



INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT EVENT 2015 3 March 2015 Brussels

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

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Brussels

Violeta Bulc, Commissioner for Transport, European Commission

ROLE OF INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT AS CARRIER IN MULTIMODAL CORRIDORS

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today. This is my first encounter with you, the Inland waterway transport community. So, allow me to extend my speech beyond what has been given to me as a subject, to set the stage for our future cooperation.

During my first month in the office, I have become aware that inland waterways have a big potential. They span all over Europe, connect ports with the hinterland and can clearly make our transport system more sustainable. Strategic industries for the EU economy — like automotive, chemicals, petro-chemicals, agro-industries and energy production — rely heavily on inland waterways. And still, there is a lot of unused capacity!

I want us to work together to use this potential better! We need to innovate, become even more sustainable, generate employment opportunities, and improve the infrastructure. Perhaps most importantly, we need to better connect inland waterways with rail, road, maritime transport.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We can build on a good foundation. Last year the Commission has adopted the NAIADES II programme. It addresses the key issues I have just mentioned: infrastructure, innovation, sustainability, employment.

Let me start with infrastructure. With the new TEN-T guidelines and the Connecting Europe Facility, we can make a step change in transport infrastructure policy. We have now a core network where high standards are set and deadlines for implementation have been agreed. But there is a big gap between this clear vision for 2030 and the situation now. The Danube is not fit for navigation, the Seine and Scheldt rivers are not interconnected and many parts of the network need to be upgraded. A lot needs to be done and the financing needs are huge.

This is why the Commission shifted the emphasis from funding to investment. I have heard your concerns about the proposal to use part of the CEF funding for setting up the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the EFSI.

I have three answers for you. First, the top priority inland waterway projects with the highest EU added value will get funded — if good quality projects are submitted of course. Secondly, the new approach will eventually generate more investments, and better value for money. Finally, we — as a transport sector — can and should benefit from the EFSI, also for the completion of the TEN-T core network.

But in order to benefit from such opportunities, we need a strong and resilient inland waterway



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sector. The potential for passenger transport, the continuing containerisation and the transport of smaller payloads are just three examples of growth opportunities for inland waterway transport. But there are undoubtedly many others.

Seizing these opportunities is also the best answer to concerns about overcapacity. But it will require adaptation and innovation.

Adaptation of the way you invest in and operate your business, adaptation of the fleet, adaptation of the workforce. Adaptation is something that you need to do yourselves. I believe that the representative organisations of the sector can help a lot, and I support stronger representative organisations. But you should come together and rally around positive high-quality projects for the whole sector.

Secondly, innovation. It is an issue close to my heart. There is a lot to be done. The sector is digitally isolated in the logistics chain – we need to break out of this isolation. The creation of the Digital Inland Navigation Area, which will include a review of River Information Services (RIS), is crucial for this.

More generally, one of the three key priorities of my term is to create a data layer across all modes that will make logistics more efficient.

We also need to update of technical requirements for vessels and we are tackling this already under NAIADES. A large number of inland barges are old — sometimes very old — and not adapted to the market needs. This undermines the attractiveness, competitiveness, safety and sustainability of inland waterway transport.

I am sure you are aware of the threat that lack of innovation represents in the long term, not only in terms of missed growth. It also means that one of the main arguments to push for a greater share of Inland waterway transport, loses credibility: sustainability.

A greater use of inland waterway transport means less congestion, less CO2 emissions and less noise. But there is a need for further improvements. Think of air pollution. Inland waterways should not be left behind by road or rail in this respect. It is necessary to maintain ambition when updating the emissions standards for new engines, currently under discussion in Council and Parliament. But also a renewal of the existing fleet is needed.

The second issue are alternative fuels. As you know, the supply side will be addressed through the Commission's alternative fuel strategy. But there is also a need to adapt the fleet to alternative fuels.

My proposal to you is to fix common objectives, and to rally all those with an interest in inland waterways to build sound business cases. Member States, waterway authorities, ports and shippers can offer incentives.

Industry and innovation institutions can develop cost-effective solutions and guide their deployment in the market. NAIADES II has opened up the reserve funds, but this will of course not be sufficient. I see an opportunity to use financial instruments also to support fleet renewal and adaptation.

The only feasible way forward is to join forces between the sector, Member States and Commission. Let's act swiftly.

I would like to finish with those who ultimately, must benefit from our work: people. Not only passengers on ships but also those who do the navigation job every day. Last year, a good step forward



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was made with social dialogue, resulting in the adoption of the working time Directive. But we should do more. Workers have the right to quality employment and to have their qualifications recognised across the EU, whatever ranking they have on the ship.

This is what I want to achieve without complex arrangements and procedures — just simple and clear. We need minimum standards based on competence and the recognition of qualifications across the whole EU.

The EBU rightly says that inland waterway transport offers a huge potential to cope with the challenges in the field of transport in the coming years. I fully share this view. I see a sector that can become stronger, better organised and cleaner. That becomes focusses on the many opportunities which are around us and is integral part of the overall transport system.

With NAIADES II, the EU has provided the policy framework for this. Let's work together to implement it.

I look forward to our cooperation! Let's meet again soon.

Thank you.