



EUSDR Priority area 7:

To develop the Knowledge Society through research, education and information technologies

1st STEERING GROUP meeting

22nd June 2011, University of Novi Sad, Conference Hall

MINUTES

Attendees:

Members of SG PA7:

1. Prof. Dr. Miroslav Veskovc, University of Novi Sad, Serbia-PAC
2. Prof. Dr. Lubomir Faltan, Slovak Academy of Science-PAC
3. Ms. Eva Nussmueller, DG Regional Policy, European Commission
4. Mr. Christian Gollubits- BMWF- Federal Ministry of Science and Research, Austria
5. Mr. Heribert Buchbauer BMWF- Federal Ministry of Science and Research, Austria
6. Ms. Elke Dall ZSI- Centre for Social Innovation, Austria
7. Mr. Sasa Ivanovic, Ministry of Science, Montenegro
8. Mr. Julius Oszlanyi, Institute of Landscape Ecology, Slovak Republic
9. Mr. Daniel Straka, Government Office of the Slovak Republic
10. Mr. Bela Kardon, Ministry of National Resources-Department for Science Policy, Hungary
11. Mr. Hrvoje Pavletic, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Croatia
12. Ms. Iliana Draganova, Business Support Centre for SMEs-Ruse, Bulgaria



Other participants – representatives of relevant stakeholders:

13. Ms. Katarina Petrovic, Cabinet of DPM for EU integration, Government of the Republic of Serbia
14. Mr. Viktor Nedovic, Ministry of Education and Science, Government of the Republic of Serbia
15. Prof. Dr. Branislav Jeremic, University of Kragujevac, Serbia
16. Prof. Dr. Branko Kovacevic, University of Belgrade, Serbia
17. Mr. Milan Solaja, Vojvodina ICT Cluster, Serbia
18. Mr. Predrag Novikov, European Affairs Fund of APV, Serbia
19. Prof. Dr. Vesna Crnojevic-Bengin, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
20. Prof. Dr. Ivana Ivancev-Tumbas, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
21. Prof. Dr. Ivana Teodorovic, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
22. Dr. Jovanka Levic, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
23. Dr. Nebojsa Ilic, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Absent members of SG PA7:

1. Ms. Genoveva Jecheva, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, Bulgaria
2. Ms. Ivana Radonova, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, Bulgaria
3. Ms. Katia Goranova, Business Support Centre for SMEs-Ruse, Bulgaria
4. Mr. Lukáš Teplý, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Czech Republic
5. Mr. Vinko Purgar, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Croatia
6. Mr. Joachim Scholz, Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Munich, Germany
7. Mr. Christian Matheis, Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Stuttgart, Germany
8. Ms. Tanja Ostojić, Ministry of Education and Sport, Montenegro
9. Ms. Anca Ghinescu, National Authority for Scientific Research, Department of European Integration and International Cooperation, Romania
10. Mr. Viorel Vulturescu, National Authority for Scientific Research, Department of European Integration and International Cooperation, Romania
11. Ms. Helga Jancovicova, Ministry of Finance, Slovak Republic
12. Ms. Mojca Rebolj, Ministry of public Administration, Directorate for e-Government and Administrative Processes, Slovenia



MEETING AGENDA

10.00 **Registration and Coffee**

OPENING SESSION

11.00 **Welcome and introductory remarks**

11.05 **Keynote speeches**

- Prof. Miroslav Veskovíc, PhD SG Chairman
- Mr. Ľubomír Falťan, SG Co- chairman

WORKING SESSION

11.30 **Introduction of SG members**

- all SG members

11.55 **Approval of the agenda**

12.00 **Presentation of Centers of Excellence across the Countries**

12.20 **Opportunities for implementation of smart specialization strategy and discussion on the procedures for prospective projects**

