

Minutes of the 19th Steering Group Meeting EUSDR, PA4 - To restore and maintain the quality of waters

DATE: 26 May 2020

VENUE: Water Research Institute, Bratislava, Slovak Republic – *meeting was organized online by the ZOOM application, zoom meeting room was provided via DSP*

Main objectives of the meeting were:

1. To present the information by the European Commission and the Danube Strategy Point
2. To discuss the recent activities and events related to PA4 and give information on the planned events including the projects submitted within the 3rd DTP call
3. To discuss the revised PA4 Action Plan, second SMF call and the EUSDR embedding exercise
4. To inform the participants about the activities within EUSDR PA5, ICPDR, ISRBC, Carpathian Convention and the Global Water Partnership
5. To inform the participants upcoming calls for project financing – alignment of funding

The meeting was attended by the SG members of the following Danube countries: CZ, HU, AT, DE, SK, HR, RO, MD and by the representatives of the European Commission, ICPDR, ISRBC, DSP, CC, GWP and the PA 5 (the detailed list of participants is attached).

The meeting was moderated by PAC SK Assistant Ms Andrea Vranovská.

AGENDA

- 10:00 – 10:05 Welcome by NC SK, PAC4 SK and PAC4 HU
- 10:05 – 10:20 COVID 19 in Danube countries – Tour de table
- 10:20 – 10:35 Information by the European Commission about the EUSDR Action Plan and the Embedding Process (Mr. Johan Magnusson)
- 10:35 – 10:40 PA4 Action Plan as adopted Staff Working Document (PA4 HU)
- 10:40 – 10:45 Information on state of play PAC4 DTP 2 project proposal and upcoming events (PA4 HU - SK)
- 10:45 – 10:55 Information on Embedding Exercise and on Seed Money Facility 2 (PA4 HU)
- 10:55 – 11:05 Questions & Answers
- 11:05 – 11:20 Break
- 11:20 – 11:30 Information on ICPDR activities and future plans (ICPDR secretariat)
- 11:30 – 11:35 Information on ISRBC activities and future plans (ISRBC)
- 11:35 – 11:40 Danube Strategy Point presentation (DSP)
- 11:40 – 11:45 Carpathian Convention activities and future plans (CC)
- 11:45 – 11:50 Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe activities and future plans (GWP-CEE)
- 11:50 – 12:00 Questions & Answers
- 12:00 – 12:15 Break
- 12:15 – 12:25 Information on PA5 activities (Mr. László Balatonyi)
- 12:25 – 12:35 Information on the alignment of funding (PA 4HU)
- 12:35 – 12:50 PA4 related projects:
- Danube Floodplain (Mr. Razvan Bogzianu), MEASURES (Mr. Ladislav Pekarik)
 - DEEPWATER (PA 4 SK)
- 12:50 – 13:00 Questions & Answers
- 13:00 – 13:05 Miscellaneous
- 13:05 – 13:10 Closing session (PAC4 SK, PAC4 HU)

Ms Andrea Vranovska (PA4 SK team) opened the meeting and **Ms Mihaela Florea (DSP)** gave some useful technical information about the online transmission and ZOOM tool operation.

Mr Michal Blaško (NC SK) thanked the organizers and said a couple of words about the new programming period preparation. He informed that on 25 May 2020 there was online NC meeting organized where the main topic was embedding process discussion. He stressed that the support of macro-regional strategies has been rooted in the European Union regulations, the question still remains to what extent. The document should be ready by mid-June 2020.

Mr Vladimír Novák (PAC 4 SK) and **Mr Balázs Horváth (PAC 4 HU)** warmly welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda of the meeting. They expressed the hope for smooth cooperation, large number of projects, rich macro-regional support, mutual cooperation between countries and stakeholders. They stressed the importance of water, new Action Plan, new embedding procedure and the new multi-financial framework.

