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

**Kick-off Meeting of the Working Groups for
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**
Bucharest, Romania – 27 October 2011

MINUTES

Author(s):
Technical Secretariats of PACs 1a

Version (date):
V 1.0 (final) | 15-03-2012

1. Opening, welcome to the participants

The Coordinators of Priority Area 1a (henceforth: PACs 1a) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Austria and Romania (represented by Mr. Vorderwinkler and Mr. Cucu), welcomed the participants to the kick-off meeting of the Working Groups and expressed their pleasure for having participants from the public and the private sector.

2. Presentation on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and the role of the Priority Area Coordinators

Ms. Ploeg Cruceru (DG REGIO, European Commission) introduced the objectives of the EUSDR and its structure. She explained the role of the Steering Group which shall contribute to find appropriate solutions for a sustainable development of the inland waterway transport system. The European Commission will take into consideration the projects recommended by the Steering Group, which will help to implement the respective actions of the Danube Region Strategy's Action Plan. In this context, it will be important that each country will be actively represented in the Steering Group.

Also, Ms. Ploeg Cruceru informed the participants that the "Connecting Europe Facility" programme will start in 2014 and will take priority projects for the Danube Region into account which will need to be identified. In this context, Mr. Bernabei (DG MOVE, European Commission) underlined that currently projects and budgets are under discussion for the next 10 years, also taking into account the projects under the EUSDR.

3. Presentation on the role and the responsibilities of the Steering Group, finalised targets for EUSDR Priority Area 1a and expected results from the Working Groups

Mr. Cucu and Mr. Vorderwinkler, representing the PACs 1a, described the organisational structure for the implementation of Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR, i.e. "To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways". The main purpose of the Steering Group will be to provide feedback and guidance to the Coordinators and to report to the European Commission about the implementation of the EUSDR. The Steering Group can recommend projects which are in line with the EUSDR objectives, the Working Groups are the thematic platforms where projects/project ideas are discussed. Furthermore it has been outlined that the Steering Group does not have the mandate to decide upon the concrete funding of projects, as this is an exclusive task of the respective management authorities of the different funding programmes.

The PACs 1a proposed to establish five Working Groups in line with the actions contained in the EUSDR Action Plan (*Modernise Danube Fleet; Invest in Education & jobs; Implement River Information Services; Improve the Waterway infrastructure & the waterway management; Develop multimodal ports & sustainable freight transport*) in order to address project proposals from both the public and the private sector.

4. Presentation of Working Groups: Introduction on the status quo of five action fields and overview on already existing projects/activities, followed by "flashlight" presentations of relevant stakeholders

Working Group 1: "Waterway infrastructure & management"

Mr. Hartl provided a general overview on the planned and ongoing infrastructure projects on the Danube, giving examples from Germany, Austria, Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine (navigation conditions, bridges, locks, etc.). Also Mr. Hartl explained the importance of applying the integrative planning principle in infrastructure development provided by the *Joint Statement on Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River*

Basin (adopted in December 2007) and in the *Manual on Good Practices in Sustainable Waterway Planning*. Furthermore Mr. Hartl pointed out the importance of a modern and comprehensive waterway management system in order to properly address the regular maintenance works.

Mr. Soare presented the main responsibilities and activities of the Romanian "River Administration of the Lower Danube Galati (AFDJ)" which is the competent authority for ensuring navigation conditions on the Romanian sector of the Danube. The AFDJ carries out topo-hydrographic surveys, signalization and dredging works, elaborates and updates the electronic navigational charts and implements several infrastructure projects in order to ensure the navigability of the Danube. Mr. Soare briefly presented several projects of the AFDJ, e.g., *Improving the navigation conditions on the Danube between Calarasi and Braila*, *Improving the navigation conditions on the Romanian – Bulgarian Common Sector of the Danube*, *NEWADA*, *IRIS Europe II*.

Working Group 2: "Multimodal river ports & sustainable freight transport"

Mr. Gussmagg presented the Austrian public port "Mierka Donauhafen Krems", an independent and privately owned service provider offering over 70 years of experience and expertise to the customers. He provided information on the capacities, the equipment, services and types of cargo and products handled in the port. He explained that the port of Krems and its partner Rhenus Logistics believe in a positive development of the Danube region and are convinced that the Danube River can play a crucial role in the overall transport system of the Danube region – provided that the river infrastructure will be improved (fairway conditions, locks management, multimodal ports).

Mr. Cucu gave a presentation on the Romanian ports development and focused on the main river and maritime ports which have capacity for multimodal transport. Ports like Galati, Braila, Tulcea, Giurgiu, Drobeta – Turnu Severin, Calafat, Oltenita, Constanta, will be modernized and developed in order to better address customers' needs. The investments will be carried out until 2017 and address especially the modernization/construction of berths and multimodal connections.

Working Group 3: "Danube fleet"

Mr. Schweighofer presented the current status of the Danube fleet, which has an average age of over 30 years and needs to be modernized. According to the EUSDR Action Plan the expected results are to contribute to an improved environmental and economic performance through technological developments (innovative vessels, engines, etc.) and waste management measures. Several studies were carried out in areas like hydrodynamics, energy efficient operation, engine technology, etc., but have not yet been implemented due to high implementation costs. Furthermore Mr. Schweighofer explained the need for dedicated research and development projects taking into account the specifics of the Danube navigation system. This will be addressed within the EUSDR through a ship technology study which shall examine the potentials for the further development of ship technology and the reduction of the environmental impact of Danube navigation.

