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PLATINA 5.3.3 Workshop

2009 06 09 Zagreb

The 'Joint Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin' aims, as stated in its Introduction, "to provide guidance to decision makers dealing with inland waterway transport (IWT) and environmental sustainability as well as to water managers preparing relevant riverine environmental and navigation plans, programmes and projects." It refers to "the existing legal framework, including all relevant transport and environmental legislation (national legislation, EU directives and international requirements)". In its operative part it gives "Recommendations" regarding planning principles and criteria for river engineering.

In other words, the Joint Statement does not add, by its nature and content, any further legal requirements to the existing EU environmental legal framework. It rather suggests certain useful principles on how to apply the existing legal framework on river planning and river engineering with the view to facilitate inland waterway transport in the Danube area taking into account the protection of the riverine environment. Responsible for the planning processes and project engineering are the relevant States, which are also competent for the planning and authorisation procedures on the basis of the existing legal framework. In this respect the Joint Statement may have a certain effect on those Riparian States which adhered to the Joint Statement but which are not EU Member States.

The objective of PLATINA in this context is twofold:

- to provide technical guidelines regarding sustainable waterway development
- to raise awareness and know-how among inland waterway planners and policy makers about environmentally friendly waterway development practices.

This includes the carrying out of scientific assessments on hydro-morphological alterations caused by inland navigation activities, the drawing-up of a best practice manual on waterway planning as well as the organisation of training workshops for inland waterway planning officials. The works of PLATINA are of an advisory nature; their results cannot be imposed as a prerequisite for EU funding.

The EC applies when funding projects and programmes through the Structural Funds in the EU Member States the Community acquis, in line with what is clearly stipulated in Council Regulation 1083/2006. This naturally includes the full respect of the EU environmental acquis.

We consider the recommendations of the Joint Statement as useful guidance on how to reconcile inland waterway development and environmental protection in practice and we will continue supporting the implementation of these recommendations. We are therefore looking forward to a constructive workshop today and tomorrow.