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

**3rd Meeting of the Steering Group for
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**
Bratislava, Slovakia – 3-4 May 2012

MINUTES

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The 3rd meeting of the Steering Group for Priority Area 1a - *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Bratislava, Slovakia and has started in the presence of Mr. Johannes Hahn – Commissioner for Regional Policy, Mrs. Nikolina Nikolova, Bulgaria's Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works and Mr. Andrej Holák - State Secretary within the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic. In the first day the discussions were targeted to the waterway maintenance and measures that could be implemented in short time in order to avoid the negative effects of the low water periods. In the second day, discussions were focused on EUSDR projects proposed to receive a Letter of Recommendation, Roadmaps and contributions of the EUSDR States for the Action Plan (SEC 1489 (2010)) implementation.

Waterway maintenance

In the opening speech Mr. Andrej Holák welcomed the participants and thanked the European Commission for the interest showed for the inland waterways transport. Slovakia actively participated in the preparation of European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and it is interested and committed in removing the navigation obstacles. Although 16.5 million of Euro was spent in the last 5 years for waterway maintenance, the navigation on the Slovak Danube stretch was affected by low waters and ice and to solve these problems constructions are necessary and also international cooperation.

Mr. Johannes Hahn said that navigability is a core priority area of EUSDR, having a great potential on development and has a impact on other cooperation areas as economy, tourism, competitiveness of enterprises, environment. At this time it is a crucial moment because the implementation of EUSDR has started already and the next financial framework (2014-2020) is under preparation. DG REGIO intends to allocate money in different programmes for the next EU funding period to finance projects having an impact on the Danube region development.

In the last time we had many days without acceptable conditions for inland navigation on the Danube. This happened due to the weather but also because of the lack of maintenance. A letter regarding the maintenance measures was sent to the Danube riparian countries in order to identify what specific measures were taken in 2011 during the low water periods and what are the plans in order to prevent this issue in 2012. The outcome of this correspondence between Commission DGs (DG MOVE and DG REGIO) will be discussed during the Council meeting (7 - 8 June 2012, *Luxembourg*) with the responsible ministers of transport. A *Common Declaration* will be also prepared aiming at the commitment of the countries that necessary maintenance have to be done and the financing will be assured.

It can be estimated that the development of industry, shipyards, ports facilities or other new companies along the river banks will increase sustainably a certain number of jobs. DG REGIO is preparing the terms of reference for a study with the aim to evaluate the impact on jobs when volumes of transport by inland navigation are increasing. Such a study could help to increase improve the financing in appropriate river and ports development.

Also Mr. Hahn underlined that each country should make the maintenance on the Danube and also develops the fleet, ports, etc. and should speed up the projects implementation.

In the end of his speech, Mr. Hahn expressed the Commission's interest and commitment for achieving the targets within the EUSDR and for closer cooperation with the actors involved and, in this sense, recommended for the next period more frequent meetings.

Mr. Romeo Soare gave a presentation about the content of the report regarding the management of 2011 low water level period and the catalogue of identified measures on short term (2012) and medium terms (2013 – 2015) in the framework of NEWADA Project. He presented statistics showing that last year and at the beginning of this year were the worst periods for navigation because of the

low waters and ice on the Danube. The conclusions were that dredging is no longer enough and measures as for increasing the monitoring and maintenance are needed.

Reports by countries on possible measures for effective waterway maintenance

Romania. Between August and December 2011, on the Lower Danube sector, downstream of the Iron Gates II, the water flow values were smaller than the multiannual mean value, and this generated low water levels that had a negative influence on the navigation conditions. The mean number of days with level values below ENR values, recorded in 2011, was of 91 days, and it represents a percentage of 60% of the analyzed period. The short term measures identified were: the improvement of water level information by acquisition and installation of automatic water gauges; Improvement of the quality of the exchanged data by a more frequent exchange of such information and by the diversification of the communication channels towards all stakeholders; creation of joint cross-border Romanian-Bulgarian Experts Group meant to elaborate joint plans for the maintenance of the navigation conditions (measurements, signalling and dredging works) required on the common Danube sector. For mid – term (2013 – 2015) the measures which were identified are: Calibration of water gauges on the border sector, to the same reference system, in order to improve the quality of the data exchange; acquisition of specific dredging equipments to be used to ensure the minimum depths of the fairway; the modification of the *Agreement on the maintenance and improving the fairway on the Romanian – Bulgarian sector of the Danube*, signed in 1955, in order to allow common and unitary actions for ensuring the efficiency of all interventions

