

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

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

Zagreb, Croatia  
04 May 2016

**MINUTES**

Author(s):  
**Joint Technical Secretariat of PACs 1a**

Version (date):  
**final | 30-05-2016**

## 1. Introduction of PACs and adoption of agenda of the meeting

The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group (extended) for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Zagreb, Croatia, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2016.

The meeting was chaired by **Mrs. Ursula Zechner** PA1a Austrian Coordinator (henceforth: PAC 1a). PAC welcomed the participants, members of the Steering Group and the observer members - representatives of the European Commission (DG REGIO, DG MOVE and DG ENV), Danube Strategy Point (DSP), representatives of the Danube Commission and Sava River Basin International Commission and professional organizations (Pro Danube International). FAIRway project partners were present as well. The participating countries were: Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine.

The Minutes from the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, which was held in Bruxelles (Belgium) on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2016, as well as the Agenda for the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Group were approved unanimously and without amendments.

## 2. Priorities and activities of the International Sava River Basin Commission

**Mr Dejan Komatina**, Secretary - International Sava River Basin Commission, presented a brief introduction of the activities performed by the international organization. The International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) has been established for the purpose of implementation of the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin, and realization of the mutually agreed goals as: the establishment of the international navigation regime on the Sava River and its navigable tributaries; the establishment of the sustainable water management; undertaking of measures to prevent or limit hazards, such as floods, ice hazards, droughts and accidents involving substances hazardous to water, and to reduce or eliminate their adverse consequences.

The activities performed includes: coordination of the development of joint / integrated plans for the SRB, such as River Basin Management Plan, Flood Risk Management Plan and Contingency Plan; coordination of the establishment of integrated systems for the SRB, such as GIS, RIS (River Information Services), and Monitoring, Forecasting and Early Warning Systems (for accident prevention and control, and for flood protection); preparation and realization of development programs and other strategic documents, carrying out and coordination of the preparation of studies and projects; harmonization of national regulation with the EU regulation; creation of additional protocols to the FASRB; cooperation and public participation.

The political support of countries contributes definitively to the success of projects. ISRBC is a good example of cooperation between countries and between sectors related to water management. All the documents are very integrative and aligned with UNECE, EUSDR and other international regulations and strategies.

The representative of DG MOVE appreciated the good cooperation between the EC and ISRBC and mentioned in this context the *Joint Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin*. It was stressed that it is impetuous that this process to be taken up also during TEN-T Days 2016.

## 3. State of play of PA1a: workplan and activities

The joint Technical Secretariat for PA 1a presented the workplan and the activities for 2016

In the field of **Comprehensive Waterway Management** two updates of the National Actions Plans, which are part of *Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and its navigable tributaries*, will take place in May 2016 and October 2016. The updates are done in cooperation with FAIRway Danube project and are adopted by PA 1a SG. Based on the update from May 2016 is prepared the Appeal of PA1a SG towards Transport Ministers and the technical input to meeting of transport ministers planned for the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, with the occasion of TEN-T Days in Rotterdam. Two working

group meetings on comprehensive waterway management are planned for the 28<sup>th</sup> of June in Linz (AT) and the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 in Bucharest (RO).

In the field of **Fleet modernization**, concepts for more efficient and environmentally friendly vessels were tackled within the study “**Innovative Danube Vessel**”, a flagship project of PA1a. The results are further developed under LNG Masterplan and PROMINENT research project. A working group will be organized on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 in Bucharest where it will be discussed the concepts for energy efficient navigation, LNG and innovative vessels for the Danube.

In the field of **Administrative Processes** aiming to reduce administrative burden on commercial shipping companies a *Manual on Border Controls* was issued in cooperation with PA 11 (Security). Discussions on validation of recommendations for improved border control procedures will take place in the working group meeting on administrative processes which will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 in Linz beside the event Danube Business Talks.

In the field of **Waterway Infrastructure & Ports and Sustainable Freight Transport** two working groups are planned for 2016, on the 05<sup>th</sup> of July and 18<sup>th</sup> of October, both in Bucharest. Their aim is to exchange information and disseminate good practices on infrastructure projects in ports and along the Danube, as well as other studies and projects (ex. DAPHNE project proposal, Green Port Giurgiu).

