

EUSDR Joint PA 4 – PA7 11th Steering Group Meeting

Summary Minutes

25 May 2016

Historical building of the Slovak National Council

Bratislava, Slovakia

First part of this meeting was exceptionally organized as a joint meeting of the Priority Areas 4 and 7, since both priority areas co-ordinated by Slovakia decided to use the opportunity to organize their Steering group meetings back to back NCP-PAC Meeting and the 5th Financial Dialogue organised by the Slovak Presidency of EUSDR.

The main objective of the meeting was to inform each other (PA4 and PA7) on ongoing and planned activities of both Priority Areas and on important (flagship) projects. In the additional separate session of PA4 an overview was given about the on-going activities of the priority area on water quality (PA4) of the EUSDR, the ICPDR and the Sava Commission. Moreover, the new concept of strategic projects was introduced. The separate session of PA7 included the information about Interim Progress Reports on the implementation of projects financed by the EUSDR Technical Assistance, information on up-dated PA7 Targets, state of the art of the PA7 working groups and common forthcoming joint activities, followed by the discussions on labelling of PA7 Strategic Projects and on preparation of the PA7 Workshop during the 5th Annual forum of the EUSDR.

The meeting was hosted by the Slovak partners in Bratislava in the city centre (Historic Building of the Slovak National Council) at Župné square. Considering both priority areas, the representatives of all Danube countries except for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro participated.

Regarding the participation on behalf of PA4, eight countries were participating at the meeting – Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Moldova and Ukraine. The SK and HU PAC Teams, the ICPDR Secretariat, the Sava Commission, the GWP, European Commission, Danube Strategy Point representatives as well as project representatives were also present at the meeting.

Regarding the participation on behalf of PA7 – steering group representatives of the following countries were present – Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Moldova. The SK and RS PAC teams, some Working Group leaders and projects coordinators (DREAM, Danube Future, DO-IT, INT-VET, and Danube INCO.NET) also attended the meeting .

AGENDA

Morning section (Joint Meeting of PA4 + PA7)

09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30 – 10:00	Welcome by PACs7 (SK+RS), PACs4 (SK+HU), EC
10:00 – 10:15	Information by EC representative
10:15 – 10:45	Information by DSP representative – Strategic Projects
10:45 - 11:00	5th Annual Forum of in Bratislava - <i>Frantisek Kolocany</i>
11:00 – 11:15	EuroVienna Project Management – PA 10, Presentation on the new website EuroAccess Danube Region - <i>Julie Dalmoro</i>
11:15 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:30 – 12:00	Information by PA4 about implemented and upcoming activities
12:00 – 12:30	Information by PA7 about implemented and upcoming activities
12:30 – 13:30	Information by PA4-PA7 on ongoing and upcoming projects (appx. 30 minutes each PA) for PA7: <i>DREAM (SAS tbc.), Danube Future (University BOKU), DO-IT (University Maribor); INT VET (L.Pitlova); HINO (t.bc), Danube-INCO NET(Elke Dall), Multilateral call and COST (Martina Hartl) - every presentation max. 5 min.</i>
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch Break</i>

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by all priority coordinators – **Mr Vladimír Novák** (SK PAC 4), **Mr Štefan Chudoba** (SK PAC 7), **Mr László Perger** (HU PAC 4) and **Ms Dijana Štrbac** (RS PA7) on behalf of **Mr Viktor Nedović** (RS PAC 7) who was not able to take part in the meeting because of parallel obligations in Brussels.

2. Information by the European Commission

The next speaker was **Mr Frithjof Ehm** from DG Regio who besides the introductory words mentioned two specific events. The first was the meeting of DG Enviro and DG Regio which was organized in Brussels on 12 April 2016 where Ms Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper from PA 4 HU introduced the whole work of Priority Area 4 and 5. The main idea of the meeting was to settle the cooperation of both DGs in the context of EUSDR implementation. The second event mentioned by Mr Ehm was Sarajevo Technical Conference which was organized some weeks ago for the countries of Western Balkan related to environmental issues. The conference was understood as the support for non-member states of the European Union. **Ms Ann-Jasmin Krabatsch** from DG Regio offered a brief summary of PAC and NCP meeting which was held on 23 May 2016 in Bratislava.

