



11th Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” of the EUSDR (PA10)

– minutes –

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration of Republic of
Romania

Bucharest, 15 November 2016

Participation

6 out of 14 Danube countries participated at the 11th Steering Group (SG) meeting of Priority Area 10 (PA10) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). In accordance with the guidelines for the functioning of the SG of PA10 (see annex 2) the quorum for taking decisions was thereby not fulfilled. RCC representatives also participated in the meeting.

Main discussion outcomes

1. The Centre for European Perspective (CEP) was introduced as new Slovenian Co-PAC, starting its cooperation in 2017.
2. The Romanian ESF Managing Authority (MA) presented its contribution to institutional capacity-building
3. The SG was informed on the results of the 1st call of the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) and on the conditions for the 2nd call.
4. The SG discussed the specifications on the Seed Money Facility of the DTP regarding PA10 projects.
5. The SG was informed on the conditions regarding the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF)
6. The SG was informed about current developments of the platforms and planned activities of PAC 10.

Upcoming meetings/deadlines

28.-30. 11. 2016: D-CAP Platform, Audit of IPA Fund, Ljubljana (SI)

6.-7. 12. 2016: Danube Governance Hub Forum: “Tools for better public governance in the Western Balkans”, Vienna (AT)

13. 12. 2016: Vienna Final START Event, Vienna (AT)

10. 3. 2017: 12th Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10, Proposal: Berlin (to be adopted)

Minutes

	AT	BA	BG	CZ	DE	HR	HU	MD	ME	RO	RS	SI	SK	UA
SG11	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	-
	EC	DSP	EESC	DTP	RCC	CEI	DCSF	CoDCR						
SG11	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-						

Welcome address

Ms Cristina Pop, Public Manager of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration firstly welcomed the Steering Group of the PA10 and gave the floor to Ms Sirma Caraman, State Secretary of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration. Ms Caraman greeted the members as well and gave an overview of the EUSDR, mentioning Romania’s implication ever since the conceptual stage, the strategy being at first a political initiative of Austria and Romania. She indicated that at this stage the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration is coordinating, together with Bulgaria, the Priority Area 3 of EUSDR. She reassured all the participants of the support the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration offered and is willing to offer to contribute to the implementation of the Strategy. In this respect, she mentioned the Romanian regional development policy and she stressed the importance of local development which is crucial for regional development. She mentioned the ongoing administrative reform of Romania and touched on developing Romania’s administrative capacity through EU funds.

Introduction

Mr Rudolf Schicker, PAC 10 – VIE, was chairing the Meeting due to Ms Maja Tomšič Pavlič’s, PAC 10 – SI, unforeseen absence.

Mr Schicker welcomed the Steering Group Members as well as other participants and thanked the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration for hosting the meeting. He emphasised that it is important to have an EU approach that could be seen in case of Romania. He appreciated the wide range of work and cooperation that has been done, and talked about intensifying cooperation with Romania. He pointed out that due to the number of participating SG members in this meeting, the Steering Group does not have the quorum to pass decisions.

The Centre for European Perspective (CEP) was introduced as new Co-PAC of PA 10 and successor of the Centre for Excellence in Finance (CEF). Ms Nina Čepon, PAC 10 – SI from 2017 on, presented the work of the Centre for European Perspective (CEP). CEP is a Slovenian governmental organisation operating from 2006 at the initiative of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mission of the Centre is enhancing European perspective by various activities in the field of democratisation, security and youth. CEP is an official provider of international development assistance to South-East European countries in order to support their economic, social and political development. CEP is also among organizers of the largest strategic conference in the region – Bled Strategic Forum, representative in the ENTRi capacity building programme in the field of civilian crisis management, part of H2020 granted project entitled IECEU

(Improving the Effectiveness of the Capabilities in EU Conflict Prevention), active in publication, research and think-tank activities as well as in regional cooperation projects (EuropeAid, International Visegrad Fund, Danube Region Project Fund, GIZ project, Erasmus+ etc). (see Annex 3).

Romania's role in EUSDR

Ms Silvia Davidoiu, EUSDR National Coordinator of Romania said that she will talk about what has Romania done so far in terms of EUSDR. She stressed that one of the targets identified by the central authorities is related to enhancing the capabilities of the local authorities to understand the Strategy and to act for its implementation. One example in this respect relates to the close cooperation started with the National Agency for Civil Servants, aiming to train and improve the abilities of city managers (identified as an important professional group for the strategic development at the level of local governance) . A possible cooperation with a University in Austria is envisaged for a training project for this target group, financed through the Operational Programm for Administrative Capacity. She emphasised that at the level of the National Coordinator office, they consider important to turn to the stakeholders (the natural partners for the implementation of the Danube Strategy) and in this respect they have organized information meetings with several such target groups (Cluster organizations, export association, Roma minority NGO's). Ms Davidoiu wished for a better participation of Western Balkan countries in the strategy, Ukraine, Moldova and urged to find the ways to mobilize them. As for the financial constraints, there is a need for more information, better mobilisation of financial players other than the national European funds and a closer involvement of the private actors.

