

Report to the European Commission

Implementation of the EUSDR Priority Area 6 to preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils

Reporting period
June 2012 – June 2013

This Report on implementation of the EUSDR Priority Area 6 to preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils, prepared by PAC 6 (BY and RH) and endorsed by the Steering Group members according to the *Rules of procedure* is submitted to the European Commission (DG REGIO and DG ENV). Integral part of this report are Annexes as follows: Annex 1: *Roadmaps to implement each action*; Annex 2: *Projects approved by the Steering Group* and Annex 3: *Sturgeon 2020 Strategy*

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1. OVERALL PROGRESS

1.1. State of play

1.1.1. Work on the policies

The work on policies within Priority Area 6 (PA6) continued to follow the approach which has been defined during the first year of implementation and which proved to be the most appropriate way to reach the targets and aims of PA6: a strong focus on bottom-up oriented concrete activities with stakeholders, backed up by receiving respective support and awareness on the policy level. Additionally, a cross-sectoral approach with a transnational perspective has consequently followed, both on policy level as well as with relevant stakeholders. The Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) are placed right in the middle within this horizontal and vertical integrative approach. One of the added values and strengths of the EU Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR) is the provision of an excellent platform to further develop and extend this approach by concrete activities.

Concrete measures, activities and conferences on EUSDR policy that PAC6 has undertaken or participated, in the period from the end of June 2012 till now comprise the following:

29 June 2012, Osijek and Vukovar (HR): Visit of Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Regional Policy. Aim of this visit was strengthening of a political commitment of Republic of Croatia, as a Danube region country, towards EUSDR via meetings of Mr Hahn with the high level officials, representatives from the ministries, National Contact Points, PACs, local officials, stakeholders and users of EU projects. During the visit of Mr Hahn, a meeting was held at which major challenges, together with opportunities and projects which contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Danube Strategy were presented.

17-18 September 2012, Danube Commission, Budapest (HU): 4th Workshop on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin. The framework of this 4th Workshop is the joint initiative of the Danube Commission, the ICPDR and the Sava Commission to elaborate and discuss ways to integrate the needs of inland navigation with those coming from environmental and nature protection side. Beside the representatives of the mentioned organisations and countries, environmental stakeholders and NGOs (e.g. WWF), PAC1a (inland navigation) and PAC6 also participated at the workshop. On this occasion, the basis has been laid to further promote the integrative implementation of the EUSDR and to transfer the resolutions of the Joint Statement to concrete project-oriented activities, facilitated by the PACs. The initiative was highly welcomed by the participants of the workshop and resulted in the joint workshop session of PA1a and PA6 during the 1st Annual Forum in Regensburg.

27-28 November 2012, 1st Annual Forum of the EUSDR, Regensburg (DE): PAC6 were involved in preparation of the main EUSDR event in 2012, foremost as coordinator for Workshop 3 “A Sustainable River Basin – Environmental and Touristic Assets” and the joint PA1a and PA6 panel discussion “Improved Mobility and a Sustainable River Basin: The integrative approach as key success factor”, which for the first time brought together representatives from transport and environmental and nature protection sector, as well as representatives from the European Commission and relevant DGs, in the EUSDR. This part of the workshop session was the first official and public milestone to develop cross-cutting activities, trying to overcome the conventional sectoral approaches. Concrete project examples revealed realistic opportunities to continue further with this approach. Beside the workshop session, the Annual Forum provided an excellent opportunity to reflect the state of play of the EUSDR, as well as to network with stakeholders and representatives from the policy level. Finally, the political back-up of the EUSDR was pointed out by high level representatives, such as the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel.

11-12 December 2012, 15th Ordinary Meeting of the ICPDR, Vienna (AT): Upon invitation by the ICPDR Executive Secretary, PAC6 participated at the 15th Ordinary Meeting of the ICPDR in Vienna. The participation further consolidated the close cooperation between PA6 and the ICPDR, as well as with the other two PAs from the Environmental Pillar. The ICPDR is observer of the PA6 Steering Group and also

member of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force, which was presented during the meeting by a representative of the DSTF.

