



PA10 Steering Group

Minutes of the 5th Meeting

Vienna, 11 December 2013

1. Introduction by Kurt Puchinger

- Approval of the agenda and apologies for members who could not come (Johannes Urban, Bavaria, who will be replaced by a new representative at the next meeting, and Dorota Malčėková, Slovakia).
- All follow-up actions from the 4th Steering Group (SG) meeting have been implemented, apart for the planned meeting of Working Group 2 planned for 23 September in Ruse, which did not take place due to lack of registrations.
- You can find the overview of PA10 activities in the annual report of PA10, covering the period July 2012 to June 2013. The report is available on PA10 website or [directly at this link](#).

2. Introduction round and state of play in the participating countries

One year ago, participants were asked to complete a report on the state of play. The exercise was not repeated this time, it is better to collect direct feedback today.

Jelena Spasic, Ministry of Regional Development and Local Self-government, Serbia

The reshuffling of the government in the summer led to new appointment of SG members for PA10, Sasa Mart and Jelena Spasic.

Serbia is currently preparing a plan for regional development, supported from IPA Technical Assistance. The greatest concern, in relation to the national and macro-regional perspective, is the difficulty to keep population in the rural areas, as most development is taking place in Belgrade and Novi Sad. Polycentric development should help speeding over the transfer of wealth created. There is also a need to improve institutional capacity, especially of civil servants at local level. A law is being prepared on the status of civil servants incl. salary policy, training, etc. There is a need for project development oriented training for this personnel.

There is a lack of awareness of the EUSDR at many levels, from national down to local level (e.g. mayors). One of the reasons in Serbia the confusion between the Strategy (for the entire region) and a current project which is being developed around the Danube River.



There is a need for mechanisms to involve local units, beyond national languages. Cooperation and participation in transnational network would be beneficial, e.g. within the NALAS network.

Annamária Oláh, Ministry of Public Administration and Justice
Department of Cross-Border Co-operations for Territorial Public Administration, Hungary

There are no personal changes in the Steering Group for Hungary. The EU 2014-2020 programming exercise, implying quarterly coordination meetings, is addressing the EUSDR e.g. through the thematic objective 11 of the Danube Programme.

An application has been prepared for support from the Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region projects (TAF-DRP), which is likely to be submitted to PAC10.

PA10 topics are addressed in meetings of the national working group on the EUSDR, and a high-level conference on public administration took place in November 2013.

→ **There were no additional national updates.**

3. Review and update on PA10 Activities

3.1. UNESCO Network

A preparatory study is ongoing and will be finalised in February, in cooperation with PA3, PA7 and PA9. The study should identify the needs of different historically important sites in the region, as basis for establishing a Danube Region UNESCO Network. The current study is identifying sites which can be interested and interesting, and it is also looking at potential partners for the network. The objective is to have first results ready until the Danube Programme is up and running. Members of the Steering group have been provided with a description of the Project.

→ **SG will be invited to propose possible interested local authorities.**

The results of the study will be shared with the members of the Steering Group.

State of play and possible directions:

- Cooperation with UNESCO is complex due to the complexity of the organisation and the lack of funding.
- The project was discussed last week within PA9 meeting on vocational training, sites were identified but more partners are interested.
- The project can be about training, dual qualification, on topics such as building, restauration or management and tourism. It is an umbrella project, additional thematic projects can be developed.
- There will be different pilot projects, 10-12 sites will be identified as a start. Hungary wishes to know which institutions and sites are identified in the study.
- The University of Novi Sad could be involved as well, as it is already working with PA 7. The university of Vienna is running the Limes project and the project coordinator is onboard with the UNESCO project.



The online UNESCO Taskforce is open to new participants (currently approx. 20), access from PA10 website: <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/danube-region-network-of-unesco-world-heritage-sites>

3.2. Danube Civil Society Platform

The platform, mentioned in the EUSDR action plan, is still under construction. Despite the absence of EU funding from European Commission, the project is developing through active participation of certain organisations, especially the DCSF (Danube Civil Society Forum). Financing of the platform is now ensured until 2015.

The platform will consist of meetings and an electronic interactive and collaborative platform, open to any interested organisation. A preliminary study was contracted by PA 10 already in 2012 to identify civil society organisations in the Danube Region, a great number of organisations was identified but not necessarily the relevant ones. Many PAs and national or regional governments do not feel impelled to work with Civil Society organizations, the Platform's aim is to help improve communication between the PACs, national institutions and Civil Society organizations.

A meeting will take place in Eisenstadt on the eve of the 3. EUSDR Forum (25.06.2014) with regions, cities and civil society organisations, where the collaborative online platform will be presented.

Cooperation could be sought with the youth platform being developed at PA9.

PA 10 Working Group 2, dealing with civil society, will be reshuffled and act as coordinating, monitoring committee for the civil society platform. The monitoring committee will provide inputs and monitor the progress of the platform, enabling an evaluation of the added value of the Platform for the EUSDR after the first financing period. In parallel, PAC10 is trying to establish a Danube Group at the European Economic and Social Committee, in order to integrate the Social Partners in the activities of the Danube Civil Society Platform.

