



3rd Steering Group Meeting of Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” in Vienna on 5th and 6th of December 2012

Date: December 5 - 6, 2012

Venue: Representation of the European Commission in Austria Wipplingerstraße 35, A-1010 Vienna

Participants: Anikó Turi (RO), Dorota Malčeková (SK), Elean Gagov (BG), Ion Gumene (MD), Ionut Vasilca (RO), Irena Lukač (SL), Peter de Martin (AT), Miroslava-Nina Mišković (HR), Peter Langer (DE), Petra Holopirkova (CZ), Roland Arbter (AT), Snežana Filipović (RS), Tanja Dedovic (international), Tomislav Belovari (HR), Marlene Hahn (AT), Kurt Puchinger (AT), Ivana Lazic (AT), Daniela Urschitz (AT), Simone Böhm-Gartner (AT), Christiane Breznik (AT), Eric Bartha (RO), Johannes Urban (DE).

TOPICS DISCUSSED

DAY 1

Welcome and introductory round

Mr. Puchinger welcomed all Steering Group (SG) members and guests. He thanked the SG members for the broad participation. The participation of 12 Danube countries was highly appreciated and regarded as important step towards a durable cooperation in PA 10. After the presentation of the agenda he invited the participants to shortly introduce themselves.

Following a short introduction round Ms. Lukač provided an overview of the 1st Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) taken place in Regensburg on 27th and 28th of November 2012. She focused especially on Workshop 6, “Modern Governance: How to make the region work?”, organised by the Priority Area Coordinators (PAC) 10. The uniqueness of this workshop was interactive and cross-cutting approach including also the perspectives of Priority Area (PA) 7 Knowledge society and PA 11 Security beside PA 10 Institutional Capacity and Cooperation. She pointed out following conclusions:

- Strengthening the capacity of institutions and people in the Danube region will facilitate the implementation of the EUSDR and its overall objectives.
- The strategy should have better visibility. Especially, it needs to be better communicated to national policy makers.
- Focus on inclusiveness and cooperation among various stakeholders across the Danube region. Working together is a direct benefit, exchanging knowledge and experiences increases potential and the outcome is always a benefit. This is the true value added of the EUSDR.
- Financing of projects, in particular smaller projects is challenging. There is a need to bring EUSDR to 2014 – 2020 EU funding schemes.

Status, progress and steps ahead of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

Mr. Ballette also referred to the 1st Annual Forum of the EUSDR and added that this form was well organised and a big success! He stressed the strong commitment of the political level that was supporting this Forum. He also emphasized that the EUSDR contributes to the European integration process, within and beyond the European Union.



Mr. Ballette also pointed out that the immediate challenge is the integration of the EUSDR in the next financing period 2014-2020. Even though in the draft regulations macro-regional strategies will be given more attention than in the past, it is of upmost importance that the macro-regional strategies are also reflected in the partnership agreements between the Member States and the EC. Additionally, there is a need to stronger inter-link the cooperation between the National Contact Points (NCP) of the Danube Countries and the Managing Authorities (MA) of the Structural Funds.

Furthermore, he invited the PAC and SG to provide comments on the Reflection paper of the 1st Annual Forum by the 21st of December 2012. The comments will be integrated by the end of January 2013 and presented at the NCP and PAC meeting taken place in Brussels on 30th and 31st of January 2013. By June 2013 the European Commission (EC) has to submit an evaluation of macro-regional strategies (EUSDR and EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EUSBSR) to be presented to the Council and the Parliament.

Mr. Arbter added that in WS 6 one of the key messages was “to do more with less”. He also emphasized the fact that PA 10 does not only work on own contents referring to institutional capacity and cooperation but provides also valuable input for other PA due to its horizontal nature. Mr. Urban stated that the state of Bavaria is happy about the results of the 1st Annual Forum in Regensburg. Mr. Bartha added that WS 4 focusing on “Jobs and how to get out of the crisis?” was also enriching. Ms. Lazic informed the SG members that at the NCP/PAC meeting in Brussels one session will focus partnership agreement.

Added value of the EUSDR

Ms. Lazic was providing an input on “What did the Strategy do for us and what can we do for the Strategy?” (see further information in the attachment).

