**Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Workshop**

**“New experience in implementation of Article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the Danube Region”**

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) Priority Area 4 and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) jointly organised the workshop “New experience in implementation of Article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the Danube Region” on 12 September 2018 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The workshop provided a platform to discuss experience and challenges with the implementation of Article 4(7) WFD in EU Member States of the Danube River Basin. Taking into account results of Workshop discussions, conclusions and recommendations were drawn in order to further support the practical knowledge and application of Article 4(7) WFD:

Workshop participants have positively acquired information about the JASPERS checklist tool to support Article 4(7) WFD implementation on national level, interlinked with guidance provided in CIS Guidance Document No. 36 on “Exemptions to the Environmental Objectives according to Article 4(7) Water Framework Directive (WFD)”.

* The European Commission, DG ENV, is kindly asked to maintain cooperation with individual EU Member States to optimize the assessment process of applying exemptions from the environmental objectives according to Article 4(7) WFD for new infrastructural projects and human activities.
* It is recommended to use synergies in the implementation of relevant EU Directives in the field of environmental protection (including Habitats Directive, EIA and SEA Directives, Floods Directive and Renewable Energy Directive), based on already available national expertise on assessment procedures in order to reduce the administrative burden for EU Member States at national level.
* According to the precautionary principle an Article 4(7) Test is recommended, if the Applicability Assessment results are uncertain.
* The Applicability Assessment considering all relevant and potentially affected quality elements is a main part of the procedure; therefore detailed data and hydromorphologically sensitive biological assessment methods are fundamental
* Quantification of potential effects is a general challenge; scenarios are useful as practical way for approximations
* Profound methodologies (e.g. on national level) are crucial for comparable results and (economical) planning security.
* To support the practical application of the Guidance document a workshop addressing inter alia the issue of maintenance should be organised
* It is considered a good practice to discuss project ideas and involve all interested stakeholders to the permitting procedures as early as possible in order to avoid unnecessary investments and burden on authorities as well as later conflicts.
* It is recommended to exchange experience at European, Danube and/or national level regarding
  + the term „overriding public interest“ to be used in the permitting process,
  + typical project types and their impacts as well as
  + how to evaluate cumulative effects.
* A regular exchange of information to promote uniform law enforcement by training the project designers, EIA authors and authorities (knowledge transfer, guidance, checklists publicly available) should be fosteredat national level.