

## **Consultation Document**

### **An Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport**

The European Commission intends to present a Communication on the promotion of Inland Waterway Transport by the end of 2005. The Communication will set out an integrated action programme, focusing on concrete actions which are needed to fully exploit the market potential of inland navigation and to make its use more attractive.

The action programme which the Commission intends to propose focuses on strategic areas which are essential for the development of Inland Waterway Transport (IWT):

- (1) Create favourable conditions for services
- (2) Stimulate fleet modernisation and innovation
- (3) Promote jobs and skills
- (4) Improve image and co-operation
- (5) Provide adequate infrastructure
- (6) Improve the institutional framework

The programme includes recommendations for action between 2006-2013 by the European Community and other responsible parties. Its implementation shall be carried out in close co-operation with national and regional authorities, River Commissions, as well as European industry.

The action fields are inter-dependent. The various actions and measures are connected together and included in action clusters. The instruments recommended for their implementation can be classified in legislative, coordination, and support instruments. Instruments which cover more than one action (e.g. state aid guidelines) are mentioned in every action cluster concerned. The action clusters will be further elaborated in the annexes to the Communication.

**Stakeholders are invited to express their ideas and views until 31 August 2005.**

## 1. CREATE FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR SERVICES

Beyond its traditional strength in bulk transport, inland waterway transport has successfully expanded into high-value markets of unitised maritime cargo in Western Europe. However, developments in the continental cargo market and in Central and Eastern Europe, though promising, are still in their infancy. New market niches are developed in the areas of waste and recycling, dangerous goods, and in the transport of vehicles and abnormal indivisible loads as well as in River-Sea-Shipping. The aim is to expand reliable multi-modal and door-to-door inland navigation services to these growth markets.

### *Attract new markets*

New multi-modal services require strong synergies and critical mass to penetrate into the market. Difficult access to capital hinders the establishment of new services. Kick-off grants should be sought to help overcome start-up barriers, facilitate co-operation between modes and alliances within the sector, and contribute to modal shift objectives.

### *Encourage entrepreneurship*

The inland waterway transport sector's tradition of entrepreneurship is to be encouraged. High investment costs and difficult access to finance hamper the expansion and renewal of the sector. To attract newcomers to the market and to enable existing businesses to expand it needs better access to capital especially for SMEs. In addition, fiscal incentives should stimulate re-investment of operational profits.

### *Improve administrative and regulatory framework*

The general administrative and regulatory framework should be supportive of a prosperous inland waterway sector. In line with the Lisbon objectives, administrative procedures should be assessed to consider simplification or removal and to establish a level playing-field between Member States and between modes of transport. A better coordination of all relevant public services and policies should streamline necessary formalities.

<b>1. CREATE FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR SERVICES</b>	
<b>Proposed actions and measures</b>	
<b>Attract new markets</b> § Investigate and implement new logistics concepts § Support liner services for intermodal transport § Improve co-operation between modes and within the sector  <b>Encourage entrepreneurship</b> § Attract newcomers § Facilitate access to finance for SMEs  <b>Improve administrative and regulatory framework</b> § Abolish administrative barriers to IWT development § Ensure a level playing field/avoid competition distortions § Improve co-ordination between relevant public services	
<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Responsible actors</b>
§ State aid guidelines for support schemes § Support programmes to promote modal shift and facilitate investment (incl. research and fiscal incentives) § EU RTD and support programmes (Marco Polo, CIP, INTERREG) § Funding Handbook for IWT § Administrative one-stop-shops and IWT focal points § Screening for barriers in existing and new European and national legislation § Harmonised legislation for manning, vessels, boatmasters' certificates, intermodal documentation, liability, and loading units (ILU)	EC <sup>1</sup> MS <sup>2</sup>  EU <sup>3</sup> /MS/industry EC EC/MS EC/MS/industry EU

## 2. STIMULATE FLEET MODERNISATION AND INNOVATION

Inland navigation is an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly mode of transport. Its increased use complies with the objectives of transport and environment policy. However, continuous investments in modernisation and innovation are still needed to maintain its head start in these fields.

*Improve logistics efficiency, environmental and safety performance of IWT*

Efficient technology usually results in higher logistics efficiency and lower operating costs. These can be achieved by targeted fleet innovations, e.g. vessel design, further automation, including ICT. Innovative concepts for vessels, operations and transshipment should therefore be investigated and facilitated.

