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

**2nd Meeting of the Steering Group for
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**
Bucharest, Romania – 28 October 2011

MINUTES

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1. Welcome to the participants, introduction, presentation of finalised targets

The Coordinators for Priority Area 1a (henceforth: PACs 1a) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Austria and Romania (represented by Mr. Vorderwinkler and Ms. Patrichi), welcomed the members of the Steering Group to the meeting.

This was followed by a round of introductions in which each attending Steering Group member introduced himself/herself and the organisation he/she is representing.

Thereafter, the PACs 1a briefly presented the finalised targets for Priority Area 1a which were also sent out to the participants before the meeting. The final targets for the implementation of Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR, i.e. to improve mobility and multimodality: inland waterways, are as follows:

1. Increase the cargo transport on the river by 20% by 2020 compared to 2010. [target maintained as in EC Communication of December 2010]
2. Solve obstacles to navigability, taking into account the specific characteristics of each section of the Danube and its navigable tributaries and establish effective waterway infrastructure management by 2015. [target reformulated from EC Communication of December 2010: "Remove existing navigability bottlenecks on the river so as to accommodate type VIb vessels all year round by 2015."]
3. Develop efficient multimodal terminals at river ports along the Danube and its navigable tributaries to connect inland waterways with rail and road transport by 2020. [target reformulated from EC Communication of December 2010: "Development of efficient multimodal terminals at Danube river ports to connect inland waterways with rail and road transport by 2020."]
4. Implement harmonised River Information Services (RIS) on the Danube and its navigable tributaries and ensure the international exchange of RIS data preferably by 2015. [new target; not in EC Communication of December 2010]
5. Solve the shortage of qualified personnel and harmonize education standards in inland navigation in the Danube region by 2020, taking duly into account the social dimension of the respective measures. [new target; not in EC Communication of December 2010]

2. Agreement on “Rules of Procedure of the Steering Group”, adoption of the Minutes from the previous meeting and adoption of the Agenda

The “Rules of Procedure of the Steering Group” with changes proposed by some Steering Group members were adopted by the Steering Group (for final version please cf. Enclosures).

The Minutes from the previous meeting as well as the Agenda for the 2nd meeting were approved without any amendments.

3. Presentation on the main results from the Working Groups kick-off meeting

Mr. Simoner informed the participants that on 27 of November 2011 a kick-off meeting of the five thematic Working Groups for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR was organised in which representatives from the public and the private sector took part.

The main conclusions of the meeting were that Working Groups are necessary for the implementation of Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR and that two meetings per year of two days each would be viable (while making use of the electronic means of communication). Working Group meetings will be organised by the Technical Secretariats of PACs 1a. These meetings will be open to the public and the private sector as well as to NGOs and other interested parties.

Having in view that the Technical Secretariats of PACs 1a have started to collect information about ongoing projects and project proposals it was decided that the next Working Group meeting will be

held in common for all five thematic Working Groups, i.e. waterway infrastructure & maintenance, ports & sustainable freight transport, Danube fleet, River Information Services and education & jobs.

The submission of the Project Fiche for information on ongoing projects and project ideas is still possible and is expected that all Danube countries will collect the relevant information as soon as possible and forward filled-out project data sheets to the Technical Secretariats.

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.

4. Presentation on the new Structural Funds Regulations

Ms. Ploeg Cruceru, representative of the European Commission, DG REGIO, provided information on the EU's new architecture of the Structural Funds Regulations for the future programming period 2014-2020 which are relevant for tapping EU funding for projects in line with the EUSDR. At the moment, new transnational areas are being developed for funding at the European Commission.

Ms. Ploeg Cruceru also reported on the draft regulation concerning the review of the TEN-T Guidelines and the accompanying Connecting Europe Facility, which is an entirely new funding instrument of the EU.

Regarding projects which are in line with the objectives of EUSDR PA 1a, Ms. Ploeg Cruceru requested countries to present their priorities with respect to project development in the next meeting of the Steering Group, taking into consideration those projects which are also listed in the Action Plan.

