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

**12th Meeting of the Steering Group
for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

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MINUTES

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1. PA 1a Kick-Off: Welcome and introduction

The 12th meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Vienna, Austria, on the 11th of May 2017.

The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Vera Hofbauer, head of inland navigation department within the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (on behalf of **Mrs. Ursula Zechner** PA1a Austrian Coordinator) and Mrs. Cristina Cuc, counselor for European affairs within the Romanian Ministry of Transport (on behalf of **Mr. Mihai Tămâian** PA1a Romanian Coordinator), henceforth: PACs 1a welcomed the participants, members of the Steering Group and the observer members - representatives of the European Commission (DG MOVE, DG REGIO), Danube Strategy Point (DSP), representatives of the Danube Commission and transnational organizations (Pro Danube International and Council of Danube Cities and Regions). FAIRway project partners were present as well. The participating countries were: Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine.

The participants were informed that Mr. Mihai Tămâian, Secretary of State responsible for naval transport in Romania was recently appointed, as the Romanian PA1a Romanian Coordinator. He attended the Priority Areas Coordinators meeting, in Vienna, on 3-4 May 2017.

Mrs. Désirée Oen, DG MOVE, made a statement presenting the advantages of the inland navigation, which have a great potential for the sustainable economic development of cities and regions. Being the greenest transport mode IWT was very much promoted in CEF. Mrs Oen presented the latest information about the Rhine – Danube Corridor (including TENtec maps, list of projects, the corridor work plan updated in June 2016, the agreed priorities) and highlighted the future needs for the Danube River, such as: greater multi-modality and better interconnection, improvements in waterway management, equipment and availability of qualified staff to assure the continuous navigation, the need to address environmental issues with an smart approach: "good navigation status" and "good ecological status". The main IWW legislative developments in 2016 are the Approval and entry into force in October 2016 of the new EU Directive 1629/2016 on Technical Standards of Inland Navigation Vessels and an advanced state of discussion on the new Directive on IWT Professional Qualifications that could come in force in 2017. Information was provided on the Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team (METEET) aiming to promote conciliation of navigation and environmental requirements and to help the authorities to prepare good projects related to the waterway. In September 2017, a team of experts will start as a pilot project in Croatia. Mrs Oen made references on the "Good Navigation Status" and FAIRway projects and assured the participants of the full support of the European Commission and availability to work together to remove the problems hindering the navigation.

The Technical Secretariat of PA 1a informed the participants that PACs 1a have signed a contract with Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) for the financing of coordination activities in the period January 2017 – December 2019. The current meeting represents also the **kick-off event for this contract** and a summary of PA 1a Work Plan was presented. The Work Plan is in line with the application form submitted to DTP and is organized in four work packages as follows:

- WP 1 - Management, publicity and communication;
- WP 2 - Policy development;
- WP 3 - cooperation and coordination with EU institutions, PA 1a stakeholders and other Priority Areas;
- WP 4 – Strategic projects monitoring and supporting projects initiatives, projects being the engines for achieving the targets.

The Work Plan foresees meetings of the PA 1a thematic Working Groups (WG) and PA 1a Steering Group (SG), which was reminded that its scope is to assist the PACs and to make decisions on:

- Updating the targets and action plan
- Approving Progress reports
- Release of policy input papers

- Projects labelling and issuing Letters of Recommendations
- Monitoring Working Group activities:
 1. Waterway infrastructure & management
 2. Ports & sustainable freight transport
 3. Fleet modernisation
 4. River Information Services
 5. Education & jobs
 6. Administrative processes

The success of EUSDR PA1a involve all SG members will be assured by a good cooperation with all the stakeholders, projects in line with targets, a close interconnection between policy and project level and close coordination with DGs of the Commission (REGIO, MOVE, ENV).

The participants were asked to make observations on the PA 1a priorities presented, their national priorities or other issues that could be included in the PA 1a Work Plan for 2017 – 2019.

