

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

**10th Meeting of the Steering Group
for Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

Brussels, Belgium
09 February 2016

MINUTES

Author(s):

Joint Technical Secretariat of PACs 1a

Version:

Final

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

The 10th meeting of the Danube Strategy's Steering Group for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was held in Brussels, Belgium, on the 9th of February 2016.

The meeting was chaired by the new Coordinators of Priority Area 1a (henceforth: PACs 1a) appointed by Austria and Romania, respectively **Ms. Ursula Zechner**, Head of Section IV Transport in the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria and **Mr. Marius Humelnicu**, secretary of state within the Ministry of Transport of Romania. PACs welcomed the participants, members of the Steering Group and the observer members - representatives of the European Commission (DG REGIO and DG MOVE), representatives of the Danube Commission and professional organisations. The participating countries were: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania

The new coordinators presented themselves as well as their teams from the technical secretariats which remain unchanged. Mrs. Ursula Zechner is the head of the Department IV "Transport" which covers regulatory and legislative issues for all modes of transport. Mr. Marius Humelnicu is secretary of state responsible for naval transport in Romania and for EUSDR related activities. The PACs confirmed they are aware of the ongoing activities within the Priority Area 1a and they are confident that the good cooperation with the Steering Group will continue.

The Minutes from the 9th meeting, which was held in Vienna (Austria) on the 22 April 2015, as well as the Agenda for the 10th meeting of the Steering Group were approved unanimously and without amendments.

2. Revision of EUSDR targets and identification of strategic projects

PACs 1a thanked the representatives of the European Commission for their continuous support and asked Mr. Marco Onida, programme manager for Danube Region Strategy within DG REGIO, to inform the participants about the ongoing process regarding EUSDR targets revision and about strategic projects.

Mr. Onida appreciated the work done so far within PA 1a and mentioned the session organised at the last EUSDR Annual Forum (Ulm, 29 – 30 October 2015) for this topic. The next Annual Forum will be organised in Bratislava (3 – 4 November 2016), under the Slovakian Presidency of the Council, and will be more focused, being concentrated on two domains: research & water. Back to the targets, those were approved during 2010 as well as the EUSDR Action Plan and they were used in defining the specific areas of interventions of the financing programmes for 2014 – 2020. It was noticed that some targets are outdated and need to be updated or replaced with new ones. The Danube Strategy Point (DSP), created in 2015, is responsible to collect the new targets approved by Priority Areas Steering Group Members until 15 of February 2016. Based on that, a discussion with National Coordinators regarding a possible change of the Action Plan will take place in Bratislava in March 2016.

The DSP was created in order to ensure a follow up of the EUSDR activities, to closely monitor the priority projects and to ensure the communications between all parties included in the EUSDR governance structure. The DSP's aim is to be focused on concrete results and projects.

Mrs. Janeta Toma, DSP, informed the participants that a process of identification of strategic projects takes place in parallel with the revision of targets. A template for the identification of strategic projects was elaborated by the DSP and the feedback of Priority Areas Coordinators is expected. SG members must be involved in defining the strategic projects which can be single actions, projects or even processes. The list of strategic projects will be published on the DSP website.

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman, PA 1a Technical Secretariat, made a review of the PA 1a current targets. Whereas the first PA 1a target is a horizontal objective (increase of the cargo transport by 20% by 2020),

the remaining 4 targets refer to framework conditions needed to achieve this horizontal objective (solve the obstacles to navigability, development of ports, implementation of River Information Services and RIS data exchange, harmonisation of education standards in river transportation). For the revision it was proposed to modify the targets 2 and 4 as follows:

- Target 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~~ **2020**
- Target 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~~ **2020**

The targets were partially achieved through projects like NEWADA and IRIS Europe (establish effective waterway infrastructure management and implementation of harmonised RIS respectively). The efforts to solve the obstacles to navigability and the consolidation of an effective waterway infrastructure continue, having in mind the implementation of *Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan (FRMMP)*, as well as other hard infrastructure projects that are ongoing or under preparation stages. River Information Services were implemented in all riparian countries, but not all the countries implemented all the services and application developed until now. RIS data exchange is technically possible but is confronted with legal obstacles in practice. A new project initiative, COMEX, will further develop the RIS Corridor approach.

Danube Commission asked details about next steps on target no. 4 and added that RIS implementation has indeed been achieved for a large part. Pro Danube International suggested that some intermediary milestones should be included in the targets in order to do more in terms of coordination to reach the targets. DG REGIO explained that the targets are intended as a signal for those preparing projects and that intermediary milestones could create confusion among the applicants. The PA1a Technical Secretariat added that detailed milestone planning will be including in the upcoming progress report by PA1a, which will be discussed with Steering Group members during the next SG meeting in May.