3. Information by the Danube Strategy Point

Mr Matija Vilfan from the DSP presented the new concept of “strategic projects” which was developed by the DSP on the basis of suggestions and commitments of EUSDR Foreign Ministers. On March 2016 this concept was confirmed and finalised. The deadline for submission of the first round of projects was 30 April 2016. The purpose of strategic projects is to contribute to stronger and clearer strategic focus to the EUSDR activities, to encourage cooperation among the Danube states/regions, to establish strategic ground for projects/processes and to strengthen and improve communication. Strategic projects shall serve as pilot examples for possible strategic support for embedding projects in funding programs. Scope can vary from a single project to group of projects or the whole process (e.g. network or new cooperation mechanism). Strategic projects can be preparatory or investment projects and they have 5 assessment criteria. Identification and selection process is performed at 3 levels: PACs, DSP and NCPs. So far 30 projects have been submitted from 3 priority areas (PA 1a, PA 9 and PA10). The first screening has been done by the DSP, and the final list of the projects will be sent to NCPs for assessment and approval. Strategic projects are not an obligatory issue – PAs do not have to participate in this context. This concept is viewed as a tool to help to find financial sources. Their added value is better communication and flexibility of outputs as well as better reporting. If the project is labelled “strategic” there is an assurance that it will be given some extra points when it applies in the Danube

Transnational Programme, but only in the section “contribution to EUSDR targets and actions”. Regarding other financial mechanisms, there are no guarantees.

Mr Pascu asked what will be the relationship of this concept towards current flagship projects.

ICPDR asked for more details about the selection of strategic projects and how will the application process look like? **Mr. Liska** said there are many valuable contributions within PA4 and PA5, but he also asked about the specific purpose of the strategic project labelling, and whether the clearer criteria for labelling will be set.

Ms Hartl commented that PA7 has not submitted any strategic project because the added value of the concept has not been clear for PA7 and unfortunately still remains vague. She also raised questions how visibility could be increased if parallel processes of the PAs and the DSP exist, what would be the roles of coordinators, and who actually decides at the end whether the projects are strategic. **Mr Vilfan stated there** is no obligation to come up with a project, it is a tool that can be used and help to come to additional funding. In his opinion these projects will raise the visibility by getting together the tangible results of work of experts, contribute to the common targets or to renewal of the action plan, nonetheless the labelled project will get additional points by evaluation in DTP-Interreg programme or in other programmes, as well.

Mr Vilfan explained that it is up to the PAs to decide which projects will be submitted for strategic projects labelling. He also stated that if some flagship project can fulfil all strategic project criteria, it can apply and become EUSDR strategic project.

4. Information about the 5th Annual Forum hosted by Bratislava

Mr František Koločány (NCP SK) had the presentation about the upcoming Danube Strategy Annual Forum which will be held in Bratislava on 3-4 November 2016. It will have 2 specific topics – Water and Knowledge Society since Slovakia is involved in these issues within the Danube Strategy. On the first day morning there will be organized the meeting of ministers for research and innovation. Both days there will be 3 workshops running in parallel (6 workshops altogether – workshop 1: PA 7 knowledge society and related issues, workshop 2: PA 4 water, workshop 3: DG Regio governance and embedding, workshop 4: JRC, workshop 5: DTP second call, seed money facility and workshop 6: practical experience – Quo Vadis Danube?). After the workshops there will be awarding ceremony for young scientists which will be followed by closing plenary session.

5. Information about Euro Access

Ms Julie Dalmoro, PA 10 representative, introduced the new website called Euro Access. She clearly demonstrated how this website functions and why it is called a gateway to European Union funding. It is a really useful tool for searching funding area, type of funding, partners, etc.

6. Information about PA 4 and PA 7 activities

Ms Andrea Vranovská (PAC 4 SK Assistant) and **Mr László Perger** provided a detailed information about the activities of the Priority Area 4 according to the work plan. Next speakers were the representatives of the Priority Area 7 **Ms Ľubica Pitlová** and **Ms Dijana Štrbac** who provided the overview of current and upcoming PA7 activities.

