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Workshop “Addressing Labour Market Challenges and Making the Sector More Attractive”

Background Note for the Workshop

Transmitted by the European Inland Waterway Transport Platform and the European Transport Workers’ Federation*

I. Introduction

1. Changes and developments that took place in Europe over the last decades had an impact on inland water transport. Of particular importance are the opening of Eastern Europe and the whole Danube to the international economy and the extension of the European Union to its present shape. They have brought to consequences for the entire sector, the labour market, registers of vessels and employment.
2. The share of citizens from Eastern Europe, in particular, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia employed in the sector has been increased. These are countries which either have a tradition of employment in inland waterways as boatmen and boatmasters or present themselves as a source of low-cost labour for the hotel and catering industry. The nautical personnel is found throughout inland water transport, where 80 per cent of traffic is centred on the Rhine and its tributaries. The Danube and the Main are the backbone of the Rhine-Danube Corridor of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), which provides the main East-West link across continental Europe.
3. The establishment of the Transport Community¹ with a large part of the Baltic region under its flag entering into intense negotiations with the European Commission on implementing the transport acquis, has entailed a de facto enlargement of the sphere of influence of the European Union in the field of transport. This also affects inland water transport, as indeed the interconnected waterway network extends beyond that region. At the same time, the possibilities to move vessels from one register to another have grown especially since the enlargement of the European Union in 2005.

* The present document was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information.

¹ www.transport-community.org.



4. The river cruise industry has experienced a rapid growth. The river cruise fleet in Europe has constantly increased since 2004 and the newbuilding rate is high. In 2019, 19 new river cruise vessels entered the market in the European Union. The number of cruise ships navigating on rivers in the European Union increased by 55 per cent between 2012 and 2019, and reached 378 vessels in 2019, according to the thematic report “The European Inland Navigation Sector Labour Market” published by the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) in February 2021.²

5. In the last 20 years, around 5,500 new floating workplaces have been established. Employment in the river cruise sector is concentrated on both major river systems, the Rhine and the Danube, visiting historic centres, such as the German section of the Rhine between Cologne and Heidelberg on the Rhine and the waterway section from Nuremberg (Germany) to Budapest. In terms of employment rates, the European river cruise association IG RiverCruise³ estimates that there are currently about 12 thousand persons active in accommodation and gastronomically related activity on European river cruise vessels, compared to 2,500 persons working in the nautical field.

6. Since the late 1990s, ever more companies moved employment to countries that offered cheaper social security and/or income tax systems. Luxemburg and Switzerland were the front-runners in this development; Luxemburg attracted primarily freight vessels and Switzerland – river cruise vessels. Employers could offer employees the same net salary and access to a comprehensive social security at costs some 30 per cent lower than in Germany or the Netherlands. Both countries are contracting parties to the Agreement concerning the Social Security of Rhine Boatmen of 1979; Switzerland is also a Member state of CCNR and a Contracting Party to the Agreement concerning the Conditions of Employment of Rhine Boatmen, 1954.

7. The legislative basis of the European Union related to the crewing regulations in inland navigation has been developed to address the actual situation. Fundamental legislation acts have been recently adopted and implemented, and more legislative proposals with a focus on a new European Union-wide crewing regulation are under development. It includes, in particular:

- Council Directive 2014/112/EU of 19 December 2014 implementing the European Agreement concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time in inland water transport, concluded by the European Barge Union (EBU), the European Skippers Organisation (ESO) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF)⁴
- Directive (EU) 2017/2397 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Council Directives 91/672/EEC and 96/50/EC.⁵

8. A conclusion can be made that, after the opening of Eastern Europe and the entire Danube region to the international economy, new possibilities have emerged for commercial interests and practices, which confront employees, trade unions and control bodies with a series of challenges. The sector is hampered by lack of a comprehensive and internationally harmonized legal framework in the field of labour and social security, and the situation is getting worse. The examples are: (a) the Dutch bogus crewing agency Gyro that triggered immediate legal actions in the Netherlands, (b) indirect recruitment of crew members, and (c) recruitment of nationals from third countries under unclear labour conditions, facilitated by some training centres in the Philippines.

