Council of the European Union

Brussels, 24 May 2024
(OR. en)

10350/24

Interinstitutional File: 2024/0011(COD)

TRANS 249
MAR 82
CODEC 1353
IA 125

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Proposal for a DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL amending Directive 2005/44/EC on harmonised river information services (RIS) on inland waterways in the Community **[doc ST 6008/24 COM(2024) 33 final** **Interinstitutional number - 2024/0011 (COD)]** – Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

Delegations will find, in annex, the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the above-mentioned proposal.

This opinion is available in all language versions on the following website:

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ANNEX

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

Harmonised river information services – revision of EU rules

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2005/44/EC on harmonised river information services (RIS) on inland waterways in the Community (COM(2024)33 final - COM(2024)59 final - 2024/0011 (COD))

TEN/840

Rapporteur: **Mateusz SZYMAŃSKI**

Advisor	Krystyna WOJEWÓDZKA-KRÓL
Referral	European Parliament, 29/2/2024 Council, 15/3/2024
Legal basis	Article 91(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)
Section responsible	Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society
Adopted in section	4/4/2024
Adopted at plenary	24/4/2024
Plenary session No	587
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	191/0/1

1.**Conclusions and recommendations**

1.1 River information services (RIS) in Europe not only now, but also in the future, should pursue three objectives:

- safety,
- sustainability, and
- enabling integration with different modes of transport.

1.2 It should therefore be able to adapt to changing challenges and opportunities, while at the same time being compatible with the relevant systems in the various modes of transport and be user-friendly.

1.3 The system to be set up should be open to any initiatives to promote the development of shipping on local waterways, including those in towns and cities that are not part of the TEN-T network, in order to prevent the creation of local systems that are incompatible with RIS.

1.4 The proposal basically ignores the issue of preparing crews to use the new digital tools. The EESC believes that building awareness of the new digital technologies in inland waterway transport and educating people on how to use them are essential. It must be ensured that employees are involved in discussions on how to implement RIS.

2.**Amendments to the legislative proposal**

2.1 Directive 2005/44/EC

Amendment 1

Article 1 (1) is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
This Directive establishes a framework for the deployment and use of harmonised river information services (RIS) in the Union in order to support inland waterway transport with a view to enhancing its safety***, efficiency and sustainability*** and to facilitating interfaces with other transport modes.	This Directive establishes a framework for the deployment and use of harmonised river information services (RIS) in the Union in order to support inland waterway transport with a view to enhancing its safety ***and sustainable development*** and to facilitating interfaces with other transport modes.

Reason
Efficiency is an integral part of sustainable transport development. That means that a balance between environmental protection, business and social needs is required.

Amendment 2

Article 1 (2) is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
This Directive provides a framework for the establishment and further development of technical requirements, specifications and conditions to ensure harmonised, interoperable and open RIS on the Union inland waterways and ensure continuity with other modal traffic management services***, in particular maritime vessel traffic management*** and information services.'	This Directive provides a framework for the establishment and further development of technical requirements, specifications and conditions to ensure harmonised, interoperable and open RIS on the Union inland waterways and ensure continuity with other modal traffic management services and information services.'

Reason
Cooperation of inland water transport with other modes of transport is also important. See 1.1, 1.2, 4.1.

Amendment 3

Article 1 (3) (hg) is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
'smart inland waterway infrastructure system' an electronic platform supporting semi and fully automated management of IWT infrastructure in locks and movable bridges in the ***TEN-T***, operated by the public waterway management authorities;	'smart inland waterway infrastructure system' an electronic platform supporting semi and fully automated management of IWT infrastructure in locks and movable bridges in the ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2***, operated by the public waterway management authorities;

Reason
The system implemented on all waterways should be the same. See 1.3 and 4.9.

Amendment 4

Article 1 (3) (hi) is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
'Inland ports' means an inland waterway port of the ***TEN-T*** core network or ***TEN-T*** comprehensive network, as listed and categorised in Annex II to Regulation (EU)	'Inland ports' means an inland waterway port of the ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2*** core network or ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2*** comprehensive

No 1315/2013.’	network, as listed and categorised in Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013.’

Reason
The same as in amendment 3.

Amendment 5

Article 1 (4) point 3. (b) is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
ensure that for all their inland waterways of the ***TEN-T***, in addition to the data referred to in point (a), electronic navigational charts suitable for navigational purposes are available to RIS users;	ensure that for all their inland waterways of the ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2***, in addition to the data referred to in point (a), electronic navigational charts suitable for navigational purposes are available to RIS users;

Reason
The same as in amendment 3.