17 April 2013, Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the German Parliament, Berlin (DE). Upon invitation of the Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the German Parliament, PAC6 together with a representative of the German Federal Ministry of Environment and an expert from Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, also a member of the DSTF, presented and discussed the topic “Ecological Connectivity of the Danube River as regards migration of sturgeons”. The invitation was based on recent activities of the DSTF in the framework of the EUSDR and was closing the link of the concrete work of the DSTF by the involved experts, stakeholders and NGOs with the policy level. The presentations of the three experts highlighted the issue from three viewpoints: political, scientific and the contributions of the DSTF in the framework of PA6 and the EUSDR, the latter being presented by PAC6. Three different but integrative viewpoints were highly appreciated by the members of the Parliament. Public discussion was in parallel broadcasted live in the internet and thus was followed live by several DSTF members from DE, AT and RO. Therefore the discussion even though held in German and on spot in Berlin has raised international attention in the Danube Region¹. As a direct result of the presentation and discussion it could be stated that the members of the Committee on the Environment received a comprehensive insight view on the necessary issues and activities to ensure viable populations of sturgeon species in the Danube River. The topic of ecological connectivity is one important element, but for a sustainable solution, several other key topics, as elaborated in the Sturgeon 2020 program, must be taken into consideration (see chapter 1.2.8. and Annex 3).

27-29 June 2013, 7th Environment Action Programme Europe 2020, Danube Environment Forum, Tulcea (RO). The international conference linked several high level representatives from the EUSDR, the policy level including EC, the Joint Research Centre and several stakeholders to shape the future of environmental development in the Danube Region. PAC6 (BY) contributed in a panel discussion on “Green Growth and Sustainable Development in the Danube Delta”. Specific focus has been laid on the issue of sturgeon conservation in the framework of the Danube Day 2013.

Table 1: Events related to policy level with participation of PAC6

DATE	VENUE
29 June 2012	Visit of Johannes Hahn, Osijek and Vukovar (HR)
17-18 September 2012	Danube Commission (Budapest): 4th Workshop on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin
27-28 November 2012	Regensburg: 1st Annual Forum of the EUSDR.
11-12 December 2012	Vienna: 15th Ordinary Meeting of the ICPDR
17 April 2013	Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the German Parliament, Berlin
27-29 June 2013	Danube Environment Forum, Tulcea (RO)

1.1.2. Improvements compared to previous report

- Added value of EUSDR in terms of integrative and coordinated approach could be made visible to representatives of policy level through concrete projects and activities, such as Sturgeon 2020 strategy.

¹ The discussion is available online under the following link: http://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2013/44094935_kw16_pa_umwelt.

- Role of PACs as facilitators and coordinators for stakeholders, as well as its role on the policy level, is much clearer now.
- Stakeholders and NGOs better understand their benefits by getting connected to PA6 / EUSDR as regards higher visibility and political support due to continuous cooperation with PA6. Flagship projects with high attention on all levels (e.g. Sturgeon 2020 Strategy) raise the interest of further stakeholders as regards the added value of the EUSDR.
- PA6 philosophy to focus on bottom-up processes which in turn shall be linked with policy level by their cooperation with the PACs and by this receive awareness and support from policy level seems to be fruitful and will be further followed.

1.1.3. Outline on the future

The role of the PACs as a connection among all relevant actors in horizontal and vertical integration will be further pursued. The given framework must be further filled with concrete projects and activities, which will become highly relevant in the next funding period. In the light of the new programming period, PAC6 will continue to support stakeholders in the process of identification of projects aligned with the actions of PA6 EUSDR targets.

1.1.4. Lessons learned

Continuous promotion of EUSDR-related activities contribute to the awareness raising on policy level, which in turn further backs up the concrete activities and raises the interest of further actors. The PACs play an essential role by being a facilitator and a promoter at the same time.

Following a good example of the Pillar II coordination in this reporting period, strong need for continuous horizontal approach in all PAs is highly recommended for the next reporting period.

1.2. Process

1.2.1. PAC6 organisation, Steering Group, Enlargement of the Network

PAC6 cooperation: The cooperation among the **PACs of PA6** is continuously carried out well and in a sound complementary way in terms of regional focus, stakeholder involvement and interrelation with national, EU and international policies and regulations. The exchange between PACs is functioning well by e-mail communication on a daily basis and by organising PAC6 meetings when needed. Also joint EUSDR events are used for updates and exchanges of current and future activities.

The **PA6 Steering Group** (SG) remains active as reported before. The participation of SG members in the meetings varies, as well as their involvement in steering the PA6 process. Due to a tight schedule in the end of 2012, no Steering Group meeting was held in December 2012. Instead a **Newsletter by the PACs**, issued in **December 2012**, informed the Steering Group members about the progress made since June 2012. The **fourth Steering Group meeting** took place in Zagreb on **6 March 2013** and the fifth is foreseen for autumn 2013.

