

EU Strategy for the Danube Region

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

16th Meeting of the Steering Group for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR

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MINUTES

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1. PA 1a Welcome and introduction

The 16th meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Bucharest, Romania, on the 26th of June 2019.

The meeting was chaired by Ms Cristina Cuc, counsellor for European affairs within the Romanian Ministry of Transport (on behalf of PA 1a Romanian Coordinator, Mrs. Mihaela Mocanu) and Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, viadonau, (on behalf of PA1a Austrian Coordinator, Mrs Vera Hofbauer). PACs 1a welcomed the participants, Member State representatives of the Steering Group and the observer members - representatives of Danube Commission, DSP, Pro Danube International. The participating countries were: Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine.

In the opening of the meeting it was introduced briefly the agenda and the subjects of the meeting. The agenda for the 16th meeting of the Steering Group was approved.

2. Status of revision of the EUSDR Action Plan

The main documents of the EUSDR, issued by COM, are the EC Communication COM(2010) 715 from 8 December 2010 and its accompanying Action Plan SEC(2010) 1489 final which defines actions that require interventions (projects, policies, etc.). Currently the Action Plan is under revision process and it was presented the scheduled calendar, as it was communicated at the meeting of the National Coordinators (NC) and Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) held in Bucharest on 23 – 24 May 2019. The publication of Commission Staff Working document related to the revised Action Plan is expected in October 2019.

Within PA1a first consultation of the Steering Group was done on the 9th October 2018, in Vienna, where the key topics for PA1a coordination activities after 2020 were discussed. On 17th June 2019 the DSP released a consolidated input paper containing the contribution of PA1a. PA1a targets and actions post 2020 are grouped in 6 thematic areas as follows:

- Waterway and port infrastructure & management
- Business development
- Fleet modernization
- River Information Services
- Education & Jobs
- Administrative processes.

The targets and actions will be introduced in the Application Form that will be submitted by PACs to the Danube Transnational Programme. The deadline for submitting Application Form is 24 September 2019. The financing contract for PACs will cover the period 2020–2022.

Danube Commission, Mr. Dejan Trifunović, mentioned that the Danube Commission submitted in February a document containing the contribution for the EUSDR revision. The document was discussed and agreed within technical group with DC member states. As the DC Secretariat is having a new structure and a new management starting with 1st July 2019 and it is necessary to be informed about this issue, the status of the proposed measures was asked for. The PA1a technical secretariat answered that most of the DC input is reflected in the proposal for the revised Action Plan, less the measures related to additional dams on the Danube and the revision of the Belgrade Convention signed in 1948. Related to the conditions of navigation, PA1a put a focus on active waterway maintenance and management instead. Related to the revision of the Belgrade Convention, the main responsibility is at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Danube riparian countries, so PACs PA1a, having a contract under DTP programme, cannot assume responsibility for a “deliverable” that is largely beyond the control the PA1.

The PACs PA 1a and PA 1a Steering group can facilitate such discussions, as well discussions on the revision of the *Joint Statement for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection* within Action 1.1 - *Facilitate management of inland waterways in order to provide “Good Navigation Status” and adequate fairway conditions on the Danube and its navigable tributaries*. DC informed that on the 12 September 2019 a meeting of a preparatory committee for the revision of Belgrade Convention is scheduled.

3. Status on the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan

PACs thanked the members of the Steering Group for the support given during the negotiation process, as well to the ministers of transport who signed the *Conclusions on effective waterway infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance*, on 3 December 2018 in Brussels. Since the adoption of the *Master Plan for Rehabilitation and Maintenance of the Fairway on the Danube River and its Tributaries*, the ministers of transports met every two years, having a closer look on the implementation results and have committed themselves to continue to give political support to inland waterway transport and the implementation of the Masterplan. Possibly next year, during the Croatian presidency of the EU Council, Croatia could organise the next meeting of the ministers of transport.

The PA1a Technical Secretariat informed that every year, in spring, DG MOVE invites EU member states for a meeting of the NAIADES II expert group. This year the meeting was organized on 29 April 2019 and the focus was on the NAIADES-2 Sub-Group for Good Navigation Status. 'Good Navigation Status' (GNS) is part of the TEN-T guidelines 1315/2013: "Rivers, canals and lakes shall provide "good navigation status" through close coordination and standards on minimum service levels to the navigation function as well as waterway infrastructure maintenance and safety coordination across waterways." The aim of the subgroup of the NAIADES II expert group is to gather input for the Commission's Draft recommendations for the development of common, harmonized guidelines/standards for Good Navigation Status by October 2019.

