

## EUSDR Report June 2015

### Priority Area 7

*"To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)"*

#### **General remarks:**

*This report covers the period June 2014 – June 2015.*

*The report fulfils three main objectives:*

- (For the general public and interested stakeholders) To be a sort of "business card" of the work and progress (also the shortcomings) of the Priority Area. The content may subsequently be used for the website and/or other communication tools;*
- (For the involved stakeholders) To illustrate what is happening (i.e. increasing/ decreasing/ changing etc.) because of the Strategy since last year. In this sense, the report should outline concrete facts and examples;*
- (For internal purposes) To explain the use of technical assistance funds for the year covered by the report through the TA bi-annual progress report, as an integral part of the EUSDR PA implementation report.*

*The report should be well-structured and should go to the point, addressing the content rather than aiming for quantity. The language should be as much as direct and clear possible, and avoid using acronyms, jargon or internal technicalities. Vague and general comments (e.g. "the situation is progressing favourably and quite rapidly") should preferably be avoided.*

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*Please include a table of contents.*

*We would like to suggest that you divide the chapters/sub-chapters in headings/sub-headings (to be possibly reflected as well in the table of contents).*

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Please include a one-pager summary highlighting the progress made and main achievements during the reporting period (including key actions/ projects and "success stories"), as well as the next steps and challenges ahead, focusing on the macro-regional added value of the actions.*

*The summary should be written in a simple and clear language, easy to understand for (non-expert) readers that may not be directly involved in the Strategy work.*

Priority Area 7 – To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT) is a part of the EUSDR Pillar C – Building prosperity focused on steering a number of stakeholders in higher education, research and ICT in the Danube Region towards common EUSDR objectives and specific PA7 targets. PA7 has big targets set in front of it, starting with 3% of GDP investment in R&D by 2020, 50% of increase in number of patents, 40% of population age 30-34 with tertiary education, 20% of academic mobility, and broadband internet access to all. Not only relevant ministries of partner countries, but also other public institutions, private organizations and networks are the ones expected to contribute to the synergy of actions and drive the Danube Region on the road to knowledge society. The PA7 of the EUSDR has a very horizontal character; higher education, research and innovation are not only highly relevant issues per se, but they also form an integral and essential part of other priorities, from energy, water and environment, to mobility, culture and security. Therefore, the most intensive work of PA7 coordinators and the Steering Group is focused on dissemination, networking and creation of the framework that will boost motivation and commitment of stakeholders to the EUSDR.

In the last year better recognition of PA7 among stakeholders and relevant target groups can be reported. The interest of stakeholders is continuously emerging and the number of common project proposals dealing with the PA7 targets and actions with strong Danube consortia is increasing. Much has been done in regard to funding research and innovation activities. The comprehensive feasibility study on the regional funding mechanisms for the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) has been completed and, based on these outcomes, the decision on further implementations steps towards intensifying cross-border do-operation will be developed within the next few months. The specific EUREKA! Call was opened for the Danube Region - EUREKA Danube Region multilateral call 2015 for cross-border co-operative projects (E!DI EUREKA Danube initiative call 2015). The call resulted from an initiative following the EUSDR, which aims at a closer collaboration by creating “synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region”. Following this example of good practice recently the initiative was launched in favour of possible COST action designed specifically for the Danube Region. As the result of the Ulm Follow-up Working Group, established after the Ulm Ministerial Conference of the Danube countries in July 2012, the German Ministry of Education and Sciences (BMBF), together with co-funding partner countries from the Danube Region (Hungary, Moldova, Serbia) has launched the second ideas competition for the establishment and development of innovative R&D networks with partners in the Danube States in June 2015. The BMBF also provides specific funding opportunities in the region via a call “Strengthening the prospects of less research intensive CESEER regions for cooperation in the ERA” and a “Joint Research Structures” Call.

Project Danube-INCO.NET provided strategic high-level coordination and support to the PA7. Based on strong institutionalised links with the PA Coordinators and Steering Groups, a consortium of 19 partners from all over the region supports the policy dialogue within the EUSDR and focus on the implementation of the ‘Innovation Union’ and the ERA Framework. Innovation support measures, development of joint funding mechanisms, enhancing DRRIF and supporting EUREKA and other platforms in the development of targeted calls, smart specialisation strategies, technology transfer centres and a system of supporting the development of targeted project proposals are all being addressed, with concrete outcomes already available. Danube-INCO.NET supported working-groups of the PA7 and PA8 and their cross-fertilising. Moreover, the Danube-INCO.NET designed a new approach, methodology and criteria for selecting/supporting EUSDR relevant projects. It

directly follows the Joint Statement of the Ministers of foreign affairs on the participation states of the EUSDR and EC (Vienna, June 2014), which called on PA Steering Groups to further develop joint approach for labelling strategic projects of the EUSDR until the end of 2014. The PA7 performed a pilot assessment activity for the labelling of EUSDR projects for Horizon 2020 Call on Twinning (H2020-TWINN-2015). A concrete outline of process for labelling for projects was developed while first outcomes of the pilot phase are now available.

The strategic collaboration with the DG Joint Research Centre - JRC brought more focus on the development of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization (RIS3) in Danube Region countries (transversal priority). The four scientific priorities/thematic clusters on the key resources of the Danube Region: water, land and soils, air, and bioenergy support real cross-fertilization among PA7 and other PAs, bringing research and innovation to the focus of other thematic areas.

At the beginning of 2015 there was a change in PA coordination on behalf of Serbia. On the position of Priority Area Coordinator Prof Dr Viktor Nedovic, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia, replaced Prof Dr Miroslav Veskovc, who took over the position in DG JRC on the coordination of scientific support to macro-regional strategies. The change went smoothly and the work continued in full capacity.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION**

*This chapter is the core of the report, and it shall describe the progress made and main achievements in terms of policy development and the implementation of the Action Plan. The activities should be related to the progress in terms of substance, and not focus on the processes/governance, which is the purpose of point 3.*

*Please also be as concrete as possible, while bearing in mind that progress that may seem obvious to you may not be obvious to outsiders.*

*Try to limit your input to 2/3 pages per sub-chapter.*

### **2.1. Policy development**

- *Progress made since last report on policies, actions and projects. Please describe the most important outcomes (including comparisons with the last reporting period) and explicitly highlight events/ discussions/ results that are happening or being speeded up because of the Strategy;*
- *Lessons learned, positive or negative;*
- *Outline on the future. Next steps and challenges. What, if anything, is missing in order to achieve the planned goals?*

Since the last progress report leading PA7 activities remained focused mainly on a wide dissemination and policy level advocacy for the EUSDR, PA7 targets and obtaining support for the most relevant PA7 actions (flagship projects, Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization - RIS3, Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund - DRRIF, recognition of the most relevant projects – labelling, coordination and support, etc). A number of activities contributed to the outcomes, including two SG meetings:

- 8th Steering Group meeting, 10 December 2014, Vienna, Austria,
- 9<sup>th</sup> Steering Group meeting, 3 June 2015, Bratislava, Slovakia,

and other relevant events organized or attended by PACs, members of their support teams, PA7 Working Group leaders and Steering Group members (the list is not exhaustive):

- “Workshop on ERA and Innovation Union: transnational cooperation of national programmes in the Danube Region”, Danube-INCO.NET, 10 July 2014, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

- “START - Danube Region Project Fund” preparatory meeting for the first call for proposals, PA10, 11 July 2014, Vienna, Austria
- DO-IT flagship project board meeting, 28 August 2014, Maribor, Slovenia
- JRC launch conference for “Stairway to Excellence (S2E)” - Gearing up for research and innovation funds in new EU countries , 2 – 3 October 2014, Prague, Czech Republic
- "International Water Forum on Water for our Future”, “7th World Water – Forum” and “3rd Nakdong River International Water Week 2014", 17 – 24 October 2014, Daegu and Gyeongju, South Korea
- 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Danube Local Actors Platform (AC D-LAP) organized by PA10, 4 November 2014, Vienna, Austria
- Regional seminar: Macro-regional initiatives - “Macro-regional strategies as a development instrument experience from EUSDR PA7”, 4 November 2014, Belgrade, Serbia
- DRC annual meeting 2014 and conference “Digital culture - the synergy between higher education and ICT”, 6 – 7 November 2014, Belgrade, Serbia
- Joint Workshop of PA7 with the Danube-INCO.NET Project, 10 December 2014, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Vienna, Austria
- Danube-INCO.NET General Assembly, 11 December 2014, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Vienna, Austria
- Meeting of the EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators and National Contact Points, 13 February 2015, Stuttgart, Germany
- Preparatory meeting for the new calls under START – Danube Region Project Fund and TAF-DRP – Technical Assistance for Danube Region Projects, PA10, 20 March 2015, Vienna, Austria
- “Beyond-Europe Roundtable” – Workshop of Austrian Research and Innovation Stakeholders engaged in Danube Region activities, 23 March 2015, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Vienna, Austria (co-organised by the Austrian PA7 Steering Group Members)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Danube:Future Workshop, 08 – 10 April 2015, Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt, Austria
- Danube-INCO.NET - Workshop on ERA and Innovation Union: fostering the participation of Danube region stakeholders in Horizon2020 with a special focus on SMEs, 23 April 2015, Kiev, Ukraine
- Selection criteria for EUSDR relevant projects in the framework of the Danube Programme, Pac meeting, 8 May 2015, Brussels, Belgium
- 2nd meeting of the Danube Local Actors Platform Advisory Committee (AC D-LAP) organized by PA10, 13 May 2015, Vienna, Austria
- 1st Austrian EUSDR Dialogue Forum, 13 May 2015, Vienna, Austria
- “Enhancing synergies in research and innovation programmes in the region”, Danube-INCO.NET workshop, 8 June 2015, Budapest, Hungary
- Meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for Western Balkan Countries, 8 – 9 June 2015, Budapest, Hungary
- Sustaining Regional Platform for Benchmarking and Cooperation in Higher Education and Research, 15 – 17 June 2015, Novi Sad, Serbia
- Conference of Danube parliamentarians, 20 – 22 June 2015, Belgrade, Serbia
- Meeting of the EUSDR National Coordinators and Priority Area Coordinators in the framework of the Floating Conference, 24 – 26 June 2015, Budapest – Bratislava – Vienna.

The trend of interest for EUSDR, policy level recognition and visibility of the PA7 targets and actions among stakeholders is still rising. It ensures that EUSDR and PA7 are being discussed among diverse audience. The attention of regional and EU funding authorities and project applicants is drawn to the PA7 actions, both those set in the Action Plan and the ones being dealt with under the flagship and other relevant PA7 projects. Since the last report two new funding possibilities were opened for the EUSDR Research & Innovation specifically: *BMBF call:*

*Strengthening the prospects of less research intensive CESEER regions for cooperation in the ERA and EUREKA! Danube Region multilateral call.* Moreover, the *Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) feasibility study* is finalized by EY Slovakia. On the basis of its findings the next steps are already thoroughly discussed within the Working Group on DRRIF and coordination of national funds within Danube Region, PA7 Steering Group and among relevant ministries of the Danube Region. Under the umbrella of *Danube-INCO.NET project*, which gives solid structure and speeds up some of the activities planned in the PA7, much has been done in regard to developing mechanisms for *recognition and labelling of the most relevant project proposals* for the EUSDR and PAs. Also the project strongly supported *policy dialogue*, establishment of *Danube Technology Transfer Centers* and *scaling up funding mechanisms*. Close collaboration with the EC DG Joint Research Center 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. They complement four *thematic clusters* established by the JRC with the focus on the key resources of the Danube Region, namely water, land and soils, air, and bioenergy.

The EUSDR and PA7 are getting more recognition in the local policies, internationalization strategies of university and research institutes, in the agenda of respective ministries. Emphasize is put on cooperation and joint partnerships of regional institutions. Together with new funding possibilities (in the last year EUREKA!, BMBF call, labelling; DRRIF and COST in preparations, etc.) this steering of policy orientation towards Danube Region brings more initiatives and projects with strong regional focus. Finally, this framework approach of coordinated activities at all levels of policy making may well provide synergy of relevant stakeholders and their actions strongly in favor of PA7 targets. Having in mind that reaching 3 out of 5 PA7 targets are possible only through coordinated actions of numerous regional stakeholders in education, research and ICT, the recent developments are encouraging.

On the other hand the representation of partner countries in the PA7 Steering Group and active participation of national representatives in the work of Steering Group and its Working Groups has not recorded much of a progress in the last year. Not all EUSDR member countries participate actively in the Steering Group, attend meetings, or even take active part in the e-mail correspondence between meetings. The stronger signal from EU that active involvement is expected/responsibility of each partner country would bring more power to the Steering Groups and enable taking decisions that are obligatory for participating countries, instead of its current almost pure consultancy capacity. However, positive developments continued in all countries of the Region despite the lack of interest among policy makers. Although some countries still lack active participation in the work of the SG (e.g. Moldova, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine), their stakeholders manage to find the way to take active part in the PA7 projects, initiatives, RIS3 platform and other activities. As a result of new funding possibilities with clear Danube Region focus this trend should continue and improve in the future.

