

EU Strategy for Danube Region

A COMMON TRANSPORT VISION

Contribution by PA1b PACs
Non-paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of Danube Transport Vision is initiated by the EUSDR Priority Area 1b Steering Group. It is expected that upon presentation it is supported also by the Priority Area 1a. The aim of this paper is to emphasise a few main reasons for need of such a document in order to fulfil and upgrade the objectives of the EUSDR.

The Danube Transport Vision should cover the Danube macro-region which consists of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Southern part of Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and South-Eastern part of Ukraine.

It should be an important step towards a joint view on the sustainable transport development in the Region. The Vision should look at all transport modes. Future increased traffic flows between the Danube States (EU and non-EU), as well as with the neighbouring countries of the Region, such as the States of Baltic macro-region, Russia, Turkey and Italy to mention some.

One of the primary aims should be to come to the common transport system, which could be best presented on the Region's infrastructure map. Main bottlenecks and missing links should be clearly shown on the map. The Common Transport Vision should address elimination of these bottlenecks and missing links by means of coordinated implementation of projects. An output could be the establishment of a "Danube Region Main Network", which could complement the EU TEN-T (core and comprehensive network) proposed by the European Commission, the SEETO network and the transnational routes of Moldova and Ukraine. This network should be fully multimodal, comprising road and rail links, airports, inland waterways ports, as well as sea ports of Western part of the Black Sea. Intermodal terminals of trans-national importance should be also included. A development of all transport modes should follow the principle of co-modality.

The main goals of the common transport systems are on one hand to ensure accessibility of and within the Danube Region to ensure adequate mobility and economic growth. On the other hand the development of the transport system also has to take into account the reduction of CO2 emissions, the protection of the population and the environment and has to use the natural resources of the region in a sustainable way.

An important aim should be also reduction of the external cost and simplification of administrative procedures in order to get rid of burden on transport of goods and passengers. So, the overall aim should be to improve mobility and access within and to the Region, in order to make better conditions for competitiveness and development.

The Main network, together with simplification of administrative procedures, should improve mobility, accessibility and cohesion through a single common transport system.

Differences between the States of the Danube region are obvious. The largest ones exist between the Eastern and Western parts. Inadequate quality and availability of infrastructure is particularly seen in the Central and Eastern part of the Region, where several bottlenecks need to be eliminated by construction of new missing links and upgrading of existing links.

The Danube transport vision should form a common ground for cooperation between the States of the Region in the field of transport and contribute to development of infrastructure, transport of people and goods, safety and security in all modes and environmental protection by promoting co-modality. The use of those modes causing less external costs has to be promoted. Here, in Danube region there is a specific situation, with the Danube as important inland waterway, as well with the need of significant improvements in some part of the railway network. So the targets of the Commission's White Paper of 2011 of raising the modal share of rail and inland waterways on long distance freight and passenger transport are very important for Danube Region.

It is believed the Danube region will progress and develop in the future. As a consequence traffic will increase. If so the Common Transport Vision could significantly contribute to better, maybe even optimal planning of the future transport needs and so help to avoid main obstacles for smooth transport activities in the Danube region.

Obviously time would be needed to enable for exchange of views of many stakeholders that would for the first time look at the transport in the Region as one seamless area.

Prior to start the project it is important to answer three main questions:

- Why is a Common Transport Vision for Danube Region needed?
- How to build a firm basis to define pathways to sustainable transport in the Region?
- What are main tasks for further work?

2. WHY THE VISION / STRATEGY?

“The Danube Region has changed dramatically.The world’s most international river basin is now largely a European Union (EU) space. There are new opportunities to address its challenges and potential, especially to reinforce its efforts to overcome the economic crisis in a sustainable manner. Socio-economic development, competitiveness, environmental management and resource efficient growth can be improved, security and transport corridors modernised. The Danube can open the EU to its near neighbours, the Black Sea region, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. An EU Strategy for the Danube Region can contribute to EU objectives, reinforcing major EU policy initiatives, especially the Europe 2020 strategy (EUSDR).”

