

Danube Commission
International Sava River Commission
International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

10th Workshop on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin



Danube Commission
Budapest, 11-12 September 2019



Summary Report 10th Workshop on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin

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1. Welcome and introductory statements

On 11-12 September 2019 at the Danube Commission premises in Budapest the 10th meeting on follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin was held with the representatives of the Danube Commission (DC), the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), representatives of the European Commission, national, transport, environmental, water management authorities, and NGO's.

The Danube Commission, the ISRBC, and the ICPDR supported by the European Commission, national authorities, and NGOs are joining their efforts to protect the riverine environment and improve the sustainable development of the inland navigation in the Danube River Basin. For these purposes, annual follow-up meetings of the Joint Statement are organized.

The meeting with 53 participants was opened with welcome speeches by Mr Manfred Seitz, Director-General of the DC; Mr Ivan Zavadsky, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR, Mr Dragan Zeljko, Secretary of the ISRBC, Ms Karla Peijs, the European Coordinator for the Rhine-Danube Corridor, and Ms Desiree Oen, EC/DG MOVE. The meeting was also attended by the diplomatic representatives of the DC member states Hungary, Serbia and Ukraine.

The meeting was led by moderators: Mr Seitz (DC), Mr Zavadsky (ICPDR), Mr Zeljko (ISRBC), and Mr Trifunovic (DC).

1.1 Danube Commission

Mr Seitz, welcomed the participants and opened the 10th Joint Statement Meeting. He stressed that the Joint Statement is an important instrument for the sustainable development of the waterway Danube and its navigable tributaries and serves as platform for the exchange of experiences among the countries and stakeholders. However, it is necessary to improve the process and its activities. For this purpose, the implementation of new mechanisms is very important. During the meeting a proposal for possible future modifications will be made. Mr Seitz noted the importance to speed up the design and implementation of integrated eco-engineering projects due to the impact of climate change which results in longer and more severe periods of shallow water level creating stress to both, navigation and riverine environment. Mr Dejan Trifunovic as co-chair on behalf DC Secretariat provided information about the foreseen course of the meeting and emphasized the importance of the JS process to achieve the overall goal of a fully functional and multimodal Rhine-Danube Corridor by 2030.

1.2 International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

Mr Zavadsky welcomed the participants on behalf of the ICPDR and expressed appreciation for the participation of experts from different fields. He highlighted that the meeting would define progress made in the practical implementation of the Joint Statement, challenges encountered, and lessons learned. In addition, he emphasized the high value of the synergies coming from the excellent cooperation of the stakeholders of the Joint Statement. He noted that all proposed activities regarding the improvement of Joint Statement process will need a thorough analysis as a basis for their further development.

1.3 International Sava River Basin Commission

Mr Zeljko welcomed the participants on behalf of the ISRBC and confirmed the good progress made with the help of the Joint Statement platform. He informed that the Sava Commission is involved in a project addressing the most critical section on the Sava River „Jaruge- Novi Grad” - from rkm 329 to 300. Mr. Zeljko also stressed the excellent cooperation with Danube Commission and ICPDR, which is important for the success of the Joint Statement process and its future strategic direction and activities.

2. Inland waterways and the environment - Policy developments relevant for the Danube region

2.1 Outlook for Danube navigation in the context of the Rhine-Danube Corridor and new EU budgetary period 2021-2027. EU policies on inland navigation and financing opportunities - latest developments

The European Coordinator for the Rhine-Danube Corridor, Ms Peijs (EC/DG-Move) expressed satisfaction to the 10th Joint Statement Meeting and the high number of participants. She emphasized the support of European funds for achieving a sustainable transport system in the Danube region and that the key objective of the inland waterway part of the multimodal TEN-T Core Corridor “Rhine Danube” is to guarantee reliable good navigability conditions which respect the environmental needs. Ms Peijs stressed the importance of improving public procurement procedures and the need of higher operational capacity of the public administrations to ensure the implementation of projects in the defined scope and time schedule. Being convinced that the strong focus on the corridor development and inland navigation will continue also under the new European Commission, she called on representatives of all countries and institutions to continue cooperation.

Ms Oen, (EC/DG MOVE), provided an outlook for Danube navigation in the context of the Rhine-Danube Corridor as well as on EU policies in the fields of inland navigation, financing opportunities and other recent EU policy developments. She emphasized the excellent cooperation of DG Move, DG Regio and DG Environment in related activities. Therefore, the Joint Statement process remains fully valid and of high importance for the Commission’s services.

