**Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution
Towards Future-proof Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) in Europe**

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**2. Reference number:** 2021/2015 (INI) / A9-0231/2021 / P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0367

**3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 14 September 2021

**4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN)

**5. Brief analysis/assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

In its resolution, the Parliament makes several calls on the Commission to take steps to promote a greener, more sustainable, and efficient inland waterways sector.

On modal shift from roads to inland waterways, the Parliament calls on the Commission to build on the existing NAIADES programme for a greener, more sustainable, efficient, digital and social future for the sector. The resolution also calls on the Commission to strengthen oversight on the Member States completing the trans-European transport (TEN-T) inland waterways core network by 2030.

On greening of inland waterways, the Parliament calls on the Commission to draw up a roadmap to achieve a decarbonised sector and to incentivise the use of financial instruments to encourage the take up of sustainable alternative fuels and technologies.

In calling for greater use of digital and automated technologies in the sector, the Parliament underlines its importance and benefits – cleaner environment, improved safety on board and greater energy efficiency. The resolution also calls for a harmonised digital use and acceptance of electronic crew and vessel documents and for swift implementation of the Electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) Regulation. The Parliament calls on the Commission to include space services (in the Galileo, Copernicus and EGNOS programmes) in the review of the ITS (Intelligent Transport Systems) Directive and to prepare an EU action plan for digital infrastructure of multimodal transport.

On education, training and working conditions, the Parliament underlines the need for the sector to be made more attractive, especially to young people and women, with better working conditions, modernising education and training, and improving and harmonising social and safety standards.

On financing, the Parliament calls for greater use of existing EU funds (Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Horizon Europe, European structural and investment funds (ESIF) and Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)) for greening and digitalising the inland waterways sector and calls on the Commission to support and incentivise the take-up of sustainable alternative fuels and technologies. Parliament also calls for the setting up of a dedicated EU Inland waterways Fund.

On urban mobility, the Parliament calls on the Commission to encourage the Member States and cities 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 Parliament also calls on the Commission to include waterborne transport in the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy goal of making better use of inland waterways in cities. The Parliament finally calls on the Commission to enhance its collection of urban mobility data for waterborne passenger transport and freight and highlights the potential of inland waterway transport for the last mile in urban sustainable logistics.

**6. Response to requests and overview of action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

Paragraph 1

The NAIADES III Communication, adopted on June 24 2021, proposes new measures and actions to help exploit the potential of inland waterway transport and boost its contribution to sustainable, smart and resilient transport. The core objectives are: getting more freight onto Europe's rivers and canals, setting the sector on an irreversible path towards zero-emission barges by 2050, underpinned by a paradigm shift towards further digitalisation and measures to allow the sector to provide more attractive and sustainable jobs. The Action Plan also contains measures to facilitate financing to support the transition of the sector, and improve its governance, all in line with the European Green Deal and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS).

Paragraph 2

The CEF funding is mainly for transport operations. The Member States are best suited to support adequate and regular en route facilities for families.

Paragraph 3

NAIADES III foresees providing support to the European Committee for Drawing up Standards in the Field of Inland Navigation (CESNI) for further standardisation in Inland waterways transport.

Paragraph 4

NAIADES III is the ambitious response to the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy objective of increasing modal shift to inland waterway transport.

Paragraphs 6 and 7

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy sets out milestones for the European transport system’s path towards achieving the objectives of a sustainable, smart and resilient mobility. One of the objectives is that transport by inland waterways and short sea shipping should increase its market share by 25% by 2030 and by 50% by 2050.

The aim of Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T network) is to contribute to the creation of a single European transport area which is efficient and sustainable, increases the benefits for its users and supports further economic growth and competitiveness. It establishes guidelines for the development of a trans-European transport network comprising a dual-layer structure consisting of the comprehensive network and of the core network, the latter being established on the basis of the comprehensive network. The Commission intends to present a proposal revising this Regulation on 14 December 2021. The objective of the revision will be to make all transport modes more sustainable and to make sustainable alternatives widely available and better integrated in a multimodal transport system.

