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Danube+20: more jobs due to better inland water transport?

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Abstract

The Danube region is an area of Europe that has wide variations in terms of economic development levels and integration. There is a common belief that raising economic performance levels across these countries will deliver welfare gains and promote cooperation across borders. As part of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), a range of actions and projects have been formulated to stimulate the development of inland waterway transport, ranging from waterway infrastructure projects to port & terminal development and from educational programs to promotional initiatives. The set of measures aims to develop a more attractive and more efficient inland transport system, resulting in more effective and extended use of the Danube as a transport corridor. This development should contribute to employment growth in the IWT sector itself, in the sectors associated to IWT (e.g. ports and terminals) and in the sectors using IWT as a transport mode. To assess the possible effects of the actions and projects defined in the EUSDR, the European Commission commissioned a study, with the aim to estimate the employment levels that would be achieved if transport volumes on the Danube would increase by 20% in 2020 compared to 2010.

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1. Introduction

The Danube region consists of ten riparian countries, i.e. Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and the Ukraine. The river has a length of over 2,800 kilometres, with Romania having the longest stretch within its territories (1,075 km), and Moldova the shortest section, less than 1 km. Seven out of the ten riparian countries are EU Member States, while all of ten are united in the Danube Commission. The Danube itself is one of largest rivers in Europe, besides the Rhine, Elbe and Maas River.

The Danube region is of great economic importance to Europe. A total of 115 million people live in the Danube catchment area¹ and more than €1300 billion GDP (2011) is generated in these countries (excluding Germany). The capital cities of Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia and Bucharest form a strong axis of economic development within the region. This axis is referred to as the ‘Danube Belt’ (OIR 2000). Through the accession of Danube countries Hungary and Slovakia in 2004, and Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the economic well-being of the Danube countries has become of direct importance to other EU countries, opening up new markets and economic opportunities in these countries. Other European countries have discovered the increased opportunities in the interchange of labour, goods and foreign direct investments in the EU Danube countries (Van den Bossche et. al. 2013).

Although the Danube region offers many opportunities it is still an area of Europe that has wide variations in terms of economic development levels and integration. There is a common belief that raising economic performance levels across these countries will deliver welfare gains and promote cooperation across borders. In order to improve the economic performance, the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) was adopted by the European Commission in 2010 and the European Council in 2011. This strategy is organised in four pillars and eleven priority areas (see figure 1). One of these priority areas is focusing on the development of the transport system, including inland waterway transport (priority 1A).

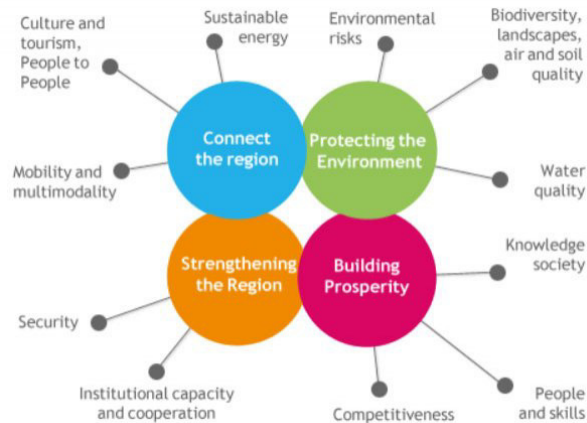


Fig. 1. The four pillars and eleven priority areas of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region².

To stimulate the development of inland waterway transport in the Danube area, the following thematic fields have been identified for which concrete projects have been formulated (European Commission 2010):

¹ This catchment area consists of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

² Source: <http://www.danube-region.eu/>

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