

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EUROPEAN INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT (IWT) PLATFORM

EBU AND ESO DECIDE TO INSTITUTIONALISE THEIR COOPERATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE SECTOR

The European inland navigation organisations, EBU and ESO, which represent barge owners and operators at Union level, decided to strengthen the representation of the inland navigation sector at Union level by closer coordination and cooperation. In order to accomplish this aim, they have established the European Inland Waterway Transport Platform, financed by means of the reserve fund.

Overall objectives

The common objective of both associations is i.a. to represent the interests of inland waterway transport at European level and to strengthen the position of the sector. They deal with all the subjects that concern and support the development of the carriage of cargo and passengers by inland navigation vessels and to increase its share in the overall volume of European transportation.

This includes *inter alia* the following tasks:

- following and contributing to the development of the European transport and inland navigation policy;
- establishing a level playing field within freight and passenger transport in Europe
- safeguarding the sector's labour market position by establishing attractive working and living conditions through dialogue with its social partners
- supporting education and training in order to increase safety and sustainability, while underpinning labour mobility and widening the career perspectives in the sector
- promoting greening and innovation in the field of inland waterway transport
- establishing and maintaining favourable infrastructure conditions

These tasks are accomplished in close cooperation with all decision-making bodies and authorities that decide the general conditions under which inland shipping carries out her activities.

These overall objectives are closely linked to the various European and international policies in the relevant fields.

With the establishment of the European Inland Waterway Transport platform EBU and ESO aim to strengthen and improve the positioning of the IWT sector. The IWT platform will be coordinated and managed by the two organisations. **The combined expertise in the joint platform acts as a catalyst in elaborating strategies in the key areas of the future of IWT, such as “Greening and Innovation”, “Sustainability”, “Education and Training”, “The setting of Technical standards” and “Infrastructure”.**

New dimension of expertise

While the two organisations EBU and ESO will remain independent, the joint platform is intended to add **a new dimension of expertise to the benefit of not only their own members but also to the entire inland navigation community including the institutional bodies which deal with inland navigation.** Some concrete examples are expert contributions at a.o. the CESNI working groups in different areas, EC expert groups, UNECE Working Parties and CDNI. In order to accomplish these expert contributions, the organisations have established joint working committees (social & education, innovation & greening, safety & environment, nautical-technical and infrastructure), bringing the expertise together in the various areas and contributing to the various decision making bodies in a joint and coherent way.

In line with the goals of the founding organisations the platform will focus on a number of main areas to contribute to the sector’s needs, mainly

- encouraging innovation in vessels and their adaptation to technical progress as regards the environment, including all sustainability goals at Union level
- increasing the attractiveness of the sector by offering increased career perspectives to the youth and encouraging young trainees and other maritime workers from outside the sector by training and education

- encouraging ways of leveraging the use of the reserve funds in conjunction with available financial and funding instruments, including Horizon Europe and CEF and with financing instruments from the European Investment Bank.
- Improving infrastructure in order to guarantee well maintained waterways benefitting European industry and economy

Inland waterway transport is the key to mitigate the environmental impact of transport and to contribute to European and international policy goals

COP 21, the European Union's environmental and sustainability goals, the Commission's recent communication "A clean Planet for all", climate change, and the human and social agenda are a number of developments which challenge the transport sector. Inland waterway transport is known for its positive sustainability record in various areas. In the background of the above developments the work of the platform will focus strongly on these challenges.

Conclusion

All in all, there are a huge number of areas in which additional expertise will be shared with policy and decision makers at EU and international level. Through the platform the sector will closely cooperate with the involved member states in order to align the different policies. The establishment of the IWT platform will contribute to both discussions and the decision making processes within the relevant bodies of the European Commission, the river commissions and UNECE.

Last December the Ministers of Transport adopted conclusions to exploit Inland Waterway Transport to its full potential. In these conclusions the Ministers acknowledged the significant contribution that this efficient, safe and sustainable mode of transport can make towards mitigating the negative effects of the transport sector as a whole. The conclusions stress the need for further efforts to exploit the full potential of inland waterway transport, and called on the Commission to develop a

follow-up programme to NAIADES II. This should be launched by the end of 2020 which we fully support.

We look forward to strongly cooperate with all involved institutions and are honored to welcome our keynote speaker, Director General at the European Commission DG MOVE, Henrik Hololei, who has strongly supported us in the past years on our path towards the establishment of this platform.

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