For successful PA7 coordination in the future a better representation of EUSDR countries in the Steering Group and common recognition of the PA7 targets at national level are still considered a challenge. Regarding the already agreed plans the PA7 will put more focus on:

- ICT role in Danube Knowledge Society and providing support to currently less active Working Groups to get more involved in the actions (and appointing new leader for the Working Group on Higher Education and Mobility)
- Scaling up funding mechanisms and providing policy level support to strategic projects applying for research and mobility funds under EU and regional grant schemes (Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, ETC programme Danube 2014 – 2020), to the future of DRRIF, possibilities for specific Danube calls under existing multi- and bilateral agreements
- Initiating the COST targeted network action and opening discussion about possibilities for COST Danube call

- Better recognition and awareness of PA7 targets among relevant audiences and stakeholders, including targeted presentations of scientific, research and innovation activities in the Danube Region on webpages (including Danube-INCO.NET) and in media.
- Providing promotion and support for new project ideas and proposals highly relevant for the Danube Region (e.g. in the field of energy, environment protection, food safety and security, risk management and minimization of natural disaster effects in the Danube Region, etc.)
- Strengthening collaboration with the JRC in providing scientific support to EUSDR.
- Strengthening horizontal links with other PAs, regular communication and exchange of news with other PAs, especially PA2, PA4, PA5 and PA6 (contact points will be appointed), as well as close collaboration with PA10 in capacity building actions like START and TAF-DRP
- Interlinking with other European macro-regional strategies and platforms that focus on research, innovation, education and ICT (e.g. Adriatic-Ionian, Balkan (WISE), Black Sea (BSEC), Baltic, etc.).
- Smooth technical management of PAC activities and Steering Group coordination, preparation of the new technical assistance grant application to the Danube Strategy Point.

Analysis of progress regarding targets will be performed by the end of this year. Based on its outcomes new milestones and activities will be proposed to speed up processes underpinning the PA7 objectives.

## 2.2. Progress by target

- *Analytical evaluation of the progress in reaching the targets, in terms of substance (how the actions/projects undertaken are contributing to it) since the last reporting period (please include a general evaluation and an individual evaluation per target) of your PA;*
- *What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the planned targets?*

PA7 Steering Group promotes 5 targets out of which first four were set in the Action Plan, while the last one was amended when adopted by the SG already in 2012:

- To invest 3% of GDP in Research and Development by 2020;
- Broadband access for all EU citizens in the Region by 2013;
- Increase the number of patents obtained in the Region by 50%;
- Greater share of EU population age 30-34 with tertiary education – aiming towards 40% by 2020;
- To reach 20% of academic mobility by 2020.

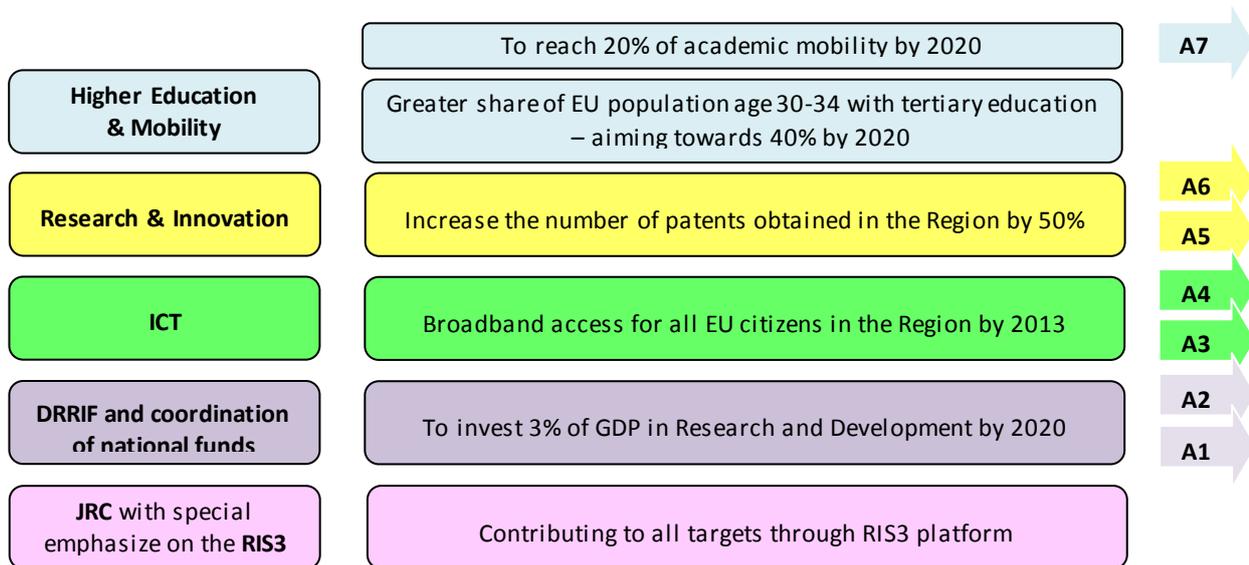
Although the target *Broadband access for all EU citizens in the Region by 2013* was planned to be reached by 2013, the SG suggest the High Level EUSDR group the extend the deadline until 2018, as well as to include the added target *To reach 20% of academic mobility by 2020* to integrative list of PA7 targets.

The Steering Group continue to monitor progress by targets and in its capacity propose corrective actions to respective national and regional governments. The SG has again assessed reaching some of the defined targets as a very ambitious. For example “*to invest 3% of GDP in Research and Development by 2020*” is still “too optimistic” to be achieved in defined timeframe, especially in the economic crisis environment, while PA7 targets resulting from the Strategy Europe 2020 are feasible only in a long run. PA7 targets can highly benefit from challenges and opportunities set in front of all partner countries:

- Developing regions downstream can benefit from the leading innovative regions upstream.
- Cooperation and Competition

- Working together can (or must) become a habit and a skill.

Aiming to enable better coordination of stakeholders and allow clear focus on specific targets, PA7 Working Groups were established already in February 2013. WGs are aimed to deal with some of the specific targets, monitor the progress, collect data, maintain regular communication with specific stakeholders and propose actions (Roadmap, milestones), as illustrated below. Actions contributing to targets correspond with PA7 Action Plan. The Roadmap and list of milestones are assessed and updated at SG meetings, based on the inputs from WGs and partners (e.g. JRC).



#### **“To invest 3% of GDP in Research and Development by 2020”**

- A1 “To cooperate in implementing the flagship initiative “Innovation Union” of the Europe 2020 Strategy” in the Danube region countries”
- A2 “To coordinate better national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in research and development, in research areas specific for the Danube region”

#### **“Broadband access for all EU citizens in the Region by 2013”**

- A3 “To develop and implement strategies to improve the provision and uptake of Information and Communication Technologies in the Danube Region”
- A4 “To draw up internet strategies”

#### **“Increase the number of patents obtained in the Region by 50%”**

- A5 “To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure”
- A6 “To stimulate the emergence of innovative ideas for products and services and their wide validation in the field of the Information Society, using the concept of Living Labs”

#### **“Greater share of EU population age 30-34 with tertiary education – aiming towards 40% by 2020”**

#### **“To reach 20% of academic mobility by 2020”**

- A7 “To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points”

Targets on **Higher Education and Mobility** were supported by continued close cooperation with most relevant stakeholders: Danube Rectors’ Conference (DRC) and Alps-Adriatic Rectors’ Conference (AARC), the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS) and others. New possibilities for academic cooperation and mobility in the Danube Region under new EU funding Erasmus+ are continuously promoted, with the idea to evolve from previous and existing successful mobility networks in the Danube Region, with particular emphasize on joint master and doctoral programmes (Roadmap, milestones 12 and 15). The Danube: Future, one of the PA7 flagship projects, organizes summer schools and provides good starting ground for development forwards joint masters and PhDs. Moreover, in November 2014 DRC organizes

conference “Digital Culture” and which proposal guidelines for strengthening ICT role in Higher Education (Roadmap, milestone 14).

Regarding targets on **Research and Innovation**, the focus was put on the projects DREAM, DANCERS and DANUBIUS (more info in Project section), especially in regard to target “To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure” (Roadmap, milestones 1 and 11). A thorough analysis of the RTDI potential was made within the DRRIF feasibility study as well as Danube-INCO.NET project. Information on cooperation and funding possibilities has been supported through Danube-INCO.NET newsletter.

With the launch of the **DRRIF Feasibility Study** the Working Group on “DRRIF and Coordination of National Funds within Danube Region” has been mandated to follow-up on the progress of the study and to provide necessary national data and information (or respective contact persons) regarding the respective R&I systems, funding mechanisms, national implementation of the new ESIF period with view to EUSDR-related activities etc. In the reporting period two Working Group meetings have taken place (1. and 2. September 2014, 17 March 2015) and in addition to featuring Workshops with the EY study contractors to follow-up on the study progress, these meetings were also dedicated to advancing the overall improvement of coordination of R&I activities (e.g. via opening up national activities towards multilateral activities as shown in the German BMBF Call), the identification of potential for joint activities (e.g. via EUREKA) and information exchange regarding interesting EU-related Calls (like the Twinning-Scheme in Horizon 2020).

In addition strong links have been maintained with the DANUBE-INCO.NET. Beside the fact that the project has provided an excellent analytical base that will greatly support the work of PA7 (e.g. co-publication and co-patenting analysis for the Danube Region, stakeholder mapping for relevant R&I actors and programmes; identification of successful R&I projects and their results) co-operation has also taken place with view to the projects activities in WP6 on the scaling up of funding mechanisms. With view to WP2 regarding policy dialogue dedicated Innovation Union and ERA Workshop has been organized in the Ukraine which focused on fostering SME participation in Horizon 2020 and where Members of the DRRIF WG have been present.

Moreover the project has greatly contributed to milestone 3 “Identification of national, regional and EU funds for research and innovation” by providing a dedicated website section to that topic [http://danube-inco.net/information-service/calls\\_for\\_funding\\_opportunities](http://danube-inco.net/information-service/calls_for_funding_opportunities) and by compiling a theme-specific compilation of funding possibilities for the area of energy efficiency.

A documentation of the meetings and activities for the DRRIF Working Group can be found online: <http://groupspaces.com/KnowledgeSociety/pages/workinggroup3drrif>.

One of the most advanced strategic collaboration is established with the DG **Joint Research Centre - JRC** (European Commission). It is focused on the JRC support to development of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization (RIS3) in Danube Region countries (transversal priority), as well as in the field of four scientific priorities/thematic clusters on the key resources of the Danube Region, namely water, land and soils, air, and bioenergy. JRC provides scientific support to the EUSDR in two ways. Firstly, it addresses the scientific needs related to the implementation of the EUSDR and thereby helps decision-makers and other stakeholders to identify the policy needs and actions needed for the implementation of the Strategy. Secondly, it contributes to the reinforcement of ties and cooperation amongst the scientific community of the Danube Region.

The Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy initiative is sub-divided into different flagship clusters and activities. They aim to address the scientific challenges faced by the Danube Region from an integrated and cross-cutting perspective, taking into account the interdependencies between various policy priorities. Four flagship clusters include: Danube Water Nexus (DWN), Danube Land and Soil Nexus (DLSN), Danube Air Nexus (DAN) and Danube Bio-energy Nexus (DBN). These four thematic clusters are complemented by three horizontal activities: Danube Reference Data and Service Infrastructure (DRDSI), Smart Specialisation and Danube Innovation Partnership (DIP). More details are available on the link <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research/crosscutting-activities/danube-strategy>.

Although for some time progress has been slow in the field of ICT, since the shift in the leadership of this WG, a number of successful activities were carried out e.g. in disseminating good practice in e-solution and e-services supported by the Danube eRegion Conference – DeRC, the LivingLab concept, and the Danube Rectors’ Conference event on ICT in Higher Education. In the last SG meeting in June 2015 in Bratislava University of Maribor has formally taken over leadership for this WG. With view to the experienced delays of the milestones the Coordinator of the WG suggested to narrow down the actions in the field of ICT to two actions that also incorporate the others, and to focus on the innovation and perspective fields of ICT in the scope of the knowledge society based on research rather than mere educational and supportive aspects of ICT. As a result, two actions would remain for ICT, while ICT support and educational use of ICT might be discussed with PA9 and PA10.

- A3 “To develop and implement strategies to improve the provision and uptake of Information and Communication Technologies in the Danube Region” covering ICT support for the Danube region priorities
- A4 “To stimulate the emergence of innovative ideas for products and services and their wide validation in the field of the Information Society, using the concept of Living Labs” – covering innovation and knowledge development in the field of ICT as stated in the introduction.

New analytical assessment of PA7 targets and assessment of progress comparing the data collected in 2013 will be performed by the end of year. New milestones will be set accordingly.

### 2.3. Key actions/projects

*Please select from the lists in annexes 1 and 2 the list of actions and projects that you consider more relevant for the implementation of your Priority Area, and provide a short description of each of them.*

The **Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF)** Feasibility Study was launched in April 2014 and finalised in June 2015 (see respective milestone 5). Two presentations have been given to the PA7 Steering Group about the study progress and content and both times the Steering Group gave its formal support. The results of the study will be further discussed in the DRRIF Working Group and the PA7 Steering Group, and the next implementation steps are outlined in the Roadmap (milestones 9 and 10). For more details please refer to Chapter 4, page 15 of this report.

**Danube-INCO.NET** is a strategic high-level coordination and support action. Its background is the macroregional approach, in particular the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and its Priority Areas for Knowledge Society (PA7) and for Competitiveness (PA8). Based on strong institutionalised links with the PA Coordinators and the PA Steering Groups, a consortium of 19 partners from all over the region supports the policy dialogue within the EUSDR, to exchange with other regional policy initiatives and to enhance bi-regional dialogue with a focus on the implementation of the ‘Innovation Union’ and the ERA Framework. The societal challenge of innovative and inclusive societies in the Danube region is addressed through the provision of analytical evidence: Research and innovation activities are monitored with several instruments, a survey identifies barriers to cooperation and less competitive innovation systems are reflected through policy mix reviews. To implement concrete innovation support measures, smart specialisation strategies, technology transfer centres and a system of supporting the development of targeted project proposals are being addressed. Danube-INCO.NET is also committed towards the development of joint funding mechanisms enhancing Danube Region Research and Innovation Funding (e.g. through supporting EUREKA and other platforms in the development of targeted calls). In this respect, Danube-INCO.NET supports the cooperation among the leading – indeed world-class – innovative regions upstream to the regions downstream both at strategic and operative level.

