

## **Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin**

Kick-off meeting, Orth an der Donau, Austria, April 25-26, 2007

Abstract Felix Leinemann, European Commission, DG Energy and Transport  
“Inland waterway transport – the European policy framework and challenges”

### European Transport Policy: sustainable mobility for our continent

Europe’s freight transport system is far from being perfect. Congestion, capacity limits and delays affect mobility and economic competitiveness. They are detrimental to the environment and quality of life. With an expected doubling of traffic between Member States until 2020, the EU transport policy aims to (1) provide the mobility needed for economic growth and social welfare, and (2) tackle the negative effects caused by increasing transport activities.

Inland waterway transport (IWT) can contribute significantly to coping with present and future traffic volumes in Europe. More than 35.000 km of waterways connect hundreds of cities and industrial regions. IWT is characterised by its reliability, its cost-effectiveness and energy-efficiency, modest noise and gaseous emissions, as well as low external costs and a high degree of safety.

### The EU’s policy to promote inland waterway transport – “NAIADES”

The “NAIADES” Action Programme establishes a comprehensive policy framework for the promotion of IWT at EU level. It is structured around five inter-dependent areas: Market, Fleet, Jobs and Skills, Image, Infrastructure. Action is to be taken between 2006-2013 by the European Community, Member States and other parties concerned.

With regard to the waterway infrastructure, the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) policy aims to build the missing links and remove the bottlenecks in the EU’s transport infrastructure. As a major route connecting the North Sea to the Black Sea, the Rhine-Main-Danube axis is one of 30 TEN-T priority projects. With the objective of allowing the passing of vessels of up to 3.000 tonnes and achieving a minimum required draught of 2.5 metres along the entire waterway, the navigability of certain stretches of the Danube will have to be improved.

### Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a guiding principle of the transport policy. The completion of the TEN-T network should reduce transport-generated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 6.3 million tonnes a year by 2020. Shifting freight to inland navigation will help relieve congested corridors, especially in densely populated areas. But even if IWT is quite environmentally friendly, it needs continuous innovation to maintain this position.

“NAIADES” addresses this from at least two angles. Firstly, the environmental performance of the fleet must be improved through research, support for technological innovation and accompanying legislation (e.g. engine emissions, fuel quality, dangerous goods). Secondly, the waterway infrastructure should be developed in a coordinated and integrated way. NAIADES suggests a “European Development Plan” for waterway infrastructures and transshipment facilities, aiming to reconcile environmental protection and sustainable mobility at the planning and programming level.

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Useful documents and links:

NAIADES Communication and Action Programme: [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/iw/prospect/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/iw/prospect/index_en.htm)

TEN-T priority axes & projects 2005: [http://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/priority\\_projects/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/priority_projects/index_en.htm)

Communication: Trans-European networks: Towards an integrated approach (21/03/2007):  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007DC0135:EN:NOT>