Croatia adopted a Strategy of development of Inland Waterways and Inland ports in the period 2008 - 2018 based on the NAIADES. Croatia has adopted medium - term plan for development of Inland Waterways and inland ports in the period 2008–2016 and has completed the harmonization of legislation with the *acquis communautaire*. In 2009 an agreement with Serbia on maintenance and works was signed. Several projects for eliminating the bottlenecks are proposed within the EUSDR and the preparation of project documentation for the Inland Waterways of the Danube River from the mouth of river Drava, upstream to the border with Hungary has started. There are several bottlenecks for navigation. The most difficult situation is in the sector Apatin - Kopački rit. During the low-water level in the fall of 2011 there were frequent visits to this sector in cooperation with responsible institutions from Serbia and additional recording and marking of waterways was done. The mouth of the Drava into the Danube, riverbed was deepened on several occasions in the fall of 2011. Funds for the rehabilitation of the bottleneck from the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia are not sufficient so Croatia will endeavour to try to provide the same from EU funds.

Hungary A high level meeting; partners informed each other on the situation; further investigation of environmental aspects; statement of the ministry. Hungary is involved in the IRIS Europe; inland transponders obligation for ships >20 m and >12 passengers; establishment of legal criteria for international data exchange; working on national strategy which will be finalized at the end of 2013. Hungary is involved also in NEVADA, WANDA and NELI Projects.

Serbia. From the river administration – PLOVPUT measurement was seen that the number of sections with low water levels increased from 18 to 24 in the period 2006 – 2011 and dredging is not efficient for solving the problems. The short term measures identified are: implementation of the project "Preparation of necessary documentation for river training and dredging works on selected locations along the Danube River" (IPA 2010 project, 2011-2013), maintenance of the winter ports, increasing frequency of hydrographical data collection using cross-border cooperation, improving quality of hydrological data on critical sectors by installing new automatic gauging stations on critical sectors, implementation of RIS in Serbia (will be finalized in March 2013), up-to-date stakeholders information on Plovput website. An additional proposal made to the Commission is to investigate the possibility to allow Serbia to use other financial instruments, other than IPA, such as Connecting Europe Facility, having in view that Serbian Danube stretch has 588 km (second longest stretch of the Danube River) and there is a mutual interest from both EU and Serbia for the navigation on the Danube River.

Moldavia Having in view that Moldavian Danube stretch is just a few meters not urgent measures were needed and the priority is the development of Giurgiulesti port. Since it was opened in 2009, the traffic increased every year.

Slovakia Through the period with low water level in the year 2011 emergency procedures have not been performed, excepting the regulatory dredging of Danube in r. km 1786,800 – 1786,000. There are also other sections which creates problems for navigation (for ex. between rkm 1714 – 1708, rkm 1799 – 1792 Dunaja, rkm 1736 – 1731, between Morava and old bridge Lafranconi) and dredging is a short term solution but is not enough. The costs of the fairway maintenance were of 16.5 MEURO in the period 2007 – 2011. Financial support is necessary in order to solve the navigation bottleneck on the Slovak stretch of the Danube, to maintain the fairway on common section of Danube with Austria and Hungary but also for construction of water works on Danube. Other measures needed to be implemented by Slovakia are: to intensive morphological monitoring of Danube river bed, to equip the vessels of river administration with ENC, to modernize staking vessel of river administration and obsolete technical equipments.

