

# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of the EUSDR 2016 - Summaries of the Plenary Sessions and Workshops

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## Welcome & Keynote speeches

### **Robert Fico**, Prime Minister of Slovakia

- Welcomed the participants, emphasized the importance of the meeting of ministers and their representatives and described it as a stepping stone for cooperation in Research and Innovation in the Danube region;
- Stressed that further efforts are needed in embedding strategies into ESIF;
- Called on all the stakeholders to increase the visibility of the Strategy and bring concrete and tangible results for the everyday life of citizens;
- Noted that there is a divide between national and European identity. Macro-regional strategies can bridge the gap between this divide.

### **Maroš Šefcovic**, European Commission Vice-President for Energy Union stressed that

- Macro-regional strategies have a strong support on the side of the European Commission;
- In times of globalization, cooperation with neighbors is needed because together we can achieve much more than individually;
- The strategies offer interesting opportunities for non-EU countries;
- a list should be made of all the main projects that need to be implemented/are in search of partners/lack financial sources. Every year, there could be a stock-taking exercise to update the list and promote important projects;
- The selection of projects and their financing are crucial aspects, therefore, the Commission looks for innovative solutions, such as the European Fund for Strategic Investments.
- he called on the Danube countries to make use of the European Investment Advisory Hub and apply for EFSI funding

### **Tibor Navracsics**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and of Commissioner in charge of the Joint Research Centre

- Underlined the fact that the Joint Research Centre (JRC) was for the first time involved in organizing the EUSDR Annual Forum;
- Was pleased that the scientific aspects represent now an integral part of discussions at the Forum;
- Stressed the important role of the JRC in the Danube Strategy and the concrete actions the JRC is doing: securing the quality of water through Danube water nexus, boosting regional development through Smart specialization platform or fostering cooperation within the scientific community through Danube Reference Data and Service Infrastructure platform;
- Emphasized the role of the human capital – it is an essential asset of the Danube region that needs to be developed

## Opening plenary

**Markku Markkula**, President of the European Committee of the Regions

**Normunds Popens**, European Commission Deputy Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)

**Krassimir Kiriakov**, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Bulgaria

**Vladimír Šucha**, European Commission Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (DG JRC)

**László Sólymos**, Minister of Environment of Slovakia

**Peter J. Kalas**, President of International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

## Workshop 1: Knowledge society - Common Danube Vision to Transfer Knowledge into Praxis

### PART 1: Knowledge Society, Skilled People, Competitive Region

What are the biggest achievements of the last year? How was your work related to the priorities of the SK Presidency of the EUSDR and the EU Council?

**Viktor Nedovic** (PA7, Serbia): Several important achievements:

- Establishment of the **Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN)** - *with* the aim of coordinating national, bilateral and regional efforts in the Danube Region in order to foster multilateral collaboration in Research and Innovation, which should ultimately lead to the implementation of concrete joint funding actions for STI activities.
- **The pilot Multilateral Call** on scientific and technological cooperation for 2017-2018 launched by Austria in July 2016. The overall aim of this call will be to support project cooperation, including support to mobility of young researchers, among the following participating Danube region countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Republic of Serbia and Slovak Republic.
- **“Danube Call” launched by German Ministry of Education and Sciences (BMBF)** for proposals under the Federal Government’s Strategy for the Internationalization of Science and Research, supporting the development of innovative R&D networks with partners in the Danube States, with participation of HU, MD, and RS as co-funding partners;
- Close **Cooperation with Joint Research Center (JRC)** to speeded up activities regarding Smart Specialization in the Danube Region, as well as Danube Innovation Partnership, and Reference Data and Service Infrastructure for the Danube Region, all three horizontal activities of the JRC in the Danube Region.
- Improved conditions for research

**Dragica Karaic** (PA8, Croatia): Achievements in the following key areas influencing competitiveness:

- Improvement of the **entrepreneurial education** in order to enhance the competitiveness of enterprises, followed by two approaches :

1. Improvement of the **Vocational educational training (VET)** according to the business needs;
  2. Enhancement of **entrepreneurial literacy** for the relevant stakeholders.
- Added value gained: transnational projects envisaged
  - Instrument developed for support by PA10 (TAF, STAR)
  - 18 DTP projects selected for financing that are relevant for PA8

**Jürgen Schick** (PA9, Austria):

- Education and training - focusing on strengthening the cooperation, social inclusion through education and training and fostering social cohesion and empowerment of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups (especially on Roma and young people);
- Labour market policies
- Establishment of the EUSDR Youth Platform which serves as a place to exchange, get ideas and motivation for youth projects in the formal and non-formal educational field in the Danube Region. The overall topic of the platform is “social cohesion”. The platform has been established within the EUSDR and the Erasmus+ programme.

