

IX Meeting of the Steering Group 2 July 2015, Berlin

MINUTES

Participants:

The Steering Group members of the following countries were present: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

The following institutions were represented: European Commission, EUROPOL, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSS), Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), South-East Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), PA 1a (EUSDR), EuroVienna, Joint Secretariat of Danube Transnational Programme (JS of DTP).

Under the Chairmanship of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the IX meeting of the PA 11 Steering Group focused on the current progress of the ongoing projects and activities within the framework of PA 11. Special emphasize was given on the available opportunities for funding projects in PA 11. The Priority Area Coordinators outlined the main achievements and tendencies of PA 11 work in the last eight months.

1. Opening of the meeting

Welcome by the Priority Area Coordinators

Mr. Christoph Hübner, Priority Area Coordinator from the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), warmly welcomed everyone and gave an overview on the meeting's agenda.

Ms. Snezhina Marinova, Priority Area Coordinator from the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, commemorated the constitutional meeting on the 2nd June 2011 and the key importance of PA 11 within the Strategy, as a security is a precondition for good development in the Danube. From the beginning PA 11 has relied on a clear and strong political support and still enjoys it today. The strong participation of more and more countries is a clear sign about the increasing awareness of the possibilities that the cooperation within the Danube Strategy presents.

One of our biggest challenges when launching the Strategy was the lack of particular instrument for financing projects within PA 11. The persistent efforts to attract partners and to find appropriate financial instruments (ex. START and TAF-DRP among others) are already bearing fruit. PA 11 project portfolio increased to 48 project proposal. In this context the successful cooperation with KAS and HSS was also pointed out. Last but not least, special emphasize was put on the excellent cooperation with the partners from Berlin and Munich.

Mr. Thomas Hampel, Priority Area Coordinator from the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Building and Transport, welcomed everybody and especially thanked Mr. Hübner, Ms. Niehaus and Ms. Marinova for their good work. He informed that the Bavarian police just finished work on the G7 summit, their biggest operation so far, where they were assisted by Austrian police.

2. Key-Note Speech (held at the eve of the welcome reception)

Mr. Marco Onida (Coordinator of the EUSDR team in DG Regio, EC) pointed out the good work done by PA 11 and invited the PA-representatives to a broader participation at the next Danube Annual Forum in Ulm on 29th and 30th October 2015. In addition to the PAC-Sessions

(workshops and presentations), thematic sessions are foreseen. The COM wants PA11 to be represented in the Thematic Session “Innovation”.

The Danube Strategy Point (DSP) is built up and running. It is hosted by Baden-Württemberg in their Brussels representation. The DSP is in charge of facilitating the implementation of the Strategy and to serve as a link between Commission and the Danube Countries assisting in monitoring and communication among others.

The cooperation between Priority Area 11 and DG for Regional and Urban Policy will continue to be fruitful and constructive.

3. On-going activities within PA 11 - current state of play of the project implementation and forthcoming activities

3.1 DARIF (flagship project within PA 11)

Hungary presented a summary of the project implementation that ran from July 2013 to end of June 2015, its final results and the main conclusions and messages.

The implementation of the DARIF project was successfully completed. The final conference was held in Budapest on 12-13 May 2015.

The main aims of the DARIF were the common strengthening of the security of the waterway on the Danube, the effective and harmonised action against criminal activities and organized crime related to the waterway and the establishment of a cross border professional law enforcement cooperation in order to make the Danube a modern and secure traffic corridor with regard to the transport of goods and passenger transport. The project started with a kick-off conference, held 17-19 September 2014 and ended with a Final Conference in Mai 2015, both in Budapest. In between three expert and technical workshops and based on this three joint operations (JOP) throughout all 10 Danube River countries were organised.

Results/summaries are finalized in a publication, available on the Hungarian site: www.bmprojektek.kormany.hu

The results show that the project should be continued and Hungary is committed to continue, putting a great emphasis on communication and on finding new funding options.

Next steps planned - For the Future it is hoped that the coordination centre in Mohács will operate on a permanent basis. Work should also be continued on the following subjects: development of legal bases, joint cooperation, information exchange, development of a national Contact Point.

3.2 Cooperation Southeast Danube Region – CSDR

Bavaria presented the results and the next steps in the project implementation. The project idea was born at the Danube Police Chief Conference 2012, with the conclusion to integrate the Working Group South-East on combating Drug Crime as a two years enduring separate project in the Strategy. The ISEC-funded project is under the leadership of the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office (BLKA) with the project partners from Austria and the Czech Republic.

The project phase started with a kick-off conference on working level, in January 2014 in Munich. In October 2014, one of the two conferences of the WG South-East took place in Austria. The results of both meetings were published in brochures. An eleven-day enduring exercise of a controlled delivery of drugs, the Operation Perseus, took place successfully. Approximately 200 officers from Germany, Moldova, Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Moldova participated.