Enlargement of the Network: As mentioned before, PA6 intends to enlarge the **stakeholder network**, which can also serve as a platform for topic related discussion and project exchange and development forum. An enlargement of the SG by **additional observers** has been agreed upon during the meeting in Zagreb in March 2013. Following the diverse themes covered by PA6, it was recognised that the further involvement of the NGOs would bring additional benefit for the achievement of targets and actions of the EUSDR and assist in stakeholder networking and communication with the wide range of stakeholders on regional and local level. Both approaches, the stakeholder network and enlargement of the SG by observers, are concrete

measures to enlarge the PA6 network both on the level of stakeholders as well on the policy level, keeping the long-term vision of a Danube wide platform in mind.

Strengthening the commitment of PACs: In order to strengthen the PA6 actions in the region, Croatian PAC6 created national Working Group with an aim to include other relevant experts who can contribute to EUSDR PA6 implementation through consultations on existing relevant projects in the region from their field of expertise, by further networking with stakeholders etc.

Croatian PACs have tight collaboration with Croatian NCP team, working together on updates on EUSDR implementing actions in general and in communication between Danube Region countries and their representatives in Croatia (e.g. meetings with representative from Ukrainian Embassy and Romanian Embassy).

Better cooperation with EUSDR countries: It was highly appreciated that Ukrainian NCP for the EUSDR shared with PACs a compilation of projects connected with the particular Priority Area. PAC6 got in contact with the project managers of the PA6-related project proposals and forwarded them the Pillar II procedure for labelling in order to receive a Letter of Recommendation / Letter of Acknowledgement. It is expected that the contacts with Ukraine will be further strengthened on the basis of the submitted project proposals. In this way, new cooperation on the foundations of EUSDR could be initiated.

Table 2: Attendance to Steering Group meetings

Country*	1 st Meeting 20 June 2011 Munich	2 nd Meeting 24 - 25 Oct. 2011 Zagreb	3 rd Meeting 14 June 2012 Munich	4 th Meeting 6 March 2013 Zagreb
DE	x	x	x	x
AT	x	x	x	x
CZ				
SK			x	
HU	x	x	x	
SI		x	x	
HR	x	x	x	x
SRB				x
BIH		x		
MNE				
RO	x	x		x
BG				
MD				
UA				
DG ENV	x	x	x	
DG REGIO	x	x	x	x
PAC4		x		
PAC5				
ICPDR		x	x	x
Carpathian Convention		x		x

*Austria (AT) , Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH), Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Croatia (HR), Hungary (HU), Moldova (MD), Montenegro (MNE), Serbia (SRB), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SI), Romania (RO), Ukraine (UA)

1.2.2. Integrative approach with other PACs

Already from the beginning, PA6 fostered an integrative approach within the EUSDR, which has been successfully established **with PA4 and PA5 within the Environmental Pillar**. This cooperation led to several joint activities on operative level (e.g. joint labelling system) and also resulted in the first Joint Pillar II Stakeholder Workshop on 6 November 2012 in Budapest (see below). PAC6 participated at the **5th SG meeting of PA4** on 5 June 2013 in Bratislava for the exchange of general information, planning of joint events and to consolidate the cooperation.

Also the cooperation with **PA1a** has been established in this reporting period. Beside the Joint Workshop at the Annual Forum in Regensburg, PAC6 participated at the 3rd Meeting of the Working Groups of Priority Area 1a on 7 November 2012 in Belgrade and informed the participants, mostly stakeholders and policy representatives from transport branches, about the targets of PA6, the Sturgeon 2020 strategy and in general, the need to stimulate an integrative approach between inland navigation and biodiversity and nature protection. PAC6 was also invited to participate at the Steering Group meeting of PA1a on 8 November 2012 in Belgrade, which marked one visible milestone in the cooperation of PA1a and PA6.

During the **PAC/NCP/EC meeting on 30-31 January 2013** in Brussels, PAC1a and PAC6 reflected this approach in a joint presentation, inviting the other PACs to jointly further develop the integrative approach within the EUSDR.

The **first PAC meeting on 29-30 April 2013 in Sofia** actually further deepened the discussion on concrete issues, e.g. a harmonized labelling system. This internal process is very important and it is foreseen that there will be regular PAC meetings; the next one is announced for autumn 2013 in Romania.

The internal PAC cooperation in order to promote a more integrated and harmonized collaboration is a clear progress in the EUSDR organisation and will be even more essential in the next funding period 2014-2020.

1.2.3. German Stakeholder Workshop on the implementation of PA6 of the EUSDR

In order to inform local stakeholders about the state of play and the opportunities in the thematic fields of PA6, a Stakeholder Workshop in German language was conducted on 22 October 2012 in Neuburg a.d. Donau. The workshop was implemented back-to-back with the Kick-off conference of project Danubeparks Step 2.0. The workshop contributed to establishment of contacts with various stakeholders in the field of biodiversity, nature protection, fishery and other PA6 related fields. As a result, the follow-up on developing a master plan for a “Living Space Danube” with the Bavarian Stakeholder Network in February and May 2013 (see chapter 1.2.6.) could be initialized.