Romanian observer (PA4) asked Mr. Perger whether all the papers he presented were circulated among SG members.

Mr Perger answered that all papers are regularly uploaded on the PA4 website.

Ms Vranovska added the all internal issues related to the PA4 activities will be discussed in the separate PA4 section after lunch.

7. Information by PA 4 – PA 7 on ongoing and upcoming projects

Mr László Perger provided the information about the project Joint Tisza which is a strategic project. The project was submitted to the 1st step of the 1st call of the Danube Transnational Programme in 2015. It passed within the 1st step and was submitted within the 2nd step of the 1st call in 2016. The content of the project includes overexploitation, water regime modification, climate change, contamination and growing flood events. The project has 10 project partners and 6 work packages.

Mr Péter Bákonyi (PA 5) informed about the Danube Sediments project. The project was also submitted to the 1st step of the 1st call of the Danube Transnational Programme in 2015. It was successful within the 1st step and was submitted within the 2nd step of the 1st call in 2016. It has 14 project partners including universities, research institutes, water management bodies, etc. There are many associated strategic partners as well. The project has 6 work packages. The project deliverable include database of metadata and guidelines on the best practices.

Mr Igor Liška from ICPDR introduced the Danube Floodplain Project. This project is contributing to 3 priority areas altogether – PA 4, PA 5 and PA 6. It is the continuation of the Danube Flood Risk Project. The project objective is to reduce the flood risk through flood plain restoration along the Danube River. Target groups include flood managers, river basin managers, etc. The estimated costs are 3 million Euro and the project duration is 3 years minimum. The project will be submitted in early November 2016 within the 2nd call of the Danube Transnational Programme which will be one step application.

Mr Raimund Mair informed about the Danube Sturgeon Project. The project proposal will be submitted within the 2nd call of the Danube Transnational Programme. The project focus is safeguarding sturgeons in the Danube Region. The project fulfils a specific shared EUSDR target of PA 4 and PA 6. The project objectives are the following: creation of transnational knowledge pool based on existing knowledge, strengthening the Danube Sturgeon Network, safeguarding critical and potential habitats, communication of results and public awareness and building up basin-wide partnership.

Mr Richard Müller (GWP) presented the information about the SANDANUBE project. The project is focused on sustainable sanitation in small settlements in the Danube Region.

Duration of the project is 8 months from 1 December 2015 till 31 July 2016. The total project budget is 24 000 Euro (Start contribution – 20 000 Euro). Expected results include bringing technical knowledge and waste water legislation to topical problems of small settlements.

The section about PA 7 ongoing and upcoming projects followed where the following projects were presented: Danube Future, DREAM, Do-IT, INT VET, and Danube – INCO.NET.

Ms Gertrud Haidvogel (BOKU Vienna) presented a project Danube:Future, which stands for a sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge for the interdisciplinary humanities. It targets all 19 countries in the Danube region and belongs to activities endorsed by the Danube Rectors' Conference and the Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference, which link 90 universities in the region, involving the largest possible institutional knowledge-producing and disseminating group of organizational actors. Ms Haidvogel introduced also the White Paper on research and capacity building needs, challenges and opportunities for the development of the sustainability-oriented knowledge society of the Danube River Basin (from July 2015) and other undertaken and newly planned activities within the project for 2016 and 2017.

Mr Kenderessy (Slovak Academy of Sciences) spoke about the project EUSDR Priority Area 7 flagship project DREAM (Danube River Research and Management). DREAM is a compound of 14 countries with the goal to improve the river focused research infrastructure and cooperation of research institutes in the Danube basin. Mr Kenderessy introduced the project main cooperative activities and its achievements.

Ms Lubica Pitlova presented an overview of the project INT-VET (Introduction of Elements of the Dual Vocational Education in the Slovak Republic) and the concept of the Danube Academy for Dual Education. The main goals and impacts of this project are fostering the national VET system reform, establishment of a Competence Centre for dual VET (Danube Academy), stronger and sustainable mobilisation of SMEs and companies for dual apprenticeships, and ongoing experience exchange for apprenticeships. The main aim of the Danube Academy should be education of teachers of technical subjects.

