



Donaukommission – Commission du Danube – Дунайская Комиссия – Danube Commission

Austria Bulgaria Croatia Germany Hungary Moldova Romania Serbia Slovakia Ukraine



Symposium 10 years of CESNI

“Beyond the Rhine: IWT in a broader European perspective / Danube ”

Manfred Seitz, Director-General of DC Secretariat
Rotterdam, 29 October 2025



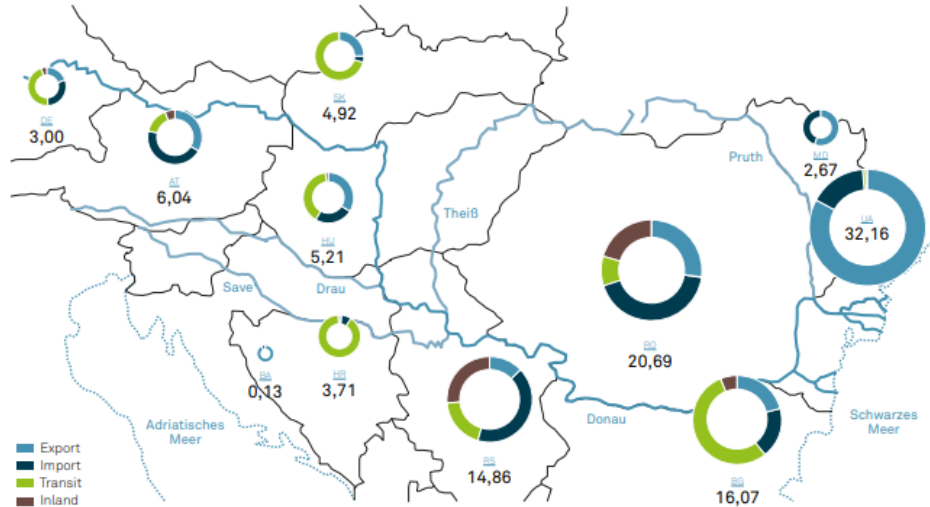
International Intergovernmental Organization

Legal basis: Convention for the Regulation of Navigation on the Danube, 1948

- 11 member states of convention: 7 EU and 4 non-EU; since 1954 based in Budapest
Russian Federation excluded since 17 March 2022 as result of war of aggression against Ukraine
- **New Convention** in consideration (limited to *Danube riparian states as members*) – alternative?
- **Working in expert groups** (hydro-technic, personal, waste, security, statistics, ports) **and in working groups** (technical, legal & financial) as well as in **two annual sessions**; **private IWT industry is included in expert groups**;
- **No legislation, but recommendations & services to member states**
- **Fundamental reform of Secretariat and work of Danube Commission since 2019/2022:**
 - *Adapting tasks and structures to meet the challenges of Danube navigation*
 - *New language regime (EN & DE as working languages as from 1 July 2026)*
- **Coordination and cooperation platform of Danube States, competence center and service provider for members and EC, support to implementation of relevant EU related policies**
- **Providing technical assistance to EC/DG MOVE - Grant Agreement 2023-2027; 13 tasks, among :**
 - Action Plan for EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes to facilitate Ukraine's agricultural exports and bilateral trade with the EU [COM(2022) 217 final/12 May 2022]
 - Support RD-Corridor management
 - Greening fleet and ports in the view of climate change
- **Involvement in strategic EU funded projects (RTD, EC studies, Interreg, etc.)**
- **Strengthening cooperation with CCNR, ISRBC, ICPDR, EUSDR PA1a, PIANC, etc.**



Freight transport on Danube & Sava 2023: 55,2 mio tons



Source: via donau, Annual Report 2024

➤ Shortcomings in fairway maintenance and backlog in infrastructure investment (waterway & ports)

- Fairway depth limitations -> Strong dependency on waterway conditions -> reduced vessel draught, higher costs, reliability problem in managed supply chains
- Transport volume in 2007: 49 mio tons / 2022: 40,6 mio tons
- Losses to road and rail transport, de-industrialization of Europe as part of globalization, change in cargo structure;

