

Steering Group of Priority Area 9 (SG PA 9) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

Internal Minutes of the 2nd Meeting

Date and location of the venue

05/06 December 2011, Hotel International, Miramarska 24, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

05 December 13.15 - 17.45, 06 December 9.00 - 12.15

Chair: Roland Hanak (AT), Jürgen Schick (AT)

Countries present (participants see attached lists)

Representatives of the following countries of the Danube Region: AT, BA, BG, DE, HR, ME, SK. Missing: CZ, HU, MD, RO, RS, SI; UA (has not nominated SG member)

European Commission (EC/DG Regio)

European Training Foundation (ETF)

Proposed Agenda - day one

1. Opening & Welcome
2. Acceptance of the Agenda
3. Overview of Major Developments since SG 1
4. Evaluation of the Questionnaires on Targets, Main Priorities and Outputs
5. Process of Stocktaking of Projects, Interim Results
6. Priority Area 9 in the Action Plan
7. Discussion of the Work Plan
8. Overall Targets for PA 9

Proposed Agenda - day two

9. Continuation of Discussion from Day one
10. EC Technical Assistance and Implementation of a PA 9 Pilot Project
11. Internet Platform of PA 9
12. Criteria for Labelling and Inclusion of Projects in PA 9
13. Next Meeting and AOB
14. Final Conclusions, Deliverables and Next Steps

Main Conclusions

- The SG adopts the work plan and the action plan with modifications as drafted by the PACs.
- The SG agrees on the overall targets with modifications (see pages 10 and 11). The PACs will transmit the targets to the EC/DG Regio, SG members and other relevant persons.
- A draft of the requirements for the labelling of projects will be sent out to and subsequently adopted by the participants of the 2nd SG meeting.
- The SG underlines the importance of greater participation in the meetings. In this respect, and to ensure further high credibility for PA 9, the SG decides to increase awareness in their respective home country. DG Regio is supporting this commitment through communication with the NCPs. The support for the participation of the PAC from MD will continue.
- The evaluation of the questionnaires will be continuously updated.
- PACs develop a draft for up to 8 thematic working groups following the 8 actions which are mentioned in the work plan. The commitment and active participation of the DR countries is required.
- The actions in the work plan will be further developed and continuously updated during the implementation of the EUSDR.
- The Pilot Project within PA 9, “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe” in the respective home country will be supported by the SG members.

Main events 2012 (current state of play)

30/31 January 2012 EC-PAC-NCP Meeting Conference (Bucharest; PA 9 will be represented by Priority Area Coordinators)

Spring 2012 International Conference, Stakeholder Forum & 3rd SG Meeting (Vienna; date tbc)

4th SG-meeting in autumn (tbc)

4 Thematic Working Groups, 2 in one semester (tbc)

(Day 1)

1. Opening & Welcome

HANAK, SCHICK (CHAIR) and the representative of the host country, IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR), welcome the participants and thank for their presence and commitment. HANAK and SCHICK express their gratitude to HR for hosting the meeting.

2. Acceptance of the Agenda

The SG adopts the agenda as provided by the PACs. As stated in the „Guidelines for the Functioning of the Steering Group“ for PA 9, paragraph 4 d), „Decisions can be made when at least half of the participating EUSDR countries attend the meeting.“, the required quorum of minimum seven states is present (AT, BA, BG, DE, HR, ME, SK).

3. Overview of Major Developments since SG 1

Evaluation and Stocktaking of projects

HANAK (CHAIR) mentions that a questionnaire (Stocktaking-List of Nominated Projects) as well as a project data sheet as one out of three main documents according to the deliverables requested by the EC has been sent to the SG on 26 August 2011, 8 of 13 participating countries have answered. The questionnaire was also sent to Austrian project leaders and actors mentioned by the EC.

Letters of Recommendation & Labelling

HANAK (CHAIR) informs that some letters of support were given out for projects which already applied for funding (4 projects have been recommended, 2 labelled).

PA 9 webpage

HANAK (CHAIR) mentions that a webpage provided by Interact has been filled with information on PA 9 in order to provide relevant information on the Strategy to the citizens and to promote public awareness; also for spreading information among potential project leaders on funding and communication within PA 9.

