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europaean barge union



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Introduction

Over the past several years, EBU has worked on creating awareness of the potential of inland waterway transport. The transport sector in general occupies an important position within the European Union, but when it comes to getting freight off road and onto water or – following the recent shift in the paradigms – to optimising modes of transport, inland waterways still handle too little of the total amount of freight transported in Europe.

The natural advantages offered by inland waterway transport have not been fully recognised yet. Thanks to its scale, for instance, inland waterway transport is the cheapest and most efficient way of moving products in bulk. By making efficient use of energy, inland waterway transport reduces the emission of pollutants into the atmosphere. In the past years inland waterway transport has achieved a prominent position regarding the carriage of containers and is able to absorb the increasing number of containers arriving in European ports. And because of highly advanced and internationally recognised safety standards, it is by far the most secure method of transporting dangerous goods.

In response to the European Commission's White Paper and the Lisbon Strategy, EBU issued its own "Top 10 Priorities" in 2004 to contribute to the discussion on the development of a European inland navigation policy. Following the enlargement of the European Union, inland navigation will play a more important part in the common internal market. Many of the new Member States have navigable waterways for freight and passenger transport.

The new objective of the European Union's sustainable transport policy is to meet society's economic, social and environmental needs. It takes into account the importance of the transport industry and its contribution to the functioning of the European economy as a whole. Mobility of goods and persons is considered an essential component of the competitiveness of European industry and services wherein effective transportation systems are essential to Europe's prosperity.

Against this background, inland waterway transport – harbouring considerable unexploited potential – can make a major contribution to meet the challenges of these objectives of the European Union's sustainable transport policy.

The European Commission recently took the initiative in the campaign to promote inland waterway transport. It proposed an integrated action programme focused on what is needed to fully exploit the market potential of inland waterway transport and make it more attractive to users.

EBU welcomes this but continues to stress the need to create a level playing field. Inland waterway transport deserves the same attention and treatment given to all other modes of transport.

In the past year, EBU has moreover given priority to relevant developments in the field of environmental protection and to resume the social dialogue in the inland navigation sector. Along with the new challenges, these issues are part of EBU's overall aims and responsibilities.

NEW EUROPEAN INLAND NAVIGATION POLICY

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN GOOD INTENTIONS AND REAL SUPPORT

To achieve a more balanced European transport system, it is imperative to strengthen the position of inland waterway transport. The initiative taken by the European Commission to introduce NAIADES, its Integrated European Action Programme, is regarded as the first step towards attaining this goal.

EBU supports NAIADES and is ready to take its responsibility on the basis of the sector's spirit of entrepreneurship. It is now up to the European Union's Member States and the European Commission to provide sufficient financial resources to implement the measures proposed in the European Action Programme.

NAIADES – THE INTEGRATED EUROPEAN ACTION PROGRAMME

On 9 June 2006 the Council of the European Union adopted a set of conclusions on the promotion of inland waterway transport as a follow-up to the action plan for inland waterway development that the European Commission proposed on 17 January 2006.

The proposed action programme covers a wide range of measures in strategic areas, on which the European Commission, the Member States, the River Commissions and the industry should undertake decisive and, if necessary, concerted action. This coherent approach aims to contribute to the development of inland waterway transport, which will contribute to the sustainable development of the European transport policy.

Strategic areas

- create favourable conditions for services
- stimulate fleet modernisation and innovation
- promote jobs and skills
- improve image and cooperation
- provide adequate infrastructure

Because of its relatively underestimated role, inland waterway transport suffers from a lack of political support. Inland waterway transport has met the demands of the European transport policy and the challenges of competitiveness, security and the environment while offering capacities in terms of

infrastructure and fleet of vessels. Developing inland waterway transport will contribute significantly to the fulfilment of European transport policy objectives, in particular to the shifting of the balance between the modes of transport. A review of the role and future of inland waterway transport within the enlarged European Union will need to consider the economic and political framework in which inland waterway transport operates. To understand the details of how inland waterway transport will compete with or complement other modes of transport, an analysis will need to be done of the European Union's transport and other policies and the instruments created to implement them.

The conclusions of the Council of the European Union regarding the promotion of inland waterway transport form a solid basis for further elaboration of the integrated action programme proposed by the European Commission.