2.2 EU environmental policies relevant for Danube inland navigation - latest developments

Ms Jeanne Boughaba (EC, DG Environment) provided a presentation on the latest developments regarding EU environmental policies relevant for inland navigation. She highlighted the previous results of the Joint Statement process and the balance between hydro-technical projects and environmental protection and improvement. Referencing the Water Framework Directive (WFD) document, she informed attendees regarding activities in the frame of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) for the WFD, including work on hydro-morphology, harmonized environmental requirements to reach "Good Ecological Potential (GEP)” and the new Guidance on WFD Article 4(7) on exemptions from the environmental objectives, which included a coordinated approach with GNS. Finally, she provided the latest information on developments with regard to the publication of the 2nd RBMPs assessment, document mitigation measures, and GEP from the perspective of Europe’s most important shipping line and fitness check process regarding evaluation of WFD at the end of 2019.

2.3 Implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the Danube region regarding the navigation sector and river works- Article 4(7) WFD checklist tool

Ms Ismini Maria Kyriazopolou (Networking and Competence Centre, JASPERS/EIB) informed that JASPERS elaborated a “Water Framework Directive Project assessment checklist tool”, which is based on the information and principles of the Guidance and which should be particularly useful for project promotion, including those from the inland navigation sector. She noted that on 11 April 2019, the Danube Commission was host of a successful one-day regional workshop addressing the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) regarding the navigation sector and river works. The workshop was organised by the Secretariat of the Danube Commission and the JASPERS team, in line with activities envisaged by the GRANT AGREEMENT between the Danube Commission and EC-DG MOVE, focusing on the implementation of Pillar 3, Activity 3.1.

In order to determine whether Article 4(7) WFD need to be applied, a checklist has been developed by JASPERS using a four-step approach for assessing if a project could lead to a deterioration or even compromise the achievement of the WFD objectives. The checklist tool is currently being tested on concrete cases with a view to widen its application on project preparation assistance and future training activities. This tool represents good practice to discuss project ideas and involve all interested stakeholders in the permitting procedures as early as possible in order to avoid unnecessary investments and burden on authorities, as well as future conflicts. Ms Kyriazopolou asked for the opinions of interested parties and for comments on the checklist tool for further development of the topic. Cooperation may be continued within the framework of the METEET project.

2.4 Discussion

Ms Barbara Keri (Danube Sediment DTP project) asked for clarification if the topic of sediment management has been taken into account in the said documents of DG Environment. Ms Boughaba answered in the affirmative with notification that the time horizon for the relevance of documents is 2021.

3. Overview on current state of IWT projects in the Danube basin countries

Mr Zavadsky (ICPDR) introduced the agenda item and presentations on recent experiences of projects with integrated planning and practical implementation of the Joint Statement. As a follow-up to the 9th Meeting of the Joint Statement in the Danube River Basin, representatives were asked to focus particularly on the exchange of sustainable technical infrastructure solutions to improve navigation conditions and their potential impacts on the environment. All presentations can be downloaded on the website of the Danube Commission: <https://www.danubecommission.org/dc/en/2019/09/10/danube-commission-hosts-10-th-joint-statement-meeting-in-budapest/>.

3.1 Presentations per countries

3.1.1 Integrated River Engineering Project / Catalogue of Measures for the Danube East of Vienna

Mr Gert-Jan Muilerman, head of the project department of via donau provided a presentation on the river engineering measures on the Danube East of Vienna and highlighted the results of the integrated planning approach. The project started in 2002 and will run until 2030, when all measures are planned to be implemented. Maintenance measures are planned after 2030 in order to ensure the sustainability of project results, in particular as regards riverbed stabilization. An integrative planning structure was set up, and different measures were taken with 6 pilot projects within 17 years of project implementation. The first measures have been implemented in 2016. Activities will also continue through support CEF-T program.

Mr Muilerman mentioned that the continuation of the interactive approach is part of the Catalogue of Measures on the Danube East of Vienna with realization timeline up to 2022 and 2030. The Catalogue of Measures was explained in more detail in the areas of maintenance activities to counteract river bed erosion and for current optimization projects. Details can be obtained from the presentation.

Mr Georg Frank (DANUBEParksCONNECTED) emphasized the importance of implementing the Danube East of Vienna project for the sustainable ecological functioning of the wetland park. Mr Georg Rast (WWF) commended the via donau approach to improve monitoring of river ecology and navigation which could be followed by many other projects, e.g., Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, thus could draw from the experiences gained in Austrian projects.

