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DRAFT REPORT

on towards Future-proof Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) in Europe
(2021/2015(INI))

Committee on Transport and Tourism

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on towards Future-proof Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) in Europe (2021/2015(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 25 February 2021 entitled ‘Evaluation of Directive 2005/44/EC on Harmonised River Information Services (RIS)’ (SWD(2021)0050),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 24 February 2021 entitled ‘Evaluation of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package (SWD(2021)0047),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 9 December 2020 entitled ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future’ (COM(2020)0789),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 9 December 2020 accompanying the communication entitled ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future’ (SWD(2020)0331),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 18 September 2018 entitled ‘Mid-term progress report on the implementation of the NAIADES II action programme for the promotion of inland waterway transport (covering the period 2014-2017)’ (SWD(2018)0428),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2017/2397 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation¹,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2016/1629 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels²,
- having regard to Directive 2014/94/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure³,
- having regard to Directive 2005/44/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on harmonised river information services (RIS) on inland waterways in the Community⁴,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 21 October 2020 on policy considerations for a pandemic and other major crisis contingency plan for the European freight

¹ [OJ L 345, 27.12.2017, p. 53.](#)

² [OJ L 252, 16.9.2016, p. 118.](#)

³ [OJ L 307, 28.10.2014, p. 1.](#)

⁴ [OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 152.](#)

transport sector,

- having regard to its resolution of XX April 2021 on technical and operational measures for more efficient and cleaner maritime transport⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2019 on NAIADES II – An action programme to support inland waterway transport⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2016 on unleashing the potential of waterborne passenger transport⁸,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A9-0000/2021),
- A. whereas European countries have a variety of different fleets of inland vessels, which makes inland waterway transport very convenient and useful for transporting different types and large quantities of cargo to different destinations on either large or small rivers;
- B. whereas ports play an important role as multimodal connecting points offering other modes of transport that can take over freight loads temporarily, and whereas it is therefore important that sea and inland ports have good connections with the hinterland;
- C. whereas river cruises, ferries, water taxis and water shuttles should become a cleaner option for tourism and public transport in regions and cities with accessible and navigable rivers and canals, which would make urban mobility more sustainable and effective;

Modal shift: freight from road to inland waterways

1. Calls on the Commission to take the initiative on green and digital leadership and to build on existing programmes such as NAIADES, which should inspire all stakeholders within the waterway transport sector, as well as other transport sectors, and in particular rail, to work together towards a sustainable future, while supporting the competitiveness of the sector as a whole;
2. Stresses that more investment in updating river and canal infrastructure (for example, locks, bridges and interoperable deployment of digital technologies across borders) is key, while respecting the applicable environmental law;
3. Notes that there is not a ‘one size fits all’ solution for tackling the problem of low water levels as a result of climate change; deplores, however, that the problems of the inland

⁵ Texts adopted, XX.

⁶ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0005.

⁷ [OJ C 449, 23.12.2020, p. 154.](#)

⁸ [OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 29.](#)

waterway sector, caused by the low water levels, have not been taken duly into account;

Greening inland waterway transport

4. Highlights the importance of further encouraging and supporting initiatives aimed at the use of alternative fuels and propulsion methods for shipping in accordance with the principle of technological neutrality; points out, in this regard, the value of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a transitional solution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in inland waterway transport; notes that the existing, technically mature vessels and distribution infrastructure now based on LNG could be used for biogas and will therefore be essential in scaling up Bio-LNG as a marine fuel;
5. Highlights that low-emission and zero-emission alternatives should become more financially attractive than conventional propulsions and that this trend should be accelerated, for example by a realistic, progressively increasing blending percentage based on an impact assessment;
6. Points out that modular construction of ships provides flexibility, predictability and cost savings; stresses in this regard that standardised ship components, design and development create a good basis that can be used in different ways (cross-modality), and furthermore facilitate the retrofitting of more sustainable propulsion systems as soon as they enter the market; highlights that in addition to environmental benefits, modular construction can lead to cost savings and help reduce risks thanks to the predictable production and construction process and should therefore be incentivised and promoted;

