

Danube Business Talks 2021 goes digital

Effective infrastructure operation during the crisis - Lessons for the future



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viadonau stands for modern waterway management



- Company owner: Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology
- Founded in 2005 on the legal basis of the Austrian Waterway Act
- Responsible management, development and promotion of the Danube waterway
- National and international projects on infrastructure management, shipping and logistics, electronic information systems, flood control and hydraulic engineering

→ **Leading international waterway operator in the Danube region**

Covid-19 crisis and waterway management – initial situation

Uncertainty at the beginning:

- How can the working environment at viadonau be organised to minimise the risk for infections?
- How can collaboration with external partners be organised most effectively under these circumstances?
- How will the pandemic affect traffic on the Danube waterway?

→ Swift reaction required to adjust internal processes to new situation

**viadonau staff working
in management and administrative
field**
e.g. accounting, legal department, project
management etc.

viadonau staff working on-site
e.g. traffic regulation and supervision at
the Danube locks, surveying, waterway
maintenance and fairway marking
activities

Covid-19 crisis and waterway management – immediate reaction

Protection of employees

Family and work compatibility

Maintaining operations

Reactions of viadonau to changing working environment:

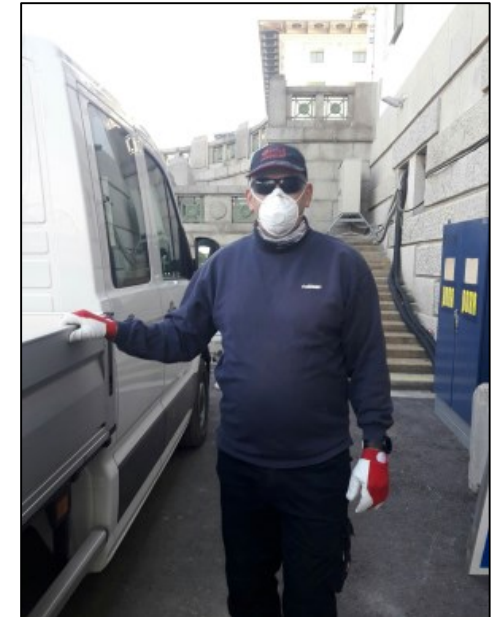
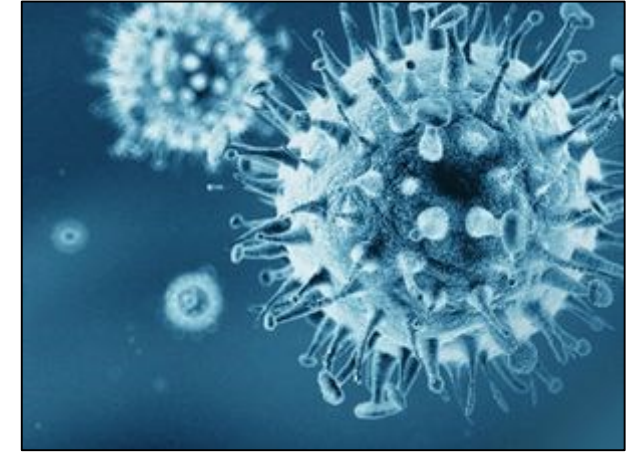
Activation of **CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM (CMT)**, well trained and with already clarified responsibilities of team members

→ 1-3 meetings per week, consultations and decisions to maintain infrastructure operation undisturbed

Infrastructure operation – general approach

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- **CMT: central contact point on Covid-19 related topics** → short lines of communication, bundling of information, quick decision making processes
- **Stricter internal rules** than governmental instructions as a result of transparent and efficient processes (employees felt safe at all times at the work place)
- **Swift engagement of IT Team**
→ adaption of the entire IT system of viadonau for homeoffice within 5 days (hardly any malfunctions and disturbances)



Infrastructure operation: surveying activities

Usual operation (before Covid-19 crisis/lockdowns)

- 2 persons onboard (boat master & technician) + 3rd person onshore for accompanying measurements
- Existing remote maintenance tool only used for service purpose

Covid-19 crisis/lockdowns → 2 persons onboard prohibited!