In June 2015 a De-Briefing of the exercise was organised in Budapest where the main challenges and problems were figured out, e.g. simultaneously detentions in the participating countries, communication problems, different legislations, etc.

Next steps planned - Outcomes will be published and a film will be produced to be shown at the Annual Forum in Ulm.

Funding question remains for future work.

The next meeting of the Working Group South-East, to be held in September 2015 in the Czech Republic, will be the closing conference of CSDR.

3.3 Danube Property Crime Project – DPCP

The project focuses on combating domestic burglary committed by mobile organised crime groups (MOCGs). Project partners are Austria, Bulgaria, Baden-Württemberg, Romania and Europol. The project is funded by the Hanns-Seidel-Foundation with 40.000 €. The objective of DPCP is to generate a common situation report on the property crime perpetrators' travel routes and the distribution channels for stolen goods by analysing ongoing investigations and closed cases in this crime field, to establish an international network of experts and to initiate the exchange of information within this network on a regular basis. The project was initiated at a high level expert meeting held in Munich in March 2015 and will run till end of 2016. The project leaders apply additionally for START (20.000 €).

Next steps planned - to implement a national and EU survey as a base for the creation of a situation report, an expert meeting in November 2015 in Serbia and later on two other expert meetings in Bulgaria and Romania.

3.4 Comprehensive and Integrated Approach in Prevention and Fight against Organized Crime in the Danube Region

Romania presented a summary of the project implementation and brief overview of the remaining activities.

The project aims at enhancing the cross border cooperation between law enforcement agencies in prevention and fight against organized crime in countries from the Danube Region and implement comprehensive policies. Participating partners are Germany (Baden-Württemberg), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. Leading countries in the project are Romania and Germany. The project started in March 2015. By the end of June 2015 a Steering Committee meeting, an opening conference and two thematic workshops took place within the framework of the project implementation. The budget is 40.000 € funded by KAS.

There will be three international workshops in total and a manual will be elaborated. On 22 February 2015 was a first committee meeting with all partners in Romania. On 17 June a second meeting took place on the topic of cybercrime and sexual exploitation.

Next steps planned – Mid July a third one will be held with the topic of drug traffic.

KAS thanked for the great cooperation and excellent organization in Romania. This is another pleasant experience after the cooperation with the Bulgarian police.

KAS welcomes the EUSDR member states to come up with new project proposals financed by KAS, the details will be discussed in the forthcoming months.

3.5 Round Table “Possibilities for cooperation on visa and consular issues in the Danube Region”

Bulgaria reported about the Round Table on 9-10 June 2015 in the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the framework of key objective III: “System of border control and document inspection management” of PA 11. The event, where 12 countries were represented, gave opportunities to exchange new ideas and practices in the field of consular and visa activities. The main points on the agenda were related to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of cooperation among the states of the Danube region regarding consular support and assistance as well as visa policies and visa regimes.

Bulgaria suggests to the members of the SG PA 11 to discuss the establishment of a regional focal point for urgent information exchange in cases of major disasters following the initiative and a further discussion on the interest in the exchange of information and best practices about the introduction of biometrics in visa border information system.

Next steps planned – The Priority Area Coordinators welcomed the idea to establish a platform of responsible authorities and encouraged the EUSDR member states to deliver propositions.

4. Opportunities for funding EUSDR projects – available instruments and pipe-line projects

4.1 Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP) – II call

4.1.1 Cooperation in the area of booby-trap explosive systems and disposal of discarded ammunition

The Czech Republic informed the SG members that the consultancy services were finalized in December 2014. Three possible financial sources were identified. However, none of these sources doesn't provide co-funding rate higher than 75% and due to the expensiveness of the project the CZ and its partners (HU and SK) decided not to continue the project. The Czech Republic focusses now on implementing other projects.

4.1.2 Combating corruption in cooperation with Danube region states

The Moldovan project proposal was approved for financing under the TAF-DRP instrument. The project is considered to contribute to key objective “Promoting the Rule of Law” by promoting cooperation in the anti-corruption field, developing the instruments for prevention and counteraction of corruption in the countries from the Danube Region, in compliance with the EU policy. Moldova presented the steps taken after the recommendations and the way ahead for the project implementation.

Current state of the project: partnership scheme inclusive identifying a lead partner developed; project idea in cooperation with partners involved developed (joint work plan, training plan); financial and project management issues established (draft budget, co-financing).

Next steps planned - monitoring the development and approval of the DTP 2014-2020, improving and aligning the project related documentation in accordance with Programme requirements, developing and signing memorandums of understanding with the project partners, identifying solutions on technical equipment expenditures to be covered.

4.1.3 Strengthening the naval transport protection capacities of Romanian Gendarmerie

The project is considered to contribute to PA 11 objectives by enhancing the operational protection capacity for the naval transport of hazardous products on the Danube river.

