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REPORT

on the promotion of inland waterway transport: NAIADES, an integrated European Action Programme for inland waterway transport (2006/2085(INI))

Committee on Transport and Tourism

Rapporteur: Corien Wortmann-Kool

CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	8
PROCEDURE	12

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the promotion of inland waterway transport: NAIADES, an integrated European Action Programme for inland waterway transport (2006/2085(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission on the promotion of inland waterway transport: NAIADES (COM(2006)0006),
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 718/1999 of 29 March 1999 on a Community-fleet capacity policy to promote inland waterway transport¹,
 - having regard to the white paper "European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide",
 - having regard to the findings of the inland navigation high level meeting held in Vienna on 15 February 2006,
 - having regard the Lisbon agenda for jobs and growth,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A6-0000/2006),
- A. whereas transport flows are expected to grow and inland waterways still offer a lot of free capacity and can contribute to competitive transport solutions using a combination of modes of transport,
- B. whereas greater ambition is needed in Europe in order to fully exploit more of the free capacity on inland waterways and the market potential of inland navigation in isolation and as a part of multi-modal transport chains across Europe, including public and private parties at national and Community level, and in order to increase the potential for raising the volume of transport on inland waterways with relatively low infrastructure costs,
- C. whereas close cooperation among the European Commission, the River Commissions, the Member States and all interested private parties is of essential importance to improving competitiveness and developing waterway transport,

The NAIADES action programme

1. Recognises that the European transport system is increasingly confronted with capacity problems, leading to congestion and delays, and that inland waterway transport can help reduce congestion, improve freight transport safety, contribute to better energy efficiency and protect the environment;
2. Supports, therefore, the initiative of the Commission to establish an integrated European action programme for inland waterway transport: NAIADES (Navigation and inland

¹ OJ L 90, 2.4.1999, p. 1.

waterway action and development in Europe);

3. Invites the Member States to further develop national policies to stimulate inland waterway transport (IWT), taking into account the European Action Programme, and to encourage regional, local and port authorities and industries to do likewise;

1. Markets

4. Emphasizes that existing markets should be consolidated, in particular by making infrastructure more reliable and better integrated across the whole supply chain;
5. Stresses that links with the new EU Member States in Eastern and Central Europe and also with Romania and Bulgaria must be developed and brought into line with current technology, which means that additional infrastructure measures must be considered and measures relating to intermodality and interoperability taken;
6. Stresses the need to develop opportunities for innovative multi-modal services, to build new markets in which cooperation among IWT operators and users, national and regional authorities will be essential;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in view of the sector's consisting mainly of small businesses, to improve access to finance, and especially risk capital, for start-ups, fully taking into account, when planning and carrying out relevant measures, the sector's specific structure;
8. Fully supports in this regard the Commission's initiative to provide sources of information on the subject of financing, for example a funding handbook containing a list of European, national and regional aid instruments for IWT, covering, if appropriate, funding from the European Investment Fund;
9. Asks the Commission to publish as soon as possible State aid guidelines for inland waterway transport support schemes and to adopt de minimis rules that take due account of the needs of the inland navigation sector;
10. Welcomes the Commission's plan to screen existing bottlenecks at national and European level that hamper the development of IWT; calls for all public and private parties involved to contribute to this screening, to examine potential solutions and look for best practices, with the results of the screening being taken into account when drafting future legislation or taking new measures;
11. Stresses that administrative bottlenecks should be removed and procedures simplified, in particular by making optimal use of e-communication and by establishing one-stop-shops; believes that specific attention should be paid to procedures in sea and inland ports as well as to legislation on the environment, waste and food safety that leads to the disruption of logistics processes;

2. Infrastructure

12. Points out that the reliability of the waterway network and the availability of multi-functional (inland) ports is the most important condition for the further development of

IWT, above all as a part of multimodal freight transport chains, and for the sector in technical and economic respects and emphasizes the particular responsibility of Member States to increase their efforts to ensure adequate and reliable infrastructure, whilst taking into account environmental risks and aspects;

13. Points to the importance of River Information Services to contributing to a more efficient and safer use of the inland waterway network and its links with other modes of transport; calls upon the Commission and the Member States to include RIS as part of the multi-annual indicative programme of TEN-T and to fully tap the potential of RIS for achieving sustainable logistics;
14. Points to the need to integrate the waterway system with maritime navigation by developing access to the sea, improving interfaces between inland waterway and maritime systems, and investing in new combined inland waterway and seagoing vessels, including vessels of innovative design;
15. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with Member States and any third countries involved, to draw up a European Development Plan which should contain an up-to-date inventory of the infrastructure on European inland waterways and to provide more information on waterways in need of maintenance and other structural improvements to infrastructure; also calls on the Commission, in doing so, to make use of the existing findings of scientific studies and expert reports in the Member States;
16. Calls upon the Commission to designate as soon as possible, and by the end of 2006 at the latest, a European TEN-T coordinator for IWT to support the implementation of the IWT TEN-T priority projects, drawing on experience with existing coordinators;
17. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to give a higher preferential rate of at least 20% to all inland waterway projects of common interest and to give greater priority to inland waterways projects of common interest in the multi-annual TEN-T program;
18. Calls upon Member States to consider the IWT potential in land use planning and in economic policies at federal, regional and local levels so as to actively encourage the development of waterside commercial and logistic sites, taking into account sustainable transport and job creation in industry and distribution, and to pay special attention to small waterways which have an unexploited potential to enhance freight mobility;