EBU welcomes the European Commission's initiative and the Council's conclusions as an opportunity to strengthen the position of inland waterway transport. In compliance with the Council's request, EBU will fulfil its responsibilities in the areas addressed by the action programme.

Various areas as defined in the Commission's proposal have been addressed over the past several years. Given EBU's efforts in the field of advanced standards, it will also continue to contribute to the discussions referred to in the action programme.

ADVANCED TECHNICAL STANDARDS

Harmonisation and modernisation of technical standards

High fleet standards have always been a major concern of the inland navigation industry. EBU plays an active part in the harmonising and modernising of technical standards applying to inland navigation vessels throughout Europe. Safety standards as introduced by the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR) are to be applied on a pan-European scale. EBU's positive response to this revision of European Union's Directive 714/82/ECC is based on a strategy to adopt Rhine regulations along with nautical exemptions as needed. The proposed legislation will probably pass the European Parliament and Council in 2006. This will be a major step towards the achieving of unified standards and the facilitating of inland waterway transport throughout Europe.

Transport of dangerous goods

Because of the stringent technical standards involved, inland navigation plays a major part in the transport of dangerous goods. At this time, the regulations for the transport of dangerous goods on inland waterways are laid down in the ADNR (Accord européen relatif au transport international des marchandises Dangereuses par voie de Navigation sur le Rhin). The ADNR is developed and monitored through the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR).

As the sector is committed to its high standards, those who work in it are sceptical of the efforts to replace ADNR in the near future with ADN (Accord européen relatif au transport international des marchandises Dangereuses par voie de Navigation), which is

monitored through the United Nations' Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE). The ADN will be enacted by a framework directive of the European Union or by the completion of the ratification process (seven of Member States have already signed the accord).

The CCR has managed to create a set of high-level safety standards for the transport of dangerous goods on inland waterways and has introduced the highest standards in the world. Thanks to this, the ADNR oversaw some very important successes, such as:

- enlargement of the maximum tank capacity from 380 m³ to 1,000 m³
- new definition of a double-hulled, N-type vessel
- approval of new shipbuilding materials (SPS)

Of great importance in the next two years will be the integration into the ADNR of rules governing the transport of goods harmful to water, which will result in the replacement of single-hulled vessels with double-hulled vessels. This can be completed by 2018, but will be the subject of much discussion in national and international organisations regarding the economics and politics of the process.

During the past year, EBU experts have been actively involved in improving the ship/shore interface in a different CCNR project. They will follow the standards of the International Safety Guide for Tankers and Terminals (ISGOTT) to develop an International Safety Guide for Inland Navigation Tankers and Terminals (ISGINTT). The ISGINTT, which will contain examples of best practise to improve landside and shipside safety during the loading and unloading of tankers, will be published at the end of 2007.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

STRUCTURES FOLLOW STRATEGY

According to the Council of the European Union, the guiding principle for institutional considerations will be to demonstrate the added value of proposed institutional changes.

Given that structures must follow strategy, the outcome of this discussion will depend on the way the newly introduced inland navigation policy is introduced at the European level.

Inland waterway transport in Europe is governed by different legal systems and supranational organisations. The principle of free navigation on the Rhine was introduced by the Mannheim Act and its additional protocols. Since then secondary legislation governing high technical and safety standards, among other things, has been enacted. Similar legislation governing cross-border navigation on the Danube was introduced by the Belgrade Act.

In its recent communication on the Promotion of Inland Waterway Transport "NAIADES" the European Commission analysed a number of options for modernising the organisational framework of inland waterway transport in Europe. These will be discussed further with all stakeholders.

EBU has contributed several vital points to this discussion:

- free passage on pan-European waterways/river systems
- fully harmonised legislation on navigation, technology and safety that makes allowances for the fact that requirements can differ according to geographic factors
- structural involvement of the industry in the elaborating and developing of legislation
- clustering rather than fragmenting of European expertise in inland navigation

The ministers responsible for navigation on the Rhine in Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland recently emphasised the importance of the navigation on the Rhine. With more than 70 per cent of the total volume of all inland water transport, the Rhine constitutes an essential axis of European inland shipping, offers a growing and competitive means of freight transport with good connections to rail and road networks and meets high security and environmental standards. The ministers in their final declaration ("Declaration of Basel") underlined the role and competencies of the Commission for Navigation of the Rhine, the organisation responsible for ensuring a high standard of security for inland shipping and promoting environment protection.

