The Power of Inland Navigation

The Hague (Scheveningen)
10-12 November 2004
Given the results of the congress “The power of Inland Navigation” held from 10-12 November 2004 in The Hague, the Netherlands, also holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, concludes that:

a. Inland navigation is a safe, efficient, reliable and environmentally friendly way to transport goods within Europe;

b. The enlargement of the EU will result in an increase in the flow of goods in Europe;

c. Inland navigation can absorb a considerable part of the growth in goods traffic, certainly when it operates more efficiently and when the reserve capacity of the waterway network is fully used;

d. The reliability of inland navigation is under pressure as a result of overdue maintenance and insufficient capacity in the infrastructure (e.g. draught, locks, bridges).

In order to make full use of the role of inland navigation in the economic growth and social welfare in Europe and to give inland navigation a more prominent place in the European transport and traffic policy, the Netherlands calls upon:

the European Commission:
1. To draw up an action plan for inland navigation in the EU. This action plan should include a timeframe for the realization of the TEN-waterways network as well as a programme implementing the results and recommendations of surveys such as the study on the Prospects of Inland Navigation within the Enlarged Europe (PINE) and Strategies to Promote Inland Navigation (SPIN);

2. To stimulate initiatives from the market in the fields of innovation, information and communications technology as well as intermodal transport by barge by using funding schemes such as those provided in the 6th and the 7th Framework Programme and Marco Polo;

3. When developing a framework on intermodal security, to structure the necessary security measures in such a way that an international level playing field is ensured and that account is taken of the specific features of inland shipping;

4. To monitor the speedy implementation of the Directive on River Information Services (RIS) in the EU member states after the adoption by the Council and the European Parliament;
the European Parliament:
1. To make progress in its assessment of the proposal for the Directive on River Information Services (RIS) to ensure that it can pass its first reading as soon as possible;

2. To expedite the second reading of the proposal for changing Directive 82/714/EEC with respect to technical specifications for inland waterway vessels after an agreement has been reached in the Council;

the EU Member States:
1. To make sufficient financial resources available for the management and maintenance of the waterways as well as for the removal of bottlenecks in order to achieve a high-quality network of waterways;

2. To make sufficient financial resources available for the realization of the TEN-waterways network as laid down in the Decision of the Council and the European Parliament dated 29 April 2004, relating to the Community Guidelines for the Transeuropean transport network;

3. To share knowledge with respect to the development of intermodal nodes (e.g. inland ports, terminals and logistic centres) and to stimulate trade and industry to set up businesses at the waterside or close to an intermodal node;

4. To stimulate initiatives from the market in the field of innovation and information and communications technology and to facilitate these by removing legal and administrative barriers and by creating favourable conditions;

5. To ensure that the Directive on River Information Services, once adopted, is implemented according to schedule;

6. To search for solutions and create conditions in which inland navigation can develop in harmony with other users of inland waterways such as water management, ecology and recreation;

7. To expedite its examination of the proposal for changing Directive 82/714/EEC with respect to technical specifications for inland waterway vessels so that an agreement in the Council can be reached in December 2004;

8. To continue to point out to the industry the possibilities offered by funding schemes such as the 6th and 7th Framework Programme and Marco Polo and to stimulate the industry to submit applications;
Trade and industry:
1. To draw the attention of shippers, freight forwarders, freight integrators and industries as well as politicians and government more emphatically and more systematically to the possibilities and the economic value of transport by inland waterways;

2. By means of innovation and information and communications technology, to continuously improve safety, efficiency, reliability and environmental friendliness and thereby to strengthen the competitive position of inland navigation;

3. To promote the integration of inland navigation into the multimodal chain through more collaboration with the other parties in that chain;

4. To establish companies as much as possible on the waterside or close to an intermodal node;

5. To ensure that well founded, high-quality applications are submitted with respect to the various European funding schemes such as the 6th and 7th Framework Programme and Marco Polo;

6. To ensure sufficient handling capacity in ports in order to limit delays.