Networking activities

SCHICK (CHAIR) states that synergies have been sought with regional networks e.g. the RCC Task Force Building Human Capital, the Education Reform Initiative of SEE and the Central European Cooperation in Education (CECE). The cross-sectoral approach of the Strategy (cf. GAC conclusions on EUSDR of 13 April 2011) with other Priority Areas (7 & 3) is being supported. There was a conference with actors from development cooperation, based on synergies of development cooperation with EUSDR in Vienna on 05 September

2011. Furthermore, assistance is being provided to Lead Partners and PA 9 participated in a Labgroup Meeting in Belgrade on 06/07 October 2011.

Deliverables / Letter by DG Regio

SCHICK (CHAIR) mentions the letter by DG Regio/Dirk Ahner of 16 August 2011 in which the EC proposes deliverables the PAs should achieve: 1. Actions are broken down in operational steps; 2. 5-10 new projects identified; 3. 5-10 ongoing projects identified; 4. 2 SG meetings until June 2012. 5. Organization of one stakeholder seminar per year 6. Website in place. The current state is as follows: Deliverables 3, 4 and 6 are already achieved, 1 and 2 are in good progress, deliverable 5 is in preparation and will be achieved until June 2012.

Support from DG Regio

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) thanks for the invitation to the SG meeting and apologises for the fact that the EC will be represented only on the 1st day of the meeting because of the further trip to another SG meeting on 06 December. NUSSMÜLLER (EC) stresses the political support by the EC for the EUSDR, which importance was also underlined at the last EU 27 High-Level-Group meeting on 21 November 2011. The high political level should be maintained. In order, there is the need to have concrete actions to achieve high political support, such as the annual forum, which will take place presumably in autumn 2012. The next High-Level-Group meeting will deal mainly with the developments at the macro-level. DG Regio asks which actions PA 9 wants to start and in the sequel include in the Work Plan. At the EC-PAC-NCP meeting Conference in Bucharest on 30/31 January 2012 developments about what already has been achieved will be exchanged. The report about the single actions in PA 9 shall be transmitted to the EC until June 2012. DG Regio is encouraging a wider participation in the SG meetings because otherwise the credibility would be much lower. Therefore, DG Regio is working together with the NCPs to increase the number of participants.

Technical Assistance (TA)

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) assures that every PA will be supported with EUR 200.000 over the initial period of the EUSDR, which means for two years. The necessary money will be soon available. As regards current achievements, a letter regarding alignment of funding has been sent out by the EC/DG Regio to the Programme Managers in order to ensure that finances that have not yet been fully exploited will be used sustainably. The EC encouraged the Managing Authorities to involve the EUSDR in the Operational Programmes in existing and future programmes in a better way. The new programmes within the ERDF are being discussed in the General Affairs Council (GAC) together with the EU Member States. The same happens on other policies as well, e.g. the new ERASMUS FOR ALL programme.

HANAK (CHAIR) thanks for the presence of DG Regio and contribution of the most important points.

Discussion: Use of TA

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) asks about the proposed activities the TA will be used for.

HANAK (CHAIR) makes the suggestion to use the money primarily for the meetings, within these for e.g. travel costs for non-EU MS. There will be an International Conference at Minister's level, including a Stakeholder Forum with 200 - 300 participants in spring 2012. CHAIR leaves open the question whether the money should be used for this purpose.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) asks if all non-EU MS will be invited to the International Conference and the Stakeholder Forum.

HANAK (CHAIR) replies in the affirmative and adds that within the event there could be some kind of project fair with best-practice examples.

Discussion: Funding Issues

MATTES (DE) states that many projects do not apply for financial resources from the EU Structural Funds.

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) stresses that the Structural Funds are implemented in the region concerned. Differences in absorption capacities can be mainly found in the funds for infrastructure, transport and environment. As far as the LLL Programme is concerned, information about the absorption rate is not available.

HANAK (CHAIR) interposes that there are difficulties in the absorption of funds, depending on the country. It appears that the problem lies in the lack of know-how in some Member States, how to apply for funding. In the CBC there is a 4 % of the EU Structural Funds budget allocated. The EUSDR asks for at least bilateral/trilateral/multinational projects and it is more difficult to apply for funds together with other states, as regards finding reliable partners.

