

**Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup>  
Steering Group meeting  
of  
PA4 - To restore and maintain the quality of waters – of the EUSDR**

DATE: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014

VENUE: Water Research Institute, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

**Main objectives of the meeting were:**

1. To present the Joint Document of Cooperation between PA4 and ICPDR and discuss how it will be approved with the Steering Group
2. To present the START projects, explain how the best 15 projects were selected and to discuss the way how the top 4 projects will be selected for the submission to the Priority Area 10
3. To discuss on recent activities related to PA4 and give information on the planned events
4. To present the information about the different possibilities for project financing including the new Danube Transnational Programme

The meeting was attended by the SG members or their substitutes of the following Danube countries: AT, CZ, HU, HR, SK, MD, ME, and DE and by the representatives of EC DG Region, ICPDR, Sava Commission and GWP (the detailed list of participants is attached).

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

## The final meeting agenda was the following:

09:30 – 09:35	Welcome by Mr Čerešňák, PAC 4 SK and introduction of the agenda
09:35 – 09:45	Welcome by Mr István Joó, Ministerial Commissioner (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungarian National Coordinator)
09:45 – 09:55	Welcome by Mr František Koločány, (The Slovak Republic Government Office, Department of Cross-sectoral Priorities – National Coordinator)
09:55 – 10:00	Welcome by PACs 4 and introduction of participants
10:00 – 10:15	Summary of the activities done since the 7th SG meeting, information on 3rd Annual Forum (Ms Andrea Vranovská)
10:15 – 10:30	Information on ICPDR activities (Mr Raimund Mair)
10:30 – 10:45	Information on SAVA Commission activities (Mr Samo Groselj)
10:45 – 11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00 – 11:15	Presentation of joint document of cooperation between PA4 and ICPDR (Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper and Mr Raimund Mair)
11:15 – 11:30	Work plan of PA4 for upcoming period (2014 -2015) (Ms Diana Heilmann)
11:30 – 13:00	Project financing (Horizon 2020, LIFE, Danube OP, EIB) (Ms Anna Repullo Grau, Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper, Mr Imre Csalagovits)
13:00 – 13:45	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:45 – 15:15	START – selection of 2 projects for support of PA4 (Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper and Ms Andrea Vranovská)
15:15 – 15:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:30 – 16:30	Current projects – information (Sediments – Prof. János Jozsa, Iron gate – feasibility study, Mr Raimund Mair)
16:30 – 16:45	Closing session (PACs)

### 1. Welcome, introduction, agenda

The 8<sup>th</sup> PA4 SG meeting was opened by PAC4-SK **Mr Dušan Čerešňák**. 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 István Joó**, Ministerial Commissioner at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungarian National Coordinator, who spoke about macro-regional

strategies, facilitation of the proper funds use along the whole Danube Region, operative flood management and cooperation programme and highlighted that **Hungary specifically aims** to facilitate and help the proper and effective **use of available funds**, to set up consortiums and to develop projects proposals in line with the objectives of the priority area. Hungary has been putting significant efforts to integrate the Danube Strategy aspects and priorities into the Operative programmes and launched an initiative to strengthen cooperation between water related educational institutions.

**Mr František Koločány**, the Slovak Republic Government Office, Department of Cross-sectoral Priorities – National Coordinator, had few words about new programming period in which the concept of macro-regional strategies will be the most important tool. This concept is included in the most relevant regulations. Cooperation of EU countries and non-EU countries is really important. Concept on governance of macro-regional strategies is being prepared by the Council of the European Union. He also spoke about the improvement of cooperation between the Priority Areas and the ICPDR since the Annual Forum of the Danube Strategy which took place in October 2013 in Bucharest. That time the Commissioner Mr Johannes Hahn assigned the task to elaborate the joint document specifying the cooperation between the ICPDR and EUSDR. **Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper**, acting PAC4-HU highlighted the importance of the joint document of cooperation between the PA 4 and the ICPDR, she mentioned that PA4 would like to assist its members to provide information about financing possibilities and that the aim of the current SG meeting is also to decide about the projects that should be recommended for Start funding.. After that the participants introduced themselves.

