

## **EUSDR Report June 2014**

### **Priority Area 7**

#### **European Union Strategy for the Danube Region – Priority Area 7 "To develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)"**

#### ***General remarks:***

*This report covers the period **June 2013 – June 2014**.*

*The language of this report should be clear, simple, well-structured and should address the content rather than aiming for quantity.*

*The main aims of this report are:*

- *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. Vague and general comments (e.g. "the situation is progressing favourably and quite rapidly") should preferably be avoided.*
- *To explain the use of technical assistance funds for the year covered by the report (TA progress report).*

*Reporting on the Technical Assistance: The provisions regarding the submission of the TA progress report (implementation and financial report) specify that the reports will be submitted every six months starting from the starting date of the action (Article 1.2.2 of the Special Conditions of the Grant Agreement).*

*However, considering that a separate reporting exercise on the use of TA adds additional work, one of the two annual reports will be merged with the activity report on the PA implementation and will be submitted, for all PAs, by the end of June, as an integral part of the EUSDR PA implementation report.*

*The second annual TA report will be submitted by the end of December each year.*

## 1. OVERALL PROGRESS

### 1.1. State of play

*The input under this sub-chapter shall be limited to maximum 3 pages.*

*This sub-chapter shall include information on:*

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

Since the last progress report the Danube Strategy and PA7 continued getting **better recognition among stakeholders and relevant target groups**. Three years after the kick-off of the EUSDR and PA7 work due to very intensive networking and putting emphasize on the Strategy and the work which accompany it, the Strategy itself as well as PA7 targets and cooperation as prerequisite for their reaching are quite familiar among key players in the PA7 and the topic of wide interest. It does not reflect contribution of only those directly involved in the work of the PA7, but also stakeholders region and nationwide.

The **interest of stakeholders is continuously emerging** as well as the **number of common project proposals is increasing**. It provides strong belief that this trend continues in future years, both on policy level and among relevant contributors (higher education and research institutions and in ICT sector). This way in defined time frame (by 2020) the PA7 will be able to fulfil or come very close to defined area targets. In favour of this speaks several favourable circumstances:

- new Transnational Danube Programme which will be launched soon and which has recognized PA7 targets in its Priority Axis 1,
- Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF, the first PA7 flagship projects) which will deliver feasibility study in the upcoming year,
- ongoing Danube-INCO.NET project giving support to few of the most relevant PA7 actions, and
- increased interest to build strong Danube consortiums for future calls in Horizon 2020, Erasmus Plus, CEEPUS etc.

The projects which PA7 Steering Group awarded with the *flagship label*, in accordance with the *Criteria for Label of Flagship Projects* developed in the last year and also gained wider publicity, promoting at the same time EUSDR and PA7. List of PA7 flagship projects is listed on PA7 web pages at Group Spaces (<http://groupspaces.com/KnowledgeSociety/pages/projects>) with direct links to projects websites. More information on their progress will be provided in Annex 2 of the Report. Besides 4 projects already awarded with PA7 flagship label, currently the Steering Group discuss new 4 applications. Moreover, some projects not fulfilling minimum criteria for the flagship label but contributing to cooperation in the Danube Region in reference to PA7 targets were awarded letters of recommendation and letters of support from PACs. Likewise there are many more projects directly and indirectly contributing to PA7 targets and milestones in university and research collaboration, academic mobility and ICT.

Academic and research communities in the Danube Region have recognised their leading role in the development of Danube knowledge society. They promote projects and actions that contribute to implementation of PA7 targets on the field. The activity of both rectors' conferences, Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC) and Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference (AARC) in most effective way providing strong frameworks for regional university cooperation in education and research. Established close cooperation with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) enables joint promotion of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization (RIS3). In the last year there were several workshops organized by JRC where RIS3 of the regions of Danube macro-region were already peer reviewed. More information is available in the report section

*Progress by targets.*

Many of the activities of the PACs especially, as well as some of the SG members were still focused on wide dissemination along with policy level advocacy for the EUSDR, the PA7 targets and to obtaining support for the most relevant actions (flagship projects, RIS3, DRRIF, coordination and support). On the other hand the representation and active participation of national representatives in the PA7 Steering Group remained almost unchanged: not all EUSDR member countries participated actively in the SG meetings or in the e-mail correspondence. Although some countries still lack their active participation in the work of the SG, on the stakeholder level in some of them (e.g. Croatia, Moldova, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine) there are evident interest to take their part in projects, initiatives, RIS3 and other activities.

Much has been done in the last 12 months by both PACs and their teams. There were organized two SG meetings:

- 6th Steering Group meeting, September 23-24 2013, City Hall, Ulm, Baden-Württemberg, Germany,
- 7<sup>th</sup> Steering Group meeting, May 19-20 2014, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, Budapest, Hungary;

while PACs and members of their teams also attended many other EUSDR and PA7 relevant events, some of which are listed below:

- "4 Motors for Europe", B2B interregional matchmaking event with companies from European regions: Baden Württemberg (Germany), Lombardy (Italy), Rhône-Alpes (France), Catalonia (Spain) and Flanders (Belgium), Novi Sad, 2 July 2013
- Conference on Higher Education Cooperation in Central, Eastern & South-Eastern Europe Higher Education Contact Seminar, 3-5 July, Vienna
- DRIFF Public Procurement Committee meeting, opening offers, Bratislava, 11 July 2013
- on the invitation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Baden-Württemberg, the Slovak delegation lead by Mr. Chudoba visited Stuttgart, with the declaration to share an interest in cooperation in the area of dual education, July 2013
- Joint event with the JRC in Vienna, Austria, Austrian Ministry of Science and Research, 11 September 2013
- Open Session on Danube Strategy, Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia, 1 October 2013
- Ulm Follow-up Working Group meeting, Ulm, 15 October 2013. On behalf of Pro. Veskovic, Prof. Dr Zita Bosnjak, University of Novi Sad Vice-Rector attended the meeting.
- New Challenges for Democracy – Exploring the Crisis of Trust and Democratic Legitimacy in Europe, Inaugural Conference of the Center for Advanced Studies – Southeast Europe, University of Rijeka, Croatia, 16-18 October 2013
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Forum of the EUSDR, Bucharest, Romania, 28-29 October 2013
- Danube Rectors' Conference Annual Conference, Cluj, Romania, 6-8 November 2013