At the end of her intervention, Ms. Ploeg Cruceru informed the members of the Steering Group about the following upcoming meeting and events:

- 21 Nov. 2011: EUSDR High-Level Group meeting (EU-27 & non-member states involved in the EUSDR): approval of targets for all Priority Areas on the European level
- 30/31 Jan. 2012: Common meeting of PACs, NCPs and European Commission (based on Gödöllő blueprint): basically on technical issues (project cycle management)
- Feb. 2012: Financing Conference ("Bratislava II") focussing on the coordination of EU funding, attendance by national managing authorities of the EU's Objective 1-3 Programmes

5. Presentation on the revision of the TEN-T Guidelines

Mr. Bernabei, representative of the European Commission, DG MOVE, gave an overview on the Trans-European Network – Transport and the revised TEN-T Guidelines, explaining the general and specific objectives of the EC's White Paper.. Solutions to current problems were identified as to move from today's patchwork to a network, filling the missing links (cross-border, bottlenecks); to make the network multimodal, interoperable and efficient and to make the framework for realising the network more binding. This will be achieved by issuing the TEN-T Guidelines in the form of an EU Regulation.

The new TEN-T Guidelines provide implementation of projects of common interest; two network layers with complementary functions and specific strategic objectives; a clear prioritisation with a view to project implementation; corridors and further developed instruments for project implementation; strong link between network policy and relevant financial instruments.

A two-layered approach will be established: A core network and a comprehensive network, where the core network will be a selection of the most important parts of the network to be realised as a priority until 2030 while the comprehensive network will cover the entire EU territory, accessibility for all citizen and businesses. Mr. Bernabei also said that the amount allocated to inland waterway development was increased.

Mr. Bernabei was asked by the participants if in the case that a non-EU Member State has become a Member State after the initial definition of the TEN-T network, the network could suffer some changes in this respect, and he responded that this should be the case. In answering a question concerning the relation between IWT projects within the scope of the EUSDR on the one hand and TEN-T on the other hand, Mr. Bernabei explained that all projects concerning TEN-T development will have to be included in the EUSDR.

6. Presentation by river commissions on current activities

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Weller, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR, notified the members of the Steering Group in an e-mail of 25 October 2011 that attendance by the ICPDR was not possible because of a conflict with a pre-planned meeting held in Belgrade. In his e-mail, however, Mr. Weller stressed that the ICPDR remains strongly committed to actions under the Danube Region Strategy and is interested to be an active and involved member of Priority Area 1a.

International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC)

Mr. Milković, Deputy Secretary for Navigation of the ISRBC, provided an overview on the function and organization of the ISRBC and its ongoing projects. The Commission was established in 2004 and has as members Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia. Among the ISRBC's tasks are the establishment of an international regime of navigation on the Sava River and its navigable tributaries; the establishment of sustainable water management and to undertake measures to prevent or limit hazards.

Currently, the ISRBC is carrying out, in different stages of implementation, several projects of regional importance as, e.g., the rehabilitation and development of transport and navigation on the Sava River, the implementation of RIS on the Sava River (fully operation in 2013), the establishment of a system for the collection, treatment and disposal of hazardous and other ship wastes on the Sava River as well as the preparation of the Sava River Basin Management Plan.

Considering the very low water levels on the Sava River, some river training and dredging works are necessary for providing better navigation conditions. Other interventions pertain to bridges and the implementation of RIS.

Danube Commission (DC)

Mr. Suvorov, Deputy Director General of the Secretariat of the DC, explained that while for other European river basins a rise in transport volumes for inland navigation is recorded to have reached pre-crisis levels, this is not the case on the Danube. Mr. Suvorov stressed that development of freight transport on the Danube would be possible if infrastructure would be seriously modernized; this would also help to avoid the difficulties occurred this year on the Lower Danube.

Mr. Suvorov mentioned that the achievement of target 1 of PA 1a (Increasing the cargo transport on the river by 20% by 2020 compared with 2010) will be a direct consequence of achieving targets 2 – 5 from the final list of targets (see above). He proposed that the Master Plan on the achievement of recommended fairway parameters, hydro-technical and other facilities on the Danube and the List of national infrastructure projects (projects of DC member states as of 1 December 2010) should be addressed within the Working Group on waterway infrastructure & management.