II. Social Security

9. Problems related with social security for crew members of vessels engaged in inland navigation may arise in those European Union countries that do not have inland navigation

² https://inland-navigation-market.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Thematic-report_EN_web_BD.pdf.

³ Interessengemeinschaft (Interest group); www.igrivercruise.com.

⁴ *OJL* 367, 23.12.2014, p. 86–95.

⁵ *OJL* 345, 27.12.2017, p. 53–86.

on their territory. This is the case of Cyprus and Malta who opt out on the above-mentioned European legislation for pure geographical reasons, as both countries are islands and de facto do not have navigable rivers and canals.

10. However, both countries open up their maritime registers to river cruise vessels or provide licenses to recruit the staff for river cruise operations without having any direct link with the activity that takes place in the centre of mainland Europe. Both the Cyprus and Maltese social and labour legislation is being used to increase profit margins at the expense of the crew members who find themselves without any social security coverage and long-term benefits such as pensions. This has an impact on social security of employees, first of all, in terms of new registers of ships and new “home states”.

11. It is also important to underline the rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union where it states that no corporate construction can have the intention to limit the social rights of employees.⁶

12. In the last years, a growing number of river vessels entered on to the Maltese Shipping Register. ETF has not been able to ascertain whether the health and safety regulations and working conditions for crews are properly controlled and enforced on those vessels and what body is responsible for that. Due to the absence of the flag state legislation in inland navigation, it is even not clear if there is an obligation for the Maltese authorities to enforce the Maltese labour, social security, health and safety legislation on-board such vessels.

13. Whereas Malta has emerged as a new flag state on European rivers, ETF has not witnessed any growth of employment with Malta-based contracts of employment. In contrast, Cyprus has become a new home state for thousands of inland navigation employees. Some companies have set up effective offices in Cyprus, yet most have set up letter-box companies to act as employers. There are numerous cases of employment agencies using Cypriot contracts.

14. The social security system of Cyprus does not offer the same protection as the long-established systems of Western Europe and the responsibility for income tax is placed solely on the employees. ETF has not been able to satisfactorily ascertain to what extent the Cyprus labour legislation and its protection can be extended to citizens of other states working on inland waterway vessels registered under another flag and operating in a third state.

15. There are cases when companies operate vessels under the Maltese flag and use the Cypriot contracts of employment. This can bring to unsatisfactory situations when citizens of one European country (or a country outside Europe) who are employed by an agency in another European country with the Cypriot contracts to work on a Maltese ship, have to seek remedy from a court in Cyprus.

16. It is not clear what crewing provisions apply to vessels entered in the registers of seagoing ships of Cyprus and Malta: maritime regulations or inland navigation standards and norms set out in the regulations of the European Union, the European committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI), CCNR and other relevant documents. Furthermore, both countries do not have an observer status both at CCNR and CESNI. ETF is of the opinion that the current practice of using the Maltese Register and/or Cypriot contracts of employment for crew members has a negative impact on the two states.

17. Furthermore, Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems⁷ has far reaching effects, as employees will have to pay social security contributions in the countries where they primarily work, e.g. Austria, Germany or Hungary.

18. If the employment is restricted to citizens of the European Union or Member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the question of labour permits does not arise. However, there is an increasing share of personnel outside the European Union and EFTA states, e.g. China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Russian Federation and Serbia. There is no

⁶ Case C-610/18, paragraph 69, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:62018CJ0610>; case C-29/10, Article 6(2) of the Rome Convention of 19 June 1980, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:62010CJ0029>.

⁷ *OJL 166*, 30.4.2004, p. 1–123.

apparent control on the employment of their nationals from either the flag state or the state in which the contracts of employment originate, which affects their immigration, visa regime, mobility and working conditions, and it is not clear what regulations apply to their salaries, working hours, social insurance and other relevant aspects.

19. Work is ongoing by the key players in the field of the water police and the governance of the employment relationship to improve the situation:

- The European network of water police bodies Aquapol⁸ and the German water police based in Bavaria are very active in this matter; they have stated that the legislation should prevent social dumping and the abusive exploitation of workers, including slavery and human trafficking.
- This topic is a permanent agenda item of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Inland Navigation of the European social partners⁹ as a reminder for the European Commission of the vast impact of unclosed legal loopholes. The European social partners met with the European Commission in 2018 and 2019 seeking to find a remedy to this situation; unfortunately, there has been no solution so far.
- Water police bodies would welcome a clearer regulation of the legal situation in terms of the legislation applied, rights and protection of employees.

