

## Press release

### LOW WATER SITUATION ON EUROPEAN WATERWAYS CALLS FOR URGENT INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

**Since a couple of weeks Europe is suffering from a heat wave leading to a.o. dramatically low water levels on European waterways. The Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) sector is committed to continue its services and to serve the European society and industry even under these very difficult circumstances.**

**The important role of IWT has become even more obvious in the past weeks. Where it is expected to substantially increase its modal share in the future, lack of investments of infrastructure currently undermine the reliability of IWT. EBU repeatedly called for proper maintenance of the waterway infrastructure and removal of bottlenecks which would have avoided these situations.**

The water levels on major free flowing European rivers have drastically fallen during the past weeks.

On the Rhine, the water level at the important stretch at Kaub meanwhile is dramatically low reaching a critical level. The low water situation imposes huge challenges on the sector. At the current level vessels only can carry less than a quarter of their normal capacity. Given the already high demand for vessel capacity during the last months for all kind of materials, in particular also in support of the grain transports from Ukraine, this leads to a shortage of available capacity on the market.

As of the weekend an increase of water is expected in the river Rhine. According to experience, after an intense rain period the water level normally recovers within a couple of days.

On the Danube Inland Waterway Transport over the past weeks was confronted with a dramatically low water level also due to a lack of maintenance of the waterway by the Bulgarian authorities. This even caused a blockade of many vessels during a couple of weeks at the beginning of July. The local navigation stop reverberated across the entire multimodal Danube transport corridor. Such situations have far reaching consequences for the EU industry structurally relying on waterway transport (agricultural - Eastern European cereals are in full harvest period, fertilizers transported downstream the Danube for the use in the region and for export to the countries in the past depending on importing Ukrainian foodstuff, steel sector - upstream steel plants in other EU countries are depending on supplies of raw materials, power plants in Serbia depending on downstream supplies). This local navigation stop also had a severe negative impact on shipping UA grain into the EU via the Danube, at a moment where waterway transport was the only mode to offer the capacity to move large volumes.

## Press release

### **IWT fulfilling its role even under difficult circumstances**

Notwithstanding these circumstances, the IWT sector is undertaking every effort to serve its clients and to supply the European society and industry with essential goods and raw materials. „The current situation once again proves the important role, Inland Waterway Transport is playing as part of the supply chain. EBU therefore continues to call upon the national authorities to undertake all necessary efforts to guarantee an unhindered passage of vessels on all major European waterways. Obviously, the lack of investment in waterway infrastructure in the past years has led to the current situation. A promoted increase of modal share of IWT goes hand in hand with commitment from the authorities, which currently is lacking”, Theresia Hacksteiner, Secretary General of EBU emphasises.

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. However, due to a lack of investment in waterway infrastructure and neglected maintenance situations of low water periods are emerging more frequently and undermining the reliability of the IWT sector.

IWT is expected to substantially increase its modal share. In the past years this could not be materialised due to neglected waterway infrastructure maintenance and lack of investment. EBU therefore calls upon all involved parties, in particular the Member States with relevant waterway infrastructure to take their responsibility in fulfilling their duties. It also calls upon the European Commission and the River Commissions to take a strong coordinating role in this process.

18.08.2022

**Press contact:**

Theresia Hacksteiner  
Secretary General EBU

T: +31 653336366

[t.hacksteiner@ebu-uenf.org](mailto:t.hacksteiner@ebu-uenf.org)

Brussels Avenue Grandchamp 148, 1150 Brussels, Belgium  
Corresponding address Handelsplein 92, 3071 PR Rotterdam, The Netherlands

T. +31 (0)6 53 33 63 66 E. [info@ebu-uenf.org](mailto:info@ebu-uenf.org) I. [www.ebu-uenf.org](http://www.ebu-uenf.org)  
IBAN NL ABNA 062.35.96.520 Transparency ID number 36944616803-45



## Press release

### **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](http://www.ebu-uenf.org)

Brussels Avenue Grandchamp 148, 1150 Brussels. Belgium  
Corresponding address Handelsplein 92, 3071 PR Rotterdam. The Netherlands

T. +31 (0)6 53 33 63 66 E. [info@ebu-uenf.org](mailto:info@ebu-uenf.org) I. [www.ebu-uenf.org](http://www.ebu-uenf.org)  
IBAN NL ABNA 062.35.96.520 Transparency ID number 36944616803-45