
EU Strategy for the Danube Region
Priority Area 1a – To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways

**12th Meeting of the PA1a Working Group
on Waterway Infrastructure &
Management**
Brussels, Belgium
29 November 2017

MINUTES

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Version (date):
V 0.1 (draft) | 22-12-2017

The 12th meeting of the thematic working group on *Waterway Infrastructure & Management*, within PA1a – *To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways* was organised in Brussels, Belgium, on the 29th of November 2017.

The meeting was moderated by Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman chaired by Mrs. Cristina Cuc from PA1a Technical Secretariat. The meeting was attended by representatives from Ministries of Transport and waterway administrations from Danube riparian countries, representatives of the European Commission (DG MOVE, DG REGIO), representatives of the Danube Commission and transnational organizations (Pro Danube International, etc.).

The discussions run according to the agenda set up by the Technical Secretariat for PA1a.

1. Discussion on critical fairway locations along the Danube on the basis of the FAIRway National Action Plans

Ms. Viktoria Weissenburger (viadonau) presented the background of the National Action Plans (NAP) and explained the contents of these plans.

The National Action Plans monitor the implementation status of the *Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan*, as adopted in 2014 by the transport ministers of the Danube region and it is updated twice per year, in May and October by the FAIRway Danube consortium (AT, SK, HU, HR, RO, BG). For remaining riparian countries (DE, RS, BiH, UA) a yearly update, in May, is coordinated by the EUSDR PA1a. The NAPs are a reporting and steering tool for the operational level (waterway administration) as well for the political level (ministers of transport).

The NAPs contain graphical presentations for surveying, marking and dredging activities in the critical sectors. The results are used within other projects and for user information.

2. Topical overview of navigability conditions on the Danube and its navigable tributaries in January 2016 – October 2017

Concerning the updates from October 2017 the situation per country is as following:

- **Austria:** mainly good year for navigation, except January 2017 when the Danube was frozen from Regensburg to Sulina; some dredging was done on the Austrian Danube sector (East of Vienna);
- **Slovakia:** weekly marking tours were performed according to plan;
- **Croatia:** as usual, problems were encountered with the fairway width (limited to 100m width) and corresponding marking and inspection tours were necessary;
- **Serbia:** fairway width had to be reduced to 80m and dredging activities were conducted on the Sava River;
- **Romania:** a lot of dredging activities were performed between km 678 – 676 (Bechet) and km 632 – 620 (Corabia) and the fairway conditions were ensured; for the critical sector 345 – 342 (Turcescu) and km 309 – 308 (Cochirleni), dredging activities were performed by AFDJ, but these locations remained critical for navigation during the summer months;
- **Bulgaria:** the most critical sector is at km 568 – 561 (Milka / Belene / Condur) and there were critical hydrological conditions in summer; the measure taken by the Bulgarian administration was fairway relocation, but it remained critical for navigation.

3. Navigability conditions from the point of view of the waterway users

Manfred Seitz (PDI) stated that the IWT companies need homogeneous conditions for navigation which do not require intermediate transshipments. The PA1a target is to increase the volume of cargo transported on the Danube by 20% and transport companies can easily reach this target in a good year, but there are still 472 km (19,6%) of shallow water sectors.

Figures were presented that were registered by a ship from NAVROM, one of the largest transport companies operating on the Danube River, regarding the main bottlenecks, observed over the period 2015-2017. It was mentioned that at the Budafok bottleneck (km 1637,700 - 1638,900), convoys need to be split into 2, 3 or even 4 formations made of at the most 2 units. This results in additional delays and fuel consumption. For Budafok, there is a Notice to Skippers from March 2009.

In the last 10 – 15 years operators lost a lot of money and that's why no investment was done on the Danube for fleet renewal. The private sector considers that despite the money allocated for investments and maintenance activities, the results are unsatisfactory in 2017. More information is available and it is more accurate, but still IWT is not competitive on the logistic market.

4. Recent and planned activities and budget to drive implementation of the FRMMP forward

Mr. Bozidar Yankov (IAPPD Ruse) informed the participants that dredging equipment will be purchased using funds from the Sectorial Operational Programme 2014 – 2020, which will definitively help and improve the capacity of the administration. A public tender for dredging services (framework contract for 3 years) was organised and contested. The money for dredging activities in the next years is secured. Sustainable solutions for the critical bottlenecks on the Romanian – Bulgarian sector, a free flowing sector, will be provided by the FAST Danube project.

Mr. Romeo Soare (AFDJ) stated that for the critical location Cochirleni there is an alternative route, via Bala – Borcea. In 2017, the critical sector Cochirleni was extended from km 304 – 305 to km 304 – 309. The volume that needs to be dredged is very high and consequently the dredging activities performed in 2017 were not efficient. Mrs. Monica Patrichi from the Romanian Ministry of Transport added that the budgets for maintenance activities were assured in 2017 and will be secured also for 2018.

Mr. Zsolt Gerencsér (Hungarian Ministry of National Development) informed that budgets for fairway maintenance will be secured in 2018 and that the information for the update of the National Action Plan will be sent to the FAIRway consortium until the end of 2017.

5. METEET project

Mrs. Désirée Oen (DG MOVE) informed the participants about the status of the METEET (Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team) initiative. A good navigation status should go together with a good environmental status. A first action was organised in Croatia (28 - 29 September 2017, Vukovar). During the workshop, where all the authorities from the field of inland navigation and environment were invited, it was discussed about the legislation and a project case was simulated in order to find a possible solution for a case of conflict. Many good projects failed on CEF calls because they did not have good Environmental Impact Assessments. In 2018, it is planned to organise such a seminar in another Danube country. A letter will be sent by DG MOVE in order to ask who will host the second workshop.