III. Level Playing Field in the Inland Water Transport Sector

20. Due to the international nature of inland water transport, the task of creating a level playing field in the sector is challenging, as the various regulations seek to ensure this for all organizations in Europe. An example is Directive (EU) 2017/2397 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and its delegated acts, aiming to:

- Promote the employability of crew members and the labour mobility within the sector
- Establish a level playing field
- Ready the sector for the future.

21. The ongoing conformity check and transposition assessment of the Directive show that many issues still remain unsolved. Whereas initially many Member states of the European Union opted out, the European Commission took a very clear position that all European Union countries except Cyprus and Malta would have to transpose the Directive into their national legislation: countries who are at the heart of inland navigation will have to fully transpose the directive, while others will have a minimalistic transposition.

22. The eighth meeting of the Commission Expert Group on Social Issues in Inland Navigation held on 28 November 2022 in Brussels, however, demonstrated that many issues remain unclear for the Member states of the European Union in relation to the Union Certificate of Qualification and the European Crew Database both at the practical and interpretational levels.

23. There are directives and regulations in the European Union on social security, taxes, working conditions, technical aspects and other relevant issues. However, the elaboration and implementation of these laws and regulations are not easy due to differences between European countries. Identifying and addressing bottlenecks by both employers and employees is important in the process of achieving a level playing field.

⁸ www.aquapol-police.org.

⁹ *Note by the secretariat*: the term “European social partners” refers to those organizations at the European Union level which are engaged in European social dialogue, provided for under Articles 154 and 155 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/social-partners.

IV. Training and Education

24. Training and a high-quality education are major drivers to enhance the overall attractiveness of the sector, which is of paramount importance towards the ambitious challenge of the sector to take up a larger part of the overall transport and logistics market. Although a lot of time, energy and resources are invested in shaping training and education in inland navigation, a solid, structural management is missing. The new vision on training and education based on skills and competencies enhances the overall employability and labour mobility in the European inland water transport sector. However, apprentices usually only follow training and education in their home country, and big differences exist in the various training institutions.

25. In 2019, CESNI adopted standards for harmonized practical examinations at the European level.¹⁰ These examinations concern both the management level (boatmaster) and the operational level (boatman, able boatman, helmsman). The CESNI Working group on professional qualifications has complemented them with model examinations, which can serve as tools for the examination commissions to implement a level playing field in European inland navigation.

26. Appropriate minimum requirements have been defined for mandatory practical examinations for the qualification to sail with the aid of radar and passenger navigation experts, as well as for handling liquefied natural gas. Practical examination standards for boatmasters have been complemented with an additional module for the practical examination of skills at the operational level for side entrants, intended for applicants who have not undergone any approved training programme at the operational level or have not yet demonstrated in an examination the required competences of a boatman.

27. CESNI has also developed standards for the approval of simulators, containing consistent technical and functional requirements for simulators used for the assessment of the skills of boatmasters and for the authorization to navigate with the aid of radar. These requirements support this new form of internationally recognized practical examination.

28. Through various projects such as “Competence Based Education and Training for Inland Navigation” (COMPETING)¹¹ and PLATINA 3,¹² training institutions together with the sector stakeholders develop a multitude of materials in order to pave the way towards a true level playing field in inland navigation training and education. Via a stepping stone approach the materials are increasing both in terms of concept, importance and quality and comprise among others: Course manuals, Train the Trainer courses, Model examinations, audit lists and much more.

29. In order to effectively address the massive shift in skills and competencies in the upcoming mid-term period of 15 years and over, a training coordination centre is needed for inland water transport in Europe. A permanent body, such as the Inland Waterway Transport Educational Network (EDINNA), if properly funded at the European Union level, could permanently assess skills and competencies and re-align them with the changing reality in the sector.