After discussions SG members agreed on the revision of targets as presented above.

3. State of play in priority Area 1a on Inland Waterways and Work Plan 2015 – 2016

In this section PACs informed about the four topics that will be presented and discussed, namely waterway infrastructure & management, fleet modernisation, administrative processes and harmonisation of professional training standards for IWT.

First the representative of DG MOVE was asked to make a statement on policy issues.

Mr. Cesare Bernabei, policy coordinator in DG MOVE, appreciated the work within PA 1a and how the transport policy is implemented. He underlined that the policy is made by the national transport ministries with the European Commission. The European policy has changed in the sense that multimodality is seen as the way forward and not the development of the separate modes of transport. So, a closer cooperation with PA 1b should help in the implementation of European policy. The areas where the cooperation with PA 1b can bring an added value are the ports and multimodal terminals within the ports and RIS where a major challenge is the multimodal approach. West Balkans countries were included in the Rhine–Danube Corridor and PA 1a can also contribute to the implementation of the European policy by including the work and the initiative of these countries.

Ms. Zechner stated that in Austria the transport policy is also focused on multimodality.

Initiated by the Luxemburg Declaration of 2012, a Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan had been elaborated by PA1a in cooperation with the NEWADA duo project. This Master Plan was subsequently adopted by a vast majority of the Danube Transport Ministers in December 2014. Based on

that, the FAIRway Danube project was set up in the course of 2015. FAIRway Danube should work as an implementation project for important parts of the Master Plan and will run until the year 2020.

Ms. Gudrun Maierbrugger, Technical Secretariat for PA 1a, highlighted the benefits of the FAIRway project and the corridor approach at the project level. The FAIRway project will:

- update twice / year (May and October) the national actions plans for maintenance and rehabilitation;
- set up, implement and evaluate pilot activities related to the hydrological services;
- improve data quality and coherence of actions along the Danube;
- include equipment procurement for measurements and signalisation.

No physical dredging will be done within the project. The last update of national action plans was done in October 2015 and provides information on the maintenance budgets in 2016. The budget data allows no direct comparison between countries, as the accounting practices are different

Following the criticism brought on various occasions regarding the insufficient consideration of environmental aspects and the Joint Statement principles in the context of FRMMP, it was proposed to include these aspects in the template of the national action plans in order to emphasize environmental dimensions. So, in the *General introduction* a summary of the relevant environmental legislation and Joint Statement Principles will be included. In the country sections information about the current ecological status based on Danube River Basin Management Plan 2015 – 2021 will be included, as well as the national dredging permits and an illustration of environmental relevance of planned activities. The new template will be discussed with DG ENV, ICPDR and PA6 and will then be used for the next update in May 2016.

The SG members agreed on the National Action Plans according to the provisions of Luxemburg Declaration (June, 2012) and the new template for reporting.

Mr Alexandru Capatu of Pro Danube International noticed that some countries did not send data and stressed that an agreement of the ministers also requires real commitment. Private companies need assurances that the navigation will be ensured all over the year.

Mr. Petar Margic, General Director of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission, stated that in 2015, fairway depths were below the recommended ones on the majority of days on the German Danube. The Technical Secretariat replied that Germany has not been NEWADA duo project partner and thus does not agree to 2.5m as targeted fairway depth, but 2 metres. Furthermore, Germany did not contribute to the last National Action Plan update.

Mr. Marius Humelnicu mentioned that Romania has, as always, allocated for 2016 the necessary budgets for maintenance of the Romanian stretch of the Danube River and that each government should proceed in line with its international obligations. PACs 1a cannot force any country to foresee the necessary financing.

For the second theme, namely *Fleet modernisation* two project initiatives were introduced.

Ms. Gudrun Maierbrugger presented PROMINENT project, which aims at the deployment of innovative greening technologies in European inland waterway transport. PROMINENT project has a budget of 6 Million EURO and will be implemented between May 2015 and April 2018.

Mr. Manfred Seitz, Pro Danube International, presented the main achievements of the LNG Master Plan project, which ended in December 2015. The project focused on regulatory framework, market and location studies for LNG terminals, studies for storage tanks and engines, safety of operations as well as on education and training. On the Danube River a LNG terminal is operational in Ruse (BG). Other recommended locations are Komarno (SK), Galati (RO) and Constanta (RO). Some of the recommendations of the study are related to the completion of the regulatory framework (transposition of DAFI), establishing national strategies for alternative fuel with LNG and stimulation of investments in LNG

fuelling infrastructure using EU Programmes 2014 – 2020. Dedicated financing programmes for greening the sector would be necessary.

The third working group theme addressed was the *Administrative processes*, an initiative strongly supported by the private sector and developed in cooperation with PA 11- Security.

