

**European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)**

**Priority Area 4**

Draft

**Summary Minutes**

of the 7th Steering Group meeting of Priority Area 4

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Summary Minutes of the 7th Steering Group meeting of Priority Area 4 (28th March 2014)

Opening of the meeting

The 7th Steering Group (SG) meeting of Priority Area 4 (PA4) of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region took place in Budapest, Hungary on the 28th March 2014 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Budapest, Nagy Imre square) back to back with the EUSDR PA5 SG7 meeting.

The meeting was opened and chaired by Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis Kupper Hungarian PAC advisor.

Mr Balázs Medgyesy, EUSDR Government Commissioner from Hungary welcomed the participants and provided introductory remarks. He expressed his very warm welcome to the SG members and he highlighted that the meeting is a very important milestone in the PA4 work. It was also his pleasure to welcome Mr Ivan Zavadsky ICPDR Executive Secretary as a special guest of the meeting as well as the SG members especially those coming from Non-EU MS countries. Mr Medgyesy stressed that it was a specific meeting as a consequence of the stringent timeframe of the programming of the operational programmes (having only three months left since the last SG meeting). The discussion should focus on the interim materials (most of them were already available on the website prior to the meeting) and the objective is to have the timely pipeline to be able to feed into the programming process, directions, methodologies and main topics be discussed to enable PA4 PAC team to finalise the document in a week period following the meeting. Next to the programming there were also a range of specific topics addressed by PA4, Mr Medgyesy stressed. Some of the experts developed these proposals joined the today meeting and would introduce these proposals towards next steps to implement Roadmap of PA4. Specific presentations would be given by experts focusing on buffer strips and comprehensive overview especially related to legal framework of buffer strips. This topic was identified as relevant issue regardless political sensitivity which should be addressed and should be followed up on how to proceed further to get fuller picture related to this issue. Further on issues such as collection of waste and waste water treatment plants are also challenge in some particiating country and experts investigated on how to further deal with these issues. The other important topic is on monitoring and early warning system for transboundary rivers of the macroregion which was identified as a bottle neck at most of our partners including the DG Environment and can have a substantial input to the already established procedures operated by the ICPDR and other partners.

We have regular tasks to discuss during the day, as Mr Medgyesy told in his last sentences, such as the implementations of milestones, steps of Roadmaps, the Danube Region technical assistance funds related tasks as well as an overview on the further identification of synergies of common work and finding out common visions between the EUSDR and ICPDR.

In the frame of the meeting the representatives of the European Commission, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro, GWP-CEE, BDCP, National Institute of Health and representatives of the embassies were presented. Representatives of the ICPDR and Sava Commission also gave important inputs during the meeting.

List of participants can be found in **Annex 1.**

Approval of the Agenda and the Summary minutes

The agenda was agreed by the participants. The approved document can be found in **Annex 2**.

No comments were received related to the Summary minutes of the 6th Steering Group meeting. The chair noted that the Steering Group approved the summary minutes of the 6th SG meeting.

A request was noted from AT to indicate the date of the documents on the papers. It was also requested by the PAC team to inform SG members in case new document was uploaded to the PA4 website. The PA4 team thanked and acknowledged the request and will act in accordance with it.

Steering group members were kindly asked to inform PAC in case any change of membership of persons delegated to the Steering Group had happened.

Alignment of Funding

The Priority Area Coordinators shall among others make sure that there is an effective cooperation between project promoters, programmes and funding sources.

PA4 is one of the two priority areas where special emphasis has been taken on the process of alignment of funding. The process has been started in 2013 in the frame of the 5th SG meeting and the issue was further discussed in December 2013 (6th SG mtg) and in March 2014 in the frame of the 7th SG meeting.

As the outcomes of the discussion of the 6th SG meeting a background paper was prepared and uploaded to the website prior to the meeting (*Alignment of Funding – Operative programmes for EUSDR, Draft background paper for discussion*).

Before introducing the document in details Ms Anna Repullo Grau from DG Regio said some words in connection to the PA4 developments and Mr Alain Roggeri, adviser for EU macro-regional strategies introduced strategic and technical recommendations related to different ways of cooperation.

Ms Repullo Grau said that the overall process of programming entered to its final stage and now is time to finalise it. She stressed that the document prepared by PA4 would be a meaningful and useful paper to the countries and also to the Commission.

Mr Alain Roggeri stressed in his opening words that in the preparation of the programming it should be considered that cooperation activities are important tools to reach the own strategic objectives and the identification and planning of joint, coordinated, complementary and convergent actions contribute to reinforce efficiency in the implementation and impact of the results. Further on Mr Roggeri introduced different cooperation models from the less integrated models to the integrated ones. During planning and implementation phase it is necessary to identify cooperation interests and needs and to consider their relevance to address the situation and reach the targeted results. Added value of cooperation in the strategic planning phase should be assessed (benefits, impact and cost effectiveness, but also feasibility and readiness). As much as possible cooperation activities should be mainstreamed in the usual decisional processes and delivery systems in force at national, regional, local level. Funding sources, instruments and tools in respect of their specific mission, financial allocation size, eligibility rules restrictions, feasibility and easiness of management, selection process should be also selected.

In relation to the programming of the Operational Programs (Ops) Mr Roggeri said that implementation system of the OPs open for different cooperation models should be checked and kept. Specification of programming cooperation in broad terms is needed at OP or at Priority Axis level without being exclusive.

Ms Kocsis-Kupper thanked and welcomed the thoughts of Ms Repullo-Grau and for Mr Roggeri for the philosophy of cooperation. Following this she gave a presentation on what PA4 is achieved.

