

Minutes

3rd Steering Group Meeting

EU Strategy for the Danube Region | PA 9 „People and Skills“

14 June - 15 June 2012

1st day 14 June 2012

Opening and Welcome

Welcome Roland Hanak (Chair, Austria)

Welcome Jürgen Schick (Chair, Austria)

Welcome Ion Gumene (Chair, Republic of Moldova)

Welcome Eva Nussmüller (EC, DG REGIO)

Welcome Klaus Körner (EC, DG EAC)

Welcome Simona Rinaldi (European Training Foundation, ETF)

Introduction round of new persons within the Steering Group:

Antonie Ondrouchová (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, department of EU Affairs, Czech Republic)

Zoica Vlăduț (Ministry of Education, Romania)

Tobias Kazich (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Baden-Württemberg, Germany)

GabriellaTölgyes (Ministry of National Economy, Hungary)

Liliana Draganova (Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprise, Bulgaria) replacing Mrs. Kasparyan for this Steering Group Meeting

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the aim of the Steering Group meeting is to pro-actively take the floor and communicate one's objectives to the group.

Nussmüller (EC) proposes to set the topic “progress report” on the agenda of the first day.

Acceptance of the Agenda (concordant)

Tour de table with the underlying question “What developments have been made since Steering Group 2?”

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that preparation on Stakeholder Conference was done by the Priority Coordinators and their staff, meetings with several people and networks took place, the Danube Strategy Priority Area 9 has been promoted e.g. at the conferences of the Austrian-Hungarian, Austrian-Slovakian, Austrian-Czech, Austrian-Slovenian Expert Academies, at cooperation networks KOOP AT.RO and KOOP AT.BG and at the EU-Roma-Network..

Schick (Chair, AT) says that visibility of EUSDR projects has been promoted, recommendation letters have been issued, the website got more user friendly, the pilot project “Empowering Young People - Connecting Europe” has started. In October 2012, a Contact Seminar will be held by the Austrian National Agency for LLP with the goal to create new EUSDR projects. PA9 has also sought synergies with other initiatives and institutions, such as the Education Reform Initiative (ERI SEE) as well as the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TFFBHC) of the Regional Cooperation Council.

Gumene (Chair, MD) proposes to host one of the upcoming Steering Group meetings in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova.

Ivanković-Knežević (HR) says that Croatia had good experiences with hosting the last Steering Group. She believes that there are a lot of projects which could become part of the working areas of Priority Area 9. She mentions Croatia's transition toward EU membership and problems linked to this issue, e.g. transition from IPA to EU funding structure.

Draganova (BG) says that collecting data needs synergies with other priorities. She draws the attention to a big strategic project in the framework of the CBC programme RO-BG.

Mattes (DE-BW) says that money has been allocated for capacity building in vocational training. A workshop is being planned at the moment. The Government of Baden-Württemberg is investing money in the Danube Region.

Körner (EC) says that countries with no tradition in VET programmes get interested in those programmes.

Štěpánková (SK) says that at the moment a lot of DR coordination meetings take place on a national level. There is an intensive cooperation with Priority Area 7. Commissioner Johannes Hahn will visit Slovakia on his Danube tour. At this visit the ministerial level is involved. Most huge projects are not at an international level. There is a problem to identify resources. ESF does not comply with the transnational needs of the EUSDR. LLP is better suited for international cooperation. The SK Ministry of Education supports the initiative to include the EUSDR in the draft regulations for the legislative proposals for the “Erasmus for all” programme in the upcoming budget period.

Danielopol-Hofer (AT) confirms that PA 9 should have a look on the interaction between the EUSDR and the new legislative proposals for the “Erasmus for all” programme in the upcoming budget period. Together with HU, SK (see statement above) and RO, AT has advocated the inclusion of macro-regional strategies in these proposals.

Nussmüller (EC) says that Commissioner Hahn will visit several Danube countries on his travel through the Danube Region.

Körner (EC) means that time is late for bigger changes, but there is still time to make some changes.

Progress report

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that participants can send bullet points per mail until next week.