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<sup>1</sup> EC = European Commission.  
<sup>2</sup> MS = Member States.  
<sup>3</sup> EU = European Union.

The introduction of existing technology to further reduce fuel consumption and harmful emissions, e.g. hydrodynamics, improved propulsion, fuel-efficiency and filtering techniques, will allow inland shipping to maintain its high standards. Meanwhile, research into commercially viable non-carbon fuels, e.g. hydrogen fuel cells, and zero-emission engines should be actively pursued<sup>4</sup>.

The safety record of inland shipping, though exemplary, can be further improved by on-board and on-shore information technology (River Information Services), navigational equipment, vessel design, as well as by measures aimed at training and education.

Innovation can take place both through the construction of new vessels (long-term approach) and the refit of existing vessels (short- and mid-term approach). To facilitate rapid market transfer of new technology, the legal framework for environmental and safety standards (engine emissions, fuel quality, waste disposal, dangerous goods transport) should be reinforced. R&D activities should concentrate on the development of refit concepts accompanied by support programmes (including pilot tests), fiscal incentives and training.

<b>2. STIMULATE FLEET MODERNISATION AND INNOVATION</b>	
<b>Proposed actions and measures</b>	
<b>Improve logistics efficiency, safety and environmental performance of IWT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Develop and facilitate use of innovative vessel concepts and technologies</li> <li>§ Encourage use of safety-enhancing technologies</li> <li>§ Encourage use of eco-efficient engines and renewable energy sources</li> <li>§ Develop refit concepts for existing vessels</li> </ul>	
<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Responsible actors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ State aid guidelines for support programmes</li> <li>§ Support programme to facilitate efficiency, environment and safety-enhancing technologies (incl. research and fiscal incentives)</li> <li>§ EU RTD and support programmes (FP 7, lead projects for sector innovation)</li> <li>§ European IWT Innovation Fund</li> <li>§ Funding Handbook for IWT</li> <li>§ Reinforced environmental and safety legislation (incl. waste disposal, dangerous goods)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EC</li> <li>MS</li> <li>EU</li> <li>EU/MS/Industry</li> <li>EC</li> <li>EU</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Following Directive 2003/30/EC on the promotion of the use of bio-fuels or other renewable fuels for transport.

### 3. PROMOTE JOBS AND SKILLS

Staff and entrepreneurial shortage has become a major problem. In the 1990s this could partly be counterbalanced by technological innovations and the employment of crew members from countries which had not yet entered the EU, labour cost differences being a main pull factor. Converging salary levels following EU enlargement might however limit the inflow of personnel in the future. Clear strategies are needed to create sustainable and future-oriented employment and entrepreneurship.

#### *Attract workforce*

Improving working and social conditions through a constructive social dialogue at European level must be at the heart of such a strategy. The definition of EU-wide professional qualification requirements will enhance labour mobility. It should be supported by mutual recognition of qualification standards and training requirements. A common approach towards labour migration will further facilitate and stimulate legal access to the labour market from candidate and associated countries. Additionally, recruitment initiatives should create awareness beyond the sector on the job and career opportunities in inland shipping.

#### *Invest in human capital*

A functioning education and training system is a fundamental condition for a sound and competitive labour market. The existence of education and training institutions therefore has to be secured and their curricula adapted to current managerial, technological and nautical needs. Modern learning tools such as simulators for navigation in unknown and critical areas need to be introduced in education and training curricula. Life-long-learning should be encouraged.

<b>3. PROMOTE JOBS AND SKILLS</b>
<b>Proposed actions and measures</b>
<b>Attract workforce</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>§ Improve working and social conditions</li><li>§ Stimulate labour mobility</li><li>§ Create awareness and improve career opportunities</li><li>§ Enhance cooperation regarding mutual recognition of qualifications</li></ul>
<b>Invest in human capital</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>§ Preserve education and training institutes</li><li>§ Stimulate life-long learning</li><li>§ Enhance entrepreneurial skills</li></ul>

Instruments	Responsible actors
§ Social dialogue within sector (working conditions, working time arrangements, definition of EU-wide professional qualification requirements)	Social partners
§ Recruitment campaigns	EC/MS/industry
§ Funding Handbook for IWT	EC
§ Free movement of workers	MS
§ European policy for labour migration	MS/EU
§ EU support for education and training institutions (e.g. SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI)	EU
§ European IWT Innovation Fund	EU/MS/Industry
§ Specific training programmes for IWT needs	EU/education & training institutes
§ Common framework for education and training standards	EU/MS
§ Harmonised legislation for manning requirements and boatmasters' certificates	EU

#### 4. IMPROVE IMAGE AND CO-OPERATION

The image of the inland navigation sector has not kept pace with the logistics and technological performance achieved. General awareness and knowledge of the real potential of the sector in terms of quality and reliability need to be improved.

