

## **EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

Priority Area 1a – To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways

### **2nd Meeting of the Working Groups for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

Vienna, Austria – 15/16 March 2012

#### **MINUTES**

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## 1. Opening, welcome to the participants

The Coordinators of Priority Area 1a (PACs 1a) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), Austria and Romania (represented by Mr. Vorderwinkler and Ms. Patrichi), as well as their Technical Secretariats (represented by Mr. Simoner) welcomed the participants to the second meeting of the Working Groups.



## 2. Progress of the EUSDR / of Priority Area 1a

1) Ms. Ploeg Cruceru (DG REGIO, European Commission) presented the status, progress and steps ahead of the EUSDR from the European Commission's perspective as follows:

Ms. Ploeg Cruceru stressed that it is a good thing that most of the participants also attended the kick-off meeting of the Working Groups in October 2011 – a good sign that Working Group meetings can become a **stable forum for discussions** on the implementation of Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR.

For the first time in June 2012, the Priority Coordinators are to report to the European Commission on the status of implementation. Ms Ploeg Cruceru noted that Priority Area 1a is making notable progress and as an example mentioned the recent initiative by the Commission and the PACs on the topic of **improving waterway maintenance** along the Danube in face of the experiences made in the low-water period in the second half of 2011, which had severe adverse effects on the efficiency and on the public image of Danube navigation. Together with Commissioner Kallas of DG Mobility and Transport, the current Vice-President of the European Commission, Commissioner Hahn of DG Regional Policy of the European Commission had sent a letter in February 2012 to the Ministers of Transport of all Danube riparian countries, inviting them to provide the Commission with an analysis of the low-water period of the past year and to identify possible short- and medium-term measures for effective waterway management. In order to discuss with the Danube countries on immediate and short- to medium-term actions aimed at the improvement of waterway maintenance on the Danube, Commissioner Hahn will join the 3rd meeting of the Steering Group, which will take place on 3-4 May 2012 in Bratislava.

At the end of her intervention, Ms. Ploeg Cruceru informed the participants on the **First Annual Stakeholder Forum** of the EU Danube Region Strategy, which will take place in November 2012 in Regensburg (Germany). This event will provide a broad overview on the status quo of the Strategy for all eleven Priority Areas and will address a wider interested public.

2) Mr. Vorderwinkler, representing the PACs 1a, reported on the progress made in Priority Area 1a on inland waterways of the EUSDR as follows:

To date, **81 projects** have been reported to or have been identified by the PACs 1a aimed at the implementation of actions in the fields of waterway infrastructure, waterway management, ports & sustainable freight transport, fleet modernisation, River Information Services and education & jobs. Out of these 81 projects, 26 are currently being implemented, while 14 are in their definition phase. Five projects are already completed. An overview on all projects is available in the form of project summaries on the website of PA 1a (tab "Working Groups & Projects").

The PACs 1a have set up (and are operating and continuously updating) the **website** [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu) on which detailed information regarding the implementation of PA 1a is made available (including the targets and actions related to inland waterways, all documents related to meetings of the Working Groups and the Steering Group, current status of projects and project ideas). A relaunch of this website is planned for May 2012 in order to provide better usability, design and interactivity to its users. The new website will feature a project database with extensive search functionalities.

Mr. Vorderwinkler stressed the fact the projects and project ideas for PA 1a can be forwarded to PACs 1a at any time by using the **project data sheet** form which is available online at the above-mentioned website. Once a data sheet has been received, projects will be evaluated by the Steering Group to check on their compliance with the targets and actions set for PA 1a. In case of a positive evaluation, a **Letter of Recommendation** (LoR) will be issued by the Steering Group which will be forwarded to the project developer. A LoR cannot automatically safeguard EU funding, as the formal criteria of project proposals have to be met corresponding to the respective funding programme. For the upcoming programming period 2014 to 2020 of the EU, a mechanism will have to be established by the European Commission and the EU Member States, acceding countries and candidate countries on how to integrate a LoR in concrete funding decisions.

By request of the European Commission, so-called "**road maps**" for the implementation of the actions identified for PA 1a in the Action Plan of the EUSDR shall be drafted by PACs 1a, involving Steering Group members (EC, Danube countries, river commissions, international organisations) as well as stakeholders. For reasons of smooth implementation, the PACs 1a clustered the 10 actions identified for PA 1a in the EC's Action Plan into 8 Road Maps ("action fields"), of which 6 are "vertical", i.e. thematic, and 2 are "horizontal", i.e. political:

1. Waterway infrastructure
2. Waterway management
3. Ports & sustainable freight transport
4. Fleet modernisation
5. River Information Services
6. Education & jobs
7. National inland waterway transport policies
8. Revision of the Belgrade Convention

Parallel to the NAIADES Action Programme for inland waterway transport in Europe, steps for the implementation of actions according to Road Maps are divided into **legislative, policy and support instruments** as well as **projects** and visualised on a time axis according to recent developments as well as short-, medium- and long-term horizons. The thematic Road Maps (nos. 1 to 6) will be finalised on the basis of the feedback received by the Working Group members (cf. section 4 below) and will be agreed on in the next Steering Group meeting, which will take place in Bratislava on the 3rd and 4th of May 2012.

Mr. Vorderwinkler also explained the support provided by PACs 1a to the EC **ad hoc initiative on the improvement of Danube waterway infrastructure maintenance** and informed the attendants about the preparation of the EUSDR "**flagship project**" labelled "**Innovative Danube Vessel**".

For more information on these issues, please cf. Mr. Vorderwinkler's presentation, which is available online under the "Working Groups & Projects" tab at [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu).