## 2. Presentation of the summary activities of PA4

**Ms Andrea Vranovská**, PAC4-SK assistant had a presentation about the activities within EUSDR Priority Area 4 which have been performed since the 7<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting organized in Budapest. She also provided the information about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Forum which was organized in June 2014 in Vienna. Within the plenary session 3 – Inspired by Diversity – Ready for Action - Danube Cosmos PA4 organised the workshop “Synergy of the Danube Strategy with the policy of the European Union”. Workshop conclusions related to the implementation and functionality of macro-regional strategy are:

- Operative interconnection and mutual cooperation of EU SDR, ICPDR, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme and Directive EU 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive)
- Close cooperation and implementation support of PA4, PA5 and PA6 actions which relate to the common Pillar II – Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region
- The practical issues of the Danube Region anchored in EU SDR and ICPDR documents shall be solved on the base of scientific knowledge obtained within the JRC research

## 3. Presentation on the information about ICPDR activities

Ms. Kocsis-Kupper announced that in each SG meeting there will be a separate section provided to the ICPDR and ISRBC to present their progress and opinion. The SG members, namely Austria and Germany appreciated this approach and welcomed this practice for the future as well.

**Mr Raimund Mair** who is the 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. They have 15 contracting parties. River basin management is dealt within the WFD. Then he introduced the WFD implementation cycle and significant water management issues like organic pollution, nutrient pollution, hazardous substances pollution and hydro-morphological alterations. He mentioned that the 2013 Update of the Danube Basin Analysis Report with annexes and maps is being currently finalized. The draft of second River Basin Management Plan will be published in December 2014 and they will be finalised and adopted in December 2015. Some examples of the Danube River Basin Management Plans are urban waste water treatment, measures on agriculture, connectivity and fish migration and inter-sectoral cooperation. The report on the Joint Danube Survey 3 is being finalized. Implementation of EU Floods Directive is very important for the Priority Area 4 and 5. The First Danube Flood Risk Management Plan is under preparation, the draft will be ready in December 2014 and 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 talked about ICPDR meetings and events and welcomed that PA4 PACs would be attending the events, mentioned the upcoming RBM EG, where Ms.Kocsis-Kupper would attend on behalf of EUSDR PA4 and reminded that the Ordinary Meeting of ICPDR will be held on 10 December 2014 where the PACs are also invited.

#### **4. Presentation on the ISRBC activities relevant for the implementation of EUSDR**

**Mr Samo Grošelj** gave the presentation about the activities of the Commission. Firstly he presented the overview of the Sava River Basin. Then he spoke about the projects within the Priority Area 4: Sava River Basin Management Plan; Biodiversity and Environment Status of Sediment, Water and Biota in SRB and Establishment of Sava GIS. The project within the Priority Area 5 is related to the spatial planning and construction activities in the context of climate change and increasing flood threat. He also mentioned other projects and activities among which are Water and Climate Adaptation Plan for the Sava River Basin; sustainable sediment management; consideration of inter-sectoral linkages and Sava waterway rehabilitation. At last but not least he spoke about May 2014 floods – meetings and activities.

**Ms Kocsis-Kupper** had a few remarks after these presentations. She said that the 3 topics ICPDR highlighted are the issues that PA4 is also active and in which PA4 cooperates with the ICPDR, namely: waste water treatment, phosphates and buffer zones. She really appreciated the cooperation between PA4 and ICPDR saying that there is a big potential for future joint works.

She also highlighted the fact that the Sava Commission is also an important stakeholder of PA4 and pointed out that the experiences of the Sava Commission related to the Sediment issue should be used.

#### **5. Presentation on the Joint Document of Cooperation between the Priority Area 4 and the ICPDR**

**Ms Kocsis-Kupper** gave the presentation about this document consisting of 10 pages plus annexes. The ICPDR, PA4 and PA5 agreed to prepare this joint document in November 2013, where the particular mandates, responsibilities, tasks and modus operandi between

ICPDR and PA4/PA5 would be clarified. Between January and March 2014 PA4 developed a draft document, which was sent to the ICPDR Secretariat as well as to the PACs of PA5 and to the NCPs of the coordinating countries. In March 2014 the ICPDR developed an ICPDR draft document: Joint Paper on Cooperation and Synergy for the EUSDR Implementation focusing on EUSDR PA4 and PA5 coordination. The document was discussed several times among the ICPDR and related NCs during 2014 and on 8 September 2014 in Vienna an agreement was reached between ICPDR, HU and SK related to the text. The Romanian party which was not present at the meeting provided its consent. The document was ready for circulation on 3 October 2014 and the PA4 submitted it to its SG members on 6 October 2014. The basic objectives of the document are: outlining mandates; setting clear overview on the task separation and responsibilities and seeking the options how to make the best of both frameworks through complementarity and coordination synergy. The document is quite short, which was appreciated by the parties, and the annexes contain detailed descriptions that could be regularly updated. The improvement of cooperation is visible already now, e.g. PA4-PA5 team participate at ICPDR working groups, PACs participate in key ICPDR meetings, PA4 workplan was elaborated together with ICPDR in 2014, etc.