Danube-INCO.NET supports working-groups of the Priority Areas 7 and 8 and cross-fertilising PA7/PA8 working group. Presentations were held at several PA7 and PA8 meetings and support provided to the PA7 DRRIF working group. Examples include the presentation of the project and activities at different steering group meetings (e.g. [in May 2014](#)), the co-organisation of events (e.g. [December 2014](#), see also [related news entry](#)) or participation at the events with a focus to link competitiveness, innovation, the knowledge society and respective stakeholders along the triple helix (e.g. [in Vienna at the 3<sup>rd</sup> EUSDR Annual Forum](#)). Additional support to activities of PA7 (and management of PAs in general) was provided through activities related to [Labelling of Danube Region Proposals, where a Pilot Phase was launched](#). The project supported the identification of project proposals with a remarkably relevant impact for the EUSDR in relation to the pilot call H2020-TWINN-2015. A [concrete outline of process for labelling for projects](#) was developed while first [outcomes of the pilot phase](#) are now available.

A [Mapping of relevant stakeholders in Danube Region describing activities, positions, and good practices including recommendations for synergies](#) has been carried out in the frame of Danube-INCO.NET and a series of stakeholders has been interviewed and also invited to a [dedicated workshop in Budapest](#). Specific stakeholders addressed here included: the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, Danube Rectors Conference, UNESCO, Danube Transnational Programme, BSEC, RCC, Danube Universities, etc. Danube-INCO.NET also [exchanged experiences with Danube Reference Data and Services Infrastructure \(DRDSI\)](#). Dedicated workshops of Danube-INCO.NET organised in Belgrade and Kiev supported in particular the non-EU countries to better integrate to the European Research Area activities, e.g. recommendations have been developed in the first Danube-INCO.NET policy dialogue workshop on [“Innovation Union and ERA in the Danube Region”](#) and a background paper for the second one on [“Fostering the participation of Danube region stakeholders in Horizon 2020 with a special focus on SMEs”](#). In order to disseminate information about ERA, regular news have been disseminated through the website and newsletter, a dedicated [webinar was organised on the German ERA Strategy](#) and other specific instruments have been addressed. While several stakeholders currently envisage to enhance the available information about science, technology, innovation and issues of competitiveness in the Danube Region (e.g. Joint Research Center nexus initiatives and Danube Reference Data and Services Infrastructure, PA8 “State of the Region” study, PA7 feasibility study for the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund, etc.), Danube-INCO.NET has carefully selected several analytical questions to be answered and methodologies and prepared and provided during the first half of Danube-INCO.NETs implementation a study on [Co-publication and co-patenting analysis among countries in the Danube Region \(D 4.16\)](#). Furthermore, a questionnaire [on Barriers to RTDI Cooperation was launched](#) and elaboration of the results presented in the document [Barriers to cooperation in the Danube Region](#).

Danube-INCO.NET targets the innovation policy in the region through **support of smart specialisation strategies and peer review**. A [Peer review workshop for regional RIS3](#) was organised in Novi Sad. The [Matchmaking and Information Exchange Report](#) developed under the lead of IPTS/JRC, informs on tools advancing collaboration in RIS3 process and to explore possible R&I cooperation and matchmaking opportunities along the DR. Based on data for 13 countries and 4 regions in the Danube Area, the analysis reveals 4 main fields of cooperation (KRTs, ICT, sustainable innovation and health). In parallel the project has also **addressed the challenge of innovation & technology transfer (I&TT)** and outlined a scheme for [creating and implementing technology transfer centres in the Danube region](#) - the so-called Danube Transfer Centres (DTCs). Both a [concept with tool-kit for DTC creation and implementation](#) was delivered and an analysis containing also general and comprehensible methodology of how to [develop a DTC network in the entire area of the EUSDR](#) were delivered. The analysis identified 16 more organisations as appropriate or with interest towards the setting up of a DTC. The related training activities and work done with the stakeholders on the ground contributed to increase the innovation capacities in the region. The main success regarding better coordinated national, regional and multilateral funding is the launch of a dedicated EUREKA call for the Danube Region. Danube-INCO.NET contributed to the discussions on the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (e.g. in the frame of meetings of the [working group Coordination of national funds within the Danube Region](#)

[and Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund DRRIF](#)), provided an analysis on the scaling up of funding mechanisms towards a possible Article 185 programme initiative (including a [visit and analysis of the BONUS programme](#) for the Baltic region). A [EUREKA/Danube-INCO.NET workshop](#) (see also [event review](#)) was organised.

Cooperation with the JRC is crucial regarding three horizontal activities: a) Danube Reference Data and Service Infrastructure (DRDSI) aiming to offer a satellite view on harmonised data sets on various issues related to the Danube Region (such as water and soil quality, population, landscape, etc.) and thereby provide policy-makers with comparable data to support evidence-based decision-making in the Danube Region; b) Smart Specialisation: the JRC via its Smart Specialisation Platform supports the designing and implementation of **Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation in the Danube Region**, taking into consideration the regional assets and opportunities but also the broader macro-regional dimension; c) Danube Innovation Partnership (DIP) which gathers stakeholders of the innovation value chain of the Danube region into a partnership that will design and implement actions to accelerate innovation and technology transfer. The DIP is built on the results of a pilot initiative launched recently by the Steinbeis Foundation with 4 partners from Danube countries. The JRC brings expertise of the European network of Technology Transfer Offices coordinated by the JRC, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), and the European Investment Fund (EIF), in order to ensure that the scientific results obtained are properly channelled to the decision-makers and stakeholders who can use them to develop policy measures and actions in the Danube Region, in cooperation with its partners.

### 3. GOVERNANCE

*The input under this chapter shall be limited to maximum 2 pages.*

*It shall include information on:*

- *Progress made since the last reporting period on the governance of the PA (including the organisation and functioning of the PACs, Steering Groups, Working Groups, etc. and the links with stakeholders) as well as an outline of the significant changes (if any);*
- *Links with other Priority Areas;*
- *Publicity measures (such as website, stakeholder seminars, publications) etc.*
- *Lessons learned, positive or negative;*
- *Outline on the future. Next steps and challenges.*

The **coordination of the PA7** is continually led jointly by **Slovakia and Serbia**. On behalf of Slovakia **Dr Štefan Chudoba**, Advisor to Minister, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic is PAC since autumn 2012. On behalf of Serbia **Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovic**, Rector of the University of Novi Sad was representing Serbia as PAC from the beginning of the EUSDR implementation until the end of 2014. At the beginning of 2015 Prof. Veskovic joined Joint Research Centre (JRC) and took over coordination of scientific support to macro-regional strategies. On behalf of Serbia for new PAC was appointed **Prof. Dr Viktor Nedović**, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia, who joined PA7 team in full capacity in February 2015.

The PAC support teams in Serbia and Slovakia support joint governance, coordination and communication with Steering Group members and other stakeholders of the PA7. Their work maintained defined tasks to go smoothly, both on internal level among PACs and their teams, as well as in the well-structured organization and hosting of the meetings. In March 2015 Serbian PAC support team was enriched with Ms. Dijana Štrbac PhD student and researcher at the Institute Mihajlo Pupin, Belgrade, while Ms. Sandra Salamonova left Slovak team on June 15, 2015.

To maintain good coordination with main stakeholders and strengthen links among Steering Group members, both PACs have undertaken a number of activities. Some of the most important dissemination and policy level activities are listed in previous section of this Report. PACs, some of

the most active SG members and support teams were very active on promotion of PA7 targets and actions. Having in mind that PA7 is more like horizontal priority of the EUSDR, the networking and involvement of relevant stakeholders, prominent experts and organizations, links with other PAs, education and research institutions, professionals, organizations are essential to reach progress regarding defined PA7 targets. These activities aim to encourage networking and joint projects towards development of Knowledge Society in the Danube Region, with the special reference to new funding opportunities within the Horizon 2020, Erasmus plus, new Danube Programme, future DDRIF framework and other eligible sources.

Comparing to the last progress report, there were changes in the **Steering Group** representation. Some country representatives in the Steering Group changed including Hungary, Baden-Württemberg, Croatia and Slovenia, as well as the change of Serbian PAC. Overall involvement, motivation and real contribution of SG members to the work done varied among the countries. Again it was obvious that countries were not equally committed to the EUSDR PA7. There are still states which do lack interest in activities or neglect their obligation to have proper representation in each SG of the EUSDR. Also, not equally policy-level representation among members of the SG prevents some major and for the partner states obligatory decisions to be taken. This could lead the way to SG transformation from decision making to consultancy/hearing body without real power in its hands. In these circumstances the new approach to EUSDR governance should be considered.

On the other hand there are partner states which contribute much to speeding up the activities and process within the Danube strategy. Among the most active in the reported period was again Austria, together with Slovenia, Hungary, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Czech Republic and Montenegro, and coordinating countries of Serbia and Slovakia.

The involvement and support provided by the DG Regio, especially Mr Marco Onida and Ms Ann-Jasmin Krabatsch was highly appreciated and very much relevant to PACs work. On the reporting issue, financial reports and interim payment their assistance was of the utmost importance. Also the coordination of the DG Region is much appreciated in regard to the preparation of the new ETC Danube Programme, the establishment of collaborative framework between PACs and the Programme Secretariat in Budapest and the design of the first call aiming at EUSDR targets to be well recognized in call documents and evaluation matrix from the very beginning.

The SG continued with practical organization of its work through **Working Groups**, led by the SG members:

- Higher Education & Mobility – Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovc, Serbia
- Research & Innovation – Dr Viorel Vulturescu, Romania
- Information & Communication Technologies – Prof. Dr Karin Stana-Kleinschek, Slovenia
- DDRIF and coordination of national funds within Danube Region – Heribert Buchbauer, Austria
- Communication with JRC with special emphasize on the RIS3 – Dr. Stefan Chudoba, Slovakia.

This approach should ensure practical and effective involvement of regional experts in PA7 actions and more focus of these smaller expert groups on specific topics of interest. Five Working Groups were established in Bratislava in February 2013 already. However their contribution and involvement vary. Not all WGs were equally active in this reported period and the outcome is not balanced. The most active remained WG on DDRIF and coordination of national funds within Danube Region, deeply involved in the DDRIF feasibility study and proposals how to proceed in regard to coordination of national funds.

WG Higher Education and Mobility was again supported through networks of Danube and Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conferences, CASEE and CEEPUS, aiming at better utilization of already functional mobility schemes emphasizing Danube Region partners. On the next SG meeting the new leader for this WG should be appointed replacing Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovc.

WG Communication with JRC with special emphasize on the RIS3 continued cooperation with JRC. Activities related to the S3 process, set-up and implementation of the RIS3 strategies have become one of the principle activities in Europe in the past two years. Aiming at improved competitiveness, smart, sustainable and inclusive development and creation of qualitative employment and based on the participatory process with all the relevant stakeholders, the DG JRC has, together with DG REGIO, DG RTD and some other DGs, continued providing support to the regions and countries from the Danube macro-region. More information about JRC Initiative on Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research/crosscutting-activities/danube-strategy>

The University of Maribor made a proposal for coordination of the WG Information & Communication Technologies and received positive feedback from the SG in Bratislava in June 2015. The team will set up a work plan with a renewed and timely adapted Roadmap and relevant milestones. WG shall work together with establish links with other PAs, especially energy (PA2), competitiveness (PA8), people and skills (PA9), and capacity building (PA10). The WG will be supported under the framework of the PA7 flagship project DO IT, which is already interlinked with the flagship project Danube Transfer Centre in PA8. DO IT was already presented at the Annual EUSDR Forum 2014 in Vienna, at the annual Danube Rectors' Conference, the annual Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference, and a number of national events in the partners' states. In the upcoming months WG has to be re-established with active and willing experts in the three fields of activity (a. micro-nano-electronics and photonics, b. internet of things, c. big data). The first meeting of the group will be set up to be in Maribor, probably in November 2015. The coordinator will apply for some funding for the creation of the WG and organisation of meetings, in order to produce a work plan and redefine the roadmap. For the start of the WG coordinator will apply for funding in calls enabling coverage of travel costs and administrative costs. The Erasmus+ strategic partnership call is in the foreground of thoughts, but also other programmes as the cross-border.

The WG on Research & Innovation mainly dealt with Pan European research infrastructures relevant to the river-deltas-sea systems. It performed analysis of the research infrastructures, programs and initiatives and provided a list of relevant research infrastructures, initiatives and programmes in the water cycle domain in Europe and worldwide.

The governance of PA7 is strongly supported through **Danube-INCO.NET** project <http://danube-inco.net/>, funded under FP7 Coordination and Support Action and coordinated by Centre for Social Innovation and with consortium of 18 partners. The project provides synergies with PA7 and PA8 and gives operational upkeep to targets and actions recognized in the Roadmaps. It creates platform for linking key players and delivers important outcomes in regard to the stakeholder mapping, reports on Innovation Union/ERA Framework implementation, the analysis of transferability of RTDI results, study on cooperation barriers, Smart Specialisation peer reviews (IPTs), Danube Technology Transfer Centers, as well as support to 'Project Labelling' and scaling up of joint funding mechanisms, support to DRRIF, and the roadmap towards Article 185 for Danube.

