

EUSDR Priority area 1b:

To improve mobility and multimodality: road, rail and air links

MINUTES of the 27th STEERING GROUP meeting

Wednesday, 31st May 2023; 9.00 – 16.00 (CET)

Venue: Hotel Slon, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Participants: CZ, HR, HU, SI (4) and DG REGIO, DSP, EUSPA, CEI

Non-participating / Excused: AT, BA, BG, DE, MD, ME, RO, SRB, SK, UA (10)

Chairman: Mr Franc Žepič, PAC (Slovenia) **Co-chairman:** /

General comments: After seven SG meetings in row organised virtually in the times of coronavirus pandemic, the 26th SG meeting and 27th SG were again organised in person. Both meetings failed to meet the PACs expectations in term of participation of SG members. While at 26th SG meeting eight (8) SG member states participated at 27th SG meeting only four (4) SG members joined the planned discussions on the agenda. Since, according to the PA1b RoP, “decisions can be made when at least the half of the participating countries attend the SG meeting” there was no quorum.

Opposite can be said for invited observers and experts contributing to PA1b activities and exchange of views and understanding of macro-regional transport development. All invited arrived. At 26th SG took part: the European Commission DG REGIO, the Transport Community Permanent secretariat, the Danube Strategy Point and the Danube Transnational Programme and coordinators of Policy Area Transport of the EUSBSR. At 27th SG actively participated DG REGIO, DSP, EUSPA and CEI.

The 27th SG meeting was initially planned as a two-day meeting, second day in a form of technical visit. Due to lack of participants only the first day was executed. The meeting started at 9.00 and ended at around 16.00.

Item 1: Welcome and Introductory topics

The Chairman, Mr Žepič welcomed the participants of the 27th SG meeting and in particular today's special guest Mr. Maximilian Bauernfeind from the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) and a new member from Czechia Ms. Lucie Vayhelova.

In his introductory words Mr Johan Magnusson, representative of the DG REGIO of the EC explained state of play at the EU level. Among others he mentioned published Report on MRS 2022, which explicitly is not addressing transport but offers many links through e.g. skills that are an issue also in transport sector. Conclusions on report will be prepared for the General Affairs council on 7 June 2023. Next came the Tour de Table.

Item 2: Approval of the agenda of the 27th SG meeting and the minutes of the 26th SG meeting

The Agenda for the 27th meeting and the Minutes of the 26th meeting were approved without comments. Prior to the meeting no written comments were received.

Item 3: Past and upcoming events – information

SG participants were briefly informed of the following events related to the macro-region strategies:

Past events: a) NCs – PACs meeting, Brdo pri Kranju (1-2 December 2022), b) PACs meeting, Maribor (16-17 March 2023), c) MRS week, Brussels, Belgium (24-28 April 2023),

Upcoming events: a) MRS week, Izola, Slovenia (18-22 September 2023), b) 8th Danube Region Transport Days (DRTD 2023) (planned 3-4 October), c) 12th EUSDR Annual Forum, Brdo pri Kranju/Ljubljana (24-25 October)

Briefing and information were given by Mr. Aleš Rovšnik, MRS NCs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia and Mr. Franc Žepič, PAC, Ministry of Infrastructure, Slovenia.

Mr Aleš Rovšnik informed about the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum to be held on 24 and 25 October 2023 at Brdo pri Kranju in Slovenia. He stressed that a panel on transport will be an interesting part of the event.

Item 4: Update on Danube Strategy Point (DSP) Activities in 2023

Ms. Irene Schnait, DSP (Danube Strategy Point) presented work of DSP with focus on support to PACs, NCs and EUSDR Presidency. Following activities were presented: - Support for EUSR core-stakeholders, - Embedding/Funding process, - Monitoring/Evaluation, - Capacity building, - Communication and - Youth.

Ms Schnait also said that: a) in future hybrid meetings will play crucial role, b) process of narrowing the topics with PA role is welcomed, c) new flagship projects or update of present should be submitted to the DSP by 10 July 2023 and d) involvement of DYC in PA work have begun and that best practices will be shared with the DYC and PACs.