- Chairmen and all SG members

13.00 **Buffet Lunch**

14.00 **Presentation and discussion on ongoing projects**

- Chairmen and all SG members

14.30 **Discussion on the work program (targets, deliverables, deadlines)**

- Chairmen and all SG members

15.15 **Next steps and final remarks**

- Chairman and co-chairman

15.30 **Closing of the meeting**

15.45 **Coffee**



Opening session

The first meeting of the Steering group for Danube strategy Priority Area 7 was opened by Prof. Veskovic, coordinator of this EUSDR Priority Area, who welcomed the colleagues from all the countries participating in the Strategy, as well as colleagues from other Universities in Serbia, relevant stakeholders and experts from the University of Novi Sad. He introduced the audience with the Action Plan for PA7, approved by European Commission, stressing that actions and project examples provided in this document are not limiting and that they only represent guidelines for the future PA7 operational steps. Therefore, Prof. Veskovic invited all participants in PA7 to think proactively, to start right away with activities and to enable PA7 to deliver the first results by next summer, proving that we have viable projects for the next EU financial period 2014-2020.

In order to stress in which direction the projects should go and which goals should be supported, Prof. Veskovic informed the attendees about the targets set by European Commission in Europe 2020, out of which for PA7 the most important ones are:

- To invest 3 % of GDP (public and private combined) in research and development / innovation
- Broadband Internet access for all until 2013,
- Increase patents by 50%
- Greater share of EU population age 30-34 with tertiary education - aiming towards 40% by 2020.

Additionally, Prof. Veskovic suggested that the main focus should be put on Centers of Excellence and identification of opportunities for smart specialization in order to enhance the well being of the Knowledge Society. Strategy for Priority Area 7 should address all the areas of population and especially underprivileged groups such as Roma. Even though the EC has proposed an administrative structure for the Danube Strategy, such as central office, regional offices, priority coordinators, national contact points (NCPs) etc, the Action Plan does not provide insights into financial sources of funding. However, once again the relevancy of immediate implementation of certain projects was highlighted and in order to increase efficiency the Steering Group members were invited to join the web portal, supported by INTERACT Vienna, which will be used as communication platform for PA7 members.

One of the initial steps is therefore seen in the process of identifying what we already have in the Danube region across the board and then moving from there by utilizing, to the fullest extent, the already existing structures.



Prof. Veskovic concluded his introduction by quoting Charles Darwin: “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, or the most intelligent, but the one most adaptable to change”, proposing intense know-how exchange among Danube Strategy partners.

Prof. Faltan, Coordinator of Priority Area 7 from Slovakia, gave a short introduction and put an emphasis on the urgent need for the group to be operational, stressing out 8 actions listed in the Action plan. He proposed concrete steps for next year and a half to be taken within all actions of the PA7.

Both Priority Area Coordinators believe that the Action plan should be revised and extended and that the projects in the Action Plan are just examples of the types of projects expected in the DS implementation phase. Therefore, there is a need in the near future to define the real flagship projects within Priority Area 7.

Both PACs agreed that there should also be clear and continuous coordination and cooperation with other pillars and priorities of the Danube Strategy.

After the short introduction of all the present colleagues, the floor was given to Ms. Eva Nussmueller, a representative from the European Commission, DG Regional Policy Unit E1 Transnational And Inter-regional Cooperation.

Ms. Nussmueller ensured the colleagues that by being pragmatic and creative the results will become visible, since the implementation of the Danube Strategy should be seen as simple and straightforward. She stressed that steering group is not a monitoring committee, but the platform to discuss the Action Plan, the policy aspects and issues, the proposed projects, to think about new project ideas that can deliver results, and prioritize all the projects in terms of relevance and timelines regarding EUSDR. Additionally, the task of the Steering Group is to identify the best possible ways of financing the projects based on existing funding structures and to disseminate information to relevant stakeholders. It needs to facilitate the process of implementation in PA7 by determining what is feasible and important, but also by feeding back the relevant information from its meetings (conclusions, recommendations, developments) back to the national levels (ministries, HE institutions and all other relevant stakeholders) on a continual basis.

The main role of the European Commission (EC) in terms of EUSDR is to facilitate the entire process, as well as to provide necessary knowledge for individual projects. Moreover, EC will assist in alignment of funding and identification of which projects match existing programs of the EU. Additionally, the European Commission can provide certain expertise related to the subject by inviting relevant DGs based on the topics of individual meetings in the future.