Mr. Arbter added that it is important to promote EUSDR projects. Mr. Urban pointed out that there is a need to provide incentives for administrations to commit for the EUSDR. Furthermore, an institutional change management process would be required to integrate the Strategy on an institutional level. Mr. Puchinger replied to the question of what makes a project a EUSDR project that its EUSDR relevance can be measured by the targets. In other words if the project's targets support the EUSDS, it is a good project and should be labelled as EUSDR project.

Status and future of the transnational programmes 2014-2020: An overview

Ms. Breznik was providing an input on “CENTRAL EUROPE 2014+: Status Programming Process” (see further information in the attachment). Ms. Breznik drew attention that the so-called “new Danube Programme” does not yet officially exist.

Mr. Puchinger considered the challenge of the future Danube Programme which focuses on a limited number of priorities not covering all Priority Areas of the EUSDR. This means that some of the PA of the EUSDR would be excluded from this Programme. In his opinion it would be preferable to have one “EUSDR-priority”, which addresses all Priority Areas of the EUSDR.

Mr. Arbter added that a future Danube Programme would be only one appropriate financing instrument out of many others. Furthermore, he said that it is of upmost importance that the partnership agreements should refer to the macro-regional strategies, as already pointed out earlier in this meeting. In Austria the tendency is that macro-regional strategies are considered in the partnership agreement.

Ms. Urschitz added that there is a remarkable coordination work coming along with the preparation of the financing period 2014-2020. In this context the experiences of the



work done in the EUSBSR could be helpful for the EUSDR. She asked whether the EC or Interact could support the EUSDR stakeholders with coordinating and communicating this working process.

Mr. Ballette invited the SG members to provide suggestions regarding the role of Interact within the feedback done on the Reflection paper. He also stressed that the EUSDR projects cannot only be financed by Cohesion policy. Mr. Ballette considered the importance of making use of innovative financial instruments such as private funds or the combination of loans and grants. He also pointed out that one of the key aspects of the NCP / PAC meeting in January 2013 will be a brainstorming of how a supportive role of the EC could look like in order to facilitate the involvement of actors within the programming processes of the upcoming period 2014-2020.

Furthermore, he informed the group that in the upcoming financing period there will be an improvement of aligning Structural Funds and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (*IPA*). In the future IPA and European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) will be fully integrated.

Special Project of Priority Area 10: “The Danube Investment Framework”- status and outlook

Ms. Hahn was providing an input on “The Danube Investment Framework- status and outlook” (see further information in the attachment).

Mr. Ballette remarked that the selection process of EUSDR projects benefiting from the Technical Assistance Facility is crucial. Mr. Arbter added that it is important that the selected projects are in line with the national priorities. Accordingly the SG members should play a role in the selection process of projects. Mr. Urban agreed and said that the selection process has to be transparent. Ms. Hahn and Mr. Puchinger pointed out that that these points have been discussed already and will be considered in the further work on the Technical Assistance Facility.

Report of the Steering members

The SG members provided insight in their work they have done so far and their planned activities in 2013 on the basis of their Activity Report completed prior to the meeting (see further information in the attachment).

Mr. Puchinger was closing the first day, and proposed to continue on the next day with the reporting of the SG members.

DAY 2

Introduction of the agenda

Mr. Puchinger welcomed the SG members, presented the agenda and gave the word to the SG members to continue the reporting from the precedent day.

Continuation of the report of the Steering members

The SG members provided insight in their work they have done so far and their planned activities in 2013 (see further information in the attachment).

Status and future role of the Working Groups

Mr. Puchinger presented the Background paper which has been submitted prior to the SG meeting to all SG members (see further information in the attachment). He invited the SG to submit suggestions for amendments for the Background paper by the end of January 2013.



Ms. Urschitz presented the work done so far regarding the establishment of a Civil Society Platform and on an e-government initiative.

The idea of the Civil Society (CS) Platform is the integration of one CS representative from an umbrella organization in each of the 12 SG of the EUSDR. The PAC already received a respective request from the PA 10 team. It is planned that the CS representatives are nominated by the end of January 2013. Beside the participation in the SG meetings the CS representatives should meet once a year in order to exchange know-how and experiences and to develop a common understanding. Interact could help to organize a meeting.