3.1.2 Current situation on inland waterways in Bulgaria-FAST DANUBE "Technical Assistance for Revising and Complementing the Feasibility Study Regarding the Improvement of Navigation Conditions on the Romanian-Bulgarian Common Sector of the Danube and Complementary Studies"

Ms Georgina Pavlina, (EAEMDR) and Mr Romeo Soare, (AFDJ) presented the status of the FAST DANUBE project. The project was approved for funding under Transport CEF Call 2014 for multi-annual projects, financing objective 4 - specific call for the Cohesion Funds, Priority 1 - pre-identified projects on the core network corridors - inland waterways and ports. The project partners are the two waterway administrations of Romania and Bulgaria, AFDJ Galati and APPD Ruse. The total project budget is 5.252.000 euros. The main objective of the project is to identify the technical solutions to be implemented in order to ensure navigation conditions on the Romanian-Bulgarian common sector of the Danube and safely conducting transport activities on the Danube throughout the entire year, in accordance with the recommendations of the Danube Commission. The project will run for a period of 50 months, between 01.11.2014 - 31.12.2020, focusing on improving the waterway infrastructure with a view to develop river transport on the Romanian-Bulgarian common sector of the Danube (rkm 845.5 to rkm 375). The project deals with the documentation for three critical areas on the Romanian stretch of the Danube and two critical areas on the Bulgarian stretch of the Danube. The EIA procedure was launched in both countries beginning in 2019. A big challenge represent the differences in the legal procedures in developing the EIA Study in Romania and Bulgaria. The last Stakeholders Forum meeting was held in Belene in May 2019, and the project activities are progressing. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

3.1.3 Current situation on inland waterways in Croatia-Inland waterway on Sava river rkm 300 to 329

Mr Tomislav Štrus (Croatian Inland Navigation Directorate) together with the project team formed by Hidrokonzalt and the Institute IGH Zagreb presented the activities for the improvement of the most critical section on the Sava River "Jaruge- Novi Grad" - Preparation of EIA Study and Design Documentation for the Sava River sections from rkm 329 to 315 and from rkm 312+200 to 300.

The project is funded by CEF with a budget of 650.000 Euros and commenced in January 2018 and will finish in December 2020. It will contribute to the implementation of the "Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan of the Danube and its navigable tributaries" with the intention of reaching Class IV. The team presented parts of the hydrological, the hydraulic analysis, the applied multiple-criteria analysis and the optimal solution defined under the project. Additional details are available in the presentation.

Mr Štrus reflected on Ms Lucius (WWF DCP Austria) question concerning clarification of criteria. He *inter alia* highlighted 10 criteria in the multiple-criteria project analysis.

3.1.4 Supervision and Environmental Monitoring of River Training and Dredging Works on Critical Sectors on the Danube River in Serbia

Ms Jasna Muskatirovic (Serbian Directorate for Inland Waterways - Plovput) provided a presentation on Supervision and Environmental Monitoring of River Training and Dredging Works in Serbia with a particular focus on the environmental monitoring and stakeholder involvement. She explained the focus to the six most critical sections on the Danube in Serbia and presented good practice with the preparation project process and the activities of the Stakeholder Forum. Besides that, Plovput applied multi-criteria analysis with following criteria: navigation, environment, technical feasibility and costs. Activities started with EU IPA project 2011-2014 regarding the preparation of project documentation and continued with river works and environmental monitoring in six locations in the period of 2017-2020. The Stakeholder Forum was active in both phases of the project. The critical areas monitored were: hydro-morphology, water & sediment quality as well as biology. In the following periods, the focus will be on the implementation of compensation measures (contingency budget for compensation measures ensured). Ms Muskatirovic also presented current fairway maintenance activities and emphasized the importance of EU support for the project under implementation in Serbia. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

3.1.5 Danube Waterway in the Slovak Republic

Mr Roman Cabadaj (Slovakian Ministry of Transport and Construction) presented the currently ongoing projects in Slovakia: Upgrade of Gabčíkovo locks (CEF transport call 2015), Danube Rehabilitation Measure-DaReM (CEF transport call 2016), technical measures to ensure required parameters of the fairway on Danube (OPII 2014 –2020), Fairway Danube (CEF transport call 2014), Improvement of services provided by the public ports (Bratislava and Komarno) as well as the construction of the LNG terminal in the public port of Bratislava (OPII 2014 –2020). More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

Mr Trifunovic (DC) confirmed the positive experience gained from the Bratislava METEET workshop in April this year. The focus was on the implementation of the DaReM project, and progress is expected when it comes to organizing Stakeholder Fora.

3.1.6 IWT Projects for improvement of navigation conditions on the Danube between Calarași and Braila (rkm 375–175) (DANUBE 1)

Ms Catalina Dumbrava (AFDJ) explained that the focus of the project is to ensure navigation conditions on the Danube all year around between Calarași and Braila. The project includes the following river engineering works that will ensure navigation levels on the Old Danube and have a reduced impact on the environment with effects only during low water seasons: a) submersed bottom sill on the Bala branch, (with a view to recreate its opening, to decrease the discharge thereon and to increase discharge by up to 20% on the Danube), b) submersed guiding wall, c) river banks protection, d) submersed bottom sill on the Caleia branch. Contract price was 38.671.752 Euro. The project restart in August 2011 and ended in February 2016.