New operation scheme within 1-2 weeks:

- 1 person onboard (additionally trained boat master)
- Acquirement of 2 licences for existing remote maintenance tool → technician monitors & edits surveying data from homeoffice
- 3rd person onshore
 - no physical contact between involved staff members
 - (almost 100 %) usual operation

Currently:

For security reasons: 2 persons onboard, 1 person onshore (business as usual)

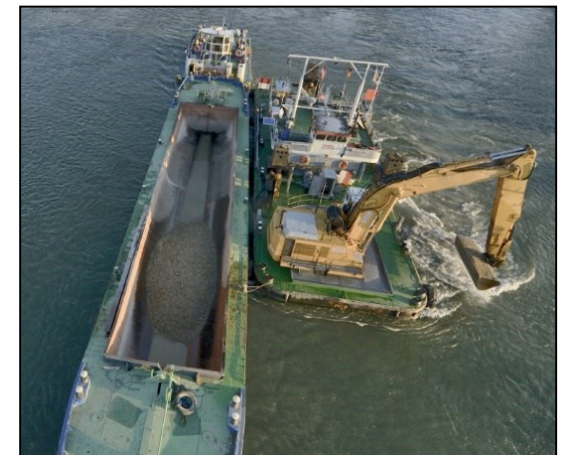
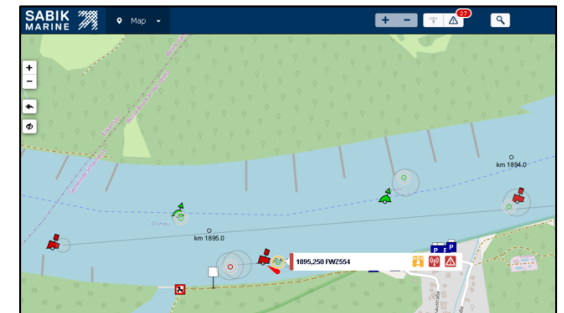
Infrastructure operation: marking of the fairway & dredging works

Marking of the fairway

- Covid-19 safety concept on marking vessels established in April 2020
 - Remote surveillance of buoys via GPS moduls on buoys
- Marking of the fairway ensured at all times during the Covid-19 crisis

Dredging activities

- Pro active dredging activities carried out under Covid-19 safety rules with external contractors
 - Remote control of dredging activities (vessel tracks, loading status of barges)
- Adequate fairway conditions ensured at all times during the Covid-19 crisis



Infrastructure operation: lock operations

Supervision and traffic control at locks: single workplace BUT limited number of employees

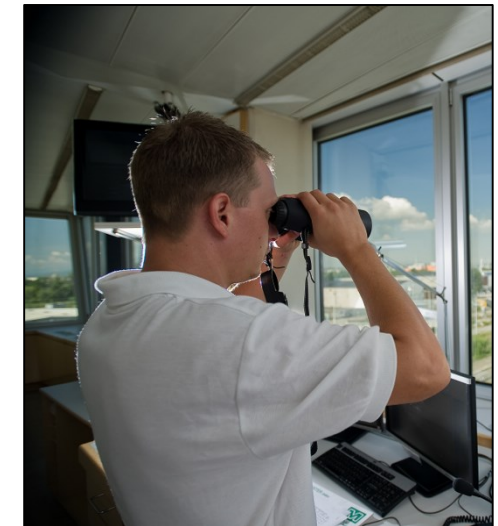
Goal:

Secure working environment to avoid critical number of Covid-19 infections in order to maintain 24/7 lock operation