*Promote inland navigation as a successful partner in business*

Improving the image of inland navigation is the joint responsibility of the industry, politics and administrations at national and European level. Promotion activities aimed at logistics decision-makers should be supported and co-ordinated to establish a consistent and positive image of inland navigation and to pave the way for a re-balanced transport system.

*Set up and expand European IWT promotion and development network*

Some Member States have set up promotion structures that provide up-to-date information to industry on the opportunities, and assisting in the development, of inland navigation. The establishment of promotion centres combined with the appointment of national focal points will generate smooth interfaces between authorities and industry and facilitate result-oriented policy. This is demonstrated by comparing growth statistics of countries with and without co-ordinated structures. A Europe-wide network of national promotion and development centres should therefore be set up or expanded, also including candidate and associated countries.

*Monitor trends and developments within the IWT market*

Permanent observation of relevant economic and social parameters is crucial for business, policy-makers and authorities in order to anticipate market trends. Currently, Europe-wide statistics are not detailed enough for this purpose. A pre-condition for any system of market observation is the availability of comparable and

compatible source data. National administrations should be encouraged to provide this data. An updated European regulation on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways, which is under preparation, will contribute to this objective. A European Market Observation System involving the CCNR, the European Commission and the professional organisations is currently being established and in due time will have to be re-assessed and adapted.

<b>4. IMPROVE IMAGE AND CO-OPERATION</b>	
<b>Proposed actions and measures</b>	
<p><b>Promote inland navigation as a successful partner in business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Support and coordinate promotion activities</li> <li>§ Influence logistics decision-making by public relations</li> </ul> <p><b>Set up and expand EU IWT promotion and development network</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Set up national promotion and development structures</li> <li>§ Provide political, practical and financial support for promotion centres</li> <li>§ Appoint national focal points within administrations</li> <li>§ Integrate national promotion structures and focal points into a European network</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitor trends and developments within the IWT market</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Harmonise collection of data at all levels</li> <li>§ Ensure availability of compatible source data</li> </ul>	
<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Responsible actors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Support programmes for national promotion and development organisations and their network</li> <li>§ Regulation on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways</li> <li>§ IWT Market observation</li> </ul>	<p>EU/MS</p> <p>EU EC</p>

#### 5. PROVIDE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE

More than 36,000 kilometres of waterways and hundreds of inland ports connect many important economic areas in Europe. Even though the larger part of the waterway network has ample free capacities, several bottlenecks caused by limited draught, bridge clearance and lock dimensions hinder its full utilisation and reduce the competitiveness of inland waterway transport.

##### *Improve multi-modal network*

A European Development Plan for improvement and maintenance of waterway infrastructures and transshipment facilities should be initiated to make trans-European waterway transport more efficient. Such a plan, oriented along the TEN-T network<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Revised Community guidelines for the trans-European transport network (O.J. L 201 of 7.6.2004).

should be aimed at eliminating bottlenecks and provide guidance for financing and prioritisation. A European Coordinator could facilitate its coordinated implementation. The development of waterway infrastructure should happen in a co-ordinated and integrated way, by fostering the mutual understanding of multi-purpose use of waterways and to reconcile environmental protection and sustainable mobility. Infrastructure charging may contribute to funding opportunities.

Given existing backlog for the development of transshipment facilities and access to waterways, support is required, especially in new Member States and accession countries. Support should concentrate on growing market segments. Innovative strategies and significant investments are also required to better accommodate inland vessels in seaports. Spatial planning and economic policies are needed at federal, regional and local levels to safeguard waterside sites for logistics purposes.

