



MEETING REPORT: DANUBE REGION INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES NETWORK (DIAS) KICK-OFF MEETING, 9-10 OCTOBER 2014, SOFIA, BULGARIA

Prepared by: Teodora Trichkova, Harald Kutzenberger, Florian Ballnus

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the meeting was to bring together scientists, stakeholders and authorities to discuss the status-quo, and most urgent present and future needs to efficiently tackle the issue of invasive alien species (IAS) in the Danube Region. The idea behind is to join forces, to establish a Danube Region-wide network and to develop a mid- and long-term strategy and work plan in order to significantly improve the situation, to establish links between science and policy level and to develop individual but coordinated projects in the single regions.

The Kick-off meeting was jointly organised by:

- Priority Area 06 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (PA 06 EUSDR), represented by the Bavarian State Ministry of Environment and Consumer Protection (Munich, Germany)
- International Association for Danube Research (IAD)
- East and South European Network for Invasive Alien Species (ESENIAS)
- Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IBER-BAS, Sofia, Bulgaria).

The workshop was supported by Priority Area 06 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

BACKGROUND

The Danube River is a part of the South-European aquatic invasion corridor, which links the Black Sea basin with the North Sea basin via the Danube–Main–Rhine Canal and it has been exposed to the introduction and influence of IAS.

There are numerous challenges in the management of IAS and different pathways and vectors of their introductions. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (**ICPDR**) acknowledges that IAS have become a major concern for the Danube River and their further classification and analysis are vital for effective river basin management. Also the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)¹ which has been endorsed in 2011 acknowledges IAS as one major threat to biodiversity and a livable Danube Region. Consequently, one of the targets of the **EUSDR** as defined in **Priority Area 06** reads: “By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.” Proposed actions should include assessing the impact of IAS on the ecosystems in the Danube region, identifying environmentally friendly ways to control their development, promoting research to identify ecologically sound ways to keep their

¹ COM(2010) 715 final, see also: www.danube-region.eu



population under control or eliminate them, and raising public awareness about the danger of IAS. This target is actually the starting point for the DIAS.

Finally, also the **European Commission** has published a proposal for a Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species².

There are already several joint initiatives related to IAS in the Danube River basin (DRB). Monitoring of aquatic IAS was included in the Joint Danube Survey 3 (ICPDR, 2013). Since 2012 a joint project on ‘Potential threats to environmental and economic sustainability in the Danube and Black Sea Region: Danube River as invasive alien species corridor’ has been implemented by ESENIAS and IAD. These initiatives have demonstrated the strong necessity of cooperation and coordinated actions related to IAS in the DRB. This can only partially be covered by ESENIAS in the Lower and Middle Danube River basin.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop had the following objectives (see also **Annex 1**):

- To establish the Danube Region Invasive Alien Species network (DIAS) as new initiative to tackle the issue of IAS in the Danube Region in a coordinated and efficient way
- To discuss the scope of tasks of DIAS, its internal and external organisation, its relation to existing initiatives, networks, organisations and authorities
- To discuss guiding questions towards a DIAS strategy on key topics, such as: IAS species and pathways of introduction in the DRB; information system and knowledge dissemination; risk assessment and prioritisation; early detection and rapid eradication; management and restoration; and awareness rising
- To discuss the preparation of a DIAS strategy following the requirements of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the new EU Regulation on IAS prevention and management
- To initiate the preparation of the DIAS strategy and plan future work
- To explore options for cooperation and funding within the frames of ESENIAS, IAD and other organisations.

RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop brought together 38 representatives from 10 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine), the JRC, and Priority Area 06 Coordinator – EUSDR (see **Annex 2**). These also included representatives of research institutions, universities, environmental protection agencies, ministries, as well as NGO working on invasive alien species.

1. Opening session with welcome and introduction of participants

The meeting was opened with welcome speeches by Prof. Dr Snejana Grozeva, scientific secretary of the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of

² Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, Official Journal of the European Union, 4.11.2014



Sciences, and Mr Florian Ballnus, Priority Area 06 Coordinator – EUSDR. Each participant introduced him/herself.

2. Background (presentations)

Mr Florian Ballnus presented the structure and processes of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Priority Area 06 (PA 06): Preserving biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils.

