

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION OF INLAND WATERWAY
TRANSPORT “NAIADES”
AN INTEGRATED EUROPEAN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR INLAND WATERWAY
TRANSPORT**

STATEMENT HIGH-LEVEL MEETING FEBRUARY 15, 2006 VIENNA

EBU warmly welcomes the draft communication from the Commission regarding the promotion of Inland Waterway Transport “NAIADES”. The European Commission has understood the need to promote inland waterway transport by setting out this integrated action programme, focusing on concrete actions which are needed to fully exploit the market potential of this mode of transport and to make it more attractive to users.

1. AN INTEGRATED EUROPEAN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT

Transport is the backbone of trade and economy. To meet the challenges of the increasing transport volume in Europe, the European Commission in 2001 released its White Paper “European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide”. Since then hardly any measures have been taken to solve the existing problems and to work on sustainable solutions.

Where the further implementation of the Lisbon goals is high on the agenda, transport is merely mentioned in the general discussion and does not have the attention of policy makers. It therefore needs a stronger economical positioning within this concept.

In this context, inland navigation offers numerous possibilities in terms of innovation, growth and capacity, environmental friendliness, safety and security. It besides disposes of sufficient capacities in order to absorb the increasing freight streams in Europe and to free Europe from a permanent road congestion.

The transport sector occupies an important position in the EU, generating 7 per cent of total employment, 40 per cent of investment and 30 per cent of energy consumption. Where issues like shift from road to alternative transport modes are at the top of the agenda, inland waterway transport still only covers some 6 per cent of the total performance of freight transport within the European Union only. Alternative and environmentally safe modes of transport have to be encouraged and better integrated into the transport systems, which brings about a sustainable balance in the transport sector that would be better for the economy and environment in Europe. Taking into account the policy announced by the European

Mailaddress:

PO Box 23210 • 3001 KE Rotterdam • The Netherlands

Address:

Vasteland 12e • 3011 BL Rotterdam • The Netherlands • T +31 (0)10 4116070 • F +31 (0)10 4129091
Email: info@ebu-uenf.org • Internet: www.ebu-uenf.org

Commission, IWT as such, as well as part of the intermodal transport chain, can play a major role to contribute to the competitiveness of the European economy.

The intended action programme covers a wide range of measures, for which the Commission itself, the Member States, the River Commissions and the industry should undertake concrete and if necessary concerted efforts. This coherent approach aims to contribute to a development of inland waterway transport which itself contributes to a sustainable development of the European Transport policy.

2. PRECONDITIONS

Level playing field

The establishment and maintenance of a level playing-field between modes of transport and between Member States is a precondition for the well functioning of the market. Where IWT is acting in a fully liberalized market and working in competitive surroundings, other modes of transport still are acting in a protected and non-liberalised market and often take advantage of state aid programmes, leading to distortion of competition in the intermodal transportfield.

Removal of bottlenecks

IWT is seen as a way of achieving a more balanced transport market. In order to be able to exploit the full potential of this mode, a number of obstacles need to be removed which are currently impeding the full development of the sector. In broad terms, obstacles are encountered in relation to infrastructure and the development of the Trans-European Networks, as well as in relation to the lack of institutional and legal harmonisation and unification of IWT, including the harmonization on social and fiscal level.

Political support

Due to the relatively under estimated role, IWT is suffering from a lack of political support. Inland Waterway Transport has proved to pay an important contribution to the demands within the European transport policy. Moreover it is able to meet the challenges of competitiveness, security and environment, while at the same time offering capacities in terms of infrastructure and fleet. Its development therefore may contribute significantly to the attainment of transport policy objectives, in particular shifting the balance between modes of transport. An overall review of the role and future of Inland Waterway Transport in the Enlarged European Union needs to consider the overall economic and political framework in which IWT is working. Within that overall framework, the role of IWT competing with or complementing other transport modes requires an analysis of EU transport and other policies and the instruments created to implement them. Therefore a "Masterplan for freight transport" needs to be set up in which a strong and cohesive policy marks the future development of the European transport industry.

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The proposed integrated action programme for IWT can be considered as a solide basis for such a Masterplan.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE

The functioning of freight and passenger transport depends on an excellent infrastructure. The proper maintenance of the existing waterway infrastructure, the removal of the major bottlenecks and the realization of the missing links is a condicio sine qua non for the further development of this sector. Therefore the Member States must take their responsibility regarding improvement and proper maintenance of waterway infrastructure as well as removal of bottlenecks, for which sufficient financial support needs to be guaranteed. For the quick realisation of the priority projects as defined on the priority list of the TEN-T's a European Coordinator for inland waterway projects needs to be appointed and the highest financial support for these projects as foreseen in the revised guidelines of the TEN-T's needs to be guaranteed.