→ **SG members will receive the first draft for the civil society platform and the details of the organisations in charge.**

3.3. Urban Platform Danube Region

The Platform:

The Urban Platform Danube Region, currently in preparation, will be an open collaborative online tool, a service platform, open to cities, City networks and City Organizations as well as regions linked to the urban dimension. The Urban Platform will contain city and network profiles (each city can establish a profile and update it), best practice projects, thematic groups, etc. This will enable participating cities to select information relevant to their needs. The Platform will be organized along topics relevant to Europe 2020, like the smart city, the inclusive city, the competitive city, and present best practice projects, partner searches,



international activities, joint statements, studies on relevant topics, etc. The platform language will be English, however, specific links complementing descriptions in English can be made to pages in national language, if no translation is available.

The Council of Danube Cities and Regions (CODCR), in cooperation with the ARGE Donauländer Working Community, will be the political overhead of the platform, ensuring the political correspondence between the platform and the EU institutions as well as national and regional governments. As compared to the Committee of the Regions, which is an EU institution, the CODCR is a political network of mayors and regional politicians in the Danube Region (also outside EU). The Committee of the Regions has a "Danube Group", in which PAC10 is participating. European institutions will be asked to participate in the platform. A new working group (WG5) will be established to act as monitoring committee for the urban platform, on the same model as the civil society monitoring committee.

Cities and City-networks will be invited to participate in the platform activities by PA 10 and the Council of Cities and Regions of the Danube at the beginning of 2014. Tanja Dedovic, IOM, proposes to present two projects with a transnational dimension, SEE-MIG and MMWD, which are developing tools for local authorities in Serbia on the topic of labour migration on the platform.

→ **SG members will be consulted to send their comment to PAC10 on the first draft of the online platform's homepage.**

PA 10 stakeholders conference "Building the Urban Future of the Danube Region", 9-10 December 2013 in Vienna:

The Platform was adopted by a number of capitals and cities of the EUSDR at the PA 10 stakeholders conference, which some of the members of the Steering Group attended as well.

Main results of the conference:

- Input by a representative from the Baltic Sea Region: there has been a vision for the region since the eighties. Such vision is missing for the Danube area.
- The declaration (see handout) is the basic document for the Urban Platform
- The three headings of EU2020 strategy, smart, sustainable and inclusive will be the basic cooperation topics for the Platform.
- The urban platform can only work if inputs are provided by cities.
- The city of Ljubljana informally offered to coordinate the issue of transports. The City of Bratislava is interested in the issue of e-government, transparency, and corruption, the IOM will provide inputs on migration issues, Vienna will provide inputs on social housing, smart cities and equal opportunities.

3.4. Vienna Charta Project

→ **See attached document „Vienna Charta goes Danube“**



4. PA10 Working Groups – state of play

4.1. WG1 – Institutional Capacity - by Irena Lukac

Support is needed in mobilising member institutions that have not been active at the last 2 meetings. The objective is not to force participation, but to have onboard those institutions willing to participate. The last meeting of WG1, on 10.12.2013, was very constructive.

WG1 is composed of institutions doing training at vocational level, institutions dealing with cross-issues such as public procurement, migration, etc. The WG also deals with the topics of capacity building initiatives within the implementing structure of the EUSDR (e.g. for PACs and NCPs, with one meeting per year, organised by CEF), and policy.

The TAF-DRP and START are seen as motivators to initiate joint work and projects. However no organisation has yet volunteered to lead such project. A project idea (Public Procurement Workshops by Austrian procurement Agency) within the WG1 was selected in TAF call 1.

Possible other ideas were explored:

- Irena Lukac presented the idea discussed at the WG, to establish an e-learning platform, but it is not clear on what topic, and such project can be very expensive.
- A project proposal (Dante 4PA, Euro Institut) within WG1 is dealing with capacity building on a local (regional, municipal) level, its pilot was financed by state Baden-Wuerttemberg. It already has a number of partners, the project promoter will extend invitation to cooperate also to WG1 members.
- It was agreed that there are already numerous projects on capacity building at local level, but what is missing is the institutional memory, as people leave. A Danube Academy could be very beneficial, providing technical training to the managerial level e.g. on cost-benefit analysis, SWOT, etc – to teach people HOW to do things.
- The Danube Managers initiative, a sort of MBA programme, supported by the CODCR, is now waiting for available funding from the Danube Programme, probably until end of 2016. Establishing a long-lasting structure could be an option, but it means long-term commitments.

Other activities related to capacity building within WG1 in 2014:

- An event will be organised together with PA9 in June 2014 on the issue of migration and capacity building
- PAC10 will continue, on demand, to support implementation structures of the EUSDR.
- A one-day seminar on E-government is planned in Ljubljana for spring 2014. E-government solutions and best practices will be exchanged.
- WG1 will explore possibility to organize a training course with UNDP in Bratislava as a follow-up event to March 2013 WG1 meeting.

