CONGESTION IN TRANSPORT

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Transport is the backbone of trade and economy. To meet the challenges of the increasing transport volume in Europe, the European Commission in 2001 released its White Paper “European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide”. Since then hardly any measures have been taken to solve the existing problems and to work on sustainable solutions.

Where the further implementation of the Lisbon goals is high on the agenda, transport is merely mentioned in the general discussion and does not have the attention of policy makers. It therefore needs a stronger economical positioning within this concept.

In this context, inland navigation offers numerous possibilities in terms of innovation, growth and capacity, environmental friendliness, safety and security. It disposes of sufficient capacities in order to absorb the increasing freight streams in Europe and to free Europe from a permanent road congestion.

AN INTEGRATED EUROPEAN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT

Although inland navigation in Europe carries more than 500 million tonnes a year and realizes an annual transport performance of some 130 billion ton kilometers the potential of this mode of transport still often is underestimated.

The European Commission recently understood the need to promote inland waterway transport by setting out an integrated action programme, focusing on concrete actions which are needed to fully exploit the market potential of this mode of transport and to make it more attractive to users.

The intended action programme covers a wide range of measures, for which the Commission itself, the Member States, the River Commissions and the industry should undertake concrete and if necessary concerted efforts. This coherent approach aims to contribute to a development of inland waterway transport which itself contributes to a sustainable development of the European Transport policy.

Political support

Due to the relatively under estimated role, IWT is suffering from a lack of political support. Inland Waterway Transport has proved to pay an important contribution to the demands within the European transport policy. Moreover it is able to meet the challenges of competitiveness, security and environment, while at the same time offering capacities in terms of infrastructure and fleet. Its development therefore may contribute significantly to the attainment of transport policy objectives, in particular shifting the balance between modes of transport. An overall review of the role and future of Inland Waterway Transport in the Enlarged European Union needs to consider the overall economic and political framework in which IWT is working. Within that

Mailaddress:
PO Box 23210• 3001 KE Rotterdam • The Netherlands

Address:
Vasteland 12e • 3011 BL Rotterdam • The Netherlands • T +31 (0)10 4116070 • F +31 (0)10 4129091
Email: info@ebu-uenf.org • Internet: www.ebu-uenf.org

overall framework, the role of IWT competing with or complementing other transport modes requires an analysis of EU transport and other policies and the instruments created to implement them. Therefore a "Masterplan for freight transport" needs to be set up in which a strong and cohesive policy marks the future development of the European transport industry.
The proposed integrated action programme for IWT can be considered as a solide basis for such an Masterplan.

The performance by freight transport in the EU-25 in 2005 according to EU-Energy and Transport in figures, Statistical pocketbook 2006, shows an IWT-share of 5,4 %, compared to 72,6 % Road, 16,5 % Rail and 5,6 % Pipeline.
Referring to the recent Midterm-review of the White Paper the growth of the European economy will influence the transport development. As according to the forecasts the various parts of industry will develop differently, these developments will influence the market segmentation of IWT. The overall growth until 2020 is intended to ly in between a rise of 100-160 % in export and 50-60 % in import in the EU-25, while in accordance with the forecast in the recent situation the change of the split of goods however will not be significant.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The functioning of freight and passenger transport depends on an excellent infrastructure. The proper maintenance of the existing waterway infrastructure, the removal of the major bottlenecks and the realization of the missing links is a condicio sine qua non for the further development of this sector. Therefore the Member States must take their responsibility regarding improvement and proper maintenance of waterway infrastructure as well as removal of bottlenecks, for which sufficient financial support needs to be guaranteed.

For the quick realisiation of the priority projects as defined on the priority list of the TEN-T's (18. Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube inland waterway axis and 30. Inland waterway Seine-Scheldt) a European Coordinator for inland waterway projects needs to be appointed and the highest financial support for these projects as foreseen in the revised guidelines of the TEN-T's needs to be guaranteed.

Although the canals and rivers in northwestern Europe are already being used on a large scale, they still offer much scope for doubling the weight carried. According to recent publications ("The power of Inland navigation, The social relevance of freight transport and inland shipping 2004-2005") the river Rhine can even absorb a sevenfold increase in transport activities. This means that this river can guarantee an unobstructed passage of goods form the north-east via the Danube to the south east.

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According to the PINE-study sufficient fairway conditions f.e. on the Upper Danube would have the following benefits:

- savings on investments in the road system
- savings on external costs of transport, such as:
  - reduction of accident cost
  - reduction of congestion costs
  - reduction of CO2-emissions (Kyoto-objectives)
  - reduction of noise
  - reduction of space consumption

ENVIRONMENT

Inland navigation has to protect its reputation as an environmentally sound mode of transport. Emission standards, fuel quality, noise protection and treatment of ship waste have always been a major concern of EBU. Currently, new methods to further reduce emissions even in the next decade are being discussed by ship operators, engine producers and authorities.

Inland shipping holds a positive record regarding environmental performance compared to other modes of transport and aims to keep this position. In this respect a study was conducted last year to assess the environmental performance of inland shipping.

The sector is committed to move forward on emission-low concepts in order to maintain its environmentally friendly image.

The benefits from inland navigation however must not only be considered in terms of emissions. They are the result of the overall concept and advantages of inland shipping in terms of congestion, maintenance and use of infrastructure, accidents and other relevant elements.

