

EBU-SEMINAR 2011

OPENINGSSPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT

Dear Minister of State,

Dear representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament,

Dear representatives of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine

Distinguished guests,

On behalf of the European Barge Union I have the pleasure of welcoming you at the annual EBU Seminar.

Following the recent release of the new White Paper we have decided to choose the future mobility and the role that inland navigation plays within this concept as topic of this years' seminar.

Recently the Hungarian Presidency of the European Union together with the Vice-President of the European Commission organized a High Level Conference on the integration of IWT into the economy. In the conference conclusions the participants called for a follow-up framework programme NAIADES II for which sufficient financial means need to be provided.

We are very pleased that **Minister of State, Mr. VÖLNER** accepted our invitation to deliver the openings speech and to inform us about the initiatives of the Hungarian Presidency to have these conclusions adopted at the meeting of the Transport Council in June.

Mid- term progress report of the implementation of NAIADES

Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) plays an important role for the transport of goods **and** passengers in Europe. It pays an important contribution to the transport demands within the European policy. When the European Commission released its second Mid-term progress report on the implementation of the NAIADES Action Programme exactly 1 month ago it concluded that NAIADES for the first time established a comprehensive European inland waterway transport policy framework and created a universally acknowledged momentum in the sector to raise it high on the political agenda of all stakeholders. Where on an operational level a wide range of valuable and tangible results has been delivered it is however widely acknowledged that the lack of dedicated resources turned out as disadvantage for the implementation of the programme.

IWT serves huge industries and offers a huge potential for modal shift

It is widely known that IWT serves huge industries in Europe and is leading in the carriage of many goods. It offers a huge potential for modal shift as the existing infrastructure can absorb a much higher volume of transport.

In this respect it needs to be stressed that infrastructure and the TEN-T policy in economic terms are crucial to the development of Europe. Stimulation of the competitive position of Europe in a sustainable way needs to take on board transport and infrastructure demands. Transport and cargo volumes follow the economic development and trade patterns. According to the recent White Paper transport volumes will increase by 80 % until 2050. This calls for a proper infrastructure to guarantee the smooth transport of cargo and passengers in the future with a special focus on

- **interconnectivity** of modes within the transport and logistic chain.

- making the best and most efficient use of the existing infrastructure.

Inland Waterways as major part of the core network are linking East and West, old and new Member States. To fully exploit the potential of the waterways – mainly existing and natural infrastructure - the necessary financial support must be increased to remove the bottlenecks and realise the missing links. A review of the existing TEN-T policy must be based upon solid financial perspectives, criteria and support where at least 20 % of the TEN-T budget should be dedicated to the navigable waterway network.

Where NAIADES is regarded as the appropriate framework to cope with the future development of IWT within the realisation of a sustainable transport policy a further integration of IWT into the economy requires a number of measures that are needed under this programme for which a dedicated financial support must be foreseen.

As a matter of fact the environmental and social challenges as expressed in the White Paper can be much better addressed by making full use of environmentally friendly modes and potentials such as inland waterway transport. In addition the prioritisation and rebalance of cargo flows must lead to a better use of the existing resources in a more efficient and effective way.

We are utmost pleased to have a number of **high level panellists** who will present their view on the chosen topic and to discuss with us the measures that are needed to cope with future mobility and definitely we are very honoured that **Vice-President KALLAS** will arrive at the end of the panel discussion to address the closing speech.

Let me finally draw your attention on today's release of **EBU's Annual Report**. You might be aware that the main challenge of our sector remains with its economic recovery, where in the past years it has been suffering from the consequences of the economic crisis which was of an unprecedented intensity. We are aware that it will take another couple of years before the industry will recover. On top of this difficult situation our members had to face the consequences of a severe accident on the river Rhine which led to a 23 days blockade of the navigation.

I am however confident that inland navigation with its benefits will deliver a major contribution to the realisation of the ambitious goals of the new European Transport Policy.

Where EBU in the past period has contributed to the Commission's consultations to set a new course as regards the future mobility and the new TEN-T policy I am happy to see the preparation work of a new EU framework for inland waterway transport confirmed. With our recently – together with INE and ESO - published **vision document "Setting the course"**, concrete recommendations as regards the transport challenges and future solutions have been released to the policy makers.

The release of our Annual Report today is to be seen as the starting shot to **sail the new course!**

André Auderset
President

4 May 2011