

The European Barge Union (EBU) Event “ROLE OF INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT (IWT) IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EU’S MOBILITY AND SUPPLY POLICY”

17 November 2022, 14:00 – 19:00

The European Barge Union (EBU) welcomed about 100 participants, keynote speakers, and panellists for intensive and enriching discussions on the challenges and further development opportunities of the inland waterway transport (IWT) sector in the EU with a particular focus on modal shift & urgent need for infrastructure investment and fleet innovation towards energy transition.

The EBU gathered on 17 November 2022 exceptional speakers and panellists from European and international institutions and industry experts to express their positions and propel the main open questions for IWT. The keynote speakers Václav Bernard (Deputy Minister of Transport, Czech Ministry of Transport), Henrik Hololei (Director General European Commission DG MOVE), Dominique Riquet (MEP TRAN committee and co-rapporteur “TEN-T revision”), and Philippe Grulois (President EBU) underlined the importance of IWT¹ in achieving the objectives set up by the Green Deal and its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy.

KEYNOTES

[Mr. Bernard](#) in his [keynote speech](#) pointed to the growing importance of inland waterways transport throughout the years - not only because of its economy of scale but also because of its significant role in decarbonising transport, and recently also in transporting grain and raw materials from Ukraine as part of the Solidarity Lanes. To support the sector he announced the preparation of the Council on the NAIADES III Action Plan Conclusions for formal adoption by ministers of transport at the Transport Council on December 5.

Furthermore, he referred to the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive, which is part of the Fit for 55 package. This framework, together with other proposals in the package, will contribute to achieving the key EU objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The draft which is intensively discussed under the Czech Presidency envisages that IWT fuels will not be taxed in the first five years after its entry into force, and subsequently, they will be taxed at a low rate. He expects a policy debate on outstanding issues at the end of our Presidency.

Also, [Mr. Hololei](#) emphasised in [his speech](#) the IWT’s role at the heart of the Solidarity Lanes. The Danube route accounts for more than 50% of Ukrainian grain exports through the Solidarity Lanes, and a significant share of Ukrainian imports, in particular energy. They will be turned into permanent transport and trade corridors between Ukraine and the EU and they are transport’s way of helping Ukraine move closer to the EU’s single market. Eventually, they will become the backbone of a new grid of links between Ukraine and the rest of our European family, which is largely thanks to the tremendous response of the IWT sector. As one of the cleanest transport modes, inland waterway transport is at the heart of the Commission’s Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. In

¹ With over 40,000 km of navigable waterways and 250 inland ports, IWT currently carries some 550 million tonnes of goods per year and is of increasing importance in the field of cruising and passenger transport.

fact, it has set an ambitious milestone for the sector: inland waterway transport and short-sea shipping should increase by 25% by 2030 and by 50% until 2050. To realise this goal, the Commission has realised a number of legislative proposals, which are underway to be adopted by Council and Parliament.

[Mr. Riquet](#) in his [key note](#) called for higher political attention for the IWT sector. As co-rapporteur on the TEN-T file in EP's TRAN committee he is committed to support the sector by setting the right framework conditions. In their report the co-rapporteurs point to some critical shortcomings which require specific attention in terms of an increased ambition for standards and requirements, maintenance, and governance.

EBU's President Philippe Grulois welcomed in [his speech](#) the addresses and expressions of support by the representatives of the European institutions. He emphasised that IWT has an extensive potential to contribute to the EU policies by absorbing higher volumes on the European waterways. However, *"a number of preconditions need to be met from our perspective to fully materialise the potential of the sector to the benefit of society and economy."* underlined Dr Grulois.

IWT needs a reliable, safe, cost-effective, and climate-resilient **infrastructure network**. To achieve this goal, several steps should be undertaken. There is a clear need for more ambitious targets for the infrastructure standards and requirements for enabling further modal shift including urgent investment in waterway infrastructure by the Member States and supplementary funding by the Common European Framework.

The President welcomed the announcement of Council Conclusions on NAIADES III by the Czech Presidency, emphasising the importance to encourage Member States to elaborate and implement long-term strategies.

In view of the **revision of the TEN-T regulation**, the EBU considers the proposed minimum parameters as very unambitious and as such as an absolute minimum. EBU advocates to lift these minimum standards within the corridor approach to more ambitious parameters enabling the sector to materialise the modal shift goal. Given the level of ambition the President applauded the TEN-T rapporteurs in the Parliament, who acknowledged the need for an increased ambition for standards and requirements and to include maintenance in the scope of the revised regulation, a particular interest of EBU.

To support the further facilitation of the IWT integration in the **multimodal transport** schemes EBU called on the Commission

- to expire the Consortia Block Exemption Regulation (CBER). From the perspective of the Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) sector, this exemption led a.o. to a disturbance of container handling in the hinterland connection imposing high additional costs on the sector and leading to a reverse modal shift **and**
- to revise the Combined Transport Directive (CTD) and create a level of the playing field in terms of support measures and benefits, which currently are granted to the road/rail leg mainly.