Bulgaria In 2011 more than 3 months the water level was below the DC recommendation and daily variation was registered. The measures taken in the period July - October 2011, on the Danube sector administrated by Bulgaria were: 61 corrections to the fairway trajectory were made and an entirely new fairway on 4 occasions was drawn; limitation of the allowed dimensions of vessels and convoys passing through the critical areas; 116 floating signals were used to ensure safe navigation conditions and better outline of the fairway; 150 hydrographical pictures of critical sections were made using echo sounders and the monitoring of the traffic increased for the safety of navigation. The short term measures identified were: improving the communication between all parties concerned from both the public and private sectors; acquisition of new software for hydro-graphic pictures and a greater number of floating signs to be deployed. The medium terms measures definitely consist in the implementation of projects like Improvement of the navigational systems and topohydrographic measurements along the Danube River (*financed under OP "Transport" 2007-2013*) and Danube WATER integrated management (WATER) (*financed under the CBC Programme "Bulgaria-Romania" 2007-2013*).

Ms. Nikolova underlined the commitment for improving the navigation condition on the Romanian - Bulgarian common sector of the Danube and considers that new TEN-T Regulation will support such activities through financing support for acquiring dredges and other equipments for maintenance activities.

Austria Integrated approach for navigation, flood protection and environment is applied in Austria. Regarding the maintenance monitoring is done every month, dredging of shallow area is carried on and then again the survey of the dredged areas. Around 10 MEURO are allocated every year for waterway maintenance of the Austrian Danube stretch. The short term measures identified for an effective waterway management were: pro active dredging (starting in September) before a potential low water period in autumn, improved display of shallow sections (trackplots) via the internet; updated internal directive for all surveying activities & revised legal framework for contracting of dredging works; start of pilot project at "Bad Deutsch Altenburg": Reconstruction of groynes & optimization of interaction to continuous maintenance works; start of project "water level forecast" with Technical University of Vienna (objective: at least reliable 3 days water level forecast) and start of internal projects: Creation of a comprehensive electronic waterway management system (EMS) & set-up of internal process management. via donau has set up an internal project: Customer-oriented & integrated waterway management in which all internal procedures are considered and discussed, waterway management has to be understood as continuous improvement process. The Danube river is the most international river of the world (10 riparian countries), therefore Danube waterway administrations should cooperate & learn from each other in order to achieve harmonised waterway standards along the Danube river.

Mr. Vorderwinkler wanted also to mention the situation that is happening in Hungary. Although there are International Conventions signed by Hungary like the AGN which establishes the class of inland waterway based on the dimensions of ships and convoys (Hungarian stretch is classified as VII) and

Belgrade Convention based on which Danube Commission recommends 2.5 m to be assured on the Hungarian stretch, Hungary adopted recently a legislation which limited the numbers of barges in convoys and also the draughts. Reducing the allowed vessel draught means less transport capacity, which is in contradiction with EUSDR targets. The overall opinion is that Hungary should reconsider the new national regulation in this sense and the delegate member of Hungary in the Steering Group was kindly asked to forward this message to the Hungarian Government. This is considered a matter of legal situation and having in view that the navigation on the Hungarian stretch is since decades and recommendation of 2.5 m were applied it is also a matter of national policy.

The representatives of the professional association **Pro Danube International** appreciated the work that have been done till now by the European Commission, PA 1a Coordinators and Steering Group and also expressed the satisfaction that private sector is involved within the activities carried. In the winter 2011 – 2012 for more than 80 consecutive days the navigation was not possible on the Danube which causes loses of about 3 – 4 MEURO for its members. The confidence in reliable infrastructure was actually lost and 2 large companies don't want to use Danube anymore. Transparent short term measures for ensuring the depths are needed. Pro Danube proposed to organize a **task force experts group** in order to discuss the problems faced and possible solution for the next autumn.

