

## 14th Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” of the EUSDR (PA10)

– minutes –

Office of Priority Area 10 – City of Vienna  
Vienna (AT), 24 April 2018

### Main Outcomes

	AT	BA	BG	CZ	DE	HR	HU	MD	ME	RO	RS	SI	SK	UA	EC	EESC	RCC	CEI
SG14	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+

### Participants:

7 out of 14 EUSDR countries were represented at the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 (see Annex II). According to the “Guidelines for the Functioning of the PA10 Steering Group” the quorum for decision-making was reached. Furthermore, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Central European Initiative, the implementing body of the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF) as well as representatives from the projects Excellence in ReSTI (funded by the Danube Transnational Programme), SECCo2 and I-VET (both funded by the DSPF) attended the meeting.

### Main outcomes of the discussion:

- The Steering Group takes note of the information on the EUSDR Annual Forum 2018 that takes place on 18 and 19 October 2018, and the Danube Participation Day that takes place on 17 October 2018 in Sofia.
- The Steering Group takes note of the contribution for the second EC Report on the implementation of the four macro-regional strategies by the coordination of Priority Area 10.
- The Steering Group discusses the updates on the Danube Transnational Programme concerning the second and third call for project proposals, the Seed Money Facility, and the Danube Strategy Point.
- The Steering Group endorses the activities of PAC 10’s work plan 2018.
- The Steering Group endorses and comments on the proceeding concerning the organisation of the Danube Participation.

### Upcoming meetings:

14-16 May 2018	Facilitating Enhanced Cooperation among Young Danube Experts, Maribor (SI)
25 May 2018	NC/PAC Meeting, Sofia (BG)
11 June 2018	Unlocking Benefits of Public Participation, Vienna (AT)
26 June 2018	Special NC/PAC Meeting, Brussels (BE)
7-9 September 2018	Young Bled Strategic Forum, Bled (SI)
10-11 September 2018	Bled Strategic Forum, Bled (SI)

19-20 September 2018 Meeting of the ESF Network Danube Region (tbc), Bratislava (SK)

15-16 October 2018 Danube Participation Seminar, Sofia (BG)

17 October 2018 Danube Participation Day, Sofia (BG)

18-19 October 2018 EUSDR Annual Forum, Sofia (BG)

07-09 November 2018 Strong Municipalities for a Citizens' Europe, Vienna (AT)

27 November 2018 Seminar Affordable Housing in the Danube Region, Vienna (AT)

## Welcome

Rudolf SCHICKER (PAC 10/City of Vienna, AT) and Nina ČEPON (PAC 10/Centre for European Perspective – CEP, SI) welcomes the participants of the 14<sup>th</sup> Steering Group (SG) Meeting of EUSDR Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacities and Cooperation”. Rudolf SCHICKER briefly presents the agenda for the 14<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting of PA 10 (see Annex 1)

SCHICKER invites all members of the Steering Group to fill in and sign the consent form to processing personal data. The form is compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (see Annex 2)

### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group adopt the agenda for the 14<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting of PA 10.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the consent form to processing personal data and agree to fill in the consent form and return it to PAC 10.

## Tour de Table of the members of the PA 10 Steering Group

All participants of the Steering Group Meeting introduce themselves. (See Annex 3)

Iona STANCIU (RO) states that Romania will chair the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in 2019. The preparations are already well under way. The Steering Group will be updated on further activities from the Romanian EUSDR Presidency.

Tomislav BELOVARI (HR) reports that the Ministry of Regional Development is responsible for the coordination of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) as well as for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. In this function, he is responsible for the Danube Transnational Programme and Priority Area 10.

Roman HAKEN (EESC, CZ) mentions that he is responsible for building partnerships, and was engaged in drafting an opinion on macro-regional strategies at the EESC.

Daniela STAMPFL-WALCH (AT) reports that she joined the Department for International and European Affairs of the government of Lower Austria in February. The department is particularly engaged in the EUSDR through a Working Group at the regional network ARGE Donauländer and is currently shaping the future activities of the Working Group.

Veronika SCHLAIEN and Radka ŠTORKOVÁ (CZ) are representatives from the Ministry of Regional Development.

Lilla BOGNAR (HU) mentions that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary plans to organise a EUSDR National Hearing in June 2018.