Mr. Cesare Bernabei, external expert for DG REGIO, appreciated the work done so far in PA 1a and mentioned that PA 1a is an example for the cooperation in other PAs or other macroregional strategies. The issue was discussed also at the Joint meeting of Transport Coordinators of the EU macro-regional strategies held in March 2017, in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Mrs. Olena Proskura, Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine, mentioned that the priorities presented by PA 1a are in line with the priorities of Ukraine in the field of inland navigation. There are projects for the development of the navigation on Nipru River as well as for studies to connect Nipru and Danube Rivers. There are challenges between Romania and Ukraine regarding the inclusion of Bystroe Canal on the TEN-T maps. Ukrainian authorities addressed to Romanian ones with different solutions in order to find a common approach on the issue.

2. Introduction and adoption of agenda

The **Agenda for the 12th meeting of the Steering Group** was approved with the amendment that the RIS thematic theme will not be discussed today, having in view that all experts in this field attend the RIS week organized in Belgrade, Serbia.

The agenda included presentations of projects which contribute to achieving the PA 1a targets, most of them financed through CEF or DTP.

3. Waterway infrastructure and management

Ms. Viktoria Weissenburger, viadonau, presented the status of the National Action Plans updates for May 2017. National Action Plans monitor and show the progress in the implementation of the *Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and its navigable tributaries* and are updated twice per year (in May and October), but can be considered also a base for steering the policy in the field of waterway infrastructure and management. There were made some changes in the reporting format, including graphical representation of the fairway availability in relation to the hydrological conditions and the frequency of the surveying/dredging activities, which can also be visualized in only one graphical format.

In **Austria** a critical section of the Danube is located East of Vienna and there were recorded fairway depths under 2.5 m in January and December 2016. There have been carried out surveys and dredging activities mainly at rkm 1896.5 and 1886.7.

Each present country was invited to present the main highlights of their reports:

In **Slovakia** there are three critical sectors (rkm 1880 - 1863, rkm1810 - 1785, rkm 1740-1710) which are closely monitored and the quality of data collected was improved. No dredging activities were performed in 2016.

In **Hungary**, data was provided for three critical sectors (rkm 1811 – 1708, rkm 1708-1560, rkm 1560 – 1433) by the General Directorate of Water Management (OVF). In 2016 only surveying activities were performed in the critical sections. The Ministry of Transport is not involved in this activity and do not analyse this kind of data.

In **Croatia**, the fairway depths of 2.50 m were not assured for 180 days on the common sector with Serbia. Fairway widths of 100 m were assured in the critical point Apatin all over the year. In 2016 measurements were performed with single beam equipment and marking activities. Fairway information is transmitted to the harbour master offices in order to inform the skippers. The situation of the measurements performed on Sava and Drava rivers were presented as well.

In **Serbia**, the critical location in 2016 was between rkm 1267 – 1261 where surveying activities were performed with single beam equipment. The measure taken was the reduction of the fairway width and no dredging activities were performed.

In **Romania**, the most critical location in 2016 was Cochirleni (rkm 309 – 308) where dredging activities were performed in the autumn, during low water levels, and the results were not satisfactory. An alternative route is provided for navigation, which is longer with approximately 10 hours. In the critical point Bechet (rkm 678 – 676), in 2016 surveys were carried out, the fairway was relocated and dredging activities were performed in September – November with very good results. AFDJ informed that in 2016 a framework contract for dredging was signed for three years. As a consequence in May 2017 the maintenance dredging started in Cochirleni and Bechet and it is expected to ensure the conditions for navigation in this year. In 2016 on the Danube – Black Sea Canal there were no problems in terms of the fairway parameters.

Bulgaria reported two critical locations in 2016, with many days having depths under 2.5m, situated in Milka/Belene/Condur (rkm 568 – 561) and Vardim/Gâasca (rkm 548 – 536). In the critical locations surveys were carried out, as well as marking activities and fairway trajectory relocation in September 2016.

In June 2016 a consolidated version of the updated National Action Plan will be transmitted to the PA 1a SG in order to be approved.

