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

**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Steering Group for  
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

Linz, Austria  
17 – 18 April 2013

**MINUTES**

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## 1. Welcome to the participants, adoption of the Minutes from the previous meeting and adoption of the Agenda

The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Linz, Austria, on the premises of the voestalpine Stahlwelt. The Coordinators of Priority Area 1a (henceforth: PACs 1a) of the EUSDR, represented by **Mr. Reinhard VORDERWINKLER** of Austria and **Ms. Monica PATRICHI** of Romania, welcomed the participants, members of the Steering Group, representatives of the European Commission (DG REGIO and DG MOVE), representatives of river commissions and PACs from PA 1b – *To improve mobility and multimodality: road, rail and air transport* and PA 8 – *To support the competitiveness of enterprises*.

The Meeting Minutes for the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting as well as the Agenda for the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Group were approved unanimously and without amendments.



## 2. Introduction of current status of work by PACs 1a

The PACs 1a of Austria and Romania provided an overview on the currently on-going activities concerning waterway infrastructure projects, waterway maintenance, ports and sustainable freight transport, River Information Services (RIS), education and jobs as well as administrative procedures.

In the field of implementation of representative **waterway infrastructure projects** on the Danube the following activities were mentioned: study on variants for the sector Straubing–Vilshofen (Germany) which was finished at the end of 2012, start of the pilot project east of Vienna (Austria), progress on

the planning of works for six priority locations (Serbia) and on-going works on the Calarasi–Braila sector (Romania).

In the field of **waterway maintenance**, following up on the *Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries* which was signed by the Danube transport ministers in June 2012 in Luxembourg, the Joint Technical Secretariat of PA 1a is monitoring the short-term measures taken or planned by the riparian countries twice per year with the help of questionnaires. A representative project for waterway management is *NEWADA duo (Network of Danube Waterway Administrations – data and user orientation, 10/2012–09/2014)*, co-funded in the EU's SEE Transnational Cooperation Programme.

In the field of **ports and sustainable freight transport** the project *INWAPO (Upgrading of Inland Waterway and Sea Ports, 10/2011–09/2014)* was mentioned which is co-funded in the EU's CE Transnational Cooperation Programme. The project established a set of benchmarks and performance indicators for Danube ports and transshipment sites.

With regard to **fleet modernization** several studies for the use of alternative fuels on the Danube (e.g. LNG - liquefied natural gas) are conducted and others are in preparation. Also on-going is the flagship project *Innovative Danube Vessel (07/2012–12/2013)*, a study commissioned by via donau on behalf of the EC's DG REGIO.

Concerning **River Information Services** the IRIS Europe 3 project was mentioned together with recent RIS developments in Romania and Serbia and the start of the pilot operation of international RIS data exchange in June 2013 between Austria and Slovakia, including the involvement of a limited user group. Preparations for the interconnections with Hungary, Croatia and Romania are on-going. The PACs 1a underlined the need of involvement of logistical users into RIS data exchange, the continuation of the signature process for legal agreements for international data exchange (as a mid-term solution) and the improvement of the quality of interoperability between national RIS systems.

In the field of **education and jobs** the public consultation on the recognition and modernization of professional qualifications in inland navigation (revision of EU Directive 96/50/EC on boatmasters' certificates) is currently on-going. A representative project for the topic of education and jobs is *HINT (Harmonized Inland Navigation Transport through Education and Information Technology, 12/2012 – 12/2014)*, co-funded in the EU's SEE Transnational Cooperation Programme. Concerning the revision of EU Directive 96/50/EC on boatmasters' certificates, the HINT team will provide information and bring in the Danube region opinions. In addition, the PACs encouraged the SG members to bring in their national contribution in this public consultation process. In January 2013, via donau published the 3<sup>rd</sup> revised and updated edition of the *Manual on Danube Navigation*.