Ugo POLI (CEI, IT) announces that the CEI currently implements different activities that strongly align with the EUSDR.

Matthias HOLZNER mentions that the States Ministry of Baden-Württemberg engages in a series of activities that contribute to the EUSDR actions and will be discussed later in the meeting.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the activities and initiatives planned by the Steering Group in 2018.

### **EUSDR Presidency and Annual Forum 2018**

Rudolf SCHICKER presents the priorities of the Bulgarian EUSDR Presidency (see Annex 4). This year, the EUSDR Presidency highlights the topics tourism and culture and their contribution to economic growth, employment and connectivity in the Danube Region. In May 2018, the EUSDR Presidency organises a joint meeting with National Coordinators and Priority Area Coordinators in Sofia (BG). The EUSDR Annual Forum will be held from 18 to 19 October 2018. Similar to the Annual Forum in 2017, the second day of the Annual Forum will be merged with the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) Annual Event that will focus on the DTP capitalisation strategy, the DTP's contribution to the EUSDR, and the Seed Money Facility. Additionally, the Annual Forum will address questions related to EU macro-regional strategies (MRS) and the future of cooperation in EU Cohesion Policy. In the course of the Annual Forum, the Bulgarian EUSDR Presidency organises a photo exhibition, for which PAC 10 submitted material from the archaeological site *Carnuntum* and the Danube Limes project.

Ugo POLI remarks that the current discussion on the future of EU Cohesion Policy is decisive for the future of MRS. Cohesion Policy and MRS further institutional building are crucial in order to produce positive results within the EU institutional reform. POLI highlights that EU Cohesion Policy is closely linked to the overall relaunch of the European Union. Hence, stakeholders in Cohesion Policy have to be aware of their role and should clearly advocate the pivotal role of Cohesion Policy as the main field where the EU meets the needs and expectations of its citizens. EUSDR bodies shall support all those who are working towards improving cohesion in Europe. Stefan LÜTGENAU (AT) seconds Ugo POLI's position. Further, he points out that bringing EU Cohesion Policy closer to people is not a question of money. Only a few million Euro of funding for all four MRS for the entire funding period would be required in order address citizens in a better way. Rudolf SCHICKER adds that there will be possibilities to influence the future of MRS. It is not an issue of money, if all MRS work together more closely.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the activities planned by the EUSDR Presidency.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> EC Report of EC on 4 MRS

Rudolf SCHICKER reports that the European Commission is currently drafting the second report on the implementation of the four MRS. He further reminds that the Steering Group members of PA 10 and the members from the Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP) provided inputs for the contribution to the report drafted by PAC 10. The inputs were integrated in the written contribution of PAC 10 (see Annex 5).

In view of the multi-annual financial framework (MFF) post-2020, PA 10 recommends the provision of easily accessible funding for local actors and civil society. Amongst others, the written contribution also addresses the lack of formal procedures in the EUSDR between NCs and PACs as well as the need for a EUSDR Secretariat. Concerning the planned revision of the EUSDR Action Plan, the paper recommends initiating an analysis of the current Action Plan in advance. The full comment sent by PAC 10 will be distributed to the Steering Group.

SCHICKER asks, if there are any further questions or comment to the EC Report. There are no further questions or comments.

### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the process and content of the PAC10 contribution to the 2<sup>nd</sup> EC Report on the implementation of the four macro-regional strategies.
- Priority Area 10 Coordination will disseminate the written contribution for the report to the PA 10 Steering Group members.

## Update on the Danube Transnational Programme

Roland ARBTER (AT) reports on the current state of play of the Danube Transnational Programme (see Annex 6). In February 2018, the DTP Monitoring Committee (MC) discussed the projects submitted under the second call at the MC Meeting in Podgorica (ME). Additionally, the programme set-up is finalised, as the electronic monitoring system (eMS) - used for project application and reporting – is fully operational.

Roland ARBTER presents the results from the second call for project proposals. In total, 119 applications were submitted to the Joint Secretariat (JS). However, only one quarter of the applications passed the strategic relevance check. In March 2018, the MC approved 22 projects. ARBTER further presents the statistics on the partner structure of the approved projects as well as the allocation of projects to the Specific Objectives. None of the approved projects addressed the specific objectives 2.4 (“Improve preparedness for environmental risk management”) and 3.2 (“Improve energy security and energy efficiency”).

