Unleashing the potential of waterborne passenger transport

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The European Parliament adopted by 551 votes to 82, with 64 abstentions, a resolution on unleashing the potential of waterborne passenger transport.

Members recalled that waterborne passenger transport (WPT) in the fields of coastal (short sea) shipping, inland and maritime ferries, urban and peripheral mobility, cruises and tourism offers great potential for using available excess capacity in terms of both infrastructure and vessels, and plays a crucial role in connecting the different regions of the European Union.

Competitiveness: Parliament encouraged the Member States, regional and local authorities and the Commission to give consideration to WPT, and especially to improve the associated infrastructure, in both its core and comprehensive networks, within the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) by strengthening its interconnection with, inter alia, rail hinterland infrastructure.

Members encouraged the development of the **motorways of the sea** which promote efficient multimodal transport, remove bottlenecks in key network infrastructures and ensure territorial continuity and integration.

They stated that the integration of WPT into **urban and regional public transport networks** could considerably enhance mobility efficiency, environmental performance, quality of life, affordability, relief of congestion of land-based transport networks, and comfort in cities.

The Commission is called upon to **finance better organised and more efficient projects for integrated transport services** leading to: (i) a progressive reduction in energy consumption; (ii) a reorganisation of the timetables of the various public and private air, sea and land carriers with a view to the intermodal and efficient management of passenger transport; (iii) consolidation of tickets issued by public and private operators in a single pass available via a digital application.

Statistics: stressing the key relevance of **European statistical data** for formulating plans and policies for the waterborne transport sector, the report asked Eurostat to include in their statistical data on maritime cruise passengers 'port-of-call passenger visits', namely the number of passengers embarking and disembarking at **each transit port**, and not only the cruise passengers embarking on holiday each year (turnover).

Environmental sustainability: Parliament welcomed the efforts of the WPT sector to switch to cleaner, energy-efficient ships with lower emissions, developed as part of a European framework aimed at making waterborne transport greener.

The Commission is called to integrate WPT into its strategy and to take steps to **reduce CO2 emissions** in line with the COP 21 agreements. Environmental standards should be improved with a view to reducing air pollution, along the lines of the Baltic Sea standards for sulphur emissions limits, fuel quality and more fuel-efficient engines.

Members supported the Commission in its **promotion of LNG**, non-fossil alternative fuels, electric and hybrid systems based on renewable sources, and solar and wind energy for maritime vessels.

Safety and security: Parliament considered that the quality and safety of services can be best improved with **qualified staff**. Staff on ferries and cruise ships must be trained to assist passengers effectively in the event of an emergency.

The competent authorities are invited to **propose a clear framework** allocating responsibilities and costs, with a view to improving security, and to address additional staff training, instruction and guidance, especially the issue of accepting training using approved simulators as part of the training programme within the framework of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) rules.

Service quality and accessibility: the Commission is encouraged to integrate the principles of Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 into its proposal on intermodal passenger rights, including aspects of barrier-free accessibility for people with disabilities or reduced mobility, and also to take account in it of the special needs of the elderly and families travelling with children.

Moreover, given the importance of the WPT sector in **developing sustainable tourism and overcoming seasonality**, Members called on the Commission, the Member States and local and regional authorities to make fullest possible use of EU funding opportunities for SMEs, including subsidies for local communities in the aforementioned outlying regions.

The Commission should take into account the fact that there is a greater demand for quality transportation services in **coastal regions** and islands.

In addition, improvements are needed in order to develop mobility as a service by enabling **integrated ticketing schemes** in order to enhance reliability, comfort, punctuality and frequency, to ease pressure on logistics chains and to achieve faster boarding times with a view to attracting passengers.