



## SUPPORTING INLAND NAVIGATION IN EUROPE – THE FINANCING ISSUE

As the European Commission recently emphasized in its January 2006 Communication on the “Naiades” programme, inland navigation is particularly well suited to coping with the challenges currently faced by freight transport in Europe.

Inland navigation is a highly energy-efficient transport mode, but it is also:

- **More environmentally-friendly**: thanks to low external costs of €10 per 1000 tons/km (vs. €15 for rail and €35 euros for road), inland waterways represent an alternative transport mode, which is both socially acceptable and capable of reaching the heart of large built-up areas. Canals can also make a significant contribution to tourism in the regions that are crossed.
- **More secure** : an extremely reliable transport mode, inland navigation can boast of an accident rate in the Netherlands, the European country with the highest density of inland waterways that is close to zero.
- **More efficient** : inland navigation provides adequate answers to such global trends as the growth of maritime container transport. It also supports the development of multimodal platforms with logistical and industrial facilities within the seaports' hinterland.
- **Less expensive** : a single river convoy can remove up to 220 trucks from Europe's roads. Inland navigation provides an opportunity to promote greater massification, a more efficient and affordable transport system and lower costs for shippers and the logistic sector as a whole.

**For all these reasons, inland waterways represent an ideal infrastructure in terms of sustainable development. Yet, this transport mode remains under-utilized:**

- **Under-utilisation of existing capacities** : barely 10 percent of the capacity of large rivers such as the Danube, the Seine or the Rhône is actually exploited. The modal share of inland navigation in the EU does not exceed 6 percent whereas it reaches up to 12 percent of overall freight shipments in the USA.
- **Under-representation among European infrastructure investment programmes** : only 2 of the 30 priority projects under the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) relate to inland navigation. Their share of the total budget reaches only 1.5 percent, despite the fact that inland waterway transport contributes to up to 7.5 percent of all freight transport within the European Union.

As highlighted by Paolo Costa, the Chairman of the European Parliament's Transport Committee, the situation is critical since the ongoing negotiations on the European Union's financial perspectives for 2007-2013 are expected to result in a significantly reduced TEN-T budget.



**The European Commission's « Naiades » initiative is of course to be welcomed. However, the efforts of all stakeholders - European institutions, Member States, private actors – must now be combined to provide the necessary momentum for the development of inland navigation in Europe.**

**As a first step, this will of course require the European Union and the Member States to ensure that the current TEN-T inland navigation projects have the necessary means to exist.**

As such, the immediate priority must be to ensure adequate finance for the Seine-Scheldt project, particularly its cross-border portion between France and Belgium, the **“Seine-Nord Europe” canal.**

- Inland navigation projects within the TEN-T are pan-European cross-border projects that promote integration between Member States. An efficient and reliable inland navigation infrastructure from the Channel to the Black Sea will contribute to a swift and environmentally-friendly European integration.
- Among the TEN-T priorities, inland waterway projects and the “Seine-Nord Europe” canal, are unique in that they can be completed as early as 2013 and are thus awaited by loaders and port operators. Moreover, the European Union's support will help to mobilize the public private partnership that will secure the financing of the projects.
- The completion of the “Seine Nord Europe” canal will conclude the Seine-Scheldt inland navigation network. Several studies have highlighted the multiple socio-economic benefits that will be generated for the regions that will be crossed, as well as the entire European freight transport system. The elimination of bottlenecks on Europe's roads, which account for almost 8% of the European Union's GDP, will enable savings of between €60 and €220 millions every year over the period 2020-2050.
- A wide-gauge network, the “Seine-Nord Europe” canal will contribute, over the 2008-2012 period, to 25% of the yearly targets that are set out in the annual Marco Polo programme and the Commission's White Paper on Transport. From 2013, no less than 5 billion ton-km will be transferred from roads to canals. This will help to reduce the saturation of large road axes in the Benelux and the North of Europe, but also to meet the EU's Kyoto objectives.

**It is crucial that Community support for inland waterway projects adequately reflects their real weight in the TEN-T budget. This is important in that a coherent European canal network will guarantee, alongside tunnels in the Alps, the fluid, multimodal and massified flow of freight in Europe.**

**A commitment in favour of inland waterways will set the foundations of a more efficient, reliable and environmentally-friendly European transport system. In the long term, it will also come to represent a factor of growth and competitiveness for the whole of the European Union.**

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