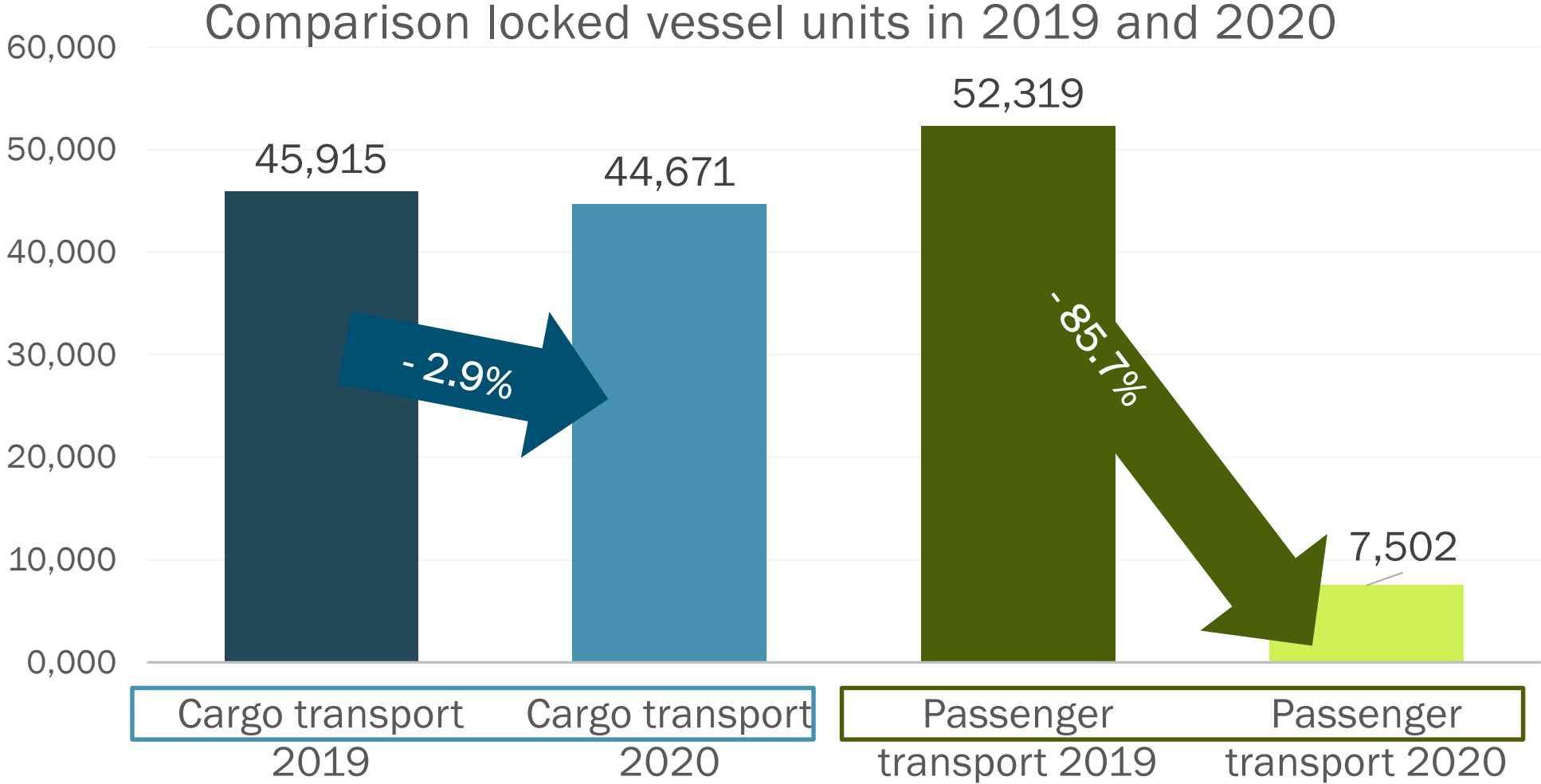
Solution:

- General ban to enter control tower (except in urgent cases)
- Contact during shift change and service handover reduced to minimum
- Desinfection of all surfaces before shift change

→ Lock operation along Austrian Danube ensured without interruptions during Covid-19 crisis

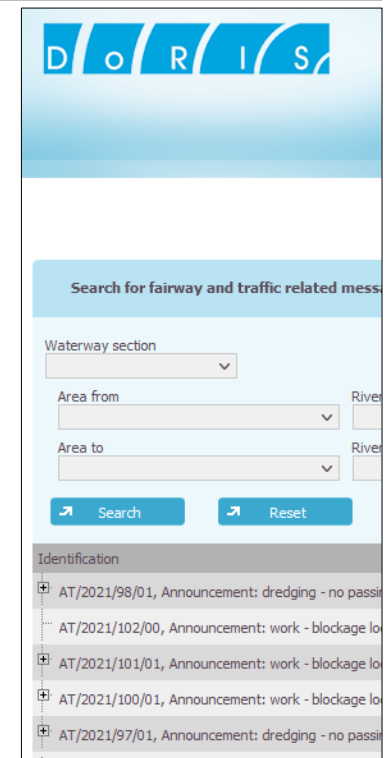


Covid-19 crises and inland navigation – Impact on locked vessel units



Lessons for the future

- **Efficient and well-trained internal Crisis Management Team (CMT)** essential for overcoming challenging times and ensure quick solution finding processes
- **Digital solutions** developed in the past e.g. River Information Services (RIS), Waterway Asset Management System (WAMS), buoys with remote monitoring modules etc. helped to maintain operations with hardly any interruptions
- **International cooperation & joint coordination** decisive to ensure transnational transport flows and avoid interruptions in supply chains for important cargo groups (e.g. Notices to Skippers, regulation on crew change procedures in cross-border traffic)



Opportunities for the future

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- **Cargo shipping** proved to be a **reliable logistics partner** also in times of crises → **ensured supply security** for crucial raw materials, agricultural and industrial products, etc.
- **Passenger shipping** has suffered from an unprecedented crisis but will recover and come back **smarter, greener and more resilient** (e.g. shore power, new touristic offers etc.)
- Covid-19 pandemic is a chance for accelerated **digitalisation** in the inland navigation sector
- Covid-19 crisis and climate crisis are a chance for **European & national policy makers** to work jointly on **innovative solutions** in the field of inland navigation (no excuses)



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