Current waterway targets reflected in international agreements or legislation such Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 cannot be reached in practice by the countries - for example 2.50 m draught on 365 days per year for Class IV waterways. The member states want to find a balance between "setting ambitious targets" and "setting achievable targets", finding balance between "one clear target value for the European core network" and "corridor- or waterway-specific targets", the latter with the danger of "cherry picking". As few Danube countries (AT, SK and Danube Commission) attended the first meeting of the GNS sub-group in Brussels on 29th April 2019, PACs requested the participants to be engaged in this process. Currently is no documentation is available, except for the study "Good navigation Status" of January 2018.

PA 1a monitor the implementation of the *Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan* through the National Action Plans updated twice per year by FAIRway Danube partners (May and October). The updated version was finalized on 25.06.2019 and briefly presented to the participants. Participants were informed that the document will be distributed by email and comments, if any, are expected in 10 days, according with SG Rules of Procedures.

2018 was a catastrophic year for navigation due to a very dry summer with water discharge below multi – annual average level. So, depths of 2.5 m couldn't be reached for many days along the entire Danube. Quite similar conditions were also encountered in 2015, but a comparison with the situation in 2018 showed some improvements and little better conditions for the transport companies. This is due to the multiannual dredging contracts signed by the waterway administrations, equipment bought, and better information and communication.

Austria: all the operative tasks for fairway marking have been undertaken in 2018. A marking craft was already purchased in 2017. Another marking vessel will be purchased in 2019. In 2018 60 remotely controlled buoys were installed as pilot in the section East of Vienna. Also, in the section East of Vienna, three fords were rehabilitated by hydraulic structures (groynes and an island).

Slovakia: The surveying and the marking vessels were delivered and baptised. Test runs were already conducted with the surveying vessel, so new multibeam surveying results should be online very soon. Also the marking vessel will be used for first tours in the coming weeks. In the DaReM project SVP will modernise the chain-bucket excavator and will purchase 2 new belt excavators which will be installed on a floating platform. VV will purchase 1 suction dredger and 1 belt excavator. The project aims to deliver a list of priority works to be implemented as pilot rehabilitation dredging works to reinstate a good navigation status in the Danube section of the Hrušov reservoir (rkm 1845 to rkm 1868). In 2019 it is expected that all the required contracts are signed.

Hungary: The surveying vessel is expected to be operational in 2019 autumn. In the FAIRway Danube

project 3 AIS AtoNs were purchased as pilot equipment in order to find out which system to use in HUMARK (until 2020). The drone is in operation and it is an innovative approach for checking how the fairway components are evolving. A feasibility study is ongoing in order to provide suitable plans and technologies for the rehabilitation of the water bed composed of rocks in the Hungarian stretch.

Croatia: Under the FAIRway Danube project, the surveying vessel is operational since 2017. The gauges and marking vessel were delivered as well. Tender documentation for WAMS software is under preparation and the water level forecast will be calculated until 2020 for three important gauges.

Serbia: In 2018 dredging works were performed at the critical sector Futog. River training works were executed within the IPA project and some measures for the relocation of the fairway were necessary in 2018. During the execution of the works the navigation was open on the respective sector. On the Sava river dredging works were performed at Sabac. Surveys at every 200m were executed on the Danube, the sector downstream of Belgrade, as well as on the Sava River. Under IPA project 160 AtoNs will be installed.

Romania: 2018 represented a big challenge for the navigation sector and for the waterway administration, AFDJ, in order to ensure the minimum fairway parameters. There were 100 – 160 days with fairway depths below 2.5 m. At one of the most critical points, Bechet, dredging interventions took place in May and October 2018 and finally there were around 80 days with fairway depths below 2.5m. In 2018 the critical sectors were surveyed and the administration provided information related to good navigation status to the skippers. The new surveying and marking vessels from the FAIRway Danube project are in operation and the results of the surveys were published in FIS portal. In 2019 dredging works were executed in Bechet, Cernavodă and Cochirleni.

