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

**14th Meeting of the Steering Group
for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

Budapest, Hungary
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MINUTES

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1. PA 1a Welcome and introduction

The 14th meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Budapest, Hungary, in the premises of the Danube Commission, on the 12th of June 2018.

The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Vera Hofbauer, head of inland navigation department within the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (PA1a Austrian Coordinator) and Mrs. Cristina Cuc (on behalf of Mrs. Maria-Magdalena Grigore, PA 1a Romanian Coordinator), counsellor for European affairs within the Romanian Ministry of Transport, henceforth: PACs 1a.

Mr. Petar Margić, General Director of the Danube Commission Secretariat and the PACs 1a welcomed the participants, members of the Steering Group and the observer members - representatives of the European Commission (Mr. Caesare Bernabei senior adviser for DG REGIO), representatives of the Danube Commission and transnational organizations (Pro Danube International, Danube Tourism Commission). The participating countries were: Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia and Romania. Host country Hungary could not participate due to illness of the SG member.

The **Agenda for the 14th meeting of the Steering Group** was approved.

Mr. Caesare Bernabei, DG REGIO, appreciated the work done so far in this priority area and stressed that the Steering Group should start to think what should be the future appointments and what will be necessary do for inland waterways in the next years. It was mentioned as a good example the ministerial meetings for the ministers of transport which will be organised again in 2018, in December.

Mrs. Vera Hofbauer, BMVIT, introduced the projects contributing with concrete results to PA 1a targets and to the implementation of the EU Strategy for Danube Region.

2. Reports on PA1a Working Groups

2.1 WG 3 - Fleet modernization

A workshop on the projects GRENDEL and Green Danube was organized in Vienna, on the 18th of April 2018.

Mr. Manfred Seitz, PDI, reported on the status of Green Danube, the integrated transnational policies and practical solutions for an environmentally friendly IWT system in the Danube region and the project GRENDEL. The process of greening the fleet is significant, left almost no room for profit for the shipowners and it is compulsory starting with the entering in force of the EU Regulation 2016/1628 concerning the pollutant emission limits. In Europe, there were developed mature solutions for engines, including LNG engines, but they bring additional costs to the fleet operators. GRENDEL project is implemented in the timeframe 1st June 2018 – November 2020 and it will develop investment plans for fleet operators in order to meet the pollution challenges and to stay on the market. The input from the technology side will come from other projects and as concerns the financing the project will develop a state-aid scheme, using the model developed and applicable on Cohesion Fund for the inland vessels recorded in the Register of the Czech Republic. Also, at the EU level, it will be discussed de possibility to establish a Green Innovation Fund.

Mr. Robert Rafael, PDI, presented the status of the Green Danube project, project ongoing, financed through Danube Transnational Programme. The project is trying to look to the level of emissions from the shore side. There will be established places to measure the level of emissions, how to measure them, their effects on the society. National workshops in seven countries were organized for the development of a Greening Strategy for emissions reduction based on possible greening technologies for the Danube Region. A Green Technologies Survey realized within the project conducted to the conclusion that vessel operators are willing to green the fleet, they are aware of the new technologies, but the cost and the return of investment are more relevant to them.

Mrs. Cristina Cuc, Technical Secretariat PA 1a, mentioned that more support from COM for greening the fleet will be necessary in the near future.

Mr. Hors Schindler, Danube Commission, mentioned that DC negotiate with DG MOVE a second grant agreement, which will have five pillars and projects like GRENDL and DANTE could be continued and bring to the future.

Mr. Gerhard Skoff, Danube Tourist Commission, added the fact that most of the projects related to the modernization of ships deals with cargo ships. Although the white ships meet high standards, in order to lower their emission they have also to be taken into consideration while developing state aid or grant schemes. Mr. Manfred Seitz commented that GRENDL project takes into consideration passenger ships as well.

