

EUSDR Priority area 1b:

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

**MINUTES
of the 18th STEERING GROUP meeting**

Tuesday, 26 March 2019
"Aero Klub", Belgrade, Serbia

Participants: AT, BG, CRO, HU, SI, SRB, CEI, DSP, TER (see List of Participants)

Non-participating: BiH, CZ, DE, ME, MD, RO, SK, UA, DG MOVE, DG NEAR, DG REGIO, DTP

Chairman: Mr. Miodrag Poledica, PAC (Serbia)

Co-chairman: Mr. Franc Žepič, PAC (Slovenia)

Items 1-2) Welcome and introductory topics

Item 1: Welcome and introduction

The Chairman, Mr. Poledica and the Co-chairman, Mr. Žepič, welcomed the participants of the 18th Steering Group meeting. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to all present members and organizations. The Co-chairman indicated the importance of presence of the Danube Strategy Point at this meeting considering the topics on the agenda, as well as high expectations of support and cooperation with the PA1b SG.

Item 2: Approval of Agenda for 18th and Minutes of the 17th SG meeting

The Chairman reviewed the agenda and explained the course of the meeting. He invited for any comments on the agenda and minutes of the 17th SG meeting held in Belgrade on 11 October 2018. The Agenda was approved as proposed by the Chairman. There was only one comment related to the minutes - Mr. Paolo Dileno requested removal of a line in the draft version of the agenda. With this change, the 17th SG meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Items 3-6) EU Transport policies, the Danube Strategy and PA1b

Item 3: EU transport policy - work in progress

Since DG representatives were excused, the Co-chairmen Mr. Žepič presented the most important topics and challenges for the EU Transport. In his presentation, he pointed out that EC is focusing on 4 main issues: Digitalisation, Decarbonisation, Investment and People. He explained that during the Juncker Commission (2014-2019) the DG MOVE presented three 'mobility package' initiatives: 1st mobility package - "Europe on the move", 2nd mobility package - "Clean mobility" and 3rd mobility package - "Safe, Clean and Connected mobility". Then, Mr. Žepič gave an overview and status of selected dossiers (Legislative Acts) under consideration. At the end, he mentioned that a Ministerial meeting is taking place in Bucharest next day with initial discussion on revision of the TEN-T network. He furthermore suggested that it is now the right time for PA1b to start promoting agreed proposed corridors with the added value for the Danube region. (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Hungary: Mr. Gergely Gacse mentioned importance of the agreement on the "Combined Transport" (from the 2nd Package). In addition he is of the opinion that the "Smart TEN-T" (the 3rd Package) will be difficult to adopt.

Item 4: The Danube Strategy Point

Mr. Robert Lichtner, DSP Pillar Officer, presented DSP activities since the start of work in October 2018. DSP has two offices, Vienna and Bucharest. From the list of activities in 2019, Mr. Lichtner pointed 5 main points: 1- Revision of Action Plan, 2- Evaluation / Monitoring, 3- Communication, 4- Capacity Building and 5- Miscellaneous (Implementation Report 2016-18 and Annual Forum 2019).

He gave an overview and status of the Action Plan revision process and work on the Consolidated Input document. He also presented changes to the new reporting tool for PAC-s and SG-s.

Mr. Lichtner stated that the visibility of the EUSDR is low and that creation of a narrative of the strategy and highlighting success-stories can and should have a positive impetus on the national and local politics. He invited members of the SG to send the information of the projects to DSP.

Mr. Lichtner gave an overview of the activities in social media and website, calendar for future activities and plans for the capacity building program. (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Item 5: The Danube Transnational Program

Representatives from DTP were not present at the 18th SG meeting. Based on information provided by DTP Mr. Željko Janjoš stated that 6 projects related to the land transport from the 1st Call (presented at the 17th SG meeting in Belgrade) will be completed in May/June time-frame. The 2nd Call had only one project addressing land transport (RADAR, also presented at the 17th SG meeting). The 3rd Call is a two-stage call (still in process of evaluation) and 14 submitted proposals address land transport.

