
EUSDR Priority Area 7:

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

3rd STEERING GROUP meeting

March 7, 2012, Centre of the Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Pécs

MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

Members of SG PA7:

1. Prof. Dr. Miroslav Veskovíc, 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. Ms. Elke Dall ZSI- Centre for Social Innovation, Austria
6. Mr. Bela Kardón, Ministry of National Resources-Department for Science Policy, Hungary
7. Mr. Christian Matheis, Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Stuttgart, Germany

Other participants – representatives of relevant stakeholders:

8. Bečić Emira, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia
9. Borza Beatrix, Ministry of National Resources, Hungary
10. Boszormenyi Tamas, Ministry for National Economy, Dep. For Innovation and R&D, Hungary
11. Brenner Koloman, Faculty of Humanities, Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary
12. Gajdusek Martin Felix, Centre for Social Innovation, Austria
13. Hausz Frigyes, Ministry of National Resources, Hungary
14. Nadasi Gyorgy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary
15. Plocek Florian, OO. Technologie-und Marketinggesellschaft m.b.H., Austria
16. Subotic-Gantar Sanja, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
17. Vujosevic Nikola, Directorate for development of SME, Montenegro
18. Zaharis Nikos, SEERC, Greece
19. Kocsis Tamas, DDRIU, Hungary
20. Fodor Istvan, MTA, Hungary

MEETING AGENDA

12:00-12:30	Registration (PA7 Steering Group members only)	
12:30-13:30	Lunch (PA7 Steering Group members only)	
First part: Policy & Finances		Moderator: Dr. Ľubomír Falťan
13:30-13:40	Welcoming words (Dr Béla Kardon, Dr Ľubomír Falťan, Dr Miroslav Veskovic)	
13:40-14:00	Developing feasible and ambitious indicators for PA7 and cooperation with other DGs on policy level (Ms Eva Nussmüller)	
14:00-14:20	State of the art in Danube Region countries regarding defined PA7 targets and possible actions (Dr Miroslav Veskovic)	
14:20-14:40	European funding possibilities for EUSDR PA7 and the Draft regulation on Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 (Ms Elke Dall- tbc)	
14:40-15:00	Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (Dr Ľubomír Falťan)	
15:00-15:30	Discussion	
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break	
Second part: Cooperation possibilities, steps to be done		Moderator: Dr. Miroslav Veskovic
16:00-16:15	Rules of procedures of SG (Dr Béla Kardon)	
16:15-17:00	Short introduction of project proposals, examples of good practices (Dr Ľubomír Falťan and Dr Miroslav Veskovic)	
17:00-17:20	Cooperation of EUSDR PA7 with the Danube Rectors' Conference and the Alpe-Adria Rectors' Conference (Dr Miroslav Veskovic)	
17:20-17:40	Roadmap on PA7 Actions (Dr Ľubomír Falťan, Dr Miroslav Veskovic)	
17:40-18:00	Discussion	
18:00-18:15	Conclusions (Dr Miroslav Veskovic, Dr Ľubomír Falťan)	
19:00-21:00	Gala Dinner (all participants)	

Opening session

Welcoming words

Dr Bela Kardon, the EUSDR representative of Hungary and the host of the event, opened the third meeting of the EUSDR PA7 Steering group in the premises of Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Pecs. Dr Kardon welcomed the participants of the meeting and invited them for a short personal presentation.

After a short presentation of attendees, Dr Lubomir Faltan and Prof. Miroslav Veskovic PA7 coordinators (PACs), welcomed the participants and thanked the organizers for the successful organization of the event.

Dr Faltan stressed that the meeting will focus on four major topics: reflection on the state of the art of the targets set in PA7 action plan, follow up strategy of PA7 as a roadmap ways of support for PA7 actions, support to project ideas provided within the PA7 and activation of cooperation with the key actors.

