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

**6th Meeting of the Working
Groups for Priority Area 1a of
the EUSDR**
Vukovar, Croatia
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MINUTES

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The 6th meeting of the Danube Strategy's Working Groups for Priority Area 1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways*, was held in Vukovar, Croatia in the premises of Hotel Lav. The meeting was attended by 78 people representing public institutions, the European Commission, the private sector, universities and non-governmental organizations active in the field of inland navigation. The meeting was organized in plenum sessions to give the participants the possibility to express their ideas and opinions and to discuss issues concerning waterway infrastructure and administrative processes with a broad group of stakeholders.

The first part of the 6th Meeting of the Working Groups set focus on waterway infrastructure, including the TEN-T Study on the Rhine-Danube Corridor, the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan: Danube and its navigable tributaries and a project for shipwreck removal along the Danube. In the second part of the meeting the activities of PA1a in connection to administrative processes were presented and complemented by the information on the DARIF project – a flagship project within Priority Area 11.

1. Welcome and introduction to Working Group of Priority Area 1a on inland waterways

The Austrian coordinator of Priority Area 1a (PAC 1a), represented by **Mr. Reinhard VORDERWINKLER**, welcomed the participants and thanked them for the interest in the PA 1a activities.

In his welcome address the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Maritime, Transport and Infrastructure, **Mr. Igor BUTORAC**, expressed his pride about hosting the Danube Strategy's Working and Steering Groups in Vukovar. Croatia is engaged in Priority Area 1a and 1b. It signed the Luxembourg Declaration on effective waterway maintenance in 2012 and participates actively in the improvement of navigation conditions and the implementation of River Information Services. Examples for recent project activities relate to NEWADA duo, Co-Wanda and the reconstruction of the Port of Vukovar.

Ms Božana MATOŠ, General Manager of the Port Authority Vukovar also welcomed participants. The high number of participants proves the interest in projects related to the Danube and its navigable tributaries. The Working Group Meetings are a good occasion to find out about the status of on-going projects and to develop new ideas.

The agenda of the meeting and a wrap up on the activities by Priority Area 1a was presented by the representative member of the Technical Secretariat for Priority Area 1a, **Mr. Gert-Jan MUILERMAN**. The targets of PA 1a are realized by projects in six thematic areas: Infrastructure, Ports, Fleet, River Information Services, Education and Jobs and Administrative Processes.

2. Working Group on Waterway Infrastructure

Ms. Katja ROSNER (viadonau) presented the TEN-T Study on the Rhine-Danube Corridor, highlighting the contents related to inland waterways and ports. As a result of the study, a Work Plan for the further development of the Rhine-Danube Corridor will be sent to the Member States by 22nd December, the European Commission will adopt Implementing Acts after their approval. Stakeholders are involved via Corridor Fora which are planned to be held frequently. Project promoters have the possibility to publish their projects by submitting a project data sheet to the EUDRS PA1a W website (www.danube-navigation.eu) in order to be taken up into strategic documents like the Work Plan.

Ms. Gudrun MAIERBRUGGER (Technical secretariat PA1a, viadonau) provided information on the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan: Danube and its navigable tributaries. She stressed the importance of continuous maintenance and presented the Master Plan as a technical

basis for coordinated measures. It contains the critical locations per country, analyses the activities by the countries along the fairway maintenance cycle (monitoring, planning, execution and information) and describes the needs in order to provide recommended levels of service. The Master Plan concludes with the required additional financial means for each country in the different fields of activity. The additional costs are relatively low (~ 85 Mio EUR investment cost and ~ 8 Mio EUR annual operational cost) but have the potential of leading to strong positive effects on fairway conditions already on the short term. The majority of investments is needed for dredging equipment, fairway marking and riverbed surveying.

The endorsement of the plan by the transport ministers is envisaged for December 2014. The Master Plan is considered as a living document, the progress will be monitored continuously. European funds may be used to tackle the identified needs.

Cargo skippers and transport service providers will be contacted until end November and asked to give feedback on the critical sectors by pointing out the most urgent ones. In case no contact is taken up, Danube waterway users are invited to contact the Pa1a Technical Secretariat.

Ms. Alina VLADOIU (S.C. CELESTA MAVIC S.R.L.) presented an outline of the “Private project No.81000/2014” which suggests the elimination of sunken civil and war ships from the bottom of the Danube from Bazias to Sulina. The objectives of the project match with the general targets of Priority Area 1a. It covers Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. The estimated budget amounts to 3.4 billion Euros, the private consortium seeks for financial support by EU funds.

3. Welcome to the second half of the Working Group Meeting

Mr. Ivan PENAVA, the Mayor of Vukovar expressed his apologies for his late arrival and welcomed all participants to Vukovar. The port of Vukovar is Croatia’s most important port on the Danube. It actively participates in European cooperation projects. As an example the DAHAR project, which was finished only recently, included 24 partners from 8 countries and engaged in multimodal port development.

4. Working Group on Administrative Processes

Mr. Simon HARTL (viadonau) informed about the activities by the Joint Technical Secretariat of PA1a regarding administrative processes. A number of meetings together with PA 11 – Security took place, representatives of PA1a gained insight on the border control processes in Mohács at the Second Joint Operation of the DARIF project. A first feedback from the inland waterway transport sector highlighted the most pressing issues related to administrative processes. The next steps of the WG on administrative processes base on this feedback: a survey among shipping companies / vessel operators at border crossings, a practical manual for border control procedures as well as final recommendations on improved control procedures along the Danube and its navigable tributaries.

Skippers of cargo vessels who recently crossed EU borders at the Danube or its navigable tributaries are invited to fill out the online feedback form:

<https://indivsurvey.de/pollonadministrativeprocesses/15077/2LfxZA>

Ms. Mónika HERCZEG (Hungarian Ministry of Interior) gave insight on the activities by the DARIF project – a flagship project within Priority Area 11 (Security), aimed at establishing a transnational, cross-border and operative law enforcement cooperation platform for the Danube. She called the cooperation between PA 11 and PA 1a a big step forward in order to make controls more transparent. The synchronisation of activities will be beneficial for both shipping companies and border control

authorities. The proposal by Simon Hartl on the next steps (survey, practical manual and recommendations) is supported. A follow-up activity on the DARIF project is planned and cooperation is welcome.

Interventions from the audience showed the importance of the topic. Particularly the unavailable possibilities of electronic reporting (RO and BG), double checks by both countries sharing a border (RO and RS, HU and RS), the unimproved formalities in RO and BG after becoming EU members as well as taxation at the canals have been mentioned by the participants as hindrances to navigation.

5. Next steps

The Coordinator of PA1a thanked the participants for their contributions and announced the requests for feedback on administrative barriers and critical sectors along the Danube and its navigable tributaries to be sent to the shipping sector.

Note:

Meanwhile the survey on administrative procedures has been published. Please help us to improve administrative barriers by filling out the feedback form:

<https://indivsurvey.de/pollonadministrativeprocesses/15077/2LfxZA>

Enclosures

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

- (1) Agenda
- (2) Presentations given at the Working Groups meeting
- (3) List of attendants
- (4) Link to the survey on administrative processes
- (5) Photos