Danube Tourism Commission mentioned that not only cargo but also the passengers transport was affected and it is desirable that the passengers not to be transferred from Danube and transported by busses or trains as it were the case last year. Other issue raised was the berthing places for passengers' ships in Budapest. There is an agreement between local council and shipping companies that they can berth now in the city centre, but the situation is uncertain for 2014 – 2015.

In order to avoid the size of the negative effects of the Danube navigation, the participants were asked to provide their input in order to prepare a draft *Common Declaration* which is going to be signed by the Ministers with the occasion of the next Council meeting which will take place on 7 – 8 of June 2012. Mr. Otto Schwetz proposed to make use of the text of the Memorandum of Understanding of the development of the pan European Transport Corridor VII (Danube), which more than 10 years was applied and could be adapted to current needs.

Participants expressed that flexibility in financing, better communication, increased funds, partnership agreements where the case are necessary.

Ms. Ploeg-Cruceru underlined the main conclusions following the commissioners letters are that national administrations in charge with the fairway maintenance is lack of budget, equipments, navigation aids, specialized personnel and information systems. She supports the idea of creating a task force, as soon as possible.

International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) Mr. Milkovic proposed that also the tributaries to be included in the text of Common Declaration.

After the discussions, Commissioner Hahn asked PACs to draft the Common Declaration and to send it to SG members. Also he asked to be calculated the average yearly costs for inland waterways maintenance and to be prepared concrete projects for the future. The possibility to use solidarity fund will be analysed for financing additional costs of maintenance for urgent measures under extraordinary circumstances. The probability that the same problems will appear is relatively high, so it is time now to react and for short term is necessary the commitment of the ministers of transport in order to find funds for maintenance and to find solutions for sharing the dredging equipments between the states. Having in view that at the moment Solidarity fund exists at the Commission but dredging is not eligible a solution could be to reallocate funds within the existing financing programmes if the Member States would want to.

The second day of the meeting started with discussions on how the Common Declaration will be drafted and how will be organized the "task force experts group" (TFEG).

The general opinion was that there should be one task force for all Danube countries and this should be supported by the ministries. Meetings should take place for short term measures under extraordinary situations. Within the Common Declaration could be included references on the necessary budgets for dredging, signalization, information to be provided to the RIS users, regular works, surveys, measurements, and extraordinary works. The TFEU could work in the framework of priority Area 1.a. *Inland Navigation* facilitating also the communication between private sector and national authorities.

The Steering Group approved the Minutes of the 2nd Steering Group which was held in Bucharest, on 28th of October 2010, and the agenda for the 3rd SG meeting.

The Priority Area Coordinators gave a presentation on the current status of EUSDR implementation. The 2nd meeting of the Working groups was held in Vienna, on 15th and 16th of March 2012 with the aim to have an input from the stakeholders on draft version of Road Map for the implementation of PA 1a. There was a feedback of attendants regarding waterway infrastructure, integrative waterway management, ports & sustainable freight transport, fleet modernisation, River Information Services, education & jobs. A detailed minute is available online at www.danube-navigation.eu. Till present 91 project files were received by the technical secretariats. For several known projects, data sheets are missing in the following fields: Waterway infrastructure, port infrastructure and River Information Services. Regarding the Preparation of EUSDR "flagship project" - Innovative Danube Vessel, the terms of reference were finalised and the tender will be in June 2012. The overall objectives are elaboration and development of innovative vessel and technology solutions with high potential for implementation on the Danube, an analysis of solutions derived from existing R&D projects with respect to their potential for implementation and further development in the Danube region and provision of recommendations for further technology development within the framework of the Danube Region Strategy. PA 1a website www.danube-navigation.eu is permanently updated with information and documents. The Coordinators informed about the **1st Annual Stakeholder Conference** and requested SG members to participate and to give a short presentation on the second day of the conference (25 May) on the contribution to the implementation of PA 1a on inland waterways and priorities for the near future.