- Danube Business Forum, Novi Sad, Serbia, 25 November 2013
- Review meeting of the first call of the Technical Assistance Facility for the Danube Region Projects, the initiative of the PA 10, held on the 3 December 2013 in Vienna, Austria.
- DRRIF public procurement Committee meeting, Bratislava, Slovakia, 20 January 2014
- Danube transnational programme towards EUSDR, Budapest, Hungary, 24 January 2014
- Danube Rectors' Conference Presidency meeting, Vienna, Austria, 31 January 2014
- Danube-INCO.NET Kick Off Meeting, Vienna, Austria, 3-4 February, 2014
- 4th Meeting of Priority Area Coordinators and National Contact Points, Vienna, Austria, 11-12 March 2014
- 2014 DIAnet International School Welcome Ceremony, Danube: Future Project, Gorizia, Italy, 22 March 2014
- on invitation of Ministry of Finance and Economy Baden Wuerttemberg State Secretary Chudoba held a speech in the Conference "Dual Education in the Danube Region" within the Exhibition Didacta 2014 in Stuttgart, 27 March 2014, Mr. Chudoba also met Peter Friedrich, Minister for Bundesrat and Europe and International Affairs Peter Friedrich
- Towards 2020: New Horizons for RTD and Innovation in the Western Balkan Region, WBC-INCO.NET Final Conference and Brokerage Event, Vienna, Austria, 27-28 March 2014
- S3 for DANUBE: Developing Danube R&I Projects across Borders – How to Make the Joint Use of EU-Funds a Reality?, Joint Research Centre, Brussels, Belgium, 3-4 April, 2014
- Peer review workshop for regional RIS3, Novi Sad, Serbia, 10-11 April 2014
- on invitation of PAC Stefan Chudoba Minister for Bundesrat, Europe and International Affairs Baden Wurtemberg Peter Friedrich with his delegation visited Slovakia and on this occasion he and Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic signed a Letter of intent on cooperation in the field of Dual Education, 28–30 April 2014
- CASEE Conference and Danube Rectors' Conference Presidency Meeting, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, 25-27 May 2014
- Ulm follow up Working Group meeting, Bonn, Germany, 26-27 May 2014. Members of PA7 SG attended the meeting. Slovakia presented the concept of DRRIF. German Ministry of Education and Science announced its intention to open a call for proposals for the Danube countries.
- High-Level Conference - Mobilising Europe's Universities for Smart Specialisation, Brussels, Belgium, 20 June 2014
- High-level event on the Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy organized in the frame of the Annual Forum of the EUSDR, Joint Research Centre, Vienna, Austria, 24-25 June 2014, where PA7 Members participated as panellists in the Workshop and Round-Table on "Financial design of transnational R&I projects and the role of Smart Specialisation"
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Forum of the EUSDR "We Grow Together, Together We Grow", 26-27 June 2014, Vienna City Hall, Austria. Here Priority Area 7 presented its activities and projects in 2 Workshops and 1 Speakers Corner with an overall attendance of around 150 people.

For the future it would be highly beneficial to have better representation of EUSDR countries in the SG and common recognition of the PA7 targets at national levels to support actions and relevant funding, including H2020, DTP, DRRIF, bilateral agreements and other schemes. Without that support structure desired balanced progress towards Danube knowledge society does not seem realistic.

## 1.2. Process

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

*This sub-chapter 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);*
- *Outline of the significant changes (including comparisons with the last reporting period as well) in your work/network approach resulting from the Strategy (e.g. larger networks, more visibility), including any problems encountered and any solutions found; Links with projects from other Priority Areas; Publicity measures (such as website, stakeholder seminars, publications) etc.*
- *What, if anything, is missing in order to streamline the governance of the PA (progress not depending exclusively on your PA)? What are you planning to improve in the governance of the PA (progress entirely depending on your PA).*
- *Outline on the future. Next steps and challenges.*

The coordination of the PA7 is continually led jointly by Slovakia and Serbia: Dr. Štefan Chudoba, State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, (since autumn 2012) and Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovíc, Rector of the University of Novi Sad, representing Serbia as PA7 PAC from the beginning of the EUSDR implementation. The PAC support teams and the joint coordination improved and defined tasks went smoothly, both on internal level among PACs and their teams, as well as in the well structured organization and hosting of the meetings.

Both PACs have undertaken a number of activities (some of dissemination and policy level ones are listed in previous section) on coordination and promotion of PA7 targets and actions through networking and involvement of relevant stakeholders, prominent experts and organizations (other PAs, education and research institutions, professionals, organizations), aiming 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, Danube Transnational Programme, future DDRIF and other eligible sources.

Comparing to the last progress report, after the major shift in good and efficient representation of some of the partner countries in the Steering Group, their involvement, motivation and real contribution to the work done, this year situation remained unchanged with only minor adjustments. There are still states which do lack interest in activities or neglect their obligation to have proper representation in each SG of the EUSDR. On the other hand there are partner states which do the most of the work speeding up the activities and process within the Danube strategy. Among the most active remained Austria, Hungary and Baden Württemberg, together with coordinating Serbia and Slovakia, while two months ago Slovenia changed their representatives and it is expected it will provide stronger impact in the future, especially in ICT WG. The involvement and support provided by the DG Regio is highly relevant to PACs and the SG, especially on the issue of programming Danube Transnational Programme which were taking place during last year.

In order to gain more focus on the specific tasks and intensify involvement of regional experts in PA7 SG actions last year in February 2013 during meeting in Bratislava Steering Group established five Working Groups and appointed SG members to take over the lead in organizing WG work, communication and coordination, data collection and the update of the Roadmap:

- Higher Education & Mobility – Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovíc, Serbia

- Research & Innovation – Dr Viorel Vulturescu, Romania
- Information & Communication Technologies –coordinated by Slovenia
- DRRIF and coordination of national funds within Danube Region – Heribert Buchbauer, Austria
- Communication with JRC with special emphasize on the RIS3 – Dr. Stefan Chudoba, Slovakia.

Working Groups continued their activities in the last 12 months. Since the last Report not all WGs reached by this time the same level of achievement and network involvement; however there is an evident progress in all of them. The WG DRRIF was extremely active in the last period due to the utmost intensive work load with the public procurement process of setting up the project start. WG Higher Education and Mobility was strongly supported through networks of Danube and Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conferences, CASEE and CEEPUS, together with better utilization of already functional mobility schemes emphasizing Danube Region partners, while the RIS3 workshops in the organized last year by the JRC peer reviewed RIS3 of some of the Danube countries and their regions (Czech Republic, Vojvodina (Serbia), Northeast Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania). The ICT WG was still due to the change of SG member on behalf of Slovenia and the WG leader accordingly, along with the Research & Innovation WG which was a bit behind with setting up the focus and providing inputs for the Roadmap actualization.

Since January 2014 the governance of PA7 is also supported through the relevant activities of the FP7 Coordination and Support Action project Danube-INCO.NET. The project provides synergies with WGs of PAs 7 and 8, the stakeholder mapping and report 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 the creation of a funding parties platform, scaling up of joint funding mechanisms, support to DRRIF, and the roadmap towards Article 185 for Danube.

Steering Group discussed in September 2013 in Ulm former Annual report (June 2012-June 2013), WGs activities and progress, and awarded two new projects with PA7 flagship label: DANUBIUS, presented by Dr. Viorel Vulturescu and Danube:Future, introduced by Prof. Sergio Paoletti. SG also amended the Roadmap, after the introduction given by the Slovak coordinator. It was concluded to adjust the milestones to comply with WGs inputs and to finalize this issue on the next SG meeting planned for spring 2014.

The SG meeting held in Budapest in May 2014 lacked qualified majority of present SG members for decision making, therefore the Roadmap actualization proposed by the Slovak PAC Support Team was not adopted. It was decided to continue with electronic voting following the PA7 Rules of Procedure. As regards the flagship projects, four new projects applying for the label have been presented. Three from Slovakia: *Danube Academy of Dual Education* (together with Baden Wurttemberg), *Cloud Enabled Business Information Service for Danube Region* by the Technical University Košice and *Regional Network for Innovation and Development* submitted by the Danube Cluster, and the project on nanotechnology in biomedicine *Health Impact of Nanotechnology - H.I.N.O.* presented by Italian colleagues but endorsed by the Danube Rectors Conference as well as a number of research institutes in the Danube region.

Updated list of the PA7 Steering Group members, meeting minutes from the SG meeting held in Ulm in September 2013 and draft meeting minutes from the SG meeting held in Budapest in May 2014 are all annexed to this report.

