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

**19th Meeting of the Steering Group of
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**
17 September 2021

MINUTES

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Version (date):
V 0.1 | 26-10-2021



1. PA 1a Welcome and introduction

The 19th meeting of the Danube Region Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held online, on the 17th of September 2021.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Ukraine. The European Commission (DG REGIO) and DSP participated and the following professional associations and international organisations: Danube Commission, ICPDR, EBU, PDI, USPA.

2. Update on recent developments from NAIADES expert group

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, Technical Secretariat PA1a, provided information related to the 5th NAIADES expert group meeting organized online by DG MOVE on 13th of September 2021. A relatively low participation from Danube riparian countries was noticed and a plea of DG MOVE was sent to the countries to sign up for this working group, if not done so yet. On 13th of September 2021, the topics on the agenda of the NAIADES expert group related to the Communication NAIADES III which was presented by DG MOVE. The main objectives for the next years are to shift cargo from road and rail to the inland waterways and to move towards zero emission in all modes of transportation.

“Climate proofing” will be an important pre-condition for future CEF infrastructure projects. On 29th of July 2021 the European Commission published the Commission Notice on Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027, C(2021) 5430 final. Climate proofing will need to be demonstrated before and **during implementation of infrastructure projects**, at least for CEF financing over the next years. Since September, the document is available in 23 EU languages and can be downloaded from https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/default/files/adaptation/what/docs/climate_proofing_guidance_en.pdf.

NAIADES III is an important path for PA 1a and has high goals and the Danube region will need a reliable infrastructure

3. Status of the Update of the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan

Mrs. Viktoria Weissenburger presented the status of the Update of the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan (FRMMP). First discussion related to the update of FRMMP took place within the Steering Group organized in December 2019. In March 2020 the first extensive meeting of Working Group 1 took place with the experts of the waterway administrations. In the Danube Ministerial Conclusions from May 2020 the Ministers of Transport “CALL ON all relevant riparian EU Member States and non-EU countries to contribute to an update of the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan...” In summer and autumn 2021 PA 1a planned bilateral meetings with waterway management experts to discuss about priorities for the future.

FRMMP is a living document. When started in 2014 many countries, waterways administrations needed equipment for maintenance. Since then, a large number of projects was implemented (e.g. FAIRway Danube, HUMARK, SWIM) with EU financing, but other key issues emerged like digitalization, measures related to the resilience to climate change and a more coordinated action at the Corridor level.

The structure of the document will contain the chapters dedicated to each country in which will be provided updated information and the unsolved issues. The national chapters will further contain information on digitalisation (e.g. intelligent marking systems, improvement of internal procedures), on water level forecasts in hand with climate change, improvements of the interface between waterway-related data and user information platforms. A new transnational chapter will be added containing information on climate change adaptation and consolidation of platform for user information. A large variety of platforms for user information was developed in the last years and in the next 7 years they should be consolidated, wherever feasible. Maintaining many platforms is time-consuming for the waterway administration to update the information in

a variety of platforms and for the users to have multiple choices for their information. The FRMMP will include a new chapter related to the environment. It is necessary to keep the options open in relation to the climate change and to have a transnational coordination.

The PA 1a technical secretariat proposed to the participants the following calendar for this activity:

- until end of October 2021: PA 1a will gather further expert inputs (waterway administrations, Ministries of Transport) and will prepare the consolidation of FRMMP
- November 2021: updated FRMMP draft will be coordinated with Steering Group members (Ministries of Transport) for the first content-wise approval of their county chapters;
- December 2021: presentation of the draft document at the PA1a Steering Group meeting, including the River Commissions participating as observers;
- Dec. 2021/Jan. 2022: expected feedback from the observers to the PA1a Steering Group in 4 weeks and other organisations;
- February 2022: Final approval of the new FRMMP by PA1a voting Steering Group members in a written procedure.

ICPDR informed that in December 2021 a new Danube River Basin Management Plan is expected to be adopted. This document should include a reference to the FRMMP. It was established that PA 1a will cooperate with ICPDR on this issue and will send a text to be included in the new Danube River Basin Management Plan.

