

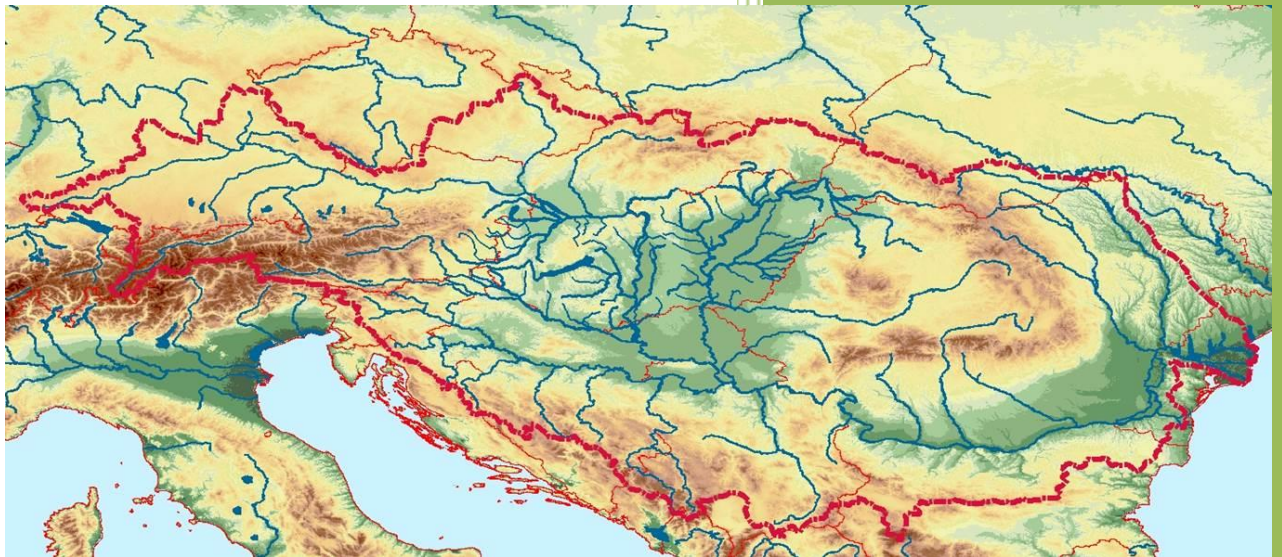
2014

FINAL REPORT

REPORTED PERIOD: FROM 01/2012 TO 12/2013

CCI N° 2011CE160AT091

EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION
IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY AREA N°4
(‘TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF WATERS’)





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1. Summary of the project

The aim of the project was to facilitate the starting phase of coordination of EUSDR Priority Area 4 “To restore and maintain the quality of waters”. The practical task was to establish a stable, effective and innovative governance system for EUSDR PA4.

The PA4 has achieved important policy results, established an active cooperative platform, identified gaps to fill, obtained related technical and scientific results and disseminated them successfully.

- It identified and initiated wide POLICY DISCUSSIONS with the main water-quality related stakeholders of policy-making at international, European and regional level;
- It identified PRIORITY TOPICS and GAPS that PA4 should further focus on to ensure comprehensive and useful water quality actions in line with the Roadmaps and also to support the actions of DG Environment in line with the Blueprint;
- It ensured INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING and cooperation with key water partners; and for the sake of institutional strengthening it set up an international expert position;
- It initiated RESEARCH and completed SURVEYS in areas of water protection (buffer zones, early warning);
- The first steps of sectorial discussions started: it IDENTIFIED MODELS AND INNOVATIVE METHODS, CREATED AN OPTIMIZATION MODEL of key priority areas of PA4 (sediments, early warning, buffer zones, drinking water, urban waste water);
- Concrete PROJECTS are being carried out in the topics of water quality monitoring and urban and rural waste water treatment systems and sediments based on the optimization models.
- For the key innovative methods identified and also for the Danube strategy concerning water quality it ENSURED HIGH VISIBILITY and dissemination at many forums (including the Water Summit and other conferences);
- It ORGANISED LARGE CONFERENCES AND STAKEHOLDER SEMINARS with more than 300 participants focusing on the Danube macro- region and water in November 2012, September 2013 and organised a conference on drinking water in December 2013;
- It FACILITATED COLLECTING EXPERIENCES on national PROGRAMMING from EUSDR members and continuously bringing the attention of stakeholders to promote that EUSDR aims should be included into national programming;
- It is continuously working on STRENGTHENED COOPERATION WITH KEY ACTORS AND PARTNERS, including the ICPDR and PA5 and for effective cooperation it prepared a SYNERGIES DOCUMENT to clearly identify the field of actions and responsibilities for PA4-PA5-ICPDR;
- It FACILITATES BRINGING INVOLVED EXPERTS TOGETHER at different working groups and organises meetings in a coordinated manner to ensure the participation of involved EU experts and provides financial support in order to ensure the participation of non EU experts as well.



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.

In the last two years the Priority Area 4 **has achieved important milestones** such as it completed the **identification of the operational steps, with targets and milestones** that were revised and accepted by the Steering Group (SG) and as a result, the **Roadmaps to the Action Plan for PA4 has been finalised** to achieve the identified goals of the Action Plan for the Strategy.