“In the Region, there is a need to connect people, their ideas and needs. Transport interconnections must be modernised, and informatics access improved. Development can be balanced with protection of the environment, within a sustainable development approach, in line with the environmental acquis communautaire as applicable. Work together is needed to minimise risks and disasters such as floods, droughts and industrial accidents. By building on considerable research and innovation perspectives, the Region can be at the forefront of EU trade and enterprise.(EUSDR).”

We found at least three arguments why a Danube Strategy is needed:

1. There is no general agreement on what are “...opportunities to address its challenges and potential, especially to reinforce its efforts to overcome the economic crisis in a sustainable manner.” It is well defined at the level of each country, but it needed to be defined at the level of the region as well.
2. Transport is a very specific sector. It is a precondition to meet most of the EUSDR objectives. Transport is much more than the infrastructure. It is needed to be understood as a precondition for sustainable development of the region. It is a challenge on how to assure a transition of present mobility towards sustainable patterns of transport which will support a competitive profile of the Region.
3. It is emphasised, that “.....there is a need to connect people, their ideas and needs.” We believe it is much more than just making several investments visible by making a widespread campaign. In our opinion it is important to involve citizens and other stakeholders into the process of building a Danube vision. It is important to achieve a high level of ownership on what are specific strategic objectives and how each citizen might contribute in order to make the vision happen.

3. DEFINE SCENARIOS AS A BASIS

The idea is to provide first scenarios and to start the process which will facilitate vision and strategy building in the field of transport in the Danube area. It is important to have a

platform for discussion and to support successful strategies in an unpredictable and still unknown future.

At this stage scenarios on the future of the transport in Danube region and possible pathways to desired (sustainable) future should be built on the present situation. The scenarios should be based on the existing or new transport model for the passenger and freight traffic in the region, taking in account social and economic data and the forecasts for their development in the future. Those scenarios should answer the most important question: ***What will be possible transport system in the Danube region by 2050 and how to assure the transition towards sustainable transport system?***

Scenario could be based on following principles:

- Long term analyses (2050). Provide long term framework of conditions, opportunities, contextual challenges (uncertainties) and options (pathways) to support short term decision making (avoiding decisions based on past dependency).
- Participatory based. Include stakeholders in the region from different thematic backgrounds (research, business, government, sectors, environment etc) to form scenarios based on inclusion of different views and needs.
- Systemic thinking. Many of existing problems are becoming increasingly of systemic nature. Methodological approach proposed will facilitate dealing with complex issues.
 - a. Environment protection and improved well-being and competitiveness will be key focus areas (i.e. improving mobility, boosting sustainable energy, promoting culture and tourism, protecting health and efficient use of natural resources).
 - b. Interlinkages between different modes of transport and other factors (economy, environment, etc.)
 - c. Interlinkages with other neighbouring regions, links to European and global dimension
 - d. Analyses of driving forces and uncertainties which influence future changes and pathways (for allocating potential policy measures)
- Strategic response capability. Flexibility to adapt to speed of changes by innovation, decision making, implementation capacities; dealing with complex issues and unpredicted environment; manage stability and flexibility in robust way. Alternative scenarios, threats and opportunities, pathways will improve adaptation capacities of key stakeholders in the time of quick changes.
- Awareness raising: process itself and the communication of the results of the project will substantially improve awareness of the issues, key areas for action and responsibilities among policy makers, civil society and other actors.

4. PACs PROPOSALS ON FUTURE WORK

- Steering group (SG) agrees to continue the work on Common Transport Vision,
- SG understands proposed work,
- SG supports the project idea on scenarios as a first step towards a Vision and invites Slovenia to continue the work in order to provide the SG with more detailed project
- SG members are invited to cooperate with Slovenia in preparation of the project proposal and to check availability of EU and national resources in order to support implementation of the project
- European Commission is invited to revise the project proposal and to see how to best support realisation of the project.

Ljubljana, Belgrade: February 2012; revised June 2012