

“Danube Waterway Industry Declaration”

Investing into the key transport axis of the region for the benefit of its people

Europe needs smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The last financial and economic crisis clearly demonstrated the importance of diversified and competitive industrial structures. Over the last two decades, the Danube region achieved significant industrial growth turning the region into a new heartland of modern industrial production sites. Nevertheless, the full potential of the Danube region for the (re-)industrialization of Europe has not been tapped. One reason for this is the insufficient transport system of the region along the Danube waterway. The intentions of the European Union to develop the Danube waterway into a sustainable and environmentally friendly core transport axis for the region did not materialize yet. But, with relatively little investment, the Danube waterway could provide cost-effective logistics solutions which improve the competitive situation of many industries.

Therefore, the represented industry companies of the region feel the strong need to request more concrete actions from the governments of the Danube States to overcome existing shortcomings in waterway infrastructure, to expand the Danube ports into centres for regional development and to foster the modernization of the Danube fleet. This requires concerted actions in the framework of the new European transport and regional development policies in close cooperation with and/or under the coordination of the European Commission.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region aims to exploit the full potential of the Danube navigation by removing obstacles to navigability and to increase transport volumes on the Danube River by 20% by 2020. The Danube is also an integral part of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and the financing instrument Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). Together with the Programs for European Territorial Cooperation and the EU Research Program Horizon 2020, the new EU Programming Period 2014-2020 must be used to overcome existing structural problems and shortcomings.

In order to serve as environmentally friendly and cost-effective logistics backbone for the Danube Region and its economy, the national governments together with the European Commission are called to acknowledge the need for urgent action with regard to the following measures:

1. Establish and ensure effective waterway infrastructure management

- **Implementing adequate fairway parameters** according to the provisions of the Belgrade Convention and - where it applies – of the UNECE/AGN enabling cost-effective and reliable waterborne logistics services as well as safe navigation.
- Acknowledging the need for immediate action in the field of fairway maintenance. Therefore, **planning and executing emergency dredging measures** wherever it is necessary to ensure navigation on the critical sections throughout of the forthcoming shallow water periods as of 2014.
- **Enforcing the “Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries”**, signed in Luxemburg on 7 of June 2012, in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) based on a Fairway Maintenance Master Plan which has to reflect the needs of the Danube navigation industry and ensuring the permanent monitoring of its progress.

2. Execute the pre-defined TEN T bottleneck infrastructure projects

- Planning and implementing already identified **river engineering projects** which provide minimum fairway depth of 2.5m according to UNECE/AGN with tangible results until the year 2020 corresponding with the challenges derived from climate change and in line with the existing environmental protection needs.
- Providing **technical and organizational assistance** to the waterway authorities in the planning and implementing these complex interdisciplinary ecological - infrastructural projects in order to ensure progress.

3. Develop the Danube Ports into effective centers of intermodal logistics and industrial growth

- Defining a **transnational strategy for the Danube ports** as a part of the future EU Transport and Regional Policy.
- **Executing public investments** in infrastructure of the ports and terminals as part of the Sectorial Operational Programs and the CEF in line and in conjunction with the needs of private sector investments.
- Setting into force **National State Aid Schemes for ports and terminals investment** as practiced in most Western European countries. These State Aid Schemes shall be integrated into the Operational Program for Transport in order to ease national budgetary constraints and ensuring high leverage of public spending through private sector investments.
- **Improving public port governance** in order to ensure fair competition, to improve the service quality of public port operators and to reduce red tape in public port administration.

4. Facilitate the modernization of the Danube Fleet

- Setting into force **National State Aid Schemes for fleet modernization** as practiced in most Western European countries and integrating them into the Operational Program for Transport which provide financial support for fleet investment
- Supporting the full-scale deployment of **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as fuel and cargo** for Danube navigation
- Promoting **lead projects for technological innovation** in national and EU innovation programs like Horizon 2020

5. Abolish all unnecessary administrative barriers for waterway transportation

- **Reducing administrative procedures and related dues** to a minimum and thus relief industry from costs and time losses in logistics operations
- **Harmonizing administrative procedures** for transport and transshipment operations to its possible utmost following the Pro Danube concept of “Same River – Same Rules”

6. Optimize financial support schemes of the European Union to stimulate investment in the sector

- **Maximizing the use of EU Programs** like those of Structural and Cohesion Funds as well as other EU programs for pilot and deployment projects in waterway infrastructure, port and fleet modernization
- **Providing access to all EU Programs** for private sector initiatives and projects and reducing the administrative burden of these projects to an adequate level


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On behalf of the members of Pro Danube Austria and International



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