

For the kind attention of the representatives of

By email only

- The EU Commission Services responsible for transport
- The European Coordinator of the Rhine-Danube Corridor
- The EUSDR PA1a

Vienna, 13rd July 2022

Call for action on co-operative fairway management

Facilitation proposal – by Pro Danube International

Dear Partners working for the Danube waterborne transport,

Referring to our call for action and co-operative and proactive fairway management, signed and submitted last year on the 24th September 2021, regrettably, only after 10 months we are in a similar situation again. Since last week (calendar week 27 of 2022) navigation on the Danube section between rkm 563 to rkm 565 came to an almost stand still situation. Dozens of pushers, vessels, and hundreds of barges had to wait for maintenance of the fairway by dredging on the relevant stretch.

As a non-profit business association, we are working on behalf of our members settled in various industries – for whom this situation is unbearable and endangering not only their business model, but endangering the trust, reliability and sustainability of the inland waterway transport mode.

The current fairway problematic triggers an avalanche of complaints from all different sites and angles and causing industries to lose millions of Euros. As experienced in the past more than 10 years and last time in September 2021, a very stressful situation for shippers, receivers, vessel owners and waterway administrations.

In our understanding, we all together, must aim to distress the situation and restore trust in this mode of transport. It is simply not good enough to troubleshoot under such stressed circumstances the problem by hectic dredging – thus to postpone from situation to situation and from year to year. **We need a coordinated and pragmatic solution in a systematic manner for the future, starting as soon as possible.**

And this is (also considering the NAIADES III targets to significantly increase our share in the modal split and the currently also urging EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lane initiative) what we believe we must show to the users of that waterway – that we tackle the problems, learn out of history, and prepare for the future. Nobody expects that such infrastructure problems will we solved withing a day, week, or month, but everyone expects that we learn from the situation and do our best to prepare for the future.

Pro Danube International is known and recognised as a pro-active and solution-oriented partner within the European IWT community.

Accordingly, we would like to come up with a facilitation proposal which shall deliver quick wins for all the stakeholders in this challenge.

We as Pro Danube International propose two ongoing actions – to be facilitated, organised and administered:

1. Quarterly meetings (physical, hybrid or online) including the IWT-sector and the waterway administrations of Bulgaria and Romania

Our aim is to establish a platform of experts, including the well-experienced nautical colleagues from the sector and the experts from the responsible waterway administrations. It will serve as an expert-hub to exchange information on the natural development of the bottlenecks, followed by a common interpretation of the evolution and decision making if pre-cautious dredging will be necessary to avoid similar situations as of today and in the past.

2. Data gathering about the limitations on the fairway in this sector

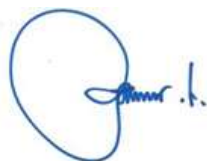
Gathering data is of utmost importance to evaluate the future progress. Currently we are not aware of any data/statistics showing the real limitations in loading draft and convoy size within the referred bottleneck – the hard facts which affect the business decisions pro or contra to Danube waterborne transport. This will be our priority focus. Once implemented, we will start to administer the consequences for the shipping industry, such as number of vessels, pushers, barges, waiting times etc.

Both data sets will accordingly serve as basis for the future and to evaluate progress in this navigation sector.

As a non-profit association it is difficult for us to overcome the financial burden for such arrangements. Accordingly, we need to cover at least our direct expenses with regards to headcount, statistical tools, traveling etc. – being estimated and fixed for the first 24 months at € 3.000,00 monthly.

Trusting that such proposal would be beneficial to the entire IWT sector, we hopefully find an acceptance from your side and are looking forward to the joint work.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Herfried Leitner".

Herfried Leitner
President and Chairman of the Board

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Robert Rafael".

Robert Rafael
General Secretary