

Keynote speech at the EBU Seminar

Brussels, 18 March 2010

"Future of transport

The Role of Inland Navigation within the new White
Paper"

I am pleased to be here at this seminar to speak about the EU transport policy and the role of inland waterway transport. In the past, transports by rivers have always played a tremendous role for the mobility of goods and people. Also today, our transport system cannot be imagined without inland waterway transport.

Europe 2020 Strategy

The Commission has just now presented its proposal for a strategy for Europe 2020 which, I am happy to be able say, recognises the particular enabling role of transport policy for the European economy.

We must move out of the current economic crisis which has also hit the transport sector in a drastic way. We must get back on track, sustain growth and jobs by focusing our action on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

White Paper

As the 10-year period covered by the 2001 White Paper on Transport comes to an end, the Commission is preparing a new long-term strategy for the future of transport and mobility. Building on comprehensive internal and external consultation, we are now preparing **the new White Paper** which will set the policy objectives for the incoming 10 years. The White Paper is scheduled for adoption at the end of 2010.

It is too early to go into details, but I would like to stress already now, that my attention will focus on horizontal areas: a competitive, innovative and environmentally friendly industry, the removal of bottlenecks and remaining barriers to transport and looking at people: passengers, clients, transport professionals. In the light of foreseeable limitations of public funding, we need to reflect on a **more effective and comprehensive funding structure**, possibly taking the form of a European Transport Fund.

The era of cheap oil is coming to an end, creating the need to devise policy solutions aimed at **reducing the dependency of transport on fossil fuels**. To meet this objective and to respect the Commission's commitment to fight climate change, our aim is to construct policy in such a way that **the decarbonisation process does not negatively affect the achievements in European mobility**. We need efficiency gains and technological breakthroughs. Efficiency can be increased through better integration of the modes (co-modality) and optimising the functioning of each single mode.

Better integration of the modes

Transport is a network industry and as such, it is shaped by infrastructure. The response to the challenges ahead is using at best the strength of each mode.

Ideally, **railways and inland waterways should increasingly be used for long-distance transport**, especially of heavy and bulky cargo, while road should be used for shorter distances and to complement rail and inland waterways on the "last mile".

This vision can be realised if networks are designed to allow **modal integration**. The infrastructure must be developed together with the intermodal connections along the entire logistics chain as their availability, quality and capacity have an impact on the transport system and traffic flows.

This is the idea behind the revision of the TEN-T guidelines which is currently in process.

Already current guidelines foresee the establishment of **a single, multimodal network** as the ultimate policy objective.

The development of **intermodal platforms** with increased use of modern **ICT solutions** will provide the necessary infrastructure for seamless transshipment of cargo and exchange of passengers. **E-freight**, which is the European project for paperless exchange of information on transported cargo, and **integrated ticketing**, will increase the transparency and reduce the costs of co-modal transport. All this should create alternatives to current practices mainly axed on road.

MORE EFFICIENT MARKET FOR TRANSPORT

Wide scaled deployment of ITS solutions will increase overall efficiency and capacity within and across transport modes. The **removal of administrative barriers** in a European Maritime Transport Space without Barriers will increase the efficiency of short sea shipping. Finally, the construction of lacking connections and the **removal of bottlenecks** can increase the attractiveness of railways and inland waterways and facilitate their integration into the single multimodal network.

Infrastructure must be exploited efficiently and more **competition and market opening** should improve the quality of the service.

PEOPLE

In order to attract passengers to more sustainable modes of transport, we need to enhance the level of the services they offer. This is the reason why **safety, security and passengers' rights** will also be high on my agenda.

We also need to address the rights of the workers, who should not become the victims of the changes that the transport sector will have to go through in the years to come. In the inland waterway transport sector, the sectoral Social Dialogue is dealing with specific working time arrangements and the professional profile of crews. However, a lot remains to be done to enhance working conditions and training of workers in all modes of transport.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that inland waterway transport significantly contributes to our transport policy goals. I do not need to repeat here with you the assets of inland waterway transport as a cost- and energy-efficient, environmentally friendly and safe transport mode which, in addition, has still huge free capacities.

Nonetheless, we have to admit that despite all agreement on its qualities, the use of inland waterway transport remains far behind its potential and capacities.

The use of a transport mode lies, however, first and foremost with the market actors, in particular the freight forwarding industry. The EU can contribute to a greater use of inland waterways mainly by providing appropriate framework conditions.

The freight forwarder industry should be aware of the advantages of inland waterway transports and the Commission contributes to this, for example, through supporting the development of dedicated promotion and communication strategies.

The introduction of correct pricing of externalities for all transport modes will provide better price signals and help the transport users to make the choice for more environment-friendly modes, such as inland waterway transport.

What is paramount, however, is that inland waterway transport can only realise its potential if the inland waterway infrastructure is properly maintained and functioning. This is in the first place Member States' responsibility. The EU can contribute to the improvement of the waterway network through various programmes, in particular the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), the Regional and Cohesion Funds.

Last but not least, the logistics efficiency of inland waterway transports and their interconnection with the other transport modes need to be improved, e.g. by the further development and deployment of ITS solutions, intermodal transshipment facilities in inland ports and terminals and their *hinterland* connections.

To conclude, I am convinced that inland waterway transport can and should play an important role for sustainable mobility in Europe. It will rightly be a key element in our reflections about the competitive, high performant and environmentally friendly future of transport. In this regard we are looking forward to constructively and openly working together with you, the stakeholders from the sector, the Parliament and Member States.

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