Ms Mihaela Vrabete, Secretary of State, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Priority Area 3 Coordinator, also emphasized the importance of the EUSDR, the relation between the administration and the local communities being crucial for the Danube region development. She mentioned the need to work to match the local development plans with the Danube region development plans. In addition, she underlined the significant role PA 10 plays in relation to PA 3 targets, and to all priority areas in general.

Romanian Operational Programmes for Administrative Capacity (2007-13, 2014-20)

Roxana Chițu from the Managing Authority for the Romanian Operational Programmes for Administrative Capacity (OPAC) presented the programme. The programme has the goal of improving the efficiency, the transparency and the accessibility of Romania's public administration and judicial system. In the programmes 2007 – 2013 (311,12 million €) she touched upon what was funded, presented results, weaknesses and lessons learned. For the new period 2014 – 2020 (658,29 million €) it was explained what will be financed and expected results were presented. The OP is related to a strategic framework encompassing the Strategy for the consolidation of public administration, the strategy for better regulation and the strategy for the development of the judiciary system. The programme 2007 – 2013 consists of three priority axes:

PA 1: Structural and process improvements of the public policy management cycle,

PA 2: Improved quality and efficiency of the delivery of public services on a decentralized basis,

PA 3: Technical assistance. (See Annex 4)

The programme 2014 – 2020 consists of three priority axes:

PA1: Efficient public administration and judicial system

PA2: Accessible and transparent public administration and judicial system

PA3: Technical assistance (See Annex 4)

Mr Csaba Hende, European Commission, and Mr Matthias Holzner, State Ministry of Baden Württemberg, asked if they plan to implement a transnational dimension and respectively whether they plan any cooperation with other member states from the Danube Region in this programme? Ms Chițu explained that the OPAC plans to cooperate with stakeholders in the Danube Region. The details for this process are currently elaborated.

Ms Daniela Urschitz, PAC 10 – VIE, mentioned the Governance Hub that enables all public-sector organisations in South East Europe to improve administrative and political capacity based on European values using EU, national, regional and local government knowledge in order to coordinate local actors. She pointed to the next meeting of the Governance Hub in December 2016 (see “Upcoming meetings/deadlines”). She also touched on the issue of challenges of transnational cooperation within the ESF due to strongly varying rates for hourly wages for experts in different countries of the Danube Region. The most effective alternative for now seems to be eLearning in order to avoid different financial arrangements of the Danube Region countries. She also mentioned that Romania is not yet part of network of operational management structures in the Danube region.

Update on macro-regional cooperation

Mr Csaba Hende, European Commission - DG Regio, presented shortly the 5th Annual Forum in Bratislava. This year Joint Research Centre of the European Commission as well as DG Regio and Slovakia were on board for the Annual Forum. He highlighted amongst others the presentation of the ESF Romania, the launch of the EuroAccess Database and the presentation of the European Investment Advisory Hub. He also mentioned the side events accompanying the AF, such as the Participation Day. He briefly introduced the new brochure on Success Stories of the EUSDR. The next annual forum will be held under Hungarian presidency of the EUSDR in Budapest, the main focus will be Energy.

Ms Daniela Urschitz, PA10 - VIE asked why annual Forum needs a specific topic. Mr Matija Vilfan, Danube Strategy Point, answered that the evaluation of Annual Forum in Ulm showed that too many workshops were organised that covered too many topics. Therefore, it was decided that each EUSDR presidency can decide on one main topic for each forum. In this manner all PAs should think about how to contribute to the specific topic of the Annual Forum. Mr Vilfan also took this opportunity to ask all participants present to fill in the evaluation form that was sent to all attendees of the Forum in Bratislava as a channel for promoting new ideas and express opinion about the Forum’s implementation.

Ms Stefana Greavu, Regional Cooperation Council, expressed the need to support Western Balkan countries in concrete way. She expressed a concern that local communities from Western Balkan countries have no culture of cross-border cooperation. She stressed that SEE donor activities database (SEEDAD) developed by RCC became operational. SEEDAD is linked to EuroAccess and can provide an overview on the potential financial resources for EUSDR projects.

Mr Schicker, PAC 10-VIE, and Mr Stefan August Lütgenau, Danube Civil Society Forum, expressed their opinion towards more focused and engaging inputs from the speakers as well as implementing formats that enable more interaction with the audience and exchange of experience and expertise with the participants who represent important EUSDR stakeholders.

