

7th Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” of the EUSDR

Main Outcomes

9 out of 14 Danube countries participated at the 7th Steering Group (SG) meeting of Priority Area 10 (PA10) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The **quorum** was thereby fulfilled in accordance with the guidelines for the functioning of the SG of PA10.¹

The SG adopted on the following conclusions:

1. The SG of PA10 expressed its will to support the upcoming **Strategy Point** of the EUSDR and welcomed the establishment of this facility. It pointed out that it should also play a crucial role in the policy making procedure in the Danube Region. This aspect should be communicated to the National Coordinators of the EUSDR.

2. The SG of PA10 adopted its **new working structure**², consisting of **4 advisory committees and 4 related stakeholder platforms**:

- a) Danube Capacity Building Platform (D-CAP)
- b) Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP)
- c) Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR)
- d) Danube Financing and Investment Platform (D-FIP)

3. The SG of PA10 included and welcomed **two regional institutions as new participants**: The European Economic and Social Committee (**EESC**) and the Regional Cooperation Council (**RCC**). In addition to this, the Central European initiative (**CEI**) was included in the Danube Local Actors Platform Advisory Committee.

Upcoming meetings/deadlines

4 November 2014: D-LAP Advisory Committee, Vienna

18 November 2014: Deadline for submission of top 4/15 pre-selected PA10 START applications

10 December 2014: D-CAP Advisory Committee, Ljubljana

23 January 2015: E-governance for the Danube Region, Ljubljana

26-27 January 2015: Joint CoDCR & UPDR meeting, Vienna

March 2015 (tbc): D-FIP Advisory Committee

13 March 2015 (tbc): 4th Danube Financing Dialogue (DFD), Zagreb

Spring 2015: 8th Meeting of the SG of PA10

Autumn 2015: 5th Danube Financing Dialogue, Bulgaria (tbc)

29-30 October 2015: 4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR, Ulm (Germany), including 2nd participation day

¹ See <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/steering-group>

² Please see annex 1 for a visualization of this working structure.

Meeting Minutes

1. Introduction and welcome

Jung (DE) expressed his gratitude for attending the meeting and welcomed the participants.

Puchinger (PAC10, AT) thanked Baden-Württemberg to host the 7th SG meeting and gave an overview on what happened since the 6th SG meeting in Ljubljana in May 2014, especially the 3rd Annual Forum of the EUSDR.

Lukač (PAC10, SI) agreed.

Onida (EC) introduced himself as new team leader of the DG Regio in the competence centre for macro-regional strategies. He commented on an e-mail to the PACs by Colin Wolfe and explained some new tools of the EUSDR such as the Strategy Point and commented on the NC meetings in Brussels and Vienna in September 2014. There is a lot of work on the table. The question of a possible revision of the EUSDR Action Plan was raised by some NCs. Next meeting is to be held on 16 January 2015 in Stuttgart. He stressed that the backbone of the Strategy are the Priority Areas and that there is already a lot of concrete work being done which is generally recognized. The START project triggered an enormous response and has shown that there is a considerable interest from the side of the stakeholders. Priority Area Coordinators will continue receiving financial support in 2015 and 2016 with EP money. 200.000 € will be made available for an online search tool which will be administered by the City of Vienna.

2. Results and consequences of the 3rd Annual Forum in Vienna on 26-27 June 2014

Puchinger (AT) pointed out that the Danube Cosmos method showed the inclusiveness of the Strategy with more than 50 different activities. PACs were asked for tangible results between two MFF when no call was open. When talking about the added value of the EUSDR it should be borne in mind that in the Danube Region there is no longstanding history of cooperation as in the EUSBSR. The establishment of a transnational dialogue in the Danube Region should therefore be considered to be a big success.

Lukač (SI) commented on a workshop on migration management on local level in cooperation with PA9 "People and Skills" and the IOM on 24-25 June 2014 which had shown a new quality of communication on the local level, where migration is actually being faced. There is a big gap between the local level and the national one with regards to migration management. The meeting has shown that the local level would like to be more involved in the policy level and have more autonomy. NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe) gave their perspective. She outlined two workshops held in the framework of the 3rd AF's Danube Cosmos, one of which was dealing with e-government and one with institutional capacity.

