

Hendrik Wüst  
Minister of Transport of the State of North Rhine-  
Westphalia

***Welcome address***

**Inland Waterway Transport as key player in  
the multimodal transport chain**

**European Barge Union Event 2018 – Brussels**

Thursday, 12th April 2018

*(Check against delivery)*

Dear Mr. Goris,  
Dear Director General Hololei,  
Dear Members of the European Barge Union,  
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen.  
Good afternoon.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you at the premises of the Representation of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union.

As Minister of Transport, I am delighted that today's event of the European Barge Union is dedicated to "Inland Waterway Transport as key player in the multimodal transport chain."

One of the advantages of North Rhine-Westphalia is its location at the intersection of major European waterways. North Rhine-Westphalia certainly is Germany's number one regarding inland waterway transport.

Some 120 ports handle nearly 127 million tons of cargo by ship per year.

We are proud to have the world's largest inland port in Duisburg.

It seems to be logical that the European Barge Union was founded in the port city of Duisburg.

Mr. Goris, let me use this opportunity to congratulate you on the appointment as new President of the European Barge Union.

I wish you the best of success for your new task and in tackling the challenges ahead of you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

North Rhine-Westphalia is a major transport hub in the European Union.

Being home to the country's traditional industry belt, to many global players, to large companies and to a significant number of small and medium businesses, North Rhine-Westphalia plays a leading role in the national economy. Our location offers excellent access to markets and consumers.

Hardly any other region of Europe offers companies better conditions for transport and logistics.

This is ensured by a dense infrastructure of roads, railways, airports and inland waterways.

This infrastructure makes North Rhine-Westphalia the Number 1 logistics hub in Germany and one of the leading logistics players in Europe.

In North Rhine-Westphalia as well as in the European Union as a whole, we rely on a good transport system for the mobility needs of our citizens, for our economy and for our societal welfare.

We are facing huge challenges though to make our mobility system sustainable and efficient.

In addition, we have to provide the physical infrastructure to handle the growing demand for transport services.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, we are looking for all options to use our stretched infrastructure to the best possible effect.

It is my firm conviction that digitalization of the transport system will provide a way to solve a big part of the transport challenges.

And it goes without saying: We have to exploit all options of combining the different modes of transport in the most efficient way.

Therefore, inland waterway transport is high on the agenda of North Rhine-Westphalia's transport policy.

Two of the core corridors of the Trans-European Transport Network are crossing North Rhine-Westphalia and our waterways play a vital role in these corridors.

Thus, we are looking forward to the proposals for the next funding period by the European Commission – in particular regarding the Connecting Europe Facility.

North Rhine-Westphalia definitely will take part in the discussions about the requirements for a sustainable, efficient and interoperable European transport system.

We consider inland waterway transport as the transport mode with the biggest potential to take over large parts of freight transport.

The government of North Rhine-Westphalia is convinced though that modal shift from road or rail to inland waterways should not be imposed by state authority.

Rather, we have to set the economic signals in a way that shippers are encouraged to use inland navigation – as a sustainable and low-carbon, as a cost-efficient and convenient mode of transport.

Indeed, the aim of our transport policy is to raise awareness of the free capacity of the network of waterways, to encourage and incentivise shippers to use inland waterways and to improve the conditions of using inland waterways.

Doubtless, inland waterways are an essential and indispensable part of the multimodal transport chain.

In March this year, I have visited our neighbours the Netherlands and Belgium. The main focus of my visit was on port hinterland transport and on waterway infrastructure.

North Rhine-Westphalia is seeking to conclude an agreement with the Netherlands and the Flemish Government on enhanced co-operation with the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp.

Moreover, North Rhine-Westphalia was invited by Dutch Minister of Transport, Mrs. Cora van Nieuwenhuizen, to join the “Benelux Mobility Roadmap”.

This Roadmap will enforce our joint policies in the field of mobility: Making better use of transport by rail and inland shipping while as well improving traffic flows by switching to intelligent transport systems.

And, as I already mentioned, we are currently drafting “letters of intent” to enhance the co-operation with the ports of the Netherlands and Flanders. These agreements will help to improve the link of our waterway infrastructure to the ports of the Netherlands and Flanders. And thus, enhance the terms for connecting hinterland transport on rail, road and inland waterways.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Multimodality will prevail if transport always takes advantage of the strengths of every respective mode – for each type of transport as well as for the different types of goods to be shipped.

In this respect, multimodal transport can contribute to improve efficiency and productivity in logistic chains and to tackle the challenges for European transport – by reducing CO2 emissions and by reducing air pollution and congestion on our roads.

I am therefore glad that the European Commissioner for Transport, Ms. Violeta Bulc, has designated 2018 to be the “Year of Multimodality”.



North Rhine-Westphalia is committed to support the concept of multimodality.

And it is my conviction that transport policy will only be successful if we all cooperate – cross-border and on the level of the European Union.

Therefore, I am glad that the European Barge Union organised its annual convention about the subject of inland waterway transport as a key player in the multimodal transport chain.

I wish all of us an interesting event with fruitful discussions and many new insights to the challenges of transport and possible solutions.

Thank you very much for your attention.