

Summary Minutes

20th Steering Group Meeting of EUSDR PA4 10 November 2020, virtual meeting

The objective of the meeting was (1) to provide information on recent activities of EUSDR PA4 -PA5, ICPDR, ICSRB, EU, DSP, Carpathian Convention, Global Water Partnership, (2) to discuss the status and updating possibilities of the PA4 roadmap (3) to present and discuss a draft study about sewage sludge in the Danube region, (4) to introduce results of starting and ongoing projects in relation to the PA4 Action Plan and (5) to discuss financial possibilities in the current and upcoming programming periods.

The meeting was hosted by PA4 HU with assistance provided by DSP for the virtual platform. Over thirty participants were present at the meeting: representatives from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia participated as well as delegates of the European Commission, the DSP New, EUSDR Priority Area 5 (environmental risks), the ICPDR, the Sava Commission (ISRBC), Carpathian Convention, Global Water Partnership, WWF and the DanubeHazard m3c and SIMONA project representatives were present at the meeting. Detailed list of participants is attached in Annex 1.

Opening of the meeting

Mr Horváth, PAC4 HU opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. **Danka Thalmeinerova** on behalf of PAC SK mentioned that the starting SK EUSDR presidency plans for a workshop with climate change adaptation to be organised in autumn 2021 and mentioned that on behalf of PA4 SK they also look forward for the Roadmap update. The agenda was adopted.

The national coordinator of **EUSDR Hungary, Mr Viktor Oroszi** welcomed the participants present at the event. He welcomed the SK presidency, and mentioned that with the lead of the former Croatian EUSDR Presidency the new endorsed [Governance Architecture Paper](#), the [EUSDR Embedding process](#) into EU programmes and the consideration of the EU Green Deal within the Danube Region Strategy was adopted. Mr Oroszi noted the important issue of embedding of the EUSDR into the financial framework. This embedding process is still ongoing, it started with the EC with the national operative programmes. The financing of the objectives of the Strategy depends on how it will be embedded into the CBC programmes and namely to DTP as well. The policy objective 2 will be weighted significantly, which is good for PA4. He mentioned that following a recent discussion there is a plan that PAC projects could be planned for a longer period (7 years). The first call of DTP will be launched in autumn 2021. There is a commenting phase of the implementation report of MRS, the EC will provide contact points for MRS in the Commission services. The 3rd version of the Council Conclusion is under discussion now. He called attention to the Western Balkan Declaration that was approved during the recent Annual Forum. He stressed the need for horizontal cooperation among the PACs, also namely for Pillar B (PA4, PA5 and PA6) and that it is important to support the EU recovery after the pandemic.

1. EU news

Johan Magnusson from DG Regio mentioned that we are in a new political context, in a new Commission: focusing on green and digital transition. 1824,3 billion EUR to be dedicated that combines the multiannual financial framework (MFF) of EUR 1074.3 billion with an extraordinary recovery effort under the Next Generation EU (NGEU) instrument of EUR 750 billion. Green transition : the EU wants to become the world first climate neutral economy, EU cohesion policy to deliver this. The flagship is

the EU Green Deal (EGD) focusing on climate, energy, and circular economy. He highlighted that MRS provides a cooperation platform, also coordination, cross sectoral approach, multi- level governance. The MRS can assist the Green Deal in a broader context, as it creates a common vision. MRS can help the EGD implementation on the ground with coordinated regional and local initiatives, taking into account the territorial specificities of a certain geographical area. MRS can help the implementation of the EGD in the Western Balkans (and the future Green Agenda for Western Balkans), as Western Balkans countries play an important role in the achievement of the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube Strategies objectives. The EGD offers a common policy framework and common objectives to the MRS, and therefore it provides a common vision (within each MRS and also across the four MRS)

He mentioned that digital transition is also especially important. He finally mentioned the Third Report on Implementation of MRS (COM(2020) 578 final) and stressed the need of the embedding. As the MRS do not have their own resources, success or failure of the MRS is ultimately linked to their capacity to ensure that EU, national, regional, and other public and private funds are aligned with the priorities of the relevant strategy. More funding is needed from other centrally managed programmes and pointed that creating contact points within DGs is important, as well as projects that pay an important role in implementation.

Questions:

Mr Groselj, ISRBC: will the Green Deal focus on implementation of new projects as well?

Mr Magnusson, EC: it is another question how the amount will be distributed and what the eligibility rules will be, not all details are known yet.

Mr Horváth, PAC4 HU: how the contact points in the DGs will be set up?

Mr Magnusson, EC: one entry point is planned for the centrally managed programmes.

2. Information about EUSDR PA4 and PA5 ongoing activities

2.1 EUSDR PA4

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU together with Ms Vranovska from the SK PA4 team presented information about the main PA4 activities since the last SG meeting as follows: PA4 received funding for the PAC2 project, it started in January 2020, and the first annual report will be submitted in April 2021.

SK actions: developing a study on water retention in Danube region, to be prepared by December 2020. The planned meeting on migratory fish was postponed to 2022. In 2021 a leaflet will be prepared on water retention and an international workshop will be organized related to pharmaceuticals. An international conference on climate change adaptation will be organized in 2021. Brochure on case studies of sustainable agriculture measures implementation in the Danube Region will be prepared in 2022.

HU actions: wastewater management background document will be prepared by 2022. Fish migration (2021), resource efficiency (2022) will be promoted via leaflets. Funding workshop will be organised in 2021 and a study on projects in 2022. Development of an educational tool (cards or short publication) and development of a study as background document for pilot e-learning material is planned for 2021.

Several events were held since the last SG meeting, e.g. the ICPDR Tisza group preparatory meeting-to follow up on the JOINTISZA project, also a LAREДАР project meeting and Climate update meeting. (19-21 October 2020.)

PA4 participated at a Conference: “Climate change and the European water dimension – Enhancing resilience” organised on 4-5 November 2020 by the German EU presidency - the message is that water should be a key factor in the new EU climate adaptation strategy. A Water Joint Programming Initiative

(JPI) Workshop in the Danube Region was held on 5 November 2020. The JPI would like to have a specific network in the Danube region, the research needs for Europe were mapped.