Although the canals and rivers in northwestern Europe are already being used on a large scale, they still offer much scope for doubling the weight carried. According to recent publications ("The power of Inland navigation, the social relevance of freight transport and inland shipping 2004-2005") the river Rhine can even absorb a sevenfold increase in transport activities. This means that this river can guarantee an unobstructed passage of goods form the north-east via the Danube to the south east.

According to the PINE-study sufficient fairway conditions f.e. on the Upper Danube would have the following benefits:

- savings on external costs of transport, such as:
 - reduction of accident cost
 - reduction of congestion costs
 - reduction of CO2-emissions (Kyoto-objectives)
 - reduction of noise
 - reduction of space consumption

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4. INTERMODALITY

Inland navigation plays an important role in the intermodal transport chain. As alternative to road transport the further development of intermodal concepts deserve full support. Where as these concepts already have been developed in the past years in the field of container transport, additional measures need to be undertaken in order to fully exploit the possibilities of intermodal transport involving a.o. inland navigation.

In concrete terms centers of loading or discharging need to be located along rivers. Existing and new ports must be developed as intermodal ports, offering the possibility of smooth operations and handling of cargo from or on inland vessels and providing sufficient and good connections with road and rail. The efficiency of port infrastructure and excellent fairway conditions, a.o. sufficient height of bridges along the rivers and canals, largely determine the efficiency of intermodality.

5. ENVIRONMENT

Inland navigation is an environmentally sound mode of transport. Emission standards, fuel quality, noise protection and treatment of ship waste have always been a major concern of EBU. Currently, new methods to further reduce emissions even in the next decade are being discussed by ship operators, engine producers and authorities.

Inland shipping holds a positive record regarding environmental performance compared to other modes of transport and aims to keep this position. In this respect a study was conducted last year to assess the environmental performance of inland shipping.

The sector is committed to move forward on emission-low concepts in order to maintain its environmentally friendly image.

The benefits from inland navigation however must not only be considered in terms of emissions. They are the result of the overall concept and advantages of inland shipping in terms of congestion, maintenance and use of infrastructure, accidents and other relevant elements.

Modal shift to inland shipping therefore does not only contribute to an improvement of the environmental performance of the transport chain but to developing a sustainable transport system in general.

For modal shift towards inland shipping follows from this study it can contribute to an improvement of the environmental performance of the transport chain. This could be a chance in relation to the Kyoto targets for emissions reduction.

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6. CONCLUSION

1. It is imperative to strengthen the position of IWT by formulating a European inland navigation policy within the revised White Paper. The creation of a level playing field, the removal of the existing infrastructure and institutional bottlenecks and the necessary political support are a precondition for the future development of this mode of transport.

2. The proposed *"INTEGRATED EUROPEAN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT"* can be considered as a solid basis for the development of IWT. The measures as proposed under the programme – taking into account the comments on the proposal - need to be implemented without delay in order to use the full potential of this sector.

3. The proper maintenance of infrastructure by the Member States as well as the necessary financial support together with the undelayed realization of the Inland Waterway Priority projects as defined on the priority list of the TEN-T's needs to be guaranteed together with the 30 % financial support for these projects as foreseen in the revised guidelines of the TEN-T's. The appointment of a European Coordinator for the inland waterway projects as defined in the TEN-T list of priority axes and projects (18. Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube inland waterway axis and 30. Inland waterway Seine-Scheldt) must support the removal of the bottlenecks.

4. The creation of an appropriate institutional framework, equipped with the necessary own competences and means and embedding the River Commissions and their legal regimes, is considered as an adequate instrument to implement the proposed Integrated European Action Programme for IWT and to reinforce the position of IWT.

EBU calls upon the Member States of the EU as well as the participants at the High-Level Meeting to support the proposal by the European Commission and emphasises that sufficient financial resources should be made available at the level of the Member States and the European Commission to implement the measures proposed in the European Action Programme without delay.

In this regard EBU welcomes the proposal by the Austrian presidency, to create an innovation funds in which the financial means of the Reserve Fund of the industry of some 40 mio EURO would be complemented by same contributions from both the European Commission and the Member States. EBU in principal under certain conditions is willing to put the means of the Reserve Fund of the industry at the disposal of such an innovation funds.

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The European Barge Union EBU was founded on 14 December 2001 by 8 national organisations representing the national inland navigation interests in six different European countries.

The association has its seat in Brussels, Belgium and in Rotterdam.

EBU represents the interest of inland navigation on a pan European level and deals with all questions, arising out of the future development of the inland navigation industry and inland waterway transport.

To realise this aim EBU deals with

- the development of the European transport policy
- the improvement of the economic position of inland navigation
- the structured cooperation with national and international institutions
- the exchange of information and experience between the parties involved

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