1.2.4. Joint Pillar II Stakeholder Workshop

The first Joint Pillar II Stakeholder Workshop took place on **6 November 2012** in Budapest. The PACs were asked by the EC to implement Stakeholder Workshops in order to inform interested actors about the EUSDR and specific PA-related topics. Because of the the cooperation of the Pillar II PACs (PA4, 5 & 6), it was proposed to jointly carry out the Stakeholder Workshop. By initiative of PA4 and the Hungarian NCP, this first Joint Workshop took place in Budapest and brought together around 120 participants from Danube countries.

During the event, the cooperation of Pillar II was highlighted as the best practice example, which should be extended also to other PAs. It has also been stated by representatives of the EC that **integration is the key of the EUSDR**. The workshop was an excellent opportunity for the exhaustive discussion with the participants on the state of play and further needs for implementation. It was accompanied by presentations of already running projects which were closely connected with PA6 (e.g. Danubeparks). It is foreseen to continue with

the Joint Pillar II Stakeholder Workshops in various countries and with specific key topics relevant for all target groups (e.g. funding for environment in the EUSDR).

At the occasion of the Joint Pillar II Workshop, the **PA6 Service and Information Flyer** was presented in all Danube Region languages. The flyer is short and summarised information on the EUSDR, the Environmental PAs and specifically PA6. It also includes service offer and contact information of the PA6 PACs. The information flyer was distributed at various events (e.g. Annual Forum) and also to the Steering Group members for further distribution. The production has been covered by the Technical Assistance funds. An information flyer in English language is available online².

Table 3: PAC and EUSDR related events with participation of PAC6

DATE	VENUE
19 Sept. 2012	Meeting of PAC6 (BY) with EC, DG Regio, Brussels (BE)
18 October 2012	Pillar II PAC meeting (PACs 4, 5 & 6). Vienna (AT)
22 October 2012	1 st German PA6 Stakeholder Workshop, Neuburg a.d. Donau (DE)
6 November 2012	1 st Joint Pillar II Stakeholder Workshop, Budapest (HU)
7 November 2012	PA1a Working Group Meeting, Belgrade (SRB)
8 November 2012	PA1a Steering Group Meeting, Belgrade (SRB)
18 December 2012	PAC 6 meeting, Zagreb (HR)
14 January 2013	Meeting with PAC1a Vienna (AT)
6 March 2013	4 th PA6 Steering Group Meeting, Zagreb (HR)
5 June 2013	PA4 Steering Group meeting, Bratislava (SK)

1.2.5. Progress made since the last reporting period on the governance of PA

- Extending of cooperation among PA6 Coordinators
- Continuous well-functional Pillar II cooperation, highlighted by the First Pillar II Stakeholder Workshop
- Enlargement of the PA6 Network by including additional observers and further developing Stakeholder Network
- Formalisation of cooperation with PA1a through joint workshop session during Regensburg Annual Forum and starting of cooperation on the project level
- Propagating the integrative approach to other PAs, establishment of regular PAC meetings
- Common understanding of the benefit of integrative approach by the PACs

² <http://groupspaces.com/BiodiversityLandscapesAirSoil/files/folder/39292>

Potentials for improvements:

- The integrative horizontal approach among PAs should be continuously propagated and a regular platform for PAC exchange should be established, both for day-to-day exchange and before regular PAC meetings (1 or 2 times a year and upon needs)
- Further work on harmonized labelling system, joint events and joint visibility measures
- Sub task forces of the PACs on different topics could be further explored
- As more macro-regional strategies are currently in preparation, a Clearing House could be established, which collects, analyses and distributes good and not so good practices coming from the different MRS.

1.2.6. Outline on the future regarding PA governance

Further strengthening horizontal PA-exchange, preferably by concrete project developments, and identifying the needs to design the internal cooperation.

1.2.7. Work on actions and projects

PAC6 continued the close cooperation with the project coordinators established in the first year of implementation. Furthermore, new contacts were established, new project developments supported and several new project ideas discussed. In most cases, the preparatory work is focussed on the next funding period in order to have mature projects in the project pipeline, ready to apply for funding as soon as the programmes start their calls. Considerable progress could be achieved with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF), which elaborated the full strategy “Sturgeon 2020”, accompanied by meetings of the DSTF, both financially supported by PAC6. A new initiative has been launched with local stakeholders and NGOs from Bavaria with the target to elaborate a vision and Masterplan (and respective activities) for the “Living Space Danube”.

