

## EUSDR PA7 17<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting

11 June 2019 | Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research,  
Minoritenplatz 5, A-1010 Vienna, Austria

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### Minutes

The 17<sup>th</sup> Steering Group (SG) Meeting of Priority Area 7 (PA7) was hosted by the Austrian Steering Group members of the PA7 and took place in the premises of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research on 11 June 2019.

The agenda of the meeting and the list of participants are presented in annexes I and II.

Presentations from the meeting were sent to all participants and can be found at the PA7 official webpage on the following link:

<https://www.danubeknowledgesociety.eu/files/directory/35>

#### **Main objectives of the meeting were:**

1. To inform participants about the recent EUSDR PA7 activities and give information on the planned events and calls for project financing
1. To present the information by the new Danube Strategy Point
2. To discuss the revision of the PA7 Action Plan and structure more concretely its future implementation
3. To present the progress achieved within PA7 working groups
4. To inform about the implementation status of strategic projects submitted within the first DTP call (TP1 – EcoInn Danube; TP2 – Resinfra@DR, TP3 – Excellence in ReSTI, TP9 – EDU-LAB) and PA7 flagship projects Danube:Future and DREAM
5. To discuss bilaterally the possibilities of future cooperation with Resinfra@DR project participants

#### **Welcome address on behalf of Priority area coordinators; BMBWF - the host institution; European Commission and the Danube Strategy Point**

The meeting was opened by **Ms Lubica Pitlova and Mr Viktor Nedovic**, PA7 coordinators. They welcomed all SG members and stakeholders from the region – especially Resinfra@DR project partners, and nonetheless expressed thank to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research for organizational support and hosting of the

meeting. Ms Pitlova highlighted the importance of the meeting regarding the finalisation of PA7 actions, as SG members have a chance to contribute with their concrete suggestions to the future implementation of the strategy.

**Mr Heribert Buchbauer**, Director of the Department for International Research Cooperation at the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) welcomed all participants on behalf of the host institution. Mr Buchbauer also appreciated the visibly growing R&D&I cooperation on macroregional level and mentioned the preparation of the second call on multilateral S&T cooperation in the Danube region coordinated and supported by BMBWF.

A message on behalf of **EC DG JRC (Prof. Dr Miroslav Vesković)** was presented by Ms Jaroslava Szudi and can be found in **Annex III**.

**Ms Mihaela Florea**, Pillar officer in the new Danube Strategy Point (DSP), also welcomed the participants on behalf of DSP team and thanked for invitation to the meeting. She noted that more information and the news will follow during her presentation.

A Tour de table followed after the official welcome notes.

### **PA7 update on activities and future plans**

#### **Progress Report (01.01.2018-31.12.2018) by Dijana Strbac**

Ms Strbac presented DTP PA7 project activities on the basis of the submitted project progress report. A brief overview about the project concept, objectives and methodological approach was introduced and further the annual results per work packages were presented. The main achievements were summarized as follows:

- Providing support to the SG members (organisation of 2 SG meetings); organisation of one capitalisation workshop with TP 2; enhancing the visibility of PA7 and EUSDR by drafting the PA7 communication strategy; organisation of a COST-Connect event; supporting networking and involvement of PA7 stakeholders.
- Drafting 2 Policy Papers with a high political impact: 1) Position paper on reducing remuneration gap of researchers within the next Framework programme for Research and Innovation Horizon Europe; 2) the joint proposal „Better embedding of the EUSDR’s prosperity pillar into suitable funding instruments within the new MFF“.
- Launching of an online public consultation on the Revision of PA7 actions.

- Supporting DFCN activities (continuation of the multilateral call for mobility between 4 DR countries and France in 2019); cooperation with other priority areas (in particular PA4, PA8 and PA9); cooperation with 4 thematic poles of the DTP Capitalisation Strategy.

### **Information on past events and upcoming activities by Jaroslava Szudi & Barbora Hoffmannova**

Ms Szudi and Ms Hoffmannova prepared a presentation informing SG members about past events and planned activities mentioning also other important news, such as DSP webinar on communication strategy or PA7 involvement in WG on innovation and technology transfer under PA8. From the past events main information from the NC+PAC meeting in Vienna (December 2018, Vienna); INTERACT macroregional meeting (January 2019, Bucharest) and another NC+PAC meeting (May 2019, Bucharest) were shared. From the future activities the new DTP PAC Call as well as Capitalisation Call were introduced and a short information about the 8th EUSDR Annual forum was disseminated.

### **Information on the activities of DSP new**

Ms Florea informed participants about the main topics of her presentation, which were related to the EUSDR Action Plan, Evaluation and monitoring of the strategy, Communication tools, Capacity building and other relevant information and invitations.

#### **1. Action Plan Revision**

Ms Florea presented the timeline of the revision process starting in July last year, when the main needs of revision by priority areas were identified, followed by the long lasting stakeholder consultations and preparing first consolidated inputs in January this year. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of the consolidated input was sent to NCs for endorsement in May 2019. Final version of the Consolidated Input will be sent to DG REGIO in order to be used in the process of drafting the new AP by the EC. The new Action Plan should be approved by all ministers responsible for EUSDR at the ministerial meeting in October 2019.