Item 5: PA1b Projects: Flagship projects 2023

The Chairman presented the current three flagship projects and asked for proposals on their update or proposals of new flagship projects by not later than end of June. He concluded that if no new project will be proposed at least the first two will be updated and remain as flagships also in 2023. These are:

- Stakeholder Conference “The Danube Region Transport Days (DRTD)”: The objective of Stakeholder Conferences is to achieve high level understanding and support for a common vision on infrastructure and mobility needs in coming years (until 2030, 2040 and 2045) for road, rail and air transport. The outcomes of stakeholder conferences serve and will serve as input for the PA1b decisions on how to tackle the most important activities of the EUSDR Action Plan. Last but not least the conferences are important for awareness rising and understanding that joint efforts are needed for the international / cross-border projects with clear added value for the Danube macro-region.
- The Danube Region Multimodal Corridors: The development of an interconnected and integrated transport system in the Danube Region is a challenge of macro-regional relevance and it is consistent with national priorities, as well as with EU objectives of more connected, greener and low-carbon Europe, aiming at strengthening transport infrastructure networks relations by means of the identification of multimodal corridors alongside the TEN-T network including, in particular connections between the EU and non-EU member states.

There were no suggestions for new flagships at the meeting.

Item 6: Transport Poverty in the Danube Region

The Chairman wanted to address a new topic “Transport Poverty in the Danube Region” in order for all to broaden the understanding of transport challenges that are rarely mentioned although they are present in all countries in Europe. What is transport poverty? He stressed that that the concept of 'transport poverty' is recent and is generally used to describe situations when people do not have access to essential services or work because of a lack of affordable or available transport options. Some of the elements leading to transport poverty include: a) no or poor transport infrastructure, b) no transport availability (the lack of transport options or low frequency); c) low transport affordability (inability to meet the cost of transport); d) no accessibility to transport for people with reduced mobility.

The chairman advised colleagues to look for documents addressing transport and mobility poverty (e.g.: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)738181](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA(2022)738181)) so that the issue can be further discussed in the future meetings if needed.

The DG REGIO agreed that social aspects are important and should be an issue in all Europe.

Item 7: EU Agency for the Space Programme: The EU Space Programme and Transport

The Chairman greeted Mr Maximilian Bauernfeind, the representative of the EUSPA Headquarters in Prague, who presented the link between the space and transport.

The EUSPA contributes to the EU Agenda by contributing to:

- Stronger Europe (Strategic autonomy and non-dependence of Europe in space)
- Green Deal (EU-space-based applications for sustainable economy, transport, agriculture, biodiversity, energy, smart cities)
- Digital (Security of EU space, uninterrupted high capacity connectivity everywhere, IoT)
- Resilience (Innovative downstream space sector)

For today and future transport "space is a key enabler to efficient, safe and environmentally friendly mobility solutions for EU" said Mr. Bauernfeld.

The EUSPA supported acceleration of EGNOS Adoption in Transport with 2020 call. Received were 17 proposals and 7 projects were awarded. Budget for projects increased from 3M€ to 5M€.

Then concrete contribution for aviation, railway and road transport were presented. (Note: if interested, please visit: <https://www.euspa.europa.eu/>)

Before the end of incredibly interesting and valuable presentation the Chairman, Mr Bauernfeld and participants agreed that awareness rising on linking space and transport for stakeholders in the Danube region could be beneficial. That's why EUSPA and EUSDR PA1b will explore possibility to organise stakeholder event in 2024.

Item 8: Cross-MRS: The EUSDR and the EUSBSR transport steering group cooperation

The Chairman said that in order to exchange information and explore possible ways of cooperation between MRS the PA1b coordinators invited transport coordinators from the EUSBSR to the 26th SG meeting at Bled in November 2022. Mr. Tarmo Ots (Estonia) and Ms. Inga Ablingienė (Lithuania) newly coordinators for the transport field of EUSBSR participated. The EUSBSR transport coordinators then invited PA1b PAC to the meeting in Gotheborg, Sweden in May 2023. Mr. Žepič participated, made a presentation to the EUSBSRD Transport group and learned valuable information on activities in Baltic Sea region.

On both occasions potential for future cooperation was discussed and it looks like that the first step can be a mutual event on a topic of interest for both regions, such as e-aviation, multimodal (TEN-T corridors) or high-speed railways. Talks will continue.

There were no discussion or proposals from the participants.

