
КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ

JOINT EFFORTS FOR MOBILITY IN DANUBE REGION

МОБІЛЬНІСТЬ НА ДУНАЇ СПІЛЬНИМИ ЗУСИЛЛЯМИ

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On December 18, 2018, a round table on “Joint efforts for mobility in the Danube region” was held at the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine. The Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine on the European Integration, Viktor Dovgan opened the meeting. Participation in the round table was attended by the representatives of the European Commission, the representatives of the priority direction 1A of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the Danube Strategic Point, the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine, the state enterprise “Administration of Seaports of Ukraine”, the state institution “Derzhhydrography”, the state enterprise “Classification Society The Shipping Register of Ukraine”, The State Service for Marine and River Transport of Ukraine, PJSC “The Ukrainian Danube Shipping Company”, the Ministry of the Regional Development construction, housing and communal services of Ukraine, the regional administrations and the city councils of the Odesa region. The representatives of the National University “Odesa Law Academy” – Tetiana Averochkina and Victoria Sidor, were invited to participate in the event.

The purpose of the round table was to unite and to consolidate the efforts and joint actions of central and local authorities to support inland navigation in the Danube region, as well as to intensify Ukraine’s activities in the implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region.

Victor Dovgan noted that holding the round table on mobility issues on the Danube River would provide an opportunity to identify the main priorities and measures for the further development of sustainable and environmentally safe water transportations on the Danube River both at the national and the international levels.

“The strengthening Ukraine’s participation in the implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region will contribute to: enhancing the competitiveness of the Danube macro-region; acceleration of the European integration processes; approaching the living standards of the border regions to the European level”, – said the Deputy Minister.

Victor Dovgan also emphasized that the Ukrainian side was interested in activating Ukraine’s participation in joint activities on the implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, and confirmed its readiness for the preparation and implementation of joint projects such as the development of infrastructure on the Danube River and the modernization of the Ukrainian fleet in the context of its ecologization.

The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region is a long-term EU policy to address the Danube macro-region. In 2011, it was approved by the European Commission and supported by the European Parliament and the EU Council. According to the strategy, 14 countries of the Danube River Basin by 2020 will have to implement about 200 projects related to four main areas: the Danube Region, the protection of the environment, the promotion of prosperity and the strengthening of its positions. These include, in particular, the achievement of political stability in the region, joint work for security and prevention of crime.

Historically, the Danube Region has been particularly affected by turbulent events, with many conflicts, movements of population and undemocratic regimes. However, the fall of the Iron Curtain and EU enlargement provide an opportunity for a better future. This means addressing major challenges, in particular:

– **Mobility:** the Danube River itself is a major TEN-T Corridor. However, it is used way below its full capacity. Freight transported on the Danube is only 10%-20% of that on the Rhine. As inland waterway transport has important environmental and efficiency benefits, its potential must be sustainably exploited. There is particular need for greater multi-modality, better interconnection with other river basins modernising and extending infrastructure in transport nodes such as inland ports.

– **Energy:** prices are high in the Region, in relative terms. Fragmented markets lead to higher costs and reduced competition. Reliance on too few external suppliers increases vulnerability, as periodic winter crises testify. A greater diversity of supply through interconnections and genuine regional markets will increase energy security. Improved efficiency, including energy saving and more renewable sources, is crucial.

– **Environment:** the Danube Region is a major international hydrological basin and ecological corridor. This requires a regional approach to nature conservation, spatial planning and water management. Pollution does not respect national borders. Major problems such as untreated sewage and fertiliser and soil run-off make the Danube highly polluted. The environmental impact of transport links, tourist developments, or new energy-producing facilities must also be considered.

– **Risks:** major flooding, droughts, and industrial pollution events are all too frequent. Prevention, preparedness and effective reaction require a high degree of cooperation and information sharing.

– **Socio-economic:** the Region has very wide disparities. It has some of the most successful but also the poorest regions in the EU. In particular, contacts and cooperation are often lacking, both financially and institutionally. Enterprises do not sufficiently exploit the international dimension of marketing, innovation or research. The share of highly educated people in the Danube Region is lower than the EU27 average, again with a pronounced divide. The best often leave.

– **Security, serious and organised crime:** significant problems persist. Trafficking in human beings and smuggling of goods are particular problems in several countries. Corruption undermines public confidence and hampers development.

The proposals follow extensive consultation of stakeholders. Governments, including those from non Member States, have been involved through ‘National Contact Points’. The expertise of relevant Commission services and the European Investment Bank, and other regional bodies (e.g. the Regional Cooperation Council) has been mobilised. Stakeholders were consulted on-line, and via five major conferences. The main messages were: (1) this is a welcome initiative to reinforce the integration of the Region in the EU; (2) Member States and Third Countries (including candidate countries and potential candidates) commit themselves at the highest political level; (3) the Commission is key in facilitating the process; (4) existing resources can be much better used for Strategy objectives and (5) the Strategy must deliver visible, concrete improvements for the Region and its people.

The Strategy proposes an Action Plan, to which a strong commitment from the countries and stakeholders is needed. The Commission will regularly review progress. As a result, actions and projects will be updated or replaced as they are completed, making it a ‘rolling’ Plan. There is an

emphasis on an integrated place-based approach. Good links between urban and rural areas, fair access to infrastructures and services, and comparable living conditions will promote territorial cohesion, now an explicit EU objective.

The key themes and objectives of the discussion during the round table were as follows: the strengthening coordination between national and regional stakeholders; opportunities for activating Ukraine in priority direction 1A (mobility: inland navigation); creation of joint infrastructure projects within the framework of the Danube Strategy; accelerating the adoption of legislative initiatives on the Ukrainian inland navigation.

The Deputy Minister also expressed gratitude to all the participants of the international round table and assured that we would ensure the proper level of development of free and unimpeded navigation on the Danube River, as well as promote the creation of the most comfortable conditions for the development of navigation processes on the Danube River and the shared prosperous future of the Danube Region by joint efforts.

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