
EU Strategy for the Danube Region
Priority Area 1a – To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways

**6th Meeting of the Steering Group for
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

Budapest, Hungary
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MINUTES

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1. Welcome to the participants, adoption of the minutes from the previous meeting, adoption of the agenda and introductory keynote

The 6th meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways - was held in Budapest, Hungary in the premises of the Ministry of National Development. The Coordinators of Priority Area 1a (henceforth: PACs 1a) of the EUSDR, represented by Mr. Reinhard VORDERWINKLER of Austria and Ms. Monica PATRICHI of Romania, welcomed the participants, members of the Steering Group, Mr. Balázs Medgyesy – Government Commissioner and Hungarian NCP, representatives of the European Commission (DG REGIO) and representatives of river commissions. The participating countries were Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Romania and Moldova.

The Minutes from the 5th meeting as well as the agenda for the 6th meeting of the Steering Group were approved unanimously and without amendments.

The Coordinators of Priority Area 1a (PACs 1a), Austria and Romania, provided an overview of the current ongoing activities and of the discussions in the working group meeting held on 20th November 2013 in Budapest. The status quo of the PA1a activities is published on the website www.danube-navigation.eu. The website is updated permanently.

Mr. Balázs MEDGYESY (Government Commissioner and Hungarian NCP) welcomed the participants and underlined the importance of the EUSDR and inland waterway transport for the Danube Region countries and, due to its geographic location, for Hungary in particular. Mr. Medgyesy emphasized that the challenges of economical and climate change as well as of migration should be faced and that the best tool to address these issues is the EUSDR. He underlined the high level support for the strategy from the countries through their coordinators, as well as from the European Commission.

He appreciated the progress registered within PA1a and stated that the new European funds and opportunities should be used. Concerning activities in Hungary, he stated that the RIS extension, the establishment of a Single Window System for traffic safety and the single Schengen border are the main elements. The EUSDR is included in the Partnership Agreements as well.

Hungary aims at integrating inland waterway transport into the logistic chains more intensely in order to obtain a sustainable system. Sustainable results could be achieved through the alignment of funding and Hungary will support the implementation of a common vision.

2. Introduction of state of play of the EUSDR

Mrs. Ann - Jasmin KRABATSCH (DG REGIO) informed the participants that all States submitted the Partnership Agreements and the Commission made efforts to be assured that the EUSDR is reflected therein. She also reported that the legal framework for the new cohesion funds was adopted and that in the next financing period, the new *Danube Transnational 2014-2020 programme* will cover the geographical area of the Danube Strategy. A meeting of the Programming Committee under Hungarian lead (JTS in Budapest) is scheduled for December in Zagreb.

Afterwards, Mrs. Krabatsch presented the main conclusions of the 2nd Annual Forum on the EUSDR, held in Bucharest on 28 – 29 of October 2013, which focused on the idea “Stronger together, stronger in the world”. The Forum was attended by more than 1000 participants and 4 parallel workshops were organized. The main message of these workshops was that the cooperation process should be enhanced and improved. PA 1a has been called one of the most successful Priority Areas.

Many discussions during the Annual Forum focused on waterway maintenance and Commissioner Hahn showed great interest in this topic. He expressed his willingness to support Romania and Bulgaria in bringing works on the common sector of the Danube forward. Mrs. Krabatsch also referred to the recent meeting between Romania and Bulgaria, organised on 19th November 2013 in Silistra (BG) by the Bulgarian presidency.

The next Annual Forum will be organized in Vienna on 26th – 27th June 2014 and will focus on improving the governance of the macroregional strategies.

3. Working Groups for the implementation of the EUSDR's Priority Area 1a on inland waterways

Effective waterway maintenance

Mr. Thomas HARTL (via donau, Austrian Technical Secretariat for PA 1a) prepared a summary of the discussions during the WG meeting which had focused on the topics of waterway management and fleet modernization. It was also emphasised that fairway conditions are essential for efficient use of the ships.

In the WG meeting, the outcome of the questionnaire regarding waterway maintenance activities for 2013 was presented. Mr. Hartl mentioned Mr. Capatu's intervention concerning the dissatisfaction of the private sector about the application of the Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance, signed in June 2012 in Luxemburg, lack of EU financing for maintenance and administrative barriers.

Mr. Hartl presented the objective of the Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure and the key role of the PA 1a on monitoring its implementation. Through the questionnaire presented, each country is providing information on waterway maintenance, which is included in the Annual Reports submitted to the European Commission. The declaration was signed/adopted by all Danube Region Countries except Hungary.

