

Short Report of 2nd Navigation Sector Roundtable

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The H2020 MERLIN roundtables aim to build a community of practice linking the economic sector representatives with MERLIN scientific and implementation partners. Following a first roundtable with the [Navigation Sector](#) and [Sector Briefing](#), a second roundtable was held on 13 April 2023. This report captures the main discussion points of the second roundtable. The findings will contribute to a final roundtable to be held in 2024, and subsequent policy briefings and sector strategies.

Themes discussed

What does Nature Based solutions mean in the context of navigation?

What are the difficulties, conflicts of interest? What are the motivations for navigation stakeholders?

- Wetlands is in the wider benefit of the navigation sector because it can store the water. Anything that stores water and release it during low water periods benefits the sector.
- During high water periods the wetlands can hold the water and during low water periods, it provides water to help the waterways maintain the uniform water levels.
- One way navigation is required in order not to interfere with the main waterways. Although we agree with the views of ecologist (to reduce modifying of riverbed conditions), we sometimes need to deepen river channels which don't fully meet the previous statement.
- It is important to look at case by case issues and consider the specific sites. In very populated areas, the situation is different from completely natural environment.
- Stable water levels, year round – this is the key expectation of the navigation sector; all solutions are supported to improve fairway conditions during low waters; this can be NbS ones by releasing the water slowly back in the main course of the rivers;
- Case-by-case solution all depends on pilot sites. Not general NbS is known or available, geographical scope and political will are both significant -> case-by-case solution is necessary on each;
- We need to use flexible ways of nature-based solutions and low-water regulations. These are only effective during low water levels, they may also affect ecology and reduce water velocity;
- To look at compensation from multi-stakeholder perspective rather than from a single stakeholder's viewpoint.

How to reach the target audience? Who is the target audience?

- Early involvement of all stakeholders is the preferred solution
- Stakeholders from agriculture are purely informed about what NbS is. It is not that they do not read the documents, but sometimes they are long to read. It could be good to have a common training about what NbS in the navigation sector is.
- One of the ideal outcomes of this project is to help to institutionalise more firmly the cooperation points and stakeholders' engagement and be resilient to political changes.
- Manuals and guidelines are available, but not well-known. Many new ideas appear which also should be considered, but difficult to follow all of them.



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- Developing guidelines and reaching target audience are both long-term processes and takes time of technical people / experts, but sometimes the political agenda changes quickly and drop back the whole approach on the starting line.

Stakeholder mapping: identify roles, knowledge gaps and synergies – national & international level

- The role of stakeholders is diverse, there are different structures in the EU countries, the responsibilities of management bodies, agencies, ministerial departments highly depend on the countries' tradition in managing waterways.
- The Austrian, Dutch, Serbian and Croatian examples confirm that wide involvement of stakeholders is a key. In Austria and in the Netherlands there are very complex structures, a lot of commissions, events for entities which have responsibilities or for stakeholders whose involvement is expected. This is similar with the German Federal waterways.
- The national associations are involved in negotiations, they have contacts at the European levels and they cooperate with EU institutions. The International level mostly covers the strategic aspects. The cooperation of the environmental sector and navigation sector is improving. What is not sufficient at the EU level is cooperation with other sectors and this is something to consider discussing;
- The ongoing METEET project from 2017 represents best practice in some Danube countries. The aim of workshops organized by project partners was to raise awareness of the EU environmental legislation that applies to navigation projects and to identify the key factors for creating win-win solutions for river ecosystems and inland navigation;

Low hanging fruits, best practices – on selected waterways and on horizontal levels

- The project for improving navigation conditions on Danube in Austria downstream Vienna;
- Sigma Plan in Belgium: considers navigation and recreation; it was managed to invite stakeholders and to reach they need to become co-owners of the plan, which certainly influence their feeling about responsibilities;
- River Training Works on Danube in the Republic of Serbia (2017 - 2021);
- At the German level, there have been some projects, examples will be gathered later

Next steps

- Notes of RT2 will be shared and will work further on the cooperation points.
- Further stakeholder analysis will be compiled by the organizers of the roundtable.
- Bilateral discussions with some of the roundtable participants will be organized around the cooperation points and to support the stakeholder analysis.
- The list of institutions (stakeholders) to be invited for discussions on the cooperation points will be developed.
- Options will be identified on how to reach those who are on the list.

Please let us know if you have any comments or clarifications to add on this note. Please address your comments to tamas.gruber@wwf.hu.



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