

July 2024

WP4: Transformation

Short Report of the 3rd Navigation Sector Roundtable

The H2020 MERLIN roundtables aim to build a community of practice linking the economic sector representatives with MERLIN scientific and implementation partners. The third Navigation Roundtable was held on 18 June 2024. This report captures the main discussion points of the event - the findings will contribute to the Navigation sector strategy.

Agenda

A total of 19 people were present at the roundtable, including representatives of navigation companies or associations, universities and research centres, the MERLIN project and case study leaders.

Time	Content
14:00 – 14:10	Welcome and introductions
14:10 – 14:15	Short intro on MERLIN's strategic interaction with different sectors
14:15 – 14:45	NbS examples in navigable waterways (Germany, Netherlands)
14:45 – 15:15	Potential for NbS in navigable waterways
15:15 – 15:30	Break
15:30 – 15:45	Presentation draft sectoral strategy
15:45 – 16:30	Role of MERLIN sectoral strategy towards more environmentally friendly navigation
16:30 – 16:45	Next Steps and wrap up

NbS examples in navigable waterways from Germany – Presentation by a representative of the German Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG)

- Federal waterways in Germany are an economic, recreational and natural capital
- Operation, maintenance of fairways are traditional, but ecological restoration to a certain degree is a new task for BfG (declared now in law)
- Implementation of NbS means for BfG: contribute to navigation; reduce maintenance efforts; replace outdated infrastructure; support ecological goals; enhance social well-being.
- Examples:
 - Modifications of grey infrastructure considering ecological aspects
 - Removal of fixed banks if obsolete or replace with willow plantations
 - Sediment management: sediment traps and artificial water bodies (also have an ecological or recreational function)
 - Dike relocation, floodplain restoration
- Summarizing the approach: integrating ecological solutions and mitigation measures, parallel with the grey ones
- Outlook – navigational and ecological tasks are equally important - new legal frame, Blue Belt program; alliance with NGOs is built and improving; increasing commitments from navigation sectors' stakeholders to NbS

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NbS examples in navigable waterways from the rivers Rhine and Meuse – Presentation by Tom Buijse, Deltares

- Bank protection removal, Meuse, steep banks are nesting sites for birds; 30% of the wholelength of this river – bank protection removed; ship waves stimulate bank erosion on openstretches; according to colleagues at Rijkswaterstaat the navigation sector sees the added environmental value. There are concerns as well, but no serious issues reported.
- Riverbed incision – negative impacts on many sectors; possible solution: Longitudinal training walls, parallel with the banks – multiple functions – also flood safety, habitat: test on 10 km; multidisciplinary research – shore channel benefits nature: higher density of species compared to the channelized main river course; still some scepticism within navigation sector, other stakeholders evaluated project as a success.

First Q&A, discussion

- Sedimentation behind training walls? – was mapped, no dredging happened, there is dynamic waterflow behind the training structures which transports the sediment; bottom sill in the shore channel for providing sufficient water depth in the main navigation channel
- Advantage of groynes is that they are more flexible (adaptable). We need to think how to adapt longitudinal training walls in the future if it is needed.
- Germany- technical-biological solutions proportionate? – not easy to pinpoint length of stretches/percentage of waterways in which NbS have been implemented, since many projects were carried out individually.
- Always to be considered: how much space is available, what will be the impacts of invasivespecies, how quickly will these spread.
- Different river sections for different purposes (e.g. navigation, nature): some PIANC examples where this is indeed possible. Depends on the responsible authority. Examples where use is made of the hydro-morphological behaviour of the river. But this allows only smaller vessel depth classes.
- Danube: only 1 or 2 pilots with groyne removal. Reason is that these are costly investments and waterway authority does not have the budget to test these new types of measures, and there is no incentive to do this, from other sectors or decision-making levels. Although on the Danube in some areas the river is wide enough to implement pilot NbS.
 - RE: Longitudinal training walls serve multiple goals, so the incentive could be there. Maybe examples need to be shared more.
 - RE: Information sharing may not be sufficient - lack of financing and synergistic governance is still an issue.

Draft Sectoral strategy – Presentation by Tom Buijse, Deltares

- PIANC and Joint Statement Initiative
- METEET – expert team, to support authorities (DG Move, DG Env, etc.)
- Practical examples, manuals: e.g. Viadounau, Platina
- Some notes from RT2 – how to reach the target audience, Stakeholder mapping and synergies
- Draft key messages²: raise awareness, now the feeling is that NbS only requires compromises from navigation sector; who is the sector: both private and public bodies, but national water and fairway management authorities might have leading role
- Finance for NbS in inland waterways will predominantly be coming from public sector

¹ https://www.blaues-band.bund.de/Projektseiten/Blaues_Band/DE/00_Home/home_node.html

Second Q&A, discussion

- What is the target audience of the report?
- Who is the sector? Let's discuss also with them in advance and then formulate strategy and key messages.
- Awareness – not homogeneous within the sector. Waterway authorities are aware, but within shipping industry it is variable. Also among policy makers more awareness is needed. Synergistic approach is necessary, different funds are available for different stakeholders.
- Key message #7 on trade-off between inland navigation and ecosystem conservation/restoration should be based on further dialogue with stakeholders.
- We often speak about waterways, but it's a derivative of the system itself (e.g. river, channel). Inland navigation is one user of the waterway, but e.g. with bank protection removal, we have more stakeholders, e.g. landowners. So we have multiple stakeholders (multi-actor sector). And the inland navigation sector is not necessarily negative towards NbS (e.g. because maintenance costs may be reduced), it is more about looking which solution fits where. However, we need to make clear what we understand to be waterways: a clear definition.
- Indeed, the sector is heterogeneous, but the goals we are looking at are mainly connected to the public sector. We also learned this from the previous round tables.
- Discussion on financing:
 - Question if it would be possible to involve private companies in paying for fairway maintenance.
 - This may be counterproductive towards achieving Green Deal goals (to increase inland water transport). If costs increase for the inland navigation sector, they may be less competitive with other modalities. There does not seem to be a level playing field between modalities, because the IWT sector does not benefit from the fact that they are now more environmentally friendly.
 - Contribution from private sector could be focused on environmentally friendly ships. Also: for tourism (e.g. cruise ships) river restoration has benefits because it will attract more tourists.
 - Charging navigation sector happens on some waterways, but it is hard to define a price because maintenance of waterways benefits multiple functions. But the ships are private assets, so there it is clear who is responsible.
- Comments on the draft key messages:
 - Maybe there is a lack of attention for the implementation phase. Can we strengthen the role of adaptive management, and focus on the obstacles for (large-scale) implementation? It can take years to implement even small-scale pilots. How can we speed up approval processes? Are we giving enough recommendations for that?
 - Important to define target audience for the messages.
 - We need to target the actions to different actors, but also to different parts of the 'cycle': design, implementation, maintenance, etc. This is also valuable for other sectors. Different stakeholders may need different types of actions: e.g. creating awareness, information sharing, etc. So maybe include a bit more detail in the strategy.
 - Knowledge sharing between subsectors needs to be improved. Different stakeholders have different responsibilities (e.g. designing, maintaining, regulating and using infrastructure) – they do not necessarily know each other's interests.
 - Recommend best practices to determine cost/benefit ratio of NbS.

² The draft key messages have been sent to all invitees prior to the RT.

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Next steps

- Finalization of the sector strategy by end of this year
- Cross - sector RT autumn 2024

If you wish to receive further information or make a comment, please contact tom.buijse@deltares.nl or Anna.Berczi-siket@wwf.hu or Kirsty.Blackstock@hutton.ac.uk for more general MERLIN information.



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