

MINUTES

3rd Meeting of the Danube Funding Coordination Network

Bratislava, June 26, 2017

Host: Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak republic; Division of Science and Technology

Venue: Slovak centre of scientific and technical information, Lamačská cesta 8/A, Bratislava, Slovakia (Conference room 2nd floor)

Introduction: The 3rd meeting of the Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN) took place on 26th June 2017 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The meeting was hosted by the Slovak DFCN chairmanship team with a great organizational support of the German chairmanship team, with financial contribution of the Danube INCO.NET project and DTP-PAC1-PA7 projects.

The 3rd DFCN meeting was held back to back with the 13th PA7 Steering Group meeting taking place on 27th June 2017.

The Slovak team represented by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the DLR Project Management Agency followed the already established framework of the two previous workshops held in Berlin/Germany on 30th and 31st May 2016 and in Bratislava/Slovakia on 2nd November 2016.

The aim of the DFCN meeting was to sum up the impact from the implemented DFCN actions and to discuss outlook and future perspectives for new joint actions in 2017 and beyond.

The agenda of the DFCN meeting is presented in the Annex I.

The list of all participants of the meeting is presented in Annex II.

*Presentations of the meeting can be found at the PA7 webpage under the following link:
<https://www.danubeknowledgesociety.eu/files/directory/25>*

Minutes

At the beginning of the meeting, the Director General of the Science and Technology Division Marek Hajduk welcomed the participants of the meeting on behalf of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and of the chairmanship team. He expressed his hope for fulfillment of the main goals of the meeting streamlining the cohesion and better coordination and synchronization of resources in order to foster multilateral collaboration in research and innovation. Mr. Hajduk also thanked both co-chairmanship teams for their energy, motivation and efforts.

Matthias Hack welcomed the participants on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the co-chairmanship team of the meeting, and suggested to evaluate past activities and to discuss new ideas and potential ways for future cooperation.

During a brief Tour de Table, participants introduced themselves and shared brief statements regarding recent developments within their focus areas.

Part I: Lessons learned

The first presentation was given by Ralf König from the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) on the **First and Second EUREKA calls in 2015 and 2017**. Lessons learned from the 1st call and the interim evaluation of the 2nd call show different results in the number of submitted applications (1st call: 80 proposals with ca. 300 participants; 2nd call: 8 proposals with 16 participants). There is room for improvement for future calls, e.g. better project management skills of applicants; need for increased budget in partner countries, raised awareness of the programme, and longer call duration. However, there was an agreement among the participants the slim EUREKA application procedure should be used as a chance in further joint activities. The impact of the starting projects from the first EUREKA call should be further investigated.

During discussion a proposal by the Slovak side was raised to organize a specific training/workshop/seminar on *preparation of successful project proposals/systematization and better understanding of ongoing programmes, schemes and funding possibilities*, supported by the German colleagues.

Follow-up

Ralf König informed that such trainings are commonly organized by FFG and other organizations for Austrian participants and that it has to be checked if representatives of other Danube countries would be allowed to participate in such events (R. König to inform DFCN).

Viktor Nedovic (RS) stated that Serbia could not take part in the second EUREKA call as there was no dedicated budget, but promised support for the upcoming call. (V. Nedovic to inform FFG)

The second agenda point **Multilateral call on scientific and technological cooperation in the Danube Region** was briefly introduced by Christian Gollubits from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMBWF). He presented his experience gained from the pilot call supporting 19 projects with the participating Danube region countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Republic of Serbia and Slovak Republic. The aims of the call are mainly to:

- contribute to scientific advancement in the above mentioned countries by funding researchers' mobility;
- contribute to research capacity development in the region;
- support the advancement of cross-border research cooperation; and
- provide an opportunity for young/female researchers to cooperate in an international setting and to develop their scientific careers.

The call was open during summer 2016 to all scientific disciplines and thematic areas and incited a great interest of the scientific community (approximately 50 project proposals received in each participating country).

Follow-up

A new call is planned for 2018 and (new) participating countries are encouraged to take part. Both PA7 Coordination teams expressed support to organize joint multilateral calls in the future.