The next SG meeting is scheduled for November 2014 in Belgrade, Serbia, when Working Groups will present progress in their respective fields, the discussion about flagship projects will be concluded, and the SG will discussion about funding should be raised.

### 1.3. Funding

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

*This sub-chapter 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 mythologies/criteria for selecting/supporting PA relevant projects (including comparisons with the last reporting period);.*
- *Opportunities and challenges regarding the funding of relevant projects.*
- *Lessons learned, positive or negative.*
- *Next steps*

Comparing to the last progress report there have been several positive developments regarding funding possibilities for PA7 actions and projects. Specific type of PA7 targets and expected synergetic outcomes of many activities/projects and involved stakeholders provides PA7 a wider opportunities for project funding through different funding schemes, while on the other PA7 still lacks mechanisms to provide a sort of prioritization or extra points in project evaluation in the framework of applicable funding schemes.

Among positive developments is the start of the **Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) feasibility study**. Within repeated procedure of public procurement for the organization to carry our feasibility study in April 2014 the winner company Ernst&Young Slovakia signed the contract and launched preparatory activities for the study. In the next 12 months the study will be delivered and will enable policy level decision making on the future steps for the coordination of national research and innovation funds for bilateral/transnational cooperation.

**Danube-INCO.NET**, launched in January 2014 is a FP7 funded coordination and support action for the EUSDR in the field of research and innovation. It focuses mainly on two EUSDR priority areas: PA 7 „Knowledge Society“, and PA 8 „Competitiveness“. It provides support to the 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 this activity: “Promoting Innovative and Inclusive Danube Societies” (WP5) and “Scaling up Danube Funding Mechanisms” (WP6).

The objectives of WP5 refer to the societal challenge of Horizon 2020 “Inclusive, INNOVATIVE and secure SOCIETIES / Europe in a changing world”. The goals of these objectives 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 using different funding sources which shall fit into the EUSDR objectives, complement the on-going activities and avoid duplication. Whereas the objectives of WP6 should promote 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.

The Danube-INCO.NET project also develops the new approach, methodology and criteria for **selecting/supporting EUSDR relevant projects**. The project supports the evaluation of project proposals asking for "Letters of Recommendations" certifying their "relevance for the Danube Strategy" (= labelling; the concept of "bonusing" was also used in the Baltic Sea Strategy which is being taken up in EUSDR and implemented already in some of the PAs). Based on specific calls for proposals, invitations will be circulated to propose projects with a specific relevance in and for the region for "labelling". A focus will be put on calls under Horizon 2020, and potentially European Territorial Cooperation (in particular calls focusing on the macro-region).

PACs and their teams have participated in joint meetings of the EUSDR and the Task Force in the programming process for **Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020**, as well as in the consultation process. During the process PA7 targets have been recognized under 3 of 11 total Thematic Objectives (1 – Research and Innovation, 2 – ICT and 10 – Education) of the Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020. The programme shows a clear thematic concentration on the four thematic objectives, among which addresses Priority axis 1: Innovative and socially responsible Danube region corresponding to the thematic objective 1 (Research and innovation). In order to contribute to the implementation of the flagship initiative “Innovation Union of the Europe 2020 Strategy” in the Danube Region countries the programme pays specific attention to a number of innovation topics of broad relevance in the cooperation area. Therefore it is expected that PA7 actions and stakeholder consortium will be able also to find financial support for the most relevant projects under DTP.

For PA7 joint project applications with strong Danube consortium European Union funding under **Horizon 2020** and **Erasmus Plus** plays very important role, together with mobility programme **CEEPUS** and **Ulm Follow-up Working Group** on the macro-regional level. The Follow-up Working Group has been established after the Ulm Ministerial Conference of the Danube countries in July 2012. So far five meetings were organized by June 2014 providing new relevant inputs and potential future funding possibilities of the PA7 actions. This Working Group organised participation of some Danube countries in the call for proposal of networking projects which the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research has opened for the Danube region. 32 projects were selected for funding.

The BMBF offers interested Danube partner countries to open up the planned next Danube call to be launched in autumn/winter 2014 by participating and co-funding projects by granting funds for e.g. travels, subsistence or workshops they might further improve chances for successful application within e.g. Horizon 2020.

Still the issue of project labelling remains at some point unclear. EUSDR and PA7 actions lack policy level recognition giving specific value to the macro-regional project consortiums dealing with the defined targets within the calls and evaluation of project applications under European Union funding schemes. This issue will be at least partially dealt in the upcoming period in the framework of the Danube-INCO.NET project as well as in the course of setting up relationships between EUSDR/PAs and Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020. A draft for the labelling concept that is already available will be provided for discussion with relevant stakeholders in the next months.

Much has been done on the issue of funding possibilities for PA7 actions, and moreover on improvement of the projects supporting/selection. Additionally, three out of four PA7 flagship projects (DRRIF, DREAM, Danube: Future) are in their implementation phase funded through diverse funding schemes, what has been also recognized along the way as good practice to apply on large scale projects dealing with main PA7 targets.



## 2. PROGRESS BY TARGET

*The input under this sub-chapter shall be limited to maximum 3 pages.*

*This chapter shall include information on:*

- *Progress made since the last reporting period on the achievement of the targets (please treat each target individually) of your PA (explain the political, technical and governance aspects contributing to/affecting the achievement of the targets, including comparisons with the last reporting period).*
- *Name the actions that contribute to each target.*
- *What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the planned targets?*
- *Lessons learned, positive or negative. Outline the opportunities and challenges regarding the achievement of the targets.*
- *Outline on the future. Next steps*

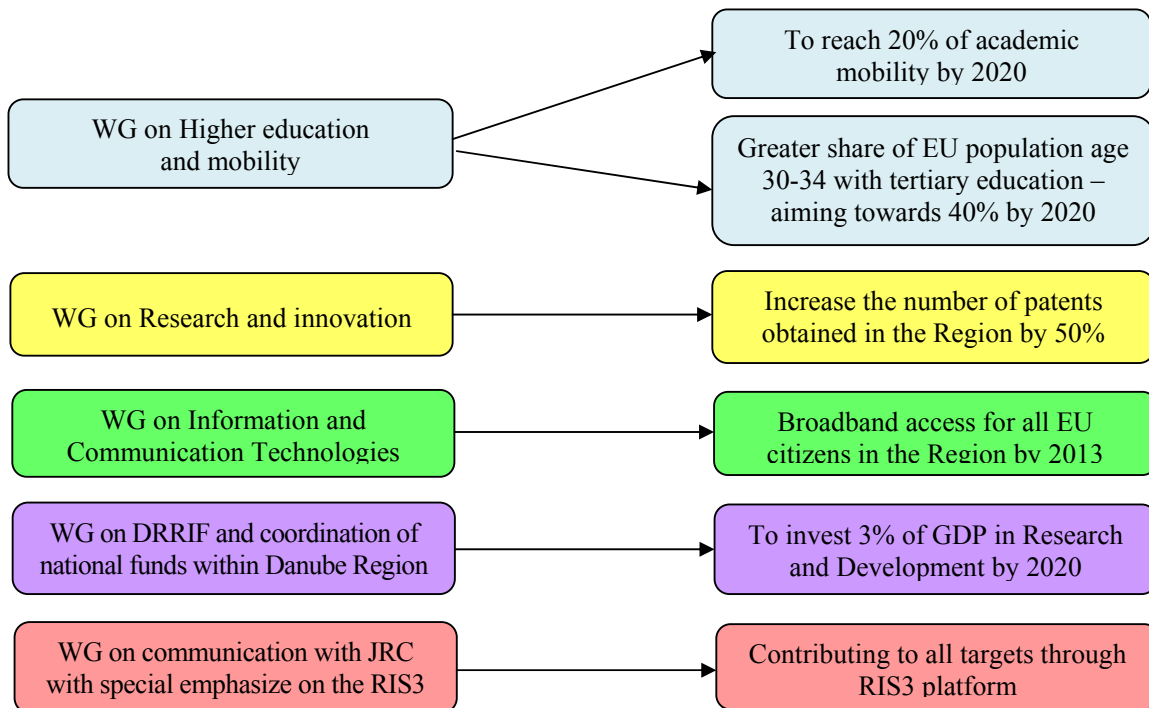
PA7 targets:

- 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.