Annual Forum in Bratislava

Mr Matija Vilfan, Danube Strategy Point, presented the brochure on Success Stories of the EUSDR. He mentioned the meeting of the ministers for science in the course of the Annual Forum where important conclusions were taken, especially the commitment to the EUSDR. Mini common research area in the region is to be established, there is an initiative for Smart Specialization strategy (present in the member states of the EU) to be developed in other countries, a document on young researchers was created in order to

prevent brain drain. In regard to the official launch of EuroAccess database at the AF, he also mentioned the EuroAccess tool that has been implemented by PAC 10 and EuroVienna in 2016. Mr Vilfan announced that from 2017 onwards the database is planned to be financed by the DSP and EuroVienna, an affiliated entity of the City of Vienna, plans to expand services for (potential) project partners in terms of consultation. (See Annex 5)

He also mentions that the strategic projects submitted by the PACs will be presented to the NCs in February 2017.

A question arose from the Romanian Communication Office about the kind of feedback project partners may expect from the consultation service. Mr Vilfan answered that they offer one to one consulting, but they envisage to publish this in the following year on the website as webinars and direct connection to experts. The services will be free of charge.

Results of 3rd Participation Day in Bratislava

Ms Daniela Urschitz, PAC 10 – VIE, presented the 3rd Participation Day that was held on 2 and 3 November in Bratislava on Working towards sustainable development: Civil Society, Local Actors and EU Strategies. 160 participants attended the Participation Day. They had three key note speakers and six workshops on the first day, dealing with participative government, energy and environment, social innovation, impact of consumer and producer behaviour, how to turn local ideas into global solutions and on infrastructure and participation. On the second day, they had four keynotes followed by questions and answers. The conclusion of the discussion was amongst others that participative governance is a key issue for the EUSDR. However, funding for local actors still turns out to be inadequate as more small-scale funding is needed. Finally, Ms Urschitz thanked the Danube Civil Strategic Forum (DCSF) and the Baden-Württemberg Foundation for its vital support.

Mr Stefan August Lütgenau, Danube Civil Society Forum, revealed that Slovakia was very active on Participation Days and some strong partnerships were built. Participation Days include existing regional institutions, but they should be better implemented through PA coordinators. Mr Lütgenau pointed out that alignment is a key issue for the EUSDR and calls for a better alignment of the strategy with DGs, countries and international organisations. He stressed the importance of National Participation Days – meetings on national, regional and local levels that involve active, interested or potential stakeholders of the EUSDR. National Participation Days address civil society organisations and networks, local actors, academia, public authorities on the local and regional level as well as national authorities and experts active in the EUSDR institutions. In 2017 national Participation Days (or national hearings) will be organised in UA, BG, SI, AT and HU. Furthermore, Mr Lütgenau called for Romania to also engage in the implementation of a national Participation Day as civil society is an important multiplier for the EUSDR.

1st and 2nd Call of the Danube Transnational Programme, SMF pilot on targeted topics for PA10

Mr Johannes Gabriel, Danube Transnational Programme, reported on the 1st Call of the Danube Transnational Programme. In this call 55 projects were approved and 54 % of the total budget allocated. There were 13 projects approved relevant to the PA 10 (Well Governed Danube Region). For more information on the projects, the DTP policy officers can be contacted. The 2nd Call will be launched in the beginning of 2017 in a one-step-application procedure with an expected budget of 45/50 million €. The assessment will take place according to the following three categories: relevance, strategic, operational. Specific objective 4.1 will be closed, other specific objectives will remain open. The Danube Transnational Programme Capitalization Strategy offers the possibility to find synergies between projects covering similar topics and increasing visibility and impact of the project results.

Ms Zamfirescu, EUSDR NC RO Unit, asked to elaborate on the Capitalization Strategy. Mr Gabriel explained that the DTP will group projects or respectively clusters projects around topics to exchange findings. For each thematic pole one leader should be nominated from the project cluster. Additionally, the PACs should also have a leading role within the poles of the Capitalization Strategy to encourage exchange and capitalization. Mr Schicker asked if there might be as possibility to link the Capitalization Strategy to the EuroAccess Newsletter in order to further disseminate the findings. This idea is supported by the DTP.

The establishment of the Seed Money Facility (SMF) is meant to provide support to strategic projects in thematic fields of the EUSDR. Projects that are implemented within the SMF have to deliver 3 compulsory outputs: an analysis of needs and challenges, a main project plan and a report on funding opportunities. The 1st SMF Call covers all EUSDR Priority areas (with a thematic focus within Priority areas) with 1,500,000.00 EUR available EU funds. Seed money projects will be lump sum based (amount still needs to be defined), there is no need of submitting invoices as the funding is not based on real costs. PACs have a leading role as they decide on the topics to be addressed in the seed money call. Therefore, the SG has been consulted in regard to thematic priorities of PA 10 for the DTP SMF prior to the SG meeting.