In the field of **Education and Jobs & RIS** two working groups are planned for 2016, on the 06<sup>th</sup> of July and 19<sup>th</sup> of October, both in Bucharest. The subject of the discussions will be the content of a report on relevant status indicators on the RIS data exchange network operation followed by a final report on relevant status indicators on the RIS data exchange network operation, the progress on the harmonization of IWT qualification requirements and relevant projects as Danube Skills project proposal.

The projects with relevance for the PA 1a targets are identified and monitored continuously by the PA 1a Secretariat. Their status is published on the website [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu).

For the facilitation of project initiatives in the field of inland waterway in the Danube Region, 4 letters of recommendation were issued in February 2016 for the projects Upgrade Gabčíkovo locks, Constanta Green Port, PROTECT and SWIM - SMART Waterway Integrated Management which were submitted for financing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> call of CEF Programme. 5 Letters of Recommendation were issued in October 2015 for the projects DANTE, Danube SKILLS, Danube STREAM, DAPHNE and ENERGY BARGE which were submitted on the first call of Danube Programme. All the projects submitted on Danube Programme have reached the next stage in the application process.

#### 4. Progress Report & Implementation Report

An Interim Progress Report and an Implementation Report have to be submitted by PACs to the European Commission by the end of April 2016, respectively July 2016.

The Interim Progress Report was prepared by the PA1a Technical Secretariat and contains details on the activities performed on the period 09/2015 – 02/2016.

The Implementation Report, for the activities performed on the period 07/2015 – 06/2016, is under preparation and will be sent to PA 1a SG members mid July for approval in written procedure. The purpose of the Implementation Report is to support the political, coordination and operational levels of the EUSDR by presenting concise, clear and updated progress of each Priority Area. The Implementation Report will contain the progress on policy level, progress on PA's targets, actions, milestones, activities and strategic projects, main achievements in terms of funding, roadmaps to implement each PA 1a actions and the PA 1a workplan.

The SG members were asked to agree on the procedures for the PA1a Implementation Report and no objection was raised.

The SG members were informed that Danube Strategy Point (DSP), which assists the Commission in its coordination tasks of the EUSDR, introduced the concept of “EUSDR strategic projects” (instead “EUSDR flagship projects”) which are projects with high impact and visibility for the EUSDR. The strategic projects should contribute to stronger and clearer strategic focus of the activities and efforts undertaken within the

EUSDR Priority Areas as well as fleshing out the ambition and the direction an EUSDR PA would have in certain policy area. They should support and further encourage joint cooperation between EUSDR states and/or regions. It was asked the SG members agreement that within PA 1a to be considered “strategic projects” those that received a letter of recommendation of SG PA1a in the last calendar year:

- CEF: FAIRway Danube, Green Port Giurgiu, MAINtopiC, SWIM, Upgrade Lock Gabcikovo, Constant Green Port, PROTECT
- Interreg DTP: DANTE, DanubeSKILLS, DanubeSTREAM, DAPhNE, ENERGY BARGE

No objection was raised by SG members.

The representative of **DG ENV** stressed once again that DG ENV supports the policy aims of further development of IWT as a sustainable mode of transport. However, the environmental acquis has to be complied with in all cases, including on TEN-T priority stretches, as environmental protection is a major European interest. In line with the Joint Statement it is essential that environmental requirements are considered.

## **5. FAIRway National Action Plans and PA1a Steering Group appeal towards Danube Transport Ministers as regards the status of fairway maintenance**

**Mrs. Gudrun Maierbrugger**, PA 1a Technical Secretariat, presented an overview of the updated FAIRway National Action Plans. Fairway conditions were extremely difficult along the whole Danube River in 2015. On the upper as well as the middle and lower Danube, water discharge was significantly below the multi-annual average, which combined with a lack of financial means for maintenance led to an unfavorable situation for the shipping companies. The status of the critical location in 2015 on the whole length of the Danube waterway was presented in graphic format. An overview table of available and needed budget was provided as well.

