

Closing Statement Manfred Seitz
Director-General Danube Commission Secretariat

Green Inland Ports Final Conference
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Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

As we conclude this inspiring conference, I want to reflect on what we have achieved together and, more importantly, what lies ahead.

Over these two days, we have witnessed the results of intensive research, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative development. The Green Inland Ports Study has delivered not just analysis, but realizable tools that can genuinely transform how our inland ports operate, compete, and contribute to environmental sustainability.

We have seen how the GRIP-ESMS (Environmental and Sustainable Management System) framework provides a holistic approach to environmental management that integrates emissions monitoring, digital readiness assessment, and performance prioritization. We have explored how the Digital Maturity Assessment Tool can guide ports through their digital transformation journey, from basic systems to advanced, integrated platforms. We have examined case studies, good practices, and innovative approaches from ports across Europe.

But tools, no matter how sophisticated, are only as effective as the commitment to using them. This is where the role of platforms like the Danube Commission's Expert Group for the Development of Ports and Port Operations becomes crucial.

On behalf of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission, I want to make a clear commitment to you today: our Expert Group is ready to continue pursuing the objectives of the Green Inland Ports Study within the Danube region. We will not allow the valuable knowledge generated by this study to gather dust on virtual shelves.

Specifically, the Danube Commission's Secretariat will actively promote the adoption and implementation of the GRIP-ESMS and the Digital Maturity Assessment Tool among Danube ports. We will integrate these instruments into our ongoing work supporting the "Joint Statement on Decarbonization of Danube Ports". We will facilitate knowledge transfer, peer-to-peer learning, and capacity building to ensure that ports across our

region—regardless of their current resources or maturity level—can benefit from these tools.

Our Expert Group meetings will continue to provide a forum for sharing experiences with these tools, discussing implementation challenges, and developing region-specific adaptations where necessary. We will work to connect the Green Inland Ports methodology with other relevant initiatives, such as from the SEANERGY Clean Energy Hub Master Plan to various digital transformation projects across the Danube region.

The decarbonization targets we have set—55% emission reduction by 2030, net-zero by 2050—are not abstract aspirations. They are concrete commitments that require systematic action. The tools from this study give us the means to track progress, identify priorities, and allocate resources effectively.

I also want to emphasize the importance of continued cooperation between the European Commission, the Transport Community, international river commissions like the Danube Commission, port associations, and individual port authorities and operators. The transition to sustainable, digitalized, zero-emission ports cannot be achieved in isolation. We need policy alignment, financial support, technical expertise, and political commitment working in concert.

To the study team and all those who contributed to this remarkable body of work: thank you for your dedication and expertise. To our colleagues from the European Commission's DG MOVE: thank you for your vision in commissioning this study and your continued support for inland waterway transport. To all participants: thank you for your engagement, your insights, and your commitment to sustainable port development.

The journey toward green inland ports is long and challenging, but it is also necessary and achievable. With the tools now at our disposal, with platforms like the Danube Commission's Expert Group providing institutional continuity, and with the dedication evident in this room, I am confident that we will succeed.

The Secretariat of the Danube Commission looks forward to continuing this important work with all of you. The Date for the next milestone is already set: Expert Group for Ports of the Danube Commission, April 22-23, 2026, in Ruse, Bulgaria

Our waterways have connected peoples and cultures for hundreds of years. Now, they will help connect us to a sustainable future.

Thank you, and safe travels to you all.

Vienna, November 27, 2025