The Danube Region covers 9 EU countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania) and 5 non-EU countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova). The EUSDR refers to the entire Danube Region and aims at better coordination and cooperation between the countries and regions in order to address different challenges, which the Region faces, *e.g.* environmental threats (water pollution, floods, climate change). The EUSDR addresses four thematic pillars: 1. Connecting the Region; 2. Protecting the Environment; 3. Building Prosperity; and 4. Strengthening the Region, and sets targets and actions in 11 Priority Areas to reach this aim.

PA 06 has four targets and one of them is related to IAS: “By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS”. The Action Plan identifies 16 actions for PA 06 and Action 6 addresses specifically IAS.

Furthermore, Mr Ballnus presented the tasks of the PACs, gave some examples of PA 06 activities, and highlighted the benefits provided by EUSDR on project level. He specified how PA 06 EUSDR and PAC 6 can support DIAS and IAS activities within the Danube region by coordination, networking, search for funding and others.

Mr Alexander Kotsev presented the Danube Reference Data and Services Infrastructure of JRC in Support of the EUSDR and potential synergies with DIAS.

The JRC together with PA 07 “Knowledge Society” of the EUSDR launched a flagship Initiative in 2011 with the following objectives:

- Gather essential scientific expertise and data to help decision-makers and other stakeholders in the Danube Region to identify the policy measures and actions needed for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region
- Reinforce ties and cooperation amongst the scientific community of the Danube Region.

There are four flagship clusters of this initiative (Danube Water Nexus, Danube Land and soil Nexus, Danube Air Nexus and Danube Bio-energy Nexus) and 3 horizontal activities, among them the Danube Reference Data and Service Infrastructure (DRDSI).

The DRDSI (<http://drdsi.jrc.ec.europa.eu>) is an innovative collaborative scientific platform fit to user needs, providing a flexible solution for scientific support of informed decision making and focusing on the Danube Region. It is based on regional as well as on community approach. The main advantages of DRDSI are: providing a single access point for access to the Danube Region data; representing a platform for collaboration; increasing the visibility of project results; providing sustainability; and being a real test case for INSPIRE in cross-border context (combined use of data, data services). The DRDSI platform follows the principles of the open data movement, represents a frontend to scientific information, provides an easy discovery of resources, is based on successful open source technology and



consumes resources from the INSPIRE geoportals, EU repositories, and different projects (FP7, H2020, IPA, etc.).

Mr Kotsev pointed out potential synergies with DIAS:

- Possible pilot projects (2015 – onwards)
- DRDSI platform:
 - Support on data harmonisation activities (based on INSPIRE)
 - Provide access to data for the Danube Region
 - Facilitate access to IAS data
 - Ensure sustainability of data
 - Host metadata for DIAS-related datasets.

Mr Momir Paunović presented the results on IAS from the Joint Danube Survey 3 (JDS3, 2013). The JDS3 is the third international expedition organised by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), in cooperation with EC. During this expedition, a total of 68 sites were sampled along a 2500 km long stretch of the Danube River. The following methods were used: the data collected for each biological quality element were additionally processed to identify the distribution and abundance of alien taxa; additionally data from free diving collection of mussels and crayfish traps were used; SBC Index was applied for the identification of the level of biological contamination. A total of 25 alien plant taxa (aquatic and riparian), 34 alien macroinvertebrate taxa and 12 alien fish species were recorded. The results were compared with previous studies (JDS1, 2001, ADS, 2004, JDS2, 2007).

Based on the results of the four Danube surveys, Mr Paunović concluded that the Danube River is significantly and constantly exposed to the influence of alien species. An increase in the number of alien aquatic macroinvertebrate species was observed, the molluscs and crustaceans being the most abundant and frequent alien taxa. ICPDR has prepared a draft document and template on IAS, including all taxa groups in the Danube River and main tributaries. Further studies and regular surveys were recommended.

Teodora Trichkova presented a proposal on the Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network (DIAS) key topics and processes.