Romania presented the steps taken after the recommendations and the way ahead for the project implementation.

The GOAL is that all the states along the Danube area will cooperate together in order to ensure the security of the hazardous transports and to prevent radiological accidents, accidental marine pollution or terrorist attacks. The actions to be taken are to draft standardised operational procedures, to develop an IT&C platform for data exchange, to train the personnel and to procure equipment and materials.

Next steps planned - monitoring the possible funding sources in order to identify a financing program for the project.

4.2 START I call

4.2.1 Cybersecurity in Danube Region

The project proposal “Cybersecurity in the Danube Region” proposes tangible activities aimed at strengthening and improving of information security, sharing (software) tools, information and trainings for security teams, including best-practice exchange. The project is considered to contribute to the dimension “combating cybercrime” of key objective “Enhancing police cooperation” within PA 11. The leading partner is Czech Internet company.

After endorsement by PA 11 Steering Group, the project was approved for financing under the START instrument.

The Czech Republic presented the current state of play of the project implementation and the way ahead. The project was launched in April 2015 by the CZ.NIC Association, which operates the national CSIRT team. CSIRT/CERTs play a key role in cyber-security. So far two expert meetings/trainings were held – first targeted at presentation of software tools used in particular states when combating cyber threats and second aimed at website and applications vulnerabilities.

Next steps planned - to implement the activities - strengthen CSIRTs institutional capacities and cooperation, educate CSIRTs and best-practice exchange, to hold a final conference planned in March 2016 in Prague.

4.2.2 Illicit Trafficking of Firearms in the Danube Region - START I call

The project proposal „Illicit Trafficking of Firearms in the Danube Region” aims at improving the fight against illicit trafficking of firearms in the Danube Region through strengthening the cooperation between practitioners (law enforcement and judicial authorities) and researchers. The project is considered to contribute to key objective “Enhancing police cooperation” within PA 11. The leading partner is the Foundation - Centre for European Perspective (Slovenia).

Because of the absence of Slovenia, Germany presented the progress of this project. Official start was in April 2015. 9 Partner countries take part in the project.

Next steps planned - to draft a needs assessment analysis, to carry out a 2-day-seminar on the exchange of best practices in countering the firearms trafficking in November 2015, to draft the midterm report.

4.3 Danube Transnational Program (DTP)

The Joint Secretariat (JS) of the DTP presented an overview on status quo and thematic portfolio of the DTP and the DTP – EUSDR coordination measures. The JS informed about the

forthcoming 1st DTP Call for Proposals and possibilities for funding of PA 11 projects through the DTP.

Within the portfolio of INTERREG B the DTP 2014-2020 supports the same geographical outline as EUSDR. The financial instruments are ERDF (202 Mio. EUR) and IPA (20 Mio. EUR). Each DTP thematic priority has clear linkages to one or more EUSDR Priority Areas. The maximum project duration is 30 months. There are two directions for using the programme for PA11:

- SO 4.1: Strengthen multilevel- and transnational governance and institutional capacities and provide viable institutional and legal frameworks for more effective, wider and deeper transnational cooperation across the Danube region in areas with major societal challenges.
- Transversally in other topics e.g. transport of hazardous substances → environment

The requirements for successful DTP-projects are

- eligibility criteria: formal (deadline, submission) and eligibility (Partners / geographical)
- strategic criteria: relevance regarding specific needs / challenges of the Danube region, coherent intervention logic (project contribution to Programme objectives, results and outputs), project contribution to EU policies, strategies and EUSDR; Partnership composition, transnational relevance, targets groups and sustainability.

Details are provided in the official DTB Applicants Manual.

For further information: http://www.southeast-europe.net/en/about_see/danubeprogramme/index

Next steps planned - improvement of the cooperation programme by the EC, launching conference on 23/24 September 2015, first call for proposals in September 2015.

4.4 Review of the state of play – II START call and III TAF-DRP call

Following the great success of the Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP) initiative, the European Commission decided to launch a second phase of TAF-DRP with a third call. The call was open from 20th May until 26th June 2015.

The second call for project proposals of the initiative START – Danube Region Project Fund has been officially launched and it will be open from 20th May until 8th July 2015.

EuroVienna presented the current state, focusing on lessons learned from the previous calls and important issues concerning the eligibility of the projects.

Next steps planned - EuroVienna informed about the procedures for the forthcoming month: formal check, content check and ranking. plausibility check - final ranking, final consultation of PACs and SG, final selection, start project implementation for TAF-DRP in Oct. 2015 for START in Dec. 2015/Jan. 2016.