PA4 has already made a lot of steps in order to reach the identified joint priorities. The steps which were taken last years related to programming were the following:

* PA4 PACs in 2013 participated at many meetings to discuss the roles, tasks and opportunities of the PA in the upcoming financing period.
* Already at SG5 items on financing, OP process was on the agenda.
* At all forums in 2013 PA4 disseminated the message (macroreg conference, Annual Forum, seminars).
* At SG6 detailed discussions on OP process to identify Joint Priorities, to be active and be involved were held.
* As a next step prior to the 6th Steering Group meeting PA4 *circulated a questionnaire* to the members and observers of the Steering Group related to the following main issues:
* Priority issues of water management in the Danube River Basin to be dealt with within the next programming period (PA4 relevance);
* State of play of the preparation in the countries related to the operational programmes;
* Danube Strategy integration into the planning process in the countries, role of SG members in the programming;
* Sources of funding is envisaged, operational programmes planned or established in the countries;
* Assistance needs from the PACs and from the Steering Group;
* National financing visions.
* At the 6th SG meeting (12th December 2013, Vienna) the financing possibilities and the *alignment of funding* were discussed in detail. Experiences of the Sava Commission and the Czech Republic were shared during the meeting.
* The PA4 in January 2014 called again the attention of the SG members to identify priorities and started to collect items from members for PA4 *joint priorities*.
* The PA4 further contacted the Secretariat of the ICPDR in February 2014 to reach in a coordinated manner the ICPDR working groups identifying Joint Priorities. PA4 colleagues participated at the Hydromorphology Task Group of ICPDR on 27-28 February 2014, Vienna, AT and further asked the contribution of the expert group to inform PA4 about Joint Priorities for the operational programmes. (PA4 will be similarly active and present at other ICPDR expert group meetings and will ask the opinion of the WGs for Joint Priorities.)
* In summary the SG members (Danube countries), ICPDR PS, ICPDR expert and tasks groups, Sava Commission were requested to fill in the questionnaire and identify joint priorities.

As the outcomes of the above procedure and based on the replies the PA4 compiled a draft document for the identification of PA4 joint priorities. In line with the agreement made in the frame of the 6th SG meeting no country specific details were included and annexed, but the main priorities were collected and grouped in the circulated background paper. Ms Kocsis-Kupper asked again the participants to send their feedbacks on the questionnaire if they did not do so far and identify and let us know about the joint priorities.

Ms Kocsis-Kupper stressed that this is a unique and exceptional work and contributed to the knowledge of PA4. These sets of proactive measures taken by PA4 in 2013 are out of precedent and show the commitment of PA4 for assisting in reaching the targets identified by the EU for the upcoming financial period for macro-regional strategies.

The main outcomes of the feedbacks demonstrate that the national priorities and institutional/organisational solutions vary, but there are some general considerations that are applicable to the whole macro-region:

* From the replies to the questionnaire it seemed as general consideration that the countries consider the *macro-regional view as crucial aspect for the implementation of the Strategy.*
* In most countries the programming is in preparatory, not completed phase and work will accelerate in 2014 and the preparation of the Partnership Agreements is in a final phase of consultation with the EU.
* In some countries the governance systems of EUSDR and Cohesion Policy are closely interlinked (A, BA); EUSDR experts also participate in programming (Bg) in some cases strong influence is assured to EUSDR aims as a result of inter-governmental coordination. (CZ, SK, HU)
* Some countries highlight the good informal exchange in relation to the new ETC Danube programme (INTEREG Vb, Danube Region Programme) between the ICPDR, and EUSDR PAC6. (BA)
* It was also mentioned that *political support* for the achievements of the macro-regional targets in the water quality area (in particular to ensure transnational funding) as well as a strong coordination and connection with the ICPDR (as an institution of all Danube countries, ensuring high quality work in the field of water for nearly 20 years) should be given.
* It was highlighted in the replies that the *cooperation is also of major relevance in terms of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC),* within these the relevant EUSDR priorities will be taken into account accordingly (especially within the ETC programmes).
* The EUSDR has been considered in the Partnership Agreements primarily under sections “territorial cooperation” and “integrated territorial approach”.
* In some countries the EU SDR is integrated into the working version of the national environmental operational programmes 2014-202. (CZ, HU), in other countries the aims of the Pillar 2 of the EUSDR are incorporated into programming (Bg, SK) or in the outline of Operational Programme “Competitiveness and Cohesion“ environmental priorities were identified (Cr).

**The main principles towards outlining measures (or project) to be financed within the financing period of 2014-2020 are in one hand that**

* PA4 is seeking for a list of common policy interventions/measures, which cover basin-wide activities with significant aspects in transboundary scale such as common planning, coordination, implementation;
* It is an important factor that at least one of the elements of the listed measures should be implemented during the 2014-2020 financing period using sources from the European Structural and Investment Funds and/or EIB, IPA etc;
* The implementation or financing of the measures should be coordinated in transboundary scale;
* A4 is primarily seeking for a list of transboundary *measures* but in case specific tasks are already defined in details *projects* might be also considered;
* PA4 looks for all measures, which are planned to be started before 2020.

The main objective is to identify and agree on common joint priorities and finalise this process in a week period, said Ms Kocsis-Kupper at the end of her presentation.

Following the presentation of Ms Kocsis-Kupper, the Government Commissioner, Mr Balázs Medgyesy took the floor and introduced the methodology towards programming. The complex task what was agreed on is to identify the water management related specific topics for the Operational Program (OP) purposes, said Mr Medgyesy. The most important is to provide special content in terms of water management. The results will be circulated to the SG members and to the EC. For this purpose the most important goal is to contribute to the transboundary cooperation and the confirmation of national priorities related to EUSDR. The compliance to OP should be ensured, broad intervention topics and indicative interventions have to be identified.