Mr. Andreas Back, viadonau, FAIRway project manager, mentioned the expected results of the FAIRway project, which aim to implement parts of the *Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and its navigable tributaries*. As concrete actions 13 new technical ships (marking and surveying) will be ready until the end of 2018; new gauging stations will be installed in all the partner countries; a feasibility study will be elaborated for rehabilitation of Gabčíkovo (Slovakia) locks and improved work procedures for waterway administration will be developed.

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, viadonau, informed the participants on the current stage of “Good Navigation Status (GNS)” project which objective is to substantiate the concept of GNS, referred to in article 15 paragraph 3(b) of EU Regulation 1315/2013. It is challenging to develop a broadly accepted concept, a common methodology that allows for a sufficient level of differentiation to the various corridors and specific demand requirements and transport characteristics. For realizing the study a bottom-up approach was applied: discussions with relevant river commissions, national waterway authorities, and representatives of the industry have been carried out for this purpose. A preliminary conclusion is that it is not necessary and it is not intended to set up very ambitious or new targets (as example number of days with fairway depths more than 2.5 m) and more attention should be paid to achieving good navigation status in practice, to identify the good practices (as example the framework contract signed by AFDJ which eliminates lost time for organizing a tender every year).

Mr. Romeo Soare, AFDJ, provided information to the participants on the FAST Danube and SWIM projects, financed through CEF. FAST Danube is the largest project in Europe on the inland waterways, covering a length of 470 km of the Danube River, which is a Romanian – Bulgarian common sector. Currently, the consultant is performing the first survey campaign, for collecting information on the morphology and topography of the sector. A 2D mathematical model with sediment transport will be developed and calibrated for the 5 critical zones and 1D model will be developed and calibrated between them. The contract has as an objective to revise the previous feasibility study and

to find environmentally friendly technical solutions. As main milestones can be mentioned that in 2017 2 measurements campaigns will take place (in the period April - June and in July - August), in 2018 the optimal technical solution will be chosen and in 2019 the tender for design and works will be launched. The SWIM project will deliver the capital dredging for ensuring: the access in Corabia port, the second fairway passing under the Vidin – Calafat Bridge, as was initially designed and a sustainable fairway trajectory in Bechet area. Currently, the technical specification for dredging equipment is under preparation. The project will deliver also an integrated concept for capital dredging works with Bulgarian waterway administration.

4. Port and sustainable transport

Mr. Róbert Rafael, Pro Danube International, provided information on DAPhNE project, which was approved for financing from DTP, being highly scored by the evaluators. DAPhNE is a transnational project related to the ports along the Danube River and is the main contributor to the DTP Capitalisation Strategy, Pole no. 7 – Waterborne Transport. DAPhNE is in line with all the EU strategies, like NAIADES, EUSDR PA 1a, White Paper on Transport 2030/2050, R&D & Innovation Policy. The project started in January 2017 and its main goals are: to analyse port legislation and to make recommendations, to elaborate guidelines for green port policy, to develop concepts for alternative energy provision and distribution, to develop strategies and best practices for human resources development in the Danube ports, to identify harmonized instruments to stimulate public and private port investments as well as state aid model schemes, to develop a model architecture for a Danube port IT community system and pilot actions implemented in 3 ports from AT, SK, RS. A Danube Ports Network will be set up and it will be operational by June 2019.

First Port Policy Day Event will be organized with the occasion of the 6th EUSDR Annual Forum, 18 - 19 October 2017, in Budapest.

Mrs. Christa Dißauer, Bioenergy 2020+, provided information on ENERGY BARGE project, which was approved for financing from DTP and started as well in January 2017. ENERGY BARGE project aims at building a green energy and logistics belt and is implemented by a consortium consisting of 7 partners from the biomass/bioenergy sector, 6 partners from the logistics sector including 5 ports, and 3 partners from research that provide special knowledge on spatial modelling, biofuels and biomass. The main objective of the project is to increase the sustainable deployment of biomass for energy production in the Danube region through secure, efficient and sustainable supply chains along the river. In order to achieve this objective, the consortium will map supply chains and market information for biomass for energy production, based on the specific advantage of inland navigation ports will be promoted as locations for processing, handling and storage of biomass for energy production and will provide practical solutions and policy guidelines for both market actors and public decision-makers to further develop secure and efficient bioenergy supply chains. Transnational learning interactions, practical experiences from pilot projects and policy recommendations, developed in cooperation with the bioenergy and the Danube logistics sector, will help public authorities and policy makers on regional, national and transnational level to close the gap between Danube countries in terms of know-how, equipment and infrastructure for biomass supply chains