PA4 contribution to the embedding exercise as follows: Embedding EUSDR objectives into post-2020 EU programmes – preparation of 3 themes (1. hazardous and emerging substances + wastewater; 2. water and agriculture; 3. water and climate change). Interreg Danube Transnational Programme post-2020 programming – questionnaire filled; Interreg Central Europe Programme post-2020 programming – questionnaire filled. EU climate adaptation strategy – questionnaire filled.

PA4 contacted the World Bank (Mr Raimund Mair) about the contribution of the planned wastewater workshop and learnt that events are planned in December and in 2021 at a later stage. They were also informed that PA4 mandated experts are preparing an overview of the sludge system in EUSDR.

Upcoming studies:

- Sewage sludge management in the Danube Region
- Water retention in urban areas in the Danube Region

Further participation in events:

PA5 SG – 19 November 2020; Carpathian Convention COP6 – 25 November 2020; PA6 SG – 8-9 December 2020; ICPDR Ordinary Meeting – 15-16 December 2020

Mr Horváth highlighted that at the 3rd DTP call the following projects were supported: Danube Hazard m3c (LoR), IDES (ecosystem services and water quality), Tid(y)Up (microplastics) (LoR), lifelineMDD (Mura-Drava ecological corridor), SaveGreen and also mentioned the submitted projects: LIFE Logos 4 Waters (LIFE CLIMA) (LoR) and PA4 project facilitation: Waste Goes Circular (Basel Convention call). He mentioned the current open call: Horizon 2020 Green Deal call (open until 26 January 2021).

Questions:

Mr Arzet, DE: Impressed by all the activities even in these difficult times, to do all this in digitally. The question is about water and agriculture brochure on positive examples. ICPDR just finished a document on water management and agriculture in the Danube, how is it linked to that?

Ms Vranovska, PA4 SK: The brochure will be coordinated with ICPDR, it was already discussed with Adam Kovacs. The work will be done in 2022.

2.2 Updates on the Slovak EUSDR Presidency

Ms Kurecova PA4 SK provided short information about the SK presidency and stressed its important topics:

- Action Plan Revision - implementation phase
- Ownership
- Embedding of EUSDR priorities into EU funds
- Governance

Institutional priorities:

Institutional cooperation of stakeholders involved in the strategy implementation

EU institutions, international organizations, research organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc. Supporting this cooperation leads to raising awareness about the Danube Strategy (EUSDR).

Cooperation among priority area coordinators (PACs)

To intensify, harmonize and coordinate the cooperation among PACs, namely within the EUSDR pillars, since many activities require horizontal cooperation and common approach.

Thematic priorities:

Climate change and biodiversity protection

Key initiative of the new European Commission (Green Deal) is to achieve a climate neutral economy by 2050. These topics require wide cooperation of different actors in the whole Danube Region.

Digitalization and innovation

EC issued the new policy initiative - Strategy for Europe Fit for the Digital Age. Digitalization has significant social and economic impact on private and professional life, and it needs to be supported within Danube Region.

Questions:

Mr. Ivanov, GWP asked about Climate conference planned by the Presidency Office in December 2020, is there any news about it?

Ms Kurecova, PA4 SK will get back, as currently has no information on this. At the moment PA4 SK team is searching for this information at the level of the Ministry of Environment. The Presidency Office does not plan any climate conference in December 2020. There is a preparation of the Presidency Office to contribute to the video-conference organized under Global Climate Summit of Heads of States (December 2020).

2.3 Status and updating possibilities of PA4 roadmap

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU introduced a topic to be further discussed related to the updates, revision of the PA4 Roadmap. He mentioned that as the Action Plan was updated in 2020, now our Roadmap is not in accordance with the new AP and its update would be timely. The SG should decide how the update shall take place. He mentioned that PA6 mandated a study to create an update of the Roadmap and we should decide when and how to update our PA4 Roadmap. The SG members were asked to express their opinion on the update during the meeting and also proposed that countries express their opinion in writing within two weeks.

Reactions:

Ms Vranovska, PA4 SK advised to wait for EC and guidelines and to coordinate with other PACs.

Viktor Oroszi, HU NC advised that a harmonised approach should be discussed with the NCs and suggested that maybe the SK presidency would start the discussion and if there will be a decision on a unified roadmap, then the DSP can support the process. All PAs should reconsider how to reach the goals defined in the new Action Plan and how to harmonise it with their roadmaps. He recalled that DSP should have a mandate from the NCs and the Presidency to provide support in this action.

Ms Florea, DSP agreed to have a mandate decision by the NCs and the EUSDR Presidency and after that DSP will be there to assist.

Mr Arzet, DE recommended PA4 asking PA6 for the document and then ask the EUSDR Presidency for the support.

Mr Constantin RO PAC5, supported to harmonise with other PACs, would be useful to discuss with PA6.

Mr Balatonyi, HU PAC5 agreed that we can start considering the real technical content of the Roadmap, and we should have a common outlook and structure and support that Pillar B can have a joint output.

Mr Stania, AT recommended to stay in line with other PAs with the update of the Roadmap.

Mr Magnusson, EC agreed with Mr Oroszi, it is clear that we should have an update of the Roadmap, it makes sense, but it would be good to be coordinated. Indeed, best is to have an NC decision first, then involve DSP, advised further to talk to other PACs to agree.

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU concluded that in this case we will not go ahead but will wait for NC decision and will also coordinate with PA6 and PA5. He advised the SG that members can provide opinion by end of November 2020.

2.4 Study on sewage sludge

PA4 mandated company Trenecon to prepare a study on sewage sludge in the Danube region. **Mr Attila Fürstand** provided a presentation on the draft. He mentioned that the goal is to foster common thinking about sludge management and noted that there are large differences of the countries. There is a big gap related to sludge, the best data available from 2016 from the country reports. It would be good to incorporate sludge issues. He stressed that the contribution of the SG members would be appreciated, and he also thanked that some members (namely Mr Groselj, ISRBC and Mr Kovács, ICPDR) and some countries already provided information to compile to the report. He recalled that information could be shared via Mr Horváth PAC4 or sent by directly.

