

National and international inland waterway transport: systems of chartering and pricing

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The rapporteur, Mr Leen van der Waal (EDN, NL), said that the aim of the amendments tabled was to achieve fair competition in the inland waterway market, after the process of deregulation had been completed. With this in mind the Transport Committee also proposed setting up a working group whose remit was to assist the Commission in its deliberations on the future position of the inland waterway fleet. This would allow the Commission to examine the means by which it would be possible to make maximum use of the potential of the inland waterway network as an ecological form of transport. The group of experts could also help the Commission to implement the programme of deregulation and development planned for this sector as well as to promote the accompanying social measures required at national level. Stating that the smaller operators in this sector should be able to adapt to the free market, the Commissioner declared that given this imperative it would not be helpful to limit the transition period to 1 January 1999 (in accordance with Amendment No 6), as this would not give interested parties sufficient time to adapt. Moreover, the Commission could not take over Amendments Nos 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10. Amendment No 7, for example, sought to extend the 'old for new' scheme and to set up a permanent fund for the scrapping of vessels. As the 'old for new' system would not expire until April 1999, any decision on a possible extension would be taken on the basis of how the market developed in the intervening period; according to Commissioner Kinnock this ruled out taking any measures in advance. The same argument also applied to the setting-up of a reserve fund for financing the scrapping of vessels.