As a main part of the South-European aquatic invasion corridor, which links the Black Sea basin with the North Sea basin via the Danube–Main–Rhine Canal, the Danube River is exposed to intensive colonisation of aquatic alien species. In most of the cases of introduction and establishment of the alien species, negative impact is reported. Seven examples of alien species and pathways of their introduction to the Danube River basin were given: the magnificent bryozoan, *Pectinatella magnifica*, quagga mussel, *Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*, Asian clam, *Corbicula fluminea*, Chinese pond mussel, *Anodonta woodiana*, Chinese mitten crab, *Eriocheir sinensis*, Amur sleeper, *Perccottus glenii*, and the black bullhead, *Ameiurus melas*. A case study in the Lower Danube River – Bulgarian Sector (2012-2014) was presented. Based on the presented data and case studies, the following questions can be raised:

1. Which alien species have established in various sections of the river basin and what are the temporal patterns in their arrival, donor areas, establishment, and dispersal rates?
2. What is their ecological and socio-economic impact?
3. What are the common traits of the taxa and communities that determine invasion success in the DRB?



4. What are the pathways and dispersal vectors of IAS introductions in the DRB and which of them are most significant?
5. Which are the priority species, pathways and vectors posing the highest environmental and socio-economic risk?
6. How can this risk be properly managed?
7. What is the public awareness and understanding of the problem in the DRB region?

A review of the main current global, European and regional instruments and initiatives, which can partly address the issue of IAS in the DRB, was made. These are the Aichi Target 9 under the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 (CBD COP10), Target 5: *Combat Invasive Alien Species* under EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, the EU Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, the Danube River Basin Management Plan (ICPDR, 2009), and the EUSDR. The objectives, structure and guiding principles of the EU Regulation on IAS were also presented.

T. Trichkova presented the proposal for DIAS network and possible approaches for DIAS Strategy. The presented results and initiatives on IAS demonstrate the strong necessity of cooperation and coordinated actions related to IAS in the DRB. In order to achieve effective transboundary cooperation and information sharing and effective transboundary IAS risk assessment and management, the establishment of the Danube Region Invasive alien species network (DIAS) and the initiation of a Work plan/ Strategy on IAS in the DRB was proposed within the frames of IAD, ESENIAS and the EUSDR. Possible approaches for a DIAS strategy will include: 1) Data collection; 2) Lists of priority species and pathways; 3) Risk assessment; 4) Action plans on pathways of IAS; 5) Surveillance; 6) Early detection and rapid eradication; 7) Management measures and restoration; and 8) Awareness raising and information systems.

The following guiding questions towards the DIAS Strategy on six key topics were presented for discussion:

1. IAS - Species and pathways of introduction in the DRB
2. Information system and knowledge dissemination
3. Risk assessment and prioritisation
4. Early detection and rapid eradication
5. Management and restoration
6. Awareness raising.

3. Guiding questions towards a DIAS strategy on six key topics (discussion)

This session, which included discussions, continued during the two days of the meeting. Each key topic had a moderator. During the first day, the moderators made an introduction, presented the most important issues within each topic and led the discussions. On the second day the moderators presented a brief summary of the results and conclusions made.

3.1. IAS - Species and pathways of introduction in the DRB (moderator: Aljoša Duplić)

Different options regarding the scope (species groups) and geographic scale (micro/ macro region approach) were discussed:

- only the main channel/ aquatic species,
- the main channel and flooded areas/ aquatic and riparian species, or



- river basin scale/ aquatic and terrestrial species.

For different species groups different approaches can be used. In the case of aquatic species, it should be taken into account that many of the native species for the Lower Danube River are non-native for the Upper and Middle Danube River.

In respect to management and considering the big number of alien species, the focus should be placed on the pathways of introduction. Prioritisation is needed for both species and pathways.

It was decided that the first step would be the identification and analysis of pathways of introduction using existing results from papers and projects, such as ALARM, DAISIE, national projects, etc.

Through the analysis of pathways priority species groups for listing would be defined. Identification of focus area should be based on those species lists, the species distribution and ecological needs.

Two approaches were recognised as the options for implementation of target one:

- It could be done on state level
- It could be done on regional level (*i.e.* catchment).

Finally, it was recommended to split this topic into two separate ones:

- IAS - Species and interactions/ impact in the DRB
- Pathways of introduction in the DRB.