In finalising his contribution, Mr. Vorderwinkler informed the attendants about the **next steps** in the implementation of EUSDR's PA 1a:

- 3/4 May 2012, Bratislava: 3rd PA 1a Steering Group meeting
- 24/25 May 2012, Bucharest: 1st Annual Stakeholder Forum
- June 2012: 1st implementation report of PACs 1a to the EC
- Autumn 2012: 3rd WG and 4th SG meeting of PA 1a

Detailed information on the venue and the agenda for the meetings mentioned above will be provided in due time by the PACs 1a.

### **3. Presentation of draft Road Maps for the implementation of actions according to the EUSDR's Action Plan and feedback by the attendants on main topics**

Members of the Austrian & Romanian Technical Secretariats for the implementation of PA 1a of the EUSDR presented the draft **thematic Road Maps** nos. 1 to 6 (cf. subsections below). For each of the six action fields, a summary of the actions according to the Action Plan of the EUSDR, the key tasks identified therein as well as of the targets for PA 1a (as amended by the PACs 1a and the Steering Group) were presented. Apart from information on the actors identified to be relevant in order to implement a specific Road Map in the field of inland navigation (i.e., EC, Danube countries, river commissions, IWT industry, NGOs, financing institutions, UNECE etc.), the general and continuous activities of PACs 1a which are contributing to the implementation of each Road Map were specified.

All presentations on thematic Road Maps are available online for download under the "Working Groups & Projects" tab at [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu).

After these presentations, the attendants of the Working Group were asked to provide the PACs 1a with their **feedback** regarding, e.g., their general expectations, prioritisation of topics/actions, proposals for alterations and missing elements. This was done anonymously by written statements on cards which were then collected in a feedback box.

The feedback received was clustered according to the **six thematic Road Maps** by the PACs 1a and – on the second day of the meeting – served as handouts for discussion on round tables dedicated to one thematic Road Map per table (this feedback provided on cards is also available at the PA 1a website for download).

Apart from that, feedback by the attendants was also provided on the implementation of PA 1a of the EUSDR (organisational structure and role of PACs 1a) and on administrative and political issues – both of these will serve as a basis for discussions in the Steering Group of PA 1a.

Regarding the **implementation of EUSDR's PA 1a** the following points were observed:

- PACs should clearly indicate the need for dedicated EU support funds for EUSDR projects; the current Structural Funds have inappropriate regional programmes
- PACs should raise the attention of "Danube specific" geography in the European Commission and its relevant Directorate-Generals and Services: EU and non-EU member states, unique river regime (Danube Commission / Belgrade Convention) and its consequences
- Activity of Steering Group members: How will they be inspired to contribute to the improvement of the Strategy?
- Action fields (Road Maps): It is not clear how the Strategy will contribute to the harmonisation of different projects developed under the six identified action fields. One overarching inland waterway transport infrastructure topic/action field was proposed to serve correlations and integration

between the related subtopics, i.e. waterway infrastructure & management, ports & sustainable freight transport and River Information Services (in line with TEN-T policy).

- In line with the EUSDR stating that navigation should be improved in an environmentally sustainable way, the PA 1a Road Map should equally use an integrative and pro-active approach with respect to environmental requirements. In particular, the EU environmental directives (BD, FFH, WFD, FD, SEA/EIA-D etc.) as well as international conventions (DRPC, Espoo, Ramsar etc.) should be added to the legal instruments of the six thematic Road Maps (notably for waterway infrastructure and management).
- Support of projects: What would be further means to support EUSDR projects besides Letters of Recommendations? Are there any intentions like smart objectives, to create other functional means for supporting projects, i.e. technical competence of the project? How will Letters of Recommendation check whether the project's goals fit with the targets of other Priority Areas of the EUSDR?
- Are the PACs considering to create an internal EUSDR structure for maintaining specific projects to sustain the EUSDR's actions?
- What about passenger transport and tourism?

On the topic of **administrative and political issues**, the following feedback was provided by the attendants of the meeting:

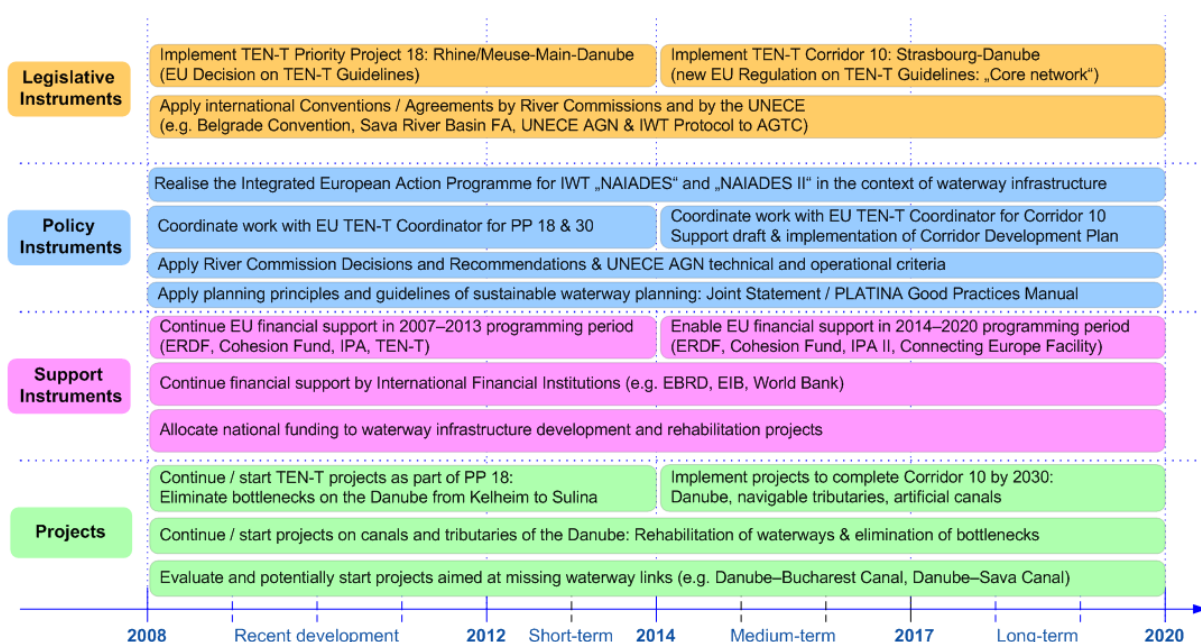
- There are too many "uso porto" along the Danube, too many taxes for shipping companies, taxes are not transparent.
- Get rid of border revisions – they are obsolete, annoying and time-consuming. If a ship could travel non-stop, without the delay of border formalities, it would shorten a trip by 2 to 3 days and it would cut out a lot of corruption and save a lot of money.
- Ships should be allowed to navigate on the tributaries like Sava and Tisa without stopping and without extra Serbian pilots or permits needed. The tributaries should be accessible for anyone with a Danube patent or Rhine patent. Captains with a Danube patent can already sail the Rhine tributaries now. This should also be possible on the Vojvodina canal network and the Danube-Black Sea Canal.