PACs mentioned that 91 project files were received, for projects being in different stages (under definition phase, in preparation, in implementation and even finalized) and presented the criteria for the projects selected to receive a Letter of Recommendation (LoR). The project files were published on the PA 1a website and all the received projects will contribute to the EUSDR actions and targets and have an impact on the macro-region. The criteria were sent before the meeting to the participants and no objections were expressed during the meeting. The proposed criteria were approved. The document was named *Criteria for project labelling* and the observation of Mrs. Ploeg-Cruceru from DG REGIO was taken into account and the name of the document will be changed in *Criteria for projects that will receive a Letter of Recommendation*.

According to the proposed criteria, 9 projects will receive a Letter of Recommendation. Also it was mentioned that if other requests for a LoR will be forwarded to the PACs, the written procedure will be followed according to the Rules of Procedures (art. 6).

Mr. Vojtěch Dabrowski from Czech Republic mentioned that they submitted a project **Analytic study of the need of water corridor Danube–Oder–Elbe**, which has financing for the feasibility study and was not chosen to receive LoR. The PACs explained that the project is taken into account on the global picture of the macro-region development and it is labelled as EUSDR projects, but will not receive a LoR because it is not necessary having financing is assured.

Mr. Bernabei said that LoR do not have an added value now and DG MOVE is concerned about the value of such a letter in the future programmes.

The Roadmap, a document necessary for each EUSDR priority area, requested by the European Commission was elaborated and sent before the meeting to the SG members. Mr. Thomas Hartl, from Austrian technical secretariat, presented briefly the content of the Roadmap. The Roadmap is a

strategic concept, having recurrent and specific activities and for each those activities describes milestones, responsible and involved organisations, timeframe of implementation, tasks (sub-activities) and the expected output / results.

Mrs. Ploeg-Cruceru from DG REGIO proposed that chapter 4 – *Thematic overview* to become chapter 2 and said that the document will be analysed in detailed by DG REGIO and if there are other comments will be send in due time. As there were no other observations or comments on the Roadmap it was decided that the SG members can send their inputs in the next few weeks, in due time to insert the comments before first progress report to be send to the European Commission.

In order to prepare the content of the first Progress Report which will be delivered by PACs to European Commission at the end of June 2012 the SG members were requested to present how they are contributing to the implementation of the EUSDR's actions and targets for Priority Area 1a on inland waterways and what its specific priorities are for the near future in implementing the Strategy.

Romania considers that the contribution is done through projects focused on improvement of the conditions of navigation on the Danube (especially on Calarasi – Braila sector and on the Romanian - Bulgarian common sector), rehabilitation and development of ports infrastructure and also port facilities for collection and treatment of ships' waste and implementation of Romanian River Information Services. The stage of these projects was presented and the priorities for the near future are finalisation of the ongoing projects, implementation of necessary measures on short term in order to ensure more days /year with good conditions for navigation, elaboration of a General Master Plan for Transport and participation in transnational cooperation projects like NEWADA, HINT an IRIS Europe.

Croatia considers that the contribution is done by measures to ensure the safety of navigation and improvement of the conditions of navigation on its inland waterways, respecting and using the provisions of the Manual on Good Practices. For the Danube River, the environmental assessment is in process for the sector from rkm1380 (mouth of river Drava) to rkm 1433 (border with Hungary) on whose part is the worst bottleneck for navigation (Apatin- Kopački rit 1400-1410 rkm). For arrangement of the waterway on the Danube River from 1325 -1321 rkm construction permit will be issued in the first half of 2013 and also for arrangement of winter shelter Opatovac. The performance of works in the future time can be hardly implemented because of the establishment of the border with the Republic of Serbia on some parts on the Danube. Regarding the bottlenecks on the Sava River main design for the arrangement of the waterway from Brčko (rkm 234) to Sisak (rkm 590) is in preparation.