Roland ARBTER reports that since all MC members want to avoid a de-commitment of DTP funds, the next call should be opened soon. Against this background, the JS will develop some options on how to speed up the funding process. Also, the re-opening of Specific Objective 4.1 (“Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges”) is currently under discussion. However, since the budget for this Specific Objective was already exhausted after the first call, the re-opening requires a budget shift.

ARBTER states that the decision on the approved projects under the DTP Seed Money Facility (SMF) will be taken in May 2018. The programme will endorse up to three projects per Priority Area. The

approved projects are expected to start in autumn 2018. For Priority Area 10, six projects submitted an application for the SMF. One out of the six projects did not pass the eligibility check. The SMF is expected to support the development of projects for further funding sources. After the first SMF call, the DTP plans to conduct an assessment on the facility in order to evaluate the results and added-value of the instrument.

ARBTER reports on the current state of the DSP framework. The objective is to establish a service structure for the EUSDR governance. The DTP approved elements of the DSP call. The call will be announced in May and will be closed in early June 2018. ARBTER presents the call process. The terms of reference are under elaboration. The budget is still not fixed, but the operational framework is drafted.

Matthias HOLZNER asks, whether there is a possibility to re-allocate budget from other Specific Objectives to Specific Objective 4.1. ARBTER replies that since some Specific Objectives were not sufficiently addressed by the projects, there will be a debate, whether budget from other priorities might be shifted to Specific Objective 4.1. However, if the budget will be shifted from other Priority Axes, the DTP needs to file for a programme change. On the other hand, if the budget will be shifted within Priority Axis 4, no programme change would be required. As the DTP has no experience with programme changes to re-allocate the budget, it is yet unclear how long the procedure will take.

Rudolf SCHICKER asks, why the Specific Objectives 2.4 and 3.2 were less successful in the current call. ARBTER responds that some Specific Objectives were already very narrowly defined and were apparently more difficult to address.

SCHICKER enquires, whether more project promoters could have been attracted to the SMF through an easier application/implementation procedure as well as offering grants instead of re-imburement. ARBTER agrees that a simplified application and implementation procedure would be more beneficial for project promoters. Based on the experience from the first SMF call, the DTP could apply simplified cost options that facilitate project implementation for a future SMF call. Nevertheless, the DTP is not able to provide grants-based seed money, as the ETC regulation and the programme rules, respectively, do not allow grants.

Tomislav BELOVARI recalls that the Steering Group endorsed 12 project description for the Declaration of Alignment in November 2017, but only six projects were assessed by the DTP. BELOVARI requests whether these six projects are the basis for the selection by the programme. ARBTER confirms that the six projects were submitted to the DTP. After the formal assessment, the five remaining projects are subject of the quality assessment and up to three of these projects will be funded. Ioana STANCIU remarks that the fact that only six out of twelve projects supported by the Steering Group have submitted an application, could be an indicator for the SMF framework to be too difficult to handle for project promoters. Claudia SINGER points out that some project descriptions for the SMF were still in a raw version and most probably did not manage to finalise the application in the short period until the application deadline. Perhaps, more preparation time is needed in order to provide more guidance to the project promoters. The DTP Joint Secretariat came to a similar conclusion at the PAC Meeting in February.

Ugo POLI enquires, whether the terms of reference for the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) call for proposals was compared with the goals and structure of the facility structures from the other macro-regional strategies and whether it was possible to get a look at the call documents. Roland ARBTER replies that the call for proposals for the Danube Strategy Point is public. Hence, the call documents

are available at the DTP website. However, the comparison with other secretariats for macro-regional strategies is difficult, because the governance frameworks and requirements for the secretariats greatly vary among the different strategies. Rudolf SCHICKER adds that indeed, the experience from the exchange between macro-regional strategies shows that there are different approaches. Nevertheless, there are also some similarities that are worth discussing and could bring added-value to a future Danube Strategy Point.

Roland ARBTER reports that DG REGIO plans to draft a road map for macro-regional strategies in order to prepare a mid-term perspective. This could also be advocated at a broader level, as Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia link their EUSDR chairmanship to their EU Presidency. Tomislav BELOVARI complements that the presidencies also closely link to the process on the multi-annual framework post-2020, which will have a great impact on the future of Cohesion Policy.