In April 2019 a technical agreement between Romanian National Institute for Hydrology and Waters Management (INHGA), AFDJ and IAPPD (Bulgaria) was signed. INHGA will send water level forecasts for 5-7 days to the waterway administrations. A *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria on the implementation of joint initiatives to improve navigation conditions on the Romanian-Bulgarian common sector of the Danube and transport connectivity between both states* was signed by the ministers of transport from Romania and Bulgaria on 29 March 2019, in Bucharest. A MoU is a political commitment that the financing will be assured for the maintenance on the Danube common sector and for the implementation of the FAST Danube project.

Bulgaria: Surveying and marking vessels were delivered in 2018 and are in operation. In 2019 the contract for the installing the gauging stations will be signed. In 2018 in Belene was dredged a quantity of 150,000 m³ and in Vardim 100,000 m³ and the results are good and sustainable. In July 2019 APPD will start a survey campaign to establish the locations for the dredging plan. The dredging works are scheduled to start at the end of July 2019.

Ukraine: was active in providing information for the updates on the National Action Plan. In 2018 in Ukraine there were some administrative changes, the maintenance activities tasks of the Danube river were transferred from the Ministry of Infrastructure to the Sea Ports Authority / Odessa Port Authority, based in Odessa.

The Conclusions of this updates are that implementation of the Master Plan is well under way and more budget is being allocated for the implementation of the Master Plan.

4. Status Working Group on fleet modernisation

PA1a Working Group meeting on fleet modernisation was organised on 7th March 2019 in Vienna, in connection with first know-how transfer event of GRENDL project. During discussions the critical issues identified regarding fleet modernisation in the Danube region are: backlog in investments because of low margins and investment capacity aggravated by economic crisis and poor navigation conditions in last years; no business case for many greening technologies and more technologies to reduce pollutants (NO_x, PM) add costs rather than make inland navigation more competitive; investment costs are inhibitive for individual entrepreneurs; stringent NRMM Stage V emissions norms for new vessels, but no

compliant engines available for the inland navigation market; long lifetime of investments cause low innovation rates.

Key elements for PA1a policy recommendation on fleet modernization will be: identifying and lobbying for financing instruments to allow transition to greening of the fleet and support for the intensify research and development of technologies (electric propulsion systems, hydrogen – fuel cells – combustion engines, usage of synthetic (bio)-fuels HVO, automated ship operation – autonomous sailing, digitalisation).

Pro Danube International, Mr. Robert Rafael, presented the intermediate findings of the GRENDDEL project. As mentioned above, a first know-how transfer event was organised in Vienna (7-8 March 2019) and the aim was to bring together vessel operators from the Danube region with innovation experts and suppliers. Examples of good practices were discussed, as were European legal requirements for emission reduction, future-oriented innovative technological solutions. The most expected result of the GRENDDEL project is a state aid model scheme in order to support investment in the Danube fleet. Preparatory works have started, including consultations with EC representatives, Dutch and German ministries.

PA1a SG members were asked if they have information about some plans for state aid schemes in their countries. Danube Commission is as well partner in the GRENDDEL project. PA1a will prepare policy recommendation, useful for people involved in negotiation of the next financing programmes 2021 – 2027.

5. Status Working Group on administrative processes

Working Group on administrative processes was organised on 16 May 2019 in Vienna, a joint PA1a/PA11 meeting. The WG focused on the simplification, harmonisation and digitalisation of control forms – DAVID forms. The steps taken for the implementation of DAVID forms were: a technical agreement of experts in April 2018 (24.04.2018, Karlsruhe, PA 1a, PA 11, DANTE consortium); the PA 1a Steering Group endorsement in June/July 2018; in October 2018 organisation of political commitment by inclusion of the theme of administrative barriers in political conclusions (Danube Transport Ministers), endorsed on 3rd December 2018, prepared by PA1a in conjunction with European Commission and the Austrian EU Presidency.