On the second day of the meeting, each **round table dedicated to the discussion of a thematic Road Map** was moderated by a member of the Austrian & Romanian Technical Secretariats for EUSDR PA 1a. After the very lively but nonetheless very constructive discussions, the findings were reported back to the plenum by the moderators. The following subsections contain a visualisation of the draft Road Maps as presented to the attendants during the meeting, each followed by a summary of the discussion as provided by the moderators of the thematic round tables.





## 1 | Waterway infrastructure

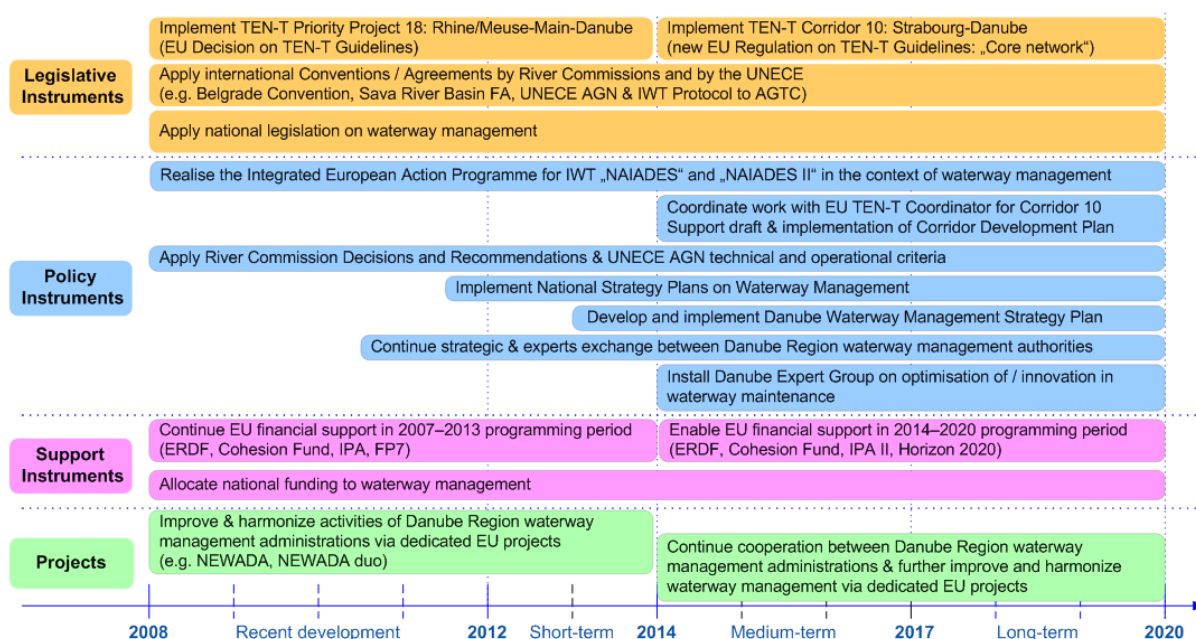


Summary of the discussion provided by Ms. Cristina Cuc (Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Romania):

- Proposals for short-term measures: Projects to improve navigation conditions usually require a long implementation period; prior to the planned interventions, measures with short-term effects are needed. Such measures could include dredging, surveying of the riverbed, signalization systems etc., activities for which some countries will need to purchase the necessary equipment.
- The need to redefine the optimal conditions for navigation was highlighted. The representative of the Danube Commission explained that they started such an activity and that they will be able to provide more information in autumn, after several experts meetings.
- The representative of VIRUS expressed his disagreement with the Danube Commission's intention to define the optimal conditions of navigation, stressing that they will never accept greater fairway depths on the Danube.