**Stefan Konetzko** (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research):

- Some of the BMBF activities in the DR already mentioned by PA7
- Calls for proposals for CE/SEE Region
- 2 Danube multilateral Calls

**Felix Gajdusek** (DANUBE Inco.Net):

- Two pilot actions: 1. Towards a Bio-economy in Danube Region, and 2. Building a bio economy research and advocacy network
- Set-up of the Danube Transfer Centres (Vukovar & Maribor)
- good reachout of Danube – Inco-Net Newsletters

**Elena Andonova** (DG JRC, Technology Transfer team):

- The mission of the Technology Transfer Team: to disseminate, or to support and encourage the dissemination of technology-related IP resulting from the JRC’s scientific and technical programmes and having a potential for further development and commercial exploitation.
- Danube Innovation Partnership (DIP) – which aims at enhancing and accelerating technology transfer in the region – through Technology Transfer Offices (TTO) and fostering Technology Transfer (TT) activities.
  - o Improving TTO operations
  - o Sharing best practices
  - o Connecting Industry & Research

What are the future challenges in 2017-2018?

**Viktor Nedovic** (PA7, SR):

- Synergies and Coordination
- Ownership
- Political commitment
  - o Ensuring Synergies between PACs and with other MRS
  - o Coordinating cross-cutting activities
  - o Better use of national funding and EU Instruments

**Dragica Karaic (PA8\_HR):**

- Stakeholders entrepreneurial approach (creativity vision)
- Encouraging stakeholders to approach transnational projects
- Sustainability of instruments

**Jürgen Schick (PA9\_AT):**

- Funding of Projects
- Governance of EUSDR: downgrading it to administrative requirements (i.e. Roadmaps)
- Bringing stakeholders together

**Felix Gajdusek (DANUBE Inco.Net):**

- Monitoring framework needs to be used by PACs !
- PACs need to look more critically (!) on the quality of the projects submitted for funding.
- Development of the next steps of the Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN).

**Stefan Konetzko (German Federal Ministry of Education and research):**

- Heterogeneity (in terms of EU Membership)
- Fragmentation (as response to the current political tensions in the region)
- Political tendencies (more cohesion needed)

**Elena Andonova (DG JRC):**

- Cooperation among MRS
- Challenges from the industry side: Absorption capacities, Practical experience, Cohesion process, Still existent gaps in R&D, Mobilizing private investment
- Future activities focus on „Open Innovation“

**PART 2: Experience from introduction of dual Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Slovakia and other Danube countries**

**Introduction of dual VET in Volkswagen Slovakia:**

- To address industry-related concerns about qualified workforce supply, Slovakia underwent a transformational process in order to introduce a Dual Vocational Training (DVT) system – with a clear division between theory and practice
- Political commitment and support is a prerequisite to succeed in implementing such transformational initiatives

**Projects implementing the DVT system were presented:**

- **Dual Academy Project:** A 18 month–project (March 2015 - September 2016) which lead to transforming a public school into a private one. The Outcomes are a 2-year training programme & issuance of certificates for vocational training valid in both DE and SK.
- **Young Stars:** Project implementing the DVT from the SMEs perspective; Participating countries AT, SK.

## Workshop 2: Water - Non-alternative source for life

### Main topics (in synergy with SK EUSDR Presidency for water sector):

- **Danube water resource outlook until 2050** (DG JRC, Water Nexus)
- **Dynamic integrated management with regard to climate change**
- Hydrological drought - current status and new challenges of the research (PriFUK, SK)
- Dynamic integrated management with regard to climate change (ICPDR)
- Integrated drought management programme for Central and Eastern Europe – Methodology guidance for preparation of drought management plans (GWP)
- **Water and Agriculture**
- Water and Agriculture: Conflict or synergy? (DG Environment)
- Agriculture, part of the problem or part of the solution for water issues (Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, NL)
- Effective reducing of water pollution by nutrients from agricultural land - a primary matter of available spatial information (Water Research Institute, SK)
- **Presentations of projects of importance/relevance for PA 4, PA5 and PA6**

### Summary of key messages:

- **DG JRC, Waster Nexus** presented recently published **technical report** with water projections and scenarios as result of climate change
- **Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University, SK** stated that the following **scientific challenges in further drought knowledge** (to help institutional and strategic drought management) were pointed: Improving knowledge and data collection (meteorological and near real-time hydrological data should be available as quick as possible); Defining sector-oriented drought indices; Defining and implementing ecological flows; Promoting resilience to climate change; Identification of sensitive and vulnerable areas with respect to possible development of water resources and modelling of possible solutions by securing of needed water resources; Integrating of Water Scarcity and Droughts measures in the RBMPs
- **ICPDR** presented its priorities, its role with regards to the Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive, the **2 management plans for the Danube river basin** (Danube River Basin Management Plan Update 2015 and 1st Danube Flood Risk Management Plan) and the plans towards a basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The following next steps were highlighted: Update scientific knowledge base 2017; Update ICPDR CC Adaptation Strategy 2018; Integration of climate change in Plans 2021 River Basin and Flood Risk Management Plans. The key messages delivered: Sound, institutionalized water management is a key to climate change adaptation; ICPDR countries use their River Basin & Flood Risk Management Plans to address water scarcity, droughts and climate change pressures; a cyclical, adaptive approach is needed to continuously address uncertainties and new scientific findings.
- **GWP** presented a **methodology guidance for preparation of drought management plans**, based on WMO/GWP with regards to the Associated Programme on Flood Management (established in 2001) and the Integrated Drought Management Programme (established in 2013).
- **DG Environment, EC** emphasized on **the need of action** (both at EU level and on regional level) with regards to the **cooperation and coordination between agricultural and environmental sectors of the member states**.
- A representative of the **Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment in NL** shared the country's view and experience for aligning the EU policies with regards to nutrients, pesticides and abstraction/drought. The message of the Water Directors (of the EU MS) was highlighted: ***“the work on water and agriculture can only be successful with a full engagement of the water and the agriculture administrations at Member States and at Commission level”.***