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) states that it is not expected that due to the EUSDR there will be a better absorption rate. There might be more time for discussion on projects within the EUSDR and, as a consequence, more high-quality projects. The letters of recommendation can be a useful tool in order to check on the content of the projects. The supporting should be assumed by Interact as they are specializing in e.g. CBC.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) reminds that Europe's growth strategy EU 2020 is based under the territorial principle and asks how non-EU MS could receive funding.

SCHICK (CHAIR) mentions that different partners could be connected not only in major or large projects, but also on a smaller level. It could be conceivable to build co-operations at e.g. school level, like in the Comenius programme. The question is how PA 9 may ensure the projects' continuous reference to the EUSDR and thereby keep its political momentum vivid.

Discussion: PAC for PA 9 from MD

HANAK (CHAIR) introduces another topic of discussion. The underlying principle of the coordination in the EUSDR PAs is based on an equal partnership between two states. The new nominated PAC from Moldova confirmed his presence at the 2nd SG meeting but had to decline. His deputy has rejected his presence short dated. The question arises how to deal with this difficult circumstances.

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) mentions that PA 9 is the only PA in which this circumstance has arisen. The EC does not propose a particular policy or action in such a case, but it would be good to give MD more time.

SCHICK (CHAIR) highlights the crucial role of the EC, which has nominated the PACs, to safeguard the involvement of MD in the implementation process of PA 9 (cf. 15.b GAC Conclusions of 13 April 2011).

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) suggests to express support in MD participation as PAC and also to communicate this to the NCP of MD.

ŠTĚPÁNKOVÁ (SK) asks if MD has a good access to EU funds.

HANAK (CHAIR) replies that MD receives funding from the Development Cooperation Programme. PA 9 supports MD just as other non-EU MS regarding travel costs arising from meetings within the EUSDR.

RAIZNER (DE) mentions that there was a similar discussion with Ukraine. There is a possible need for coaching the countries to result in developing of some structures. This could be done by the EC.

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) stresses that the EC has given its support to these countries.

HANAK (CHAIR) refers to the last seminar on Labour Market Policy in MD/Chişinău on the 08/09 November 2011 where the cooperation went very well. One option would be to involve MD through organizing the 4th SG meeting in Chişinău.

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) asks over which period of time this could be reached.

HANAK (CHAIR) replies that it is feasible within one year.

SCHICK (CHAIR) stresses that there is an urgent need for participation from MD also because of the impending report to the EC in June 2012.

7. Discussion of the Work Plan and the Action Plan

Due to 5 more items on the agenda for day one and early departure of DG Regio, there is a request from the CHAIR to move item 7, "Discussion of the Work Plan", forward because of particular interest for DG Regio. The items 4 and 5, "Evaluation of the Questionnaires on Targets, Main Priorities and Outputs" and "Process of Stocktaking of Projects, Interim Results" are dropped from the agenda as they were already discussed under the previous items. Item 6, "Priority Area 9 in the Action Plan", is dealt with in item 7.

Specific PA 9 overall activities

HANAK (CHAIR) reports about the Work Plan at this stage. There will be specific overall activities like 2 SG meetings per year and a Stakeholder Forum, together with an International Conference with Minister's participation in spring 2012. Furthermore, up to 8 thematic working groups will be established, following the 8 actions, whereas these working groups do not necessarily have to be carried out all at the same time. A part of

the TA money could be used for these working groups. In order to cover the groups, it is asked if there are SG members who want to organise and/or host a group. In addition, it is reported that activities like mapping and labelling of existing/new projects and initiatives are ongoing. The discussion on the common PA 9 targets and objectives is planned over the course of this item. Furthermore, the participation of PAC of PA 9 in relevant events on EU and regional level already started. The PA 9 website is up and running.

Proposals to change - gathering of opinions and discussion

HANAK (CHAIR) introduces that the current Work Plan will be continuously updated during the implementation and is - together with the report about activities in PA 9 - another document which will be included into the first Progress Report issued by the Commission by the end of 2012. It is proposed to consider the merging of actions 4 & 5 due to thematic overlaps into the action "To support lifelong learning and expanding learning mobility". The proposal for the new action 5 is "To promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through education and training". Furthermore it is suggested to merge action 7 & 8 due to thematic overlaps into "To fight poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities in the Danube Region, especially the Roma communities" and to implement a new action 8 with focus on gender equality, especially on payment, namely "To promote gender equality on the labour market, especially in payment".

