

## SEMINAR 2010

### “FUTURE OF TRANSPORT - THE ROLE OF INLAND NAVIGATION WITHIN THE NEW WHITEPAPER”

Dear Vice-President and Commissioner Kallas,  
Dear State Secretary Schouppe,  
Dear Mr. Grosch,  
Dear Mr. Ruete,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Barge Union I am pleased to welcome you to our annual seminar. We decided to dedicate this year's seminar to the Future of Transport-discussion and the role of inland navigation within the new European transport policy.

We are very honored with the assistance of our high level key note speakers who- with their attendance – underline the importance of our industry within the overall European transport policy and system.

Last year a new Parliament has been elected and started its works. Recently the new European Commission has been officially appointed and therefore we are very pleased that the representatives of both the newly elected Parliament and the new European Commission are with us today, together with the representative of the incoming presidency of the European Council.

When **Mr. Barroso** presented the “Political Guidelines for the New Commission” last year he stressed that “decarbonisation of the transport sector” must be a key concern of the new Commission's transport and environmental policy. In a joint letter of the whole transport sector to Mr. Barroso we 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 and that his announced decarbonisation of the transport sector by 2050 requires full cooperation and discussion between the Commission and stakeholders.

In this respect we are fully prepared to contribute to the upcoming discussions to develop a sustainable European transport policy for which the Commission started its consultation process last year and which will result in the release of a new White Paper at the end of this year.

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### Economic crisis

Meanwhile 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.

Transport follows trade patterns. Since the economic crisis seriously effects world trade, transport and inland navigation is suffering from an enormous decrease of volume since the beginning of 2009, in particular the dry cargo sector which has serious effects on the economic situation of the inland navigation industry.

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.

In the past years many newly built vessels came on the market as an answer to the increased transport demands. This also led to a renewal of the fleet in order to meet with **ecological demands** of a sustainable European transport policy. In the actual economic crisis this however leads to a serious overcapacity of vessels. Consequently there is a lack of cargo for the actual fleet capacity which goes hand in hand with a fall of the freight rates. The inland navigation industry thus is suffering on both the supply side as well as the prices to be paid for its services. This leads to undesirable effects on the whole market.

Given the coupling of transport on economy we however believe it is important to **maintain the fleet capacity on one hand and to guarantee the survival of the industry on the other hand** in order to meet the future transport demands. EBU therefore called in the hearing dedicated to the economic crisis in inland navigation which has been organised by the European Commission in November 2009 for **long term and sustainable solutions in favour of the whole industry.**

### Future of transport and European IWT reflection group "REGINA"

Taking into account the above mentioned effects on the whole transport sector, the more important it is 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 benefit the entire transport policy thus deserves support.

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In this respect an informal expert group, facilitated as from autumn 2009 under PLATINA, has been created to start further deliberations with regard to the improvement of European cooperation and coordination. 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 are necessary:

**1. Intensified cooperation between all stakeholders by establishing a permanent, structured and intensive cooperation between the competent institutions:**

Inland waterway transport is the most liberalised and most international transport mode within the EU, but is still confronted with a heterogeneous organisational and institutional framework. In order to overcome the identified shortcomings an intensified co-operation between all stakeholders is required (European Commission, Member States, River Commissions, UNECE and navigation sector).

**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:**

NAIADES addressed for the first time comprehensive IWT coordination and cooperation tasks of the European Union in the period 2006-2013. NAIADES proved to be successful and should be continued through the elaboration of a European follow-up strategy and programme including permanent actions at the European level as part of the new common transport policy.

**3. Financial and human resources by providing the financial support at the Community level required to implement a permanent European IWT programme.**

One of the identified weaknesses of the ongoing NAIADES programme is that it does not earmark dedicated financial resources for the implementation of the foreseen actions, in particular at the European Community level. Therefore, appropriate human and financial resources should be made available at Community level, both for the actions programme and its implementation management.

**4. Seamless transition of the ongoing NAIADES actions by securing continuity between the present and future actions.**

The ongoing NAIADES implementation platform PLATINA successfully set up activities where long-term European actions are required. However, after the end of the PLATINA project in May 2012 the continuation of these activities is not yet secured. Therefore, a seamless transition towards a new European IWT strategy and its implementation should be guaranteed.

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The experts of the reflection group 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 the European society.

**EBU strongly supports the conclusions and recommendations of 'REGINA'.**

As one of the industry experts involved in this reflection group we have the pleasure of officially releasing the outcome of these deliberations and **handing over the first copies of the 'REGINA'-recommendations** to Vice-President and Commissioner Kallas and his Director General Mr. Ruete, to State Secretary Schouppe acting as incoming President of the Transport Council and to the Rapporteur of the Future of Transport discussion within the European Parliament, Mr. Grosch, before inviting them to deliver their key note speeches.

Dr. Philippe Grulois  
President EBU

Brussels, 18 March 2010

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