Nina ČEPON refers to the possible Capitalisation Call that Alessandra Pala was mentioning at the PAC Meeting in February and asks, whether Roland ARBTER could say more about it. Roland ARBTER responds that, indeed, it was discussed to open a separate or 4<sup>th</sup> call for proposals that is expected to link the existing projects and to further capitalisation. However, some programme representatives also expressed the opinion that a lot of resources would be needed to manage a call that allocates only a rather small amount of funds.

SCHICKER asks if there are any further questions or remarks. There are no further questions or comments.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the results from the second call for proposals of the Danube Transnational Programme.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the current state of discussion on the third call for project proposals of the Danube Transnational Programme.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the current states of the DTP Seed Money Facility and the DSP framework.

#### Workplan PAC 10

Claudia SINGER and Nina ČEPON present the work plan of PAC 10 for 2018. (see Annexes 7+8)

Claudia SINGER announces that PAC 10 will work on a policy paper on sound local public management in 2018. The paper will be based on existing findings and inputs from experts. There will be a seminar that is planned for the second half of 2018.

SINGER reports on the development within the framework for investment in institutional capacity building. The framework consists of two parts. One part is the Donors' Conference framework that was launched in 2017 with a pilot conference in Chisinau (MD). The Donors' Conference framework aims at improving strategic project development for institutional capacity building and to foster cooperation and coordination between project promoters and public and private donors. The results of the conference were summarised in the Donors' Conference paper that is published on the PA 10 website. In 2018, the conference format will be continued in Bulgaria and in the Ukraine. The second part of the framework for investment in institutional capacity building is the network for investment in institutional capacities in the ESIF in cooperation with Interact. The network aims at fostering exchange between MRS, ESIF, IPA, ENI and further initiatives related to the Thematic Objective 11 ("Enhancing



institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration”). In March 2018, Interact and PAC 10 organised the second meeting of the network. The meeting aimed at defining joint activities to exchange good practices on institutional capacity building.

In the end of 2017, PAC 10 launched an online survey among Steering Group and D-LAP members on the need for project consultation. The response rate was rather low and the feedback was very diverse, which made it difficult to develop a single format that covers the “most relevant” needs for project development support. Hence, PAC 10 will provide a variety of information and support to potential project promoters, and considers cooperation with further partners. Against this background, Claudia SINGER points to existing tools such as EuroAccess Danube Region or the Excellence in ReSTI project that provides capacity building for project managers. Additionally, PAC 10 is currently planning to offer project funding information within the Participation Partnership with PAC 9 “People and Skills” on Roma Inclusion.

PAC 10 takes part in the ESF Network Danube Region. The network consists of representatives from the Managing Authorities of the European Social Fund (ESF) in the Danube Region, PAC 9 “People and Skills” and the European Commission (DG EMPL). The ESF Managing Authorities Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria initiated the network that meets once a year in order to support transnational cooperation for social inclusion and institutional capacity building in the Danube Region. The ESF Managing Authority in Slovakia (Operational Programme Human Resources) will host the next network meeting in September 2018. At the up-coming meeting, the network will discuss the multi-annual framework 2021-2027 and aims at elaborating a joint position on the future of the ESF. Therefore, the network plans to involve beneficiaries from labour market agencies and civil society. Further information will be disseminated to the Steering Group members.

SINGER presents the state of play of National Participation Days for 2018. So far, National Participation Days are planned in Ukraine, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Serbia. Baden-Württemberg organises thematic dialogues between public administration and civil society.

On 22 March 2018, PAC 10 organised the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP) that focused on the preparation of the Danube Participation Day and cooperation activities of civil society and local actors.

Nina ČEPON presents the up-coming PODIM Conference in May 2018. PAC 10 will organise a meeting for young experts focusing on support for entrepreneurship.

Nina ČEPON announces that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Slovenia organises a macro-regional week in September.

Nina ČEPON presents the Young Bled Strategic Forum that will take place from 7 to 9 September 2018. The thematic focus will be “Sustainable Security. The Role of Youth in Bridging the Divide”. The Young Bled Strategic Forum is organised back-to-back with the Bled Strategic Forum. The Young BSF is aiming at engaging young experts in a lively discussion in order to develop solutions for global challenges and enhance cross-regional cooperation. The call for participants opened in mid-April.