The Commission fully agrees with Parliament and is urging the Member States to complete the core network by 2030. EU funds, in particular CEF funds, can certainly contribute to this objective. The European Coordinators have also been instrumental as they act as ambassadors of the TEN-T policy. The TEN-T revision should reinforce the role of the European Coordinators. They should not only foster the priority setting at national level, but also facilitate the monitoring of progress made on the TEN network. To achieve this objective, the work plans of the European Coordinators should be used to promote cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, to strengthen complementarity with actions by the Member States and in particular to set the milestones and priorities for investments.

Inland waterways, especially free flowing stretches, may be heavily affected by climate and weather conditions. In order to ensure reliable international traffic, while respecting the hydro-morphology and applicable environmental legislation, TEN-T requirements should better reflect the specific hydro-morphology of each waterway as well as the objectives of environmental and biodiversity policies. The Commission will consider in the proposal revising the TEN-T Regulation a definition of Good Navigation Status, probably at the river basin/ corridor level. It is the intention to translate an obligation to the Member States to enable efficient, reliable and safe navigation by ensuring minimum waterway requirements and levels of service and by preventing the deterioration of these minimum requirements.

Promoting zero and low emission vessels, and developing measures to improve the environmental performance of inland waterway transport in accordance with the applicable requirements under Union law or relevant international agreements is also essential.

Paragraph 11

The Commission will assess the need in the TEN-T revision for flexible technical requirements for inland waterway transport infrastructure for taking into account the water level along the TEN-T network. Horizon Europe will also support research projects for climate resilient infrastructure.

Increasingly, low water levels in rivers are recognised by the Member States and the Commission as an issue, which needs attention. The extreme droughts over the last years, among others in Central and Western Europe, revealed the breadth of impacts, e.g. on transport of goods through shipping, intake of fresh water for drinking water production, etc. This topic is also on the agenda of an increasing number of (transboundary) river basin organisations, such as the one for the Rhine, the Meuse and the Danube. Some of them have started to draft action plans for low water. The river basin is an ideal scale for cross-border coordination. The Common Implementation Strategy, in which the Member States and the Commission work together to implement the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive will also be instrumental in ensuring coordination at EU-scale.

Paragraph 12

Regarding the use ofspace data,the ITS Directive already includes references to the use of satellite-based infrastructures to deliver timing and positioning, including in its Annex II on the principles for specifications and deployment of ITS, and to the European satellite navigation programmes (EGNOS and Galileo).

The upcoming review of the ITS Directive will continue to include these references, and reflect the evolutions of these programmes.

**Greening inland waterways transport**

Paragraph 14

The Commission agrees that the waterborne sector faces significant challenges to deploy and scale-up climate neutral solutions. In the NAIADES-III Action Plan, the Commission has committed itself to facilitate solutions to overcome the investment challenge (see below).

The Horizon 2020 Platina III project will propose a roadmap for decarbonising the inland waterways sector, and will specifically look at ways to improve the funding and financing conditions for investing in green technologies in the inland waterway sector. The Commission, taking account of these studies, will consider under what conditions EU financial instruments can support those technological pathways that are compatible with the ambition of the EU Green Deal.

Paragraph 16

The European Green Deal emphasises that the EU will ‘ramp-up the production and deployment of sustainable alternative transport fuels’, through legislative proposals to boost the production and uptake of sustainable alternative fuels for the different transport modes. These proposals have been presented on 14 July 2021, as part of the Fit for 55 package. The package also included the proposal to review the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive and the TEN-T Regulation to accelerate the deployment of zero- and low-emission vehicles and vessels.

The increased deployment and use of renewable and low-carbon fuels must be accompanied by the deployment of recharging and refuelling infrastructure to enable the widespread uptake of low- and zero-emission vehicles and vessels.

In addition to revising the regulatory framework, the Commission is also supporting the uptake of zero- and low-emission solutions and the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels in all modes of transport through a set of programmes.

In particular, the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility under the Connecting Europe Facility will support the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure along the TEN-T network.

This will complement other funding programme such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Cohesion Policy Funds, InvestEU, Horizon Europe and the Innovation Fund, which all support the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 while focussing on different aspects of the deployment of alternative fuels and relevant technologies.

