

Mrs. Loyola de Palacio
Vice President of the European Commission
200, rue de la Loi

B - 1049 Brussels

Brussels, 10 February 2003

Dear Mrs de Palacio,

With great interest the undersigned have taken note of the recently published booklet on TEN-T priority projects in the Trans-European Transport Networks as prepared by the Directorate General TREN.

It becomes increasingly clear that current traffic growth can no longer be managed by the expansion of road infrastructure alone. Together with short sea, the optimisation of the European waterway network can indeed offer a solution to increasing transport growth by serving the main economic areas in a cost-efficient and environmentally sound way. Better intermodal connections to inland ports and seaports are a smart land use-planning tool to attract business and to steer a modal shift.

In view of the upcoming TEN-T revision, we kindly ask your active support for:

- Seine-Nord Europe

Road traffic is expected to grow by 50% on the north-south corridor in the next ten years. An efficient connection between the Seine basin and the trade partners northwards would provide Île de France and the hinterland of Le Havre with a sustainable connection whereas today road transport is the only option. The link Seine-Nord Europe aims at already absorbing an extra of 15 million tons or four times more traffic in its first year of operation, with additional external cost savings for society. On the motorway Paris-Lille e.g., there will be more than a million trucks less per year. The higher growth rate of inland shipping (17,5% in 1997-2000) in comparison with road and rail transport in France shows that inland waterways have a significant development potential.

- Restoration of regulation on Elbe and finalization of the Mittelland corridor

The Czech Republic and Poland are the largest economies in central and eastern Europe and are expected to have an annual economic growth of 4 - 5% in the next 10 years. Cross-border transport serving the markets of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic is becoming ever more important. The finalisation of The Mittelland corridor until the Polish border is therefore of utmost importance to complete the east-west connection. In the north-south direction, restoring the regulation measures of the Elbe would open the hinterland of Hamburg with a sustainable connection and significantly increase the modal share of inland navigation. The industry confirmed its readiness to invest in modal shift actions if appropriate investments ensure an optimal capacity use of the waterways.

- Optimisation of the Danube corridor

The inland navigation sector very much welcomes the determination of the Commission to rank the improvement of the Danube river between Vilshofen and Straubing among the priority projects.

The rivers Rhine, Main and Danube link 10 countries. More than 100 million of citizens live along this corridor connecting the North Sea with the Black Sea. The perspectives of EU enlargement lead to a rising goods exchange between east and west. In Austria e.g., as much cross-border road traffic transits the Danube corridor today as the Brenner corridor. Road traffic annually grows much faster in this corridor than in others due to increasing east-west trade.

Solving the current bottlenecks, in particular Straubing-Vilshofen, would create reliable navigation conditions and turn inland shipping into a competitive alternative on this corridor. From an environmental point of view, it will save more than a million tons of CO₂ per annum.

In summary, the undersigned European organisations plead for including the listed waterways projects in the revised priorities (Seine-Nord Europe, optimisation of the East-west and Danube corridor).

We trust that you will attach due attention to this matter and remain,

Yours truly,

Theresia Hacksteiner
European Barge Union



Frederik Mink
European Dredging Association



Jürgen Sturm
European Federation of Inland Ports



Johnny Conings
European Shipowners Organisation



Klaus Ebeling
European Intermodal Association



Karin De Schepper
Inland Navigation Europe



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