2.2 WG 6 - Administrative processes

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, viadonau, provided information on the achievements resulted from the cooperation between PA 1a and PA 11 – *Security* regarding the improvement of border control along the Danube. The cooperation between PA 1a and PA 11 is an ongoing process, which have in view the simplification, harmonisation and digitalization of control procedures. Concerning the simplification, the aims are to avoid duplication/multiplication of work for ship crews, the elimination of requests for data that does not have any specific purpose in the control process, clearly structured and self-explaining control procedures which were delivered already by guidelines for the ship operators. For the purpose of harmonization, the DAVID forms were discussed and agreed at expert level, in a meeting organized in Karlsruhe on the 24th of April 2018. The digitalization, subject of the current and future EU agenda, will bring benefits for border control authorities through simplified data exchange as well as for shipping companies/ship crews and control authorities as time for administrative tasks can be substantially reduced.

The administrative processes issue was included in the third report of the European Coordinator for Rhine – Danube Core Network Corridor and it is declared as a flagship project (launched during TEN-Days in Ljubljana on 26 April 2018)

The discussions on the control forms started 2 years ago and now the DAVID forms have a technical agreement. The next steps will be the endorsement by PA 1a and then to be proposed further to be adopted and put in practice. Having in view that the final version of DAVID forms (arrival and departure report, crew list and passenger list) were delivered to the participants during the meeting, the SG members are invited to analyze them and to send the feedback in 10 working days. It was proposed to also include the theme of administrative barriers in the upcoming ministerial conclusions (Danube Transport Ministers), to be endorsed on 3rd December 2018, prepared by PA1a in conjunction with DG MOVE / REGIO and the incoming Austrian EU Presidency. In July 2018 it will be prepared the path towards anchoring of technical results in EU legislation together with DGs MOVE and HOME / DIGIT, including a possible complementary project.

Mr. Horst Schindler, Danube Commission, added that DC distributed the DAVID forms to the member states and that the subject will be included in the work of the technical expert group of DC, which will have its next meeting in October 2018. The DC could provide recommendations on this issue.

2.3 WG 5 – Education and Jobs

In the field of education and jobs the future is the single EU certificate and the digitalisation and currently a lot of efforts are needed for the implementation of the Directive 2017/2379 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Directive 96/50/EC and Directive 91/672/EEC.

Mrs. Doina Munteanu, CERONAV, presented a comprehensive update on the strategy for implementing the EU Directive 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation. The directive is in force since 17th of January 2018. The responsibility of the European Commission is to adopt the implementing and delegated acts referred to in the EU Directive by 17 January 2020 and the Member States has the obligation to transpose the Directive in their national legislation 17 January 2022.

The implementation of the Directive faces some problems, but it is supported by Danube SKILLS project activities, CESNI and EDINNA activities.

Within Danube SKILLS project, public consultation workshops with relevant stakeholders were organized in 2017 in 8 Danube Riparian countries in order to promote the new EU Directive and take stock of current legal framework in each country. In Romania the public consultation was organized by CERONAV in Galati and there were invited representatives from Ukraine and Republic of Moldova, non-EU countries. There were elaborated didactical materials for the Train the trainer sessions based on CESNI standards of competence and a Policy Support Strategy for Nautical Education with a detailed roadmap for the approval of training programmes.

An output of the Danube SKILLS project is the *Policy support strategy for nautical education*. It was finalized the first step, the identification of the existing gaps in the Danube Region with regard to the implementation of the EU Directive in the existing education, training and certification system of inland navigation personnel. The conclusion is that the implementation of the provisions of the EU Directive in the education, training and certification systems of Danube riparian countries can be done in due time but step by step, depending of the available resources and the number of people. Based on the strategy, an *Action Plan* will be developed, which shall break the strategic goals and objectives.

CESNI (European Committee for drawing up Standards in Inland Navigation), functioning at CCNR, created a temporary working group on professional qualifications which analyses five categories of standards.

In EDDINA General Assembly held in May 2018, in Harlingen, Netherlands, it was widely discussed the subject of the Directive implementation and the most important problems identified by EDINNA members are

- lack of cooperation between Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Education;
- framing of educational programs into the qualification levels established by law- the responsibility lies with the National Authority of Qualifications;
- education and training institutions are not yet contacted by the designated national authority to send them new responsibilities;
- lack of education and training institutions in some of the countries and lack of interest for inland navigation sector of the designated authorities.

