



INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT (IWT) SECTOR POSITION ON THE TEN-T GUIDELINES

The IWT sector, represented by EBU, ESO and the IWT Platform, 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.

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

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 view of the challenges ahead and towards the background of the global and Union policies we however signal a number of shortcomings in the proposal that need to be addressed to realise the fit for future infrastructure and the modal shift ambition of the Union.

1. GOOD NAVIGATION STATUS TOGETHER WITH CLEAR AND AMBITIOUS PARAMETERS TO GUARANTEE RELIABILITY FOR THE SECTOR

We agree that inland waterways in Europe are characterised by a heterogeneous hydro-morphology which hampers a coherent performance for all waterway stretches and thus that TEN-T requirements should take into account the specific hydro-morphology of each waterway. Such an approach should be considered at river basin level. In general we can and support the chosen approach by the Commission with a focus on the “Good Navigation Status” that should allow to address the shortcomings in the implementation of the current TEN-T guidelines and take on board climate resilience within a river basin approach.

Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) is expected to increase its share by 25 % by 2030 and by 50 % by 2050. Previously, EU strategies identified the elimination of infrastructure bottlenecks as a key requisite for the development of inland navigation in Europe. Unfortunately, due to under-investment and lack of political attention this could not be realized in the past years. Due to this underinvestment and subsequent low water periods in the past years the modal share of IWT did not increase.

The notion of Good Navigation Status therefore should also cover the protection and the non-deterioration of the current status of the waterway network which may be higher than the minimum requirements and levels of services proposed in the legislation. The current status of the waterway network should not be left to deteriorate but be appropriately maintained.

Article 22 sets out the inland waterways transport infrastructure requirements for the core network, which should be realised by 2030. We consider the proposed minimum parameters for the bridges of at least 5.25 m and for the navigable channel depth for rivers and canals of 2.50 m at defined reference water levels, which are exceeded at a defined number of days per year on a statistical average, as very unambitious in view of the intended increase of the modal share and thus as an absolute minimum. We advocate to lift these minimum standards within the corridor approach to more ambitious parameters enabling the sector to materialise the modal shift goal. As an example of a huge modal shift potential we refer to the increasing share of hinterland container transports which are supposed to substantially grow in the coming years. Where the current minimum bridge height is set at 5.25, allowing only 2 layers of containers in vessels, a fit for future infrastructure needs to meet at least 3 and preferably a 4 layers infrastructure, meaning 7.00 m and 9.10 m. The 4 layers infrastructure certainly should be the standard for new infrastructure

The reference water level shall be established on the basis of the number of days per year on which the actual water level exceeded the specified reference water level, based on which the Commission shall adopt implementing acts specifying the reference water levels per river basin.

In view of the reliability of the sector there is a clear need to restrict the number of days on which the reference water levels may be undercut to a minimum. The Commission implementing acts should be adopted, ~~per river basin~~, in cooperation with the respective River Commissions, taking account of the experience gathered by these commissions. This requires a strong governance structure based on clearly defined KPI's where we support a strong role of the very River Commissions.

Hence, we propose the following amendments of Article 22

2. Member States shall ensure that the inland waterway network, including connections referred to in Article 20(1), point (e), is maintained to enable efficient, reliable and safe navigation for users by ensuring minimum waterway requirements and levels of service. ~~and by preventing~~ **Member States shall prevent the deterioration** of these minimum requirements or any of its defined underlying criteria **and of the status of the inland waterway network which exceeds these minimum requirements at the date of entry into force of this Regulation**¹ (Good Navigation Status).

3. Member States shall in particular ensure that **by 2030**
 - (a) Rivers, canals, lakes inland ports and their access routes provide a navigable channel depth of at least 2.5 m and a minimum height under non-openable bridges of at least 5.25 m at defined reference water levels, which are exceeded at a defined number of days per year on a statistical average. **Member States – within the corridor approach – strive to increase these minimum**

levels where ever possible in order to reach a higher level of performance of the infrastructure and to realise more ambitious minimum standards, in particular bridge heights to facilitate the increasing container traffic on the European waterways. On new or rebuilt infrastructure the minimum bridge height will be 9.10 m allowing a 4 layer container carriage.