- A representative of the **Water Research Institute**, SK presented why an **effective reducing of water pollution by nutrients from agricultural land** is a primary matter of available spatial information. As concluding remarks the following was highlighted: the need to improve the state of water creates pressure/responsibility also to farmers; the setting or revising the basic measures (if relevant) often consist of: decrease of nutrient surplus often accompanied by reduction of their inputs and/or in extra costs linked to manure and crop management; at evaluation of the sufficiency of adopted measures it is essential to check their allocation with regards to the areas which most contribute to nutrient emissions to water; farmers need to understand the source of water pollution and transport paths; **supporting spatial information is fundamental for success – i.e. achieving good water status.**
- Representatives of PA4, PA5 and PA6 presented some of the **highlight projects** they have been engaged with in the last couple of years (**JOINTisza, Solotvino (UA), CleanRiver, DanubeSediments, DAREFFORT, Danube Floodplain, EAST AVERT, Sturgeon 2020, Invasive Alien Species**).

## Workshop 3: Innovating together

### Part 1: What model for transnational governance?

#### Andrea Mairate (DG Regio):

- Macro-Regional Strategies (MRS) are recent but are regarded as laboratories of transnational cooperation. They are experimental and each MRS has its own specific features.

Is the model for EUSDR adapted to the needs and circumstances of today?

- This is not an intergovernmental model; governance is about cooperation, not only between layers but between institutions
- **Common principles:**
  - o **3 NOs** (the doctrine MRS have developed) and convert the 3 NOs into 3 YES by making best use of the existing legislation, funds and EU Structures.
  - o **3 tiers of governance:** political body (steers the Strategy/Ministers); NCs (coordinating body/States); operational level (Steering Groups/PAs).
  - o MRS are islands of **new ways of policymaking** and create networks.

### **What model of transnational governance do we need and what kind of cooperation?**

#### Marzena Kisielewska (OECD):

- Main challenges in the Danube Region and how international institutions deal with MRS
  - o There are similarities between the OECD Programme and the EUSDR: similar partners, challenges, difficulties.
  - o The main objectives are to increase the understanding of OECD:
    - demand-driven and flexible approach;
    - pragmatism: share good practices;
    - mobilisation of partners at the different levels of development;
- Policy makers from all institutions need to be involved.
- Fostering strong ownership and sound governance:
  - o allow them to play formal/informal leadership role;
  - o coherence and complementarity;
  - o persistence, optimism, idealism;
- South-East Europe economies expand with 3%, which is below the level before the crisis and the world average of 3,3%. There is a need to fix investment, trade and finance in order to have economic growth.

#### Harald Egerer (Carpathian Convention):

- Largest part of the Carpathian Mountains chain is in the Danube Region; success factors for the MRS and challenges for the Carpathian Convention
  - o The Convention has become a strong player in the Region after signing an MOU with the EUSDR. The success was owed to arriving at the right moment. Networking is done at government/official level, NGO level and at the center of gravity at the EU scientific network.
  - o The EUSDR is a great engine with great synergies.
  - o Challenges: overcoming bureaucracy; the geographical gap between EU and non-EU members; cooperation with other MRS; MRS should not create new borders.

#### Alessandro Cenderello (Ernst & Young):



- The role of the private sector in the transformation of cities and regions
- The topic of digital transformation of cities is very actual. It is a concept that gets political weight: digitalisation is seen as a better opportunity to foster growth.
- Lessons learnt:
  1. You need to empower a broad range of stakeholders around **user needs**;
  2. Make sure that the **private sector** is involved;
  3. Policy and regulatory level needed at **Pan-European level** (e.g. Smart Cities)
  4. **Large scale partnership** is needed to attract investments. There is a huge need for cross border exchanges;
  5. Need to promote **leadership** and effective management.

#### **Andreja Jerina (National Coordinator for 3 MRS, Slovenia):**

- Merits and lessons from the 3 MRS and challenges for the EUSDR
- Slovenia looks at all its neighbours and sees the 3 MRS as “fellow travellers”; the experience in one can be used and transferred to another;

#### Lessons learnt:

- MRS have an experimental character and it is not advisable that they have specific rules;
  - MRS are not only about projects, but about processes as well, but these need time and patience and to make the process easy;
  - There is a need to manage the expectations;
- Two proposals for **improved governance**:
  - **1st: Stakeholders’ Involvement**: need a bottom-up feed-in; active participation; ownership is the pre-condition for action; connect all at governance level; propose to meet representatives of all MRS next year and to discuss the stakeholders’ involvement.
  - **2nd: Environmental Connectivity: Organise one single horizontal pillar in all MRS dealing with Media and Communication**;
- MRS are a tool to address the real needs of people, thus bring EU policies close to the people. MRS should be taken into consideration for the post 2020 budget.

