

Hungarian position on the development of inland navigation in the Danube River Basin

Concerning the development of the waterways in the Danube River Basin, first of all we feel necessary to emphasize that the Hungarian Danube section represents a significant natural value. That is justified by the fact that even though hydromorphological risks have been identified for the section upstream of Gönyü according to the evaluation system of the Water Framework Directive, for the total 358 km length section between Gönyü and the country's southern border no such risks are present. Almost the whole Hungarian Danube section is classified as Natura 2000 protected area. The position of Hungary is that the requirements incorporated in international agreements concerning the development of waterways may not be attained due to hydromorphological conditions, to the good ecological status to be achieved according to the Water Framework Directive and to other environmental and nature conservation provisions in EC legislation. In order to eliminate the inherent conflict between nature conservation and water protection legislation and the development goals relating to water ways the revision of the latter may be necessary..

The development of inland navigation, connected infrastructure and multimodal transport systems – in accordance with the transport policy of the EU promoting the role of inland navigation – should be supported in general. It must be highlighted however that there is a range of constraints to such development beyond hydromorphological conditions. We feel necessary to conduct an overall assessment including the elaboration of comprehensive analysis of economic and social factors. In connection with the waterway development of the Hungarian Danube section we feel necessary to monitor the current and future, domestic and international demand for inland waterway transport and in the view of this the analysis of possible solutions and the cooperation with the relevant organizations and authorities.

In the case of planning and construction of waterway development interventions all social, economic and technical interests can be achieved only with the conservation of environmental values in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. In this regard compliance with the requirements of the Natura 2000 Network based on Bird and Habitat Directive and Water Framework Directive is especially important. Before taking a decision on development concepts and on certain interventions there is a need for strategic environmental impact assessment (later in the process for environmental impact assessment), cost benefit analysis including environmental capital, cost effectiveness analysis and feasibility study. Economic analyses are especially important in cases when inland navigation transport aims to play a more significant role than it is used to be the case. The analyses have to cover the activities of other transport modes as well.

The Hungarian position is that besides the examination of the navigability of the river other possibilities concerning the development of navigation must be taken into account through the realization of European and other international economic objectives in such a way that natural values should not be damaged in the Danube River Basin.

Even though the above position mainly reflects Hungarian circumstance in our view many of the issues raised therein apply to other sections of the Danube River Basin.

Budapest, 20 April 2007