A High number of stakeholders was involved in planning and implementation process, both for navigation and environmental issues. Shipping companies, environmental NGOs, specialists, experts held fruitful discussions with the representatives of competent Romanian authorities. As a result, some specific parts of the technical solution were changed based on stakeholders' recommendations. The project was stopped because some environmental NGOs manifested worries about possible impacts on sturgeon migration. Consequently, the construction of the bottom sill on the Bala Branch was stopped at half of its initial height. A complex and integrated monitoring program on the environment was launched in an adaptive management approach.

A parallel project "Monitoring of environmental Impact of the works for Improvement of the navigation conditions on the Danube between Călărași – Brăila, rkm 375 – rkm 175" (ROMOMED project) was conducted before and during construction works and after the completion of the initial works. During EIA and WFD procedures of "Restoration and renaturation of the bifurcation area of the Bala arm to ensure navigation and environmental protection on Danube"" relevant public participation procedures will be conducted in order to ensure a wider stakeholder involvement, especially the navigation beneficiary and relevant NGOs. In case it is required within the EIA procedures, under Articles 5 and 3 of the ESPOO Convention, notifications will be submitted to relevant countries. The initial works have been completed in 2016. The "Feasibility Study for Alternative Solutions on Bala Critical Point" is still in progress. There was and still remains a great interest in the project procedures and project outcomes. Beside the formal dialogues regarding institutional procedures, during the elaboration of the Bala Feasibility Study, three workshops and many technical stakeholders meetings were organized. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

Ms Peijs and Ms Oen expressed concern about the problem of implementation and extension work on the sector Calarasi-Braila. It was noted that the dredging performed even consistently doesn't solve the maintenance problem, and that there is continuity with respect to the fish migration/sturgeon.

Ms Lucius noted the importance of a joint approach and cooperation regarding the topic of sturgeon conservation in the Danube River Basin and asked the Romanian representatives for data sharing collected in the course of the studies.

3.1.7 Win-Win Solution to protect sturgeon species and to ensure navigation conditions on Bala Branch vs. Old Danube in the context of sustainable development in Romania

Ms Madalina Boboc and Ms Monica Matei (INCDPM) provided a presentation on the improvement of navigation conditions on the Bala Branch vs. Old Danube to restore the natural evolution of the Bala Branch course based on interpreting the historical maps regarding the riverbed's dynamics and further evolution of the hydro-technical constructions' impact in the area of interest, ensuring also the continuity of sturgeon migration routes.

The hydro-technical works performed so far have not solved the problem of flow efficiency for naval transport and, implicitly, improvement of navigation conditions on the Lower Danube, though the constructions works performed until now on the Bala Branch have not interrupted the sturgeon migration routes. In this situation, it is necessary to find a technical solution that may be applied, with concrete results for improving the navigation conditions on the Old Danube, with minimum impact on the environment, and especially on sturgeons by ensuring the continuity of their migration routes. The project foresees the development of a physical model, tested in laboratory conditions and demonstrating the applicability of the technological solution through numerical modelling; a solution regarding the water flows redistribution in the area of bifurcation between the Bala Branch and the Old Danube, under low and average water levels scenarios, by developing a guiding dyke located on the Old Danube, without affecting sturgeon species; tagging and monitoring sturgeon specimens in order to analyze their behavior and identify their migration routes; developing a patent regarding the solution of water flows redistribution in the Bala Branch – Old Danube area. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

3.2 Activities of River Commissions

3.2.1 Sava Commission

Mr Milkovic from ISRBC provided a presentation on the status of the development of the project documentation and the EIA Study for the improvement of navigation conditions on the Sava River Waterway sector from rkm 300 to 329 - sector Novi Grad with a focus on the Stakeholders Forum. ISRBC by its Decision established Stakeholders Forum and integral part of the Decision are List of Forum Members and Methodology of Work. Members from the local stakeholders was determined by public call for expressions of interest for Membership announced on the web sites of the Ministries for Transport from B&H and Croatia and all applications was accepted. The members are coming from the sectors of the nature and environment protection, IWW transport and water management. Forum held its first meeting and started discussion on variant solutions for the improvement of the fairway. It was emphasized that it is the first forum established by an international organization for a cross-border project. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

3.2.2 Danube Commission

Mr Trifunovic (DC) noted that the DC Secretariat actively participated in the Stakeholder Forum of the project Supervision and Environmental Monitoring of River Training and Dredging Works in Serbia. In addition to other participants, such as ICPDR, via donau, WWF, the DC Secretariat participated without exception in six sessions so far. Progress has been made in river works. Other works are also performed in parallel: dredging works, construction of groins/ detached groins, and chevrons. In the first period, the focus was on the Futog sector which is one of the most critical bottlenecks on the Middle Danube.

