

PRESS RELEASE

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EBU GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RELEASE OF ITS ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

At the General Assembly on 22 June 2017 EBU released its latest Annual Report. In his introduction President Dr. Gunther Jaegers emphasises the potential of Inland Waterway Transport in practical and political terms.

The Report provides an overview of the most important areas of involvement of EBU, such as infrastructure, the Social Dialogue and Labour market and transport of dangerous goods. The Annual Report can be freely downloaded from EBU's site.

Inland waterway transport is known for its sustainable record in terms of low emissions and energy efficiency in relation to its transport volume. Contrary to the congested roads the network of European waterways still disposes over free capacity, offering a huge modal shift potential on its navigable network of over 40.000 km. Past year it carried more than 550 million tons of goods which is an equivalent of 140 billion t/km. Besides it is increasingly popular in the field of cruising and passenger transport and can relieve the congested urban areas by offering modern solutions of public transport.

Low emission mobility and innovation

Low emission mobility and greening are high on the political agenda and the sector is challenged to investigate into new innovative concepts to further improve its environmental record. A number of front runners from the industry meanwhile invested into new concepts by i.a. introducing LNG driven vessels. EBU is promoting innovation in all areas involved and specifically in greening of the fleet. For this reason it advocates a voluntary renewal scheme of the fleet through the establishment of a European Inland Navigation Innovation Fund (EINIF) by combining EU and MS funding in order to avoid a standstill of innovation in the sector.

Economic situation and infrastructure constraints

President Jaegers however stresses that the sector still is sailing under difficult economic circumstances which are reflected by low incomes and financial constraints. The expected and predicted increase of modal share of inland waterway transport is hampered by the lack of infrastructure maintenance which is key to the development of the industry. Special attention needs to be paid to the dramatic situation on the rivers Elbe and Danube, where due to a lack of maintenance and dredging the draught is reduced year by year and endangers the reliability of this mode. With limited effort and financial means the Danube could absorb a twentyfold of the actual volume and contribute to the economic development in the region.

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Labour market

Another major concern of the sector is the labour market. "In this field our organisation welcomes the proposal on professional qualifications that is expected to be agreed short termed" the President emphasises. It will help our sector to attract qualified people and solve the shortage of professional staff. The General Assembly at this occasion invited the President of EDINNA, the network of European institutions of training and education" to exchange experiences and to team up in attracting new people to the sector.

Given the huge potential of inland waterway transport Dr. Jaegers is confident to meet with the challenges ahead and sees many chances to contribute to a sustainable mobility policy in the European Union and beyond.

Note from the redaction:

More information provided by Secretary General Theresia Hacksteiner

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