#### **2. Evaluation / Monitoring**

**Evaluation** of the Strategy will be executed by an external provider. On the basis of the public procurement process taking place from 20 February until 4 March DSP received 3 applications. The winning organisation was [METIS Ltd](#) and the evaluation report shall be circulated by mid-June 2019. Ms Florea informed participant about the ESPON workshop “*From evidence to action: territorial trends and challenges identified in the ESPON projects. Fostering policy coherence in the Danube Region*” which took place on 4th April 2019 in Vienna.

As for the **monitoring** there will be a new Reporting tool for PAs & SGs with including regular project based reports to the DTP (technically oriented) and a biannual report to the Commission (strategically oriented). The main elements of the new monitoring systems will remain: developments in the reporting period, policy impact, governance, projects and funding, opportunities and challenges. The new elements are: advocacy and impact on law, capitalisation, institutional changes, coordination and cooperation across funding sources, stronger engagement of the SG Members.

### 3. Communication

The **Communication plan** of the new DSP was approved during the NCs meeting taking place on 14-15 February 2019 in Bucharest. Prior to its approval there were numerous discussions of its draft versions with PACs and NCs, and one webinar on objectives and target groups of the Strategy (March 2019). The **Communication Strategy of the EUSDR** will be finalized with the support of an external expert by the end of 2019.

Ms Florea introduced also the **Narrative for EUSDR** which is “the future past”; the EUSDR is not a funding tool, but it can draw a picture of the future of the Danube Region in its social, environmental and economic cohesion. Thus, the creation of a narrative of the strategy and by highlighting success-stories can and should have a positive impetus on the national and local politics. A common narration should be on one hand the first step to reach out to all political stakeholders – European, national, regional and local likewise. On the other hand, the narrative must also be able to reach the people of the Region through positive pictures that a vast number of target groups can relate to in a positive way and can identify with.

Furthermore Ms Florea explained the usage of **the EUSDR Online & Social media: [official website](#); [twitter](#); [facebook](#)** – with a regular weekly **story campaigns**; [LinkedIn](#); and [EUSDR-Calendar](#).

As for the statistical overview, when the new DSP took over the administration of the EUSDR social platforms the situation was the following: **Facebook page**: from 2615 followers in January 2019 to 2974 followers in May 2019. ***This week story campaign*** attracts lots of people and increase visibility online (from PA7 strategic projects **RESINFRA@DR** project was promoted in May 2019, the next PA7 related project will follow on 31 July 2019). The number **of twitter page** followers raised from 891 followers in January 2019 to 997 followers in May 2019. A new page was created on **LinkedIn platform**, which has gathered almost 1294 connections in 5 months of activity.

Regarding the situation of the **current provision of EUSDR website and PAs single websites**, Ms Florea informed that there is relaunch of main page and PAs-sites planned for this year.

#### 4. Capacity Building

Ms Florea introduced the main findings based on the results from the PACs questionnaire on **capacity building**. The topics considered as the most relevant by PACs were the following: Capitalization of results and identification of synergies; Enhancing cooperation and workflow; Communication and storytelling; Strategic Planning; and Approaching further stakeholders.

The idea of a “Tool kit” supporting implementation of the strategy in the non-EU countries in view of the next MFF was presented. The DSP counts with organization of internships for non-EU participants at the DSP offices (\*the costs have to be supported by the employer of the “intern”; and the request for internship and the final report will be sent for information to the NCs.)

#### 5. Miscellaneous

During the last point Ms Florea informed that the EUSDR Implementation Report 2016 – 2018 is being prepared. The report will be focused **on major developments and achievements with a particular focus on PAs. The key elements of the report are General milestones & evolvments; Developments at PA level** (*consolidated synthesis of 1-2 pages including information on Cooperation & policy embedding, Highlights and Projects – implementation & monitoring*); **Cross-cutting cooperation; Conclusions & Outlook and Annex including Project Sheets and Target / Activity Matrix.**

Moreover, Ms Florea invited participants to the **8<sup>th</sup> EUSDR Annual Forum**, which will take place on 27-28 June 2019 at the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest. The motto of this year’s forum is *“Building cohesion for a shared prosperity in the Danube Region”*, and the main topics will be: connectivity and regional mobility, economy, ICT, environment, tourism, links between Macro-regional strategies, ESIF programs and the new cohesion policy.

As for the **thematic sessions**, participants will get acquainted about:

- Increasing European convergence and competitiveness through EUSDR
- Promoting interconnectivity for improving European regional mobility throughout EUSDR
- Developing joint strategic projects: Fusing transportation and digitalization with innovative cultural and touristic trails
- Boosting efficiency in connecting EUSDR key stakeholders and the civil society in the Process of revising the EUSDR Action Plan
- The present and future roles of the Danube Transnational Programme in the Danube region

- EU mainstream and operational programs and EUSDR objectives under the auspices of the new Cohesion Policy
- The future of EU macro-regional strategies in the post-2020 framework

**And in the case of side events, participants can choose from the following:**

- Danube Participation Days
- Exhibition for the presentation of best practices and success stories of transnational cooperation in the Danube Region
- B2B Session
- Workshops on the Capitalization of the Interreg DTP projects
- Public consultations on the Revision Process of the Action Plan of EUSDR
- The 18th meeting of the Steering Group of the PA3
- The Workshop “The Working Community of the Danube Regions”
- PA8 Workshop on competitiveness and clusters in the Danube region

During the following discussion Mr Gajdusek raised the question on the future consistence and dynamic of the current working groups. How the working group will continue in the framework and in compliance with the new actions, what changes are already foreseen, and how will be the membership in working groups solved (will they be rather close, or open to everyone)?