5. The Commission shall adopt implementing acts **in cooperation with the respective River Commissions**, setting out requirements complementing the minimum requirements established in accordance with paragraph (3) point (a), second subparagraph, per river basin.

We welcome the Commission's acknowledgement of shortcomings in the sea ports regarding the handling capacity of the entire hinterland chain, which since many years causes huge congestion problems and costs to the IWT sector. By imposing the need for "dedicated handling capacity for inland waterway vessels" in the seaports this is considered to contribute to shift more freight towards inland waterways.

3. PASSENGER TRANSPORT ON EUROPEAN WATERWAYS AND FACILITIES IN INLAND PORTS

Passenger transport on European waterways, both on day trip vessels and river cruises, are of increasing importance for the European tourism sector. It attracts tourists from all over Europe and abroad allowing to visit the European heritage via the waterways. After being seriously hidden by the COVID 19 pandemic the sector is resuming its business this year.

We thus welcome that in the development of the core, the extended and the comprehensive network **general priority shall be given to measures that are necessary for increasing freight and passenger transport activity** of more sustainable modes of transport in view of a reduction of GHG emissions from transport. The IWT passenger sector itself is a front runner in terms of greening and adaptation of its fleet to the energy transition. As such it is highly depending on the publicly accessible recharging and waste collecting infrastructure along the trans-European transport network. **Therefore all infrastructure components as referred to in Article 20 of the proposal shall be available for both freight and passenger transport.**

As regards freight transport we however foresee that smaller inland ports might not be able to meet the threshold as foreseen in the current proposal and thus propose to decrease the level from 500.000 to 250.000 of an annual freight transshipment.

Hence, we propose the following amendment of Art. 20

3: An inland port shall be part of the comprehensive network where it meets the following conditions: (a) it has an annual freight transshipment volume exceeding **250.000** tonnes. The total annual freight transshipment volume shall be based on the latest available three-year average, based on the statistics published by Eurostat; **or it has a total annual volume of passenger traffic volume exceeding 500 000 persons. The reference amount for this total volume is the latest available three-year average;**

3. CORRIDOR APPROACH WITH STRONG INVOLVEMENT OF RIVER COMMISSIONS

The term ‘river basin’ building on the definition of the water framework directive is in our opinion not the right way forward in TEN-T and its transport corridors. On the one hand, river basins are broader and contain non-navigable sections. On the other hand, for transport, certain waterways/waterway sections located in one river basin are linked up to waterways/waterway sections located in other river basins. Moreover, canals cannot always be unequivocally allocated to a single river basin. We therefore propose that minimum requirements and levels of service (art. 22.3) and complementary minimum requirements (art. 22.5) as well as eventual exemptions (art. 22.4) are set out per European Transport Corridor. The corridor method allows a coherent approach across borders which fits into the TEN-T logic, whereby the European Transport Corridors enable Member States to achieve a coordinated and synchronised approach with regard to investment in infrastructure.

The Commission implementing acts should be adopted in cooperation with the respective River Commissions, taking account of the experience gathered by these commissions.

In this approach we would welcome an enhanced role of the coordinators to ensure a coherent planning and investment approach in the European Transport Corridors.

4. IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVE CRITERIA TO ENFORCE THE PROPOSED MEASURES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION BY 2030 AND FURTHER

The IWT sector in providing high level services to many industries in Europe. As such it is depending on the reliability and predictability of the waterways. Frequent low water levels in the past decade led to a loss of volumes and a reverse modal shift. This is contrary to the overall EU policy objectives. In addition, by 2030 the sector is expected to meet emission reduction levels as laid down in global and Union policy.