- Proposal for creating/improving the forecasts of navigation – this would allow on the one hand for an efficient planning of vessel journeys and on the other hand provide waterway administrations with the possibility to intervene in due time in case of risks.
- The view was expressed that states should be held responsible for the maintenance of inland waterways.
- The private sector stressed that the authorities responsible for policy making and project planning do not involve the industry and proposed to create a framework for this purpose. It was also underlined that the problems on the Danube are very well known (for more than 10 years), but that the responsible authorities are not taking the necessary measures in order to address them.
- The representative of the WWF expressed his appreciation to the coordinators of PA 1a for how they involve NGOs but also expressed his dissatisfaction with the low level of involvement in project planning, suggesting that the EUSDR could be a framework to address these shortcomings.
- A representative of the European Commission pointed out that currently there is a lack of trust between the authorities implementing projects on the one hand and NGOs on the other and proposed as a solution, that once an agreement is achieved between the two sides, that both sides should stay with what was agreed.
- The Bulgarian Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Public Works and National Contact Point for the EUSDR proposed a common project to develop the trans-European Corridor VII through improvement of the navigability on the Danube river, modernization of the port infrastructure, promotion of intermodal transport and development of information systems using the Connecting Europe Facility. She explained that for the next funding period an integrated approach for developing the Danube Region will be necessary, thus increasing the opportunities for development and project funding. The participants were in principle in favour of such an initiative. About the involvement of NGOs, the Deputy Minister said that there must be flexibility and that sometimes it is necessary to reach a compromise between project developers and NGOs for successful implementation of projects.

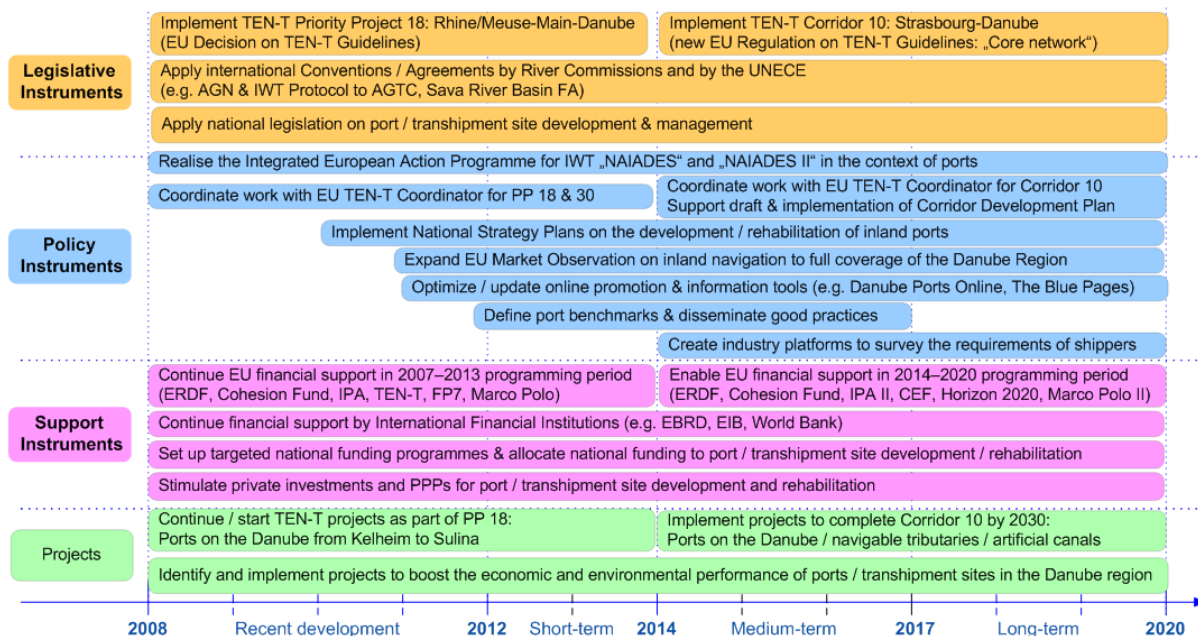
## 2 | Waterway management



Summary of the discussion provided by Mr. Thomas Hartl (via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH, Austria):

- A definition is needed about the scope of the term "waterway management" – what could/should it include and what not; the interfaces between management authorities (e.g. between ports and waterway management authorities) should be taken into consideration.
- There is a need for harmonising waterway management along the entire course of the Danube in line with the legal framework (e.g. Danube waterway management strategy/plan); tasks for which waterway management authorities are responsible should be performed on a higher professional level. The point was raised that an improvement of waterway management (including fairway maintenance) cannot eliminate structural deficits of a waterway (physical bottlenecks) – action will thus be needed on both aspects.
- Identify the status quo of inland waterways in the Danube region (capacity, hydrology, bathymetry, morphology etc.) and define a minimum standard to be achieved/maintained. Perform a "needs assessment" for what is needed in order to improve the situation, focussing on sustainable measures. Make the provision of "reliable" infrastructure more "dynamic".
- Minimum fairway depths and widths should be defined/provided for specific vessel types.
- Provide complete, harmonised and up-to-date information on the current status of the fairway for the entire navigable course of a river/canal, including results from riverbed surveying. Create dedicated monitoring tools and information tools.
- Harmonise standards on
  - the quality and quantity of dredging activities (including ports and ecological issues) and
  - on the safety of navigation (regulations of safety, management of dangerous situations).
- The lack of harmonisation creates a need for concerted actions regarding
  - the bathymetry of the riverbed (surveying activities; include information received from echo sounders on board of vessels),
  - the quality of information provided for the users of the waterway and
  - the forecasting of water levels.
- Administrative issues:
  - Simplify and harmonise border revisions as they currently have severe negative impacts on the travel times of vessels;
  - Revision of locks should be shorter and should be done in a more concerted way along the Danube (also provide proactive information on closures);
  - There is an excessive bureaucracy in some countries with regard to all aspects of inland navigation.