3. Recommendations on Fleet modernisation

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman summarized for the participants the strategies and documents stressing the greening of the fleet which is a key issue to address. In 2019, the European Commission published the "European Green Deal", a strategy that aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Sustainable & Smart Mobility Strategy foresees the reduction of traffic-related greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050 through measures to significantly reduce dependence on fossil fuels (low-emission and zero-emission vehicles, increasing the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels), measures to shift towards sustainable means of transport (shifting considerable quantities of goods to rail, inland shipping and coastal shipping) and internalisation of external costs (e.g. polluter pays principle). NAIADES III constitutes a strategy for the implementation of the Sustainable & Smart Mobility Strategy. Its objectives are very ambitious and a lot of work has to be done in the next years to achieve them.

In 2019, PA 1a prepared a strategy for fleet modernisation. In 2021, PA 1a developed Policy recommendations on fleet modernization based on this strategy. The discussion paper elaborates on two topics, namely the creation of national aid schemes and the development of a strategic research agenda. In the future, the PA 1a Working Group on Fleet modernisation should monitor ongoing studies and initiatives related to this topic and develop recommendations for actions by Member States and the industry in order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. Together with the Steering Group members and the Danube Commission, PA 1a has started identifying experts who can be engaged in this process. The industry will be involved as well.

PA 1a is interested to know how the topic of greening the fleet is treated in every country, if measures have been anchored in Operational Programmes for EU Structural Funds or in other facilities such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility so far.

Mrs. Theresia Hacksteiner, European Barge Union, raised awareness for the draft Communication from the Commission on guidelines for state aid for climate, environmental protection and energy 2022 which are not in favour of the sector. EBU already sent its comments to EC, will share the document with the PA 1a SG members and asked countries to oppose this proposal if the modernisation of the fleet is desired. Related

to taxonomy, the PLATINA 3 project will deliver more research. For the transition to zero emission the sector needs time.

Mr. Robert RAFAEL, Pro Danube International, mentioned the studies dealing with new technologies for greening the fleet (GRENDDEL project, CCNR study), which are important but not enough to achieve the set targets. Fleet operators have to mix financial resources in order to achieve zero emission and contributions from EC and member states are crucial. A process for the creation of a dedicated fund for fleet is foreseen in the PLATINA 3 project. PDI will be active on following the policy issue and to assure that inland waterway transport will not compete with maritime transport in terms of financing.

5 Status of Administrative Processes

The work on administrative processes concentrated on border controls procedures in recent years and involves PA 11 – Security in which the Ministries of Interior are represented. In 2018, a set of harmonized forms (DAVID forms) were established to be used in countries with Schengen external borders and outside the Schengen area instead of the previously used national forms. In April 2018 the agreement on technical level for the three forms (Arrival and departure report, Crew list and Passenger list) was obtained and the forms were introduced in Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. They are not yet introduced in Romania and Moldova. Romania reported that changes in legislation are needed and expect to apply them starting with 2022.

Next step is the digitalisation/digital submission of the DAVID forms. The main objectives of the digitalisation of DAVID forms are: the single entering of data (even if different reports are required by receiving authorities, the reporting party enters each data field only once) and giving the authorities the choice of report receipt within an electronic reporting system (overview, print, create pdf, respond, forward, etc).

The task for full digitalisation of DAVID Forms was taken by the RIS COMEX project, module “Central and Eastern European Reporting Information System” (CEERIS) based on one-time reporting & single-entering of data. The already available DAVID Creator is an intermediary step in the digitalisation, enabling the digital creation of DAVID forms as pdf, available in Austrian DoRIS Portal. Still the submission to the control authorities must be done manually. The DAVID Creator is owned and operated by viadonau and is free of charge for the users.

After the finalization of the RIS COMEX in 2022, the Central and Eastern European Reporting Information System (CEERIS) will be implemented and operational in 8 countries (Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Czech Republic).

Based on the “Recommendations for improved border controls along the Danube and its navigable tributaries”, developed in 2016, it is under exploratory stage, with border control authorities and sector representatives, to implement an electronic registration and time slot management tool to schedule the arrival of ships at control points and assign time slots for border controls.

Mr. Manfred Seitz, Danube Commission, emphasised that in the DANTE project (2017 – 2019) a platform for monitoring the administrative barriers was created. The Danube Commission have the human resources to manage the platform and to continue to monitor the administrative barriers in the coming years.