Mr Peter Vrtič (University of Maribor) introduced the main goals and achievements of the project DO IT (Danube Open Innovative Technologies), which are mainly to increase the number of high-tech companies and the competitiveness of SMEs in the region and creating new jobs with high added value and preventing brain drain. One of the successes mentioned is for example, a project titled DEMOLA awarded by prestigious Wharton Award for good practices in knowledge and technology transfer. At the moment also another project proposal is being developed for the DTC with the working title Made in Danube.

Ms Martina Hartl informed about the planned activities related to coordination of national funds within the Danube Region (mainly the Pilot Multilateral Call, which is planned to be opened later this year on the basis of opening up the Bilateral Governmental agreements on scientific and technological cooperation with 4 partner countries, i.e. Austria, Slovakia, Serbia and the Czech Republic) and on behalf of **Ms Elke Dall** presented shortly also the main outcomes of the project Danube INCO-NET. This project represents a coordination and support action funded under the 7th Framework Programme and addresses EUSDR in the field of research and innovation with the primary focus on PA7 and PA8 while also supporting the policy dialogue, the creation of networks, and providing analyses and support

to R&I activities. Concrete activities include the co-operation with the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, the development of the concepts for triple helix cooperation, improvement of R&I systems in non-EU Member States (upcoming workshop on performance related R&I funding), co-development of proposals for further cooperation, etc.

8. Individual Section of PA 7

AGENDA

Afternoon section (11th PA7 Steering Group Meeting)

14:30 – 14:50	Information on the PA7 Interim progress reporting on the implementation of projects financed by EUSDR TA <i>Jaroslava Szüdi, Dijana Štrbac</i>
14:50 – 15:00	Current status in the discussion about PA7 Targets, Roadmap and Action Plan - <i>Lubica Pitlova</i>
15.00 – 15.30	Report of the Working Groups - <i>WG leaders</i>
15:30 – 15:45	Discussion on the Labelling of PA7 Strategic Projects
15:45 - 16:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:00 – 16:10	Information on planned joint activities - <i>Martina Hartl</i>
16:10 – 16:20	Danube-INCO.NET Update - <i>Elke Dall</i>
16:20 – 16:30	Preparation of the PA7 Workshop during the 5 th Annual forum of the EUSDR - <i>Lubica Pitlova</i>
16:30 - 16:15	AOB, Conclusions

A. Information on the PA7 Interim progress reporting on the implementation of projects financed by EUSDR TA

Ms Dijana Strbac introduced a brief summary of the project: Coordination, Facilitation and Implementation of Common Activities Supporting Building Knowledge Society in the Danube Region – Serbia (KSocSr) awarded by the EUSDR TA grant for the period 09/2015-12/2016. The project main aim is to support technical management of all activities and processes (organization and active participation at meetings, workshops, conferences, and developing relevant materials) that are part of PA7 main objectives and milestones resulting

from EUSDR Action Plan and PA7 Roadmap updated and agreed by PA7 SG. The interim progress report for period 09/2015 – 02/2016 was mainly focused on presenting the outcomes of the following activities: 1. Technical management of PAC activities and SG coordination , 2. Organization and support to Working Groups, 3. Supporting common R&I projects and scaling up funding mechanisms, 4. Promotion of PA7 actions/targets & Strengthening collaboration.

Ms Jaroslava Szüdi similarly prepared her presentation about the interim progress achieved in the project: Implementation, Coordination and Facilitation of Common Activities Supporting Building Knowledge Society in the Danube Region – Slovakia (Know SoS). The interim progress report was mainly focused on the outcomes achieved in these activities: facilitating of a stable, effective, and innovative governance system for PA7, establishing a well operating Funding network, supporting common R&I projects taking into account countries smart specialisation; and strengthening cooperation among education and research institutions and industry in the Danube region.

