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

**17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Steering Group and  
Final Event of the project Coordination of  
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

Brussels, Belgium  
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**MINUTES**

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## 1. PA 1a Welcome and introduction

The 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Danube Region Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Brussels, Belgium, on the 04<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. The Steering Group meeting was joint with the Final Event of the project Coordination of priority Area 1a, financed from Danube Transnational Programme

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

## 2. Review of EUSDR activities

Between 2017 – 2019, PA 1a activities were grouped in five thematic working groups as follows: WG 1 - Waterway infrastructure & management; WG 2 - Ports & sustainable freight transport; WG 3 - Fleet modernisation; WG 4 - River Information Services; WG 5 - Education & jobs; WG 6 - Administrative processes.

**Implementation of the waterway infrastructure & management**, the key achievements since the endorsement of the FRMMP (*Master Plan for Rehabilitation and Maintenance of the Fairway on the Danube River and its Tributaries*) in 2014 are monitoring of the implementation status through the National Action Plans and keeping the topic on the political agenda through Danube Ministerial Conclusions (20.06.2016 Rotterdam, 03.12.2018 Brussels). PACs thanked the SG members and DG MOVE for their support in drafting and signing of Danube Ministerial Conclusions and the positive impact is seen in the large number of projects related to waterways, most of them financed from EU programmes, and the increased budgets for maintenance. The results are seen also in the field by improved fairway conditions at several critical locations, improved information basis and marking activities.

**Harmonisation and digitalisation of cross – border administrative procedures.** PA 1a and PA 11 working groups worked together for harmonisation and digitalisation of cross-border administrative procedures. Through this process, PA 1a managed to bring the industry closer to the border control authorities, PA 11 representing the ministries of internal affairs of Danube riparian countries. Common vision for better border control procedures along the Danube has materialized in the Practical Manual on Border Controls (3<sup>rd</sup> edition published in May 2019) and DAVID forms.

The technical agreement for DAVID forms, on working group level, was obtained in April 2019 and in June / July 2018 it was obtained the Steering Group endorsement of PA1a (Inland Waterways) and PA 11 (Security). In December 2018 the political commitment was achieved by inclusion of the theme of administrative barriers in Danube Ministerial Conclusions (3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018). Currently the efforts are concentrated in introducing DAVID forms in the first set of countries, namely Hungary, Croatia and Serbia, in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2020. The second set of countries, namely Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine, will introduce them no later than/preferably by 2021.

Digitalisation of DAVID forms is the next step after harmonization. Together with the RIS COMEX project PA 1a investigates the way for embedding of forms in River Information Services.

Mr. Mario Sattler (DG MOVE) informed that a Regulation on electronic freight transport information (eFTI Regulation) currently is under discussion and according to this Regulation all the authorities should accept all the documents in digital forms. It was suggested to bring DAVID forms in the attention of this working group.

Mr. Dejan Trifunovic informed that DAVID forms are on the agenda of the Danube Commission and they were translated from English in the 3 official language of DC.

**Recommendations on fleet modernisation.** Inland waterway transport has been the most environmentally friendly mode of inland transport for decades. This advantage has steadily been eroded due to the rapid improvement of emission levels in other transport modes and the low modernisation rate of the inland fleet. Road vehicles use EURO 6 engines and the Regulation with regard to technical and general requirements relating to emission limits and type-approval for internal combustion engines for non-road mobile machinery is not applicable for vessels. Stricter emission regulations do not apply to the existing fleet, and lacking these the traditional environmental and economic advantages of inland waterway transport are expected to further deteriorate in the future.

The overall vision and objective is to achieve zero emission navigation by 2050 is challenging for IWT fleet and needs public support. Key drivers behind slow modernisation rate are: long economic life-time of inland vessels and engines (approx. 20 years), high investment costs and a lack of business cases, small and specific market for inland vessels and engines, lack of investment capital of the shipowners, emission regulations are not affecting legacy fleet and incomplete alternative fuelling infrastructure.

The draft document “Strategy on fleet modernization” is under elaboration under PA 1a coordination project. The Strategy will be sent to SG members and observers for feedback and comments until the end of the year.

Mr. Robert Rafael, representing Pro Danube International, mentioned that PDI prepared and is implementing since 2017 the Green Deal for Danube Transport, based on four pillars. Currently the Agenda for Europe proposed by the President of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, for the next five years include as a top priority “A European Green Deal”. Projects like DANTE, DAPhNE, GRENDDEL are implementing projects of PDI green deal.