The progress monitoring and relevant policy level decisions are in the scope of the activities of PA7 SG. Moreover SG members contribute to raising awareness of stakeholders on the targets and proposed actions at their national level, and (should) initiate concrete measures and promote projects which are of a highly priority to achieving targets at the national, and exchange of knowledge and practice on macro-regional level (less developed learning from more developed countries). Still, reaching the very ambitious PA7 targets resulting from the Europe 2020 Strategy will be feasible only in a long run.

Moreover, some of the targets, namely *to invest 3% of GDP in Research and Development by 2020*, the SG assessed as too optimistic to be achieved in defined timeframe, especially in the economic crisis environment. Still they are worth to be monitored and corrective actions proposed by the SG to the respective national and regional governments, where applicable.

In order to get more efficient and with clear focus on specific targets, which covers all three fields of PA7 (research, education and ICT), in February 2013 SG has established PA7 Working Groups. 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:



Main targets can highly benefit from following 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.

Actions contributing to targets correspond with PA7 Action Plan. The Roadmap and list of milestones are assessed and updated regularly at each SG meeting, based on the inputs from WGs and partners (e.g. JRC).

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

2.1.1. “To cooperate in implementing the flagship initiative “Innovation Union” of the Europe 2020 Strategy” in the Danube region countries”

2.1.2. “To coordinate better national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in research and development, in research areas specific for the Danube region”

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

2.2.1. “To develop and implement strategies to improve the provision and uptake of Information and Communication Technologies in the Danube Region”

2.2.2. “To draw up internet strategies”

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

2.3.1. “To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure”

2.3.2. “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”

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

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

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

WG on Higher Education and Mobility, led by Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovic, continued close cooperation with both rectors’ conferences: Danube Rectors’ Conference (DRC) and Alps-Adriatic Rectors’ Conference (AARC), the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS) and other stakeholders. New possibilities for academic cooperation and mobility in the Danube Region under new EU funding Erasmus Plus are continuously promoted, with the idea to evolve from previous and existing successful mobility networks in the Danube Region (students/academic/researchers financed under previous Union funding 2007-2013), with particular emphasize on joint master and doctoral programmes (Roadmap, milestones 12 and 15) with Danube universities consortiums. DRC and AARC, as well as CEEPUS programme are all highly contributing to strengthen cooperation among universities, while Danube: Future, one of the PA7 flagship projects, also provide valuable inputs for future actions. Moreover, in November 2014 this WG will merge its actions with ICT in the framework of DRC Conference “Digital Culture” and expected outcome is the proposal on strengthening role of ICT in Higher Education (Roadmap, milestone 14).

WG on Research and Innovation, coordinated by Dr Viorel Vulturescu, Romania, works closely with the projects DANCERS and DANUBIUS (more info in Project section), especially in regard to target “To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure” (Roadmap, milestones 9 and 10).

WG on DRRIF and Coordination of National Funds within Danube Region has been set up to enhance and accelerate the implementation of the goals set in the EUSDR Action Plan and PA7 Roadmap aiming at better coordinating national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in research and development, in research areas specific for the Danube Region. WG also deals with DRRIF related feasibility study investigating the DRRIF as one of the potential co-operation scenarios for the future. WG, headed by Heribert Buchbauer, had very busy schedule in the last 12 months, dealing with the DRRIF public procurement procedures and final conclusion of the contract for feasibility study with Ernst&Young Slovakia, in addition in cooperation with the Danube-INCO.NET works on an overview of national, regional and EU funds for research and innovation (Roadmap, milestone 2) are ongoing. This WG gained substantial support from the project Danube-INCO.NET, WP2 – Policy Dialogue in its policy level actions. However even before launch of the project in January 2014, the first meeting of the WG was held in Vienna in November 2013 and established WG workplan and links with national policy makers. Therefore the main tasks identified for the group are:

- To follow-up the implementation and results of the DRRIF feasibility study and other PA7 relevant projects;
- To prepare concrete steps for further co-operation based on the results of the project, studies and in line with the national/regional R&I priorities.

The Slovak coordinating team was responsible for organizing the calls for public procurement for the DRRIF feasibility study (first call was launched in May 2013, tender opening and evaluation organized in July 2013, and cancelled in September due to objections from the applicants and according to the decision of the Slovak Office for Procurement). The second call was set up in close cooperation with PA7 SG. The call was submitted for publication in Official Journal and tender was launched in November 2014. The bids were opened on 7 January and evaluated on 20 January 2014. The contract with the winner company Ernst&Young Slovakia was signed on 15 April 2014. As the creation of the DRRIF must be politically supported by the governments of the countries of the Danube Region and of their institutions responsible for the implementation of the Strategy of the EU for the Danube Region the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport addressed all relevant Danube countries ministries with request to provide information and contact points for political negotiations and discussions to the DRRIF feasibility study. Ernst&Young submitted to the contracting authority the first inception report mid of May and made a presentation at the SG meeting in Budapest (20 May 2014). The project is under surveillance of the contracting authority Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport together with the PA7 respective WG (ref. Roadmap milestones no 4 and 5).

One of the most advanced strategic collaboration is concreted with the Joint Research Centre - JRC (European Commission) mainly 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: environment protection, irrigation and agricultural development, navigability and energy production (JRC Danube Initiative). At this stage the WG on Communication with JRC with Special Emphasize on the RIS3, coordinated by Dr Stefan Chudoba, based its activities on excellent cooperation with the Joint Research Centre, promotion of RIS3 concept and providing support to peer-review events. This cooperation with JRC was again highlighted on the VI Steering Group meeting in Budapest on 20 May 2014 by the present representative of the JRC. The JRC in cooperation of Danube countries has been organizing series of workshops with the aim of peer reviewing of the national and regional smart specialization strategies. The monitor (peer-review) mechanism of regional RIS3 (proposed by JRC) is already established (Roadmap, milestone 3). Several Danube macro-region countries and their regions have already taken part in peer-review workshops organized during last year:

- Moravia-Silesia (CZ), 11th Peer Review Workshop, Crete, September 2013
- Prague (CZ), 12th Peer Review Workshop, Potsdam, November 2013
- Czech Republic, Peer Review workshop for National RIS3, Riga, 25-26 February
- Vojvodina (RS) and Northeast Romania (RO), Peer review workshop for regional RIS3, Novi Sad, 10-11 April 2014
- Croatia and Slovenia, S3P Peer-Review Workshop for National RIS3, Portoroz, Slovenia, 15-16 May 2014
- Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, Peer Review Workshop, Dublin, 3-4 July 2014.

