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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Inland Water Transport  
(Forty-eighth session, 19-21 October 2004,  
agenda item 6 (c))

**INTER-BASIN WATERWAY CONNECTIONS**

**Submitted by the Governments of Belarus, Belgium, Germany, Latvia,  
Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Poland, the Russian Federation,  
Turkey, Slovakia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Switzerland  
and by the Danube Commission**

**Note:** At its forty-fifth session, the Working Party requested the secretariat to approach Governments concerned with a view to exploring possibilities for launching two studies on the establishment of inter-basin waterway connections mentioned in the Plan of Action for the implementation of decisions taken by the Pan-European Conference on Inland Water Transport, 2001, i.e. the Danube - Oder - Elbe and Rhine - German canals - Vistula - Dnieper connections (TRANS/SC.3/158, para. 13 (v)). Also, at its forty-seventh session, following an exchange of views on the possible establishment of a Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway, the Working Party requested the secretariat to contact all Governments which might be interested in building such a transit waterway, with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a group of rapporteurs on that issue (TRANS/SC.3/161, para. 22).

Replies received from several Governments and the Danube Commission to the secretariat's inquiries on the above-mentioned three inter-basin waterway connections are reproduced below.

## **BELARUS**

1. Over recent years interest has developed in the Baltic, Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries, Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in more actively cooperating on the establishment of water transport connections between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea.
2. The **Daugava (Western Dvina) - Dnieper transit waterway** project is to be carried out in three States: Latvia, the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine. The total length of the waterway will be 2,110 km, with 360 km in Latvia, 719 km in Belarus and 1,031 km in Ukraine. The existence of the Daugava - Dnieper waterway will enable the transportation route from Northern Europe to the Middle East to be more than halved.
3. The dimensions of the fairway - 100 m wide and up to 5 m deep - will allow vessels 100 m long and 15 m wide, with a cargo capacity of 5,000 tonnes, to travel from Riga to Kherson in 12 days. The approximate construction period will be 10 years. A total of 18 locks will be built.
4. It is proposed that a shipping canal, 100 km long, 100 m wide and 5 m deep should be constructed in the watershed area between Vitebsk and Orsha.
5. According to an expert assessment carried out by specialists from Latvia, the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine, the total investment cost of establishing the Daugava - Dnieper connection will be approximately US\$ 10 billion. The payback period will be about 11 years.
6. Income will be obtained from transit and own freight transportation services and electricity generated by a cascade hydropower station.
7. Engineering calculations lead to the conclusion that the building of the Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway will be technically possible in the Republic of Belarus.
8. The predicted total transit freight transport per year is approximately 100 million tonnes. Implementation of the project will have an active and positive influence on the world economy. If the appropriate measures are taken, the waterway will not cause any adverse ecological changes to the natural surroundings.
9. A **Dnieper - Vistula - Oder connection** existed before the Second World War.
10. Following the renovation of hydrotechnical structures and the construction of a blind dam in Brest, the Dnieper - Vistula - Oder water transport connection was divided into two sections - the first in Belarus, and the second in Poland. The waterway in Belarus, which runs from Brest to the river Dnieper, is in a satisfactory technical condition, and is a class IV inland waterway of international importance. In Poland, waterways on the river Bug are of limited suitability for navigation.
11. East-West trade development means that the restoration of the Dnieper - Vistula - Oder waterway connection is becoming increasingly necessary.

12. This system attracts a range of transport flows of export-import goods from the Republic of Belarus, Poland, Ukraine and other European countries (coal, ores, metals, potash fertilizers, table salt, sugar, crushed stone, peat, forest products, spropels, etc.), and goods from Scandinavian countries.
13. The countries most interested in the re-establishment of this water transport connection will probably be those over whose territory the route passes. The waterways forming this connection could also be used for tourist journeys on boats.
14. According to expert estimates, an economic study for the Dnieper - Vistula - Oder connection will cost in the region of US\$ 500,000. The cost of work on rehabilitating the waterway itself is estimated at between US\$ 20 and 25 million.
15. It would be in the common interest of Western and Eastern European States to pursue research and decide on the question of the Dnieper - Vistula - Oder connection.
16. In 1997, the Government of the Republic of Belarus adopted a water transport development programme, to be implemented by 2010, which provides for the rebuilding of Dnieper-Bug canal shipping locks to meet the standards of a class Va European waterway of international importance.
17. Since that time, four sluice dams and one shipping lock have been reconstructed, thus allowing the passage of convoys of vessels 110 m long, 12 m wide and with a draught of 2.2 m. Reconstruction of the canal will continue over the next few years.
18. In order to clarify the economic, social, ecological and technical issues arising from the establishment of the Daugava (Western Dvina) - Dnieper, and Dnieper - Vistula - Oder waterways, and to take definitive decisions on the technical possibilities and economic expediency of the two projects, we propose carrying out, in the context of the Inland Transport Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), economic studies as a basis for the provision of investment, with participation from the relevant State member organizations.

