

FUTURE of TRANSPORT

The Role of Inland Navigation within the New Whitepaper

The Inland Navigation in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Statement of the Chairman of Corridor VII, Otto Schwetz at the Seminar of the European Barge Union
Brussels, March 18, 2010

The EU's transport policy's goal is to ensure sustainable mobility for people and goods and create a coherent global transport system which gives the best possible returns, not only in investment, but in securing safety and other environmental and social priorities as well.

Among the other transport modes – road, rail, air – inland navigation fulfills alongside the European waterways this goal in the best way. In the East-West connection the Danube plays the most important role in this request. The Danube and Black Sea Region contains the single most important non-oceanic water body of Europe. Every year, about 350 cubic kilometres of river water pour from the Danube into the Black Sea from a 2 million square kilometre basin, covering about one third of the area of continental Europe. More than forty years the Danube area was with its main part beyond the iron curtain, dividing Europe. After the turn around twenty years ago the return of the area started very slow, at least because of the Yugoslavian war. After the accession of most of the Danube basin countries to the EU something must happen, to speed up the recovering and integration of the region in the EU.

The European Council requested the European Commission in June 2009 to draw up a transnational strategy for the future of the Danube Region. Modelled after the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which has been adopted after years of preparation, the EU Danube Strategy should be developed together with the Member States.

The strategy should consist of three main pillars, of which the pillar “Connectivity” is the relevant one for inland navigation. It is stated, that the “Sustainable development and efficient use of the Danube waterway to cope with freight transport in the Macro-Region” is one main goal of the strategy. The Austrian provinces laid down in a Contribution paper two more pillars with the demand to deal with the “Location development at multimodal transport nodes”. So the Danube as inland waterway but also as main water resource will play a crucial role in the process of realisation of the Strategy for the Danube Region.

According to this basic papers, Corridor VII invited to a meeting of the Steering Committee in Vienna to adopt the draft of a “ Contribution of the PAN-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR VII, THE DANUBE” to the Strategy for the Danube Region. We received after the meeting amendments to the Corridor VII paper by the EBU and the EFIP. You will find the final Contribution, as it was handed over to the European Commission, DG MOVE as attachment .