

17th Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” of the EUSDR (PA10)

– meeting minutes –

Hotel Podgorica, Podgorica, Montenegro

12 November 2019

Attendance

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

Participants:

Six out of 14 EUSDR countries were represented at the 17th Meeting of the Steering Group of Priority Area 10 (see Annex I). According to the “Guidelines for the Functioning of the PA10 Steering Group” the quorum for decision-making was not reached. Furthermore, the European Economic and Social Committee representative, the Danube Civil Society Forum representative, as well as representative from the project CrowdStream (financed by the DTP through the first call for applications) attended the meeting.

Outcomes

Main outcomes of the discussion:

- The Steering Group takes note on actions and targets included in the final version of the Action Plan proposed by PA10.
- The Steering Group takes note of the new targets proposed by the Hungarian Steering Group members, which will be put to decision in the Steering Group by means of Written Procedure if there will be any option to include comments in the final version of the document.
- The Steering Group takes note of the information on the priorities of the Croatian Presidency to the EUSDR, EUSDR Annual Forum 2020 and the Danube Participation Day that will take place in October in Croatia.
- The Steering Group takes note on the implemented and planned activities of PAC 10 by the end of 2019.
- The Steering Group discusses the option of having online Steering Group Meetings, which might be considered for the future in addition to the regular Steering Group Meetings.
- The Steering Groups takes note on planned cooperation with other Priority Areas.
- The Steering Group takes note on planned activities proposed in the application for PAC Technical Support 2020 - 2022.

Welcome

Nina ČEPON welcomes the participants of the 17th Steering Group (SG) Meeting of EUSDR Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacities and Cooperation”. She presents the agenda for the meeting of PA 10 and

welcomes Tatjana BOŠKOVIĆ from the European Integration Office of Montenegro. BOŠKOVIĆ greeted all present and expressed her satisfaction that they supported first EUSDR Steering Group meeting organized in Montenegro. European Union has praised Montenegro for their invested efforts in strengthening the administrative capacities and they are pleased to present a bit of that at the meeting. She ensured that Montenegro will be confident and reliable partner in future EUSDR activities.

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

All participants of the Steering Group Meeting introduce themselves and share their current work on PA10 related topics.

Radka STORKOVA (CZ) works for the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic.

Tijana DJOKOVIĆ (ME) works for the European Integration Office of Montenegro.

Katharina LENZ works for the Danube Strategy Point as pillar coordinator, responsible for pillars 1 “Connecting the Region” and 4 “Strengthening the Region”.

Matthias HOLZNER (DE-BW) from the States Ministry of Baden-Württemberg presented their recent engagements in the PA10 topics – event on Innovative Social-Business Initiatives in Romania and the Danube Region that they are hosting on 14 November 2019 in Bucharest and combating Human trafficking workshop they hosted with PA11. A large conference on human trafficking is planned for autumn 2020, while Donaufest will be held in June 2020, where one discussion will be dedicated to youth work and transferred to the Danube Participation Day in autumn as well.

Roman HAKEN works at the European Economic and Social Committee and has presented the Opinion of the Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion titled ‘*Towards better economic convergence and competitiveness within macro-regions, such as the European Strategy for the Danube region – the role of transnational clusters*’, that Priority Area 10 contributed to. He explained that it is available in all languages of the Danube countries and called for its use as an argument for national actions. If needed, the EESC members are able to join any national event to present the opinion and support national endeavours in line with the opinion. EESC offers contacts from CSOs that are active in EESC and know the MRS and might be able to support the Participation Days.

Tatjana KRALJ (HR) is working at the Service for Transnational and Interregional Cooperation within Ministry for Regional Development and EU funds. She was working last 4 years on macro-regional strategies in Croatian Permanent representation in Brussels and has join the team for the EUSDR presidency. She briefly presented that priorities of the Presidency that will be connected to embedding the EUSDR in mainstream programmes, geopolitical role of the Strategy and new Action Plan. The overarching topic will be ‘Danube Strategy 10 years later’.

Stefan LÜTGNAU (DE) is representative of the Danube Civil Society Forum and Foster Europe and briefly presented how they are safeguarding participation in Danube Region in cooperation and coordination with Priority Area 10 through the framework of National Participation Days (NPD) and Danube Participation Day. There have been six Danube Participation Days organized so far and 22 National participation days in 11 Danube countries. Danube Participation day 2020 will be dedicated

to youth and representation in Danube region. They are preparing a review of last PD and outlook for new one (planned for 10/12/2019) on how to discuss not about the youth, but with the youth. He invited Croatia to organize Danube national participation day.

Claudia SINGER added that the Danube Participation Days used to be organised as side events of the EUSDR Annual Forum. In light of the topic “Danube Strategy – 10 years later”, the youth focus of the Danube Participation Day in 2020 might be a good supplement to build a bridge between previous achievements and future perspectives.