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PANELS

[Theresia Hacksteiner](#), Secretary General of the EBU, chaired 2 panels dedicated to the main topics of the event.

1st Panel: MODAL SHIFT & URGENT NEED FOR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

She discussed the need for a **reliable, safe, cost-effective and climate-resilient infrastructure network** with important stakeholders and representatives of the institutions. With over 40,000 km of navigable waterways and 250 inland ports, IWT 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 depend on a seamless supply of their goods via waterways, while tourism on waterways is a major pillar of European tourism.

Low water situation on free-flowing rivers in Europe

Melting glaciers and less snow can lead to more often low-water situations in the Rhine from Basel to the North Sea - this is shown by the results of a recently completed research project commissioned by the transnational Commission on the Hydrology of the Rhine (CHR*). From the CHR's point of view, the new findings confirm the importance of a climate-resilient further adapt water management in the Rhine catchment.

The overall financial impact of the low water on the Rhine in 2018 for German and Dutch barge owners, shippers, and society was almost 2.7 billion euros.

On the Danube, navigation was heavily hindered and even blocked in the joint Bulgarian/Romanian stretch in July where hardly any ship could pass during a couple of weeks. This local navigation stop was reverberating across the entire multimodal Danube transport corridor. It had far-reaching consequences for the EU industry structurally relying on waterway transport and deters other interested industries to choose sustainable waterway transport which the EU Green Deal attempts to promote in order to achieve the EU climate targets.

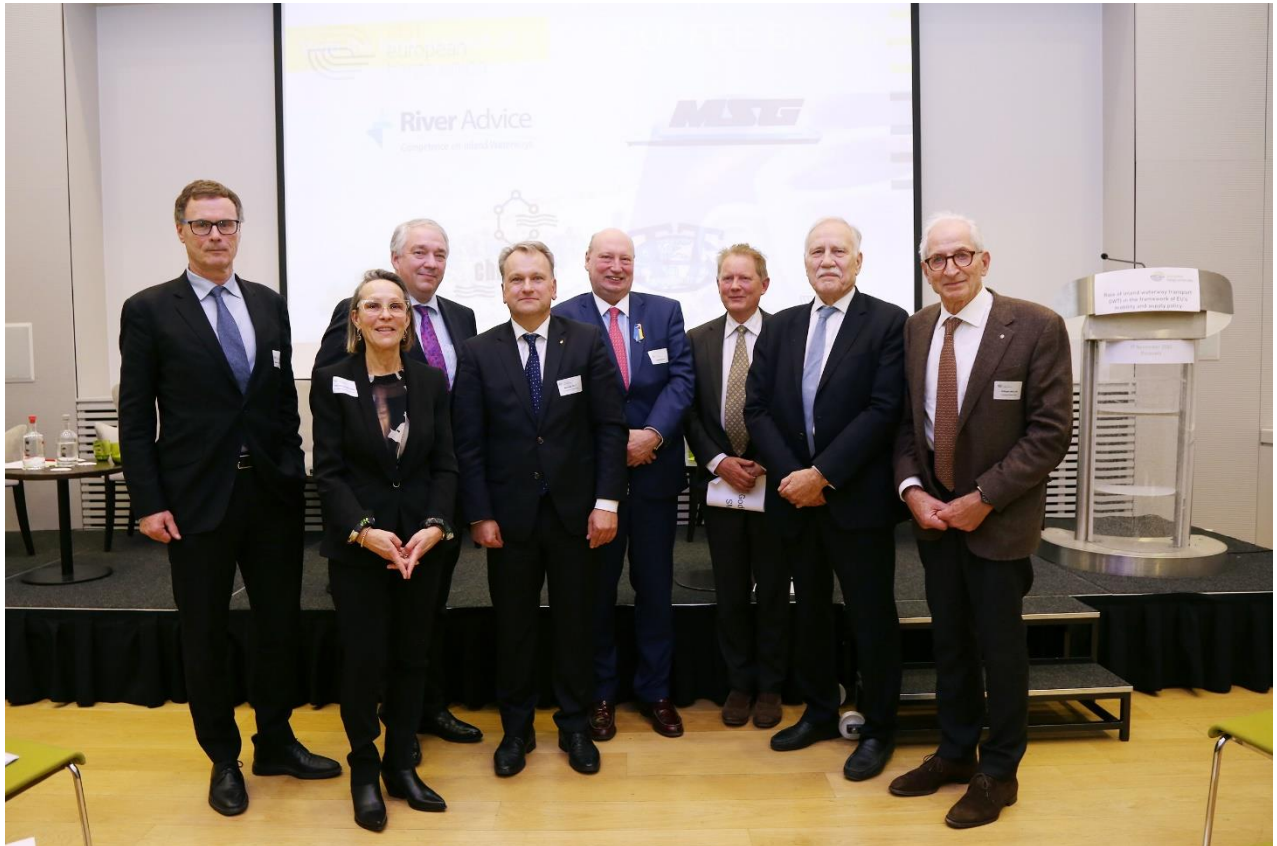
The situation on the river Elbe is comparable. Since many years the decreasing water level endangers the navigation on this important river due to a lack of maintenance and building of locks which would allow the necessary transport to be carried out on the waterway.