**Steps taken and recommendations for ports development** a flagship project for PA 1a is DAPhNE project financed from Danube Transnational Programme. DAPhNE project delivered reports, strategies and action plans for the development and digitalisation (Port Community Systems modules) of ports and created the Danube Ports Network (DPN) an entity, a “club of ports” which will promote the interests of Danube ports. The first event organised by DPN was Conference of Port Digitalisation, organized on 11.04.2019 in Vienna. Other several meetings, like Port Policy Days, Port Info Days, were organized during DAPhNE project lifetime and brought under discussion important issues for ports.

Recommendations on **Jobs & Skills** a flagship project for PA 1a was Danube SKILLS, financed also from DTP. Danube SKILLS project delivered the strategy and Action Plan for the implementation of the *Directive (EU) 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation*. The development of delegated acts foreseen in the Directive are discussed within CESNI - European Committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation. For the activities further 2020 PA 1a intends to cooperate more with PA 9.

### 3. PA 1a activities 2020 - 2022

**Status of the revision of EUSDR Action Plan.** The Steering Group members were informed that the revision of the EUSDR Action Plan is still ongoing. A revised document was prepared by DG REGIO and PACs Pa 1a sent feedback on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019. The document contains an introductory and main activities for each PA are described. PA 1a actions are grouped on the following thematic areas:

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

After winter holidays the document will be circulated within EC services.

From the Danube Strategy Point perspective, they have collected all the inputs of PACs and NCs. DSP activities are concentrated on evaluation, monitoring and communication. The final report on evaluation of the effectiveness, communication and stakeholder involvement of the EUSDR was published on EUSDR website on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019. A new monitoring system for PACs was developed and gives PACs the opportunity to report about their own work. The monitoring report contains: recent general developments in the reporting period, core governance, projects, activities and funding, policy impact, opportunities and challenges. DSP will ask for feedback from PACs on the very first draft in December 2019 and the presentation of first draft will be in 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2020.

DSP will support the current EUSDR Croatian Presidency 2019/2020. The central theme of the presidency is „The Danube Strategy – 10 Years Later”. Priorities of the EUSDR Croatian Presidency are: governance, cooperation with other MRS, embedding and geopolitical dimension. It was presented the main events and meetings organised by Croatian presidency which will end with the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of EUSDR Annual Forum 2020 planned to be in Zagreb on 22-23 October 2020.

**Overview of the planned actions and working group activities 2020 – 2022.** Steering Group members were informed that a new contract will be signed with DTP for the coordination activities between 2020 – 2022. For this contract two associated strategic partners (Pro Danube International and CERONAV) were included mainly for the topics related to ports and skills.

For the **Waterway & port infrastructure and management** it is proposed to start in February 2020 a process to update the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan. FRMMP was a good framework for the actual financing, but maybe an update is necessary having in view, for example, that digitalisation was not a very big issue 5 years ago, but now it is one of the priorities at the EU level. For the update it is necessary to conduct consultations at national levels, to see the key issues for FRMMP and the process to be the same with that in 2014. This process should end in December 2020 and the new master plan to be available for the new financing period starting with 2021. Danube Ministerial Conclusions 2020 will be prepared and it was proposed to be signed in the framework of the TEN-T Days in Šibenik / HR (13-15 May 2020).

Related to ports, it is expected to be consolidated and extended the DPN (Danube Ports Network) in order to prepare future projects for ports. DPN has a wider portfolio of services and it is a free of charge network. DPN is interested in digitalisation and logistics and was involved in the preparation of DIONYSUS project, which was submitted this year at the 3<sup>rd</sup> call of projects of Danube Transnational Programme. DPN will start discussions with EFIP (European Federation of Inland Ports) for a new strategy. EFIP has a new president, Mr. Friedrich Lehr, CEO of the Port of Vienna.

**Business development** thematic was introduced to boost the cooperation with the industry and because the interest is to attract more cargo on the Danube. The planned actions relates to the organization of national and transnational stakeholder meetings that bring together supply and demand side for promising market segments. In Austria, there are organized meetings between private and public sector acting in different business like chemicals, construction materials, etc. where the problems of the business and possible solutions are discussed. PA 1a can bring its contribution to international business-to-business meetings (e.g. Danube Business Talks) by means of organizational support and content.

