



EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Priority Area 7 – To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies

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RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE PA 7 STEERING GROUP

Preamble

Representatives of the Countries of the Danube Region have established a Steering Group (hereinafter referred to as "SG") for the implementation of Priority Area 7 - "To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies" (hereinafter referred to as "PA 7") of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (hereinafter referred to as "EUSDR") on the basis of the:

- ✓ European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (COM(2010) 715 final) of 8 December 2010 and the accompanying Commission staff working document "Action Plan" (SEC(2010) 1489 final) and the
- ✓ Council Conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region of the 3083rd General Affairs Council Meeting (8388/11) of 13 April 2011
- ✓ Conclusions of the European Council (EUCO 23/11) of 23/24 June 2011.

Art. 1 – General provisions

(1) The SG for the Implementation of PA 7 comprises **representatives of all EUSDR Partner States** (i.e., Baden-Wurttemberg and Bavaria for Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine), the European Commission (DG REGIO, DG RESEARCH and INNOVATION, DG EDUCATION and CULTURE), relevant international organizations (Danube Commission, INTERACT,...) and Coordinators of other Priority Areas, specially PA 8 and PA 9.

Each country appoints maximum two representatives with voting rights for the Priority Area Steering Group. The participation in the Steering Group shall be voluntary.

Other stakeholders and relevant international organizations may be invited or associated to the work of the Steering Group as observers.

The European Commission would participate, where appropriate.

(2) PA 7 is coordinated jointly by Slovakia, represented by Dr Lubomir Faltan and Serbia, represented by Prof. Dr Miroslav Vesković.

(3) The SG is chaired by the Priority Area Coordinators (hereinafter referred to as "PACs").

(4) The SG is assisted by the PACs Support Team.

(5) Working Groups will be established in order to investigate thematic issues and support the SG and the PACs. The membership in the working groups will be on expert level.

(6) The duration of the term of office for the SG will cover the whole period of implementation of the EUSDR, if possible without fluctuation, to achieve good knowledge of the matters and environment for a common concept for the development of the region.

Art. 2 – Role and tasks of the Steering Group

(1) The SG is created in order to advise and assist Serbia and Slovakia in their capacity as PACs, for the smooth implementation of PA 7 and to ensure that suitable actions are anchored all over the region and in all participating states. Furthermore, the SG should also make decisions regarding the future development of the area, its objectives, co-operations and guidelines.

(2) The SG is responsible for working on formal and policy level recognition of PA priorities in the calls for grants coordinated by relevant European Commission bodies and other relevant granting organizations in the Danube Region (DG REGIO, DG RESEARCH & INNOVATION, DG EDUCATION & CULTURE, EACEA etc.). SG is not responsible for the operational initiation, administration, organization or execution of such projects.

(3) To enable SG to perform continual monitoring of the achievements towards defined PA 7 targets, the established working groups shall submit to the SG a list of ongoing, planned projects and possible project ideas which support the PA 7 Action Plan and reaching the defined targets, and the SG members shall submit these proposals further on to the PACs. This list is to be continuously updated during the implementation phase of these projects.

(4) The SG discusses the Action Plan adopted by the Commission and follows the progress in targets and may also propose adjustments of the following three types to the European Commission:

- ✓ Clarification/correction of the details of an target/action
- ✓ Addition of a new target/action
- ✓ Deletion of an action

(5) The SG shall discuss and finally approve the annual implementation progress report for PA 7 to the Commission, which has to be drafted by the PACs.

(6) Already existing and well-established platforms should be utilized in order to identify synergies with the EUSDR.

(7) The SG facilitates the work of the PACs regarding the implementation and the development of PA 7, in particular with regard to:

- ✓ Establishing a network of national counterparts
- ✓ Identifying possible relevant stakeholders
- ✓ Promoting public awareness
- ✓ Promoting the cross-sectoral approach of the EUSDR
- ✓ Ensuring policy discussion and policy development
- ✓ Ensuring communication and visibility of results

(8) The SG members entitled to vote have the following tasks:

- ✓ Participate in the SG meetings and involve in the decision-making process;
- ✓ Inform the SG about the activities developed in the countries they represent and which are related to the implementation of PA 7;
- ✓ Contribute to implement the decisions of the SG, according to their responsibilities.