These situations were not due to any unfortunate interplay of circumstances or unfavorable discharge conditions, but the omission of the involved member states to undertake the necessary maintenance measures to ensure safe navigation.

The panel members agreed in their conclusion that much more political attention and timely maintenance of the infrastructure is needed to materialize the modal shift goal of the EU policy. Investment in waterways is well-spent money and has a very high return on investment from economical and ecological perspectives.

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From left to right: Pawel Wojciechowksi (Coordinator Rhine Alpine TEN-T corridor), Theresia Hacksteiner (Secretary General EBU), Martin Staats (Managing Director MSG eG and President Bundesverband der Deutschen Binnenschifffahrt eV), Manfred Seitz (Director of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission), Henrik Hololei (Director General European Commission DG MOVE), Godfried Smit (Secretary General European Shippers Council ESC), Dominique Riquet (MEP TRAN committee and co-rapporteur “TEN-T revision”), and Philippe Grulois (President EBU).

2nd Panel: FLEET INNOVATION TOWARDS ENERGY TRANSITION

Conversion of the IWT fleet to zero emission is a challenging task as inland ships have extremely long life-cycles. To accelerate the development and deployment of greening solutions in IWT and thus to create a win-win situation for both society and industry the sector calls for a coherent approach of measures.

Meanwhile front runners in the sector already are investigating and investing in greening solutions from different perspectives and with different approaches. As an example, [Ard-Jan Kooren](#), President & CEO KOTUG INTERNATIONAL B.V., demonstrated in [his presentation](#) the E-Pusher – as a Gamechanger for inland Shipping.

[Daniela Rosca](#), Head of Unit Ports and Inland Navigation, European Commission DG MOVE, pointed to the concrete actions meanwhile undertaken under the NIADES III program, which are

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supposed to support the sector on this transition pathway and the realisation of the modal shift towards IWT.

[Lucia Luijten](#), Secretary General of the CCNR, briefly introduced in her [presentation](#) the results of its Studies on Financing the energy transition in Inland Waterway Transport and the corresponding roadmap to reduce emissions in inland navigation. She emphasised that there is “no size fits all” and pointed to two transition pathways (conservative / innovative) for the fleet (new and existing vessels). Given the complexity of the topic a number of measures will be necessary to cope with the challenges.

The study calculated the costs of the energy transition – depending on a conservative or innovative pathway – between 2,6 and 7,8 bn EURO. For the time being, there is no positive business case to justify the investment decisions by shipowners/operators in technologies contributing to zero emissions.

Currently, there are no dedicated funding for the deployment of greening of the sector at EU level, except national funding programs in some member states.

[Didier Leandri](#), President Entreprises fluviales de France E2F Paris and Vice-President EBU, made it very clear, that IWT is not a problem as regard to climate change but part of the solution. Four times more performant than road transport in terms of energy consumption, IWT is the better alternative and friendly transport solution. He insisted on the notion that transition towards carbon neutrality, which is clearly an objective of the inland navigation sector, can only be achieved in the medium or long term.

However, the sector needs to make progress today in reducing emissions. Doing so is first and foremost being responsible, but it is also about aligning ourselves with our customers' expectations and providing solid foundations for our growth ambition.

He pointed to the very high investment needed, despite the willingness of our members to make those changes. Given the very low-price elasticity in the market, economic neutrality is required and consequently a sector contribution in that field cannot be expected as a solution.

To stay in line with this objective, the idea of having a one-stop shop for financial engineering is one of the solutions, with a mix of funding and financing.

Olympic games 2024 in Paris on water

He concluded by inviting the audience to the opening of the Olympics on July 26, 2024 in Paris which will take place from inland vessels on the river Seine.



From left to right: Didier Leandri (President Entreprises fluviales de France E2F Paris, Vice-President EBU), Theresia Hacksteiner (Secretary General EBU), Lucia Luijten (Secretary General Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine), Ard-Jan Kooren (President & CEO Kotug International B.V), Daniela Rosca (Head of Unit Ports and Inland Navigation, European Commission DG Move), and Philippe Grulois (President EBU).

The Secretary General closed the session by concluding that IWT is characterised by its energy efficiency, safety, and sustainability compared to other modes of transport. To realise the transition towards zero emission funding and regulatory support is needed as **IWT is an enabler to absorb much higher volumes and to deliver the ambitions of the EU Green Deal.**

Brussels, 23 November 2022

About 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

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