PA7 maintains good communication with other PAs, most regularly with PAs from the pillar C: PA8 – Competitiveness and PA9 - People and skills, as well as PA10 - Institutional capacity and cooperation. Also, the SG members are encouraged to keep links with NCP and other SG members from their country.

Updated list of the PA7 Steering Group members, meeting minutes from the SG meetings held in Vienna in December 2014 and in Bratislava in June 2015 are annexed to this report.

The next SG meeting is scheduled for autumn 2015. Exact date and place will be announced soon.

#### **4. FUNDING**

*The input under this chapter shall be limited to maximum 2 pages, and it shall include information on:*

- *Progress made since the last reporting period on identifying funding opportunities and sources: use of existing funds, new financial instruments, etc.(including comparisons with the last reporting period);*
- *Progress made since last reporting on developing methodologies/criteria for selecting/supporting PA relevant projects (including comparisons with the last reporting period);*
- *Progress made since last reporting on mobilisation of funding for relevant projects;*
- *Lessons learned, positive or negative.*
- *Next steps and challenges.*

Comparing to the last reporting period no major changes occurred in regard to recognition of new funding schemes. The foundations set in previous year continued to develop. The specific position of PA7 which serves more as horizontal priority seeks a wide synergetic outcome of many activities/projects and involved stakeholders to provide progress in regard to PA7 targets. However, some important steps were made during last year considering **DRRIF feasibility study**, **scaling up funding mechanisms**, proposal on **labelling of EUSDR projects** (both in the framework of the Danube-INCO.NET project) and strengthening of links with ETC programme **Danube 2014-2020**.

The **Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF)** Feasibility Study has been launched in April 2014 and has been finalised in June 2015 (see respective milestones 5). During that time the contractor EY has held a continuous dialogue with the DRRIF Working Group / PA7 providing a number of opportunities for feedback-loops with the Working Group Members. On the formal side two Workshops with the DRRIF Working Group have taken place to present interim results of the study (2. September 2014, 17 March 2015), two presentations have been given to the PA7 Steering Group about the study progress and content and two voting procedures approving the first and second part of the study have been concluded positively. The results of the study will now be further discussed in the DRRIF Working Group and the PA7 Steering Group and next implementation steps are outlined in the Roadmap Part of the report (see respective milestones 9 and 10).

Still the issue of project labelling remained opened. EUSDR in general lacks policy level recognition giving specific value to the macro-regional projects dealing with the defined strategic targets within calls under EU funding (e.g. Horizon 2020). In the attempt to provide mechanism for a sort of prioritization or awarding extra points in project evaluation to the most relevant EUSDR projects in the structure of the applicable funding schemes the **labelling facility** was proposed. Under the Danube-INCO.NET project a new approach, methodology and criteria for **selecting/supporting EUSDR relevant projects** was designed. The labelling aims to support the good governance of the EUSDR and recognition of those projects which contribute most to defined targets and priority area's action plans. It follows the Joint Statement of the Ministers of foreign affairs on the participation states of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and of the European Commission, Vienna, 26 June 2014, which "called on Priority Area Steering Groups to further develop joint approach for labelling strategic projects of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region until the end of 2014". The labelling process should facilitate the information flow about relevant calls expected to support the implementation of EUSDR and PAs roadmaps, while improving networking and cooperation among stakeholders in the Danube Region. The expected result is the accelerated implementation of the EUSDR and Action Plan through advanced recognition of the most prominent project applications, first internally among EUSDR governance structures and right after externally among funding decision makers.

The PA7 was decided to perform pilot labelling. At SG meeting held in Vienna on December 10 2014, the **labelling pilot was launched** for the specific Horizon 2020 call: Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation, Call for Twinning H2020-TWINN-2015. For the pilot 7 proposals applied, out of which 3 were awarded EUSDR label. All winning proposals received Letter of Recommendation and the [Letter for the Evaluation Committee](#) of the Twinning Call, providing a brief overview of this new established facility for labelling of the proposals relevant for the Danube

Region. Details on the outcome of the pilot are available on PA7 Group Spaces <http://groupspaces.com/KnowledgeSociety/item/972658>. Based on the pilot the proposed procedures will be improved and the other PACs, DG Regio and newly established Danube Strategy Point approached to continue discussion aiming to provide common approach to recognition of the most relevant EUSDR projects in the competition to EU grants.

**Danube-INCO.NET**, a FP7 funded coordination and support action, focuses mainly on two EUSDR priority areas: PA 7 „Knowledge Society“, and PA 8 „Competitiveness“. It provides support to the PA7 **policy dialogue, creates networks, analyses and supports R&I activities**, and encourages their possible establishment. Two work packages in the Danube-INCO.NET are dedicated to PA7 activities and funding: “Promoting Innovative and Inclusive Danube Societies” (WP5) and “Scaling up Danube Funding Mechanisms” (WP6). The goals are to support the innovation policy in the region through support of **smart specialisation strategies** and peer review, support capacities in technology transfer through creation and support of **Danube Technology Transfer Centres** Network and support the **development of targeted projects** (labelling) using different funding sources which shall fit into the EUSDR objectives, complement the on-going activities and avoid duplication. Moreover, on the basis of WP6 project promotes research and innovation support initiatives through a more institutional/technical way; it promotes the development of joint calls and the **scaling up of joint funding mechanisms**, supports the development of joint funding mechanisms (either existing or under preparation in close cooperation with the concerned stakeholders through joint agenda setting, joint promotion activities, joint peer review and evaluation support etc.), prepares scaling up of dedicated funding mechanisms towards an Art. 185 TFEU programme; and provide **support to the DRRIF call secretariat** and coordinate communication and consultation processes.

Important progress was also made regarding the recognition of EUSDR targets in the new ETC programme **Danube 2014-2020**. Previously the PA7 targets have been recognized in 3 out of 11 Thematic Objectives of the Danube Programme (1 – Research and Innovation, 2 – ICT and 10 – Education). In the last few months a set of meetings and online consultations were organized by Danube Transnational Programme Joint Secretariat with the participation of PACs and DG Regio. The outcome of this process is a proposal for assessment scheme for the first call in regard to the link between the proposal and a relevant EU, national, regional policy or strategy. In case the proposal is contributing to the EUSDR, the proposal is expected to additionally describe the link to the relevant Priority Area(s) and the concrete contribution to the implementation of the PAs and achievement of the EUSDR targets, as described in the list of targets and actions (EUSDR Action Plan). It is also agreed that applicants will be advised to check the websites of the PAs in order to better understand how the proposal can contribute to the EUSDR. This will help applicants to better structure their projects and PAs to better steer activities towards targets, at the same time improving the visibility of PAs websites and getting in contact with applicants.

The specific **EUREKA!** Call was opened for the Danube Region - EUREKA Danube Region multilateral call 2015 for cross-border co-operative projects (E!DI EUREKA Danube initiative call 2015) <http://www.eurekanetwork.org/content/eureka-danube-region-call-project-outlines-deadline-30-april-2015>. The call resulted from an initiative following the EUSDR, which aims at a closer collaboration by creating “synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region”. Following this example of good practice recently the initiative was launched in favour of possible **COST** action designed specifically for the Danube Region.

The PA7 recognizes vast possibilities to funding strong Danube consortiums under EU funding schemes like **Horizon 2020** and **Erasmus+**, together with the reinforcement of mobility programmes like **CEEPUS** and programmes which came as a result of coordinated actions like the **Ulm Follow-up Working Group**. The Follow-up Working Group has been established after the Ulm Ministerial Conference of the Danube countries in July 2012. WG members are Ministries of Science from Danube countries, EU Commission, JRC and PA7 Coordinators dealing with possibilities of opening up of national programmes for multilateral activities. The concrete outcome

was **BMBF call: Strengthening the prospects of less research intensive CESEER regions for cooperation in the ERA** (<http://danube-inco.net/object/call/14534>) which was opened until 20/03/2015. Moreover as one of the outcomes from the Working Group on DRRIF and Coordination of National Funds within the Danube Region the **BMBF** opened the **Call for proposals under the Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Science and Research – Regulations for funding an ideas competition for the establishment and development of innovative R&D networks with partners in the Danube States** (<http://internationales-buero.de/en/7297.php>) published on 24 June and opened until 18 September. This call is supported with the national R&D funding from Hungary, Serbia and Moldova which all signed Memorandum of understanding with BMBF in regard to this call.

PACs, SG members and most relevant stakeholders remained active in seeking for funding possibilities for PA7 actions, and the improvement of the projects recognition, support and selection. Additionally, the PA7 flagship projects which are in the implementation phase and received funding through **diverse funding schemes**, serve as a good practice to apply to large scale projects dealing with main PA7 targets.

## 5. **ANNEX 1: ROADMAPS TO IMPLEMENT EACH ACTION**

*The input under this Annex shall be limited to maximum 1 page per action, excluding the list of projects.*

### **Roadmap 1**

***[In case several actions have been grouped under one roadmap, please provide a short introduction explaining the logic behind.]***

#### **Action 1**

*This Annex should summarise the progress in the roadmap, in comparison with the last reporting period:*

- *Milestones (including deadlines)*
- *Outputs*
- *List of projects associated with the actions included in the roadmap:[Please specify only the name of the project as a full description will be included in annex 2.]*

*Use specific PA tables if existing.*

NB: The Roadmap presented below is given with comments on milestone status in comparison with the last report. Milestones that are fully achieved are given in light grey colour, while comments are in red.

The Roadmap will be updated by the end of the year at the Steering Group meeting, based on the progress reported, Working Group and relevant projects input and the outcomes of the new analysis of PA7 targets.

#### **Milestone N°1: Identify and link centres of excellence and potentials for smart specialization in the Danube Region**

*Work:* identify centres of excellence in order to promote further regional projects (e.g. Horizon 2020, ETC Programme Danube 2014-2020, future DRRIF); inform RTDI stakeholders about cooperation possibilities and smart specialisation objectives

*Output:* Analysis of RTDI potentials and key Centres of Excellence (CoE), networks of CoEs in specific fields (e.g. energy/bioeconomy, Danube-INCO.NET WP3) and targeted promotion of cooperation possibilities in research and innovation (e.g. through Danube-INCO.NET newsletter, network of National Contact Points for RTDI programmes and joint activities)

*Responsible:* Working group for “Research and Innovation”, Danube-INCO.NET

*Deadline:* 30 November 2015

**Status: Milestone partly achieved**

**The list of centres of excellence was only partly completed as the input was not received from all countries. However the analysis of the RTDI potential was made within the DRRIF feasibility study as well as Danube-Inco.NET project. Information on cooperation and funding possibilities has been supported through Danube-INCO.NET newsletter. New analysis of PA7 targets should also bring more info on the topic.**

#### **Milestone N°2: Establish a peer-review mechanism for regional smart specialization strategies tailored to Danube countries**

*Work:* Support sharing of information on smart specialisation strategies via <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu>; peer review of smart specialisation strategies in the Danube Region and promotion of the concept in the non-EU Member States

*Output:* Analysis of smart specialisation strategies, peer review workshops and improved S3 processes, non-EU MS familiar with S3 and improved innovation strategies

*Responsible:* Working group Communication with JRC with special emphasize on the RIS3; Task 5.1 of Danube-INCO.NET under responsibility of JRC-IPTS

*Deadline:* February 2016 for Danube-INCO.NET deliverable “Peer review reports for smart specialisation strategies and recommendations”

**Status: Milestone partly achieved**

Danube countries used the possibilities of the JRC S3 Platform for peer review of country/regional S3 strategies. The outcomes were presented during the 8 SG meeting in Vienna in December 2014. A very thorough analysis of S3 strategies or similar documents was worked out within the DRRIF feasibility study. Danube-INCO.NET deliverable “Peer review reports for smart specialisation strategies and recommendations” has been already prepared.

### **Milestone N°3: Identify national, regional and EU funds for research and innovation**

*Work:* Provide information on national, regional and EU funds for research and innovation in the Danube Region

*Output:* Information on EU, national and regional funds for R&I compiled ([http://danube-inco.net/information-service/calls for funding opportunities](http://danube-inco.net/information-service/calls-for-funding-opportunities)), support of DG Regio and InterAct and National Contact Points for RTDI programmes

*Responsible:* Working Group DRRIF (based on the DRRIF study output), Danube-INCO.NET for the mapping of calls mentioned above, DG Regio and Interact

*Deadline:* Danube-INCO.NET web service established since April 2014, mapping completed till 30 June 2014, DRRIF study input based on schedule, DRRIF Working Group Meeting September 2014

*Status: Milestone achieved*

*There are a number of services now online that provide interested stakeholders with respective information on open calls on different levels:*

[http://danube-inco.net/information-service/calls\\_for\\_funding\\_opportunities](http://danube-inco.net/information-service/calls_for_funding_opportunities)

<http://www.danube-region.eu/2014-03-21-07-28-38/funding-opportunities>

*In addition the Danube-INCO.NET project has delivered a Report on available funds for promoting energy efficiency in the Danube Region*

<http://danube-inco.net/object/document/14846>

*As soon as the DRRIF Feasibility Study is approved it can go online and will provide specific chapters on relevant existing grant and other schemes as well as potential funding sources.*

*The Commission itself is also providing specific information e.g. “A beginner’s guide to EU Funding” available in 23 languages as well as information on combining funding sources like Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds.*

*However, as information on funding opportunities is not static but changes quite frequently updates are necessary on a regular basis. The Danube-INCO.Net will provide these updates until the end of the project end of 2016.*

*On a broader scale PA10 is also currently running a project called EUROACCESS that aims at developing an online search tool\_about EU funding available for project implementation in the Danube Region. Moreover it is expected that also the Danube Strategy Point will provide input to this area in the near future.*

### **Milestone N°4: Call for tender –feasibility study for the establishment of the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) – PA7 Flagship project**

*Work:* PACs should open a call for a feasibility study on the establishment of DRRIF and select the best application.