Modal shift to inland shipping therefore does not only contribute to an improvement of the environmental performance of the transport chain but to developing a sustainable transport system in general.

For modal shift towards inland shipping follows from this study it can contribute to an improvement of the environmental performance of the transport chain. This could be a chance in relation to the Kyoto targets for emissions reduction.

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SECURITY

After the entering into force of the ISPS Code and the Security Directive for Maritime Transport, the European Commission announced the idea of introducing common security standards for the entire transport chain.
The nature of inland waterway transport as such guarantees the most secure transport in general. In addition the inland shipping industry as professional sector took its responsibilities in the field of terror prevention and participated in the Commission's preparatory work by presenting own guidelines.

EBU advocates that the security measures to be taken should be realistic and proportional and do not influence the competitiveness of the sector. By enhanced co-operation between carriers, governments, shippers and other parties involved 'secured lanes' can be developed, which may benefit all parties in the logistic chain.

The inland shipping sector is, by nature (a vessel is not only capital equipment but also a residence) and because of its economic scale (a relatively large volume of cargo per transport unit), an intrinsically secure transport mode.

CONGESTION ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

IWT is a safe, environmentally friendly, cheap and reliable mode of transport. It is able to absorb a much higher transport volume than today is carried, if some general conditions are met and some major bottlenecks are removed.

Congestion in seaports

The most important seaports in Europe are connected with important rivers and canals. Since a number of years inland navigation is suffering from bottlenecks in the main European seaports (Rotterdam, Antwerp). Due to capacity problems in the field of container loading and discharging at the terminals, inland navigation has to deal with long waiting times, which cause severe problems to the liner services. Many of the inland container vessels provide their services in a strictly scheduled way and are expected to deliver the container in due time. This however, is not possible, due to unacceptable long waiting times at the container terminals, leading to (partly) loss of cargo and causing huge costs to the operators.
To solve this problem European conditions for the delivery of containers in seaports should be elaborated.

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Developing a coherent network of inland terminals and spatial planning

From a socio-economic point of view it is important to strengthen the interests of inland ports. Inland ports are necessary to facilitate the development of the industry and to keep and develop employment.

From this point of view a coherent network of inland ports should be developed. Regional cooperations between ports offers opportunities for political and financial frameworks.

Within this concept also spatial planning can be dealt with in a more coherent and responsible way, taking into account the different uses of rivers and canals.

Better integration of IWT into muldimodal transportchains by developing multimodal ports

Inland navigation plays an important role in the intermodal transport chain. IWT is always a good alternative for the development of intermodal concepts and deserves full support. Where as these concepts already have been developed in the past years in the field of container transport, additional measures need to be undertaken in order to fully exploit the possibilities of intermodal transport involving a.o. inland navigation.

In concrete terms centres of loading or discharging need to be located along rivers. Existing and new ports must be developed as intermodal ports, offering the possibility of smooth operations and handling of cargo from or on inland vessels and providing sufficient and good connections with road and rail. The efficiency of port infrastructure and excellent fairway conditions, a.o. sufficient height of bridges along the rivers and canals, largely determine the efficiency of intermodality.

Expansion of infrastructure and equipment

Container flows will grow tremendously in the coming years which makes the expansion of infrastructure and equipment of ports and terminals necessary, varying from anchor places to complete new terminals. When issuing space for new terminals ports have to guarantee sufficient facilities for IWT. It is both the responsibility of the port authorities and the terminals to guarantee sufficient IWT-facilities from the very beginning.

Terminal accessibility needs to be improved and guaranteed, together with equal treatment conditions compared to other modes of transport.

Removal of infrastructural bottlenecks

Economically important areas are situated around ports and along rivers. Their interconnect ability depends on the infrastructure.

Bearing in mind that the trans-European transport network is a key element in the relaunched Lisbon Strategy, the European Union identified a series of transnational axes and projects, amongst which two related to inland waterways, the Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube inland waterway axis and the Inland waterway

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Seine-Scheldt. The last mentioned project for example would connect 6 big Western European seaports to the hinterland in France and Belgium and would realize a unique transport system in this area.
Another major bottlenecks f.e. on the Rhine-Main-Danube-Corridor, the so called Straubing Vilshofen section, causes severe obstacles to transport efficiency. Due to insufficient depth of the waterway in this section, inland navigation lost some 4,5 mio t in the past five years, which is a loss of 15,7 % of the freight passing this section. The loss of income as a result of this situation amounts some 60 mio EUR. Additonally some 20 mio EUR had to be paid for the carriage of these goods to alternative solutions.
Another classical example of congested waterways is the German section of the Mosel, which was canalized in the 50ies based on an annual transport volume of 10 mio t of freight. The average transport volume carried on the Mosel in the past years lies with some 15 mio t, which leads to long waiting periods in front of the outdated locks. Besides it often happens that the locks are not working which leads to a shift of cargo to the road of some 40.000 t per day!

The European Barge Union EBU was founded on 14 December 2001 by 8 national organisations representing the national inland navigation interests in six different European countries.
The association has its seat in Brussels, Belgium and in Rotterdam.

EBU represents the interest of inland navigation on a pan European level and deals with all questions, arising out of the future development of the inland navigation industry and inland waterway transport.
To realise this aim EBU deals with

- the development of the European transport policy
- the improvement of the economic position of inland navigation
- the structured cooperation with national and international institutions
- the exchange of information and experience between the parties involved

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