Serbia contributes to the EUSDR through the improvement of infrastructure and economic performance of waterway navigation and Improvement of the organizational framework and human resources for inland waterway navigation. For the Danube River 24 critical sectors were identified and prefeasibility study for the improvement of the conditions for navigation was finalized. The preparation of conceptual designs in progress and financing is assured through EU IPA 2010 Programme, 2011-2013. The financing for works is not assured and there is the concern that if funds will not be allocated in time the technical documentation will be obsolete having in view the dynamic of the river. Removal of UXO near Prahovo and implementation of RIS are also ongoing. Serbia is sharing a common vision with its strategic partners in all fields of actions and especially on the transnational cooperation projects like NEWADA, PLATINA and IRIS Europe.

Bulgaria contributes to the implementation of EUSDR through a strategic planning of the works on the corridors crossing Bulgaria and the connections with intermodal nodes and neighbouring countries. Regarding the ongoing projects on the Danube river, they are focused on the improvement of the navigability in the common Bulgarian - Romanian section of the Danube River, establishment of River Information Services System (BulRIS), improvement of the systems for navigation and topo-hydrographic measurements on the Danube River, establishment of the Danube water integrated management (WATER) and the transnational cooperation within IRIS Europe.

Mrs. Nikolina Nikolova Bulgaria's Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works and Bulgarian national coordinator for EUSDR presented a proposal for an action which was made to the Romanian authorities for the **Development of Pan European corridor VII through improvement of the navigability on the Romanian – Bulgarian common sector of the Danube river, modernization of the port infrastructure, promotion of the intermodal transport, surrounding infrastructure and development of the information systems using Connecting Europe Facility.** For such a complex action Bulgaria had prepared a draft Roadmap which establishes concrete actions and timeframes for the identification, preparation and implementation of projects. The roadmap also foresees to set up an Interministerial Committee which will be responsible for carrying out this complex action. Mrs. Nikolova mentioned that this example was presented also to the European Commission and can be followed by others neighbouring countries.

Moldova contributes on PA 1a activities by developing the port of Giurgiulesti. The port of Giurgiulesti provides facilities for receiving tankers, grain carriers, container ships, vessels for the carriage of general cargo, passenger ships, Ro-Ro. The priorities for the near future are to develop the port infrastructure according to the Giurgiulesti Port Complex Master Plan, to develop facilities for waste collection and to promote the port at international level.

Hungary contributes to the PA 1a of EUSDR by elaborating a national transport strategy which will be ready in 2013, by carrying out RIS activities like updating ENC and working on legal framework for data exchange and cooperation within the transnational projects like NEWADA and WANDA. A river buss will be under operation starting with 2012 between Budapest and its neighbourhoods.

Slovakia consider that the contribution is done through the actively involvement in the international projects like NEWADA, NELI, PLTINA and project implementation for improving the waterway infrastructure in Slovakia (on the stretch above Bratislava, below Bratislava and on the river Váh waterway). The ongoing study INWAPO will assess the needs of Slovak ports in terms of infrastructures and links/services to improve the trimodality. For the port of Bratislava is under preparation the development of infrastructure for a new container terminal. The priorities for the near future is to deal with water levels, completion of infrastructure in ports and to eliminate bottleneck on Danube (conditional by international agreements) represented by the old bridge in Bratislava.

Austrian contribution is made by carrying out actions and activities foreseen in the Austrian Action Plan Danube Navigation (NAP). NAP is a comprehensive and dynamic planning and decision-making instrument for Austrian IWT policy until 2015. This catalogue of measures was developed in cooperation with inland ports and the inland navigation sector and it is totally in line with European NAIADES action programme and the European Strategy for the Danube Region PA 1a. The priorities for the near future are for instance "the improvement of the environmental performance of the Danube fleet", "the improvement of the security standards of the Danube inland navigation", the support for Danube riparian countries to implement the RIS etc.)