Ms Strbac and **Ms Szüdi** pointed in their presentations at the main successes as well as weaknesses observed within the interim progress period. From the successes can be mentioned fulfillment of the planned milestones and well-functioning teams of both PA7 coordinators. In contrary as for the weaknesses were presented not equal commitment/active participation of all countries to the EUSDR PA7 and not equal policy-level representation among members of the SG preventing some major decisions to be taken.

B. Current status in the discussion about PA7 Targets, Roadmap and Action Plan

Ms Strbac prepared a presentation regarding the Revised PA7 targets including short introductory background information from the European Council and Commission reports related to the achievement of targets, and the need for their update.

During the PAC meetings of 21 March 2015 and 8 May 2015, the issue of relevance of correct targets was raised in relation to the selection criteria of the DTP, referring specifically to the EUSDR targets in the assessment of project proposals, with a view to give extra points to proposals which implement the EUSDR.

At the "Floating Conference" (common NC & PAC Meeting on 24-25 June 2015) it was decided that all EUSDR PAs will assess the respective targets in view of proposing adaptation or revision. The new targets shall be concrete-attainable-realistic and also their use in terms of monitoring the implementation progress of the EUSDR shall be ensured.

On the basis of the Commission recommendations and several meetings, discussions and adoption procedures, the newly revised targets of the PA7 (endorsed by the NCs on 23 May 2016) are stated as follows:

- 1) To increase the effectiveness of investment in R&I through establishment of a funding coordination network aiming to initiate a minimum of 2 dedicated EUSDR activities each year (e.g. joint calls; joint strategic project proposals (within a multilateral framework)).

- 2) To increase the number of EPO and PCT patent applications filed from the Danube Region by 20% by 2020
- 3) To enhance regional research and education co-operation to reach 20% of academic mobility within the region by 2020.
- 4) To increase the annual output of co-publications in the region by 15 % by 2020
- 5) To develop RIS3 in all Danube countries (or their regions) by 2020.

She also presented three PA7 Actions closely related to these targets and stated that there was no proposal to make changes in PA7 actions. However, the process of updating EUSDR actions is separated from the process of updating targets and it will be finalised by the end of 2016. The reason is to leave the door open for a more thorough revision of the Action Plan when needed, possibly as an outcome of the EC report on the implementation of macro-regional strategies due by end 2016 as well as the outcome of the monitoring lead by the DSP.

Ms Pitlova introduced a short presentation concerning proposed milestones related to the newly adopted targets and opened the discussion towards setting the relevant milestones, which may lead towards the fulfillment of the revised targets.

There were no concrete outputs from the discussion. **The participants concluded that a longer time for consideration in this case would be needed, and the PA teams will approach participants in a written procedure.**

However the main questions that came out of the discussion were:

- 1) Will it still be possible to make amendments in the new targets?
- 2) What exactly do we want to achieve by co-publication and co-patenting? How are we going to evaluate/analyse?
- 3) Is there a need to start a new WG/study on the targets implementation?

C. Working Group Reports

Ms Ivanka Popovic (University of Belgrade, Serbia) was apologized by Ms Strbac and was asked for a short update on WG 1 activities on Higher Education and Mobilities via e-mail, unfortunately we remained without response.

Mr Zdravko Kacic (University of Maribor, Slovenia) presented results of the WG on Information and Communication Technologies – a horizontal priority in the Danube Region. Mr Kacic introduced a project titled DO-IT 1.0 - Fostering a symbiotic open innovation framework for improving conditions for innovation in the Danube region which is now in the second phase of evaluation process in the DTP and partnership in PA8 Flagship project Danube Transfer Centre coordinated by Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum. He highlighted the importance of a symbiotic transnational innovation ecosystem integrating all actors of quadruple helix model, as without active cooperation and communication it is hardly possible to achieve any goals.

Ms Martina Hartl (BMWFV, Austria) explained progress of the establishing of a new structure titled Danube funding coordination network – a so called follower of the DRRIF WG, which will however not serve as a PA7 WG any longer and its terms of reference are

now just being prepared. The main intention is to establish a stable professional structure coordinating and synchronising national efforts in the Danube region to foster multilateral cooperation leading to the implementation of concrete joint funding actions for research and innovation activities.

