

Distr.: Restricted
22 June 2021

English only

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

Fifty-ninth session

Geneva, 23–25 June 2021

Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda

Standardization of technical and safety requirements in inland navigation:

Modernization and greening of the inland waterway fleet in Europe

EBU Hybrid Event 2021: Inland Waterway Transport key to deliver the European Green Deal and Contribute to the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (21 June 2021)

Transmitted by the European Barge Union

The European Union Commission in the Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS) underlines the importance of Inland Waterway Transport as sustainable mode to realize its future sustainability goals. The Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS) seeks to increase the share of Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) by 25 % by 2030 and by 50 % by 2050. Based upon the Green Deal a key objective is to deliver a 90% reduction in transport- related greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

EBU is supporting the European Green Deal (EGD), in particular its aims to reduce transport emissions by shifting a substantial part of the freight carried by road to inland waterway transport (IWT) which

in the SSMS is underpinned by concrete figures. IWT is known as an energy efficient, safe and sustainable alternative to other transport modes. It contributes to decongesting overloaded road networks for cargo and people. A better integration into transport chains and shifting higher volumes to Inland Waterway Transport will substantially contribute to realise the objectives of the EGD. The IWT sector is prepared to take over much higher volumes and to substantially increase its share in the coming years if the right framework conditions are met. EBU in this context welcomes the own initiative reports by the European Parliament on both the SSMS and IWT in which the important role of IWT is emphasised.

Concrete measures and an implementation strategy needed

To support the policy objectives, the European Commission is expected to release its NAIADES III action programme short termed. EBU counts on the support of the European Commission and the European Union member States to fully tap the potential of IWT by concrete actions with regard to infrastructure, greening, digitalisation and attracting the sector to qualified people in this programme.

In particular, the energy transition and the modal shift towards Inland Waterway Transport call for concrete actions and a robust program of funding within a new implementation strategy for IWT. This should be a joint effort under a strong governance structure by the European Commission, member States, River Commissions and relevant International Organisations.

To support the discussion regarding the energy transition of the IWT sector, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine together with its member States launched a couple of studies regarding the financing of the innovation of the fleet. The results of these studies are expected in autumn and will deliver important insight in the financing and funding needs of the European fleet in the energy transition path.

The event was held on 21 June 2021 in Brussels. Some 200 participants joined the event, at which the hosts for the first time after the COVID 19 lockdown welcomed representatives of the European institutions, river commissions, industry representatives and stake holders in Brussels.

In their key note speeches, both Commissioner for Transport Adina Valean and Director General of DG MOVE Henrik Hololei pointed to the very important role of IWT in the framework of the recent European Union policies. In acknowledging the high modal shift potential they emphasised that even though inland navigation is one of the most CO₂ efficient modes per transported tonnes of goods, one of the big challenges for the sector is to move further towards the zero emissions vessels. In its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS) the Commission seeks to increase the share of IWT by 25 % by 2030 and by 50 % by 2050. “The Commission will put forward an ambitious action plan, NAIADES 3, to focus on these targets” Commissioner Valean announced in her speech. NAIADES 3 will look to future challenges and opportunities meaning that the Commission is working on a busy agenda for IWT in the coming years.

Call for right framework conditions

President of EBU Mr. Paul Goris in his speech emphasised that the sector is supporting the objectives of the Green Deal and awaiting the announced NAIADES 3 action plan. “IWT is prepared to take the necessary steps towards 0 emission and to take over much higher volumes of freight on the waterways if the right framework conditions are met” he stated. That means:

- More investment in infrastructure by the Member States and much more funding out of CEF for waterways
- An increased share of Inland waterway transport by a full integration in the multimodal chain, creating the right regulatory framework and correcting imbalances such as the long lasting port congestion
- Supporting the energy transition of the sector via tailor made funding for the large scale deployment of green technologies for the fleet, reliable alternative fuels and digitalisation”.

Both Director General Mr. H. Hololei and Mr. D. Mes, member of the cabinet of Commissioner Timmermans of DG CLIMA, confirmed to be well aware of the specificities of the sector that needs a tailor-made approach. For this purpose, financial opportunities should be facilitated by public authorities at regional and national levels, by the river commissions, as well as at European Union level to make the business case.

The European Barge Union (EBU) is the European association representing the inland navigation freight and passenger carrying industry on a Pan-European level. Its members are the national associations of barge owners and barge operators as well as (international) associations in the field of inland navigation and related areas. EBU’s mission is to contribute

to the development of a sustainable and efficient Pan-European transport system via a larger share of inland waterway transport. www.ebu-uenf.org
