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FUTURE OF TRANSPORT AND THE ROLE OF INLAND NAVIGATION WITHIN THE NEW WHITE PAPER – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REFLECTION GROUP ON INLAND NAVIGATION “REGINA” OFFICIALLY RELEASED.

On 18 March 2010 EBU organised its annual seminar which this time was dedicated to the Future of Transport-discussion and the role of inland navigation within the new European transport policy. EBU's President Philippe Grulois officially released the recent outcomes of the reflection group on inland navigation “REGINA” to Vice-President and Commissioner for Transport, Siim Kallas and his Director General Matthias Ruete, to Belgian State Secretary Etienne Schouppe, and MEP and TRAN-Rapporteur on the Future of Transport, Matthieu Grosch, who with their assistance underlined the importance of the inland navigation industry within the overall European transport policy and system. Some 140 participants followed the key note speeches as well as the panel discussion, for which Matthias Ruete, Director General DG MOVE, set the scene.

In his “Political Guidelines for the New Commission” **Commission president Barroso** called for “decarbonisation of the transport sector” as a key concern of the new Commission's transport and environmental policy. In a joint letter of the whole transport sector to Mr. Barroso the transport industry stressed that transport is the backbone of the European economy, accounting directly for 7 % of GDP and more than 5 % of total employment in the EU. This number more than doubles if the related industries serving transport are included. In his answer to this joint letter Mr. Barroso confirmed that transport policy is one of the key priorities of the new Commission.

Future of transport

In the past two years Europe has been suffering from an economic crisis which led to a recession. Transport is closely connected to the economic situation and development of the industry. Consequently the transport industry has fallen into an economic crisis as well, which has severe consequences for the sector as such.

According to recent studies and the figures of the Market observation by the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine there is a decrease in volume of cargo carried in 2009 which in general reached almost **25 %** compared to the year 2008. The actual crisis is of an unprecedented intensity and will – according to the latest predictions – last several years before the industry will recover.

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Taking into account these effects on the whole transport sector, the more important it is – according to EBU's president Philippe Grulois – to develop a sustainable and efficient European transport policy. Such a policy requires a strong inland navigation sector. The environmental and social challenges of a future European Transport Policy can be much better addressed by making full use of the environmental friendliness and unexploited potentials of inland waterway transport. 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 modes that are beneficial for the entire transport policy thus deserves support.

European IWT reflection group “REGINA”

In this respect an informal expert group, facilitated as from autumn 2009 by the PLATINA platform, has been created to start further deliberations with regard to the improvement of European cooperation and coordination in the field of inland navigation. This **reflection group on inland navigation named ‘REGINA’** – in which key experts from the industry, the river commissions as well as from the public administrations were involved - recently finished its deliberations. In its conclusions ‘REGINA’ stresses the need for a strong positioning of inland waterway transport in the European Transport Policy. This has to be achieved through comprehensive and concerted action of all involved stakeholders. Against the background of the many and varied identified tasks the reflection group concluded that the following measures be necessary:

- 1. Intensified cooperation between all stakeholders by establishing a permanent, structured and intensive cooperation between the competent institutions;**
- 2. Permanent European IWT policy by setting up a comprehensive European IWT strategy and programme as a permanent follow-up of the current Action Programme NAIADES;**
- 3. Financial and human resources by providing the financial support at the Community level required to implement a permanent European IWT programme;**
- 4. Seamless transition of the ongoing NAIADES actions by securing continuity between the present and future actions.**

The experts believe it is the right time to address these issues now and to recommend solutions to strengthen the role of inland navigation within the Future of Transport discussion in favour of the economical development of European society.

EBU's President Grulois - by strongly supporting the conclusions and recommendations of ‘REGINA’ - officially released the outcome of these deliberations and handed over the first copies of the ‘REGINA’-recommendations to Vice-President and Commissioner Kallas, State Secretary Schoupe acting as incoming President of the Transport Council and Rapporteur of the Future of Transport discussion within the European Parliament, Mr. Grosch.

Brussels, 18 March 2010

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