He noted that the next Stakeholders Forum meeting will be held on 25 October 2019 in Novi Sad and the focus will be on compensation measures. The project shall end in August 2020. There is a high possibility that this project will present real best practices regarding environmental monitoring and Stakeholder Fora on both phases of planning and design and river works. He expressed readiness of the DC Secretariat to participate in other Fora and to contribute to the work and transparency to projects including: FAST Danube, Calarasi-Braila, DaReM, etc.

3.3 Environmental projects

3.3.1 Danube Sediment Management - Restoration of the Sediment Balance in the Danube River (Danube Sediment)

Ms Barbara Keri (project manager of DTP Danube Sediment project) explained the project organisation consisting of 14 partners from nine countries with aims at improving water and sediment management, as well as the morphology of the Danube River. With a budget of 3.56 million Euro, the formal end of project will be in autumn 2019. The project team is collecting sediment transport data in the Danube River and its main tributaries. This data provides the foundation for a Danube-wide sediment balance that will analyze the sinks, sources and redistribution of sediment and their impacts. A main project result will be the first “Danube Sediment Management Guidance (DSMG)”. This document will deliver key contributions to the 3rd Danube River Basin Management Plan and the 2nd Danube Flood Risk Management Plan, both of which are developed by the ICPDR. One of the key objectives was to establish a sediment budget for the Danube River and selected tributaries, which implies quantification of the downstream fluxes of sediments through the Danube and identification of surpluses and deficits. A “Sediment Manual for Stakeholders (SMS)” will focus on target-group specific measures for improved sediment management in navigation, hydropower generation, flood risk management and river basin management. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

3.3.2 MEASURES project

Mr. Paul Meulenbroek (University of Natural Resources & Life Science Vienna) presented development of the MEASURES project. MEASURES aims to create ecological corridors by identifying key habitats and initiating protection measures along the Danube and its main tributaries. The implementation period is three years under the DTP Programme (01.06.2018 –31.5.2021) with a budget of 2.5 million euros. MEASURES will pave the way for the establishment of ecological corridors through identifying key habitats and initiating protective measures along the Danube and its main tributaries. A methodology for migratory fish habitat mapping will be developed and tested. A harmonised strategy (including prioritization) for the restoration of ecological corridors will be developed and will support implementation in future management plans. Two pilot actions are envisaged: (1) identification and mapping of key habitats; and (2) restocking of two native species to preserve their genetic pool. A network for concerted restocking of targeted species will be established, as well as a manual for the operation of breed stock facilities. A MEASURES Information System will be created to facilitate access to information for experts, decision makers, and the general public. Concrete input into the next drafts of policy and management plans (*e.g.*, river basin and flood risk management plans) will secure the translation of project outcomes into sustainable management of relevant sites restoring ecological corridors. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

With the main project objectives of identification and mapping of migratory fish habitats and creation strategy to conserve Danube sturgeon, MEASURES project was created with an Information System and Network for eco-corridors.

Mr Georg Rast (WWF) also noted that the future results of the project of mapping the corridor and migratory fish in the entire Danube region will be very important.

3.3.3 DANUBEparksCONNECTED project

Mr. Georg Frank (DANUBEPARKS Secretary General) noted that DANUBEparksCONNECTED's project aim is to restore ecosystem multi-functionality. Boosting green infrastructure has to follow a strong integrative and cross-sector approach. Common policies like Natura 2000, Water Framework Directive, and Green Infrastructure in Europe deliver the policy background.

In addition to the DANUBE FREE SKY initiative (WP4), the Danube Dry Habitat Corridor (WP5), and the Danube Riparian Forest Corridor (WP6), a main focus is on the WILDisland initiative (WP3). There are 912 islands with 138,415 ha along the Danube. The Danube-wide monitoring of indicator species for river dynamics stressed the outstanding role of islands for biodiversity. The WILDisland initiative now brings together PAs, land users, stakeholders, NGOs and the policy level to prepare self-binding agreements for non-intervention management on selected islands, representing small-scale wilderness in the middle of Europe. Besides a better understanding between inland navigation and nature protection, the cross-sector approach (two cross-sector conferences, expert workshops, joint stakeholder meetings, and one cross-sector Directors Meeting) raises the awareness of wilderness in Natura 2000, for river restoration and integrative flood protection. The creation of guidelines defines the principles of WILDisland, 5 pilot actions qualify sites for WILDisland and demonstrate how to create synergies among the sectors. Minimum 21 sites all along the Danube will be labelled as WILDisland, an online database that is the interactive tool to implement WILDisland in the long-term. The 2nd Danube Volunteers Day (WP2) will promote WILDisland to the general public. This WP is jointly planned with Danube STREAM and waterway sector. It serves as a concrete example of how to improve cross-sector collaboration among EUSDRA PA6 and PA1a by joint concrete implementation. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

4. Good Navigation Status

4.1 Correspondence group for the setting of appropriate objectives for rivers and canals

Ms Oen, (EC/DG Move), made a statement regarding the concept of Good Navigation Status that is anchored in the TEN-T Regulation 1315/2013, laying down objectives for rivers and canals to be reached and to be complied with by Member States by 2030. Ms Oen presented the latest information regarding the GNS concept and highlighted that the concept of GNS needs to be elaborated and specified in order to arrive at a series of ambitious and achievable targets and to come to a concept that can be measured and monitored.