Paragraph 17

The Horizon 2020 Platina III project will develop a methodology for a labelling system for inland waterways vessels. The Commission will also establish an EU framework for the harmonised measurement of emissions from logistics and transport, which could subsequently be used to provide businesses and end-users with information on the carbon footprint of their choices, and help increase the demand for more sustainable options, including both inland waterways and short-sea shipping services, where feasible.

Paragraph 20

The Commission adopted on 14 July 2021 the proposal for a regulation on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure in the EU, including the targets for shore-side electricity supply in inland waterway ports.[[1]](#footnote-1) According to Article 10 of this proposal the Member States will have to ensure that: (a) at least one installation providing shore-side electricity supply to inland waterway vessels is deployed at all TEN-T core inland waterway ports by 1 January 2025; (b) at least one installation providing shore-side electricity supply to inland waterway vessels is deployed at all TEN-T comprehensive inland waterway ports by 1 January 2030.

In addition, Article 13 of the proposal provides that by 1 January 2024, each Member State is to prepare and send to the Commission a draft national policy framework, including a deployment plan for alternative fuels in inland waterway transport, in particular for both hydrogen and electricity.

On funding, see the comments below in paragraphs 43 and 49.

**Digitalisation and autonomous shipping**

In the NAIADES III Action Plan, the Commission has set the clear objective that, by 2030, the European inland waterway network can and must be connected as much as possible - also digitally - to other transport modes, starting from River Information System and other initiatives to connect inland waterways proper.

Paragraph 24

The Commission will assess the need for legislative initiatives for on-board digital tools for recording and exchanging information on crews and vessels, as well as on crewing requirements for better harmonisation at EU level.

Paragraph 25

The Commission, in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, works on relevant delegated and implementing acts, in line with the deadlines set in the eFTI Regulation. The Commission will put forward data definitions and implementation specifications for the authorities and the eFTI platforms by August 2023. The Member States and the private sector have until August 2025 to get their systems up and running.

Paragraph 26

The Commission fully recognises the importance of a better integration of inland waterway transport into the overall logistic chain for the benefit of both the transport system and businesses, and the relevance of interconnected and interoperable data herein. Upcoming reviews of the Intelligent Transport Directive, for example, will explore the need for tools to prepare this groundwork for the future, alongside the work on a Common Mobility Data Space to which inland waterways are connected. In the context of the Digital Transport and Logistics Forum (DTLF), the Commission also works on establishing a common framework to foster interoperability in data sharing between all relevant stakeholders and in particular in a business to business environment. The framework aims to create the conditions for networking data platforms and to address the necessary technical specifications, implementation guidelines and governance structure.

Paragraph 27

The Commission agrees that an overview of the flow of goods and containers would greatly benefit efficient business operations as well as policy development. While statistics on container transport by inland waterways are published by Eurostat ([Inland waterways - statistics on container transport - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Inland_waterways_-_statistics_on_container_transport), developing such a comprehensive overview is not, currently, possible due to a lack of statistics on intermodal operations and systematic data on the flows of goods from origin to destination, across different modes. A common European mobility data space, proposed in a European Strategy for data, could, in the future, be a way to overcome this gap by pooling and sharing of data from existing and future transport and mobility databases, including big data-based analytics.

Paragraph 28

Making more and more complete multimodal transport data available and creating a favourable environment for seamless data sharing across countries and modes is important for better integration of inland waterways in the transport system. More generally, digitalisation would render the transport and logistic system more efficient, agile and resilient as well as allow optimising infrastructure, asset and capacity management. Several initiatives are planned in this regard, notably the implementing act on high-value datasets and the revision of the multimodal travel information services Delegated Regulation. As integral part of the NAIADES III action programme, the upcoming revision of EU rules on harmonised river information service (RIS) will take due account of these initiatives. Particular attention can be also drawn to the work of the Digital Transport and Logistics Forum (DTLF) working on a common framework to foster interoperability and facilitate data sharing between all types of supply chain stakeholders. The Mobility Data Space initiative is expected to facilitate the access, sharing and pooling of data from existing and future mobility and transport databases and platforms – ultimately bringing the different initiatives together. It will contribute to create a larger pool of strategic transport data, enabling wider ranges of applications notably for multimodal transport.