2.4 WG 4 – River Information Services

Mr. Csaba Kovács, RSOE, reported on project “Enhance the Efficiency of Hungarian RIS Operation” (HERO project) financed from CEF in the period 01.03.2015 – 31.05.2018. Within the project, there were purchased and installed 11 fully redundant AIS physical shore stations and it was assured the full coverage of VHF network on the Hungarian stretch of the Danube River. Other equipment purchased and installed are: DGNSS into all RIS infrastructure for correction less than 1m, radar and camera systems especially in Budapest area on the bridges, 15 meteorological sensors providing information in real time, modernization and automation of water level gauges at 25 sites. The electronic navigation map according to the IENC 2.3 standard was updated based on surveys on the entire Hungarian section of the River Danube and new objects were included. It was developed the methodology on how to update the ENC in Hungarian critical sections and all the scenarios like floods, accidents were taken into consideration.

The core of the system is VTS – Integrated traffic monitoring software that provides the information to the PannonRIS public interface (website and mobile app). There were presented the functionalities and services provided to the skippers.

2.5 WG 1 – Waterway infrastructure and management

Mrs. Viktoria Weissenburger, viadonau, reported on the status of the National Action Plans. The updates of the document, which cover the situation of navigation and maintenance of the fairway for entire 2017, is in progress. The updates were communicated by Austria, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, while some countries (Germany, Hungary, Ukraine) communicated that the updates will be ready at the end of June 2018 or August 2018. PA 1a Technical Secretariats proposed to SG to send the updated National Action Plan at the end of August 2018 for approval through written procedure.

The fairway conditions and major steps for the implementation of the Master Plan were presented by **Victoria Weissenburger, viadonau**, for Upper and Central Danube and by **Romeo Soare, AFDJ**, for the Lower Danube.

Apart from January 2017 when there was ice on the Danube, fairway conditions on the upper and central Danube were quite good, in Croatia and Serbia though fairway width had to be reduced (in Croatia to 100m) and in Serbia at Futog to 80m reduced even, to improve the conditions for the users, at least regarding depth).

In Austria there were undertaken the operative tasks for fairway marking as of 2018 and for that purpose there were purchased a new marking craft and about 233 buoys. In the critical sector East of Vienna another critical bottleneck was solved in 2017 by building hydraulic structures and a bedload trap was realised. The water level forecast at two important gauging stations was improved, from three to five days.

In Slovakia, the procurement procedure for a new surveying vessel was finalised (delivery August 2018) and same goes for the procurement of a marking vessel (spring 2019). For purchasing a dredger for the DaReM Project the tender is under preparation, as well as the tender for an internal national management system.

In Hungary, tender documents were finalised in 2017 for a surveying vessel (published this year in May). Within HUMARK project, under implementation since 2015, it was prepared the tender for rehabilitation of 3 marking vessels and some new buoys will be purchased.

In Croatia, 4 new gauging stations were installed in 2017 and one was rehabilitated and the surveying vessel was delivered. The tender documentation for WAMS software is under preparation and the water level forecast was improved.

In Serbia, 160 buoys were purchased and two projects for improvement of the conditions for navigation are ongoing on Danube and Sava rivers. One critical point has been solved.

In Bulgaria, the most critical point is Belene, where in 2017 the fairway alignment was changed. Procurement of the new surveying vessel was finalised. The ship was delivered in June 2018. Marking vessel contract was signed and is now being built (delivery 2018). The technical specification of the first 10 gauges was elaborated. A tender will be launched for the acquisition of a dredger with financing from the Bulgarian Operational Programme 2014 - 2020. The maintenance dredging started in Vardim, on 02.06.2018.

In Romania, the most critical point remains Cochirleni (km 309 – 308), even AFDJ performed maintenance dredging in 2017 and 2018. The Bechet is a good example, because after maintenance dredging works were performed in 2017, the conditions for navigation were assured. The maintenance dredging continues in Bechet and they were started on 07.05.2018. Procurement of the new surveying vessel was finalised. The ship will be delivered in June 2018. Marking vessel contract was signed and the vessel will be delivered in December 2018. AFDJ and CAN will purchase 10 new gauging stations

and rehabilitated 8. A project application will be submitted this year for extension of the gauging network, to have 54 additional gauges. The water level forecast will be improved and it is under preparation the tender for waterway asset management system. The contract for a new dredging equipment was signed by AFDJ in March 2017, within SWIM project and the equipment will be delivered in March 2019.