Amendment 6

Article 1, Annex 2, point 6. is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
(b) a harmonised, single point of access for up-to-date, if possible real-time, information on fairway conditions for safe and sustainable navigation, planning and port operations along the ***TEN-T***; (d) high level of data accuracy for seamless data exchange among relevant RIS users along the ***TEN-T*** (within and outside the Union); (g) link with other systems using information, communication, navigation or positioning/localisation technologies in order to manage infrastructure, mobility and traffic on the **TEN-T** effectively and to provide value-added services to citizens and operators, including systems for safe, secure, environmentally sound and capacity-efficient use of the network;	(b) a harmonised, single point of access for up-to-date, if possible real-time, information on fairway conditions for safe and sustainable navigation, planning and port operations along the ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2***; (d) high level of data accuracy for seamless data exchange among relevant RIS users along the ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2*** (within and outside the Union); (g) link with other systems using information, communication, navigation or positioning/localisation technologies in order to manage infrastructure, mobility and traffic on the ***inland waterways in accordance with Article 2*** effectively and to provide value-added services to citizens and operators, including systems for safe, secure, environmentally sound and capacity-efficient use of the network;

Reason
The same as in amendment 3.

Amendment 7

Article 1 (4) point 2. is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
Member States shall develop RIS in such a way that the RIS application is efficient, expandable and interoperable so as to interact with other RIS applications and with systems for other modes of transport, ***while also providing interfaces to*** transport management systems and commercial activities.	Member States shall develop RIS in such a way that the RIS application is efficient, expandable and interoperable so as to interact with other RIS applications and with systems for other modes of transport, transport management systems and commercial activities.

Reason
The goal is the interaction, not how to provide it.

Amendment 8

Article 1 (4) point 3. is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	Amendment
(b) ensure that ***for*** all their inland ***waterways of the TEN-T, in addition to the data referred to in point (a),*** electronic navigational charts suitable for navigational purposes are available to RIS users; (c) enable, as far as ship reporting is required by national or international regulations, the competent authorities to receive electronic ship reports of the required data from ships. In cross-border transport, this information shall be transmitted to the competent authorities of the neighbouring State and ***any such transmission*** shall be ***completed*** before arrival of the vessels at the border; (d) ensure that notices to skippers, including water level (or maximum allowable draught) and ice reports of their inland waterways, are provided as standardised, encoded and downloadable messages. The standardised	(b) ensure that all their inland electronic navigational charts suitable for navigational purposes are available to RIS users; (c) enable, as far as ship reporting is required by national or international regulations, the competent authorities to receive electronic ship reports of the required data from ships. In cross-border transport, this information shall be transmitted to the competent authorities of the neighbouring State and shall be ***delivered*** before arrival of the vessels at the border; (d) ensure that notices to skippers, including water level (or maximum allowable draught) and ice reports of their inland waterways, are provided as standardised, encoded and downloadable messages. The standardised message shall contain at least the information necessary for safe navigation. The notices to skippers shall be up-to-date and provided in an

message shall contain at least the information necessary for safe navigation. The notices to skippers shall be up-to-date and provided ***at least*** in an accessible common electronic format; (f) ensure that ***at least*** traffic related information is exchanged between RIS and electronic information exchange environments established by Union law and used in other transport modes, including through maritime National Single Windows within EMSWe;	accessible common electronic format; (f) ensure that traffic related information is exchanged between RIS and electronic information exchange environments established by Union law and used in other transport modes, including through maritime National Single Windows within EMSWe;

Reason
b) the same as in amendment 3. c), d), f) stylistic correction.

Amendment 9

Article 1 (4) point 5. is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	**Amendment**
Member States shall create, operate, use and maintain a single RIS Platform which provides fairway-, infrastructure-, traffic-, and transport related data. The RIS Platform shall be accessible for all RIS users and shall be the main platform for the exchange of RIS related information. It shall ***contain interfaces for connections*** with systems of other transport modes and inland ports. Member States shall designate one or more competent authorities responsible for operating RIS Platform.	Member States shall create, operate, use and maintain a single RIS Platform which provides fairway-, infrastructure-, traffic-, and transport related data. The RIS Platform shall be accessible for all RIS users and shall be the main platform for the exchange of RIS related information. It shall ***connect*** with systems of other transport modes and inland ports. Member States shall designate one or more competent authorities responsible for operating RIS Platform.

Reason
The goal, not the way of achieving it.

Amendment 10

Annex II point 8 should be removed.