The European Court of Auditors in its report in 2015 found that, despite the objective of shifting traffic from roads to environmentally friendly transport modes, overall the modal share of inland waterway transport has not significantly increased since 2001 within the EU. The Court therefore considered that the European IWT strategies have not been effectively implemented as the policy objective of shifting goods from roads to inland waterways has not been achieved and overall navigability conditions have not improved. The Court also noted that developing inland waterway transport requires considerable coordination among Member States and that, as for other larger infrastructure projects, political and environmental considerations may affect the implementation of inland waterways projects. The Court found also that the EU strategies lacked some important analyses. They did not identify the overall benefits of inland navigation in different corridors and did not assess the extent to which IWT should contribute to the policy objective of shifting traffic from roads to environmentally friendly transport modes.

Therefore the Commission is expected to introduce in the Implementing Acts objective criteria to efficiently and effectively monitor the implementation of the infrastructure requirements as set out in the proposal and analyses to measure the effect of projects co-financed under CEF.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Article 20

Text proposed by the Commission	Proposed amendments
<p>3: An inland port shall be part of the comprehensive network where it meets the following conditions: (a) it has an annual freight transshipment volume exceeding 500.000 tonnes. The total annual freight transshipment volume shall be based on the latest available three-year average, based on the statistics published by Eurostat</p>	<p>3: An inland port shall be part of the comprehensive network where it meets the following conditions: (a) it has an annual freight transshipment volume exceeding 250.000 tonnes. The total annual freight transshipment volume shall be based on the latest available three-year average, based on the statistics published by Eurostat; (new) or it has a total annual volume of passenger traffic volume exceeding 500 000 persons. The reference amount for this total volume is the latest available three-year average;</p>

Justification:

1. we foresee that smaller inland ports might not be able to meet the threshold as foreseen in the current proposal and thus propose to decrease the level from 500.000 to 250.000 of an annual freight transshipment
2. the extended and the comprehensive network intend to give **general priority to measures that are necessary for increasing freight and passenger** transport activity of more sustainable modes of transport in view of a reduction of GHG emissions from transport. The **IWT passenger sector itself is a front runner** in terms of greening and adaptation of its fleet to the energy transition and highly depending on the publicly accessible recharging and waste collecting infrastructure along the trans-European transport network

Article 22

Text proposed by the Commission	Proposed amendments
<p>2. Member States shall ensure that the inland waterway network, including connections referred to in Article 20(1), point (e), is maintained to enable efficient, reliable and safe navigation for users by ensuring minimum waterway requirements and levels of service and by preventing the deterioration of these minimum requirements or any of its defined underlying criteria (Good Navigation Status).</p>	<p>2. Member States shall ensure that the inland waterway network, including connections referred to in Article 20(1), point (e), is maintained to enable efficient, reliable and safe navigation for users by ensuring minimum waterway requirements and by preventing. Member States shall prevent the deterioration of these minimum requirements or any of its defined underlying criteria and of the status of the inland waterway network which exceeds these minimum requirements at the date of entry into force of this Regulation (Good Navigation Status).</p>

3. Member States shall in particular ensure that

(a) Rivers, canals, lakes inland ports and their access routes provide a navigable channel depth of at least 2.5 m and a minimum height under non-openable bridges of at least 5.25 m at defined reference water levels, which are exceeded at a defined number of days per year on a statistical average.

The reference water levels shall be established on the basis of the number of days per year on which the actual water level exceeded the specified reference water level. The Commission shall adopt implementing acts specifying the reference water levels referred to in the previous subparagraph per river basin. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 59(3).

5. The Commission shall adopt implementing acts, setting out requirements complementing the minimum requirements established in accordance with paragraph (3) point (a), second subparagraph, per river basin.