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) mentions that there are a number of different and comprehensive actions in the Work Plan. It would be important to state what PA 9 wants to do in each of the actions and how it is achievable. According to the resources, PA 9 should begin with the implementation of the actions, whereas not all of them have to be filled with projects at a time. In comparison with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the start was a little bit easier because in the EUSBSR there was the aim to name certain flagship projects. In the case of EUSDR, the EC leaves the decision up to the PACs/SG members, but it is recommended to focus on 2 - 3 actions, staged in short- and medium-term actions. All in all, the current documents are representing what the EC requests. Perhaps a merging of the Work Plan and the evaluation documents would be useful.

SCHICK (CHAIR) stresses that the focuses of PA 9 are mainly generated on the project level. The PACs and the SG members have limited influence on this part within projects. Therefore, it is suggested to keep all actions in the Work Plan open, in order to have a lot of projects to build upon.

HANAK (CHAIR) emphasizes that if the core of the implementation of the EUSDR are the projects, then this working level is out of scope for PACs. The assessment of projects is not possible due to lack of personal resources within PAC and would also mean to double the assessment of Monitoring Committees, Managing Authorities and Technical Secretariats. The projects shall be supported regarding the focus of public attention and the support for where and how to receive EU funds.

NUSSMÜLLER (EC) indicates that the mentioned actions in the Action Plan are examples for projects. The PAs are asked to formalise and operationalise the actions according to their feasibility.

ŠTĚPÁNKOVÁ (SK) interposes that a decreasing number of actions is being supported, whereas it is noted that responsibilities for projects cannot lie with the SG members.

Institutions in SK are uncertain about where particularly PA 9 can create an added value, as sources for funding in SK are accessible irrespectively of the EUSDR. It is pointed out that regarding the Work Area 7, “To fight poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities in the Danube Region, especially the Roma communities”, the situation in the Slovak and the Czech Republic is different from that in Romania and Bulgaria, in particular in the field of education.

MATTES (DE) points out that the main task of the SG is to create networks of cooperation and to help to identify possible partner countries.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) suggests to differentiate the Work Plan into three working areas, namely Labour Market, Education and Social Inclusion. The areas could be linked easily to the certain PAs.

HANAK (CHAIR) states that there is already a separation into three working areas, such as Education and Training, Labour Market and Marginalised Communities. The essential question is why a project should be part of the EUSDR.

SCHICK (CHAIR) mentions that possible project outputs and priorities were asked in the questionnaire “Stocktaking-List of Nominated Projects”.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) suggests to extend the period for returning the questionnaires because of not yet received information from relevant bodies.

HANAK (CHAIR) stresses that PA 9 is in urgent need of a basic list of projects and existing partners in order to encourage the creation of new partnerships and to stimulate the inter-connection also at transnational level. The subsequent operationalisation should be feasible and on a level where best results can be achieved.

ŠTĚPÁNKOVÁ (SK) suggests regarding the operationalisation for the field of education, to bring teacher training programmes together with relevant institutions in the respective countries.

DURIĆ (BA) mentions the ERI SEE regional platform as a best practice example, where countries agreed on achievable topics in three clusters, like NQF (National Qualification Frameworks). The ERI SEE platform contributes to the development of the NQF as well as the involvement of other countries.

SCHICK (CHAIR) punctuates that there are excellent co-operations within the pre-mentioned ERI SEE platform, whose projects were also reported to PA 9. Of particular interest in this context is also the cluster project on Evidence-based policy-making.

RAIZNER (DE) states that the Work Plan should also include the basic principles of what is ultimately needed for a successful project. Within the framework of the EUSDR, the effects on other PAs, e.g. transport, should be mentioned, as well as the Work Plan could contain eventually an evaluation of the project results.

SCHICK (CHAIR) explains that one of the basic approaches of the Work Plan is that the projects should have at least a bilateral component. The work plan shall also give an overview of current co-operations.

HANAK (CHAIR) asks the fundamental question, if the Work Plan should include the essence of projects and/or other contents. One possibility might be also that states try to promote the projects in their own countries.

MATTES (DE) proposes that projects could be combined between the participating states of the EUSDR. It is mentioned that there is a current project in the Education Field/ Vocational Training between RO and DE/Baden-Württemberg which could be initiated because of the good connections at ministerial level between the two states. Interested EUSDR countries might join in the project, or similar ones.