Urschitz (AT) gave an overview on the participation day of the DCSF held in Eisenstadt on 25 June 2014 and jointly organized by PA9 and PA10 and where Farbizio Barca presented the place-based approach. In addition to this, Iveta Radicova had given a very convincing presentation about citizen involvement. Urschitz stressed the importance of a Danube Youth Platform. Civil Society needs reliable consultation mechanisms and transparency as well as simple funding opportunities for smaller projects, e.g. in the field of culture. Discussions about Capacity building are also at the heart of civil society involvement of the Strategy.

At the eve of the Annual for a, there should be a hearing of civil society actors as outlined above and with the participation of supranational and international institutions.

Langer (DE) gave brief information on the CoDCR meeting held on 26 June 2014 back-to-back with the 3rd AF, which was attended i.a. by the Lord Mayors of Vienna, Bratislava, Ulm and Bucharest. He explained the CoDCR's development towards an organization with a legal body. The Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR) should work as the administrative arm of the CoDCR with a thematic leadership being held by one or more cities. Langer invites SG members to check UPDR website.³ CoDCR/UPDR office is jointly managed by Ulm and Vienna at the PA10 office. Langer stressed that the Urban Agenda should be implemented in the Danube Region. He drew the attention to the upcoming CoDCR/UPDR meeting on 26/27 January 2015 in Vienna.

Mirtl (AT) gave insights into a workshop on Roma Inclusion held within the 3rd Annual Forum and on 9-10 October 2014 in Vienna and a follow-up conference on 9-10 October 2014 in Vienna which assembled a big variety of stakeholders from line ministries, the Commission, the RCC, the EESC, etc.

Haken (CZ, EESC) commented on the EESC prize for Roma Integration

Urschitz (AT) mentioned that Roma representatives are also represented on the D-LAP.

Hende (EC) stressed that DG Regio representatives appreciated the in-depth discussions at the meeting related to Roma Integration.

Onida (EC) asked to precise the macro-regional and transnational dimension of Roma, which looks like a relevant example when discussing added value of MRS.

Mirtl (AT) pointed out that Roma Inclusion is a cross-sectoral challenge which is related as much to social as cohesion as to economic and territorial cohesion. Moreover, it is a challenge that is closely linked to the implementation of Structural Funds and the transformation of countries which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. In this respect, the EUSDR can provide a link between the legal world of Roma inclusion and the Structural Funds, but also an interface towards third countries in the Danube Region.

Holzner (DE) pointed out that with regard to migration, also very local challenges can have a transnational impact, e.g. when entire Roma communities from Romania migrate to Germany. There is a need for a connection between local actors between Romania and Germany in this respect.

Panait (RO) presented projects and highlighted the potential of Romania. He also commented on the urban plan of Bucharest which was developed jointly with the city of Madrid. RO will participate in all EUSDR conferences dealing with urban development. Bucharest is ready to participate in the EUSDR and on the UPDR/CoDCR

Puchinger (AT) added that the UPDR will build on the existing significant links between Vienna and Bucharest on the political level.

³ www.updr.eu

3. News and status of the Danube Transnational Programme

Cruceru (EC) gave an update on the Danube Programme (DP). It is one of the successors of the Southeast Europe Programme. Part of the Danube Region is also covered by the Central Europe Programme, whose programming will be finalized at the end of the year. Priority Axis 4 of the DP will provide direct support for EUSDR implementation. The other three deal with the innovation and societal challenges, tourism and culture as well as mobility and energy. The first call is not to be expected before summer. 20% are allocated for innovation, 14% for priority axis 4 (7 % for 4.1 (institutional capacity) and 7% for 4.2 (EUSDR support)). Lead partner will be responsible for both ERDF and IPA countries. IPA project partners will implement projects according to external rules – which affects their public procurement. TAF and START are pilot projects with a limited time frame. The experiences of these pilot projects are going to be used for priority axis 4.2 of the Danube Transnational Programme. Once the programme is submitted, more details can be provided.