### 3 | Ports & sustainable freight transport



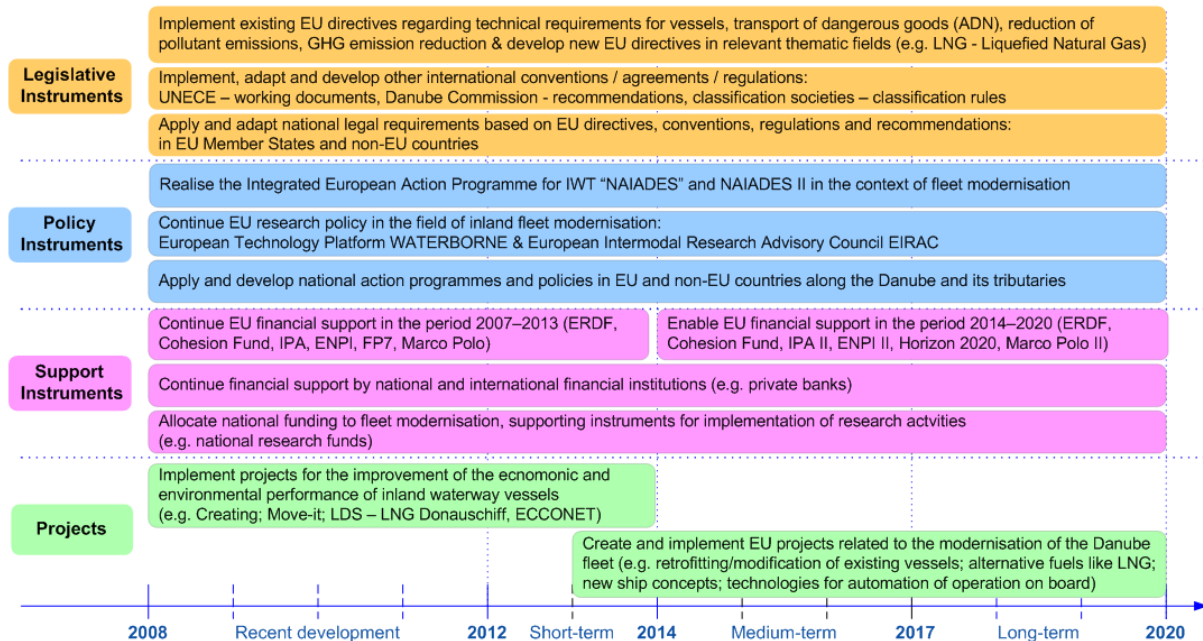
Summary of the discussion provided by Ms. Monica Patrichi (Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Romania):

- Many comments referred to multimodal transport and the interconnections with other modes of transport, e.g. to think about modal chains, multimodal transport; develop multimodal connections – land projects in the frame of port infrastructure development; reposition inland ports to logistic service providers and argue for the development with different impulse, not only IWT; specific actions for improvement of opportunities for involvement of the supply chain and logistic industry; rebuilding/realisation of the closed ports for the new economical targets.
- The participants proposed to organise a meeting with the Coordinators of Priority Area 1b on road, rail and air links, in order to receive information (including maps) on where the infrastructure for road and rail will be improved (UA, BG, RO). Ports are intermodal nodes and their development is linked with the development of rail and road connections. The moderator informed the participants that the Coordinators of PA 1b will attend the next PA 1a SG meeting, which will take place in Bratislava, 3/4 May 2012.
- It was expressed that the development of inland ports also very much depends on their links with ports that accommodate maritime vessels like Constanta, Izmail and Varna.
- Regarding the comment "promote a mission and logo for the logistic activities based on IWT", there is already a logo for the EUSDR and the opinion was that this is not a priority and that the actual logo is nice and can be used for the activities and projects promoted within PA 1a. Also, the opinion was expressed that if any country would like to create a logo or a mission to be free to do so and to present a proposal to the WG members or the SG.
- Regarding environmental issues like, e.g., taking into consideration the Joint Statement, Birds and Habitats Directive, EIA and to integrate them into the proposed Road Maps, the opinion was that all the development projects already take into consideration these aspects (EIAs are made according to national legislation) and that it would not be necessary to include them into the Road Maps.
- The opinion was expressed that legislation and some general rules established for the operation of ports should be harmonised. Having in mind that not only in Europe, but world-wide, there are

ports under the authority of central governments (Ministries of Transport), local administrations and private ports and that several studies and initiatives aimed at a common approach for this issue did not succeed and prove which is the best model for the administration or operation of a port, it was decided that some minimum standards (on the services to be provided, opening hours, waste management facilities and others) should be established for ports in the Danube region. This opinion is in line with the Road Map proposed for ports by the PACs 1a, which includes the promotion of a definition of port benchmarks and good practices. This issue could also be in line with the comment raised by participants to have “master plans” for the management of Danube ports.

