



## **“SETTING UP THE STRUCTURE OF A DANUBE RIVER FORUM” KICK-OFF CONFERENCE**

**17-19 September 2013, Budapest/Mohács (Hungary)**

### **JOINT DECLARATION**

The kick-off conference of the project “Setting up the Structure of a Danube River Forum” was held on 17-19 September in Budapest and Mohács (Hungary). The purpose of the conference was to display the aim of the project and the steps of its implementation.

The conference was held with the participation of high-level representatives and experts of Ministries of Interiors and law enforcement agencies of the countries involved in Priority Area 11 “*To work together to tackle security and organized crime*” of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (PA 11 member countries). The representatives of the European Commission, EUSDR, EUBAM, Europol, Baltic Sea Forum, Black Sea Forum, Aquapol, EU SEE Programme, Danube Commission, and relevant Hungarian governmental and non-governmental bodies also attended the conference.

The representatives of PA 11 member countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine),

*desiring* to improve the safety and security of the Danube transportation corridor;

*being aware* that effective cooperation between law enforcement authorities of their countries is of utmost importance for combating crime related to waterway transport;

*recalling* the Danube Security Conference held on 6-7 May 2013 in Munich within the framework of the EUSDR, where the Ministers of Interior of participating countries affirmed that the further upgrade of the centre in Hungary (Mohács) as coordination centre is regarded as a strategic project with an added value;

have agreed to declare as follows:

1. PA 11 member countries expressed their strong commitment to support the project “Setting up the Structure of a Danube River Forum” during its two-year implementation period. The project is coordinated by Hungary, with the partnership of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Federal Republic of Germany, and with the financial support of the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme (ISEC) of the European Union.

2. They took note that the main goal of this project is the establishment of a regular cooperation platform, the Danube River Forum (DARIF) by mid-2015. The DARIF will enable participating countries to discuss arising issues in connection with the safety and security of Danube river transport and to take harmonised actions for better cooperation. Cooperation in DARIF will be performed at two levels: strategic decisions will be made by the Steering Group consisting of the leaders of the national law enforcement authorities, and practical cooperation will be carried out by Thematic Expert Groups. The detailed tasks and operational rules of DARIF are to be determined by the participating countries at the end of the project.

3. PA 11 member countries acknowledged the importance of the second goal of the project, namely, the establishment of Danube Law Enforcement Coordination Centre in Mohács (Hungary). They encourage creating synergies between common contact points and coordination centres operating in Danube region’s countries while avoiding overlaps. The Coordination Centre aims to coordinate the performance of law enforcement tasks related to waterway transport (water and border policing, customs administration and disaster management) and to improve their efficiency by information sharing. Participating countries may enable its operation by deploying law enforcement officers or by maintaining direct contact with the Coordination Centre.

4. In order to ensure the implementation of the project PA 11 member countries support the operation of five Expert Groups (Criminal and Risk Analysis Expert Group – CRIMINAL EG, Law Enforcement Control Expert Group – CONTROL EG, Safety and Security of Waterway Expert Group – SAFETY EG, Joint operations and Training Expert Group – OPERATIONS EG and Information exchange and River Information Service Expert Group – INFORMATION EG) by delegating representatives of their competent national authorities. Each Expert Group will have two meetings (in the end of 2013 and in the beginning of 2015), where the participants may exchange views and best practices, identify common interests and possibilities for improving cooperation. In 2014 three Joint Operations will be also organised.

5. PA 11 member countries underlined that their active participation in the implementation of the project may not generate any future obligation. The experience of pilot operation will be evaluated and the concept of future cooperation will be elaborated and discussed at the Final Conference in the second quarter of 2015.