A new field of interest was identified during previous meetings of the Working Groups which is related to **administrative processes**. Complex administrative processes and excessive paperwork are a significant competitive disadvantage for inland navigation on the Danube and its tributaries and happens because not all Danube riparian states are in the EU and not all EU states are within the Schengen area. As a consequence, there are necessary border checks for passengers and crews and customs clearance is required for imports and exports which increase travel time. A detailed analysis of the most time-consuming activities will be needed, involving the private sector and state authorities, together with an evaluation of synergies with on-going activities in PA 11 on security of the EUSDR.

The European Commission and the general Communication on the EUSDR stress the need of horizontal cooperation between PACs of the EUSDR. In this sense, a meeting between PACs and NCPs was organized in Brussels on the 30th and 31st of January 2013 and a meeting of PACs took place in Sofia on the 29th and 30th of April 2013. A matrix visualising the horizontal cooperation between PACs of the EUSDR was elaborated by PACs 1a and PACs 6 which was presented at the meeting in Brussels. PACs 1a invited PACs 6, PACs 1b and PACs 8 to the last Steering Group meetings in order to identify synergies between Priority Areas activities. On the 6th of June 2013, PACs 1a were invited to participate at the Steering Group meeting of PA 11 – Security.

Data sheets showing the status quo of **PA1a projects** are available online on the website [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu), a number of more than 90 projects were identified as being in line with PA 1a targets and/or actions. The website is updated on a regular basis by the Joint Technical Secretariat

of PA 1a. In addition, a new section was created on the website for strategic and political documents which are also available for download.

**Mr. Thomas HARTL** (Austrian Technical Secretariat for PA 1a, via donau) made a summary of the discussions which took place during the 4th Working Groups meeting on the 16th and 17th of April 2013 (held back-to-back with the 5th Steering Group meeting). The focus was on two main topics: waterway management and fleet modernization/efficiency. Concerning the topic of fleet modernization, three presentations were held which revealed the need for improvement of the fairway to also enable the efficient operation of inland vessels. During the Working Groups meeting, Mr. Hartl presented the outcome of the questionnaire regarding waterway infrastructure maintenance activities for 2013. He mentioned Mr. Capatu's intervention concerning the dissatisfaction of the private sector about the application of the Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance, the lack of EU financing for maintenance and several administrative barriers.

### **3. Outlook on the new EU programming period 2014–2020**

**Ms. Ann-Jasmin KRABATSCH** (European Commission, DG REGIO) presented an overview of the state of play regarding the implementation of the Danube Strategy and informed the Steering Group members about latest news on the *Danube 2014-2020 transnational programme*. On the 8th of April 2013 the Commission published a Communication after 18 months of the Danube Strategy's implementation which recommends the strengthening of internal implementation structures, sustainable leadership and strategic planning for the Strategy by continuity and sustainability, calling on the EU Member States to incorporate the EUSDR into the new generation of funding schemes for 2014–2020. The new *Danube 2014-2020 programme* will cover the geographical area of the Danube Strategy and currently a Task Force is working on its specifics. Still under discussion are, amongst others, the thematic priorities of the programme and programme management, one of the options for the latter being the establishment of an EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – a cooperation instrument at the Community level). It is foreseen that in January 2014 the programme will be submitted to the EC for approval and that a first call for projects will be opened at the end of 2014, at the earliest.

**Mr. Cesare BERNABEI** (European Commission, DG MOVE) presented the current status of the revised guidelines for the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The new proposal regarding TEN-T shows a dual-layer approach consisting of a core and a comprehensive transport network, with deadlines to establish the network by 2030 and 2050, respectively 2050. New multimodal corridors will be created which will have coordinators in order to monitor their implementation. The new infrastructure package is under discussion between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council and it is expected to be approved until autumn 2013. The new CEF financial instrument will have a budget of 23.174 billion EUR for transport including 10 billion EUR from the Cohesion Fund. The CEF will not replace or displace cohesion policy funding.