Remarks:

Mr Constantin, RO PAC5 stated that the issue of sewage sludge is an important subject, especially for downstream countries, and important for Romania as the quantity of sludge will be rather high. Romania will send the sludge strategy once ready. He recommended to have a joint seminar for this topic.

Mr Kovács, ICPDR expressed the willingness of the ICPDR to support the study and its follow up activities. He also stated that the ICPDR would like to offer a platform for further assessments and discussions, that could be a workshop, a questionnaire or a more detailed analysis. A follow up activity is highly recommended, this could be a joint discussion in the basin. He recalled that in many downstream countries sludge is still an issue, it is not yet addressed, and the amount will probably raise. Knowledge transfer could also be provided, it would be a good way to discuss this issue. Moreover, it would be useful to discuss the study with the PM EG later.

Mr Groselj, ISRBC: thanked for the comments and the study. They have also developed a study for the Ljubljana plant and was happy to share the information about ISRBC data.

Mr Oroszi, HU NC: thanked for the support of all the countries who contribute to the preparation of the study. He noted that in his view this issue would also be useful for other PAs, such as PA6, PA2, PA7.

2.5 EUSDR PA5

From EUSDR PA5 **Mr László Balatonyi PAC5 HU** introduced the main PA5 tasks under the revised Action Plan. He mentioned that in 2020 PA5 issued 10 LoRs for projects and 1 letter of merit. He reflected that PA5 selected the following 3 topics for embedding: strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness, provide sufficient support for development and execution of risk management plans for different hazards, anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change. He presented study on “The revision of policy instruments and their potential to contribute to EU water scarcity and drought policies”. He also mentioned that the Disaster Management Working Group was set up and had its first online meeting on 23 June 2020.

He mentioned that the cooperation with ICPDR continues and in 2020-2022 it will focus on preparation of the update and publishing of the update of the Flood Risk Management Plan for the Danube River Basin Districts (DFRMP) and development of projects supportive to the implementation of this DFRMP. PA5 through its participation at ICPDR FP EG meetings will provide an active contribution to ongoing DFRMP related project activities and to development of proposals of new projects supporting achievement of objectives of DFRMP. He called attention that further details (including strategic projects) are available in the PA5 website at: <https://environmentalrisks.danube-region.eu>

3 Information about the Carpathian Convention, ICPDR, Sava Commission, DSP-new ongoing activities

3.1 Carpathian Convection (CC)

Ms Sabine McCallum was presenting on behalf the CC Secretariat and summarized that the CC has several documents, publications in connection with water quality. She referred to the Working Group on Climate Change under the Carpathian Convention which is one of eight thematic intergovernmental Working Groups currently supporting the implementation of the Carpathian Convention as subsidiary bodies. She mentioned that the Working Group considers an increasing urgency for lifting the level of ambition for climate action in order to steer progress towards building resilience and supporting collaborative action on climate risks and impacts in the Carpathians on a transboundary scale. She reported that the 7th Meeting of the Working Group on Climate Change was held on 15 May 2020, online, where decided to elaborate a Long-term Vision 2030 towards combating climate change in the Carpathians and an accompanying Implementation Framework. Preparations are ongoing towards and COP6 would be held on 25 November 2020, online. The Long-term Vision 2030 identifies seven Strategic Objectives (SO) to be followed, namely:

- (SO 1) Climate Action in mountain areas is given higher attention through targeted outreach and by fostering collaboration with other mountain and neighbouring regions
- (SO 2) Regional cooperation and interaction among the Parties of the Carpathian Convention are strengthened through identifying common priority actions and harmonizing them with ongoing regional and national efforts on climate change in the Carpathians
- (SO 3) Possible areas for transnational climate action in the Carpathians are identified with concrete options for climate change mitigation and adaptation
- (SO 4) Interlinkages between climate issues and other relevant areas of work of the Carpathian Convention are taken into account
- (SO 5) Climate research on both qualitative and quantitative levels is promoted, including fostering the application of its results;
- (SO 6) Science-policy - practice interfaces and innovative approaches are further explored and promoted
- (SO 7) Joint efforts are taken on identifying funding opportunities and drawing the attention of donors towards the benefits of greater regional cooperation.

3.2 ICPDR activities

Ms Hödl provided information about the following activities:

1. River basin management in the Danube River Basin

The ICPDR is in the progress of drafting the Danube River Basin Management Plan (**DRBMP**) **Update 2021**. Besides the four Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) in the DRBD there is now a new, fifth SWMI addressing climate change effects. In the light of the EU Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy, cooperation with EUSDR PA6 will be enhanced in the ICPDR RBM EG.

Many data for the DRBMP Update 2021 were reported by Danube countries until 3rd November 2020, an updated revised version of the DRBMP Update 2021 will be circulated prior and discussed in the ICPDR OM-23 taking place from 15th to 16th December 2020.

2. Hydropower

The planned ICPDR workshop on sustainable hydropower in spring 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19 and will now take place from 24th to 25th March 2021 as an online event.

3. Sturgeon activities and WE PASS project

COVID-19 prevented planned monitoring activities and thus the finalization of the project in November 2020; a contract extension by one year was approved by the EC. Biological fish monitoring activities are now planned for spring 2021. The publication/leaflet on sturgeon activities to be prepared by PA4 in 2021 is appreciated; the planned PA4 workshop with links to ICPDR sturgeon conservation activities is postponed to 2022. Regarding the WE PASS project, Ms Hödl mentioned that there was an open call with a budget of 2 Mio EUR for the next project at the Iron Gates, building on results of the WE PASS project. A proposal led by CDM Smith, with ICPDR, RO and RS partners as well as NINA as subcontractors, was prepared. ICPDR sturgeon activities are strongly connected and coordinated with activities of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force. A concept note for ex-situ sturgeon conservation was prepared by BOKU University and a full project proposal is currently being prepared.