DTP is in process of preparing for the 2nd PAC Call that is supposed to be launched in the second half of June, pending decision on number of PA-s and PAC institutions by NCs.

Item 6: UN Trans European Railway Project (TER)

Mr. Andreas Zimmer, TER Deputy Project Manager, has introduced the TER project to SG participants. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is its Executing Agency, responsible for technical and administrative backstopping of the Project and the co-ordination of its activities. There are 16 participating countries: Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. Project is open for all railways undertakings. Mr. Zimmer presented main aims and objectives of the project and mentioned that the Steering Committee has two meetings per year - one in Geneva and one in a participating country. The main project office is in Belgrade. The project was initiated in 1990 by UNECE with initial financial support, which from 1992 is financed by the participating countries and is self-sustained.

Mr. Zimmer pointed several benefits the project brings to the TER countries: brings more information on high speed rail, connects the region and addresses emissions and safety. TER has also created a Master Plan involving 25 countries (Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine). This is an instrument for political decisions. Mr. Zimmer mentioned that data collection and processing is one of the important activities. He stated that most of the participating countries are small and they have to work together and create better environment for new generations.

Austria, Mr. Josef Zitzler expressed the interest in the results of the Master Plan. Mr. Zimmer responded with the information that at the moment the first phase is carried out and the final outcome is coming in near future.

Romania, Mr. Serban Tupa questioned if the high speed rail mentioned in the presentation is referring to the passenger or freight transport. Mr. Zimmer explained that different countries have a different approach. Austria has a high capacity network approach, but in general both transport (freight and passenger) tend to increase the speed. Mr. Tupa pointed out that infrastructure and trains (rolling stock) are dependent on each other and the development one side shall be synchronised with the development of the other. Mr. Zimmer confirmed this dependency and stated

that also the new rolling stock (new generation wagons) have reduced noise in exploitation as well. He also stated that the new technologies and know how transfer are on the top of the agenda of the TER project.

CEI, Mr. Paolo Dileno stated that in the project CONNECT2CE (more detailed presentation to follow in the afternoon session) a huge number of border crossing issues - bottle necks - was identified and that these bottle necks are definitely related to the TER project activities. More details will be available in May, 2019. Mr. Zimmer responded that the TER project addresses soft measures as well, among them border crossing issues are definitely on the top of the agenda.

Mr. Žepič stated that the work of the PA1b and TER project are closely related. Several topics as high speed rail and border crossing are common as priorities. Also, the master plan is very interesting for the PA1b and participating countries. When talking about border crossing, Mr. Žepič stated that despite of significant efforts of many stakeholders, no real progress has been made in past years.

Mr. Zimmer agreed with this statement and offered one of the possible factors: absence of some key ministries at the table. He mentioned that the railway companies and ministries responsible for transport are mostly involved, but rarely ministries of finance (customs) and police. He also informed that 16 participating countries are in process of data collection on border crossings. Once completed, the results will be published on TER project website.

7-8) Revision of the EUSDR implementing documents

Item 7: Romanian Presidency of the EUSDR - Building cohesion for shared prosperity

Representative of the Romanian Presidency, Dr Stefan Imre, Minister Counsellor at the Romanian Embassy sent a presentation on Romanian presidency priorities and their commitment to Strategy implementation in advance. Due to unforeseen circumstances he was not able to attend the meeting. (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Item 8: Revision of the Action Plan: State of play

Mr. Robert Lichtner, DSP Pillar Officer, presented state of play of the Action plan revision process and DSP activities related to this process. He mentioned that other Macro-regional strategies have revised their action plans several times by now, e.g. Baltic Sea region 3 or 4 times. The revision was initiated during the Bulgarian Presidency and is being finalised during the Romanian Presidency. Mr. Lichtner presented the Roadmap and current status. With reference to the 5 questions defined by the Bulgarian Presidency, he mentioned that PA1b needs to respond to the Q number 4. At the end of the presentation, Mr. Lichtner informed that SG members of the NCs and PACs meeting in Bucharest on 23rd and 24th of June as a very important step in process and that now NCs and PACs need to provide input for the Consolidated input document as agreed on NCs meeting in Bucharest on 13th and 14th of February, 2019. (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Mr. Žepič then presented work done by PA1b, starting with the revision of Targets concluded in March 2016 and continued in 2017 with work on corresponding revision of actions. This activity was superseded by the Bulgarian Presidency's initiative in February 2018. He opened discussion by presenting working material and requesting input ideas on how to change the Actions in order to best reflect the revised Targets and current work on revision of the Action plan.

