



## PRESS RELEASE

### Danube Ports Days 2023: Navigating Towards Sustainable Waterborne Transport

*Vienna, 27 November 2023* - The Danube Ports Days 2023 event, a collaborative effort by Pro Danube in partnership with the EU-funded Green Inland Ports Study, MultiRELOAD and SYNERGETICS projects, and with support from the Danube Ports Network, has successfully concluded. This groundbreaking event served as the focal point for high-profile representatives from the European Parliament, European Commission, international river commissions, port authorities, and various stakeholders in the inland waterway transportation (IWT) sector.

The two-day event, held on 23 and 24 November in Vienna, provided a unique platform for participants to explore innovative tools and solutions geared towards achieving green objectives, sharing experiences, addressing common challenges, and staying updated on latest industry developments. With a specific focus on the European Green Deal, the Danube Ports Days aimed to facilitate collaboration between public and private entities, fostering know-how sharing and feedback collection in pursuit of the ambitious climate targets enshrined in the European Green Deal.

Keynote speakers from the European Parliament, European Commission, and the City of Vienna emphasised the pivotal role of inland ports in both climate protection and economic viability. The event showcased the essential contribution of inland ports to the Green Deal's goals, pointing to their role as hubs for sustainable mobility, clean energy, and circular economy development.

Commissioned by the European Commission to explore and drive sustainable practices within the inland navigation sector, the Green Inland Ports Study marks a pivotal step towards a greener and economically robust future for inland ports. **Geert Smit**, from Ecorys, the organisation leading the study, expressed pride in the collaboration and shared insights into the study's significance. *"We are proud that Ecorys and partners can work with the inland navigation sector on identifying the factors affecting the sustainable development of inland ports and propose solutions for the implementation of green objectives, paired with economic development of inland ports."*

The Green Inland Ports Study aims to identify key factors influencing sustainable development within inland ports, proposing innovative solutions that align with both environmental and economic objectives. The study is set to play a crucial role in shaping policies and strategies to enhance the sustainability of inland navigation, addressing the growing need for eco-friendly practices within the industry.

By bringing together a diverse audience of end customers, including logistics service providers, freight forwarders, and cargo owners, the inaugural MultiRELOAD User Forum served as a dynamic platform for collaboration and feedback within the IWT industry. *"We believe in the power of collaboration and user feedback to drive innovation in the IWT sector. The MultiRELOAD User Forum exemplifies our commitment to actively engage with stakeholders, enabling us to develop solutions that not only meet but exceed industry expectations"* stated **Jan-Christoph Maass**, from Duisburger Hafen AG, the lead partner of the MultiRELOAD project.

The Danube networking cruise, organised in the aftermath of the MultiRELOAD User Forum, emerged as a great success, serving as the social highlight of the event. Participants engaged in vibrant discussions and dynamic project presentations, emphasising the crucial role of ports in Europe's evolving transport system's greening. The scenic cruise facilitated meaningful connections, idea exchange, and exploration of innovative initiatives within the IWT sector. The overwhelming positive feedback from attendees underscores the success of this networking experience, reinforcing its significance in fostering collaboration and advancing the shared goals of sustainable transportation in Europe.

On the second day of the event, the SYNERGETICS project took centre stage. This initiative focuses on accelerating the greening of inland shipping throughout Europe, providing retrofit solutions to facilitate the green transformation of inland vessels and coastal ships. *"Our mission is clear: to provide a consistent catalogue of developed and ready-to-deploy retrofit solutions. The aim is to facilitate and accelerate the green transformation of inland vessels and coastal ships"* said **Igor Bačkalov** from DST – Development Centre for Ship Technology and Transport Systems.

*"We are delighted with the success of the Danube Ports Days 2023 event"* said **Róbert Rafael**, on behalf of Pro Danube. *"The event provided a unique platform for constructive dialogue among industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders, paving the way for innovative solutions and partnerships in the IWT community. We extend our sincere gratitude to the speakers and attendees who played a crucial role in the success of the Danube Ports Days 2023."*

## About Pro Danube

Pro Danube represents the voice of Danube-minded businesses which are interested in the promotion of better navigation conditions, waterway infrastructure and transport services, hence being an active contributor in the political debates on transport policy, technology, and regional development fora. For over a decade, Pro Danube has been involved in the initiation and execution of transnational EU-funded projects related to the development of the inland waterway transport sector in the Danube Region.

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