4. Navigation

The 11th Joint Statement Meeting was organized from 16-17 September 2020 and hosted by ISRBC as an online event. Two METEET missions were organised: one was organized on 5-6 November 2020 in Romania, and another one would be held on 26-27 November 2020 in Bulgaria.

5. Water balance

Ms Hödl expressed thanks to colleagues in Serbia and Hungary supporting this new ICPDR activity as lead countries; an internal expert workshop is planned in the first half of 2021.

Mr Kovács continued reporting on ICPDR activities as follows:

6. Wastewater management

Discussions with World Bank (WB) and with the IAWD on wastewater management workshops were recently held. As a result of the discussions, two different regional wastewater management workshops are planned to be organized, one on sustainable financing of wastewater facilities and the other one on rural wastewater management and small-scale facilities. This latter one was planned to be organized in December or in January 2021, cooperation with PA4 would be appreciated, the program details are still under discussion. ICPDR is aiming to prepare a position paper particularly about the revision of the UWWT Directive, to show the most important challenges in the Danube River Basin and to recommend common strategies and potential solutions. There will be a webinar organized by the Commission on 26-27 November in relation to the UWWTD revision, focusing on nutrients and micropollutants and probably a series of other webinars will follow later on.

Mr Kovács mentioned that the ICPDR is also welcoming the Hungarian study on sludge and would support follow-up activities, as mentioned earlier.

7. Hazardous substances

The Danube Hazard m3c project obtained funding from DTP, the technical work has started already. Kick-off events were held on 22-24 September 2020, online. ICPDR appreciates the support of EUSDR PA4 already for the preparatory steps and now within the project as well. The project is about control and management of hazardous substances pollution by a comprehensive emission modeling, supported by specific monitoring. A policy guidance will also be developed, so that the project results can support the next RBM Plans, filling the knowledge gaps on this issue. There were also two specific campaigns: one in the former Solutions project and the other one in JDS4, both campaign results will be integrated into a synthesis report.

8. Agriculture

The final draft Guidance document and a policy paper were developed by June 2020. Consultation with the national agricultural sectors is on-going through the HoDs, some feedback was received by end of September 2020. Both documents will be consolidated and finalized in November 2020 and will be submitted to the OM in December 2020 for adoption. The brochure to be prepared by PA4 SK in 2022 is also supported by ICPDR and ICPDR looks forward to cooperating on it.

9. Accident prevention

The Danube TMF project is finalized, proving tools for the countries to assess TMF hazard and risk and to evaluate the safety of individual TMFs. A technical report and a brochure are currently being finalized. Practical tools (hazard and risk assessment methods, checklist for safety conditions and safety measures) and a TMF inventory for the DRB are to be published. A special webinar on the TMF issue was held in November for the APC EG to present and discuss the project outcomes. An online seminar will be organized by the UNECE on 1 December on TMF safety.

10. Projects: Several other projects are ongoing, such as: WACOM, IDES, Tid(y)-up.

Remarks:

Mr Arzet, DE really appreciated that cooperation between ICPDR and PA4 has improved compared to previous times and thanked to all involved, proposing that and we should continue going in this line!

3.3.Sava Commission (ISRBC) activities

Mr Samo Groselj introduced the ongoing activities of the Sava River Basin Commission, mentioning about the following main achievements and ongoing work: Mr Groselj mentioned that they are still collecting data for the Sava RBM Plan and facing difficulties with delayed country replies. Sava 2nd RBM planning cycle current status: Activity on data gathering is ongoing. Only official data from SI and HR - 2nd national RBMP, BA - 1st national RBMP. Unofficial data from RS and ME (according to availability of data)

Sediment issues: Report on Planned dredging for 2019, data for realization of dredging in 2019 and Plan for 2020 expected.

3rd DTP call for proposals: Water Contingency Management in the Sava River Basin – **WACOM project:** its main objective is the reduction of environmental risks related to accidental pollution and floods, especially those which have or might have transboundary impact in SRB. Its scope is to develop operational framework for activation of Protocols on Emergency situations, Prevention of Pollution Caused by Navigation, Flood Protection.

Planned results: reduced risks induced by the accidental pollution and floods of transnational dimension by strengthening the transnational and trans-sectorial cooperation among institutions, especially governmental institutions (responsible for water and flood management and the civil protection) managing the flood and accidental pollution preparedness and response stage. The project started in July 2020 and it will last until December 2022 with a budget of 1,5 M EUR. Its kick-off meeting was held on 20-21 July 2020.

Mr Groselj mentioned another important project: **SHELTER- Sustainable Historic Environments hoListic reconstruction through Technological Enhancement and community-based Resilience – approved under the EU Horizon 2020 (WP 2018-2020).** The project held the 1st Sava Open lab

Stakeholder Workshop on 2 Oct 2019 and the 2nd Sava Open lab Stakeholder Workshop on 28 May 2020. Main accomplishments - preliminary data collection: data are being collected within the Areas of mutual interest for flood protection defined by the Sava FRMP. All collected data will be stored, harmonized, and integrated under Sava GIS, and ready to be shared through the OWSs with the SHELTER Data Driven Platform.

Concerning **Waterway rehabilitation** he mentioned the development of EIA Study and project documentation for the improvement of the navigability conditions of the Sava River for the section from rkm 329 to rkm 300 (Jaruge - Novi Grad, shared by Croatia and B&H) on going; Stakeholder Forum established and two meetings were already held.

Related to **strategic development issues** he mentioned the Joint Plan of Action (Bled, 15 June 2017) and the Sava - Drina River Corridor integrated development programme (WB, 2019)

–High-level objective is to facilitate integrated transboundary water resources management and development along the Sava and Drina River Corridors. Two phases process over 10 years planning (2020-2030)

–Phase I: to improve flood protection, inland waterway freight transport, and enhance transboundary water cooperation

–Phase II: to further strengthen regional integration and connectivity.

Mr Groselj further informed about the ISRBC's pp issues as follows:

Public participation: the 9th Sava Youth Parliament to be held in Banja Luka (BA), was cancelled due to the pandemic.