Ms Florea answered that DSP runs as a project following the rules of the Danube Transnational Programme, with clear activities foreseen the Application Form. The decision regarding the working groups should be made by the PACs in consultation with the SG members. The technical level of coordination and overall implementation will be on PAC teams, who need to carefully consider on the future continuation. She also mentioned that up to now some PAs work on the basis of very active working groups, unlike some others working without working groups. If requested, DSP will discuss with PACs the improvement of their activities and PACs will be asked to propose strategic projects contributing to the future EUSDR Action Plan implementation.

Ms Hartl suggested a similar story telling approach (e.g. once a month) could be used also on PA7 social media and volunteered to contribute.

Ms Szudi added that the plan is to use various PA7 channels on a more active basis and motivated also other participants to contribute. PAC team will be ready to help with dissemination of information and raise awareness on our activities.

**[Information on the revision process of the EUSDR Action Plan – from the PA7 perspective](#)**

Ms Pitlova prepared for participants an overview about the **development of new actions related to PA7**. PA7 during the whole revision process reminded that the key element of the strategy is and should remain coordination by encouraging increase in the level and quality of network activities; strengthening the existing regional and interregional cooperation and fostering new cooperation. The new Action plan needs to be realistic, based on the existing experience, reflecting good practice and addressing the concrete identified needs in the region. Furthermore the character of the PA is horizontal therefore the knowledge aspects should be taken into account when drafting the new actions within all 12 PAs.

In the next part Ms Pitlova explained the overall process that PA7 had been following since June 2018, i.e. the main focus of the past SG meetings was concentrated on PA7 action plan revision and discussion of the new actions; apart from that PA7 launched a public online consultation and reached its stakeholders via direct e-mails, EUSDR webpages, social media, DTP thematic poles and Danube INCO.NET database. On the basis of the obtained results priority area coordinators prepared a consolidated input on behalf of PA7 stakeholders that was sent to the DSP and further distributed to all PACs, NCs and the EC. All SG members were informed about the finalized input and asked for their comments per e-mail.

Ms Pitlova briefly summarized the identified new actions and challenged all participants to the brainstorming sessions on the practical implementation of these actions in the future.

**The new structure of PA7 actions and activities related to them** was proposed as follows:

**Action 1: To promote national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in research and development, in research areas specific for the Danube region**

- ▶ Danube Funding and Coordination Network - platform for experience exchange and coordination of investment in R&I activities

As proposed concrete steps within this action were mentioned **organization of regular meetings and workshops on various topics** (e.g. on seed money facility financing, raising awareness on gender aspects in R&D&I) and organization of joint calls supporting the R&D&I activities in the Danube region.

Ms Csapo representing the Danube Schools pointed on the low chance in getting funding for smaller research projects with smaller budget, since EU focuses mainly on development of big projects in which universities of applied sciences do not succeed and are disadvantaged.

**Action 2: To promote participation of Danube countries in EU R&I Programmes in particular in Horizon Europe**

- ▶ Monitoring of participation of Danube countries in EU R&I Programmes

- ▶ Trainings supporting researchers in project development
- ▶ Organization of informative workshop(s) on Horizon Europe and its particular work programmes
- ▶ Networking events supporting project preparation and participation in joint partnership initiatives (such as BIOEAST)

Ms Hartl cautioned that there are already lots of trainings on H2020, and these activities of PA7 may be overlapping with H2020 and Horizon Europe NCP network activities. She suggested, that practicalities of such trainings need to be discussed more in detail and properly.

Moreover Ms Hartl asked for additional information on the past COST connect workshop to find out if within PA7 there would be enough potential for preparing a Danube region COST proposal.

Mr Nedovic – as PA7 coordinator, as well as COST scientific committee member answered that there is a potential for preparation of top-down projects, and added other schemes and platforms should be used and new partnerships supported.

Ms Popovic explained that there exist various trainings on H2020 and project writing exist, however not enough efforts is still invested on young researchers in the region – therefore workshops with a focus on young and inexperienced researchers should be supported.

### **Action 3: To strengthen cooperation among universities, research organisations and SMEs in the DR**

- ▶ Cooperation between quadruple helix actors
- ▶ Cooperation with DRC
- ▶ Danube academies of sciences
- ▶ Involving of business sector and regional municipalities
- ▶ Developing joint programmes, mobility schemes, common research projects, exchange of best practices

Ms Hartl noted there may be overlaps with PA8 activities, and more details should be discussed in order to create synergies together with PA8 coordination team. JRC potential should not be forgotten and its representatives should be involved when planning the future activities.