Mr Stefan Chudoba (SK PAC7) presented the most important outcomes of the cooperation of JRC with PA7. As one of the biggest successes can be considered participation of Moldova, Serbia and Baden-Wuerttemberg in the S3 platform and their way towards a Smart Specialisation Strategy. Mr Chudoba further introduced the JRC Danube Reference Data and Service Infrastructure (DRDSI) evolved in consolidation and enrichment of the DRDSI infrastructure; outreach activities to increase the visibility and value added of the DRDSI in the region and long-term sustainability of the DRDSI infrastructure. Another success is a positive evaluation of the project proposal Open Danube: Capacity Building Towards Transnational Data Sharing, in the first call for proposals of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (DTP). It represents an important milestone and confirms the interest of the Danube community for a smooth hand-over of the JRC work to the Danube Region. Mr. Chudoba also mentioned that the JRC hosted the winners of last years' "Young Danubius Award" at the JRC sites in Ispra and Seville.

From the forthcoming activities and events can be mentioned:

- June 2016 - JRC aims to launch a "Collaborative Doctoral Studies" call that will give students the opportunity to do parts of their research at the JRC
- 8-9 July– Kick-off of the Science meets Regions concept during the EU Regional Summit in Bratislava
- 4-5 July - How to build Smart Energy Regions (with a strong participation from the Danube Macro-Region, Karlsruhe)
- 1-3 September - Science and Policy interface summer school, JRC Ispra
- 26 September - Science meets Parliament (together also with PA10), Vienna
- 11 October - JRC Annual Lecture & launch of the Knowledge Centre for territorial policies, Brussels
- 3-4 November - during the EUSDR Annual Forum JRC contributes to the workshop on knowledge management and water

Mr Adrian Pascu (National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, Romania) introduced the results of the WG on Research and Innovation. He pointed out organization of a workshop in Bucharest on 9 June 2016 on Innovation and Technology Transfer. He also mentioned that the ESFRI Roadmap 2016 was launched on 10 March 2016, in Amsterdam. The ESFRI Roadmap identifies the new Research Infrastructures of pan-European interest corresponding to the long term needs of the European research communities, covering all scientific areas, regardless of possible location.

D. Discussion on the Labelling of PA7 Strategic Projects

Mr Matija Vilfan (DSP) briefly presented new concept of EUSDR strategic projects aiming at contributing to stronger and clearer strategic focus of the activities and efforts undertaken within the EUSDR PAs, supporting and further encouraging joint cooperation between EUSDR states and/or regions, which are strategically important for the Danube region, and

establishing the ground to further consider the strategic projects within the revision process of EUSDR targets, actions, milestones and roadmaps.

Ms Martina Hartl (AT) asked about the selling point, purpose and attractiveness of these projects.

Mr Mayer-Frei (BW) asked whether these projects represent a tool or an offer, or whether they are mandatory.

Mr Matija Vilfan explained that strategic projects are not an obligatory issue – PAs do not have to participate in this context. This concept is viewed as a tool to help to find financial sources. Their added value is better communication and flexibility of outputs as well as better reporting. Nevertheless if the project is labelled “strategic” there is an assurance that it will be given some extra points for the section “contribution to EUSDR actions and targets” when it applies in the Danube Transnational Programme.

Ms Martina Hartl doubted that the concept of strategic projects is voluntary and asked whether there is a plan to streamline the approval of strategic projects with the timeline for the next DTP Call.

Mr Vilfan replied that they do not consider streamlining and stated that these projects could also serve as pilot examples for desired future changes, e.g. possible strategic support for embedding them into funding programs.

Ms Lubica Pitlova (SK) asked about the roles of PACs within the concept of the strategic projects.

Ms Dijana Strbac (RS) added that it would be good to have a document clearly stating the benefits of the strategic projects which could be presented to potential applicants for strategic project label.

Ms Lubica Pitlova stated that the current document on strategic projects is not a very user friendly document.

Ms Elke Dall (AT) asked who decides and on the basis of what criteria whether the projects are strategic.

