Procedure file

Basic information

INI - Own-initiative procedure	2021/2015(INI)	Procedure completed
Towards Future-proof Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) in Europe Subject 3.20.04 Inland waterway transport		

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	TRAN Transport and Tourism		01/03/2021
		NAGTEGAAL Caroline	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		BERENDSEN Tom	
		TAX Vera	
		DELLI Karima	
		VAN OVERTVELDT Johan	
		PELLETIER Anne-Sophie	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Mobility and Transport	VĂLEAN Adina-Ioana	

Key events

11/03/2021	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/06/2021	Vote in committee		
06/07/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0231/2021	Summary
13/09/2021	Debate in Parliament		
14/09/2021	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/09/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0367/2021	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2021/2015(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	TRAN/9/05506

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE689.855	23/03/2021	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE689.856	04/05/2021	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0231/2021	06/07/2021	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0367/2021	14/09/2021	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2021)709	20/01/2022	EC	

Towards Future-proof Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) in Europe

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted an own-initiative report by Caroline NAGTEGAAL (Renew Europe, HU) setting out the path towards future-proof inland waterway transport in Europe.

Inland waterway transport is an essential pillar in the shift towards multimodal sustainable transport. Inland waterways currently represent a very small share of freight transport in the EU (6.1 %), while road has a 76.3 % share and rail 17.6 %. A sharp increase is needed to reduce road congestion, enhance safety, reduce emissions and ensure a more sustainable transport system as a whole.

Modal shift in freight: from road to inland waterways

The inland waterway fleet needs to be modernised and adapted to reflect technical progress to further improve vessels environmental performance. More goods should be shifted from road to inland waterways and short-sea shipping, including regional, urban and intercity freight transport.

Members called on the Commission to:

- take the initiative on green, efficient and digital leadership and to build on existing programmes such as NAIADES, which should support and incentivise all stakeholders within the waterway transport sector, as well as other transport modes, in particular rail;

- present proposals for a governance and regulatory framework in line with the next NAIADES action programme, ensuring harmonisation and standardisation at EU level for quality navigability, vessels and crew qualifications;

- map a potential modal shift in the transport of goods to inland waterways through the NAIADES III action programme;

- regularly evaluate and step up its ambitions for the modal shift goals of inland waterway transport and to reap the benefits of the sector;

- support the uptake of best practices on integrating inland waterway transport services into multimodal logistics chains.

Member States are called on to eliminate the missing links, tackle bottlenecks and promote quality physical and digital infrastructure.

Greening inland waterway transport

The report highlighted the importance of tackling the energy transition in a cost-efficient and accessible way, while recognising the diverse range in types of vessels, by quickly stepping up the availability and rollout of a heterogeneous mix of clean alternative fuels, alternative fuel infrastructure and propulsion methods for shipping with a network approach and in accordance with the principle of technological neutrality. An energy transition in inland navigation is key to attaining the climate-neutral agenda by 2050.

The Commission is called on to:

- develop a realistic roadmap to further reduce pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions in order to achieve a decarbonised inland waterway sector, while safeguarding competitiveness, reliability and safety;

- assess the possibility of devising an EU emissions labelling scheme for inland waterway transport;

Digitalisation and autonomous shipping

The report stressed that far-reaching digitalisation and data collection can contribute to a cleaner environment and improved safety on board

and bring about more efficient routing, less congestion in ports and better communication and information exchange between ships, ports and infrastructure. It called on the Commission to:

- come up with an intermodal overview of the flow of goods and containers that enter Europe and the routes taken by the goods to their end destination, which could be beneficial for drawing up an effective modal shift policy. Boosting the modal shift should be considered a priority as sea containers are not always transported efficiently from seaports to the hinterland at present, leading to higher costs and longer travel times;

- present an EU action plan for the digital infrastructure of multimodal transport that enables data sharing and interoperability, with the goal of achieving a synchromodal, connected and automated transport system by 2035 at the latest.

Dedicated EU inland waterway fund

The report stressed that the path towards a climate-neutral inland waterway sector and the desired energy transition will create a funding gap approaching EUR 10 billion, which cannot be financed by the sector alone. The Commission is called on to set up a dedicated EU inland waterway fund for the sustainable transition, 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. This dedicated fund should focus on ship retrofitting and renewal in order to improve the energy efficiency of ships and support investments in innovative and energy-saving technologies as well as port infrastructure, notably the deployment of alternative fuels, thereby helping to achieve the objectives of the Green Deal, a sustainable recovery and a more sustainable transport system as a whole.