Mr. Cotiga provided information on the "Romanian Inland Ship-owners and Port Operators Association (AAOPFR)" established in Galati in 1993. This association aims to improve the economic position of inland navigation, to implement a common policy for personnel training and to exchange information and experience with interested parties. Mr. Cotiga explained that the average age of the Romanian fleet also exceeds 30 years. Nevertheless within the last five years Romanian ship owners made investments in their fleet (new engines, propulsion systems, improving the devices control, reducing gas emissions and noise). Nevertheless the modernisation rate in Romania remains modest, as only one new barge was acquired within the last 15 years in Romania. Finally Mr. Cotiga stressed the need to modernize the fleet and identify possibilities for financial support of navigation companies.

Working Group 4: "River Information Services"

Mr. Vorderwinkler presented the main functions of River Information Services (RIS). Harmonized RIS are currently under implementation along all Danube riparian countries. Mr. Vorderwinkler pointed out that inland electronic navigational charts (ENCs) are already available in all countries; tracking & tracing infrastructures is in (pilot) operation in most countries, most Danube vessels will be equipped with transponders until the end of 2012, respective carriage requirements are already in force in several countries; notices to skippers and electronic reporting systems are in (pilot) operation in nearly

all countries. Furthermore, Mr. Vorderwinkler stated that there are ongoing projects for the completion of RIS implementation in Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia. The project IRIS Europe 3 will contribute to ensure a harmonised service development – full service coverage along the Danube is expected to be realized until 2013.

Ms. Ostojić Barjaktarević provided information on the implementation of RIS in Serbia, which started in 2001 and shall be finalized in 2012 with a full scale implementation on the Serbian Danube. RIS in Serbia are used by the authorities as well as the commercial sector. She also informed the audience that a respective transponder equipment programme has been launched in 2011, equipping approximately 40 commercial vessels.

Working Group 5: "Qualified personnel & education standards"

Ms. Hofbauer gave an overview on the status quo in the Danube region: The inland navigation sector currently has to cope with a shortage of qualified personnel on board of vessels, in inland ports and also in the logistics sector. As main problems she identified little investments in the educational system, unfavourable working conditions, a general underrepresentation of inland navigation in transport logistics education, as well as insufficient/outdated teaching material. Ms. Hofbauer presented ongoing initiatives and projects like EDINNA and NELI, which shall contribute to harmonise training and certification standards, to improve cooperation and to exchange knowledge as well as to improve working conditions in inland navigation.

Ms. Leganel gave a presentation on the "Romanian Maritime Training Centre – CERONAV", which was established in 1976 as a national Romanian body for the training of maritime, river and port personnel. CERONAV is involved in various Danube-related projects like EWITA, PLATINA or NELI. Furthermore, CERONAV is involved in the preparatory phase of the HINT project (Harmonized Inland Navigation Transport through education and information technology). This project has the following main objectives: to integrate the Danube Region into the European harmonized education process, to develop training and assessment IT applications and tools, to create conditions for transnational cooperation, to develop concepts for onboard and simulator practical training and to promote jobs in inland navigation.

Presentation on example of EUSDR project

After the presentation of the five thematic working groups, the General Director of IZMAIL FERRY LTD Ukraine, Mr. Vasyl, provided information on an Ukrainian project named "Building up the Onshore Automobile Ferry Crossing Complex Izmail – Tulcea". The Project initiator "Izmail Ferry Line" strives to set up the Automobile ferry crossing between Izmail (Ukraine) and Tulcea (Romania) within the next 12 months. According to Mr. Vasyl, the realization this project will allow a stable transport of freight and passengers on the projected ferry line. The construction of the ferry crossing will reduce the length of the existing route (Odessa – Reni – Galati Tulcea – Constanta) by 120 kilometres, as the distance along the Danube amounts to only 32 kilometres (two hours by ferry bridge).

5. Discussion on Working Groups

Mr. Cucu explained the role of the Working Groups for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR, which will address actions/projects related to the implementation of the EUSDR Action Plan. The thematic Working Groups have been set up on the basis of the Action Plan (infrastructure, multimodal ports, fleet, RIS, education). The main role of the Working Groups is to gather information about project proposals/ideas and to bring together interested people and professionals of the respective thematic fields (project brokerage platform). The outcome from Working Group meetings, especially with regard to projects/project proposals, will be forwarded to and discussed in the Steering Group, which shall recommend projects which are in line with the EUSDR to the European Commission.

The proposal of the PACs 1a was discussed with the audience. Based on these discussions, the PACs concluded to remain the concept of Working Groups with the frequency of meetings twice a year. The Working Groups will be organized by the Technical Secretariats of the PACs and will specifically involve both the public as well as the private sector and NGOs.

As a result of the discussion on the labelling of projects as being in line with the targets of EUSDR's Priority Area 1a, Working Groups should not have a right to take decisions, as projects or project ideas are not obliged to be examined by Working Group members and can be submitted directly to the Steering Group for discussion and approval for receiving a letter of recommendation.

Having in view that the Technical Secretariats of PACs 1a have already started to collect information about ongoing projects and project proposals/ideas it has been concluded that this information will be made available on the Internet until the end of the year.

6. Next steps and activities to be carried out by the Working Groups

As soon as possible all parties interested in the five Working Groups of EUSDR Priority Area 1a should submit their project fiches.

The 2nd meeting of the Working Groups for EUSDR Priority Area 1a will be held in spring 2012, presumably in March. The exact date and venue will be communicated by the PACs in due time.

Enclosures

Please note: All documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1A
→ <http://groupspaces.com/MobilityWaterways>

- (1) Presentations given by the participants at the Working Groups meeting
- (2) List of attendants