the Danube Transnational Programme. 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 work is divided into 6 work packages. In addition to management and communication, the focus will be laid 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.

**Mr Raimund Mair** briefly provided the update on Iron Gate project. He mentioned the preparatory study – Sturgeon behaviour at the Iron Gates dam which aims at adopting telemetry techniques on sturgeon behaviour to determine preferred location of fish pass entrances. The results will be considered for the future Iron Gates feasibility study.

**Mr Gábor Baranyai** introduced the Transboundary water cooperation in the European Union: a hydro-political gap assessment. He mentioned that the climate change and other drivers have a strong potential to alter current hydro-political balances and he posed the question: how to ward off the potential destabilising impacts and adapt to permutations in the complex geopolitical and environmental systems of shared river basins? He compared worldwide the assessment matrix as basic presence of a water treaty; mechanisms for water allocation; mechanisms for variability management; conflict resolution mechanisms and presence of a river basin organisation. He assessed the present state and potential scenarios because of climate change. He identified the important vulnerability gaps as the absence of water quantity management from European treaty framework and EU law, the absence of water allocation mechanisms; variability management is almost completely limited to flood, the dispute settlement mechanisms of the EU are inadequate.

**Ms Alena Kurecova** updated the information on project “Utilization of Unique Wetlands and Lakes in Undermined Areas” (MINEWETLIFE) which was submitted in the 1<sup>st</sup> call of Central Europe Programme, but it was not invited into the 2<sup>nd</sup> step of the 1<sup>st</sup> call. The meeting of project partners was held on June 16, 2015 in Novaky-Kos site (Slovakia) to be familiar with the concrete conditions in situ. Following the lessons learned from Central Europe Programme evaluation, the project idea was re-considered. The new consortium submitted the project “Utilization of Postmining Wetlands and Lakes in the Danube Region” (MINEWATERLIFE) within the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the Danube Transnational Programme. The lead partner is Technical University of Ostrava (Czech Republic).

**Mr Matvej Kádar** introduced the update of the project “Development of urban wastewater treatment plants in Transcarpathian region, Ukraine”. Overall objective of the project is to improve the wastewater treatment facilities in Uzhgorod, Mukachevo and Beregovo and thus reduce pollution in Tisza River. Specific objectives are related to the reconstruction of waste water plants and development of modern purification technologies and development of treatment facilities for waste and sludge (biogas plant and composting stations). Project involves 7 partners from Ukraine and Hungary. It should be financed by European Investment Bank; ENPI CBC HUSKROUA 2014-2020 and the Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020. The project activities cover the estimation of building costs and design for construction of mechanical and biological treatment facilities, nutrient removal facilities, sewage sludge treatment and reconstruction of the most critical elements of canal network in 4 cities (Uzhgorod, Mukachevo, Beregovo and Hust).

The projects asking for the Letter of Recommendation were SANDANUBE, JoinTisza and WAQUM. All the information about the projects needed for LoR administrative process were sent to SG members prior to PA4 10<sup>th</sup> SG Meeting.

**Mr Richard Muller** from Global Water Partnership presented the project “Sustainable sanitation in small settlements of the Danube Region” (SANDANUBE). The project partners come from Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine, but also countries beyond the Danube Basin. Proposed lead partner is GWP Central and Eastern Europe. The potential sources of funding are LIFE or Danube Transnational Programmes. The project objective is to overcome the gap between policy makers, engineers and local communities to improve wastewater management with a specific goal to mitigate water pollution in the Danube Basin and exchange of knowledge and best practices are key elements that can be replicated beyond the Danube Region.

**Mr Zoltán Pámer** from South Transdanubian Regional Development Agency introduced the project “Water Quality Monitoring (WAQUM): Setting up methodological framework for testing, monitoring and neutralisation of micro-pollutants of low biodegradability in natural surface waters of the Danube region”. He mentioned the new challenges in environmental health to be solved, among them drug and pesticide residues in water. The project offers the solution to face these problems by development of cost-efficient laboratory methods for detection of most hazardous drug and pesticide residuals; definition of most important measurement points of the monitoring system and mapping the possible polluting points; recording of basic data, optimisation of measurements, fine-tuning of laboratory measurement methods and location of sampling points; and finally the application of the monitoring system for the whole Danube River Basin. The general objective is to ensure the sustainable, long-term use of water resources in the Danube Region by means of improving water quality. The confirmed project partners come from Hungary, Germany, Romania and Croatia, new ones should be approved soon.

The SG members by voting decided that the projects JoinTisza and SANDANUBE will be provided with the Letter of Recommendation. The project WAQUM was recommended to be more precise and detailed and after providing the supplementary information it could apply for PA4 LoR.

## 6. Closing session

In the closing session **Mr Perger** and **Mr Novák** thanked 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 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum on 29-30 October 2015 in Ulm. Everybody was invited to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Conference in November 2015, held in Budapest and devoted to the financial opportunities for projects financing.