Short Sea Shipping

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PURPOSE : to promote the development of short sea shipping in Europe.

CONTENT : Following the reports of 1995 and 1999, the Commission presents a further communication on Short Sea Shipping in Europe highlighting the progress achieved since 1999 and linking it to the Programme for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping.

Short Sea Shipping is growing. Between 1995 and 2002, the tonne-kilometre performance of both Short Sea Shipping and road grew by 25 %. In 2001, Short Sea Shipping performed 40 % of all tonne-kilometres in Europe while the share of road transport was 45 %.

Maritime transport has a higher energy-efficiency than other modes of transport and is, in general, less harmful to the environment. Increased use of Short Sea Shipping would generally be in line with the Community transport and environmental policies.

However, a number of obstacles still hinder the mode from developing faster:

- It has not yet reached full integration in the intermodal door-to-door supply chain;

- It has not yet fully shed its past image of an old-fashioned industry;

- It involves complex administrative procedures;

- It requires high port efficiency.

The Commission states that developing Short Sea Shipping is primarily a task for the industries. Nevertheless, the authorities have a clear role to play in creating an appropriate framework and keeping the mode continuously high on the political agenda, as has been the case in the past years.

Logistics chains involving Short Sea Shipping should be managed and commercialised by one-stop shops, such as freight integrators. These shops should offer customers a single contact point that takes responsibility for the whole intermodal supply chain door to door. This requires efforts from all parties but is a win-win situation.

The Commission, in co-operation with the Short Sea Shipping Focal Pointsand industry, has been collecting a list of obstacles that hinder the development of Short Sea Shipping. In 2003, two meetings of the Focal Points were dedicated to addressing those alleged bottlenecks one by one in the following categories:

- Image of Short Sea Shipping;

- Door-to-door Short Sea Shipping;

- Administration and documentation;

- Ports and port services;

- Country-specific issues.

A number of bottlenecks on the original list have been solved and work on addressing the remaining 67 bottlenecks in a systematic manner will continue.

The Communication goes on to discuss customs procedures for Short SeaShipping and port services and security. It points out that harmonisation and standardisation of loading units can have a positive influence on Short Sea Shipping.

The Commission also discusses the criteria and financing for Motorways of the Sea. These should become an integral part of door-to-door logistics chains and offer efficient, regular, reliable and frequent services that can compete with road, for instance, in terms of transit time and price. The ports connected to the Motorways should have efficient hinterland connections, rapid administrative procedures and a high level of service that is targeted to making short-sea operations successful. The Commission is developing guidelines that would set out the criteria and procedures for the funding of Motorways of the Sea projects under the rules of the trans- European transport network thereby facilitating the practical application of those rules.

Although Short Sea Shipping would be the mode to operate on the Motorways of the Sea, its underlying concept is broader than that of Motorways of the Sea, because, apart from transnational links between European Union Member States, Short Sea Shipping also includes connections with close third countries, domestic connections, and connections from mainland to islands.

Finally, the Commission discusses the Marco Polo Programme, which has a goal to shift 12 billion tonne-kilometres a year from road to non-road modes. The budget of the new programme is EUR 100 million for the period 2003-2006.

The first call for proposals under Marco Polo was published in October 2003 with a budget of EUR 15 million. Under this call the Commission received 87 eligible proposals requesting subsidies totalling EUR 182.4 million. 36 % of the proposals related directly to Short Sea Shipping, while 34 % were rail projects, 5 % were inland waterway projects and 25 % involved more than one non-road mode (e.g. Short Sea Shipping in combination with rail or inland waterways). The short-sea proposals made in the selection round were generally of high quality and a substantial share of accepted projects will involve Short Sea Shipping.