Establishment of the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve. On 11 July 2012, at the 24th Session of the International Co-ordinating Council (ICC) of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO, Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve between Hungary and Croatia was proclaimed as a part of world’s biosphere reserve network.

Danube Sturgeon Task Force meetings in August 2012 (Tulcea, Romania) and April 2013 (Munich, Germany). The Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF) consists of 30 permanent members from nine countries with the purpose to implement the target “*Secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species and other indigenous fish species by 2020*” of Priority Area 6. The main task during this reporting period was to start the elaboration and finalize the Strategy “Sturgeon 2020” and the accompanied program with more details on the implementation. The meeting in Tulcea marked the starting point in the elaboration but also served to agree on an organisational structure of the DSTF. The logic of “Sturgeon 2020” is similar to the EUSDR: the strategy formulates the overall framework in a more condensed way, whereas the program defines concrete measures and activities and is seen as a living document for the implementation phase. Within the DSTF sub working groups were established, the overall coordination is perceived by the DSTF core group, in which PAC6 is a member as well. The sub working groups take care of the 6 defined key topics (see Annex 3). In the time between the Tulcea and Munich meeting, several bilateral meetings and exchange took place. It is worth to mention that the work for the DSTF currently takes place on a voluntary basis by the members of the DSTF, as no funding is available yet. The motivation of the group therefore is considerably high but is in need for permanent and project related funding in a mid- and long term perspective. The two meetings in Tulcea and Munich were co-funded by means of the TA budget of PA6. The Munich meeting served to finalize the strategy and the program, followed by a feedback round and finalisation of the document in June 2013. The document is the workplan for the next years, with the year

2020 as current timeframe to reach its objectives. It is worth to mention that the DSTF activities already raised considerable interest and attention on policy level including EC and national ministries, the EUSDR and several NGO's and stakeholders within the Danube Region, despite the fact that currently no budget for project implementation is available. It is nevertheless to be expected, that the flagship initiative should boost the opportunities to receive respective funding in the next funding period. Currently, the DSTF applied for funding within the recent project call of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The flagship status of the Sturgeon 2020 is also clearly visible by its overarching and crosscutting integrative approach, which actually implies the cooperation with virtually all 11 Priority Areas of the EUSDR. The connections to the single PAs are described in detail in the program Sturgeon 2020 (see Annex 3). It is foreseen to establish these links in the second half of 2013 and to define measures to be taken by single PAs.

26 February 2013 and 13 May 2013, Neuburg a.d. Donau and Regensburg: Workshop "Implementation of EUSDR in Bavaria" with Stakeholders, NGO's and local authorities on the implementation of the Danube Strategy in the field of PA6. Following the approach of PA6 to integrate relevant actors from local level to the transnational implementation of the EUSDR in the field of nature protection and biodiversity, a Stakeholder network has been established in Bavaria to further define the implementation process. The initiative was launched after the Regensburg Annual Forum in 2013 by the initiative of *Auenzentrum Neuburg*, as several stakeholders expressed their intention and interest to get involved into the EUSDR in the field of the PA6 topics. PAC6 explained the background and current status of implementation of the EUSDR, also the fact of current lack of funding was important to mention. Despite this obstacle, it was agreed to elaborate a Masterplan for the "Living Space Danube", focussing on the current state of play and also needs in terms of habitat networking, floodplain forests, agriculture in Danube floodplains, ecological needs of regional situations for lowland moors, meadows and pastures with the overall aim to restore and improve the ecological status of the Danube floodplains. It is foreseen to derive specific activities and projects out of this Masterplan. Similar to the Sturgeon 2020 strategy, the Masterplan could be accompanied by a concrete work plan to implement the activities. As a next step it is foreseen to connect the Bavarian initiative with actors and projects in the Danube Region. Already now there are direct connections to the Danubeparks step 2 project, as the German project partners are involved leading the Bavarian initiative. PAC6 established links to the policy level (StMUG) and the Ministry is already involved in the process by granting funds for the development of the Masterplan. This process would have not been started without the framework of the EUSDR and PA6 and is also in line with the vertical and horizontal integration perspective, as actors from water protection and agriculture shall be involved in the process as well. The next meeting is foreseen for September 2013 with a first revision round of the Masterplan.

1.2.8. Improvements compared to previous report

Above mentioned success stories (Sturgeon 2020, Bavarian Stakeholder Network) have originated due to EUSDR. Still it is remarkable to mention that these activities are currently taking place without permanent funding and are for most of the participating actors an "add on" to their regular obligations. This shows that the EUSDR with its horizontal and vertical integrative approach implies a new element for motivation. Nevertheless it remains crucial that the preparatory work performed until now will lead to success, meaning that funds will be allocated to respective projects. If this will work out in the next funding period, a snowball effect can be expected, as it has already been observed in single cases.

