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**EUSDR Priority Area 7:**

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

**4<sup>th</sup> STEERING GROUP meeting**

**June 26 - 27, 2012, Ministry of Science and Research, Vienna**

## ***MINUTES***

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### **ATTENDEES:**

#### ***Members of SG PA7:***

1. Miroslav Veskovc, University of Novi Sad, Serbia - PAC
2. Lubomir Faltan, Slovak Academy of Science - PAC
3. Christian Matheis, Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Stuttgart, Germany
4. Hans Joachim Scholz, Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst, Germany
5. Buchbauer Heribert, BMWF- Federal Ministry of Science and Research, Austria
6. Leskone Kecskes Ildiko, Ministry for National Economy, Hungary
7. Rebolj Danijel, University of Maribor, Slovenia
8. Icheva Petya, Bulgarian Embassy in Vienna
9. Eva Nussmueller, DG Regional Policy, European Commission
10. Elke Dall ZSI- Centre for Social Innovation, Austria

#### ***Other participants – representatives of relevant stakeholders:***

1. Gollubits Christian - BMWF- Federal Ministry of Science and Research, Austria
2. Plocek Florian, OO. Technologie-und Marketinggesellschaft m.b.H., Austria
3. Sorantin Elisabeth , CEEPUS
4. Glossl Josef, Boku University Vienna, Austria
5. Habersack Helmut, Boku University Vienna, Austria
6. Hartl Martina, EC DG RTD, C5 Regional dimension of innovation
7. Scheglow Nadja, Ministry of finance and Economics, Baden Wurtemberg, PA8 representative
8. Stockhamer Katrin, INTERACT point Vienna
9. Rosso Cicogna Giorgio, CEI, Italy
10. Lombardo Alessandro, CEI, Italy

11. Toplak Ludvik, Alma Mater Europea-European Centre Maribor, Slovenia
12. Angleitner Sagadin Tanja, Alma Mater Europea-European Centre Maribor, Slovenia
13. Salamonova Sandra, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia
14. Ivancev-Tumbas Ivana, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
15. Hirszenberger Helena, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
16. Subotic-Gantar Sanja, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

## MEETING AGENDA

Day one            Tuesday 26 June 2012

*Venue: Ministry of Science and Research, Minoritenplatz 5, 1014 Vienna*

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09.30 – 10.00	Registration / Welcome speech
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10.00 – 10.20	<b>Rules of Procedure</b> , introduction by Prof. Miroslav Vesković, PAC Short discussion on the final draft document with amendments, followed by voting
10.20 – 11.00	<b>Roadmap for Action</b> , introduction by Prof. Miroslav Vesković, PAC Presentation of the draft document SG discussion on the draft document and amendments Voting/adopting the document Discussion on the SG Working Groups
11.00 – 11.20	<b>Preparing input for the Research Ministers Meeting in July</b> Presentation of the relevance of Research Ministers meeting for PA7 actions SG discussion – issues that should be discussed at ministerial level, decisions needed from the political level, messages to pass
11.20 – 12.20	<b>PA7 flagship projects</b> , introduction, Prof. Miroslav Vesković, PAC <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation of the DRRIF – Dr. Lubomir Faltan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- state of the art</li><li>- next steps to be taken by the Steering Group</li></ul></li><li>• Presentation of DREAM project – Prof. Helmut Habersack<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Relevance for the PA7</li><li>- State of the art and the next steps</li></ul></li></ul>

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- Presentation of the future steps to support regional Smart Specialization Strategies – Joint Research Centre
    - Presentation of the concept and planned actions
    - Information from the Smart Specialisation Workshop held in Stuttgart (PA8)
    - Discussion what tasks should be taken care by the PA7 SG

Discussion on presented flagship projects, on the relevance of flagship projects for PA7 and criteria for flagships
- 12.20 – 13.00      **Project proposals and SG policies to support projects**
- Presentation on project ideas by Dr Lubomir Faltan, PAC
- SG discussion on handling project proposals other than flagship projects in the future
- 13.00 -14.00      Coffee and Lunch Break
- 14.00 – 14.15      **Inco.Net for the Danube Region**, Elke Dall, ZSI
- Information on preparatory activities
- 14.15 – 14.30      **Horizon 2020 and regional aspects of research policies**
- Introduction by EC DG Research & Innovation
- SG discussion: how to proceed in order to win a call for a thematic ERA net in the future? What is still possible in FP7? What could be done in the Danube Region to draw more money from the Horizon 2020 in the future?
- 14.30 – 15.00      **Mobility in the Danube Region**
- CEEPUS programme, Ms. Elisabeth Sorantin, Secretary General
    - presentation on next steps to be done by the SG
  - Joint university programmes, Prof. Miroslav Veskovíc
    - Short introduction on tasks accomplished so far
    - Discussion on next steps to be done by the SG: how to proceed, potential networks/participants and funding
- 15.00 -15.30      **Periodic report on PA7 activities and progress**