Mr Kraljic complemented Ms Hartl that there will surely be possibilities for a stronger cooperation with PA8. He also mentioned that leader of PA8 WG Digital Danube will be actively contributing to the activities of PA7 WG on ICT.



#### **Action 4: To increase awareness and visibility of science and innovation in the DR**

- ▶ To inform the public about the role of science in life
- ▶ Make science more attractive (notably to young people)
- ▶ Increase society's appetite for innovation, and open up further research and innovation activities
- ▶ Promotion of the Danube region as a smart region at different foras

Apart from the suggested general activities, SG members mentioned a very good medial coverage of Danubius Young Scientists Awards; Danube Participation Days, and asked DSP for a possibility to filter out concrete contacts from their database e.g. in order to approach concrete focus group to prepare a project proposal, citizen science activities, etc.

Ms Florea agreed that within the new DSP Communication strategy more targeted approach for each PA needs to be taken into consideration.

Mr Schaeffer suggested that there is also the potential of using the database of all awarded Danubius Young Scientists. The alumni database could be used to investigate how the career of the awarded participants was developed, whether and how they continued in their research activities, etc.

Ms Hartl added that specific trainings on MSCA and ERC proposal writing could be useful.

Ms Krivjanska complemented that promotion of possibilities for employment in science would be of a good use, as there is generally a low awareness within general public in our countries.

Mr Marcic mentioned more effective usage of a power of social media, as well as potential of LinkedIn and Research Gate databases. Apart from that he mentioned that this SG meeting is his first one and recommended to PA7 that the information should be distributed in a more understandable way to different stakeholders.

#### **Action 5: To support exchange of information and experience sharing for the purpose of preparation of future strategic R&I documents applicable in the new programming period**

- ▶ Better integration of the Danube region into ERA
- ▶ Stimulate the constructive use of regional diversity by avoiding uniformity and duplication in regional investment goals
- ▶ Develop critical mass to tackle major common challenges
- ▶ Contribute to the fulfilment of SDGs (e.g. by development of STI road maps based on RIS3 methodologies)

Mr Nedovic mentioned that the main aim of this action should be focused on promotion of RIS3 methodology. He added there was lately a workshop organized in UN, and at the next meeting he will inform SG members on more concrete actions.

Ms Hartl stated that there may be an option to prepare a dedicated knowledge sharing workshop on this issue (sharing the methodology), as it seems of interest for many of participants.

Ms Popovic mentioned that the SDGs are implemented in the mission of all Danube region universities.

Mr Kraljic in general agreed with the proposed action and its steps and added that PA7 should actively cooperate with Danube Region research agencies and organisations supporting mobilities for a better integration within ERA.

#### **Action 6: To promote horizontal cooperation in S&T across all PAs and other MRSs**

- ▶ Participation in joint activities across PAs
- ▶ Support of cross-fertilisation activities among macroregions
- ▶ Promotion of best practices exchange and capitalisation activities between projects

Mr Nedovic noted that concrete activities focused on promotion of Open Science, Open Data and Open Access should be suggested and supported.

Mr Gajdusek suggested that more focus should be paid to the finishing projects and their sustainability within (but not only) PA7 framework.

Other SG members commented that more use of H2020 projects, DTP projects, but also projects from Western-Balkan platform should be investigated, pro-active approach in this sense will be needed and afterwards more structured strategy should be adopted.

The topic of sustainable research infrastructure and stronger research capacities in the Danube region was raised by several SG members as well. Romanian participants representing the Resinfra@DR project consortia pointed out a customized database/roadmap of research infrastructures, which can be used in other countries.

Due to the time limitations participants were asked by Ms Pitlova to send more comments, feedback, suggestions or recommendations regarding the new PA7 actions in written form to PA7 coordinators within next 2 weeks (by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019).

#### **Information on PA7 Working Groups**

## **WG 1 HEI and mobilities + cooperation with DRC**

Working Group 1 on Higher Education and Mobilities was represented by Prof. Ivanka Popovic and Dr Sebastian Schaffer. Prof. Popovic prepared a presentation on the recent activities within WG, including 1) participation at the final conference of DTP EDU-LAB project named "Better Chances for Young People in the Danube Region" (May 2019, Zagreb), where DRC was one of the associated partners; 2) comparative analysis of co-publications within the Danube Region based on the WoS data; 3) news on mobilities; 4) information on Open Science in the Danube Region and 5) information on 16th DRC Summer School 2019 focused on Regional Co-operation, titled "Falling walls - moving borders - common house Europe?", taking place from 30 June till 7 July 2019 at the University of Zagreb.