30. The definition of skills and competencies is not a static exercise, but a living matter that needs permanent care and attention. The ad hoc and project approach towards training and education in inland water transport undermines its sustainability in the long term. Furthermore, the overall employability could be further enhanced by student/apprentice exchange programmes in order for apprentices to prepare for the international, cross border nature of their future career. Through this permanent re-alignment of offer and demand in the area of training and education a proper quality assessment of all training courses throughout Europe and beyond could be finally within reach.

¹⁰ European Standard for Qualifications in Inland Navigation (ES-QIN).

¹¹ www.iwt-competencies.eu/competing.

¹² <https://platina3.eu>.

V. Digital Tools and Enforcement

31. There is a clear call for more flexibility in inland water transport. The more the sector becomes transparent in its operation, the more flexible systems can be supported. The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy¹³ of the European Union announced two new legislative initiatives in the area of jobs and skills related to inland shipping:

- Digital tools for recording and exchanging information on inland crews and vessels
- Crewing requirements.

32. The “digital tools” initiative intends to oblige operators to record data on activities of crews and vessels in real time and make it accessible on a shared platform to authorized users. Currently, this data is recorded in paper service record books and logbooks which cannot be easily controlled by the authorities and are not reliably protected against manipulation. Therefore, the existing practice may have an impact on navigation safety, the level playing field in the sector and may bring to the deterioration of working conditions thus affecting the attractiveness of the sector.

33. The objective is to set up a “smart tachograph” for inland water transport. This will help minimize administrative burden, increase the uptake and acceptance of electronic documents and other digitized solutions and improve the enforcement of the legislation on the crewing requirements, working time and professional qualifications.

34. The crewing requirements for inland navigation are introduced by the national law and the CCNR regulations and are not currently established at the European Union level. Furthermore, these requirements were designed for older fleets; they do not take into account new technologies and working practices that modify the workload on-board. The sector needs a forward-looking and flexible legal international framework that establishes the crewing requirements supported by a reliable, real-time, digital controlling capacity.

35. Inland water transport cannot afford to lose momentum for modernization, as other modes of transport push fast forward in digitalization in multiple ways. The initiative should contribute to fully exploit the untapped potential of inland waterways.

36. It is time that inland water transport in Europe becomes digitally controllable through:

- “One system – one database” with all relevant information on vessels, cargoes, crew on-board, professional qualifications and certification, working and resting times
- Digital and smart tools that not only register the sailing time, but also the compulsory resting and working hours
- Remote access to all relevant data in order to install a solid enforcement capacity
- One efficient enforcement to ensure a real level playing field for all employees
- A uniform and unique system that guarantees the transparency, easy for use, control and enforcement, implemented in the entire European inland water transport sector.

VI. Digitalization and Automation

37. Inland water transport is by nature a conservative transport mode, but it has a huge potential still untapped. Digitalization and automation could be the tools to finally unleash its full capacity. There are several projects and activities in this field; the company Seafar (Flanders (Belgium)) who supports and operates unmanned and crew-reduced vessels¹⁴ is the best example where remotely operated vessels are no longer a thing of the past.

38. However, ETF would like to make some reservations in terms of the applicability of the Seafar experience as the sole basis for future standards on automation. All ongoing pilot projects have been executed either on a pre-set low traffic trajectory or on a very limited

¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0789>.

¹⁴ *Note by the secretariat*: more information is available in ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2020/12.

distance with dense traffic, and therefore cannot be extrapolated to all circumstances at all locations. In the transitional phase, where vessels will be operated partly on-board and partly from a remote control centre, full and transparent communication is of the utmost importance for ensuring safety.

39. The Waterborne Technology Platform,¹⁵ the European research and innovation platform for waterborne industries, has developed a roadmap for connected and automated waterborne transport. The Platform considers automation as a part of the entire digitalization opportunities offered to the sector, whereby it is not synonymous with “unmanned”. The increase in maritime and inland waterway traffic, as well as in the life span of ships, further emphasizes the necessity to reduce the risk of accidents and increase safety of vessels, crews, cargo and passengers. Furthermore, to support the competitiveness of the European waterborne sector from a global perspective, it will be necessary to increase integration between stakeholders for improving the efficiency of operations (navigation, manoeuvres, cargo handling, etc.) and facilitate the transition to higher quality jobs. This integration can be achieved mainly through the automation of operations and their digitalization (through data management and sharing). One of the concrete results of the Platform is a key contribution to the “Report on vision and roadmap on pathway for automation and on board systems” in the context of the PLATINA 3 project.