Furthermore, Mr. Hartl provided information on one of the main outcomes of the NEWADA duo project, which is a master plan for waterway maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries (Waterway Maintenance Master Plan - WMMP). It will be based on information gathered by questionnaires sent to the Danube countries: each country is asked to provide information on maintenance plans, expected costs and need for equipment (e.g. surveying and dredging vessels). This needs assessment will be a main element of the WMMP and serve as basis to prepare for funding opportunities in the next European programme period.

Another important outcome of NEWADA duo will be an Annual Danube Report comprising performance indicators and statistics.

Mr. Reinhard VORDERWINKLER underlined that the Declaration was signed/adopted by all Danube Region Countries except Hungary; still, there are several reasons of not being fully implemented by the countries (i.e. lack of funding).

For preparing the WMMP within the NEWADA duo project, each country should provide information not only on the operational needs, but also in terms of costs. Mr. Vorderwinkler stressed that, for the next financing period, financing possibilities for equipment (such as surveying and dredging vessels) exist and that respective needs should be communicated. A good means for that will be the WMMP.

In the same time, according to the Declaration's provisions, the Ministers who are responsible for transport committed to meet once a year to monitor the implementation of the Declaration. No meeting was held until today. Taking into account the SG's monitoring role, the Technical Secretariats from Romania and Austria have prepared a draft letter to be sent to all Transport Ministers from the Danube Region Countries. In the letter, the need for implementation of the Declaration is stressed and support in preparing the first meeting of the transport ministers is expressed. It could be held in June 2014, back-to-back with the next TTE Council meeting.

The SG Members unanimously agreed with the proposal of sending a letter to the ministers responsible for transport within the Danube Region Countries. The SG members contributed suggestions for the text, which will be included; afterwards, the new draft will be circulated for final approval according to the Rules of Procedure of the SG.

The European Commission, the Danube Commission and the Sava Commission also expressed their support for the First Ministerial Annual Meeting on the follow – up of the implementation of the Luxembourg Declaration.

Regarding this meeting, **Mr. Petar MARGIĆ**, General Director of the Danube Commission, provided information on the discussions with the European Commission in this respect. It could take place in Budapest at the headquarters of the Danube Commission.

The decision on time and place of the First Annual Ministerial Meeting concerning the Luxemburg Declaration remains to be taken by the ministers responsible for transport, as the participation should be extended to all Danube Region countries.

Status quo of maintenance plans in different countries

According to the Luxembourg Declaration, the implementation of the actions foreseen in the Declaration is to be monitored through a common regular monitoring and reporting mechanism in the framework of the EUSDR's PA 1a. A Questionnaire has been drafted in order to enable Danube riparian states to provide specific information on the execution of regular fairway maintenance works as agreed on in the Declaration. The SG members were asked to present the updated information for 2013 filled in the questionnaire and also other relevant information related to maintenance activities foreseen for 2014.

Romania pointed out that the maintenance activities are performed by the River Administration of the Lower Danube (AFDJ) based in Galati and reported that in 2013, an amount of 1,101,000 Euros was provided for measurement activities, from which 709,953 Euros were spent. For 2014, an amount of 1,125,000 Euros was planned for this activity. For dredging interventions, an amount of 2,445,000 Euros was foreseen in 2013, from which 1,792,271 Euros were spent. For 2014, the amount of 2,700,000 Euros is foreseen for this activity. For signalling activities, the amount of 3,515,590 Euros was provided in 2013, from which 2,636,695 Euros were spent. For 2014, an amount of 3,640,450 Euros is foreseen for this activity.

Austria presented the measures taken after the summer floods, providing details on the surveying activities of more than 100 spots. In 50 spots, dredging of approximately 1.3 million cubic meters will be necessary. Contracts with dredging companies were concluded and the critical points were prioritized since there are only a few dredging companies in Austria. The dredging started in July 2013 and should be finalized at the beginning of 2014 according to the schedule. RIS is functional along the entire Austrian Danube stretch. A unified historical database is under preparation within the NEWADA duo project and will be ready in 2014.

Serbia presented the status of the project River Training and Dredging Works on Selected Locations along the Danube River, which has started in 2011, for which both feasibility study and EIA were finalised. By the end of 2013, the EIA legal procedure, which started in August, will be completed. For the Serbian – Croatian common sector, a Joint Commission was established which meets twice per year. Within this Joint Commission, two technical working groups were created and the critical sectors were identified jointly. The prioritisation of the 17 critical sectors is currently under discussion. For the period 2014 – 2020, the planning process is ongoing and works for improving the conditions for navigation on the Danube River and Sava River are among high ranked priorities. RIS is operational in Serbia and its use will be mandatory as of January 2014.