Developing feasible and ambitious indicators for PA7 and cooperation with other DGs on policy level

The program continued by introducing the next speaker, Ms Eva Nussmueller representative from the European Commission, DG Regional Policy Unit E1 Transnational And Inter-regional Cooperation.

Ms Nussmueller emphasized that there is still a strong political will to work on the Danube strategy and that the framework is set up. The Governments and the PACs have done a great job so far, the Strategy has been delivered, PACs have received the technical assistance and can now hire the staff to support all the work planned. The functioning of the Strategy is planned to be supported by SG meetings and meetings of PACs and NCPs that are to take place at least twice a year. These meetings are devised for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the Strategy. The Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) is very interested in cooperation with and support of the EUSDR, and concerning the PA7 the most interest comes from the Directorate General for Research and Innovation. There is shown interest and initiative from the Joint Research Centre to organize a Conference with a focus on a scientific cooperation in the Danube Region.

Concerning the current funding possibilities, there are cross border cooperation programs, EU Structural Funds, Seventh Framework Program, and there are interests shown from other DGs for funding the implementation of the Danube Strategy.

Ms Nussmueller informed the attendees that the EUSDR First Annual Forum will take place on 27–28 November 2012 in Regensburg, Bavaria, where the progress report on implementation of Danube Strategy and on concept of macro-regional strategies will be delivered. Next steps that need to be taken are definition of the roadmap for PA7 actions, putting the clear focus on core actions that PA7 needs to implement in the next period and use of the opportunity to structure the work of PA7 Steering Group. Ms Nussmueller emphasized the importance of sharing the tasks, which is seen already in

organization of the SG meeting in Pecs. The concept of the shared tasks among the SG members is welcomed and will facilitate to great extent the implementation of the Strategy.

Given the materials provided on the previous SG meetings, the focus of the PA7 Steering Group at this moment should be given to structuring the work of the Steering Group itself, giving inputs for the planned Ministerial meeting taking place in July, the Smart specialization strategy, the Danube Research and Innovation Fund and joint University programmes.

Ms Nusmueller emphasized the importance of the Ministerial meeting, expressing that is very important to prepare well for the meeting in order to use the given opportunity the best way possible. The PA7 SG members should consider what kind of impact do they want to give and how the tasks should be divided among the members.

Also she has drawn attention to the *Smart Specialization Seminar* taking place on May 24th in Stuttgart, Germany, organized by Priority Area Coordinators of Priority Area 8.

The targets are already defined in the Action Plan and have not changed so far. Now it is important to discuss the indicators, what is necessary to be done, by whom and when. The identification of the current status is necessary followed by the creation of the roadmap that define how should be proceeded.

State of the art in Danube Region countries regarding defined PA7 targets and possible actions

Prof. Miroslav Veskovic presented the state of the art in Danube Region countries regarding defined PA7 targets and possible actions. Prof. Veskovic mentioned that together with the colleagues from DG REGIO PA7 has defined what general policies the group wants to support. One of them is excellence in the region, where good examples of institutions and universities were to be identified, in order to develop the database of centers of excellence. The idea is to make the opportunity for such institutions to work in complementary way all over the Danube flow, to facilitate the cooperation among the Upper Danube institutions with Lower Danube institutions and working on building cooperation next to competitiveness.

At the PA7 SG meeting held in June 2011 in Novi Sad, SG members discussed and agreed to adopt the targets defined in the EUSDR, and to develop ways of implementing them. Prof. Veskovic reminded the attendees about the targets set by the European Commission in Europe 2020, out of which for PA7 the most important are:

- ✓ *To invest 3% of GDP in Research and Development by 2020*
- ✓ *Broadband access for all EU citizens in the Region by 2013*
- ✓ *Increase the number of patents obtained in the Region by 50%*
- ✓ *Greater share of EU population age 30-34 with tertiary education – aiming towards 40% by 2020*

Prof. Veskovic drew attention to the fact that in meantime there were some new targets to be added and some new issues have been recognized. One of the issues that should be addressed is mobility of students, university professors, staff and researchers within the Region. Namely, in Europe brain

drain index increases from west to east and from north to south. The imbalance in mobility is evident and the partners should work more actively on providing the mobility and brain circulation (instead of brain drain) in both directions, otherwise there will be no excellent researches, professors and students in some countries or parts of the region.