3. Fleet

19. Recalls the need to lay down in 2007 stricter Community limits for SO_x, PM, NO_x and CO₂ emissions, in particular by promoting low-sulphur fuel; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide incentives to accelerate the introduction and use of fuel efficient and environmentally friendly engines in inland waterway transport in order to improve its energy-efficiency;
20. Acknowledging that emissions are closely linked to the quality of the fuel available on the market, invites the Commission to submit as soon as possible a proposal setting stricter standards for inland shipping fuels;
21. Invites the Commission to submit in 2007 a proposal for a European Waterway Transport

Innovation Fund for the financing of new demand-based investments and innovative concepts of European interest in the area of logistics, technology and the environment requiring cross border cooperation and interoperability, a Fund that, as a key instrument of the NAIADES Action Programme, should be financed as to one third by the sector (the existing Inland Waterway [reserve] Fund, created under Regulation (EC) No 718/1999), as a means of co-financing, for another third by the EU and the remaining third by the Member States and, further, to draw up, in close cooperation with the sector, the conditions under which the fund should be established; points out that support for information offices should be considered as an option;

22. Stresses the need to encourage the development of clean and efficient vessels under the Seventh Framework Programme on research and development. Points, in this respect, to developments in vessel construction for use on different kinds of waters, including limited draught, which can promote IWT even on waters with low or variable water levels, without harming the natural environment; considers, in this connection, that there should be a particular focus on information and communication technologies and the design, eco-efficiency and equipment of vessels;

4. Jobs, skills and image

23. Recognises that the shortage of entrepreneurs and staff is becoming a problem for the IWT sector, given the aging of current personnel and a lack of appeal to newcomers;
24. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue their efforts to harmonise manning requirements and boat masters' certificates, and to promote the mutual recognition of qualifications, e.g. via the European Qualifications Framework (EQF);
25. Calls on the Commission, the River Commissions and the Member States to develop, in cooperation with the sector, modern and market-oriented training programmes for the sector, where possible using common training standards, also cooperating with maritime training programmes such as "Leadership", to attract newcomers to work in an international environment and to offer attractive career perspectives;
26. Stresses the importance of enforcing existing social legislation, to safeguard good working conditions;
27. Notes there is still a lack of awareness of the possibilities of carriage of goods by IWT in particular as regards the flexibility and sustainability potential of IWT;
28. Recognises that, in order for it to be fully utilised and successful, the economic value of and possibilities for IWT need to be explained and advertised; calls therefore for support for existing IWT promotion offices and the creation of new ones in Member States with IWT potential, which can advise and encourage transport users to use inland shipping, and for support for authorities in the identification of problems and definition of policies;
29. Proposes that this European network for promoting IWT should be integrated into a European network for promoting intermodality, using existing structures and experience gained in promoting other modes of transport, in particular such as already exist at European level in relation to promoting short sea shipping;

30. Calls on the Member States and stakeholders concerned, in the absence of dedicated Community funding, to undertake to ensure the financial sustainability of this network;
31. Notes the importance of a European Market Observation System involving all actors, providing comparable market information, notably to allow timely and responsible investment decisions, to identify strong and weak points and to discover possible new markets;

5. The institutional framework

32. Points out that the growth and prosperity of IWT must be the focal point for future discussions on the institutional framework; stresses, in this connection, that it is important to take account of the existing competences of all relevant parties, to make use of the expertise of international organisations and to avoid additional bureaucracy;
33. Calls for intensified and enhanced cooperation between the River Commissions and the Community, to be laid down in a Memorandum of Understanding, containing at least the following:
 - implementation of the NAIADES Action Programme;
 - better exchange of acquired knowledge and human resources in the field of IWT between the Community, the Member States and the River Commissions;

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34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Commission has presented an Action Programme, NAIADES, in order to promote inland waterway transport (IWT). It states that IWT, as a safe, environmentally friendly mode of transport with a lot of free capacity on its infrastructure, can contribute to modal shift and ease the congestion problems affecting other transport modes. The Commission's Action Programme covers five strategic areas: market, fleet, jobs and skills, image and infrastructure.