Paragraph 30

Training and upskilling is one the InvestEU (Regulation (EU) 2021/523) objectives, which includes as a Key Performance Indicator the number of individuals having acquired new skills. This objective is further delineated and operationalized in InvestEU delegated regulations. The Investment Guidelines (Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1078) target inter alia the development and strengthening of skills for the functioning of strategic and critical activities (which may include inland waterways pursuant to Directive 2008/114/EC). In addition, the Scoreboard for operations (Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/5183) captures this objective for training support, notably in the scoring of operations for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

The Commission will launch a study on the impacts that the port activities of selected river and seaports can have on the environment. The study will develop and implement specific tools, such as Environmental Management Systems, as well as port-specific action plans creating a nucleus for wide-scale roll-out of environmentally sustainable port management and operations.

**Future proof ports – energy and circular hubs**

The Commission recognises the possible role of inland ports as clean energy and circular hubs, and encourages synergies with initiatives like the Clean Hydrogen Strategy, the Batteries Alliance, to reap this potential. As explained above in response to paragraph 20, the Commission has proposed the targets for shore-side electricity supply in inland waterway comprehensive and core ports. The electrification of inland ports, if in combination with projects in seaports and other large infrastructure, could explore synergies with TEN-E.

Paragraph 38

In the context of the TEN-T network, high-level standards to ‘green’ transport will be consistent with the “do no significant harm” principle, which also encompasses the transition to the circular economy.

The Commission agrees on the potential of inland waterways to transport commodities originating from new circular markets. While stressing that inland ports in the EU are covered by Union waste law, the Commission recognises the importance of modern infrastructure to enable the application of circular principles to the entire waterway transport industry. This includes capacity building and renovation efforts where appropriate, in EU ports and vessels. The Commission confirms that EU funding is available to support such circular economy activities in ports, and to adopt life cycle thinking to implement projects able to establish local integrated management systems for, inter alia, water, energy, waste, construction sites, spatial planning and urban green areas. For such projects, cohesion policy funds are suited to complement local-level actions. Innovative pilot projects for green and digital solutions in inland waterways are also i.a. eligible under the LIFE Programme and Horizon Europe.

The Commission will also carry out a European Parliament pilot study to support the greening of inland ports.

**Education and training, working conditions and research and innovation**

Paragraph 39

In the NAIADES III Action Plan, the Commission recognises that the current and future workforce needs to be equipped with the right skills to deal with the green and digital transitions, cybersecurity, synchromodality and the automation of vessels and infrastructure. The Commission encourages the sector and Member States to engage with the European Skills Agenda to further these objectives.

Paragraph 42

Within Horizon Europe, the development of innovative green inland waterway transport is addressed through activities within the Waterborne transport research area under cluster 5, including under the Zero-emission Waterborne Transport Partnership. For example, the 2022 call includes a topic addressing “Seamless safe logistics through an autonomous waterborne freight feeder loop service” which is likely to be applicable to Inland Waterway Transport. Planning for 2023 and 2024 calls is now underway and may also include topics addressing inland waterway transport. The Horizon Europe Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking could include innovative hydrogen in Inland waterway transport within its scope.

**EU Financing Plan**

Paragraphs 43 and 49

In the NAIDES III Action Plan, the Commission recognises that the increase of financial support for the transition to a zero-emission fleet is one of the key challenges for the modernisation of the sector.

The Commission will facilitate efforts by the stakeholders and the Member States to create a fund to bring together and complement EU and national financial instruments for the deployment of zero-emission vessels, and the associated infrastructure.

In this context, CEF is one of the main programmes for the support of the transport infrastructure. The Commission adopted the CEF Transport multiannual work programme 2021-2027 on 5 August 2021[[2]](#footnote-2) covering calls in 2021-2023. Concerning the inland waterways and ports, actions addressing infrastructure, environmental protection requirements, digitalisation and connections to other modes of transport will be supported, with the possibility to combine the funding with other forms of public and private investment to have greater impact. In particular, the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility within the CEF is set up to support the deployment of such infrastructure in the inland ports. Importantly, support to zero -emission vessels will be eligible if an initial number of vessels is needed to kick-start the use of the alternative recharging/refuelling infrastructure in the inland ports. The CEF also supports actions improving the resilience of the infrastructure to climate change and the natural disasters, and synergies with the energy and digital sectors. Through the Horizon Europe Programme, the Commission will support innovative projects on inland waterway transport infrastructure and fleets. The strengthened Innovation Fund will further incentivise innovation in waterborne transport including the deployment of zero emission vessels.