*Output:* Feasibility study on the establishment of DRRIF, contracting a contractor for the preparation of a feasibility study for the establishment of DRRIF.

*Responsible:* WG on DRRIF.

*Deadline:* 28/02/2014

*Project proposal:* Feasibility study

*Output:* Feasibility study to establish DRRIF.

*Funding:* EU grants

*Status: Milestone achieved – study launched 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2014*

*Project proposal:* Feasibility study

*Funding:* EU grants

### **Milestone N°5: Feasibility study for the establishment of the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) – PA7 Flagship project**

*Work:* Feasibility study for the establishment of DRRIF to be adopted by SG members, in cooperation with the Danube Inco.Net WP6.

*Output:* Feasibility study on the establishment of DRRIF.

*Responsible:* WG on DRRIF.

*Deadline:* 31/03/2015

*Project proposal:* Feasibility study

*Output:* Feasibility study to establish DRRIF.

*Funding: EU grants*

*Work: Feasibility study for the establishment of DRRIF to be adopted by DRRIF WG members, in cooperation with the Danube Inco.Net WP6.*

*Output: Feasibility study on the establishment of DRRIF.*

*Responsible: WG on DRRIF.*

*Status: Milestone achieved – study presented at the Steering Group Meeting in Bratislava on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 and formal written approval of the DRRIF Working Group given on 19 June 2015.*

*Funding: EU grants*

#### **Milestone N°6: Implementation of piloting coordination activities**

*Work: Better coordination of existing activities and programs; opening of bilateral programs towards multilateral activities. Identification of suitable agreements and programmes on national/regional level; coordination of timing, content, procedures and levels of funding.*

*Output: Joint activities following an open method of coordination, mainly in the areas of mobility / networking / project preparation / capacity building.*

*Responsible: WG on DRRIF (in cooperation with the Ulm Follow-up Group and Danube Inco.Net)..*

*Deadline: 28/02/2015*

*Project proposal: Joint activities*

*Output: mobility / networking / project preparation / capacity building.*

*Funding: EU and national grants*

*Status: Milestone partly achieved*

- the German Federal Ministry of Education and Science has launched a Danube Call in 2013 where 31 joint projects have been funded (2 phases 1 year with second phase proposals being prepared at the moment); currently a second joint Danube Call with a co-funding from Hungary, Moldova and Serbia is in preparation with a scheduled launch in June 2015.*

*Although first activities have been developed this task is of course further continuing.*

*As an example the Austrian Ministry of Science, Research and Economy is planning to discuss with the partner countries in the Danube Region possibilities for a pilot Call in 2016 with the aim of opening up bilateral agreements towards multilateral activities for all the partners in the Danube Region.*

*Project proposal: Joint activities*

*Funding: EU and national grants*

#### **Milestone N°7: Implementation of piloting research funding activities**

*Work: To support cross-border cooperation in R&I projects in the Danube region for certain thematic priorities relevant for the region.*

*Output: Identification of relevant programs and funding schemes (Danube Inco.Net provides funding for support meetings).*

*Responsible: WG on DRRIF (in cooperation with the Ulm Follow-up Group and Danube Inco.Net), implementation via national / regional research and innovation funds*

*Deadline: Fall 2016*

*Project proposal: Joint activities (following an open method of coordination) mainly in the areas of R&I project funding*

*Output: mobility / networking / project preparation / capacity building.*

*Funding: EU and national grants*

*Status: Milestone partly achieved – Due to the coordinated effort of the Danube-INCO.NET project and the national high level representatives of the EUREKA Programme (dedicated Workshop has taken place in Vienna on 11 December 2014) and supported through the DRRIF Working Group a dedicated EUREKA Danube Call has been launched in March 2015. The Deadline for Calls is the 17 June 2015 and a high interest in the Call is expected as already 88 projects were received for the non-obligatory deadline for project outlines on 30 April 2015.*

*Although first activities have been launched this task is of course, as Milestone 6, one that is further continuing.*

*Project proposal: Joint activities (following an open method of coordination) mainly in the areas of R&I project funding*

*Funding: EU and national grants*

#### **Milestone N°8: Launching joint activities on EU level (e.g. ERA-Net Co-Found, Marie Curie Skłodowska, etc...)**

*Work: To strengthen the competitive basis of applications and projects from the Danube Region. Lobbying for a EU Horizon call for a Danube ERA-NET CoFund initiative (or a specific topic relevant for the Danube Region);*

stimulate in an open method of coordination of the preparation of joint applications for EU funding programs that are relevant for the Danube region.

*Output:* Joint applications for projects in Horizon 2020 or other relevant EU funding opportunities.

*Responsible:* stimulation of cooperation via WG DRRIF (in cooperation with the Danube-Inco.Net and the Ulm Follow-Up Group).

*Deadline:* beginning of 2016-2017, depending on available relevant EU calls / the labelling could also play a role in this respect (supporting specific ERA-NETs).

*Project proposal:* project applications

*Output:* projects

*Funding:* EU Horizon 2020

*Status:* Milestone under progress

*Achieved:* specific calls for the Danube Region: E!DI EUREKA Danube initiative call 2015, BMBF call: Strengthening the prospects of less research intensive CESEER regions for cooperation in the ERA

#### **Milestone N°9: DRRIF Set Up as an organisational structure**

*Work:* Depending on a promising outcome of the DRRIF Feasibility study as well as the first piloting activities and based on a sound political and financial commitment of a critical mass of Danube countries / regions and steps towards the set up of a DRRIF organizational structure is envisaged. This includes the potential set up of an Article 185 Initiative.

*Output:* Decision on and set up of a legal, financial and management structure of the DRRIF.

*Responsible:* Monitoring and coordination of the process with the EC via WG DRRIF/Danube INCO.Net Task 6.2 "Scaling up joint funding mechanisms" shall explore possibilities towards Art. 185.

*Deadline:* earliest 2017/2018 (remark: related to EU Presidencies of SK, BG and AT).

*Project proposal:* DRRIF organization

*Output:* organizational structure

*Funding:* EU and national budgets

Due to the fact that the DRRIF Feasibility Study has concluded that the establishment of a dedicated Research and Innovation Fund for the Danube Region is currently not a realistic option (due to financial constraints in the EUSDR countries, the complex nature of such a set-up and potential parallel activities like the Western Balkans Innovation Strategy Exercise Facility) two alternative scenarios the Support Center approach and the Funding/Financing Network approach for further intensifying R&I cooperation in the Danube Region have been developed in the study that will now be followed-up by PA7 and its DRRIF Working Group respectively.

#### **Milestone N°9: Danube Region R&I Support Centre**

*Work:* Preparing the strategic, managerial, legal and financial preparatory work towards the establishment of a Danube Region R&I Support Centre; decision on the potential submission of a project proposal in the Danube Transnational Programme for co-financing the envisaged Support Centre

*Output:* Danube Region R&I Support Centre

*Responsible:* Interested EUSDR countries; stimulation of cooperation via WG DRRIF in cooperation with the Danube-Inco.NET.

*Deadline:* depending on available funding sources and interest of the Danube Region countries in implementing this approach. Activities starting from the third Quarter of 2015.

Set- up of the Support Centre cannot be expected before late 2016 or in 2017.

*Funding:* EU and national budgets

#### **Milestone N°10: Danube Region R&I Funding/Financing Network**

*Work:* To strengthen the coordination of national/regional and EU funding sources for R&I in the EUSDR using existing networks and structures to support cross-border R&I projects. Renewal and extension of the mandate of the DRRIF Working Groups towards establishing a Danube Region R&I Funding/Financing Network and nomination of experts as necessary to stimulate participation from all EUSDR countries; Contact and coordination with structures like EUREKA, COST, etc. in order see the feasibility and possibilities of dedicated activities for the Danube Region. In an open method of coordination joint use of those structures for calls etc..

*Output:* Joint activities mainly in the areas of R&I project funding, capacity building, mobility etc.

#### **Milestone N°11: Identify competitive research infrastructure in the Danube Region**

*Work:* Each country will list its competitive research infrastructure and capacities to support the Danube Region innovation system with special emphasize on ESFRI, including existing EU and national programs and initiatives. It should include scientific fields (also SSH) and incorporate WBC-INCO.NET and Danube-ICO.NET data on R&I and EU wide mapping initiatives (inputs from other PAs is welcomed)

*Output:* Comprehensive list of competitive research infrastructure and capacities for regional innovation system of scientific infrastructure

*Responsible:* WG on R&I

*Deadline:* 30/11/2015

*Output:* comprehensive list

*Funding:* EU and national budgets

*Status:* Milestone under progress

### **Milestone N°12: New joint master and doctoral studies with strong Danube Region Consortium**

*Work:* Development of new networks for joint master or doctoral studies which will involve strong Danube Region Consortium, with participation of at least 8 Danube Region countries and universities.

*Output:* 4 new mobility networks for master/PhD studies.

*Responsible:* WG on HE&mobility, Danube Rectors' Conference, Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference, CEEPUS

*Deadline:* 31/12/2015

*Project proposal:* Mobility schemes, joint curriculum development

*Output:* New joint master and doctoral studies networks

*Funding:* EU and national grants (CEEPUS, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 etc)

*Status:* Milestone under progress, number of project proposals on joint master/doctoral studies with strong Danube Region Consortium is increasing e.g. Joint Master Degree in Sustainability in Agriculture, Food production and Food technology offered by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (Austria) and Szent István University (SZIE), Gödöllő (Hungary) with contributions (courses, MSc thesis supervision, summer schools...) from the following partner universities: Corvinus University Budapest (HU), CULS Prague (CZ), WULS (PL), University of Zagreb (HR), University of Novi Sad (SR), Slovak Agricultural University Nitra (SK) USAMVBT Timisoara (RO).

### **Milestone N°13: Strengthening the role of Rectors' Conferences**

*Work:* Support new applications of universities of the Danube Region to join two major university organizations/networks: Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC) and Alps-Adriatic Rectors Conference (AARC), while providing support to DRC and AARC in their joint actions in the Danube Region Higher Education projects and initiatives.

*Output:* 10 new members, 2 new joint initiatives

*Responsible:* WG on HE&mobility, Danube Rectors' Conference, Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference

*Deadlines:* 31/12/2015

*Status:* Milestone under progress

### **Milestone N°14: Proposal on strengthening role of ICT in Higher Education**

*Work:* Advance the synergy between ICT and Higher Education through wide participation of relevant stakeholders in discussion and analysis. Organization of Conference "Digital Culture"

*Output:* Conference conclusions on strengthening role of ICT in Higher Education

*Responsible:* WG on HE&mobility, Danube Rectors' Conference

*Deadline:* 31/12/2014

*Status:* Milestone achieved. Conclusions are disseminated to DRC network.

### **Milestone N°15: CEEPUS Programme for academic exchange in the Danube Region**

*Work:* Implementation of the CEEPUS III main objectives: joint PhD programmes and promotion of cooperation in the framework of the EUSDR

*Output:* 4 new joint PhD programmes, increase of Danube Region mobilities by 20%

*Responsible:* WG on HE&mobility, CEEPUS network

*Deadline:* 30/06/2016

*Status:* Milestone under progress.

### **Milestone N°16: Support strengthening cooperation among education and research institutions in the Danube Region**

*Work:* Promote joint actions, project and initiatives that involves strong consortium of both higher education and research institutions in the Danube Region (e.g. DREAM project) in the framework of Horizon2020, Danube Transnational Programme and other eligible funding schemes. Preparation of the model and procedures for the formal recognition (e.g. flagship projects, labelling) of the most prominent project applications that reflects EUSDR cooperation of higher education and research institutions, involve strong consortium and target more EUSDR priorities.

