

## **Danube-Black Sea Gateway Region - Regional and Transport Development in the Danube -Black Sea Region towards a Transnational Multiport Gateway Region Project Kick-Off Conference in Sofia, 22 March 2017**

About 60 experts from Central and East European Countries will come together on 22 March at the Best Western Hotel Expo in Sofia in order to be informed on the recently started project DBS (Danube-Black Sea) Gateway Region, which is co-financed within the framework of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme.

The conference is organised by the Regional Government of Lower Austria, lead partner of the project, the Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company (project partner and host) and TINA Vienna GmbH (project partner). Mr. Werner Pracherstorfer, Regional Government of Lower Austria, and Mr. Anguel Ziburto, Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company, will open the event.

Within the framework of the event representatives from Transport Ministries, local and regional authorities, Danube and Black Sea ports, special interest groups, research institutions and universities and private companies will meet for expert talks and panel discussions. They will talk about main challenges for the future development of the Danube waterway on the global market, reasons for supporting maritime and inland waterway transport from national/regional perspectives, the importance to participate in transnational networks for future development and future perspectives of the European corridor Rhine-Danube regarding prosperity, shift of transport volumes towards environmental friendly modes of transport and their overall importance in a European transport network, too.

With the enlargement of the EU, the borders were opened to reunite the historical Danube region. Economic development and the emergence of new markets led to rising road transport flows. High traffic volumes not only restrain economic development again, but also have negative effects on the regions. Thus, the main result of the DBS Gateway Region project will be the highly increased intensity and quality of cooperation between all key actors in order to jointly support the Danube-Black Sea region to become an attractive gateway region for maritime and inland waterway transport between Central Europe and the Black Sea, the Caspian region and the Far East (DBS Gateway Region) on a well-informed (Potential Analysis, Road Map), well-prepared (list of projects ready to be implemented, Funding Guideline), well-focused (Joint Vision, Joint Cooperation Strategy) and well-supported (operative Cooperation Platform beyond the lifetime of the project) basis.

The Potential Analysis points out the status, joint challenges and potential cargo for the waterway transport system. The Joint Vision 2040 tells us where the DBS Gateway Region wants to go, the Roadmap defines how we will get there and the Regional Action Plans give concrete steps on what needs to be done, by whom, when etc. and how much this will cost.

Cooperation increases between Danube and Black Sea ports, ports associations, public authorities, business agencies, universities, enterprises, freight forwarders and other strategic partners (such as the EUSDR PA 1a Coordinators, the Working Community of Danube Regions) who will establish close ties during project implementation and beyond. The project ensures financial sustainability by providing a Funding Guideline for project implementation, political sustainability through the strong commitment of participating policy-makers and institutional sustainability through the establishment of the Cooperation Platform that will support long-lasting cooperation and further action in the region.

DBS Gateway Region is led by the Regional Government of Lower Austria. The project consortium comprises ten partners from seven riparian Danube countries and 20 associated partners.

Information on the project is available at <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/dbs-gateway-region>.