In line with the above and as a result of the work in the past years now:

- PA4 working structure is politically embedded in a way to ensure financial and human sources where mostly needed towards the realisation of the Action Plan;
- PA4 is one of the priority areas, which takes efforts toward facilitating Alignment of Funding;
- PA4 is one of the priority areas, where cooperation with international organisations (ICPDR and ISRBC) can serve – in long term – an example.
- PA4 facilitated relevant policy processes in line with the already existing policy developments to reach objectives of PA4 outlined in the Action Plan (discussion with relevant main policy actors concerning water quality including the UNECE - Helsinki Convention, DG Environment, ICPDR, Sava Commission, Danube Commission, JRC, REC, ASEM, Water boards-bilateral commissions);
 - o Steps were taken in line with the objectives of the EUSDR action plan to fill in gaps towards reaching goals outlined in the Roadmap and to set up consortiums to implement tasks and objectives of the priority area;
 - o Coordination and harmonisation of tasks/steps listed in the roadmap with relevant institutions and organisation to achieve goals indicated in the EUSDR Action Plan (e.g. ICPDR, ISRBC) has been started;
 - o PA4 explores possible financial sources and facilitates that national programming process can fit to the objectives of the EUSDR.

2. Duration of the project:

The total duration of the project was from 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2013.

3. Activities planned and conducted:

Table 1 – main events, conferences during the project period

Timetable as agreed in the Grant Agreement		Key activities conducted
Date	Activity according to the project	
30-31 January 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation on 2 nd EUSDR conference for NCPs, PACs and national coordinators in Bucharest
17 February 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation on Danube Net (DaNet) for NGOs conference on PA4 in University of Komarno, Slovakia
19-20 March 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation on World Water Day in Vienna House, Brussels invitation by EP
27 March 2012	Meeting with international organisations	PAC4 informal meeting with EIB representatives from Vienna on cooperation in funding
04 May 2012	Participation in SG meetings	PAC4 participation on 3 rd SG meeting of PA5 in Budapest
04-05 June 2012	Participation in SG meetings	3 rd SG meeting of PA4 in Bratislava
14 June 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation on Danube Net for NGOs conference on PA4 in Szarvas, Hungary
27 June 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation on 10 th ICPDR Standing Working Group meeting in Innsbruck, Austria
28 June 2012	Participation in EU events	Meeting with Com. Johannes Hahn on work progress in visiting Hungary
28 June 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation on the Danube Day in Budapest
26-28 June 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on 10 th ICPDR Standing Working Group meeting in Innsbruck, Austria
9-11 July 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on ICPDR Tisza Group meeting, Lemberg, Ukraine
18 October 2012	Networking activities	Joint Pillar B meeting on common work remained till end of 2012, INTERACT, Vienna
23-25 October 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on 36 th ICPDR River Basin Expert meeting, Cluj, Romania
05 November 2012	Steering meeting	Organising and leading of 4 th Steering Group meeting, Budapest, Hungary
06 November 2012	Networking activities	Organising the 1st Pillar B Stakeholder Seminar, Budapest, Hungary
26-29 November 2012	Participation in EUSDR events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on the 1 st EUSDR Stakeholder Forum, Regensburg, Germany

Timetable as agreed in the Grant Agreement		Key activities conducted
Date	Activity according to the project	
11-12 December	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on ICPDR 15th Ordinary meeting, Vienna, Austria
12-14 December 2012	Participation in international events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on the Danube Basin Forum organised for NGOs held in Budapest, Hungary
29 January 2013	Consultation in Brussels	PAC 4 visit and meeting in DG ENVIRO, Brussels to provide information on progress of PA 4 (To restore and maintain the quality of waters), connection to and fulfilment of environmental policies of EU at level of the EUSDR and show the contributed work with ICPDR countries
29-30 January 2013	Participation on EUSDR events	PAC 4 participation on the 1st NCP/PAC meeting in Brussels
14-15 February 2013	Participation on international events	PAC 4 participation on kick-off meeting of CC-WARE project, one of the promoted one by PA4 LoR which is fully fitted to PA 4, in Ljubljana, Slovenia
14-15 March 2013	Participation on international events	PAC4 assistant participation in ICPDR HYMO Task Group meeting on Habitat and Migration Continuity, in Vienna, Austria
21-22 March 2013	Participation on international events Networking activities	PAC4 assistant participation at JRC Scientific meeting on promoting of the EUSDR work by Different Nexuses (focusing to Danube Water Nexus) in Ispra, Italy
9 April 2013	Participation on international events	PAC4 participation and presentation providing on sub-basin action in frame of the EUSDR, at 19 th ICPDR Tisza (Sub-basin) Group meeting in Budapest, Hungary
29-30 April 2013	Participation on EUSDR events	1 st PAC Meeting on financing of projects and TA in the next MFF, in Sofia, Bulgaria
9-10 May 2013	Participation on international events	PAC4 participation and presentation on the EUSDR progress at 37 th ICPDR RBM EG meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia- Hercegovina
16 May 2013	Participation on international events, Networking activities	Pillar B participation on JRC High Level Event endorsing political and scientific commitment to the EUSDR promotion, in Bratislava, Slovakia
20-21 May 2013	Participation on EUSDR events	2nd PAC Meeting on financing of projects and TA in planned frame of the Danube Transnational Programme under discussion, in Ljubljana, Slovenia
27 May 2013	Consultation in Brussels	2 nd visit and PAC 4 and PAC 5 participation at DG ENVIRO to show progress
29 May 2013	Participation on international	Informal meeting on future of the EUSDR