An optimal balance between narrowing and broad, flexible content is essential.

An operative programme consist priority axes that are made of (hierarchic) thematic objectives and investment priorities. This is the underlying structure determined first. Specific objectives, result indicators, overview of interventions/actions and indicative interventions as concrete examples are linked to these. To provide helpful contribution to the programming *the intervention area should be the primary level of inputs.* Intervention areas should be grouped by target sectors / actors / types of intervention. Broad categories are used also as "placeholders" for interventions to be determined later. Intervention areas must be complemented with both nested intervention areas (if any) and indicative interventions.

It is not needed to be supplied at this stage but intervention areas might be complemented with specific objectives (broad category but narrower than the axis/TO/IP). Intervention areas should “hint” at description of the type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives if defined. Indicative interventions should provide a more concrete understanding.

More detailed categories, especially project level interventions are not advised to be listed. There are many reasons for that:

* not all OPs might accommodate projects in the programme document;
* those that do can generally only include large scale projects of very specific qualities.

The content, however, of most projects proposed by partners during the programming consultation also qualify as indicative interventions.

The PA4 identified top priorities (topics) for PA4 and further discussed in the frame of the 7th Steering Group Meeting. According to the Action Plan of the EUSDR and in line with the Roadmap of PA4 he following priorities shall be adopted and should be indicated in the OPs of the Danube countries according to their national priorities. The listed topics are divided according to main interventions areas and zoomed to indicative interventions as follows:

**Intervention areas** relevant from programming point of view of PA4 (top level):

1. Framework activities
2. Strengthening cooperation on sub basin level
3. Assessment and monitoring
4. Complex tasks and interventions for protection and sustainable use of water resources and aquifers
5. Address gaps in water infrastructure
6. Hydromorphological pressures
7. Information systems
8. Cross-cutting tasks
9. Scientific support

***Horizontal areas relevant to PA4 of EUSDR***

* Complex green infrastructure projects and coordinated planning (eg. in water and coast management, flood prevention, biodiversity) following a cross cutting approach (involving all affected sectors) should be encouraged in sectors contributing to the planning, use and restoration of water resources and water bodies. Such coordinated planning should always address (improve) the status of waters, hydromorphology, water resource management (quantitative and qualitative aspects) and biodiversity of water and related ecosystems. Additional interruptions in water bodies affecting sediment continuum or migratory species are to be avoided.
* Joint approach also to be ensured in a macroregional scale in coordinating funds and activities related to the aforementioned projects, appropriately involving PA4 and it’s partners especially in EU DRS efforts throughout all priority areas.

In line with the listed intervention areas the following **indicative interventions** can be listed[[1]](#footnote-2):

1. Framework activities Preparation and  monitoring of programmes of measures and implementation plans on a River Basin/sub-basin level

* Broad support to be provided to implementation of Water Framework Directive (also Reference to the Common Implementation Strategy is relevant throughout the OPs in the macroregion)
* Broad support to addressing bottlenecks River Basin Management Planning, Joint Programme of Measures planning and review process on the basin / sub basin level. Indicative interventions:

### 2nd Morava River Management Plan

### *Update of the Sava River Basin Analysis (2nd cycle)*

### *Preparation of the 2nd Sava River Basin Management Plan*

### *Complex ecological and hydromorphological target status for complex (intersectorial) planning*

## Broad support for RBMP, JPM implementation on the basin / sub basin level. Indicative interventions:

### *Address the bottlenecks in JPM implementation*

### *Broad support to be provided to the measures foreseen in the 2nd Danube River Basin Management Plan*

### *Implementation of the Sava RBMP*

## Significantly strengthening cooperation on sub basin level. Indicative interventions:

### *Strong support to the process envisioned in the Tisza Group by the Ministers of the Tisza countries and in the Pro Tisza initiative*

### *Sava*

### *Prut*

1. Assessment, monitoring and information systems

## Knowledge gaps and assessment related to RBMP, PoM, review, Blueprint and significant issues or emerging issues in the 2014-2020 period. Indicative interventions:

### *Hydrological study of the Sava RB*

### Address the significant knowledge gaps in order to enable Danube Countries to plan and assess impacts of sustainable management of Danube and tributaries’ sediment for a range of end user sectors (drinking water, flood management, biodiversity, navigation, etc.). Indicative interventions:

### *Danube Sediment project;*

### *Project towards a sustainable sediment management in the Sava RB*

### Address knowledge gaps on hydromorphology related issues and hydropeaking

## Monitoring and preparedness. Indicative interventions:

### *Support for addressing knowledge gaps and lack of data in hazardous and emerging substances*

### *Water quality monitoring and early warning system- (Sub) basin*

### *Support for coordinated compilation of national inventories on discharges, emissions and losses*

## Complex monitoring of water bodies. Indicative interventions:

### Examination of biodiversity and environmental status of sediment, water and biota in the Sava River Basin

### Complex hydroecological assessment of sub-basins. Indicative interventions:

### *Complex Tisza Hydroecological Status Report*

## Socioeconomic impact assessment and decision aid for complex water management planning

## Improve information systems to support tasks of the EU SDR. Indicative interventions:

### *Sava GIS 2nd and 3rd stage*

### *Support for the improvement of consistent spatial and monitoring data for addressing the needs of planning and scientific support to the water related strategic interventions in the DR, inter alia in the context of climate change*

1. Complex tasks and interventions for protection and sustainable use of water resources, bodies and aquifers (Some tasks common with PA5 and PA6)

## Water bodies (Morphological alterations)

### Implementation of sediment management plans with complex financing following the resolution of knowledge gaps (potentially part of complex interventions)

