



PROCEEDINGS

of the 2nd Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin

Zagreb, March 9-10, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Background

The ICPDR (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River), the ISRBC (International Sava River Basin Commission) and the DC (Danube Commission) have jointly launched the process to develop the *Joint Statement (JS) on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin (Joint Statement)*. After a year-long process preparing the document, and its adoption by the three river commissions in December 2007 and January 2008, the Joint Statement was publicly announced in March 2008.

In accordance with the Joint Statement, the ICPDR, Danube Commission, and International Sava River Basin Commission, including relevant stakeholders, shall meet yearly to discuss specific navigational and environmental developments and to highlight good practices in river maintenance projects. The first meeting was held on January 29-30, 2009, in Budapest in the seat of the Danube Commission and on this meeting it was agreed that the second meeting will be held in 2010 in Zagreb.

Organization and objectives

The meeting was organized by ISRBC together with ICPDR on March 9-10, 2010, in Zagreb.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- inform about progress on the implementation of the *Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin*,
- discuss the further development and application of the *Joint Statement* and its implications (regular information exchange),
- inform and discuss new facts and perspectives of European inland waterway transport,
- inform and discuss the current state of legal and policy frameworks of integrated river basin management and environmental protection,
- inform about the state of IWT projects in the Danube basin.

PROTOCOL

Day 1 (March 9, 2010)

Welcome and introductory statements about the Joint Statement

(Chaired by Mr. Dejan Komatina – Secretary of the ISRBC)

The Meeting was opened by welcome speeches of the Chairman of the ISRBC, Mr. Branko Bačić, the President of the ICPDR, Mr. Mitja Bricelj, and Mr. Piotr Suvorov, Deputy Director General of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission. They welcomed all participants on behalf of the three commissions, informed about the progress made in the implementation of the JS and expressed the commitment to the principles of the JS.

(All statements and presentations from the meeting can be found on the web sites of the ISRBC and ICPDR).

Session 1: Progress in navigation, environmental protection and regional development

(Chaired by Mr. Dejan Komatina – Secretary of the ISRBC)

Mr Komatina informed the outline of the meeting and the agenda where some modifications are needed (some speakers could not come, a new presentation was added).

On behalf of Via Donau **Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman** presented the EU Platina project and its implications for the Danube basin. This serves with a wide range of activities in five sectors (Markets, Fleet, Jobs & Skills, Image, Infrastructure) to develop waterway transport across the EU. Between 2008 to 2012 it aims at coordinating and supporting research activities and policies. First outputs are so far an IWT information portal (www.naiades.info), a Funding Guide, an innovation database, the new education network EDINNA, technical specifications of RIS and two training workshops on integrated waterway planning.

Mr. Georg Rast from WWF presented perspectives for IWT in the Danube region from an NGO point of view. He emphasized i.a.:

- The Danube waterway is a major European route for IWT but not with one general minimum draught.
- Future development requires better integration of all means of transport (see discussion on EC Danube Strategy conferences/forums); WWF also made a proposal of a new ship design.
- IWT project planning needs to be better coordinated/integrated with other programmes (N2000 management plans, WFD POM).

In the short discussion Mr Schwetz stressed that for a competitive transport on the Danube some minimum draught must be guaranteed. Mr. Simoner also mentioned that beside draught one should not forget the width of the fairway. Mr Schindler stressed that the DC just started to elaborate new fairway parameters.

Upon request, an additional presentation within the session was given by **Mr. Zoltan Hlavaty** (Groundwater Consulting, Bratislava). He presented some examples which illustrate groundwater and environmental management in Slovakia, in connection with the multipurpose Gabčíkovo Hydropower Project. Goals of the Project were to solve problems with navigation, improving water supply, enabling environmental protection and utilizing renewable energy production. He focused on the activities for protection and sustainable development of groundwater resources in the central Danubian Lowland area.

Marieke van Nood (European Commission DG ENV) - on behalf of Nathalie Vershelde (DG Regio) - presented the EU Strategy for the Danube Region which is a new initiative of the EU based on the political demand of Member States (initially RO and AT). The aim is better cooperation and coordination in the macro-region (subjects: transport and energy; environment; socio-economics) and expected result is improvement of living conditions in the Danube Region. The Strategy will be based on a stakeholder consultation in Spring 2010.

In the brief discussion it was stressed that actions under the Joint Statement should be built into the Strategy.

In her second presentation **Marieke van Nood** spoke about the implementation of the WFD in the Danube River Basin especially regarding waterway projects. A major factor affecting water quality has been hydromorphological alterations. All River Basin Management Plans (2009) will be assessed by 2012 by the EC – an important part of the assessment will be a review of applied designations of water status, and exemptions). Future Infrastructure Projects (many for navigation), are listed in the Danube River Basin Management Plans and there needs to be actions to ensure that they do not decrease the status of the waters. Ms van Nood considers the Danube RBMP a “must-read” and explained under which conditions water quality deterioration by new modifications is possible and which assessments are needed (related guidances are available).