Timetable as agreed in the Grant Agreement		Key activities conducted
Date	Activity according to the project	
	events	‘flagship’ project Sediment with lead partners of project at ICPDR, in Vienna, Austria
30 May 2013	Participation in EUSDR events	PAC 4 participation as Pillar B representative on 5 th PA 5 SG meeting, in Budapest, Hungary
05 June 2013	Steering Group meeting 5	Organising and leading of 5 th PA 4 SG meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia
18-19 June 2013	Participation on international events	PAC4 participation and Pillar B presentation providing in ICPDR 11 th Standing Working Group meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina
21 June 2013		PA4 participation in Stuttgart in connection to EUSDR financing
11-12 September 2013	Budapest Macro-regional Conference	The yearly Macro-regional conference was organised by PA4 with the participation of circa 300 registered participants
8-11 October 2013	Budapest Water Summit	Participation of EUSDR on the BWS
28-29 October 2013	EUSDR Annual Forum	Participation of PAC4 on the Annual Forum
3 December 2013	DR-TAF meeting	Participation of PAC4 on the DR – TAF meeting in Vienna, Austria
12 December 2013	Steering Group meeting 6	Organising and leading of 6 th PA 4 SG meeting in Vienna, Austria, back to back with the ICPDR OM.
16-17 December 2013	The Safeguarding of Drinking Water Supply – Challenge for the Danube Region	Participation and presentation of PA4 (NCP-HU) on the Drinking Water Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia

4. How was the action carried out?

The project has a dual governance system, for PA4 there are two countries defined by COM as coordinators, Republic of Slovakia and Hungary. As a first step the cooperation between **the two parties were clarified, the priority area coordinators were appointed in 2011.**

The next step was the **establishment of the Steering Group and its Rules of Procedures** together with all the necessary forms for the management of EUSDR tasks, actions and projects.

Based on the decision of PA4 the basic operational document of EUSDR on project level is the **Letter of Recommendation**, which is issued by the Steering Group for the individual EUSDR projects. By elaborating and accepting all the basic documents the conditions for the operation of PA4 were established.

The implementation of Actions outlined in the action plan (Accompanying Action Plan of the European Commission (SEC(2010) 1489) is guided by the roadmaps, which were made and revised at the 3rd and 4th Steering Group meetings of PA4. Between 2011 and 2013, PA4 **agreed on the Roadmap** to implement Action Plan outlined for PA4. Actions, milestones, deliverables and related

projects have been identified and implementation of the roadmap has been started. The operational steps towards developing the roadmap followed the below concept:

1. Organization of three Steering Group meetings, discussion about the draft roadmaps;
2. Approval of Targets of PA4 in line with actions outlined in the action plan;
3. Assignment of the 14 Actions towards fulfilling the Targets;
4. Definition of Highlighted Target;
5. Breaking down of EUSDR PA4 Actions to operational steps;
6. Approval of 13 project proposals (8+5 in two steps) and linking them to the relevant actions.

The SG of PA4 **has been operating as foreseen**: it meets at least twice a year. The participation of the SG members was improving as a result that part of the current Technical Assistance budget is dedicated to the travel and accommodation costs of SG members from non-EU countries to ensure participation. At the last SG meeting 13 countries were present.

Cooperation between PA4 and relevant institutions such as ICPDR and Sava Commission are crucial, as was stressed by the steering group members. An agreement was made in the frame of the 6th Steering Group meeting to prepare a joint document, where the particular mandates, responsibilities, tasks and modus operandi between ICPDR and PA4/PA5 would be clarified. The National Contact Points and Priority Area Coordinators agreed to channel their preparatory activities and drafting would start following to the meeting of high level representatives and PACs on PA4 and PA5 coordinator countries in the margin of the EU SDR Annual Forum in Bucharest, 2013 via this common pipeline together with ICPDR.

During the project period PA4 **facilitated relevant policy processes** in line with the already existing policy developments to reach objectives of PA4 outlined in the Action Plan. Discussion and meetings have been organised with relevant main policy actors concerning water quality including the UNECE - Helsinki Convention, DG Environment, ICPDR, Sava Commission, Danube Commission, JRC, REC, ASEM, Water boards-bilateral commissions.

PA4 is one of the priority areas where special emphasis has been taken on the process of **alignment of funding**. It was facilitated in the frame of the SG6 meeting to discuss on the needs of the countries related to financing as well as on the possible roles of the EUSDR PA4 to ensure financial sources to the implementation of action plan between the 2014-2020 financing periods. As the outcomes of the 6th Steering Group meeting and based on the countries input a document was prepared on programming.

5. How has the project met the objectives of the budget heading?

According to the budget heading the TA covered personnel costs to facilitate PAC activities (PAC's assistants). The budget also covered costs of travels to facilitate cooperation between relevant institutions and to disseminate project results. Steering group meetings held in Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna were also facilitated and budgeted from TA1. More information detailed budget can be found in the financial tables (**Annex 1 and Annex 2**).

6. The transnational dimension of the project

The project has a dual governance system, two countries, Slovakia and Hungary works closely together for the success of PA4 of EUSDR.

The Danube River Basin is the most international river basin in the world covering 19 countries with its basin. The EUSDR involves 14 countries (8 out of them are EU MSs) in its process. Each priority area has to guarantee the maintenance of the transnational dimension and involving the Danube countries in its activities.

The PA4 ensures the involvement of the Danube countries via the following tools/activities:

- ✓ Steering Groups meetings;
- ✓ Cooperation with relevant organisations;
- ✓ Set up project consortiums, monitoring project results (Projects);
- ✓ Dissemination outcomes of PA4.