### Address hydromorphological alterations and restore river continuity. Indicative interventions:

* *Planning and implementation of fish migration aids based on common priorities*
* *Furthering efforts on Iron Gate*
* *Support to planning and rehabilitation of longitudinal and lateral connectivity of rivers and ecosystems (incl. wetlands and inundation zones): also see PA5 floodplain related issues*
* *Morphological restructuring of modified river beds*
* *Sturgeon 2020 project*

## Aquifers. Indicative interventions:

### *Protection and sustainable use of water resources from alluvial aquifers in Sava River Basin*

### Mitigate diffuse pollution from agricultural sources

1. Address gaps in water infrastructure

## Water supply

### Identification of most efficient interventions to improve climate resilience of water supply systems

### Establishing and upgrading water supply systems and networks to EU standards and improve climate resilience

## Wastewater treatment and sewerage

## Settlements under 10 000 PE (non-MS) and 2000PE

## *Program for optimized deployment of UWWT for 10000PE-2000PE and 2000 PE> settlements*

### *Planning and dissemination*

### *Optimized development framework*

### *Pilot projects for 2000 PE> UWWT investments*

### Establishing and upgrading UWWT systems and networks to EU standards, reduce organic pollution

### *Introduction of nutrient reduction in existing and new UWWTPs*

### Upgrade of the sewerage network

1. Cross-cutting tasks. Indicative interventions:

### *Sediment Balance Project*

### *System for collection, treatment and disposal for hazardous waste on Sava river (follow-up for CO-WANDA)*

### *Master Plan for the development of Eco-Tourism in the Sava RB*

Following the presentation of Mr Medgyesy, Mr. Schweiger from AT thanked for the list provided by the countries. It was highlighted that priorities should be linked to clear legal obligations. Austria highlighted the importance of the ICPDR process on the SWMIs and it was requested to feed the listed priorities into the already existing hierarchy. Mr Medgyesy indicated that our aim is to determine the elements relevant for OP programming. In case the listed intervention is not relevant from the RBM point of view and it is not essential steps than we should omit from the future document. There is more than one way to incorporate these interventions into the OP programmes. Croatia and Serbia supported the idea to focus on measures having legal obligations and not to invent on new interventions. Mr Medgyesy fully supported the comment and stressed that the list actually presented by him reflects in a broad term the necessary measures and it is clear that one measure relevant in one Danube country might not be a priority in other one. But the list gives a broad area of intervention including all the potential areas in a broad sense in a high level of hierarchy and the indicative interventions which provide samples that kind of interventions foreseen.

Mr Zavadsky noted that we have two parallel process, which should be merged. Information collected from different stakeholders through questionnaire should me mainstreamed and certain priority measures should be highlighted with policy relevance behind. Policy and legally justified interventions should be outlined. The overall message from PA4 should be that we need this specific type of issues, because this is an obligation this has been elaborated already and it has basin wide relevance. In principle we have the goal, as Mr Zavadsky noted, to make sure that the key strategic needs in connection to the water management are being reflected in all those OPs that we have in mind.

Mr Roggeri encouraged the consolidation which is a normal process. The task is to contribute to the consolidation of policy level, in term of prioritization and what should be in first instance to be done.

Mr Mair from ICPDR highlighted that prioritization process has already been done when preparing the DRBMP.

BDKP representative stressed that the focus should be on specific type of activities where SG can initiate or stimulate the cooperation. The new financial system should be also taken into account.

SK stressed that when preparing the Slovakian national list as the contribution to the background paper the idea was to list those measures which are the main priorities in national level. This should be a short list of priorities.

Anna Repullo Grau stressed that we should not forget about the HOW. During the programming if we can provide some thought where we can include this interventions would be useful.

Mr Zavadsky commented that we have a process within the expert groups that can be used as a full support, if we have policy relevance on what to do. In case PA4 describes the process how to do the integration of these priority elements into the OP programming it would be a very important input.

The policy input is not the results but the input of the overall exercise, Mr Medgyesy stressed. At the very end the consolidated list should be merged into the programming period.

*Tasks: As the outcomes of the discussion it was agreed that the presentations would be uploaded and then PACs would ask the SG members to comment on the joint priorities. The countries are kindly asked to send their feedback comments to the PA4 PACs by the 28 April 2014. Following the comments arrived in a month period the consolidated document would be uploaded to the website[[2]](#footnote-3).*

Review of progress and state of tasks drawn up in roadmaps

PA4 acknowledges that water quality is a world- wide significant policy issue and its aim (in line with the Action Plan) is to improve water policy and to reach good status under the Water Framework Directive.

Regarding the wording of the roadmap Ms Vranovska said that no feedback has arrived to the PACs during last months and the wording can be considered approved. In case the SG members would like to include any updates, changes are kindly asked to contact the PA4 PACs.

**Ms Kocsis-Kupper introduced the main tasks which were further elaborated during the last three months period between January and March 2014:**

Action 5 ‘*To establish buffer strips along the rivers to retain nutrients and to promote alternative collection and treatment of waste in small rural settlements’*

* Survey of the situation on buffer zones (M1) – main findings and proposals.
* Survey of the situation on management of solid waste in small rural settlements (M3) - main findings and proposals.
* Survey of the situation on alternative collection and treatment of wastewater in small rural settlements (M4) - main findings and proposals.

Action 7 „*To legislate at the appropriate level to limit the presence of phosphates in detergents*“

* Survey of the situation toward legislate at the appropriate level to limit the presence of phosphates in detergents.

Action 2 “*To greatly strengthen cooperation at sub-basin level*”

* Feasibility study on Water Quality Early Warning System - on Transboundary Watercourses of Tisza River Basin.

