

Release of the NECU press-conference "Will the E40 river route (Gdansk - Kherson) become an economic miracle for Ukraine?"

On November 16, 2020, NECU hosted a press conference in media-center "Ukrinform" on the topic: "Will the E40 river route (Gdansk-Kherson) become an economic miracle for Ukraine?".

Organizers of the event: National Ecological Center of Ukraine (NECU) and Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds (TOP).

The results of the feasibility study of the E40 International Waterway Project: Gdańsk - Kherson (Project E40) developed by a consortium headed by the Maritime Institute (Gdańsk, Poland) were presented at the press conference.

The assessment of the feasibility study of the E40 Project was performed by Belarusian specialists of the associations: "Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers after prof. M.S. Kunyavskii", "Republican Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs", "Belarusian Scientific and Industrial Association".

The event was attended by:

Oleg Rubel, Doctor of Economics, Professor of Odessa State Ecological University, Leading Researcher of the Institute of Market Problems, Economic and Ecological Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine;

Oleg Lystopad, expert of the Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds;

Heorhiy Veremiychyk, NECU expert on climate change;

Oleksander Gusev, NECU expert on sustainable development.

A recording of an interview with the Deputy Director of the "Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers after prof. M.S. Kunyavskii" **Ales Gerasimenko**, who presented the conclusions of Belarusian economists on the economic performance of the E40 Project, was presented.

In his opening speech, **Heorhiy Veremiychyk** briefly described the history of the idea of the E40 Project and the public reaction to the plans to build the Gdansk-Kherson river route; the emergence of an international coalition of civil society organizations, which is fighting for the E40 Project to be publicly reviewed for compliance with European environmental legislation as a whole, rather than in fragments; the preservation of Polissya as the only area in Europe that has undergone minimal anthropogenic intervention.

In his speech, **Oleg Rubel** highlighted the EU policy on the development of water transport on the European continent, its advantages over land transport in the case of transportation of multi-ton and large cargo. At the same time, he noted that Project E40 is not included in the list of projects planned for implementation. And that now we can't say for sure what is good or bad.

According to Oleg Rubel, it is necessary to properly assess the real state of the transport infrastructure of the Dnipro River and the amount of investment required for its modernization to provide a waterway class E40. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the maintenance of the waterway is expensive. According to the speaker, the cost of deepening the Dnipro River alone can reach 1 billion hryvnias annually. Hence, the volume of cargo flow must be correctly estimated so as not to make mistakes in economic calculations.

In his speech, **Oleg Lystopad** noted that not all risks associated with the functioning of the E40 waterway are taken into account. For example, in the event of a tanker accident near the Kyiv water intake, what kind of water will Kyiv, Cherkasy and other cities drink? Who will cover the losses for water purification and accident elimination? Nobody counted these potential costs. Water supply systems in Ukraine are vulnerable because water is taken from surface sources, unlike in EU countries. Even in Belarus, cities consume water from underground sources. Therefore, the requirements for the construction of the waterway are very high. We can pay a very high price in

the event of an unforeseen incident. The priority should be the reliable operation of water supply systems, rather than turning rivers into freight roads.

Oleksander Gusev pointed out that the economic benefits of the project are unreasonably optimistic, because the losses caused by the construction and operation of the road are underestimated. The danger is that loans will be taken under state guarantees. The costs of mitigating and eliminating unforeseen environmental damage will be borne by every Ukrainian. A natural question arises, what for do we need such a prospect?

In his closing remarks, **Heorhiy Veremiychyk** emphasized the conclusions of Belarusian experts on the prospects of the E40 Project. First of all, the feasibility study of the E40 Project does not meet the European requirements for this class of documents; the expected environmental damage of large-scale construction is significantly underestimated. This large-scale project will affect the lives of about 28.7 million people living in an area of about 393 thousand km². In Poland and Belarus, a total of about 1,900 km², mostly in the Vistula and Pripjat river valleys, will be flooded. This is more than double the area occupied by the city of Kyiv.

The speaker reminded that about 7,000 km² of valuable lands were flooded by the Dnipro reservoirs - this is half of the country of Montenegro! The Dnipro River has lost its river status and has been transformed into a system of artificial lakes that are continuously silted up. The Pripjat River will undergo the same changes in the case of Project E40!

The biggest threat to the E40 Project is the loss of invaluable freshwater reserves in Pripjat and Polissya in general in the context of global climate change and river dehydration. After all, Ukraine suffers from a lack of drinking water supplies.

The construction of the E40 waterway will lead to a significant deterioration of water quality in the Pripjat River and will lead to unpredictable consequences due to the disruption of radioactive absorbing of the Kyiv Sea.

In his interview, Deputy Director of the “Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers after prof. M.S. Kunyavskii” **Ales Gerasimenko**, stressed on the main conclusion of Belarusian experts:

- ✓ The waterway will be uncompetitive with road and rail transport if it is not subsidized;
- ✓ Governments should focus on cost-effective alternatives to waterways, such as upgrading existing road and rail infrastructure.

The National Ecological Center of Ukraine emphasizes that the E40 Project in Ukraine has not passed the environmental impact assessment procedure, and policy decisions on its implementation have already been made.