Mr. Bernabei also referred to the discussions during the 4th Working Groups meeting on the TEN-T Regulation and on provisions regarding financial support by the Community for the maintenance of the fairway. He said that the countries should commit themselves to maintain a good fairway for navigation, as this clearly lies in their responsibility. In this respect Mr. Bernabei also pointed out the importance of finalising the review of the Belgrade Convention, which is also a dedicated action of the EUSDR Action Plan. The completion of this process would strengthen the role of the Danube Commission and would also enable the accession of the European Commission as member.

### **4. Letter of Recommendation (LoR) for selected projects**

Prior to the 5th meeting of the Steering Group, the Joint Technical Secretariat sent out data sheets for projects which had been received by the PACs 1a from project promoters and which are suggested to receive a Letter of Recommendation, as these projects comply with the criteria for issuing a Letter of Recommendation for PA 1a. The following three projects were received:

1. *Feasibility Study "Recreational Navigation on the Morava River"* (MreNa), project lead: Slovakian Waterborne Transport Development Agency
2. *Danube River Research and Management* (DREAM), project lead: Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences
3. *High-performance GREEN PORT GIURGIU*, project lead: ILR Logistica Romania S.R.L.

After consultation with the Steering Group members and by taking into account the criteria adopted by the Steering Group for issuing Letters of Recommendation, it was decided that only projects no. 1 and 3 are meeting all the criteria and will receive a LoR. For project no. 2 the information concerning the specific funding programme to which the project promoter intends to apply for funding is fragmentary (no information on specific call) and the decision was taken to delay the vote until sufficient information on the project will be available.

## 5. Presentation of proposal for common position on enhancing RIS international data exchange

Prior to the 5th Steering Group meeting, the SG members received a proposal by the PACs 1a regarding the *Appeal of the Steering Group of Priority Area 1a of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) concerning the data exchange in River Information Services (RIS data exchange)*.

**Mr. Reinhard VORDERWINKLER** mentioned that RIS systems are very much advanced in some Danube states and that data exchange should be established between authorities, as this is also in line with one of the targets of PA1a. Although the RIS Directive 2005/44/EC stresses in its preamble the privacy and protection in the electronic communication sector regarding the processing of the personal data as well as of the economically sensitive data related to market operators, some states consider that the RIS Directive is still not clear enough on these aspects and that some provisions related to this issue should be amended.

As the provision of international exchange of RIS data is one explicit target of PA 1a, an appeal drafted by the PACs was submitted to the Steering Group which should be understood as a recommendation in order to speed up the process for international RIS data exchange for logistics purposes.

The document was presented by **Mr. Thomas HARTL**, representing the Austrian Technical Secretariat of PA1a. The appeal was approved by the attendant SG members entitled to vote with no objections and in accordance with Art. 6 (1) d ("unanimity minus one") of the SG Rules of Procedures. Prior to the meeting, a written objection to the Appeal was introduced by Germany, albeit with no German representative participating in the SG meeting.

The *Appeal of the Steering Group of Priority Area 1a of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) concerning the data exchange in River Information Services (RIS data exchange)* was signed by the PACs of PA 1a and will be forwarded to the Commission and the Danube countries. It will also be made available for download on the website of PA 1a.

## 6. Horizontal cooperation with other Priority Areas of the EUSDR

In line with the spirit of the EUSDR, which encourages the horizontal cooperation between the 12 Priority Areas of the Strategy, the PACs 1b – *To improve mobility and multimodality: road, rail and air transport* and PACs 8 – *To support the competitiveness of enterprises* were invited to the 5th Steering Group meeting of PA 1a to present their activities in order to identify common goals and future possibilities of cooperation.

**Mr. Franc ŽEPIČ** (PAC 1b, Slovenian Coordinator and representative of Slovenia to the SG of PA 1a) and **Mr. Fedor ČERNE** (Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning of Slovenia) made reference to the SG meetings of PA 1b and more than 100 projects received, the majority of which being road and rail infrastructure projects. Currently, the Slovenian coordinator of PA 1b is working on the Terms of

Reference for a new project proposal by the name of *TRANSDANUVIOS – a common Transport Vision for the Danube Region*. The idea for the project is based on the already achieved results of Vision Slovenia (2002–2003) and the PRELUDE study. TRANSDANUVIOS aims at identifying the important transport links that will need to be established in order to prepare the Danube region for tomorrow's markets, based on the opinions of the region's citizens and stakeholders and also at identifying the resources available. Mr. Žepič expressed the interest of PA 1b for cooperation with PA 1a within this project and with the European Commission.

