

**COMMENT ON THE GREEN PAPER TEN-T POLICY REVIEW:
TOWARDS A BETTER INTEGRATED TRANS-EUROPEAN NETWORK AT THE SERVICE OF THE
COMMON TRANSPORT POLICY**

Traffic growth of the past decade led to an unacceptable congestion and pollution in the European Union. The European Union transport plays a key role within the policy guidelines regarding future developments of society by recognising that the effect of imbalance between modes led to situations which are at least not in favour of the Community.

General remarks

Europe in the past years suffered from severe congestion problems for which solutions have to be defined and implemented. It is necessary to find a new balance between the transport volume and sustainable development of the society towards the background of an enlarged European Union. Promoting better use of all modes of transport and a better use of alternative modes to road with unused potentials can considerably contribute to new solutions and a new balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

Inland Waterway Transport pays an important contribution to the transport demands within the European policy, however this mode of transport suffered from an underestimation during the past decades. Where the share of Inland Waterway Transport in specific areas plays an important role and reaches shares up to 40 % in some Member States, the overall share of Inland Waterway Transport only makes up some 4 %. Research has proven that Inland Waterway Transport *can grow tremendously on various waterways*, due to considerable reserve capacity both in infrastructure and fleet capacity. Inland Waterway Transport has turned out to be the most environmentally-sound and safe mode of goods transport as well, which even more offers the best possible safety guarantees.

This offers tremendous possibilities for the future growth of Inland Waterway Transport.

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The TEN-T policy review – some general observations

Infrastructure is without doubt the backbone of transport. Reflecting on the experiences and lessons from the past some **general remarks and observations** should be taken into account in the overall policy review:

1. A closer relation between the TEN-T policy and the transport policy is needed: The TEN-T policy should be embedded in the overall European transport policy rather than acting as standalone policy. This would automatically lead to a more integrated approach as well as complementarity between the different policy areas.
2. The TEN-T policy in economic terms is crucial to the development of Europe. Stimulation of the competitive position of Europe in a sustainable way - one of the aims of the Lisbon agenda – needs to take on board transport and infrastructure demands. Transport and cargo volumes follow the economic development and trade patterns. A proper infrastructure is needed to guarantee the smooth transport of cargo.
3. The environmental challenges as expressed in the overall European policy can be much better addressed by making full use of environmentally friendly modes and potentials such as inland waterway transport.
4. Prioritisation and rebalance of cargo flows must lead to a better use of the existing resources in a more efficient and effective way. A concentration on projects that benefit the entire transport policy deserves support.
5. A review of the existing TEN-T policy must be based upon solid financial perspectives, criteria and support. This means that the necessary financial means need to be allocated at both the European and the national level. The resources need to reflect the ambitions and not vice versa.
6. Ports are estimated to play a major role in the TEN-T policy. Besides the seaports hinterland ports will increasingly contribute to the distribution of the cargo flows and the interconnectivity. The quality and performance of the ports to a large extent will depend on the hinterland connections.
7. Following these general observations in the future a clear choice in favour of cleaner modes and the use of less congested infrastructure will be needed in order to address the overall congestion problem and to

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keep Europe moving. Therefore a stimulation policy is needed in favour of modes that contribute most to the realization of this policy, mainly inland navigation.

8. The navigable waterways in Europe, which mostly are existing natural rivers, dispose over capacity to absorb a much higher volume of transports. In connection with the positive effects in terms of external costs and energy efficiency a switch to inland navigation offers many advantages. Choices of transport modes in the future will be based more upon energy efficiency reliability, capacity and flexibility rather than on costs and distances.

9. It is thus crucial to acknowledge in the discussion regarding the TEN-T policy review to support waterborne transport with substantial infrastructural measures and financial means to remove the existing bottlenecks and to realise missing links in the European waterway system.

From a socio-economic point of view many Inland Waterway projects deserve full support. A positive first step towards realisation of the aims within the European Transport policy in terms of modal shift has been the listing of some Inland Waterway Projects in the TEN-T Prioritylist. The listed projects are of high relevance to the transnational traffic flows.

Answers to the various questions

1. Arguments for or against maintaining the comprehensive network (Q1 + Q2)

One of the weaknesses and main obstacles within the TEN-T policy is the fact that a number of priority projects has not yet been realised. This is due to a lack of sense of urgency at the member state level as well as a lack of substantial financial support from the Community level. This leads to an unacceptable delay of the realisation of the projects which consequently contributes to a worsening of the congestion problem.

Therefore the **socio-economical importance** of projects or networks in terms of

- congestion avoidance
 - environmental benefit
 - relevance to transnational traffic flows and
 - the integration of other policies which benefit regional development and sustainability
- must be better taken into account.

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Inland navigation projects, either as stand alone projects or as integrated projects within a network, fulfill these criteria as they in general go far beyond a mere infrastructure approach. They are by definition linked to land- and portbased policies which benefit regional development.

2. Priority network or priority project approach? (Q3 + Q4)

Prioritisation and rebalance of cargo flows must lead to a better use of the existing resources in a more efficient and effective way. A future approach has to concentrate on **projects that benefit the entire transport policy in economical and ecological terms.**

Apart from this a future approach has to concentrate on the **interconnectivity** of modes within the transport and logistic chain. It is important to make the best use of the existing infrastructure and modes by better integrating them.