He also explained the status of the fleet and crew personnel, highlighting existing problems and possible solutions. Taking into account the age of the existing fleet, modernization would be needed in order to improve its economic and environmental performance. Regarding nautical personnel, Mr. Suvorov informed the participants that the DC is working on the establishment of the system of harmonised requirements for certain professions for movement of high skilled personnel from maritime transport into the Danube navigation. The DC will send the relevant information to the Working Group on education & jobs.

Mr. Suvorov expressed the DC's willingness to further contribute to the promotion of actions which will lead to a reasonable compromise approach to the interpretation of certain articles of the revised Convention regarding the regime of navigation on the Danube.

The DC will actively participate in the activities of the Working Groups established within the EUSDR's Priority Area 1a..

Mr. Schindler, Counsellor for Inland Waterways Maintenance of the DC, gave a presentation on the Master Plan for the achievement of recommended fairway parameters focused on the critical sections along the Danube and a general description of known projects. The most critical sections were identified on the sectors Straubing – Vilshofen, Wien – Bratislava, Sap – Mohacs, Belgrade and Romanian – Bulgarian sector. For these sections there are ongoing studies or projects scheduled to be implemented in the next years.

7. Presentation by country representatives on current national IWT policy/master plans as well as on current IWT related activities

Countries' representatives explained the current situation in their country related to waterway infrastructure, ports development, safety of navigation and environmental protection. They reported on ongoing or planned projects to be implemented which will contribute to achieving the EUSDR's PA 1a targets.

Serbia provided information on the Master Plan for IWT in Serbia, on the Serbian Transport Development Strategy for the period 2008–2015 and on the General Master Plan for Transport in Serbia. The participants were also informed about the current status of the implementation of projects like RIS (which will be fully implemented by 2013), training works for solving obstacles on five critical sections of the Danube in Serbia as well as the NEWADA and WANDA projects.

Slovakia outlined the national institutional organisation as well as the bodies responsible for inland navigation in Slovakia and gave information on the waterborne development focused on projects for improving the parameters of the fairway, reconstruction of berths and equipment in the Port of Bratislava and the Port of Komárno.

Croatia provided information on ports development (Vukovar, Osijek), on projects for solving navigation obstacles by means of training works and water regulation on several sections (Apatin, Sotin, Mohovo, confluence of Drava river), on projects for the rehabilitation and improvement of the Sava River waterway and on RIS implementation.

Bulgaria made a brief presentation on the Strategy for the development of the transport system in Bulgaria until 2020 and on the National transport policy priorities for 2010–2020, providing project examples like the improvement of navigation conditions on the Romanian–Bulgarian section of the Danube, RIS, VTMIS, improvement of the system for navigation, topo-hydrographic measurements on the Danube River and ports development.

Austria informed the participants that all projects aimed at the development of inland navigation in Austria are in line with the National Action Plan on Danube Navigation, including ongoing projects for improving fairway conditions, RIS, education, etc.

Romania presented projects on the Calarasi–Braila section and on the Romanian–Bulgarian common section of the Danube waterway, several ports which are to be modernised, RIS implementation and projects for waste management. Some of the projects will be finalised in the near future while others will be implemented by 2017.

Hungary informed the participants on the activities and projects for improving the navigability on the Danube, the status of RIS implementation, the WANDA project and projects to be implemented in the field of education and jobs (e.g., NELI).

Representing **Ukraine**, the Ukrainian Embassy in Bucharest expressed the interest of Ukraine in the implementation of the EUSDR and confirmed that Ukraine will contribute more actively in the next Working Group and Steering Group meetings.

8. Wrap-up & next steps

The 3rd meeting of the Steering Group for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR will be held in the spring of 2012, presumably in March. The exact date and venue will be communicated by the Priority Area Coordinators in due time.

A specific focus of the next meeting will be discussions on concrete projects and project proposals received from interested parties.

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 Steering Group meeting
- (2) Approved Rules of Procedure of the Steering Group of EUSDR Priority Area 1a
- (3) List of attendants
- (4) List of contact details for members of the Steering Group