The proposed strategy and next steps regarding implementation of DAVID forms are:

1. **Q1 2019: Anchoring of existing DAVID forms in legislation:** Preparatory steps towards anchoring of harmonised forms in EU and/or national legislation are the identification and check of relevant national legislation/ordinances to be adapted and the identification of other ministries/departments to be involved/consulted. The tasks can be realized by PA 1a jointly with PA 11;
2. **Q3 2019: Organisation of further political commitment?** Inclusion of the theme of administrative barriers in political conclusions, possibly by Danube Ministers of Interior in conjunction with European Commission and the incoming Croatian and German EU Presidencies
3. **Q2 2019: Identification of further control forms to be harmonised – extension of the DAVID forms suite.** The tasks are to identify and check relevant national legislation/ordinances to be adapted; consult with IWT industry and control authorities; identify “quick wins”: forms that can realistically be harmonised additionally within 2-3 years and that would result in significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. The tasks can be realized by PA 1a jointly with PA 11;
4. **Q2 2019: In-depth analysis of digitalisation of already adopted DAVID forms.** The task are to investigate/specify embedding of forms in River Information Services; define a pilot system as joint activity of PA1a/PA11 in cooperation with RIS COMEX (<http://www.riscomex.eu>); specify system architecture for pilot implementation in the year 2020.

A Memorandum of Understanding was prepared and preliminarily discussed within the PA 11 Steering Group. In order to be effective in this process, it is important that the date of entry into force to be coordinated among a majority of involved countries. The MoU or any other agreement within the PA1a/PA11 working group foresees that DAVID forms will be applied starting with 1st January 2020 in HU, HR and RS and as soon as required national legislative provisions have been adapted accordingly but no later than 31st December 2021 in RO, MD, BG and UA.

The SG members of PA1a will be informed on the status and contents of the foreseen agreement by the end of July 2019, dependent on the outcome of the PA11 Steering Group meeting on 25th June 2019 in Sofia.

Pro Danube international, Mr. Robert Rafael, presented the main results of DANTE - *Improving Administrative Procedures and Processes for Danube IWT* - project. DANTE contributes to the achieving of PDI vision "Same River Same Rules". Main results of DANTE project are the set-up of the electronic tool for barrier and good practice reporting in Danube IWT; identification of the key To-Do's in the field of administration procedures and set-up of a Strategy and Action Plan (at both national and Danube region level); set-up of the DANTE Facilitation and Monitoring Platform. The electronic tool for barrier and good practice reporting will be operational after June 2019 (end of DANTE project) and the Strategy and Action Plan contain the next steps and follow – up until 2024.

Based on more than 250 inputs in the electronic reporting tool and a series of national and transnational workshops with very productive consultations, some national results were registered, such as:

- HU: preparations have started to amend the waterway act in order to cover more reporting obligations by the use of RIS and the EU hull database;
- RS: foreseen changes in law for border crossing procedures;
- Simplification of port dues in Romania (e.g. applied by APDM Galati as of 01.01.2019);
- BG: Interventions to improve BuRIS to ease reporting.

DANTE worked very closely together with EUSDR PA1a & PA11 related to the DAVID forms, providing feedback, back-to-back meetings and promotion of the forms.

The Danube Commission mentioned that language of communication is a theme of discussion related to possible administrative barriers. Currently on the DC website a questionnaire is posted and addressed to skippers, shipping companies, ports, training institutes, administrations and other actors of inland shipping

<https://www.danubecommission.org/dc/en/danube-navigation/questionnaire-about-the-communication-languages-on-the-danube/>

PA1a will promote the questionnaire via its EUSDR communication channels.

6. Status Working Group on Jobs & skills

The Working Group on Education & Jobs was organized on 14th June 2019 in Budapest, in connection with the final event of Danube SKILLS project.

The Danube SKILLS project results are supporting the implementation of EU Directive 2017/2397 in the Danube riparian countries. The project provided a *Policy support strategy for nautical education* and a *Transnational Action Plan for implementation of policy support strategy on nautical education*. The strategy consists of a concrete roadmap outlining what the Danube riparian countries should do and how future coordination and cooperation on the transposition and implementation of the Directive (EU) 2017/2397 in the coming years should take place, taking into account their national obligation as Member States. The Action Plan consists of further steps that address the Member States' obligation for the transposition and implementation of the provisions of EU Directive 2017/2397 provisions on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation. Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this EU Directive by 17 January 2022.

The Danube Commission mentioned that during the 92 session of the DC, on 13 June 2019, there were discussions on the implementation of the QP and PT Directives in the EU member states and the recognition of the mentioned Directives of the non-EU states within the DC member states. On this issue a legal opinion from the EC in 3–4 months (up to October 2019) is expected.