## BELGIUM

19. The Government of Belgium welcomes the initiative of the Governments of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine regarding the possible building of a **Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway**. Any project that could contribute to the establishment of a pan-European network of modern inland waterways deserves to be examined and evaluated. The declaration adopted by the Pan-European Conference, held in Rotterdam on 5 and 6 September 2001, states that the development of a network of modern and effective infrastructures, which respect the needs of the environment, is a precondition for the promotion of inland navigation, as well as for an improvement in river-sea transport.
20. Due to its geographic location, this project does not have direct or economically important implications for Belgium and its inland waterway navigation sector. Since our resources are limited, we are obliged to focus our attention on projects that concern us more

directly. We would, however, like to be informed about the activities of any future group of experts, through the reports that it will no doubt submit to the Working Party on Inland Water Transport and the Inland Transport Committee.

## GERMANY

21. Germany does not support a study on the **Rhine - German canals - Oder - Vistula - Dnieper waterway connection**. The economic feasibility of this project can immediately be ruled out, especially since the connection between the Twente Canal and the Mittelland Canal has already proved to be economically unfeasible and is no longer being pursued.

22. In Germany's opinion, the economic feasibility assessment of the **Danube - Oder - Elbe connection**, made in the 1992 study, is based on over-optimistic assumptions of the investment cost and the traffic forecast. In view of the experience gained in the construction of the Main - Danube Canal, we consider the Danube - Oder - Elbe project to be economically not feasible.

## LATVIA

23. The Government of Latvia has carefully considered the question of the possible establishment of a **Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway**, linking the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, which was discussed during the forty-seventh session of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport, with a view to exploring the possibility of constituting a group of rapporteurs on that issue. We have come to the conclusion that this is not a priority issue for the Government of Latvia. In view of the foregoing, the Government of Latvia cannot support either the further consideration of this initiative within UNECE or the establishment of a group of rapporteurs.

## LITHUANIA

24. Both cargo and passenger inland waterway transport operations have declined sharply in Lithuania since 2000. Companies working in the sphere of freight transport by inland waterways are unable to develop their activities for lack of cargo. Passenger traffic on inland waterways represents an insignificant proportion of passenger services by all modes of transport. At the present time, the Government of Lithuania is not planning to make any considerable investments in the development of water transport infrastructure. According to our estimations, this situation will remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.

25. Taking account of the above-mentioned circumstances, it is difficult for us to evaluate the need to launch a study on the establishment of a **Rhine - German canals - Oder - Vistula - Dnieper connection** and to update the study on the establishment of a **Danube - Oder - Elbe connection**.

## LUXEMBOURG

26. Concerning the **Danube - Oder - Elbe and Dnieper - Vistula - Oder waterway connections**, it must be observed that the studies carried out thus far are no longer relevant, and should be updated to take into account recent changes in transport requirements.

27. In this connection, it would seem sufficient at the present stage to begin by carrying out an economic study.

28. Such an approach would allow that part of the research to be completed quickly, before beginning the technical and financial parts.

29. Regarding the possible establishment of a future **Daugava - Dnieper waterway connection between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea**, it must be noted that Luxembourg is not directly affected by this project. It is necessary, however, in every way to encourage this idea, in the context of developing international waterway links.

## **MOLDOVA**

30. The growing intensity of transport in Europe and the increase in West-East and North-South freight traffic movements require exploiting the unused throughput capacities of inland waterways and, emphasizing the advantages of inland navigation, substantiating the need to modernize Eastern European water transport infrastructure following Western European examples.

31. We therefore believe that the initiative of the Governments of Belarus and Ukraine, regarding the assessment of the necessity and possibility of launching a study on the canalization and establishment of a Daugava - Dnieper waterway connection, deserves attention and discussion during the forthcoming forty-eighth session of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport.

## **POLAND**

32. The **Daugava - Dnieper waterway connection** may be the subject of a study only if the initiative elicits the interest of all coastal countries not merely in carrying out that study but also in the possible establishment of such a connection.

33. In the view of the Ministry of Infrastructure, solely on that condition will the convening of a group of experts under the Working Party on Inland Water Transport be justified.

34. The opinion of the Latvian Government, as presented in the report of the Working Party on its forty-seventh session (TRANS/SC.3/161, para. 22), that this initiative should not be subject to discussion by an intergovernmental organization must be accepted by the Working Party as notice of the sovereign position of Latvia on this issue.

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

35. The Russian Federation is not interested in the establishment of a **Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway**, linking the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. A waterway runs through the Russian Federation via the Volga-Baltic waterway, the Volga river, the Volga-Don canal and the Don river (routes E50 and E90), which connects the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea basins. This waterway fully meets the Russian Federation's needs in respect of transport between those two basins.

## **SLOVAKIA**

36. Regarding the need and possibility of launching a study on the establishment of a **Rhine - German canals - Oder - Vistula - Dnieper waterway connection.**

37. Slovakia, having signed and ratified the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), supports all measures for the development and construction of a network of inland waterways and especially of main inland waterways. The Minister of Transport of Slovakia confirmed this position during the Pan-European Conference on Inland Waterway Transport, held in Rotterdam on 5 and 6 September 2001.

