



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on the promotion of inland waterway transport

**2735th TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS and ENERGY Council meeting
Luxembourg, 8-9 June 2006**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

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1. Having regard to the White Paper "European Transport Policy for 2010: time to decide";
2. Considering the importance of transport for the development of the European economy and the need of raising the sustainability of the European transport system;
3. Recognising the multi-purpose use of waterways and the potential contribution that inland waterway transport can make to diminishing unwanted external effects of transport, for instance through a more efficient use of energy and less emission of pollutants into the atmosphere, as well as through safer freight transport operations and reduced congestion on roads;
4. Recognising the availability of free capacity on inland waterways, the position of inland waterway transport both in its own right and as part of multi-modal chains in the Trans-European Transport Networks and the possibility to increase inland waterway transport with relatively low infrastructure costs;
5. Acknowledging that if inland waterway transport is to thrive, that progress needs to be commercially driven and that apart from infrastructure, industry has the primary responsibility for investment in and development of this sector.

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6. WELCOMES the Communication of the Commission on the promotion of inland waterway transport "NAIADES" - "An integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport".
7. CONSIDERS that the approach presented in this European Action Programme offers a comprehensive framework for effective inland waterway transport policies both at European and national level.
8. EMPHASISES that for exploiting the full potential of inland waterway transport efforts in concerted action are called for both by private stakeholders - including the inland navigation industry, the social partners and the shippers - and by public stakeholders at all appropriate levels - international, European Community, river commissions, national and regional - each according to its competencies.
9. AGREES to the strategic areas for action distinguished in the Commission's Communication:
 - to create favourable conditions for services by fostering entrepreneurship and by improving the administrative and regulatory framework in order to attract new markets;
 - to stimulate fleet modernisation and innovation, thus improving the logistics efficiency as well as the environmental and the safety performance of inland waterway transport;
 - to promote jobs and skills by attracting workforce and by investing in human capital;
 - to improve image and co-operation by promoting inland waterway transport as a successful partner in business by setting up and expanding the European inland waterway transport promotion and development network and by monitoring the trends and developments within the inland waterway transport market;
 - to provide adequate infrastructure by improving the multi-modal network and by implementing River Information Services on those inland waterways within the scope of Directive 2005/44/EC.
10. NOTES the contributions of the Commission to the discussion on the institutional framework for inland waterway transport and STRESSES the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders in future considerations. The guiding principles for such institutional considerations will be to demonstrate the added value of proposed institutional changes, to work on the basis of current competencies of all relevant stakeholders, to make use of the expertise of inter-governmental organizations, to allow the integration of non-EU riparian states of European inland waterways, to ensure utmost efficiency in the use of resources and to avoid additional bureaucracy; UNDERLINES without prejudice to a possible future decision on the institutional framework, the positive effects of enhanced cooperation between the European Commission and the river commissions within the existing institutional framework.
11. INVITES THE COMMISSION to elaborate, on the basis of consultations with all relevant stakeholders and of appropriate impact assessments and taking due account of the principle of subsidiarity, detailed proposals on the recommendations included in the Commission's Communication, in particular:

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- to provide a source of funding information such as a funding handbook containing a repertory of European, national and regional aid instruments relevant for inland waterway transport;
- to submit a proposal for a European Inland Waterway Transport Innovation Fund. This Fund should aim at concepts and technologies to raise logistics efficiency as well as environmental and safety performance and be coordinated with the national programmes of Member States.
- to develop, in consultation with the Member States and the inland navigation industry, guidelines on State aid to inland waterway transport that would facilitate the adoption of national schemes promoting access to finance for inland waterway transport companies; these national schemes could in particular enable new enterprises, new entrepreneurs and other newcomers to the sector to become active in inland waterways transport and stimulate investments in fleet modernisation and in innovation, in safety and in the opening up of new market segments; if appropriate, the Commission should adopt *de minimis* rules duly taking into account the necessities of the inland navigation sector;
- to screen for barriers which hamper the development of European inland navigation, thereby taking into account the experience of the industry and the work already undertaken by the UNECE, in particular with regard to existing and new European and national legislation, as well as administrative formalities and documentation, and to examine potential solutions and best practices;
- to further pursue appropriate legislative harmonisation as identified in the European Action Programme, in particular in the fields of technical requirements for inland navigation vessels, the transport of dangerous goods, manning requirements, and boat master certificates, while taking account of the different characteristics of the national waterways of Member States and of the fact whether those waterways are linked to waterways of other Member States;
- to create, in co-operation with national educational institutions, a common framework for education and training standards and to support specific training programmes in the field of inland waterway transport as well as in the field of logistics, with an emphasis on the integration of inland navigation into multimodal supply chains;
- to define strategic inland waterway transport research and development in the Seventh Framework Programme on Research and Development, in particular with a view to addressing information and communication technologies, the vessel design and its environmental performance and equipment, transshipment operations as well as the human factor;
- to facilitate access of the inland navigation industry to Community aid programmes, especially attracting new enterprises, fully taking into account the industry's specific SME character in the application and planning of these programmes;
- to support existing and new promotion centres, where appropriate in cooperation between the public and the private sector, to promote the use of inland waterway transport among potential users;
- to follow developments in inland waterway transport market and to collect and disseminate factual data and information on inland navigation and on its potential;