3.2. Information system and knowledge dissemination (moderator: Milica Rat)

Every information system is developed based on the collected data. The first questions on data always should be – What kind of data do we already have? What kind of data are already collected or published? How updated are these data. After this, it is important to find out the validity of these data. Also, is there any sequence that was not considered by now?

In that manner it would be preferable to create common protocols, upon which preliminary data should be validated. During discussion, the main conclusion was that all data have to be managed (managing data) and certain quality control should be included. Quality management should be developed at (proposal) three levels: 1) research group (aquatic species, plants, terrestrial vertebrates, etc.) 2) regional (managed by group of regional experts) and 3) harmonisation of data and sources (local and regional level). Since many data are already published and available to the public, DIAS should go one step further – harmonisation of these data on the national (local) and regional level. Upon common protocols a joint platform can be published.

Joint platform (e-database, internet platform, etc.) was proposed as a cost effective and most visible information system for the knowledge dissemination. The information visibility is very important - as soon as some data are recorded will be available to the public.

3.3. Risk assessment and prioritisation (moderator: Rumen Tomov)

Mr Rumen Tomov presented different methods for risk assessment and put some questions for discussion. The main issues were:

- What methods for IAS risk assessment in the Danube River basin can be used – adopt existing methods or develop new ones?
- What are the aims and criteria for prioritisation?
- What experience with IAS risk assessments and prioritisation do we have in the region?



The ecosystem approach was recommended. The species of EU concern, regional concern and national concern should be considered.

3.4. Early detection and rapid eradication (moderator: Ahmet Uludag)

The discussion started with what the new EU Regulation tells about early detection. Then it continued with the possible approaches for early detection of IAS in the DIAS and ESENIAS areas. The discussions focused more on early detection than on eradication.

With the new regulation, the member states have obligations to establish a surveillance system, border controls and reporting occurrences. However, there are non-member countries and extra support can make this regulation meeting its objectives.

The early detection can be implemented at different scales – by using both volunteers and scientists.

DIAS and ESENIAS can play a supplemental role to detect introductions by using citizen science. This could include collecting information from the general public and IAS training. Creating awareness among policy makers, technical people and many other stakeholders in the context of early detection can be achieved. Meetings, flyers, etc., can be used for those purposes.

A project under DIAS/ ESENIAS can be prepared to find out the alien species introductions. The main goal of such project will be a regular monitoring of the pathways and vectors of introduction.

It is necessary to develop a communication/ reporting system with flexible and decentralised structure. The ESENIAS website can be used as a platform for the mapping of IAS/AS distribution in the Danube region. Flyers for warning and informing the public on IAS in the region can be added to the website. Thus, the species with limited spread can be managed and their introduction to other areas prevented.

3.5. Management and restoration (moderator: Doru Bănăduc)

After the discussions among the participants, the following main ideas were highlighted:

- There are centres of professional knowhow excellence in the Danube River Basin which can/should deal properly with management and restoration issues;
- The good and very good experts in these topics are not numerous enough to work directly and cover all the DRB area;
- They should be involved immediately in pilot projects wherever is possible/need in the DRB, including tributaries;
- The need for small and medium grant schemes for supporting this pilot projects all around the DRB;
- The pilot projects should be orientated on categories of management and restoration issues and sub-issues, and the results and experience should be translated to the DRB strategies;
- The results and experience should be shared in regular meetings (workshops, conferences, trainings, debates, etc.).
- The management and restoration proposed solutions should be applied on habitats, plant and animal species, populations, biocoenosis, ecosystems, human communities, riverine land use, etc., from biological and ecological perspectives.



3.6. Awareness raising (moderator: Marius Skolka)

How invasive species are viewed is filtered by human values and perceptions. The prevention and control of invasive species will require modifying behaviors, values, and beliefs and changing the way decisions are made. A successful plan to address invasive species issues will depend on the public's understanding and acceptance of the actions needed to protect our valuable resources. To that end, a wide variety of education, outreach, and training programs are needed to help motivate people to take action and raise awareness of the causes of establishment and consequences of invasive species.

Mr Marius Skolka gave an example on the current situation about IAS in Romania, which is similar in some of the other countries in the region:

- Lack of interest in the authorities
- Lack of information – no official national IAS list
- No national research program concerning IAS
- Misunderstanding of issues related to IAS
- Confusions in mass-media
- Incoherent legislation at national level.

