

Inland waterway transport: integrated European action programme Naiades

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In the light of the Commission communication on the promotion of inland waterway transport "Naiades" - , and taking into account the results of a high-level meeting on the subject organised by the Presidency in Vienna on 14 and 15 February, 2006 the Council adopted the following conclusions:

The Council felt that the approach presented in the Commission's European Action Programme offered a comprehensive framework for effective inland waterway transport policies both at European and national level.

The Commission was invited to elaborate, on the basis of consultations with all relevant stakeholders and of appropriate impact assessments, detailed proposals on the recommendations included in the Commission's Communication, in particular:

- to provide a source of funding information such as a funding handbook containing a repertory of European, national and regional aid instruments relevant for inland waterway transport;
- to submit a proposal for a European Inland Waterway Transport Innovation Fund;
- to develop, in consultation with the Member States and the inland navigation industry, guidelines on State aid to inland waterway transport that would facilitate the adoption of national schemes promoting access to finance for inland waterway transport companies;
- to screen for barriers which hamper the development of European inland navigation, thereby taking into account the experience of the industry and the work already undertaken by the UNECE, and to examine potential solutions and best practices;
- to further pursue appropriate legislative harmonisation as identified in the European Action Programme, in particular in the fields of technical requirements for inland navigation vessels, the transport of dangerous goods, manning requirements, and boat master certificates;
- to create, in co-operation with national educational institutions, a common framework for education and training standards and to support specific training programmes in the field of inland waterway transport as well as in the field of logistics, with an emphasis on the integration of inland navigation into multimodal supply chains;
- to define strategic inland waterway transport research and development in the Seventh Framework Programme on Research and Development;
- to facilitate access of the inland navigation industry to Community aid programmes, especially attracting new enterprises;
- to support existing and new promotion centres, where appropriate in cooperation between the public and the private sector, to promote the use of inland waterway transport among potential users;
- to follow developments in inland waterway transport market and to collect and disseminate factual data and information on inland navigation and on its potential;

- to give appropriate weight to inland waterway projects within the framework of TEN-T;
- to insert RIS as part of the Multi-annual Indicative Programme of TEN-T;
- to assure the relative advantage of inland navigation as regards impact on the environment and transport safety also in the future;
- to take the needs of inland waterway transport constantly into consideration, both in the application and planning of Community actions and in regional cooperation with relevant third countries;
- to submit progress reports at two-yearly intervals, evaluating the results of the actions undertaken in order to promote inland waterway transport.

The Member States were invited to do the following, in the light of the European Action Programme and taking due account of the principle of subsidiarity:

- to develop national policies to stimulate inland waterway transport, and to encourage regional, local and port authorities and industries to do likewise;
- to strive for providing sufficient financial resources and incentives for the targeted implementation of the proposed measures, in particular through cost-effective national schemes for the support of inland navigation;
- to establish promotion centres for inland waterway transport and to provide appropriate political, practical and financial support from administrations and the inland navigation sector to safeguard support services on a continuous basis;
- to appoint national focal points according to the objectives of the European Action Programme in order to provide advice concerning legal requirements and administrative procedures;
- to contribute to the creation of a common framework for education and training standards, both regarding personnel on board as well as regarding the logistic chain;
- to screen national and regional legislation for administrative and procedural requirements, which may constitute an unnecessary and inappropriate burden for the development of inland waterway transport;
- to develop spatial planning and economic policies at federal, regional and local levels to encourage waterside sites for logistics purposes;
- to pursue inland waterway transport and infrastructure projects that promote viable inland waterway transport services, including those projects interlinking Member States and supported by Community programmes such as TEN-T;
- to consider how national programmes and projects can contribute to the European Development Plan for improvement and maintenance of inland waterway infrastructure the Commission intends to create;
- to contribute to the development of procedures for a structured dialogue with all involved stakeholders on environmental issues concerning inland waterway infrastructure projects;
- to communicate to the Commission the measures adopted to implement the European Action Programme.

The Inland Navigation Industry were invited to:

- step up its efforts to further develop inland waterway transport on the basis of the sector's spirit of entrepreneurship;

- to contribute to the relevant measures of the European Action programme, in particular: by modernising the inland navigation fleet, by investigating new market opportunities, by improving the logistics efficiency, safety and environmental performance of inland waterway transport, by investing in human capital and improving working and social conditions, and by promoting inland navigation as a valuable partner in business.