- Attention was drawn to a dedicated fund for the modernisation of port infrastructure in Germany on which private investors can develop further specialised terminals or logistic parks.
- A representative of via donau mentioned a study concerning the Austrian Danube ports which was conducted recently. Within the study, a list of companies was finalised and used for an analysis of their profiles, of traffic volumes that could be generated as port throughput, of the distance of the port to economic areas and of the quality of infrastructure (hinterland connection). The study also includes an analysis of the available areas for industrial location within the ports. This kind of study could be an example for good practices, could be mentioned in the Progress Report and notified to the SG members.
- Regarding the comment on high port tariffs in the Port of Constanta which was provided as a feedback to the PACs 1a, the Director of port infrastructure from Constanta port explained that the tariffs applied by the National Company Maritime Ports Administration Constanta are at the same level as in other European maritime ports and that these tariffs are published on website of the Port of Constanta.
- During the discussion the issue was raised that some measures should be identified in order to transfer cargo from road to inland waterway transport. Presently, the unions and associations of road operators are very strong and there are agreements between maritime lines and road operators.
- Main conclusions of the discussions:
  - In order to develop ports in the Danube river basin into multimodal logistics centres and to promote sustainable freight transport in the Danube region, it is necessary to have a complete picture of ports, their development plans and throughput and to have information regarding the projects for the development of road and rail links in the Danube Region (from PA 1b Coordinators)
  - Definition of port benchmarks and identification of good practices (within the Danube Region there are different kinds of administration, procedures, tariffs)
  - Identification of infrastructure and other projects that will be implemented until 2013 and projects that will be implemented after 2014.

#### 4 | Fleet modernisation

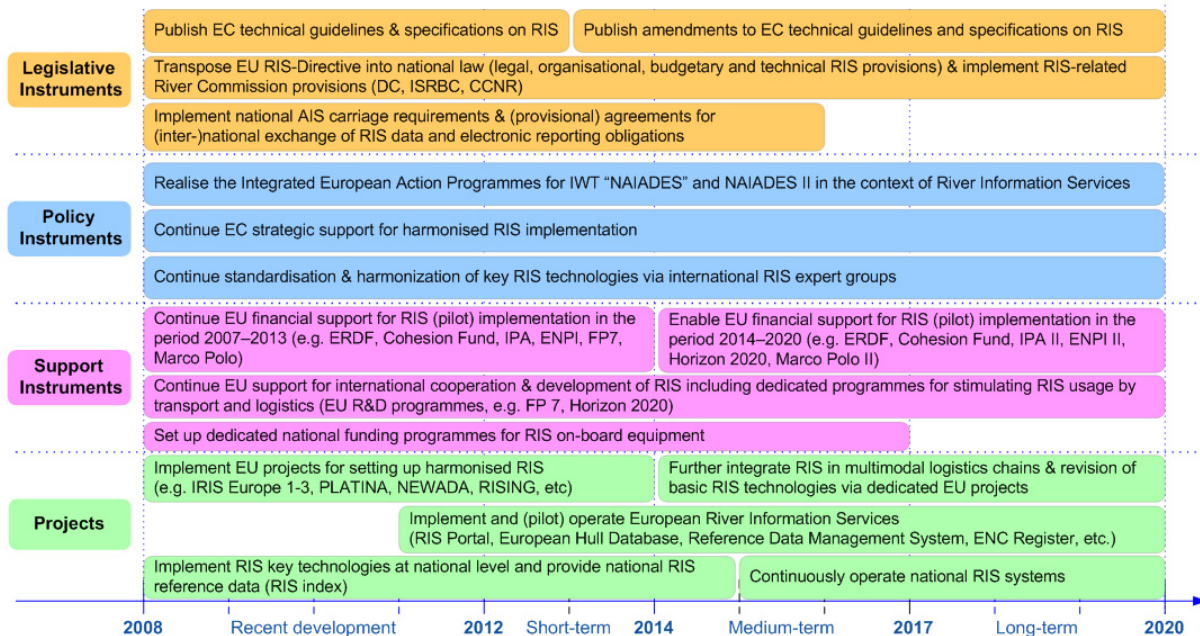


Summary of the discussion provided by Mr. Juha Schweighofer (via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH, Austria):

- Economical considerations are ranked first when making investment decisions. “Greening” of the fleet takes place as far as it is prescribed by regulations. Further actions related to the “greening” of the fleet require either sufficient subsidies or a clear prove of associated economical benefits. The lack of subsidies may have a negative impact on the improvement of the environmental performance of inland waterway transport, weakening its position in comparison with other modes of transport.
- For the implementation of innovations promising business plans are essential. Innovations will be implemented only if a decent return on investment and clear benefit can be expected with high confidence on a relatively short term.
- Provision of improved framework conditions for inland waterway transport has a higher priority than innovation (infrastructure, waterway sage fees, revision procedures, customs procedures etc.). Removal of administrative and infrastructural barriers is essential for improving the competitiveness of inland waterway transport. Once this has been achieved, the consideration of innovations will become of increasing importance.
- Provision of subsidies for fleet innovation may be associated with risks related to distortion of competition, requiring mechanisms in order to avoid this phenomenon.
- Provision of funding dedicated to fleet modernisation is requested from the European Union as well as through activities within the framework of the Danube Region Strategy. The funding rates for SMEs are requested to be higher. Related to financial support and funding the particular framework conditions, business practices, markets and market requirements of the Danube region have to be accounted for.
- Highly innovative solutions are not necessarily required. Rather simple, practical solutions can have also significant effects related to the improvement of the economical and ecological performance of inland waterway transport. Research and development areas related to fleet modernisation may relate to:

- Waste heat recovery and usage of cooling water from engines for heating of accommodations and provision of warm water
- Cost efficient catalyst systems
- LNG (liquefied natural gas) as fuel for vessels
- Altered main dimensions of vessels (e.g. length, draught)
- Reduction of ship weight
- Reduction of maintenance effort as well as proactive proper maintenance
- It was suggested to create a separate platform for the exchange of information on the kind of research and development required from the industry for particular improvement of Danube navigation. Currently it seems to be the case that highly skilled research institutions do not know exactly where to put their efforts. The involvement of the industry is essential. It remains an open question how to involve the industry. The existence of other platforms e.g. the Waterborne Technology Platform was considered as not sufficient.
- Related to technical requirements stricter regulations and control of compliance within the Danube region was suggested.
- It was proposed to create a timetable with concrete actions and single items to be discussed more in detail in the next WG meetings.
- Further issues to be considered within fleet modernisation relate to:
  - Waste management
  - Inclusion of environmental concerns (Joint Statement, Water Framework Directive, Birds and Habitat Directive et al.)
  - Initiation of EU-wide competitions for provision of new and innovative ideas related to fleet modernisation involving e.g. ship owners, research institutions and universities.
- The session was concluded with following sentence: “Don’t dream of magic adaptation of vessels to the river as a solution.” The sentence was interpreted in the following way: When it comes to fleet modernisation, the solutions have to be practical and economical.