Revision of the PA10 Action Plan – Group Discussion

Katharina LENZ shared with SG members results from the workshop on revision of the action plan that was held in Vienna in September and concluded that it is expected that NC will be invited for additional round of comments which should have deadline on 13/12/2019. As the comments provided by PACs and NC by the end of October were very extensive (compilation has around 150 pages) it might be that the timeline indicated by the European Commission will be adjusted. She presented the DSP team and topics that they are currently focused on (Annex II).

HOLZNER stated that the cross-cutting issues that are mentioned in the consolidated input that was provided to the EC, where not integrated in the draft staff working document. He further expresses his wish that the cross-cutting topics should be included in the staff working document as they are one of the few innovative changes to the EUSDR Action Plan. SG members agree that the cross-cutting issues are important, they were discussed at the last NC+PAC meeting in Bucharest, but as revision of the action plan doesn't foresee any new structures or coordination, it was not agreed who is responsible for them.

KRALJ agrees that cross-cutting and horizontal issues were pointed out at the workshop in Vienna as well, while document fails to manage the procedures and responsibilities for working on it. Second topic they see important is embedding that is not mentioned in the PA section either. SG members discussed where the cross-cutting topics should be held – in strategic introductory part or in the section that deals with actions and targets of the Priority areas? HOLZNER argues that it should be at least mentioned in PA10 with matrix for example, while SINGER explains that cross-cutting topics that PA10 is working on are at least already mentioned in the targets for PA 10 actions. LÜTGEMAU believes that description of the problem/desired outcome/output should be added. SINGER concluded that PA10 could make the amendment on 'why', but prior to that there need to be a decision by the National Coordinators and the EC, if the cross-cutting topics should be integrated in the text.

SG members reviewed the final proposal of the European Commission and discussed some comments that were submitted by Hungary after the final deadline for comments.

PA10 report on activities in 2019 and planned activities by the end of 2019

Both co-coordinators reported on activities implemented and planned by the end of 2019.

Active Participation of Youth May 2019

Danube Participation Day June 2019

Young Bled Strategic Forum September 2019

Bled Strategic Forum September 2019

Policy Paper on Sound Public Management December 2019

Policy Paper on Functional Regions December 2019

EUSDR Youth Action Plan started in Bucharest in June 2019 and continues in December 2019

ESF Network Danube Region October and December 2019

Webinar on funding for civil society and local actors in the Danube Region December 2019

More details in Annexes (III and IV)

Presentation of priorities of the Croatian presidency to the EUSDR

KRALJ is working on the Croatian presidency to the EUSDR, responsible primarily for contact and communication with the National Coordinators. However, she has been and will be following PA10 related topics closely as well. She pinpointed priorities of the Croatian presidency:

- *Governance* – strengthening the role of the regional development, working on visibility and complementarity of the programmes
- *Cooperation with other macro-regional strategies* – meetings of the all four MRS presidencies (January 2020), with programmes, Interact. Creating synergies among MRS and cohesion policy especially in light of the new financial dialogue – close cooperation with EC and EP.
- *Cooperation with non-EU countries* – putting the enlargement high on the political agenda.

KRALJ presented as well thematic priorities:

- Cooperation between scientific institutions and economic stakeholders
- Environmental protection and sustainable economic development
- Inland waterways, tourism and smart villages
- Civil protection
- Regional and local government capacity building

Expected meetings with tentative dates:

MRS Presidencies meeting 16 - 17 January

PAC Meeting 11 February 2020

NC+PAC meeting 12 February 2020

Ministerial meeting 30 – 31 March

NC+PAC meeting 7 May 2020

Annual Forum focused on regional development 22 - 23 October 2020

Interreg and 30 years of its implementation

She will regularly update the PA10 coordinators about the meetings and dates of the meetings.

Presentation of the new application for PAC technical support 2020 - 2022

SINGER presented the new application for technical support for period 2020 - 2022 that was submitted to the DTP for next three years. Structure stays the same with four working packages. First one is the *general management* of the PA with communication activities, reporting and SG, DTP, DSP meetings and Annual Forum. From *Policy development* partners decided to work on two papers: Youth Action Plan and Tools on Civil Society Engagement. For *cooperation & coordination part* focus remains on the integration of various actors in the EUSDR implementation, namely through the Danube Participation Day, Bled Strategic Forum and Framework for Cross cutting cooperation with other Priority Areas. As *strategic projects* coordinators will keep the Framework for Project Consultation and new activity was added – Bridging the Gap. It aims at creating an online platform, that will consist of previous PA10 networks already established, participants that attended different conferences and meetings in the

past, local and national government representatives, international and regional organization representatives, important projects of PA10, and interested individuals¹.

Coordinators are currently waiting for the feedback from the DTP and will notify Steering Group members if anything substantially changes.

