

Notes for the speech of Mrs. Karla Peijs, European Coordinator for Inland Waterways, at the EBU Seminar. Brussels March 3rd, 2008.

I have no doubts: Inland Waterways will strongly contribute to the development of the European Transport System and, at the same time, serve the cause of mitigating the negative impact on the environment and on our lives that the steady mobility growth is demanding.

As a Dutch, I must believe this, we live between and with rivers all over our country.

As a transport expert I do also believe it and I think that this is the right time to tackle this challenge of developing inland navigation and I am very glad to take the task of Coordinator of European Inland Waterways given to me by the European Institutions.

Let me better explain why this is the right time to promote inland navigation and why I believe that it will be very successful.

Recently, during last few years, the European Community has given itself very effective legislative tools that promote the development of the inland navigation; I refer to the Naiades Programme in primis and it has also established other

Directives like the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the LIFE one that sets fundamental rules for the respect and the protection of our environment.

I noticed, during my meetings with Authorities and transport entrepreneurs that sometimes these environmental Directives are judged as stumbling blocks in the path of inland waterways transport development.

But this is really the mistake that we have to avoid: clear and sound Directives are most important to create confidence between Groups for the protection of the environment and transport promoters. If we really want to develop a sound, efficient, cost effective and sustainable navigation transport system we have to build a consensus that can only come from the confidence that everyone puts into the Authorities.

I interpret my task as Coordinator in this sense: my first target is to create the conditions for the development of inland navigation supporting the implementation of the principles included into the Naiades Action Programme: developing the market, encouraging the creation of intermodal points where the implementation of comodality will be best exploited; taking advantage from efficient technology in terms of vessel design, use of bio fuels and implementing River Information Systems (RIS); promoting a modern image of inland navigation, including education and training and certainly encouraging the implementation of infrastructures that are conceived for the safety and the reliability of the navigation, but in full respect of environmental Directives to reduce the impact on the habitat.

All these assets will really provide a winning situation if all opinions will be taken into account and most particularly if the environmental issues will be taken into account in a serious and constructive way.

To do this, I am ready to listen to all instances, to visit personally each place where there are reasons of conflict and then to contribute to the development of a sound and sustainable inland transport system.

As A Dutch, recently Transport Minister, I can recall mistakes that occurred in the exploitation of the river Rhine and also in rivers in The Netherlands: I think I have the experience not to let it happen again and at the same time I that the tools that we have now, in terms of legislation, economical and technological support are such that a really sustainable and successful inland waterways transport system can be achieved, if we all work together.