Following the introductory notes of Ms Kocsis-Kupper the presentations were given by Dr. Szilvia Szilagyi, representative of the J& E association on environmental legal organisations, having its legal seat in Brno, Czech Republic, Coordinated from Budapest, Hungary. Ms Szilagyi introduced issues related to Action 5 and Action 7 as follows:

General methodological background: A questionnaire based assessment has been developed to review on the situation on buffer zones/strips in the Danube basin, to assess solid waste disposals, landfills and waste management and wastewater treatment and management in small rural settlements. The legislative background as well as the progress in implementation of existing measures were investigated in each cases. The work was implemented by environmental lawyers from each Danube countries via short interviews with national decision makers. Specific focus of the given questionnaires are introduced in the below chapters.

## Buffer zones and management of solid waste

In line with the Roadmap action 5 milestone 1 and 2 a survey on the situation of buffer zones and on the management of solid waste, on alternative collection and treatment wastewater in small rural settlements has been initiated by Hungarian PAC. HU PAC initiated an international research to investigate the gaps and prepare a study on the situation regarding the above topics in the Danube countries. The Policy recommendations were circulated prior to the SG7 meeting. Information related to the buffer zones available from all countries.

**Methodology:** For the assessment of the situation in the Danube basin separate questionnaires were distributed the questions were focused on the following issues:

* General legal background (level and type of regulations establishing protecting territories)
* Definitions, establishment, management
* Specific technical requirements
* Procedural rules (designation, authorities responsible, stakeholders taking part)
* Evaluation of effectiveness of the regulations

**Main findings**

* **The planning of the protecting territories:** The decision-making circle concerning the protection of waterflows starts with planning. Protection of waterflows appears in a wide-range of planning documents (national, regional, local spatial plans, RBMPs, nature protection plans, agricultural planning documents etc.). Coordination and alignment of these plans would be important (different terms, parallel measures, contradictory deadlines) Up-to-date registry of the protected territories would contribute to the proper implementation.
* **Size of protecting territories:** The size of the protecting territories range between 5-10-15-20-50 meters from the shore line; with or without discretionary right to the authorities to tailor the actual width of the protection zone according to the local circumstances and specialties. Protecting zones might form a system for several protecting purposes – different rules to conduct. In some cases further divided into several zones where level of protection is different.
* **Substantial rules on protecting territories:** The plans on protecting territories shall be broken down into several levels of implementing legislation.
* **The process of assigning the protecting territories:** The first major question in procedures concerning the protection territories of waters is naturally the stakeholders to take place in these procedures. They can be in most of the cases: relevant authorities, water suppliers, municipalities, planning experts or organizations, concerned land owners, farmers, local communities and their organisations.

**Problems**

* Altering definitions - different definitions for the different purposes for the same territory, lack of clarity
* Planning of the protecting territories - planning documents not in concordance with the respective legislation
* Lack of social attention and proper funding - including for the compensation of land owners for the restrictions

**Policy proposals**

* Definitions and substantial rules – guidance document (aims, determination, stakeholders, substantial requirements, restrictions, compensation measures, good practices etc.)
* Harmonization of planning documents
* Substantial rules of the protecting territories (site specific guidelines to orient activities of land users)
* Enhanced cooperation between different authorities

## Situation on management of solid waste in small rural settlements

According to the EU WFD, establishment of waste water treatment plants are obligatory in all EU countries independently from the size of the settlements. The initial problem outlined in action 5 milestone 4 and 5 of the roadmap of PA4 arises from the settlement structure of agro-industrial regions of many countries resulting in large proportion of untreated waste water and substantial diffuse pollution of ground water and surface water.

To further investigate on the issue and to be able to outline next steps related to solid waste disposals, landfills and waste management a survey on the situation on management of solid waste in small rural settlements has been carried out.

**Methodology:** The questionnaire investigated on the legislative background, the local relevance of legal provisions of specific waste management activities as well as on the role of local administration in the regulation, organization, management and control of local waste management activities.

**Main findings**

* Waste management planning and waste management activities are regulated in detail in most of the countries.
* Main problems arise from implementation – illegal activities and from abandoned dumping sites.
* Local municipalities – competitive advantage but lack of financial resources
* Landfill is still the most common disposal method of municipal solid waste - strong pressure on countries to decrease the amount of waste to be landfilled (selective collection with different effectiveness)

**Problems**

* Abandoned landfill sites - high number of to be re-cultivated landfills and questionable attainability of financial resources.
* Illegal waste dumping - limited number of landfill sites, exceeding landfill rates, no reliable data on the number of illegal waste dumping sites.

**Proposals**

* Prevention, detection and sanctioning illegal waste disposal - significant financial resources, effective enforcement, awareness raising campaigns.
* Liquidation of abandoned municipal landfill sites - tracing, assessment, monitoring and liquidation - cooperation of all the respective authorities and bodies.

## Survey on the situation on alternative collection and treatment of wastewater in small rural settlements

In line with the agreed milestones of the Roadmap and towards outlining steps to fulfil objectives outlined in the Action Plan of the EUSDR a survey on the situation of alternative collection and treatment wastewater in small rural settlements (A5M4) has been carried out to offer and promote best practices in WWT for small settlements.

Local waste management systems in most of the countries are divided into systems serving households and also waste management services for local industrial plans. The research has focused on the first one, because of this having strong local relevance, while the industrial waste is usually managed by large nationwide systems.

**Methodology:** The questionnaire investigated on the legislative background of waste water treatment, the waste water treatment solutions in small rural settlements as well as on the supervision and control of waste water treatment activities (authorities responsible and legal instruments they apply).

