

Priority Area 9 “To Invest in People and Skills” of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

As of 29 November 2012

Guidelines for the Functioning of the Steering Group

Preamble

Representatives of the Countries of the Danube Region

on the basis of the

- European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (COM(2010)715) of 8 December 2010 and the accompanying Commission staff working document “Action Plan” (SEC(2010)1489, 1490 and 1491) and the
- Council Conclusions on the European Union Strategy of the 3083rd General Affairs Council Meeting (8388/11) of 13 April 2011
- Conclusions of the European Council (EUCO 23/11) of 23/24 June 2011

have established a Steering Group (hereinafter referred to as “SG”) of the Priority Area “To Invest in People and Skills” of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (henceforth referred to as “EUSDR”).

(1) Membership in the Steering Group

- a) There are three types of membership in the SG:
 - Members nominated by the participating states with a right to vote
 - Other regular members with an observer status
 - Invited members with an advisory capacity
- b) The following fourteen participating States of the EUSDR are invited to participate in the SG (in alphabetical order): Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

- c) Each State that has expressed the interest in participating in PA 9 of EUSDR through nominating representatives has equal rights and duties, regardless of its status as EU-Member State, Candidate or Potential Candidate State or State of the European Neighborhood.
- d) Each of the fourteen states participating in the EUSDR can nominate not more than two SG members with a right to vote. Austria and the Republic of Moldova have both the right to nominate two SG members in addition to the PACs. In this case, PACs delegate their right to vote.
- e) The SG takes decisions regarding the acceptance of other regular members. If not decided otherwise, other regular members refrain from voting rights.
- f) Other regular members with an observer status are representatives of the European Commission, the European Training Foundation and other relevant cooperation mechanisms and initiatives, as decided by the SG.
- g) The meetings of the SG are open, ex officio, to the participation of staff members of the PACs and the NCPs. Upon invitation of the PACs, other countries, international organizations, existing cooperation mechanisms, regional initiatives, experts and other partners may participate as guests.
- h) SG members are allowed to send substitutes to the meetings upon prior notification of the PACs in writing and in due time.

(2) Profile, Objectives and Tasks of the Steering Group

- a) The SG of the Priority Area "To Invest in People and Skills" of the EUSDR takes action and is the executive body of this Priority Area. It also makes decisions regarding the future development of the area, its objectives, co-operations and guidelines.
- b) The SG is chaired by the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs).
- c) The SG is responsible for the co-ordination and labeling of projects in line with the EUSDR, but not for their operational administration or organization.
- d) Already existing and well-established platforms should be utilized in order to identify synergies with the EUSDR.
- e) The SG discusses the Action Plan adopted by the Commission and may propose adjustments of the following three types to the European Commission:
 - Clarification/correction of the details of a project
 - Addition of a new action or project

- Deletion of an action or a project
- f) SG members commit themselves to proactive co-operation with the PACs.
- g) The SG facilitates the work of the PACs regarding the implementation and the development of the PA, in particular with regard to
- Establishing a network of national counterparts
 - Identifying possible relevant stakeholders, with particular emphasis on Project Leaders
 - Promoting public awareness
 - Promoting the cross-sectoral approach of the Strategy
 - Setting up an operational working structure
 - Compiling a list of on-going projects and possible project-ideas
 - Agreeing on realistic and feasible objectives and actions
 - Providing assistance to Lead Partners
 - Ensuring policy discussion and policy development
 - Ensuring communication and visibility of results
 - Monitoring and report to the Commission on progress

(3) Role of the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs)

- a) The Republics of Austria and Moldova chair the PA 9 together as partners in a sense of close co-operation and partnership.
- b) The PACs are leading members of the SG and responsible for the co-ordination of the EUSDR and proactively contribute to its implementation in close co-operation with the European Commission, the National Contact Points and other relevant PACs. The implementation process involves all the stakeholders of the participating countries, regional and local authorities as well as inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies. The PACs' work is trans-national, inter-sectoral and inter-institutional.
- c) PACs have the possibility to organize networking events involving relevant stakeholders, the Civil Society and experts.
- d) PACs have the right to initiate decisions upon the creation of ad hoc groups and permanent working groups.

(4) Meeting Format and Decision Making

- a) The SG meets at least twice a year. PACs are in charge of convening the meetings of the SG.
- b) Electronic exchange and web-based co-ordination shall play a crucial role within the PACs' and the SG's communication.
- c) Decisions that the SG is entitled by the EUSDR to make will be taken by consensus, which is understood as absence of objection.
- d) Decisions can be made when at least the half of the participating countries attend the SG meeting.
- e) Each participating state has one vote per decision.
- f) In case the consensus is not reached, the Chairperson shall give a 30 minutes recess for consultations in order for the present members to reconsider their position; it is considered impossible to reach consensus if, after two rounds of discussions on one certain issue, a consensual decision cannot be reached.
- g) In case of opposition by several members, the Chairperson decides whether the decision is postponed or defeated. However, if consensus cannot be reached due to one single opposing position, the SG may decide, at the initiative of the Chairperson, by unanimity minus one, meaning, all members but one support the decision.
- h) In addition to the decision making at the SG's meetings, the SG uses electronic agreement through silence procedure (simplified written procedure). Answers should be given within fourteen days, in exceptional cases within seven days.
- i) For decisions on labeling of or issuing a letter of recommendation for a project or an initiative, only comments that explicitly relate to a potential non-compliance with the agreed and valid project criteria will be treated as an objection. Any other comments will be considered as recommendations to the project partners.
- j) At each of the meetings, the PACs provide a draft agenda, write meeting minutes and distribute it among the SG members.
- k) Aiming at assuring an efficient and rapid communication among the Partners of the SG, English is adopted as working language.