The second meeting of NAIADES II sub-group took place in Brussels on 10 September 2019. The discussions were centered on the future EU policy in relation to the TEN-T Guidelines that had some analogies to the concept of the Good Ecological Status, as defined by the Water Framework Directive, though the final result of the ongoing process can only be expected in the course of 2021. Ms Oen marked out that a balance has to be found between ambitious and realistic target values. In order to be both ambitious and realistic, availability targets related to navigable channel depth should reflect statistical variations in hydrological conditions, especially for free-flowing waterway sections: The minimum navigable channel depth for the TEN-T network is generally set at 2.50 m. The corridor-specific availability targets are intended to be defined by the responsible international river commissions and the involved Member States in coordination with the TEN-T Corridor Coordinators.

The concept of Good Navigation Status is composed of both hard and soft components: The Good Navigation Status concept is to be based – analogous to the provisions of the Water Framework Directive – on a representative set of criteria, which results in an overall assessment and score of the navigation status in particular sections. The assessment of the overall navigation status and underlying criteria could – again analogous to the River Basin Management Plans as defined in the Water Framework Directive – be done on the basis of inputs of the Member States and is reported to the responsible river commissions and the TEN-T Coordinators in regular monitoring intervals.

Mr Čáky (DC) elaborated on some details of the Good Navigation Status concept. The Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (EU Regulation No. 1315/2013) was adopted in 2013. In 2017, the European Commission acknowledged the Member States request for more appropriate objectives for rivers and canals and proposed to the CCNR to set up a Correspondence Group to develop proposals for more appropriate objectives for free-flowing rivers or regulated waterways and canals. Experts from nine EU Member States and representatives of the Danube Commission, the International Commission for the Sava River Basin and the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine participated in the Correspondence Group. The Correspondence Group limited itself to work on the hard GNS components only. In July 2019, the Correspondence Group completed its work by presenting a report in which the proposal for GNS includes three different GNS, namely A, B and C. It reflects local differences in surface water characteristics and particularly in hydro-morphology. In general, GNS A means more favorable navigation conditions than GNS B or GNS C. However, in many cases, it is for hydro-morphological or other reasons not possible to reach GNS A or GNS B for a certain section.

Such an approach should lead to better maintenance of waterway infrastructure and avoid the inefficient use of financial resources for infrastructure modernization. Output of the Correspondence Group and individual statements by the group or its members express expert opinion and no official position from Member States or river commissions. The developed proposals may be considered in a possible future revision of the TEN-T Regulation.

The European Commission mandated the Commission Expert Group on inland waterway transport (NAIADES II Implementation Group) to set-up a sub-group on GNS. At its third meeting, the NAIADES II Implementation Group agreed in principal on the terms of reference for the GNS sub-group. The GNS sub-group shall assist the NAIADES II Implementation Group in order to provide relevant contributions for inland waterways related to the evaluation, revision and the new Commission proposal on the future EU policy in relation to the TEN-T Guidelines and provide support in the development of the Good Navigation Status definition. The GNS sub-group held its first meeting on 29 April 2019 in Brussels. The discussion focused on the general objective and minimum criteria of GNS concept, its level and input to the future EU IWW policy.

He noted also that the GNS topic will be discussed within Expert Group on Hydro-technology (EG HYD) to be held in the following week at the DC.

4.2 Discussion

Ms Irene Lucius (WWF) expressed support of the overall process of the Joint Statement and stressed that the progress in its implementation is evident from some of the project presentations. She also expressed support of the development of navigation in the Danube Region, but only if the main principles of the Joint Statement were implemented. In particular she stressed the importance of the existence and respect for the principles of the Stakeholder Forum in each project of river works on the Danube.

Conclusions Day 1

In the conclusion to the first working day of the meeting, Mr. Seitz highlighted the constructive approach and the intensive involvement in the discussion of all stakeholders. Participants were invited to participate in an on-line questionnaire, using smartphones or laptops to answer to the questions (accessed by QR codes or the DC web-site). The questionnaire should contribute guidelines for further improvement of the process, which will be discussed during and at the end of the meeting.

