

3rd Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Danube Local Actors Platform (AC D-LAP), Kirchberggasse 33-35, A-1070 Vienna, 9 December 2015

1. The AC D-LAP main outcomes:

General

- The AC D-LAP established working relations with several new non-governmental organisations (NGO) in the Danube Region and introduced new topics such as human trafficking.
- The AC D-LAP reached out to more Danube Region countries with a representative of Moldova.
- The AC D-LAP was informed about the 2nd Participation Day and performed National EUSDR Hearings.
- The AC participants informed about their planned projects and opportunities for joint work.
- The AC D-LAP discussed the lessons learnt from the implementation of small-scale funding.

Operational

- To implement the 3rd Participation Day (PD) back to back with the 5th Annual Forum of the EUSDR in Bratislava (Slovakia) in order to voice the needs and concerns of the civil society, academia and local authorities/institutions. A copy of a thematic proposal will be sent to the Danube Civil Society Forum and the AC D-LAP. The AC D-LAP proposed to meet again in March or April 2016 to finalize the organization of the 3rd PD.

2. Next steps

- D-LAP members are invited to contact their respective National EUSDR Coordinator, to participate in national EUSDR coordination platforms (if applicable) and propose to hold National EUSDR Hearings (NH) for the civil society.
- D-LAP members are invited to organise together with PA10 topical seminars.

Upcoming Meetings

- ⇒ February 2016: IPA II workshop, Ljubljana
- ⇒ 9-10 February 2016: Conference of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions (CoDCR), Bratislava, Slovakia
- ⇒ March-April 2016: 4th Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the D-LAP
- ⇒ May 2016: Writing Strategic Documents workshop, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- ⇒ 23-24 May 2016: Danube Financing Dialogue (DFD), Bratislava, Slovakia
- ⇒ 20-23 June 2016: Fundamental Rights Forum, Vienna, Austria
- ⇒ 23-24 June 2016: Governance Hub Conference, Vienna, Austria
- ⇒ 2-3 November 2016: 3rd Participation Day back to back with the 5th Annual Forum in Bratislava
- ⇒ 3-4 November 2016: 5th Annual Forum of the EUSDR
- ⇒ (Autumn) D-LAP Advisory Committee

Communication

The internal and external communication of the D-LAP Advisory Committee will be carried out in **English**, per e-mail and on the PA10 website. National Hearings may be held in the respective National language.

Meeting Minutes

Urschitz (PA10, AT) welcomed the participants and informed that the D-LAP AC has 4 new members¹. These are Valentin Ciubotaru from the Moldavian NGO BIOS, Christina Weidel from the World of NGOs platform, Helga Konrad from the Regional Implementation Initiative on preventing and combating human trafficking and Dagmar Engels representing the Council of Danube Cities and Regions (CoDCR).

2nd Participation Day in Ulm, 28 October 2015

Stadelhofer (ILEU, DE) reported on the 2nd PD held on 28 October 2015 in Ulm, back-to-back with the 4th Annual Forum held on 29-30 October 2015². 149 participants attended the event from 21 countries, most of them in the Danube Region. The PD complied with the structure agreed upon at the 2nd D-LAP AC held on 13 May 2015 in Vienna:

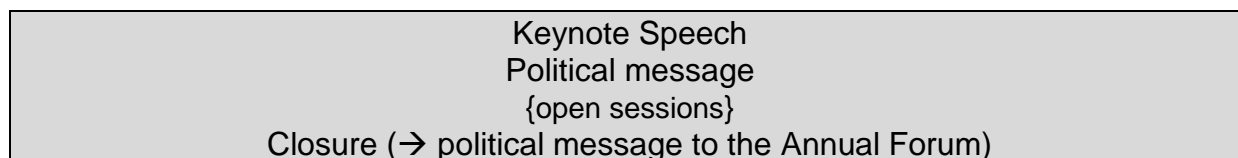


Figure 1: Structure of the 2nd PD

The event started with an interactive opening, followed by opening address from Gisela Erler (State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation of the State Government Baden-Württemberg) and Stefan August Lütgenau (Danube Civil Society Forum), 2 plenary lectures, 12 working groups and closing by Kurt Puchinger (PAC10, AT). All the inputs from the working groups are published on the event's website³.