VII. Competence Standards for Automated Navigation

40. Automation is a process and does not materialize overnight; there is a lot of progressive insights based on experience that need to be assessed almost on a daily basis. Valuable work is being done in Work Package 3 of PLATINA 3 on developing competence standards for remote operators of on-board systems and refresher classes, however, this is a first attempt based on the present scarce results. Seafar at the moment only has a business model with only one digitally navigated vessel, and for the second line assistance multiple vessels are under the supervision of one boatmaster.

41. In this process, there is a missing link, a procedure and/or a body, that can serve as intermediary for assessing new developments in order to allow adapting of the existing standards to the newly established reality. Here, solid evidence should be given that the required safety will be ensured.

42. CCNR has recently established the authorization procedure for pilot projects for automated navigation on the Rhine¹⁶ that would need a derogation from the manning requirements. The procedure consists of eight stages and has a very detailed description; it could provide a solid basis for addressing future challenges of rapidly changing standards and manning requirements. As the new manning regulation is in full preparation within CESNI, ETF can make an assumption that a future new task for CESNI will be a permanent assessment and updating of standards related to automation and digitalization.

43. The procedure developed by CCNR includes the assessment of multiple elements:

- The evolution of the workload of all crew members in a detailed and precise manner in order to justify the continued reduction of the crew on-board
- Proper use of new technologies and equipment installed on a vessel
- Continuous use of the technology and equipment installed.

44. The sector is in a transition towards a more automated and digitalized future. Nobody can estimate the time needed for the transition period, however, this may apparently take more time than initially anticipated. Until recently, European inland water transport has been the sole mode of transport that admitted persons at the age of 16 and allowed learning a job by doing. This low threshold has always played in the advantage of the sector.

45. Currently, a serious shortage of qualified staff is observed in all inland water transport segments, aggravated by the quantum leap the sector is taking in the area of digitalization

¹⁵ www.waterborne.eu.

¹⁶ www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/AutomatisationNav/Procedure_autorisation_fr.pdf.

and automation. The sector no longer attracts new, young people, as their perception on how to combine work and family life has shifted compared to previous generations.

46. People will be needed to crew vessels at least for this fairly long transitional period, and the expertise, skills and competencies in the sector must be maximized. A smooth transition can only be ensured if the sector fully embraces social sustainability, along with safety and other relevant issues. This is a precondition of a guaranteed future for the entire sector and people engaged in it. If all systems fail, and they do – recent examples show that remotely operated vessels can collide and cause serious damages, therefore we need to rely on people.

47. Along with new standards on automation and digitalization, more highly skilled workers are needed both on shore and on-board, in contrast to the past low threshold. However, it may be difficult to convince young people to study for a job that can disappear in the foreseeable future and will be replaced by automated processes. Therefore ETF urges all involved stakeholders to observe the working conditions of all crew members and to improve them as much as possible, especially for those who will be working on-board.

48. ETF has some observations to the competence standards for automated vessels:

- For remotely operated vessels, ETF considers that, in case of a reduced crew, the last person that remains on-board should be the experienced boatmaster, able to salvage the vessel and freight in case of a calamity without endangering other waterway users. If such a calamity occurs on a major waterway, it can be blocked for long periods, thus bringing to detrimental consequences to the overall image and trustworthiness of the sector.
- Boatmasters working in remote control centres require a higher level of skills and competencies than a conventional boatmaster. The Remote Control Centre Operator (RCCO) must be able to navigate any kind of vessel in any kind of waters under any navigation conditions. Therefore, a solid amount of navigation time (minimum 10 to 15 years) is an absolute minimum condition.
- Communication skills need to be upgraded to the highest possible level to ensure flawless remote operation of vessels.
- Many issues of the legal and liability nature are not yet resolved. As an example, a solid procedure for temporary replacement of RCCO at the workstation is needed to ensure that at all times the liability is properly and distinctly handed over to the person who replaces the operator.
- ETF recalls its position on simulator training which can be a big asset but can only partially replace the real life navigation time experience.