Tour de table followed where every Danube country presented the current situation related to COVID-19. **Slovakia** (Ms Danka Thalmeinerova) informed that home office was fully employed from mid of March till mid of May 2020. Slovakia focuses on expert group meetings, reporting and the climate change. There is a new government in the country. **Germany** (Mr Klaus Arzet) said that their situation is similar like in Slovakia, some colleagues are on home office and some are working normally and the conferences are being made online. **Austria** (Mr Konrad Stania) informed about the difficult time for everybody, everything should be restarted and started again to catch up time. **Czech Republic** (Ms Adela Jirickova) informed that at the Ministry of Environment CZ there was home office and they were working online through video conferences and they are back in the offices now. **Croatia** (Ms Marija Pinter) said that there had been an earthquake in Croatia 2 days before they all were sent home, they were working from home. The earthquake caused much damage and COVID 19 was nothing compared to that. The historical centre of Zagreb was affected. Now they are back at work. Croatia is soon going to have the elections and many changes are expected. **Romania** (Mr Mihail Costache) informed that during this uncomfortable period works did not stop but slowed down. They worked from home and they had online meeting, everything was virtual and now they are trying to recover the losses. **Hungary** (Mr Balázs Horváth) said that the situation in Hungary is getting much better, they are still on home office but in the mid of June they will go to work. He attended webinars about COVID-19 effect on water. Based on the conclusions SARS-CoV 2 (from limited data) is sensitive to disinfectants and high temperatures; it is expected that the new coronavirus would be less abundant as an infectious virus in sewage than known enteric viruses and less stable in currently applied water treatments in WWTP or DWTP; drinking water systems are safe; SARS-CoV-2 is not an important waterborne pathogen, the risk of transmission via sewage is considered low and current protective measures for these workers are safe. Besides the problems the virus situation provides an opportunity to raise awareness among decision makers about the importance of clean water.

Mr Johan Magnusson (EC, DG Regio) had a presentation about the state of play in relation to the Embedding Exercise and the Action Plan. EUSDR Action Plan is ready as the SWD (Staff Working Document), basis for the DS work. The process how to embed the macro-regional strategies into financial mechanisms has already started. All countries are involved into the process. Steering Group members should get in contact with their National Coordinators to make sure what countries want to be reflected in the strategy.

Mr Balazs Horvath (PAC4 HU) informed about the Action Plan and the Embedding Exercise. New Action Plan is now adopted, it was published on 6 April 2020, and general objective stays the same. He presented the changes in the PA 4 Action Plan made by the European Commission. Regarding the embedding procedure, PA 4 identified 3 Actions from the AP which were included in the shortlist of topics, they are the following: hazardous and emerging substances – waste water; climate change and water and agriculture. On 4 May 2020 they were sent to the Danube Strategy Point. National Coordinators in agreement with the PACs will approve the shortlist of strategic topics. NCs are asked to convene meetings in their countries as soon as possible with the managing authorities responsible for the strategic planning and programming of the ESI/IPA/NDICI funds and other relevant stakeholders. Raising awareness on national level is expected.

Ms Alena Kurecova (PA4 SK team) and **Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper (PA4 HU team)** presented the information about PA 4 activities since the last SG meeting, events in 2019 and planned events for the year 2020. Mr Balazs Horvath complemented the information about the projects of the 3rd DTP call, all PA 4 related projects Danube Hazard, Tidy Up and IDES were accepted for financing, condition clearing is on-going. There is not new information about the SMF call (Seed Money Facility).

Ms Edith Hoedl (ICPDR) offered the following information:

Danube River Basin Management Plan Update 2021: Draft version 3 of the DRBMP Update 2021 includes the first full draft of the DRBMP Update 2021 for ICPDR StWG-18 with all revised chapters as agreed in ICPDR EG and TG spring 2020 (online) meetings and RBM-51 online meeting based on written comments received. During RBM-51, the deadline of 30th June 2020 for the data collection of the DRBMP Update 2021 was reiterated.