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Introduction by Prof. Miroslav Vesković and Dr Lubomir Faltan, PACs

Discussion on the Periodic Report main issues

15.30 – 16.00

**Preparing for the Conclusion Session with Commissioner Johannes Hahn**

Discussion moderated by Prof. Miroslav Vesković and Dr Lubomir Faltan,  
PACs

16.00 – 16.30

**Final Conclusions**

Conclusion on all issues discussed, with clear timeframe and responsible actors  
for implementation of future plans

Detail agenda until the next SG meeting

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**Day two**                      **Wednesday 27 June 2012**

*Venue: Marina Wien, Handelskai 343, A-1020 Vienna*

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09.00 – 10.00

**Breakfast meeting with Commissioner Johannes Hahn**

Brief presentation of PA7 main achievements:

- Steering Group policies and values: excellence, complementarity and networking
- Joint programmes and mobility
- Flagship projects: DRRIF, DREAM and Smart Specialization
- Recognition of PA7 priorities on EU policy level and strategic partnerships

Discussion on the work done, success and difficulties

Future plans for action

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***Welcoming words***

Mr. Heribert Buchbauer welcomed the SG members and partners present at the meeting and introduced participants with the historic overview of the building the meeting took place at, which was used for more than 100 years as a seat of the Ministry of science, while from 1970s there is also placed the Ministry of education. Mr. Buchbauer continued his welcome speech referring to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research and its strong focus on the Danube Region, namely on occasion like this when it was a pleasure to host the meeting, bring together partners, to

work on joint activities and networking, besides providing more visibility of Danube Region in Europe and the World. Mr. Buchbauer noticed with delight that number of active participants is increasing at each SG meeting, what creates a stronger basis for the implementation of the priority actions in the future.

Prof. Miroslav Veskovíc and Dr Lubomír Faltan, PACs, welcomed the participants and shared the opinion that it is a good practice to change the place of the meetings hence all the partners can take a more active role by hosting the meeting and being involved in preparing the meeting agenda and other relevant details. Prof. Veskovíc emphasized that from his point of view as PAC, there is a progress regarding active participation of newly joined SG members and the stakeholders (DRC, AARC, CEEPUS, CEI...) in the work of the Steering Group. He also pointed out that it would be very useful to connect stronger to other Pillars of the Danube Strategy, mostly within Pillar C and the Priority Area 8 in particular.

Ms. Eva Nussmueller, DG Regio, greeted all the participants and highlighted the importance of the tomorrow morning meeting with the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Mr. Johannes Hahn, who showed particular interest in the work of the Steering Group, the issues Group is dealing with, activities realized, obstacles faced and the plans for the future.

The participants were invited to introduce themselves shortly.

The agenda was presented by PACs and adopted by the SG meeting participants, so the meeting continued following agenda, with several slight changes in order of presentations and discussions as some of the speakers had to leave early.

### ***Rules of Procedure***

Rules of procedure were briefly presented by Ms Helena Hirsénberger, as the document was sent to all the partners back in April and since when members had submitted a few amendments and comments in two rounds via e-mail communication, which were embedded in the final version of the document. All the participants were invited to give final comments and then vote on the final proposal.

Prof. Veskovíc and Prof. Rebolj raised the issue of the voting procedures. Explicitly the document defines that it is necessary to have 50% plus one more member present at the meeting in order to be able to reach a decision. If this precondition is not fulfilled, decision can be made only by consensual voting. It is defined that the quorum for regular voting is reached when at least eight partners with voting rights attend the meeting, while minimum five partners have to be present in order to reach decisions by consensual voting.

Prof. Veskovíc invited the present members to vote on the proposal including the conclusions from the previous discussion, and the document was adopted consensually by all the voting members present.