Your Rapporteur supports the assumptions and the general outline of the NAIADES Action Programme.

Inland waterway navigation offers a means of coping with several of the challenges connected with the sustainability of transport and the environment which we face today. It therefore deserves more political priority and greater ambition is needed generally to improve the benefits of the IWT sector and to utilise the huge potential inland waterways offers. Particular attention should be given to the reliability of infrastructure and links to other transport modes, notably at inland ports and sea ports. It should therefore be linked to land use planning and more effort should be made to make inland navigation more sustainable with the use of cleaner fuels and vessels that are appropriate in type and size for the particular waterway on which they are used. Your Rapporteur believes that such an approach can lead to the development of new markets where IWT has not yet been considered as an option.

Most of the IWT sector consists of family-owned small enterprises. They are self-sustaining businesses and operate primarily/solely with own capital. However, they lack resources for radical innovation. Political support and promotional activities can help the sector to become an even more vital link in modern logistical chains.

In this initiative report your Rapporteur would like to emphasize the following elements:

1. Development of Markets

In Western Europe the IWT market has grown considerably in traditional bulk transport and high-value markets for container transport. IWT has also proven to be a particularly good way to transport dangerous goods, such as chemical and fuels, safely. Still new markets can be developed; industry and freight forwarders sometimes simply are not aware of IWT's possibilities. Following enlargement, trade exchanges between western and eastern Europe have been rising spectacularly. This gives impetus to the development of new markets and can in general increase the share of IWT in the transport of goods.

Access to finance and procedural barriers are significant hindrances to the development of markets. When it comes to finance, it is important that IWT entrepreneurs, generally small businesses, find their way to and can get access to capital. For this reason your Rapporteur supports the Commission's initiatives to develop a "funding handbook" and to propose State aid guidelines for the IWT sector. Examples of funding options are the European Investment Fund, the ETF start-up facility, Seed Capital Action and the SME Guarantee Facility.

Furthermore, IWT is often hampered by bottlenecks of a procedural or administrative nature. Such bottlenecks disrupt the logistical process and weaken the competitive position of IWT

with regard to other modes of transport. Sometimes different rules as between transport modes or within or between ports make the smooth development of IWT difficult.

Too often procedures arising from legislation not directly related to transport, e.g. directives concerning waste, food safety or the environment, cause enormous bureaucratic problems for the inland shipping sector. More attention to implementing rules which take into consideration the demands of an efficient (waterway) transport system is therefore highly desirable.

In this regard your Rapporteur very much welcomes the screening and harmonisation of existing legislation. It is of utmost importance to improve the regulatory environment by streamlining administrative and documentary requirements. The screening should not be limited to Community legislation, but also look at national, regional and local practices. Therefore, whereas the Commission has prime responsibility for carrying out such a screening, the participation of other public and private parties concerned is essential.

2. Infrastructure

A reliable and well functioning infrastructure is a precondition to maintaining existing markets and developing new ones. The current maintenance backlog of the IWT infrastructure in Europe is one of the most urgent problems to be resolved. Prime responsibility lies with national or regional authorities, which too often give little priority to the maintenance and development of the IWT infrastructure. In general one tends to forget that the maintenance of existing infrastructure does not necessarily need huge investments. Limited but well timed and directed interventions can avoid bottlenecks at relatively modest cost. Maintaining the condition of banks, locks and bridges can contribute to efficient IWT and avoid bottlenecks. At European level the Commission can support this by making an up-to-date inventory of the state of inland waterways in Europe and providing information on the need for their maintenance or possible improvement. In such a way a European waterway infrastructure development plan can be a helpful instrument in raising awareness and promote investments.

When it comes to more extensive new infrastructure plans, your Rapporteur would like to note that only 1.5% of the TEN-budget is dedicated to Inland Waterways projects. The connection of river basins is of crucial importance for long uninterrupted transport chains via inland waterways. This makes the implementation of the two current TEN-T inland waterway projects, Straubing-Vilshoven and Seine-Nord, urgent. Your Rapporteur regrets that there is no TEN-T coordinator for IWT projects. A European coordinator could facilitate the implementation of these projects, as is the case for the other TEN-T projects. Finally, River Information Services improve traffic management and can also contribute to a reliable and efficient infrastructure. Their implementation should be carried out without delay.

3. Fleet

As vessels have a long lifetime and require substantial initial investment, the renewal of the fleet will take place only slowly. Innovation is however of great importance to achieving high quality shipping and thus the development of spin-off innovative concepts of European interest should be a priority.

As for sustainability, vessels have in the first place to be sustainable in terms of emissions. Secondly, they have to be sustainable in relation to the waters they are using for transport.