18 April 2013, SONДАР project meeting, Tulln (AT). PAC6 addressed a key note statement to the 80 participants about the state of play and future development within PA6. SONДАР is a Danube Region wide network on soil protection and sustainable development. This second participation contributed to deepen the close cooperation between PA6 and Sondar. It is intended that concrete future activities will be discussed and laid down in a working meeting planned for second half of 2013.

Beside the above mentioned activities, several bilateral meetings or e-mail communication that also took place are listed in table 3 below.

Table 4: Events related to projects and project development with participation of PAC6

DATE	VENUE
26-29 August 2012	2 nd Meeting of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force, Tulcea, Romania
24 September 2012	Meeting with “mooseum”, Bavarian Stakeholder in Bächingen (DE)
30 October 2012	Project development meeting in Munich with project team of “Donauwandel / Danube Learning Journey, now: DunaVision www.dunavision.eu
29 November 2012	Working meeting with two representatives of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force, Munich (DE)
17. December 2012	Project development meeting in Munich with representatives from IAD (AT) for a variety on PA6 related projects and initiatives
10. January 2013	Project development meeting in Munich with WWF Danube Carpathian office
15 January 2013	Meeting with National Park Donau Auen (Danubeparks), Orth a.d. Donau (AT)
26 February 2013	Workshop “Implementation of EUSDR in Bavaria” with Stakeholders and local Authorities from Bavaria. Neuburg a.d. Donau (DE)
11-12 April 2013	3rd meeting of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF), Munich (DE)
18 April 2013	Project Conference “SONDAR” (key note by PAC6). Tulln a.d. Donau (AT)
13 May 2013	Workshop follow-up “Implementation of EUSDR in Bavaria” with Stakeholders and local Authorities from Bavaria. Neuburg a.d. Donau (DE). Strategy development “Living Space Danube”

1.2.9. Publicity Measures and Visibility

The PAC6 Service and Information flyer has been published in all Danube Region languages.

PAC6 presented the Sturgeon 2020 strategy and its cross-cutting character with connections to all 11 Priority Areas in the Danube Region Newsletter Winter 2012-2013, published in December 2012 by Interact.

On 2 May 2013, an official awarding ceremony of PA6 labelling took place at the “Haus am Strom” in Jochenstein, Bavaria. PAC6 presented to the guests and press the connection of the exhibition “The Aliens are coming” with focus on sturgeons in the Danube and highlighted the contribution of the initiative to the EUSDR by its joint education for sustainable development in the Danube valley. In the aftermath, press reported affirmatively about the event, the EUSDR and PA6. During the event, the PA6 logo was displayed at the entrance point of Haus am Strom.

In order to enhance the visibility of PA6, a newsletter on PA6 was prepared by PAC6 and sent to SG members, observers and partners.

1.3. Funding

1.3.1. New funding opportunities

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research launched a call for proposals under the Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Science and Research for Regulations for funding an ideas competition for the establishment and development of innovative R&D networks with partners in the Danube States in April 2013³. The call has been specifically dedicated to support the EUSDR, with the aim “to support German universities, research institutions and companies to establish networks with excellent researchers in the Danube States in order to develop joint cooperation strategies and projects. It encourages stronger links between the leading innovative regions upstream and the developing regions downstream, thereby contributing to the successful implementation of the Danube region strategy. Further progress is to be made with the internationalization of existing national competence networks.” The DSTF applied for funding within this call with a respective project proposal to stabilize the network for Sturgeon Conservation in the Danube Region. It is a positive development that funds from national authorities are made available for the EUSDR and also heading to stimulate transnational partnerships.

1.3.2. Preparing the next funding period

Danube Region Programme: In the recent reporting period, the programming process for the next funding period 2014-2020 has been launched in all funding programmes. It is a very positive development that the former ETC SEE programme will be turned into the Danube Region Programme, with a territorial coverage of the EUSDR states, including Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, which will ease the participation of project partners coming from the two *länder*. It is also highly appreciated that the Task Force of the Danube Programme is directly cooperating with actors from the EUSDR, including PACs, in order to find the best appropriate way to match the needs of the PAs with those of the ETC programme. The first meeting between the Task Force and the PACs took place on 21 May 2013 in Ljubljana. The PACs were also requested to define a harmonized procedure for labelling and issuance of a Letter of Recommendation (as requested already in the previous PAC6 report). In the case that the LoR will have a direct influence on project selection of the ETC Programme, a transparent and harmonized role of the PACs in this process will be essential. This in turn could also significantly contribute to the more integrative approach within the PAs as well as the importance of the respective decision taking process by the Steering Groups.

Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects: The development of qualitative projects in a transnational, macro-regional environment is a challenging venture. In order to give momentum to the implementation of the EUSDR for the programming period 2014-2020 and to support the preparation of projects, PA6 will explore the best option for usage of the Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP) established by EC together with PA10. The TAF-DRP is an EU grant scheme to develop project ideas relevant to EUSDR into bankable and fundable project concepts. Relevant project applications will be preselected in each of the 11 PAs.

Funding programmes: In order to achieve coherency of the funding programmes and EUSDR, PAC6 are actively involved in the planning for programming documents for the next programming period.

Hence, the meeting between EUSDR PACs and programming actors “Embedding the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in European Structural and Investment Funds programmes was held in Stuttgart

³ Extract from the Terms of References of the call (source: <http://www.bmbf.de/en/furtherance/21286.php>): The Danube region has great potential for cooperation in the areas of research and development (R&D). Support for multilateral cooperation is a central element of the European Union's Strategy for the Danube Region, which provides a framework for improvements regarding socio-economic development, competitiveness, environmental management and resource-efficient growth of the Danube region.

21st of June which deepened the exchange between representatives from the EUSDR and from the Operational Programmes.

Also, PAC6 (HR) is participating in ENEA- MA (*The European Network of Environmental Authorities - Managing Authorities for the Cohesion Policy*) working group on Biodiversity⁴, set up for the purpose of helping out in the interpretation of the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy regulations and thus assisting in the preparation of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes so that they integrate biodiversity issues and deliver the most of the benefits provided. The WG prepared the guidance document on *Integration of Biodiversity and Natura 2000 in Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes 2014-2020*⁵ which can be useful for PA6 setting out biodiversity related targets.

1.3.3. Improvements compared to previous report

- Some funding schemes and national programmes take focus on the EUSDR and align specific calls
- ETC Danube Programme will cover the full Danube Region
- PACs are getting involved in the programming process for the ETC DP

1.3.4. Challenges regarding the funding of relevant projects

Labelling system in the next programming period: The labelling system and defined labelling criteria are well established within Pillar II, due to its joint labelling procedure. Nevertheless, the impact of a Letter of Recommendation (LoR) issued by the PACs on behalf of the Steering Group on the selection of projects by the funding programmes has not been clarified and remains rather unclear. As stated above, it is vital for the next funding period to discuss and clarify the impact of LoR, at least with the most relevant funding programmes (ETC, Life, Horizon 2020), which in turn requires a harmonized and transparent labelling system for all PAs.

Currently there are considerable differences in the amount of labelled projects among the different PAs as well. It should be analysed why the situation differs significantly.

It should be mentioned that the funding opportunities of the EU programmes in the next funding period will be limited as well and that however a strong request for funds is currently generated in the PAs, as several projects are currently developed. In order to avoid a competition among the PAs and the PACs as regards the call for projects, cooperation and coordination among the PACs on projects “in the pipeline” would be desirable, as well as work on jointly prepared projects.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/cohesion_policy_en.htm

⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/pdf/ENEA%20BiodivFINAL%2002042013.pdf>

2. PROGRESS BY TARGET

State of play: The following chapter provides the information on the PA6 targets and related actions as set out in the Action plan of the EUSDR including the short overview on the progress and the link to the existing projects labelled or identified by PA6.

Having in mind that all biodiversity related targets are derived from new Strategic plan of CBD and EU 2020 biodiversity strategy, and in order to be coherent with the existing policies, in the Annex 1 (*Roadmap for PA6*) of the 1st PA6 report (from June 2012) all biodiversity related actions are additionally linked to the targets of EU 2020 biodiversity strategy. In this Report, actions are presented in the same way.

2.1. Target: To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement, adapted to the special needs of the Danube Region by 2020

- 2.1.1. *“To contribute to the 2050 EU vision and 2020 EU target for biodiversity”.*
- 2.1.2. *“To manage Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas effectively”*
- 2.1.3. *“To protect and restore most valuable ecosystems and endangered animal species”*
- 2.1.4. *“To decrease the input of pesticides into the environment of the Danube Region”*
- 2.1.5. *“To decrease air pollutants”*
- 2.1.6. *“To raise awareness of the general public, by acknowledging and promoting the potentials of natural assets as drivers of sustainable regional development”*
- 2.1.7. *To educate children and young people”*
- 2.1.8. *“To build capacities of local authorities in the environment-related matters”*

- Progress in the implementation of the action:

The milestones for the proposed actions have been developed following the activities proposed by EU 2020 biodiversity strategy, especially regarding the adoption of the new legislative framework and existing obligations deriving from the environmental *aquis*. This approach was taken in order to avoid the additional reporting requirements from countries, especially EU MS, and in order to establish stronger cooperation with sectorial DG (DG ENV).