Danube Commission 11 states (10 riparian counties + Russia) are parties to the Belgrade Convention and each country has its own work procedure in order to ensure 2.5 m depths. DC presents the common position on certain matters of its Member States. In 2011 DC launched a project on market observation for Danube navigation. Was reflected that transport on the Danube is inferior comparing with Rhin for example and this is because weak economy and navigation infrastructure. A large number of critical sectors were identified, where main parameters recommended by DC are not meet. The projects of DC Member States aim mostly on the improvement of infrastructure by maintenance and traditional regulation works. Lack of progress in the implementation of these projects causes real losses for the DC Member States but also reduces confidence in transport on the Danube. Several documents were prepared or under preparation by the DC as plan for major works for achieving the recommended fairway parameters, recommendation on minimum requirements for standard fairway parameters, harmonized requirements for certain professions, etc. These documents could be used as basis for works within the Working Group for Infrastructure and DC expressed its availability for further cooperation.

International Sava Basin River Commission is contributing to the EUSDR implementation through a unique coordinated approach of four states (Coordination Committee) for the development of the Sava waterway infrastructure. The feasibility study was finalized in 2008 for the rehabilitation and development of transport and navigation on the Sava River Waterway and EIA for the sector Brčko – Sisak was adopted in 2011. The estimated value of works is 85 MEURO and next steps are detailed design and works. Three RIS base station in test operation, decision on RIS Data exchange in preparation and it is expected that RIS on the Sava river to be fully operational in 2015, same with EUSDR PA 1a target. The priorities for the near future are continuation of the project on waterway infrastructure development and urgent measures on fairway improvements on the most critical sectors (to avoid 2011 situation).

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) states that all countries participate actively in the ICPDR activities which have a lot of synergies with the navigation. Since Joint Statement on Navigation and the manual on good practices in Sustainable Waterway Planning were elaborated there is an improvement in the preparation of projects related to the fairway, which takes much more into account the environment protection. In 2012 Austria has the presidency of ICPDR and one of the next activities is to get financing for a study regarding the transport of sediments on the Danube River.

Corridor VII contribution was taken into account in drafting the Action Plan. The future activities are concentrated on the ports developments as intermodal centres and the model of Vienna container terminal could be used for other ports. Ongoing projects are PORTFINO (Assessment of the economic environment of the smaller ports on the Danube) and DONAUHANSE (Network of Danube Cities). Mr. Otto Schwetz is member of the Expert group for the TEN-T planning and extension outside EU within DG MOVE.

Danube Tourist Commission stated that River Cruise segment is growing. Cruise season is from March to January, which means 240 days the safety navigation conditions and water depths should be assured. Latest activities consisted in Danube Emergency Drill 2012 and one objective of this exercise was the development of a general alarm plan for the Danube Region. Danube Tourist Commission considers that the tax for locks on the Danube – Black Sea Canal are high.

In the end of the meeting the representatives of the European Commission took the floor. Mr. Cesare Bernabei from DG MOVE appreciated that a lot of work have been done and information collected. It is extremely important to have discussions between the countries and some problems tackled. The discussion of the 3rd Steering Group for PA 1a it is an input for the ministers Conference in June. Also he considers that LoR is not a crucial point for the group activity because is not clear how could be used in an efficient way. Mrs Irina Ploeg-Cruceru appreciated the work done so far within the PA 1a and encouraged everybody to continue the active involvement.

Next steps

- **24 - 25 May 2012:** 1st Annual Stakeholder Conference of PA 1a, Bucharest (Romania);
- **Mid-June 2012:** Draft Progress Report to be commented and adopted by SG members by written procedure;
- **30 June 2012:** First Progress Report to the European Commission based on Road Map for PA 1a;
- **Fall 2012:** 3rd meeting of Working Groups of PA 1a + 4th meeting of Steering Group of PA 1a
- **27 - 28 November 2012:** 1st Annual EUSDR Stakeholder Conference, Regensburg (Germany).

Enclosures

Please note: All documents are or will be available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1A
→ www.danube-navigation.eu

- (1) Presentations given by the participants at the Steering Group meeting
- (2) List of attendants
- (3) List of contact details for members of the Steering Group