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# Sustainable and smart mobility strategy

As main infrastructure stakeholders in the inland waterway and multimodal transport sector, [EFIP](#) and [INE](#) believe that the upcoming Sustainable and Smart Transport Strategy of the European Green Deal should provide continued support to the inland waterway transport (IWT) sector and make a great leap forward in the European modal shift. This paper outlines the opportunities that can propel European logistics into the future and the actions this would require.

## 1. SUSTAINABILITY

IWT has the potential to be foundational in future industry value chains based on sustainable logistics. Currently, IWT is the greenest transport mode together with rail while it decarbonises further.

Inland waterways have the capacity to ship high volumes of alternative fuels across strategic transport corridors, with ports as production, storage and transshipment hubs to supply the transport sector as well as other sectors. This energy coupling can for instance be seen in the link between the emerging H2 sector and the chemical sector located along the Rhine which provides the opportunity to power the industrial value chain through green vessels carrying green fuels.

### ACTIONS:

- The upcoming NAIADES action programme should include an **EU zero-emission transition pathway** for IWT with binding intermediary goals to reduce its CO2 footprint by 40% in 2030, with full carbon neutrality achieved in 2050 through innovation-oriented and supporting regulation for clean fuels.
- A clear and feasible strategy should be put in place for **alternative fuels infrastructure deployment**. This strategy should include a corridor approach that outlines the availability of infrastructure based on demand, geography and network characteristics. Roadmaps will be needed to break the ‘chicken and egg’ problem of investment between barge owners and infrastructure providers while providing clarity and transparency.
- **Sector coupling** is needed for energy carriers, be they hydrogen or electric batteries. Similarly, inland ports should be incentivised to play their role as energy hubs, where they can also supply green last-mile connections.
- Barriers for the **carriage of alternative fuels** by inland waterways should be removed and sustainable logistics of alternative fuels should be incentivised.
- Given the traditional small size of IWT sector and the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their margins, **EU funding and financing** should assist with the decarbonisation ambition.

## 2. MODAL SHIFT

Modal shift is one of the core objectives of the European Green Deal. The European Green Deal will guide the agricultural, energy, chemical, steel and construction sectors through a sustainable and circular transformation. Their transport volumes are well suited for inland shipping. IWT also has untapped potential when it comes to city logistics. As the majority of European cities are on waterways and are struggling with congestion problems, local waterborne transport becomes a solution for the construction, circular, retail and parcel sectors.

Over the last few years, strengthening the individual modes by removing inefficiencies has been the European focus. At the same time, optimising the interplay between the modes has lagged behind and must be boosted more than ever through a strong multimodal policy in order to achieve the modal shift. The COVID-19 crisis, with its various cross-border barriers disrupting transport, has shown that the only crisis resilient transport system is a multimodal one as it gives the European economy a plethora of contingencies to ensure the continued supply of essential goods.

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#### ACTIONS:

- We call for the creation of a **European Multimodal Area (EMA)** that realises the potential created by the Single European Railway Area, Road Transport legislation and NAIADES. Now is the time to connect them in a truly European way in order to make a great leap forward. The EMA should foresee the removal of legislative, administrative, cross-border and other obstacles and the creation of a multimodal expert group that should outline measures to support multimodal transport within the European economy.
- **Modal shift vision**, targets and removal of barriers for IWT for existing and new economies should be elaborated in the next NAIADES action programme.

### 3. DIGITAL

Digitalisation can support the modal shift. Interoperability of digital technologies across borders is the first condition for successful, multimodal, smart and connected transport. In particular for inland ports and IWT, a combined strategy is needed to develop and deploy the needed digital systems.

Optimised data accessibility and fast mobile broadband coverage are important to enable new industries to develop. First amongst these is the automation of fleet and infrastructure. Port and infrastructure systems will need to adapt to automation and new business models. Digital port systems will need to be able to communicate with automating assets to ensure safe traffic and facilitate future autonomous transshipment.

#### ACTIONS:

- Binding rules on **interoperable standards and datasets** between existing information systems across borders and modes are needed. Standardisation is not enough as it leaves too many operational aspects untouched.
- **IWT and port digital strategy** support the priorities above, as well as multimodal interoperability and upscaling automation.

### 4. RESILIENCE

European logistics, including waterways, is critical for economic growth and the welfare of all citizens. The disruption of supply chains has wide ranging effects. In 2018, the prolonged low water levels of the Rhine in Germany resulted in a decrease of the country's industrial production by 5 billion Euros. As such, infrastructure and logistics processes need to become resilient to climate change and other external shocks. A sustainable modal shift can only be achieved through fit-for- future infrastructure that is reliable across borders, resilient to changing conditions and innovation- ready.

Data is the bedrock for better decision-making in infrastructure management and logistics processes. Waterway authorities are reliant on data to undertake multi-purpose projects combining sustainable waterway transport, nature protection and regional development to increase European added value. However, more research and data are essential as the climate crisis deepens.

#### ACTIONS:

- **Fit-for-future development in TEN-T:** structural quality of infrastructure and innovation should be the centrepiece of the revision. For waterways, this includes detailing good navigation status, a mandatory life cycle approach and principle of non-deterioration. For inland ports, this requires the development of quayside infrastructure that is adaptable to various circumstances, related to both users and weather. Both require the deployment of a robust data infrastructure to optimise capacity management, information to users and long-term resilience.
- The EU climate adaptation and EU biodiversity strategy must lead to **coordinated guidance and information systems** for infrastructure projects enabling consistency of goals and synergies between climate change adaptation and climate change mitigation.
- A **strategic resilience strategy** for inland waterways and ports aiming to improve adaptive capacity and incorporating flexibility to allow for modification as conditions change is necessary.
- Resilience is often considered a cost: additional funding should be provided if improved resilience is demonstrated and monetise the risks and benefits.

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