From the institutional point of view, the existing international conventions must be maintained and supported by the appropriate European legal instruments. This means that the existing river conventions and regimes must be embedded in a European framework for the purpose of harmonising and unifying inland navigation in Europe. This approach will guarantee the practical orientation and efficient development of the institutional framework.

Organisations, tasks, competences and financial resources need to reinforce the acceptance of inland navigation, enhance its fully European dimension and provide it with the necessary political and financial support.

INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE – BACKBONE OF TRANSPORT

Inland navigation is an international mode of transport par excellence. This means that discussions of infrastructure investments and solutions must be held at the international rather than the national level.

European coordinators are expected to promote the execution of the inland waterway projects on the TEN-T priority list.

Efficient functioning of freight and passenger transport depends on an excellent infrastructure. Properly maintaining the existing waterway infrastructure, removing the major bottlenecks and inserting the "missing links" are a prerequisite for further development of the inland waterway transport sector. Without a properly maintained infrastructure there can be no economic development or growth!

Bearing in mind that the trans-European transport network is a key element in the relaunched Lisbon Strategy, the European Union identified a series of transnational axes and projects as priority projects within the revised guidelines of the TEN-T. Two of them are related to inland waterways. To improve the coordinating of investments, the revised guidelines permit the Commission to appoint European coordinators over projects needing a strong, often political, push to overcome difficulties in the planning and construction stages. Six European coordinators were appointed to oversee priorities on the TEN-T list in the first round.

To coordinate the implementing of the priority projects on the TEN-T list, EBU requested the European Commission to appoint European coordinators over the two inland waterway transport projects and provide sufficient financial support.

- Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube Inland Waterway axis (nr. 18)
- Inland Waterway Seine-Scheldt (nr. 30)

From a socio-economic point of view many Inland Waterway Projects deserve support. In terms of sustainability Inland Waterway Transport has proved to pay an important contribution to the demands within the European policy. It is therefore of great importance that the capacities of this mode of transport are used more adequately and as many as bottlenecks in infrastructure are removed. Against this background misunderstandings and differences in interpretation as regards all relevant aspects need to be eliminated. Many still existing bottlenecks on other major Inland Waterway axes need to be removed without delay and deserve immediate support as well.

Bearing in mind that investments in transport infrastructure have fallen in all Member States and amount less than 1 % GDP on one hand and the limited budget available for the projects at European level it follows that priority has to be given to these major axes. The main rivers in Europe as well as many national waterways and canals can absorb a much higher transport volume.

ENVIRONMENT

SHIFTS TO MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MODES

According to the mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 transport white paper this must be achieved where appropriate, especially on long distance and on congested corridors. Following the natural flow of the rivers through congested areas inland waterway transport as environmentally friendly mode specialised in long distance carriage can play a major role.

Inland navigation is an environmentally sound mode of transport. EBU is committed to protecting the environment and tightening standards for the operating and constructing of vessels. EBU's environmental protection activities focus on emissions, water quality and the Common Implementation Strategy of the European Water Framework Directive.

EMISSIONS

Inland navigation's record on greenhouse-gas emissions, noise, congestion, casualties and space consumption is and will remain matchless. However, emissions of NOx and particles need further improvement. Given the longer life cycle of vessel engines compared to lorry engines, the modernising of diesel engines on board inland waterway vessels will be a long-term undertaking. Results of research done for EBU by the Dutch-based Royal Haskoning Institute showed that the long-term (until 2025) outlook for the environmental performance of inland navigation is outstanding.

Exhaust emission limits for diesel engines on board inland navigation vessels will be subject to a tier II emission reduction in 2007. In 2012, there is likely to be a further reduction of emissions. The emission standard can be met with inner-engine measures. EBU and engine manufacturers are currently involved in discussions on measures to reduce emissions even further, which could become effective when catalytic converters for inland navigation vessels become available.