Europol announced again the possibility of applying for funds in the Policy Cycle. In the grant scheme the deadline of application call ended in April 2015. Especially trainings, studies and related exercises can be financed linked to the Operational Action Plans of the PAs of the Policy Cycle. There are two calls this year. The second call will start in the end of the summer with approx. 1-1.5 Mio. Euro. There will be a 2-3 week deadline. Europol was asked by the PACs to inform the Coordination Bureau about the next call as soon as there is detailed information available.

5. Overview of the EUSDR implementation – current issues and future perspectives - PACs and NC meeting

On 24-25 June 2015 a PACs and NC meeting (Floating Conference) took place on a ship between Bratislava and Vienna. The meeting focused on a series of concrete questions including the preparation of the 4th Annual Forum, discussions of strategic concepts for making further progress in implementing the Strategy, including adapting relevant targets and linking the EUSDR to relevant policies and programs. PA 11 was represented by the Bavarian PAC who presented the main points discussed at the conference.

The main topic of the PAC/NC meeting was governance. There is a rotating chair under the NCs that functions like a troika (last year Austria, this year BW, next year Slovakia).

DSP located in Brussels in Baden-Württemberg-representation; serves as information office and will help to imbed the strategy in financial programs and serves as a link between the different interest groups. Regarding the strategic concepts for further progress in the PAs, the COM encouraged the PACs to rotate the SG-meetings in the member countries, to strengthen the horizontal approach between the PAs, to invite the Line-DGs to the SG-meetings, to emphasise the involvement of the Line-Ministers, etc. Another topic was the embedding of macro-regional strategies in operational and cooperation programs, e.g. the EUSDR within the Danube Transnational Programme and therefore the need of the revision of the targets and actions of the PAs. Additionally, the PACs were informed about the future PAC financing 2015/2016 and about the state of play of the Annual Forum.

6. Presentation of PA 11 IV Progress Report

The Coordination Bureau of PA 11 drafts the traditional Progress Report that includes the implementation of the activities within the area of security (covering the period 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015).

The Coordination Bureau thanked for all contributions and will send the report for approval.

Next steps planned - to launch the procedure for approval of the SG members; Once approved, the Report will be sent to the EC.

7. Forthcoming activities and planned projects

7.1 Planned amendments of documents

Four years after the start of the EUSDR, it is time to review the PA 11 targets, key objectives and PA 11 documents (endorsement procedure and rules of procedure).

Next steps planned - the documents with planned amendments will be sent mid-July to SG-Members, with 7 days for comments. Targets will be formally updated till September. The decision on amendments will be taken by consensus of PACs. The targets of all PA's have to be approved by a high level group. The deadline to send targets to Commission is mid-November 2015.

7.2 PA 11 participation in the 4th EUSDR Annual Forum

The 4th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, jointly organised by the European Commission, the State of Baden-Württemberg and the City of Ulm will take place on 29 and 30 October 2015 at the Trade Fair Ulm.

Under the title "Smart, social, sustainable - Innovation for the Danube Region", the forum will put a strong emphasis on topics such as innovation, professional training and dual education,

entrepreneurship and civil society as key factors for a sustainable and integrative growth in the Danube Region.

The Chair reported that the Commission has asked PA 11 to participate in the thematic session “innovation”, which might be held in the frame of a panel discussion. PACs and SG members were in favour of participation. The speaker is still to be defined. The chair asked the Steering Group to send ideas/proposals to the Coordination Bureau until mid of July.

Additionally projects will be presented in workshops, e.g. CSDR and DPCP by Bavaria.

Next steps planned - PACs will decide on participation and the speaker for the panel discussion

7.3 Workshop on exploring the possibilities for cooperation between customs and police authorities

In the context of enlargement of the scope of cooperation, PA 11 is exploring the possibilities for cooperation between the customs and the law enforcement authorities since 2012. Various activities and initiatives were conducted in the last three years. On the initiative of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Germany) several meetings on expert level were carried out. The joint activities with the customs authorities in the framework of different PA 11 projects (ex. DARIF, Cooperation Southeast Danube Region among others) proved the importance of strengthening this cooperation.

The Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior, in collaboration with SELEC, is planning to hold a workshop on controlled deliveries with the aim to give an impetus to the cooperation between PA 11 and the customs.

Next steps planned – The Bulgarian MoI and SELEC will continue their work on preparing the event. Concrete further information will be sent in due time.

7.4 X Steering Group meeting

The next Steering Group meeting will be chaired by Bulgaria and will take place in the last trimester of 2015. The place is still to be defined. The EUSDR member states and stakeholders are encouraged to consider the possibility for hosting PA 11 10th SG meeting.

8. Other presentations by the stakeholders

Priority Area 1a “Improve mobility: Inland waterways” presented the final results of the survey on border controls along the Danube (feedback from shipping companies) which was successfully concluded at the end of May 2015.

9. Wrap-up and closing remarks

The Priority Area Coordinators summarized the discussions as informing and fruitful and thanked everyone for the good work done.