Marion Mienert from German Aerospace Center (DLR) presented on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) results and impacts of two **BMBF calls supporting cooperation of the Danube region countries** (2013 and 2015). In the context of the first BMBF Danube call (2013) 67 project proposals were submitted and 31 projects receive funding (1,5 mio. €); in the second call (2015), 63 project proposals were submitted and 16 projects receive funding (1,3 mio. €). There was an improved balance in participation of countries (2013: 59 downstream country partners vs. 70 upstream country partners; 2015: 29 upstream country partners vs. 25 downstream country partners) and in the thematic representation of the EUSDR pillars fields. It would be meaningful to carry out an impact analysis of the finished projects (how many proposals were submitted as a follow up under H2020 and other programmes).

Follow-up

In this sense, the currently approved DTP-PAC7 project could give room to a study assessing the impact of ongoing joint initiatives and discovering new potential in R&D&I in the Danube Region. (J. Szüdi to inform DFCN)

Arjan van Binsbergen from the **Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe (JPI UE)** informed on the possible integration and stronger involvement of the Danube region countries into the initiative. Inputs and recommendations from the **EXPAND project** put a focus on enhancing co-creation in JPI EU through widening Member State and stakeholder participation with the main goal of strengthening transnational funding cooperation to tackle the urbanization challenges. A joint Workshop Danube-INCO.NET & JPI UE was carried out in March 2017 and follow up activities in view of “widening alignment” are foreseen (fact finding missions in the Danube region countries).

Follow-up

Possible participation of widening Danube Region countries in new types of actions, calls, and in events or even to become member of JPI UE as a follow up is most welcome. (to be investigated by widening Danube Region countries)

Jaroslava Szüdi presented recent developments related to the initiative of establishing a **COST Targeted Network “Danube-Link”**. The relevance of the COST programme for the EUSDR (and PA7 in particular) and vice versa (how the EUSDR can contribute to the COST framework) were outlined and especially the Targeted Networks as strategic activity with a specific focus reaching beyond scientific cooperation. A draft concept for a Targeted Network DANUBELINK was prepared within Danube-INCO.NET project and presented to the COST Executive Board Meeting in June 2016). Other relevant information was added by Daniel Ács (President of the Union of Slovak Clusters) and Ulrike Kunze (DLR). Participants of this workshop expressed their interest in further elaboration of a common joint proposal. However, there is an ongoing discussion process among the COST committees and members and official information has to be waited for after the upcoming Executive Board meeting (July, 2017) and COST Senior Officials Meeting (October, 2017).

Follow-up

Yet, a clear leadership for the further elaboration of the draft concept of DANUBELINK (and organisation of a preparation Workshop) is needed. This leadership should be communicated to the COST Office by PA7 coordinators or the DFCN chairmanship. Interested parties should contact the Slovak and German DFCN Chairs by mid-September 2017.

It could be seen that there is a progress in coordination and joint funding among the countries of the Danube region.

PART II: New joint funding actions

Synergies between Horizon 2020 and ESIF for R&I activities in the Danube Region were presented by Thomas Ammerl from the BayFOR Bavarian research Alliance. Better use of Structural Funds and more research working exchange of personnel and network building should be made which may result into assets in the future not only for the sending institution/company but also for the whole region. The experience of the involvement of several projects in different regional, national and European programmes showed that it is necessary to search for additional funds but also to combine and connect funds from different sources in a profitable way. The challenge is that applicants and programme representatives are often afraid of additional work, expenditures and bureaucracy. There is a need to bait applicants “out of their comfort-zone” but also for „bridge-builders“ between the different programme worlds (H2020 / ESIF) and more flexibility needed in ERDF-operational programmes.

The following discussion centered around a better coordination and synchronization of resources. Among other instruments, Bernd Finger (Baden-Württemberg) suggested to prepare a common joint statement or a PA7 position paper on embedding of macro regional strategies into the new EU Framework Programme (FP9). This idea was welcomed and Lubica Pitlova (SK) informed that the Informal working group of the Slovak Ministry of Education is currently preparing such a Position Paper. It has been presented in various fora. Claudia Singer from PAC 10-team (AT) shared her experience with preparation of position papers that have been published so far within the macro-regional strategies; she proposed to share the information after the meeting.