In the process of gathering information on the current status in the Region regarding the targets, it became evident that there is poor communication between the SG members and the decision makers in the partner countries, since there are only few countries that have provided the information. For that reason Prof. Veskovíc once again emphasized the importance of engaging SG members who could be close to the decision makers in their countries in order to provide information and influence relevant for the SG work, in this case about the accurate information regarding the targets defined.

The analysis of the targets is important because it is possible to see the state of the art in the region countries, but also it will help defining on which issues the Steering Group wants to work on more actively. The presence of the Baden-Württemberg representative was greeted and the hope for the presence of Bavaria representatives was expressed. The analysis of the targets was presented in order to show whether the countries and governments work on reaching the defined targets and if the trends are going to the right direction. Therefore SG members were invited to take active role in communicating this issue to the governments.

Prof. Veskovíc pointed out that it is evident that the situation along the Danube Region differs largely and invited the SG members to put pressure on governments, respective ministries and experts to reach the targets as much as possible.

Concerning the mobility within the macro-region Prof. Veskovíc argued that there are 3 million students within the Danube Region, out of which in the last few years 30.000 participated in CEEPUS exchange programme, which makes only 1% of total number of active students. Using all the possibilities for mobility within the Region there are still only 5% of students engaged in mobility programs. At the meeting with president of CEEPUS, Elisabeth Sorantin and members of Danube Rectors` Conference it was agreed to develop several stimulating measures in order to increase the percentage of student exchanges and mobility.

The other idea to support cooperation and linking HE and research institutions within the Region is the internationalization of the campuses without moving, by using video conferencing systems. In that way students would be provided with some of the best lectures, but also the researchers could exchange some of the latest results and ideas. The use of the ICT, which is also one of the PA7 priorities, would help improve the visibility of universities and research groups.

Ms Eva Nussmueller added that the aim of the targets is defining what the Steering Group wants to do. The idea of having targets is to move towards their realization and roadmap are a way to achieve them. She also posed a question should the targets be changed or should stay as they are.

Mr. Christian Matheis, the representative of Baden Württemberg emphasized that mobility of students, professors, academic staff and researchers is the most important target, and Prof. Veskovíc fully agreed with the comment and added that the mobility has to be supported in both directions, for incoming and outgoing students. He argued that the biggest number of students is moving towards English speaking countries, which is the additional reason to use CEEPUS schemes that are more balanced than ERASMUS programs. The mobility within network would provide mobility in both directions. The roadmap for actions 1 & 2 shows the ways this issue is supported.

Dr Faltan commented that the targets defined are a good basis for the activation of Steering Group members in a sense that they should insist with the respective ministries to invest higher percentage of GDP in research. There are aims set by EU, but realistic analysis show that many countries could not achieve the targets set. It is important to see whether there is stagnation or a tendency of a positive change regarding the realization of the targets in Danube Region countries. Prof. Veskovíc also agreed that SG members should take more active role in that regard.

Mr. Christian Matheis expressed the doubt to be able to convince the ministries they should invest more in research because the investment in Baden Württemberg region is already higher than it is defined in targets.

Prof. Veskovíc emphasized that the demographic situation in the whole EU is such that the population is decreasing, which needs to be covered by higher competences. It is not the task of the SG members to change the targets, as they are adopted by the ministers, but to put pressure to respective ministries to fulfil them as much as possible to the extent they are defined and agreed to.