Mr Matija Vilfan stated that the strategic projects are projects of high quality and they could demonstrate the progress achieved in implementing the EUSDR and could strengthen and improve the communication on the EUSDR strategic focus. Strategic projects shall serve as pilot examples for possible strategic support for embedding projects in funding programs. Strategic projects can be preparatory or investment projects and they have 5 assessment criteria. Identification and selection process is performed at 3 levels: PACs, DSP and NCPs.

Ms Lubica Pitlova asked how many projects were labelled in the DTP call.

Mr Matija Vilfan explained that so far 30 projects altogether have been submitted from totally 3 priority areas (PA 1a, PA 9 and Pa10), but 13 were returned. The projects will be evaluated and by the end of September 2016 they will have been sent to NCPs for assessment.

Mr Matija Vilfan apologized for cutting the discussion and gave all participants possibility to send any comment related to this issue until 30 May 2016.

E+F Information on planned joint activities + Danube INCO.NeT update

Due to the limited time and duplicated information presented already during the first joint section with PA4 we have skipped this agenda points and **Ms Elke Dall** will keep the members updates via mail and regular newsletters.

E. Preparation of the PA7 Workshop during the 5th Annual forum of the EUSDR - Lubica Pitlova

Ms Pitlova showed to the participants the preliminary agenda of the 5th Annual forum and opened the discussion to the Workshop no. 1 (Knowledge society, ...) during the first day of the forum on 3 November 2016 and Workshop no. 3 (Quo vadis Danube?) during the second day of the forum, i.e. 4 November 2016, which are closely linked to the activities of PA7.

These workshops will be discussed more in detail during the next week's meeting with the Slovak NC-team. The SG members will be informed about the ideas of the workshops and their overall organization and will be asked for comments and feedback in written form.

F. AOB – Closing remarks

Ms Pitlova thanked on behalf of both PA7 coordinators to all the participants for their active involvement in the SG meeting, appreciated the fruitful cooperation with all stakeholders in the implementation of PA4 activities and stressed the need for active networking in the performance of PA7 activities within the roadmap.

Ms Strbac has expressed hope to see all participants at the 12th SG meeting in the autumn 2016 which is planned to be held in Belgrade.

The Slovak team also invited everybody to the 5th Annual Forum on 3-4 November 2016 held in Bratislava.

ANNEX I. Points for follow-up activities and clarification (suggested by Austrian + Baden-Württemberg SG members)

1) Labelling of Strategic projects

As a number of questions have been raised during the meeting that have not been clarified completely a further dialogue with the DSP is clearly needed (main responsibility of PACs).

Suggested next steps:

- Survey among the SG meeting representatives if they want PA7 to take part in the process of labelling strategic projects – this is necessary to then decide on further steps and responsibilities (to be organized by the PACs ASAP)

- If PA7 wants to take part in the process and as the labelling of PAs and the DSP will co-exist how can we make sure that the flagship projects of PA7 can get a “strategic project” status? (dialogue PACs with DSP and work within SG PA7)
- A better explanation of the responsibility of the SGs and PAs in the process. Who at the end decides what “a strategic project” looks like? At the moment it seems that the DSP returns projects to the PAs and pre-select what the National Coordinators then approve? (dialogue PACs with DSP)
- If necessary establishment of an ad-hoc Working Group within PA7 to deal with the labelling (PACs and SG PA7)
- Communication of the deadlines and organizational procedures to the SG PA7 (by the PACs)

2) Working Groups

As the different Working Groups show a diverging level of activity a concrete outline of activities of the different Working Groups supporting the new targets set should be envisaged. This should also include proposals for monitoring the new targets and potential progress in this respect (Working Group Leaders, PACs – until the next Steering Group Meeting).

3) Annual Forum in Bratislava

The discussion has shown that the time-frame for activities related to PA7 is quite short. A specific session on dual education is planned in the afternoon of Day1 and this will include the activities of PA7 (Flagship project “Introduction of Elements of Vocational Education and Training in Slovak Republic”).

SG members argued for clearly focusing the remaining time - that also has to be shared with PA8 and PA9 - e.g. by finding a common motto. (PAC from Slovakia in dialogue and with input from the SG PA7 – before the summer break).