

**Intervention on behalf of Mr. J. Scheele representing the European Commission at the Budapest Workshop on Joint Statement initiative follow-on.**

**1) IMPORTANCE OF IWT FOR THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN EUROPE**

- available capacity versus congestion of road transport

The EU's transport policy has developed rapidly over the past fifteen years. Its objectives have remained stable:

- A high level of **mobility**,
- in a manner that is **sustainable in environmental and social terms**,
- which is supported by **innovation** and **new technologies**, as well as
- projected beyond Europe's borders through the EU's **international connections**.

In its common transport policy, the EU has committed itself to pursue the goal of designing sustainable mobility for our continent. Inland waterway transport is an obvious choice to play a more prominent role in reaching these targets.

If rivers are important for a sound support to freight transportation, it is also true that rivers, and in this case

The Danube River is important for the Union and for the region that it crosses for a series of elements that are critically interlinked, such as: waterway for transport, biodiversity reservoir, source of water supply and of risks (floods) and for economic growth (tourism, fisheries, cultural heritage). All these are core policy elements for the EC. Thus, the development of the region or of one of these sectors can only be done by closing looking at the impacts and relations with the other sectors. In this respect, the Joint Statement is the tool for achieving integrated planning and paving the way for sustainable development in the region.

- Inland ports as intermodal connections with other modes of transport

**2) ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSISON IN ORDER TO SUPPORT IWT DEVELOPMENT**

- Legislative Instruments

The following **LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENTS** have been adopted or will soon enter into force:

- The new regulation on **statistics** of goods transport by inland waterways entered into force in 2006 and contributes to the visibility of IWT.
- The **de minimis** rule was extended to State aid intended for inland waterway transport in 2007
- As from 30 December 2008, Directive 2006/87/EC laying down **technical requirements for inland waterway vessels** has created harmonised safety standards for inland waterway vessels on the entire Community waterway network.
- The Commission also adopted a number of **technical standards for RIS**
- The Directive on the **transport of dangerous goods** in all land transport modes, including inland waterway transport, will enter into force.

- **NAIADES**

The EU has recognised the great potential of inland waterway transport already for some time and has taken action in a number of areas (liberalisation, structural measures for the fleet, RIS, etc.). But it is for the first time that the policy objectives are clearly set out in a comprehensive medium term transport action programme – the NAIADES Action programme.

In order to improve the competitiveness of inland navigation, the Action Programme aims at five strategic interdependent areas: Market, Fleet, Jobs and skills, Image, Infrastructure. It is addressed to all stakeholders of inland waterway transport, the EU and its institutions, and the Member States. The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers welcomed the initiative and endorsed the programme; the industry has confirmed its broad consent.

- TEN-T Priority Projects, financial support
  - Seine-Schelde
  - Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube
- In terms of **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**, we can see a significant increase of the share attributed to inland waterway transport – in comparison to the past decades (!):
  - On 21 November 2007, the European Commission selected the Trans-European Transport Network projects to be financed during the period 2007-2013. **TEN-T Priority Projects** No 18 (Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube) and No 30 (Seine-Scheldt) were granted € 610 Million Support from the EU's TEN-T budget (= 11.5% of the total).

- On 20 June 2008, the call for proposals in the area of **River Information Services** (RIS) within the TEN-T Multi-Annual Programme was closed. € 15 Million of TEN-T co-financing will be provided for harmonized implementation of RIS in Europe (in total € 50 Million between 2007 and 2013).
- The “**Marco Polo II**” programme will continue to promote shifting freight traffic off the road to other transport modes, and we are in the process of updating its conditions to better accommodate the requirements of inland waterway transport.
- By the way, I should like to mention the ongoing revision process of the **TEN-T guidelines**. In this context, we are currently preparing a Green Paper for which we collected significant input during the TEN-T-Days and we plan to publish it shortly. I hope that Member States will continue to keep support for the inland waterway infrastructure high on the agenda.

IWT projects can receive EC financial support both from the TEN-T budget and from the Cohesion Policy budget. The rules of the game for both sources of financing are full compliance with the EC acquis and policy. This means that all IWT projects for which co-financing is expected need to start with serious integrated planning, definition of ecological objectives and full consideration of the nature and water related acquis - in a nutshell, they should prove full adherence to the principles of the Joint Statement. Governments should secure at national and local level the awareness of planners on this new approach in planning. EC can support them, if requested

- European Coordinator

**TEN-T Coordinator** inland waterways – Ms Peijs was nominated in 2007. In her first year of activity, she has visited the “hottest spots” – bottlenecks – on the Danube and along the Seine-Scheldt project, in order to address the environmental, economic and political questions involved, with the objective to allow for a sustainable development of the waterway. She has also met the governments of a number of countries concerned, not only transport but also environment Ministries.

- Danube Commission Membership

### 3) IMPORTANCE OF THE JOINT STATEMENT INITIATIVE

- Comprehensive approach to transport development in a sound environmental way

Provided there is enough political support from the Danube countries themselves, the EC is willing to coordinate a Danube Strategy in the coming years;

this will be a complex and long exercise but it seems to make sense to think about the Danube in more holistic way and to ensure all stakeholders make the most of the Danube in the next decades;

The Joint Statement initiative is a step in the right direction - its successful implementation would send an extremely positive signal

#### **4) HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE JOINT STATEMENT'S PRINCIPLES**

- Importance of the Joint Statement initiative

It is almost a year that the Joint Statement has been ratified by the three Commissions and we are here to go further - learning from experiences we got so far and striving for making it fully operational.

Yesterday we have been presented the major issues that have to be solved in order to achieve a sound and sustainable inland transport system on the Danube: What are the problems met so far in its implementation and how can we overcome them? Can they be solved at national level or there is a need for a more co-ordinated reaction at river basin level? Is there a need for more practical guidance on undertaking certain types of detailed assessments? Is there a need for monitoring, reporting and potentially revise the Joint Statement in 2-3 years, on the basis of initial results? All these are questions to which we should get some approximate answers, giving guidance to all of us on what we can do further to develop IWT in a sustainable manner, by fully applying the Joint Statement principles.

- EC supports the Joint Statement

It is not because there is a talk of a strategy that existing initiatives and projects should be stopped or slowed down. **ON THE CONTRARY** - if we can demonstrate our willingness and capacity to work together for the common interest of all, this can only be seen as positive. All concerned should make every effort to ensure that current work comes to fruition as planned;

When talking about the transport issue, we would strongly support the inclusion of multi-modality and the right level of attention being paid to access to and from the Danube from its hinterland.

- Through PLATINA draft a road map for JS on Danube

PLATINA, can provide the logistic support for the drafting of a feasible road map towards the drafting of guidelines for the application of the Joint Statement Principles. This work can then be used also for the

- Working Group on Rivers- DG-TREN + ENV

The European Commission has already identified a need for action: - the Working Group on Rivers initiated by DG ENV and DG TREN will be shortly established. It aims at producing guidelines and best-practices on the integration of the Natura 2000 requirements into the IWT design, while taking into account the provisions of the Water Framework Directive. The guidance is intended for planners in all EU MSs, but it will certainly reflect the needs of the Danube river IWT projects and it will contribute to a more effective implementation of the Joint Statement.