#### **Erja Tikka (EUSBR):**

- Comparison EUSBR-EUSDR
- EUSBR is a model for macro-regional cooperation due to its long tradition;
- Strategies must be supported by everyone, otherwise they don’t have authority to lead in their field;
- Capacity-Building support is needed. Also, the member states should see that it is valuable to use their money in cooperating with their neighbouring countries.
- Importance of widening the acknowledgment of MRS at all levels; flagship projects have doubled; permanent networks have been created.
- Regional cooperation is inside-leading: MRS strengthen both the EU & the macro-regions.
- EUSBR/EUSDR can learn from each other: governance, communications, thematic cooperation (capacity building, blue growth), monitoring.

## **Part 2: Non-EU States in EUSDR: Challenges and perspectives**

### **Michael Ralph (DG Regio):**

- Invited speakers from 2 geographical areas (EU and non-EU members) to explain what are some of the most important areas within the Danube Region;
- All the countries in the EUSDR are involved in various cooperation programmes;
- There is good news: financing has become available from ENI in the Interreg Danube Transnational programme for eligible regions in Ukraine;
- IPA is doing a lot of work in Western Balkans for connectivity, environment and tourism.

### **Stefana Greavu (Regional Cooperation Council):**

- Regional cooperation as a key element for the region; cooperation and synergies between the RCC and EUSDR: - linking activities and go into project-based cooperation
- Western Balkans face different challenges. There is a need to raise awareness about the EUSDR and advocate it and also introduce the financing potential.
- RCC worked with PA10 of EUSDR in interlinking donor-assistance data base (SIDAC) with EuroAccess .
- Also cooperates with PA11 on the topic of organised crime.
- Future perspectives: adopted a Strategy for RCC for 2017-2019:
  - o Focus on skills and mobility;
  - o Connectivity;
  - o Competitiveness;
  - o Governance;
  - o Rule of law and security;

### **Sergei Saienko (Ukraine representative):**

- How to enhance Ukraine's presence within the EUSDR? How can MRS contribute to the development of the region?
- Ukraine has been progressing since the last Annual Forum. Regional Stakeholders are identified;
- It has identified border cooperation potential: transport (PA1a, PA1b); environment; tourism and culture; research and innovation;
- There is a need to create a national structure (impossible to start cooperation without it): a draft on how it can be done has been made;
- The cooperation with the NC's and the DSP is important for Ukraine for the development of new transnational cooperation projects as it leads to economic development & EU-integration;
- Ukraine can offer transparent decision-making between actors, better coordination in relevant programmes, transparent project selection; exchange of experience in PA10.
- **The Ukraine Strategy 2020 and the EU Strategy 2020** have similar goals: EUSDR is a tool in conjunction with other programmes for creation of more attractiveness and competitiveness in the region;
- Ukraine makes huge efforts for **decentralisation** and dissolution of process, through compliance with EU institutions good ideas, instruments, trust of local authorities .

### **Ales Gnamus (DG JRC):**

- The Smart Specialisation Platform started in 2011 at the request of DG Regio.
- In 2013 it started supporting projects in Western Balkans countries.

- Common features in neighbouring countries:
  - o greater need to spend on innovation;
  - o low capacity to absorb money;
  - o they are working on production capacity not innovation capacity;
  - o weak/feeble business in R & D;
  - o outside the global supply;
  - o linear support model: neglect other branches of innovation (e.g. services)
- The Western Balkans need to to recognise innovation in their policy making. Need to be active in transnational cooperation. Need to reinforce institutional capacity for R & D. Need political commitment for R & D; Adopt institutions capable of engaging in regular, meaningful cooperation with the civil society.
- JRC will support neglected activities for the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova and Eastern Partnership countries.

**Rudolf Schicker (PA10\_AT):**

- PA 10's aim is to increase the absorption of EU Funds;
- So far successfully implemented 4 pilot actions together with DG Regio:
  1. TAF (Technical Assistance Facility) was very successful: 49 projects funded;
  2. START initiative: there were 2 calls with specific targets. Applicants had to build a new project out of an idea, had to be start-ups; 48 projects were successful; projects were not coming from enlargement and candidate countries which led to the need to create the Danube Strategic Fund.
  3. The Danube Financial Dialogue: tries to bring together funding sources; it is the missing link between the ones having the money and those needing it.
  4. ROS Danube Region: Internet tool on dealing with which European Funding applicants can get and when - will be presented soon.
- The Danube Strategic Fund will focus on projects and initiatives that do not fit into a funding scheme. Particular attention will be paid to projects with strategic value. Includes neighbouring countries like Moldova and Ukraine and covers several Pas. It will implement new solutions, build networks. The projects should support economic growth.
- There is 1 million Euro available and projects up to 100.000 Euros will be funded. The funding scheme is still being discussed.
- Expectation from this pilot initiative: the political character and the involvement of young people will improve visibility of the region; there is potential for follow-up initiatives; there is a combination for cooperation between bottom-up and the political level.

## Workshop 4: Scientific support to the Danube Strategy

### “Danube” Synthesis Centres (Alberto Pistocchi, DG JRC)

- **Synthetic approach to research** allows new insights from interdisciplinary collaborations – professional coming from different fields - to identify solutions to society’s most challenging and complex environmental problems.
- It requires “synthesis centers” to be active and operate in a specific context.
- In this context, JRC discussed the rationale for Synthesis centers for the Danube Region, and specifically of a **Water Synthesis Center** in order to address the issue of “collected, untreated wastewater” which is a key issue in the Danube and the river basin plan (according to ICPDR).
- To this end, JRC launched in 2016 a Call for tenders on innovative wastewater treatment : feasibility studies on the Lower Danube – which shall look for a holistic wastewater management solution. Also, the feasibility study should make a business case of this type of solution, and show how this can be scaled up as a general solution for the lower Danube region.
- The JRC intends to explore the potentials for measures to adopt in the implementation of the European water legislation, involving innovative wastewater treatment solutions.
- Questions posed : is there need of many more synthesis centers in the DR ? For instance for “Urban Greening” or “River restoration” ?