Item 9: The EU transport policy: Current key activities of DG MOVE (Road Safety Package)

Due to excused absence of the representative of DG MOVE, Mr Žepič presented the EU Transport Affairs Update. Firstly he mentioned several dossiers that are part of 1st reading (between the TTE Council and the EP), such as:

- "Fit for 55" Ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport - 'ReFuel EU aviation' - agreement reached on 25 April 2023
- The use of renewable and low-carbon fuels in maritime transport and amending Directive 2009/16/EC - 'FuelEU Maritime'
- Deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, and repealing Directive 2014/94/EU of the EP and of the Council (AFIR) - A provisional agreement was reached on 28-3-2023
- TEN-T: "Efficient and green mobility package" Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network – 4 column for Council; trilogues started
- Road transport: framework for the deployment of intelligent transport systems and for interfaces with other modes of transport

Next the Chairman focused on Road safety package composed of three (3) legislative proposals adopted on 1st March 2023. These are: 1) Directive on driving licences, 2) Directive on the Union wide-

effect of certain driving disqualifications and 3) Amendment to Directive facilitating cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offenses. He tried to summarise main expectations of the Commission and ended that the outcome will depend on the TTE Council and the EP negotiations in order to adopt the agreed clauses of proposed legislative text. There were no comments related to the presentation.

Item 10: Preparing projects: Seed money Facility

Chairman, with the support of DSP made information of the coming call on SMF (Seed Money Facility) under preparation by the DRP. The seed money facility is a tool for kick - starting development of strategic projects and large-scale initiative for the EUSDR. Next step should be that these projects can be financed by any other EU financing instrument. Seed Money Facility Call is planned to be open late in the autumn 2023 and closed in the spring of 2024.

Item 11: PA1b projects: Long list of PA1b projects

The Chairman reiterated that: a) the long list of projects is to be reviewed and updated country by country, b) monitoring progress of so many projects is great challenge, c) the new list should be prepared composed of three to five projects with added value to the macro-region from each country and d) at 27th SG meeting members were asked to send project lists by the end of January 2023. Until today none was received by PACs. The Chairman proposed that the item is postponed also taking into account small number of SG members. There was no objection.

Item 12: Look ahead: PA1b in the next 6-year period

The Chairman presented the new 6-year subsidy contract that support coordination activities of PA coordinators and informed participants of the tasks to be carried out by PA1b in the next 6-year period.

Item 13: Planned and ongoing transnational projects: project "SUSTANCE" – update"

The Chairman introduced Mr Dileo (CEI) who presented the outcome of the SUSTANCE (Sustainable public transport solutions and innovative governance schemes for improving connectivity in Central Europe) project. The project aims at solving the lack of efficient and sustainable public transport solutions in peripheral and cross-border areas of Central Europe, which have registered a substantial increase of mobility, especially at cross-border level in the last decade. (More about the project can be found at: <https://www.cei.int/PMO/sustance>)

The Chairman expressed gratitude for exceptional presentation and added that the project's results could be used by other countries as well.

Item 14: Any other business (AOB)

Under the open issues the Chairman once more rise the issue of poor participation at SG meetings and PAb organised events.

With regards to the 28th PA1b SG meeting, the Chairman expressed believe that it can be organised in-person in Belgrade in September or October. The date will of course depend on PAC Serbia, co-coordinator of PA1b.

There were no other comments. The Chairman thanked all for participation at the meeting.

The meeting, that started at 9.00 and was closed at 16.00 (CET).

Place, Date
Ljubljana
31st May 2023

Chairman:
Mr Franc Žepič, for PAC1b (Slovenia)



Annex:

- List of participants at 27th PA1b SG

List of participants

26th PA1b SG Meeting

List of participants: CZ, HR, HU, SI (4) and DG REGIO, DSP, EUSPA, CEI
Non-participating: AT, BA, BG, DE, MD, ME, RO, SRB, SK, UA (9)

Participants:

1. Ms. Jasna Kancir, jasna.kancir@mmpi.com, Croatia
2. Ms. Lucie Vayhelova, lucie.vayhelova@mdcr.cz, Czech Republic
3. Mr. Gergely Gecse, gergely.gecse@itm.gov.hu, Hungary
4. Mr. Franc Žepič, franc.zepic@gov.si, Slovenia
5. Mr. Iztok Vatovec, iztok.vatovec@gov.si, Slovenia
6. Mr. Aleš Rovšnik, ales.rovsnik@gov.si, Slovenia
7. Mr. Johan Magnusson, johanibelgien@msn.com, DG REGIO, European Commission
8. Ms. Irene Schnait, irene.schnait@eusdr-dsp.eu, office@eusdr-dsp.eu, Danube Strategy Point
9. Mr. Maximilian Bauernfeind, Maximilian.BAUERNFEIND@euspa.europa.eu, European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA)
10. Mr. Paolo Dileo, dileo@cei.int, CEI