Art. 3 – Membership

(1) There are **three types of membership** in the SG:

- ✓ **Members nominated by the Partner States with a right to vote** (max two representatives per each EUSDR Partner State, with a right of one vote per Partner State)
- ✓ **Other regular members with an observer status** (relevant international organizations and Coordinators of other Priority Areas, specially PA 8 and PA 9)
- ✓ **Invited members with an advisory capacity** (European Commission: DG REGIO, DG RESEARCH and INNOVATION, DG EDUCATION and CULTURE, etc.)

(2) All Danube Region Strategy Partner States named in Art 1. (1) have full membership and shall delegate at maximum two representatives to the SG. The participation in the SG shall be voluntary. The members shall act under the mandate and on behalf of their respective countries. Full membership of a Partner State provides equal rights and possibilities for participating in the coordination of PA 7.

(3) In addition to the Partner States the European Commission and the relevant international organizations named in Art 1. (1) are regular members of the SG on the basis of an observer status. These SG members shall have the same tasks as the members entitled to vote of the SG, with the exception of the participation to the decision-making process (i.e. no right to vote).

(4) The meetings of the SG are open, ex officio, to the participation of staff members of the PACs and the EUSDR's National Contact Points. Upon invitation of the PACs, other countries, international organizations, existing cooperation mechanisms, regional initiatives, experts and other partners may participate as guests with an advisory capacity.

(5) SG members are allowed to send substitutes to the meetings upon prior notification of the PACs in writing and in due time.

Art. 4 – Decision-making

(1) Decision-making during SG meetings

a. Decisions that the SG is entitled by the European Council to make will be taken by majority voting when at least 50% of the Partner States plus one more – i.e. eight Partner States – are present. If there is no quorum of 50% of the Partner States plus one more at the meeting, decisions will be taken by consensus, which, in principle, is understood as absence of objection. To be able to make valid decisions the meeting must be attended by at least five Partner States. Decision making process must consider if there is a written objection of any member state, not present at the meeting.

The decision taken by consensus of the present members is binding to all members of the SG.

b. Each Partner State shall have one vote.

c. In the case that decision cannot be reached, the Chairperson sets down a 30 minutes recess for consultations in order for the present members to reconsider their position.

d. In case of opposition by several members entitled to vote, the Chairperson decides whether the decision is postponed or defeated.

e. Decisions which directly affect financially or organizationally one of the Partner States cannot be taken without the approval of that particular Partner State.

(2) Decision-making by written procedure

a. In addition to the decision-making at the SG's meetings, the PACs and SG members can initiate a written consensual decision-making process via e-mail. In this case, the PACs Support Team on behalf of the PACs shall send the draft decision to the members entitled to vote and shall fix a deadline, giving the addressees at least 10 working days time for reply. In all cases the exact date and time of reaction shall be put in the e-mail. If no objection was received by the deadline, the proposal is considered approved in the sent format (silence is considered as agreement).

b. In case objections are received, the PACs formulate their joint position regarding the received objections, which is consequently transmitted by the PACs Support Team to the SG members entitled to vote. The lack of reaction on proposals/objections is equivalent with agreement with

the joint position of the PACs. In case new objections are formulated, the matter shall be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the SG.

c. SG members not entitled to vote will be informed about the decision-making process via email.

d. In any case, after the time limit has expired, the PACs Support Team shall immediately inform all members on whether the decision is deemed to be taken or the matter is placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the SG.

Art. 5 - Meeting organization

(1) The SG meets at least twice a year. PACs are in charge of convening the meetings of the SG and shall inform the members of the SG about the venue and date of the next SG meeting at least one month in advance.

(2) Electronic exchange and web-based coordination shall play a crucial role within the PACs and the SG's communication.

(3) At each of the meetings, the PACs provide a draft agenda, write meeting minutes and distribute all the relevant documents among the SG members. Draft agenda and other relevant documents should be sent to all SG members at least two weeks before the event, while meeting minutes should be submitted within two weeks after the meeting.

(4) At the beginning of each meeting, the agenda of the respective meeting will be adopted together with the minutes of the previous SG meeting.

Art. 6 – Working language and communication

(1) Aiming at an efficient and rapid communication, English is adopted as working language.

(2) Communication among the members of the SG shall generally be done by e-mail. Any document which shall be sent to the members of the SG shall be sent via e-mail or, if this is not possible, by fax.

Art. 7 – Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

(1) The Steering Group shall adopt these Rules of Procedure by unanimous decision using electronic voting, via e-mail. In case unanimous consensus cannot be reached the decision-making provisions of Art. 4 shall be applied in order to reach consensus.

(2) After their adoption the rules of procedure may be amended by consensus. The rules of procedure should be revised every two years.