**Ms. Dragica KARAIĆ** (PAC 8, Croatian Coordinator) and **Mr. Zvonimir ČORDAŠIĆ** (Regional Development Agency Hrast Ltd.) made reference to the SG meetings of PA 8 and the six working groups created which cover the areas of innovation and technology transfer, clusters excellence, vocational education, competitiveness in rural and urban areas, entrepreneurial learning energy efficiency and environment. Ms. Karaić mentioned the flagship projects *DanuClus* which focusses on cluster mapping and a benchmarking exercise as well as *System of Integral Logistic Support Around the Central Logistic Point in Port of Vukovar* which aims to the development of a new logistics centre "Vuka" as the Regional Centre (hub) in Eastern Europe for the transport, logistics and distribution of goods.

The PACs of PA1a thanked the speakers for their presentations and express their interest in the further development of the *TRANSDANUVIOS* and *DanuClus* projects.



**Mr. Pjotr SUVOROV** (Deputy General Director of the Danube Commission's Secretariat) made reference to the insufficient fairway depths and ice problems that occurred on the Danube in 2011 and 2012 when dredging works executed had failed and many economic actors faced serious losses. The national projects aimed at improving the Danube's waterway infrastructure, which are labelled as PA

1a projects and which may significantly reduce the adverse impact of climate processes as well as enhance the logistics base of Danube transport, are included in the Danube Commission's *Plan for major works* and are also monitored by the DC.

The Danube Commission launched its market observation system in 2011. The system is designed for performing operational analysis of the density of vessels and cargo flows on the Danube, for estimating operating capacity of certain river sections in different navigation periods and the influence of various factors on the navigational conditions and economic indicators of navigation. It aims to provide prompt notification of the DC's Member States on the current market situation and possible trends. The draft of the system was approved by the expert group on navigation policy (15 April 2013). The Danube Commission will keep the Steering Group of PA 1a informed about the outcomes of the market observation.

## **7. Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance – status reported by countries**

**Ms. Monica PATRICHI** (Romanian Ministry of Transport, Romanian Coordinator of PA 1a) informed the participants about the implementation of the *Memorandum of Understanding between Romania and the Republic of Bulgaria on the establishment of the Interministerial Committee for sustainable development of inland waterway transport on the Romanian–Bulgarian common sector*, which was signed in October 2012. The Committee is chaired by the secretaries of state of the ministries of transport from both countries as well as by the national contact points. It also involves other ministries from both countries which are responsible for public financing, European funds, the environment and the interior and which could contribute to a smoothly and timely implementation of the common projects identified and adopted in a common Action Plan. Representatives of the institutions of the European Union and the TEN-T Coordinators are invited to participate at each meeting. The projects and actions included in the common Action Plan are related to: improvement of navigation conditions on the Romanian-Bulgarian common sector of the Danube, setting up of an EGTC for navigation project implementation, studies for the unification of the reference systems used for measurements on the Danube river, studies for sediment accumulation and the evolution of hydrological parameters, procurement system and data processing for producing and updating electronic navigational charts on the Danube, RIS data exchange, improvement of the connectivity between Romania and Bulgaria and the amendment of the Agreement between Romania and Bulgaria regarding the maintenance and improvement of the fairway on the Romanian–Bulgarian common sector, which was signed in 1955. For the purpose of addressing all these issues, four working groups were created which will provide independent, professional and transparent inputs, guidance and recommendations for the projects or actions.