In the subsequent discussion she further explained that for planning and assessing IWT projects an iterative process on locations and types is needed to find the better options.

Session 2: Current state of IWT bottleneck projects in Danube countries

(Chaired by Mr. Horst Schindler – Advisor in the Danube Commission)

Mr. Nicolai von Rimscha (Bavarian Ministry of Transport), presented the state of navigational bottlenecks in the German Danube section with special attention to the implementation of the basic principles of the Joint Statement in the project „Straubing-Vilshofen“. At this stage still two variants (with and without a dam) are under discussion in the course of an extended study (co-financed by the EC; results in 2012). This aims at securing compliance with WFD and Natura 2000, and involves a so-called “Monitoring Group” of diverse stakeholders. This new planning project is therefore implementing the JS principles.

In the short discussion, the sediment dynamics in the re-built groyne fields were assessed.

Mr. Leo Grill (Austrian Ministry of Transport) then introduced recent efforts to implement the EU Water and Flood Protection Directives along the Danube (several side-branch and floodplain restoration projects; a big resettlement project). Then, **Mr. Markus Simoner** (via donau) gave an update of the Integrated River Engineering Project on the Danube to the East of Vienna. Their integrative planning approach since the year 2000 used an interdisciplinary steering group and technical team as well as a moderated stakeholder process. So far, six of seven pilot projects were realised; the EIA procedure is nearly finished.

Mr. Peter Čáky (Slovak Ministry of Transport) presented the position of Slovak Republic on the Use of the River Danube and Navigable Tributaries. He emphasized that the Danube River ought to be built in the section from the mouth of the river to the city of Bratislava as waterway of class VII and VIc (in line with the AGN and with the DC recommendations), and further upstream to Regensburg, as waterway of class VIb.

He proposed as one of the tasks of the EU Working Group on Rivers to solve and consider the issue of the valid bilateral contract on the system of waterworks Gabčíkovo – Nagymaros to fulfil the conditions of navigation on Danube and on the lower section of Váh in accordance with the initial bilateral project.

In his opinion, the working group ought to take into account the negative consequences of the implementation of the project TEN-T 18.3, specifically the issue of washout of shores and the issue of silt and debris deposited in the basin of the waterworks Gabčíkovo, including the removal of navigation obstacles between Bratislava and the junction of the river Morava. It also applies to the navigability of the river Morava on its lower section.

Mr. Vladimír Holčík, Slovak vice president of PIANC, added his comments about the Austrian project developing the fairway east of Vienna (title “New obstacle between Vienna and Bratislava?” due to washout of silt and debris) and the need to remove the bottlenecks upstream and in Bratislava (old bridge).

Mr Simoner and Mr Habersack (Austria) responded that there is good cooperation with Slovakia and that project data show the opposite result.

The presentation of the representative of the Hungarian Ministry of Transport, **Mr. Tamas Marton** (Improvement of navigability of the Danube on the Slovak-Hungarian and Hungarian sections with special attention paid to the Joint Statement) was delivered to the participants only in written form. It informs that the strategic environment assessment (SEA) for the section between Szob (confluence of the river Ipoly) and Mohacs has been approved by the National Council for Environment. It includes several recommendations to reach compliance with the JS principles.

Mr. Zdenko Tadić, Hidroing Osijek, on behalf of the Agency for IWT (Croatia) and Plovput (Serbia), presented the preliminary design for the Danube reach from rkm 1400 to rkm 1410 (Apatin sector). Subsequent to lacking maintenance and new morphological processes, several new bottlenecks evolved notably since 2002. Based on various studies and modelling, corrective regulation works are suggested. EU Pre-accessing funds shall be used.

In the short discussion it was explained that there is yet no EIA and that flood protection is assessed.

Ms. Cristina Cuc presented the new development in the ISPA projects „Improvement of navigation conditions on the Danube between Calarasi and Braila an on the Romanian – Bulgarian common sector of the Danube and accompanying studies”. For ISPA 1, a monitoring of the new bottom sills from Bala and Ostrovul Lupu shall ensure that sturgeons can continue to migrate (step-wise implementation). The EC still requires several improvements. For ISPA 2, FS and EIA Report will soon be completed.

Mr. Željko Milković presented the progress in the rehabilitation and development of the transport and navigation on the Sava River. The feasibility study was completed and published in 2009. A general EIA study for the upstream section (km 211 – km 594) will be ready in May 2010. In June 2010, the detailed design phase will start (supported via IPA funding). A project on RIS implementation will be finished in 2010. The new Sava RBM Plan will be finished in late 2011 and take account of the navigation project.

The session was closed by the chairman who stressed that there is still a need for more communication. Future JS meeting should allow more time for discussion of certain projects or issues.