There might be different advantages of introducing a network approach rather than a project approach. Compared to the priority project approach a network approach would a.o. incorporate the nodes. In terms of inland waterway projects this could lead to a better connectivity and integration of inland waterway transport into the entire transport and logistic chain.

However, to realise such a conceptual and integrated approach a totally different system of financing and financial means would be necessary. Given today's scarcity of Community a change of paradigm is needed.

Whether the flexible approach would lead to a change of attitude at Member state level would largely depend on a change of paradigma and financial support by Community means.

3. Overall concept of future TEN-T development (Q5)

Volumes of cargo transport on the waterways can grow tremendously if the necessary measures are taken and substantial improvements in the waterways are achieved. The costs of maintenance of the waterways as such are reasonably low. As referred to the existing inland waterways offer considerable free capacities. Although the canals and rivers in northwestern Europe are already being used on a large scale, they still offer much scope for at least 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 for instance can absorb a sevenfold increase in transport activities, the river Danube even a twenty fold. This means that these rivers can guarantee an unobstructed passage of goods and passengers from the north-west to the south east.

They can **absorb huge additional cargo flows at relatively low investment costs** in maintenance and removal of bottlenecks. Inland waterway transport is considered environmentally friendly and therefore can

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considerably contribute to the overall transport policy. To enlarge the potential of inland waterways it is a prerequisite to **proper maintain the existing navigable waterways as well as to remove the existing bottlenecks and missing links.**

These are first of all the projects on the TEN-T priority list

- 1. Rhine/Meuse– Main – Danube axis (Project nr. 18)**
- 2. Seine-Scheldt (Project nr. 30)**

Besides **other severe bottlenecks of transeuropean relevance** should be supported at Community level and **added to the priority list**, either as stand alone projects or as part of a priority network:

1. East-West Corridor:

- Elbe: realisation of guaranteed water depth
- Canal system in Northern Germany: regulation and guaranteed waterdepth

2. North-South Corridor:

- Moselle-Saône: missing link between Marseille-Mediterranean and Moselle-Rhine-Ruhr
- Section Montereau/Bray to Nogent sur Seine

Port infrastructure

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 together with excellent fairway conditions, a.o. sufficient height of bridges along the rivers and canals, largely determine the efficiency of intermodality.

4. Contribution of ITS to the development of a multi modal TEN-T (Q 6)

The implementation of RIS in inland navigation is considered to contribute significantly to the efficiency of transports carried out on waterways. By making use of RIS the planning of transports can be eased better managed.

Support regarding the implementation of RIS at the carriers' side could speed up the overall implementation and use of the system.

5. A TEN-T core network? (Q7+ Q8)

There are different advantages of introducing a network approach rather than a project approach.

Compared to the priority project approach a network approach would a.o. incorporate the nodes. In terms of inland waterway projects this could lead to a better connectivity and integration of inland waterway transport into the entire transport and logistic chain.

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However, to realise such a conceptual and integrated approach a totally different system of financing and financial means would be necessary. Given today's scarcity of Community funding which leads to the problems as referred to under Q1 this would lead to an even worse situation.

Whether the flexible approach would lead to a change of attitude at Member state level would largely depend on a **change of paradigm and financial support at Community level.**

6. How to improve existing non-financial instruments (Q 12)

6.1. Policy integration

As already mentioned an embeddening of the TEN-T policy into the overall European transport policy would lead to a more integrated approach and prioritization of projects or networks.

When it comes to the realisation and implementation of the numerous inland navigation projects as f.e. listed on the TEN-T priority list, there are severe problems at certain stretches to overcome the diverging policies and opinions. This leads to an unacceptable delay in the carrying out of the project which is neither in favor of the inland navigation industry nor in favor of the entire transport chain.

6.2. TEN-T coordinator

The **TEN-T coordinators** are supposed to provide political support in solving these problems and help to find solutions in order to carry out the projects. According to the experience of the past years the role of the European coordinators is considered positive. Regarding the implementation of inland waterway projects the problems to address are mainly concentrated on the environmental impact of infrastructure projects. In this respect it is important to guarantee a right interpretation and implementation of the environmental framework legislation in order to avoid a blockade of the implementation of infrastructure projects.

The **definition of the role and competence of the coordinator** should take into account the observations and experiences of the past years in order to better address the mentioned problems as faced in the various policy areas.

7. Conclusion (Q13)

Following the observations and experiences from the past it seems that Option 3. of the proposed options by the Commission might best address the future challenges of transport.

Keeping the status quo as addressed in option 1 would mean a carrying on of the actual TEN-T policy without taking into account its shortcomings as experienced in the past years. The disadvantages of this option are reflected in the lack of financial support from the Community side as well as the political support from the member states' side.

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Taking into account the above mentioned observations and experiences Option 3 seems to offer advantages for the future TEN-T policy by

- both maintaining the comprehensive network and adding a core network and
- conceptual capturing the other policy aspects which are of importance when it comes to the realisation and implementation of core infrastructure of transeuropean importance.

April 2009

The European Barge Union EBU was founded on 14 December 2001 with seat in Brussels 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 is active in the field of

- 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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