### The “Air Nexus”: capacity building for air quality compliance (Julian Wilson, DG JRC)

- Work on air quality requires targeting the sources, hence links with the relevant PAs (e.g. 2016 JRC workshop with PA1b, PA1a in ISPRA)
- EUSDR PA6 Task Force on Air Quality created on 18/05/2016 during the Joint JRC-PA6 Meeting in ISPRA.

### The bioenergy nexus cluster (Manjola Banja, DG JRC)

- Human capital development and capacity building for bio-energy development in DR
- Bioenergy = Agriculture + Forestry + Waste
  - o Feedstock’s conversion/Technology – to convert in energy
  - o Market development + public support
  - o Local/regional/country level
  - o Uses : transport/heating + cooling/electricity
- Specificity of DR in relation to bio-energy
- Main messages :
  - o Transform the potential in great opportunities – farmers need to be provided with concrete business plans to convince them to invest in this.
  - o DR is a specific region for bio-energy due to 2 leading countries in this field, namely Germany – in the field of renewables -, and Austria – in the field of bio-energy at local level; main experience in bio-energy with clean solutions
  - o High resource availability (mainly UA, RO)
  - o High dependency on gas and gas import
  - o Problem of energy poverty related to the development of renewable energy
  - o There is need of social acceptance of this solution
  - o Need of better understanding of the sustainability aspects of bio-energy

### Final Statement (Miroslav Veskovc, DG JRC)

- Danube Strategy matured, and along with it JRC’s support too matured.

- This year's approach – the jointly organised Annual Forum by JRC, DG REGIO and SK Republic – gave the participants a different flavour than last year.
- In the context of its scientific support to the Danube strategy, JRC also aims at supporting capacity building through collaboration among research, industry and communities in the Danube Region.

#### **Ownership of the EUSDR**

- JRC has a specific response - not to try to solve all specific problems of the DR and work forever. Instead, extend the approach and provide expertise in the region. At a certain point, JRC support will have to phase out, though the knowledge must be kept in the Region. The created networks, platform's etc. need to keep the work going on.
- Community of practice , JRC's work on knowledge management
- Cross- cutting approach , nexus approach - not solving individual problems.

## Workshop 5: Danube Transnational Programme

### General overview of the DTP (Eloy Gomez, DTP JS):

- General data about the DTP: programme area, budget, priorities and specific objectives
- Differences and similarities between the EUSDR and the DTP both cover same geographical area; EUSDR is policy framework and DTP is funding instrument; EUSDR is one of the strategic frameworks for the DTP, DTP is one of the funding instruments for EUSDR; all DTP specific objectives contribute to the EUSDR Priority Areas (PAs); not all PAs are supported by DTP.
- Activities supported by the DTP

### DTP as financial instrument for Danube region (Simona Ene, DTP JS):

- **Danube Transnational Programme, mission, objective**
- DTP is a financing instrument of the EC, part of the Interreg family
- Due to the limited funds allocated DTP is not an infrastructure programme
- DTP is not a research programme, but support research type of activities integrated in more complex projects;
- DTP:
  - o supports joint cooperation projects that enhance capacity building and knowledge transfer
  - o paves the way for future investment;
  - o supports harmonisation of policies;
  - o creates innovative solutions to common problems.
- Eligible partners: public bodies and bodies governed by public law, private non profit institutions and private enterprises;
- Minimum requirements for the partnership: 3 financing partners from three different DTP countries, out of which the LP has to come from a Member State
- Associated Strategic Partners (ASPs) are relevant institutions coming from EU countries outside programme area and/ or non-EU countries of the programme area. ASPs do not have a budget allocated and their travel and accommodation costs are sponsored by an ERDF PP;
- DTP core principle: result orientation, the basis for this approach being the change;
- Intervention logic: a tool showing how the change will be achieved. the coherence of the project intervention logic with the programme one is a pre-requisite for a proposal to be financed by DTP Programme;
- When applying for DTP the following aspects should be carefully taken into consideration: transnationality and territorial relevance of the project, coherence of the intervention logic, contribution to the EUSDR, durability and transferability of outputs and partnership composition;
- The Joint Secretariat (JS) with the support of National Contact Points (NCPs) is continuously providing help to Lead Applicants through:
  - o Organising thematic workshops during, but not limited to the annual conferences related to Programme's priorities to disseminate information on funding opportunities, objectives, indicative activities to be financed, allocated budgets
  - o Providing constant information, on specific Calls for Proposals, including specificities thereof (type of call, submission procedure and deadlines, available budget and co-financing rates, eligible applicants and partners, contact details for additional information and support)
  - o Provide individual consultations to get initial feedback on the project idea and advice to be considered when preparing the application