5. METEET

5.1 Conclusions and results of first trainings in Croatia, Serbia and Slovakia including way forward

Ms Oen (EC/DG MOVE) provided an outlook regarding the METEET project; METEET stands for Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team. The idea behind that advice is provided to competent authorities in developing sustainable strategies, plans, and projects in the field of inland navigation in the Danube region, taking into account European Environmental Legislation from the beginning of the drafting process in order to analyse impacts, constraints, and possible mitigation and compensation measures at a very early stage. The objective and reasoning of METEET is further specified in the letter and Annex of the European Commission to the ICPDR and DC "Proposal for the setting up of a Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team (METEET) on integrated planning of inland waterways Transport (IWT) Projects". METEET's work will be guided and supervised/managed by a Steering Committee composed of representatives from the European Commission services (DG MOVE, DG ENV and DG REGIO), INEA, DC Secretariat, ICPDR Secretariat) as well as the ISRBC as observer. The activity is financed by the European Commission (DG MOVE) via a grant to the Danube Commission to manage the METEET activities. METEET was designated to assist competent inland waterways transport authorities on a voluntary basis with the objective to foster an integrated approach when developing infrastructural projects in the field of inland navigation. So far, three workshops were executed: September 2017 in Vukovar (Croatia); June 2018 in Belgrade (Serbia); and April 2019 in Bratislava (Slovakia). Hungary has volunteered to host the next workshop on 12 November 2019. It points to the problem with the presence of representatives of the environmental sector on workshops in Croatia and Serbia.

Ms Jasna Muskatirovic (transport expert) and Mr Georg Rast (environment expert) presented conclusions and results from performed trainings and the proposed way forward:

- for future trainings, an audience of minimum 25-30 participants should attend such a workshop by a clear diversity of attending persons;
- instead of a virtual project it might be more useful to work on a real case study of the region where the training is performed (to be provided in advance to trainers);
- a comprehensive training on stakeholder analysis and management can deliver additional benefit for the participants (assumed diversity of sectors represented);
- extent of presentations upfront might be reduced to key aspects (not overloading participants with theory) but provided in full extent before or afterwards;
- more emphasis should be put on complexity and timing of environmental issues (including content and timing of studies);

5.2 Conclusion

Ms Catalina Dumbrava (AFDJ) suggested the organization of a METEET workshop in Romania in 2021.

Mr Miklos Marton (Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary) expressed interest in participating in the forthcoming workshop in Budapest and readiness to support the organization of the joint event.

Mr. Seitz advocated for the creation of a real case study for the Danube region out of current projects performing trainings.

5.3 Consideration for the future of METEET

At the end of the discussion, Ms Oen emphasised that there are several options for the METEET development. One option will be to continue with the workshops oriented to environmental issues. There is a proposal to organise a workshop in Brussels, in close cooperation with DG ENV and JASPERS, to explain WFD and EIA requirements. Mr Seitz presented some slides and shortly introduced how the DC Secretariat sees the further development of the JS activities and METEET. For him, the key point is the transformation of METEET into an instrument to increase planning performance and to raise implementing capacity of waterway administrations. The discussion on what METEET should focus will continue in the future.

6. Future plans and perspectives for enhancing navigation and environmental protection in the Danube and its navigable tributaries

6.1 EUSDR related developments - Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan for the Danube and its navigable tributaries/Revision of the EUSDR Action Plan

Mr Muilerman (EUSDR PA1a Technical Secretariat) provided a presentation on the EU Danube Strategy-related key issues in the Priority Area 1a - Inland Waterways and, in that scope, the development of the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan which was endorsed in December 2014, June 2016 and December 2018 by the Danube Transport Ministers. The Revision status of the EUSDR Action Plan was also presented.

The final draft version is expected after the meeting of NCs in October 2019. He noted that the FAIRway National Action Plans Update was published in May 2019, which displays the fairway situation in 2018 as well as the conducted and planned measures regarding fairway maintenance and rehabilitation. Dredging and surveying activities in 2018 on the Bulgarian stretch was a good example for the work progress achieved. Next Steering Group meeting of PA1a will be held in Brussels on 5 December 2019.

Mr Delmeire (European IWT Platform) congratulated EUSDR PA1a for this progress, which succeeded in avoiding high impact solutions, and he advocated greater promotion of innovative vessels.

6.2 Sustainable and efficient transport on the Danube – viewpoints from an industry association

Mr Robert Rafael (PDI) supported the activities of the three river commissions under the Joint Statement process and presented the concept of “Green Deal for Danube River Transport”, the implemented projects as well as the proposal for new projects under DTP- 3rd Call. The projects DANTE and DAPHNE have been successfully finished with clear concept of sustainability. Currently, the GRENDDEL project which shall steer the development of fleet modernization has passed successfully its first year of implementation. With intention to be a major facilitator for the Danube IWT, PDI presented the project proposal of DIONYSUS - Integrating the Danube waterway into smart and sustainable multi-modal and intermodal transport chains of cargo and passengers, filled in the 3rd Call of Interreg/DTP. More detailed information can be obtained from the presentation.