**Mr. Thomas HARTL** (Austrian Technical Secretariat for PA 1a) presented the monitoring system on the implementation of waterway maintenance as stipulated in the Luxembourg *Declaration on effective waterway management on the Danube and its tributaries*. The implementation of the actions shall be monitored through a common regular monitoring and reporting mechanism in the framework of the EUSDR's PA 1a. Accordingly, a questionnaire was drafted by the Joint Technical Secretariat of PA 1a in order to enable Danube and Sava riparian states to provide specific information on the execution of regular fairway maintenance works as agreed on in the Declaration by the Danube transport ministers. The Steering Group members were asked to present the updated information for 2013 as well as other relevant information related to their fairway maintenance activities if it is the case.

**Austria** reported that usually the periods with low water levels on the Austrian stretch of the Danube are between October and February. Dredging works for most critical sections take place at the beginning of autumn (starting from September) prior to the potential low water period. For 2013, two complete hydrographical surveys in the two free-flowing sections are foreseen, with additional regular surveys of the most critical sections on a monthly basis. Based on the results of a July survey of all critical sections, a prioritisation of the necessary dredging measures will be made in August and dredging works at priority locations will start in September in both free-flowing sections. The estimated costs for dredging are 3.1 million EUR. Information on fairway depths available at the most critical

shallow sections are communicated to the users on the Austrian RIS website. In addition, the pilot waterway infrastructure project on the critical section to the East of Vienna was started in 2012 and is planned to be finalised in April 2014.

**Slovakia** pointed to the fact that the Slovakian Ministry of Environment is responsible for waterway maintenance. The Slovakian representative to the SG presented the allocated budget and activities performed in 2012 as well as the measures and budget foreseen for 2013. The riverbed of the Danube is measured annually and there is a principle of rotation for the common Danube stretches with Hungary and Austria. The budget allocated for measurements is 100,000 EUR, for dredging works 750,000 EUR and for fairway marking 400,000 EUR. Regarding the procedures for exceptional circumstances like floods and ice, there is the project CARES in corporation with the Fire Force of the Slovak Republic and the Austrian partner.

**Hungary** reported the activities foreseen for 2013 for each of the three waterway maintenance directorates (ÉDU-VIZIG, KDV-VIZIG and ADU-VIZIG). With regard to riverbed surveying the activity is concentrated on the shallow sections and the allocated budget is 32,000 EUR. There are not any dredging works planned for 2013, but activities related to the marking of the fairway are performed every two weeks. The cross-border activities with Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia were also presented, as well as RIS developments and transnational projects under implementation.



**Croatia** reported that riverbed surveying is regularly performed on the Danube, Sava, Drava and Kupa rivers by AVP's marking services. A more detailed hydrographic survey is normally performed when required, i.e. on specific locations for projects drafting purposes. Dredging intervention are planned in critical sections of the Danube, Sava and Drava rivers and the allocated budget is 443,200 EUR. Fairway marking activities are taken continuously in 2013 with an allocated budget of 573,333 EUR.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** presented the *Program for rehabilitation and development of navigation on the Sava River for the period 2010–2015*. There is no agency responsible for the maintenance of navigation conditions and the activities are currently performed by the Ministry of Communication and Transport. A contract with a private company will be signed for maintenance for the next three years and will be financed from the state budget. Maintenance and marking of the fairway are affected by the existing unexploded ordnances and it is necessary to demine the right bank of the Sava river. RIS implementation is under preparation through the Sava Commission and it is estimated that the system will be in place until 2015. As there is insufficient institutional development, the Ministry is working on a Rule Book for maintenance which shall define the relevant bodies and institutions in charge of waterway maintenance. An agreement on inland navigation and its technical maintenance was signed between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Council of ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2012.

**Serbia** reported that the 2013 hydrographic surveying campaign will last from May until October on the Danube, Tisa and Sava rivers with an allocated budget of 150,000 EUR. The project *Preparation of documentation for River Training and Dredging Works on Selected Locations along the Danube River* will be finalized in 2013 and the final output will be the main designs and tender documentation for works on six critical sectors on the Danube river on the inner-Serbian stretch of the waterway, as well as for the supervision and monitoring of the works. Other budgets for dredging works are currently not foreseen. Fairway marking is done on a daily basis and the total costs for related activities on the Danube river are within the range of 450,000 EUR. Marking is very efficient for skippers during low waters periods. The RIS system has already been implemented on Serbian waterways and has a full coverage on the Danube and Sava rivers.