The least has been achieved in the field of ICT targets, since the shift in the leadership of this WG making even before the WG was properly kicked-off what prevented expected results. On the last SG meeting in May in Budapest the WG leadership was taken over Prof. Dr Joze Gricar and Prof. Dr Karin Stana Kleinschek, new SG member from Slovenia and technically supported by the University of Maribor. On the other hand, dissemination of the good practices in e-solution and e-services was widely supported in the framework of the Danube eRegion Conference – DeRC, which gathers regional experts each year. At the same time it supports and promotes the LivingLab concept (Roadmap, milestone 17). Slovenian partners also organised some conferences dealing with the cooperation of the Danube countries in the field of ICT.

## ***Annex 1: Roadmaps to implement each action***

*The input under this Annex shall be limited to maximum 1 page/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***

*Main elements which should be included in this Annex:*

- *Progress(since the last reporting period) in the implementation of the actions/projects included in the roadmap (please be short and clear, using also comparisons with the last reporting period);*
- *Opportunities and challenges in implementing the roadmap; What, if anything, was/is missing in order to achieve the planned targets? Lessons learned, positive or negative.*
- *Outline for the future. Next steps*
- *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.]*

## **ROADMAP FOR PA7 ACTIONS**

*Two latest Steering Group meetings (held in Ulm in September 2013 and in Budapest in May 2014), the PA7 Working Groups meetings and other relevant activities organized on macro-regional and national level pointed out that there is a need for the readjustment of the PA7 Roadmap in accordance to the ongoing developments, stakeholders` involvement and the contribution from national representatives. The countries involved agreed on the statement that some milestones were formulated too ambitiously, while on the other hand, many ongoing activities, in spite of their added value were not incorporated in the Roadmap. The updated text of the Roadmap is adjusted according to the comments of the respective Working Groups, representatives in the Steering Group and the Danube-INCO.NET project. Text below reflects the current version of the PA7 Roadmap (updated based on the discussion held in Budapest, but not finally adopted at the time of Annual Report), which is agreed to be assessed and updated regularly at each Steering Group meeting.*

### **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 and Danube Transnational Programme and eventually 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) and targeted promotion of cooperation possibilities in research and innovation (e.g. through Danube-INCO.NET newsletter, creation of a network of National Contact Points for RTDI programmes and joint activities)

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

*Deadline:* 30. November 2014; 30 March 2015 for bibliometric study; promotion of RTDI cooperation opportunities is an ongoing activity (covered by Danube-INCO.NET newsletter)

### **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:* 30 September 2014; February 2016 for Danube-INCO.NET deliverable "Peer review reports for smart specialisation strategies and recommendations"

### **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>), 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

### **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

### **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

### **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 programs 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

### **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

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

**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

**Milestone N°10: 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 which will be used as a basis (will be done in coordination with other PAs).

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

*Responsible:* WG on R&I

*Deadline:* 30/11/2014 - There are two deadlines. Milestone date needs revision. WBC-INCo.Net has some data on R&I. Also EU wide mapping initiatives has to be taken into account. It should include all scientific fields (also SSH)

*Project proposal:* List

*Output:* comprehensive list

*Funding:* EU and national budgets

**Milestone N°11: Linking competitive research infrastructure in the Danube Region on the basis of projects and programs**

*Work:* This issue is a part of everyday work of the PACs and project coordinators. Every project (details described in the project part) is based on linking of research infrastructures of the Danube countries as well as networking of the researchers. The most of the projects (e.g. DREAM, Danube – Future etc.) also involve an establishment of new respective infrastructures.

**Milestone №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 plus, Horizon 2020 etc)

**Milestone №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

**Milestone №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

**Milestone №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

**Milestone №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

**Milestone №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

## Annex 2 - Projects approved by the steering group

At the moment there are four projects already formally approved by the PA7 SG and labelled with the PA7 flagship project label: **DRRIF, DREAM, DANUBIUS** (only one still in preparatory phase) and **Danube:Future**, while four new applied and are currently being discussed in the SG .

In addition to projects fulfilling the criteria for the PA7 flagship label there are several more projects relevant for the PA7 actions and Roadmap implementation, which are also listed below<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. Flagship Projects of PA7

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b><i>DANUBE REGION RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND – DRRIF</i></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: 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, presentation of work already done SG meeting in Budapest 20 May 2014 Launching feasibility study right after the closure of the contract</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 fund 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, State Secretary of the 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>

<sup>1</sup> The project descriptions within this section are based on the information provided by the projects. The financial data in some cases do not elaborate on costs/budget versus available and received funding for implementation. For respective details the project coordinators can be approached.

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b><i>Danube River Research and Management - DREAM</i></b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>To develop the Knowledge Society through research, education and information technologies (Action Plan p. 58)</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Czech Rep, Slovenia</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Ca 30.000 € Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects Ca 3 Mio € Structural Funds (up to end of 2014)</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<p><i>Implemented steps:</i></p> <p><i>Step 1: Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (2014), TAF (Preparation of DREAM-CO)</i></p> <p><i>Step 2: Structural funds: implementation of Research Infrastructure, joint bilateral monitoring and modelling in 2014</i></p> <p><i>Step 3: DREAM-CO (H2020-WATER-2014-one-stage proposal Danube River Research And Management - COordination action, submitted in April 2014, including all DREAM partners)</i></p> <p><i>Partner meetings in:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vienna, AT (June 20-21, 2012)</i></li> <li>• <i>Bukarest, RO (June 11-12, 2013)</i></li> <li>• <i>Novi Sad, SRB (February 20-21, 2014).</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Planned steps:</i></p> <p><i>New proposals in Structural Funds, e.g. CBC, Danube Programme and further implementation of research infrastructure in the coming years</i></p>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>DREAM is an umbrella project with the following aims:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>a) An important aim is to enable research of hydrodynamic, sediment transport, morphodynamic and ecological processes in the various reaches of the Danube River by means of adequate hydraulic laboratories, that provide a significant discharge (up to 10 m<sup>3</sup>/s without pumping) and space (large scale models).</i></li> <li><i>b) On the basis of an improved process understanding, derived by the large scale physical models in the labs, computer based simulations should be improved, leading to hybrid models. A further aim is to establish commonly agreed field study sites and stations along the Danube River to calibrate and validate physical and computer based models as well as to develop and test advanced river engineering measures under 1:1 conditions.</i></li> <li><i>c) The cooperation of research institutions and laboratories along the Danube River is intended to improve scientific progress and to stimulate the transfer from Basic Research to the Knowledge Society.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>DREAM consists of 6 activities:</i></p> <p><i>Act. 1: Construction of two large Responsible River Modelling Centers/hydraulic and environmental engineering laboratories (up to 5000 l/s flow capacity): one in the upper/middle part of the Danube and one in the lower part (see Figure 1); 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>Act. 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>Act. 3: Formation of a cluster/network of river engineering simulation</i></p>