The first and most important step in reducing emissions from vessels is the improvement of the quality of the fuels used. A reduction in sulphur especially will lead to lower SO_x emissions. Although low-sulphur fuels already exist, their availability is limited. Community legislation introducing a common standard for low-sulphur fuel would help significantly to achieve its general use. The Commission should therefore be invited to come forward in 2007 with a proposal for stricter standards for inland shipping fuels. In fact, the introduction of cleaner fuels would also allow the installation of cleaner motors that will emit less CO (up to 30%), PM (up to 35%) and NO_x. Thus, the introduction of clean fuels will have positive spill-over effects for other emissions as well. Particulates (PM) and NO_x can also be reduced by means of filters (PM traps) or catalysts, but even these work better with low-sulphur fuels.

Apart from making vessels cleaner, the development and use of new types of vessels should also be considered. Differences in infrastructure call for different vessels. Where the Rhine over the years has been adapted to inland navigation it could develop as an "IWT highway". For the Danube and others rivers, natural barriers and variations in water level can be handicaps for inland navigation. Trying to overcome these handicaps by extensive infrastructure works (deepening of rivers, construction of dams and dikes) may give rise to other problems of a more environmental nature, notably flooding. Therefore, instead of adapting rivers to vessels, the option of adapting vessels to the rivers should be explored more actively. The development of such vessels could lead to the opening of new IWT markets in areas with varying water levels, without harming the natural environment. Recent events have shown that dams and dikes can provide only local protection against flooding, whereas other measures, like the use of water retention areas, present more fundamental and sustainable solutions.

A European Waterway Transport Innovation Fund could be a good instrument to finance such innovations. The precise application of such a Fund remains to be specified, but it is essential that proposals for investment are demand-based and involve cross-border cooperation. The basis for such a Fund exists already in the form of the existing Inland Waterway [reserve] Fund, created under Regulation (EC) No 718/1999 and completely financed by the sector. It would be appropriate if the EU and its Member States would pay similar amounts into the Fund, so as each to contribute one third of the total value.

4. Jobs, skills and image

The recruitment of new staff has become a major problem for the IWT sector. One solution to this is the further harmonisation of requirements, such as manning requirements and boatmasters' certificates. The mutual recognition of qualifications could be an even quicker way to achieve international mobility in the labour market. To make working in the IWT sector more attractive, a positive image should be presented, stressing the dynamic and international aspects of the work. The sector can no longer rely on tradition, but should develop modern recruitment campaigns.

The promotion of IWT is also a way to of developing new markets. The establishment of promotion offices and a European Market Observatory System are means of attaining this goal. Last but not least, the enforcement of social legislation is a key component of good working conditions, along with social dialogue.

5. Institutional framework

Institutional aspects are important, but can never be a goal in themselves. Any institutional framework should have the prosperity of the IWT sector as its focal point, and the implementation of the NAIADES programme should be one of its main priorities. A better institutional framework starts with intensified and enhanced cooperation between existing organisations, notably the River Commissions, the Community and the Member States. The exchange of knowledge and people, for instance by means of secondments, can help the integration of organisations and the exchange of best practices.

PROCEDURE

Title	Promotion of inland waterway transport: NAIADES, an integrated European Action Programme for inland waterway transport		
Procedure number	2006/2085(INI)		
Committee responsible Date authorisation announced in plenary	TRAN 6.4.2006		
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	ENVI 6.4.2006	EMPL 6.4.2006	
Not delivering opinion(s) Date of decision	ENVI 25.4.2006	EMPL 1.2.2006	
Enhanced cooperation Date announced in plenary			
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Corien Wortmann-Kool 22.2.2006		
Previous rapporteur(s)			
Discussed in committee	20.4.2006	19.6.2006	12.9.2006
Date adopted	12.9.2006		
Result of final vote	+ 38 - 0 0 0		
Members present for the final vote	Gabriele Albertini, Margrete Auken, Philip Bradbourn, Michael Cramer, Arūnas Degutis, Christine De Veyrac, Petr Duchoň, Saïd El Khadraoui, Robert Evans, Emanuel Jardim Fernandes, Luis de Grandes Pascual, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Stanisław Jałowiecki, Georg Jarzembowski, Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, Jörg Leichtfried, Fernand Le Rachinel, Bogusław Liberadzki, Eva Lichtenberger, Erik Meijer, Robert Navarro, Seán Ó Neachtain, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Josu Ortuondo Larrea, Willi Piecyk, Luís Queiró, Reinhard Rack, Renate Sommer, Ulrich Stockmann, Marta Vincenzi, Corien Wortmann-Kool		
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Zsolt László Becsey, Nathalie Griesbeck, Helmuth Markov, Willem Schuth, Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García		
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Brian Simpson		
Date tabled	21.9.2006		
Comments (available in one language only)			