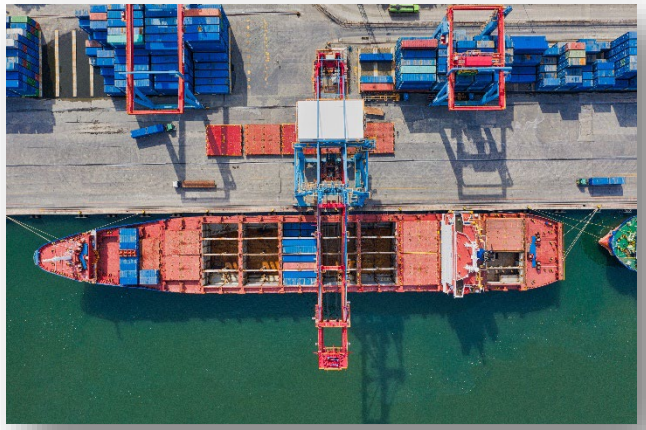
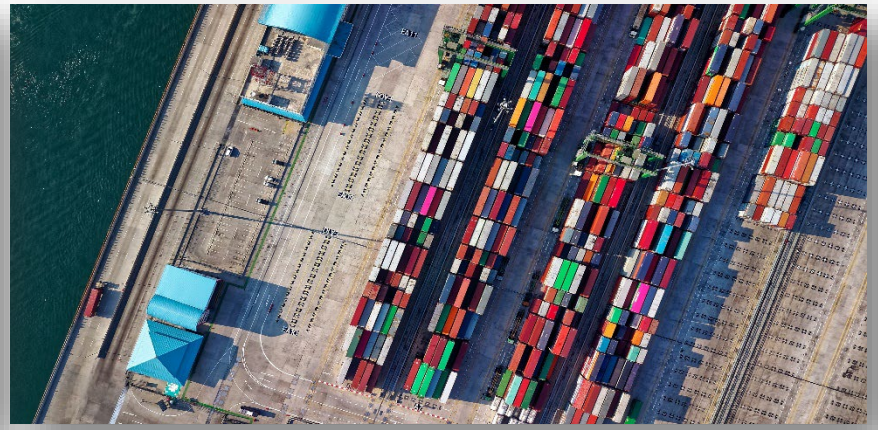
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DANUBE COMMISSION

Working Group on Technical Matters

Implementation of the “Action Plan Towards Zero-Emission Danube Fleet”

Virginia Oganesian

Budapest, 11 November 2026

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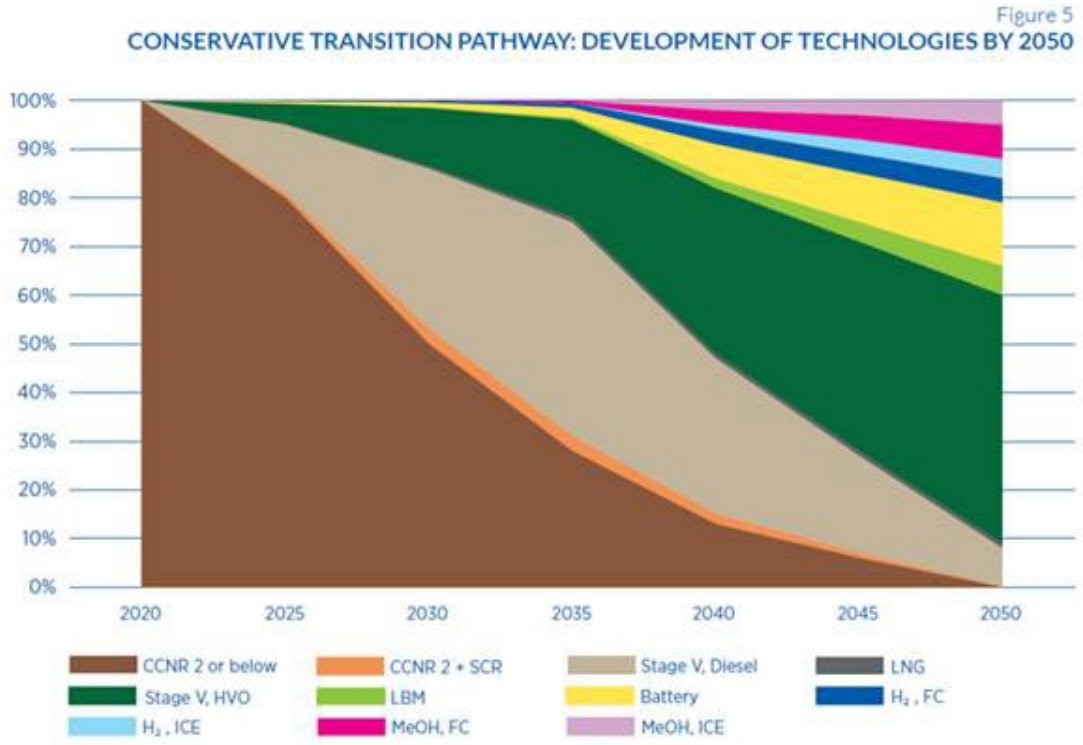
Main objectives of the DC & EUSDR PA 1a Joint Workshops (October 2024; May 2025):

