

Meeting report

Regional workshop on Good Navigation Status

Klaipeda, 7 September 2016

Venue: Klaipeda Science and Technological Park

Chair: GNS study consortium

Topics discussed during the workshop (please see also presentation slides)

General statements

The focus of GNS needs to be on “soft” components such as traffic management and regulations in Sweden and Finland. Examples for regulative problems include cabotage regulation and acknowledgements of inland navigation certificates from other waterway areas.

Considering the dimensions of the waterways “hard” components and parameter values perform well. This applies in particular to requirements of inland navigation vessels as river-sea and coastal traffic with larger dimensions operate along these waterways. CEMT class IV is in general achieved, but locally higher targets apply. However, as regards the Saimaa canal limited lock dimensions were the reason for the development of Saimaa class vessels. These vessels become increasingly outdated and due to the special requirements, investment in new vessels is regarded as not feasible. Local fleet developments may be of relevance for GNS and future developments.

In Sweden a similar situation exists at the locks at Lake Vänern. They need to be renovated before 2030, but as the vessel type, which is able to pass the existing lock is outdated, the construction of a larger lock is regarded as option. The investigation is ongoing.

In Lithuania, fairway conditions are weaker and fairway depth is below minimum TEN-T requirements. Lock construction would be required to improve fairway conditions, but legal restrictions prevent this.

As regards limits of fairway dimensions, it was emphasized to focus on the development of vessel types adapted to waterway conditions.

The scope of the GNS concept should be extended by applying a wider understanding of sustainability. It was referred to economic impact of inland waterways and their relevance for the local economy. This wider socioeconomic sustainability should be addressed by a KPI to underline the need to strengthen waterway infrastructure and to achieve a “Good Navigation Status”. Cost-benefit-analyses are regarded to consider IWT benefits not adequately.

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Fairway marking

The fairway marking is regarded as important issue for the indication of fairways. This is in particular relevant for the fairways at lakes. Intelligent buoys would be an opportunity to improve fairway dimensions. In combination with digital developments and the implementation of RIS such buoys could indicate where inland navigation is possible. Due to its high relevance for fairway dimensions, the marking was recommended to be considered as “hard” component. For instance, for lakes the availability of a sufficient number of buoys should be considered as minimum requirement.

Mixed traffic

Waterways with mixed traffic may require larger dimensions and other services (e.g. traffic management) related to coastal and maritime traffic than inland waterways with conventional barge traffic. However, the majority of management related components apply in a similar way to all types of navigation.

As regards the focus on inland navigation transport network in the GNS study, the reference to waterways belonging to zones 3 and 4 in the regulation on technical requirements of inland navigation vessels (EC 2006/87/EC), was regarded as reasonable option to select relevant inland waterways. Sweden works on wave management to extend the inland navigation transport area, i.e. the extension of zone 3.

Ice conditions

Ice conditions are handled in a different way by countries. In Finland, the waterway is closed due to ice outside the navigation season. In Sweden, traffic is running continuously even in ice conditions. In general, there is no ice breaker service needed.

In both countries, ice class vessels are required. For vessels not complying with ice class requirements, authorities will only carry out ice breaking activities to release vessels in emergency situations.

Lakes

The water level in lakes is dynamic. Information tools for water level information such as an app are available. The availability of a sufficient number of buoys is regarded as minimum requirement for fairways on lakes. As regards lakes, safety is an important issue considering the function as fresh water reserve.

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Non-EU countries

As waterways crossing/running along EU borders, the coordination with third countries is important for GNS in Nordic countries. The Finish Saimaa canal is partly built on land rented from Russia. Russia is responsible for certain components of the Saimaa canal, which determine the navigation status. Finish stakeholders complain that the waterway is regarded as not eligible for EU funding (e.g. CEF) due to its location on Russian territory, despite its status as Finish infrastructure. It is referred to the TEN-T objective to strengthen links with third countries. Finland has implemented bottom-up cooperation with Russian authorities.

Pilotage

In Sweden and Finland GNS is regarded to contribute to the release of pilotage requirements for inland navigation. Mandatory pilotage is costly and a barrier for feasibility of inland navigation. Authorities consider a release of barges from obligatory pilotage. By addressing the implementation of technological developments as regards barge traffic management GNS could facilitate the decision on pilotage exemptions for barges.

River currents

The consideration of river currents for the navigation status may be relevant, as currents influence navigation conditions.

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