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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Inland Water Transport
(Forty-sixth session, 22-24 October 2002
agenda item 5)

**EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON MEASURES AIMED AT
PROMOTING TRANSPORT BY INLAND WATERWAYS**

Addendum 1

Transmitted by the European River-Sea-Transport Union (ERSTU)

**USE OF RIVER-SEA TRANSPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON MAIN INLAND WATERWAYS
OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE (AGN)**

Role of river-sea transport in the Pan-European inland waterway transport market

1. In our view, the establishment of a Pan-European market for transport by inland waterway serves two purposes:
 - Setting up a broad-based internal market in Europe and strengthening economic ties with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (primarily with the Russian Federation and Ukraine);
 - Ensuring the uninterrupted flow of European freight transport.
2. In this context, river-sea transport as a component of inland and coastal shipping could promote:
 - The transfer of foreign-trade freight traffic to river shipping. This enables freight to be transported directly from sea ports to the hinterland, thereby rendering such transport more environmentally friendly and economically advantageous and enhancing its mobility;
 - The establishment of a Pan-European ring of waterways around the whole of Europe that would include high-speed coastal waterways and the deepwater network of waterways in European Russia;
 - The establishment of a Rhine-Main-Danube transnational waterway under the AGN Agreement.
3. In accordance with the existing capacities of its members, ERSTU could provide new technology to incorporate river and sea transport, including the shipping of the Russian Federation and other CIS member countries, into the system of Central and West European waterways.
4. The development of a ring of transport arteries will stimulate the use of the navigable river basins of France, Portugal, Spain and Italy by river-sea transport and improve the economic situation of the outlying regions of these countries.
5. By using the existing network of E waterways and introducing a trans-European waterway it would be possible to reduce the investment costs of the TEN waterway network, to which very little funding is currently being allocated.
6. It should be noted, however, that in order to put this plan into effect, it will not only be necessary to update the AGN Agreement, but also to design and construct new types of vessels. In addition, it will be necessary:

- To agree on reciprocal access to the international transport services market involving mixed sea-river transport between the European Union and the Russian Federation, and between the European Union and Ukraine;
 - To establish a uniform shipping regime for the Rhine-Main-Danube trans-European waterway;
 - To carry out a feasibility study to determine which option would best serve market requirements: the use of the Rhine-Main-Danube route by river vessels and river-sea vessels only, or by combined transport (rail and water transport). It should also be borne in mind that the Pan-European Transport Corridor VII (Danube) provides an outlet to other Pan-European corridors.
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7. Accordingly, we propose the following steps:
- The European Commission and the Government of the Russian Federation should be requested to expedite the start of negotiations to give effect to article 39, paragraph 3, of the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between the European Union and the Russian Federation, concluded on 24 June 1994 at Corfu;
 - Under the auspices of the European Commission and with the participation of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), UN/ECE, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine and the Danube Commission, new impetus should be given to negotiations to unify the shipping regime for the Rhine-Main-Danube trans-European waterway;
 - The European Union should be requested to review the issue of possible funding for economic studies based on substantiated analyses of goods flows.
8. ERSTU is prepared to participate in this work to the extent that its resources permit.

Pan-European waterway system

9. The AGN Agreement represents an ideal scenario for the use of coastal routes and national waterways, including those that cannot be brought into line with international standards in the near future.
10. There seems to be a need, therefore, to supplement the AGN with a network of international routes for river-sea transport. The classification of this network should, among other things, specify the appropriate bridge clearance for the transport of containers stacked at least three tiers high, the infrastructure operating requirements at the level of international standards and other aspects; and include the network of the most important trimodal ports functioning as hubs and logistics centres.
11. Moreover, a specialized system of this nature must naturally also take account of issues pertaining to the technical aspects of navigation and modern transport technology.

12. It is common knowledge that about half of the river-sea fleet is from CIS member countries and the other half from countries of the European Union. The main problem here is that vessels of the CIS fleet are bigger because of the navigation parameters of the principal waterways of the European part of the CIS. New types of vessels must therefore be designed for through traffic on the Rhine-Main-Danube route. We are informed that projects of this type are under way in the Russian Federation. Moreover, in designing new types of vessel, particular attention should be given to the development of special-purpose vessels (container ships, roll-on roll-off vessels, chemical tankers, etc.). This affords the most extensive opportunities to develop new transport systems.

13. To this end, it would be worthwhile establishing a special group of experts and ERSTU stands ready to participate in the work of such a group.

14. The creation of the transport network outlined above must stay within available funding. The following priorities should be borne in mind:

- Repair, modernization and refurbishment take precedence over the construction of new vessels;
- The elimination of bottlenecks and other infrastructure problems, and ensuring that ports are equipped to transship freight on to land transport modes, are priority areas.

15. We think that the AGN sub-network for river-sea transport should include the ring of waterways around the whole of Europe, the Danube-Don route and the deepwater network of European Russia, and also the Rhine-Main-Danube waterway. The possibility of using other water transport systems adjacent to sea ports should also be considered.

16. To this end, consultations should be held with countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain and Italy. Further potential could be unlocked by making greater use of canals such as the Saaima canal in Finland and the Gota canal in Sweden.