6.1. Steering Group meeting

During the project period six steering group meetings have been organised ensuring the involvement of the countries in the overall process and to make decisions on the necessary next steps. The Steering Group includes the representatives of the 14 countries, working on a transnational base.

6.2. Cooperation with relevant organisations, policy partners

As a fundamental need, expressed by the steering group members, PA4 started to build up cooperation between relevant international organisations acting in the related fields of the PA4 such as the ICPDR and ISRBC. As it was previously stressed discussion and meetings have been organised with relevant main policy actors concerning water quality including the UNECE - Helsinki Convention, DG Environment, ICPDR, Sava Commission, Danube Commission, JRC, REC, ASEM, Water boards-bilateral commissions. These discussions are currently on-going and outcomes of the discussions will be detailed in the frame of the second technical assistance project.

6.3. The Directorate General Environment

The PA4 (PAC) ensures on-going discussions with DG Environment. Please refer to DG ENV and PA meeting in May 2013 where it was agreed that the EUSDR can significantly contribute to the implementation of the EU legislation on river basin management. The systematic cooperation in the future was also preliminary agreed on in order to incorporate the EUSDR strategy to the EU environmental and water policy process and also to ensure the embedding of the DG ENV’s major findings and efforts to the Danube Region Strategy process. It was agreed on that recent review on the River Basin Management and CIS carried out by the DG ENV provides substantial inputs to frame and priorities the tasks of the PA4.

As a result of the discussion process in 2013 it was stressed that the added value of PA4 would be the issue of how the Blueprint conclusions can be implemented. Regarding the Blueprint conclusions the added value of EUSDR in 2013 was the identification of key priority areas where further improvement might needed such as: buffer strips, priority substances, uniform monitoring

network, early warning systems, cooperation with services, and initiative for the UWWT, and finally to enable non- EU countries for reasonable planning for implementation and use cohesion sources. With regard the Blueprint the PA4 identified and screened the research and development options in 2013. Further on discussions were carried out with research institutes and policy experts, resulted in the macro regional conference findings (JRC, DG Environment and universities).

It was also agreed on that result of the continuous efforts of DG Environment to review the common implementation strategy (CIS) in respective Danube Region countries will also be feed into the PA4’s workflow and that areas what ICPDR also addressees is the major interfaces of EU water policy and Danube basing wide efforts. It was also agreed that in the future there will be regular interchanges of recent tasks and development.

ADDED VALUE PA4 with regards to WATER POLICY:

- **Assist to reinforce implementation of EU Directives concerning restoration and maintenance of the quality of waters in the Danube region such:** the Water Framework Directive; the Groundwater Daughter Directive, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Drinking Water Directive, the Nitrate Directive and the Habitat Directive.
- **Full spectrum inventory of the related water organisations**
- **Established cooperation with many partner organisations,**
- **Identified gaps and needs**

IMPLEMENTATION BACK UP with alignment of funding together with MS and ICPDR and as a result, the **RELATED MILESTONES and PROJECTS are identified.**

The relevance of the listed topics will be further discussed in the frame of the expert group meetings of the ICPDR and Sava Commission in 2014 and the list would be further adjusted based on the countries feedback. A feasibility study initiated by Hungarian co-financing on early warning system (A2M1p2), a survey and policy response report related to buffer strips (A5) and the policy overview on phosphates (A7) will be disclosed and discussed in the next Steering group and water quality expert groups in the spring of 2014.

6.4. The ICPDR

In 2013 PA4 strengthened cooperation with the main partners: it ensured operative collaboration with one of the key partners in water quality: the ICPDR. Please note that the ICPDR SECRETARIAT AS PERMANENT OBSERVER assumes eight action leaderships of fourteen ones of PA4 and the remained actions are shared between EUSDR countries involved and committed in PA4. The PA4 is leading the process of concluding partnership agreements and ensures the synergies of the EUSDR with the operative programmes, while the ICPDR carries out technical research and reporting activities. The ICPDR covers many water related issues above a certain scale or level. The PA4 has to deal with the complete Danube river basin, including rivers and lakes with smaller catchment, wetlands below 500 ha and waste water treatment below 10000 P.E. The activity of PA4 also includes the uncovered 90% of groundwater bodies, lakes below 100 km². PA4 also focuses on the on-line monitoring of rivers endangered by accident risk industrial sites, on the remediation of areas contaminated by hazardous chemicals. All these tasks are done by initiating and supporting



projects, matching the financial needs with proper institutions thus helping the implementation of our targets in practice.

In 2013 PA4 prepared a show case of cooperation and it ensures continuous constructive dialogue with the ICPDR. The experts of ICPDR are invited and are welcome at the Steering Groups, technical working groups and conferences; DISCUSSIONS ARE ON-GOING at expert level and management level as well. Both the executive director and the president of ICPDR was invited and participated as key speaker at the Macro-regional Conference in Budapest in 2013, similarly, experts of PA4 are participating at ICPDR events. It was agreed that the ICPDR also welcomes the experts of PA4 at its working groups; it already shared with PA4 members the dates of planned events in 2014. Consequently as a result, possible JOINT MEETINGS are envisaged and meeting dates are identified.

PA4 ensures that VIEWPOINTS of PA4 and ICPDR are harmonised prior workshops and meetings (for example prior the Annual Meeting or Steering group meetings the relevant experts discuss positions and presentations); DRAFT POSITIONS are being commented and discussed (Action Plan, Roadmaps, progress).

