

## **Problems and Ways of Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region for Ukraine**

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**Abstract:** This article provides the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the Action Plan of EU Strategy for the Danube Region for Ukraine, investigates why the priorities of this document does not reflect the specific interests of Ukraine in the Danube region.

**Keywords:** European strategy; European integration; water management

All Danube countries, without exception, face a number of questions: is nature conservation the main need of society and the duty of the state? How to reconcile this need with the socio-economic interests of the whole countries and local communities, in particular? Is there a conflict between environmental, social and economic interests in the region? If so, what are the ways out of it? Understanding the need to balance environmental, economic and social interests as prerequisite for sustainable development of the region, the European Commission adopted a European Strategy for the Danube Region, as well as the Action Plan to implement this strategy (December 8, 2010). The Strategy is a unique document of the EU – virtually for the first time in its history the EU has developed a comprehensive document for the concrete river basin. The objectives of the strategy are:

- to improve navigation of the Danube River, primarily freight;
- to protect environment and act against pollution;
- to promote economic development, as well as development of culture and tourism;
- to develop arrangements against natural disasters.

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The Danube region is unique in terms of geographical location, historical, cultural and natural heritage and prospects of socio-economic development in the light of European integration processes. From its source to the mouth the Danube River flows through the territory of 10 states: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. The Danube Basin covers parts of the territories of Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Poland, Switzerland and the Czech Republic. On the banks of the Danube dozens of major cities are located, including the four European capitals – Vienna, Belgrade, Budapest and Bratislava.

The Lower Danube is one of the most difficult regions in Ukraine in terms of both economic welfare of local population, and their social protection. Unemployment and poverty, low prospects of important for the region sectors` development: fisheries, shipping, tourism, several long-standing problems with the natural environment – is a real picture in the Danube region today.

Restoration of these sectors together with maximum preservation of the unique nature of the region is quite possible under the assumption of participation by Ukraine in the implementation of EU Strategy for the Danube Region, as long as Ukrainian part of it is quite big and includes Odessa, Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts. Due to the unique geographical location at the traverse of the Danube, Carpathian-Alpine and Black Sea Regions, the Ukrainian part of the Danube region is essential for the whole its development.

This initiative aims to help realize the economic potential of one of the longest European rivers, and improve the environment in and around the region of the Danube.

The article aims to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the Action Plan of EU Strategy for the Danube Region for Ukraine, as well as answer the question why the priorities of this document does not reflect the specific interests of Ukraine in the Danube region (fig.1).



**Figure 1. The Danube Region**

Ukrainian part of the Danube region is unique in terms of natural heritage, due to the valuable representatives of flora and fauna. This region is also important in view of the possibility to realize the activities towards European integration declared by Ukraine, in particular the implementation of the principles of the European Water Framework Directive, which intends the basin principle of water resource management. Moreover, the implementation of number of EU directives, including “Floods directive”<sup>1</sup>, is very important for Ukraine.

The principle of integration is the basic in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. It consists of interconnection of directions such as environment, mobility, economic development, human resources development, so the process of implementation of Action Plan should be accompanied by extensive consultations with all stakeholders. Measures for environmental protection should be considered in connection with the potential development of the region. Compliance with the environmental EU legislation and other international environmental agreements is a fundamental principle of the Action Plan.

<sup>1</sup> Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks.

Not all the projects and initiatives can be included in the Action Plan, but only those that meet certain criteria of the European Commission. These criteria include the possibility of projects:

- to bring positive results at the wider regional level. Therefore, most projects should be cross-border. The national projects may be included only if they have an impact to the macro-region and meet the objectives of the strategy (for example, building of water-purifying constructions);
- to stimulate socio-economic development of the territory;
- quickly and clearly demonstrate positive outcomes for the population.

Feasibility of the projects means that they should not only be financially and technically backgrounded, but the general agreement on their values among countries and stakeholders participated and the European Commission is needed.

Besides, the projects should have a positive impact on people, business and environment, use the method of integration of different aspects and, preferably, be built on existing initiatives or activities. Projects should also strengthen the existing EU policies, Directives and political documents (such as the Pan-European transport corridors, the policy of “consolidation”).

According to the first action on transport and energy the following projects are proposed: improving of transportation access and mobility, combining of energetic system, rising of energy efficiency and level of renewable energy use.

Within the improving transport access and mobility the EU Strategy for the Danube Region Action Plan proposes a number of projects for the development of shipping:

Project “Implementation according to the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) plan of projects for the development of priority infrastructure of the Danube waterway (in particular, Project 18 - Danube Waterway) using timely and environmentally friendly methods.” The relevant projects are carried out in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. Environmental requirements for navigation on the Danube were formulated in “Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin”. “Joint Statement: Navigation and Environment”, developed in 2007 by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. The project PLATINA stands prominently among institutional mechanisms for sustainable shipping, it is funded by EU (DG-MOVE) under the 7th Framework Programme. The project is dedicated to compile and provide best practices for sustainable inland navigation.