Significant Water Management Issues (2019): Important changes with respect to the two previous DRBM Plans (2009 and 2015) are the addition of “Effects of climate change (drought, water scarcity, extreme hydrological phenomena and other impacts)” as a Significant Water Management Issue and the definition of a new sub-item “alteration of the sediment balance” under the existing Significant Water Management Issue “Hydro-morphological alterations”. The SWMI 2019 report was published for comments on the ICPDR website on 20th December 2019. The public is invited to provide comments on the document to the ICPDR Secretariat until 22nd June 2020 in written form to the postal address of the ICPDR Secretariat or by email to the dedicated email address: wfd-fd@icpdr.org. So far no comments have been received.

Navigation: The 11th Joint Statement meeting will be organised by the ISRBC, in close cooperation with the DC and ICPDR, from 16th to 17th September 2020 in Zagreb. The METEET Training Mission planned for 25th March 2020 in Bucharest had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.

Hydropower: The study on “Social and economic drivers for hydropower development in Danube countries” (drafted by Mr Jürgen Neubarth, e3 consult GmbH) was finalised in January 2020 and will serve as discussion document for the planned ICPDR Hydropower Workshop 2020. The ICPDR Workshop “Sustainable Hydropower: Progress, Solutions and Challenges” initially planned for 25th to 26th March 2020 was postponed due to the current COVID-19 situation and is now planned to take place in spring 2021.

Sturgeon issues:

WE PASS Project: Due to the current COVID-19 situation and several (field) activities being postponed to a later stage, a request for one-year project extension due to “force majeure” was sent to the EC. Relevant and substantial progress has been made in the task implementation

The 16th Standing Working Group Meeting will be organized online on 9-10 June 2020.

Mr Adam Kovacs (ICPDR) provided the following information:

Wastewater initiative: In cooperation with the World Bank and the Danube Water Program, a

short concept note has been elaborated on potential capacity building activities. The initiative aims to provide interested and committed government and utility representatives from the Danube region with the appropriate knowledge, exposure and expertise to support modernization efforts in wastewater management sector and development of optimal sector policies. The activity will, at the first stage, consist of two dedicated workshops, focusing on financial sustainability of wastewater management and rural and small scale wastewater management.

Monitoring of urban wastewater treatment plants: The ICPDR developed a short summary report on the ICPDR-SOLUTIONS wastewater effluent sampling campaign carried out in summer 2017. The report presents the site selection criteria, the sampling approaches, the analytical methods, the substance concentrations and several toxicity figures. Results are available for emerging chemicals and heavy metals based on 7-day composite samples and specific large volume samples. All measured data will be shared with the countries for further water management and scientific purposes. Moreover, the outcomes of the monitoring exercise will be compared to those of the WWTP sampling campaign organised within the JDS 4 once its results are available.

Hazardous substances: The DANUBE HAZARD project proposal was submitted to the second round of the 3rd call of the Danube Transnational Programme in November 2019. The project aims at focusing on monitoring, modelling and managing hazardous substances pollution, including capacity building activities. In total, 12 partners (including the ICPDR) and 13 associated partners joined the project consortium, covering the entire basin (Lead Partner: TU-Wien). According to the decision of the Danube Transnational Programme Monitoring Committee, the project proposal has been approved with conditions for funding.

Agriculture: After the ICPDR workshop on water and agriculture on 6-7 November 2019 in Budapest, a substantial number of comments was received from the countries and observers to the draft Guidance Document on Sustainable Agriculture, which were incorporated into the final draft version. Based on the Guidance Document, the ICPDR also drafted a policy paper on sustainable agriculture. This paper is a concise, highlighting version of the Guidance focusing on the key messages and principles for policy making in agriculture, in relation to water management. It should provide tangible support for policy makers by extracting and underlining the most relevant issues for sustainable nutrient and drought management. In summer and autumn 2020, both documents will be consulted with the agricultural sector.

Accident prevention: The APC EG continued its work on the harmonization and completion of the basin-wide inventory on the Accident Hazard Sites (AHS) and Tailings Management Facilities (TMF). Moreover, the ICPDR also supports capacity development related to the enhanced safety and appropriate management of TMFs in the frame of the Danube TMF Project (funded by the Advisory Assistance Programme of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety). The project develops practical tools for competent authorities and TMF operators to assess and improve TMF safety.