The National Action Plans were updated by all the countries participating in the FAIRway project and by Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Ukraine. The representatives of the SG members were asked to present the important issues of their national action plans.

The representative of **Pro Danube International (PDI)**, Mr. Alexandru Capatu, asked that all the representatives of the governments shall make a statement regarding the budgetary coverage of the necessary dredging works for the year 2016 in order to get a clear picture how the Danube states intend to ensure safe and efficient navigation throughout this year.

**Serbia** mentioned that PLOVPUT is in charge to maintain the fairway and in 2015 there were bad conditions for navigation. The Government reduced the budgets for maintenance and that the ones available cover the measurements and signalization activities.

**Ukraine** informed the participants that inland waterways are covered 100% with RIS and that the system was designed in line with EC requirements. In the past months there was undertaken consultation with Romanian side for the deepening of the Danube – Black sea Canal. It was proposed to the PA 1a PACs a project initiative (study) for the status of the Danube fairway in Ukraine and transport analyses.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** does not have yet a specialized body for the maintenance of the fairway conditions on the Sava River, those activities belonging to the Ministry of Transport. The MoT is not able to collect all the data necessary to fill the National Action Plan for maintenance. A framework contract was signed with a private company for the maintenance for a period of 3 years. Currently a strategy is under development, which will be the base for the further IPA funding.

**Romania** informed that the National Action Plan was updated with information on budgets available in 2016. The AFDJ and ACN maintenance budget for 2016 is 19 MEURO, out of which 3.5 are provided for dredging activities. An additional budget of 400,000 euro was requested to the MoT. In June 2016 it is expected to be sign a framework contract for dredging activities in the next 3 years and in July 2016 to start the dredging activities on the Danube sector under Romania responsibility. From AFDJ point of view the conditions of navigation will not be good in 2016.

**Slovakia** reported that does not have any problem regarding the fairway maintenance.

**Hungary** informed that public tenders are ongoing for the equipment acquisition in accordance with FAIRway project activities and other projects approved on CEF for Hungary. The Ministry of National Development mentioned that the critical locations identified by the shipping companies are not harmonized with the critical locations identified by the national authorities based on the measurement activities performed.

**Mr. Capatu** (PDI) called for surveying of the Hungarian critical sections more frequently than once a year (e.g. on a monthly basis). He also asked how the Hungarian authorities intent to ensure safe and efficient navigation on the Hungarian sector of the Danube in 2016. The Hungarian delegation answered this question with a reference to a project application submitted in the CEF Call 2015. Mr Capatu pointed out that the CEF project will be contracted, in the best case, in October this year, which is too late in view of the possible shallow water periods.

**Croatia** informed that the budget for maintenance activities is secured for 2016. A new problem on navigation was identified on Drava River mouth and a new project to solve it will be implemented until November 2016.

**Bulgaria** informed that 2015 was a critical year for the navigation conditions on the stretch under Bulgarian responsibility, because of lack of money and lack of specialized personnel. In 2016, funds will be allocated for maintenance activities. EAMDR prepared the tender documentation for dredging works and it is expected to be sign the contract at the end of June 2016, after the approval of budget.

**Mr. Capatu** (PDI) expressed concern on the fact that Bulgaria has not allocated funds for maintenance in 2016 and asked the EC what actions it can take in this respect

**Mr. Tsonev** (APPD, Bulgaria) replied that documents for a public tender for dredging of critical sections on the Bulgarian Danube sector have been submitted to the Transport Ministry in Sofia. He expects these documents to be approved at the latest on 18 May. APPD will be able to finish the tender in June and at the latest until the end of one month APPD shall be able to sign a dredging contract.

**Mr. Cesare Bernabei, DG MOVE**, asked if it is likely that the tender will be financially covered in due course by the Bulgarian Ministry. Mr. Tsonev expressed that he expects a positive decision of his Minister.

Mr. Bernabei stated that the EC has no means to fund maintenance dredging.

**Austria** stated that the two critical sections are closely monitored. On the critical sector East of Vienna, hydrotechnical works are performed in order to reduce the need for physical intervention and thus environmental impact.

