

**Participation of  
Mr. Paquet at the EBU-Seminary  
Strasbourg, 17 January 2012**

**Opening Keynote Address**

## **Sailing Ahead on High Quality Infrastructure**

### **Introduction**

- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- I would first of all thank you for the invitation to this event and congratulate EBU with its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. From the very beginning of its existence, EBU has contributed actively to the work of the European institutions helping us to advance the cause of the inland waterway transport sector.
- It is therefore my pleasure to celebrate this event in the setting of this prestigious palace.
- In the course of an average year, around 140 billion ton-kilometres of transport work is performed on inland waterways, allowing to transport around 500 million tons of cargo are transported. The network in the EU includes about 37.000 km inland waterways in 20 Member States; 12 Member States are directly interconnected through inland waterways.
- Inland waterway transport is still the most climate friendly and energy-efficient mode of transport and it has, contrary to other transport modes, lots of spare capacity and emits low levels of noise. Furthermore, it has a good safety record. These clear assets make it an indispensable part of an efficient, integrated multi-modal European transport system.
- The EU has recognized the great potential of inland waterway transport already for some time, but we also recognise the challenges for realising this potential. We therefore need to focus our efforts on the most crucial issues for inland waterway transport, especially in times of economic hardship.

## White Paper and NAIADES

- The Transport policy White Paper published last year, formulates the primary goal of creating a Single European Transport Area. The integrated transport system of the future should help the EU in achieving its overall target to reduce transport related greenhouse gas emissions by 60% until 2050, while at the same time accommodating the expected increasing demand for mobility.
- The high energy efficiency of the inland waterway transport sector and its available capacity justifies the particular attention paid in the Commission's Transport policy White Paper to this form of transport.
- One of the main novelties of the Commission's roadmap to a single European Transport Area is the recognition of the importance of transport infrastructure as an enabler for efficient transport and as an engine for economic growth. Moving from an infrastructure financing programme to an integrated infrastructure policy represents a paradigm shift which I feel is still insufficiently understood. The consequences for inland waterway transport, which depends strongly on the quality of its underlying transport infrastructure are significant. It therefore goes without saying that the opportunities from this new policy orientation for inland navigation are huge. But opportunities are worthless if they are not realised and transformed into real benefits.
- This is why it will be crucial to ensure that the ambition of the Commission set out in the White paper and reflected in our proposals on TEN-T and the associated Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) is kept intact.
- We will only be able to deliver on our objectives if infrastructure policy and the various branches of transport policy are developed in an integrated way, be it for ports – inland and maritime -, for rail, for road transport or indeed for inland navigation. Only in this way can synergies be fully exploited and will we make the most effective use of the available instruments.
- Against this background, I consider that the decision of the Commission not to fragment the available resources over a range of smaller

programmes is a good one. It will allow to reap economies of scale, to reach sufficient critical mass and bring coherence from which all the transport sectors will benefit. Inland waterways transport stands between the first to gain from this approach, given the priority given to maritime and inland ports alike, to the intermodal connection of ports, to ITS and its interconnection for various modes of transport, on top of the support that we should and we want to give to improving the inland waterway infrastructure.

- It is therefore obvious that the successor of NAIADES should heavily rely on the integration with the TEN-T infrastructure policy and its associated funding instruments, but VP Kallas will uncover more about our intentions and ambition in this respect.
- Ambition which should be high, because without it, Inland waterway transport will not be able to realize the trend break which is required if we want to achieve our policy objectives.

## **TEN-T and Connecting Europe Facility**

- Let me now zoom in on the TEN-T policy and the associated Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The Commission adopted on 19 October its proposal for a Regulation on Union Guidelines for the development of the TEN-T network, together with a proposal for a Regulation establishing the CEF, which is the funding counterpart of infrastructure development.
- These instruments will contribute significantly to establishing a competitive and resource-efficient transport system, as they will help to reduce congestion, support the development of innovative transport and boost economic development and growth. At the same time, they will help us to achieve the EU's 2020 goals by giving priority to environmentally friendly modes of transport: rail, short sea shipping and inland waterways. They will improve the efficiency of transport operations by encouraging the deployment of intelligent transport systems and the efficient use of the infrastructure.