Mr Samo Groselj (ISRBC) had a presentation about the activities, events and future plans of the Sava Commission. He spoke about 15 years of transboundary cooperation in the field of navigation, water management and management of hazards. He mentioned the Sava River Basin Management Plan, sediment issues and the 3rd DTP call for proposal in connection with the project WACOM which was approved with conditions for co-financing. The project SHELTER was approved for financing under the EU HORIZON 2020. Public participation involves the 9th Sava Youth Parliament which was postponed until October 2020. Within the development issues he mentioned the Joint Plan of Action and Sava – Drina River Corridor integrated development programme.

Ms Mihaela Florea (DSP) presented the work of the Danube Strategy Point during Nov 2019 - May 2020. New challenges emerged during pandemic days and DSP is trying to address

them. Monitoring tool is being elaborated and expectations are that by the end of the year the document is approved. As regards the communication, the interactive movie can be found at the EUSDR webpage. Also, the elaboration of the communication strategy is ongoing as well as the work to constantly update Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in and You-Tube pages. Success stories brochures and short promotion video have been developed. First capacity building workshop was organized in Zagreb last year and the second one is planned to be organized in the upcoming future.

Ms Sabine McCallum (Carpathian Convention) had a presentation about their activities and events. She introduced the Carpathian Convention, adoption, ratification and entering into force. It is a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development and forum for dialogue among all stakeholders involved. She provided the information about institutional structure and protocols. Projects under the Carpathian Convention on climate change are the following: CARPIVIA, CarpathCC, CARPATCLIM. Then she introduced climate change actions and cooperation with European Environment Agency. Carpathian Convention also cooperates with the Danube Strategy, namely with the Priority Area 4 (Water Quality) and the Priority Area 5 (Environmental Risks). They also cooperate with the ICPDR and the Tisza Group. They are associated partner in the JoinTisza project. She introduced Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework – role and contribution of the CC lies in promoting protection and sustainable development of mountain regions. There exists the working group for climate change which is one of eight thematic intergovernmental working groups currently supporting the implementation of the CC as subsidiary bodies. It has been established in 2011 and represents the main subsidiary body to strengthen its role for mainstreaming climate change into CCs activities. Seventh meeting of this working group took place online on 15 May 2020.

Mr Konstantin Ivanov (GWP-CEE) said that GWP CEE is involved in the implementation of the FramWat project which supports the idea of using landscape features to help solving environmental problems in water bodies in a sustainable way. The final conference is taking place online on 9 June 2020. The conference main aim is to present the main outputs and results with active involvement of the relevant stakeholders and invited guests. GWP CEE has also worked together with EUSDR PA5 on the revision of the policy instruments and their potential to contribute to EU droughts and water scarcity policies. Main objective of this analysis was to make a review of relevant existing EU legal frameworks in different sectors and find out how they can contribute to “EU drought policy”. It is meant to be an addition to the Guidelines for preparation of the Drought Management Plans which introduced a seven step approach to develop a plan in the context of the EU Water Framework Directive. This analysis is aiming to identify any of other selected policies in the field of water, agriculture, climate change, energy, industry, transport, nature and biodiversity and might be complementary and supporting to management of droughts, even if those policies were not geared to primarily address droughts. This document will serve countries with background information for the integration of drought management into most relevant existing policies. Additionally, it will support the development of a separate (new) drought policy with reference to existing legal frameworks. They plan to have an official launch campaign around 17 June 2020 - Desertification and Drought Day, a United Nations observance day. GWP CEE is also developing project proposals with partners in Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan dealing with climate change mitigation (especially droughts) transferring the experience from the Danube River Basin (i.e. the DriDanube project). GWP CEE also continues its work on the Danube Floodplain project. GWP CEE have recently been informed that the DTP Tid(y) Up project proposal tackling pollution in the Danube River Basin has been approved, where they are an associate partner.