Text proposed by the European Commission	**Amendment**
Exchange of data with other digital systems or platforms ***The technical specifications for exchange of data with other digital systems or platforms,***	

including EMSWe, eFTI, ERDMS, port community systems of inland ports and smart inland waterway infrastructure system, in accordance with Article 5, shall respect the following principles: (a)***build on the functionalities provided by the RIS Platform;*** (b)***the facilitation of the electronic data exchange between RIS technologies and the databases and systems in use by other modes of transport, through appropriate data links and interphases;*** (c)***the definition of the requirements concerning systems as well as procedures for automated data exchange;*** (d)***the real-time exchange of information in particular for time-critical data;*** (e)***ensuring the secure exchange of information in accordance with a comprehensive rights-based access-control system;*** (f)***anticipate a system exchange framework that will allow for future developments and links with additional systems as required, including exchanges with the future European Mobility Data Space and any other system that is designed to promote innovations in multimodality transport.***	

Reason
Repetition of point 7.

Amendment 11

Annex III is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the European Commission	**Amendment**
The technical specifications applicable to RIS shall be those set out in ES-RIS 2023/1.	The technical specifications applicable to RIS shall be those set out in ES-RIS 2023/1, ***its further updates and other relevant norms***[1]**.**

Reason

[1] For instance: COM(2024) 59 final.

Changes in ES-RiS 2023/1 are planned (COM(2024) 59 final). See 3.8.

Article 1 (13) and Article 2:

The Commission does not delete Article 12 paragraph 1, however, proposes Article 2 with the new deadlines of the transposition. The EESC recommends to review the text proposed to ensure that there is no confusion about the transposition timeline.

3.**Background to the opinion, including the legislative proposal concerned**

3.1 Inland waterway transport is an important element of sustainable transport development, as it has two to four times lower energy consumption, four times lower emissions, over two times lower land use and no congestion compared to road transport. In the EU, this branch of transport generates only 0.3% of transport external costs[2].

3.2 13 EU Member States have an interconnected waterway network, which is why its share in meeting transport needs (an average of 4% in total transport work and 5.4% in inland transport in 2021[3]) does not reflect its actual role in some areas of its application (57% in the North Sea Port service[4], over 32% of the Port of Rotterdam[5], 40% of Antwerp[6] or almost 40% in inland transport in the Netherlands). In some regions there is still space for the development of inland waterway transport which should be used.

3.3 The low environmental impact of this mode is the reason for the role attributed to it in building more environmentally friendly transport. Inland waterway and short sea shipping should increase by 25% by 2030 and by 50% by 2050[7].

3.4 One of the key conditions for building the competitiveness of this mode of transport is digitalisation. Building a harmonised, interoperable and open information system required the introduction of common standards and technical specifications.

3.5 The RIS Directive was a response to these challenges and one of the most important regulations in inland waterway transport, the aim of which was to provide advanced information services and functions in this branch of transport, which would contribute to:

- increased competitiveness,
- optimal use of infrastructure,

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2 European Commission, *Handbook on the external costs of transport*.

3 *EU transport in figures. Statistical pocketbook 2023*, Luxembourg 2023.

4 North Sea Port, https://en.northseaport.com/multimodal-port.

5 *Port of Rotterdam Container Facts & Figures 2021*, RFC Rhine Alpine Annual Report 2021.

6 *Port of Rotterdam Container Facts & Figures 2021*, RFC Rhine Alpine Annual Report 2021.

7 *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future*, COM(2020) 789 final.

– improved safety, and
– improved protection of the natural environment.

3.6 The analysis of the effects of RIS implementation showed that this does not meet the expectations, and as stated in the proposal 'the RIS Directive does not address the need to improve the efficiency of IWT and its integration with multimodal supply chains (...) does not sufficiently address new technological challenges and further digitalisation of the sector', and 'the main problem is the slow and fragmented deployment of RIS, which hampers the competitiveness and safety of the sector, and holds back its contribution to the objectives of the European Green Deal[8]'.

3.7 It is extremely important that the Communication on the Creation of a common European mobility data space[9] recognises this problem. The EESC believes and expects that RIS data will become part of this space, which will significantly improve the multimodality of transport in the EU.

3.8 In its resolution[10], the EP called for a strategy for the development and implementation of digital and automated technologies in the inland waterway sector. It also stressed the need to update the technical standards in the European Committee for the Development of Standards in Inland Navigation (CESNI) and to further harmonise river information services. The Parliament also clearly indicated the need to prepare a common framework for the interoperable exchange of data between different modes of transport. In doing so, it fully supported the increase in harmonisation and interoperability of data in international inland navigation.