Roman HAKEN wants to know, if it was possible that also civil society organisations can organise a National Participation Day (NPD). Additionally, Roman HAKEN enquires, if PA 10 would welcome the further promotion of the NPD format to other countries in the Danube Region by the EESC. SINGER responds that PA 10 indeed welcomes, if multipliers, such as the EESC, promote the NPD in the Danube Region. Moreover, SINGER clarifies that the NPD can be organised bottom-up by civil society

organisations as well as top-down by public administrations that are willing to provide a platform for dialogue. In the best-case scenario, both, civil society and public administration jointly organise the format. Stefan LÜTGNAU adds that in any case, it is crucial to provide a format that is open to all parties.

SCHICKER asks the country representatives, who already had NPDs, for their experiences with the NPD. Veronika SCHLAIEN answers that they successfully organised a NPD in 2017. However, for 2018, the ministry does not plan to organise a NPD. Stefan LÜTGNAU reports that in Serbia, civil society was very active and organised NPDs in Novi Sad, while the National Coordinator from Serbia was present. In 2018, the NPD is planned to take place in Belgrade. In Slovakia, the plenipotentiary for civil society organised a NPD in 2016. However, due to a very low participation of civil society in Cohesion Policy in the Danube Region, Slovakia did not continue to organise the format for now. ČEPON announces that Slovenia will organise a NPD for the first time together with civil society organisations. Matthias HOLZNER reports that the States Ministry of Baden-Württemberg organised a NPD in 2017, in order to discuss how to proceed with cooperation in the Danube Region. For 2018, Baden-Württemberg decided to organise stakeholder dialogues on specific topics (e.g. youth, social security) and use existing dialogue formats to support the exchange between public administration and civil society. Lilla BOGNAR announces that the Hungarian EUSDR Secretary will organise a NPD in June.

Ugo POLI remarks that he considers NPDs a very useful format. However, he has the impression that there seems to be rather low clarity about the reason for bringing people together. Since the NPDs address EUSDR implementation, POLI would appreciate to develop more explicit goals for common moves thus enabling the extension of the involved target groups.

Rudolf SCHICKER adds that he wants to encourage public administrations to cooperate with civil society. Experiences from initiatives such as the Local Agenda 21 processes showed that local administrations greatly benefitted from the cooperation with civil society and its (financial) support.

Roman HAKEN confirms that if PAC 10 provides information on NPDs in advance, he will inform the EESC members accordingly. SINGER highly appreciates the offer and encourages all organisers of NPDs to inform PAC 10 in order to document and disseminate the information and to provide support if deemed necessary.

#### Outcome:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group takes note of and endorse the PAC 10 work plan for 2018.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note that currently National Participation Days are planned in Ukraine, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Serbia.

#### 5th Danube Participation Day & Agenda for Participation/Report on Participation Partnership

Stefan LÜTGNAU points out the success of the general concept of Participation Days that could be transferred to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the EU strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). This successful transfer reiterates the need for a general concept for participation in Cohesion policy and in macro-regional strategies in particular.

LÜTGNAU reports that the 5<sup>th</sup> Danube Participation Day (DPD) will take place in Sofia, back-to-back with the EUSDR Annual Forum (see Annex 7). Thanks to the support from the Central European



Initiative (CEI), there will be a one-and-a-half day seminar for approx. 50 participants and on the third day, the official Danube Participation Day conference will take place for 100-120 participants.

LÜTGNAU announces that the DPD will address shrinking civil space in the Danube Region. The first part of the DPD will focus on analysing the challenges, based on recently drafted documents by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the EESC and the European Parliament. The second part will deal with counter-strategies to shrinking civil space and discuss measures for civil society to re-gain civil space. The issue of (shrinking) civil space is a core issue of European democracy as well as decisive for the future of the EU accession process. The latter refers to the question on how to import new partners instead of importing their problems. Another aspect of shrinking civil space is the consequences for the multi-annual framework post 2020 and Cohesion Policy. These topics will be reflected in the report on the Participation Partnerships that will also provide recommendations based on the lessons learned.

LÜTGNAU also points out that the funding for the Danube Participation Day for 2019 and 2020 is not secured so far.