PA4 cooperates also in ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS: when feasible it is willing to organise SG meetings back to back with ICPDR meetings; for example the latest SG meeting was held in Vienna in December 2013 especially to be held back to back with the ICPDR Ordinary Meeting.

The Danube River Protection Convention clearly stipulates the mandate for framework for cooperation between its Contracting Parties at both technical and political level in terms of water management, water protection, flood protection and overall sustainable use of the Danube River on the territory of 14 states within the Danube River Basin. The ICPDR has also been tasked by the Danube Ministers to provide the platform for the implementation of the EU WFD and FD at basin-wide level. However, with 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 the great potential for cooperation and for a mutual support of the EUSDR and the ICPDR in relevant fields has not fully utilised yet, in order to exploit all the potential added value for Danube countries and their citizens. Therefore, the ICPDR representing the Contracting Parties to the DRPC, approached the National Contact Points of PA4 and PA5 in 2013 and agreed to prepare a joint document, where the particular mandates, responsibilities, tasks and modus operandi between ICPDR and PA4/PA5 will be clarified.

The National Contact Points and Priority Area Coordinators agreed to channel their preparatory activities and drafting would start following to the meeting of high level representatives and PACs on PA4 and PA5 coordinator countries in the margin of the EU SDR Annual Forum in Bucharest, 2013 via this common pipeline together with ICPDR. (The HEO agreed that the Executive Secretariat of ICPDR and the 3 coordinating countries (HU, RO, SK) as far as possible prepare a joint proposal about cooperation between PA4-PA5 and ICPDR. ICPDR and the PAs based on a joint proposal will create a final document to be sent to DG Region, in which the demarcation will be defined. Take into account that the 3 PA countries agreed to this procedure, the document will be disclosed to other parties after its text is finalised.)

Furthermore, the ICPDR Heads of Delegations discussed about the cooperation between the EUSDR and ICPDR in November 2013 in a frame of a workshop. The ICPDR HoDs agreed in a step-by step procedure to be followed. The ICPDR HoDs agreed that a letter should be sent to Commissioner Hahn about the intention of the joint cooperation. It was also requested to develop a joint document between the ICPDR and EUSDR PA4 and PA5, clarifying the respective roles and expectations towards generating maximum synergy. The SG members at the SG meeting in Vienna on 12 December agreed with the above proposal. Due to these efforts and the initiative of the

Commissioner an even more punctual and comprehensive documentation is being prepared on the cooperation with ICPDR in addition to the best practices paper already issued in the spring of 2013.

In line with the above procedure, for PA4, PA5, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the ICPDR currently prepares a DEMARCATION DOCUMENT that identifies the roles of the above partners and makes clear division of responsibilities and actions to be held jointly for the sake of effective cooperation for the two water related priority areas. The draft document once primarily agreed with the partners will be disclosed for the Steering Group members and will be submitted to the European Commission in 2014.

6.5. The Sava Commission

The Sava Commission is also an important partner of PA4: as it is responsible for two sub- actions and four milestones of the PA4 Roadmaps: A2M8 (Implementation of the Sava River Basin Management Plan), A2M9 (Update of the Sava River Basin Analysis) and A2M10 (Development of the 2nd Sava River Basin Management Plan), also responsible for A3M5 (Establishment and completion of the SavaGIS). The members of the Sava Commission are always invited and actively participate at the SG meetings of PA4 and proactively involved in technical workshops, conferences to share their useful and effective experience and operation with PA4 experts. PA4 (similarly to the cooperation with ICPDR) asks the opinion of the Sava Commission on PA4 related progress and roadmaps. It was agreed at the 6th SG meeting in December that draft reports of PA4 will also be circulated with the Sava Commission in the future as well and the useful experience of the Sava Commission regarding priority programming will be used.

6.6. The JRC

The Joint Research Centre as a key initiator of fact and science based policy support to the macro-regional water policy. To integrate the new water nexus being established by the JRC into the framework in to PA4 of EUSDR the PA4 already invited the water nexus leaders to the SG in June 2013 to provide an overview and to discuss the nexus. PAC noted with appreciation the high interest from scientific institutions to take part within the water nexus and participated at various meetings to foster and deeper integration of research and science activities towards the implementation of PA4 actions in the Action plan. There are some good examples already of macro regional co-operations established between research institutions to join forces with the JRC and to broaden the research to support the EUSDR. The PAC looks forward receiving similar good examples of cooperation in all SG countries. It would be timely to reflect to this process in the upcoming SG meeting in 2014 and we look forward discussing it with JRC experts in the spring of 2014.

The cooperation with JRC resulted in initiating the macro regional conference in Budapest in September 2013. The JRC gave a presentation on the Multi-criteria hydro-economic optimisation of water resources in Europe to support the EU Blueprint to safeguard Europe’s waters and the Danube Strategy and a JRC expert also participated at the 5th SG meeting in Bratislava where the JRC study on challenges and solutions related water demand and supply was introduced as well. The aim of the study is to stimulate EU countries to increase the efficiency of water use by 2020/2030 and as such, there is joint interest in cooperation. PA4 will continue cooperate with the JRC experts and will continue inviting them at PA4 related events and continue discussions.

7. Institutional Development

A new international expert position on watershed-planning in the framework of the EU SDR PA4, at the National Institute for Environment at the beginning of October 2013 has been established. The main objective was to carry out the task of Action 2 to greatly enhance sub-basin wide cooperation by ensuring follow-up activities of the ICPDR Tisza Group work and to provide continuation of the cooperation of the effected countries of the Tisza River.