Mr. Otto Schwetz, ARGE Donaulander, mentioned that there could be synergies between the ENERGY BARGE project and Danube Black Sea Gateway Region – Cooperation Platform project. The latest one was submitted and approved for financing on DTP following the Memorandum of Understanding signed by port administration and the city councils along the Danube. Danube Black Sea Gateway Region – Cooperation Platform project will also develop a business and transport master plan for the region.

5. Fleet modernisation

Mr. Juha Schweighofer, viadonau, provided information on PROMINENT project, financed through Horizon 2020 Programme. The project started in May 2015 and will end in April 2018. The project deals with energy efficiency and clean concepts for the inland vessels, monitoring and certification for exhaust gas emissions equipment, harmonisation and modernisation of professional education and qualifications. Solutions identified until now could be applicable to 70% of the EU fleet. A shortlist of the promising technologies identified during the project was presented, which includes ship-related technical measures as well as infrastructure and ship operational measures. An innovative software developed by TNO is under testing on 23 vessels sailing on upper and lower Danube. Usually tailor made solutions are expensive. Ship operators and owners are therefore interested to find cheap solutions to adapt their ships to the new EU requirements.

Mr. Romeo Soare, AFDJ, mentioned that data related to the water current speed can be provided by AFDJ for the lower Danube for a better calibration of the software.

Mr. Róbert Rafael, Pro Danube International, provided information on the GREEN DANUBE - *Integrated transnational policies and practical solutions for an environmentally-friendly Inland Water Transport system* project financed through DTP and led by CERONAV (Romanian Maritime Training Centre). The project specific objectives are to contribute to limit impacts of Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) on the Danube ecosystem, to contribute to emissions reduction in the Danube ecosystem and to raise public awareness of environment protection. The project will start with measurements of air-pollutant emissions from IWT in 4 preselected areas along the Danube and will continue with an analysis of the data obtained, research for green alternatives for rivers and fuels, an analysis of the existing policies and legal framework and recommendation for their improvement. Public awareness will be raised through IWT Environmental Information Centre (IWT EIC) which will be located as pilot activities, in Romania, Croatia and Serbia and a mobile one in Hungaria, covering also Austria, Germany and Bulgaria. The GREEN DANUBE consortium consists of 10 partners and 6 Associated Strategic Partners (ASP) from the 7 (seven) Danube riparian countries and is implemented in 30 months, between January 2017 and July 2019.

6. Education & Jobs

Mr. Anton Edtmeier, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, provided information on the Danube SKILLS - *Increased institutional capacity in Danube navigation by boosting joint transnational competences and skills in education and public development services* project. The main challenge addressed is the fragmented legal framework governing professional qualifications in inland navigation. Danube SKILLS started in January 2017 and the financing is assured through DTP. Project results are expected to contribute to harmonization of education and training system and ultimate increased mobility of workforce in IWT, to raise the modal share of IWT and the capacity building of institutions leading to improved legal framework on nautical qualifications and Danube transport promotion. Pilot actions will be set up and developed, not-yet-existing, „One-Stop-Shops” per individual country in order to promote Danube transport. „One-Stop-Shops” will act as „neutral” intermediary between the cargo owners and logistics service providers by offering „neutral” information on Danube transport, such as: types of vessels, navigability and fairway, ports and terminals, logistics services providers.