Mr Laszlo Balatonyi (PA 5 coordinator) had a presentation about their activities and events. Firstly he presented the status of the Action Plan, embedding of EUSDR into EU

Programmes. An international workshop was organized by the PA 5 Hungarian co-ordination on 27 November 2019 in Pécs. The aim of the workshop was to exchange the information about the best intervention practices and to review flood protection equipment, materials, resources and sets available in case of an emergency situation. Study on operative flood management plans was prepared. Disaster management working group was created, it concentrates on emergency response and preparedness elements of managing environmental risks being in the scope of PA 5. The first meeting will be held online and the first physical event will take place in autumn 2020. Dissemination of the results and communicating findings are done via SG meetings and organized events and by website and articles. Strategic projects are the following: SAFETISZA, DAREFFORT, Danube Floodplain, JoinTisza and Danube Sediment.

Mr Balazs Horvath (PAC 4 HU) presented the information about open calls 2020 in Horizon 2020, the framework programme for research and innovation. There is a call within environmental IT system developments with the deadline 2nd of July 2020 and aggregation – project development assistance with the deadline 10th of December 2020. Regarding H2020 Green Deal a call for proposals is expected in the summer of 2020 to allocate the remaining budget in Horizon 2020. The call is linked to the action set out in the "European Green Deal". The exact release date and topics targeted in the call are not yet known.

Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper (PA4 HU team) had a presentation about LIFE programme 2014 – 20 and the 2020 LIFE call. She explained the following issues: LIFE financing, environmental sub-programme, climate action sub-programme, priorities and budget, evaluation recommendations, geographical coverage and activities outside the European Union. Applicants can be all legal persons registered in the EU. The emphasis is put on replicability, transferability, long-term sustainability and an EU-added value of the project results. Contrary to H2020, LIFE is not focused on research, rural and regional development. In general funding rate is 55%. There are two application procedures for the 2020 call. Sub-programme Environment includes two-stage approach based on a concept note followed by a full proposal. Sub-programme Climate Action includes one-stage approach based only a full proposal. Call opening was on 2 April 2020. Climate Action is closing on 6 October 2020 and Environment first stage on 14 July 2020 and the second in February 2021.

Mr Razvan Bogzianu (project coordinator) presented updated information about the project Floodplain. The project is focused on reduction of flood risk through floodplain restoration along the Danube and its tributaries. He introduced 6 project outputs, explained delays and spoke about individual work packages.

Mr Ladislav Pekarik (project partner) presented the information about the project MEASURES. There are 12 partner institutions across the Danube Region and 12 associated strategic partners. The project objective is to enhance and protect aquatic ecological corridors for migratory fish. There are 3 specific objectives: identification and protection of habitats required by migratory fish; integration of ecological corridors in policy and management plans; securing gene pool of Danube Sturgeon and designing broodstock facilities. There are two pilot actions: investigation of known and potential migratory fish key habitats to increase the protection status of these areas; restocking of two native sturgeon species. Finally he introduced the main outputs within individual work packages.

Ms Andrea Vranovska (PA4 SK team) offered the information about the project DEEPWATER-CE update. It is focused on developing an integrated implementation framework for Managed Aquifer Recharge solutions to facilitate the protection of Central European water resources endangered by climate change and users' conflicts. The project started on 1 May 2019 and will finish on 30 April 2022. There are 7 project partners and 4 work packages. Currently the work on selection criteria for choosing potential MAR sites from hydrogeological and climatological viewpoints and on MAR types sensitivity to extreme

climate events were finished. In the near future, the pilot site investigation is planned and training sessions for stakeholders.