After the discussion on targets the group assessed that a very important issue is the mobility within the region and agreed to follow and to observe newly defined target, based on recommendation of representative of DG Regio: **To reach 20% of academic mobility by 2020.**

European funding possibilities for EUSDR PA7 and the Draft regulation on Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020

Ms. Elke Dall presented the European funding possibilities for EUSDR PA7 and emphasized the group should have a very clear roadmap for actions for the next year. She concluded that the funds are increasing and there are various funding programs available, and that information is available on the official websites of the mentioned funds. She drew attention to the negotiations between Parliament and Council going on, based on the Commission proposal and also negotiations on EU budget 2014-2020 (including the overall budget for Horizon 2020). The group was reminded of final calls under FP7 and several other programmes extending by mid 2012. In mid 2013, the adoption of legislative acts by Parliament and Council (on Horizon 2020 and other programmes) is planned and launch of first calls of new programs (Horizon 2020 etc.) starts on January 2014.

Horizon 2020 synergises various funding programs – FP7, ERANET, ERANET +, Joint Programming, etc. Ms Dall commented that Horizon 2020 scheme is very important for the Danube Region project proposals but the key to success for EUSDR PA7 are FP7 workprogrammes in 2013. She also informed the members that the INCO workprogram 2013 will provide calls focused on the Danube Region regarding international cooperation, but it is not yet clear what instruments will be offered.

It was also strongly recommended to do the study on which work programs offer funding for some strategic areas, where should be placed the strategic proposals for the Danube Region, in the thematic areas that are covered by the Cooperation program. Regarding the program Erasmus for All, the attention was driven to some new elements such as the creation of 400 'knowledge alliances' and 'sector skills alliances' which can be of interest for the SG. COSME will have some funding lines improving the framework conditions for the competitiveness that is of relevance for EUSDR PA7 as well.

Regarding IPA II, at the moment it contains some references to research, development and innovation and it is recommended to work hard on both levels in order to have the right projects selected by National Structural Funds and IPA II.

Ms Dall invited the group to prepare the roadmaps for concrete project proposals and to define the indicator that the group would launch. She also recommended that the Steering group should provide at least 15 specifically targeted projects.

Ms. Eva Nussmueller emphasized that it is very important to know what is going on in this period and to know how can the group position itself and what is going on in the next period. She drew attention to the fact that the Framework Program becomes bigger and the Cohesion Program becomes smaller in time.

In the Cohesion policy 86 billion Euros have been allocated for the innovation, and it represents the biggest resource for innovation funding in less developed countries. It is enough money to set the framework for innovation, which is important to set right at the beginning, since it enables companies to successfully compete on international market. In the period of 2014-2020 there is still a lot of money in funds planned for the innovation.

Cohesion policy has 11 thematic objectives out of which the first is “Strengthening research, technological development and innovation”. The priorities are enhancement of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities in order to develop R&I excellence and promotion of centres of competence, promotion of business R&I investment, open innovation through smart specialisation and support of technological and applied research lined to the market.

Ms. Nussmueller explained the difference between the two programs; Horizon 2020 focuses on excellence while Cohesion policy focuses on capacity building and infrastructure; they are different in a way but also complementary.

Ms Nussmueller sent the message to the group that there is a lot of money in structural funds that can be used in complementary way. It is important for Group to define the goals that the Group wants to achieve and find the funds where specific projects fit the conditions.

The idea behind the Smart Specialization is that every region should provide innovation strategy before any of the funds open the calls. The key message is that there are a lot of money to be used in both, Framework Programme and Structural funds, and they can be used in a complementary way. The recommendation is to have several key projects that can be fitted in some of the mentioned funds. It is stressed that there are many funding possibilities, but the Steering Group has to decide first which actions does the group want to focus on and emphasize, and then to find respective funding opportunities.

Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund

Dr Faltan presented the project idea Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund - DRRIF which creation was inspired by the experience of BONUS. Its purpose is to support research and innovation projects created within the Danube Region. The main activities include provision of information on the absorption capacities of regional networks, provision of input on possible thematic areas for the

DRRIF, exploration of synergies with existing schemes such as the pilot actions in SEE-ERA.NET (PLUS), and exchange of information with similar actions in other macro-regions, exploration of willingness of public funding agencies and ministries, as well as private stakeholders to channel financial support through the DRRIF, including visits to national governments in the region, enhancement of the political support and a preparation of the organisational framework for DRRIF, draft of process management, technical management, development of system for call management, evaluation and monitoring of projects. At the moment the project is in a public procurement stage.

The expected result at this stage is reaching 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.

Rules of procedures of SG

Dr Bela Kardon introduced the PA7 Rules of Procedure and some issues regarding the voting have been discussed. Prof. Veskovic suggested that the voting procedures would be similar to ones defined in the Priority Area 1a, as it has shown that it facilitates the work of a Steering Group to a great extent. Dr Kardon stressed that it is important to define the composition of the Steering Group and to determine who does what.

Prof. Veskovic stressed that the most important discussion should be about the voting procedures and introduced the example of some Steering Groups from other Priority Areas that organize working groups consisted not only by SG members but also include some experts. The question is what the group should do in case there are less than a half of members. That would mean that the group would have to reach consensus and should use electronic voting for things that are already agreed upon. Professor invited the members to give comments and suggested if there is a general agreement, the PACs would finalize the document and send it to all the SG members to further analysis and voting. Dr Faltan added that the Rules of Procedure are a way of communicating within the Group therefore it is very important to give a clear definition of them.

Prof. Veskovic remarked that there are often changes in teams and it is necessary that the PACs are duly informed from the national ministries about the change of SG member and the new person appointed.

Ms. Eva Nussmueller suggested not complicating the procedure and in case of change of the SG national representatives a quick check with the NCP in the respective country would be enough. The Steering Group needs people who can implement the Action Plan, directly contact persons who can actively participate, so it is not necessary to be too formal in order to make possible for NCPs to decide who the newly appointed person is.

At the end of discussion on Rules of Procedure Prof. Veskovic concluded that the Priority Area Coordinators would finalize the Rules of Procedure by April and forward it to the SG members to vote electronically, since there will be no SG meetings before June.

Short introduction of project proposals, examples of good practices

Dr Faltan provided short introduction of project proposals sent to Priority Area 7 Coordinators. There were 20 project proposals delivered before the Steering Group meeting. Dr Faltan gave a short analysis of every project proposal and asked the Group what should be done with these project ideas and remarked that the greatest number of projects is resolving the same or similar problems. Dr Faltan raised the issue of Letter of Recommendation; however Prof. Veskovic added that it is not useful to label projects unless the calls are specifically oriented to Danube Region.

Following the discussion Prof. Veskovic presented the project proposal DREAM that is seen as a project that fulfils all the criteria PA7 SG has already set. The project idea is good because it connects all the places along Danube in the same project and is in connection to other pillars and priority areas of EUSDR. It has clear background in the EU documents, clear description of the activities, in details defined timeline and needed infrastructure. Prof. Veskovic stressed out that on the first SG meeting the importance of networking and cooperation within the region was emphasized, and this project is based on cooperation and complementarity.

The project proposer suggested partners from countries in the Danube Region, though some of them have not yet listed the partners, so this issue should be discussed more in the SG, since lack of active participation could be an obstacle for productive work. This is a project Prof. Veskovic believes SG PA7 should support, since it is well defined and structured. Dr Faltan expressed the concern for sub-regional problems that would not be resolved by projects that encompass the whole Region, insensitive for specific sub-regional characteristics and Prof. Veskovic responded that he is not against small sub-regional projects, but believes that the SG should focus on some projects that are of great importance, that would reach strong impact, and the DREAM project is only an idea how a good project should look like.

