

Bruselas, 17 de enero de 2006

La Comisión Europea pone en marcha un ambicioso programa de acción para impulsar el transporte por vías navegables

La Comisión ha propuesto hoy un programa de acción plurianual para fomentar el transporte por vías navegables en Europa. Este tipo de transporte puede contribuir de manera importante a mejorar el sistema de transporte de Europa, que adolece de congestión y retrasos y daña el medio ambiente. El transporte de más mercancías por vías navegables ayudará a resolver los flujos de carga, que no cesan de aumentar. Además, el transporte por vías navegables presenta un gran potencial que debe integrarse plenamente en la cadena de distribución puerta a puerta. El programa de acción aborda cinco elementos fundamentales, a saber: los servicios, la flota, el personal, la imagen y la infraestructura.

El Vicepresidente de la Comisión Europea responsable de los Transportes, Jacques Barrot, ha declarado lo siguiente: «*El plan de acción NAIADES¹ contribuye a la estrategia europea en pro del crecimiento y el empleo. Con una flota de 11 000 buques y de una capacidad equivalente a 10 000 trenes o 440 000 camiones, las vías navegables pueden volver el transporte europeo más eficiente, fiable y respetuoso con el medio ambiente. Europa no puede permitirse dejar sin aprovechar ese potencial*».

El programa de acción se centra en cinco áreas estratégicas:

- 1) creación de condiciones favorables para los servicios y conquista de nuevos mercados;
- 2) estímulo de la modernización e innovación de las flotas;
- 3) atracción de nueva mano de obra y aumento de la inversión en capital humano;
- 4) fomento del transporte por vías navegables mediante una red promocional como coadyuvante al éxito en los negocios, y
- 5) creación de una infraestructura adecuada de vías navegables.

Por último, la Comisión estudia cómo modernizar la reglamentación para hacer frente a los retos futuros.

El calendario de aplicación del plan es el período comprendido entre 2006 y 2013. El programa se dirige a todos los responsables del transporte por vías navegables, el mismo sector, los Estados miembros y la Unión Europea.

Se puede encontrar más información sobre el programa de acción NAIADES en:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/iw/index_en.htm

¹ Inspirándose en las ninfas de agua dulce de la mitología griega (náyades), el programa se denomina «NAIADES», sigla de **N**avigation **A**nd **I**nland **W**aterway **A**ction and **D**evelopment in **E**urope (Programa de Acción y Desarrollo para la Navegación y las Vías Navegables en Europa).

Questions & Answers

1. Why should the European Union do more to increase transport by inland waterways?

Freight transport volumes in Europe are expected to increase by one third until 2015, because of the growing overseas trade and the EU enlargement.

Present patterns of transport growth and its reliance on road transport are increasingly leading to congestion and pollution. If no action is taken, many of these negative impacts of road transport would worsen, with significant economic, environmental and social repercussions.

This is why the EU committed itself to pursue the goal of shifting transport to less energy-intensive, less polluting and safer transport modes. Rail, short sea shipping and above all Inland Waterway Transport (hereafter IWT) which has a major unexploited capacity, are an obvious choice in reaching these targets and handle the constantly growing freight flows.

2. Where does Europe's IWT system currently stand?

While inland shipping's traditional strength lies in the long-distance haulage of bulk transport, since the 1990's it is also successfully entering new markets such as container transport, intermodal transport and short distance traffic. The hinterland transport of maritime containers by inland waterways has prospered in North-Western Europe during the last 10 to 15 years.

In these regions inland shipping in general has conquered a significant modal share. For instance, in the Netherlands IWT presents a modal share of more than 40%. Moreover, between 1997 and 2004 impressive traffic growth rates (in tonne-km) of more than 50% in Belgium and of more than 35% in France have been achieved. These examples show that a pro-active inland waterway policy is an important step towards the improvement of IWT.

Compared to the steady growth of IWT in Western Europe, on the Danube River and other waterways of Central and Eastern Europe, the share of IWT is still significantly smaller. New industrial activities in new Member States and candidate countries are generating demand for containerised transport on a large scale, but this is currently being captured by the road transport sector. At present only 7 to 10% of the Danube's maximum capacity is actually used.

3. What are the main hurdles to the development of IWT?

Inland navigation has experienced some success, but a number of hurdles still have to be overcome if it is to unlock its full potential.

The IWT sector is traditionally characterised by a high number of private ship-owners (SME's). The fragmented market structure and strong competition have resulted in **limited re-investment ability**. Combined with the longevity of vessels, this forms a high threshold for the modernisation of the fleet. On the other hand, **difficult access to capital** and the financial risks involved with the required investments hinder the establishment of new services, and form an unmistakable barrier to attract newcomers to the sector.

In addition, the sector faces a **general lack of skilled labour**, because working conditions on board and career perspectives may not seem as attractive as elsewhere. Together with the lack of successors and hence the gradual decrease of the family-dependent ship-owner structure, this will pose a major problem to the future development of inland navigation.

The way inland navigation is perceived by the general public, does often not correspond to reality. Even freight forwarders and shipping companies are rarely aware of the advantages of IWT. The sector is often considered to be a passive, slow and old-fashioned mode of transport. Apart from some exceptions, **promotional efforts are rarely co-ordinated** and often lack a clear communication strategy.

Concerning the waterway network itself, insufficient financial means are being reserved for **maintenance** of the waterway infrastructure and the elimination of **strategic bottlenecks**. At the same time, construction projects meet growing environmental concerns. And often local and regional planning processes do not consider the opportunities that IWT can offer. Information and Communication technologies such as used in River Information Services still require further development.

