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OPEN LETTER

Ensuring Safe, Reliable and Predictable Navigation on the Danube

To the European Commission, the Danube-riparian countries´ authorities, relevant waterway administrations, the Danube Commission, and all responsible public bodies

Subject: Urgent call for a sustainable solution for navigation conditions on the Danube

Pro Danube International, representing the interests of the Danube navigation sector, is closely following the current situation on the Danube and the construction works in the vicinity of Paks. We are in continuous contact with Hungarian stakeholders and the Danube Commission and acknowledge the exceptional circumstances under which the current measures have been introduced.

The exceptionally low water levels and discharge currently affecting the Danube present serious challenges for navigation. At the same time, we fully recognise the critical importance of ensuring the necessary cooling water supply for the Paks Nuclear Power Plant and the need for the Hungarian authorities to take appropriate emergency measures to safeguard its safe operation.

According to the information available to us, the measures implemented include the anchoring and submerging of two barges and the construction of a bottom sill below the plant's water intake channel. The construction works require the **full closure of the waterway to navigation in the affected area** and are currently planned to continue until **30 November 2026**.

We understand that the responsible authorities are continuously monitoring the waterway and fairway conditions and that Notices to Skippers have been issued. We also acknowledge the announcement of temporary and partial openings of the fairway when conditions allow.

However, from the perspective of the navigation and logistics sector, the current situation creates a fundamental challenge: **the lack of sufficient predictability regarding when navigation will be possible and when the waterway will be closed.**

Temporary openings announced only a few hours in advance do not provide shipping companies, shippers, industrial operators, ports and logistics providers with sufficient time to organise transport operations effectively. This uncertainty can result in vessels waiting outside the affected area, disrupted supply chains, additional costs, missed delivery windows and, ultimately, a loss of confidence in the Danube as a reliable transport corridor.

Therefore, Pro Danube International calls for early information, advance forecasts and structured coordination with the Danube navigation sector

We therefore call for coordinated action

Pro Danube International respectfully calls upon the respective authorities, the waterway administrations responsible and all relevant public bodies to work together with the navigation sector towards a **safe, transparent, reliable and predictable framework for navigation** during the ongoing works.

In particular, we call for:

1. Maximum possible continuity of navigation

Where technically and safely feasible, every effort should be made to enable vessels to pass the affected area and to minimise the duration and frequency of full fairway closures.

Temporary navigation windows should be considered whenever construction progress, water levels and safety conditions permit.

2. Predictable navigation windows

Where temporary openings are possible, shipping companies and other stakeholders should receive information as early as possible regarding the expected timing and duration of such openings.

Even indicative information or advance forecasts would significantly improve the ability of the sector to plan vessel movements, cargo flows and logistics operations.

3. Transparent and timely communication

All navigation restrictions, changes to restrictions and planned navigation windows should be communicated through clear, consistent and easily accessible channels.

Information should be provided sufficiently in advance and updated immediately whenever circumstances change.

4. Regular coordination with the navigation sector

We propose the establishment of **weekly coordination meetings**, preferably towards the end of each week, involving the responsible authorities, waterway administrations, the Danube Commission, ports, shipping companies, shippers, industrial stakeholders and their representative organisations.

The purpose should be to jointly assess the latest situation and, to the greatest extent possible. Following each meeting, an agreed operational outlook for the following week should be communicated to the sector, clearly indicating the navigation conditions, the expected restrictions, potential navigation windows and the main factors that could lead to changes.

5. A coordinated mid- and long-term solution

The current emergency situation highlights a broader structural issue that cannot be addressed solely through short-term emergency measures.

We therefore call for a coordinated approach to develop a **sustainable mid- and long-term solution** that ensures the safe operation of critical infrastructure while safeguarding the Danube's function as an international transport corridor.

Such a solution must take into account the legitimate interests and requirements of **all stakeholders**, including the energy sector, navigation, ports, industry, logistics operators, shippers, environmental authorities and the communities along the Danube.

The Danube must remain a reliable European transport corridor

The Danube is not merely a national waterway. It is a strategically important European transport corridor connecting industries, ports, regions and markets across several countries.

For many industrial companies, the Danube is an essential part of their supply chains. Reliability and predictability are therefore not secondary considerations: they are fundamental prerequisites for maintaining competitive and resilient logistics.

The current situation demonstrates once again that **the navigability and reliability of the Danube require coordinated action across administrative and national borders**.

Pro Danube International fully recognises the exceptional nature of the current situation and the importance of protecting critical infrastructure and public safety. At the same time, we strongly believe that the interests of inland navigation and the industries depending on it must be adequately considered when emergency, construction and operational measures are planned and implemented.

Our appeal

We therefore call upon the competent authorities to establish, as a matter of urgency, a transparent and coordinated framework that provides the navigation and logistics sector with the **maximum possible degree of safety, continuity and predictability** throughout the construction period.

We further call for the experience gained from the current situation to be used to develop appropriate procedures for future situations in which competing requirements for water resources, infrastructure operation and navigation arise.

A safe Danube is essential.

A navigable Danube is essential.

A predictable Danube is indispensable for European industry, trade and resilient supply chains.

Pro Danube International stands ready to support the responsible authorities and all relevant stakeholders in developing practical solutions that balance the different interests while ensuring that the Danube continues to fulfil its role as a reliable and sustainable European transport corridor.

We invite public authorities, industry representatives, ports, shipping companies, shippers and other stakeholders who share this objective to support this initiative and join our call for **safe, reliable and predictable navigation on the Danube**.

Herfried LEITNER
President and Chairman of the Board

Robert RAFAEL
General Secretary

About us

Pro Danube International represents the voice of Danube-minded businesses which are interested in the promotion of better navigation conditions, waterway infrastructure and transport services, hence being an active contributor in the political debates on transport policy, technology, and regional development fora. For over a decade, Pro Danube International has been involved in the initiation and execution of transnational EU-funded projects related to the development of the inland waterway transport sector in the Danube Region.

Members of Pro Danube International

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4 September 2026
Signed by

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