Ms. Urschitz also presented an idea of how to further develop e-government in the Danube region and presented "Help.gv" a good example from Austria's approach of e-government. Help.gv is an information platform for citizens who can access this web-page which refers to many different life situations, e.g. citizen ship, health issues, education, etc. The citizens can directly contact a person who is obliged to provide an answer within 72 hours. The Austrian Chancellery provides the IT-template of this initiative which can be used in other governments. Ms. Urschitz proposes to submit this template to the SG members who should find out whether their represented country is interested in making use of this tool.

Mr. Puchinger and Ms. Lukač presented the Conclusions (preliminary draft) and further developed the points mentioned in the Conclusions together with the SG members. All participants agreed on the adapted Conclusions (see attachment).

Open questions

Mr. Puchinger invited the SG members to raise any open issues.

Ms. Lukač pointed out that the milestones are the work frame in place which builds the basis of evaluation. Mr. Puchinger added that the Background paper does not cover all actions of PA 10. The intention is to provide an additional idea of how to approach the milestones and actions.

Mr. Puchinger reminded the SG that the duty of the WG members is the identification of project types fitting into the objectives of the EUSDR and the further development of milestones. He asked the SG members to check whether the nominated WG members are still the appropriate persons.

The SG agreed on following points:

- SG members can submit further EUSDR projects
- SG members should take over a supervisor role over the WG Members and develop a better communication between SG and WG members. They are invited to establish a system of information exchange and communication.
- PA 10 actors should make use of the existing communication tools, in particular of the EUSDR- PA 10 web-page: <http://groupspaces.com/CapacityandCooperation>
- The SG will be informed about these PAC-activities on a regular base and act as multipliers on national and regional levels
- The PA 10 will make an effort in the 1st half of 2013 to feed in ideas how to make best use of future Structural Funds and IPA programmes for issues and projects identified in PA 10.

Mr. Arbter added that the PAC 10 is important as a strong voice as they are working on cross-cutting issues such as good governance, financing, Civil Society, etc.



Accordingly the SG members should also have the function of being multipliers in their countries in this sense.

The SG members appreciated the high profile of PAC 10 on the overall EUSDR level capitalizing on the PA 10 work so far, e.g. regarding issues on innovative financial instruments, good EUSDR governance on transnational and national level, general mobilisation and communication activities, horizontal coordination, etc.

Mr. Ballette concluded that the EUSDR is duly taken on board in the programming of Cohesion policy, IPA and other instruments for the next programming period 2014-2020. In this process it is important that a systematic contact point between NCP and Managing Authorities is ensured. Moreover, he stressed that 2013 is a window of opportunity to focus on the preparation of projects to be submitted when the programming starts in late 2013 and mid-2014. He added that the success of the EUSDR will not be measured by "how many projects will be financed" but also regarding the establishment of cooperation structures between political levels. In this context he pointed out that the governance structure should be kept simple and focused. It is important that there exists a balance between inclusiveness and a structure, which is simply, workable and focused on the main objectives.

Next steps and closing

The following next steps are tentatively planned for 2013:

- Finalization of the SG members' Activity Report by 14th of December 2012 and submission to hahn@metis-vienna.eu
- Provision of feedback by the SG members on the 1st Annual Forum's Reflection paper by 21st of December 2013 to regio-eu-danube-strategy@ec.europa.eu
- Provision of feedback by the SG members feedback on the PA 10 Background paper by the end of January 2012 to the PAC 10
- 2nd Danube Financing Dialogue in Belgrade on 24th and 25th of January 2013
- NCP/PAC Meeting in Brussels on 30th and 31st of January 2013
- 2nd round of WG Meetings in March 2013
- 4th SG meeting in Mai 2013 in Ljubljana
- Stakeholder conference and 5th SG Meeting in October 2013
- 3rd round of WG Meetings in autumn 2013
- 6th SG Meeting in December 2013

Mr. Ballette thanks for the invitation and the good organization of this extremely useful and informative meeting. He reminds the PAC to submit comments to the Reflection Paper of the 1st Annual Forum until the end of December 2012.

Mr. Puchinger and Ms. Lukač thanked all participants for the fruitful meeting and the contributions.

Attachments

PowerPoint presentations

Report of the SG members



Background paper

Conclusions

List of SG members

List of WG members