6.3 Interreg-Danube Transnational Programme in 2019 and 2020-DTP3

Ms Ana Leganel (DTP) provided a presentation on the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) and its opportunities for cooperation in IWT sector. DTP represents a financial instrument which supports the policy integration in the Danube area below the EU level (especially, the EUSDR objectives as defined in the Action Plan) and above the national level in specific fields. The whole program covers 14 countries with total EU support of 222 million Euro. The programme allocated ca. 14.5 million euro for 7 transport projects tackling in scope of waterways and port management under DTP Call 1 and 2. She noted that under DTP Call 3, 12.8 million euro will be allocated for the implementation of transport and/or energy projects. There are 35 applications and results of the adopted projects for being invited to a full application will be known on 1 October 2019. More details were provided in presentation.

Mr Romeo Soare (AFDJ) stressed that much has been done in the last 10 years on the Danube in terms of infrastructure improvements. Contribution of stakeholders, projects and institutions, such as the EU support is enormous. However, ongoing problems still exist. Due to the impact of climate change, hydro-technical works will not be sufficient, and new solutions need to be considered.

7. Discussion on key lessons learned and future steps in support of the implementation of the Joint Statement-update the document

Mr. Seitz welcomed the obvious progress in the Joint Statement implementation and the intense dialog between the relevant stakeholders. He also noted that the Joint Statement process has a positive dynamic and there are common results in the implementation of specific projects. He advocated for the progress in the field of eco-engineering, informed about the need to improve the Joint Statement application process and presented a concept of improvement, which had previously been in general discussed with the ICPDR and ISRBC.

The results of the short survey conducted during the session support to the need for some changes in the Joint Statement process. He presented key elements for refreshing of the Joint Statement process, further development of activities and instruments to be further discussed by the three Commissions in the future:

- No need to change the basic document of the Joint Statement –but need to update of Annexes.
- Transformation of the yearly JS meeting into one bi-annual Danube (corridor) project event targeting policy makers & administrations.
- Yearly Steering & Monitoring workshop of the JS.
- Update of the Manual on Good Practice and its further development into an online knowledge management system.
- Planning and executing a bi-annual expert workshop for ecological river engineering.
- Transformation of METEET into an instrument to increase planning performance and to raise implementing capacity of waterway administrations.

The proposal of Mr Seitz was discussed intensively. Ms Oen indicated the financial support mechanism for the current Grant Agreement with the DC as basis to further elaborate the proposal. She also believes that JASPERS can contribute to further activities under the JS process and expects continuous support to the JS process from EC services.

In his final statement Mr Zeljko reminded that the presentations of current and future projects have been presented by country representatives for the purpose of exchanging experiences and progress assessment. He raised the question of including a larger number of stakeholders per country in the Joint Statement process and policy decision making process in general. He supports the upgrade of the JS process and thinks that the discussion on this shall continue in the framework of annual meetings with the aim not to increase the number of meetings per year and with active involvement of its founders. Mr. Zeljko furthermore announced that the ISRBC will organize the next Joint Statement meeting in Zagreb to build on the new positive developments. The proposed date is 16-17 September 2020.

Mr Zavadsky highlighted the progress made over the last years in the implementation of the Joint Statement. He stressed that the largest number of relevant national and international institutions as well as experts with high quality presentations at were actively involved in the meeting. He emphasized that the small meeting survey has provided interesting results confirming that we need to consider in the future a reform process. Changes in the Joint Statement process should not be too radical even the symbolic meaning of terms such as river engineering and corridor.

Ms Edith Hoedl (ICPDR) emphasized that the updated ICPDR Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change was adopted during the 21st ICPDR Ordinary Meeting on 12 December 2018.

Mr Muilerman emphasized the high quality of project presentations and witnessed a good exchange of opinions among all Joint Statement representatives in full respect. He thanked the DC for the good organization of the meeting and called for greater involvement of stakeholders from Germany and Hungary in the JS process.

Mr Seitz thanked the partners from ICPDR and ISRBC and all participants for the assessment of good organization and usefulness of the 10th meeting on the follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin. He also underlined the importance of the JS for the development of a successful infrastructure project on the Danube and constructive approach and large involvement in the discussion of all stakeholders. He emphasized the common approach and the synergy coming from all parties and the special contribution of the EC.

It was concluded that the three commissions will further elaborate a concept for the future of the JS process with a draft by the end of 2019. The reform of the JS process will certainly be one of the topics of the next meeting in Croatia 2020.



Danube Commission (DC)

Benczúr utca 25.

1068 Budapest

Tel: +361 461-8010

E-Mail: secretariat@daubecommission.org

International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC)

Kneza Branimira 29/II

10000 Zagreb

Tel: +385 1 4886960

E-Mail: isrbcs@savacommission.org

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

Vienna International Centre, Room D0412

Wagramer Strasse 5, A-1220 Vienna, Austria

Tel: +431 260 60 5738

E-Mail: secretariat@icpdr.org