



EUSDR Priority area 7:

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

2nd STEERING GROUP meeting

29th September 2011, Hotel SÚZA, Bratislava

MINUTES

Attendees:

Members of SG PA7:

1. Mr. Miroslav Veskovic, University of Novi Sad, Serbia-PAC
2. Mr. Ľubomír Falťan, 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. Ms Alexandra Gjoreska, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative – SECI, Austria
8. Ms. Iliana Draganova, Business Support Centre for SMEs-Ruse, Bulgaria
9. Mr. Bela Kardon, Ministry of National Resources-Department for Science Policy, Hungary
10. Ms. Ildiko LESKO-KECSKES, Ministry for National Economy, Hungary
11. Ms. Anca Ghinescu, National Authority for Scientific Research, Department of European Integration and International Cooperation, Romania
12. Mr. Ludvik Toplak, European Centre Maribor, Slovenia



Other participants – representatives of relevant stakeholders:

13. Aleksa Bjelis, Rector of the University of Zagreb, Croatia
14. Mr. Ladislav Šimko, Government Office of the Slovak Republic
15. Mr. Stanislav Opiela, NCP, Government Office of the Slovak Republic
16. Mr. Martin Dubéci, Ministry of Finance, Slovak Republic
17. Ms. Mária Čikešová, Slovak Rector's Conference, Slovak Republic
18. Ms. Denisa Voskárová, Slovak Rector's Conference, Slovak Republic
19. Mr. Stanislav Biskupič, Slovak Technical University Bratislava
20. Mr. Herwig Waidbacher, Head of the Department for Water, Atmosphere and Environment, Austria
21. Mr. Viktor Vlasák, Danube Knowledge Cluster, Slovak Republic
22. Mr. Andrej Hrádocký, CEPIT, Slovak Republic
23. Ms. Katarina Petrovic, Cabinet of DPM for EU Integration, Government of the Republic of Serbia
24. Mr. Štefan Luby, European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Austria
25. Ms. Franziska Sielker, TU Dortmund
26. Ms. Iveta Hermanovská, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic

Absent members of SG PA7:

27. Ms. Katia Goranova, Business Support Centre for SMEs-Ruse, Bulgaria
28. Ms. Genoveva Jecheva, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, Bulgaria
29. Mr. Lukáš Teplý, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Czech Republic
30. Mr. Vinko Purgar, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Croatia
31. Mr. Joachim Scholz, Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Munich, Germany
32. Mr. Christian Matheis, Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Stuttgart, Germany
33. Ms. Tanja Ostojić, Ministry of Education and Sport, Montenegro
34. Mr. Viorel Vulturescu, National Authority for Scientific Research, Department of European Integration and International Cooperation, Romania
35. Ms. Mojca Rebolj, Ministry of public Administration, Directorate for e-Government and Administrative Processes, Slovenia
36. Ms. Victor Isac, Ministry of Education, Moldavia





MEETING AGENDA

- 9.00** Welcome and introductory remarks (Ľ. Falťan)
- 9.15 – 9.30** Review of PAC 7 activities since Kick off meeting in Novi Sad, Serbia (22 June 2011) up to Bratislava Steering Group meeting (29 September 2011) (Ľ. Falťan, M. Veskovič)
- a) working meetings and contact activities
 - b) financial provision of PA 7 up to now
- 9.30 – 10.00** Through the strengthening of infrastructure links to building scientific, research and education identity of the Danube region (Ľ. Falťan)
- 10.00 -10.30** Building clusters of excellence in the system of university, education and scientific and research activities (M. Veskovič)
- 10.30 – 10.50** **Discussion**
- 10.50 – 11.10** **Coffee Break**
- 11.10 – 11.30** Identification and promotion of excellent projects in the Danube region (Ľ. Falťan)
- 11.30 – 11.50** Role of Steering Group PA 7 (Ľ. Falťan, M. Veskovič)
- 11.50 – 12.20** **Discussion**
- 12.20 – 13.30** **Lunch**
- 13.30 – 13.50** Project for Technical Assistance of PA 7 (2012-2013) (Ľ. Falťan)
- 13.50 – 14.10** Flagship project „Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund“ (M. Veskovič)
- 14.10 – 14.40** **Discussion**
- 14.40 – 14.50** Timetable proposal of PAC 7 and Steering Group activities for 2012 – 2013 (Ľ. Falťan)
- Discussion**
- Closing of the meeting**



The second meeting of the Steering Group for Danube strategy Priority Area 7 was opened by Mr. Ľubomír Falťan (PAC), who welcomed the colleagues from countries participating in EUSDR and other relevant stakeholders. After round table presentation Mr. Falťan gave brief report about activities of PAC 7 from Kick off Meeting in Novi Sad (Serbia) up to the end of September 2011.