Passenger transport, urban mobility, waterborne city logistics and tourism

Member States and cities are encouraged to include, where possible, waterborne public transport, city logistics and local freight distribution as a safe, sustainable and effective mode of transport in their sustainable urban mobility planning and to enhance their urban mobility data collection. The Commission is called on to include inland waterway tourism in its upcoming European Agenda for Tourism 2050 in order to promote a business case for a sustainable, innovative and resilient recovery of river tourism, taking into account the economic benefits of river tourism in port regions in terms of added value, employment creation and port revenues.

Lastly, the report stressed the need to further explore the potential of inland waterways for recreational navigation and other waterfront activities, which would boost growth, create new job opportunities and enhance tourism in the regions concerned.

Towards Future-proof Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) in Europe

The European Parliament adopted by 641 votes to 7, with 45 abstentions, a resolution setting out the path towards future-proof inland waterway transport in Europe.

Inland waterway transport is an essential pillar in the shift towards multimodal sustainable transport. Inland waterways currently represent a very small share of freight transport in the EU (6.1 %), while road has a 76.3 % share and rail 17.6 %. A sharp increase is needed to reduce road congestion, enhance safety, reduce emissions and ensure a more sustainable transport system as a whole.

Modal shift in freight: from road to inland waterways

Parliament called on the Commission to take the initiative on green, efficient and digital leadership and to build on existing programmes such as NAIADES, which should support and incentivise all stakeholders within the waterway transport sector, as well as other transport modes, in particular rail.

The Commission should therefore:

- present proposals for a governance and regulatory framework in line with the forthcoming NAIADES action programme, ensuring Europe-wide harmonisation and standardisation for navigability, vessels and crew qualifications;

- regularly evaluate its modal shift goals for inland waterway transport and promote the adoption of best practices on integrating inland waterway transport services into multimodal logistics chains;

- facilitate the exchange of best practices between Member States to enable high quality navigability and facilitate modal shift, while respecting biodiversity concerns and applicable environmental law.

Member States are invited to fulfil their obligation to complete the TEN-T core network for inland waterways by 2030, to eliminate missing links, to address bottlenecks and to promote high-quality physical and digital infrastructure.

Greening inland waterway transport

The resolution highlighted the importance of tackling the energy transition in a cost-efficient and accessible way, while recognising the diverse range in types of vessels, by quickly stepping up the availability and rollout of a heterogeneous mix of clean alternative fuels, alternative fuel infrastructure and propulsion methods for shipping with a network approach and in accordance with the principle of technological neutrality. An energy transition in inland navigation is key to attaining the climate-neutral agenda by 2050.

The Commission is called on to:

- develop a realistic roadmap to further reduce pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions in order to achieve a decarbonised inland waterway sector, while safeguarding competitiveness, reliability and safety;

- encourage the use of available financial instruments that promote the use of alternative sustainable fuels and technologies;

- assess the possibility of devising an EU emissions labelling scheme for inland waterway transport.

Digitalisation and autonomous shipping

Digitalisation could bring significant benefits in terms of safety and energy efficiency for the collection and analysis of data on the inland waterway transport sector, contributing to further emissions reduction.

Parliament called for a strategy to develop and deploy digital and automated technologies in the inland waterway sector, which should outline

both interoperable standards across modes and borders and the requisite research actions and funding.

The Commission should:

- ensure a harmonised digital use and acceptance of electronic crew and vessel documents throughout the EU;

- come up with an intermodal overview of the flow of goods and containers that enter Europe and the routes taken by the goods to their end destination;

- present an EU action plan for the digital infrastructure of multimodal transport that enables data sharing and interoperability, with the goal of achieving a synchromodal, connected and automated transport system by 2035 at the latest.

Dedicated EU inland waterway fund

The resolution stressed that the path towards a climate-neutral inland waterway sector and the desired energy transition will create a funding gap approaching EUR 10 billion, which cannot be financed by the sector alone.

The Commission is called on to set up a dedicated EU inland waterway fund for the sustainable transition, 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.

This dedicated fund should leverage further investments from the industry and focus on ship retrofitting and renewal in order to improve the energy efficiency of ships and support investments in innovative and energy-saving technologies as well as port infrastructure, notably the deployment of alternative fuels.

Passenger transport, urban mobility, waterborne city logistics and tourism

Member States and cities are encouraged to include, where possible, waterborne public transport, city logistics and local freight distribution as a safe, sustainable and effective mode of transport in their sustainable urban mobility planning and to enhance their urban mobility data collection. The Commission is called on to include inland waterway tourism in its upcoming European Agenda for Tourism 2050 taking into account the economic benefits of river tourism in port regions in terms of added value, employment creation and port revenues.

Lastly, Parliament stressed the need to further explore the potential of inland waterways for recreational navigation and other waterfront activities, which would boost growth, create new job opportunities and enhance tourism in the regions concerned.