Lütgenau (Danube Civil Society Forum) commented that the PD in Ulm intended to deepen the basis set by the Eisenstadt Declaration. It was developed further by Ulm Declaration. He added that the aim is to have minimal standards for participation in the EUSDR, an open and transparent participatory structure and clear timetable. He further elaborated on the migration crisis and the first response that came from the civil society.

Urschitz (PA10, AT) commented that PA10 tries to develop a network of local stakeholders involving the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The D-LAP was presented at the 9th Steering Group (SG) Meeting of PA10 held on 4 December 2015 in Vienna with representatives from the European Commission (EC) and the Danube Strategy Point (DSP). Urschitz (PA10, AT) informed that the civil society is included in the working plan of the DSP. She added that there were a long-standing plans of including civil society representatives in the EUSDR governance structure. The DSP expressed their interest in the idea. It will be further discussed at meeting of PA10 with DG Regio in Brussels on 14-15 January 2016.

¹ See annex 1 for the participants list

² See annex 2 for the full presentation

³ http://danubestrategy.eu/sites/default/files/Media/Documents/Working-Groups_Reports.pdf

3rd Participation Day

Lütgenau (Danube Civil Society Forum) presented for discussion a draft proposal for the organisation of the 3rd Participation Day⁴ that will take place on 2-3 November 2016 in Bratislava. Resilient sustainability was proposed as a thematic leitmotif of the 3rd Participation Day. Lütgenau (Danube Civil Society Forum) suggested that the 3rd PD should be organised in accordance with a multi-layer concept which includes inputs from national governments, projects, EU Neighbourhood policy, etc. Danube Civil Society Forum made efforts to reach civil society organisations (CSOs) in Slovakia and gather their opinion on the topic. He also invited Konrad (Regional Implementation Initiative on preventing and combating human trafficking) to present her initiative at the 3rd PD as well as in other side events.

Urschitz (PA10, AT) responded that the proposal should be further discussed. Sustainability is a broad term that can address various challenges. She added that the aim for the next PD is to include representatives from other PAs and EU institutions as well.

Reporting on the National Hearing in the Republic of Serbia, 20 October 2015

Stojkovic (RS) reported on the NH held in Serbia on 20 October 2015 in Novi Sad, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina⁵. The conference was attended by 72 representatives mainly from CSOs. The NH included three working sessions on 5 topics. The National Coordinator responsible for EUSDR in Republic of Serbia reported on the current role of Republic of Serbia in the implementation of the EUSDR. The Serbian Coordinator of PA7 reported on the work programme of PA7. The NH made conclusions relating to the greater involvement of civil society in the implementation of the Danube Strategy.

Stojkovic (RS) stressed the challenges that Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) poses for non-EU countries. These include the reduced amount of funding and the fact that non-EU countries cannot be project leaders. She insisted that the DTP should take all the EUSDR countries on a same level.

Round Table

Urschitz (PA10, AT) opened a round table for discussion about the 4th Annual Forum, the 2nd and the 3rd PD and the NHs.

Barabas (Danubiana, HU) pointed out that NHs require active support from the national governments. They need to recognise the NHs' added value. He commented that the Hungarian government is actively involved in specific areas, e.g. those covered by PA4 and PA5. Barabas (Danubiana) discussed further the need for a new mechanism for participation and the involvement of new players such as social partners and universities. He emphasised the importance of ownership at the local level that is a pre-requisite for participation. There should be increased recognition within the EU and member states of article 11 of the Treaty of the EU that requires the setting up of a structure for involvement of the civil society.