Another priority coordinator prof. Veskovič highlighted that Danube strategy activities and especially Priority Area 7 are based on bottom-up approach and for PA coordinators is important to establish network of people responsible for implementing and dissemination of Danube activities in other countries. If there is not proper participation and communication within National members of Steering Group for PA 7, PA coordinators can not really coordinate. Danube strategy has 14 participating countries and for most of them National members of SG for PA 7 have already been established. Participation of Steering Group in Bratislava meeting was low just like for the 1st meeting in Novi Sad. Some countries were informally present but without authorisation to speak for the country (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia). Mrs. Eva Nusmueller (EC - DG Regio) repeated her offer - to send joint letter to NCP to support PAC to achieve good participation.

Project for Technical Assistance of PA 7 and Flagship project „ Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund“

Mr. Falťan together with Mr. Veskovič informed the Steering Group about Grant Application Form that was sent to European Commission on 12 September 2011. Grant has 2 parts:

1. Governance (Technical Assistance) - support for the implementation of the Priority Area

This grant supports the Priority Area Coordinator (PAC) of Priority Area 7 " To develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)" to set up a stable, effective, inclusive and innovative implementation for this Priority Area, which improves the cooperation between all participating countries and regions. In particular, this grant will

- Support PACs, through financing staff costs (3 full time equivalent for 24 months);
- Support cooperation and the exchange of experience with all relevant actors of the Priority Area, through the organisation of Steering Group meetings, the organisation of stakeholder seminars in 2012 and 2013 and communication activities. The objective of the Steering Group meetings and stakeholder seminars is to gather the stakeholders of the Priority Area to follow up the ongoing implementation, discuss current issues, solve bottlenecks of the implementation and develop new project ideas. To base the



Strategy's implementation on the latest, cutting edge knowledge regional and international experts may be consulted and invited to meetings.

- should ensure consultation, cooperation and coordination activities of PACs for Priority Area 7, meetings of Steering Group of PA 7, meetings with DG Regio and DG Research and when appropriate, consultation and coordination of activities with Baltic Sea Region, targeted training workshops, possibly seminars aimed at ensuring the objectives of PA 7.

This grant will ensure sustainability and continuation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region activities by facilitating the governance structure and the cooperation between the different coordinators and stakeholders. It will improve the flow of information by involving new organizations and financial sources into the implementation of the Priority Area.

Expected results for the years 2012 – 2013:

- Established PA 7 network of stakeholders - developed PA7 network through regular bilateral meetings of PACs, regular meetings of PA 7 Steering Group, permanent contacts with stakeholders and other PACs
- Building research and innovation identity of the Danube Region
- Established proper complementary networks to support excellence in the Danube Region
- Raised awareness of EUSDR and PA7 targets and activities among institutions and public through relevant dissemination meetings in the Danube Region
- Established contacts and cooperation with Baltic strategy.

2. Flagship project Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF)

The grant supports the political, technical and administrative preparation for the establishment of a Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund. This involves, among others, raising awareness in the Danube Region countries to ensure political will and technical management of all the processes, such as setting thematic priorities, developing all relevant material and setting up a call system.

The main activities are:

1. to provide information on the absorption capacities of regional networks, i.e. existing clusters and networks and potentials to create new clusters (e.g. through bibliometric study and analysis of existing multilateral funding)



2. to provide input on possible thematic areas for the DRRIF (based on analysis of existing clusters and involving all Priority Areas exploring their need for research and innovation in the respective fields)
3. to explore synergies with existing schemes such as the pilot actions in SEE-ERA.NET (PLUS), etc. and to exchange information with similar actions in other macro-regions (e.g. BONUS in the Baltic Sea region)
4. to explore willingness of public funding agencies and ministries as well as private stakeholders (e.g. from the banking sector, selected multinational firms) to channel financial support through the DRRIF including visits to national governments in the region to enhance the political support
5. to prepare the organisational framework for DRRIF, to draft process management, technical management, system for call management, evaluation and monitoring of projects.

Activities will include support to staff costs, the facilitation meetings and/ or the organisation of stakeholder seminars (upon need, travel costs, room rental, catering, and accommodation), studies upon need, and the involvement of external experts or communication activities.

The work will deliver the following main results:

- development of a conceptual and organisational framework of the DRRIF based on consultations with stakeholders and adaptation based on their inputs – resulting in a report on suggested process management, technical management, call management, evaluation and monitoring concept.