	<p><i>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>Act. 4: Establishment of a network of field study sites along the Danube River and tributaries (each country should nominate a certain river stretch, specific problem area, work program etc.) for process analysis, model calibration and validation AND test of advanced river engineering solutions (examples, to be discussed and commonly agreed on: Germany: stretch Straubing-Vilshofen, Austria: National Park Donauauen, Slovakia: Reservoir Gabcikovo, Hungary: Mosoni Danube, Serbia, Croatia: reach along Kopacki Rit, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine: border section / islands / bifurcations, Danube Delta etc., further field study sites ev. in: Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bosnia).</i></p> <p><i>Act. 5: Construction and operation of a research vessel with diving shaft for the whole Danube area (e.g. operated from Serbian base) to enable river bed research at various parts of the Danube river.</i></p> <p><i>Act. 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>So far concrete steps were realized concerning research infrastructure (act. 1). Bilateral activities were performed related to computer simulation and field work, with joint measurements and modelling (act. 3 and 4). A harbour for the research vessel was identified in Novi Sad (act. 5). If the H2020 DREAM CO project will be funded the network link (act. 6) will be intensified. In 2015 several proposals for Structural Funds calls are planned to be submitted by DREAM partners.</i></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p><i>The PACs support DREAM in Brussels as well as in the Steering Group of PA7, promoted DREAM in other Priority Areas, the Annual Forums, in all partner countries. Furthermore by facilitating meetings and by assisting in concrete applications in various Structural Funds as well as supporting TAF and supplying help by the PAC secretariate. Furthermore support has been given during high level meetings both in Brussels and in the Danube River Basin, assistance was also supplied in relation to the JRC activities. PAC Stefan Chudoba held negotiations with the managing authority of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovakia –Austria 2014-2020 in order to prepare funds for possible funding of the relevant parts of the project.</i></p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<p><i>Preparation of proposals by the partner countries for the calls in structural funds and HORIZON2020 especially concerning an improved knowledge exchange between research and management. Another step is the further implementation of research infrastructure for integrated river research and management in all Danube Basin countries.</i></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>	<i>The estimated total capital investment for buildings, equipment and installations (exclusive of personnel and running costs) is of 200 million</i>

	<p><i>Euros divided as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 2014-2016 80 million Euros</li> <li>• Phase 2 2017-2018 40 million Euros</li> <li>• Phase 3 2019-2020 80 million Euros</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 (logistics, infrastructure maintenance and partial research funding) are expected to be:</i></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><i>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:</i></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><i>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.</i></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p><i>The SG got formally introduced with the project and approved it with the flagship project label on the SG meeting in Ulm, September 2103.</i></p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<p><i>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.</i></p>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<p><b>DANUBE:FUTURE</b></p> <p><b>A sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge</b></p>
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	<b>for the interdisciplinary humanities</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>“To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points”</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Joint contribution of the Alps Adriatic Rectors’ Conference (AARC) and the Danube Rector’s Conference (DRC) to the EUSDR Present partners in charge for coordination are universities from AT, IT, RS and the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe IDM, while other Danube Region countries participate through DRC and AARC networks.</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Total estimated budget for eight years project duration: 13.175.000 EUR Existing funding sources: 1.416.881,95 EUR</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Core module: 41.881,95 EUR for management, administration, networking, website (ESF by Friuli Venezia Giulia, and in-kind contribution);</i></li> <li>- <i>Capacity Building module: DIAnet International Schools – 270.000 EUR (ESF by Friuli Venezia Giulia, and in-kind contribution);</i></li> <li>- <i>Research module: 1.105.000 EUR (Austrian Research funds).</i></li> </ul>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Danube:Future started in Spring 2013 and is a Flagship project of the EUSDR-PA7 since September 2013. The Core partners started to implement the project by organising a project organisation structure and public relation activities:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Management Committee, composed by the representative of the Core Partners, and AARC and DRC;</i></li> <li>- <i>International Advisory Board, composed by experts;</i></li> <li>- <i>Administration, provided by University of Trieste;</i></li> <li>- <i>Website on-line;</i></li> <li>- <i>Project Regulations.</i></li> </ul> <i>The project was presented during AARC/DRC/EUSDR events. Via the DIAnet International Schools – Capacity building module (held in Gorizia, Italy), 23 AARC/DRC Universities have been involved in the project. The publication of 2013 DIAnet School is on-line, while the publication of the second edition is in progress.</i> <p><b>PLANNED/UNDER IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES</b></p> <i>According to the Flagship project, the Core partners are working on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>DF Knowledge-base and DF WIKI;</i></li> <li>- <i>Developing the DF integrated networked program (“start up idea pool” and “decision support system”), thanks to the support by EUSDR-PA10 - project for Technical Assistance Facilities;</i></li> <li>- <i>Third edition of the DIAnet International School in 2015;</i></li> <li>- <i>First Danube:Future Workshop in 2015, aimed to build new consortia for research projects.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Description</b>	<i>The Danube:Future idea was approved by the AARC annual meeting in Zagreb on May 2012, as one of the four project proposal of joint initiatives of AARC and DRC to the EU Strategy for Danube Region, Priority Area no. 7, Knowledge Society. With the contribution of the project “DIAnet – Danube Initiative and Alps Adriatic Network” managed by the University of Trieste (funded by the European Social Fund 2007/13, Friuli Venezia Giulia Region OP), the first step of Danube:Future was possible in April 2013. “DIAnet International School”, a training interdisciplinary school for junior researchers, is the first project started in the framework of Danube:Future. The official website was online on March 2013. Following the good results of the first DIAnet school edition, the four Core partners (Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt, University of Trieste, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna and University of Novi Sad) defined the flagship project proposal during the summer 2013. On September 24<sup>th</sup> Danube:Future was adopted as a Flagship project of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, PA no. 7. The project focuses on the Sustainable Development of the Danube River Basin</i>

	<p><i>(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.</i></p> <p><i>The project is divided into <u>three modules</u>:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Core:</b> <i>aimed 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.</i></li> <li>➤ <b>Research:</b> <i>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.</i></li> <li>➤ <b>Capacity Building:</b> <i>it 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.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>CONTRIBUTION TO EUSDR</b></p> <p><i>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:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><u>Pillar 1</u>, Connecting the region: transportation network evolution (PA 1), transition pre- to post-fossil society (PA 2) and nationalism, war, tourism (PA 3);</i></li> <li>• <i><u>Pillar 2</u>, Protecting the environment: results of the research module will be useful for the restoration and maintenance of water quality and hydromorphological characteristics (PA 4), 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);</i></li> <li>• <i><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);</i></li> <li>• <i><u>Pillar 4</u>, Strengthening the Region: through contributing to the political and institutional structures (PA 10) and to social prosperity (PA 11).</i></li> </ul> <p><i>More info: <a href="http://www.danubefuture.eu/">http://www.danubefuture.eu/</a></i></p>
<p><b>Involvement of the PACs</b></p>	<p><i>The PACs are frequently informed about the activities of Danube:Future. During the SG meeting the state of the art is discussed. Thanks to the PA7 PACs, a project for “Technical Assistance Facility for the Danube Region” was successfully presented to the EUSDR-PA10 SG.</i></p>
<p><b>Next steps</b></p>	<p><i>The project is open to all the interested stakeholders of the Danube catchment. They are asked to contribute to Danube:Future through the knowledge-base, the WIKI and research/capacity building projects’ outcomes. Representatives of all Danube countries will be invited to the Danube:Future Workshop to be organised in Spring 2015.</i></p>

## 2. Projects that have received recommendation letters of PA7

- Master of Danube Studies
- Danube Universities for Sustainable Energy Competence