**Fleet modernization.** PACs and PA 1a Steering Group members should engage to anchor fleet modernization topics in programming exercise for European Structural and Investment funds 2021-2027. CCNR will do a study on European Greening Fund (kick off meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019, in Strasbourg) and We should get involved in discussions with them. We will monitor and support implementation of results of GRENDDEL project, which is trying to identify state aid mechanisms. A model scheme will be developed and agreed with DG COMP, and based on that each country will prepare and send its own mechanism for approval. Tangible results of GRENDDEL projects are expected at the end of 2020.

**Education & Jobs.** PA 1a will support further the implementation of the Directive (EU) 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation. The directive sets a new competence based approach, which allow the recognition of qualifications across the EU and provide for new career opportunities. Among the barriers to labour mobility, the recognition by national authorities of Service Record Books (SRBs) and of the information contained therein was identified as a specific difficulty. So the Directive foresees as well the harmonisation of the format and procedure related to SRBs and logbooks

(LBKs) through a delegated act. The database ecosystem for crew certificates must be operational in January 2022. In Austria, the Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology designated viadonau in charge with the development of this database in Austria.

**Administrative processes. River Information Services.** The activities will focus on digitalisation of DAVID forms. Currently DoRIS system is modified in order to create DAVID forms in pdf. PDI mentioned that the private sector welcomes and supports the implementation of DAVID forms.

**How Steering Group members can stay / get involved.** PACs stressed that the presentation made is a preview of activities to come. All the issues are under preparation now and PA1a depends on active participation of Member States and stakeholders in the planned Working Group meetings. Steering Group members were kindly ask to nominate national experts that we should invite to the upcoming Working Group activities. PA1a Technical Secretariat will approach each country bilaterally by the end of January 2020 to establish the necessary contacts.

**Alignment of programming of structural and cohesion funds with EUSDR objectives.** Mr. Roland Mayer-Frei (DG REGIO) made a presentation related to the embedding of EUSDR objectives into structural and cohesion funds. EUSDR came without a dedicated financing programme because money exists for transport, including inland waterways. For the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 Country Reports (European Semester) are converted into Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes, which ultimately specify investment priorities. National programming process for Cohesion Fund and Structural Funds will be ongoing in 2020 and each country should define the thematic priorities on national level.

The EC services recommend linking the financing programme to EUSDR objectives, where applicable. It will be a win-win-situation: EUSDR benefits will be: experience of programs (knowledge), contacts with policy-makers, and the funding. Programs benefits will be: bigger impact (wider territory, strategic frame), good project pipeline (better absorption), visibility (political leaders, citizens, EU). Furthermore, engagement of Steering Group members in national programming process is desired.

#### 4. Letter of support for project "High Performance Green Port Giurgiu"

PACs informed Steering Group members that the Consortium implementing the project „High Performance Green Port Giurgiu” request a Letter of Recommendation in order to support their demand to INEA for an extension of period for the project implementation. The project has the objective to transform the port of Giurgiu into the first efficient green port on the Danube. Through cooperation between one private company (ILR Logistica Romania = project coordinator) and two public companies (Giurgiu Municipality and S.C. Administratia Zonei Libere Giurgiu) this project aims at building the 1<sup>st</sup> all-weather intermodal terminal on the Lower Danube inclusive construction and rehabilitation of the necessary infrastructure (road, rail, water). Information can be found on the website <http://www.ilr.com.ro/projects/high-performance-green-port-giurgiu.html> and PA 1a project database website <https://www.danube-navigation.eu/projects/high-performance-green-port-giurgiu-stage-ii-construction>. The end date of the project (Grant Agreement) is currently 31/03/2020. The consortium works now on the request for extension of the project until 31/03/2021.

The Steering Group members did not raise any objection for issuing this Letter of Recommendation, so PACs will proceed to sign the letter.

#### 5. Conclusions of PA1a Steering Group meeting and next steps

In the end of the meeting, PA 1a Technical Secretariat summarised the main issues:

- Prepare for update of Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan during 2020, starting with the national consultations;
- Prepare for Danube Ministerial Conclusions in the framework of the TEN-T Days in May 2020
- Nominate national members for the Working Groups in January 2020

- PA1a technical secretariat shall support SG members in identifying ways to get involved in national programming process for structural and cohesion funds.

PACs informed that, according to the new contract for 2020 – 2022, Steering Group meetings will be twice per year and some of them will be carried out electronically.

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

## **Enclosures**

*Please note:* All documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1a  
→ [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu)

- (1) Presentations given during the Steering Group and Final Event meeting