*Output:* 1) 4 new PA7 flagship projects, 2) Outline process for labelling of projects

*Responsible: WG on HE&mobility, project Danube-INCO.NET, Danube Transnational Programme,  
Deadlines: 31/12/2015*

*Status: Milestone under progress.*

*The “Concrete outline of process for labelling of projects” was developed and adopted under the framework of Danube-INCO.NET project and is an integral part of the overall attempt to promote innovative and inclusive Danube societies. It addresses the labelling of strategic projects of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and proposes the framework for a joint approach and coordination of all Priority Areas and Steering Groups in this regard. The pilot phase was organized within the PA7 for the the specific Horizon 2020 call: Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation, Call for Twinning, H2020-TWINN-2015. In the pilot 3 out of 7 applications were awarded EUSDR label and Letter of recommendation. The next step is internal discussion with other PACs DG Regio, Danube Strategy Point on the best possible approach to further improvements and dissemination of this mechanism to other EUSDR PAs, and achieving policy level recognition from EU funding bodies.*

**Milestone N°17: Established links with the Danube Transnational Programme and its technical support (point)**

*Work: Start cooperation and exchange of information between PA7, PACs and Steering Group, and the bodies of the Danube Transnational Programme aiming to support promotion of DTP calls and joint actions towards building prosperity in the Danube Region. Consultancy regarding new function model of Technical Assistance Grants*

*Output: Established links and model for exchange of relevant information.*

*Responsible: PACs, Steering Group, Danube Transnational Programme*

*Deadlines: 30/06/2015*

*Status: Milestone partly achieved.*

*The PACs are in contact with the managing body of the new ETC Programme Danube 2004-2020. PACs have participated upon invitation in programming phase. Lately, there were organized several meetings to discuss selection criteria for EUSDR relevant projects in the framework of the Danube Programme. Besides official meetings with Danube Transnational Programme Joint Secretariat, both PACs, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia, maintain regular contact with national governmental offices responsible for Danube Programme in their countries.*

## 6. ANNEX 2 - PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE STEERING GROUP

The list of projects which are recognised and awarded the label PA7 flagship project is available at the PA7 Group Spaces <http://groupsaces.com/KnowledgeSociety/pages/projects>. This list includes:

- DRRIF - Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund
- DREAM - Danube River REsearch And Management ...from Basic Research to Knowledge Society
- Danube:Future - A sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge for the interdisciplinary humanities
- DANUBIUS - Danube International Centre for Advanced Studies for River-Delta-Sea Systems
- HINO - Health Impact of Nanotechnology
- National Authorities for Apprenticeship: Introduction of the Dual VET in the Slovak Republic (INT VET) (former title: DUAL EDUCATION - Danube Academy for Dual Education)
- DO-IT - Danube Open Innovative Technologies

In the tables are also presented the **Danube-INCO.NET**, FP7 Coordination and Support Action project, which strongly facilitates some of the PA7 targets and milestones in regard to R&I and funding; Danube universities for sustainable energy competence which received PA7 Letter of Recommendation; and National Authorities for Apprenticeship: Introduction of the Dual VET in the Slovak Republic (INT VET), project presented by Slovak PAC at the last SG meeting in Bratislava on June 3, 2015.

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>DANUBE REGION RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND – DRRIF</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>“To coordinate better national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in research and development, in research areas specific for the Danube Region”</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>PA7 Steering Group reflecting representation of all EUSDR countries</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>First stage – Feasibility study and establishment of the Fund: Estimated amount 289.474 EUR, financed through Technical Assistance Grant (Specific Project)</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Opening tender documentation on January 8, 2014 Evaluation of offers, January 8, 2014, signature of contract with Ernst &amp; Young Slovakia 15 April 2014, duration of the contract, 12 months, Feasibility study presented at the Steering Group meeting on June 3, 2015 in Bratislava</i>
<b>Description</b>	<i>TA Specific project - To support cooperation and excellence in the Danube Region by working towards the establishment of a Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) should result in development of a conceptual and organisational framework of the DRRIF based on consultations with stakeholders and adaptation based on their inputs: the Feasibility Study. The expected result is the provision of political will among Danube countries as the administrative and technical prerequisites for establishing DRRIF. The results will be used to establish a sustainable structure to support research, technological development and innovation in the Danube Region in order to build capacities of research, higher education and innovative businesses to increase their competitiveness and to support networking in the Danube Area.</i>

<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<i>Dr. Štefan Chudoba, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, the PAC coordinates public procurement procedure for electing partner organization, while WG on DRRIF and coordination of national funds within Danube Region takes active part in each stage of the process. Both PACs and the SG are involved in monitoring of the process and lobbying for policy level decisions.</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Once the feasibility study is published SG will make sustainable proposal and Danube Countries will be invited to join the DRRIF and redirect some of their research funds to the DRRIF.</i>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>Danube River REsearch And Management DREAM</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>To develop the Knowledge Society through research, education and information technologies</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Rep, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Various funding sources (ERDF)</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<p><i>(1) Construction of two large Responsible River Modelling Centers/hydraulic engineering laboratories (up to 10 m<sup>3</sup>/s): one in the upper/middle part of the Danube and one in the lower part; the reason for two labs (upstream section/downstream section): gravel bed vs sand bed river, up to ten times slope difference and different problem areas.</i></p> <p><i>Status AT: Research channel/supply line finished in Dec. 2014, RRMC planning in progress, submission of CBC proposals in Autumn 2015</i></p> <p><i>Status RO: Location of RRMC confirmed, further details to be developed</i></p> <p><i>(2) Cooperation of existing hydraulic engineering laboratories for improvement of expertise in all partner countries. An upgrade of laboratory instrumentation improves the ability of modern scale models to solve river engineering models. Cooperation with the large scale laboratories (act. 1) is intended.</i></p> <p><i>Status: inventory of existing laboratories + equipment within the DREAM consortium finished, concrete bilateral project proposals under preparation</i></p> <p><i>(3) Formation of a cluster/network of river engineering simulation tools to be used by Danube countries (common software development and implementation), being applied both on computer clusters and individual servers.</i></p> <p><i>Status: inventory of existing simulation tools within the DREAM consortium finished, simulation tools will be part of EU projects</i></p> <p><i>(4) Establishment of a network of field study sites along the Danube River and tributaries for process analysis, model calibration and validation AND test of advanced river engineering solutions</i></p> <p><i>Status: First drafts of Field Study Sites were prepared by each country. Details are currently worked on, pilot measures are already implemented in various countries and the success is monitored.</i></p> <p><i>(5) Construction and operation of a research vessel with diving shaft for the whole Danube area to enable river bed research at various parts of the Danube river.</i></p>

	<p><i>Status: Home port of the vessel (Novi Sad) was visited and agreed in spring 2014, the planning of the vessel is ongoing, actually details of the vessel are clarified and potential constructions investigated.</i></p> <p><i>(6) Establishment of a network of existing and extended Danube River Research Institutions throughout all riparian countries, including a strong link to management and society (...from Basic Research to Knowledge Society).</i></p> <p><i>Status: Regular DREAM meetings held: June 2012 Vienna AT, June 2013 Danube Delta RO, Feb 2014 Novi Sad RS, Dec 2014 Vienna AT, May 2015 Osijek HR, the next meeting is planned for Oct 2015 in Budapest HU. These events secure the operation of the network. It is intended to submit a joint project proposal in the new Danube Program.</i></p>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>The project DREAM will provide an umbrella and the infrastructure for a set of research topics. These topics are interconnected and cover several disciplines, from basic research, to be represented by advanced hydraulic labs and sophisticated 3D models on high computational technology, to applied research, providing field data to mitigate hydrological extremes and to improve existing situations in water regimes, sediment regime, flood risk, drought problems, revision of bio-engineering measures, restoration of streams and flood plains, etc.</i></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p><i>Especially between PA 07 (Knowledge Society), PA 1A (Mobility – Waterways), PA 02 (Energy), PA 04 (To restore and maintain the quality of waters), PA 05 (Biodiversity, Landscapes, Quality of Air and Soils) and PA 06 (Environmental Risks) strong synergies are given and win-win effects could be gained.</i></p> <p><i>Within PA 07 this project would contribute significantly to the Action - “To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure” and Action - “To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points”.</i></p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<p><i>The Danube Countries will be enabled by the outcome of DREAM and especially the research infrastructure to develop river engineering measures to support sustainable waterway, hydropower development, floodrisk management, improvement of the ecological situation. In doing this the whole Danube river basin will profit from a win –win situation of improving simultaneously the economical and ecological situation. Thus, the Danube countries can directly build on DREAM and strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and upgrade research and education outcomes related to an integrated river research and management.</i></p>

	<b>Danube:Future</b>
<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>A sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge for the interdisciplinary humanities</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<p>“To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points”</p>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<p>The project is a joint contribution of the Alps Adriatic Rectors’ Conference (AARC) and the Danube Rectors’ Conference (DRC) to the EUSDR.</p> <p>Present partners in charge of coordination are universities from AT, IT, RS, the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe IDM</p>

	(as representative of DRC) and the University of Ljubljana (as representative of AARC), while the other Danube Region countries participate through the events of the project.
<b>Funding</b>	<p>Total estimated budget for eight years project duration (2013-2020): <b>13.175.000 EUR</b>.</p> <p>During the first phase of the project (2013-2015) the costs were covered by the following financial resources (€ 4.297.765):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>MANAGEMENT</b>: coordination and administration € <b>60.115</b>, of which € 14.028 by the ESF – Friuli Venezia Giulia;</li> <li>- <b>CORE MODULE</b>: website, workshop, developing tools and publications € <b>125.852</b>, of which € 13.587 by ESF-Friuli, € 8.500 by Central European Initiative, € 35.008 by the Austrian Ministry of Science and € 25.000 by PA10 TAF-DRP;</li> <li>- <b>RESEARCH MODULE</b>: linked projects € <b>3.965.000</b>, of which € 2.200.000 by ERC and € 1.665.000 by Austrian research funds;</li> <li>- <b>CAPACITY BUILDING MODULE</b>: 3 editions of the DIAnet Int. School € <b>246.798</b> of which € 90.000 by ESF-Friuli, € 29.000 by CARIGO Bank Foundation, € 2.5000 by Voivodina Province</li> </ul> <p>In-kind contributions were provided by the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt (AT), University of Trieste (IT), University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (AT), University of Novi Sad (RS), Danube Region and Central Europe IDM (AT) and the University of Ljubljana (SI).</p>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<p>During the first phase of the project, the following results and products were achieved and prepared, respectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project <b>webpage</b></li> <li>• A network of <b>190 researchers registered</b> on the Danube:Future webpage</li> <li>• The framework of the <b>Danube:Future Knowledge Base</b> (including the Danube <b>WIKI</b>) to be launched in autumn 2015</li> <li>• <b>94 young scholars</b> who participated in the 3 DIAnet Schools</li> <li>• 45 participants who attended the first <b>Danube:Future Workshop</b> organized in Klagenfurt in April 2015, some of them from DIAnet Schools</li> <li>• First <b>cooperations for publications and joint projects</b> with participants from DIAnet schools</li> <li>• <b>Two DIANET school proceedings</b> completed; the third to be published in summer 2015</li> <li>• “Danube River Basin <b>White Paper</b> on Integrated Sustainable Development”</li> </ul> <p>In the framework of the <b>Integrated Networked Program</b> the Core Partners designed 3 tools for the Danube Region Countries: the “Danube:Future Knowledge Base”, the “Decision Support Facility”, the “Green Job Idea Pool”.</p> <p>For a complete detailed report of the first phase, please have a look at the “<i>First Danube:Future Milestone Report</i>”, available at <a href="http://www.danubefuture/reports">www.danubefuture/reports</a></p>
<b>Description</b>	<p>Danube:Future is the result of a joint contribution of the Danube Rectors’ Conference (DRC) and the Alps Adriatic Rectors’ Conference (AARC). It is managed by the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt (AT), University of Trieste (IT), University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (AT) and University of Novi Sad</p>

(RS), as Core Partners. The project is open to all the Universities of the network, as well as the research organizations of the Danube Region.

The project focuses on the Sustainable Development of the Danube River Basin (DRB). Sustainability problems transcend disciplinary boundaries and can only be tackled by inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. Sustainable development of riverine landscapes is particularly challenging as rivers are fragile ecosystems. Danube:Future seeks to contribute to the sustainable development of the DRB by bringing the humanities into an interdisciplinary dialogue. Environmental humanities are a new area of research whose potential for fostering sustainability transitions has not yet been tapped. Both societal and natural legacies limit the possibilities for future developments. A host of interdisciplinary methods is necessary to deal with our legacies, both cultural and natural.

The **Management** of the project is guaranteed by the four Core Partners and its 10 representatives. A Project Coordinator and its Deputy represent the project in the relevant events. A project administrator supports the management and other partners involved.

The project is divided into three modules:

- **Core:** aims at establishing an open-access knowledge base to which capacity building and research projects can contribute, thus increasing their visibility and accessibility. The outcomes of the Danube:Future project are available to organizations, institutions and decision makers.
- **Research:** the DRB has a troubled political and environmental history. Environmental problems abound and impede economic growth and sustainable development. Research project of Danube:Future take into account the long-term legacies of this troubled history with a strong focus on humanities and social sciences through new interdisciplinary approaches.
- **Capacity Building:** this module takes into account existing initiatives and frameworks dealing with sustainable development research. Danube:Future is aimed at developing trainings in cultural and natural heritage, institutional capacity building for green jobs, and strengthening regional networks.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO EUSDR**

The Action Plan of EUSDR identifies in PA no. 7 the Action “To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points” where Universities and Research Centers should engage in stronger cooperation in various fields. The cooperation between DRC and AARC Universities is appreciated, so Danube:Future is a good example of how to reach this goal.