The SG continued discussion on Letters of Recommendation. The Group was invited to define a position concerning this issue. As one of the arguments it was mentioned the meeting of PACs and NCPs in Bucharest where was suggested that not all PAs should go for letter of recommendation and labelling, but should base themselves on policies.

Ms. Nussmueller agreed with the comment and added that the Group should define what it wants to achieve. If mobility and a brain drain are important issues then it is familiar that the DRC and CEEPUS are partners the Group could lean on in resolving them. If the group focuses on important issues and targets defined, then it would need to avoid openness to many smaller projects.

Prof. Veskovic stressed that DREAM project gives an example what the group can achieve. The project supports already existing centres of excellence and establishes new ones in the region, and that's exactly what the SG defined as one of its goals. He believes that the Steering Group should be introduced to big and important projects, but also some smaller and university projects are welcomed. Nonetheless, DREAM is a perfect example what SG wants to do. Then he considered the issue of advertising projects before they are approved and money allocated. The idea is to distribute good examples of project proposals to others in order to help them see how should a good project look like, but avoiding stealing good ideas.

Mr. Nadasi Gyorgy suggested to structure the idea in a way that is presented in the DREAM project and to create a template for a project proposal all the applicants should respect, without sending a concrete project idea.

Ms Eva Nussmueller agreed with the suggestion and added that is crucial to define what kind of projects the group wants, in what fields or what impact does it want to achieve.

Prof. Veskovic added that the group should consider projects involving higher investments, with the infrastructure and networking involved, and not too many smaller projects. DREAM project is combination of networking and infrastructure, connecting universities and research institutes. Steering Group should give Label and Letter of Recommendation only if the all criteria for big projects set by the Group are fulfilled.

Mr. Matheis raised a question on what kind of projects could get a Letter of Recommendation and who should decide on that.

Prof. Veskovic explained that INTERACT suggested to label projects and provide letters of recommendations, but stressed that this suggestion has been misunderstood since letters of recommendation and labelling are not important to all the priorities, but only to the structural ones. If labelling is the principle, the Steering Group members and PACs should answer to each application received and the then the question of dealing with all applications appears, as PA7 is about education, research and ICT so a vast number of small and medium projects could appear. That's why it is important to think about integrated, big projects which can have Regional impact and should be supported by SG members. It is important to focus on policy level and in that way grant support for many smaller projects, and in more details be familiar and support big flagship projects of PA7.

Cooperation of EUSDR PA7 with the Danube Rectors' Conference and the Alpe-Adria Rectors' Conference

Prof. Veskovic shortly introduced the cooperation with Danube Rectors' Conference and Alpe Adria Rectors' Conference. DRC is a network of 54 universities along the Danube that is at the moment becoming a legal entity and can now apply with different programs and projects. Another similar network is AARC that encompasses some of the countries from the Danube Region with one more country - Italy that might be of interest to PA7 SG. Professor listed the priorities DRC has set and commented that there a lot of common interests with the goals PA7 wants to achieve. Taking everything said into account and since one of the imperatives within the EUSDR is to use the existing funds and institutions within the network, it would be desirable to support cooperation with the two mentioned university networks. It was suggested to write a Letter of Support for the actions of the two networks emphasizing the importance of respecting the rules and procedures PA7 Steering group has set. Ms. Nussmueller supported the idea by commenting that these could be partners for realization of issues of mobility.

Roadmap on PA7 Actions

Prof. Veskovc introduced the roadmap for group of actions 1 & 2 and 3 & 4, University of Novi Sad provided for the meeting, and emphasized the importance of the roadmap being the concrete instruction how to realize actions defined in the PA7 Action Plan.

The roadmaps define milestones, activities that need to be undertaken, outputs of the actions, institutions responsible for realization of the actions and deadlines. The roadmap will be sent to all the members of Steering Group to provide comments and in the end to vote electronically for its adoption. The third group of actions are related to ICT and some experts from the region were invited to assist in creating roadmap for these actions. Prof. Gricar from the University of Maribor, Slovenia has accepted to create with his team of colleagues a draft roadmap for the ICT and Living Labs group of actions.