8. Set up project consortiums, monitoring project results (Projects)

In line with the rules of procedure agreed by the steering group members, projects, linked to the actions of PA4 are receiving Letter of Recommendations. These projects have transboundary relevance usually involving two or more countries in their activities. The project activities are mainly related to a certain geographical area of the basin and focuses on one or more countries but not always for the whole basin.

The main activities facilitated by PA4 to implement actions outlined in the Roadmap and based on the relevant scientific methods introduced in the frame of the macro-regional conference in 2013 are the following:

- Facilitating the implementation of the Danube River Basin Management Plan;
- Study development related to the situation on buffer zones and on management of solid waste;
- Study development related to issues water quality monitoring – early warning (Feasibility study on early warning water quality monitoring);
- Facilitating issues on small rural settlements, alternative waste water treatment possibilities for small settlements;
- Facilitating set up consortium to resolve Sediment issues;
- Urban Waste Water Treatment.

8.1. Implementation of the Danube River Basin Management Plan

Action 1 of the Roadmap, aiming at to fully implement the Danube River Basin Management Plan toward reaching good status of the waters of the DRB. The ICPDR coordinates the overall implementation of the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP).

To support the implementation and the alignment of funding of the Joint Program of Measures of 1st DRBMP and to facilitate the 2nd DRBMP the PACs mobilized SG members and Danube countries to take active part in the programming process regarding 2014-2020 (http://www.southeast-europe.net/en/about_see/danubeprogramme/). It also became evident during the last period that most of the countries weren't really active in EUSDR related programming and this is an area where more efforts are to be provided. There are initiatives on behalf of Ukraine for the participation in the classification and qualification of waters according to the EU WFD requirements and for the capacity building and cooperation in this specific field.

8.2. 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 research reports will be circulated and discussed in the SG and relevant working groups of the ICPDR and Sava Commission. For the development of the study Hungary used national sources and for the outcomes and results on buffer zones information will be available from all countries.

8.3. Water quality monitoring

For the fulfilment of action 2 milestone 4, project 2 of the roadmap a very effective water quality model was identified by PA4 as a result of an intensive research and discussion process in 2013. A scientific model was presented to wide international audience at the macro- regional conference in September 2013. The base concept is ready for a unified early warning alert system for the territory of the Tisza river basin. This issue is very important as it affects all inhabitants in the Danube river basin and can improve water quality and thus would improve living conditions. Early warning function and effect based monitoring of water analysis are joined together comprising a cost effective integrated system which performs sampling, analysis and toxicity testing of surface waters. The selection of appropriate sampling locations is essential to characterise water bodies while reacting on industrial or other hot spots and also keeping record of water quality in country border sections. Due to the proper architecture of monitoring stations, data transmission and databases, together with a state-of-the-art communication system the international early warning function is also ensured. The modular structure of each monitoring station makes easy to react on varying analytical requirements, the frequency and speed of analysis results in quasi-continuous information about whole catchment areas. As a result of effect based monitoring only relevant samples are transported and analysed in labs resulting in decrease of running and investment cost of monitoring.

8.4. Small rural settlements, alternative waste water treatment possibilities for small 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. The effect of loads caused by untreated waste water on water quality is a significant issue. There is a wide scale spectrum of the natural technologies already exists for small settlements to solve waste water treatment related challenges. In line with the economical and ecological characteristics of the settlements a model should be adjusted to the characteristics to optimize this characteristics and needs. In the frame of the Macro-regional conference, organised in September 2013, the main cornerstones of the model has been outlined. The core idea of PA4 is a multi-criteria evaluation method with all the small scale water treatment equipment on one side, and a large number of ambient and social and economy parameter

on the other side. With the multi-criteria evaluation method joined with GIS ambient and social database the most suitable small scale waste water treatment equipment can be determined.

A small settlement waste water treatment optimizations system was identified as a result of the cooperation with the Budapest Technical University (BME) for the integrated solutions for wastewater treatment in small settlements and rural areas in line with action 5 milestone 4 of the roadmap of PA4.

As a next step a survey of the situation on alternative collection and treatment wastewater in small rural settlements (A5M4) should be initiated and a pilot program should be outlined (A5M5) to offer and promote best practices in WWT for small settlements.

8.5. Sediment issues and consequences in the Danube river

An international consortium was set up that brings together all Danube countries and that is able to provide a tool to preliminary assess hydrological monitoring and to serve needs of water use. The project was not funded yet, but as a result of joint efforts several social partners achieved a common understanding (including DG MOVE, navigational sector and other field representatives) to work on this issue together. PA4 had significant role in initiating the project and to facilitate the preparation of the project proposal. Colleagues of the ICPDR also played an important role in this initiative and also indicated that they are open to further discussions. PA4 launched negotiations in the frame of 2014-2020 Program in terms of outlining proper financing mix of the EU Structural and Investment Funds, the connected Europe Facility and the Horizon 2020. According to the information available all these sources can provide useful contribution to various elements of the project.