Main challenges for Danube navigation

- Reduce administrative barriers -> “Same river – same rules”
- Modernise Danube fleet -> prepare transition to (close) zero emission & expand current markets
- Ensure digitalization and prepare for automation
- Ensure skilled workforce and good working conditions in IWT sector
- Improve human capacity of waterway and port administrations, navigation authorities
- Adress institutional capacity problem
- Strengthen transnational/cross- border cooperation (fully digital transport corridor EU-non-EU)
- **Mitigate impact of climate change / adapt IWT to climate changes and increase resilience**

- “...Climate Change in the Danube has twice the magnitude of the global average”,

“A 1.5°C global warming scenario (extremely optimistic) will have to consider a 3°C warming impact in the Danube basin”

Prof. Mauser (LMU): Climate Change and the Danube River Basin – Assessment and next steps, Joint Statement meeting 15-16 September 2021



Joint Statement 2.0 - Bridging Navigation & Nature

Joint Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in Danube River Basin 2.0

- Significantly changed legal and policy framework since first JS 2007
- Inland navigation and riverine ecosystem share negative impact of climate change
- Joint initiative DC, ICPDR, ISRBC (supported by EC/DG MOVE and WB & GEF via SDIP)
- +2 years work with > 70 public & private stakeholders from IWT & ENV and NGO's

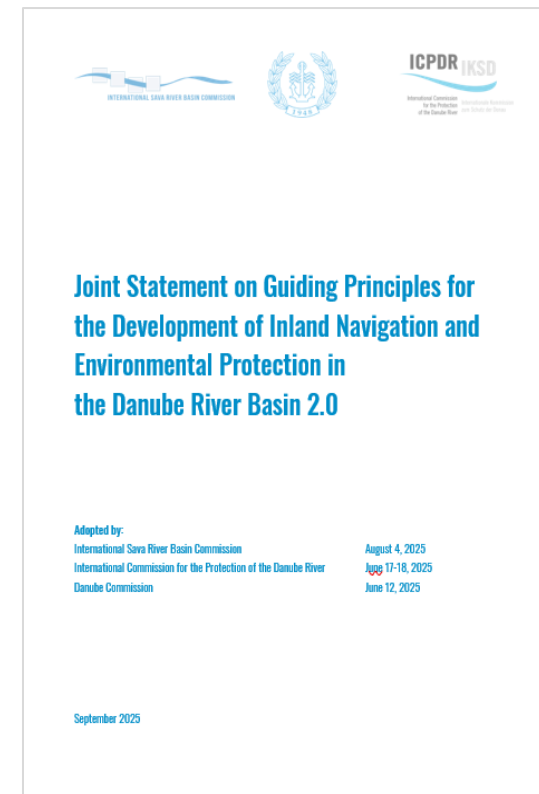
Objectives:

- Sustainable IWT development (GNS, GES/GEP, FCS)
- Resilient rivers (adaptable to climate change; maintaining natural dynamics)
- Integrated river management (innovative and adaptive approaches)
- Effective implementation of JS 2.0 (capacity, coordination, monitoring)

Approach:

- Strategic IWT planning and management (corridor-wide thinking; assessing cumulative effects; balancing short-term gains with long-term outcomes)
- Sustainable & resilient management (innovative & multifunctional solutions; adaptive and flexible approaches)
- Meeting biodiversity commitments and environmental requirements

Transition: project-based approach → dynamic river management





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Turning Joint Statement 2.0 into Action

Implementation:

Requires national-level policy and institutional capacity adjustments

- Improved coordination & monitoring
- Facilitating cross-sector communication/coordination
- Ensuring coherence (sectoral policies, strategies, plans)
- Adequately staffed, equipped & financed waterway administrations with in-house environmental competence

JS 2.0 Manual – Manual for Sustainable Planning & Management

- Principles, toolbox, good practices, guidelines for national administrations – replaces “Platina Manual 2010” – to be published end of 2025