Nussmüller (EC, DG Regio) says that the EC wants to know whether the implementation of PA 9 is functioning. The progress report sent to the European Commission should have a length of 12 pages and be pragmatic and non-technical. Main questions to work on are: What has taken place, what will be done in the future. The catchier these points are, the easier it is to draft the report.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the report should clear up the question what is going on because of the Strategy. Projects are needed to communicate with the actors. There is a need to speak about what really exists and what can stand for a role model.

Nussmüller (EC) says that the more often the Commission hears from the Strategy, the better it is.

Körner (EC) says that the report should tell about positive experiences and what challenges can be seen.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the report should show the innovative approach of the conference. The success, that many people, many countries came together, must be communicated, this should reach the Commission and the Council.

Nussmüller (EC) says that selling the success of the conference to the Commissioner is not easy.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the conference is very important for idea sharing. This fact should be also strengthened in the report.

Džuver (RS) says that it is too wide to light the labour market situation in each country too complicated to implement this in progress report.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that main points can be highlighted, but the progress report should focus on macro-regional cooperation and not be a collection of national progress reports.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says it is important to strengthen that several states are cooperating and cooperation takes place along Danube.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that the Priority Area Coordinators will resend the draft template of the progress report and invites SG members to submit short contributions not later than 21 June 2012.

Technical Assistance for PA 9

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that in the years 2012 -2013 there are 200.000 Euro for technical assistance (TA). Approximately 5.000 Euro could be spent per working group. Not everything can be covered, but the means are spent in the spirit of partnership. In the years 2014 -2015 there is only 158.000 Euro for technical assistance, which is obviously less.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that in addition to Working Group meetings the TA is intended for a follow-up of the conference in 2013 and other supporting measures.

PA 9 Stakeholder Conference: Conclusions and consequences for further work

Future of the Working Groups: Regional Ownership

Ivanković-Knežević (HR) says that different groups are having different dynamics.

Mattes (DE) says that timing combination of thematic workshops and Steering Group makes sense.

Kalmanová (SK) says that it makes sense to shrink some working groups.

Draganova (BG) proposes that working groups should be managed by two countries. She also proposes that her organisation, the Business Support Centre in Ruse, Bulgaria can undertake the coordination of WG 3 and 4.

Džuver (RS) asks whether it is possible to produce minutes for each working group.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the Rapporteurs will produce these minutes.

Concerning the follow-up meetings of the working group Hanak (Chair, Austria) says

- that Croatia will host WG 2 end of September
- that Serbia will host WG 6 by the begin of November
- that WG 8 will take place in Slovakia in October 2012.
- that WG 7 will take place in November 2012 in Budapest, Hungary

Stroie (RO) says that there is no overview of the other working groups, key topics, and key objectives.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that there has been an overview in the morning panel, but rapporteurs would write their minutes.

Draganova (BG) addresses issues related to the composition of the working groups, e.g. the involvement of experts.

Rinaldi (ETF) highlights that the outcomes of working groups should be clearly defined in advance.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that in the groups 2, 6, 7, 8 it also has been decided, which persons are responsible for the communication.

Schick (Chair, AT) is in favor of a coordinated approach for the administration of the working groups. There is still a need to further analyze possible and feasible mandates, outputs, composition and schedules of the working groups. The events are an opportunity to bring people from the working groups together and create new forms of cooperation, but there should be no uniform procedure for all working groups.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that it is no problem when people work on projects with similar indications and closes the meeting for the first day.

2nd day 15 June 2012

Hanak (Chair, AT) and Schick (Chair, AT) welcome the participants to the 2nd day of the Steering Group Meeting

Internet Platform of PA 9 – state of play

Mirtl (AT) presents the website of Priority Area 9 of the EUSDR www.peopleandskills-danuberegion.eu

Hanak (Chair, AT) suggests that sub sites for the single working groups should be implemented.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that some contents sent through the platform do not go through the firewall of some ministries.

Körner (EC) says that the internet page should give an overview on what has been done in the last time, e.g. the European Circa platform.

Ivanković-Knežević (HR) says that the minutes of working groups should be on the platform.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that all people who are not registered are invited to sign up on the website and are asked to spread the information in their country. Relevant info should be sent to Jörg Mirtl, who would publish it then on the platform.

Adoption of the Work Plan by the Steering Group; discussion of targets

Schick explains the updates of the Work Plan. Targets have been included, projects are updated. In some work areas, thematic clustering has taken place.