•**20th Sava NewsFlash** is available on the ISRBC [website](#) and he also mentioned that a “15 years of transboundary cooperation within ISRBC” – leaflet was developed.

3.4. GWP

Mr Ivanov explained that GWP had its annual meeting a few weeks ago in October 2020 focusing on how to exchange with the private sector, how to mobilise better with youth, and set down the bases for knowledge exchange, contributing to gender equality. A Position paper was prepared for Green Recovery in Central and Eastern Europe from a Water Perspective. The goal of the paper is to provide recommendations for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic from Integrated Water Resources Management perspective. It proposes a set of water related measures for a new recovery instrument, Next Generation EU. The SDG6 IWRM Support Programme Reporting in 2020 is ongoing in up to 60 countries - in the CEE region covering Bulgaria, Moldova, Slovenia. Other support is provided to Hungary and Slovakia.

Mr Ivanov mentioned the preparation of new projects and connection with partners outside of CEE region: Decentralised regenerative wastewater and nutrient management in the Danube Region / Enhancing capacity and engagement in supporting and influencing local governments in Armenia to introduce nature-based solutions for wastewater treatment (WWT) and reuse of treatment. He mentioned that the project FRAMWAT was completed and also shared information about a new project TEACHER-CE that started in March 2020 and will last for 2 years with 12 partners, focusing on climate proof management of water resources. Project OPTAIN (OPTimal strategies to retAIN and re-use water and nutrients) that is 5 years long H2020 project started in September 2020, to identify regional

conditions under which NSWRM perform most efficient - Fully harmonized approach across all 14 case studies, and to identify optimal combination of NSMWR on different scales.

Finalization of DriDanube project (DroughtWatch, Danube Drought Strategy), including Integrated Drought Management Training for Drin basin countries (implemented in other regions, countries) was completed. He stressed a topic of how to communicate drought (expert-media trainings) and the revision of the EU policy instruments, related to drought and water scarcity mitigation (organizing a follow-up process with EUSDR PA5). He mentioned that Erasmus+Youth for Water and Climate Program is ongoing, hoping that the summer school can be held in 2021.

Ongoing activities: Green Climate Fund (GCF)'s Readiness Programme provides resources for countries to efficiently engage with GCF, cooperating with CWP Moldova to support Moldova to access and implement GCF Readiness support and also involved in Green Deal project preparations and with the ICPDR Tisza Group participating in preparation of future projects (building on JOINTISZA project).

Mr Ivanov mentioned that GWP's experts continue work with their CWPs on implementing GWP strategy on transboundary issues, SDGs, climate, youth, and gender.

Remarks:

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU appreciated GWP activities. Mr Horváth appreciated further that he was involved in the early thinking of GWP position paper and also appreciated GWP's involvement in the JOINTISZA2 preparations and several joint activities.

3.5. DSP news

Ms. Florea from DSP thanked the PAs for cooperating and she also introduced new colleague Ms Nicole Hauder. Ms Florea mentioned that DSP supported the EUSDR HR PCY in organising an online NC meeting (05/2020) and PACs were supported by DSP in organising their online SG meetings. DSP elaborated a Needs Assessment for closer cooperation in SGs, assist in streamlined communication and provides on a regular basis information about MRS. Ms Florea mentioned that the **9th Annual Forum** of EUSDR was held on 22 October 2020, online. A Joint Statement of the Ministers responsible for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region was adopted and 3 thematic sessions were held (The ecologic perspective of sustainable regional development, the economic perspective of sustainable regional development and the social perspective of sustainable regional development.) Also, there was a session dedicated to Instruments for financing the development of the Danube Region.

About the **Embedding process** she mentioned that 3 meetings were held and the presentation and discussion of first results were on 25 May 2020 at EUSDR NC meeting (online). A new **Monitoring Concept** for reporting on the progress and achievements of the EUSDR was prepared with results for one comprehensive monitoring, no double reporting and strategic decision-making support tool for NCs. **Reporting** periods will be implemented as an online tool from 2022 (once in 2 years). DSP also promoted EUSDR with the help of an interactive movie.

Communication aspects: EUSDR vision was selected: *Together we build a prosperous region with a healthy environment, equal societies and high living standards.* EUSDR slogan was also selected: *DANUBE Region Strategy – Prosperity through Diversity.*

EUSDR success stories brochure was printed in 12 languages available online: <http://www.danube-region.eu/Publications>, EUSDR Newsletter – 3rd issue produced and distributed for the external public (Sept 2020) and 3rd issue produced and distributed for the EUSDR governance (Sept 2020). Joint online EUSDR PCY/NC/PAC calendar is constantly updated, NCs, PACs and SGs lists modified by request,

when staff changing occurs. EUSDR was present at the European Weeks of Regions and Cities, October 2020 by DSP virtual exhibition.

About **capacity building** Ms Florea mentioned that on October 12, 2020, an online workshop “Decision making in an online environment” was held and that by the end of 2020 an online workshop – “Roles and responsibilities of MRS stakeholders” will be organised. DSP will further contribute to support PACs in their need’s assessment for closer cooperation, in workshops and seminars on cross-cuttings (horizontal topics) and in preparing Guidelines for identifying and listing Strategic Projects/Flagship initiatives and Projects/Light Tower Projects.

Questions/remarks:

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU thanked the excellent communication activities and appreciated that no double reporting will be necessary in the future. Concerning monitoring tool with the NCs how the PACs will be involved?

Ms Hauer, DSP: The PACs were present at the SG Meeting DANUVAL in February 2020 and all PACs had the possibility to provide comments. If this was not the case, then please send your comments, but noted that comments were already taken on board.

Mr Groselj asked which young generation is involved?

Ms Florea, DSP commented that all ages are included in EUSDR, here is one PA that targeted all youth. The event in the AF was for young researchers especially.

3.6 Financial presentation

Ms Kocsis-Kupper, PA4 HU expert provided a short presentation about the current open financial calls.

