



**Speech is of Mrs. Maja Bakran, Deputy Director General of the Directorate General,
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Key Messages

- **Pleasure to participate in the Plenary Meeting of the Danube Commission.**
- **Fully recognise important role of the Danube Commission gathering EU and non-EU member states, with the common objective "to strengthen the economic and cultural relations of the Danubian States among themselves and with other nations".**

(Wording of the pre-amble of the Belgrade Convention of 1948, which next year will celebrate its 70th Anniversary).

- **Commissioner Bulc's messages at the recent Danube Transport Day at the European Parliament** go precisely in that sense:
 - Danube has been at the heart of European cultural and political history for thousands of years. It is a lifeline for many regions in 8 European Member States that it crosses, and a vital shipping route throughout our history.
 - The EU priority shared by all of you, is to unlock the potential of inland navigation in the Danube, as it provides economic opportunity to the region. We should not forget that this river serves an economic area of 100 million inhabitants.
 - Danube is an important pillar of the European transport system. Navigation on the Danube accounts for nearly 20 % of total transport performance of all European inland waterways.

There are 4 key elements which are essential to unlock this potential:

- **First, political commitment and cooperation** of all countries along the Danube basin are essential to deliver on its potential. We too often see bottlenecks created due to patchy competences and lack of commitments. Think of corridor logic when identifying and preparing projects.
- One such example is **maintenance** in order to ensure good navigability. **Good navigability** is essential in order to offer a real modal alternative for freight transport and to increase competitiveness of the sector. This is where you have a joint responsibility.
- The Commission has supported the Danube inland waterway sector politically and financially and expect the riparian Member States to stick to their commitments and ensure fairway maintenance. The navigability of the Danube needs to be ensured.
- Additionally, the preparation of investment projects must be a priority at national level, with Member States allocating the necessary technical and human resources for conducting the necessary works.
- **Second**, the inland navigation sector and ports have to come together and be an **active player in shaping the European transport policy**. Companies have to modernise, invest in new vessels and modern engines. Ports have to be better integrated with railways and roads, paying much more attention to logistic integration for inland navigation operators.



- The **third** key element is to future-proof inland navigation and ports, to be at the forefront of **digital transformation and automation**.
- This challenge is about **jobs and opportunities** for a new generation of professionals coming into the sector. Concrete regulatory steps have been made in this direction. Before the end of the year, the new Directive on Professional Qualification in inland navigation will be adopted in the EU. There will be two years for preparing the implementation measures of this directive.
- **Fourth** key element is **investments** to develop, upgrade the necessary infrastructure, tackle the key bottlenecks, especially in terms of cross-border multimodal connections, modernise the fleet and develop the potential of inland ports.
- Commission is aware of the need to continue supporting inland waterways and ports. Since 2014, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) has supported 20 strategic projects in key locations of the Danube: from the cross-border Fairway project involving 5 MSs, "Iron Gate" locks in Serbia, the Komaron Port in Hungary, to the project of rehabilitation of the Danube East of Vienna.
- This represents EU support for an **amount of EUR 350 million**. Overall the support for inland navigation has been **EUR 1.6 billion from the CEF**.
- This funding is in addition to other projects supported under the EU Danube Strategy and under the transport operational programmes supported by the Cohesion and Regional Funds.
- Strong coordination → TEN-T Corridor approach → through our Rhine-Danube Coordinator Mrs Karla Peijs.
- By 2030 - in 13 years' time – we expect the completion of the Rhine-Danube Core Network Corridor, thus providing for a direct link between the Black and the North Sea, via Danube, Main and Rhine.
- Analysis of investment costs totals 2.6 billion €. Required works range from infrastructure rehabilitation and upgrade to completely new construction works on port infrastructure.

Support of DG MOVE to DC Secretariat

- Those priorities are at the core of the **Administrative Arrangement and of the Grant Agreement in favour of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission**.
- **2016 has been the year of preparation. 2017 was the year of delivery and implementation.** But much more is to be done until the end of the contract – **mid 2019** → beyond.
- In particular, **we count on a much more pro-active participation of the experts of the Danube Commission in the work of the CESNI** (European Committee for Inland Navigation Standards).
- We also **expect a successful operation of the new Danube hydro-meteorological database**. The database is a crucial tool for addressing navigability problems, for identifying needed infrastructure projects and for water management studies and forecasts. Please, ensure good visibility of the work that you are doing in this field.



- There are many other files of common interest. I would like to re-assure that all the support that you, the Secretariat of the Danube Commission, provide in the different files is highly appreciated by the European Commission.

Closing - Forward looking

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to conclude my intervention by recalling the significance of the year **2018 for inland navigation in Europe**.

It is an *excellent timing* as in 2018 we will celebrate the anniversaries of the Belgrade and of the Mannheim international conventions for the Danube and for the Rhine.

Moreover, in 2018, the rotating presidency of the European Council will be held by *three Danube riparian countries*, Bulgaria, Austria and Romania.

2018 will also be the European *year for multi-modality*, which in practice means more attention for inland navigation's role in the logistic chain.

2018 will be the year where the discussions about the *next multi-annual financial framework* of the Union will take place. Those discussions will be of crucial importance for the budget support that the EU will be able to provide for Danube projects. It is therefore *right time to put inland navigation higher on the EU and of the national agendas of all Danube Member States*.

In the European Commission, *we are willing to continue work with the Danube Commission*, in the pursuit of the common goal of revitalising the role of the river and the prosperity of all actors in the region.

I can therefore assure you of full support you will continue to enjoy from our side.

Yet to achieve significant results in the months ahead, political commitment of all Riparian countries shall remain indispensable. Missing out one country has a severe negative effect on the other countries and on the entire Danube area.

Thank you for your attention.