

Press release

CHANGE OF PRESIDENCY AND EBU EVENT 2016

EBU at its board meeting on 7 April 2016 nominated Dr. Gunther Jaegers, representing the German member association BDB as its new president. Paul Goris, president of the Dutch member association CBRB, was elected as vice-president.

At the following annual IWT event EBU's president emphasized the important role Inland Waterway Transport plays in the logistic chain to keep Europe's economic position leading. As "The transport modality to count on" it however also counts on the support by the European policy makers to guarantee the right framework conditions, in the first place infrastructure reliability. Henrik Hololei, Director General at European Commission's DG MOVE and Director General Mobility at the Dutch Ministry of Transport and Environment on their turn underlined the importance of Inland Waterway Transport in Europe and their aim to increase its share and to make a better use of this modality

Infrastructure deficits criticized

In the premises of the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU the representatives of the inland navigation industry together with its guests and partners discussed the actual developments regarding the European Transport agenda and the role of inland waterways within this frame.

The newly elected president, Dr. Gunther Jaegers, emphasized the potential of inland waterway transport towards the background of the challenges of the European transport policies. Given the benefits of this sector it offers enormous opportunities to meet the economic and ecological EU-targets. Inland waterway transport carries some 500 million ton of goods a year and is of increasing importance in the field of cruising and passenger transport. Some 40.000 people are employed in the sector which offers interesting jobs.

Arguing that every mode of transport is only as good as its infrastructure he strongly criticized the lack of sufficient infrastructure maintenance and renewal, most obvious in two areas with an enormous deficit. One being Germany, the country he is coming from. Most of the locks need immediate repair or replacement. The industry even could have to

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face a lock breakdown within the major industrial area any day. Therefore we urge the Commission that also locks should be eligible under CEF.

The annual national budget is half of what would be needed just to maintain the present infrastructure. And not only money is the bottle neck: The German waterway administration needs an additional number 600 to 700 engineers to organise this task.

The second area being the Danube, especially the middle and lower part of it. A lack of sufficient national budgets and people as well as international disputes hamper maintenance of the river so that supply by waterway becomes unreliable and adventurous. As a result the present utilization of the Danube is below 10% of its full capacity. EBU therefore welcomes the organisation of a **Ministerial Meeting during the TEN-T days in Rotterdam** and hopes this finally will lead to the necessary steps to safe inland waterway transport on the Danube.

Emphasising that MORE Connecting Europe Facility FOR TRANSPORT IS THE BEST INVESTMENT PLAN FOR EUROPE, President Jaegers urged the Council and the Parliament to increase the relevant budget in the upcoming review of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework in order to complete the European Infrastructure plan (TEN-T) that will create 10 million additional jobs and 1.8% GDP growth by 2030.

Innovation

Despite the difficult economic situation the inland navigation industry is also characterised by innovative entrepreneurship. In the past years f.e. a number of LNG driven vessels have been built and are meanwhile sailing on European rivers. In order to boost these innovative sustainable concepts with high social benefits he called upon the representatives of the European institutions for sufficient funding out of European and national funds.” Without substantial funding in the pioneer phase it will be impossible to deploy innovative future concepts”, he emphasized in his speech.

Support by the European institutions to increase the share of IWT

All key note speakers, starting with MEP Gabriele Preuss, in her plea supported by both Director General of the Dutch Ministry of Transport and Environment, Mark Frequin, and Director General of DG Move, Henrik Hololei, underlined the importance of Inland Waterway Transport in Europe and underlined the aim to increase its share and to make a better use of this modality.

7 April 2016

The European Barge Union (EBU) represents the majority of the inland navigation industry in Europe. Its members are the national associations of barge owners and barge operators of meanwhile 9 leading European inland navigation countries.

EBU's main objective is to represent the interests of the inland shipping industry at a European and international level and to contribute to the development of a sustainable and efficient European transport system.

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