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### ***Roadmap for Action***

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Prof. Veskovic presented the draft document, raising the question of the realistic dates proposed for some of milestones listed. He also informed the group on the several meetings he had had with the JRC who is very keen to support development of regional smart specialization strategies in the Danube macro-region. The participants were invited to comment.

Dr Faltan agreed that the deadlines should be changed, which was also supported by the rest of the group.

Ms. Nussmueller drew attention to the fact that Technical assistance and INCO-NET should complement each other and that developing of the DRIF should be closely connected to it. Also, she emphasized that it is very important to create stronger links to PA8 and JRC and work complementarily on some common issues in order to avoid repeating the same activities since there are some problems already solved by JRC (such as establishing peer review mechanism) and PA 8.

Prof. Veskovic agreed with Ms Nussmueller and added that Smart Specialization Strategy within the region can be developed in two ways – separate strategies for micro-regions within countries, or one national strategy, clearly emphasizing specificities of its sub-regions. Moreover, it is necessary to establish a proper peer-review system appropriate for the Danube macro-region. At the moment very few regions (2 in Austria, 1 in Slovakia, 1 in Czech Republic and 1 in Romania) have joined Smart Specialization platform, so there is an open space to work on it, also having in mind that adopted regional smart specialization strategies will be relevant for future EU Structural Funds.

Prof. Rebolj noticed that the sequence of the milestones does not correspond with their timeline - milestones and deadlines are not in the same sequence. Prof. Veskovic explained that the milestones are listed according to three sets of actions as defined in the Action Plan: namely research, education and ICT. Also he clarified that the milestone 2 is linked with milestone 9, and suggested to move it to the set of the DRRIF milestones.

Prof. Veskovic further on explained that in creating the roadmaps we were oriented to different topics, more than the sequence of milestones, i.e. research and innovation, higher education and information technologies aiming to develop three different structures within the one roadmap document. Dr Faltan suggested presenting them as three groups: the first set of milestones oriented to infrastructure, the second to policies and the third to research activities.

Ms. Elke Dall proposed to extend the milestones after the end of 2013, since there are planned activities in 2014 and onwards, which should be recognized in the Roadmap. At the moment all the

outputs of the milestones are set till the end of 2013. Prof. Veskovic agreed to review this issue at the next SG meeting and progressively develop milestones for the period 2014-2020.

Mr. Rosso Cicogno informed the group that the application for EU status for the CEI consortium has been submitted. A virtual institution which will have the installations outside Danube Strategy could be of help for the activities of PA7 and invited SG members to suggest ways how the CEI consortium can be of use for the actions of EUSDR.

Prof. Veskovic responded that it is not on SG to decide how to identify specific infrastructure within the Region, although it is a part of the process. We have the Strategy and Action plan with defined actions that are adopted in the top down procedure. PA7 flagship projects are set just as examples of what sort of projects can be recognized and supported by PA7, while in creating the Roadmap those specific actions given in the Action plan were recognized. For example, milestone 9 - *Identify competitive research infrastructure in the Danube Region* - there will be a group of people and institutions who will define what are relevant institutions in the region, how are we going to treat them, what sort of infrastructure is considered competitive and what sort of cross border access to different infrastructure we would like to support.

Ms. Sorantin informed that the CEEPUS would investigate research interests and available funds for research actions by the end of October 2012 and proposed to submit the results to the SG.

Ms. Nussmueller drew attention that it is good to be ambitious towards deadlines, but that should not be on the cost of the content.

The discussion on the deadline for DRRIF was opened and the postponement was suggested. Dr Faltan informed the group that the opening of call will be probably on September 1<sup>st</sup> so it can be expected the closing of call on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Also Dr Faltan drew attention to low communication with the respective Ministries in the partner countries. He emphasized that it is very important to make the channel of communication with the Ministries of all the Danube Region countries more useful for the work of PA7. It is important that the European Commission put the pressure to Ministries in order to have as many countries as possible engaged in the process. The more projects are developed and the more initiatives are being realized there will be more motivation for other countries to join the network.

Ms. Nussmueller informed the group that other Priority Areas also do not have all the members activate either, therefore the absence of active participation of some member states should not be seen as insuperable obstacle. She suggested that the group should try to work with active countries, also underlining the importance how the SG members were appointed for the overall success and results of the SG.