Online JS 2.0 - Online Knowledge Management System

- Serves as a centralized, searchable repository of policy, technical, and project information relevant to JS 2.0 implementation – to be implemented stepwise 2026

JS 2.0 could also be a useful instrument for other river basins

Handover JS 2.0 to

Ms Margarida Marques

Rhine-Danube Corridor Coordinator

22 October 2025, in Budapest





Greening & Digitalization

Energy transition – Greening Danube Fleet

- Elaboration of DC Strategy and Roadmap (together with EUSDR PA1A)
 - Workshops 6 October 2024 & 12 May 2025
 - CO2 emissions from cargo vessels: 1.6 million tons of CO2/year
 - Diesel consumption of 430,000 tons/year (cargo)
- “Action Plan towards zero-emission Danube fleet”: Mid-term focus on HVO & battery-electric
- **Harmonization & coordination: “Fuel EU Inland Regulation” needed (?) to create favorable economic framework conditions -> regulation as driver for transformation!**
- *“Technology Transfer Workshop” on 3 Nov / “Platina4 Action Stage Event on 4 Nov in Budapest*

Vessel type (motorized units)	Estimated number (active fleet)
Passenger vessels	200
Push boats <500 kW (incl. tugs)	300
Push boats 500 - 2000 kW (incl. tugs)	350
Push boats >= 2000 kW (incl. tugs)	25
MCV Dry >=110 m	100
MCV liquid >= 110 m	5
MCV Dry 80 - 109 m	250
MCV liquid 80 - 109 m	40
Motor vessels <80 m	120
Total	1,390

Support to digitalization

- Monitoring implementation of RIS in Danube (accurate & updated fairway information at critical sections)
- Facilitation of roll-out of RIS to UA (Project UKRIS) and Moldova
- DC partner for EC commissioned project “Implementing IWT Digitalization Strategy” – Divine
 - Responsible for “smart administration” – favorable regulatory framework for digitalization & automation of IWT

For Ports: Expert group meetings for port administrations and operators (2 events/year)

- Information platform for EU port policy, greening, digitalization, best practices
- “Joint Statement for Decarbonization of Danube river and seaports”



High importance of CESNI for Danube

CESNI is a real European success story and of utmost importance for further development of safe and efficient European IWT

- The creation of standards for harmonization is not only a pragmatic cooperative approach (expert driven) but also offers a high degree of flexibility and scope for timely adaptation to new technologies and requirements.
- DC Secretariat advocates strong involvement of Danube State representatives and Danube IWT sector into working groups and support member states (EU and Non-EU) in adapting technical standards, for safety, greening and digitalization.
 - Active participation ensures that Danube-specific operational realities, technical requirements, and regional challenges are reflected in European inland navigation standards.
 - Without direct involvement, standards may be developed without adequate consideration of Danube specific conditions.
- Hosting CESNI working group meetings in Budapest for strengthening Danube engagement
 - CESNI/QP 22-23 May 2024
 - CESNI/PT 18-19 November 2025
 - CESNI/TI 11-12 March 2026



Conclusions

- CESNI has proven to be an effective instrument in shaping European inland navigation in the past.
- Its work will continue to play an important role in creating a safe, innovative, and economically competitive sector in the future.
- Further development of CESNI's scope of activities and structure in areas such as automation and digitization must be discussed and evaluated in terms of objectives and available resources.

The Secretariat of the Danube Commission would like to thank:

- the experts of CESNI for their outstanding work,
- the European Commission and the CCNR for their wise decision to establish and finance CESNI
- the CCNR Secretariat for its excellent work as “the home” of CESNI and for its close cooperation in strengthening the commitment of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission and the stakeholders in the Danube region.

We wish CESNI many more successful years!

The comprehensive modernisation of the Danube Commission Secretariat will enable the Danube Commission to contribute even more effectively to the work of developing CESNI standards and supporting their implementation in the Danube countries.

Thank you for your attention!

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