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GREEN PAPER ON TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORKS

Position via donau

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via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH was founded on 1 January 2005 by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology for the preservation and development of the Danube waterway. via donau is a modern and efficiently run company that operates waterways and executes sovereign functions on behalf of the federal authorities with regard to waterways and waterway transport. In addition to the tasks of federal waterway administration and transport development, via donau carries out pioneering work by planning and managing the Integrated River Engineering Project to the east of Vienna as well as operating a navigation information system called Danube River Information Services (DoRIS).

1 THE DANUBE: PRIORITY NETWORK FOR EUROPE AND BACKBONE FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The European Union is taking great efforts to intensify the usage of inland waterway transport in Europe and therefore published the NAIADES action programme in the year 2006. Some EU countries reacted on this European initiative and meanwhile established dedicated national action programmes for a comprehensive but targeted development of inland waterway transport as part of the national transport system.

The Danube region is a dynamic region with industrial and agricultural agglomerations and high population densities along the waterway. With nearly 100 million inhabitants, the Danube region is of particular importance for economic growth and social cohesion within the European Union. Due to the international character of Danube transportation and more than 1,000 km of shared borders on the river Danube, strong interregional cooperation is required in order to tap the full potential of the Danube waterway as a cost-effective and eco-sustainable transport axis.

2 NEEDS FOR A STRONGER ROLE OF DANUBE NAVIGATION

Inland waterway transport provides a cost-effective and environmentally sound alternative to the enormously increasing road traffic in the Danube corridor. However, in order to play this role it will be necessary to

- guarantee minimum and homogeneous fairway conditions on the entire Danube
- create an efficient port network of multimodal interfaces
- develop River Information Services (RIS) for traffic management operations and support of door-to-door logistics chains incorporating Danube navigation
- strengthen education and training in the sector as well as attract additional skilled people.

2.1 Strengthening the Danube waterway network

The Rhine–Main–Danube axis is a major transport route connecting the North Sea (port of Rotterdam) to the Black Sea (in particular the port of Constanta). In several sections of the Danube waterway, transport operations are negatively affected by inadequate fairway conditions during low water periods. Adequate fairway conditions for navigation on the Danube are required to allow the utilisation of the capacity of this strategic European corridor. River engineering works on various stretches of the Danube – particularly in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria – shall improve the navigational conditions along the waterway. Identified priority projects shall be continued for EU-funding until 2013 and further until their completion. Projects shall be developed and carried out in line with the planning guidelines of the “Joint Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin”. The objective is to ensure the proper integration of environmental aspects in the development and maintenance of inland waterway infrastructure, in line with the targets of the Water Framework Directive.

2.2 Efficient port network

Sea ports like Constanta and Galati are increasingly developing into major multimodal hubs with large hinterland traffic. In the year 2008 already more than 13 million tons were transported on the Black Sea Canal – connecting Constanta with the Danube. Interoperability and co-modality will be the key requirements in order to achieve an efficient network of ports. Projects should be aimed at the development and maintenance of land for commercial and other port-related purposes, the construction of connections to road, rail and motorways of the sea, construction and maintenance of water access routes, as well as navigation aids and information systems in the ports and on the access routes. Hinterland connections on both road and rail need to be upgraded to improve access to the ports.

2.3 River Information Services (RIS)

The increasing volume of freight traffic between the EU Member States and the countries of South-East Europe requires effective transport infrastructures and cost-effective logistics services in order to support economic integration. River Information Services (RIS) can be used to modernise shipping and make Danube navigation more attractive. RIS mean harmonized information services to support traffic and transport management in inland navigation, including interfaces to other transport modes.

For the planning of the RIS deployment between 2007 and 2013, the European Commission actively supported the efforts of the Dutch and Austrian Ministries of Transport to elaborate a Master Plan for RIS in Europe. RIS implementation projects are complex processes which demand cooperation among a range of partners including governmental authorities as well as logistical RIS users. Consequently not only national RIS implementation projects shall be supported, but also European-wide projects addressing further development, harmonisation and pilot implementation of additional RIS Services. In addition to the deployment of RIS Services by the national RIS providers, measures for the rapid implementation of RIS for logistical RIS users shall be set. It is proposed to integrate River Information Services in the TEN-T Multi-Annual Programme 2014-2020 and link TEN-T with other programmes in order to have a seamless development on the TEN-T Priority Projects. The similarity and co-modality of traffic management systems for rail and inland navigation and the effectiveness of the comparatively low investment volumes involved would justify 50% of TEN-T co-financing.

Crossing ten European countries and connecting a range of important inland and sea ports along the way, the Danube waterway is a backbone for sustainable regional development and a European multimodal priority network *per se*. via donau therefore supports the proposed evolvement of the current TEN-T priority projects towards a priority network.