Finally, the institutional framework for inland navigation in Europe is fragmented, as it is currently administered under different regimes, at different levels and with overlapping regulatory activities (EC/EU, the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine, the Danube Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport). This leads to an **overall reduced effectiveness and a lack of political attention** and ultimately results in a complex business environment.

4. What are the objectives and main provisions of the NAIADES Action Programme? What needs to be done?

The NAIADES Action Programme is an important step forward to fully exploit the market potential of inland navigation. Being a comprehensive programme, it combines legislative and policy instruments with support and funding programmes and focuses on five inter-dependent strategic areas (see attached table). These key areas are rounded off by an organisational structure deemed to assist the implementation of the programme.

5. What is new about the Action Programme?

The Commission will draw up, for example, a **Funding Handbook for IWT** in 2006. This will provide information on funding subjects, funding criteria, example projects, contact persons and funding organisations. In order to contribute to a fair entrepreneurial climate and the 'ease-of-use' of inland navigation, the Commission also intends to identify **the administrative bottlenecks** at whatever level, which are currently blocking the development of IWT.

Priority will also be given to **state aid guidelines** in the field of IWT, in order to create a level playing field. The state aid guidelines will apply to funding schemes to facilitate investment and attract new markets, and support programmes for fleet modernisation and innovation. Special attention shall also be given to the potential of the IWT Reserve Fund, established by the profession, in terms of innovative concepts around services, vessels and their crew as well as to its financial sources.

Several Member States have already successfully set-up promotion centres for IWT, which can set an example to others. Yet there is no coordination of the promotion of IWT at European level. Therefore the Commission aims at the establishment of one **European promotional network** between the national agencies and focal points. At the same time it will offer support the set-up of new promotional agencies in other Member States that have opportunities for inland waterway navigation and where these kinds of promotion activities are currently lacking.

Concerning the need for detailed statistical data on the market developments, a system for a **European Market Observation** is being developed.

With the intention to ensure the coordinated improvement and maintenance of waterway infrastructure and transshipment facilities, the Commission proposes to establish a **European IWT Infrastructure Development Plan**. This plan would go beyond the existing TEN-T priority projects and also include other projects of 'common interest' and smaller waterway networks, while aiming to take into account environmental concerns. The appointment of a dedicated European *Co-ordinator* will further help to support the implementation of the TEN-T priority projects, i.e. the Seine-Scheldt connection and the removal of bottlenecks on the Danube.

Finally, the current framework needs to be changed. The Commission is presently examining different options for a future organisational structure. This **institutional framework** could play a role in coordinating the implementation of the NAIADES Action Programme.

6. How much will it cost to implement the NAIADES Action Programme? Who will finance it?

The programme is composed of various types of actions which imply different costs. They are either of a legislative nature, e.g. the harmonisation of technical and manning requirements; of a policy coordinative nature, like the TEN Coordinator, or of a supportive nature. Examples of the latter are the EU RTD and support programmes and the national support programmes.

Depending on the nature of the instruments, some are to be financed by the EU, others by Member States, the industry or jointly by all addressed parties, i.e. the industry, Member States and the EU. The revised IWT Reserve Fund, could for example be financed to equal parts by the IWT sector, the EU and Member States.

However not all actions require a new budget line; many actions can be taken with existing financial resources, e.g. the existing EU support programmes and the TEN-T projects. This only requires giving higher priority to IWT. For instance in the case of the TEN-T projects, a larger part of the TEN-T budget should be allocated for waterway projects. Finally, the various actions and measures indicated in the programme still need to be further defined in the course of the deliberation with the Council and the European Parliament.

NAIADES ACTION PROGRAMME: PROPOSED ACTIONS AND MEASURES
1. CREATE FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR SERVICES
<p>Attract new markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate and implement new logistics concepts ▪ Support liner services for intermodal transport ▪ Improve co-operation between modes and within the sector <p>Encourage entrepreneurship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attract newcomers ▪ Facilitate access to finance for SMEs <p>Improve administrative and regulatory framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abolish administrative barriers to IWT development ▪ Ensure a level playing field/avoid competition distortions ▪ Improve co-ordination between relevant public services
2. STIMULATE FLEET MODERNISATION AND INNOVATION
<p>Improve logistics efficiency, safety and environmental performance of IWT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and facilitate use of innovative vessel concepts and technologies ▪ Encourage use of safety-enhancing technologies ▪ Encourage use of eco-efficient engines and renewable energy sources ▪ Develop refit concepts for existing vessels
3. PROMOTE JOBS AND SKILLS
<p>Attract workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve working and social conditions ▪ Stimulate labour mobility ▪ Create awareness and improve career opportunities ▪ Enhance cooperation regarding mutual recognition of qualifications <p>Invest in human capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preserve education and training institutes ▪ Stimulate life-long learning ▪ Enhance entrepreneurial skills
4. IMPROVE IMAGE AND CO-OPERATION
<p>Promote inland navigation as a successful partner in business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and coordinate promotion activities ▪ Influence logistics decision-making by public relations <p>Set up and expand EU IWT promotion and development network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up national promotion and development structures ▪ Provide political, practical and financial support for promotion centres ▪ Appoint national focal points within administrations ▪ Integrate national promotion structures and focal points into a European network <p>Monitor trends and developments within the IWT market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harmonise collection of data at all levels ▪ Ensure availability of compatible source data
5. PROVIDE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE
<p>Improve multi-modal network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain and improve the European IWT network ▪ Foster the mutual understanding of multi-purpose use of waterways ▪ Encourage the development of port and transshipment facilities – also in candidate and associated countries ▪ (Re)develop industrial sites nearby waterways <p>Implement River Information Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and co-ordinate development and implementation of RIS in Europe