Furthermore, Ms. Nussmueller mentioned the additional assistance provided by the Interact Lab group which not only supports cooperation programs and provides guidance notes to PACs, but also has created logos and web platforms for each priority area and the entire strategy.



The European Commission will report to the Council in the summer of 2012 about the implementation of the Danube strategy, thus, it is advising everybody to be as practical, realistic, flexible and ambitious as possible.

Ms. Nussmueller encouraged the members of the Steering Group to try to come up with a workplan for every action (defining concrete goals and timelines that are measurable). This would not only enable the Steering Group to assess the progress being made, but it would also facilitate the phase of reporting on the deliverables in a year's time.

Finally, when it comes to funds, Ms. Nussmueller mentioned that structural funds are managed within the regions and should be discussed within the steering group, concluding that there are two transnational programs that currently have open calls which could be a perfect opportunity for Danube projects.

Presentation of centres of excellence across the countries, opportunities for implementation of smart specialization strategy and discussion

Prof. Veskovic opened the discussion on targets of Europe 2020 and their feasibility by sharing his thoughts in terms of Serbia. He doubted the feasibility of certain targets set, such as increasing the share of people in tertiary education, for simple reason- lack of financial sources. He asked the members of the Steering Group for their opinion on how realistic certain targets were.

In terms of broadband internet access, prof. Kovacevic found this goal to be realistic and achievable even one year before the target deadline.

Prof. Veskovic asked other attendees to share the point of views of the countries and institutions which they come from.

On the one hand, Mr. Buchbauer from Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research found the goal to increase in R&D expenditures a realistic one.

On the other hand, Mr. Kardon from Hungary believes that the goals are rather ambitious; arguing that not even some of the most developed countries such as Finland, or Germany will be able to achieve them. Moreover, In Hungary GERD is 1%, thus 3% is too ambitious. The other issue is broadband access which is not realistic in terms of covering 100% of population.

Ms. Draganova found the targets to be ambitious, but stressed that they are supposed to be such, since then, they are motivating people to try harder in order to get closer to the desired outcomes.



Prof. Crnojevic-Bengin advised the attendees that in terms of patents the main issue cannot be only the number of those created, but also the quality, since that is the only way to attain results.

The members of the Steering Group agreed on the targets set in Europe 2020, noting that they are ambitious and that it will take a lot of effort across the board and in certain regions in particular to reach them. The best approach is therefore to focus on specific ways that will contribute significantly to their attainment.

Discussing on the smart specialization strategy, Prof. Veskovic stressed the importance to strengthen the capacities through infrastructure enhancement and mapping of expertise in the region. Expertise in the fields of sustainable development, food, climate changes and social issues, etc., should be identified and made available to other partners. The idea is to work in a complementary way, to join forces, to combine expertise in the most effective way when it comes to finding solutions to the main common challenges of the Danube region and beyond.

Following the above, all the colleagues presented the Centers of Excellence and related regulations in their countries.

Ms. Draganova, stressed that in Bulgaria, Ministry did not provide appropriate information, but some research was done at the Academy of Science.

Mr. Buchbauer and Mr. Gollubits explained that three ministries are in charge of science and technology in Austria so it is hard to map all existing centers. However, a list of all centers has been collected (centers listed in the meeting).

Prof. Teodorovic, Ms. Levic, Prof. Ivancev-Tumbas and Mr. Nebojsa Ilic from the University of Novi Sad informed the colleagues that several centers of excellence exist in Serbia either through EU RegPot projects, or defined by the national law. Investments in infrastructure are aimed at strengthening the strongest fields in science and the national priorities. Also, it is planned to work intensively on mapping the existing situation, thus adopting a national RI roadmap by the end of the year.

Ms. Elke Dall from the Centre for Social Innovation, Austria explained that mapping exercises have been done through regional platforms such as SEE-ERA.net and WBC-INCO.net and relevant methodology has been established.

The presentation of Centers of Excellence was continued by prof. Faltan who showed the mapping done in Slovakia in 2009. He stressed the opportunities for cooperation, representing the geographical dispersion of universities.