7. Administrative Processes

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, viadonau, provided information on the cooperation between PA 1a and PA 11 – *Security* regarding the improvement of border control along the Danube. The issue was raised by the private sector during PA 1a meetings and they mainly require having predictable and harmonised procedures dealing with control authorities together as well as a stable fairway. PA 1a has a neutral

position and can address the ministries of interior to show them the problems of the shipping companies. From the work done until now (surveys, manual on control procedures, know-how exchange) following recommended measures should be addressed by PA 11:

- Provide transnational training and know-how exchange for control bodies to ensure harmonised control mechanisms (special focus on ADN);
- Limit the number of officials entering the ship, as they intrude upon the privacy of the ship's crew;
- Review control processes and forms to evaluate the purpose of all requested data and information;

and priority measures that can be implemented by PA 1a:

- Draft a set of templates for selected control forms to be unified and elaborate multilingual versions;
- Update and disseminate the "Practical Manual on Border Controls along the Danube";
- Monitor the observance of officially published opening hours at all control points;
- Discuss issues addressed by multiple/repeated complaints in the EUSDR PA1a working group.

The next steps for PA 1a are to define Danube Navigation Standard Forms (DAVID) and to update the "Practical Manual on Border Controls along the Danube".

Mr. Róbert Rafael, Pro Danube International, presented information on *DANTE - Improving Administrative Procedures and Processes for Danube IWT* project financed as well from DTP, led by Pro Danube International and which started in January 2017. The objectives of DANTE are: to improve administrative procedures and reduce bureaucratic processes as well as related charges and fees for IWT on Danube and navigable tributaries; to reduce time losses and costs caused by unnecessary administrative regulations and processes for Danube businesses; to harmonize regulations and administrative processes for transport and transshipment operations ("Same River-Same Rules" concept). There were identified 5 thematic areas to be addressed by the consortium, as follows: Border Police and Tax & Customs authorities; navigation authorities (traffic control authorities); port authorities; waterway and canal administrations; other authorities. All this issues will be discussed first at national working tables. As pilot activity, an Electronic Reporting Tool will be developed, making better use of the existing ICT tools (like RIS systems).

The representative of Pro Danube International mentioned the strategy developed by PDI, *Green Deal for Danube River Transport*, which was officially launched at the European Parliament on the 7th of September 2016, in the presence of high level policy makers, MEPs and key industry representatives from the Danube Region. A similar event will be organised by PDI at the European Parliament in September 2017.

8. Summary

PA 1a Technical Secretariat informed the participants that all the projects identified until now are posted on the web page of PA 1a (<http://www.danube-navigation.eu/projects>) and will be closely monitored. The results of the projects should be raised by PACs at policy level.

Seed Money Facility is a direct financial scheme that the DTP offers to support the development of complex strategic transnational projects in the thematic fields of the EUSDR, regardless the financial instrument to be addressed afterwards (e.g. Interreg, Horizon2020, national or regional funds etc.). The amount granted by DTP for a project will be 85% of max. 40.000 Euro. DTP will launch a call on the Seed Money Facility in autumn 2017 and it will organize a launching event in Vienna (Austria) on 27th September 2017. PACs PA 1a proposed the participants to identify project ideas in the following topics:

- Improvement of fairway conditions along the Danube and its navigable tributaries
- Modernisation of the inland waterway fleet
- Reduction of administrative barriers in Danube navigation.

9. Decision on request for Letter of Recommendation

The participants were invited to provide in two weeks (until the 30 May 2017) their feedback regarding the signing by PACs of a Letter of Recommendation for the project MEASURES. The main objective of MEASURES is to enhance and protect aquatic bio-corridors for migratory fish in the Danube River Basin: Identify, map and connect migratory fish habitats to contribute to an enhancement of aquatic ecological corridors within the Danube network and develop and test conservation measures. The lead partner will be the Institute of Hydrobiology and Aquatic Ecosystem Management at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) / Austria.

10. Conclusion

PACs PA 1a thanked to all the speakers for their presentations and valuable information provided and concluded that for financing projects promoted under PA1a actions and targets, the beneficiaries use different financing programmes (DTP, CEF, Horizon2020), thus is achieved a general objective of SUERD, respectively a better use of available funds.

Next Steering Group meeting will be organized on the 29th November 2017 in Brussels.

Enclosures

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

- (1) List of attendants
- (2) Presentations given during the Steering Group meeting