- To bring together the most relevant Danube fleet operators and representatives of all Danube States at the level of navigation authorities and other organisational units tasked with the decarbonisation of the Danube fleet, to start a structured dialogue and to agree on a Joint Strategy and Roadmap for Decarbonising the Danube Fleet with the EU 2030/2040/2050 CO2 emission targets;
- To discuss technical solutions and assess their relevance to achieve the EU emission targets based on the Danube fleet composition and operational profile;
- To learn from the DC Member States how they intend to support the barge operators in their greening efforts (support in funding & financing, other incentives, etc.);
- To continue the coordinated targeted cooperation between the Member States as well as between public and private stakeholders in the Danube shipping in line with feasible investment perspectives of the freight and passenger vessel operators;
- To discuss a first draft of the strategic document “Actions towards zero-emission Danube fleet” distributed by the organizers and to collect feedback from barge operators, IWT sector representatives, Member States & Observers, fuel providers, and other relevant stakeholders.

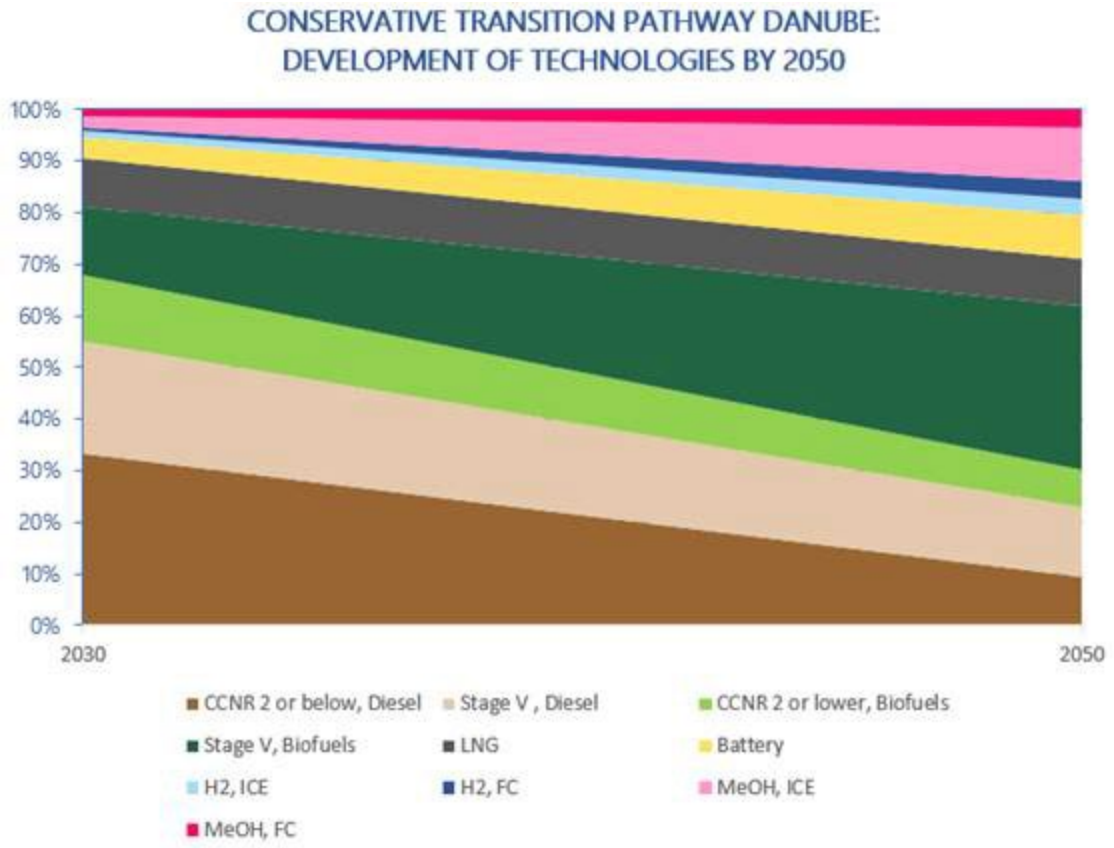




Comparison of the CCNR Study assumptions with the expectations of Danube stakeholders



Source: CCNR Roadmap for reducing inland navigation emissions



Source: Expert survey at the occasion of the Danube Commission / PA1a Workshop "Roadmap and actions towards zero-emission Danube fleet" of 8th October 2024

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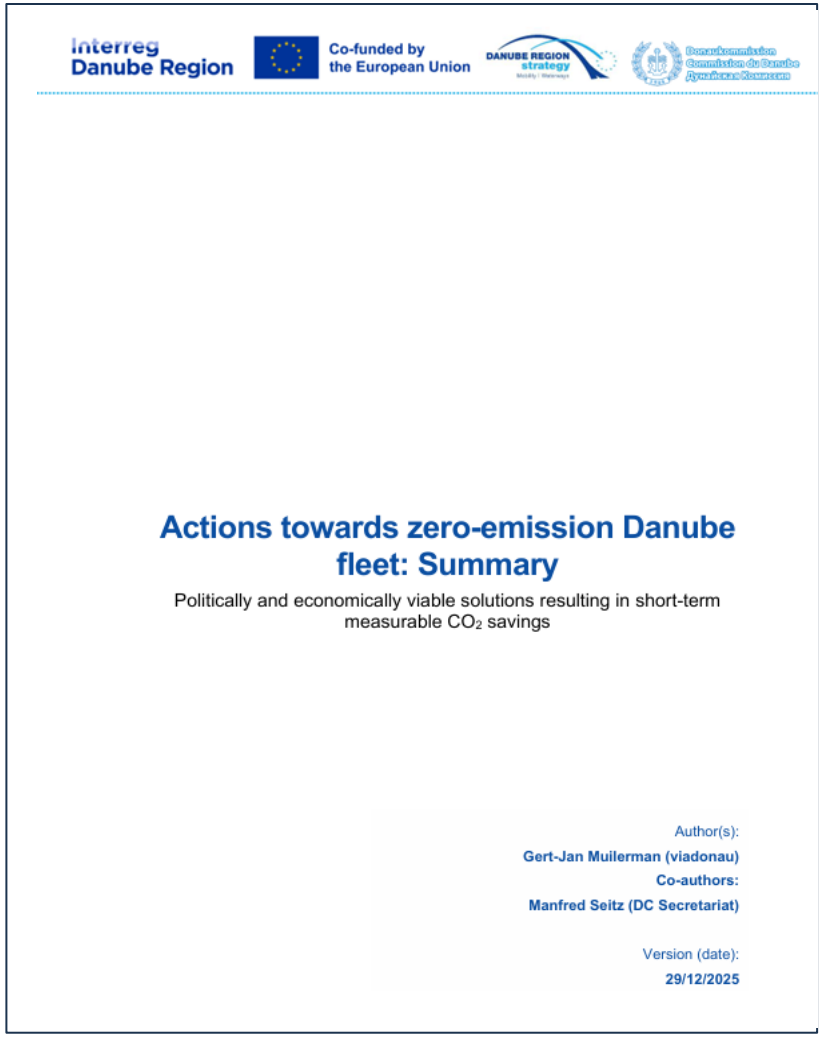
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Actions towards zero-emission Danube fleet:

Summary: The larger part of the fleet will be equipped with Stage V engines operated with Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as a drop-in fuel by 2050. The use of HVO in modern (Stage V) internal combustion engines drastically reduces air pollutant emissions and GHG emissions, even up to 100%. There are certain economic, regulatory, and technical barriers related to the application of HVO in Danube shipping.

Short-term policy strategy for roll-out of drop-in fuels:
- Safeguard coordinated implementation between Member States of REDIII in IWT;
- Use the potential of AFIF for the roll-out of alternative refuelling infrastructure;
- Ensure active state aid implementation by Member States.

Mid-term policy strategy for zero-emission technologies beyond drop-in fuels:
- Assess ETS-2 opt-in for inland navigation;
- Harmonise and improve the taxation regime, ensuring competitive pricing for renewable fuels;
- Amend NRMM Regulation to include hydrogen and methanol as reference fuels for certification of combustion engines;
- Create RTD and innovation funding opportunities that ensure SME-friendly access;
- Create a dedicated IWT investment Fund.



The follow-up activities of the Secretariat on this topic:

The findings of the Joint Workshops and the results of the discussions were processed by the Secretariat and reflected in **the updated document "Actions towards zero-emissions Danube fleet"**, which was made available to the Member States and relevant stakeholders in October 2025 (distributed under letter DC 174/X-2025 from 8 October 2025).

The updated version of the document outlined strategic actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and highlighted pragmatic steps that take into account the current state of the fleet and the Danube shipping market.

The document was supplemented by a set of **questions aimed at evaluating the proposed policy measures (A-H)** by the DC Member States, to facilitate further discussion and develop a common position for the DC.