Different awareness raising strategies/ approaches were proposed and discussed:

- Mass-media campaigns on major pathways of IAS introduction in the DRB (aquaculture; forestry, agriculture and horticulture; fouling; pet-shops)
- Educational programs in schools, high schools, universities – training programs, public events dedicated to IAS (e.g. during the Danube Day); IAS Day/ Week; short films and cartoons; leaflets; posters; etc.
- Increasing the public involvement – volunteers, NGO, individual initiatives
- Coherent national research programs.

It was recommended to start with the IAS, which are the most harmful to humans and have the highest economic impact in the region. The recommended target groups are: policy-makers, stakeholders, academic community, young generation (schools, students), and local communities.

4. DIAS Network and DIAS Strategy (moderators: Teodora Trichkova, Harald Kutzenberger, Florian Ballnus)

4.1. Organising the DIAS Network – Structure and Partners

All the participants agreed on the necessity of development of a regional network on IAS in the Danube Region. The role of this network will be to facilitate the transnational and international communication and cooperation on issues related to alien species in the Danube Region.

Different models and structures for organising of DIAS were discussed. It was proposed to keep the network as an informal working group without legal status. It was agreed that the structure of the network will be maintained as simple and as open as possible. Three centers/ regions to structure the network were proposed – the Upper Danube River, the Middle Danube River and the Lower Danube River. It can include also the adjacent regions/ basins, such as the region of the Black Sea.

The meeting decided to organise two groups – one to take care of the process (core group) and one to take care of the strategy (strategy team). The core group will have a coordinating role (organise the main partners within the network), and will have the responsibility to



formulate the DIAS mission/ vision, as well as to propose the network structure, including governance and working groups (e.g. aquatic, terrestrial, landuse).

Potential relation of DIAS to other organisations and initiatives was discussed and it was agreed that the network will develop in close collaboration and in the frames of IAD and ESENIAS, and connected with other tasks in the Danube Strategy.

DIAS logo was proposed and discussed.

Finally, the meeting agreed on the following:

- Establish the Danube Region Invasive Alien Species network (DIAS) as an informal network and new initiative to tackle the issue of IAS in the Danube Region in a coordinated and efficient way.
- Develop DIAS in collaboration and within the frames of IAD and ESENIAS and connected with other tasks in the Danube Strategy.
- Build up three centers/ regions to structure the network – the Upper Danube River, the Middle Danube River and the Lower Danube River, including the adjacent Black Sea region.
- Establish a Core group, including Florian Ballnus, Harald Kutzenberger, Csaba Csuzdi, and Teodora Trichkova, which will be responsible for DIAS coordination, building of the network, preparation of a mission statement, and proposal for network structure (governance, working groups). Florian Ballnus will be responsible for embedment of DIAS within EUSDR, Harald Kutzenberger will be a focal point for the Upper Danube River, Csaba Csuzdi will be a focal point for the Middle Danube River, and Teodora Trichkova – for the Lower Danube River, including the adjacent Black Sea region.
- Establish thematic working groups.
- Form a strategy working team.

4.2. Developing the DIAS Strategy – Needs and Tasks

The participants agreed that the first step of DIAS activities should be the preparation of a Strategy for IAS in the Danube Region. The strategy will present the long-term vision of DIAS and will formulate the mission statement and objectives, representing the main idea – to connect people and connect data on IAS. The strategy will be a frame for the work to be done for the next 10 years, will define more concretely some topics and will define where are the gaps, and where DIAS can contribute. The strategy will follow the EU Regulation on IAS, but at the same time will consider the demands of the region.

Some gaps and needs were discussed. The participants agreed that there is a need of development of a black list for the region. More data on distribution, biology, ecology and impact of alien species have to be collected. A common platform for data storage – open source and developing, including an interactive mapping tool, is needed for this purpose. At the same time it is necessary to go beyond the scientific goals and go to the implementation stage. More practical steps are necessary, such as: calculation of damages, identification of pathways, development of assessment methods (e.g. checking at ports), formulation of measures, and development of indicators for each action (to measure if the action is successful or not). It is necessary to involve in the process not only biologists, but also economists and policy makers. IAS can be integrated in the EIA assessments.

Possible approaches were discussed. The Strategy will refer to the Danube Region as well as to the adjacent region of the Black Sea. As the region is quite large, focus should be placed on the main channel and selected pilot river basins. We will start with collecting available



and confident data and assessments from the region (publications, reports). Environmental history can be used. Integrative approach was recommended – to involve scientists, managers, authorities and broad participation.

The discussed topics during the meeting will be used as a basis for the preparation of the strategy draft, the first topic being split into two: IAS - Species and interactions/ impact in the DRB and Pathways of introduction in the DRB.

A team for the preparation of the Strategy draft was proposed (see below).

The meeting agreed on the following:

- Initiate the preparation of the DIAS strategy.
- Follow the requirements of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the new EU Regulation on IAS prevention and management, and consider the demands of the region.
- Follow the key topics: 1) IAS - Species and interactions/ impact in the DRB; 2) Pathways of introduction in the DRB; 3) Information system and knowledge dissemination; 4) Risk assessment and prioritisation; 5) Early detection and rapid eradication; 6) Management and restoration; 7) Awareness raising.
- Cover the Danube Region as well as the adjacent region of the Black Sea, focusing on the main channel and selected pilot river basins.
- Use available and confident data for the region and integrative approach.
- Establish a strategy team, including: Ahmet Uludag, Aljosa Duplic, Csaba Csuzdi, Doru Banaduc, Florian Ballnus, Gabor Guti, Harald Kutzenberger, Milica Rat, Momir Paunovic, and Teodora Trichkova.

4.3. Exploring options for cooperation and funding within the frames of ESENIAS, IAD and other organisations

Different options for funding of DIAS individually and in the frame of IAD, ESENIAS and other organisations were discussed. The minimum need is for funding of the second meeting in spring of 2015. It was agreed that in the beginning small funds for small projects (separate modules) can be used within the Danube Strategy or from other funding sources. Some of the activities can be performed at national level where possible. The core group and all the participants will search for other potential funding sources and opportunities.

4.4. Defining next steps

The meeting agreed on the following short-term working plan:

	Task	Responsibility	Deadline
1	Prepare meeting report and distribute among participants	Core group	15 January 2015
2	Prepare mission statement	Core group	25 January 2015
3	Prepare the DIAS expert template	Core group	25 January 2015
4	Distribute the DIAS expert template and start the formation of the network (getting connections)	Core group	After 25 January 2015
5	Prepare and distribute the DIAS logo	Core group	31 January 2015
6	Prepare draft list with thematic working	Core group	31 January 2015

	groups		
7	Proposal for final list of Strategy team (in order to fill some gaps – invite specialist in socio-economics, GIS expert, and others)	Core group	31 January 2015
8	Proposal for DIAS governance	Core group	Spring 2015
9	Prepare a draft structure of the DIAS Strategy	Strategy team	Spring 2015
10	Prepare a schedule and organise the second DIAS meeting (to discuss the Strategy draft structure, define the tasks of the focal points and prepare a more detailed plan for future work)	Core group	Spring 2015 Possible dates: 23-24 April 2015
11	Search for funding opportunities	Core group and all participants	2015

5. Annexes

Annex 1. Workshop Agenda

Annex 2. List of Participants



ANNEX 1: Workshop Agenda

DANUBE REGION INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES NETWORK (DIAS)

KICK-OFF MEETING

9-10 OCTOBER 2014

SOFIA, BULGARIA

WORKSHOP VENUE:

Best Western Plus City Hotel, 6 Stara Planina Str., Sofia
www.sofiacityhotel.com/en/

ORGANISED BY:

Priority Area 06 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), Bavarian State Ministry of Environment and Consumer Protection
International Association for Danube Research (IAD)
East and South European Network for Invasive Alien Species (ESENIAS)
Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IBER-BAS)

ORGANISING COMMITTEE:

Mr Florian Ballnus, Priority Area 06 coordinator – EUSDR, Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection
Mr Harald Kutzenberger, IAD General Secretary
Ms Teodora Trichkova, IBER-BAS, ESENIAS
Mr Gábor Guti, Danube Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

SUPPORTED BY:

Bavarian State Ministry of Environment and Consumer Protection
Within the frame of Priority Area 06 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)



WORKSHOP OUTLINE

The Danube River is a part of the South-European aquatic invasion corridor, which links the Black Sea basin with the North Sea basin via the Danube–Main–Rhine Canal and it has been exposed to the introduction and influence of invasive alien species (IAS).