⁴ See annex 3 for Danube Civil Society Forum's proposal for the 3rd Participation Day

⁵ See annex 4 for the full presentation

Barabas (Danubiana) proposed that the next PD should focus on specific topics that are chosen on the basis of common interests of CSOs in Slovakia and Hungary, the two countries holding the presidency of the EUSDR in 2016 and 2017.

Strazay (SK) informed that the 3rd PD is organised under the Slovak EU Presidency in order to achieve broader outreach. It should be organised in line with the priorities of the Slovak presidency of the Council.

Lütgenau (Danube Civil Society Forum) and Konrad (Regional Implementation Initiative on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking) commented that the cooperation of national governments with CSOs is state of the art in international politics. This allows the CSOs to perform tasks on behalf of public authorities. Lütgenau (Danube Civil Society Forum) mentioned that the added value of the NHs is the creation of ownership.

Konrad (Regional Implementation Initiative on preventing and combating human trafficking) informed that the Regional Implementation Initiative on preventing and combating human trafficking⁶ aims to reinforce the political commitments of the participating countries in relation to preventing and combating human trafficking. The initiative makes efforts to develop common understanding on topics such as labour exploitation and to support policy-makers in the development of suitable solution tools in the field.

Urschitz (PA10, AT) stressed that the D-LAP AC members are the ones who need to start communicating in their respective countries with the relevant stakeholders, disseminate the messages of the discussion and bring the activities to the ground.

Danube Transnational Programme

Urschitz (PA10, AT) made an overview of the results from the first call of DTP⁷. Stakeholders showed considerable interest in the two specific objectives of the programme that are associated with the priorities of PA10 as well. Urschitz (PA10, AT) commented on the complicated conditions for CSOs and small and medium sized cities to apply in DTP. Several issues were identified as posing challenges – pre-financing, co-financing and finding lead partners. Thus, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) should also be unlocked.

