

20 February 2017, 14:00

Keynote Speech

European Skippers Organisation (ESO) New Year's reception 2017

Dear Mr Van Lancker,

Dear Ms Duursema,

Dear Mr Georges,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure attending, for the first time, the New Year reception of ESO. This reception is an opportunity to meet you all. Thank you very much for your kind invitation.

After just a few months of work, I can ensure you that I know what are ESO's main concerns. Hester has taken full care of it.

Today I would like to shortly underline the most important elements that underpin our work:

MULTIMODALITY/MODAL SHIFT

The EU Transport Policy priority is to achieve **multimodality/modal shift**. For the inland navigation sector that means more cargo and more traffic. If you prefer: **modal shift is about creating more demand and more business for you.**

Of course, it is a difficult objective, for many reasons, but you can count on a constant effort from my side and my colleagues in DG MOVE to improve the situation (e.g. through the work on digitalisation).

GREENING – VESSELS

At 2020 horizon, operators in the inland navigation sector need to confront the issue of new environmental emissions limits.

An important effort of renewal of engines and use of alternative fuels is required.

20 February 2017, 14:00

In our view, this "**greening effort**" is key for ensuring the long term competitiveness of the sector.

We need to keep the credentials of clean inland navigation, in particular when we see the progress being achieved by modern truck engines.

DG MOVE will continue to promote the discussion with the public authorities, at the different levels, European, national and regional, to see what kind of support can be provided.

Again, it is a difficult topic, in particular at a moment of time where public funding is scarce and there are huge investment needs in many other areas too. We will do our best, but please keep in mind that revitalizing inland waterways transport is not only a matter for the public authorities.

The proposal of EBU and ESO to use part of the Reserve Funds for promoting the Inland Navigation Sector is supported by DG MOVE. The proposed new platform could give more visibility to your activities and attracting more interest from all concerned actors – including the attraction of private investment (refer to on-going discussion with the EIB).

INFRASTRUCTURE

In the past years, we have made good progress in making inland navigation more present in the discussions about the TEN-T core corridors.

The most important CEF project to date, by cost and size of investments, is the Seine-Escaut connection. This new project will create business opportunities for inland navigation (*example: the plans of the port of Dunkerque on hinterland connexions*).

Nevertheless, **the investments needed to renew and improve inland waterways infrastructures**, in all EU regions, are huge.

I would be more than happy to have more projects approved in the 2016 call and also in the "blending call" that has been just announced.

The revision of the **next multi-annual financial framework** and the possible allocation of resources for the Connecting Europe Facility over the **next financial period will be very important in that regard**.

20 February 2017, 14:00

NEW BUSINESS MODELS

Last but not least, we need a dynamic sector with new business models looking for new business opportunities.

Examples:

- the untapped potential for passenger transport, including both commuting and for leisure;
- better use of containerization;
- the transport of smaller, more "adapted" payloads.

But there are undoubtedly **MANY OTHER ASPECTS REQUIRING ADAPTATION AT ALL LEVELS**: standardisation (refer to the work within CESNI), adaptation of the workforce, streamlining the governance and work with the various international organisations – CCNR, the Danube Commission, the UN-ECE - , and awareness raising/fact based policy - the EU IWT Market Observatory.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a **common challenge**: an inland navigation sector fully embedded in advanced logistics. For this we need a **combined and continued effort**. We appreciate very much the **joint effort** of/with all sector organizations such as ESO, EBU, EFIP, INE, Aquapole.

But challenges also come with **great satisfaction**: we will succeed in making the inland waterways transport a flourishing business, competitive, with attractive jobs and contributing to sustainable development objectives.

Thank you for your attention.