SCHICK (CHAIR) adds that an in-depth presenting of projects in SG-meetings is unfortunately not possible in the time available. It is underlined that there is a need for seminars where potential project partners meet. Regarding LLL there will be a contact seminar for potential school partnerships, etc., in Austria in early 2012. Relevant institutions in the Western Balkan countries could be addressed to develop concrete project ideas. It is suggested that the working groups mentioned in the Work Plan under “PA 9 Overall Activities” could be used to bring together potential project leaders in order to discuss which projects could be planned.

Agreement on the Work Plan and the Action Plan

SCHICK (CHAIR) stresses the idea of the Work Plan as a rolling document which will be updated regularly. Because of the future report to the EC, the current draft of the Work Plan has to be adopted on a temporary basis at this stage.

KASPARYAN (BG) mentions that the Work Areas 5 & 8 in the draft of the Work Plan are containing overlapping areas to other PAs within the EUSDR, like gender equality in Area 8 which is also an issue in PA 3. Proposal to mention these cross-cutting dimensions in the Work Plan and perhaps also in the Work Plans of the PAs concerned.

HANAK (CHAIR) states that the Work Plan is part of the new Action Plan, but it will be attempted to take this into account.

CHAIR asks if there is an agreement from the SG on the current Work Plan and on the proposed modifications of the Action Plan regarding PA9.

No objections from the Members present, the SG adopts the Work Plan and the proposed modifications of the Action Plan as drafted by the PACs.

A draft of the Work Plan and the proposed modifications of the Action Plan can be found in the Annex.

8. Overall Targets for PA 9

The target proposals were collected among the DR countries by questionnaire. The PACs submitted the draft targets to the EC on 16 September 2011 based on the discussion of the 1st SG meeting in June 2011 and with the reservation that the targets will be further discussed and finalised in the 2nd SG meeting.

FEILER (ETF) notes that there is a missing link in the targets of PA 9 between labour market, education and training.

SCHICK (CHAIR) states that these three fields are mentioned in Action 2 of the Draft of the Action Plan.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) refers to the target “To use synergies at the interface of education, training and culture” and indicates that there are no experiences in HR regarding the using of EU funds, especially in the field of culture.

SCHICK (CHAIR) points out that there are not specific cultural activities with regard to this target, but more in the sense of fostering creativity in and through education, e.g. through co-operations between cultural and educational institutions.

(Day 2)

9. Continuation of Discussion from Day one

Topic of Discussion: PAC for PA 9 from MD

RAIZNER (DE) reports that RO offered support to MD to participate in the DRS. It was agreed that there will be a meeting between RO and MD at Foreign Ministers’ level. It is also reported that RO is still very interested in PA 9, although it could not participate in the meeting.

Topic of Discussion: Overall Targets for PA 9

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) underlines the necessity to have funds for small projects. Furthermore, it is pointed out the importance of projects at local/regional level, especially because most decisions are taken on these levels.

SCHICK (CHAIR) adds that Action 2 of the Work Plan covers the linkage between local and regional level.

HANAK (CHAIR) summarises, that the Overall Targets are to a high extend general because of various conditions in the DR states.

CHAIRS introduce the proposed targets for PA 9, whereas all objectives are equally important (modifications in italics, see also Annex):

- The first target is “Contribution to the achievement of EU 2020 targets, in particular with regard to smart and inclusive growth.”
- The next target is setting up an objective for “Contribution to the ‘Education and Training 2020’ strategic framework and its four strategic objectives.”
- The third target is modified to: “Efficient cooperation between relevant actors through *involvement* and extension of existing regional cooperation networks and initiatives.”
- The fourth target is modified as follows: “To *foster creative partnerships* at the interface of education, training and culture.”

- A new target is “Contribution to the improvement of labour markets and social inclusion in the region.”
- The second new aim is “Contribution to higher synergies of education systems and labour market demands on all levels.
- ”The objectives set by PA 9 are complete with the target “Establishment and implementation of a small project funding mechanism.”¹

The SG adopts the modified Overall Targets for PA 9 as presented by the CHAIRS.

Following the request from EC/DG Regio to identify the targets for PA 9, they have been transmitted by the PACs to EC/DG Regio, SG members and other relevant persons on 07 December 2011.