Follow-up

Furthermore it was agreed that a draft position paper addressing the integration of macro regional aspects into FP9 will be prepared, enriched and discussed among DFCN members. (to be initiated by PA7 SK team)

Presentations followed on the **Seed Money Facility Call in the frame of the Danube Transnational Programme**, the results of the **Danube-INCO.NET Synergy workshop** from March 30, 2017 in Vienna and on an upcoming call and **possibilities for cooperation within the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS)**. Furthermore, information on the upcoming **ERASMUS+** calls and cooperation possibilities was given, followed by a presentation on opportunities for young researchers and currently open calls and success stories within the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA)**. There seems to be room for better utilization of **ERASMUS+** and **MSCA** in the Danube region. A brief overview of **on-going and possible new joint cooperation with Joint Research Centre (JRC)** was given by

Mr. Moritz Haller from JRC. He pointed out the support to the Danube Macro-Regional Cooperation in the frame of the JRC S3 Platform and referred to the Danube.INCO.NET report “The role of S3 in the EU European Neighbourhood Policy”.

CONCLUSIONS

A wrap up of both parts of the 3rd DFCN meeting were drafted and introduced by Ulrike Kunze. The summary shows the following:

- the implemented initiatives are based on cooperation with programmes at national (AT, DE) and at European level (EUREKA, JPI UE, COST);
- some initiatives successful, others less; mainly variable geometry used;
- some calls have been (or will be) repeated, they use different instruments;
- success is granted if cooperation is a “two-way-street” (mutual cooperation interest),
- coordination is a “learning by doing-process”, fact finding missions to region are more than helpful (personal contacts);
- cooperation was more or less close (from participation in events to jointly funding calls);
- evaluation: suggestion for Workshop to evaluate impact of funded projects (applications submitted in H2020 as a project result? how many were successful?);
- homework for DFCN: analyse impact of implemented initiatives and projects.

There are weak points and challenges that have to be looked at closely. Improvements are necessary, i.e.:

- strong commitment needed from countries participating in action;
- definition of eligibility criteria for funding agencies and programme owners of participating countries (regarding commitments to deadlines and budget);
- better synchronization, harmonization, coordination throughout the joint action;
- implementation of clear project and call management (Secretariat?) and of communication between funding agencies during all phases of the call;
- harmonization of deadlines for call submission and proposal evaluation;
- widen the thematic topics of call (i.e. social sciences);
- organization of trainings.

Annex I. Agenda of the DFCN meeting

3rd DFCN meeting, June 26, 2017 Bratislava

12:30 – 13:00	Arrival and welcome coffee/tea, sandwiches Registration
13.00 – 15:00	<p>Welcome (10 min) <i>by DFCN Co-chairs (SVK, GER) and hosts: Marek Hajduk Slovak Ministry (MINEDU), Matthias Hack German Ministry (BMBF)</i></p> <p>Tour de Table (10 min) Introduction and brief statements regarding recent development <i>by all members and participants</i></p> <p>Part I : Lessons learned and impact on future actions (100 min) Brief updates on implemented joint DFCN and Danube-INCO.NET actions, encountered challenges and bottlenecks; perspectives and steps forward</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First and Second EUREKA call/2015 and 2017 (FFG) 2. AT multilateral call (BMWFW) 3. BMBF Danube call (BMBF/DLR) 4. JPI Urban Europe/EXPAND and Integration of Danube countries Input by EXPAND project (Arjan von Binsbergen/JPI UE) 5. COST Targeted Network “Danube-Link” (MINEDU, Daniel Acs) 6. Summary (BMBF/DLR) 7. Conclusions and next steps <p><i>by various speakers, all participants</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Moderation: MINEDU/Jaroslava Szudi</i></p>
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee break
15.30 – 17.00	<p>Part II : New joint funding actions (70 min)</p> <p>Discussion of new options for funding coordination</p> <p>Synergies between Horizon 2020 and ESIF for R&I activities in the Danube Region – the BayFOR approach <i>by Thomas Ammerl, BayFOR</i></p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Information points</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DTP Seed Money Facility 2. <i>by MINEDU (SK PAC7 team)</i>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Danube Transnational Programme: Results of Danube-INCO.NET Synergy Workshop (March 30, 2017 in Vienna) <i>by Felix Gajdusek, ZSI</i> 4. Enhancing Policy Dialogue in the Danube Region: Possible Joint Action through SFIC and the INT Service Facility <i>by BMBF/DLR</i> 4. Information about the upcoming calls and possibilities for cooperation in the Danube region within schemes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) ERASMUS+ <i>by SAAIC Slovakia</i> b) CEEPUS <i>by Elisabeth Sorantin (CEEPUS Secretary General)</i> c) MSCA: <i>by MINEDU on behalf of NCP H2020 (SK)</i> 5. Short information on possible cooperation with JRC <i>by Moritz Haller, JRC</i> <p><u>Part III : Conclusions and joint follow up activities (20 min)</u></p> <p>Discussion of next steps and distribution of tasks; next meeting</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Moderation: BMBF/Matthias Hack</i></p>
19.00	<p><i>Networking Dinner</i></p> <p><i>Venue: Hotel MERCURE Bratislava, Žabotova 2, 81104 Bratislava</i></p>