#### *Implement River Information Services*

River Information Services (RIS) support the planning and management of traffic and transport operations. It can contribute significantly to a more efficient and safer use of waterways, locks, bridges and terminals by enhancing and optimising electronic data interchange and logistics operations. It is invaluable for waterway authorities in supporting traffic management tasks and dangerous goods monitoring and will become of great use for commercial actors. RIS will lead to increased competitiveness of European inland navigation and improved safety, and needs to be implemented and further developed in a coordinated way within the framework of the trans-European networks.

<b>5. PROVIDE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
<b>Proposed actions and measures</b>	
<b>Improve multi-modal network</b> § Maintain and improve the European IWT network § Foster the mutual understanding of multi-purpose use of waterways § Encourage the development of transshipment facilities – also in candidate and associated countries § (Re)develop industrial sites nearby waterways  <b>Implement River Information Services</b> § Support and co-ordinate development and implementation of RIS in Europe	
<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Responsible actors</b>
§ European Development Plan for improvement and maintenance of waterway infrastructures and transshipment facilities § European Coordinator § TEN-T funding for Priority projects N° 18 and N° 30, other projects of common interest, port and terminal development § RIS Directive and projects (TEN-T MIP) § EU RTD and support programmes (PHARE, ISPA, CARDS, INTERREG) § National funding schemes § Framework for infrastructure charging § Spatial planning giving higher priority to (re-)developing industrial zones nearby waterways	EU/MS  EU/MS EU/MS  EU/MS EU MS EU MS



## 6. IMPROVE THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The institutional framework for inland waterway transport in Europe is fragmented and responsibilities are dispersed on several organisations. As a consequence, the impact of inland waterway transport at political level is comparably low and its strategic policy management is insufficient.

### *Concentrate available skills*

The proposed action programme can only develop its full potential if it is implemented in a coherent way. However, if the current framework remains unchanged, no organisation will be in a position to take on the challenges ahead. The river commissions can only take decisions with a limited scope. The Community cannot make full use of its competences. This is why available skills and resources need to be concentrated. The bureaucratic labours of coordination and duplication of work should be avoided.

The Community framework offers the broadest legitimate basis for a strategic and efficient inland navigation policy at European level. A European Agency for Inland Waterway Transport could become a key actor in facilitating the coordinated implementation of the action programme. Equipped with technical expertise and knowledge, its tasks and competencies could include contributing to the development of legislation ensuring high technical and safety standards, as well as carrying out a number of specific tasks (as described in the action fields above). It should act in close consultation of the industry and the social partners, and cooperate with the river commissions. As a body of the European Community, it would be open to the participation of third countries.

### *Facilitate decision-making*

The Community framework provides a single decision making mechanism for common rules which are needed to guarantee the free and safe movement of vessels, crews, freight etc. on the entire waterway network. It does not add an additional administrative layer. By involving both the Council and the European Parliament, it guarantees decisions which are democratically accountable and thus closer to the citizens.

Third countries could become involved in the work of the Agency by way of bi- and multilateral agreements. Ideally, experts from some or all of those States would be involved in the drafting of rules in the Agency's working groups, similar to current CCNR working methods. The agreements could also foresee mechanisms to ensure the implementation of harmonised rules on the larger European waterway network.

The International River Commissions would continue to play their role for their respective river basin, namely in areas which are specific for their River and would not require harmonisation at European level (e.g. navigation rules, police regulations,

river surveillance). Their proven experience and expertise could thus be maintained and built upon.

*Enhance political visibility*

More than other transport modes, inland navigation needs active institutional support. The creation of an Agency for Inland Waterway Transport would give this transport mode more weight within the Community and the Member States. It can embed Inland Waterway Transport in the context of a more strategic transport policy. It would allow Inland Waterway Transport to come out of its marginal position and add a higher political visibility to the sector.

<b>6. IMPROVE THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</b>	
<b>Proposed actions and measures</b>	
<p><b>Concentrate available skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Concentrate available skills and resources</li> <li>§ Avoid duplication of work in different organisations</li> <li>§ Combine different tasks to create synergies</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitate decision-making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Establish common rules at the appropriate level</li> <li>§ Involve third countries in the elaboration of rules</li> </ul> <p><b>Enhance political visibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Embed IWT policy in the European transport policy</li> </ul>	
<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Responsible actors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Creation of a European Agency for Inland Waterway Transport</li> <li>§ Agreements with third countries regarding their participation</li> </ul>	<p>EU/MS</p> <p>EU/MS</p>