

COMMUNICATION ON MAJOUR TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT AXES TO NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

The European Barge Union EBU represents the interests of barge owners and barge operators of seven European countries. EBU contributes to the debate on European Transport policy in favour of Inland Waterway Transport (IWT). IWT has proved to pay an important contribution to the demands within the European transport policy. Moreover it is able to meet the challenges of competitiveness, security and environment, while at the same time offering capacities in terms of infrastructure and fleet.

Major axes

As economic growth and goods transport go hand in hand the enlargement of the European Union and increased economic developments with neighbouring countries will lead to an unavoidable shift of emphasis and concentration on the networks which link up with these states. To address sustainability, priority has to be given to IWT and intermodality.

European priorities targeted by focusing on investments on 30 priority projects on main transport axes. From IWT's point of view the main transport axe connecting the European Union to the neighbouring countries or broader regions is the **Rhine-South-East axe, including the Danube corridor together with the East-West corridor.**

Although the canals and rivers in northwestern Europe are already being used on a large scale, they still offer much scope for doubling the weight carried. According to recent publications ("The power of Inland navigation, The social relevance of freight transport and inland shipping 2004-2005") the river Rhine can even absorb a sevenfold increase in transport activities. This means that this river can guarantee an unobstructed passage of goods from the north-east via the Danube to the south east.

Mailaddress:

PO Box 23210 • 3001 KE Rotterdam • The Netherlands

Address:

Vasteland 12e • 3011 BL Rotterdam • The Netherlands • T +31 (0)10 4116070 • F +31 (0)10 4129091
Email: info@ebu-uenf.org • Internet: www.ebu-uenf.org

The transport volumes according to the recent PINE-study (“Prospects for Inland Navigation within the Enlarged Europe”, March 2004) have reached a total of nearly 300 m t on the Rhine corridor.

The Danube river, Europe’s second largest river with a navigable length of 2,414 km, itself offers free capacities which can be used as natural existing infrastructure. It has however suffered much from the troubled recent history on the Balkans with traffic being cut off in Serbia during the war. Meanwhile the debris from bridge bombing has been cleared and navigation can return to normal.

The performance by freight transport in the EU-25 in 2002 according to EU-Energy and Transport in figures, Statistical pocketbook 2004, shows an IWT-share of 6,0 %, compared to 72,0 % Road, 16,4 % Rail and 5,6 % Pipeline.

Referring to the recent PINE-study the growth of the European economy will influence the transport development. As according to the forecasts the various parts of industry will develop differently, these developments will influence the market segmentation of IWT. The overall growth until 2020 is intended to ly in between a rise of 100-160 % in export and 50-60 % in import in the EU-25, while in accordance with the forecast in the recent situation the change of the split of goods however will not be significant.

Bottlenecks

From a socio-economic point of view many Inland Waterway Projects deserve support. In terms of sustainability Inland Waterway Transport has proved to pay an important contribution to the demands within the European policy. It is therefore of great importance that the capacities of this mode of transport are used more adequate and as many as bottlenecks in infrastructure are removed. Against this background misunderstandings and differences in interpretation as regards all relevant aspects need to be eliminated.

The water depth on the fairways are by far the most important parameters hindering the economical use of the rivers for inland navigation with bottlenecks along the whole trajects.

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The main objective is the improvement of the navigable depth in order to guarantee an overall minimum waterdepth.

The major bottlenecks on the very corridors are located at

1. South East Corridor: Danube

- Straubing Vilshofen: realisation of a guaranteed minimum navigable depth of 2,50 m
- Wachau
- Vienna Downstream
- Gabčíkovo Budapest

2. East-West Corridor:

- Elbe: realisation of a guaranteed minimum navigable depth of 1,60 m
- Mittellandcanal: regulation and guaranteed waterdepth

Benefits

According to the PINE-study sufficient fairway conditions f.e. on the Upper Danube would have the following benefits:

- savings on investments in the road system
- savings on external costs of transport, such as:
 - reduction of accident cost
 - reduction of congestion costs
 - reduction of CO₂-emissions (Kyoto-objectives)
 - reduction of noise
 - reduction of space consumption

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Financing and co-funding

Under investment in infrastructure of the waterways characterises both the current and the future Member States. Given the scarcity of funds in the national budgets and the actual national infrastructure investment plans this situation seems not improve in the near future.

According to the principle of territory the Members State in the current situation are responsible for public financing and the risks inherent in each project which endangers the listing of major projects of a high European added value.

The idea of differentiating the intervention rates of Community financing according to the benefits going to other countries, in particular the neighbouring countries contributes to strengthen the commitment of the Member States in realising the projects and might support the proposed closer cooperation between countries concerned with the same axis.

Conclusion

The future of Europe lies on the water. Water and waterways play an important role in our society. In the European Union, 50 % of the population lives close to the coast and in the river valleys of the 15 largest European rivers.

The functioning of freight transport depends on an excellent infrastructure. The proper maintenance of the existing waterway infrastructure, the removal of the major bottlenecks and the realization of the missing links is a *conditio sine qua non*. To use the possibilities of waterborne transport the main industrial centers and areas must be linked by waterways.

Brussels, Rotterdam, March 2005

The European Barge Union EBU was founded on 14 December 2001 with seat in Brussels and in Rotterdam.

EBU represents the interest of inland navigation on a pan European level and deals with all questions, arising out of the future development of the inland navigation industry and inland waterway transport.

To realise this aim EBU is active in the field of

- the development of the European transport policy
- the improvement of the economic position of inland navigation
- the structured cooperation with national and international institutions
- the exchange of information and experience between the parties involved

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