She mentioned the **H2020 - Green Deal Calls** and particularly the water related calls that are open until January 2021 as follows:

Description of programme

"Climate Action, Environment, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials,, This Subprogramme aims to achieve a resource- and water-efficient economy and society that is also resilient to climate change.

[LC-GD-3-2-2020: Demonstration of systemic solutions for the territorial deployment of the circular economy](#)

Funding focuses on the following challenges: Health, demographic change and wellbeing;

- Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland **water research**, and the Bioeconomy; Climate action, **environment**, resource efficiency and raw materials;

[LC-GD-8-1-2020: Innovative, systemic zero-pollution solutions to protect health, environment and natural resources from persistent and mobile chemicals](#)

- The successful projects should target persistent and mobile chemicals and include elements (one or several), such as research and development of (bio)remediation technologies of soil and **water** (including sources of drinking water) contaminated by persistent and mobile substances and their precursors;
- development of best practices for the management and treatment of waste, soil and water containing persistent and mobile substances, in line with the ambitions of the Circular Economy Action Plan.

[LC-GD-8-2-2020: Fostering regulatory science to address chemical and pharmaceutical mixtures: from science to evidence-based policies](#)

- Scope (among other)s: The possible effects on humans, in particular on vulnerable sub-populations, from combined (chronic) exposure to low levels of pharmaceuticals via the

environment, taking account the inherent pharmacological properties and the potential for combined effects from co-exposures with other chemicals;

[LC-GD-9-3-2020: Transparent & Accessible Seas and Oceans: Towards a Digital Twin of the Ocean.](#)

She mentioned that there will be open calls of the **LIFE Programme** as follows: 2021 operating grants for NGOs. The next call for proposals for operating grants to support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in view of concluding framework partnership agreements (FPAs) and specific grant agreements (SGAs) will be published in spring 2021. <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/2021-operating-grants-ngos>

Furthermore, there is Pre-Information on a LIFE 2020 Call for Proposals from NGOs on the European Green Deal available at <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/pre-information-life-2020-call-proposals-ngos-european-green-deal>

Ms Kocsis-Kupper was also talking about the European Territorial Cooperation Objective **Interreg programs** after 2020. On 21 July 2020, the European Council adopted the 2021 Financial framework agreement for the period 2027 which must also be approved by the European Parliament.

About **DTP** she mentioned that the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat remains in Hungary. Policy Objectives and the Specific Objectives will be selected by the Task Force, in connection to the trends and challenges of the region. Also, it was highlighted that the focus of each Specific Objective selected is still to be discussed. PO2 – A greener, low- carbon Europe is in focus.

About **Interreg CE** the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat remains in the city of Vienna.

The program area is extended to the Braunschweig (DE) region. PO2- Greener Europe is in focus.

About **Interreg EUROPE** The Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat remains in Lille Hauts de France. The 2021-2027 PO: Interreg-specific objective ISO 1 “Better cooperation governance”. The overall objective of the program: To support regional development policies, capacity building, exchange of experience and innovative approaches by implementing Priority 1: ISO.

4. Projects and LORs

4.1. SIMONA project

Dr. Meta Dobnikar, the new project manager of SIMONA project shortly presented the project as follows: January 2020 – Mid-term project meeting (Budapest): early plans for the sampling, laboratory analysis and training activities revealed; Evaluation WG meeting: discussions on evaluation methodology development occurred. In March 2020 due to COVID all business and field trips had to be delayed until further notice; reconstruction of SIMONA timeline, all PPs working from home. LP is collecting offers from various laboratories to choose the one reference laboratory for the analysis of all 3 test areas sediment samples (from Drava, Upper Tisa and South Danube test area), the reference laboratory from Hungary (Balint Analitika Ltd) was chosen and contracted with the LP. In April 2020 evaluation WG (and all PPs): research on the scientific and methodological literature regarding available sediment quality evaluation (risk assessment) methods were carried out. In June 2020 intensively planning and preparing for the field work (TA sampling) completed and in July – SIMONA Test Area sampling harmonisation (pre-training) meeting held in Harkany. In August 2020 Drava Test Area sampling carried out and in September 2020 change in project leadership occurred with the new project manager. In September and October 2020 South Danube and Upper Tisza TA sampling was ongoing; the laboratory analysis of Drava test area samples finished, and began those of the other 2 test area samples. Furthermore, the SIMONA laboratory method development for the Sediment quality laboratory protocol for HSs was held in October 2020.

Dr Dobnikar listed activities planned in the future:

- Detailing the SIMONA Sediment quality Sampling and Laboratory protocols for HSs.
- Organizing the 1. training event for the project consortium to enable the DRB Baseline sediment sampling (sampling of the 2 NP per partner country).
- Sampling and laboratory analysis of the 26 NP (DRB Baseline monitoring).
- Training event based on point 3.
- SIMONA IT-tool
- Training event on SIMONA IT-tool, Stakeholder workshop, Scientific conference and Final Conference planned in summer 2021.

Questions:

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU: do you have any links to the DanubeSediment project?

Dr Dobnikar replied that the project would link its results to the Sediment project.

Ms Koret also mentioned that they would like to link their results to DanubeSediment but did not yet reached that level of completion. Once the results are more developed, then will compare data.

4.2. Danube Hazard m3c

Dr. Ottavia Zoboli, TU Wien provided a short overview of the recently awarded Danube Hazard m3c project as follows: the project aims to

- improve baseline knowledge on the status quo of HS water pollution and on the relevance of different emission pathways
- elaborate recommendations for the national and transnational river basin management plans
- enhance skills and competence regarding inventorying, modelling and management of HS pollution in the DRB.

The project structure is as follows:

- WP T1 Inventory of hazardous substances
- WP T2 Scenarios modelling and assessment in pilot regions
- WP T3 Transnational HS pollution assessment and recommendations
- WP T4 Capacity building Management.

Planned outputs:

WPT1: Relational database of concentrations of HS in the DRB, Demonstration of harmonized and cost- effective monitoring.

WPT2: MoRE (Modeling of Regionalized Emissions), Model Report on improved system understanding, Demonstration of management plan development based on emission modelling.