## The TEN-T Guidelines

- As you know, the concept of the TEN-T guidelines is based on a dual layer structure: the core and the comprehensive network. The core network is the main innovation. It has been identified through a methodology which has been subject to a thorough consultation process of the Member States, the European Parliament and interested stakeholders. It embraces both the existing and planned infrastructure, and identifies a network of nodes and links that offer the highest European added value. This approach should enable us to focus our priorities and move forward towards a consistent network.
- Inland waterways figure prominently in the core network. Indeed, we have taken the exceptional decision to promote the whole comprehensive inland waterway network – i.e. all inland waterways from class IV AGN specification upwards –, to become part of the core network. We have taken this decision to give a strong political signal that we want to do something about the precarious situation of inland waterway transport.

### Inland ports

- This priority for inland waterways is also reflected in the selection of inland ports. We have indeed set a very low threshold of 500 000 tons per year for inclusion of inland ports into the comprehensive network. As regards the inland core ports, we have relied mainly on geographic criteria: the ports which correspond to the nodes of the core network plus the ports which are situated on TEN-T network intersections, consistent with our focus on the intermodal nature of the core network. Quality inland ports have a substantial role to play in making inland navigation more competitive. Their inclusion in TEN-T will not allow to support their development, but also help to focus the attention on their responsibility in this respect.

### Corridor implementation

- To implement the core network – which we want to achieve by 2030 –, the Commission proposes a reinforced corridor approach. These corridors will help to develop the network in a coordinated way subject to binding timetables. The TEN-T corridors will involve all actors to develop a project pipeline, to bring together investment resources and to coordinate

project implementation. It is important to note that corridors are of a multimodal nature. The corridor implementation will therefore focus on the integration of inland waterway transport into the multimodal logistic chains. This integration will also be achieved through the deployment of River Information Services. Such services should seamlessly communicate with ITS systems of other transport modes. In view of the positive experiences we have had with the European coordinators for the current guidelines implementation, we intend to designate again European coordinators to facilitate the coordinated implementation of core network corridors.

- It is important to recognize that the corridors are only a tool to implement the core network. They are not an end in themselves. In this context, you may have noted that although the methodology of the corridors is enshrined in the TEN-T Guidelines with its time horizon of 2050, the identification of corridors is integrated into the CEF Regulation, which has a life time of six years. This means that we consider that these corridors are more likely to evolve than the more stable TEN-T core and comprehensive networks. We have nevertheless taken great care to ensure that the multi-modal European transport corridors of the TEN-T network proposed by the Commission cover the main inland waterway corridors in the EU.

#### Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

- This brings me to the CEF. In line with the new priority on infrastructure, which is not only a transport policy but a priority for the whole Commission, the Commission has significantly increased the budgetary envelope for infrastructure: to the tune of 50bn € foreseen for transport, energy and telecommunications, of which 32 bn € are earmarked for transport.
- The CEF financing instrument has a very clear focus upon the TEN-T Core network. This focus makes it fully complementary to the other major EU financing instruments, such as the Cohesion funds which will support the comprehensive network and the HORIZON 2020 instrument supporting research and innovation. Within the core network, the CEF will give priority to bottlenecks and cross-border connections – also for inland waterway transport, on top of horizontal priorities such as

innovative management and services. The CEF should allow in a flexible way to use the best form of financial aid according to the situation, in particular, grants, procurements and financial instruments. Financial instruments can help to overcome the current difficulty of the sector with respect to access to finance. We have also foreseen the possibility for funding not only "hard" infrastructure, but also measures which will allow more efficient and more sustainable use of infrastructure, such as intelligent management systems and alternative fuels infrastructure.

- High budgets however bring also high responsibilities. We are very committed to applying the "use it or lose it" rule to ensure the timely delivery of projects. We intend to move away from a framework of loose promises and replace it with legally binding commitments from all sides, including the Member States. It means the Member States will have to do everything in their power to complete projects of European interest within a reasonable timeframe and take appropriate actions to prevent significant delays.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- To summarize, I am convinced that the follow-up to the Naiades action programme in combination with the new TEN-T Guidelines supported from the CEF and other EU financing instruments, the EU will provide a solid framework for action by the Member States, River Commissions and the business sector to improve the market situation of inland waterway transport sector. The provision of a quality inland waterway infrastructure including well performing ports and a better interconnection with other modes of transport, the addressing of market barriers and obstacles in the field of jobs and skills and the modernisation of the fleet should take us a great step further on the road (or river), sailing towards a successful and sustainable inland waterway sector. I am looking forward to a continued good cooperation with EBU and all stakeholders along that path.
- Thank you very much for your attention.