PA 10 topics pre-defined so far:

1. Supporting civil society in local agenda setting in direct cooperation with local authorities;
2. Involving the lowest level of state administration (municipalities) and integrating local development into transnational cooperation;
3. Low-threshold provision of local services for disadvantaged groups such as Roma (women);
4. To develop modern social, health and educational services;
5. To create specific open government data tools for Danube Region use.

(See Annex 6)

Mr Holzner, State Ministry Baden-Württemberg, asked about the difference between the DTP Seed Money Facility and the Danube Strategic Project Fund. Mr Gabriel answered, that the Seed money facility is a follow up of the START project fund that covers strategic projects in all Priority Areas of the EUSDR for project preparation. This is a small scale financial assistance, available for EUSDR relevant project ideas. The DSPF supports slightly bigger projects and also includes countries of the Adriatic-Ionian Region. It also has a stronger focus on European Neighbourhood Policy and has a stronger thematic focus on youth.

Mr Schicker asked if there are any comments on the pre-defined topics and proposals. Romania agrees with the 2., 3. and 4. topic. Mr Schicker announced that the approval of the proposal will be done in written form.

Status and perspectives of the Capacity Development Platform (D-CAP)

Ms Nina Čepon, PAC 10 – SI from 2017 on, presented Capacity Development Platform (D-CAP) in the name of the current PAC 10 – SI (Centre of Excellence in Finance).

(See Annex 7)

Steps towards implementation of the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF)

Mr Rudolf Schicker, PAC 10 – VIE, presented the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF). DSPF is a new facility aiming at supporting the implementation of transnational strategic projects aligned with the objectives of the EUSDR, co-financed by the European Commission: 97% and the City of Vienna 3%. He explained that this fund provides support for projects and initiatives which do not fit into another program or funding scheme. Projects with a strategic dimension, especially in view of Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies, that include cross-cutting and/or horizontal measures covering several Priority Areas of the Strategy or have

connections and/or spill-over effects in the territory covered by the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region will be funded.

(See Annex 8)

Status and perspectives of the Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP) and the Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR)

Ms Daniela Urschitz, PAC 10 – VIE, reported on the Danube Local Actors Platform (D-LAP) referring to the preparation and implementation of the EUSDR Participation Day which was already discussed. She also presented the Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR) of Priority Area 10 that has become an open platform with almost 80 members, representing cities, city networks and associations as well as experts from all the partner countries of the EUSDR. It has, in a number of official and public statements, expressed the challenges and the needs of the Danube Region Cities, not least in the EU Urban Agenda. An online platform to share know-how and initiatives was financed as a pilot by the Cities of Vienna and Ulm up until 2015/16. PA 10 presented a revised concept of the UPDR to improve the capacity of local administrations to share information and know-how in order to support cooperation on cross cutting issues in the Danube Region taking into account the developments of the last two years concerning the European Urban Agenda and the roll out of the EUSDR, the implementation of EuroAccess etc. She explained that all information of the former UPDR website related to funding opportunities, events or documents will be incorporated in the PA 10 website. In order to support the formation of project partnerships and the exchange of project ideas PA 10 will bring together UPDR members with members of the D-LAP which has already been tested at this year's EUSDR Participation Day. PA 10 also provides concrete project support at the local level as for example within the Danube Governance Forum, the project initiative on cadastre and land register or the preparation of comprehensive online guidelines for sound local and regional governance.

(See Annex 9)

PA10 program directions from January 2017 on

Technical assistance will end at the end of the year; DTP will finance from 2017

Foreseen outputs, activities and deliverables in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 were presented by Ms Nina Čepon, future PAC 10 – SI and Ms Claudia Singer, PAC 10 – VIE. Main outputs are: White Book for Sound Public Administration, Policy Paper on Metropolitan Regions, Framework for Investment in Institutional Capacity, EUSDR Participation Day Framework, Bled Strategic Forum Framework, Project on Fighting Human Trafficking, Project Consultation Framework and Framework on Enhancing Civic Engagement.

(See Annex 10)

Conclusions and outlook

Mr Schicker asked if anyone has any remark. None had any. The next question was considering the next meeting where to be held – in Belgrade or Berlin. Mr Matthias Holzner, Baden Wurttemberg representative, suggested the next Steering Group meeting to be held the day after the Donausalon event (9 March), on 10 March 2017 in Berlin. As the quorum of this Steering Group meeting was not reached, the agreement on the location of the next Steering Group meeting will be reached with adoption of the minutes.