The sediment project identified by the Danube Countries focuses on the Danube bed situation and its problems. The relevance of the project started decades ago, but only slow and little steps were made towards a better knowledge of the real effects caused of human interventions into the nature. The proposed project deals with the effects of the hydropower plants (78 barriers along the Danube), the works of flood protection (causing a loss of the 80% of the original floodplain area) and the navigation (2411 km navigable waterway), river bed degradation (2 cm/year) in the upper and also the middle Danube. This project was also presented to wide international audience at the macro-regional conference in September 2013 and meets the objective outlined in the roadmap action 10 milestone 4 project. The base concept is ready for the establishment of adequate hydraulic laboratories, computer based simulations, but also field study sites for model calibration and validation are selected. With the project planning the building of cooperation between research institutions along the Danube River has already started.

8.6. Urban Waste Water Treatment

A workshop was organised in April 2013 focusing on the topics of action 4 milestone 1 and 2 to discuss progress achieved in the implementation of the Joint Program of Measures from the 1st Danube River Basin Management Plan, to learn about funding needs and potential funding instruments for actions, supported by presentations on practical examples for financing measures. A key element of the Joint Program of Measures is the extension of urban wastewater treatment, which was specifically addressed in the frame of the workshop.

Hungary recommended providing further funding for this task under the Danube Transnational Programme. The PA4 initiated contacts with the related waste water treatment services to establish working groups and preceded developing project ideas. It is also important to note that for the preparation of the financial plan

for the implementation programme on the update for the UWWT indicated in action 4 the updated ICPDR database on UWWTPs are needed to be finalised. Actions between ICPDR and PA4 should be harmonised in time. The action should be further discussed also in the frame of the relevant ICPDR EGs.

9. Dissemination outcomes of PA4

PACs have distributed the main objectives and progress achieved during the project period in the frame of international events, like conferences, workshops, seminars.

To be able to **disseminate the outcomes** of PA4 and inform stakeholders interested in the process the following main steps have been done:

- Establishing and keeping up to date a website with access to the broad public (<http://groupspaces.com/WaterQuality/>);
- Establishing a project database and proper input forms;
- Communicating the activities and projects of PA4 to stakeholders and to the public;
- Organisation of the first Stakeholder Seminar together with the other two Pillar B Priority Areas (PA5 and PA6);
- Participation in the first EUSDR Stakeholder Forum, in Regensburg;
- Organisation of the second Stakeholder Seminar (Macro-Regional Conference) together with the other two Pillar B Priority Areas (PA5 and PA6);
- Participation in the second EUSDR Stakeholder Forum, in Bucharest;
- Participation on the ICPDR Standing Working Group meetings and Ordinary meetings to sharing information with the relevant organisations;
- Presenting results and main objectives of EUSDR PA4 in the frame of relevant conferences, workshops, etc.;
- Preparing an interim report for COM.

10. What contribution was made by the partners?

Our main partner is the co-PAC of EUSDR PA4, Slovakia. The cooperation was free of any problems. The practical organisation of SG meetings was done by the hosting PAC. The documents of SGs were drafted by one of the partners (SK or HU), then through some refinement steps, on a consensus base the final and agreed documents were made. So the contribution of our partner was either the preparation of drafts or giving opinion on our drafts. The SG meetings were held on a rotating base in Bratislava and Budapest and one time in Vienna to be back to back with the ICPDR. The decision on the venue and help on accommodation, etc. was done by the host; the documents for the SG meeting were prepared mutually.

There were other partners as well such as strategic partner ICPDR, WWF, IAD and JRC as a new partner and scientific promoter and contributor in implementation process since declaration of deputy general director made on 1st Annual Stakeholder Forum in Regensburg on 27-28 November 2012.

The main documents, prepared by P4 are the following:

- ✓ Document on the rules of procedure (final);
- ✓ Roadmaps, drafted by PACs to be further discussed and be approved by the SG members in the frame of the SG meetings (agreed);
- ✓ Best practice document on the cooperation with ICPDR (submitted to DG Regional Policy and Dg Environment)
- ✓ Blueprint inventory(submitted to DG Regional Policy and Dg Environment)
- ✓ Macro-regional conference paper
- ✓ Synergies document between EUSDR and the ICPDR (draft);
- ✓ Document on the Alignment of Funding
- ✓ Technical reports: Facilitating the development of case studies and report towards reaching goals of agreed actions: 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” and Action 7: “To legislate at the appropriate level to limit the presence of phosphates in detergents”.

11. Auto-evaluation so far

- *Successes:*
 - A well established and well managed operational structure;
 - 14 labelled EUSDR project proposals;
 - Website with access to the broad public updated continuously;
 - Approval of 14 project proposal and supply with LoR;
 - Action breakdowns into operational steps;

- *Weaknesses:*
 - Mobilisation of a part of Danube countries, especially the non EU members.

12. Concrete outputs

- Organization of six SG meetings;
- Approval of Targets of PA4;
- Assignment of the 14 Actions to the Targets;
- Definition of Highlighted Target;
- Labelling of 12 project proposals (8+1+3 in three steps) with LoR and two with LoM;
- An up to date website with access to the broad public;
- A project database and proper input forms;
- Identified gaps with the Blueprint options: discussion with DG Env. and Water Directors and integration of relevant EC documents in the PA4 process

- Strengthened institutional framework: new colleagues contracted, regular cooperation with ICPDR and DG ENV
- First steps in sectorial discussion in the frame of the Macro-regional Conference
- Wide dissemination activities
- EUSDR aims included in national OPs in some countries
- Breakdown of EUSDR PA4 Actions to operational steps;
- Communications of the activities and projects of PA4 to stakeholders and to the public;
- Organisation of Stakeholder Seminars together with PA5 and PA6;
- Participation in the EUSDR Stakeholder Forums;
- Interim report for COM;
- Organisation of Macro-Regional Conferences
- Contribution to the programming of Operational Programmes;
- Contribution to the establishment of Partnership Agreement;
- Contribution to the preparation of ETC Danube Programme;
- Steps towards harmonising work between relevant organisations (synergies procedure);
- Participation in JRC Danube Water Nexus Cluster;
- Development of case study on early warning system;
- Development of case studies related to the issues on buffer zone, solid waste and waste water treatment solutions.