6 Further updates from PA1a

Mr. Jan Smallegange, STC Group, presented an overview on the COMPETING project – Competence based future proof education and training for inland navigation. The project is in line with the EU Directive 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation which entry in force on 17th of January 2022. EU Directive 2017/2397 and its additional acts set standards for competences and

standards for examinations and allows a re-definition of operational level (OL) and management level (ML) functions onboard of the inland vessels. The COMPETING project has a duration of 3 years (January 2019 – December 2021) and it is funded from Erasmus+. Within the project 14 course manuals and an audit system were developed. CERONAV from Romania was responsible for developing the manuals. All educational material will be an open source via the EDINNA platform. Two audits conducted in the Netherlands and in Romania focused on regular education.

People qualifying at any educational institute in Europe should have the same level of competences. Therefore, a common development of curricula covering the professional qualifications as an IWT crew member on operational level (OL) as well as on management level (ML) will result in qualified crew having comparable level of knowledge, skills and attitude fit for services in the EU IWT sector. The related CESNI standards contain a description of these professional competences based on a common understanding and harmonised system for the qualification of IWT personnel. The standards describe core competences both on OL and ML. The concept of these standards also allows an easier integration of career changers coming from other related transport sectors. The new European certificates of qualification will thus facilitate labour mobility.

More information about the COMPETING project can be found on <https://www.iwt-competencies.eu/>.

Mrs. Vera Hofbauer, AT coordinator, mentioned that the COMPETING project brings to life EU Directive 2017/2397 and she is looking forward to a follow-up project.

Mrs. Viktoria Weissenburger introduced to the SG members the initiative of PA 1a coordinators to develop an input document for policy recommendations on ports development by contracting external expertise. The policy recommendations on port development should be elaborated until the end of 2022. To establish the task of the external expertise close coordination is needed with existing initiatives, like the DIONYSUS project, the already concluded DAPhNE project or the Danube Commission Expert Group on ports and the TEN-T Working Group on ports and inland waterway. Any idea from the SG members is welcome, pressing issues on ports that can be addressed at transnational level.

The PA 1a RIS Working Group was not very active in recent years, but a series of projects and studies identified some gaps in the field. On 18th of November 2021, PA 1a will organize a workshop on “Notice to Skippers Services in the Danube Region”. Topic of discussion will be the late disseminated and wrongly coded NtS messages which emerged despite the international commitments that the countries have to comply with NtS 4.0 standard. Participation is open to all authorities and actors involved in drafting, approving and publishing NtS message, Danube Commission, EBU, and PDI.

The SG members were asked to approve the participation of the Priority Area 1a Technical Secretariat in the proposed Horizon Europe project “4SURE IWT” as member of the project’s Advisory Board. The project 4SURE-IWT - For SUstainable and REsilient Inland Waterway Transport will be submitted in the HORIZON Europe Call related to climate resilient and environmentally sustainable transport infrastructure, with a focus on inland waterways.

Mrs. Oksana CHEVAL, Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine gave a short update on the current developments in Ukraine. Ukraine provided updated information in March 2021 for the FRMMP and brief information on the current issues related to infrastructure. Ukraine is conducting dredging on the approach channel in the Danube Delta. In August 2020 it was approved the programme of the modernisation of the Port of Odessa, consisting in reconstruction of berths, road connections, banks protections.

EUSDR smart app for Android and iOS was presented to the SG members. EUSDR – Danube Region Strategy is the name of the application which can be downloaded from Google Play or AppStore for mobile devices, without the necessity of creating an account and, implicitly, without sharing user data. The home page provides an animated map of the region, showing all countries participating in EUSDR, including a few details about each country. A latest news section is also available and the user can activate the notification

button and receive info in real time. The user can also add upcoming events in its personal calendar and never miss the most interesting ones.

7 Conclusions and next steps

In the end of the meeting SG members were informed about the upcoming events:

- DC Expert Group on Ports, 30.09.2021;
- Danube Business Talks, 13.10.2021;
- PLATINA3 Stage event, 19.10.2021;
- 10th EUSDR Annual Forum, 26 – 27.10.2021;

The next SG meeting will be organized on 9th of December 2021, online.

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

Enclosures

Please note: All documents are 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
- (3) Policy recommendation on fleet modernization: Discussion paper
- (4) EBU – Comments from the inland navigation sector on the draft Communication from the Commission on guidelines for state aid for climate, environmental protection and energy 2022;



