

Press release

CHANGE OF PRESIDENCY AND PRIORITIES AHEAD

The EBU Board on 26 April 2022 appointed Dr. Philippe Grulois as President for a period of 2 years. He succeeded Paul Goris who presided the organisation in the past years and will remain President of the European Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) Platform. Didier Leandri, Président délégué général of the French association E2F Entreprises fluviales de France, was appointed as Vice-President.

CHANGE OF PRESIDENCY

Paul Goris stepped down as President of EBU after having presided EBU during a period of 4 years following the establishment of the European Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) Platform, of which he remains President. In his term as President he successfully contributed to the strengthening of the IWT sector at European level. “With the establishment of the IWT Platform EBU together with ESO we realised an additional layer on the two associations representing the inland navigation industry at Union level. The IWT Platform as executive body of the two sector organisations is strongly involved in all technical areas which are of high importance to the sector, such as the technical standard setting, digitalisation and innovation of the sector. We consider this cooperation as crucial in strengthening the role of inland waterway transport at the European and international level and thus contributing to increasing its modal share in the entire logistics chain”, he emphasised at the end of his term.

His successor Dr. Philippe Grulois, President of the Belgian member association “Unie der Continentale Vaart UCV” will build on this heritage. “I owe my predecessor many thanks for paving the way towards these developments. In the coming two years as EBU President I will build on this important achievement and strengthen the cooperation between the involved organisations. In view of the challenges ahead the major focus next to the contribution to the overall policy agenda will be the labour market as well as the energy transition and greening of the sector”.

PRIORITIES IN THE COMING YEARS

The priorities of the newly elected President will closely follow the EU policy agenda. Last year the Commission released its “Fit for 55” package which aims to deliver the EU’s increased emission reductions target. Furthermore it published the NAIADES III program by putting forward an ambitious ‘Inland Waterway Transport Action Plan 2021-2027’ in line with its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. The focus lying on two core objectives: shifting more freight transport to inland waterways, and setting the sector on an irreversible path to zero-emissions accompanied by a paradigm shift towards further digitalisation, as well as accompanying measures to support the current and future workforce. EBU supports the proposed focus as well as the notion that the IWT sector

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needs to be reinforced, to meet the Green Deal objectives in terms of modal shift and lower pollutants and Greenhouse Gas emissions. “Keeping already a very positive environmental record today the intended increase of the modal share of IWT will substantially contribute to an overall decrease of GHG emissions of transport. The IWT sector is prepared to take the necessary steps towards zero emission and to take over much higher volumes of freight and passengers on the waterways if the right framework conditions are met” the newly elected President emphasises. In this respect EBU observes a lack of alignment of the “fit for 55” package with the objectives of the EU Green Deal (EGD) and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS). “The EU Green Deal, SSMS and NAIADES III are focusing on a modal shift towards IWT and rail. The fit for 55 package however is not linked to this objective and even through certain measures in particular those laid down in the proposed revision of the Energy Taxation Directive might clearly undermine this objective” he adds.

TEN-T supports the increase of modal share of IWT and the greening of the sector

EBU welcomes the Commission proposal setting out the new guidelines for the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), in particular the acknowledgement of the important role of Inland Waterway Transport in line with the EU Green Deal.

It however signals a number of shortcomings that need to be addressed in the upcoming negotiations to realise the modal shift ambition of the Union, for which the Board of Directors adopted the IWT position paper (attached).

Infrastructure is the backbone of the services and reliability of our sector. IWT thus needs a reliable, safe, cost effective and climate resilient infrastructure network.

With over 40,000 km of navigable waterways and 250 inland ports, inland waterway transport currently carries some 550 million tonnes of goods per year and is of increasing importance in the field of cruising and passenger transport. Societies and major industries in Europe are depending on a seamless supply of their goods via waterways, while tourism on waterways is a major pillar of European tourism. Contrary to the congested roads, European waterways dispose of free capacity, offering a significant modal shift potential in line with the EU Green Deal. Besides, the revision is focusing on the introduction of an alternative fuel network along the European waterways. In its energy transition IWT is strongly depending on the availability of sufficient alternative fuels and energy supply in both sea- and inland ports and along the entire network of navigable waterways.

In line with the above EBU also welcomes the Commission’s initiative to amend the **Combined Transport Directive** which currently is the only legal instrument at Union level to incentivise the shift from road freight to lower emission transport modes such as inland waterway transport. It calls upon policy makers to create a level playing field

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between the modes, mainly to repair the restricted perception of intermodality in the current directive. For this purpose IWT and short sea shipping should receive the same treatment in terms of economic support measures as the combination road/rail.

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EBU

The European Barge Union (EBU) represents the inland navigation industry in Europe. Its members are the national associations of barge owners and barge operators of 9 European inland navigation countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania and Switzerland). Besides it represents the interests of a number of international organisations dealing with IWT and Short Sea Shipping. www.ebu-uenf.org