



NAIADES

An Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport

*Statement by ESPO Secretary General Patrick Verhoeven
at the Inland Navigation Summit held in Vienna on 15 February 2006*

1. ESPO would like to thank the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology and Via Donau for organising this Inland Navigation Summit and for inviting the European Sea Ports Organisation to give a statement on the European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport.
2. Inland navigation is an important partner for many European seaports. ESPO therefore very much welcomes the NAIADES Communication of the Commission. We hope it will further stimulate strategic partnerships between inland ports and seaports and contribute to a healthy balance between the different modes of transport.
3. We even would like to congratulate the Commission for its work, because the Communication is a complete document with an integrated approach. It furthermore adopts a positive approach to the sector and is obviously based on extensive dialogue with the inland navigation industry. The approach chosen for NAIADES may therefore hopefully inspire the Commission for its future work on seaport policy following the failure of the port services' Directive.
4. We would at this stage like to make only a few general comments regarding the contents of the Communication.
5. Inland navigation counts as one of the most environmental-friendly modes of transport. Yet, the promotion and development of this mode of transport is often hampered by the application of European environmental legislation. This is a paradox which we know very well in seaports, one where ESPO shares a common interest with inland ports and inland navigation and in fact one on which we are cooperating very actively. This paradox should be brought more to the political forefront. We need an open dialogue about how we can create more legal certainty about the application of environmental rules so that they do not create unacceptable delays to development of vital infrastructure and maintenance projects. We need a better balance between economy and ecology and this is only possible if we look at the broader environmental benefits of inland navigation and shipping and not just at local interest.
6. Of course this means also that we must ensure that inland navigation and shipping stay environmental-friendly and that for instance all efforts to reduce ship emissions and waste disposal are continued, as indeed outlined in the NAIADES programme. It will

also help us in the forthcoming discussion on the new Air Quality Directive of the Commission where a source-related approach should prevail.

7. Trying to establish a modal shift through an infrastructure charging policy – as advocated by the Commission’s Transport Policy White Paper and the NAIADES Communication – seems to ESPO however more a theoretical solution. Implementing a common infrastructure charging system for all modes of transport has been discussed for many years and has not lead to any tangible results. It may seem an ideal solution on paper but we believe efforts would be better concentrated in ensuring that all modes of transport are as efficient and environmental-friendly as possible. We do not believe in artificially penalising or stimulating one mode of transport above another.
8. What we do need however is clarity about public funding. The Commission has announced both State aid guidelines for inland navigation – which may also cover inland ports – and State aid guidelines for seaports. Given the fact that more and more strategic partnerships are being developed between inland and seaports, it is important that we find a common philosophy which will benefit a joint development.
9. Let me in conclusion thank again the organisers of this summit. ESPO is looking forward to a successful implementation of the NAIADES programme.

Since 1993, ESPO represents the port authorities, port associations and port administrations of the seaports of the European Union. The mission of the organisation is to influence public policy in the EU to achieve a safe, efficient and environmentally sustainable European port sector operating as a key element of a transport industry where free and undistorted market conditions prevail as far as practical.

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