Digitalisation and autonomous shipping

7. Notes that far-reaching digitalisation and data collection contributes to a cleaner environment and improved safety on board and result in more efficient routing and better communication and information exchange between ships, ports and infrastructure; stresses the need to further harmonise River Information Services (RIS), which would solve the problems arising from different interpretations of technical standards and the lack of comparable data, and underlines the need to prepare for interoperable data exchange with other modes of transport;
8. Stresses the importance of connecting existing digital transport policy frameworks and of making sure that transport data are available through a single point of access in order to achieve efficiency gains in waterborne freight transport; calls on the Commission in this regard to come up with an EU action plan for multimodal transport data sharing, with the goal of achieving a synchronodal, connected and automated transport system by 2035 at the latest;
9. Highlights that increased automation brings the reality of synchronodal transport in Europe closer; insists therefore on the need for a European Roadmap for Smart and Autonomous Inland Waterway Transport Systems that supports research, the development and successful implementation of smart ships and ports, and digital interoperability;

Ports: from transshipment point for fossil fuels to clean energy hub

10. Stresses the role of inland ports as strategic, multimodal nodes in the logistics system; stresses, therefore, that inland ports as well as sea ports should have efficient connections with a focus on connecting to the TEN-T core and comprehensive corridors where possible;
11. Highlights that the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure should take into account the potential demand and market characteristics of a port; stresses, therefore, that a European rollout strategy of alternative fuels for multimodal use through the TEN-T revision and Directive 2014/94/EU on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure (AFID) should follow a network approach that leads to an efficiently planned infrastructure, based on the potential market demand characteristics of a port and, where necessary, along water routes;

Education and training, and research and innovation (R&I)

12. Stresses the need to modernise inland navigation education and training, focusing on the development of green and digital skills, thereby creating attractive jobs for young people; calls, furthermore, for the proper implementation of Directive (EU) 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation by Member States by 17 January 2022;
13. Points out the importance of further cooperation and synergies between the different research and innovation initiatives, by sharing knowledge, know-how and best practices and by making available on a public platform an overview of ongoing projects;

A European financing plan

14. Stresses the importance of existing EU funding instruments for greening and digitalising our European inland waterway transport sector, such as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Horizon Europe and the Structural and Cohesion Funds, and the need to mobilise them to finance investments in alternative fuels and adequate ships and infrastructure;
15. Stresses that the inland waterway sector consists mostly of SMEs, family businesses and smaller ports, which makes it difficult for them to make expensive investments in order to comply with the goals of the Green Deal; considers, therefore, that the administrative burden and cost for access to funding should be significantly reduced;
16. Calls on the Commission to set up a dedicated European inland waterway fund, including a one-stop-shop system that is easily accessible for help and assistance and has the possibility to combine projects into a single application, thus increasing the chances for funding; stresses that the fund should be financed through the reserve funds created under Regulation (EU) 546/2014⁹, where possible complemented with national funds and contributions, and should provide for the possibility of blending with the CEF and the Structural and Cohesion Funds;

Passenger transport and urban mobility

17. Welcomes the recent Commission evaluation of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package¹⁰;

⁹ [OJ L 163, 29.5.2014, p. 15.](#)

highlights in this regard that the expected results of the Urban Mobility Plan (UMP), namely a reduction in CO₂ and air pollutant emissions, less congestion and fewer road casualties in urban areas, have not consistently materialised across the EU; calls on the Commission, therefore, to encourage Member States and cities to include, where possible, waterborne public transport, as a safe and effective mode of transport, in their sustainable urban mobility planning (SUMP) and to enhance their urban mobility data collection; stresses, furthermore, the need to include waterborne public transport means in digital mobility platforms, such as Mobility as a Service;

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

¹⁰ [Commission staff working document of 24 February 2021 entitled 'Evaluation of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package' \(SWD\(2021\)0047\) - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0047](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0047)