Prof. Veskovic drew attention to the fact that the other milestones connected to DRRIF have to be shifted for another 4-5 months.

Dr Faltan invited all the countries to participate in financing the DRRIF in later stages of its establishment. Prof. Veskovic argued that one of the goals of the feasibility study is to communicate to national and other funding agencies; once there is some kind of agreement among them it will be defined what kind of commitment countries are willing and able to provide.

Mr Sholz shared opinion that the feasibility study is a good idea, since it is possible that not all of the countries would participate financially in DRRIF.

Prof. Veskovic explained that DRRIF has two stages: starting stage can about defining whether different countries would like to participate in a common pot or not, firstly referring to specific pot where money provided by a specific country would return to their researchers but in the joint project framework. After several years it could evolve and decide whether it is realistic to have an actual common pot, where the money would be collected in one place and distributed according to the relevance/goal/task of the projects and not centrally according to participation of researchers of each contributing countries. If it is realistic it would be good to follow the model similar to BONUS project from the Baltic Sea Strategy.

Regarding the feasibility study it is was concluded that it would take at least 9 -12 months, what means that the start of the DRRIF project could be put in practice right after that period.

Ms Nussmueller rose important issue of divided responsibility for the delivering tasks defined in the milestones and invited all the SG members to take over the responsibility for some of them. It was concluded that if the SG members are not in power to take the responsibility at the meeting, in the period after the tasks should be divided taking into account expertise of each SG member (including ones with the voting right and other relevant stakeholders).

Regarding the milestone n°9: *Identify competitive research infrastructure in the Danube Region*, Mr. Sholz asked for the clarification, adding that fields of excellence have to be specifically defined. Prof. Veskovic explained that it is necessary to identify what exists in all of the countries, so the data provided in the study should be the basis for the smart specialization strategies in the Danube Region. The networking and joint work of different centers of excellence should gain SG support.

Prof. Glossl agreed that the identification of the research infrastructure would be very helpful and added that ESFRI data base is a good mechanism that could be integrated. Prof. Veskovic agreed that the job should not be repeated and that it is important to share the data with the partners in the region.



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Ms. Scheglow, Priority Area 8 representative, informed the group that the PA 8 wants to set up excellence centers - the working group established within PA 8 is working on this and invites Priority Area 7 to join them in the activities, so that the work should not be doubled.

Finally, after many issues were discussed and new conclusions reached, Prof. Veskovic invited the group to vote on the Roadmap document. The group of milestones 4 – 8 and 9 -13 were adopted with slight changes in deadlines and included new conclusions, whereas the group of milestones 14 – 17 was not changed at the moment and the whole document was adopted consensually. Aiming to make the document live and easily adoptable to the real progress, it was agreed to have it reassessed at each SG meeting. It was also agreed to get clear division of tasks to be performed among SG members, therefore SG members are invited to take responsibility for realization of some of the milestones and inform PACs about their plans.

#### ***Preparing input for the Research Ministers Meeting in July in Ulm***

The Danube Region Research Ministers Meeting in July in Ulm is being organized in order to coordinate better research policy in the Region. Although the meeting is without doubts relevant for the PA7 future work, it was realized that none of the present SG members were informed with more details about the meeting nor anyone had been officially invited by the organizers of national ministers so far. Ms Nussmueller invited the group to provide her with some issues the SG would like to have raised at the Ministers meeting. Commissioner Hahn, who would actively participate in the meeting, should be informed about the main proposals and issues the PA7 SG would address to the ministers.

Prof. Veskovic shared interest to be present at the meeting and to contribute to the work, informing Ms. Nussmueller that the message Steering Group wants to communicate to the Ministers is that the main issues for the PA7 SG are support to excellence, complementarity and working together, however those principles need to be explored further and need to be supported by Ministries. It would be very helpful to inform Ministers of the PA7 flagship projects: DRRIF, DREAM and SMART SPECIALIZATION STRATEGY.

#### ***PA7 flagship projects***

Dr Faltan presented the DRRIF project state of the art.

Ms. Nussmueller emphasized the importance of the team work and wondered who approved the tendering documents and if it was joint SG work. She also raised a question whether the SG will be involved in electing the strategic partner organization. She was surprised that SG members were not informed about the call text, as the DRRIF is project of the Priority Area, coordinated by PACs and supported by SG. It was expected that SG members are involved in discussion on a call which values

275.000 EUR, and especially in selection on the winning consortium. PACs should not coordinate the activities alone, it is necessary to discuss it with the SG.