49. On 6 and 7 October 2022, ETF held the Maritime Logistics Workshop in Antwerp (Belgium). At the workshop, Seafar defended the clear position that eight hours of navigating time per day was the absolute maximum for boatmasters when operating vessels remotely. However, whenever discussing manning requirements, 14 hours per day is perceived as the new norm.

50. Another concern of ETF is training of apprentices in conditions of the future reduced manning requirements. With little or no crew left on-board besides the boatmaster, it is not clear how the high quality training and supervision of apprentices could be realized. A proper and structural training accompanying system should be elaborated to address this gap in practice in order to encourage apprentices to enter the sector. Solid proof is found by the fact that of the nine apprentices in Belgium, two had a severe accident while working on-board. There is an urgent need to provide a safe learning and working environment for the young generation that opts for inland water transport as a career.

51. The human element is the only one flexible enough to bridge the gap between today and an automated future of tomorrow. ETF would invite all to take this into consideration when discussing new systems, tools and future standards.

VIII. Improving the Overall Attractiveness of the Sector

52. According to the CCNR thematic report “The European Inland Navigation Sector Labour Market”, in general the employment in inland water transport was on the rise in recent years (data of 2018):

- Freight transport: 23,520 persons which represented an increase in Western Europe, but a decline in Eastern Europe
- Passenger transport: 26,156 persons with a positive trend on the Rhine, the Danube and in Italy; river cruising is a booming business.

53. The reason for the decline in the freight transport employment in Eastern Europe is due to the overall low wages compared to Western Europe (in 2017, the average monthly salary in some Danube countries was between € 602 to € 872 per month, while in Western Europe it was € 2,780 in freight transport and € 2,917 in passenger transport). This situation has brought to a massive migration of qualified boatmasters from Eastern Europe to Western Europe.

54. Common reasons for a significant staff shortage in the sector are:

- Technical reasons: the rapid emergence of automation and digitalization requires advanced skills in information and communication technology
- Ageing of the staff, mainly in the group of self-employed skippers in Western Europe
- Social reasons: the younger generation prefers land-based jobs to have a more comfortable work-family life balance.

55. ETF is of the view that the core elements to enhance the attractiveness of the sector are:

(a) *Legal clarity*

The shortage of staff is first and foremost a public policy question. The massive legal uncertainty that governs the sector (applicable labour law, social security law) sheds a negative light on the attractiveness of the sector. The main focus remains on the economic viability, with very little real care for the staff – the human element, the only one flexible enough to bridge the gap towards an automated future.

(b) *Enhanced controlling capacity*

Beyond safety regulations, little can be inspected by law enforcement authorities on-board. The European inland water transport sector of the future needs real controlling tools and capacity.

(c) *Human centred future orientation*

All is done to facilitate the European Union-wide employability and to focus solely on automated navigation for the future. ETF reiterates that the human element is the only one flexible enough to bridge the gap towards an automated future, so solid guarantees are needed to ensure the protection of the staff during this transitional period.

(d) *Global minimum labour standards for inland water transport*

Due to various reasons, European inland water transport becomes ever more international. More and more Indonesian and Philippine nationals enter the sector. Compared to most of the other transport modes, the inland water transport sector is governed by legal uncertainty. It is high time to develop international minimum standards for inland water transport.

IX. Position of the European Inland Waterway Transport Platform on Enhancing the Attractiveness of the Sector

56. European Inland Waterway Transport Platform¹⁷ has the following views on enhancing the attractiveness of the sector:

(a) Currently, the inland shipping sector is facing a shortage of qualified personnel. This applies to all positions on-board ships within Europe. This calls for Europe-wide action within the whole sector: employers, educational institutes, unions and all other stakeholders.

(b) Can we make the sector more attractive? In our opinion, inland water transport is already an attractive sector to work in. Inland navigation has a broad scope, as it involves different kinds of vessels by type and length, variety in cargo and various sailing areas. Like in other sectors, due to innovation the ship and tasks on-board are subject to rapid changes. It is therefore difficult to make the sector more attractive than it is, even as employers. And yet the sector is less well known than we think, especially in areas where inland shipping is rare or does not exist. This means that we as a sector need to raise our profile. Here, information, promotion of inland water transport and the appropriate staff retention policy can play a key role.