## **WG 2 RIS3 development + cooperation with JRC**

Mr Viktor Nedović informed about the progress in drafting smart specialization strategies in the Danube region countries. Montenegro is in the most advanced phase. They have drafted the strategy and the public debate will be soon organized. Serbia has organized the last workshop of the entrepreneurial discovery process (EDP) on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2019. From March to May, Serbia organized 15 EDP workshops and 123 organisations were involved in the process. All results of the workshops are summarized. The next steps are establishing monitoring and evaluation system, and after that drafting the strategy. So far, 2 sources of financial support to the RIS3 implementation in Serbia are defined: 1) Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (it will have integrated lines for RIS3 implementation) and 2) Innovation Fund (funding priorities of the RIS3). Republic in Moldova is organizing the EDP at the moment. Ukraine is again active in this process. Currently, they are organizing several workshops in cooperation with JRC.

## **WG 3 DFCN**

Working Group 3 on Danube Funding Coordination Network was represented by its Serbian and Austrian co-chairs. Ms Hartl briefly informed participants about the readiness to launch the second Call on Multilateral scientific and technological cooperation in the Danube Region supporting researchers from 4 Danube Region countries (AT, CZ, RS and SK) + France to work together through supporting the research mobility and to carry out joint research projects, and thus contributing to the scientific advancement in the Danube region.

Apart from this Ms Hartl noted that there is a plan to organize a common joint meeting of WG3 later this year to discuss the possibilities on fostering regional cooperation in R&D&I.

## **WG 4 ICT**

Working Group 4 on Information and Communication Technologies was represented by Dr Mladen Kraljic and Prof. Zoran Ren from University of Maribor. Mr Kraljic reported on activities related to participation at relevant events and fostering already existing cooperation on projects related to PA7 and PA8 activities. He also mentioned synergies & possible cross-fertilisation between PA7 and PA8 via active involvement of PA7 within PA8 WG on Innovation and Technology Transfer. Nonetheless he informed on the recent success of Prof. Zen - Slovenia's supercomputer became part of EuroHPC network Society. Projects such as these are a great way to show how advanced Europe is and what potential it holds. Czech Republic and Bulgaria from the Danube Region are also represented. These chosen centres will provide support to the research community and industry in developing know-how and knowledge applications in medicine, advanced materials and climate change combat.

As agreed Mr Kraljic sent to PA7 coordination team additionally the following written contribution regarding the next steps and plans within WG on ICT:

- Transfer of WG coordination to Prof. Dr. Tomaž Kern;
- Actualisation of fields of interest from IoT, Bog Data and Energy Efficient grids to: AI, IoT, Big Data, Energy Efficient Grids, Cyber-Security;
- Entering of membership to EUSDR PA8 WG Digital Danube (this WG is directed towards SMEs, whilst WG ICT is directed towards researchers – complementary activities, not the same target group) - Partnership in Expression of Interest for establishment of a Digital Hub network;
- Set-Up of a new Work Plan of WG ICT till September 2019 for the period to end of 2020;
- Invitation to members of WG from EUSDR countries (max. 12 persons from the fields of interest, mainly universities);
- Tasks: mapping of activities in ICT (fields of interest), identification of project applications, fostering project applications by commenting and support in partner search, identification of calls, priority setting, connecting with PA11 (Cyber security);
- Set-up of HPC centre (3 of 8 EU centres are in the Danube region) on the principles of open access.

## WG 5 RI

WG 5 on Research Infrastructures was represented by Mr Martin Felix Gajdusek and members of the Resinfra@DR project consortia. Mr Gajdusek gave an overview on the project developments and its connections to the PA7 WG. He briefly introduced the project outcomes, which were 5 **stakeholders dialogue workshops, guidelines** (incl. guideline on (a) ex ante assessment of RI investment; (b) monitoring of existing ones; and (c) socio-economic impact

assessment), **recommendations** to Research Infrastructure (a) policy-makers; (b) practitioners on the establishment, operation and durability, 3 **trainings** for (a) policy-makers and (b) potential reviewers (in total 100 trained participants), **reviewers registry** (profiles of 200 qualified experts), and **Strategy for sustainable RI in the Danube region + 2 pilot actions** (peer learning action - 9 existing/to be upgraded RIs and ex-ante assessments/support - 3 planned RIs).

As Mr Gajdusek was also one of the leaders of the thematic poles within **DTP Capitalisation Strategy**, he has briefly presented the activities under **DTP TP2 (Framework Support for RDI)** with the main aim to contribute to the mission of the DTP and the S.O.1.1 by creating links between the local, regional, national, macro-regional and European levels while looking to improve the framework conditions for research and innovation in the Danube Macro region. Particular focus was put on policy dialog and development of new tools and instruments as well as on knowledge transfer, capacity building and awareness raising within the quadruple helix. The two main thematic fields are related to Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and Research infrastructures (RI). There were 3 participating projects from the 1<sup>st</sup> DTP Call: **ResInfra@DR** led by Centre for Social Innovation (AT); **RI2integrate** led by ELI-HU Nonprofit Ltd. (HU) and **D-STIR** led by South-East Regional Development Agency (RO) and several supporting initiatives, e.g. **CERIC-ERIC**; RAMIRI (FP7) - **handbook**; **ACCELERATE**; **Ritrain**; **Inroad** (completed, H2020); **RI-paths**; **MERIL**; **CatRIS**; **RICH NCP** network H2020; EOSC (+6 initiatives).