- List of projects associated with the actions^{6,7}:

- *Danubeparks II* (Interreg IVB South East Europe Programme) Countries involved: AT, DE, SK, HU, HR, SRB, BG, RO
- *Green Danube Network* (“Europe for Citizens” Programme) Countries involved: DE, AT, HU
- Protecting “Europe’s Lifeline” - The creation of a Trans-Boundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve along the Danube, Drava and Mura Rivers (TBR MDD) WWF Project⁸

⁶ Full description is provided in Annex 2 of this Report

⁷ Projects identified by desk research to contribute to this target, but no contact established in this reporting period: Be-Natur (ERDF, IPA, Interreg IVB South East Europe Programme) (Countries involved AT, BG, HU, RO, SRB as well as GR, IT) RAMSAR SK - AT (Interreg IVA SK - AT Programme) (Countries involved AT, SK / Morava - Thaya Floodplains)

⁸ http://www.ptice.hr/dokumenti/2011_FS%20MAVA_engl.pdf

- 2.2. Target: By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, including degraded soils.

2.2.1. *“To develop green infrastructure in order to connect different bio-geographic regions and habitats”*

2.2.2. *“To ensure appropriate treatment of solid waste”*

2.2.3. *“To create standardised and compatible information on land cover on transnational basis”*

2.2.4. *“To raise awareness about soil protection”*

2.2.5. *“To contribute to the 2050 EU vision and 2020 EU target for biodiversity”*⁹.

2.2.6. *“To prepare and implement transnational spatial planning and development policies for functional geographical areas (river basins, mountain ranges etc.)”*

- Progress in the implementation of the action:

The milestones for the proposed actions have been developed following the activities proposed by EU 2020 biodiversity strategy, especially regarding the adoption of the new legislative framework and existing obligations deriving from the environmental *aquis*. This approach was taken in order to avoid the additional reporting requirements from, especially EU MS, and in order to establish stronger cooperation with sectorial DG (DG ENV).

List of projects associated with the action^{10,11}:

- *SONDAR - Soil Strategy Network in the Danube Region* (Interreg IVA HU - AT Interreg IVA SK – AT) Countries involved: AT, HU, SK, CZ
- *Bioregio Carpathians* (ERDF; IPA, Interreg IVB South East Europe Programme); Countries involved: AT, CZ, HU, RO, SK, SRB, UA as well as IT, PL
- “Wetland restoration in the Mura-Drava-Danube area” WWF Project¹²

- 2.3. Target: Secure viable populations of Danube sturgeon species and other indigenous fish species by 2020.

2.3.1. *“To explore together the appropriateness of reviewing the Convention Concerning Fishing in the Waters of the Danube”.*

2.3.2. *“To protect and restore most valuable ecosystems and endangered animal species”*¹³

- Progress in the implementation of the action:

Considerable progress was achieved with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF), which elaborated the full strategy “Sturgeon 2020” re-launching the Sturgeon Action Plan of the Bern Convention from 2005¹⁴, accompanied by meetings of the DSTF, both financially supported by PAC6. More information is provided in the text of the report and its Annex 3.

- List of projects associated with the action¹⁵:

⁹ Due to the complexity of action and means of achievement, keep this action under 2 targets

¹⁰ Full description is provided in Annex 2 of this Report

¹¹ Projects identified by desk research to contribute to this target, but no contact established in this reporting period: Green Mountain (ERDF; IPA, Interreg IVB South East Europe programme) Countries involved: AT, BA, BG, GR (1), HU (1), IT (2), ME, RO, SK as well as GR, IT

¹² http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/letak_eng.pdf

¹³ Due to the complexity of action and means of achievement, keep this action under 2 targets

¹⁴ <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=1304173&SecMode=1&DocId=1440994&Usage=2>

¹⁵ Full description is provided in Annex 2 of this Report

→ *Sturgeon 2020* : Countries involved: DE, AT, HU, RO, SRB (Core Group)

- 2.4. Target: By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new Invasive Alien Species.

2.4.1. "To reduce the spread of invasive alien species (IAS)"

- Progress in the implementation of the action:

In order to have the uniformed legislative framework for combating and controlling the IAS in EUSDR region it was agreed to follow on the new EC legislative instrument to develop policy gaps in combating IAS (to be developed in 2013)

List of projects associated with the action: no new project information in this reporting period

Annex 1: Roadmap to implement each action

Annex 2: Projects approved by the Steering group

Annex 3: Sturgeon 2020 Strategy