On Mr. Gollubits question: who will perform the selection of the proposals, Dr Faltan answered that the PACs are expected to be present when opening envelopes. Continuing discussion Prof. Veskovíc raised a question of 5% co-financing of the specific project and tendering procedure, so Dr Faltan explained that it will be financed by Slovakia. Dr Faltan informed the Group that next steps should be specification on the content of the call and team.

After vivid discussion, Prof. Veskovíc suggested that Dr Faltan will send the proposal and tendering documents prepared, intended regulations and procedure about the procurement process in Slovakia, by 5pm on June 29 to all the officially nominated members of the SG with the voting right (in order to prevent the conflict of interest if sending documentation to all SG members, if some of them plan to apply on the call). The deadline for comments is 5pm on July 13, after which the output will be summarized by Slovak Academy of Sciences and sent back to SG members again for voting. If there are new comments by SG members, they should be responded and provided with another week for clarification. The document has to become final and adopted by 5pm on July 20 and as such sent to Brussels for publication.

When open issues regarding DRRIF were agreed upon, the session continued with presentation of other flagship project proposals.

Prof. Habersack presented the DREAM project, which Prof. Veskovíc commented as a project that embedded excellence, networking, complementarity which PA7 promotes. He also commented that it is important to think about the big projects in reference to total budget, consortium and impact. For this specific project it is necessary to get clarification regarding the partnership, funding (it has to be noted that some countries are not EU members), the duration of the project 2014-2016 and planned follow up. He also asked SG members if the group can support this project as the type others should look up to. It was concluded that once the group is introduced to the complete project proposal it can get formal PA7 support.

Mr. Gollubits raised the question of what does flagship project stand for. Does it refer to using the lets say "PA7 flagship" logo and what is the difference between flagship and other project applying for Letter of Recommendation?

Prof. Veskovíc answered that flagship projects reflect the priorities and promote the policies PA7 would like to support; they have to be in line with the policy, have local or macro-regional impact and relevance to the Region. He also mentioned that it is possible to have similar projects with similar impact, but the important concern is to have defined financing sources. Although the labeling and

recommendation were discussed during previous meetings, the criteria and procedure have not been defined yet; therefore Prof. Veskovic invited SG members to join him in the process of defining proposal for criteria and procedure for labeling PA7 flagship projects, which will be summarized in the annex to the Rules of Procedure in form of a guideline for stakeholders on how to apply for label PA7 flagship project. Besides, it is necessary to define policies and give examples on how to support them. The consortium of the project needs to decide when and where to apply for funding, not the SG.

Ms. Nussmueller explained that flagship projects are the ones that support the strategic policy of the Danube Region. Prof. Habersack added that the Letter of Recommendation is important to projects because it gives political relevance to the Region recognized, however the project has to be scientifically based otherwise it will not receive the funding.

Prof. Veskovic informed the group about the participation at the WIRE conference in Krakow and the meetings he had had with JRC representatives where the issue of Smart Specialization Strategy was discussed. Each region is supposed to adopt its Smart Specialization Strategy in order to be able to apply for the Structural funds in the future. For PA7 it is essential to think how to support preparation of the regional smart specialization strategies, so the help in that process offered by the JRC is acknowledged valuable. First meeting on the topic is planned by JRC at the end of September in Pisa, Italy, where Prof. Veskovic will participate and it would be very useful to have more SG members present at the meeting as well, especially those representatives of the regions which will start drafting smart specialization strategy. Also, it is necessary to work closely with PA8 to find out what kind of research institutions can be of help in that process. There are more than 30 regions within Danube macro-region and we should all work together.

#### ***Project proposals and SG policies to support projects***

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Dr Faltan presented relevant information about 19 projects applying for the Letter of Recommendation and suggested that they should be evaluated by the grant scheme they are applying for.

Prof. Rebolj presented project HEAL and Prof. Toplak presented project REIN, which are recognized as project ideas of the Alpe-Adria Rectors' Conference network. Members are informed that the presentations of the four project ideas proposed by the AARC will be sent to them with all the other relevant documents from the meeting.