With this information on DTP capitalisation activities **Mr Nedovic** – the moderator of the second part of the meeting passed the word to the representatives of DTP projects, flagship projects and BIO-EAST initiative with a strategic importance to PA7 activities.

### **Capitalisation Strategy - updates from the thematic poles, incl. information on key projects and relevant initiatives in the Danube Region**

The first presenter was **Mr Schaeffer** on behalf of the **Danube:Future** project team. Mr Schaeffer briefly pointed out that no funding is currently available for the at the moment, therefore the project team keeps the project running rather on a voluntary basis. As for the project webpage, this should be transferred to the DRC official webpage. The bi-annual organization of DRC summer schools will be teaming up with Danube:Future summer schools.

The next speaker was **Ms Pamela Bartar** representing the consortia of **DTP Excellence in ReSTI project**. Ms Bartar briefly presented the project outline, its duration, budget, partnership, target groups, background analysis and introduced the main topic concerned, i.e. *“the management of research, social and technological innovation (ReSTI) projects needs specific skills that are lacking in the Danube Region”*. The Excellence in ReSTI was therefore

established to offer a solution, i.e. *to create an environment in which knowledge on ReSTI project management in multicultural environment becomes readily available in the Danube Region through (a) an innovative **blended training programme**, (b) advice with a **specifically tailored content - Infodesk**, (c) **strategy** to improve research, social and technological innovation project participation.*

Ms Hartl inquired whether there is a concrete plan on how to disseminate the information of the prepared online courses, and how PA7 could potentially help in order to make them used by a larger number of users. Mr Nedovic complemented Ms Hartl and asked on the sustainability of this project.

Ms Bartar informed about the flexibility of these online courses, a good balance of the content of the the courses and mentioned they will further be used by several universities although the project will be officially finished.

The third DTP project **EcoInn Danube** was represented by **Ms Anna Krivjanska**. Participants could learn about the main purpose of the project which was **to enhance cooperation of innovation actors in the field of eco-innovations** with special emphasis on development and application of ecotechnologies in the Danube Region. The project was based on 3 main pillars: (1) increased transnational cooperation in eco-innovations; (2) increased match of demand and supply in eco-innovation between producers and researchers; and (3) bring eco innovation actors together – (1) to improve business, eco knowledge transfer and IPR skills of eco-innovators, (2) to offer a space to present their ideas.

Ms Krivjanska also informed about the **main challenges** the consortium has been facing during its implementation, such as low level of research on eco-innovation such as weak linkages between research and market; market prices that do not adequately reflect environmental costs; lack of appropriate and credible information on the performance of new environmental technologies; governance problems related to EU eco-innovation support; difficulties in accessing finance; or unused potential for eco-innovation in developed and developing countries.

The main **project outcomes** can be summarized as follows: 27 stakeholders meetings; mapping of the needs in the region, Strategy and Action plan for the implementation of ecoinnovation, creation of virtual lab, success stories, learning interaction workshops and matchmakings, summer Schools and innovation forums.

Last but not least participants got acquainted with the DTP **EDU-LAB** project, which was represented by **Ms Dijana Strbac**. At the beginning Ms Strbac informed about the key facts of the project, including the information on partnership, budget, project main objective, specific objectives and its outputs. The project's main objective was defined as *“improvement of*

*institutional capacities to increase the labour-market relevance of higher education with a view to retain more young talents studying and working in the Danube region“* by (1) enhancing cooperation: business, HEI and public authorities; (2) encouraging development of HE law amendments, and (3) encouraging creation of more professionally-oriented study programmes.

To the main project outputs belong: the new Danubian governance model for fitting institutional capacities to labour-market relevance of higher education; documented learning interactions, strategies, policy recommendations, e-learning courses, and 3 pilot actions.

As concrete examples Ms Strbac mentioned mainly (1) the legal and institutional changes, e.g. accreditation criteria for Professional bachelor study programs approved in Slovakia, draft of a new Law on Dual Education in Higher Education in Serbia, concept of an Advisory Board to the Minister of Education proposed in Bulgaria; (2) establishment of active coordination platforms among triple helix representatives and relevant stakeholders in all 3 pilot countries; (3) comprehensive analyses and evaluations of status quo before and after implementation of pilot activities, incl. surveys with universities, companies, public authorities and students, conducted by every pilot country, (4) compilation of lessons learnt from pilot activities, which will support the dissemination of best practices to further interested countries, (5) first accredited professionally oriented bachelor study program created at STUBA Slovakia in cooperation with VW Slovakia and 7 other companies.

Participants could also learn about the main challenges and lessons learnt, e.g. there is a serious lack of skilled young graduates due to mismatch in HE study programs and labour market needs in the region, as well as due to brain drain of young people abroad; unsatisfied employers and students, wishing more practical oriented HE studies; business organisations, associations and companies are initiators of the changes; EDU-LAB acted as driver for growing awareness of the benefits of professionally oriented study programs, especially among public authorities; powerful alliances of stakeholders initiated first steps towards creation of professionally oriented study programs and legislative changes; every country found a specific and tailor-made approach to its needs.