Funding for inland waterways is eligible also under the Cohesion policy funds, addressing both the TEN-T network and rivers beyond the network. The investments will focus on improving the navigability, the connection with other modes, digitalisation and environmental protection measures. Several Member States have envisaged in their National Recovery Plans funding for the inland waterway infrastructure under the RRF. Finally, InvestEU stimulates private investments in transport infrastructures and fleet renewal especially through its Sustainable infrastructure window, Research, innovation and digitisation window and SME window. The Commission will engage with the European Investment Bank to explore the role that their instruments can play in the transition to zero-emission fleets, with particular attention for smaller businesses in the sector.

The EU Taxonomy Climate Delegated Act also recognises the potential of low-carbon modes, such as inland waterways, to contribute to modal shift and to the achievement of the objectives in the Climate Law and Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy.

Paragraph 51

At EU level there is already existing legislation regulating the recycling of large commercial seagoing vessels flying the flag of a Member State of the EU. The EU Ship Recycling Regulation (SRR - Regulation 1257/2013) requires such vessels to be recycled only in dedicated facilities included in the so-called EU List of ship recycling facilities. During the future review of the EU SRR, the Commission intends to explore whether it would be appropriate to extend the scope of the regulation to cover all seagoing vessels without any size and class limitation and to cover possibly also inland waterway vessels.

Paragraph 53

The EU welcomes foreign investments. At the same time, the EU values its strategic assets and interests – including ports. The EU framework for investment screening is an important tool in this context. Foreign investments in European ports must be transparent; they must respect the European legal framework, standards, norms and rules. On 5 May 2021, the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market. The legislative proposal follows the publication of a White Paper in June 2020 and an extensive consultation process with stakeholders. In recent years, foreign subsidies appear to have distorted the EU’s internal market, including by providing their recipients with an unfair advantage to acquire companies or obtain public procurement contracts in the EU, to the detriment of fair competition with other market players. The proposed regulation addresses such distortions and closes a regulatory gap, whereby subsidies granted by non-EU governments go currently unchecked, while subsidies granted by the Member States are subject to close scrutiny and remedies. It proposes new tools to effectively tackle foreign subsidies that cause distortions and undermine the level playing field in the internal market, including investigating market concentration (mergers) and bids in public procurements. The Commission hopes that the proposed regulation will quickly be adopted by the co-legislators. Foreign investments could also distort transport flows on the network by not complying with the standards of the European transport network and hence affect security or public order on critical infrastructure. The risk of non-compliance with technical standards, for instance by using different IT or telematics systems, can be higher when the investment stems from outside the EU. This is a matter that the Commission intends to address in the proposal revising the TEN-T regulation, which is planned to be adopted on 14 December 2021.

**Passenger transport, urban mobility**

Paragraph 54

As indicated in the Roadmap on the New EU urban mobility framework (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12916-Sustainable-transport-new-urban-mobility-framework_en>), the Commission is envisaging, inter alia, to update and strengthen the EU sustainable urban mobility planning (SUMP) framework, promoting public transport and zero-emission urban logistics. The Commission will take into account waterborne public transport and urban distribution centres in this work. The Commission will also consider the inclusion of inland waterway transport in its work on multimodal travel information services.

Paragraph 55

As indicated in the Roadmap on the New EU urban mobility framework (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12916-Sustainable-transport-new-urban-mobility-framework_en>), the Commission is envisaging to support better progress in tracking and monitoring of urban mobility policies and measures with a coherent approach to urban mobility data collection. The Commission will take into account waterborne passenger transport in this work.

Paragraph 56

The actions included in the ongoing co-creation process for the Tourism Transition Pathway will cover all forms of tourism, including all transport modes, aiming towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient recovery. The final Tourism Transition Pathway expected for early 2022 will feed into the European Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050.

1. COM(2021) 559 final [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure-ten-t-connecting-europe/reference-documents-work-programmes-selection_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)