Sulphur quality is an important factor in the reduction of particle emissions. Although particle filters might be a future standard on board inland navigation vessels, filter dimensions must meet vessel standards. A common quality standard for gas oil needs further attention on

the basis of a technical review of European Community Directive 2005/33/EC. By supporting a joint research initiative known as the "CREATING" project, EBU has placed special emphasis on technical solutions for the inland shipping vessels market, which is small, and on innovation and research.

WATER QUALITY AND THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The Strasbourg Convention on waste disposal of 1996 defined a clear set of regulations governing bilge water, the treating of loading waste and wash water and the treating of water used on passenger ships. EBU supports the Convention's principle of "the polluter pays". Data collected pursuant to article 5 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) showed that inland navigation does not worsen water quality.

HYDROMORPHOLOGY

EBU is actively involved in the joint maritime organisations task group, which includes ports, dredging and recreational shipping, and advises the European Commission on a common implementation strategy for the WFD. Hydromorphology issues under article 4 (7) can only be discussed at a European level to prevent the adopting of different standards for maintenance and development of waterways. The results of a CCNR/ICPR Workshop in April 2006 proved that inland navigation and good ecological potential of bodies of water need further policy integration. EBU makes its knowledge and experience of logistics available for this challenge. EBU also urges the European Commission, the river protection organisations and river commissions to cooperate on the implementing of the integrated strategy.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

COMBINE THE LACK OF SKILLED WORKERS IN THE OLD MEMBER STATES WITH THE POOL OF SKILLED WORKERS IN THE NEW AND FUTURE MEMBER STATES.

Experienced crew members are crucial in retaining the positive record inland navigation holds for keeping accidents to a minimum. EBU has proposed taking action to set more effective and harmonised standards for navigation qualifications suited to different river basins, such as the Rhine and the Danube, and for maintaining necessary safety standards by taking into account modern examination methods and simulation techniques.

Following the resumption in 2005 of the social dialogue in the inland navigation sector, a new working programme was defined and negotiations took place between the social partners.

WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

The sectoral dialogue concentrated mainly on the revision of Directive 93/104/EC as regards particular aspects of the organising of working time. For the inland navigation sector, which consists to a large extent of SMEs, the definition of working time is particularly important. The specific circumstances and legislation connected with the inland waterway transport sector, especially relating to the crewing of vessels, need to be addressed. Taking into account that the European Commission stressed the need for a global and consistent approach and strongly encouraged the European social partners to reach an agreement on the definition of a third time category, EBU proposed basing a sectoral agreement on this category as much as possible.

Within this dialogue, the main short-term aim will be to achieve a consensus on a sectoral working time regulation that might contain a third time category

defined by the sector. EBU has notified the Commission that it intends to initiate negotiations on the basis of the proposals put forward in its document in accordance with Article 138(4) and Article 139 of the EC Treaty, which negotiations started last year.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT IN EUROPE

In its opinion on "Towards a Pan-European System of Inland Waterway Transport" (doc.TEN/135), the European Community's Economic and Social Committee draws attention to the need for greater harmonisation of the descriptions of jobs on board vessels to permit better correlation between the pool of qualified personnel available in Europe and the needs of the inland waterway transport sector.

EBU proposed that the river commissions start by drawing up a working document on descriptions of the key jobs on board inland waterway transport vessels, such as boatmaster and boatman. EBU's Dutch member organisation carried out comparative work on the job descriptions used in the Rhine Riparian States with a view to drawing up an initial common outline. The CCNR, which took up the proposal, held a seminar on this matter in November 2005.

THE ASSOCIATION

THE EUROPEAN BARGE UNION (EBU) is the European association of barge owners and barge operators. Since its establishment in 2001, EBU has represented the interests of its members. Its main objective is to further the interests of inland shipping at European and international level. EBU deals with all matters pertaining to the developing of inland shipping and the transporting of goods and passengers by inland navigation vessels.

This includes the following tasks:

- following and contributing to the development of a sustainable European transport policy;
- controlling and promoting all measures intended to reach, through international

cooperation, improvement of the productive capacity and cost-effectiveness of inland shipping;

- cooperating with all authorities
 - which take decisions about the general conditions under which inland shipping performs its activities,
 - which are charged with the maintaining, extending and financing of the waterways and responsible for traffic safety;
- supporting an extensive exchange of information and experience and promoting cooperation between the members.

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