**Main findings**

* In most of the Danube countries – special regulations on alternative waste water treatment solutions for small local settlements
* Individual solutions : depending on given environmental and technical conditions (domestic wastewater treatment facilities, domestic wastewater treatment units, domestic closed wastewater containers)
* Local municipalities – limited scope in the authorization and inspection (water management authorities and water utility companies)

**Problems and proposals**

* Countries pursue to build up the respective wastewater treatment infrastructure – costly and long procedure (small, clean, flexible local solutions shall have a priority in order to drive back untreated wastewater discharge into watercourses)
* Complicated authorization (flexible legal tools shall accompany these technical solutions)

Following the presentations Ms Kocsis-Kupper stressed that the studies were developed in line with the agreement in the last steering group. Hungary was partly responsible for these milestones and in order to be able to make next steps Hungary initiated to make this study. The research report is covering the milestones related to the Action 5 and the research report is the product related to this action and related milestones. Ms Kocsis-Kupper also stressed that the results of this report will be introduced in the relevant ICPDR expert groups. As the outcomes of the last year meetings of PACs of PA4 with the representatives of DG Environment it was agreed that buffer zones related issues are a relevant tasks which should be investigated on. It this regards PA4 could contribute to the policy work of DG Env. Following the presentation the countries expressed the need to list the name of the experts involved in the development of the document. As a reply to the question raised by AT representative Mr Schweiger, Ms Szilágyi told that respective EU legislation were taken into account in the study.

Ms Kocsis-Kupper stressed that SG members and countries are welcomed to comment on the document, which will be further developed based on the feedbacks.

Ms Szilágyi introduced the next topic on the phosphate detergents.

## Situation toward legislate at the appropriate level to limit the presence of phosphates in detergents

The Roadmap of Priority Area 4 of the EUSDR contains Action 7, “To legislate at the appropriate level to limit the presence of phosphates in detergents”. The ICPDR was responsible under Milestone 1 to prepare an overview report on the implementation of regulation (EU) 259/2012. In the Roadmap of PA4 A7 a special task was identified in Milestone 2 to make a policy response to the overview report. Therefore to complete this task and partially based on Hungarian governmental funds, PA4 concluded a contract with an international research organisation, Czech based Justice and Environment, who prepared a complete research document analysing the situation with regards to phosphates in the Danube basin. The summary of the Study and the recommendations based on the research are provided here for the Steering Group Members of PA4 and for further recommendations to stakeholder institutions. The present paper will be discussed and the study on Action 7 on phosphates will be discussed in detail at the SG7 Meeting in Budapest, on 28.03.2014.

The actuality of the issue can be traced from the fact that nutrient pollution is a priority challenge, which affects not only freshwaters but groundwater and the marine environment as well. Eutrophication of surface waters, the negative impacts on the status of water ecosystems are actual problems and however phosphates cab improve the cleaning effects of detergents it also contributes strongly to the increased level of nutrients.

**Recommendations on short-term policy responses**

* A complex policy which aims to reduce and/or phase out phosphates from detergents shall be based on the following measures: legislative measures; voluntary agreements; an eco-labelling system of detergents; taxes or fines; increased public awareness and involvement.
* National legislative measures may include the following:
  + introduction of a total ban of phosphates in detergents;
  + restriction of phosphates in laundry detergents; or
  + setting limit values for the content of phosphates in detergents.

**Short-term policy reflections**

* In those countries where no legislation on phosphate-free detergents exists yet, preparing impact assessments in order to find the most suitable policy option for further action.
* For those countries where the relevant legislation or voluntary agreements aiming to reduce/eliminate the phosphate content of detergents are already in place, the top priority is to monitor compliance with already existing agreements or legislation, with the assistance of NGOs when possible.

**Recommendations on short-term policy responses**

* Promoting public debate and involvement
* Raising consumers' awareness of negative environmental impacts of products
* Organising workshops
* Maintain close contact with the relevant government departments of the countries concerned
* Maintain a dialogue with both the industry and the relevant trade associations
* International co-operation among the relevant stakeholders

Having this study available action 7 has been fulfilled. Similar to the above studies Ms Kocsis-Kupper stressed that SG members and countries are welcomed to comment on the document, which will be further developed based on the feedbacks.

Ms Kocsis-Kupper took the note that the SG welcomed that related to Action 5 and Action 7 very significant progress has been made.

*Related tasks:*

* *The studies will mention clearly the names of experts involved in the development of the studies.*

Following the presentations of Ms Szilagyi Ms Zsófia Kovács from Pannonia University introduced the study on Water Quality Early Warning System - on Transboundary Watercourses of Tisza River Basin in relation to Action 2 (M4) of the Roadmap.

## Feasibility study on Water Quality Early Warning System - on Transboundary Watercourses of Tisza River Basin

The development of the idea of EW system is included in Action 2 and its roadmaps of EUSDR Priority Area 4 (PA4, Water Quality).

One of the front-end activities of ICPDR is the Danube AEWS (Accident Emergency Warning System) and its implementation through the operation of network of PIACs (Principal International Alarm Centres). This system is a logical framework of the proper reaction on the accidents and pollutions that may have international effects, AEWS itself physically does not exist. The detection of any kind of accidents varies from country to country and dependent on the concrete case, there is no unified and regulated, agreed system in Europe yet.

The implementation of an Early Warning Water Quality Monitoring System would result in a solid, physical base of the AEWS. As an initial step to touch the problem a preparatory study was made to find out the possible directions of beginning.

In the development of the study Slovakian experts are also involved. Study will be circulated to the SG members as soon as it is available.

