

Intervention

by Coordinator Mrs. Karla PEIJS

at the High Level Meeting of the Danube Commission

(Budapest, 9 October 2013)

**"Sustainable inland waterway transport on the Danube River:
an opportunity and a challenge"**

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I have accepted to intervene at this High Level Meeting in the premises of the Danube Commission.

I visited the Danube Commission in many occasions, for instance for the Joint Statement Principle events or for other important events like discussion about technical navigation issues. This time is different. We are here, all together, to exchange our views on the future of the inland waterway transport on the Danube River at the start of a New approach by the European Commission along with the Member States to ensure a sustainable and durable transport system in the Danube river Basin. Let me make a few steps backward.

Only with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 to the European Union, the beautiful river was mostly running within the European Union territories (now also Croatia has acceded last July) and consequently only from 2007 it was possible to start a coordinated approach to the development of inland waterway transport.

In the years to follow, cooperation with Danube Commission and with the ICPDR (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River) and with the Sava Commission brought us to a new way of dealing with inland waterway infrastructural works that led us to the signing of the Joint Statement Principle for a more environmentally respectful approach.

At the same time the Trans-European Transport Network Programme for the Framework Period from 2007-2013 was launched; For the first time, it included an investment of a few hundred million euros in support of inland navigation, of course not only on the Danube.

Some years later the Danube Strategy for the development of the River Danube Basin was also launched for an even more comprehensive development of the region.

If the European Institutions were initiating all these initiatives for a more coordinated effort within and between Member States, also the European Commission services in particular made a substantial effort to coordinate better the European Legislation encompassing transport, regional development and environment, basically making the European Commission one body based on more pillars. All this has brought us to the present days and to this meeting.

In the past six years there were progresses and stumbling blocks: not all the initiatives have been successful and we still face every year blockage of vessels due to drought.

Politically speaking, it was important the Ministerial Declaration signed in Luxemburg on the 7th of June 2012 for a more coordinated and structured maintenance of navigability.

Let's say that a big effort has been produced by all stakeholders and I really mean all, from the governmental representatives at local, national and international level, to the sector industry and to the NGOs for a more and more constructive confrontation of each other requirements for a truly sustainable transport system, sustainable not only environmentally, but also economically. Although nobody can deny the progresses in these last few years, still we need to do much more.

For this, the European Commission and the Member States have agreed the text of the new Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Programmes. The TEN-T Programme will rule the European intervention on the Transport network until 2030 with a vision unto 2050 as ultimate target. The CEF Programme will structure the financing of the networks, not only for Transport but also for Energy and Telecommunication until 2020.

There are few aspects that I would like to highlight of these two Programmes: it is included into the TEN-T that all inland waterways of international importance are part of the Core Network and therefore the relevant Member States have agreed to realise it by 2030.

When I say they have agreed, it means that actually they have committed themselves to do it, with penalty of losing already given funding if this promise will not be maintained.

The two Programmes have already been agreed by the European Parliament and by the Council and are expected to be formalised in a Regulation by November 2013.

Additionally another important aspect concerns the Corridors approach: the Core corridors will be only 9 plus four horizontal corridors (SESAR for air Traffic Management, ITS for intelligent systems, ERTMS for rail signalling and Motorways of the Sea for the maritime). There will be a Coordinator for each of these 9 Corridors. Corridors that will no longer be monomodal but will cover all modes of transport along their axis. This change of

approach will give the possibility of a more targeted development of the transport network in the region creating positive synergies between modes of transport and offering alternatives to operators and users.

The New Guidelines are a real shift towards a pragmatic and multimodal use of the network.

In summary, focusing on the Danube River Basin, this means that the transport capacity opportunities that can be unleashed with an efficient and sustainable inland waterway transport will represent an important asset for local populations who will benefit from the creation of efficient exchange logistics centre.

The Regulations, concerning TEN-T and CEF are in their final stage, as mentioned, as they are expected to be adopted by November. What will be important from now on is that all involved Stakeholders will be able to cooperate and to constructively discuss developments in favour of a sustainable system that will not constrain the growth and the traffic demand coming from all sides.