There were presented the available budgets in 2018 for maintenance works. A comparison between countries cannot be done, because there are differences from the point of view of flowing regime, length of national sectors, costs for maintenance activities. A temporal analysis and interpretation can however be done.

PA 1a Technical Secretariat requested the SG members and FAIRway project partners to prepare the calculations for the required maintenance budgets in 2019. The information can be an input for the ministers of transport meeting in December 2019.

Mr. Cesare Bernabei, DG REGIO, added that information related to the necessary budgets in 2018 can be useful for the discussions at the EUSDR Annual Forum (Sofia, 18 – 19 October 2018).

Mr. Manfred Seitz, PDI, asked for explanations on the required operational budgets and if the required budgets guarantee that the navigation depths will be assured. Until now it seems that the budgets do not solve the problems.

Mr. Romeo Soare, AFDJ, explained that on the one hand is the available budget and it is also a matter of technical capacity of the administration. For example in Bulgaria are allocated 4 MEURO for 3 years (2018 – 2020) but it seems that it is not enough for maintenance dredging in the critical points. Usually the budgets are prepared in October for the next year. It happens to have floods in April, bringing a lot of sediments, which cannot be foreseen in the previous year. The budgets are calculated based on estimations regarding the activities and quantities.

Mr. Romeo Soare, AFDJ, informed the participants about the status of two important projects for improving the conditions for navigations on the Romanian – Bulgarian common sector, namely FAST Danube and SWIM, both financed from CEF. The main objective of the FAST Danube project is to find technical solutions for the 12 bottlenecks (divided in 5 zones) existing on the Romanian – Bulgarian common sector, applying all the environmental requirements and legislation in force. In 2017, there were performed two campaigns of hydrographical, aerial LiDAR scanning, geotechnical and hydrodynamics survey, as well as a sediment analysis. It was realized 1D numerical model for the entire sector (km 863 – km 375) and 2D model for the critical zones. It is desired to put in operation a new concept for dredging and balance of the sediments. There were presented the identified and proposed solutions for Bechet, Bogdan-Secian Island, mixed technical solutions consisting in capital dredging and hydrotechnical works. The identified solutions will be studied with SHIPMA software, in order to test the influence of the proposed solution on the navigation.

The solution identified in Bechet will be performed within SWIM project, with the dredging equipment which will be delivered in March 2019. The capital dredging will be performed in SWIM project, in Bechet, Corabia and Calafat – Vidin bridge areas, after the environmental permit will be obtained for the FAST Danube project.

At the end of September 2018 will start the EIA procedure and it was mentioned that there are different procedures in Romania and Bulgaria. The EIA procedure is expected to be finalized in December 2019. For FAST Danube project was prepared a communication strategy, were organized workshops and working groups sessions and will continue this issue, in order to inform, to involve all the interested parties and to solve in the best way the critical points.

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, viadonau, provided information on the Danube Stream project, which gather all the waterway administrations. Within the project, in September 2018, will be relaunched a new web portal containing information on the fairway. A special attention will be given to the activities 4.3 - Environmentally sound waterway management. It will be analysed the causes leading to delays in inland waterway projects, it will be realized a summary of most important legal provisions and previous guidance documents and how the waterway administrations deal with the environment requirements. The results will be presented at the event *Danube Awareness Day*, which will be organized in Vienna, on 13.9.2018.

3. Input for Danube Ministerial Conclusions

Meetings of the ministers of transport from the Danube riparian countries and signing ministerial conclusions was an initiative of the Pro Danube international which was taken and put in practice with the involvement of PA 1a Steering Group. Usually, the Steering Group of PA 1a addressed an Appeal towards the ministers of transport with the most important issues that should be in their close attention. The first ministerial meeting (Luxemburg, 2012) prepared and emphasized the necessity of a *Fairway Maintenance and Rehabilitation Master Plan for Danube and its tributaries* (FMRMP).

