



Findings Paper

INLAND NAVIGATION SUMMIT, HIGH LEVEL MEETING

15. February 2006, Vienna

EU AT

Findings of the High-Level Meeting

THE ROLE OF INLAND NAVIGATION

Inland navigation is an attractive and environmentally compatible mode of transportation that offers reliable and cost-efficient logistics services enabling many different industry sectors to operate competitively. Inland navigation significantly contributes to Europe's industrial employment and therefore supports Europe's general economic policy objectives to boost economic growth and create more jobs. At the same time, economic dynamics and industrial development within the European Union and beyond puts pressure on existing transport systems. Moreover, without additional measures, congestion and pollution costs will rise to unacceptable levels. Inland waterway transport can contribute to rebalancing the European freight transport system. Against the background of the Lisbon Agenda – aiming at economic growth and job creation – the recent efforts of the European Commission to establish an Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport (NAIADES) are therefore more than justified.

THE EUROPEAN ACTION PROGRAMME

The participants of the High-Level Meeting – EU Member States, non-EU riparian states of European inland waterways, river commissions, in particular CCNR and Danube Commission, UN/ECE, inter-governmental organisations (such as ICPDR, ICPR) and industry associations – generally welcome the initiative of the European Commission to present an Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport, which duly takes into account the initiatives to foster inland waterway transport taken by a number of Member States. The strategic areas identified in this European Action Programme cover the broad range of issues, which need to be solved in order to promote inland waterway transport as part of the inter-modal transport chain:

- the creation of favourable conditions for IWT services;
- the stimulation of fleet modernisation and innovation;
- the promotion of jobs and skills;
- the improvement of image and co-operation and
- the provision of adequate infrastructure.

The participants of the High-Level Meeting confirm that the proposed European Action Programme defines important operational measures and instruments for each of these strategic areas and marks a major step forward in creating a comprehensive framework for an active inland navigation policy both at the European and national level.

IMPLEMENTATION

Concerning the implementation of the proposed measures and instruments, the participants of the High-Level Meeting emphasise that

- the European Action Programme respects the principle of subsidiarity and builds on the national efforts already in progress. Therefore the proposed measures and actions are to be further discussed and elaborated and implemented separately or jointly by all stakeholders according to their respective competencies;

- Member States with relevant inland waterways and non-EU riparian states of European inland waterways are called upon to promote inland waterway transport, to further develop their specific national inland navigation policies and to appoint national focal points in accordance with the objectives of the proposed European Action Programme;
- sufficient financial resources should be made available at the level of the Member States and non-EU riparian states of European inland waterways to support the implementation of the measures proposed in the European Action Programme;
- the European Union is called upon to provide co-ordination and financial support for the implementation of the European Action Programme. The European Union should especially play such a co-ordinating and supporting role in the fields of the European IWT Innovation Fund, RTD and support programmes, TEN-T funding for priority projects, the identification of administrative bottlenecks and legal harmonisation;
- Member States and non-EU riparian states of European inland waterways are called upon to actively pursue the submission of inland waterway transport projects, especially in the framework of support schemes of the European Union;
- requirements from other relevant policy fields, in particular environmental protection, should be taken into account during the planning phase of inland waterway projects. Procedures for a structured dialogue on environmental issues should be developed with involvement of national waterway administrations, river commissions and inter-governmental commissions for the protection of the rivers.

In order to fully exploit all the benefits, the participants of the High-Level Meeting stress that the proposed measures are to be taken as a concerted action, as only the joint implementation of the proposed measures involving all stakeholders will lead to the desired strengthening of inland waterway transport as a competitive transport mode.

Member states are called upon to support the implementation of the European Action Programme and to communicate to the European Commission the measures, which they adopt to implement measures according to the European Action Programme; the European Commission should report to the European Parliament and the Council by 2009.

The participants take note of the contributions the European Commission has made to the discussion on the institutional framework for inland navigation. They stress the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders in future considerations.

The guiding principles for institutional considerations will be to

- work on the basis of the competencies given by the current status of the EU Treaty and of international law;
- bundle existing expertise of the European Union, the Member States, the river commissions and UN/ECE;
- allow the integration of the non-EU riparian states of European inland waterways and
- ensure that financial and human resources are used with utmost efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The participants of the High-Level Meeting emphasise that the common and targeted implementation of measures proposed in the European Action Programme significantly contributes to the promotion of inland waterway transport as a commercially attractive and environmentally compatible mode of transportation. They invite EU institutions to give priority to the implementation of the programme.