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- to give appropriate weight to inland waterway projects within the framework of TEN-T and, after evaluation of the experience with existing coordinators, to consider the designation of a European coordinator to facilitate the implementation of the inland waterway priority projects No 18 and No 30;
 - to insert RIS as part of the Multi-annual Indicative Programme of TEN-T;
 - to assure the relative advantage of inland navigation as regards impact on the environment and transport safety also in the future. This can be achieved inter alia through improvements in the environmental and safety legislation, in particular with regard to fuel quality and engine emissions. For inland navigation to keep its relative advantage it is also important to involve all relevant stakeholders in the development of procedures for inland waterway projects, in particular the national waterways administrations, river commissions and inter-governmental organisations for the protection of the rivers.
 - to take the needs of inland waterway transport constantly into consideration, both in the application and planning of Community actions and in regional cooperation with relevant third countries.
12. NOTES the intention of the Commission to create, in cooperation with Member States, a non-binding European Development Plan for improvement and maintenance of inland waterway infrastructures, including the access to multi-modal transshipment facilities.
13. INVITES THE COMMISSION to submit progress reports – partly on the basis of data transmitted by the Member States and the industry – at two-yearly intervals, evaluating the results of the actions undertaken in order to promote inland waterway transport.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES

14. In the light of the European Action Programme and taking due account of the principle of subsidiarity:
- to further develop national policies to stimulate inland waterway transport, taking into account the European Action Programme, and to encourage regional, local and port authorities and industries to do likewise;
 - to strive for providing sufficient financial resources and incentives for the targeted implementation of the proposed measures, in particular through cost-effective national schemes for the support of inland navigation;
 - to establish promotion centres for inland waterway transport and to provide appropriate political, practical and financial support from administrations and the inland navigation sector to safeguard support services on a continuous basis;
 - to appoint national focal points according to the objectives of the European Action Programme in order to provide advice concerning legal requirements and administrative procedures;

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- to contribute to the creation of a common framework for education and training standards, both regarding personnel on board - in particular focusing on managerial, technological, linguistic and nautical knowledge - as well as regarding the logistic chain through the integration of knowledge on inland navigation in logistics education programmes;
- to screen national and regional legislation for administrative and procedural requirements, which may constitute an unnecessary and inappropriate burden for the development of inland waterway transport;
- to develop spatial planning and economic policies at federal, regional and local levels to encourage waterside sites for logistics purposes;
- to actively pursue inland waterway transport and infrastructure projects that promote viable inland waterway transport services, including those projects interlinking Member States and supported by Community programmes such as TEN-T;
- to consider how national programmes and projects can contribute to the European Development Plan for improvement and maintenance of inland waterway infrastructure the Commission intends to create;
- to contribute to the development of procedures for a structured dialogue with all involved stakeholders on environmental issues concerning inland waterway infrastructure projects;
- to communicate to the Commission the measures adopted to implement the European Action Programme.

INVITES THE INLAND NAVIGATION INDUSTRY

15. to step up its efforts to further develop inland waterway transport on the basis of the sector's spirit of entrepreneurship;
16. to actively pursue and contribute to the relevant measures of the European Action programme, in particular:
 - by modernising the inland navigation fleet,
 - by investigating new market opportunities,
 - by improving the logistics efficiency, safety and environmental performance of inland waterway transport,
 - by investing in human capital and improving working and social conditions, and
 - by promoting inland navigation as a valuable partner in business.

INVITES ALL OTHER HOLDERS

17. to actively contribute to the measures on promoting inland waterway transport according to their respective competences."

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