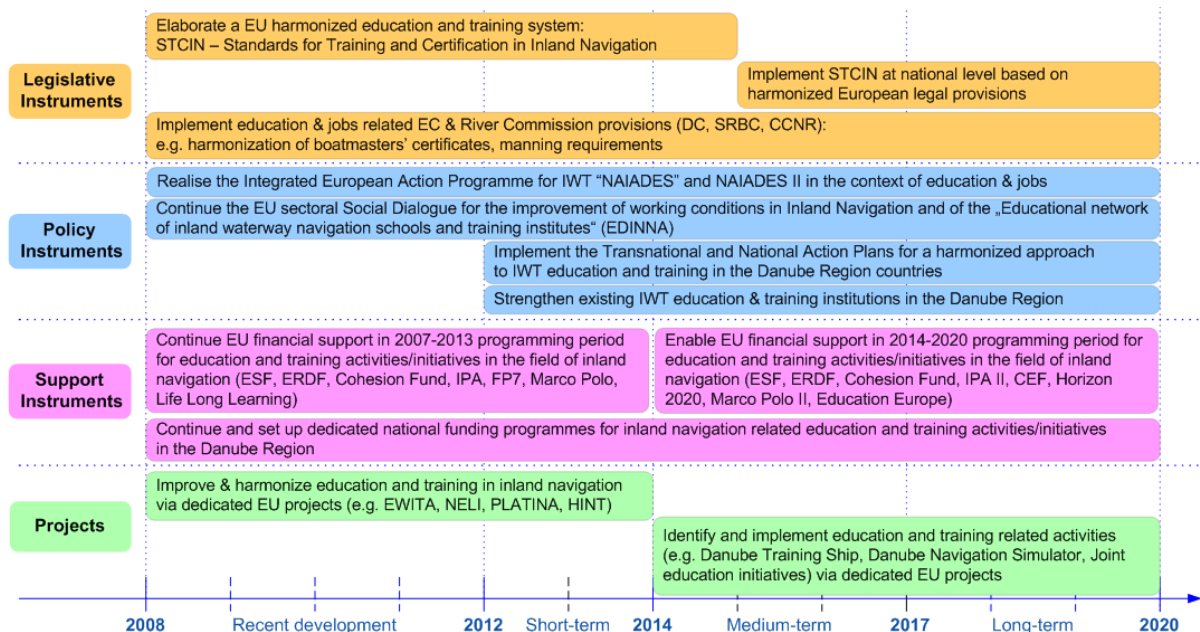
## 5 | River Information Services



Summary of the discussion provided by Mr. Jürgen Trögl (via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH, Austria):

- The participants of the discussion on the round table dedicated to River Information Services (RIS) consisted mainly of representatives of national RIS Providers or RIS Authorities.
- From the point of view of the participants, RIS are on a very good track from a technical point of view and can be considered a success story. Still, too little information was given to the end users in the past and the responsible authorities did not succeed in direct approach of non-governmental users to make them tap the existing service portfolio. Further legal hurdles to use RIS as logistics users are the main problem to let logistics users really benefit from interesting services like tracking & tracing of vessels and cargo. Although RIS providers do not share this opinion, complaints were also made in the past that the level of service is far from being harmonized over the different riparian states of the river Danube. All in all, measures will have to be taken from responsible authorities to provide tangible benefits (instead of potential benefits) to logistics users.
- Besides a more direct approach to address users and encourage them to use RIS the following main conclusions were made as recommendations to the EUSDR PA 1a Steering Group:
  - National authorities shall be encouraged to adapt the national law to allow for RIS data exchange with RIS providers from other countries (also across national borders) as well as with logistics users on the basis of mutual agreements
  - The European Commission's Directorate-General Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) shall be approached to extend and detail the RIS Directive to explicitly mandate EU member states to exchange RIS data amongst each other
- Further existing initiatives like NAIADES or the projects NEWADA duo and IRIS Europe 3 shall be used to agree on balanced minimum service levels for RIS in the Danube region. The EUSDR working groups can be used as additional platform for harmonization.
- During the workshop it was also concluded that a more active use of RIS could also be beneficial for other activities like waterway, infrastructure or port management.

## 6 | Education & jobs



Summary of the discussion provided by Ms. Vera Hofbauer (via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH, Austria):

- The participants of the round table generally agreed with the Road Map proposed by PACs 1a.
- Especially the process of modernisation and harmonisation of nautical certifications was emphasised to be of high European importance. This process has to be harmonised beyond national borders (of EU and third countries), beyond the borders of river systems and beyond institutional borders like the European Commission, the river commissions and other international institutions like the UNECE. The modernisation process shall include "Standards for training and Certification in Inland Navigation – STCIN" assuring the safety of personnel, passenger, goods and nature. Harmonisation will contribute to a higher mobility of workforce in this international market of inland navigation.
- Personnel are lacking and the jobs are – though with good perspectives – very special and not widely known. The promotion of jobs in inland navigation, especially on board was seen as a crucial accompanying action to be taken.
- The participants recommended adding issues concerning "port jobs" in the policy instruments and projects fields of the road map.
- English is seen as the future common language in inland navigation, but the implementation has to be done step by step: with the integration of "River Speak" into education and training and with adequate transition periods.