Ms. Nussmueller stressed that the roadmaps should become a working document that is of a great importance for the functioning of the Group and future agendas should look like them.

Prof. Veskovc stressed that roadmaps are not just a document for PACs but also for all the SG members, NCPs, respective ministries within PA7, but also for PA8 and PA9. It is stated that the members of the SG are not a decision-making body, but representatives who should maintain clear communication among PA7 and relevant national bodies, the ones supposed to transfer information from the PA7 Steering group towards the respective ministries and government, and vice versa.

Discussion

At the end of the session the discussion was opened on the question of financial possibilities, specifically what is the position of the Danube Strategy and the Danube macro-region in the next financial period and if there are some priorities set in the EU documents.

Ms. Nussmueller mentioned that in Cohesion policy macro-regional strategies are mentioned in the draft regulations. It is determined that macro-regions will feature in the common strategic framework, partnership contracts and operational programs, but stressed that there will not be any specific funds for macro-region strategies, since it would be impossible to realize. Because of not existing macro-regional funds there is a possibility of participating in every operational program. The ways of realizing would be negotiated individually with every single project. In addition to that there will be transnational cooperation programs, specifically Central Europe and South East Europe transnational cooperation programs providing the support to Danube Strategy. In Horizon 2020 or any other EU27 policies the financing of the Danube Strategy is not mentioned.

Smart specialization concept is something European Commission wants to see developed in every region or country, and every region should have a draft of smart specialization strategy not necessarily of transnational character. Ms Nussmueller invited the group to communicate ideas to European Commission since this is the right period to do so.

Prof. Veskovc shared the disappointment with the fact many SG members are not present at the meetings and invited the present members to see with the partners whom they are in contact with if that could be changed.

Professor Veskovic, Dr Faltan and Dr Kardon closed the meeting by summing up the important issues and conclusions and by thanking the participants for active role in the meeting and expressed hope that on the next meeting there would be more partners taking active participation in the work of the Steering Group.

SUMMARY

1. The next Steering Group meeting is planned for the beginning of June
2. The Ministerial meeting will take place in July in Germany and it requires good preparation of the Steering Group in order to provide inputs for the meeting
3. The EUSDR First Annual Forum will take place on 27–28 November 2012 in Regensburg, Bavaria
4. Priority Area Coordinators would finalize the Rules of Procedure by April and forward it to the SG members to vote electronically, since there will be no SG meetings before June.
5. It is necessary to define what does the Group want to achieve (what kind of projects, in what fields or what impact does it want to achieve.)
6. In order to support the project writers in their process it is suggested to create a template of a well structured project proposal and to send it all interested parties.
7. Funding possibilities for the Danube Region are various and provide enough money, but it is necessary that the SG determines specific goals and outcomes, prior to the providing support to applications for the funds.
8. The importance of active participation of all members in the work of the Steering Group is emphasized as highly important; together with effective communication between SG members and respective ministries, what is a precondition for successful functioning of the Steering Group.
9. Concerning the current funding possibilities, available funds are increasing and there are various funding programs available for PA7, including Framework programme and Structural funds, and they should be used in a complementary way. There are cross-border cooperation programs with special calls for Danube Region and there is an interest shown from other DGs for funding the implementation of the Danube Strategy.
10. Next steps to be taken are definition of the Roadmap, putting the clear focus on core actions that PA7 should implement in the next period. The Roadmap will be sent to all SG members to provide comments and vote electronically for their adoption.
11. Focus of the PA7 Steering Group should be put on structuring the work of the Steering Group, giving inputs for the planned Ministerial meeting taking place in July, the Smart specialization Strategy, the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund and joint university programmes.
12. The group agreed to follow and to observe newly defined target: ***To reach 20% of academic mobility by 2020.***