Mr. Josef Zitzler came up with an idea that the operational work could be done by working groups.

Mr. Lichtner reminded SG members that 2nd call for PACs will be launched in June and that this idea can be put to work within the new application.

Mr. Janjoš added to this idea that the PA1b PMT working group while working on revision of actions came up with the similar idea to form a working group for certain topics. This would be more significant engagement that would require more resources and could not be done within existing budget.

Mr. Žepič welcomed these ideas and mentioned that we have problem engaging people, SG members. He suggested to DSP that there is a need to make some efforts to engage people more, for example to organise SG meetings in different countries. For now, it is very complicated or impossible. Also, covering expenses for non-EU representatives is possible but then we run into problems when a person cancels the visit very last minute. Also, he asked DSP representative about cooperation with other MRS. Who would be organising it - INTERREG?

Mr. Lichtner responded with suggestion to communicate to PA1a directly and learned how they organise work groups. He believes that INTERREG will be organising meeting of all MRS.

Mr. Dileno, CEI, explained that projects have resources and money, and that they need to present results and need endorsement by key stakeholders. He suggested that PA become more involved as associated partners to projects.

Mr. Žepič then started review of the PA1b draft input material and stated several questions / dilemmas to DSP to give us direction in order to use the same approach as other PAs (number of actions per target, indicators and base line, etc.). For example, Target 3 (Support the development of efficient multimodal terminals at sea, river and dry ports in the Danube Region and ensure their connectivity and access through the integration of all modes of transport and efficient logistics services by 2030) we need to synchronise indicators with PA1a.

Mrs. Mirjana Jovanovic questioned definition of indicators. She asked what are we supposed to measure with indicators: PA1b work or status of transport in Danube Region? If we measure status of transport in DR that is something we do not have control of. She suggests that we define indicators to measure our work.

Mr. Zitzler also agreed that should measure our work rather than industry.

Mr. Žepič agreed, but also stated that all PAs should have the same approach to this issue. DSP should help us and direct.

Mr. Janjoš suggested that we communicate with PA1a since we have many topics in common and with the help of DSP we define the indicators and baseline.

Most of the SG members agreed that we should be measuring our work since we have control of those actions.

Mr. Dileno stated that MR strategies are not same as Programme and that indicators need to measure progress to targets. He suggested finding out what was done in other MRS.

Mr. Žepič agreed with Mr. Dileno and reminded SG members that PA1b needs to submit the input by April 26. He invited SG members to participate in completing missing items of the document.

Item 9: Member states activities

Croatia: Ms. Jasna Kancir and Mr. Rene Čepinac presented status of transport projects in Croatia. They stated that focus is on underdeveloped forms of transport: Multimodal transport and Railway transport. There are 13 projects in design and implementation phase, worth approximately 2.1 billion Euros. Among them are: lines Dugo Selo - Novska, Vinkovci - Vukovar and Okučani - Vinkovci. (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Hungary: Mr. Gergely Gecse presented main projects in Hungary. He presented planned major Hungarian main cross-border road construction projects (2016-2022). One of the problems they face is challenge to find qualified work force. Among main rail projects he mentioned High speed rail preparation (between V4 capitals), where one of the issues is the feasibility study (planned to be completed in Q1 of 2021). (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Romania: Mr. Serban Tupa informed SG members on very slow progress of transport projects in Romania due to mostly political reasons (changes in priorities). He pointed out the big gap in road projects with missing feasibility studies.