Colleague from Montenegro, Mr. Sasa Ivanovic informed that the new law was adopted in December 2010, which represents the framework for establishing the centers of excellence. So



far several potential centers have been identified, particularly in electrical engineering and biotechnology (successful in FP7) and the Institute for Marine Biology in Kotor.

In Hungary there are three levels of the centers of excellence: largest is the Centre of Excellence within the Academy of Science, the medium - Fraunhofer type network and small ones at the research universities (only 5 out of 70 were selected as real research universities-centers of excellence), namely technical, medical and University of Sciences in Budapest, University of Debrecen and University of Szeged. Hungarian research universities have developed very good know-how in mapping research potentials.

Prof. Veskovic believes that we should learn from similar experience within Baltic strategy, where BONUS, agency for funding research, was set up. The experiences of the Baltic macro-region (EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) should be taken into account, since there are common features and challenges that both of the EU macro-regions face.

Mr. Nedovic, from the Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Serbia added that the advantage should be taken of ESFRI platform since not only the EU level mapping has been done, but also a roadmap has been created. Also, ERIC's are a good way to implement ideas since Serbia as well as the other countries from the region are already participating in ERIC's.

Finally, Mr. Pavletic from Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports pointed out that the legal framework for Centers of Excellence is missing and there is none defined by national law. The ones that exist have been active through EU projects, which are the one in Varazdin (ICT), Karlovac (Mechatronics) and Opatija (EU integration studies).

Presentation and discussion on ongoing projects and PA7 plans for the following period

Prof. Veskovic made short remarks of what can be expected in terms of relevant meetings in the period to come. Firstly, the next Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC) will be hosted by the BOKU University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria in November 2011, since BOKU will be the next DRC presiding university. There, the main topics will be the exchange of PhD students and promoting the efficient use of existing research infrastructure. Bilateral agreements on PhD student exchange between countries and universities, which already exist, should be used to set up a network in the Danube Region to serve this purpose. He proposed that Serbia, Bulgaria and Austria (the last three presidencies of the DRC) should further discuss on this topic and that the three presiding universities should focus on preparing some sort of recommendations for the facilitation of PhD mobility across the Danube region.

Furthermore, the next SG meeting will be organized in Slovakia in September/October. By then, several projects should be prepared and available sources for funding identified (Besides



structural funds and FP7, CIP and other sources should be considered). Prof. Faltan explained that the social structure of the region is important, thus a project concerning this topic should be prepared for the next meeting. This project could focus on how the changing social structure of the region and thus its human capital impact all the envisaged activities within the PA7.

Additionally, as prof. Ivana Ivančev-Tumbas pointed out, a cluster for ICT in the Danube region should be established, and a related proposal on how this could be done will be drafted by University of Belgrade and University of Novi Sad, while the Institute for Food Technology in Novi Sad will prepare the first draft for the project related to the food and sustainable agriculture. Mr. Nebojša Ilić gave an overview on how the Institute saw the implementation of PA7 in the next period, noting that cooperation between all stakeholders in the area of food needs to intensify and strengthen in the next two years, so that in 2014 we can really start taking about a food cluster for the whole Danube region which has huge potential. By 2020, there should be a fully functional Food Cluster covering all areas of food (quantity and quality being of equal importance).

By the next meeting mapping of the existing centers of excellence needs to be completed so that the Steering group members could discuss on cluster organization.

Summary:

- European Commission and INTERACT will give suggestions and prepare information on funding possibilities for PA7 related projects
- A unified mapping of centers of excellence in DR should be prepared
- Everyone should register at the INTERACT web portal where all the information will be regularly posted
- Financing for coordination should be available by the end of the year. Countries should support their NCP's for the meetings and activities in their countries. Also the countries of the coordinators need to provide 5% co-financing for the coordination funds.
- Several topics of particular importance have been identified at the 1st Steering Group meeting, which will be pursued in more detail further on: food, energy, climate change and sustainable development, ICT development, social structure changes, PhD mobility etc.
- SG members should continuously disseminate all the relevant information regarding the Strategy to the stakeholders in their countries and work on project preparation until the next meeting, which will take place in Slovakia in late September / early October 2011.