⁶ <https://thbregionalimplementationinitiative.wordpress.com/>

⁷ See annex 5 for the full presentation

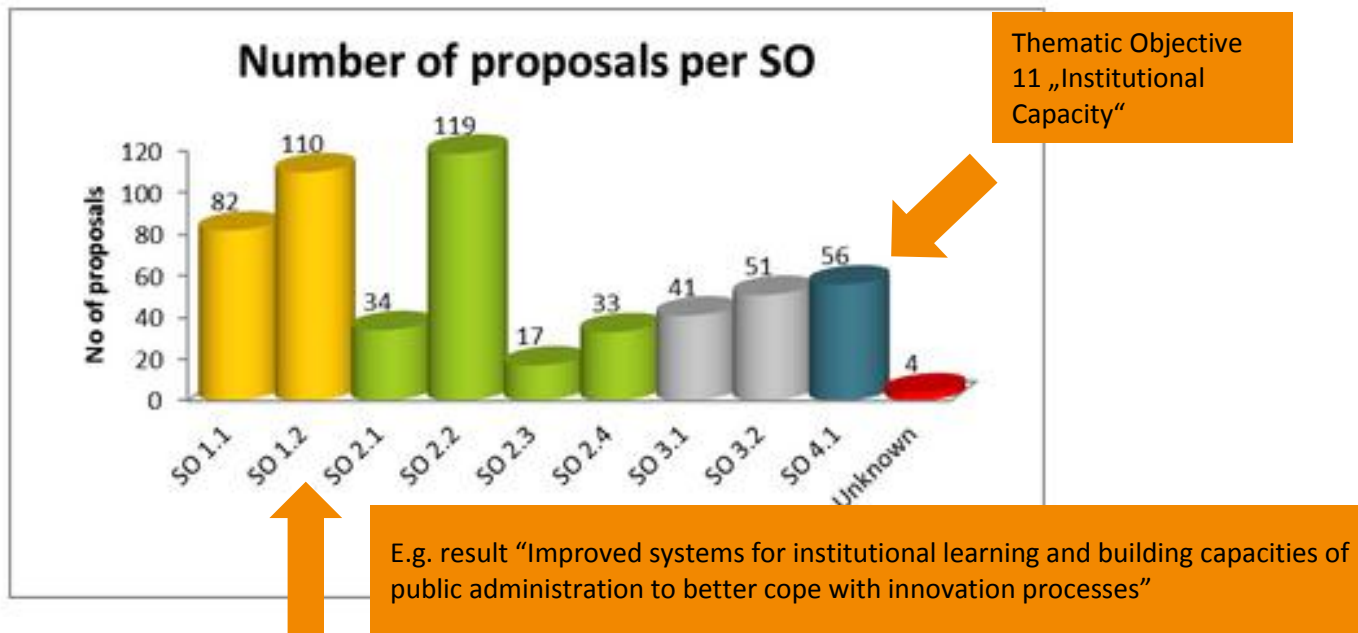


Figure 2: Number of Expressions of interest (Eoi) submitted per specific Objective of DTP

Participants discussed their experience in DTP and EU projects in general.

- Haidvogel (PA7, AT) mentioned “Danube Future” Project and the difficult conditions in administrative terms to receive EU funding and manage it.
- Stadelhofer (ILEU) mentioned “Danube-Networkers-Days” and “Taste of Danube” projects and the challenges to find lead partners, pre-financing and the language barrier.

Taralezhkova (BG) commented that there should be an evaluation of the DTP allowing its revision. She recommended that a small amount of the funding be allocated for civil society initiatives and managed by an external operator.

Pabst (EuroVienna, AT) mentioned that the provision of small scale funding is discussed within the DTP. There might be a separate call or this opportunity can be part of the second call of the programme.

Urschitz (PA10, AT) invited the participants to prepare concrete proposals on how the DTP can be revised and how this small scale funding mechanism can work. PA10 can summarize these proposals and present them to the EC at the meeting on 14-15 January, 2016.

Results from TAF-DRP and START Pilot projects

Pabst (EuroVienna, AT) reported on the results from the third call of TAF-DRP and second call of START pilot projects⁸. Stakeholders showed considerable interest, although the number of applications was lower than the previous calls. This can be explained by the start of the DTP. The pilot projects proved that high number of

⁸ See annex 6 for the full presentation

NGOs are active in the Danube Region and have interest in opportunities for small scale and simplified financing. Pabst (EuroVienna) mentioned the lessons learnt during the implementation of the pilot projects and informed that EuroVienna is open to share the experience with DSP and DTP.

Urschitz (PA10, AT) asked EuroVienna to make a summary of the structure that they used in order to administrate the funds. She proposed that it should be published on PA10 website in order to be accessible for everyone as an example of best practice.

D-LAP roadmap to 2017

Urschitz (PA10, AT) proposed that the D-LAP AC meet in March or April, 2016 in order to finalize the preparation of the 3rd PD. Until then, she asked the participants to approach the respective partners in their home countries and discuss particular proposals.

She suggested that between the PD and D-LAP AC topical seminars can be introduced. They can be co-organised by PA10 and serve as a basis for the development of working groups for the PD.

Taralezhkova (BG) proposed that such seminar be held in Sofia, Bulgaria in spring 2016 back-to-back with another planned event.

Urschitz (PA10, AT) concluded the meeting with several remarks on the upcoming evaluation of the EUSDR and its PAs. She invited the participants to inform PA10 about ongoing activities in their home countries in relation to civil society. An evaluation of PA10's success can be based on the number of national and international organisations it cooperated with and on the number of networking activities it was involved, including its role as an associated strategic partner in EU projects.

Annexes:

Annex 1 Participants list

Annex 2 Presentation on 2nd Participation Day in Ulm, 28 October 2015

Annex 3 Danube Civil Society Forum's proposal for the 3rd Participation Day, 2-3 November, 2016

Annex 4 Presentation on the National Hearing in Republic of Serbia, 20 October 2015

Annex 5 PA10 presentation

Annex 6 Presentation on results from TAF-DRP and START pilot projects