Slovenia: Mr. Žepič informed that the new minister has been appointed. He also explained main priorities of the Ministry. These are following 3 projects: a) 2nd railway track Divača – Koper: the section is part of the Baltic-Adriatic Core Network Corridor and Mediterranean Core Network Corridor. Present single track fails to achieve core rail network standards which should be fulfilled by 2030. The importance of the new 27.1-kilometre-long line is predominantly revealed in international freight rail transport, as it implies a modern and high-capacity link between the Port of Koper., b) 3rd Development Axis which will, when completed link northern and southern parts of Slovenia and in addition contribute to enhanced connections with Austria and Croatia, c) second tube of the Karavanke road tunnel (cross-border project Austria-Slovenia is part of the comprehensive TEN-T network and section along the Pan-European Corridor No. X which was established in 1997 at third Ministerial conference in Helsinki).

Serbia: Ms. Mirjana Jovanović stated that all transport sector projects presented at the previous SG meeting are progressing as planned. She stated that Serbia is progressing well on all 3 points in Connectivity agenda.

10 - 11: Joint Initiatives and Cooperation

Item 10: Joint PA1a and PA1b meeting

Mr. Žepič announced the joint meeting of PA1a and PA1b that will be held on 12th June in Vienna. Agenda for this meeting will include 4 sessions: Inland waterways, Rail transport, Road Transport and Intermodal transport - hinterland connections to river and seaports.

Item 11: PA1b and UN ECE joint workshop

Mr. Žepič announced the joint workshop with UN ECE on Rail connectivity. The event will take place in Ljubljana or Belgrade. The first planned date is end of June if possible or early autumn September / October. Expected participants are SG members, rail authorities and operators, infrastructure managers, academia and interested stakeholders. It is expected that the event will be attended by 50 to 70 participants.

Item 12: OECD ITF WG on strategic infrastructure planning

Mr. Žepič introduced involvement of Slovenia and PA1b in the OECD ITF WG on strategic infrastructure planning with role to contribute to the report on strategic infrastructure planning. The goal of the work is to prepare report on best practices on strategic infrastructure planning. It is planned that chapter on cross-border planning will be described in one of the chapters. This WG involves wide range of countries and is general in nature. The report is expected by the end of 2020.

Item 13: PA1b and other initiatives

Carpathian Convention: Mr. Žepič informed participants that PA1b has recently received Synergy paper in view of the New EUSDR Action Plan (provided to the DSP in March 2019). Pa1b has not been participating in cooperation with the Carpathian Convention as agreed due to lack of capacity / staff.

Mr. Lichtner said that DSP had a meeting with representatives from Carpathian Convention where capacity issues are recognised. The proposal to PA was rather informal.

Mr. Serban Tupa stated that they have constant pressure by Ministry of Foreign Affairs to respond to Poland's initiative for establishing new MR strategy. At present Romania is of the opinion that it would be overlapping with existing MRS.

Mr. Poledica informed of Polish Ministry of Infrastructure Declaration about Carpathian Corridor (road) - Via Carpathia. List of invited countries is unrelated. Serbia is still in process of deciding how to respond.

3 Seas Initiative: Mr. Žepič informed members that 2019 Summit of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) will be held in Slovenia on 5-6 June 2019. He suggests that we (PA1b SG) observe and watch if we can use this initiative for our work. *Note: The Three Seas Initiative is a flexible political platform at Presidential level, launched in 2015. The Initiative includes the 12 EU Member States located between the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black seas: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Up until today, three summits took place: Dubrovnik Summit in 2016, Warsaw Summit in 2017 and Bucharest Summit in 2018.*

Item 13: CONNECT2CE project - (Interreg Central Europe) - ongoing pilot activities

Mr. Paolo Dileno presented the project CONNECT2CE and explained the relevance to EUSDR Action Plan. He underlined main outputs and results of the project: 3 transnational tools for improving Public transport in remote and cross-border areas; 8 pilot actions and 10 territorial strategies. (*Note: presentation available at PA1b Website*).

Mr. Poledica commented that the project is very interesting and involves many regions and countries. He questioned how and will the pilot actions that are testing ideas be implemented in reality? Also, he underlined importance of public authorities involvement.