3.9 In its opinion on the NAIADES III Action Plan[11], the EESC pointed out that the key principles on which the inland waterway sector should be strengthened are multimodality and intelligent navigation, which assume the optimal use of the advantages of different modes of transport to achieve the best possible results, while increasing safety and reducing the burden on the environment. The EESC also stressed that 'without the prospect of improving navigation conditions on waterways, shipowners will not take the risk and invest in a modern fleet.'

4.**General comments**

4.1 In the era of digitalisation, when individual entities collect a lot of data using different systems, the creation of a multimodal, intelligent traffic and transport management system integrated with the RIS system is necessary to better use existing transport capacities, improve the level of safety of inland waterway transport and better cooperate with other modes of transport.

4.2 In this context, the presented draft Directive amending Directive 2005/44/EC on *harmonised river information services (RIS) on inland waterways in the Community* should be considered important for the sustainable development of EU transport.

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8 SWD(2024) 16 final.
9 COM(2023) 751 final.
10 European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2021 *towards future-proof inland waterway transport in Europe* (2021/2015(INI)).
11 OJ C 194, 12.5.2022, p. 102.

4.3 At least a dozen RIS systems operate in the EU, including several large-scale systems. They support navigation and planning of operations. They also allow for increased safety. However, the scope of services of individual systems varies considerably.

4.4 Over the years, attempts have been made to build a platform that would combine different regional systems into one publicly available system. The international application of RIS was indicated as desirable, including in the report of UNECE from 2012[12]. These kinds of demands were turned into the RIS COMEX project, which led to the creation of the EuRIS Platform providing easy access to all the information needed for navigation and operations on Europe's main waterways.

4.5 Currently, the EESC sees only limited intermodality. It focuses mainly on connections with seaports, rail and road transport. Unfortunately, inland waterway transport in some regions of Europe is not included in transport systems to the same extent, although its potential is obvious, especially in cities. However, for this to happen, it is necessary to use transport data to plan traffic within entire conurbations, which requires interoperability and exchange of data, as well as inclusion of inland waterway transport in planning infrastructure development, urban development, etc. (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans [SUMP] are of particular importance here). E-freight services would also be important.

4.6 It should be noted that the increased social sensitivity to environmental and social issues requires taking into account not only the costs of transport (profitability) but also external costs (e.g. noise, pollution, congestion, etc.) when planning activities in the transport sector. Taking into account external transport costs undoubtedly benefits inland waterway transport not only on the main European routes, but also on local waterways.

4.7 For new spheres of application of inland waterway transport, new transport technologies are being developed, such as vessels with a smaller draught, made of lighter materials and autonomous units.

4.8 The problem, however, is a shortage of staff, causing operators to withdraw from less frequented and profitable local waterways. Implementing digital solutions on these sections can alleviate this problem, either by making the work more attractive or by reducing the need for staff, and can therefore encourage the development of this mode of transport.

4.9 The EESC also emphasises that Article 2 of the Directive allows for investments in RIS to be made not only on TEN-T waterways but also where interested parties decide to do so voluntarily. Therefore, we believe that the Directive should set standards and the European Commission should support all investments in digital solutions on inland waterways. The implemented system should aim to become accessible for waterways outside the TEN-T to avoid the creation of systems incompatible with RIS on local waterways.

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12 *UNECE United Nations (Economic Commission for Europe) (2012) Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) for Sustainable Mobility*.

5.**Specific comments**

5.1 The issue of crews is completely omitted in the document, which should be considered a mistake. It is difficult to imagine that the full implementation of RIS will take place without the acceptance and knowledge of digital solutions among crews and in inland ports. Therefore, it is necessary to indicate the need to provide training and continuous education in the field of digital solutions in this type of transport. It is also worth emphasising that the use of RIS will help improve the safety of work on vessels and in ports, which consequently may become one of the arguments for increasing the number of people willing to work in the sector, which is not popular at the moment and there is a problem of ageing staff.

5.2 In addition, the EESC would like to point out the need to also use RIS for purposes related to monitoring the quality and safety of work on vessels, especially in relation to working time. Similar solutions exist in other modes of transport, e.g. in road transport.

5.3 The EESC also wishes to underline the importance of investing in the infrastructure necessary for the efficient exchange of information within RIS. The equipment necessary to launch RIS (base stations, optical fibres, radio lines, etc.) is expensive, therefore it is necessary to provide preferential financial support conditions for interested entities.

Brussels, 24 April 2024.

The president of the European Economic and Social Committee
Oliver RÖPKE