The SG members were asked to adopt the National Action Plans as they were updated. No objection was raised.

**Mr. Cesare Bernabei** appreciated the work done so far regarding the National Action Plans, which contain lots of information and provide a comprehensive overview over the maintenance works along the Danube fairway. The document could be the base for the discussion of the ministers of transport meeting planned for 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, in Rotterdam. Mr. Bernabei mentioned that some explanations would be necessary for the budgets needed and not secured. In terms of what can be done by the European Commission, it was answered that DG MOVE finance already the FAIRway project and that the maintenance activities are under the member state's responsibility.

Mrs. **Simunovic, DG ENV**, appreciated as well the work done, this version containing information regarding the fulfilment of requirements of the Water Framework Directive and information on the water status coming from the Danube River Basin Management Plans. For the next update of the FAIRway National Action Plans a consistency check with the national River Basin Management Plans was suggested. ICPDR can be used as a platform to disseminate the existing document and the information gathered, while the potential feedback can be useful for the preparation of updated versions. It was recommended to PA 1a PACs and SG members to strengthen the cooperation with PACs responsible for environment, especially PA 4 – Water Quality.

Further the SG members were asked on the agreement on the PA1a Steering Group appeal towards Danube Transport Ministers as regards the status of fairway maintenance, which was distributed in advance. Modifications were agreed on the point 3, at the Danube Commission proposal, and no other objections were raised by the SG members. PDI requested to insert a dedicated call for provision of sufficient maintenance budget by the Member States for the year 2016, as there are still significant gaps.

## 6. Presentation of other initiatives related to the Danube Region

**Ms Sophie Deuer (EuroVienna)** presented the new website “EuroAccess Danube Region” which will be officially launched on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 in Bratislava. The database „EuroAccess Danube Region“ lists all current calls of proposals under approximately 120 EU-programmes relevant for the Danube Region. These programmes cover 7 very different topics, which correspond to the priorities of the European Union in the funding period 2014-2020, namely: environment & climate change, science & research, education & youth & culture, health & sports, employment & social policies, infrastructure & transports, energy. Using the automatic online-tool, the user can search for an appropriate EU-programme for its project idea. The search-tool is built from the point of view of potential applicants. Through a thoroughly screening of EU-funds, the information contained in the database is always up-to-date. Moreover, a monthly newsletter informs continuously on the opening of new calls for proposals on the relevant topics, as defined by the user.

**Mr. Marco Onida, DG REGIO**, informed the participants that the website is desired to fill the gap between the Management Authorities of the Programmes and the Danube Strategy structures and actors. The national specific operational programmes will be included as they provide the largest amount of non-reimbursable funds of the European Commission and all the participants were invited to disseminate the information, to test and to use the new tool developed.

**Ms Žaneta Ostojić Barjaktarević (iC consulenten)** presented the activities of the project “Trans-European Transport Network data collection project based on the TENtec System”. The aim of the project is to ensure the availability of high quality data in the TENtec database and to collect and upload new information to bring the system up to date, so that the information can be used within the next phases of TEN-T development. TENtec is the European Commission's information system to coordinate and support the Trans-European Transport Network Policy (TEN-T) in context of two main aspects: management of policy-related information and support to the grant management of TEN-T projects managed by the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA). TENtec links geographical information (GIS) and parameter data (Oracle) of the TEN-T infrastructure and enables the European Commission to easily compile information and create timely reports & maps.

## 7. Conclusions and decisions on next steps

In the Conclusions session, PAC summarized the decision taken by the Steering Group during the meeting, which were:

- Agreement on the procedures for the **PA1a Implementation Report**
- **National Action Plans** - adopted
- Agreement on the **Appeal to be sent to the Transport Ministers**
- Decision on the next SG meeting to be held in fall 2016. Date and place will be communicated in due time.

## Enclosures

*Please note:* All documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1a  
→ [www.danube-navigation.eu](http://www.danube-navigation.eu)

- (1) Appeal of the Steering Group of Priority Area 1a of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) concerning the implementation of the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and its navigable tributaries
- (2) List of attendants
- (3) Presentations given during the Steering Group meeting