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>DANUBE UNIVERSITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMPETENCE</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>Action - "To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure". Action - "To strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and touprgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points"</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>From Ministry of Science, Research and Arts Baden-Württemberg</i></li> <li>• <i>From Baden Württemberg Foundation</i></li> <li>• <i>From German Academic Exchange Service</i></li> <li>• <i>From Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany</i></li> </ul>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Numerous goals are already regularly implemented but the aim is to continue and develop these activities</i>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>The basic idea</i>  <i>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.</i></p> <p><i>General goals</i>  <i>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.</i></p> <p><i>Following objectives should be achieved through concrete actions:</i>  <i>Building a network of partner universities and strengthening existing co-operations through student exchange, teacher exchange and staff exchange</i>  <i>Building up of a competence network</i>  <i>Using each other's know how and laboratory facilities</i>  <i>Common research activities</i>  <i>Contribution to the European Danube Strategy</i>  <i>Exchange of experiences from higher developed regions to lower developed regions</i>  <i>Development of a common curricula</i>  <i>Exchange among students during their studies as well as for practical training in companies/institutes</i>  <i>Exchange of professors</i>  <i>Summer school for sustainable energy management and special topics</i>  <i>Know-how transfer</i>  <i>Achieving synergy between science and industry through stronger cooperation between universities and industrial companies including SMEs</i>  <i>Close cooperation with local authorities</i>  <i>Increasing of research potential and researcher mobility.</i></p> <p><i>Activities</i>  <i>Conferences, fairs</i>  <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>  <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 speciality 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> <p><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></p> <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>

### 3. Projects related to PA7 that have received Technical Assistance by Priority Area 10

- DREAM (see description under flagship projects)
- Danube:Future (see description under flagship projects)
- Master of Danube Studies
- Educational and Social Potential of Children from Marginalized Roma Communities for The Improvement of their Educational Path

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL POTENTIAL OF CHILDREN FROM MARGINALIZED ROMA COMMUNITIES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL PATH</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>Project related mainly to activities related to social inclusion.</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Main partner is the Slovak Republic, further involvement of Hungary, Germany, Serbia, United Kingdom is expected in the project.</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Proposed funding Horizon 2020, EU structural funds, details not yet specified.</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>The project preparation is at the present under development in the framework of PA10 Technical Assistance Facility for the Danube Region Projects.</i>
<b>Description</b>	<i>In the period of 2015-2019, the project will aim to improve the educational and social potential of a particularly vulnerable group of children – Roma children. The project aims at improving the educational and social potential of children from marginalised Roma communities in several countries of the</i>

	<i>Danube Region and in the UK. For this goal, the project partners will conduct analysis of studies and discourse on the topic, as well as context analysis (e.g. on social, legal aspects).</i>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<i>Involvement of PA 10 – technical assistance support through the company METIS.</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>The project will apply as a Flagship Project on the next SG meeting in November 2014</i>

#### 4. Additional projects related to PA7

- DANCERS - DANube macroregion: Capacity building and Excellence in River Systems (basin, delta and sea)
- Danube Region INCO.NET

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>DANCERS</b> <b>DANube macroregion: Capacity building and Excellence in River Systems (basin, delta and sea)</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>“To strengthen the capacities of research infrastructure”</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Lead: Romania (Danube International Centre for Advanced Studies for River-Delta-Sea Systems) Within the project consortium there are 15 participants from Danube Macro-Region (AT, RO, HU, RS, DE) but also from outside respectively IT, ES, UK, IE, GR, FR, and an international organization (UNESCO).</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NATIONAL <i>Romanian Government already spent a significant amount of resources (estimated to about eight hundred thousand euros) in order to have the Scientific Case (White Book).</i></li> <li>- EU <i>At this stage <b>one million EUR</b> (project budget: EUR 999,933.00) are available from the European Commission – Directorate General Research and Innovation.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Launched in April 2013. The project lasts two years.</i>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>The short-term aim of the project is to develop new instruments and tools that will enhance environmental research and promote innovation in Danube Region, including the Danube Delta and the Black Sea. The instruments development will not start ab initio but will build on existing projects. Therefore, first step will be a critical analysis of what has been achieved so far in the region, meaning that all the existing information regarding projects/results with focus on water management issues will be gathered. Secondly, the linkages, gaps and needs in knowledge transfer between science, economy and policy makers will be identified. Finally, based on the knowledge gained from the previous steps, the new set of instruments that will enhance environmental research and innovation will emerge.</i></p> <p><i>In a long term perspective, this is just an initial phase of a more complex infrastructural project (estimated value of 70 million euros) which will be based on the findings from DANCERS, with a close collaboration with the DREAM project team.</i></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<i>The SG is familiar with the project proposal and supports the project structure as a good model of establishment of collaboration among DR research institutions aiming to strengthen future joint research projects.</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Project implementation, with regular reporting to PA7 SG.</i>

<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The whole Danube Region is involved.</i></li> <li>- <i>Danube-INCO.NET understands itself as being open also to actors beyond – for example Albania, Kosovo or FYR of Macedonia.</i></li> <li>- <i>Project partners are from the following Danube countries Austria, Germany, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia</i></li> <li>- <i>But also from Spain (JRC IPTS) and Italy (Central European Initiative)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Approx.. 2 Mio Euro, co-funding provided through FP7 / European Commission</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Under implementation (01/2014 till 12/2016)</i>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>Danube-INCO.NET is an FP7 funded coordination and support action for the official EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in the field of research and innovation (R&amp;I). Whereas the EUSDR addresses a wide variety of priority areas (ranging from PA 1A „Mobility/Waterways” to PA 11 „Security“), Danube-INCO.NET focuses mainly on two of them: PA 7 „Knowledge Society“ and PA 8 „Competitiveness“. The project supports the policy dialogue, creates networks, and analyses and supports R&amp;I activities.</i></p> <p><i>By joining forces from 19 project partners under the coordination of the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), <b>Danube-INCO.NET</b> seeks to overcome obstacles hindering the social and economic development of the Danube region. The project duration is 36 months, during which different activities are scheduled. The project will be putting in all effort to ensure that events, publications and policy recommendations related to R&amp;I cooperation in the Danube Region will reach an audience as broad as possible interested and engaged in the future macro-regional development of the Danube Region. It will also build on the project <a href="#">WBC-INCO.NET</a> which covered the enlargement countries of the Western Balkans, also coordinated by ZSI.</i></p> <p><i>The territory covered by the EUSDR includes eight EU Member States (MS) and six non-Member States, being very different in terms of economic strengths and research and innovation systems and profiles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>&gt; EU MS and regions upstream of the Danube: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Germany – in particular Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria</i></li> <li><i>&gt; EU MS and regions downstream of the Danube: Bulgaria, Romania</i></li> <li><i>&gt; Enlargement countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia</i></li> <li><i>&gt; Neighbourhood countries: Moldova and Ukraine (in particular oblast Odessa, Uschhorod, Ivano-Frankiwsk and Czernowitz)</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The region is one of the most diverse in Europe and home to over 100 million residents.</i></p> <p><i><a href="http://danube-inco.net/about/danubeinconet">http://danube-inco.net/about/danubeinconet</a></i></p>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p><i>PACs have been involved in planning of the action and submission and now also in the implementation.</i></p> <p><i>PAC 7 / SR is involved directly as project partner and beneficiary, as well</i></p>

	<p><i>as task leader.</i></p> <p><i>PAC7 / SK nominated BIC Bratislava to participate on its behalf and take over activities as task leader. PAC 7 / SK is participating in the project advisory board.</i></p> <p><i>PAC 8 / BW nominated SIG to participate on its behalf and act as WP and Task leader. PAC 8 / BW is participating in the project advisory board.</i></p> <p><i>PAC 8 / HR nominated EKOSUSTAV as organisation to participate from Croatia.</i></p>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>The project established a communication platform building and implements several networking activities, workshops, conferences, training events and analytical studies. The results will be widely shared.</i>

### 5. Applications for Additional Flagship projects in PA7 (currently under discussion)

- Danube Academy of Dual Education
- Cloud Enabled Business Information Service for Danube Region
- Regional Network for Innovation and Development
- Health Impact of Nanotechnology - H.I.N.O.