10. EC Technical Assistance and Implementation of a PA 9 Pilot Project

In a mail by the EC on 13 May 2011, European Parliament (EP) has proposed to the EC to provide technical assistance/financial allocations to PACs to implement the EUSDR. In a letter by EC/Colin Wolfe on 18 July 2011, PACs and NCPs were informed that the EC adopted the EP propositions. The amount allocated per PA is EUR 200.000 and the implementation of specific projects relating to the proposal of the EP with EUR 275.000 per project (linked to Priority Areas “Inland Waterways”, “Knowledge Society”, “People and Skills” and “Institutional Capacity”). National co-financing comprises a further 5 % to these amounts.

HANAK (CHAIR) informs that the TA will be available by the beginning of 2012 and PACs are open for proposals for what it will be used besides achieving the deliverables defined by the EC. (See also item 3 of the Minutes, “Discussion of the Use of TA”.)

Implementation of the PA 9 Pilot Project, “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe”

SCHICK (CHAIR) introduces the specific project within PA 9, “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe”, a co-operation programme between schools and other stakeholders in the DR countries. The entire project will be completed in December 2013. All DR countries will be invited to participate in the project. The main expected result is to jointly develop and implement a Danube Region wide teaching programme for students with the objective to support active citizenship, creativity and intercultural dialogue. “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe” focuses on the relationship between citizenship and employability in line with the aims of the Europe 2020 Strategy of creating a knowledge society based on smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. The 1st phase of activities is the selection of a core team of experts and the selection of 16 pilot schools, as well as the creation of an internet/social media platform (January - March 2012). In the 2nd phase of the project there will be a regional workshop with key stakeholders to develop thematic

¹ *The aim of setting up a small project funding mechanism is to facilitate space for the preparation of smaller regional projects, where DR countries/NGOs/other relevant institutions work together. In particular, projects in the field of education and training, but also for example culture, have special requirements regarding their scope and complexity of application procedures.*

priorities and co-operation structures, the establishment of 4 co-operation clusters and the preparation of cluster activities, as well as the training of teachers (April - August 2012; 2nd teacher training January - August 2013). The pilot project shall serve as an example for future co-operation programmes between schools in the Danube Region, a model which could be used by other schools after the end of the project. The PAC 9 received EUR 275.000 from the EC for the pilot project, national co-financing comprises a further 5 % of this amount. SCHICK opens the discussion on the project.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) remarks that “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe” is an appreciable project because it shows how to make the EUSDR vivid. The CHAIR is asked how the DR states can participate in this project.

SCHICK (CHAIR) informs that the participation depends mainly on the particular interest of the DR countries, especially on the school level and regarding the planned co-operation clusters.

ŠTĚPÁNKOVÁ (SK) asks how the participating schools will be selected.

SCHICK (CHAIR) explains that there are different - not yet decided - possibilities how interested DR states will be addressed, e.g. through an open call via internet or by nominations through the respective ministries. First of all, it is important to have clear criteria what the participating schools have to fulfil. The intended target group are vocational schools, a certain level of English proficiency of students and other participants will be necessary because of the regular exchange on a regional basis.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) supports the idea for an open call and suggests to expand the participation outward to schools for general education.

KASPARYAN (BG) asks whether schools will be required to form cooperation with artists, cultural institutions, NGOs or business sector as part of the selection criteria, as in the justification of the proposal it is written that such partnerships will be formed.

SCHICK (CHAIR) asks if the SG supports the idea of a selection through an open call. As no objections are raised, he states that the open call will follow soon and the SG members will be kept updated. It is uncertain whether all DR states will participate in the project.

MATTES (DE) raises the question if there will also be mobility for the students themselves.

SCHICK (CHAIR) stresses that because of a limited budget the participating schools will co-operate within up to 4 clusters and meet on a regional level and partly in the final event. A project web-platform will support interaction and communication.

HANAK (CHAIR) stresses the importance of a commitment of the SG to support “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe” in their own country and asks if the pilot project could be integrated into the Action Plan of PA 9.

SCHICK (CHAIR) responds that the project is planned in Action 3, “To support creativity and entrepreneurship”. The project will be subcontracted by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture.