Miscellaneous

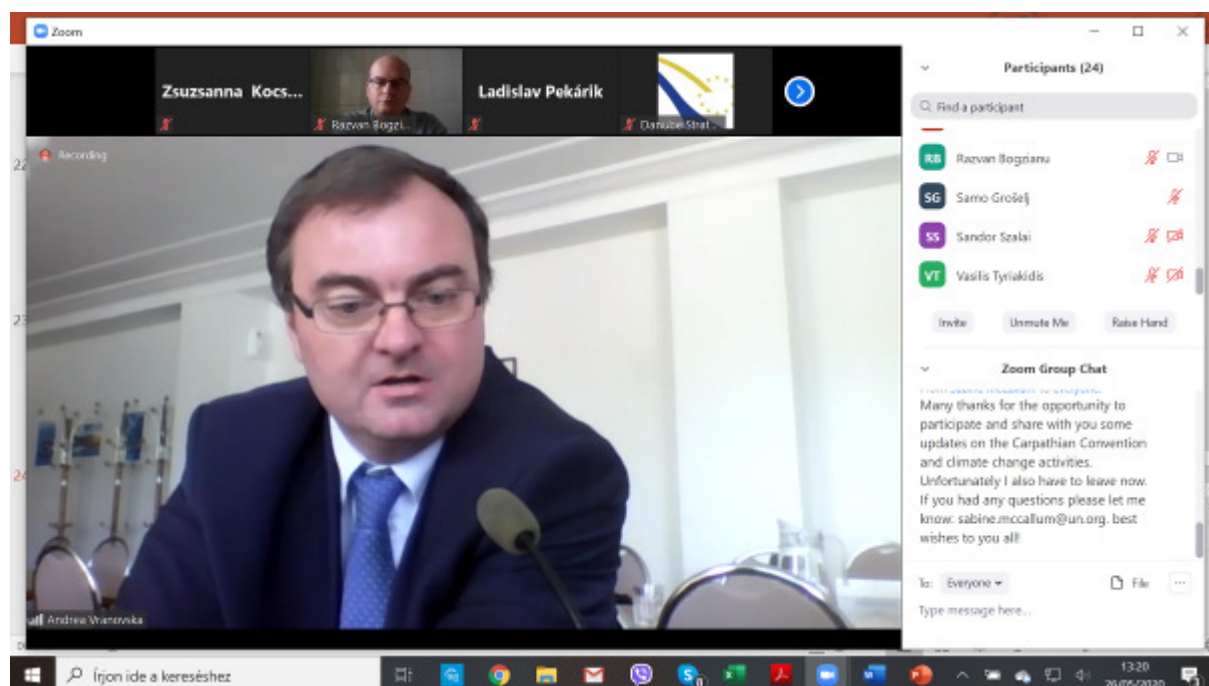
Next SG meeting will be held in Budapest in autumn 2020.