Nussmüller (EC) proposes to change the targets, because the added value of the Strategy would otherwise be limited.

Ivanković-Knežević (HR) says that the targets are good from the Croatian perspective. The document supports the targets and should in this way include information about the working groups.

The SG concluded that at the moment given targets should not be further discussed.

The SG adopts the rolling Work Plan as proposed by the PACs.

Future/continuation of Working Groups

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that there is a danger that people working for research institutions could leave the working groups because of the lack of funds for projects.

Hanak also says that when a new person should be proposed to get part of the working group, the group must decide whether the new person should be part of the working group. We cannot afford two people of one country in one working group.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that a second person can participate on a self-paying basis.

Körner (EC) says that the stakeholder conference combined bottom-up with top-down processes.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says working groups are the basis for further development. The positive momentum of the grass root feeling should give energy for further development. The different pace of working groups should not be considered as a problem.

Enabling the development of new EUSDR Projects

Final Conclusions, Deliverables and Next Steps

Hanak (Chair, AT) proposes to hold the 5th meeting of the Steering Group in Chişinău in June 2013.

Schick (Chair, AT) proposes that the 4th meeting of the Steering Group will be held back-to-back with the Annual Forum of the EUSDR in Regensburg (Germany) on 27 and 28 November 2012 in order to generate synergies regarding time management as well as travel expenses. This was supported by several SG members, no objections were expressed.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that meetings between other priority areas happen from time to time.

Körner (EC) says that in the high political area there is a main question: How can training be improved on the one hand, on the other hand how to deal with it within the Danube Strategy?

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the overcome of young people's unemployment is very important and it will be a topic of the next meeting of Working Group 2 in September 2012.

Nussmüller (EC) says that political momentum should be used. The report gives a possibility to show what is going on. At the upcoming EUSDR Annual Forum in Regensburg (Germany), projects should be presented.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the Priority Area Coordinators are happy to have this possibility. The project portfolio is updated continuously.

Nussmüller (EC) says the underlying topic is very strong and that she could imagine inviting another Commissioner, for example Andor (DG EMPL), to attend such a conference. She states that it is not sure to what extent the EUSDR will be taken over in the Operational Programmes which will be discussed by the end of the year. National authorities should be briefed on that in order to develop a common position of the DR on what they want commonly in the respective programme, also in national programmes (e.g. the ESF).

Hanak (Chair, AT) asks what information people would need to get projects on the way.

Ivanković-Knežević (HR) says that the Strategy is not for everybody because it is financed by certain funds.

Nussmüller (EC) says that everybody must work on the success of the strategy.

Körner (EC): The use of the strategy must be spread in the countries. The EUSDR should be communicated to the EU coordination in the respective DR country and thereby fed into the political process.

Džuver (RS) says that it is an obligation to report on what it going on to the National Contact Points.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that the ESF has the ability to cooperate with other states.

Körner (EC) says that people can be proud to be participants in a macro-region project. There are weaknesses concerning the spending of existing funds. The Steering Group of PA9 should figure out how a Small Project Fund should look like and identify weaknesses in existing funding, e.g. Leonardo.

Schick (Chair, AT) says that it is important to foster abilities for DR cooperation in the programmes. For instance, within the ESF, possibilities for transnational cooperation could be strengthened and programmes of the European Transnational Cooperation should consider all the EUSDR's priorities, including PA9. The LLP and its four sub-programmes will continue to be an important funding source for cooperation in the DR. Funds should be made available to draft some kind of concept paper for a Small Project Fund which should provide seed funding on the one hand and on the other support very small projects which are essential in the field of education.

Nussmüller (EC) says if participants need new funding, the main question is how to establish it. There will be seed money for project development in the upcoming budget period. In the new Danube programme, which will be the follow-up of the current SEE OP, one of the four priorities could be the EUSDR.

The technical assistance provided by the European Parliament will end in 2015 and will then be included in a transnational fund. We do not need additional funds, but if ESF loses stability, we need transnational cooperation funds.

Hanak (Chair, AT) says that it would be possible to get the ESF on board. The Ideas should be carried by the member states. Discussion is on the way. Thanks for contributions.

Hanak (Chair, AT) and Schick (Chair, AT) close the meeting.

Minutes taken by Jörg Leitner