11. Internet Platform of PA 9

MIRTL (PAC STAFF) presents the website of the EUSDR, <http://www.danube-region.eu/>, and furthermore the website of PA 9, <http://groupspaces.com/peopleskills>, which is provided by Interact. The background of the establishing of a website for the PAs are the GAC conclusions on the EUSDR and a mail by DG Regio on 16 August 2011, where a website in place is set out as one main deliverable. The website can be understood as a One-Stop-Shop on the DRS. It provides, among other things, the opportunity to announce calls for proposals, join in groups, and it offers also information on future events within PA 9. A major function of the website is the provision of all files for PA 9, whereas each file can be published to a limited number of members. In order to be able to participate in the website, but also to restrict files to certain participants, SG members who are not yet registered are requested to contact Jörg Mirtl (joerg.mirtl@kulturkontakt.or.at). It is reported that with the disposal of TA there will be a website with an own URL for PA 9, and therefore more clearly related name to PA 9. The website will be used also for organising meetings, such as the registration, etc.

SCHICK (CHAIR) stresses the importance of participation of the SG members in the website <http://groupspaces.com/peopleskills>.

12. Criteria for Labelling and Inclusion of Projects in PA 9

The CHAIR introduces a draft of the “Requirements (Minimum and Desirable) for Labelling of Projects in Priority Area 9”.

Discussion on the Requirements for Labelling of Projects

HANAK (CHAIR) stresses that PA 9 will continue to focus on the selection of appropriate projects for PA 9 and points out that the assessment of projects remains the task of the relevant bodies. Furthermore, as regards (*remark: former*) requirement 6, “The project should have a multilateral structure. A bilateral cooperation would be a minimum requirement.”, it is put up for discussion if a project that is labelled within PA 9 has to involve, at the minimum, two countries or if projects which are carried out by one country should also be included.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) asks if the projects that are listed in the Work Plan are at least all bilateral and refers to the IPA 2011 project “Preparation of Serbian Labour Market Institutions for European Employment Strategy”, which is listed in Work Area 2.

SCHICK (CHAIR) answers that according to the available information this project has a bilateral dimension.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) mentions another project, “THARA Romani Butji - Innovative Roma Employment” in Work Area 7 of the Work Plan.

HANAK (CHAIR) denies and points out the multilateral aspect of the project as Roma are former refugees. However, it is mentioned that the project should be excluded from the

Work Plan if PA 9 sticks to the rule that at least at the minimum bilateral projects are included.

KASPARYAN (BG) proposes that projects should involve partners from more than one DR country.

HANAK (CHAIR) stresses that the EC has stated that the projects labelled within the EUSDR have to have a macro-regional approach. The minimum requirement of two states should be maintained, because otherwise all projects brought forward would have to be adopted.

KASPARYAN (BG) and IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) emphasise the importance of the involvement of minimum two countries, too. The importance of a clear impact on at least two countries is underlined.

SCHICK (CHAIR) states that in multilateral projects also non-EU MS should be involved. An open question is whether it is of particular relevance that also national projects should be included in the Work Plan to keep them for the official labelling.

HANAK (CHAIR) suggests to include projects with the involvement of one nation which have a managing authority, e.g. ERDF. Such a project could be included if it applies to the requirements. Otherwise, if PA 9 insists on the minimum requirement of two DR states, there might be projects with one country which have an impact on the whole region and are not listed.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) supports this proposal.

RAIZNER (DE) endorses the idea to include also national projects because they get visible for other countries.

MATTES (DE) asks if a project is seen as bilateral when the adviser is from a different state and mentions that the project selection should stay as open as possible.

HANAK (CHAIR) stresses that the minimum requirement for projects stays bilateral, but it has to be defined that projects do not have to be necessarily transnational in the definition of the EU.

ŠTĚPÁNKOVÁ (SK) underlines that basically the projects have to have an international dimension. The dimension on the regional level may result from the distribution of the outcomes.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) mentions that e.g. TA projects are not defined as bilateral cooperation and adds that projects therefore should have a broader meaning.

SCHICK (CHAIR) states that an expert from another country within a project will not be sufficient to define the project bilateral and refers to the Twinning projects within IPA.

HANAK (CHAIR) points out that one of the substantial problems is the low absorption of EU funds and that they cannot be moved at the moment. It is underlined that Public Private Partnership and official institutions have to be involved in the EUSDR. As requirement 6 is a critical point, the PACs will sent out a proposal regarding what is meant with the impact on a macro-region and the minimum requirement of two DR countries.