WPT3: Report on existing policies and management plans, SOLUTIONS model, Policy guidance document.

WPT4: National/regional trainings on monitoring and inventorying + training material, Transnational trainings on modelling and scenario evaluation + training material, Technical guidance manual, International workshop.

There are 11 partners and 13 associated strategic partners (including HU PA4 institutions: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the General Directorate of Water Management).

Dr Zoboli mentioned that there are some delays on monitoring due to COVID-19, and because laboratories are in different countries that makes project implementation logistically difficult.

Questions, remarks:

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU mentioned that it was one of the projects that PA4 supported and also for ICPDR it was an important topic, so we are happy that it was awarded funding and we look forward for its progress and would like to follow up on the implementation in the future as well.

4.3. Ongoing projects

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU shortly summarised the ongoing projects as follows:

SIMONA: Sediment-quality Information, Monitoring and Assessment System to support transnational cooperation for joint Danube Basin water management (detailed presentation was provided by the project.) <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/simona>

Danube Floodplain: Reducing the flood risk through floodplain restoration along the Danube River and tributaries <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danube-floodplain>
Latest: International Stakeholder Meeting (15-16 October 2020); 2nd National event in Serbia (16 October 2020); Stakeholder meeting in Bistret, (Romania) about technical solutions for floodplain restoration (26 October).

MEASURES: Managing and restoring aquatic EcologicAl corridors for migratory fiSh species in the danUbe RivEr baSin <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/measures>
Latest: October restocking event, 700 Russian sturgeons were released in the Danube; Video is prepared for the World Fish Migration Day

We Pass: Facilitating fish migration and conservation at the Iron Gates <https://www.we-pass.org/>
Latest: 2020 autumn events postponed

DEEPWATER-CE: Developing an integrated implementation framework for Managed Aquifer Recharge solutions to facilitate the protection of Central European water resources endangered by climate change and user conflict <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/DEEPWATER-CE.html>

Ms Vranovska, PA4 SK also provided a short information on current state of play of project implementation, e.g. organization of 2 trainings at national level (HU, HR, PL, DE, SK) - 1st on MAR principles and collection of good practices and 2nd on selection process originated from decision support toolbox; preparation of general guidelines for feasibility study which will be performed in pilot sites (HU, HR, PL, SK) and finishing of transnational decision support toolbox for designating potential MAR sites locations explained visually in short video.

boDEREC-CE: Board for Detection and Assessment of Pharmaceutical Drug Residues in Drinking Water - Capacity Building for Water Management in CE
<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/boDEREC-CE.html>
Latest: Stakeholder workshop in IT 26 October; Mid-term conference will be held on 1 December

REVITAL-I.: Environmental Assessment for Natural Resources Revitalization in Solotvyno to prevent the further pollution of the Upper-Tisza Basin through the preparation of a complex monitoring system <https://huskroua-cbc.eu/projects/financed-projects-database/environmental-assessment-for-natural-resources-revitalization-in-solotvyno-to-prevent-the-further-pollution-of-the-upper-tisza-basin-through-the-preparation-of-a-complex-monitoring-system>

Latest: database preparation and EU satellite data analysis done; field measurements could not be fully completed; seismic measurements and water sampling delayed; project will need to be extended

AquaPinka: Pinka sustainable water management (CBC AT-HU)
<https://www.interreg-athu.eu/hu/aquapinka/> ; <https://keep.eu/projects/22758/>
Latest: kick-off planned for May postponed

Danube Hazard m3c: Tackling hazardous substances pollution in the Danube River Basin by Measuring, Modelling-based Management and Capacity building (detailed presentation was provided by the project.) <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danube-hazard-m3c>

Tid(y)Up: F(ol)low the Plastic from source to the sea: Tisza-Danube integrated action plan to eliminate plastic pollution of rivers <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/tid-y-up>
Latest: kick-off 4-5 November; international microplastic workshop held on 4 November 2020.

IDES: Improving water quality in the Danube river and its tributaries by integrative floodplain management based on Ecosystem Services
<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/ides>
Latest: kick-off meeting 8 September 2020.

Questions/remarks:

Mr Magnusson, EU: Thanked for the interesting presentation about projects. He asked whether are there any projects are carried out that covers both freshwater and Marine issues, especially related to the Black sea? Is this aspect considered?

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU: not aware of any project that tackles both freshwater and the Black sea currently, as it is not EU-funded, but knows that there are discussions with the Black Sea Commission e.g. on sturgeon.

Mr Arzet, DE: The number of projects is enlarging, there are a lot of projects ongoing. There are limited capacities of the institutions to joint projects, it might be the case for other countries. If the PAs have information about projects and might have a better knowledge on projects to tackle the mosaic, what should be in focus to set priorities.

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU: We will see in more details when we revise our Roadmap how to close the gaps in our areas. The capacities are indeed limited in some countries, but some of the projects have been finalised last year, so some capacity was freed, so maybe by next year with the new projects we shall see closing the gaps. Example the JOINTISZA2, there is now some capacity freed, so now experts can start preparing for the next call.

Mr Arzet, DE: maybe we shall consider this when updating our Roadmap.

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU: That is why the embedding procedure is so important.

Ms Danka Thalmeinerova, SK thanked for the presentations, in the roadmap discussions should discuss on what we want to focus on. Do we need still project on tools? Or we shall see more research, for example on quality on groundwater. Agree with Balázs that embedding is a key word for us.

Tamás Gruber WWF thanked for the presentations. He recommended that as the update of the RBMP is ongoing, as the outputs of the ongoing projects could be important, so those should be channelized to the countries and to the updated RBMPs. WWF will do it for the *Danube Floodplain* project but hopes that there will be other useful information to be shared in case of other projects as well.

