

## **Short statement by the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) to the Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport “NAIADES”**

**15 February 2006, Vienna**

**The European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) welcomes the adoption by the European Commission on 17 January 2006 of the long awaited Communication on Inland Waterway Transport in order to boost and develop the use of inland navigation in Europe.**

**This is a clear signal to the transport sector and the EU Member States that inland navigation should be further emphasised and put at the forefront of the political agenda as this sector has been neglected in the past.**

**Despite its support, the EFIP warns for good political will and good principles that would not be implemented on the field.**

**What will count in the end is acts which imply:**

- **a real and smooth implementation with concrete actions,**
- **the financing means to be made available, *and***
- **the application of a time frame to develop inland waterway transport.**

**Besides, the EFIP calls upon the full co-operation of the EU Member States to implement and exploit this programme.**

The Action Programme is articulated into five key areas: increasing market share, modernising the fleet, attracting skilled labour, improving the sector's image and building new infrastructure. The analysis of the Communication is right and realistic.

Although all areas identified are important for the development of inland navigation, EFIP would like to point out some key elements:

- the recognition of the vital importance of inland ports along European waterway network as integration nodes of the various modes of transportation and their added value for logistics services;
- the intention to ensure the co-ordinated improvement and maintenance of waterway infrastructure and transshipment facilities, the Commission proposing to establish a European IWT Infrastructure Development Plan and to appoint a dedicated European Co-ordinator. This will certainly further help to support the implementation of the TEN-T priority projects, i.e. the Seine-Scheldt connection, the removal of bottlenecks on the Danube as well as the consideration of smaller networks;
- the recognition of the need to encourage the development of port and transshipment facilities – also in candidate and associated countries, and more generally, the recognition that hundreds of inland ports in Europe contribute to connect important economic areas;
- the recognition that spatial planning to (re)-develop industrial zones nearby waterways should be given a higher priority;
- the recognition that there is an urgent need to overcome major bottlenecks;
- the EU support for projects in the area of education and training. Here there are good examples of positive developments that could be considered.<sup>1</sup>

Different actors have been identified for the implementation of the action programme, namely the European Union, the Member States and the industry. In order to make the Action Programme be a success, the EFIP urges the EU Member States to fully get involved in the development in the implementation of this Action Programme.

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<sup>1</sup> for instance the eWIT project: it is a We-based intermodal Inland Waterway transport Training for Europe. This projects was funded under the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the Marco Polo Programme of the Euro Commission. The aim of the project is to provide educational and learning materials covering inland waterways and intermodality in Europe.

The multifunctional inland ports in Europe have an important national and regional function in the development of clusters of economic centres of industry and logistics and the development of employment opportunities in the region. They are the nodes of the urban networks in Europe and provide more and more access to the European transport network by water, railway and road. Inland ports are located at the crossroads of the different transport modes in Europe. They are therefore the ideal location for freight transfer also to inland waterways.

The European inland ports will be fully committed to give their contribution and be associated in the implementation of this programme.

**The EFIP congratulates the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union for having put the subject of inland navigation high on its Presidency agenda and organised an Inland Navigation summit from 13-15 February where all interested parties will exchange ideas and contribute with their suggestions to the implementation of this Action Programme.**

**EFIP also considers that due attention should be given to this Action programme in the mid term review of the White Paper.**

#### **Further recommendations:**

EFIP is of the view that it would be appropriate to launch spatial planning and economic policies at European, regional and national levels, that would aim to preserve waterside sites and could be used for instance for logistical purposes. Dredging and creating appropriate treatment zones are also contributing to the improvement of the inland waterway transport network.

With regard to infrastructure, attention should be given in particular to three major elements:

- the big infrastructure projects (macro level) and their financing,
- the micro infrastructures, *and*
- the support to the operational activities.

The setting up of new infrastructures is often impeded by delays in investments and/or by the lack of investments both at national and Community level, in particular for the TENs. Besides, financing is not sufficient on certain parts of the infrastructure networks: major problems are seen on draughts, locks, the height of bridges, dredging, etc. Efforts should focus on the weak points, missing links and the removal of bottlenecks in order to contribute to the improvement of the network.

It is also important to ensure good connections with other transport modes like rail and road. These operations could be co-financed by the European Union as other improvement works. Development of partnerships between seaports and inland ports should be further enhanced in order to help solving the congestion problem and to encourage rational distribution policies with the hinterland.

*EFIP (European Federation of Inland Ports) was founded in 1994 and is the official voice of 200 inland ports in 18 countries of the EU and Candidate Countries as well as Switzerland and Croatia. Inland ports are contributing actively to attaining and maintaining a long-term sustainable mobility and favouring in particular a more efficient integration of various modes in the transport chain. They are inland load centres offering networking opportunities between different modes such as road, rail and inland shipping, including short-sea shipping in some major inland ports. EFIP is happy to provide you with any further information on its positions and activities via its Secretariat General in Brussels.*

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