Annex II. List of participants in the 3rd DFCN Meeting

NAME	SURNAME	EMAIL	POSITION
Daniel	Ács	prezident@uksk.sk	observer / speaker
Thomas	Ammerl	ammerl@bayfor.org	BayFor
Heribert	Buchbauer	heribert.buchbauer@bmwfw.gv.at	PA7 SG and DFCN member
Bernd	Finger	bernd.finger@mwk.bwl.de	Baden-Württemberg PA 7 observer
Martin Felix	Gajdusek	gajdusek@zsi.at	Danube-INCO.NET (FP7); ResInfra@DR (DTP), ZSI - Centre for Social Innovation
Christian	Gollubits	christian.gollubits@bmwfw.gv.at	PA7 SG and DFCN substitute member
Matthias	Hack	Matthias.Hack@bmbf.bund.de	DFCN co-chair and member, PA7 SG observer
Moritz	Haller	Moritz.HALLER@ec.europa.eu	JRC representative (PA7 observer, WG4 - cooperation with JRC)
Renata	Hrubá	renata.hrubá@msmt.cz	Czech Republic PA 7 and DFCN observer
Alexandra	Junaskova	alexandra.junaskova@saaic.sk	Erasmus+ / speakers
Balázs	Kápli	balazs.kapli@nkfih.gov.hu	PA7 SG member
Ralf	König	ralf.koenig@ffg.at	DFCN member
Davor	Kozmus	Davor.Kozmus@gov.si	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of Slovenia
Ulrike	Kunze	Ulrike.Kunze@dlr.de	DFCN co-chair and member, PA7 SG observer
Anna	Lechner	Anna.Lechner@stmbw.bayern.de	PA7 SG member
Miroslav	Lovric	Miroslav.Lovric@mzo.hr	PA7 SG member
Ines	Marinkovic	marinkovic@zsi.at	ResInfra@DR (DTP), Thematic pole 2 coordinator, Centre for Social Innovation
Karol	Mičieta	karol.micieta@rec.uniba.sk	DRC Vice-President
Marion	Mienert	Marion.Mienert@dlr.de	DFCN co-chair and member, PA7 SG observer
Milena	Milonjić	milena.milonjic@mna.gov.me	Ministry of Science of Montenegro
Viktor	Nedović	viktor.nedovic@mpn.gov.rs	PA7 co-coordinator
Maria	Pavelekova	maria.pavelekova@saaic.sk	Erasmus+ / speakers
Jasmina	Pesic Jotic	jasmina.pesic@rect.bg.ac.rs	PA7 RS team
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Ľubica	Pitlová	lubica.pitlova@minedu.sk	PA7 SK team
Iveta	Rusinová	iveta.rusinova@minedu.sk	observer

Claudia	Singer	claudia.singer@pa10-danube.eu	PA10-VIE
Tomáš	Sokol	tomas.sokol@minedu.sk	PA7 SK team
Elisabeth	Sorantin	elisabeth.sorantin@ceepus.info	Central European Exchange Program for University Studies
Jaroslava	Szüdi	jaroslava.szudi@minedu.sk	PA7 SK team
Dijana	Štrbac	dijana.strbac@pupin.rs	PA7 RS team
Arjan	van Binsbergen	A.J.vanBinsbergen@tudelft.nl	Speaker