#### 4. Open discussion in plenum on Road Maps

Following the discussions on the round tables dedicated to one specific thematic action field of PA 1a, an open discussion (moderated by Mr. Vorderwinkler) took place as a wrap-up of the meeting in plenum:

Mr. **Beckmann** of the WWF's Danube-Carpathian Programme expressed his appreciation to the coordinators of PA 1a for how they involve NGOs but also expressed his dissatisfaction with the low level of involvement in project planning, suggesting that the EUSDR could be a framework to address these shortcomings. Environmental concerns have been a key reason behind some of the significant delays of some of the ongoing navigation projects, and therefore a more strategic approach should be taken within the EUSDR to addressing environmental and other concerns from the beginning, in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts and delays. He also emphasised that the aim of the EUSDR is to solve obstacles to navigability (target in COM(2010) 715 final), which is different from eliminating bottlenecks (e.g. noted in the overview of the action plan).

Mr. **van Winssen**, who represented the International Department of the Dutch association Koninklijke Schuttevlaar and works as a captain on a cargo vessel frequently navigating on the Danube, pointed at the three most severe barriers for Danube navigation, which in his opinion currently are: Border revisions (create delays in the order of 2 to 3 days), port dues (e.g. Port of Constanta) and dues to be paid for travelling on the Danube-Black Sea Canal.

Ms. **Nikolova**, Bulgarian Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Public Works, expressed the commitment of Bulgaria to the implementation of the EUSDR's Priority Area 1a.

Ms. **Ploeg Cruceru**, representing the European Commission's DG for Regional Policy and responsible for the implementation of EUSDR's PA 1a, suggested to think about the logical flow of actions in order to implement the Road Maps from now on (who does what, how, when, with whom?). In the future, Working Groups should be split to be able to better go into details. Regarding infrastructure projects, she thinks that a stable set of requirements is needed in order to balance ecology and transport on the basis of the current legal situation.

Mr. **Rehm** of VIRUS, an Austrian environmental organisation, sees a clear deficit at the moment to find common interpretations, e.g. of the AGN and the Joint Statement, also with regard to the "reliability" of a waterway. The obstacles as well as the optimal conditions should be identified. Cooperation is needed in order to define the further necessary steps.

Mr. **Dumitrescu**, President of Intelligent Transport Systems Romania, sees a problem in thematically splitting up Working Groups. He suggested one overarching inland waterway transport infrastructure topic/action field to serve correlations and integration between the related subtopics, i.e. waterway infrastructure & management, ports & sustainable freight transport and River Information Services.

Mr. **Seitz**, General Secretary of Pro Danube International, sees a huge gap between the very high political attention that the Danube Region Strategy has at the moment on the one hand and the current status of the Danube on the other, specifically pointing to the severe low-water period in the second half of 2011 and the shortfalls in fairway maintenance of Danube waterway administrations. In order to make shortcomings more transparent in the future, Mr. Seitz suggested to install a "waterway maintenance observatory".

Mr. **Zinke**, Head of Zinke Environment Consulting for CEE, raised the question on the procedure / criteria for prioritising projects, specifically in relation to the work being done by the other PACs of the EUSDR.

Mr. **Schindler**, Counsellor for the Maintenance of the Fairway of the Danube Commission (DC), informed the attendants about the Danube Commission's "Plan of Major Works on the Danube" and that the DC is currently working on the problem of defining the terms "critical" and "bottlenecks". First results on the issue will be available in September 2012.

Mr. **Blanaru**, Director of Port Infrastructure at the Port of Constanta, responded to the feedback received on alleged exorbitant port dues at the Port of Constanta. He explained that the tariffs applied by the National Company Maritime Ports Administration Constanta are at the same level as in other European maritime ports and that these tariffs are published on the website of the Port of Constanta.

## 5. Next steps to be taken in Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR

The results from the discussions and the feedback received by the attendants of the 2nd Working Group meeting will be integrated by the PACs 1a in the draft **Road Maps** for the implementation of PA 1a of the EUSDR and submitted to the members of the Steering Group at their 3rd meeting on 3rd and 4th of May 2012 in Bratislava. An agreement should be achieved in the Steering Group on the basic structure and contents of these Road Maps, which will then be further elaborated by the PACs 1a and serve as a basis for reporting on the implementation of PA 1a to the European Commission in June 2012 – **first Progress Report**.

The first **Annual Stakeholder Conference** for PA 1a of the EUSDR will take place in Bucharest on the 24th and 25th of May 2012. There, the draft Road Maps will be presented to the general public, inviting them to also provide their feedback on the status quo of the implementation of PA 1a.

The **3rd meeting of the Working Groups** for EUSDR PA 1a will be held in autumn 2012. The exact date and venue will be communicated by the PACs in due time.

## Enclosures

*Please note:* The following documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1a → [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu) (visit tab "Working Groups & Projects")

- (1) Agenda and venue of the meeting
- (2) Meeting Minutes (i.e. this document)
- (3) Presentations held at the meeting (introduction by PACs, presentations on thematic Road Maps)
- (4) Feedback by attendants (responses provided on cards)
- (5) Background document (draft Road Maps and actions and targets identified for PA 1a)
- (6) Project summaries
- (7) List of registrations

A selection of photos taken during the meeting is also available online on the website under the tab "Photos".