Bosnia and Herzegovina informed the participants that two months ago, the signalling activities on the Sava River were started based on a three years contract with a private company. For the common sector with Croatia, close cooperation is taking place based on an agreement concluded between the two countries. Such an agreement was signed also with Serbia (30 km of common sector). The works are foreseen to start in 2016, after the finalisation of the studies, in close cooperation with Croatia and Serbia (PLOVPUT).

Slovakia pointed out that all maintenance activities are carried out according to schedule. After the summer floods, new measurements revealed that for the stretch upstream of Bratislava, just dredging activities will not be sufficient. The budget for signalisation in 2013 comprised 400.000 Euros. The same amount is foreseen for 2014.

Moldavia informed that works on Prut River have started in July 2013 and a strategy for modernizing the waterway infrastructure and for logistics was approved on national level. A project for building a railway in Giurgiulesti Port is foreseen.

Croatia explained that for years, no maintenance works have been carried out on Sava River. Progress was made for the preparation of the major infrastructure project, however this not being maintenance works. Because of lack of funds, only signalisation is possible, which is carried out continuously.

Hungary considers the availability of a sediment balance model as a prerequisite for major infrastructure projects on the Danube. An international consortium has been established to conduct sediment balance research. As soon as the comprehensive social and environmental cost-benefit toolkit is available, Hungary intends to finance IWT projects through CEF. Negotiations are underway with DG MOVE regarding the scope and timeframe of such projects. Funds for RIS are allocated in national Operational Programmes.

Modernised Danube fleet

Mr. Thomas GUESNET (DST) provided information on the status and preliminary conclusions of the Innovative Danube Vessel study on energy efficiency of inland water ships and ways to improve it. The study is focused on vessel types showing the highest traffic on the Danube and on solutions than can be implemented fast.

Mr. Guesnet underlined that water depths have a major influence on the loading capacity, the speed of the vessel, fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions. RIS could assist in optimising cruising behaviour in dependence of the situation of the waterway, but however, lack of water depths could not be compensated by innovative ships.

Ship waste management on the Danube

Mr. Hans Berger (via donau) and **Mrs. Raluca Danila** (APDM Galati) presented the CO-WANDA project (A Convention for Ship Waste Management on the Danube, duration 2012-2014), which contributes to a green transport system in the Danube region. Within this project, an International Danube Ship Waste Convention including financing models and control mechanisms will be elaborated as well as waste reception facilities for users developed along the Danube. The first draft of the Convention will be available in early 2014, and an Electronic Vignette System to support the waste reception network management is under development as well. The project partners asked for support for data investigations, evaluating national framework conditions, feedback on the draft Convention, facilitate communication on national level.

Mr. Pjotr SUVOROV (Deputy General Director of the Danube Commission's Secretariat) made a presentation on risk assessment in Danube navigation. Mr. Suvorov described the infrastructure characteristics on the Danube, where a large number of critical sections have been identified that do not meet the parameters recommended by the Danube Commission. Thus, the level of risks of the Danube navigation can be considered rather high.

According to the indicators of the Danube Commission, provided by the main gauging stations, the most visible indicator of the waterway's navigability is the number of days of interrupted navigation on a certain section, as well as the number of days when passage of vessels with a draught of 2.5 m cannot be ensured. During periods of climate phenomena, conditions are mainly defined by crew qualification and well-timed management of a situation by the local administration within their area of responsibility (i.e. by enabling risk management).

Mr. Gerhard Skoff (President of Danube Tourist Commission) stressed that this year, a lot of problems were faced along the Danube (i.e. floods, low waters, strikes) which generated losses of about 16 Mio Euros. Mr. Skoff underlined the importance of the SG support for the national authorities in order to improve the navigation conditions on the Danube and its reliability.

4. Conclusions and priority actions 2013 – 2014 within PA 1a

The Steering Group members were informed that three project consortia have issued requests for a Letter of Recommendation for their projects (Danube Islands, Ship Wreck Removal, DREAM Project). The SG members agreed to support all three project proposals, subject to the applications being revised in order to meet the required criteria.

The next meeting of the SG is scheduled for June 2014 in Vienna, in combination with the EUSDR Annual Forum.

The drafted appeal to implement the Luxemburg Declaration will be finalised and will, subject to no formal objection, be sent to DG Regio, DG Move and the Transport Ministers of the Danube region.

Enclosures

Please note: All documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1a
→ www.danube-navigation.eu

- (1) Presentations given by the participants at the Steering Group meeting
- (2) List of attendants