The main conclusions of the Danube SKILLS project, that present interest for PA 1a activities, are:

- The preparatory actions for the transposition of EU Directive 2017/2397 into the national legislation already started in most of the Danube countries.
- Most of the partners are already involved in the working groups for the preparation the national legislative acts.
- CESNI Standards for competence are expected in the form of official documents.
- There is in RO, one Full mission bridge simulator with Danube navigation areas.
- The preparation/revision of the education and training programmes already started in few Danube countries
- There are legal acts for approval of education and training programmes in few countries.

Possible support activities by PA1a can be given in the following areas: support for cooperation between Ministries of Transport and Education and social partners in Danube countries, in order to suitably implement the Directive; for dissemination of common teaching materials based on the standards of competences for operational and management level; for identifying the ways to retain qualified personnel in the Danube region, mainly dependent on salary and working conditions; capitalize results of DanubeSKILLS regarding Danube Logistics Promotion Centers and their tools and Monitor/guide implementation of action plan on promotion centres

7. Status Working Group on Ports

DAPhNE – Danube Ports Network project aim was to facilitate a balanced development of Danube Ports into eco-friendly, as well as accessible multimodal hubs for the transport system of the region and to turn them into buzzing economic centers functioning as catalysts for economic growth and creation of high value jobs. The DAPhNE project, finalized in June 2019, is a step forward towards closing the existing gaps between upper, middle and lower Danube ports.

The project established a well-managed working consortium (private and public stakeholders) which tackled the most urgent identified shortcomings in 7 main action areas with the help of guidelines, recommendations and concrete pilot activities leading into an overall development strategy and action plan for the Danube ports. The targeted shortcomings and proposed actions are:

- fragmented legislation → recommendations for the harmonization of port legislation
- inefficient port administration processes & procedures → recommendations based on best practices for port management models and port processes
- lack of eco-efficient port business strategies → elaboration of Green Port Policy guidelines
- shortcomings in the use of public funding → identification of new funding opportunities (PPPs, state aid schemes models)
- insufficient/deteriorated infrastructure → status of port infrastructure, elaboration of port investment guidelines
- lack of qualified personnel → Strategies based on best practices for HR development and identification of financing programmes for HR
- (very) limited use of new technologies → elaborate a Model for a port community system (tested in 4 ports).

The Danube Ports Network (DPN) was established within the project, represents the interests of Danube ports and organized its first event, a Conference of Port Digitalisation, in Vienna on 11 April 2019. The results and findings of DAPhNE project were disseminated during high visibility events like Port Info Days and Port Policy Days (2017, 2019).

The Working Group for ports was organized by PA 1a on 12th June 2019, in Vienna, in relation with the DAPhNE project final event. It was a joint meeting of PA 1a & PA 1b – rail, road and aviation transport. The objective of the meeting was to identify the ways in which we can develop more the ports and the transport corridors. At the level of the revision of the EUSDR Action Plan, the topic related to ports was introduced in the thematic area 1 - Waterway and port infrastructure & management, as it was discussed during the last SG meetings.

8. Conclusions of PA1a Steering Group meeting and next steps

In the end of the meeting PA 1a Technical Secretariat summarised the main issues and the next steps.

- the National Action Plans for the implementation of the *Master Plan for Rehabilitation and Maintenance of the Fairway on the Danube River and its Tributaries* will be sent for approval through written procedure to the SG members;
- PACs presented and discussed the proposal for activities post 2020, which will be elaborated until September 2019 in the Application Form. Activities were discussed in the SG meetings and should be in line with the goals of riparian countries;
- For the achievement of targets funds are necessary and PACs and SG members should be in contact with colleagues drafting the financing programmes;
- A draft policy proposition on fleet modernisation will be sent to SG PA 1a members in August 2019;
- The status of the implementation of the DAVID forms will be communicated to the SG by end of July 2019.

The next Steering Group meeting will be organized in connection with the Advisory Committee meeting of FAIRway Danube planned to take place on 4th December 2019 in Brussels.

The PACs PA 1a thanked to all the participants for their involvement and cooperation.

Enclosures

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

(1) Presentations given during the Steering Group meeting