#### ***Inco.Net for the Danube Region***

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Ms Elke Dall, Centre for Social Innovation, presented the idea of the INCO-NET for the Danube region and the call that will be launched on July 10. The proposed activities are Policy Dialogue, Focus on Societal Challenges, Monitoring and Analysis, Fostering Cooperation/Networking/QA. The

project would contribute to strengthen complementarities and synergies between activities funded by the Framework Programme and with other EU policies and programmes addressing the targeted regions and promote coordination and synergies between actions supported by EU programmes and national programmes of the Member States and/or Associated Countries in order to optimize their socio-economic impact. The requested EU contribution per project shall not exceed 1 000 000 EUR.

#### ***Horizon 2020 and regional aspects of research policies***

Ms. Martina Hartl, EC DG RTD, C5 Regional dimension of innovation, presented Horizon 2020 and regional aspects of research policies for enhancing competitiveness and cooperation in the Danube Region. She has informed the Group that new draft regulations for Cohesion policy give strong priority to investments in Research and Innovation. The Horizon 2020 promotes broad access through major simplification, new financial engineering instruments, new opportunities for SMEs and a host of measures to close the innovation divide. Capacity building in future Cohesion policy will provide a stairway to excellence to all European regions; from particular investments for research infrastructures and support to innovation, through support to applied research, pilot production lines and support to Key Enabling Technologies through Smart Specialisation, Cohesion policy will work in tandem with research and innovation policy (*Horizon 2020*).

The issue of "widening participation" has been specifically taken up for the last Calls of FP7. Mainly in three categories: studies, topics with a special interest or impact and awareness raising and networking. The emphasis within HORIZON 2020 is on linking institutions, networking, creating a competitive research and innovation environment for top research talents, improving information and communication, facilitating access to international networks, support to the Member States and regions for designing and upgrading their national/regional smart specialisation strategies.

ERA chairs is a pilot call focused on new member states launched to help Universities to better integrate to European research network.

#### ***Mobility in the Danube Region***

Ms Sorantin presented the work of CEEPUS and Prof. Veskovic added that the mobility issue in the region is extremely important. Apart from the CEEPUS mobility scheme, all the other mobility programmes are oriented towards English speaking countries which help the brain drain index grow from west to east. Representatives of Germany were asked if they are interested to be involved in the CEEPUS mobility programmes. Mr Sholz suggested that the issue should be addressed by competent ministries, however arguments CEEPUS vs. ERASMUS program and benefits for the country and German students have to be presented.

#### ***Periodic report on PA7 activities and progress***

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Prof. Veskovic presented the key elements of the periodic report and informed the members that it will be sent by Thursday, 28 June to all the partners for a brief comments round. The members were asked to add comments by the end of June, when it will be sent to the European Commission.

#### ***Preparing for the Conclusion Session with Commissioner Johannes Hahn***

Ms Nussmueller informed the group about the Commissioner Hahn 4-day trip to the Danube Region where he would like to see how the EUSDR is implemented, what good practices are to be shared or help solve the issues that do not work well. Moreover, it is important to raise the awareness of the EUSDR, its potentials and what can it bring to the region, but also to encourage the participation of its member states. She also emphasized that Commissioner Hahn would like to see concrete projects being realized. Commissioner has shown particular interest in PA7 as he was former Minister for Science of Austria.

Prof. Veskovic mentioned that there are three main issues that have to be addressed: participation of the SG members, flagship projects and mobility. It would be very important to share with Commissioner Hahn that there are only 6-8 countries that take active participation in the SG work. It also needs to be communicated that the Rules of Procedure and Roadmaps were adopted by the Steering Group. The SG would like to propose DRRIF and DREAM as flagship projects and inform the Commissioner that the group is keen to work with PA 8 and JRC on supporting regional smart specialization strategies and on preparation of the smart specialization potentials database within the Danube macro-region. It would be important to inform the Commissioner about the close cooperation with JRC and other EU institutions, with DRC, AARC, CEEPUS, CEI and IDM, about the high level of interest in working on the mobility of students, researchers and academics. CEEPUS would be presented as a good practice example since it provides the least imbalance in mobility comparing to other mobility schemes. It should also be brought to his attention the fact that CEEPUS does not cover Germany, so something should be done about it.

#### ***Final Conclusions***

During the session Rules of Procedure were adopted.

The roadmap document was adopted by all the members present and it was agreed to have it reassessed at every SG meeting. Deadlines for some of the milestones were changed and will be integrated in the document. It is also to be seen who of the SG members is willing to take responsibility for realization of some of the milestones.