57. To ensure that interested people will find their way in inland navigation, a clear and up-to-date information about the sector, the ranks on-board with the contents of the job, a clear career path and future developments should be available. This information can be found on the respective websites in a local language, that contain details about the local educational possibilities and the contact data to provide true and valuable information on a wide range of issues directly to the interested individuals. As employers we will need to work together to share information and enrich the websites with the necessary content and most important, up-to-date information including pictures, films and video blogs.

58. The sector will need a broad promotion to reach as many people in Europe as possible, by joint efforts of employers, educational institutions, suppliers and other stakeholders. It should be clear that not only the profession on-board, but also a career perspective after sailing is important. Putting the entire sector in the limelight requires a breakdown of the public into target groups to widen the outreach and establishing specific approaches to each of them including the message to be delivered, matters of interest, communication channels and other relevant aspects.

59. As already mentioned, a lot of work on promoting the sector is under way. There are a lot of initiatives in various countries that include websites, videos and video blogs, teaching packages for schools, guest lectures, company visits, etc. However, they require significant costs from the concept to the implementation stage. As funding of these initiatives is difficult, a European cooperation between all organizations involved in this work is beneficial for employers, educational institutes, trade unions, government bodies, local and regional initiatives and all other stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to bring the existing initiatives together to learn from each other, work together and jointly fund them. Through a joint creative work, we will be able to brainstorm together on the opportunities we are not yet exploiting.

60. The sector does not only rely on ideas from external parties; the input from its own segments brings the diversity and developments better into the spotlight, aimed at the target group we have in mind. We need to show possibilities of inland navigation for all age groups: from primary school to highly qualified staff and those looking for another career, and in regions where inland shipping is unknown due to a lack of navigable waterways.

61. In addition to the efforts to increase the inflow into the sector, it is important to keep the outflow as small as possible. Retaining staff for one's own organization or for the sector is just as important. Retention of personnel is largely the responsibility of the organization. Being a good employer, where people would like to work is not only about paying a high salary. It means much more: a good employer is careful towards employees and weighs their

¹⁷ www.inlandwaterwaytransport.eu.

interests in decisions, lives up to expectations and thus wins the trust of employees, can explain major decisions affecting employees well, treats employees equally and encourages diversity within the company, can listen to employees and offers a person-centred approach, avoids or limits occupational risks and provides good insurance and conditions for the employee. For this, a good human resources policy is important, not only for employees, but also for apprentices. An apprentice needs a safe place to learn and develop. An apprentice who is not allowed to learn and make mistakes and does not feel appreciated by his employer and colleagues, will not start sailing after graduation and will be lost to inland navigation.

62. The departure of staff is inevitable. Due to various circumstances of , an employee can make the choice to look for another job. For the sector, knowledge and skills could be retained with, for example, a supplier, charterer or insurer. As employers in the sector, we can support each other in this by pointing out opportunities to employees on shore.

X. Topics for Discussion at the Workshop and the Round Table

63. The purpose of the workshop is (a) to highlight the current situation and recent developments at the inland water transport labour market, new jobs and opportunities for the sector, (b) to address the existing challenges for employees, impact of digitalization and automation, and (c) to consider ways for achieving the level playing field, highlighting the role of the human element, improving the attractiveness of the sector and other relevant issues.

64. The following topics are proposed for discussion at the round table:

- (a) Ways for improving the labour law in the sector
- (b) Measures for ensuring social sustainability, social security and equal rights of crew members
- (c) Minimum labour standards at the international level
- (d) Ways for achieving a level playing field in the sector
- (e) Equal rights and opportunities for women in inland navigation
- (f) Digital tools and enforcement
- (g) Education and training: new opportunities and challenges, paving the way for a true level playing field
- (h) Automation and digitalization, their impact on the sector, standards for automated navigation
- (i) Possibilities for enhancing the overall attractiveness of the sector
- (j) Role of the Economic Commission for Europe in addressing labour market challenges
- (k) Lessons learned, trends and future developments in the sector and their impact on the employment.

65. Participants are invited to take part in the round table discussions on the proposed topics and consider further steps that could be undertaken by the Working Party on Inland Water Transport and the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation.