

Conclusions

*on effective waterway infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance
on the Danube and its navigable tributaries*

Danube Ministers Meeting

Rotterdam

20th June 2016

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for Transport from the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia met on 20th June 2016 in Rotterdam and reached the following conclusions:

HAVING REGARD TO:

- Article 15 §3. (b) of the Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T), including its potential extension towards the neighbouring countries, obliging EU Member States to achieve a good navigation status by 2030 at the latest, while respecting the applicable environmental law in the framework of the NATURA 2000 network and the Water Framework Directive;
- the "NAIADES 11 Communication 2013(623 final of the European Commission of 10 September 2013 "Towards quality inland waterway transport", which includes infrastructure as one of its key areas of intervention;
- the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) - for those countries members of UN-ECE who have ratified it;

- the provisions of the Belgrade Convention of 1948 establishing the Danube Commission and the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin, stipulating that the riparian states undertake to maintain their sections of the waterway in a navigable condition;
- the Danube Commission's activity providing and developing free navigation on the Danube for the commercial vessels flying the flag of all states in accordance with interests and sovereign rights of the Member States of the Belgrade Convention;
- the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin adopted by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the Danube Commission and the International Sava Commission in December 2007;
- the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the related target to establish effective waterway infrastructure management by 2015;
- the "Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries", signed by the Danube Ministers Meeting in Luxembourg on 7 June 2012 by the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for Transport from the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and the Slovak Republic and supported by the responsible Ministers in the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Ukraine;
- the "Conclusions on effective waterway infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries", signed by the Danube Ministers Meeting in Brussels on 3rd December 2014 by the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for Transport from the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Romania, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Ukraine and supported by the responsible Ministers in the Republic of Serbia and as well as Hungary;
- the "Agreement between the People's Republic of Romania and the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria concerning the maintenance and the improvement of the fairway on the Romanian-Bulgarian sector of the Danube", signed in Sofia on 29 November 1955;

CONSIDERING the importance of inland waterway transport for the support of Europe's growth and competitiveness and in particular, the fact that the transport potential of the Danube river and of its navigable tributaries is not sufficiently exploited,

CONSIDERING the importance of a Master Plan for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the fairways as an instrument to achieve reliable fairway conditions for navigation of the Danube and its navigable tributaries and for monitoring, coordination and reporting on the necessary measures for the realization of fairway conditions in accordance with harmonized minimal standards in line with the existing EU, national and international legal frameworks,

WE, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for Transport:

RECOGNISE the importance of the regulatory governance applying to Danube navigation, looking after the effective consolidation of the Single Market for inland navigation services in the context of a European sustainable transport system.

REITERATE the need for national action and cross-border coordination procedures in the field of fairway rehabilitation and maintenance, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

RECOGNISE the effort of the beneficiaries of the FAIRway Danube project (administrations from the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, Hungary, Romania and the

Slovak Republic) in executing important first steps for the implementation of the Master Plan and INVITE the other countries to join the activities, wherever feasible and useful.

RECOGNISE the work done by the Steering Group of Priority Area Ia and the Danube Commission, which are established to improve mobility and multimodality in the area of inland waterways in the framework of the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

RECALL therefore the "Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan - Danube and its navigable tributaries" prepared by the countries' experts and by the Steering Group of Priority Area Ia with the contributions of the Danube Commission and the International Sava River Basin Commission.

ENDORSE the Master Plan issued on 13.11.2014 and the updated National Action Plans for its implementation.

WELCOME the progress in a number of Danube riparian states as reflected in implementing the Master Plan requirements.

NOTE as well that fairway rehabilitation and maintenance has not improved in all Danube riparian states compared to 2014, even taking account of the particular meteorological and hydrological conditions in 2015.

AGREE to step up fairway rehabilitation and maintenance efforts in 2016 and beyond in order to improve fairway conditions according to the relevant target values relative to low navigable levels in the respective sections.

RECOGNISE the importance of regular timely coordinated rehabilitation/maintenance in an integrated manner between riparian countries while respecting the applicable environmental law.

FULFILL the legally binding obligation to achieve "Good Navigation Status" (GNS) for all the critical sections of the Danube River and its navigable tributaries that are part of the TEN-T network.

AGREE to take the necessary measures as identified and agreed by each EU Member State and riparian non-EU countries to deal within the framework of fairway rehabilitation/maintenance with the critical fairway sections identified in the Master Plan, to publish for this purpose National Action Plans once a year which identify individual actions, responsibilities, funding resources and intermediate milestones for the implementation of these measures and to communicate these National Action Plans to the relevant coordinating bodies.

WELCOME the progress with the allocation of resources as indicated in the Master Plan for a number of Danube riparian states and also reflected in the Master Plan implementation progress summary report of May 2016 presented in **Annex**.

INTEND to allocate the necessary national budgets as referred to in the Master Plan and the related National Action Plans, and

STRESS the importance of making fully use of European Union co-financing potential and opportunities for the implementation of required measures, notably within the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds, the Connecting Europe Facility and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) where applicable.

NOTE that the Master Plan shall not affect in any way the determining and marking of the state borders.

REAFFIRM the will to cooperate with the relevant coordinating bodies for the establishment of joint initiatives for the efficient and effective implementation of the Master Plan, such as cross-border and transnational projects, in particular the CEF co-financed FAIRway Danube project, with respect to the sharing of resources and joint investments.

SUPPORT the Danube Commission to make use of its institutional role to foster the coordination of fairway maintenance for the Danube at an early stage in the yearly cycle of fairway maintenance.

CALL ON all relevant riparian EU Member States and non-EU countries to further support effective monitoring within the framework of the EUSDR Priority Area 1a in coordination with the Danube Commission and,

REPORT annually in the context of the Strategy implementation to the European TEN-T Coordinator responsible for the Rhine-Danube Core Network Corridor, which will include reports and recommendations into the Corridor Work Plan.

MEET every two years or as necessary to follow-up on the present conclusions and make sure that they are implemented as agreed.

ANNEX : Master Plan implementation progress summary report – 31 May 2016

Signatures

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