Ms. Katja Rosner, viadonau, mentioned the results of the survey on border controls along the Danube and its navigable tributaries and the *Practical manual on border controls along the Danube and its navigable tributaries* which contain information about the controls performed to the ships by different authorities in 6 countries downstream Mohacs. In total 20 measures have been identified in order to harmonise and simplify border controls, to establish time – efficient and customer oriented services. The recommendations are not public yet and will be discussed with stakeholders during workshop, which will be organised by PA 1a in Linz, on the 28th of June 2016 (in the framework of the Danube Business Talks).

For the fourth theme *Education and Jobs*, experts from CERONAV, the Romanian training centre for the personnel involved in naval transport activities, were invited to present the status of the harmonisation of professional training standards for inland waterway transport.

Mrs. Ghiuler Manole, CERONAV, stated that recent studies revealed the lack of working force on board of the ships, lack of mobility, due to the different rules and regulations at national level and the existence of local knowledge requirements. First step for the harmonisation of the education standards was EDINNA project, followed by other initiative and research work at European, as well as at the Danube region level. In June 2015 the European Commission set up, together with the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine, the European Committee for drawing up Standards in Inland Navigation (CESNI). Last CESNI meeting was on 28th January 2016. The process of the preparation of the draft Directive on the Recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation is ongoing and the Directive is expected to be adopted by the European Parliament and Council in 2017. A new project proposal, Danube Skills, was submitted last year by CERONAV on the first call of the Danube Transnational Programme 2014 – 2020 under the specific objective *Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges*.

4. Status report on PA 1a related projects

Mr. Gert-Jan Mulierman, Technical Secretariat for PA 1a, presented a summary of the status for the projects identified by PA 1a and which contributes to the achievement of PA 1a targets. The complete database is published on PA 1a website (<http://www.danube-navigation.eu/pages/projects>). Regarding TAF-DPR and START II financing schemes for the preparation of EUSDR projects it was presented the available budgets. Currently for PA 1a there are ongoing two projects, namely POPEI and TRAINING4PORTS which are progressing well according to the planning.

The PACs have received requests for a Letter of Recommendation for four projects: Upgrade of Gabčíkovo locks, submitted by Agentúra rozvoja vodnej dopravy/ Slovak Republic; Constanta Green Port, submitted by the Port of Constanta / Romania; PROTECT submitted by the Port of Constanta / Romania and SWIM submitted by the River Administration of the Lower Danube / Romania. All projects will apply for financing under the 2nd Call for Projects on Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). Based on the labelling criteria, the PACs asked the Steering Group to endorse the issue of Letters of recommendation for the projects initiative. No objection was raised.

5. Decision on membership of EBU as permanent observer to Steering Group

The members of the Steering Group were informed that European Barge Union (EBU) sent an official request to become a permanent observer of the PA 1a Steering Group.

EBU represents the majority of the inland waterway industry in Europe. Its members are the national associations of barge owners and barge operators of the leading European inland navigation countries.

Mrs. **Theresia Hacksteiner**, Secretary General EBU, presented the mission of the organisation which is involved in a lots of issues presented during PA 1a SG meeting (ex. CESNI). Infrastructure is the backbone of this industry and EBU wants to contribute to the work of this group and to raise the problems of its members.

The PACs asked for the agreement of the SG members for the EBU request. No objection was raised, so the decision was taken to include the European Barge Union as a permanent observer member of the Steering Group.

6. Conclusions and decisions on next steps

In the Conclusions session, the PACs summarised the decision taken during the meeting, which were:

- Endorsement of the National Action Plans and of the proposed changes to reporting format of the FAIRway Danube Action Plans;
- Support for Letters of Recommendation for the projects: Upgrade of Gabčíkovo locks; Constanta Green Port; PROTECT and SWIM
- Agreement to accept European Barge union as permanent observer of PA 1a Steering Group.

The dates for the next meetings of the Working Groups are as follows:

- 24th May 2016, Bucharest, Working Group on “Fleet Modernisation” (in combination with PROMINENT project)
- 28th June 2016, Linz, Working Group on “Administrative processes” and Working Group on “Waterway infrastructure and management” (in the framework of Danube Business Talks).
- October 2016, Bucharest, Working Group on “Waterway infrastructure and management”.

The list will be updated by PA 1a Joint Technical Secretariat with the other meetings of the Working Groups.

Next Steering Group meeting for PA 1a will be on the 4th of May 2016 in Zagreb. One of the main themes will be the approval of FRMMP Action Plans and input for ministerial conclusions on effective waterway maintenance (planned for June 2016, in the framework of TEN-T Days in Rotterdam)

Enclosures

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

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