Ms Hartl and Mr Nedovic asked about the dissemination of project outcomes and sustainability of the project after its official ending. Ms Strbac mentioned that the sustainability of the project was carefully considered within the project consortia. A continuation of the project with the main focus on practical dual education at HEI was prepared by the lead partner institution and the proposal was discussed with PAC7 team.

**Ms Angelika Riegler** on behalf of BOKU team shortly informed participants about the PA7 Flagship project **DREAM - Danube River REsearch And Management (from Basic Research to Knowledge Society)**. The project focuses on improvement of research infrastructure and

cooperation between research institutions in the Danube basin and to its main objectives belong monitoring strategies, modelling and engineering solutions to improve measures suited to reach a win-win situation between economic use and environmental protection of the Danube River. Among the main project achievements and success stories Ms Riegler mentioned research channel and supply line for the AT hydraulic laboratory (between Danube and Danube canal) finished in 2014 (funded by the INTERREG V-A AT-HU 2017-2013 project SEDDON); tender I of the AT laboratory; groundbreaking ceremony in June 2018 and removal of existing buildings.

The Capitalization block was closed with a presentation by **Mr Stanislav Hroncek** from the Slovak Ministry of Environment, who prepared an information on **the BIO EAST initiative**.

At first Mr Hroncek briefly introduced the European Strategy on Bio-economy with an economic analysis overview, concluding there is a need to find effective solutions to ensure a stronger recognition of the research needs and overall potential of the CEE countries for working towards sustainable bio-economies.

**BIOEAST initiative** was therefore established to offer a shared strategic research and innovation framework for sustainable bio-economies in the CEE countries initiating cooperation with various stakeholders, establishing data-driven support for implementation of policies; focus on research and strategic research and innovation agenda (SRIA); improvement of skills of dedicated multi-stakeholder actors; development of synergies; visibility and promotion of funding opportunities across EU and beyond.

**BIOEAST also aims** to assist Central CEE countries to operationalize their Vision for 2030 drawing on their potential and offering opportunities for: a sustainable increase of biomass production, to become competitive and leading, high quality, food and feed producers worldwide; a circular (“zero waste”) processing of the available biomass, to become key players in the development of new bio-based value chains; a viable rural areas: to develop an innovative, inclusive, climate-ready and inclusive growth model.

Further Mr Hroncek gave an overview on historical background, the main political agreements taken since 2016 and the overall governance within the initiative, and he also informed participants about the next planned steps. Participants were informed about the H2020 CSA project proposal titled BIOEASTsUP (submitted in January 2019) and its specific objectives; establishment of national BIOEAST HUBs for the stakeholders engagement at national level and creation of 5 thematic Working Groups for SRIA development at macro regional level, i.e. forestry, sustainable yields and agro-ecological intensification, bioenergy and biomaterials, fresh water bio-economy, food systems. At last the connection to the RIS3 domains was explained.



## AoB

**Ms Hartl** briefly informed SG participants about the possibility for experts from the Danube Region and Western Balkan countries to participate in a specific training regarding gender issues. There is a project “**Gender-Action**” project that has been developing a checklist that can serve as guidance for the better integration of gender-aspects in national or international funding programmes, calls etc.

In this sense the project consortium is looking especially for governmental experts that are involved in: set-up and implementation of research and innovation funding programmes, but also representatives from universities, if they are involved in the development of funding programmes or cooperation agreements etc.

Ms Hartl also noted that there is a possibility to organize training on gender issues R&D&I, in case it may be interesting in the near future.

More information will be sent and further details will be discussed per mail.

## Conclusions and Follow-up

In the last point of the Agenda Ms Pitlova summarized the main conclusions of the PA7 XVII SG meeting.

### PA7 SG members:

- approved activities realized so far within PA7
- were informed about the EUSDR activities with the main focus on the Revision of Action Plan
- were acquainted with the revised PA7 Action Plan – new actions were presented and their future implementation was discussed
- SG members and all stakeholders were invited to send their further inputs on proposed activities and a revised structure of the future working groups by **1st July 2019**
- received information on Multilateral S&T Call supporting Danube region researchers, which will be launched in July 2019 with participation of 5 countries
  - other countries are invited to join the next edition of such call in the future
- were informed about the outcomes of PA7 working groups, DTP projects and flagship projects with strategic importance for PA7
- received information on BIOEAST initiative supporting sustainable bio-economy in the Eastern Europe

In the closing session Ms Lubica Pitlova and Prof. Viktor Nedovic thanked the participants for active involvement in the SG meeting and appreciated the engagement of all stakeholders in relation to the new PA7 Action Plan. It was also mentioned that all presentations of the SG will be uploaded to the PA7 website, so all participants could access every item.

### Meeting with Resinfra@DR participants

Since XVII PA7 SG meeting was organized with support of Austrian SG members back to back to the final event of the Resinfra@DR strategic project participants, both on project and strategic level had an opportunity to discuss the details of the project. This included the fulfillment of its main mission, particular outcomes, achieved results, and the challenges that the consortia was facing during the implementation, nonetheless could discuss the future dissemination of the results, possibilities for capitalization and sustainability of the project within PA7 framework and from the national policy perspectives.