Day 2 (March 10, 2010)

(Chaired by Mr. Philip Weller – Executive Secretary of the ICPDR)

At the beginning, **Mr. Philip Weller** (ICPDR) gave a short review of the first meeting day. He then informed that several **translations of the JS** were prepared by the DC (German, Russian, French), ISRBC (all six official languages of the commission) and the ICPDR (Romanian, Slovakian so far). They can be downloaded from the following webpages:

http://www.danubecommission.org/index.php/de_DE/environment_protection

http://www.savacommission.org/event_detail/0/0/195/2

http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/navigation_and_ecology_process.htm

Session 3: Practical aspects for sustainable IWT

Mr. Alexander Zinke presented the “draft Manual on Good Practices in Sustainable Waterway Planning”. This has been prepared under the PLATINA project since autumn 2008, including discussions and feedback at two stakeholder workshops in 2009 (on its structure, size and contents; target groups). It is based on other guidances and various experiences, and explains generally recommended planning stages and integrated teams as a base for a successful planning process. Essential are upfront scoping, stakeholder involvement and a multi-disciplinary approach with balanced objectives (win-win results). Work can be eased if the available technical knowledge and practical experiences with legal requirements (EIA) and technical options is applied. Waterway agencies have the perspective to become service institutions with a wide range of tasks (managing a multi-functional river-scape). The draft manual will be finalised and published in May 2010.

In the discussion Mr. Holčík pointed out that in his view the Austrian project of developing the Danube Waterway East of Vienna should not be put in the Manual as an example of good practice because of some serious objections from the Slovak side. Mr Zinke reminded that the Austrian project was awarded by the EC as one of the best LIFE Projects in Europe and that the project demonstrated benefits for nature and for navigation. Mr Bricelj (ICPDR president) considered the Manual a milestone for river management. Mr Beyer (Germany) expressed his strong compliments and asked the Manual be translated into several languages. Mr Komatina has no doubt that the ISRBC will support the Manual.

It was agreed that any comments to the Manual shall be sent to the ICPDR until March 26, 2010.

4. Improving and securing the application of the Joint Statement

Mr. Dejan Komatina provided an “Introduction of the Joint Statement system for information exchange“. Central point was the new draft template for the waterway infrastructure projects in the Danube Basin that ISRBC, DC and ICPDR jointly prepared (task from last JS meeting 2009). This future database should facilitate information exchange between the river commissions and relevant national authorities on the implementation of the JS. Its first part asks for general information of an IWT project¹, the second part assesses the IWT planning process in relation to the JS principles. The template should be filled in by the end of 2010 and updated annually. Results should be put into a joint database accessible through the websites of the three river commissions.

During the discussion several proposals for improvements were made. It was emphasized that the data collection should be straightforward and focus on collecting information that we can use and determine beforehand how it will be used. A long debate assessed who should fill in this template. Conclusion was that this should be done by the responsible authorities and that this will be monitored at JS meetings and that the three commissions should sort out any problems.

¹ This part of the template was developed by SECI and Via Donau in the frame of their joint project *Inventory of Danube Inland Waterways Transport and Navigation related Projects – Danube Projects Inventory*, in 2009 (see <http://www.secinet.info/pidin/seci-projects>). DC adopted this template as the information exchange mechanism to be also used within their own framework.

It was agreed that all comments to the template shall be sent to the ISRBC until March 26, 2010.

Mrs. Karla Peijs, European Coordinator for Inland Waterways, gave a concluding speech on the “Future perspectives of integrated waterway transport and the Joint Statement”. She observed that the JS is more than just a noble initiative, as many people first thought, but it is a common approach generating useful tools to combine an efficient and sustainable IWT system with the protection of the Danube environmental habitat. Transport and growth must take into account the importance and the richness that Danube river habitats represent, and a good inland transport system is the one that, from the beginning, searches for the optimal solutions. Romania, Hungary and Germany, have already accepted to insert the Joint Statement principle in the implementation of infrastructural works on the river. The further application of this guidance is still ahead but the cooperation of all parties in the entire region is what she considers Europe. The newly launched European Commissions Danube Region Strategy opens the possibility to an environmentally respectful development of the inland freight navigation that is so much needed in the river basin.

In the subsequent discussion on future steps, the participants agreed the following:

CONCLUSIONS

1. The comments to the IWT Planning Manual and Joint Statement Information Template will be sent to the ICPDR resp. ISRBC until March 26, 2010. The three river commissions will then prepare new versions of both documents.
2. The ICPDR will organise the 3rd Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin in the first quarter of 2011, tentatively. It should allow more time for specific discussions and for supporting experience exchange and commenting.
3. The new manual shall be used by all parties and be widely disseminated. The experience gained with its application will be addressed at another PLATINA workshop in late 2011.
4. It is desired that the JS guidance for IWT project should also become an input for the new Danube Region Strategy.

Annexes

- Agenda
- List of participants