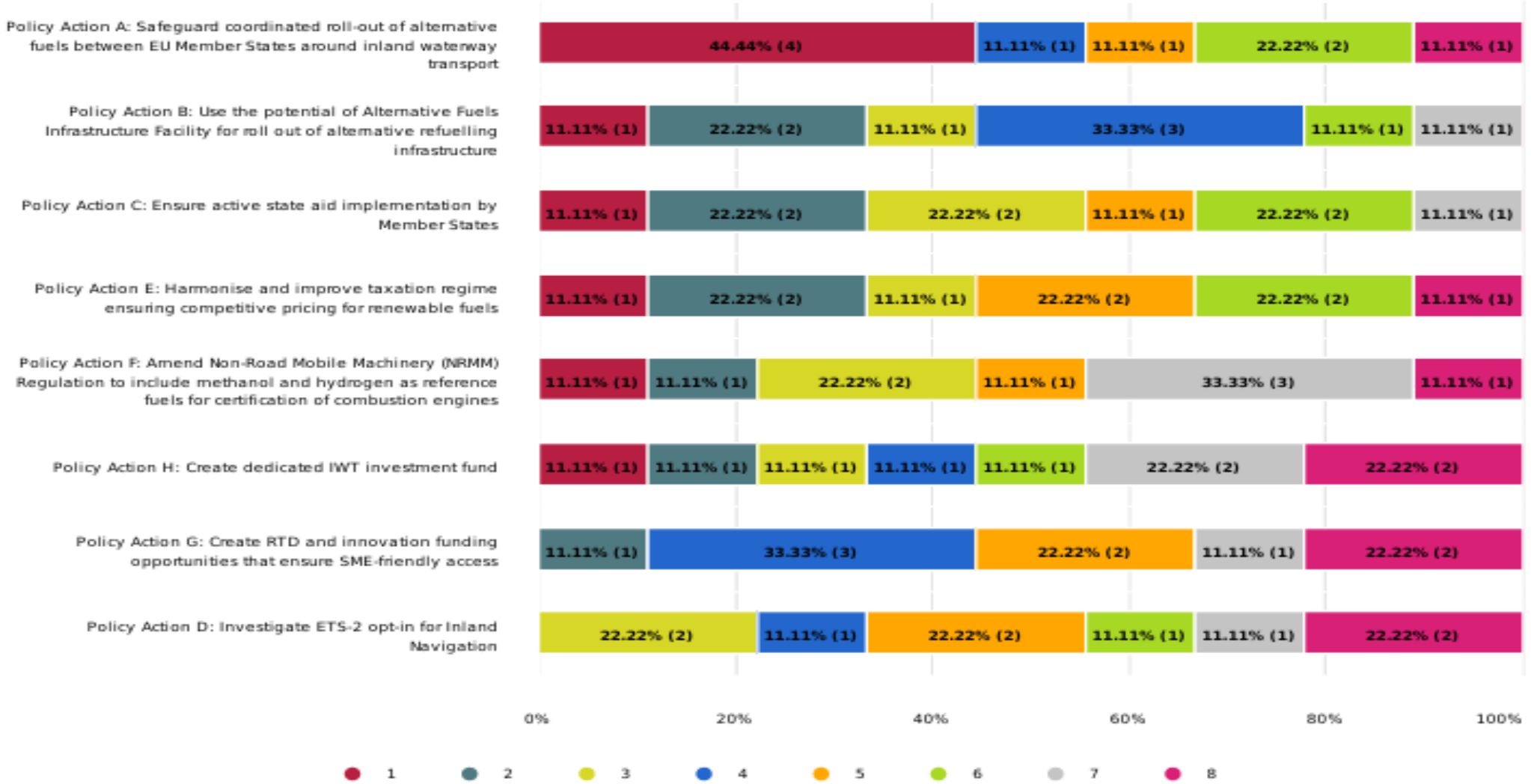
The proposed survey was based on the following specific goals:

- To measure how regional stakeholders rate the objective importance and expected impact of various green transition policies - independent of how easy or difficult they are to implement;
- To identify which initiatives have the highest consensus and urgency (e.g., coordinated fuel roll-outs and alternative infrastructure funding);
- To put in front specific socioeconomic, geographical, and technological barriers unique to the Danube;
- To shape future frameworks, to inform upcoming European transport strategies and initiatives, such as the development of the NAIADES 4 action plan and tailored local fleet modernization funds.

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The results of the survey: Member State assessment of proposed IWT policy actions (Danube Region)



Proposed discussion points and next steps:

- Information from the Member States on the actions in relation to national funding programs and state aid schemes to roll out fleet-modernization grants, operational subsidies for drop-in fuel cost gaps, and targeted public programs to co-finance retrofits for aging vessel engines.

- Further steps towards decarbonization of the Danube fleet, in particular, actions at the Member States and the EC levels concerning regulatory measures for legislative harmonization and financial support measures, e.g., harmonization of the alternative fuels' taxation, especially for HVO; position of member states regarding ETS-2 Opt-In of inland navigation as well as RED III inclusion.

- Continuation of the discussions with the EC and Member States regarding a regulation of “Fuel EU Inland”, vessel operators and their associations, fuel suppliers, the aviation sector, and other relevant parties to further assess the proposed measures and to take action towards their implementation to create a reliable economic framework for the use of HVO by the vessel operators.

Thank you for your attention!

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