**Romania** pointed out that fairway maintenance activities on the Danube are performed by the River Administration of the Lower Danube (AFDJ), based in Galati, and reported that the measures foreseen for 2013 are quite the same as those performed in 2012. Topo-hydrographic surveys are carried out on a monthly or weekly basis, depending on the development of the Danube's water levels. The allocated budget is around 756,800 EUR. Dredging works will be performed on both maritime and river sectors of the Danube with an allocated budget of 2,904,000 EUR. Activities pertaining to the marking of the fairway are carried out once a month or twice a month during low water level periods with a budget of 2,247,466 EUR. Fairway-related information to users is provided daily via internet and other media.

**Moldova** presented the facilities of the Port of Giurgiulesti which is able to receive and operate tankers, grain carriers, container ships, general cargo vessels, passenger ships and Ro-Ro ships. The Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union is currently under negotiation and some of the important EU Directives have already been transposed into Moldavian legislation, e.g., related to the systems of chartering and pricing in national and international inland waterway transport in the Community, access to the occupation of carrier of goods by waterway in national and international transport, conditions for obtaining national boatmasters' certificates, RIS, inland transport of dangerous goods and port reception facilities for ship-generated waste and cargo residues. Navigation on the Prut river was re-opened in June 2012 for tugboats and barges with the capacity of 600 tons on the sector between Giurgiulesti and Cahul. The Moldovan representative also mentioned activities and costs foreseen for 2013 and 2014 which are related to infrastructure projects and fleet modernization.

**Ukraine** reported that the state is performing surveying and dredging activities on the Danube river and focussed on the presentation of the River Radio Location Trainer (RLT) owned by the Ukrainian Danube Shipping Company. The simulation centre started its activity in 1990 and modernisation is needed with relation to the technology enabling integration with the inland EDICS viewer, AIS, display of ship management and radar overlay.

Unfortunately, no information on the on-going and planned short- and mid-term measures related to waterway infrastructure maintenance was provided by **Germany** and **Bulgaria**, as no representative of these two countries attended the 5th Steering Group meeting.

**Mr. Thomas HARTL** added that in the *NEWADA duo* project's work package on integrative waterway management, the project partners, i.e. the waterway management authorities of the Danube countries,

are providing data on related activities based on more detailed questionnaires. He also informed the attendants that the project's Board of Directors, which includes the managing directors of all project partners, has agreed to develop standards and performance indicators for waterway maintenance activities on the Danube until autumn 2014.

## 8. Conclusions and next steps

**Mr. Reinhard VORDERWINKLER** concluded that the topic of fairway maintenance is one of the most important issues for PA 1a of the Danube Strategy. As a follow-up on the Luxembourg Declaration on waterway infrastructure maintenance, the forthcoming implementation report of PA 1a – which has to be submitted to the European Commission in June 2013 – will include the status quo and the planned measures reported by the countries. Furthermore, the *NEWADA duo* project will provide information on costs and common standards regarding fairway maintenance. In face of the information provided by the countries in the questionnaire and the still very heterogeneous quality and frequency of activities related to waterway infrastructure maintenance, the Steering Group members concluded that a *Waterway Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube* shall be drafted, including common standards and also the related necessary future investments in order to achieve a common level of service in waterway infrastructure management of the Danube.

At the end of June 2013, the second Annual Report of the Coordinators of PA1a will have to be sent to the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission and the Steering Group members will be kindly asked by the PACs to bring in their contribution in the written procedure followed by a final approval of the Report.

The Coordinators of PA 1a thanked the participants for their contributions and announced that the next meeting will be scheduled for autumn of 2013. The exact date and venue will be communicated by the PACs in due time.

## Enclosures

*Please note:* The following documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1a → [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu) (visit tab "Steering Group")

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

A selection of photos taken during the meeting is also available online on the website under the tab "Photos".