PACs PA 1a proposed to SG members to address another Appeal towards the ministers of transport to meet in December 2018 and to sign ministerial conclusions, meaning a further political support for the improved fairway maintenance and administrative processes. The text of the Appeal was distributed to SG members during the meeting. A written procedure was proposed for the adoption of the appeal by the SG.

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, viadonau, presented a comprehensive analysis for 2012 – 2017, actual lifetime of the FMRMP, based on the information monitored and made available through the FAIRway project and the PA1a Technical Secretariat. Analyses were done on the fairway availability, cubic metres dredged, operational expenditures on dredging, surveying and marking. From this analysis results that the dredged quantities increased in Romania, Serbia, Croatia as well as the operational budgets for this activity. However, only if we look at budgets in not enough, because every stretch is different and has specific characteristics. Decreasing dredging budgets can also be an indication for successful structural improvements. The key lessons learnt from the analyses will be presented to the ministers for their further analysis and conclusions. The path towards Danube ministerial conclusions will be coordinated with DG MOVE and DG REGIO.

Mr. Horst Schindler, Danube Commission, informed the participants that the ministers of transport from the DC member states are invited in Belgrade, on 28 – 29 of June 2017 to celebrate 70 years from the signing of Belgrade Convention. The event will be attended by representatives of the European Commission (DG MOVE).

4. Input for Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

The SG members were informed that the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU, in second half of 2018) will have the initiative to start the discussion on specific policy needs in the Danube region post-2020, with a view to a possible NAIADES-3 programme (the name can be different).

A history and a comparison was presented of NAIADES I & II - Integrated European action programmes for the Promotion of Inland Waterway Transport and implemented through the projects PLATINA. NAIADES II Mid-Term Progress Report 2014-2017 currently under elaboration. So, the Austrian Presidency, in the process of preparation of Council Conclusions of the TTE Council, will invite the Commission to develop a comprehensive follow-up programme "NAIADES III". Some of the themes for NAIADES III could be infrastructure, greening and digitalisation.

PA1a Steering Group can prepare input and suggestions for these Council Conclusions, focussing on specific policy needs in the Danube Region. The SG members were invited during the meeting to provide a feedback on the issue.

Mr. Vojtech Dabrowski Ministry of Transport of Czech Republic, mentioned that the ministry priorities are related to the infrastructure development and it is welcomed the study on Good Navigation Status, remotorization and decarbonisation for all ships, PR for inland navigation, corridor approach on free capacities, and in the field of education the practice onboard of the ships and simulators.

Mrs. Doina Munteanu, CERONAV, suggested that a future NAIADES programme, in the field of education and jobs, should follow CESNI working programme, the preparation and adoption of standards.

Mrs. Silvia Csöbökóvá, Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of Slovakia, mentioned that in the last years the Slovak operators faces problems related to the new requirements on the technical standards for the ships and some support from EU will be necessary. In Slovakia it is needed also support for the set up of a training centre, as discussed in Danube Skills project.

The participants were asked to provide in a written form their feedback on the following issues:

- What are the key problems related to inland navigation in the Danube region and which of these issues would particularly need to be addressed in a possible NAIADES III programme?
- Are there any issues connected to the implementation of the current NAIADES programme that should be avoided in a future programme?

5. End of meeting

After the meeting a written procedure (10 working days) the PA1a Steering Group will be requested by PACs PA 1a for:

- Acknowledgement and agreement on the contents of the proposed DAVID forms to simplify and harmonise border crossing procedures
- Agreement on the contents of the appeal aimed at the Ministers of Transport
- Agrees on the general path towards Danube ministerial conclusions until 3rd December 2018

Next Steering Group meeting is planned to be organized on the **9th of October 2018**, in Vienna, Austria, followed by a FAIRway Advisory Committee.

Other important meeting whereas PA 1a SG members are invited are:

- **13th September 2018** Danube Awareness Day in Vienna (a.m.) directly followed by Joint Statement meeting
- **10-11th October 2018** Danube Business Talks in Vienna

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