Claudia SINGER mentions that a preliminary agenda has been prepared. Steering Group members now have the chance to submit proposals for speakers. Furthermore, it is planned to organise a speed dating session with projects that support participatory governance. The projects are encouraged to apply for participation with a short video that can be submitted to the Danube Civil Society Forum until 10 September 2018. Hence, PAC 10 kindly asks the Steering Group members to promote the call for participation for project promoters and actively encourages project promoters to submit their activities.

LÜTGNAU adds that the DPD often is misunderstood as the day where participation happens, but it is the day, where participation is highlighted.

Matthias HOLZNER requests, if it is considered to relate the topics of the Participation Day to the topics of the Annual Forum. LÜTGNAU replies that culture and tourism - that is addressed at the Annual Forum 2018 - is an important issue and, indeed, will be included in the DPD format.

Roman HAKEN suggests to consider activities from the United Nations that dealt with the topic of shrinking civil space, too. In fact, the UN developed a methodology for global participation. Likewise, the Europe for Citizens Initiative considers to improve access through revised rules. LÜTGNAU thanks for the information and will try to include the mentioned activities in the DPD.

Roman HAKEN suggests to have more representatives from public administration at the DPD. Also, he enquires if the DPD organisers cover costs for civil society organisations. LÜTGNAU responds that the DCSF is able to cover costs for travel and accommodation for a limited amount of participants from civil society. Travel costs will be covered for 2 days, so the participants are also able to attend the Annual Forum. This offer was well received in 2015 and 2016. However, last year in Budapest much less organisations requested support for travel costs.

Thomas PROROK mentions that ReSPA recently organised a conference addressing the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that gathered local public administration and civil society. Against this background, there is great potential in the Global Sustainable Development Goals for a structured dialogue between public administration and civil society organisations and suggests to consider the topic for future Participation Day formats. LÜTGNAU thanks for the suggestion and will take note of it for further consideration regarding the Danube Participation Day.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the current state of the Danube Participation Day.
- PAC 10 asks the Steering Group members to disseminate the call for participation for project promoters for the speed dating session.

#### Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF)

Martin MAREK presents the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF) (see Annex 9). Fifty-six applications were submitted to EuroVienna and twelve projects were selected eventually. In February 2018, EuroVienna organised a kick-off meeting in Vienna that aimed at informing the lead partners about the technical requirements for the project implementation. MAREK further presents the timeframe for the DSPF (project) implementation.

Enikő HÜSE-NYERGES presents the DSPF project SECCo2 that is addressing Priority Area 10 (see Annex 10). The project aims at strengthening the cohesion of EUSDR and EUSAIR regions and, particularly, to strengthen cross-border cooperation capacities. The project will implement a database for cross-border stakeholders and will draft a cross-border cooperation tool kit. The 10<sup>th</sup> Youth Forum and Conference will take place on 30-31 May 2018, which constitutes the main conference of the project.

ČEPON asks, if the project consortium will maintain the platform after the project. HÜSE-NYERGES answers that it is expected that the platform will be continued after the end of the project.

Ugo POLI offers to provide some contacts for the Youth Forum.

HOLZNER enquires, if the project will cover travel and accommodation costs for the participants. HÜSE-NYERGES replies that travel costs cannot be covered, however, accommodation will be covered by the project.

Majlinda OSMANAJ presents the DSPF project I-VET that is related to Priority Area 9 “People and Skills” (see Annex 11 + 12). The project aims at providing high-quality career guidance to young people. Thus, the project partnership screens existing career guidance, develops Youth Coaching and develops a guidance manual based on the results from the screening. So far, the screening in Moldova and Montenegro are finished and a methodology was developed.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the Steering Group take note of the current state of implementation of the Danube Strategic Project Fund.

#### EuroAccess Macro-Region

Martin MAREK presents the EuroAccess Macro-Region database. EuroAccess Macro-Region is the extended programme database based on EuroAccess Danube Region and the design will be similar to the current database (see Annex 13). The extended version will be launched in 2018. Currently, EuroVienna updates the database with programme information. Additionally, the database will be promoted at the macro-regional Annual Fora.

ČEPON adds that at recent meetings, the representatives from other MRS showed high interest in the database and would like to know more about it.

SCHICKER asks, whether the content for the Danube Region stays the same, which is confirmed by Martin MAREK.

Thomas PROROK asks how many visitors come to the website. MAREK answers that currently, there are around 50 unique visitors per month on the website and the number is rising. Also, he observed at various presentations that still a lot of people do not know about the database, so more dissemination will be needed.