**Mr Mair** added a couple of words to this presentation. He said that the Chapter 4 of the document is very important because it indicates the synergies between ICPDR and EUSDR. He added that in the whole process the countries themselves are also important, not only the PA4 and ICPDR sphere distribution. **Ms Anna Repullo Grau** appreciated the efforts made, welcomed the final agreement and advised that this joint document should be sent to both commissioners – the previous one and the current one. The previous commissioner Mr Johannes Hahn is now responsible for IPA and ENI countries. **Mr Karl Schwaiger** and **Mr Klaus Arzet** (representatives of Austria and Germany respectively) expressed their satisfaction with the document. **Ms Marija Pinter**, representative of Croatia, added that Croatia has a very difficult position in terms of overlapping because it is the member of the ICPDR, ISRBC and therefore she really appreciates the effort connected to the document preparation.

**Ms Kocsis-Kupper** suggested to have 10 days silent procedure and after this period elapses and there are no objections from the countries, it means that the document will be approved by the Steering Group.

(Please note that the Document was accepted by the SG members in a silent procedure as agreed. Austria expressed its appreciation in writing.)

## **6. Presentation on the Work Plan for upcoming period (2014-2015)**

**Ms Diana Heilmann** had a presentation about the PA4 Workplan 2014-15. The main objective of the workplan and the timetable is not to repeat the elements of PA 4 Roadmap but to include and specify the following activities: activities under implementation, activities financially covered or planned to be covered and the activities relevant for the Danube countries. Then she presented the workplan structure. She remarked that it is a living document and it is updated from one steering group meeting to the other one. **Mr Schwaiger** fully appreciated the form of the document to be really user-friendly, transparent and clear in comparison to the long and time consuming reading of the roadmaps. He suggested to organize a similar event to the Danube Day also within the Danube Strategy and to present dissemination activities in the next Annual Forum.

## 7. Presentation on project financing

**Ms Anna Repullo Grau** was the first speaker in this section. She spoke about the financial tool the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) in the Representation of Baden-Württemberg in Brussels which will be established in the spring 2015. DSP will operate as a tool to support the implementation of the EUSDR and the coordination and interaction between its key stakeholders. In January next year its final shape will be clear. It is the financial tool to support Priority Areas Coordinators and Steering Groups. It should help to improve the work of the Danube Strategy and to include more DG Enviro and DG Regio in the strategies. This way the European Commission will be more involved. European Commission funding programmes have the objectives of the Danube Strategy in the concept, so this was the strategy is reflected in the Partnership Agreement and all operational programmes. The question is how this will be implemented in the practice. It is open for the operational programmes to decide, clear directions have not been set up yet.

**Ms Kocsis-Kupper** continued in this block by speaking about different financial programmes. She gave detailed information about the Central Europe Programme, Life Programme and Water Projects and Horizon 2020. Regarding the Central Europe, the first call is planned to be available in early 2015 and will be open for 2 months, there will be a web-based application form. There are 4 thematic objectives and 4 priorities. Priority 3 with the title “Cooperating on Natural and Cultural Resources for Sustainable Growth in Central Europe” is important for the PA 4. The co-financing rate differs for the EU countries, for instance for the Slovak Republic it is 85%. Budget is 246 million Euro out of which the first call covers 80 million Euro. She provided an overview about the Life Programme as well where she works as a regional coordinator of the external monitoring team for 10 years now. The current budget of the Life Programme is 3, 5 billion euro and 81% of the Life budget will go to projects which are divided into the following types: traditional, integrated, preparatory and capacity building projects. She highlighted the fact that the Life Programme can provide appropriate funding especially for water projects (many Danube related water projects were financed in the past), the new integrated projects could be useful to serve for the needs of the RBMPs and advised to consider the possibilities of the programme and referred to the website of the call. She also mentioned the Horizon 2020 funding which overall budget is 78,6 billion Euro, out of which 3 billion Euro is available for projects including water projects over 7 years. She mentioned that PA4 is collecting information on many financial possibilities and would share the consolidated information with the SG members.

**Mr Imre Csalagovits** spoke about the Danube Transnational Programme which is the follower of the South East Europe Programme with a total budget of 260 million EUR with 85% co-financing rate. (The main problem of the SEE Programme was the involvement of stakeholders, there was the need for more support and more stakeholders and more multicultural financing.) He mentioned two financial tools offered by the Danube Transnational Programme: Danube Strategy Point and Seed Money distributed also via PA10 EUSDR in the form of START - Danube Region Project Fund.