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>DANUBE ACADEMY OF DUAL EDUCATION</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>to foster cooperation between industry, education and research policies</i></li> <li>- <i>to support sustainable education reforms in the Danube countries</i></li> <li>- <i>to support development of applied science</i></li> <li>- <i>to strengthen the competitiveness of the Danube Region entrepreneurs and SMEs</i></li> </ul>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Slovakia, Germany (Baden Württemberg), Austria, open for other Danube countries</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Ca 15- 20 mil. EUR, Erasmus+, ERDF funds (including cross boarder cooperation Programme SK-AT), PPP</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Preparing project proposal for ERASMUS + call</i>
<b>Description</b>	<p><i>Center of excellence for dual education in Slovakia in a) the automobile sector b) of professions in metal-working and electronics c) industrial-technical professions. This includes following activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Service provision for enterprises to support introduction of components of dual VET (especially to small and medium enterprises).</i></li> <li>- <i>Further training of teachers and instructors. The implementation practice (practical and theoretical part of the training still needs to be discussed)</i></li> <li>- <i>Introduction of industry-wide regional VET, based on the German and Austrian model of practical vocational trainings within and among companies.</i></li> <li>- <i>Best practice transfer to other Danube countries</i></li> <li>- <i>Software development, prototyping</i></li> <li>- <i>Research, applied science</i></li> <li>- <i>Quality assurance, accredited Centre</i></li> </ul>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<p><i>PAC Stefan Chudoba initiated the cooperation with Baden Württemberg and Austria as well as with industry in Slovakia in this fiels. Mr Chudoba leads negotiation with ERDF programmes managing authorities in Slovakia on possible implementation of the project, as well as with the partners in Austria (WKÖ), Baden Württemberg ( Ministry for Bundesrat and European Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Finance).</i></p> <p><i>PAC Stefan Chudoba held negotiations with the managing authority of the</i></p>

	<i>Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovakia – Austria 2014-2020 in order to prepare funds for possible funding of the relevant parts of the project.</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Preparation of the project proposal within the call ERASMUS + call 'EACEA 13/2014 "KA 3 – Support for Policy Reform National Authorities' as start-up financing for the set-up of the Danube Academy.</i>

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>CLOUD ENABLED BUSINESS INFORMATION SERVICE FOR DANUBE REGION</b>
<b>Action related</b>	<i>Impact on PA7, 2.2.3 Action “ To use e-content and e-services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public and private services</i>
<b>Countries involved</b>	<i>Main leader Slovak Republic, in cooperation with Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary</i>
<b>Funding</b>	<i>Not specified yet, possible sources of financing EU structural funds and Horizon 2020</i>
<b>Stage of implementation</b>	<i>Project presented on the SG meeting in Budapest / May 2014 by the authors Slovak Technical University Kosice</i>
<b>Description</b>	<i>Objective –Improving quality of e-services in the Danube region through standardisation of SME business processes and support of next generation e-evolution for the Danube single e-market.</i>
<b>Involvement of the PACs</b>	<i>Synergy with PA8 Competitiveness</i>
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Project will be proposed as a Flagship project on the next SG meeting in November 2014</i>

### **Annex 3 – TA Progress Report**

Technical Assistance grant is administered at beneficiary institutions in connection with a European Union financed "Technical Assistance for the implementation of the ELJ Strategy for the Danube Region", Grant Agreement CCI 2011CE160AT095 and Amendment No1 to Grant Agreement CCI 2012CE160AT127, starting from the January 2012.

On the Slovak side the Technical Assistance grant spending started a bit latter in June 2012, continually within the shift of the competencies of the coordinator from the from the Slovak Academy of Sciences to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, which took place as of 1 May 2013. One person is executing the services under direct management of the Slovak coordinator, who is at the present the State Secretary at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport together with one person, assigned from the Section of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. 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. TA grant enables Prof. Dr Miroslav Veskovic as PAC to implement all coordination activities including intensive dissemination, networking and policy level meetings in his power of PAC, and to engage a number of professionals to support his actions and ensure smooth communication with all relevant institutions and stakeholders, efficient administration of TA and related reporting.

The Technical Assistance grant on both beneficiary institutions is mainly spent on staff costs and travel and stay costs, corresponding with the budget table headings *1. Staff (gross salary) and 5. Other eligible costs (according to the call)*. Staff covers costs of the engagement of PACs and members of their staff employed in preparation, organization and delivery of PA7 coordination activities and relevant administration. The list of most relevant meetings attended or organized by PACs and their teams is available under *Section 1.1. State of play in the narrative part of the report*. Also the maintenance of the PA7 web pages was paid to the platform of Group Spaces under budget category *5. Other eligible costs, 5.1. Publication, dissemination, diffusion*.

Since launching public procurement procedure for DRRIF followed by successful selection of the winning offer proposed by Ernst&Young Slovakia for the feasibility study for Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) and the agreement signed in April 2014, PAC Slovakia started with the spending in the budget heading *3. Other implementation contract*.

For supporting activities required for efficient PA7 governance, organization and correspondence, to assist Prof. Dr Miroslav Vesković, PAC, the University of Novi Sad hires (on regular and part time basis) following personal: Sanja Subotić-Gantar, Helena Hiršenberger, while support was also provided by university staff: Ivana Vujkov and Olivera Krklješ, International relations, Gordana Kažić, financial management and monitoring, Jelena Cvejic, Public Relations, Tatjana Vranješević, Jasmina Biro and Nataša Hrabovski for education and research issues. In PA7 dissemination and networking were also involved Prof. Dr Ivana Ivančev Tumbas, Prof. Dr Pavle Sekeruš, Prof. Dr Zita Bošnjak, Prof. Dr Snežana Radulović, Prof. Dr Milan Martinov, Prof. Dr Vesna Crnojević Bengin, Dr Viktor Nedović and other academic experts in PA7 and EUSDR activities and related projects.

For the supporting activities of PA7 Coordinator 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 prepared and organized by Sandra Salamonová, Lubica Pitlová as well as following 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 and Anna Činčurová.

The overview of the consolidated estimated budget and estimated actual costs (spending) for the reported period June 2013 – June 2014 for both PA7 coordinating institutions is presented in the Annex IIa. The total spending by both beneficiaries and for the DRRIF is EUR 157.703,50.

The University of Novi Sad has already spend full first pre-financing instalment (EUR 80.000), therefore it submits with this Annual Report the Interim Financial Report (01/01/2012-30/04/2014), Internal Audit Report and Request for Interim payment, in accordance with Article I5.2 of the Amendment No1 to Grant Agreement CCI 2012CE160AT127.

For more details on TA Progress Report PAC support teams remain available.

## *ATTACHMENTS*

- Minutes from the VI SG Meeting, held on 23-24 September 2013 in Ulm
- Draft Minutes from the VII SG Meeting, held on 20 May 2014 in Budapest