- Provide useful tools to facilitate partner search/ organise partner search events
- Provide guidance for project generation

**The forthcoming 2<sup>nd</sup> call for projects under DTP (Alessandra Pala, DTP JS):**

- **Information on the 1<sup>st</sup> Call:** 55 projects have been approved with conditions, starting their implementation in December 2016/January 2017; presentation of some topics addressed by the selected projects with the contribution to the EUSDR Priority Areas..
- **Information on the forthcoming 2<sup>nd</sup> Call:**
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> call for proposals will be aligned to the results of the 1st call;
  - Expected launch in Jan/March 2017; indicative budget of 45/50 million Euro;
  - Potential direction: SO 4.1 will be closed, while a decision for the other SOs will be taken in December 2016. The second call will follow a one step approach.
  - Changes compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> call: inclusion of ENI; eligibility of EGTC (which has to be registered in the DTP Programme area);
  - Changes in assessment: stronger link with the EUSDR (synergies, how to contribute to and embed project in the EUSDR, e.g. expected connection with the PACs and/or PA Steering Groups, etc.). The assessment will focus on **relevance, strategic and operational criteria**;

**Questions & Answers:**

- **In case of 2<sup>nd</sup> call for proposal MC took the decision to close SO4.1** as the funds were exhausted in the first call; nevertheless MC might decide to open SO 4.1 in the third call for proposals.
- The Applicants of DTP are experienced institutions that participate in ETC programmes for several periods already. Nevertheless, the JS and NCPs are working on raising the interest of relevant, decision making institutions, that have not participate so far in the programme and that can bring an added value to the outputs produced by the projects. To attract new partners, the MA/JS will organise a specific training.
- A **Lead Applicants' Seminar for the second call for proposals is planned to be held in Budapest** .
- Financing under SO4.2 is related only to the direct financing of the EUSDR which refers to: financing the Priority Area Coordinators, Seed Money Facility and financing of the Danube Strategy Point.
- Projects are ranked based on an objective and impartial assessment performed by the JS and external experts.
- **The list of selected projects from the 1<sup>st</sup> call is available on the DTP Website.** In January 2017 there will be more information available about these projects.

**The forthcoming DTP Seed Money Facility (Johannes Gabriel, DTP JS):**

- **Information on the forthcoming Seed Money Facility:** SMF is for supporting strategic projects in the thematic fields of the EUSDR (small scale financial assistance for EUSDR related project ideas);
- SMF is different from the START facility: it has a specific mission, it is bound to ETC and DTP rules and focuses on complex transnational projects;
  - **Result:** increased capacities for the development of complex strategic transnational projects contributing to the EUSDR;
  - For the partnership the **“Lead Partner Principle”** has to be followed: cooperative nature of partnership (according to the ETC regulation: min 2 partners from 2 different countries);

- Envisaged simplification: use of electronic monitoring system, simplified costs (lump sum defined by DTP) and simplified procedures;
- Project has to consist of **3 compulsory outputs: analysis of needs and challenges, main project plan and report on funding possibilities** → these 3 outputs shall be subject of quality evaluation (quality of each output and correlation between the outputs) before payment by the programme is made;
- **1<sup>st</sup> Call:** available amount of 1.5 million Euro; project duration of 12 months; all PAs covered;
- For the **Reimbursement of costs:** all 3 outputs covered by 1 lump sum; evaluation of the validity of 3 outputs before payment: quality of each output and their correlation; no progress reports requested and no validation of single costs needed (1<sup>st</sup> level of control).
- **Expected next steps were presented:** fine-tuning of thematic focus by the PAs; further elaboration of technical, financial and regulatory scheme; communication and launch of the call.

#### **Match making session:**

- 4 panels were put on the stage according to the 4 priority axes of the DTP.
- Under each priority, each panel displayed a list of topics relevant for the Danube region but not completely tackled by the 1<sup>st</sup> call approved projects; and to be potentially tackled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> call for proposals.
- Participants were asked to show their interest in the topics, sticking their contact details in post-its under each topic or inserting their business cards in the envelopes attached to each panel. They were also invited to write down new topics that should be tackled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> call, according to their view.
- After the Forum, the DTP JS put in contact by email all those who showed interest for each specific topic as a way to foster the networking possibilities and to find potential partners for future proposals.



## Workshop 6: Aligning funds with the Strategy

### Part 1: Theoretical inputs and practical tools

#### **Cooperation methods and tools applied by EU funding programmes to support the implementation of the EUSDR (Jörg Mirtl, Interact)**

- Presentation of the study with the purpose to identify, describe and analyse cooperation and coordination methods and tools foreseen within EU funding programmes that aim at contributing to the implementation of the EUSDR (and partly to EUSAIR):
  - The EUSDR / EUSAIR in the 9 Partnership Agreements of the EU Member States.
  - Consideration of the EUSDR / EUSAIR during the programme preparation phase.
  - Programme strategies and their contribution to the EUSDR or EUSAIR.
  - Good match between planned contributions and the results of the experts' strategy mapping.
  - Weak inclusion of EUSDR / EUSAIR macro-regional cooperation under priority axes & investment priorities.
  - Little use of specific options for supporting macro-regional cooperation within provisions on financing and eligibility.
  - Programme-level coordination, cooperation and exchange processes on the EUSDR or EUSAIR.