4.2. WG3 – Regional Cooperation - by Kurt Puchinger

It was decided in May-June 2013 to change and adapt the working philosophy of the Working Group, as actions agreed at meetings are not implemented by members.



PAC10 invited WG3 members to concentrate on one element, the joint development of a strategic project on regional development, with focus on the lower Danube (high interest expected). Three countries proposed to prepare a project idea: Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, towards a project idea for TAF-DRP support.

The results of the last WG meeting are available on PA10 homepage: <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/wg-3>

4.3. WG4 – Financing - by Irena Lukac

A high-level dialogue on tax administration and compliance is taking place on 13.12.2013 in Ljubljana. The event is attended by high-level representatives from Danube Region tax administrations, from the OECD, European Commission, IMF and the academia, sharing their problems and views on EU and OECD rules. This could be the basis for a needs assessment.

5. Presentation of the Danube Implementation Facility by Elise Lindner

→ See attached presentation

6. Presentation of the state of play of the EUSDR by Anna Repullo Grau, European Commission

→ See attached presentation

Main discussion points:

Macro-regional strategies are based on mutual will and commitments and reporting. The Commission is supporting, monitoring, backing, it cannot impose anything onto the participating countries.

The planning exercise for the Strategy came up during programme implementation of 2007-2013. Now, it is expected that the strategy is embedded into the new programmes for 2014-2020. It is the role of the participating countries to e.g. take project recommendations letter into consideration and to adapt programme selection criteria accordingly. Every line Ministry and organisations involved in the Danube Region and dealing with EU programme(s) has to endorse the Strategy, not just the Danube Programme.

Status of preparation the Danube Programme:

The question to establish an EUSDR Secretariat financed from the Danube Programme (based on Thematic Objective No 11), is currently in discussion. The functions would be related to administration, governance, communication, etc.

Status of adoption of EU Regulations on Structural Funds for 2014-2020:

The Structural Funds regulations are to be adopted in 2013, from this date onwards the deadlines for submitting OPs will be established and the count-down will start. Also the IPA Regulation is expected to be approved until the end of the year.

It is not expected to have major changes in terms of eligibility of applicants compared to the South East Europe Programme, apart from the geography and the linkage to EUSDR.



7. Discussion Paper of European Commission on „Leadership and governance“

→ See attached presentation

The document sent by European Commission (EC) in October addresses questions regarding the role of different stakeholders (High level group, NCPs, PACs) and interaction between them.

The EC is guiding the discussion process, starting in December 2013, until June 2014, and is collecting inputs from the field.

Following points were discussed during the meeting:

- There is a need to clearly define the role of different stakeholders.
- A troika system could set up as representing body of the EUSDR, linked to annual forum, implying a political representation, which could talk in the name of the EUSDR, e.g. at annual meetings. Yet, in order to define the functions and mission of the troika, one needs to define a vision for the EUSDR first.
- The role of National Contact Points must be strengthened. NCPs, if they really want and if this makes sense, need to be organised around a secretariat/executive unit, to act as interface between European Commission and PACs. This would not challenge the principle of “no new institutions”.
- The Commission is to keep its coordination role, incl. coordination of different macro-regional strategies.
- A bottom-up approach could be established. E.g. by bringing Managing Authorities from different countries together. There is also a need to bring sectoral ministries (e.g. transport, environment) onboard, as many EU programmes, incl. IPA, have a sectoral approach, not territorial.
- The role and mandate of Working Group members also needs to be clarified, as some members don't have mandate to implement WG decisions in their countries.

→ **SG members are invited to contact their National Contact Point or directly the European Commission within the next 3 months.**

→ **PAC10 will share the draft of European Commission (which will be sent in the beginning of January) with the SG.**

8. 3rd Annual Forum EUSDR, 26-27 June 2014, Vienna – Save the Date!

Based on lessons learnt from the second Annual Forum, the third edition will focus on governance and social inclusion in the city hall of Vienna. Social inclusion is a very lively issue, the concept being developed is addressing both elements in a lively and understandable way. The annual forum should be the most important event of the year and its results should impact future implementation

Several other connected events are happening in those days: Danube Island music festival (Vienna, 27-28.06), Civil Society Platform (Eisenstadt, 25.06), Reed-Messe Vienna Fair, etc.



9. PA10 Workplan for 2014+

- Participation in the Task force for preparation of the third annual forum. It was confirmed that the South East Strategy 2020 will be invited to the annual forum.
- Participation in the governance discussion (inputs from SG members are welcome)
- Development of a joint project in the field of capacity building, responding to needs of WG1 members
- Launch a policy-level debate on governance and quality of public administration in the Danube Region e.g. to discuss questions of salary, brain-drain, qualification, etc.
- Communication with the task force of the Danube Programme
- Establishment of the Urban Platform Danube Region
- Establishment of the Civil Society Platform
- Launch of the UNESCO network/project
- Launch of the Danube Development Strategy
- Launch of the second part of special projects: Danube Financing Dialogue, Technical Assistance Facility and START.

Group photo