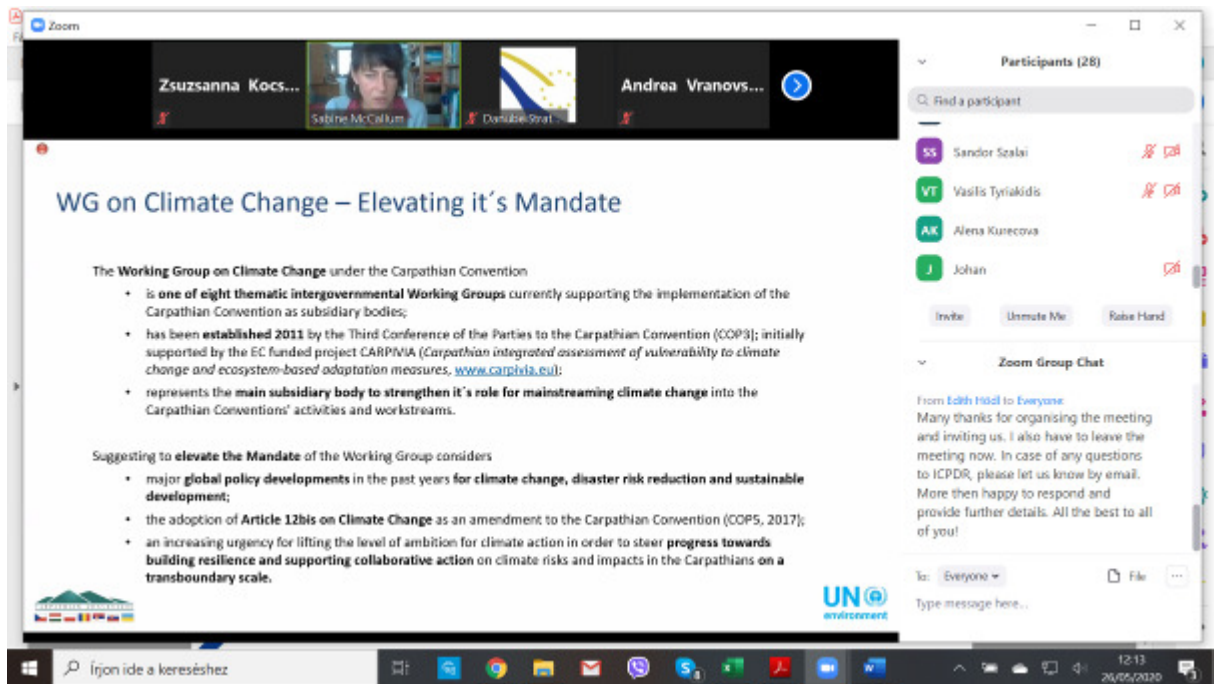
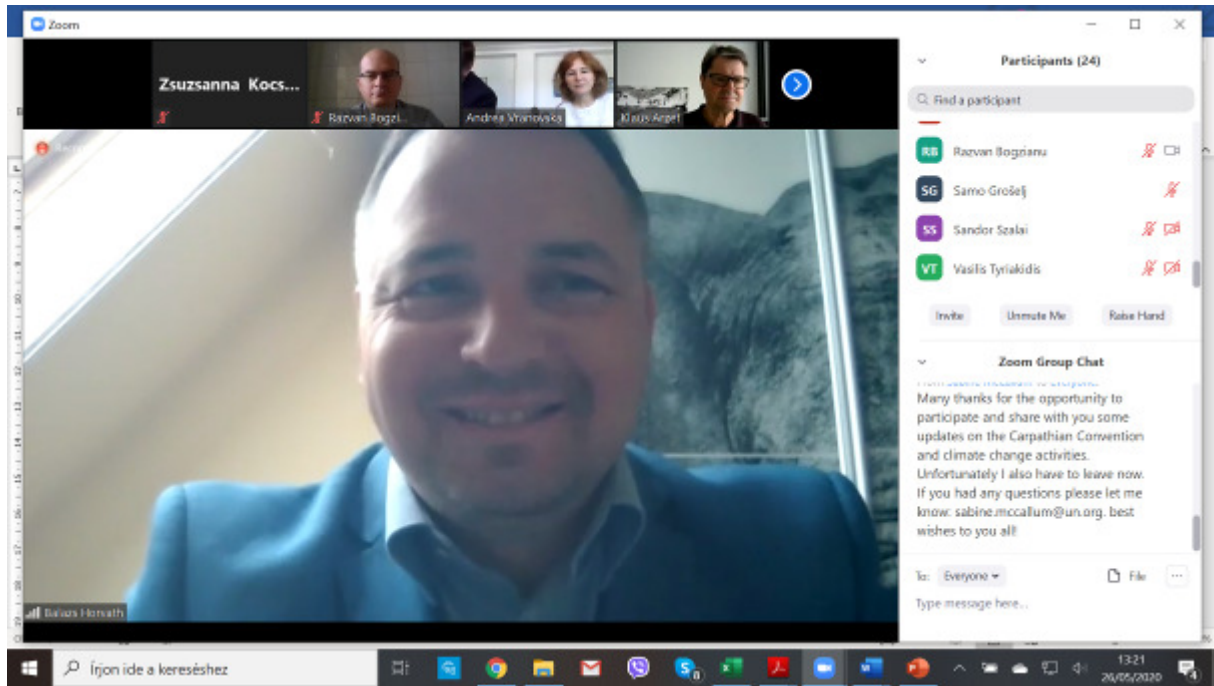
Farewell

In the closing session **Mr Balázs Horvath** and **Mr Vladimir Novak** thanked the participants for active involvement in the SG meeting and appreciated the engagement of all stakeholders in the PA 4 embedding process. It was also mentioned that all presentations of the SG will be uploaded to the PA4 website, so all participants could access every item.

The minutes were written by Ms Alena Kurecová (PAC SK Assistant).

The presentations are available at: <https://waterquality.danube-region.eu/19th-priority-area-4-steering-group-meeting/>





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