Danube Waterway Industry Declaration

Investing into the Danube waterway as key transport axis of the region for the benefit of its people and preserving the valuable ecosystem

Vienna, October 2018

In order to stimulate job creation and to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the Danube region needs an up-to-date, high performance, clean and safe transport infrastructure. The Danube and its navigable tributaries form a natural transport backbone for the Danube region and therefore are an indispensable part of the Trans-European Networks for Transport. Currently, the transport potential of the Danube is not sufficiently exploited resulting into congestion of roads, high number of accidents, environmental pollution and pre-mature death of thousands of people. Moreover, the GDP of the Danube region is forecasted to grow by approx. 30% till the year 2030 which will further increase transport of cargo and passengers and its negative effects. Therefore, a strong inland navigation sector providing high-quality transport and logistics services will be required to meet policy objectives addressing economic competitiveness and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other negative effects caused by transport and mobility in line with European policy targets.

The businesses which form the Pro Danube network fully recognize the tangible achievements of the last years made in the framework of the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and with the help of the European Union policy and funding instruments. Nevertheless, they feel the strong need to request more actions from the governments of the Danube States to overcome existing shortcomings in waterway infrastructure, to expand the Danube ports into centres for regional development and to foster the modernization of the Danube fleet. This requires concerted actions in the framework of the new European transport and regional development policies in close cooperation with and/or under the coordination of the European Commission.

The new EU Programming Period 2021-2027 must be used to its utmost to overcome the existing structural problems and shortcomings. The infrastructure investment as foreseen in the Corridor Development Plan and the state-of-technology maintenance of the waterway infrastructure must be achieved in line with the environmental concern of the Danube ecosystems.

In order to serve as environmentally friendly and cost-effective logistics backbone for the Danube Region, its people and economies, the national governments together with the European Commission are called to acknowledge the need for action with regard to the following measures.

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On behalf of the members of Pro Danube Austria and International

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General Secretary of Pro Danube International

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Measures

1. Establish and ensure a safe and reliable waterway infrastructure

- **Implementing adequate fairway parameters** according to the provisions of the Belgrade Convention and - where it applies – of the UNECE/AGN agreement enabling cost-effective and reliable waterborne logistics services as well as safe navigation.
- **Stepping up fairway rehabilitation and maintenance efforts** according to the targets defined in the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan (FRMMP) for the Danube and its navigable tributaries by allocating the necessary national budgets as outlined in the National Action Plans and by making full use of EU co-financing opportunities.

2. Execute the pre-defined TEN T bottleneck infrastructure projects

- Accelerate the planning and implementation of identified **river engineering projects** which provide minimum fairway depth of 2.5m according to UNECE/AGN with stepwise tangible results until its full deployment in the year 2027 corresponding with the challenges derived from climate change and in line with the existing environmental protection needs.
- Providing **technical and organizational assistance** to the waterway authorities in planning and implementing these complex interdisciplinary ecological - infrastructural projects in order to ensure tangible progress and compatibility with the provisions made in the **Joint Statement** for waterway development.

3. Develop the Danube Ports into effective centers of intermodal logistics and industrial growth

- Defining a **Transnational Strategy for the Danube ports** as integral part of the future EU Transport and Regional Policies in order to meet the challenges of ports such as digitalization, multimodality, security and climate change.
- **Executing public investments** in infrastructure of ports and terminals with a maximum use of funds of the EU in consideration and close cooperation with the private sector investment needs.
- Applying **National State Aid Schemes for ports and terminals investment** as part of EU funding schemes in order to ease national budgetary constraints and to ensure high leverage of public spending through parallel private sector investments.
- **Improving public port governance** in order to ensure fair competition, to improve the service quality of public port operators and to reduce red tape in public port administration.

4. Facilitate the modernization of the Danube Fleet

- Setting up **National State Aid Schemes for fleet modernization** as part of a comprehensive European financial support mechanism in order to facilitate the transition of the Danube fleet to close to zero emission standards and to highest operational efficiency.
- Promoting **lead projects for technological innovation** in national and EU innovation programs creating best practices and preparing wide-scale deployment of innovative technologies and services.

5. Reduce administrative barriers for waterway transportation

- **Harmonizing administrative procedures** for transport and transshipment operations by implementing standardized documents, the use of state-of-the art digital tools and electronic information exchange between competent authorities based on a simplified and harmonized international regulatory framework.
- **Reducing excessive national charges for administrative services** to a minimum in line with international practices following the Pro Danube concept of "Same River – Same Rules" and thus relief the Danube industry from costs and time losses in logistics operations.

The businesses which form the Pro Danube network acknowledge that the sustainable development of the Danube waterway and its navigable tributaries only can be achieved in close cooperation between the public and private stakeholders of the Danube region as well as with the continuous help of the European Union services and instruments. They therefore call for the conclusion of a "Green Deal for the modernization of the Danube waterway" as a joint and long-term policy initiative of public and private stakeholders.