

Response of the European Federation of Inland Ports to the Commission's Action plan on Urban Mobility COM (2009) 490

On 30 September 2009, the European Commission adopted an **Action Plan on Urban Mobility**. The Action Plan proposes twenty concrete measures to help local, regional and national authorities achieve their goals for sustainable urban mobility. The Action Plan is a follow-up to the Green Paper on Urban Mobility that was adopted on 25 September 2007.

The European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) is the official voice of nearly 200 inland ports in the EU, Switzerland, Moldova and Ukraine. Given the important role inland ports play in the European Transport System as nodal point for intermodal transport combining road, rail and inland waterway transport, EFIP wants to respond to this Action Plan.

EFIP'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION'S ACTION PLAN ON URBAN MOBILITY

EFIP welcomes the Commission initiative to develop an Action Plan on Urban Mobility. Indeed, even if local authorities are best placed to define and implement urban mobility policies it is clear that **urban transport systems are an integral element of the European transport system**. Very rightly, the commission stresses that urban mobility is a central component of long distance transport since most of the transport starts, passes through or ends in an urban area. Urban transport is as such a vital element of a competitive and sustainable transport system.

In this context, the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) is identifying **three priorities**:

1. **Inland ports offer efficient interconnection points for the trans-European transport network in urban areas.**

The European Commission stresses that urban areas should provide efficient interconnection points for the trans-European transport network, and offer “last mile” transport for both freight and passengers.

- ⇒ EFIP believes that inland ports can play an important role in providing an efficient interconnection point between road transport and other environmentally friendly modes of transport. **An inland port is functioning as a real “gate” and access point to waterborne and rail transport.**
- ⇒ The other way round, inland ports can help in making the “last mile” transport as efficient and limited as possible by **bringing the goods in a sustainable way into the towns**, from where they can be distributed to their final destination.
- ⇒ Moreover, inland ports are becoming more and more **clusters of urban logistic services**. They **offer logistic service providers efficient and flexible choices and** allow customers to combine the different transport modes depending on the demands of the market or the goods to transport and handle.

2. Urban areas: Restore the balance between logistic and housing needs

In its Communication on the future of transport, the Commission foresees a continuing increase of the European population residing in urban areas, raising to 84% in 2050. This urban sprawl does not only **imply** more transport needs and mobility problems for individuals, but above all a **fast growing demand of goods to be delivered in towns** (consumption goods, building material,...).

Historically a lot of towns were built along the water or at the crossing of two waterways for the precise reason that a waterway was needed to supply a town. Mainly due to the rapid development of road transport, river transport in towns went in decline and the river bank areas ran down quickly. During the last decades however, towns have rediscovered the attractiveness of the riverside and river banks have become the dream location for real estate and housing projects, leisure activities and other non river related use. As a consequence **the space along the waterways has often lost its specific logistic function. In fact, cities risk to give away a part of the solution to their congestion problems.** The inland city ports who were originally well nestled in the town and their activities are often getting squeezed and will not be able to respond in an adequate way to the growing supply and distribution needs of towns.

- ⇒ **EFIP strongly believes the logistic benefits of an inland port in a town should be revalorised.** Facing the challenge of increasing urban congestion, local authorities can not reserve the river and river banks for housing, offices and pure panoramic purposes only. Inland waterway transport and inland ports can contribute in finding sustainable solutions for the increasing demands in town supply and distribution of goods. This implies however **a rebalancing between the different functions of the riverbanks, between the logistic needs and the housing and leisure needs.** If needed, **some space** along the waterway should be **safeguarded for logistical purposes or other river-related uses.**
- ⇒ **Since urban distribution of goods is getting more and more important, projects for the sustainable distribution of goods in and to towns should get the necessary attention in European programmes.**
- ⇒ **At the same time, a good access to the port area should be guaranteed.**

⇒ **EFIP finally stresses the need for the municipal and regional authorities to involve the port authorities when preparing urban mobility plans.**

3. Internalisation of external costs of transport in urban areas: waste transport as a pilot project

The Commission points out that EU policy does not prevent the non-discriminatory application of regulatory charges in urban areas to reduce traffic congestion and environmental impacts.

⇒ **EFIP would like to encourage the Commission and competent authorities in the Member States to start by introducing the “smart pricing” in one segment of transport, namely waste transport. “Smart pricing” should be introduced for the transport of waste, in particular between the collect centres and the recovery plants.**

⇒ **At the same time, public tenders for waste transport should include the obligation to use more sustainable transport modes.**

Removing and managing the fast increasing waste amounts in towns is one of the challenges of urbanisation in Europe. Too often, the environmental advantages of collecting and recovering waste are lost because of the transport.

Over recent years, many inland ports have built up experience in finding sustainable solutions for the collection of waste or the transport of waste from the collection point to the waste recovery plants. Even if successful, these environment-friendly methods of waste removal are often more expensive than the transport by truck. Because of budgetary constraints, the use of the waterway for the removal of urban waste remains under threat. A price signal should help competent authorities and waste treatment companies in choosing sustainable solutions for the transport of waste.

CONCLUSION

As to conclude, EFIP believes inland ports can play an important role in the implementation of this Action plan. EFIP and its members remain at the Commission’s disposal to provide factual information or reflect further on the issues at stake in this action plan.