The project “Coordination of national transport policy for the development of navigation on the Danube River” relates mainly to the implementation of the program NAIADES (Navigation and Inland Waterway Action and Development in

Europe), which, in turn, determines an exhaustive list of environmentally friendly and energy efficient measures on inland navigation potential.

The project “Renovation of the fleet and improvement of its environmental and economic indices”. An inland navigation is generally the most favorable to the environment way of transportation. Inland waterway transport has the lowest specific fuel consumption. However, the environmental and economic parameters of navigation on the Danube River can be further improved by implementation of measures on fleet modernization and management optimization. (As for Ukraine, according to the Complex Program of the Lower Danube in Ukraine the 2 new barges were placed on the shipyard in Kiliya, but this was not completed. Currently, there is a question: to dismantle them for sale or to utilize). In this context the project WANDA (Waste management for inland navigation on the Danube) is worth of mentioning.

One of the proposals of the Ukrainian side in “Public vision of Ukraine’s participation in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region” was the project on creation of integrated system of collection and utilization of wastes from the ships in Ukrainian part of the Danube River. It provided: buying the watercraft and equipment for waste disposal for main ports (Reni, Izmail, Odessa), construction of the pier; integration into the overall cross-border system of collection and utilization of vessels` exploitation wastes on the Danube river, which will improve the health of the environment in the Ukrainian part of the Danube.

The project “Implementing of Integrated River Informational Service (RIS)”. RIS aimed at increasing the safety and effectiveness of inland navigation. Shipping companies, ports and freight operators can optimize their logistics operations by reducing direct and indirect costs associated with transportation. The potential of River Information Services can be developed only in conditions of involvement the entire length of the navigable Danube.

In the “Public vision of Ukraine’s participation in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region” the Ministry of Transport and Communication of Ukraine proposed the project “Establishment of River Infrastructural (informational – O. R.) Services (RIS) in the Ukrainian part of the Danube”. The project stipulates the construction and purchase of equipment for building and commissioning of River Informational Services (RIS) in the Ukrainian part of the Danube. The project provides infrastructural improvements, installation of AIS (Automatic Informational System), automatic water level recorders, the introduction of Notice-to-Skippers system.

The action “Investing in jobs and skills of skippers in the Danube shipping sector” is noteworthy. Ukraine is a “forge” of specialist (sailors). The Lower Danube region and Odessa have enormous potential in preparation of qualified personnel for all sectors of water transport, but, unfortunately, Ministry of transport and

communications of Ukraine has not presented no project related to growth of human and professional development by means of educational and scientific exchanges, whereas in this area, Ukraine could make an invaluable service for the neighbors and Danube countries upstream.

In the structure of European projects “Improving of the complex Danube waterway management” set an important role. Its idea is to provide the harmonization of national plans on water management (including dredging) on national level. This direction could be developed within the project NEWADA (Network of Danube Waterway Administrations), which goal is to provide coordination, planning and informational sharing among organizations which are responsible for the administration of the waterway of the Danube. The aim of the project “Improving of the complex Danube waterway management” is to harmonize the development of water infrastructure with the provisions of the Water Framework Directive and Joint Statement on guidelines for the development of inland navigation and environmental protection of the Danube basin.

For other modes of transport in Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region it is mentioned: in order to implement the project Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) (for railways and highways) the priority projects that cross the Danube Basin are proposed; they take into account the complexity of road construction, environmental, economic and political conditions. In this direction, the EU provides implementation of the following projects: Railway tracks on the route Nuremberg - Constanta - Athens through Prague, Vienna, Budapest (Priority Project 22) and Gdynia - Warsaw - Brno - Bratislava - Vienna (Priority Project 23), from the Ukrainian border through Hungary to Lyon, Turin, Northern Adriatic (Priority Project 6). Roads on routes: Baltic-Danube (Priority Project 25, Priority Project 7 - along the Danube waterway should be constructed.

Regarding the transport direction in the Action Plan of the Danube Strategy Chernivtsi Regional State Administration prepared the project “Restoration of European standard railway line between Ukrainian-Polish and Ukrainian-Romanian borders”. This project was aimed at restoring the leading role of existed the shortest and safest Baltic-Black Sea-Mediterranean routes of Trans-European connections that bypass Carpathian Mountains to the east and combine I, II, III and VI TEN-T transport corridors in the area of the Baltic Strategy of V, VII, VIII, IX and X TEN-T corridors. This approach, initiated by the border regions and the governments of Ukraine and Romania was supported by the decisions of working meeting of the Central European Initiative in 2006-2008 and was supported by the World Bank. It should have a positive impact on the development of sufficient infrastructure of the longest section of EU eastern borders and at the same time meet the requirements of Transport Protocol of Alpine Convention and similar developments of Carpathian Convention. Unfortunately, at the meetings of Interagency Working Group this project was not supported by Ministry of

Transport and Communication of Ukraine, and likely will not be presented by Ukraine as perspective area for EU cooperation in the transport sector.

The transport projects of EC “Strengthening of cooperation between operators of air services in order to reduce air routes” and “Modernization of transport access to rural areas” are interesting for Ukraine to take part. They aim to “make towns and villages more “friendly” to the bicycles”. The latest project is close to realization in Germany, Hungary and Romania.

