

Position of SR to the common opinion of the Zagreb Conference on the Use of the River Danube and of Navigable Tributaries

This paper is based on the principle that rivers and water surfaces in general are natural resources that offer various benefits for the mankind. It is necessary to guarantee the liberal access to them, rationally considering the effects and consequences of interdisciplinary character.

Without exaggeration, when listening to the opinion of NGO represented in WG River at the European Commission, read by an expert from the Inland Water Transport Department, we must ask whether it does not constitute a paradox in view of the existing principles of the existence and development of navigation. The European transport policy, the White Paper of EU transport policy, resolutions adopted in Helsinki and Rotterdam, the agreement AGN, the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and of the Rhine, Danube and Sava Commissions and the individual national strategies of transport policy were based on these principles.

The fact that the environmental criterion enters the TEN-T and the European transport networks to a dominant degree is astonishing for people working in the transport sector, especially in the inland water transport. It was permanently declared, and the EU transport policy in its partial steps confirmed, that measures, directives and regulations were adopted so that the inland water transport achieves the competitive level of the other transport modes and takes over a part of the capacity to alleviate other, environmentally disadvantageous transport modes. It is alarming to what degree the NGO declaration intervenes by its requirement for the revision of adopted binding documents of inland water transport, such as the agreement AGN, Belgrade Convention and recommendations of the Danube Commission. We don't mean to deal with the issue what does it mean de iure, i.e. what process of European legislation can be applied to the elimination of relevant legal documents. Which is more serious is the attempt to question the basic axioms of water transport, to ensure its competitiveness:

- **only on a waterway with guaranteed navigation conditions at least 340 days in a year;**
- **only with full use of its available capacity** - significant effectiveness is achieved on waterways of classes VI and VII;
- **at large transport distance** - since the times of Karl der Grosse the dream of connection of Rhine and Danube came true (1992) and a transcontinental waterway connecting the Black Sea with the Baltic Sea was created. The navigation conditions on the river Rhine are however much better than on the river Danube, which is a serious obstacle to the full and effective use of the more than 3000 km long connection of the Rhine and Danube basins.

These basic rules were already observed in water transport, both maritime and inland, by the previous generations. They built remarkable waterways that, from the environmental view, existed in a perfect symbiosis with nature and provable did not cause any damage to it. The upper reaches of large rivers and smaller rivers were regulated in the effort at the maximum use of the waterway. By such backwatering through water cascades a high-quality waterway was built, which created a continuous 500 km long waterway from Vienna to Regensburg of class VIb, except for two short, 30 km long sections near Vilshofen and Wachau. And following completion of the initially planned waterworks between Budapest and Vienna another 200 km waterway section of class VII would be created.

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What are actually the arguments that hinder the completion of this works within its initial scope? Why projects, that reduce it to much lower level, are adopted? This question is probably very difficult to answer.

As early as in the end of year 2008, the working group WG River at DG TREN and DG ENVIRO was founded to manage the conflict between the interests of the water transport and the other interests of use of potential benefits of Danube, which are in contrary with the environmental conservation of the Danubian nature. During the year 2009 two meetings of this working group were held. The WG members were invited to submit their national positions. However, in the name of the Water Transport Department of MTPT SR we declare that we were not invited to provide such position or to participate at work of WG, and there is probably nobody who misses our position. Therefore, on the grounds of this Conference, which deals with this issue, we submit the position of SR to the issue of interests of navigation and method of their enforcement on the river Danube, as eligible Danube country that is a member of the Danube Commission:

1. The Danube waterway ought to be built in the section from the mouth of the river to the city of Bratislava as waterway of class VI in accordance with the agreement AGN and in line with recommendations of the Danube Commission, and in the section from Bratislava to Regensburg (inclusive), as waterway of class VIb.
2. One of the tasks of the working group WG River at EU is to solve and consider the issue of the valid bilateral contract on the system of waterworks Gabčíkovo – Nagymaros to fulfil the conditions of navigation on the Danube river and on the lower section of Váh river in accordance with the initial bilateral project (Hungary – Czechoslovakia).
3. In its opinion the working group ought to take into account the negative consequences of the implementation of the project TEN-T 18.3, specifically the issue of washout of shores and the issue of silt and debris deposited in the basin of the waterworks Gabčíkovo, including the removal of navigation obstacles between Bratislava and the junction of the river Morava. It also applies to the navigability of the river Morava on its lower section.

We require that this paper, prepared by the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications of SR is taken into account in the common resolution of the Conference.