KASPARYAN (BG) suggests to add to the second part of requirement 4, “The impacts of the projects should be long persistent and sustainable.”, also “multipliable”.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) asks what requirement 7, “Non-member states of the European Union should participate in the carrying-out of the project, if applicable.”, means and how projects between HR and BA are seen in the context of the DRS/PA 9.

SCHICK (CHAIR) explains that requirement 7 was formulated with the background to involve non-EU MS as far as possible.

HANAK (CHAIR) suggests to drop requirement 7 and asks the SG members on their opinion on requirement 8, “The project partners should be prepared to communicate project progress and results to the PACs and the Steering Group.”.

KASPARYAN (BG) points out that projects which are offering an integrated approach should also be encouraged to exchange with other PAs.

HANAK (CHAIR) suggests to take this into account in a further requirement and proposes the following formulation: “The project should include a wide range of relevant stakeholders (incl. NGOs, social partners, etc.).”, as well as *a proposal for another requirement that includes the integrative approach to other PAs*: “The project should promote an integrative approach with other PAs.”

SCHICK (CHAIR) announces that the draft of the “Requirements (Minimum and Desirable) for Labelling of Projects in Priority Area 9” will be sent out to be adopted by the participants of the 2nd SG meeting.

13. Next Meeting and AOB

SCHICK (CHAIR) announces that information about the contact seminar for project development will be sent out to the SG members. The main aim is to bring project partners together. One target group would focus on the identifying of partners at school level, but also thematic areas covered in PA 9 are possible. The SG members are invited to suggest other topics or areas which should be targeted within these seminars, even at a later date, to the PACs.

HANAK (CHAIR) refers to the Work Plan of PA 9 and reminds of the forthcoming establishment of up to 8 thematic working groups, following the 8 actions which are mentioned in the Work Plan. This PA 9 overall activity needs the commitment and active participation of the DR countries. For example, a DR state might assume the carrying out of a meeting of a working group.

SCHICK (CHAIR) underlines the importance of ownership among DR countries and suggests that different countries could take responsibility for one thematic field. PA 9 could allocate money at the disposal for accommodation and/or travel costs. The PACs need feedback from the SG members regarding topic proposals in the first half of 2012.

KASPARYAN (BG) mentions that BG needs to consult the relevant Contact Points and will inform the PACs afterwards.

SCHICK (CHAIR) informs that PACs will send out a letter to all DR countries and ask them for participation in the working groups. The selection of schools within the pilot project of PA 9, “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe”, will be sent out at the beginning of 2012.

HANAK (CHAIR) mentions an appointment within PA 9 in spring 2012, the International Conference, Stakeholder Forum & 3rd SG Meeting in Vienna which will take place back to back. The date of the event will be announced soon.

14. Closing

HANAK, SCHICK (CHAIR) thank for the presence and commitment of the SG members and express gratitude to HR for hosting the meeting and the hospitality.

IVANKOVIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ (HR) responds to the thanks and offers to organise the 5th SG meeting in spring 2013 on the Croatian Coast.

FEILER (ETF) apologises for being late and thanks for the invitation to the SG meeting.

SCHICK (CHAIR) thanks the ETF for the participation and underlines the importance of the ETF for PA 9, as some activities of the ETF could be included in the Work Plan.

FEILER (ETF) is pleased and will clarify the further procedure concerning mentioned activities of the ETF with Ulrike Damyanovic from the ETF.

DURIĆ (BA) expresses thanks for the opportunity to participate in the SG meeting and says that the conclusions made will be passed over to colleagues.

HANAK (CHAIR) closes the meeting and mentions that a commitment by the EC is of utmost importance for the SG.

Minutes: Ester Bergmann

All documents are provided at the PA 9 website <http://groupspaces.com/peopleskills>

Attachments

Annex 1: Agenda

Annex 2: List of deliverables to the EC

Annex 3: Draft of the Work Plan

Annex 4: Revision of the Action Plan (Draft)

Annex 5: Evaluation of the Questionnaires (Draft)

Annex 6: Overall Targets for PA 9 (Final Version)

Annex 7: Draft Concept/Working Paper of the Pilot Project

Annex 8: Requirements for Labelling of Projects (Draft)

Annex 9: Lists of participants (05/06 December)