Cooperation with other EUSDR Priority Areas

SINGER presented topics that were identified with other priority areas as shared with PA10:

- Network for Roma inclusion with PA9
- Network to Fight Trafficking with Human Beings with PA11
- Network of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region with PA11 and European Social Fund

SG members were asked if they have any suggestions for cooperation with other priority areas and HOLZNER exposed two topics that BW would like to involve with, but haven't found proper framework and partner yet:

- How to engage foreigners living in BW for longer period to give something back to their home-country in form of civic engagement? They are interested in any similar initiatives that anyone would be aware of.
- How to combine crowdfunding and state-funding for topics and activities interesting for state? If for certain actions people believe it's important and contribute half of needed money, state would be willing to top that amount with the other half. To support cross-border cooperation for example. They would be interested into platform that would be able to host this kind of suggestions for actions.

SG members discussed possible solutions and will share any relevant information they might find.

Workplan until next SG meeting

HAKEN called again for promotion of the EESC Opinion to ensure the visibility and called especially for the less active countries in the EUSDR to use the opportunity. The EESC can co-organize and support national events focused on EUSDR.

LÜTGNAU reported that 3rd National Participation Day (NPD) is planned by Czech Republic. Moldova and Ukraine plan NPD in December 2019, but Foster Europe suggested to postpone them until the beginning of 2020, when the EP and EC will be fully operational. He called for organization of the NPD in each EUSDR country and promotion of the Danube Participation day.

KRALJ reported that they are working on the Rules of Procedures of the EUSDR Presidency that would be helpful tool for each forthcoming country. It is still not known who will be next presiding country.

¹ Part of the platform will be expert meetings, policy recommendations creation, as well as results sharing with the stakeholders. Idea behind the platform is facilitation of bridging the gap that exists between the public administration, private sector and civil society representatives and discourses. So far, all the sides have been working in their own sphere, with occasional meetings, but mostly thinking and acting only from their own point of view. Platform will persuade thinking and working on all the topics the participants deem important, pertaining to their own sphere, but that have wider reach and consequence, and require re-thinking of a wider circle of stakeholders, forcing joint debates and action. Topics to be touched upon will be proposed by any participant or member of the platform, and will pertain to the current worlds' issues, bridging the gap, citizen participation, e-governance, good governance and trust in institutions.

HOLZNER said that BW will be working on embedding of the EUSDR in the mainstream programmes, as their managing authorities (MA) expects concrete topics suggested by the SG members. He called for coordination with other Danube countries before consulting with the national MA, as topics suggested need to be mirrored in several MA programmes. If one country is writing certain topic in their programme, it has to be aligned with programme of another country so that country that has project in the MA will find partner for implementation of the projects.

Presentation of results of the CrowdStream project

JANIČIĆ presented project CrowdStream that lasted three years and finished in May 2019 with final conference in Varna. Main project objective was to improve the effectiveness of public/private business support for innovative SME, start-ups and social enterprises to access qualitative alternative financing (crowdfunding). Montenegro has been pointed out as the great example how one project can have wider policy and practical impact. They had no guiding legislation nor arranged system for sending/receiving money through established payment system. Project partners have adjusted project's targets to the country specifics and national situation, which ensured enough flexibility that proved to be needed for making project results most useful for all involved countries. Project results included online training-of-trainers, self-assessment tool for crowd-funding agencies and platforms, policy recommendations.

Presentation in Annex V

Discussion & Outlook

Nina ČEPON asks the steering group members if anyone would be willing to host next steering group meeting and two suggestions were put on table: Eisenstadt with Danube Civil Society Forum or Brussels with support of the EESC or Baden Württemberg that is preparing and event in spring at their representation in Brussels. ČEPON remembered that CEI offered to host the SG meeting in Trieste and it will be checked if the invitation is still open. It was suggested that SG meeting is organized back-to-back with any other relevant meeting and that option to join meetings virtually should be offered and ensured. Suggestion that some virtual meetings to support information exchange among SG members could be organized, in addition to planned two face-to-face meetings per year. The next SG location will be decided with written procedure when the dates of the PA10 related meetings will be clear.

Nina ČEPON thanks everyone for their participation, thanks Montenegro for hosting the meeting and closes the 17th meeting of the PA 10 Steering Group.

Already known dates of the meetings in 2019 and 2020:

21 November 2019	NCs meeting, Zagreb
4 December 2019	Webinar on funding for civil society and local actors in the DR
5 – 6 December 2019	EUSDR Communication workshop, Zagreb
16 -17 January 2020	Meetings of 4 MRS Presidencies
11 February 2020 (TBC)	NC meeting
12 February 2020 (TBC)	NC + PAC meeting in Croatia

30 – 31 March 2020	Ministerial Meeting
7 May 2020	NC + PAC meeting
8 June 2020	Donaufest in Baden-Württemberg
22 – 23 October 2020	Danube Participation Day and EUSDR Annual Forum
Autumn 2020	Conference on Human Trafficking in Ulm