4. Interpretation of the joint statement of the foreign ministers of 26 June 2014, the GAC conclusions on MRS governance of 22 October 2014⁴ and the PAC10 online questionnaire.⁵

Mirtl (AT) developed on the foreign minister's statement as well as the GAC conclusions on the governance of macro-regional strategies of 21 October and confronted this political level with the day-to-day implementation of PA10. In order to implement the EUSDR during the on-going MFF, meetings of line ministries should be envisaged both at the Annual Fora and potentially also within the Council formations. Line ministries meetings should be as concrete as possible and pose very concrete questions and be content-driven. There is still a potential to further improve the performance of the SG and the EUSDR i.e. by creating motivation that is not money driven and by raising public awareness and interest.

Panait (RO) recommended inviting Commissioners to line ministries' meetings.

Puchinger (AT) added that from the perspective of PA10, administrative reforms should be at the core of such meetings. He drew the attention to a study on public wage policies in South Eastern Europe, which should be dealt with on the ministerial level.

5. Presentation of upcoming Danube Strategy Point

Jung (DE) gave a presentation of the proposal of Baden-Württemberg to host the Danube Strategy Point and gave an overview of the activities of the presentation of Baden-Württemberg in Brussels in the framework of the EUSDR, e.g. the Danube Network in Brussels. The Danube Strategy Point will be located at the representation and be closely linked to the Danube Transnational Programme and also to the upcoming Annual Forum in Ulm on 29-30 October 2015. The grant agreement is due to be signed in December 2014 and staff will be recruited in order to start working in May or June 2015. The Strategy Point's work plan will be presented at the AF in in Ulm and in NC meetings.

Hende (EC) confirmed that the discussions on the details of the Grant Agreement is ongoing and it is to be finalized as soon as possible.

⁴ ST13374

⁵ <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/pac10-sg6-questionnaire>

Conclusion: The SG of PA10 decided to support and to welcome the upcoming Strategy Point and pointed out that it should also play a role in the policy-making procedure of the Danube Region, which should be communicated to the National Coordinators.

Jung (DE) added that the Parliamentary dimension be essential for the EUSDR implementation.

6. PA10 Platforms and Pilot Projects; state of play

Puchinger (AT) developed on the 4 platforms which will be implemented by PA10:

1. Danube Capacity Building Platform (D-CAP)
2. Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP)
3. Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR)
4. Danube Financing Platform (D-FIP)

These should comply with the political decisions and also make the activities of PA10 more visible and more inclusive. Each of the platforms will be accompanied by an advisory committee and websites. In the Urban Platform Danube Region, each city takes over a thematic leadership and provides information on its website.⁶

Urschitz (AT) developed on the Local Actors Platform (D-LAP), where each country provides experts from the following groups:

- i. Academia
- ii. Regional/local authorities
- iii. Civil Society Organisations

Moreover, relevant international organisations will participate on these platforms, as well as Coordinators from other Priorities of the EUSDR. The D-LAP aims at increasing the level of transparency and participation of the EUSDR implementation. Moreover, it should contribute to identifying experts of macro-regional strategies and add a strong bottom-up dimension to the EUSDR, also in terms of subsidiarity. EUSBSR representatives are also participating on the D-LAP.

Conclusion: The SG of PA10 adopted its new working structure, consisting of 4 advisory committees and 4 related stakeholder platforms:

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→ See annex 1

Puchinger (AT) commented on the three pilot projects. External evaluations are already or will be published on the website for the Technical assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects⁷

⁶ www.updr.eu

⁷ http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/technical_assistance_facility-drp

(TAF-DRP) and the Danube Financing Dialogue⁸ (DFD). Next DFD will be held on 13 March 2015 (tbc) in Zagreb in cooperation with the HR MFA and the HR National Bank. START project had 874 applications, which is a considerable success in terms of interest. Only a very small share of the projects will receive support.