13. How was the action publicized and how have the results been disseminated?

As Table 1 shows, PA4 and related PAC’ teams have been participated on and/or organised several meetings, conferences. One of the important platforms to disseminate results were the stakeholder seminars where relevant organisations, institutions, stakeholders came together and shared their knowledge and information about relevant issues (policy processes, research options towards best practices, etc.) A website was also set-up to share outcomes of the steering group meetings as well as to publish other relevant information about PA4. The main activities of the PA4 were introduced in the frame of the ICPDR yearly meetings (Standing Working Group meetings and Heads of Delegation meetings.)

13.1. What lessons have been learnt from this experience?

From management point of view the following main lessons learnt can be summarised:

- To be able to manage such a wide scale priority area and related activities, both technically and internationally experienced team is required.
- Steering groups are suitable platforms to share progress of the activities between the Danube countries and for decision making, however preparation for the steering group meetings will need more time in the future taking into account the wide scale of activities of PA4.
- There is a clear need to strengthen cooperation between PA4 and relevant institutions such as ICPDR and ISRBC and there is a strong intention from both parties (PA4, ICPDR and ISRBC) to do so.
- Countries involvement in the overall process should be further strengthened and there is a strong need to better mobilise the least active countries, through diplomatic bodies.

From professional point of view the following main lessons learnt can be summarised:

PA4 is one of the priority areas with the widest scale of actions. Roadmaps were agreed to reach objectives outlined in the action plan. As an important next step actions related milestones, projects has to be further specified to be able to follow-up on the progress of the implementation of the action plan on a more precise manner.

- Projects can give significant input to the actions and can serve as a pilot activities or good samples relevant in basin wide scale.

From policy and financing point of view the following main lessons learnt can be summarised:

- Letter of Recommendations and Letter of Merits can serve as an important tool to support EUSDR PA4 related projects, however it is crucial to consider / take into account these tools in the decision making process during the distribution of the related financial funds.
- PA4 has collected information related to the state of play of the operational programming in the Danube countries to summarise how the EUSDR related activities are considered within the next financing period (2014-2020). It can be concluded that it is crucial to guarantee on national level the implementation of the WFD and in transboundary scale to ensure funds and support (labelled) projects with PA4 priorities to reach objectives set in the EUSDR action plan.

From dissemination point of view the following main lessons learnt can be summarised:

- Based on the outcomes and experiences of the PACs there is a high interest towards the EUSDR and PA4 related activities, and there is a clear need to further strengthen dissemination activities in the future, such as presentations in relevant forums, platforms or publication of articles in relevant magazines or preparation of brochures.

14. Are there any plans to improve the implementation and if so, how?

As it is indicated in the previous section (lessons learnt) there are specific fields of activities which should be further strengthened to enable better cooperation within PA4 and which could help in the improvement of the implementation process such as:

- ✓ Strengthening cooperation between PA4 and relevant organisation (ICPDR, ISRBC), development of synergies document;
- ✓ Mobilise the least active countries, through diplomatic bodies;
- ✓ Strengthening dissemination activities.

In the upcoming few months the PA4 will accelerate work with regards especially to **Programming OPs** and after the 6thSG meeting in December 2013 will have a completed recommendation for assisting MS to incorporate EUSDR aims into their national programming procedures. (The Programming Document was adopted in June 2014) PA4 will complete **finalising the surveys** and recommendations related to buffer zones and hotspots update.

The PA4 will accelerate efforts to **strengthen cooperation and identify new partners** with non-members states, such as in the frame of twinning programmes with Moldova and Ukraine. In the frame of the International Development Cooperative Framework (NEFE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs finances experts from the Danube countries to facilitate cooperation of PA activities. In 2013 experts from Baden-Württemberg and Ukraine have been invited to facilitate transboundary cooperation in connection to the PA activities and additional experts will arrive from Moldova. Discussions have already been started with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia on possible future co-operations. The NEFE main objective is to strengthen PA activities especially with the support of the Non-EU countries. (This support covers among others travel costs, consultancy/expert fees).

Next steps concerning programming are to repeatedly call SG members and representatives of EUSDR countries to participate in programming at national level; to include EUSDR targets into OPs and to approach PACs, SG members with project ideas.

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2. Consolidated budget table for Hungary and Slovakia
3. Rules of Procedure PA4 adopted
4.
 - 4.1. PA4 Roadmaps to Implement the Action Plan: description of actions as of SG4
 - 4.2. PA4 Roadmaps to Implement the Action Plan: status, progress as of December 2013
5. PA4 List of projects obtained LoRs and LoMs between 2011-2013
6. Minutes of Steering Group Meetings (SG 1-6)
7. Summary of the macro-regional conference
8. Feasibility study on early warning water quality monitoring
9. Study on buffer zones
10. Study on management of solid waste in small rural settlements
11. Study on small rural settlements, alternative waste water treatment possibilities for small settlements
12. Situation toward legislate at the appropriate level to limit the presence of phosphates in detergents
13. PA4 Leaflet
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15. Photos of PA4 events