Mr. Dileno responded that 2 studies were implemented as permanent solutions. Also, one pilot (Cross-border integrated ticket Trieste - Ljubljana resulted in synergies with project 'CROSSMOBY' and new experimental train Udine-Trieste-Ljubljana). In this case, result brings a new pilot.

14-17) Past and planned events and AOB

Item 14: 4th stakeholder conference "The Danube Region Transport Days - DRTD 2018"

Mr. Žepič reported that the 4th DRTD conference, held in Ljubljana on 4-5 December 2018, was success. Over 40 speakers and over 120 attendees from 17 countries participated in the plenary session and 6 thematic ones: 1) Financing mechanisms, 2) Towards improved mobility and connectivity, 3) Ongoing projects, 4) Future of Rail Passenger transport, 5) Euro-Asian transport links, 6) Road Safety and 7) Challenges of Air transport in the Danube region. The 4th international stakeholder conference brought together the transport community who during the two days event exchanged and shared know-how, experience, results and ideas on many aspects of road-rail-air transport in the Danube macro-region. In addition, the conference reinforced the cooperation between the transport stakeholders in the Danube macro region. For more information, list of participants and presentation see the PA1b website: <https://www.danube-transport.eu/the-danube-region-transport-days-2018>

Item 15: 8th EUSDR Annual Forum

The Co-Chairman gave brief information on plans for 8th EUSDR Annual Forum in Bucharest on 27-28 June, 2019 and side events. PA1b will participate at the final event of the TRANSGREEN project on 26 June and Pole 6 Capitalisation Session. SG members are invited to participate at these and other sessions on the 8th EUSDR Annual Forum.

Item 16: Planning of 19th SG meeting

Most of the SG members opted for tentative date for the 19th SG meeting to be in second half of September or first half of October. Mr. Žepič will inform members once the date and location is selected.

Item 18: AOB

Croatia-Pelješac bridge: The Croatian delegation informed the SG members of issues with regards to construction of the Pelješac bridge which will significantly improve the connection between Dubrovnik and Split, through reducing the travel time. The Neum corridor (a 23 km coastal strip which physically separates Dubrovnik and southern Dalmatia from the rest of the country), a strip of the Adriatic Sea coastline part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is currently the only land-based communication route between Dubrovnik and the rest of mainland Croatia. The new bridge will facilitate a smooth flow of goods and people, especially at the peak of the tourist season.

The Pelješac road bridge will be 55m high and 2.4 km long, with four lanes. The EU will contribute 85% of the cost (*Note: on 7 June 2017 the Commission allocated €357 million of Cohesion Policy funds*). The EU is also funding supporting infrastructure, such as the construction of access roads, including tunnels, bridges and viaducts, the building of an 8km-long bypass near the town of Ston and upgrading works on the existing state road D414. Today to build a bridge that will connect the southernmost part of the country and Dubrovnik to the rest of mainland Croatia. The works are expected to be completed at the latest in 2022. The Chinese consortium which won the tender to build the bridge is proceeding well. Current progress is ahead of schedule.

8th Summit China + 16: Mr. Poledica informed that China + 16 event (8th Summit of Central and Eastern European Countries & China “Building new bridges through openness, innovation and partnership” and 9th Business Forum of CEEC & China) will be organised on 11-12 April 2019 in Dubrovnik. Aim of the annual summit is to reflect upon deliverables of 16+1 Cooperation and to set new and ambitious goals for future cooperation between countries of the initiative. *Note: The 16+1 Cooperation was established in 2012 to promote business and investment relations between China and 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia).*

Closure of the meeting: At the end of the meeting Mr. Poledica and Mr. Žepič, thanked all participants, and pointed out that mutual cooperation is of great importance for achieving efficiency in implementing Strategy, together with visibility of EUSDR.

The 18th SG meeting started on 26 March 2019 at 9.00 and ended at 17.00.

Place, Date

Chairman:

Belgrade, 26 March 2019

Mr. Miodrag Poledica, PAC 1b

Annex:

- List of participants