## ANNEX I

### Agenda

- 09:30–10:00      **Registration of Participants**
- 10:00-10:15      **Welcome address on behalf of the BMBWF - host institution, Priority Area coordinators and on behalf of the European Commission and the Danube Strategy Point**
- 10:15-11:00      **PA7 update on activities and future plans**  
  
Progress Report (01.01.2018-31.12.2018) *by Dijana Strbac*  
  
Information on past events and upcoming activities *by J aroslava Szudi*  
  
*Discussion*
- 11:00-11:15      **Coffee break**
- 11:15-12:00      **Information on the revision process of the EUSDR Action Plan** *by Mihaela Florea (DSP perspective) and Lubica Pitlova (PA7 perspective)*  
  
*Discussion*
- 12:00-13:00      **Information on PA7 Working Groups**  
  
WG 1 HEI and mobilities + DRC *by Ivanka Popovic*  
  
WG 2 RIS3 development + JRC *by Viktor Nedovic*  
  
WG 3 DFCN - Information on Danube Region Multilateral Call *by Martina Hartl*  
  
WG 4 ICT *by Mladen Kraljic*  
  
WG 5 Research Infrastructures represented by *ResInfra@DR project leader Martin Felix Gajdusek*
- 13:00-14:00      **Lunch break**
- 14:00-14:30      **Capitalisation Strategy** - updates from the thematic poles, incl. information on key projects in the Danube Region  
  
**Excellence in ReSTI** represented by *Pamela Bartar*  
  
**EcoInn Danube** represented by *Anna Krivjanska*

EDU-LAB represented by *Dijana Strbac*

- 14.30-14.50            **Capitalisation Strategy** - information on flagship projects  
  
                              **DREAM** represented by *Angelika Riegler*  
  
                              **Danube:Future** represented by *DRC/BOKU*
- 14:50-15:00            **Information on the initiative BIO EAST** by *Stanislav Hroncek*
- 15:00-15:15            **AoB**
- 15:15-15:30            **Conclusions and Follow-up** by *Lubica Pitlova and Viktor Nedovic*  
  
                              **Official End of the Meeting**
- 15:30-17:00            **Possible Bilateral and Individual meetings**  
  
                              **Meeting with Resinfra@DR participants**

## ANNEX II

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Country</b>
1.	Pamela	Bartar	Austria
2.	Heribert	Buchbauer	Austria
3.	Raluca	Ciobotaru	Romania
4.	Csilla	Csapo	Germany
5.	Igor	Cojocar	Moldova
6.	Monika	Deneva	Slovakia
7.	Mihaela	Florea	DSP
8.	Martin Felix	Gajdusek	Austria
9.	Martina	Hartl	Austria
10.	Barbora	Hoffmannova	Slovakia
11.	Stanislav	Hroncek	Slovakia
12.	Vadim	Iatchevici	Moldova
13.	Judita	Klosaková	Czech Republic
14.	Mladen	Kraljic	Slovenia
15.	Anna	Krivjanska	Slovakia
16.	Ulrike	Kunze	Germany
17.	Anna	Lechner	Germany
18.	Sinisa	Marcic	Bosnia and Herzegovina
19.	Viktor	Nedović	Serbia
20.	Aliona	Onofrei	Moldova
21.	Jasmina	Pesic Jotic	Serbia
22.	Ľubica	Pitlová	Slovakia
23.	Ivanka	Popovic	Serbia
24.	Zoran	Ren	Slovenia
25.	Angelika	Riegler	Germany
26.	Sebastian	Schäffer	Austria
27.	Dijana	Strbac	Serbia
28.	Jaroslava	Szüdi	Slovakia
29.	Ioana	Trif	Romania
30.	Andrii	Vasylenko	Ukraine

## ANNEX III

Dear colleagues,

I wish to thank you for your kind invitation but due to previous commitments and several events which are taking place during June and July, related to WB and the Danube region, I will not be able to join you in Vienna. But as always, JRC stays committed to help as much as possible to the development and further achievements of the Danube Strategy, different PAs and especially PA7.

It is important moment for the EUSDR and JRC is trying to be active in the process, but it is important to emphasise once again the importance of bottom up approach and demonstration of clear sense of ownership of the countries.

During the 8<sup>th</sup> EUSDR Annual forum I will be in Bucharest and among other things I will participate in the THEMATIC SESSION 6: ESIF programmes and EUSDR objectives in the framework of the new Cohesion Policy. During my intervention I will mention Danube Funding Coordination Network and its achievements strongly advocating to have similar but cross-sectoral transnational networks.

We strongly believe that S3 activities should be an additional opportunity to build upon and find new ways of transnational cooperation and funding related to that.

As part of my intervention in Bucharest, I will strongly emphasise the importance of cross-sectoral nexus approach, used from the very beginning by the JRC. In that sense we believe that the role of Higher education, Research, Innovation and Information technologies should go beyond its own "borders" or even the pillar C, and can be seen as overarching activity in support to all the goals and targets.

I wish you successful PA7 SG meeting and look forward to seeing you in Bucharest.

Kind regards

Miroslav Veskovíc