#### **Presentation of EUROACCESS (Julie Dalmoro, Eurovienna)**

- EUROACCESS is an online search tool which can be used to find potential and available funding possibilities for EU-projects in the Danube Region in order to facilitate access to EU-Funds and raise the amount of EU-funded projects in the Danube Region.
- Live demonstration of the website followed the short introduction.

#### **The Danube Reference Data Service Infrastructure (DRDSI) (Jean Dusart, DG JRC)**

- JRC scientific support to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Gathering scientific expertise and data to help in support to EUSDR. At the moment there is no common access point for harmonised data covering a wide-range of scientific issues and encompassing the whole Danube Region. For this reason, a Danube Data and Services Infrastructure (DRDSI) was developed that will facilitate access to comparable and harmonised data sets on various issues related to the Danube Region.
- Presentation of the DRDSI:
  - Search Engine and Metadata repository for details about data, projects, applications... for the whole Danube Region from government authorities of the EUSDR MS (public data) and linked to the priorities of EUSDR.
  - Openness and transparency fostered through data sharing.
  - Testbed for INSPIRE Directive implementation (including pilots and apps).
  - Leverages investments for data collection, harmonisation and access and generate value added services (for private actors and e-government services).
  - Network of experts (DANUBE\_NET) from each Danube country for local promotion, content generation and stakeholder engagement.

#### **Strategic co-operation as a basis for developing inter-regional investment platforms (A. Reid, EFIS)**

- This presentation drew on the experience at both macro-regional and inter-regional levels in identifying and developing platforms that enable mapping and matching of strategic infrastructure (research & innovation, renewable energy technology testing, etc.) and the potential for structuring regional enterprises working in specific value chains with a view to developing joint or co-investment projects. Examples from the Baltic Sea, Vanguard Initiative

and Sea basin strategies illustrated different processes that can help build investment platforms.

#### Highlights:

- Regional firms need access to complementary know-how/technologies, critical mass for investors, access to value/supply chains, etc. - business logic/needs do not respect regional boundaries.
- Most regional strategies (smart specialisation, etc.) do not take into account (fully enough) the inter-regional dimension (limited use of 'Article 70', etc.).
- Investment in research and innovation infrastructures should be optimised – inter-regional co-investment and 'open access' can increase effectiveness.
- The EFSI Regulation places significant emphasis on the role of Investment Platforms within the European Fund for Strategic Investments as a tool for pooling investment projects with a thematic or geographic focus.

#### **Presentation of the European Investment Advisory Hub (Radoslaw Ossowski-Barbetti, EIB)**

- The European Investment Advisory Hub is a tool to strengthen Europe's investment environment and improve the quality of investment projects:
  - o A single access point to a comprehensive offer of advisory and technical assistance services for potential projects covering all available funds.
  - o An instrument to assess and address unmet needs for advisory support.
  - o A cooperation platform to leverage and exchange and expertise (NPIs, Managing Authorities).

#### **Part 2: Practical Examples**

##### **Danube ESF Transnational Network (Gerald Engasser, Ministry of Social Affairs & Integration, BaWü)**

- A meeting of representatives from ESF managing authorities in the Danube Region took place last year as a side-event of the Annual Forum for the Danube Strategy in Ulm. With this first meeting an ESF network for the Danube Region was initialized. The ESF Network focuses on exchange of experiences and possible fields of cooperation within the Danube Strategy. The overall aim of the network is to establish cooperation on working level and to generate transnational projects in the Danube Region, which can be financed by the European Social Fund.
- Interim Results:
  - o Promising start to establish a sustainable ESF-cooperation within the EUSDR.
  - o Next meeting planned in Vienna Jan 2017.
  - o Bulgaria: transnational call in preparation.
  - o Transnational project in Baden-Württemberg with partners in Austria and Romania.
  - o Go.for.europe.de: traineeships for young people especially from Danube region in Baden-Württemberg (from 2017).

##### **Approaches and experiences of practical arrangements in Romania (Ionut Sandu, Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Programme of Romania)**

- The Regional Operational Programme 2014 – 2020 foresee a dedicated national call for EUSDR related projects, implemented within 12 Danube riverine counties. There is also additional score for those projects that contribute to EUSDR. The envisaged types of investments are related to measures aiming sectors such as low carbon economy, cultural heritage, local and regional road infrastructure and sustainable development of tourism.

- EUSDR in the context of the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020:
  - o Presentation of the Regional Programme 2014-2020
  - o The projects foreseen to be developed and implemented through the EUSDR will contribute to the sustainable development, with a balanced approach between the economic development and environmental protection.

The moderator was Erich Unterwurzacher, Director, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission, who have highlighted as well the Open Data platform of DG REGIO as source of data for tracking investments in the EU (<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>)

## Closing Plenary

### **Part 1: Introduction und Input-Presentations**

#### **Introduction** (Walter Defaa, DG Regio)

- In the past, cities were key actors, because they initiated the Strategy. 70% of the Danube Region lives in cities. Their importance for economic development has been discussed in the Urban Agenda of the EU.