There are numerous challenges in management of IAS and different pathways and vectors of their introductions. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (**ICPDR**) acknowledges that IAS have become a major concern for the Danube River and their further classification and analysis are vital for effective river basin management. Also the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)³ which has been endorsed in 2011 acknowledges IAS as one major threat to biodiversity and a livable Danube Region. Consequently, one of the targets of the **EUSDR** as defined in **Priority Area 06** reads: “By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.” Proposed actions should include assessing the impact of IAS on the ecosystems in the Danube region, identifying environmentally friendly ways to control their development, promoting research to identify ecologically sound ways to keep their population under control or eliminate them, and raising public awareness about the danger of IAS. This target is actually the starting point for the DIAS.

Finally, the **European Commission** has published a proposal for a Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species⁴.

There are already several joint initiatives related to IAS in the Danube River basin (DRB). Monitoring of aquatic IAS was included in the Joint Danube Survey 3 (ICPDR, 2013). Since 2012 a joint project on ‘Potential threats to environmental and economic sustainability in the Danube and Black Sea Region: Danube River as invasive alien species corridor’ has been implemented by ESENIAS and IAD. These initiatives have demonstrated the strong necessity of cooperation and coordinated actions related to IAS in the DRB. This can only partially be covered by ESENIAS in the Lower and Middle Danube River basin.

The Workshop will bring together IAS experts from the Danube Region countries in order to:

- Establish the Danube Region Invasive Alien Species network (DIAS) as new initiative to tackle the issue of IAS in the Danube Region in a coordinated and efficient way.
- Discuss the scope of tasks of DIAS, its internal and external organisation, its relation to existing initiatives, networks, organisations and authorities.
- Discuss guiding questions towards a DIAS strategy on key topics, such as: IAS species and pathways of introduction in the DRB; Information system and knowledge dissemination; Risk assessment and prioritisation; Early detection and rapid eradication; Management and restoration; and Awareness rising.
- Discuss the preparation of a DIAS strategy following the requirements of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the new EU proposal for a Regulation on IAS prevention and management.
- Initiate the preparation of the DIAS strategy and plan future work.
- Explore options for cooperation and funding within the frames of ESENIAS, IAD and other organisations.

³ COM(2010) 715 final, see also: www.danube-region.eu

⁴ COM(2013) 620 final



AGENDA

09 October 2014

12.00 Networking lunch and registration

13:00 **Opening session with welcome and introduction of participants**

13.30 **Background (presentations)**

F. Ballnus – EUSDR – Structure and process

A. Kotsev (JRC) – Danube Reference Data and Services Infrastructure in Support of the EUSDR

M. Paunovic (ICPDR) – JDS3 results on IAS in the Danube River

T. Trichkova, H. Kutzenberger, F. Ballnus et al. – proposal on DIAS key topics and processes

Discussion

15.30 Coffee break

16:00 **Guiding questions towards a DIAS strategy on six key topics (discussion):**

- IAS - Species and pathways of introduction in the DRB
- Information system and knowledge dissemination
- Risk assessment and prioritisation
- Early detection and rapid eradication
- Management and restoration
- Awareness raising

17:30 Discussion on one of the key questions: What we can really do in practice to prevent introduction and control/stop further spreading?

18:30 End of Day one

19:00 Joint Dinner

10 October 2014

09:00 **Guiding questions towards a DIAS strategy on five key topics (cont.)**

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 **DIAS Network and DIAS Strategy**

- Organising the DIAS Network – Structure and Partners
- Developing the DIAS Strategy – Needs and Tasks
- Exploring options for cooperation and funding within the frames of ESENIAS, IAD and other organisations
- Defining next steps

12:45 **Wrap up and closure of Workshop**

13.00 Lunch



ANNEX 2: List of Participants

DANUBE REGION INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES NETWORK (DIAS)

KICK-OFF MEETING

9-10 OCTOBER 2014, SOFIA, BULGARIA
Best Western Plus City Hotel, 6 Stara Planina Str.

List of Participants

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