

Regional Workshop on GNS

Budapest, 14 September 2016

Venue: Danube Commission,

Chair: GNS study consortium



DONAUKOMMISSION
COMMISSION DU DANUBE
ДУНАЙСКАЯ КОМИССИЯ

Topics discussed and raised during the workshop in response to the discussion paper (please see also presentation slides)

General statements

The problems of the Danube region are rather basic compared to other river corridors (reaching minimum fairway parameters). Not all topics (soft elements) are considered as particularly relevant on the Danube. It has to be made sure that the content and in particular targets are well suited to the requirements of the Danube.

No new targets shall be set by the GNS study, in some areas even reaching the existing targets is problematic. Legally adopted standards on local level shall be used as targeted minimum standards.

Environmental and navigation interests shall both influence the choice of measures. However, Good Navigation Status shall focus on navigation.

The requirements for the passenger fleet on the Danube shall also be taken into account.

Harmonisation of vocabulary is seen as an important issue. It was stipulated to create a document comprising definitions of key aspects in several key languages. This was duly acknowledged, but is not seen to be subject of the GNS study.

The proposal for the topics of the guidelines was confirmed.

Waiting times

Waiting times at locks are a relevant issue on the Danube. Especially for freight barges in summer season, as passenger cruise vessels have priority over freight barges at locks. Moreover, some locks represent severe bottlenecks with long waiting times, e.g. Gabčíkovo.

Waiting times at borders should be taken into account, as they are of special relevance in the Danube region. However, they need not necessarily be taken up as GNS parameter in the hard components, as they do not lie within the competencies of waterway administrations and it is not a relevant issue for all major waterways in Europe. There are other projects (Danube Region Strategy, DANTE, Danube Commission activities) that deal with this issue already, a reference shall be made to this work.

Non-EU countries

Non EU countries must not be overlooked in the process. Their integration in the GNS project is an issue (e.g. how to develop a joint database? GNS criteria for project funding?). The Sava

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Commission set up the Sava HIS (hydrological information system) with hydrological database and the Danube Commission is working on a hydrological database and both abovementioned systems might be the link to data from non EU countries

The consortium is reaching out to UN-ECE and the Blue Book process in order to be able to take non-EU countries on board. A session on GNS is planned on 2nd of November in Geneva at the 60th working party on IWT and an official working paper for UN-ECE was drafted over summer.

Monitoring fairway parameters

As regards monitoring fairway depth in relation to draught of the vessel, there needs to be a distinction made between rivers and canals. The riverbed morphology is decisive for the minimum keel clearance (e.g. rock vs sand). There seem to be two options for the Danube: either a very detailed approach with specific values per section or a general assumption of e.g. 20 cm for all sections as a rough first estimate. In some countries, e.g. Hungary, the allowable draught is also defined in police regulations.

It was advised that as regards width/beam, the focus shall be laid on collecting information on the possible beam of the vessel, as especially in bends, the situation is even more complex.

In general, fairway depth and draught should always be related to reference water levels.

There are several databases as regards hydrological parameters and waterway conditions existing or under development in Europe. TENtec as such is limited to EU Member States. It must not be the goal to set up a new database, but rather to integrate and link the existing ones (Sava Commission, Danube Commission, TENtec, FAIRway project - database). A single data entry is important!

Exemption criteria

Exemption criteria shall not allow inflationary use of exemptions. Reaching the agreed standards for navigation shall be safeguarded. It shall be stuck to objective, measurable criteria that are flexible enough to adjust to local conditions. Excessive bureaucracy and documentation efforts must be prevented.

The Common Implementation Strategy of the Water Framework Directive may serve as practice example for dealing with exemptions and lessons learned may be taken over. A process should be set up that allows for joint understanding of criteria and measures among all affected stakeholders. The GNS process shall take the ecological status of the river into account and include environmental organisations (ministries of environment, NGOs) in the consultation and decision making process. This process could be set up in detail after the GNS study ends (e.g. within the framework of the Danube Commission or follow-up projects funded by the European Commission).

Justifiable exemptions can also comprise cultural heritage issues, e.g. as regards bridges. Furthermore, similarities are seen to the WFD article 4(7) as regards exemptions.

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