38. West-East category E main inland waterways numbered 60, 70, 80 and 90 are particularly important for the creation of a single, pan-European inland waterways network, and more specifically for a waterway connection between the developed Western European network and the waterways of Central and Eastern Europe. The significance of waterways E60 and E90 is that they run along the European coastline, and are fundamental for the use of current and future advanced non-trans-shipment technologies for mixed river-sea navigation. As regards the establishment of an E70 waterway, this principally concerns the States on whose territories the existing waterway (including the E70-E40 connecting section) lies, i.e. the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, the Russian Federation, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine. Studies on that question will in all likelihood have to be conducted. Since for this main waterway there is not yet an authoritative international river commission, a study group or group of rapporteurs must be established, pending the creation of such a commission, by the UNECE Working Party on Inland Water Transport.

39. Renewal of the study on the creation of a **Danube - Oder (Elbe) waterway connection.**

40. Regarding this study, or more specifically the economic and financial basis for establishing a main North-South E30 (E20) Danube - Morava - Oder (Elbe) waterway connection, the position of the Government of Slovakia is set forth in Decree No. 469 of 21 June 2000 concerning the Concept for the development of transport by inland waterway. The Decree expresses full support for the earliest phased construction of this waterway, beginning at the Danube (from the mouth of the Morava river, along its channel for approximately 6 km, and then via the longitudinal canal through the grounds of the industrial estate next to the railway and motorway - part of multimodal Pan-European Transport Corridor IV - to the border with the Czech Republic). Since the Morava river basin forms the border area between Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a more detailed route of the first phase of the waterway, i.e. the canal, should be clarified by a group of experts or rapporteurs, with input from specialists of the three parties concerned. The party most interested in a phased construction approach should be the Czech Republic, which after completion of the first construction phase would already gain access to the main trans-European Danube - Main - Rhine waterway.

## **TURKEY**

41. The relevant Turkish authorities look positively on the project for the establishment of a **Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway** connecting the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea.

## UKRAINE

42. The Ministry of Transport confirms its interest in the further development of the project regarding the establishment of a **Daugava - Dnieper transit waterway**, and in the establishment of a group of rapporteurs within UNECE, including input from all the parties concerned, with a view to launching an economic study into this prospective waterway.

43. For its part, the Ministry is ready to present all the materials available to it from the preliminary studies completed by the Ukrainian side.

44. Ukraine is also interested in a study on the possibility of establishing a **Rhine - German canals - Oder - Vistula - Dnieper water transport connection**, but on condition that such a study will be carried out jointly by specialists from all the countries through whose territory that connection would pass.

## CZECH REPUBLIC

45. Taking into account its current circumstances and possibilities, the Czech Republic does not, at the present time, recommend resuming international activities within the context of UNECE, to study the possibility of the future construction of a **Danube - Oder - Elbe connection**.

46. The effective decisions of the Governments of the former Czechoslovakia and of the Czech Republic, which were made on the basis of the results of the previous study carried out in 1992 within the UNECE context, remain relevant in respect of the route of the future connection.

47. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe will, of course, be officially informed by the Government of the Czech Republic of any possible future changes in the Czech Republic's position on the issue of preparing for the construction of a Danube - Oder - Elbe connection, and on the possibility of providing funding for that project, which will require preliminary negotiations both with the Governments of the coastal countries of the connection and also in the framework of the European Union, of which all the coastal States are members.

48. For the above reason, the Czech Republic, through whose territory the largest part of the connection will run, is not in favour of initiatives of private entities calling for the renewal of activities related to the future Danube - Oder - Elbe connection, including a study on the financing of its phased construction.

49. We must give priority attention to more pressing water transport problems, such as the unsatisfactory navigational conditions on the river Elbe waterway (i.e. the Czech part from Usti nad Labem to the State border), which now actually provides for 100% of water transport services in international directions, and also to dealing with issues related to the possible incorporation of the proposed trans-shipment logistics centre in Breslav, Southern Moravia on the Danube river.

50. Accordingly, we do not, for the foreseeable future, intend to divide our efforts to cover other issues not falling within the scope of the Plan of Action.

51. The Czech Republic has no objections to the possible beginning of a study on a main West-East trans-European waterway, and specifically the **Rhine - German canals - Oder - Vistula - Dnieper connection**, which would, in future, open up a new transport artery for inland navigation.

#### **SWITZERLAND**

52. Under the current circumstances it does not seem appropriate to begin or renew economic studies on the establishment of new inter-basin waterway connections.

#### **DANUBE COMMISSION**

53. The Danube Commission is greatly interested in the promotion of navigation in all possible forms, as well as in the establishment of new transport routes, which play an important role in the development of international economic relations for the benefit of all parties.

54. Regarding the necessity and possibility of launching a study on the establishment of a **Rhine - German canals - Vistula - Dnieper connection**, the secretariat holds the view that the positions of the countries concerned here is determinant. The need for a connection between navigable sections in this region remains as before important for the European transport network.

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