Lukač (SI) added that for PA10 alone there were 92 projects passed the formal check. She will send top 4 and top 15-selection and submit it to the SG in due time. Projects which are parts of bigger projects showed a higher degree of quality. Nevertheless, the intention of START is i.a. to support small initiatives.

Puchinger (AT) mentioned that a second call is currently not envisaged. The high demand might be due to the specific situation between two MFFs. Both TAD-DRP and START intended to be low-threshold and reduce the workload of applications. All Priority Areas and Danube Region countries should be involved.

Hende (EC) confirmed the special situation and added the adoption of the Central Europe Programme can be expected before the end of the year, which can lead to its first call for proposals early next year.

5. The urban dimension of EU policies

Nussmüller (EC) gave a brief overview on EU urban policies and the EU urban agenda. The discussion regarding the urban agenda is still on-going and follow-up depends on new Commission and reaction of the Council. Cities need to be empowered also in terms of decision-making, which is a big change, since part of the programme management would be delegated to cities. URBACT has been strengthened and has also a focus on capacity building. Interreg Europe has also a focus on urban development. She then developed on the tool Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), which would combine several funds and OPs and might be applied e.g. for metropolitan regions. Another similar tool is community-led development (CLLD), which follows a bottom-up approach.

Gagov (BG) added that there is still a need for information regarding the urban innovative actions. There is a need for information and dissemination.

Urschitz (AT) brought UPDR-website⁹ to the fore and mentioned CoDCR/UPDR conference on 26/27 January 2014.

6. Inclusion of already existing networks in the working structures of PA10

Puchinger (AT) mentioned that the EESC and CEI are already included in the working structures of PA10 and welcomed the RCC as new member of the SG of PA10.

Turbedar (RCC) thanked PA10 and looked forward to the cooperation between the RCC and PA10. RCC's work has been reoriented from peace-building to economic development. RCC develops SEE200 strategy similarly to EU2020. Regional projects are currently being programmed, in the fields of environment, transport, etc. Unfortunately, only 4 out of 7 economies covered by SEE 2020 Strategy are covered by EUSDR.¹⁰ The RCC believes that the

⁸ <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/danube-financing-dialogue-dfd>

⁹ www.updr.eu

¹⁰ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

EUSDR even for non-member Western Balkan countries represents the unique opportunity to take part in an EU-led process on a par with the EU Member States.

Conclusion: The SG of PA10 included and welcomed two regional institutions as new participants: The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). In addition to this, the Central European initiative (CEI) was included in the Danube Local Actors Platform Advisory Committee.

7. Activities PA10 in the next future

Lukač (SI) elaborated on the upcoming meetings and deadlines:

4 November 2014	D-LAP Advisory Committee, Vienna
18 November 2014	Deadline for submission of top 4/15 pre-selected PA10 START applications
10 December 2014	D-CAP Advisory Committee, Ljubljana
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Lukač (SI) stressed that next SG meeting will be held in Ljubljana, if no other country provides an invitation. SGs should be held in as many countries as possible. She thanked the host in Brussels.

8. Outlook to the 4th Annual Forum in Ulm and farewell

Holzner (DE) focused on the 4th Annual Forum in Ulm on 29-30 October 2015. Main coordinator is the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg in close cooperation with the EC and the city of Ulm. It will build on the experiences of the 3 preceding Annual Fora in Regensburg, Bucharest and Vienna. Topics will be i.a. entrepreneurship, skilled labour, and civil society, the latter being closely linked to PA10. The parliamentary dimension should be included and contacts have been established in this regard. SG members from Baden-Württemberg will contribute to the Danube Cosmos. A second participation day is being planned and would be run by representatives of civil society organisations. Roma Integration issues will also be included following up what has been done by PA10 and PA9 in Vienna on 9-10 October 2014.

Annex 2 | Agenda
Annex 3 | Participants list