Further results will include:

- study on absorption capacities of regional networks with a focus on mapping of existing clusters and networks,
- study on possible thematic areas based on interviews, co-publication analysis and network analysis,
- report on the synergies with SEE-ERA.NET PLUS and other stakeholders and cooperation activities in the Danube Region,
- report on the exchange and lessons learnt in cooperation with other macro-regions.



The expected result is the provision of political will among Danube countries as the administrative and technical prerequisites for establishing Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund. The results will be used to establish a sustainable fund to support research, technological development and innovation in the Danube Region in order to build capacities of research, higher education and innovative businesses to increase their competitiveness and to support networking in the Danube Area.

Mr. Veskovič has mentioned that establishment of DRRIF is not an easy task, first of all, it is a political decision. Each country participating in Danube macro-region should be involved there in a very specific way to understand what they are talking about and what are the opportunities to establish this fund in each country or another stakeholder can or should participate in this kind of coordination of national financial resources. Once there is created such a virtual pot it will be possible to discuss the projects relevant to macro-region. Each country will support its own researchers and infrastructure which is part of the projects identified under PA 7 as something equal to Danube partnership.

Mr. Falčan stated that there was a question how to motivate the cooperation for networking and clustering in the Danube region if there are three “No-s” from the European Commission- no new money, no new institutions, no new legislation and the establishment of fund should be some kind of motivation for universities and research team. Fund is a complicated thing since it depends on political will of relevant governmental bodies, banking sectors and other stakeholders which could support it in Danube Region countries.

Mr. Veskovič added that we must have input from relevant country representatives how they see that issue about having some sort of common fund supporting activities within the Danube macro-region in order to have added value of the Danube macro-region in research and education etc. This is the starting point where we need information about current status and current ideas in countries participating in Danube region.

Mr. Béla Kardón from Hungary informed that at political level Danube strategy is highly supported, governmental Commissioner for Danube strategy has its office and the PAC are reporting to her at monthly meetings. At the level of financing if somebody wants to participate in Danube strategy projects it is an advantage in proposal when they are asking money e. g. from structural funds and they have some bottom up initiatives financed from these sources. Members of SG should bring the clear message to the governments about DRRIF in order to plan this kind of financial sources at the governmental level.



Ms. Katarina Petrovic from Serbia has mentioned successful creation of Western Balkan Technology Fund for supporting companies, for innovation in the Western Balkan region and covering the gap in financing of innovation in that region . DRRIF will be different type of fund for financing research and innovation and focusing on topics relevant for Danube region. There are 3-4 models that could be offered – countries financing researchers within their own country, working on joint projects and common pot- not ideal solution because it requires fund management. For the next meeting SG members could prepare proposals and in such way it will be easier to reach consensus at the next meeting.

Mr. Štefan Luby from European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Austria raised the issue about the need of stronger instruments to support Danube strategy (networking, assessment and bonusing are rather weak instruments) otherwise Danube strategy will slowly die. There are at least 2 approaches at the moment - to persuade European Commission to change this point of view of three “No-s” and create some new approach for the next financial period 2014 – 2020 because the negotiations are starting now or to create something like Visegrad fund (V4 countries) but bigger one only for PA 7 from national resources of incorporated countries according to the GDP.

Ms. Aleksandra Gjoreska from SECI- Austria said that creating additional fund would not diminish the existing funds. She supported the idea of Mr. Veskovič of virtual fund to see how much money was there available for research and innovation from already existing programmes and then we would have idea what was there for this priority. Additionally, it would be interesting to consider that PA 7 goes over all the priorities. Within each programme there is at least one priority that deals with research and innovation in specific area and these are again funds which come into a pot for research and education. In principle, there are already existing research funds on national level, there are regional funds for innovation, research and education and when we put it together and try to see where to build bridges within existing programmes and how e.g. we can create macro-regional projects but still use this fund there is available for this project. Each country should come with its own proposal for the DRRIF.

Mr. Miroslav Veskovič proposed at the level of PA coordinators within next month to prepare a draft of proposal how DRRIF should look like and send it to national contact points.

Ms. Elke Dall (ZSI, Centre for Social Innovation) from Austria mentioned that we would need a clear structure and vision to be developed – common pot, virtual pot, bridging towards horizon 2020 etc.



Another issue raised at the meeting was that it was not clear what we could expect from “think hard” about Danube priorities. At the moment we have several calls within FP7 open and within most of calls one can participate with the ideas related to the Danube region, clustering etc. It is not clear at the moment if somebody sends the application what sort of advantage would it be if somebody -maybe PAC, SG- gives and how to support Danube projects – would it be advantage? Who would take care about the letter of support of this proposal or could it be anybody being in charge of PA 7? Another topic is South-East Europe Fund – those priorities mentioned there are very much related to the Danube region. But it is not mentioned specifically in the call if you have full support of certain group of people, body, institution within Danube strategy infrastructure that project has some sort of advantage. This is something that should be asked different DGs within European Commission or maybe find some answer within group.