6. The Commission shall ensure a coherent approach on the application of the good navigation status in the Union and may adopt guidelines thereto. When establishing minimum requirements for

3. Member States shall in particular ensure that **by 2030**

(a) Rivers, canals, lakes inland ports and their access routes provide a navigable channel depth of at least 2.5 m and a minimum height under non-openable bridges of at least 5.25 m at defined reference water levels, which are exceeded at a defined number of days per year on a statistical average.

(new) Member States – within the corridor approach – strive to increase these minimum levels where ever possible in order to reach a higher level of performance of the infrastructure and to realise more ambitious minimum standards, in particular bridge heights to facilitate the increasing container traffic on the European waterways. On new or rebuilt infrastructure the minimum bridge height will be 9.10 m allowing a 4 layer container carriage.

The reference water levels shall be established on the basis of the number of days per year on which the actual water level exceeded the specified reference water level. ~~The Commission shall adopt implementing acts specifying the reference water levels referred to in the previous subparagraph per river basin. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 59(3). The minimum requirements and the reference water levels referred to in the previous subparagraph shall be specified per waterway and where appropriate per waterway section.~~

5. The Commission shall adopt implementing acts **in cooperation with the respective River Commissions**, setting out requirements complementing the minimum requirements established in accordance with paragraph (3) point (a), second subparagraph, per river basin.

The Commission shall ensure a coherent approach on the application of the good navigation status in the Union and may

<p>paragraphs € and (f), the Commission shall ensure that the interoperability between river basins is not compromised.</p>	<p>adopt guidelines thereto. When establishing minimum requirements for paragraphs € and (f), the Commission shall ensure that the interoperability between river basins corridors is not compromised.</p>
---	--

Justification:

1. To avoid any misinterpretation the year 2030 by when measures need to be realised should be mentioned here.
2. We consider the proposed minimum parameters for the bridges of at least 5.25 m and for the navigable channel depth for rivers and canals of 2.50 m as very unambitious in view of the intended increase of the modal share and thus as an absolute minimum. We advocate to lift these minimum standards within the corridor approach to more ambitious parameters enabling the sector to materialise the modal shift goal. As an example of a huge modal shift potential we refer to the increasing share of hinterland container transports which are supposed to substantially grow in the coming years. Where the current minimum bridge height is set at 5.25, allowing only 2 layers of containers in vessels, a fit for future infrastructure needs to meet at least 3 and preferably a 4 layers infrastructure, meaning 7.00 m and 9.10 m. The 4 layers infrastructure certainly should be the standard for new infrastructure
3. In view of the reliability of the sector there is a clear need to restrict the number of days on which the reference water levels may be undercut to a minimum. The Commission implementing acts should be adopted, per river basin, in cooperation with the respective River Commissions, taking account of the experience gathered by these commissions. This requires a strong governance structure based on clearly defined KPI's where we support a strong role of the very River Commissions.

We propose to remove any reference to river basins: this term which relates to the Water Framework Directive is confusing for TEN-T and waterways for several reasons/

- River basins are broader, whereas TEN-T only concerns the navigable parts;
 - Canals do not fit in this definitions and it is unclear how to categorise canals that connect river basins;
 - Some basins are connected and form one navigation area, it does not make sense to split these up.
1. We propose that exemptions acts for waterways or where appropriate for waterway sections are laid down in the implementing act of the European Transport Corridor where the waterways geographically belong to. This will reduce the administrative burden of elaborating an implementing act per exemption and strengthen the corridor approach proposed by this Regulation



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). www.ebu-uenf.org

ESO

The European Skippers Organisation is the voice of the independent Inland Waterway Transport entrepreneurs. ESO looks after the interests of the barge owners at European level with representatives from six European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, UK and Poland) www.eso-ueb.org

European IWT platform

As an executive body of EBU and ESO, the European IWT platform aims at a stronger positioning of Inland Navigation in European and national transport policies by an intensified contribution to various governing bodies, working parties and standard setting committees like CESNI and ADN www.inlandwaterwaytransport.eu