The idea for the technical structure of EW system was presented at the Macro Regional Conference last year with a success and getting a general acceptance. The study was discussed at the regular meeting of ICPDR APC EG (Accident Prevention and Control Expert Group) on 25-26 March in Ljubljana and the issue was introduced by Mr István György Toth, advisor to PA4. Investment and operational costs were discussed related to EWS system and it was clear that costs of such a system can be very significant.

Ms Zsófia Kovács from the Pannonia University introduced the related presentation. She described at the beginning of the importance of the Early Warning System (EWS), which is

* essential for both the upstream and downstream countries, for warning and forecasting of possible catastrophic events and helping timely reactions.
* does not replace the monitoring processes required and undertaken by the states
* it would give help in the analysis and solutions of problems
* it would provide continuous timelines from the whole catchment territory
* some elements of the alarm system may already exist in some countries
* full interoperability required in case of devices, ICT, databases

Ms Kovács introduced the aims of the study to give ***a basic assumption*** and to lay down the basics of the strategy for the „basic” Water Quality EWS, and to define the framework of the extendable, configurable and specialized automatic monitoring system, which includes installation, infrastructural and ICT elements. The study can serve as a ***basic cookbook***, a catalogue system that recommends a pre-modelled, detailed and applicable scenario for particular situations.

The main parts of the study includes

* Proposal of installation sites and measurement parameters for the monitoring system on the Tisza river basin
* Evaluation of measurement methods applicable on monitoring stations, and introduction and specification of the monitoring devices necessary for implementation.
* Evaluation of technically applicable sampling systems of EWS, taking into account different riverbed types, sample and data archiving system types and introduction of design options.
* Calculation of investment and operational costs for monitoring system to be developed

The next step could be the involvement of the countries of Tisza basin with their local knowledge, expertise and information on their water system and hazard sources. The outcome of this second phase would be a study which basically reflects on the special requirements and conditions of the five Tisza basin countries (SK, UA, RO, RS, HU) taking into consideration the accident risk sites (ARS) and their relations to the water system, the experience of operational or abandoned EW monitoring stations.

The presentation introduced one of the several options towards the implementation of an early warning system in the TRB. The EWS configuration is strongly depend on the available financial resources and the needs of the countries. The overall presentation is attached to **Annex 3.** Question related to operational costs has been raised and it was also suggested to contact Rhine Commission as well as water directors for discussing especially the pricing issue with regards to early warning. In the Elbe there was also a project were such an options were also investigated in the past and one important conclusion was that operational costs are too high.

BDKP representatives (Mr Kiss-Parciu) asked about the interest of the other countries in connection to the EWS idea.

Mr Tóth from Hungary mentioned that countries are aware of the proposal. He emphasised that the costs of running an EW system must be compared to the potential damages to the environment and to the operation of a classical guarding service thus deciding about the economy of EW system. Mr Kiss-Parciu suggested to organise a workshop as a next step related to the idea to further discuss the details. EIB is interested in the idea and perhaps organising a meeting can be an idea.

Serbia suggested to present the idea at the ICPDR Tisza Group since this platform should be also utilise this. Serbia also stressed that first all stakeholders should be sit at one table and should discuss about the idea.

*Related Tasks:*

* *SG members and countries are welcomed to comment on the circulated document, which will be further developed based on the feedbacks.*
* *PACs will contact the water directorates and the Rhine Commission for discussing especially the pricing issue with regards to early warning;*
* *Issue of EWS will put into the agenda for the upcoming Tisza group and study will be presented,*
* *EWS idea will be presented for EIB for future funding of a more detailed study.*

New projects ideas

In the frame of the agenda item information was shared about the Technical Assistance Facility initiated by PA10. Information was also given about the JRC water nexus related research projects ideas.

## JRC related research projects relevant from PA4 point of view

On the 6th March 2014 a meeting has been organised by the Secretariat of the Government Commissioner for the EU Danube Strategy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to introduce and discuss on scientific-research project ideas relevant for the EU Danube Strategy point of view.

Mr Medgyesy noted that the meeting was linked to the JRC water nexus. It is important that the Steering Group is informed about these projects.

Ms Heilmann shortly introduced some aspects of the projects listing first the main project initiators such as the

* Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Ecological Research;
* National Institute of Environmental Health;
* University of Debrecen.

The planned projects are international projects including several Danube countries in the work. The main project ideas are the following:

* AGOLA - Accelerated ageing: past, present and future of aquatic biota living in wetlands and shallow water bodies (Possible partners: Water Directorates and Research Institutes of Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Croatia);
* AGAREC - Aggradation and erosion – the dual face of changing in hydrological regime of a regulated large river (River Danube): ecological consequences;
* ECOSTAD - Development of the complementary ecological status assessments for the Danube, particularly for the floodplain ecosystems;
* LAMECOL - Impact of the various land use effect on the biotic communities (Possible partners: Water Directorates and Research Institutes of Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania)
* TISZAMICROBIA - Emerging microbial risks - Tisza river longitudinal analysis
* Tisza irrigation - Tisza irrigation

Projects on Tiszamicrobia and Tisza irrigation were introduced separately by János Fehér (Hon. Associate Professor, Leader of the GWP CEE Danube Strategy Task Force) and Márta Vargha (National Institute for Environmental Health, Department of Water Hygiene). Presentations see in **Annex 4** and **Annex 5.**

## Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects

Ms Vranovska updated the group on the status of the TAF-DRP and she also said that the deadline for the 2nd call was 1st of April 2014. Information was circulated to the SG members during the last months and countries were requested to submit project ideas if there are any. One project proposal arrived to the SK PAC prior to the meeting requesting support for the development of the overall project proposal. The title of the project was’ *Remediation of polluted groundwater in the Danube river flow in Serbia’*. Presentation was introduced related to this project by Serbian experts (**See Annex 6**).