The criteria and procedure for labelling flagship projects will be drafted and summarized as an annex to the Rules of Procedure in form of the guidelines for project consortiums.

The members were reminded of the General annual meeting in Regensburg that is to be organized in November.

It is decided that the next SG meeting would be held in first half of December, before December 10, and will hopefully be organized in some of the countries that have not yet hosted the SG meetings. Participants were invited to volunteer for the organization of the meeting.

Mr Buchbauer, Prof. Veskovíc and Dr Faltan thanked the participants for productive discussions and reminded them of the meeting with Commissioner Hahn the next morning.

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### ***Breakfast meeting with Commissioner Johannes Hahn***

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The Commissioner Hahn welcomed all the participants in the Donau Marina, Vienna, and shared interest in the work and problems SG is dealing with. He invited Priority Area coordinators to inform him of the PA7 work and encouraged all the participants to share their experience.

Prof. Veskovic briefly presented PA7 main achievements and reminded the Commissioner of the Steering Group policies and values: excellence, complementarity and networking. The question of low participation of some partner countries was raised and Commissioner was asked if he could help regarding this issue. Commissioner Hahn was also informed about the PA7 flagship projects: DRRIF, DREAM and support to regional smart specialization strategies, about new joint programmes and enhancing mobility. The evolving cooperation with CEEPUS and other stakeholders such as JRC, DRC, AARC, BYHOST, CEI and PA 8 were mentioned. Finally, the issue of funding flagship projects was raised and Commissioner Hahn responded that it would be very important to identify already existing funds in the region, such as bilateral agreements between Danube Region countries and drew attention to the next financial period. Dr Faltan shortly informed Commissioner Hahn about the state of the art of the DRRIF project and emphasized the issue of funding the project.

Commissioner Hahn added that Strategy has to be communicated to Governments more clearly and stressed that the brain drain issue is crucial for the region. He informed the group about the initiative going on for creating possibilities, environment and infrastructure for the researchers who are working abroad to come back to their countries and implement what they have learned elsewhere. The infrastructure is being set with the help of the Structural Funds. Commissioner invited the members to take active participation in this process by providing inputs to relevant institutions. For the next year the aim would be to implement the first project.

Dr Faltan informed Commissioner Hahn that the government in Slovakia and some other countries is cutting the budget for research and invited Commissioner to address this issue to the Ministers he is going to meet on his trip along the Danube. Commissioner Hahn confirmed he will communicate this issue to the relevant parties but also invited the SG members to do the analysis of the existing funds in the region.

Prof. Veskovic informed Commissioner Hahn about the political changes in Serbia and stressed out the lack of communication with the Danube countries' governments, as well as that some of the SG members are not close enough to decision makers what slows down the policy work of the PA7.

Commissioner Hahn stressed that it is important to establish common understanding what is important for research and in which direction PA7 wants to go. That's why stability and continuity of participation is important and expected. It was also emphasized that the governments have to be aware that scientific research leads to business opportunities and should not cut the budget.

Mr. Busek suggested that SG members should promote more in their countries the idea that the Governments from the national funds provide finances for the projects within the Strategy, but also to raise awareness in the scientific community.

Prof. Rebolj shared the opinion that the countries cutting the finances for science and research should be informed about the consequences of budget reduction and stressed that the relevance of the active connection with the region should be more evident and clear for all the countries involved.

After a short presentation of the DREAM project by Prof. Habersack, which was introduced by Prof. Veskovic as a very important flagship project, Commissioner underlined the importance of early open the lobbying for and working on cooperation programs. He also emphasized that the government coordination is necessary and that it would be imperative to start the lobbying now during summer in order to be able to get recognized as eligible and welcomed in negotiations member states will start in autumn regarding the next operational programmes. Moreover, it is still possible to use the structural funds in the member states for the improvement of research infrastructure.

Mr. Colin Wolf suggested to SG that in the process of providing the finances it might be more helpful to talk to possible funders about the crosscutting topics of interest for the Danube Region and the impact of the future projects, rather than to address directly the amount of money needed for the realization of the projects.

Commissioner Hahn concluded the meeting with PA7 SG by recommendation to Steering Group members to insist on stronger political packing and to study availability of regional, bilateral and national funds for supporting joint projects in the Danube Region.