

*Priority Area 6 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region*  
**Preserving biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils**

**Kick Off Meeting**  
**Steering Group**  
**20. June 2011**

**Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health**  
**Rosenkavalierplatz 2**  
**81925 Munich**  
**Germany**

**10:30 am - 17:10 pm**

Final Minutes as of 27.7.2011, approved by Steering Group at 24.10.2011

Participants:

**Szilvia Ádám** (Ministry of Rural Development, Hungary), **Florian Ballnus** (Priority Area Coordinator, Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health, Germany), **Olivier Baudelet** (European Commission, DG Regio), **Isabella Bernt** (Bavarian State Chancellery, Germany), **Szilvia Bosze** (European Commission, DG ENV), **Peter Eggenberger** (Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health, Germany), **Erzébet Gergely** (Ministry of Rural Development, Hungary), **Erich Ober** (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water, Austria), **Kornelija Pintaric** (Priority Area Coordinator, Ministry of Culture, Croatia), **Cristina Sut** (Ministry of Environment and Forests, Romania), **Patrick Stromski** (Ministry of the Environment, Climate Protection and the Energy Sector, Germany / BW), **Joachim Schütter** (Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health, Germany), **Ivna Vuksic** (Ministry of Culture, Croatia)

**Opening by the Chair**

Mr. Florian Ballnus in his function as Priority Area Coordinator for the Priority Area 6 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and co-chair together with Ms. Kornelija Pintaric, opens the meeting and welcomes the participants.

**Welcome Address by the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health**

Mr. Peter Eggenberger as representative of the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health welcomes the participants on behalf of the Ministry and highlights the high priority given by the Ministry to the EUSDR. He points out that a specific unit titled "Danube Strategy, Alpine Space" was established in the Ministry.

**Introduction by PACs and Chair**

The chair presents the agenda. No additional issues for discussion are raised. He explained that to the kick off meeting all SG members, EC (DG REGIO and DG ENV) and PAC 4&5 were invited, but due to time constraints some of them could not come. Also, for Ukraine and

Moldova SG contacts are still missing. The chair invites the participants to introduce themselves in a tour de table.

### **Input speech by DG Regio, Olivier Baudelet**

Mr. Olivier Baudelet emphasizes that the ownership and responsibility for implementation of the EUSDR is at the countries and the regions. The European Commission has the role as a facilitator of implementation of Strategy. He describes the roles of the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), the Steering Group (SG), the National Contact Points and of observers to the SG. He points out that the SG is the decision taking body for the Priority Area. The big decision will be taken by the Ministers within High Level Group. PACs have to do day to day work, to organize SG, help design some projects, ensure communication, to keep the progress of the Strategy and make link with the Commission. They meet twice a year with other PACs. SG has to meet at least twice a year. One seminar with stakeholders has to be organized per year. The approach shall be pragmatic and pro-active. He emphasizes the importance of horizontal exchange with other Priority Areas. Observers, especially the ICPDR, are considered as important and shall take part in the SG meetings. The National Contact Points shall make sure that the nominated representative takes part in the SG meetings.

The working method of the EUSDR is transnational. Specifically the impact of actions and projects shall be transnational, which can derive from regional and local activities as well. An integrated approach (keep contacts with other) and inclusive approach (include wider audience) shall be followed.

It is of importance that the SGs agree on targets and communicate its position on targets to the EU Commission by the end of June 2011.

Funding is available in the Danube Region, as there are various sources of funding (European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, 7 Framework Programme, LIFE Programme, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), etc.).

Operational Programmes (OP) have to be designed and broad enough to support implementation of the EUDRS. PACs will receive projects which cost no money but need support for implementation.

A working procedure for the issuing of a letter of recommendation shall be elaborated. The PACs are asked to prepare the decision on issuing the letter of recommendation by a pre-assessment. The SG shall take the decision, based on the pre-assessment.

Next steps to be taken until June 2012:

Each action in the action plan should be break down to milestones (operational steps) and a timeline to achieve the milestones. The aim should be to develop three (3) new projects and 10 (ten) existing projects. Further aims to achieve until June 2012: two SG meetings, one Workshop and the installation of a Website.

Role of the EC will be to facilitate the process, to continue with participation, to help organize work and give the signal to Operational programmes.

Web site for PAC has been launched provided by Interact.

### **Presentation by DG Env, Szilvia Bösze**

Mrs. Szilvia Bösze gives an overview on the EU biodiversity policy, EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and its links to the EUSDR and other policy developments highly relevant for the Danube Strategy (see presentation). Mrs. Bösze makes special reference to the high number

of Natura 2000 sites alongside the Danube river. She furthermore points out "green investments" and "ecosystem services" as important issues for the implementation of the Danube region strategy. The LIFE post 2013 programme will provide good opportunities for integrated projects and should serve as a catalyst for macro-regional projects.