Mr. Vlasák from Danube Knowledge Cluster thought that there was important need for Danube strategy paradigmas shift . We should have not talked about three “NO-s” because it would not move us forward, but three “YES-es” :

- YES for better use of existing funds
- YES for better coordination of projects and institutions
- YES for more efficient use of existing legislation and European added value

In the future it was clear that only macro-regional cooperation and public-private cooperation would have chance to get some funding. There were some clusters and partnership within universities and if we did not connect universities, private and public sector we would gain nothing. This was the room for international clusters which would put together all 3 sectors and show the ability to work together to prepare the projects that all country connected in them would agree on and would not have negative influence on anybody.

Mr. Veskovič raised the question about the role of PAC and SG as a group of people who should go over each project having the task to support the certain projects within Danube region or as a group of people who should motivate people, institutions within macro-region to prepare proposals which are related to strategy.

PAC informed about the possibility to implement the flagship project “Danube Region Research and Development Fund”, through an ERA or INCO net and asked SG members about their first views.



Next steps: SG members asked for more information and about possible different approaches for coordination of national and regional funds for research and innovation. PAC will develop a short paper on different options including points for discussion and on this basis flagship project will be discussed at the next meeting. A meeting of ministers envisaged for spring 2012 should be used as deadline to have discussion at high political level.

Identification and promotion of excellent projects in the Danube region

Mr. Falčan presented the ideas about identification and promotion of excellent projects in the Danube region since there are not any financial means to support scientific, research and educational projects and we had to find other incentives and mechanisms. He proposed the system for selection and recommendation for projects important for Danube strategy criteria and selection procedure.

Mr. Veskovič summarized the discussion about projects and suggested to go for at least for 3-4 partners in the project if we want to establish something like international centre for starting the Danube policy.

He mentioned we had a good project proposal from HUNGARY. Danube ERA-Net actions would be the type of project we should support. It should get a proper label from PA7 PAC and SG.

Hungary proposed to consider for applying for a thematic ERA nets (call currently open, end of call: January 2012). The HU Office for Innovation could be a project leader.

Based on discussion participants came to the conclusions:

1. to support ERA-Net type of approach for the Danube region – it does not mean we want the Danube ERA-Net but basically we want this type of approach within those 14 countries to go towards different funding proposals or funding calls
2. to try to support authorities, institutions etc. to participate in this call for specific thematic priority
3. to investigate or to support establishment of Danube ERA-Net type of structure in the near future

SUMMARY:



- Because of low participation at the Steering Group meeting PAC Mr. Veskovič and Ms. Katarina Petrovic will contact respective NCP and SG members by letter
- PAC Mr. Veskovič proposed to invite Danube Rectors Conference to prepare a proposal on an exchange programme for PhD students in the Danube region. Danube Rectors Conference is invited to prepare a proposal, to discuss it at their General Assembly on 16-17 November and to finalise it afterwards. Proposal will be submitted to Steering Group members for the next SG meeting at the end of January 2012. Mrs. Nusmueller will check with DG EAC on possibilities in TEMPUS programme and on next calls
- PAC informed about the possibility to implement the flagship project “Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund” through an ERA or INCO net. PAC will develop a short paper on different opinions including points for discussion. Based on this information, the flagship project will be discussed again at the next SG meeting. A meeting of research ministers envisaged for spring 2012 should be used as deadline to have discussion at high political level
- Hungary proposed to consider applying for a thematic ERA-NETs (call is currently open and the deadline is January 2012). The Hungarian Office for Innovation could be project leader. Hungary is looking for project partners to apply. SG members are encouraged to identify possible project partners in their countries and establish contacts to HU office for Innovation
- SG envisages developing a roadmap regarding research infrastructure in the Danube region. The ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) regional working group should be asked to support the work (next meeting on 21 November 2011). HU representative will check if HU can take the lead in developing this roadmap. Serbia proposed to support HU. Austrian SG member Mr. Gollubits will be at the next ESFRI meeting
- E. Nusmueller (European Commission) strongly urged Priority Area Coordinators and the Steering group to develop feasible and ambitious indicators for their priority area, given that the Europe 2020 targets set out in the Communication of the Danube Strategy are very hard to reach. A work plan, with indicators and clear responsibilities should be developed for each



of the eight actions of the Priority Area. This should be presented at the next meeting with National Contact Points and Priority Area Coordinators.