

Conclusions

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

Danube Ministers Meeting

Brussels

3 December 2018

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 3rd December 2018 in Brussels 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 II 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 Commission Staff Working Document "Mid-term progress report on the implementation of the NAI ADES II action programme for the promotion of inland waterway transport (covering the period 2014-2017)"¹;
- The "Council Conclusion on Inland Waterway Transport of 3 December 2018"²;
- The European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) – for those countries who have ratified it;

¹ SWD(2018) 428 final

² 11958/18 LIMITE TRANS 363 MAR 113

- The provisions of the Belgrade Convention of 1948 establishing the Danube Commission and the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin of 2002;
- 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;
- Regional ministerial declaration by UN-ECE³;
- 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 River Basin Commission in December 2007;
- the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the related target to establish effective waterway infrastructure management by 2020;
- the "Declaration on effective waterway infrastructure maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries", signed at 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 at 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, 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;
- the "Conclusions on effective waterway infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance on the Danube and its navigable tributaries", signed at the Danube Ministers Meeting in Rotterdam on 20th June 2016 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, Romania, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia;
- 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-Republic of Bulgarian sector of the Danube", signed in Sofia on 29 November 1955;

HAVING TAKEN NOTE OF:

- Declarations of the inland navigation industry represented by EBU/ ESO and PDI

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 the 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;

³ Adopted at the International Ministerial Conference on Inland Water Transport - Inland Navigation in a Global Setting (Wrocław, 18 April 2018)

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

ENDORSE the Master Plan issued on 13th November 2014;

RECALL the importance of the "Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan of the Danube and its navigable tributaries" prepared within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Priority Area 1a on Inland Waterways;

ACKNOWLEDGE the progress made in the majority of Danube riparian states towards complying with the recommended minimum levels of Services as set out in the Master Plan.

WELCOME the contribution of activities and EU Projects funded as a follow-up of the Master Plan to the improvement of the navigation status along the critical sections of the Danube during the years 2016 and 2017;

RECOGNISE that a modern transport system is a system where adequate resources have been allocated to maintenance and that, if and when future infrastructure works are planned, they need to be executed in a sustainable manner in the framework of the existing National/Cross-Border and European Corridors' programme;

RECOGNISE the importance of regular and timely rehabilitation and maintenance activities that are coordinated between riparian countries as well as at corridor level and

Underline the need to execute them in an integrated manner in order to ensure that applicable environmental legislation is respected as well as the Guiding Principles of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin;

UNDERLINE therefore the importance of the European Union co-funding, notably within the framework of the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Instrument for Pre-Accession as well as the EU coordination for the realisation of this Master Plan with the aim to preserve good navigation status, as far as this is possible with maintenance and rehabilitation measures.

RECOGNISE the importance of the Rhine-Danube Core Network Corridor AND WELCOME the CEF-funded project FAIRway Danube and the joint efforts of all its beneficiaries (Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, Hungary, Romania and the Slovak Republic) to preserve a good navigation status, as far as this is possible with maintenance and rehabilitation measures.

WELCOME the extension of the Rhine-Danube CNC to the neighbouring countries, as foreseen in the indicative maps in annex III of the TEN-T Regulation;

UNDERLINE the importance of making full use of European Union co-funding opportunities for the implementation of further measures such as additional equipment for monitoring, marking, dredging and information services to fairway users;

APPRECIATE the tangible results of the on-going pilot operation of new surveying and marking vessels, gauging stations as well as information services for fairway users in several countries funded through the CEF funded project FAIRway Danube;

CALL ON all Danube riparian EU Member States to ensure the sustainable operation of EU-funded equipment and systems (gauging stations, vessels, national and trans-national waterway asset management system(s), etc.) as well as information services to fairway users even after the end of the related projects.

FULFIL in view of regional development the legally binding obligation to preserve "Good Navigation Status" (GNS) of the Danube River and its navigable tributaries that are part of the TEN-T network, as far as this is possible with maintenance and rehabilitation measures, and –at the same time– SEEK for reaching a "Good Ecological Status/Potential" (GES) and a "Favourable Conservation Status" (FCS) as required by the Water Framework Directive and –where applicable– by the Birds and Habitats Directives;

RECOGNISE the positive examples, including the rehabilitation of bottlenecks in the Republic of Austria and the Republic of Serbia by means of river engineering measures, the maintenance dredging activities in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Austria, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia, Romania, the Republic of Bulgaria as well as in Ukraine;

AGREE to maintain this level of activity and - where still needed - to step up fairway rehabilitation and maintenance efforts in 2019 and beyond in order to improve the fairway conditions according to the maintenance objectives in force ;

NOTE however that the navigation status has still not improved in all Danube riparian states compared to 2014;

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

CALL ON all relevant riparian EU Member States and non-EU countries to further support effective and timely progress monitoring regarding the Master Plan, within the framework of the EUSDR Priority Area 1a and in coordination with the Danube and Sava Commissions;

UNDERLINE the importance of the annual National Action Plans as one of the monitoring tools for individual actions, responsibilities, budgets and resources for rehabilitation and maintenance measures in line with the Master Plan;

ENDORSE the updated progress summary report of October 2018 (National Action Plans from October 2018) presented in **Annex** for its implementation;

WELCOME efforts towards further digitalisation of the monitoring regarding the Master Plan by means of both national and trans-national waterway asset management systems, as currently being realized in the framework of the FAIRway Danube project;

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

INVITE the administrations to consider the continuation of the successful cooperation model of the Master Plan, including FAIRway Danube for further targeted rehabilitation measures to tackle the most critical and persistent rehabilitation and maintenance bottlenecks.

STRESS the need to also pursue implementation of important flanking measures, like the reduction of administrative barriers in cross-border Danube navigation as well as the further greening of the inland fleet;

WELCOME the results of the joint Working Group of EUSDR PA 1a and PA11, which are aimed at simplification, harmonisation and digitalisation of administrative processes in Danube navigation, which have resulted in a first set of harmonised border control forms (arrival and departure reports, crew lists as well as passenger list), endorsed by the PA1a and PA11 Steering Groups and which are part of the current TEN-T Corridor Flagship Projects;

RECOMMEND the further application of the mentioned harmonised control forms along the Danube and its navigable tributaries and

SUPPORT further harmonisation and digitalisation efforts that make cross-border control procedures more efficient and effective;

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 – 25 October 2018