Development of **environmentally friendly modes of transport** and its greening should be a top priority in transport policy. Unfortunately, in modern conditions economic and business priorities are prevailing in the transport policy of Ukraine. However, the law of Ukraine “On Transport” provides environmental protection from the harmful effects of transport, among other tasks.

Forming the sustainable systems of navigation, that consider the interests of stabilizing of natural resources in the Danube and meet socio-economic needs, can be based on the following mechanisms: the development of unified approach of navigation on the Danube, harmonization of transport policies with the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive; introduction of methods of ecological compensation and investment in ecosystem services; limiting the requirements of dredging; promotion of sustainable innovations in transport.

The main strategic goals of the shipping policy on the Danube:

- a. to establish single regulatory framework;
- b. to create balanced high-effective infrastructure as a single transport corridor;
- c. to ensure high standards of safety, including environmental;
- d. to achieve high economic efficiency of the Danube fleet and other objects of navigation infrastructure exploitation;
- e. effective integration of Danube navigation to All-European liberalized market of inland waterway transport;
- f. to strengthen links with other basins` markets to increase the capacity.

The main action about solutions on waterway pollution prevention:

- a. development of similar requirements in water policy (environmental protection of water-bodies), including special issues on ecology for infrastructural projects and cross-border systems for collecting and utilization of ships` wastes;
- b. development of a single plan for communication, notification and coordination to deal with possible oil spills on the Danube;
- c. ensuring of environmental navigation by upgrading the main and auxiliary engines of ships due to:

- usage of low sulfur oxide fuels;
- usage of selective catalytic reduction to decrease the content of nitrogen oxides;
- introduction of biodiesel and mixtures to reduce carbon dioxide.

**Fleet of the Danube countries** needs active modernization. This gives a chance to introduce new shipbuilding technologies, low sedimentation, reduce emissions. Informational and security systems should also be improved and will provide a good zoning, adequate and modern labeling of navigable waterways. It is proposed to put into practice the innovation of the ships focused on renewable energy and other innovative approaches, including project PACSCAT (Partial Air Cushion Supported CATamaran, capacity up to 2000 tons, 80 containers). INBAT (Innovative Barge for Effective Transport on Shallow Waters) can serve as another perspective project – innovative low-sitting barge. Technical parameters: length of the barge – 118 m, width – 9 m, draught load – 1, 7 m, the length of one barge – 48, 5 m; draught of barge – 0, 20 m; tonnage of the barge in draught 1, 7 m – 641 tons, length of pushboat – 20 m, pushboat's capacity – 480 kW, 3 propellers, draught – 0, 60 m. Realization of these innovative projects depends on the economic priorities of the Danube countries. It is proposed to introduce firmer regulation of costs under the NAIADES program taking into account innovative technologies. Considered approaches and estimations are applied to all Danube countries regardless of EU membership. Forming of preventive policies in greening of navigation on the Danube may become a source of additional competitive advantages in Ukraine.

Formation of sustainable systems of navigation, that considers the interests of stabilizing of natural resources of the Danube and satisfies socio-economical needs, can be based on using the following mechanisms: the development of unified concept of navigation on the Danube, harmonization of transport policies with the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive; implementation of the methods of ecological compensation and investment in ecosystem services; promotion of sustainable innovations in transport.

Establishment of transparent planning process (information /participation) based on comprehensive data, including the environmental assessments and current standards required for Strategic environmental estimation (SEA - for qualifying plans, programs and policies) and to Environmental impact assessment (EIA - for projects).

It is needed to guarantee that during planning the projects on improvement of navigation conditions the issue on climate change is taken into account. Using the best practices on navigation improvement involves using of alternative fuels and dimension-type of vehicles, etc. Setting priorities among possible measures to ensure the best possible impact to environment and shipping; and effective use of financial resources is needed. Provision of flexible funding conditions for projects



on integrated planning (including the participation of all stakeholder groups) and adaptive implementation, and monitoring is very important. Monitoring the effects of measures and - if important - their adaptation, is necessary.

According to the Manual on good practices in Sustainable waterway planning, developed within the project «PLATINA», project managers, developing the projects on Inland waterway, should also consider the national, regional and local aspects and requirements.

The identification of integrated project problems that unite entire IWT, environmental needs and objectives of other uses of the river basin, such as water management and fisheries, are important features for integrated planning. When IWT development projects fail, it is often explained by very belated participation of public. Preferably, the stakeholders and public should be involved in all stages of project development of IWT. The participation of the public is especially important at the stage of project formulation and during elaboration of realistic alternative solutions on its problematic aspects.

The complex approach and deployment of transport system not only to the client – recipient of transport services, and “to a human and his needs” is threaded stone in Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Humanization of transport and general communication are at the forefront. This is developed, particularly, in promoting of communications in rural areas and the “greening” of transport, i. e. offer of the most environmentally friendly transport technologies and strategies. Inclusion of Ukrainian proposals in the process of implementing of EU Strategy for the Danube Region is possible only in case of keeping to these fundamental principles of modern transport management.

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