#### **Quo Vadis Danube Region?** (Bettina Müller and Hannes Leo, ZEW):

- Recommendations:
  - o Potentially huge number of projects;
  - o Different mechanism to trigger projects at the macro and micro level;
  - o Help catching-up countries get into the positions to implement large scale and long term projects;
  - o increase the level of political backing of the EUSDR;
  - o Empower companies /civil society to formulate bottom-up projects at micro level;
  - o Are cities the new power house for the EUSDR developments?
- Catching-up countries expect help from advanced countries and the EU.

#### **Success Stories of the EUSDR** (Marco Onida, DG Regio and Matija Vilfan, DSP):

- Joining forces from the region on selected key challenges to solve the region's needs.
- 5 years of cooperation have concretely improved effectiveness of policies and programmes
- The achievements of this macro-regional cooperation are impressive: many initiatives, regional strategies and complex transnational projects have been implemented.
- The achievements exemplify the **added value** of the Danube Strategy and are motivation for further cooperation towards a connected, prosperous, sustainable and secure region.
- 14 selected "success" projects managed to engage 143 mio Euro from different funds

### **Part 2: Discussion of Mayors from the Danube Region:**

#### **Q1: How do you see the future of the Danube Region?**

- **Mayor of Bratislava:** Hosted many events related to the Danube. The city of Bratislava is built on “cooperation”. The city itself has a particularity: it was a border region, the beginning of the Iron Curtain.
- **Mayor of Chisinau:** Hope for a concrete project. The Danube is the first and only natural highway in Europe. There should be a minimum of rules for all capitals and cities in the Danube Region, in order to promote the Strategy. There should be the same rules, same competences, which would offer a common ground. Since environment is an important topic, Chisinau has a concrete project: introducing autonomous trolley-buses in the city and outing buses within 10 years.
- **Mayor of Ulm:** The contribution to the EUSDR has been achieved through the Danube Fest and the office in Ulm. There should be less talk and more concrete projects. Um supports the EC in promoting the Urban Agenda and it is time to make concrete steps for the people in the Danube Region. Digitalisation/Smart Cities is one of the themes that Ulm wishes to promote, alongside water and waste management; the Danube Youth Project. There should be a cultural road in the region, since Unesco already recognised the cultural region.
- **Deputy-Mayor of Belgrade:** Belgrade is the former capital of Yugoslavia, a city of 1,7 million inhabitants contributing with 40% at the Serbian GDP. Cities can be the main doors of cooperation between countries. Recommendations: tourism (especially for China), smart cities, investment potential. Belgrade has 10 million Euro in the pipeline for investments. There should be a formal/informal working group established for support.

## **Q2. What are the areas in the cities where you would like to receive more help from the EUSDR?**

- **Mayor of Bratislava:** There should be more funds allocation in the Danube Region, particularly for areas such as drinking water; water management; infrastructure.
- **Mayor of Chisinau:** There is a need for common rules and tools. A kind of “Constitution” for the Danube cities should be drafted to help the administration. Areas of interest for downstream Danube: infrastructure, waste management, economy, jobs, services, leisure.
- **Mayor of Ulm:** Financing in the early design stage of a project is necessary, because not every city in the Danube Region can afford to finance these preparations. We have cooperation, but because of political changes it is sometimes interrupted. It is important to have a stable public service in the Danube Region municipalities.
- **Deputy-Mayor of Belgrade:** Better connections are needed and areas where cities can cooperate should be identified. Cities should have a more important role in the implementation of the EUSDR. The Danube gives many opportunities, but we are responsible for making our own future.

## **Part 3: Concluding remarks:**

### **Michal Blaško, Slovakian National Coordinator:**

- Since it took over the EUSDR Presidency last year, Slovakia has been successful in linking the DTP contribution to the EUSDR, especially regarding the activities of coordinators and preparation of Strategic Projects;
- EUSDR targets have been updated;
- Much attention was paid to the links between the EUSDR and European structural and investment funds; In cooperation with the EC and DSP, SK managed to organise the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum which demonstrated the added value of macroregional cooperation;
- Slovakia appreciates the cooperation with Hungary and is pleased to pass them the presidency.

### **Istvan Joo, Hungarian National Coordinator:**

- Hand over of the EUSDR Presidency; The Hungarian term will be guided by the principle of interconnectivity, because connectivity brings prosperity; focus on **Energy and Transports**;
- Concerning Energy, the aim is increasing energy security before 2020.

- Hungary will also try to identify the regional bottlenecks in transportation;
- Because energy and transports are the backbone of economic development, the Hungarian presidency will try to find synergies between the two.
- Renewables are changing the way we perceive environment, therefore green energy can contribute to the 2020 goals.
- Expectations:
  - o Carry on the momentum of the current Presidency;
  - o Transfer successfully the focus;
  - o Hand over the Presidency in as good condition as it was received.
  - o The **next Annual Forum** will take place on **18-19 October in Budapest**.

**Lena Andersson-Pench, DG Regio Director:**

- Five years after the launch of the Strategy we can take stock of what has been achieved; with the help of the new brochure "**Success Stories from the Danube Region**"
- In the future we need to work more on monitoring the results;
- Beneficiaries from Moldova and Ukraine will also be able to receive ENI Funds through the DTP; there are more than ERDF funds, there are other financing sources as well.
- EuroAccess is an interesting tool for finding financing;
- The gap between stakeholders should be bridged in order to maximise the funding;
- **Mayors and cities are the motors of the Strategy.**