Furthermore, Danube:Future is connected with all the EUSDR Priority Areas because it potentially contributes to all 4 pillars:

- Pillar 1, Connecting the region: transportation network evolution (PA 1), transition pre- to post-fossil society (PA 2) and nationalism, war, tourism (PA 3);
- Pillar 2, Protecting the environment: results of the research module will be useful for the restoration and maintenance of water quality and hydromorphological characteristics (PA 4),

	<p>for the management of environmental risks as toxic sediments (PA 5) and for the preservation of biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils (PA 6);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Pillar 3</u>, Building prosperity: results of the capacity building module enhance the development of green/blue economy (PA 8) and strengthen the education for people (PA 9);</li> <li>• <u>Pillar 4</u>, Strengthening the Region: through contributing to the political and institutional structures (PA 10) and to social prosperity (PA 11).</li> </ul> <p>More info: <a href="http://www.danubefuture.eu/">http://www.danubefuture.eu/</a></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p>The PACs are frequently informed about the activities and results of Danube:Future. During the SG meetings the state of the art is discussed by the representatives of the project in Budapest, Vienna and Bratislava.</p> <p>First discussions and cooperations started with PA3-, PA6- (in particular the Sturgeon Task Force) and PA9-(flagship-)projects in the last period.</p> <p>With the support of PA7 PACs, a project for “Technical Assistance Facility for the Danube Region” was successfully presented to the EUSDR-PA10 and was completed in May 2015.</p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<p>Following the general timeline, as approved by the EUSDR – PA7 Steering Group, Danube:Future will last until 2020. The <b>second project phase</b> from 2016 to 2020 will be specifically dedicated to joint research projects, but the Core Module and Capacity Building Module activities initiated during the pilot phase will continue. The Management Committee will continue to coordinate the activities of Danube:Future.</p> <p>For detailed information of the planned activities, please have a look at the “<i>First Danube:Future Milestone Report</i>”, available at <a href="http://www.danubefuture/reports">www.danubefuture/reports</a></p>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>DANUBIUS</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>“To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure”</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<p><i>Lead: Romania (Danube International Centre for Advanced Studies for River-Delta-Sea Systems)</i></p> <p><i>Within the project consortium there are planned participants from Danube Macro-Region: AT, RO, HU, RS, DE, MO, UK, SK, but also from outside respectively IT, ES, UK, IE, GR, FR, and an international organization (UNESCO).</i></p>
<b>Funding</b>	<p><i>The estimated total capital investment for buildings, equipment and installations (exclusive of personnel and running costs) is of 200 million Euros divided as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Phase 1 2014-2016 80 million Euros</i></li> <li>• <i>Phase 2 2017-2018 40 million Euros</i></li> <li>• <i>Phase 3 2019-2020 80 million Euros</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The exact value could be evaluated only after performing the feasibility study in 2013-2014 that will consider all the aspects related to the construction, equipment and installation of the Centre and to its connection to different facilities.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, the estimated personnel and other operational costs</i></p>

	<p>(logistics, infrastructure maintenance and partial research funding) are expected to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2015-2024 fully funded externally (national, EC, international) to a total of 110 million Euros</li> <li>• 2025-2029 funded 50 % externally and 50 % through projects applied for by the Centre;</li> <li>• 2030 onwards – 30 % externally and 70 % funded through projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<p><u>Project duration: 2013 – 2019</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development of the partnership within the Danube Region</li> <li>2. Development of the partnership between the Danube Region members and the best facilities in Europe willing to join the project Time frame: 2013 – 2015</li> <li>3. Development of “Mezocosme” laboratories - promoting the concept of the Danube – Danube Delta – western Black Sea coastal part as an “in situ” natural scientific observatory Time frame: 2014 – 2018</li> <li>4. Building of the hub and its interconnection with newly developed nodes part of DANUBIUS and with existing excellent laboratories (development of the distributed research infrastructure).</li> <li>5. Development of a long term management plan for the sustainable growth of DANUBIUS Time frame: 2014 – 2019</li> </ol>
<b>Description</b>	<p>In order to develop a world class Research Infrastructure in the field of integrated management of rivers-deltas-seas focused on the Danube – Black Sea macrosystem, DANUBIUS covers two aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Infrastructure regarding the integrated management of the complex Danube River – Danube Delta – Black Sea system, dealing with all the regional aspects related to these issues.</li> <li>• Pan-European network of Research Infrastructures focused on European-Global questions on how to deal with the phenomena from River-Mouth-Sea interfaces</li> </ul> <p>The DANUBIUS mission is to provide innovative, science-based customised solutions for major actual environmental-related problems and to set the framework for sustainable development of the Danube River – Danube Delta – Black Sea macrosystem – as best practice example for large river-delta-sea systems worldwide.</p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p>The SG got formally introduced with the project and approved it with the flagship project label on the SG meeting in Ulm, September 2 103.</p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<p>The project links to the outcomes of the project DANCERS. It is in the first preparation phase, with expected more intense communication with PA7 SG/WG for Research and Innovation.</p>

Name of the project	H.I.NO. Health Impact of Nanotechnology
<b>Action related</b>	<p>“To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points”</p>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<p>The project is joint contribution of the Alps Adriatic Rectors’ Conference (AARC) and the Danube Rector’s Conference (DRC) to the EUSDR.</p> <p>Present partners in charge for coordination are universities from RO, IT, DE and SK, while other 15 partners from 7 Danube Region</p>

	countries participate to the project.
<b>Funding</b>	Total estimated budget for eight years project duration (2014-2021): <b>13.765.000 EUR.</b>  No funds were already reached during the first period.
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	Because the project topic is very particular, several partnerships already exist in EU and so there are not available calls for improve the Research activities.  Concerning the Core and Capacity Building modules, the partnership is waiting for the new Transnational programme Danube 2014/20, where these kind of activities should be funded.
<b>Description</b>	<p>H.I.NO. is the result of a joint contribution of the Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC) and the Alps Adriatic Rectors' Conference (AARC) and it is managed by the Babes-Bolyai University (RO), University of Trieste (IT), Helmholtz Zentrum München (DE) and Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK), as Core Partners. The project is open to all the Universities of the network, as well as the research organizations of the Danube Region.</p> <p>The project aims to fill the gap in the understanding of the health impact of nanotechnologies, linking scientists working on NP health effects in countries along the Danube. The project aims to promote research needs in different fields, starting from the current knowledge on NP uses and perspectives.</p> <p>The production of new materials for medical purposes will increase the opportunity to treat surgical and medical diseases, continuing studies that are already ongoing and that will open future opportunity to patients. Meantime the toxicology evaluation using in vivo and in vitro methods will permit to better define what could be dangerous for the health and to prevent negative effects in future.</p> <p><u>Scientific impacts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying the possible <b>toxicity</b> related to NP exposure</li> <li>• Defining <b>pre ventive measures</b> to be applied</li> <li>• Producing <b>guide lines</b> inside the concept of living labs for workers and consumers</li> </ul> <p><u>Impacts on EUSDR PA7, knowledge society:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disseminating</b> knowledge</li> <li>• Increasing <b>collaboration</b> among scientists along the Danube river</li> <li>• Producing <b>high quality research</b> for a better knowledge of NP safety</li> <li>• <b>Guidelines</b> to be used by stakeholders of the macro-region.</li> </ul> <p>The project is divided into <u>three modules</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Core</b>: in the project timeline there are the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>MANAGEMENT</u>: will promote the project in all the existing and future networks of the Danube Region, jointly organize scientific meetings, and manage the Project.</li> <li>• <u>NETWORKING</u>: the Rectors' Conferences' communication structures and their annual meetings shall be used as platform for exchange and networking on the level of the partner institutions. The project is open to other Universities, Research Centers, and Institution of the DR.</li> <li>• <u>KNOWLEDGE DATA-BASE</u>: the present knowledge on NP toxicity and risk for consumers and workers will be inserted into a data base available on line to scientist, students and workers. That will help to clarify what is known and what are the preventive measures available to be used for protective</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>reason.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DISSEMINATION:</b> results of the research projects will be published on peer review journals and data will be presented in international congresses and in meeting organized between all participants as well as in internet as open access in data base build up.</li> <li>• <b>Research:</b> hazards of nanomaterials are likely due to a combination size, shape, particle surface properties, charge, released ionic species. To understand NPs interaction with human body and environment we need a comprehensive approach by a specific research project.</li> <li>• <b>Capacity Building:</b> is an ongoing process through which individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their ability to identify and meet development challenges. A fundamental goal of the capacity building module is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the questions related to nanotoxicity and modes of implementation among preventive measures and solutions. The module enables workers, consumers, health authorities and entrepreneurs to strengthen their capabilities in using the nanotechnology.</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	The PACs are frequently informed about the activities of H.I.NO. During the SG meetings the state of the art is discussed by the representatives of the project in Vienna and Bratislava.
<b>Next steps</b>	<p>Following the general timeline, the future actions of the project's could be summarize as follow:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Started the activities of the Management Committee</li> <li>2. Created the consortium for the research project</li> <li>3. Involved other stakeholders in the Project</li> <li>4. On-line website (including Knowledge-base)</li> <li>5. Defined methods for disseminating knowledge in the DR</li> </ol> <p>The partnership is waiting for the first call of the DANUBE OP 2014/20.</p>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<p><b>National Authorities for Apprenticeship: Introduction of the Dual VET in the Slovak Republic (INT VET)*</b></p> <p><i>*Former title: DANUBE ACADEMY OF DUAL EDUCATION</i></p>
<b>Action related</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to foster cooperation between industry, education and research policies</li> <li>- to support sustainable education reforms in the Danube countries</li> <li>- to support development of applied science</li> <li>- to strengthen the competitiveness of the Danube Region entrepreneurs and SMEs</li> </ul>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Slovakia, Germany (Baden Württemberg), Austria</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<p>Total costs: 312 717, 41 EUR</p> <p>EU grant: 234 538, 06 EUR</p> <p>Cofinancing: 78 179,35</p>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>In June 2014 Project proposal was submitted within the EU Erasmus+Programme – Call for proposals EACEA 13/2014 “National Authorities for Apprenticeship” It was recommended for cofinancing and has been realised since October 2014. Project is coordinated by the ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.</i>

	<i>The first outcome has been published: the study “Identification of Labour Market Needs for Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the Slovak Republic. On basis of the outcomes the concept of the Danube Academy for dual Education will be prepared.</i>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>The project is focused on the support of the solution of high unemployment of young people in the Danube region, in contrast with the shortage of qualified work force. The intention is to contribute to further modernization of the system of dual education in Slovakia and so to concede an impulse for other countries of the Danube region. Transfer of positive experiences from Austria and Germany (Baden Württemberg) should be a contribution towards creation of compatible systems of education in the Danube region.</i></p> <p><i>The objective of the project is to contribute towards a complex reform of the system of vocational education and training not only on a systemic level, but also by analysing the pilot experiences from the manufacturing sector in Slovakia. Through the improvement of the quality of vocational education and training the project shall contribute to the fulfilment of the the aims of the EU Strategy 2020 and Bruge communique.</i></p> <p><i>Expected concrete results of the project:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Support of the reform of the system of dual education and preparation.</i></li> <li><i>2. Creation of a competence centre for dual vocational education, focused on theoretical and practical preparation of pupils for automotive industry, through „Dual Education“, as well as for the education of teachers of practical training and transfer of experiences into other countries of the Danube area. ( working name Dual Academy for Dual Education)</i></li> <li><i>3. Strengthening the support and mobilization of small and medium enterprises and enterprises to be included into the dual education system.</i></li> <li><i>4. Continual exchange of experiences in the area of vocational education within the employer.</i></li> </ol>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<i>PAC Stefan Chudoba initiated the cooperation with Baden Württemberg and Austria as well as with industry in Slovakia in the field of dual education. He is member of the Project Steering group and participates in all project meetings. Ms. Lubica Pitlova from the Support team of Mr. Chudoba is the Coordinator of the Project and Member of the Project Management Group.</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Project ambition is to work out a project concept of the Danube Academy for Dual Education which would analyse also the possibilities of establishment and implementation of the Academy.</i>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>Danube Open Innovative Technologies (DO-IT)</b>
<b>Action related</b>	Action 1: “To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure”. Action 2: “To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points”.
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Slovenia, Germany (Baden-Württemberg), Austria, Italy, Serbia Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania</i>
<b>Funding</b>	South east Europe programme: SEE Technology (2.000.000,00 €) Future Emerging technologies: CONQUER (still in progress)

<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Under implementation.</i>
<b>Description</b>	<p><b>Danube Open Innovative Technologies (DO-IT)</b> is a regional development project aimed at fostering a <b>symbiotic relationship between universities, other research organizations, the economy, support and development organizations as well as local communities through open innovations and technologies.</b></p> <p>DO-IT consists of three interconnected and intertwined parts offering comprehensive support for research and innovation:</p> <p><b>(1) Innovation and support:</b>  Work package 1: Establishing innovation support and DO-IT entry points (in accordance with the “one-stop-shop” principle)  Work package 4: Promoting innovation and knowledge/technology transfer  Work package 5: Entrepreneurship – promotion, consulting and start-up incubation  Work package 6: Internationalisation  Work package 7: Assisting local communities and attracting investors</p> <p><b>(2) Infrastructure:</b>  Work package 2: Establishing R&amp;D infrastructure centres</p> <p><b>(3) R&amp;D:</b>  Work package 3: R&amp;D for the development of new higher value-added products and services  Research &amp; development  Infrastructure  Innovation &amp; support</p> <p>In accordance with the <b>Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014-2020</b>, DO-IT primarily falls within thematic objective 1: <b>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</b> and also thematic objective 3: <b>Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs.</b>  The project focuses on the following priority area of Horizon 2020: <b>“Societal Challenges – Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing”</b>.</p> <p>Establishing an open research and innovation infrastructure through an R&amp;D programme, strengthening the support environment for both the start-up and growth of new enterprises and enhancing international competitiveness of existing ones are considered urgent measures that must be employed in order to reduce development inequalities within Danube region. DO-IT is based on a <b>smart, sustainable and inclusive strategy</b> and supports <b>KET (“Key Enabling Technologies”)</b>, which are regarded as <b>crucial for promoting sustainable competitiveness and growth, addressing societal challenges and encouraging the development of innovative products.</b> KET EU: micro- and nano-electronics (including ICT), nanotechnology, photonics, advanced materials, industrial biotechnology and advanced production technologies.</p> <p>DO-IT adheres to <b>guidelines on green buildings and the Energy Efficiency Directive.</b> Reduction of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emission, an increase in the share of energy generated from renewable sources and increased energy efficiency will be achieved through full implementation and total compatibility of concepts in the field of smart buildings, smart grids and micro grids, which are based on ICT. <b>Project buildings will serve as reference and demonstration buildings of the industry in Danube region.</b></p>