***Following the presentation a voting was held and the SG supported the project idea to submit to PA10 – TAF DRP***.

Ms Vranovska also explained that there is a Slovakian project idea which is also requested to be submitted to PA10 TAF-DR. The short information about the project was sent to SG members shortly before SG meeting.

The title of the project is **Utilization of the Unique Wetlands in Undermined Area Nováky – Koš.** The main objective of the project is to improve the environmental quality and water of the territory degraded by mining in the residential area Nováky-Koš with regard to new interconnection of the city and provincial area to create an active form of population relaxation. Project will propose the concrete measures related to wetland protection, e.g. preservation of part of meanders of the Nitra and Handlovka old river bed to feed the originating wetland by water, restoration of former streams and current periodical flows Metrbos and Ťakov. The objectives of proposed measures are mitigation of the negative impact of natural and anthropogenic surrounding on wetlands, enhancement of the ecological stability of the territory and monitoring of surface water quality. Additional project objective is a positive impact of newly originated wetlands on hydrological regime in relation to climate change and water retention in landscape. Moreover, the project shall raise the public awareness and education concerning wetlands importance.

The project was submitted within the financing mechanism LIFE in 2013. Unfortunately, it was not evaluated further due to not fitting the LIFE programme innovativeness criteria. The project asked for the technical assistance for 3 reasons – the first one is that the participation of foreign partners is necessary (so far there are only national partners found); the second one is the need to find a proper financial mechanism from which the project will be funded and the last one is designing the proper methodology fitting to selected financial mechanism.

The project was approved by SG members to get Letter of Support for 2nd call PA10 TAF-DR.

Serbia also indicated that is aware about a project idea which would like to apply for the support of the TAF-DRP.

The criteria is to select is quite open as MS ARG stressed. The projects should be feasible and the applicant should have high commitment to common implementation. The main question is now the timing. It would be better to have the project applications prior to the meeting and to be strict with the deadline. We should take it more serious. The SG is here to approve the project application – Ms Repullo-Grau highlighted.

Austria agreed that applicants must be more strict with the deadline but it was suggested that this time as an exceptional case the SG should agree to allow the projects to be submitted.

*Related tasks and conclusions:*

* *SG should be continuously informed about the new projects*
* *Serbian project on the ‘Remediation of polluted groundwater in the Danube river flow in Serbia’ was supported by the Steering Group to further submit to PA10 – TAF DRP.*
* *Slovakian project “Utilization of the Unique Wetlands in Undermined Area Nováky – Koš”**was supported by the Steering Group to further submit to PA10 – TAF DRP.*

Joint approach towards the harmonisation of the actions of EUSDR priority areas fourth and fifth and ICPDR relevant activities

Ms Kocsis-Kupper invited Mr Balázs Medgyesy and Mr Ivan Zavadsky to introduce the issue.

Balázs Medgyesy stressed that since the last year more stronger link is established between ICPDR and EUSDR activities and PA4 also further investigate on what kind of common activities can be developed.

The evolving and broadening scope of river basin management and the new opportunities provided by the implementation of the legal provision as well as the successive financial periods give great potential for cooperation and for a mutual support of the EUSDR and the ICPDR in relevant fields. These potentials were has not fully utilised yet, in order to exploit all the potential added value for Danube countries and their citizens.

The aim is to have a structured overview how to operate together and to explore the potential extension of this elements. The HODs of the ICPDR agreed in November 2013 to prepare a joint document, where the particular mandates, responsibilities, tasks and modus operandi between ICPDR and PA4/PA5 are clarified.

Mr Zavadsky stressed that the process is ongoing and a draft paper has been drafted by Commissioner Medgyesy and a certain view of this joint document was put together as well and sent to the HODs. Due to the timing out of the fourteen countries ten countries sent their feedback and the next step is to get this procedure streamlined.

ICPDR PS invited NCPs to sit together and further discuss on this issue and provide a consolidate draft.

Ms Kocsis-Kupper thanked for the overview on this issue.

Next meeting and any other business

Ms Vranovska indicated that the next meeting is intended to be organised in Bratislava on October 2014, but slight changes can occur.

In summary it was agreed that all documents will be uploaded to the website. It was also requested that the idea to having the PA4 and PA5 back to back organised is a good idea and also to follow to upload official documents to the website prior to the meeting (one week at least).

Annexes

**Annex 1**: List of Participants

**Annex 2**: Approved Agenda

**Annex 3**: Water Quality Early Warning System on Transboundary Watercourses of Tisza River Basin – Zsófia Kovács, Pannon University

**Annex 4:** Emerging microbial risks – Tisza river longitudinal analysis Márta Vargha

National Institute for Environmental Health Department of Water Hygiene

**Annex 5**: Participation options in the JRC Scientific Support to the Danube Region Strategy – Danube Water Nexus – János Fehér, GWP CEE Danube Strategy Task Force Leader

**Annex 6:** Remediation Of Polluted Groundwater In The Danube River Flow In Serbia

**Annex 7:** Presentation of the case studies related to Action 5 and Action 7

**Annex 8:** OP programming presentations of Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper and Balázs Medgyesy, Government Commissioner

1. More detailed information is available int he document of *’ Consolidated OP document\_version\_sent\_April6\_PA4’.* <http://groupspaces.com/WaterQuality/pages/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. An updated version of the OP document was prepared and uploaded to the website on the 6th of April 2014 ([Consolidated OP document\_version\_sent\_April6\_PA4.docx](http://files.groupspaces.com/WaterQuality/files/1062618/JWsWQ8KNnpNxLZLFgnNt/Consolidated+OP+document_version_sent_April6_PA4.docx)). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)