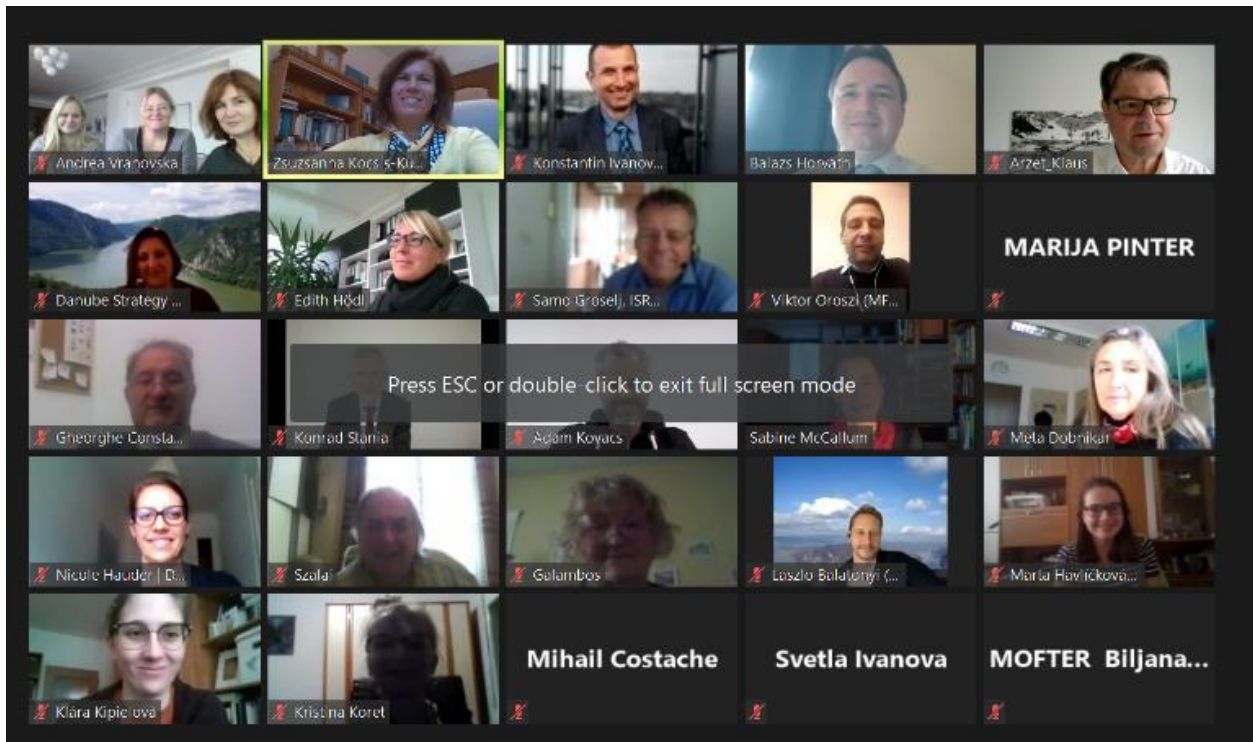
AOB:

Ms Danka Thalmeinerova, SK thanked very much for the meeting. Noted that we might have some debates on the Roadmap, but we would need to wait for clear instructions on the templates. Thanked all participants and the SK colleagues for all the today.

Mr Horváth PAC4 HU: we look forward for the SK presidency and the update of the Roadmap. Thanked DSP for assisting the meeting, for the presenters, and all participants, it was the 20th meeting of PA4. Mr Horváth thanked all members for active participation, he reminded that all presentations would be shared.

The minutes were compiled by Ms Kocsis-Kupper.

The presentations are available at: <https://waterquality.danube-region.eu/pa4-20th-sg-meeting-on-10-november-held-online/>



ANNEX 1.

List of participants		
20th SG meeting of PA 4 - online event - 10.11.2020		
No.	Name	Email address
1	Balázs Horváth	horvath.balazs@ovf.hu
2	Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper	zsuzsanna.kocsiskupper@gmail.com
3	Mihaela Florea	mihaela.florea@eusdr-dsp.eu
4	Piroska Szabó	psz@trenecon.hu
5	Andrea Vranovska	andrea.vranovska@vuvh.sk
6	Dana Vrablikova	dana.vrablikova@vuvh.sk
7	Edith Hödl	edith.hoedl@icpdr.org
8	Ottavia Zoboli	ozoboli@iwag.tuwien.ac.at
9	Klara Kipielova	klara.kipielova@mzp.cz
10	Sándor Szalai	szalai.sandor@mkk.szie.hu
11	Samo Groselj	sgroselj@savacommission.org
12	Nicole Hauder	nicole.hauder@eusdr-dsp.eu
13	Sabina Bokal	sabina.bokal@gwpcee.org
14	Biljana Rajic	biljana.rajic@mvteo.goc.ba
15	Klaus Arzet	klaus.arzet@stmuv.bayern.de
16	Meta Dobnikar	meta.dobnikar@geo-zs.si
17	Johan Magnusson	johan.magnusson@ec.europa.eu
18	László Balatonyi dr.	balatonyi.laszlo@ovf.hu
19	Alena Kurecova	alena.kurecova@vuvh.sk
20	Ádám Kovács	adam.kovacs@icpdr.org
21	Danka Thalmeinerova	danka.thalmeinerova@enviro.gov.sk
22	Mária Galambos	maria.galambos.molnarne@am.gov.hu
23	Marta Havlickova	marta.havlickova@mzp.cz
24	Marija Pinter	marija.pinter@mingor.hr
25	Sabine McCallum	sabine.mccallum@un.org
26	Uros Suberic	uros.suberic@minpolj.gov.rs
27	Gheorghe Constantin	gheorghe.constantin@mmediu.ro
28	Attila Fürstand	fua@trenecon.hu
29	Mihail Costache	mihail.costache@mmediu.ro
30	Tamás Gruber	tamas.gruber@wwf.hu
31	Viktor Oroszi	viktor.oroszi@mfa.gov.hu
32	Svetlana Ivanova	sivanova@moew.government.bg
33	Konrad Stania	konrad.stania@bmlfuw.gv.at
34	Kristina Koret	kristina.koret@geo-zs.si
35	Konstantin Ivanov	konstantin.ivanov@gwpcee.org
36	Luca Bartus	lub@trenecon.hu