## 8. Presentation about the START selection of 4 projects for support of PA 4

**Ms Kocsis-Kupper** introduced the selection procedure of START projects. Selected projects will be finally submitted to the Priority Area 10 and will have to meet 2 basic criteria: macro-regionalism and importance for PA 4. Not later than 18 November the Priority Area

10 will receive the list of selected projects – top 15 projects including 4 top projects. Ms Kocsis–Kupper offered the detailed explanation of the whole process – originally the Priority Area 4 received 40 applications altogether out of which 8 projects did not pass the formal check made by PA 10. Priority Area 4 Coordinators chose 15 projects out of those 32 and identified 6 best projects together as follows:

- Local waste water treatment solutions 2020 (LOCWAT 2020)
- Dissemination of the refined EWS study of Tisza basin (R-EWS)
- Microbiota and heavy metal interactions in the Romanian and Hungarian sectors of the Danube aquatic environment (MICROMETINTERACT)
- Radiological impacts of nuclear facilities to the Danube River Basin (RADIM)
- Towards the assessment of ecological status of water bodies in the Sava River Basin (STAWA)
- Revitalization of Eutrophic Waters for Different Degrees of Pollution and the Size of Water Areas (REWATER)

The Steering Group agreed that there will be voting by email where all 14 Danube countries make their own ranking. Each country has one vote and will give maximum number of points to the best project (i.e. 6 points for the best project, then 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 point for the lowest project). Based on the number of points, the projects will be ranked from 1 to 6 and the selected top 4 projects will be advised to PA10 for financing. PA4 decision is only advisable, the final decision about project financing will be done by PA10. The country which will not reply by the deadline (7 days) is considered to agree with the final decision of ranking made by PACs. In case there is an equal vote then the PACs ranking prevails and there will be no second voting. (The countries voted in writing after the SG meeting as agreed and the result of the voting as follows:

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Project No</b>	<b>No of points</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>STAWA</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>REWATER</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>LOCWAT 2020</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>RADIM</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>R-EWS</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>MICROMETINTERACT</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>

## **9. Presentation on the information about current projects**

**Mr János Józsa** from Budapest University of Technology and Economics had an interesting and alive presentation about the Danube Sediment Project. Firstly he gave a quick overview about the Danube River pressures and impacts and then he continued with selected-sediments related problems like intensive morphological changes in the river, increased sedimentation in side-arms and sedimentation in flood plain and shallow areas. Then he mentioned field measurement methods and added some examples of projects supporting the

forthcoming Danube Sediment Project application. Finally he spoke about the Danube Sediment Project itself where the core partner countries are Austria, Hungary and Romania with the support of the ICPDR. He highlighted the basin-wide cooperation, included some information about stakeholders and offered preliminary work packages formulations and thanked the EUSDR financial support provided by Hungary for project preparation. Further partners and key stakeholders will be decided later, the next meeting of the experts are foreseen on 21 November 2014 in Budapest. The project is foreseen to be funded from the Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme and the planned project duration is 3 years. **Mr Mair** spoke about the fish migration at the Iron Gates. Ensuring fish migration is really important because fish need access to habitats and spawning grounds from reproduction, e.g. sturgeons in the Danube River. Then he mentioned important political agreements and objectives and introduced the project Fish Migration Iron Gated I & II which was launched in 2013. Project duration is from September 2013 to September 2014. Key objectives of the project are: establishing fish passage possibilities at Iron Gates I & II, monitoring of sturgeon behaviour at Iron Gate II dam and elaboration of joint roadmap on next steps. The project funding is 260 000 Euro. The he introduced the activities done so far and drafted next steps, also highlighting that they look forward for PA4 support in the future as well, especially identifying financial assistance.

## 9. Closing session

In the closing session **Mr Joó**, **Ms Vranovská** and **Ms Kocsis-Kupper** thanked the participants for active participation in the SG meeting, appreciated the fruitful cooperation with ICPDR in implementation of PA4 activities and stressed the need for active co-operation at the performance of PA4 activities within the roadmap as well as at the preparation of financial instruments for the next programming period.

Ms. Kocsis-Kupper finally mentioned that the Tisza Office will be official opened on 4 November in Szolnok and also invited the SG members to think about potential issues that could be presented at the upcoming Annual Forum that will be held in Ulm in October 2015.