	<p>Both the implementation of DO-IT and the attainment of the primary objective will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>increase the number of high-tech companies and enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the region</b> by developing and marketing innovative products, processes, business models, etc.</li> <li>- <b>create new jobs with high added value in the region, thus preventing brain drain and facilitating long-term regional development.</b></li> </ul> <p>The project will also facilitate the <b>transfer of superior scientific knowledge from universities and other research organizations in the entire region</b>, thus accelerating the restructuring of regional development potential.</p> <p>Progress in 2014-2015:</p> <p>In pillar one, the support structure is being spread in the Danube Region, especially by fostering the setting up of new DEMOLA centres (e.g. Croatia). In the same way, a team works on ICT support for the implementation.</p> <p>In pillar two, the coordinator seeks to support for the creation of the open innovative technologies infrastructure within the fund for the eastern Slovenian cohesion region.</p> <p>In pillar three, several projects have applied to funding. First results are visible by the winning application to the FET call in Horizon 2020. For the field of ICT, projects will be developed to apply for funding in Horizon 2020, as well.</p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p><i>The Slovenian national EUSDR coordinator calls the representatives of all resorts of the government to facilitate Flagship projects and to define the value of the Flagship status in the calls for applications/tenders. So far, there is no general adopted principle. The national PAC is supportive and has fostered the signing of the national support letter for the Flagship application. Else, the attitude is passive.</i></p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<p><i>The network is combining with other Flagship projects (especially Danube transfer centre in PA8, H.I.N.O. from PA7), in order to reach a higher awareness of the need to cooperate in line with the DO IT system. New partners are involved and the triple helix systems are set up in all local partner areas for the providing of sustainability and higher impact in the region. The goal is to be present in all Danube states, mainly in second largest towns or areas (multi-centric approach).</i></p>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>DANUBE-INCO.NET</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>Coordination and support action for research and innovation in the Danube Region</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Austria (coordinator), Germany (Baden Württemberg and national level), Serbia, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, international: Central European Initiative (based in Italy), European Commission – DG Joint Research Center – Institute for Prospective Technology Studies (based in Spain)</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>1,996,465.00 Euro; European Commission FP7</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Under implementation (01-01-2014 – 31-12-2016)</i>

<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p><i>Danube-INCO.NET understands itself as strategic high-level coordination and support action for the EUSDR Priority Areas for Knowledge Society (PA7) and for Competitiveness (PA8).</i></p> <p><i>Support is provided to policy dialogue within the EUSDR, to exchange with other regional policy initiatives and to enhance bi-regional dialogue with a focus on the implementation of the 'Innovation Union' and the ERA Framework. Apart from horizontal activities, Danube-INCO.NET also works on specific societal challenges: Energy efficiency and renewable energy in a bio-based economy. They are addressed by mapping and analysis, clustering and networking and the implementation of concrete pilot activities. Moreover also the societal challenge of innovative and inclusive societies in the Danube region is addressed through the provision of analytical evidence: Research and innovation activities are monitored with several instruments, a survey identifies barriers to cooperation and less competitive innovation systems are reflected through policy mix reviews. To implement concrete innovation support measures, smart specialisation strategies, technology transfer centres and a system of supporting the development of targeted project proposals is being introduced. Danube-INCO.NET is also committed towards the development of joint funding mechanisms downstream both at strategic and operative level.</i></p>
<p><b>Involvement of the PACs</b></p>	<p><i>PACs facilitated the development of the proposal, the selection of partners, the definition of specific tasks; PACs participate in the implementation of specific activities (e.g. policy dialogue, support to working groups, pilot initiative on labelling of projects). In concrete terms: two organisations from Serbia closely linked to PA7 are involved (University of Novi Sad, Institute Mihajlo Pupin), Slovakia is represented through Business Innovation Center Bratislava; PA8 nominated Steinbeis GmbH as partner from Baden Württemberg which participates with two institutes and EKO-SUSTAV from Croatia.</i></p> <p><i>Danube-INCO.NET is closely cooperating with PACs.</i></p>
<p><b>Next steps</b></p>	<p><i>Further recommendations as well as implementation activities are expected from several of the project's activity areas, e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Mapping of stakeholders and exploitation of synergies</i></li> <li><i>• Cooperation in relation to the Danube Region funding network</i></li> <li><i>• Workshops focusing on specific topics of integration to the European Research Area</i></li> <li><i>• Clustering of stakeholders related to Energy/Bio-economy</i></li> <li><i>• Promotion of previous project results for further multiplication</i></li> <li><i>• Priority setting based on analysis</i></li> <li><i>• Recommendations to overcome barriers to cooperation</i></li> <li><i>• Policy mix peer reviews (in BiH and Serbia)</i></li> <li><i>• Networking along the Smart Specialisation Strategies</i></li> <li><i>• Implementation of Danube Transfer Centers</i></li> <li><i>• Development of Project Labelling approaches</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to funding parties platforms</li> <li>• A dissemination platform for STI news, documents and events in the Danube Region.</li> </ul>
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Name of the project	DANUBE UNIVERSITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMPETENCE
<b>Action related</b>	<p>Action - "To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure".</p> <p>Action - "To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points"</p>
<b>Countries involved</b>	Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Ministry of Science, Research and Arts Baden-Württemberg</li> <li>• From Baden Württemberg Foundation</li> <li>• From German Academic Exchange Service</li> <li>• From Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany</li> </ul>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<p>Numerous goals are already regularly implemented but the aim is to continue and develop these activities</p> <p>The participating countries submitted ERASMUS+ applications in the framework of Knowledge alliances and Strategic partnership as well as H2020 project proposals.</p> <p>Furthermore the partners are working on a concept for common degrees as well as scientific publications.</p> <p>Summer academies contributed to the network of young scientists.</p>
<b>Description</b>	<p><u>The basic idea</u></p> <p>A trans-regional, voluntary partnership between Danube universities could be able to build a trans-regional network that opens new avenues to the partners (e.g. in the development of courses and content), but which also opens new doors of opportunity to the universities located along the Danube itself. Production, trade and industry for regenerative energies and fuel cells can now develop at these locations.</p> <p><u>General goals</u></p> <p>The main idea is to link the education and research activities of the participating universities in the field of renewable energy and efficient energy use. The aim is to create synergies and to use know-how from each other sustainably.</p> <p>Following objectives should be achieved through concrete actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building a network of partner universities and strengthening existing cooperations through student exchange, teacher exchange and staff exchange</li> <li>- Building up of a competence network</li> <li>- Using each other's know how and laboratory facilities</li> <li>- Common research activities</li> <li>- Contribution to the European Danube Strategy</li> <li>- Exchange of experiences from higher developed regions to lower developed regions</li> <li>- Development of a common curricula</li> <li>- Exchange among students during their studies as well as for practical training in companies/institutes</li> <li>- Exchange of professors</li> <li>- Summer school for sustainable energy management and special topics</li> <li>- Know-how transfer</li> <li>- Achieving synergy between science and industry through</li> </ul>

	<p><i>stronger cooperation between universities and industrial companies including SMEs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Close cooperation with local authorities</i></li> <li>- <i>Increasing of research potential and researcher mobility</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Activities</u></p> <p><i>Conferences, fairs</i></p> <p><i>Common stands on fairs enable the partner universities to present their own activities under the umbrella of “Danube Universities” but the participation on conferences and symposia also help to collect ideas and suggestions for common projects.</i></p> <p><i>Summer Schools along the Danube</i></p> <p><i>The Green Waves Summer Academy along the Danube will be organized once a year in Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. The “wandering” academy starts in Vienna, continues in Bratislava and Győr and ends in Budapest. The specialty of the Summer Academy is the mixture of compact lectures and cultural programmes. The students become a part of an international community because students from eight universities and six countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia) participate in the event.</i></p> <p><i>Newsletters, publications</i></p> <p><i>Regularly issued newsletters inform the partners about ongoing projects, developments or offers at the universities.</i></p> <p><i>Innovative education forms: remote laboratory projects</i></p> <p><i>Participating universities develop and install remote systems (e.g. PV systems on a tracking device to follow the way of sun which enables the user to control the tracking system and investigate the influence of declination and tilt to the performance of the system). Common using of each other’s laboratory facilities is an economical and ecological solution instead of building up laboratories.</i></p> <p><i>Gender equality projects</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Our gender mainstreaming concept includes numerous activities for ensuring gender equality at the technical universities in the region. Besides workshops and exchange of experience about gender projects we organize Girl’s days within the framework of excursions along the Danube to motivate young schoolgirls to decide for studying on technical universities.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Research working groups (E-Mobility, Smart grid, Photovoltaics, Energy meteorology, Solarthermal, Energy efficiency &amp; Environment)</i></p> <p><i>The goal of the working groups is to promote bilateral or multilateral research projects and to develop concepts for EU applications. The results of these can also be helpful in the education and be used by every participating university.</i></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<i>LOR’s from PA 2 and PA 7</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Common research projects, Building up of a research competence network, Common degree programs (Master courses)</i>

## 7. ANNEX 3 – TA PROGRESS REPORT

Technical Assistance grant is administered at beneficiary institutions as set by the European Union grant "Technical Assistance for the implementation of the ELJ Strategy for the Danube Region", Grant Agreement CCI 2011CE160AT095, and amendments No1 CCI 2012CE160AT127 and No2 CCI 2011CE160AT095. The latest extended the eligibility period up to 44 months from start of the grant, meaning that the grant started in January 2012 ends in August 2015.

The spending at both beneficiary institutions remained balanced in the reported period. After a short delay in starting the use of the grant at the Slovak side in 2012 no major deviations occurred. (Technical Assistance grant payments started in June 2012, together with the change of the coordinator from the Slovak Academy of Sciences to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, which took place as of 1 May 2013).

In the reported period both beneficiaries received interim payment, after detailed financial report and request for interim payment were submitted to the DG Regio. The interim payment arrived at the end of April enabling beneficiaries to continue with their activities in full capacity.

Regarding the organization of the Grant spending, at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, one person is executing the services under direct management of the Slovak coordinator. Support has been also provided by one external staff, within the process of the DRRIF project evaluation (translating and interpreting services). The whole process of public procurement was organised and administrated by the employees of the Ministry.

On the Serbian side the execution of TA grant is entrusted to the University of Novi Sad from the beginning of eligibility period. Despite of the change of the PAC in January 2015 the grant administration remained at the University of Novi Sad. TA grant enables PACs, Prof Dr Miroslav Veskovc and Prof Dr Viktor Nedovic, and their support teams to implement coordination activities including intensive dissemination, networking and policy level meetings. It also allows PACs to engage relevant experts to support PAC activities and ensure smooth communication with relevant institutions and stakeholders, efficient administration of TA and related reporting.

The Technical Assistance grant at both beneficiary institutions is mainly spent on travel and stay costs and staff costs, as planned in the proposed budget (headings: *1. Staff (gross salary)*, and *5. Other eligible costs (according to the call)*). Staff costs cover PACs staff costs (management) and staff costs of Support Team members (technical and administration) who are engaged in preparation, organization, coordination and delivery of PA7 activities and relevant administration. The list of most relevant meetings attended or organized by PACs and their teams is available under Section 2.1. Policy development. The feasibility study for the DRRIF, planned in PAC Slovakia budget – Specific project, is performed by E&Y Slovakia, and covered under the spending of the budget heading *3. Other implementation contract*.

To support PAC activities and efficient PA7 governance, organization and correspondence the University of Novi Sad hires (on regular and part time basis) following personal: Sanja Subotić-Gantar, Helena Hiršenberger and since March 2015 Dijana Štrbac. Support to PAC activities is also provided by university staff from International Relations Office, Office for Finances, and Office for Education, Science and Public Relations. In PA7 dissemination and networking are also involved Prof. Dr Pavle Sekeruš, Prof. Dr Zita Bošnjak, Prof. Dr Milan Martinov, Prof. Dr Ivana Ivančev Tumbas, Prof. Dr Snežana Radulović, and other academic experts from the University of Novi Sad.

To support activities of PA7 Coordinator the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport hired Sandra Salamonova. Further support was provided by Lubica Pitlová employee of the Science and Technology Division of the Ministry. Public Procurement for DRRIF was administered by Sandra Salamonová, Lubica Pitlová and other employees of the Ministry: Ivan Bukovský, Roderik Klinda, Žaneta Surmajová, Marek Repa, Richard Urbanovič, Štefan Bachár. Administrative support

to EUSDR coordination was also provided by Monika Vaculová, Barbora Lempochnerová, Dana Brathová, Jana Belohlávková, Zuzana Vráblik and Anna Činčurová.

The overview of the spending of the EU Grant for the Technical Assistance (TA) and specific project DRRIF is presented below:

		Jun 2014 – Jun 2015	Jan 2012 – Jun 2015
TA	SK	23.290,77	89.384,30
	RS	15.892,21	96.676,40
DRRIF	SK	102.463,00	102.463,00
Total		<b>141.645,98</b>	<b>288.523,70</b>

The final financial report for the Grant period 01/01/2012 – 31/08/2015 will be submitted in September 2015, fully in accordance with the guidelines provided. For more details on TA Progress Report PAC support teams remain available.