SCHICKER asks, if there are any further questions or remarks. No further questions or remarks.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the plans to extend the EuroAccess Danube Region database to EuroAccess Macro-Region. The EuroAccess Macro-Region database will be available at [www.euro-access.eu](http://www.euro-access.eu)

### Excellence in ReSTI

Gabor SZÜDI presents the Excellence in ReSTI project that is funded by the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) (see Annexes 14+15). The project aims at improving project management skills and increase employability for young researchers through trainings. The training encompasses five modules that are supposed to be integrated in an university curriculum with 20-25 ETC credits.

HÜSE-NYERGES asks, if the course will be open source after the pilot phase. SZÜDI responds that the material will be accessible but not open for alteration.

PROROK enquires who the key target group is. SZÜDI replied that the main target group are students or young project managers. There is no age limitation, but participants are expected to have few or no experience in project management.

SCHICKER asks, if there are any further comments or questions. There are no further comment or questions.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the Excellence in ReSTI project.

### Initiatives related to Local Development in the Danube Region

Rudolf SCHICKER presents the Urban Agenda and its relation to the EUSDR (see Annex 7). One of the partnerships from the Urban Agenda is the Partnership on Housing, that is lead by the City of Vienna and includes Danube Region partner countries Slovakia and Slovenia. In the course of the Austrian EU Presidency, the city of Vienna will organise in cooperation with PAC 10 a seminar on affordable housing in the Danube Region.

Thomas PROROK presents the BACID programme (see Annex 16). The BACID 2015-2021 has three pillars. The first pillar is the BACID Fund, which is a small fund for municipalities and civil society organisations for know-how exchange and small projects. The Danube Governance Hub is the second pillar. Together with ReSPA, BACID is setting up a regional quality centre for public administration. The third pillar is the LOGON (Local Government Network), where NALAS is currently planning to establish a Regional Decentralization Observatory that measures development of decentralisation.

ČEPON asks, if the BACID programme addressed the issue of absorption of funds. Thomas PROROK responds that municipalities received support in cooperation with NALAS on how to write applications

Matthias HOLZNER presents the workshop series “New Ideas for the City of the Future” that aimed at developing smart city projects with representatives from the Danube Region. The workshop series applied the design thinking method. Around 25 people from all over the Danube Region were brought together to develop ideas around four topics addressing mobility, circular economy, aging society and participation. The approach triggered interesting discussions in different fields with interesting results brought through fast-changing perspectives. Especially, in mobility and circular economy, the participants produced interesting solutions.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the planned conference on affordable housing in the Danube Region in Vienna in November 2018.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the BACID programme.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note of the workshop series “New Ideas for the City of the Future” that was initiated by the States Ministry of Baden-Württemberg.

#### Initiatives related to Institutional Capacities and Cooperation

SCHICKER announces that the EUSDR Presidency considers a revision of the EUSDR Action Plan. Hence, SCHICKER asks if the Steering Group members have any preliminary opinion regarding in what way the future EUSDR Action Plan should be revised.

Iona STANCIU states that simplification and digitalisation in the public service area is a crucial issue in Romania. Especially, the use of instruments for electronic communication between public institutions and open data as well as the modernization of public administration should be promoted in the Action Plan.

Matthias HOLZNER seconds the remark from Iona STANCIU. However, HOLZNER recommends that the EUSDR should figure out a structured process for inputs to the revision. Otherwise, the Action Plan cannot be narrowed down to the essential topics, if different communities are proposing topics that should be included.

Thomas PROROK points out that there is a demographic development caused by great emigration from some countries in the Danube Region. This has an impact on their institutions. Thus, PROROK recommends to address demographic development in the Danube Region.

#### Outcomes:

- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group take note that the EUSDR Presidency currently drafts a process regarding the revision of the EUSDR Action Plan.
- The members of the PA 10 Steering Group make some preliminary suggestions on key topics that should be included (e.g. digitisation of public administration, simplification of bureaucratic structures), but call for a structured process to narrow down the actions that should be included in a revised Action Plan.

## Discussion & Outlook

ČEPON asks if any of the Steering Group members would like to offer to host the next meeting.

SCHICKER thanks everyone for his/her participation and closes the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the PA 10 Steering Group.