### **Presentation by PACs**

Mr. Ballnus presents the first part of the PAC presentation, mostly concerning issues implemented so far and foreseen to be implemented as well as the organizational structure, division of tasks of the PACs and the Steering Group (see presentation).

*Lunchbreak 13:00 - 13:50*

### **Presentation by PACs (cont.) and Discussion on targets**

Ms. Pintaric gives an overview on the proposed targets for the Priority Area 6, as laid down in the EU Communication COM(2010) 715 final.

She points out that the proposed targets should be adjusted more to the targets of the EU Strategy on Biodiversity.

Mr. Baudalet emphasizes the need to stick to the deadline by the end of June 2011, to adopt targets by the SG. Targets shall be considered as an important milestone to be achieved by the end of June in each SG.

Mr. Ober questions, if he can agree to the targets without a further consultation in his ministry. Mr. Eggenberger sees no justification to agree on the targets until the end of June. He would prefer an appropriate discussion, as the targets are indicators by which the political and content-related success of the EUSDR will be measured. Furthermore, the proposed target on soil erosion belongs to the competences of the Ministry of Agriculture, so they would need to be consulted as well.

Also other participants express their doubts that they can agree to the targets at the occasion of the Kick off meeting or within a short time until End of June.

Mr. Baudalet points out that the SG members should have the mandate to agree on the targets, as this was foreseen in respective guidance notes. He further points out that the High Level Group of the EU-27 will take the final decision on the targets by September 2011. A basis for this decision shall be provided by each SG, as an expert group, before that date.

Ms. Pintaric proposes to take relevant target(s) from the EU Biodiversity Strategy and to agree on them as a target(s) for the Priority Area 6, which will serve as a basis for the final decision by the EU-27 High Level Group.

As the EU Biodiversity Strategy is to be adopted by all EU member states on 21 June 2011, the participants of the SG agree to the proposal.

After a consultation of the relevant Communication from the Commission COM(2011) 244 final *Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020*, the participants of the SG Meeting agreed by consensus to replace the following three targets from the EU Communication COM(2010) 715 final:

- Draw up effective management plans for all Natura 2000 sites;
- Secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species and other indigenous fish species by 2020, combating invasive species;
- Reduce by 25% the area affected by soil erosion exceeding 10 tonnes per hectare by 2020.

with the following four targets, based on the EU Communication COM(2011) 244 final:

- To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement, adapted to the special needs of the Danube Region.
- By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.
- By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.
- Secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species and other indigenous fish species by 2020.

### **Rules of Procedure**

Mr. Ballnus presents the draft Rules of Procedure. The participants agree by consensus to the changes (see attached documents) and adopt the Rules of Procedure.

### **Observers**

The following organizations are proposed as permanent observers according to Rule 3(1):

- the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)
- the Carpathian Convention

The members of the Steering Group agree by consensus to accept the ICPDR and the Carpathian Convention as permanent observers.

### **Labeling**

Mr. Ballnus presents a proposal for the working procedure of the labeling process (see attachment). The SG members ask the PACs to present a draft of the foreseen application form and the criteria by the end of August 2011. Final draft should be developed by the end of September 2011 together with evaluation criteria. Mr. Baudalet announces that the EU Commission will draft a harmonized letter of recommendation to be used by all Priority Areas. He added that technical assistance will be provided PACs for different activities (communication, meetings, staff, etc.)

### **Database**

Mr. Ballnus invites the SG members to list relevant projects in the provided excel file and submit it to the PACs by the end of July 2011.

### **Next SG meeting**

The chair proposes to have the second meeting of the SG in the second half of 2011, envisaged are the first two weeks of November 2011. Proposals for specific dates will be made by the PACs. Ms. Pintaric announces that the second meeting will take place in Croatia, the concrete place is to be defined.

### **Ending of meeting**

The chair thanks the SG members and observers for the successful kickoff meeting and summarizes that two major aims were achieved: the adoption of Rules of Procedure and the agreement on targets. It is foreseeable that the second meeting of the SG will have a more content oriented focus. It would be most desirable that all countries will be represented in an appropriate way.

### **Annexes**

1. Draft Rules of Procedure, changes visible
2. Rules of Procedure (adopted by the Steering Group)
3. Presentation Szilvia Bösze
4. Presentation PACs
5. Presentation Working Procedure Labeling
6. PA6 Database (to be filled in by SG Members, see above)
7. PA6 Members and Observers