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REPORT

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee
No. prev. doc.:	11895/4/22 REV 4
Subject:	Preparation of the Council meeting (<u>Transport, Telecommunications and Energy</u>) on 5 December 2022 Draft Council conclusions on the "Ongoing development of inland waterway transport (NAIADES III)" – Approval

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Transport on inland waterways is a sustainable and less congested mode of transport that can play a significant role for the Union's efforts to decarbonise the transport system. The Czech Presidency wishes to draw attention to the benefits offered by inland waterways while also highlighting the challenges that the sector is facing.
2. The Presidency decided to develop Council conclusions on the potential and ongoing development of this mode of transport.

II. WORK AT THE COUNCIL PREPARATORY BODY

3. Based on a proposal drafted by the Presidency, the Shipping Working Party discussed and developed the text of the draft conclusions in its meetings on 5, 12 and 26 September 2022 and 3 October 2022.

III. CONCLUSION

4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to examine and endorse the draft conclusions, as set out in the annex, and to submit them to the Council TTE (Transport) on 5 December 2022 for approval.
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**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF INLAND
WATERWAY TRANSPORT (NAIADES III)**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

HAVING REGARD TO

- the communication from the Commission on the European Green Deal¹;
- the communication from the Commission on a ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future’²;
- the Council conclusions of 3 December 2018 entitled ‘Inland waterway transport – See its potential and promote it!’³;
- the Council conclusions of 5 June 2020 entitled ‘EU Waterborne Transport Sector – Future outlook: Towards a carbon-neutral, zero accidents, automated and competitive EU Waterborne Transport Sector’⁴;
- the communication from the Commission entitled ‘NAIADES III: Boosting future-proof European inland waterway transport’⁵;
- the communication from the Commission entitled ‘A contingency plan for transport’⁶;
- the communication from the Commission on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030⁷;

¹ ST 15051/19 + ADD 1.

² ST 14012/20 + ADD 1.

³ ST 15144/18.

⁴ ST 8648/20.

⁵ ST 10214/1/21 REV 1.

⁶ ST 9490/1/22.

⁷ ST 8219/20 + ADD 1.

RECALLING Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council, which establishes the framework for achieving climate neutrality at the latest by 2050, while EMPHASISING the importance of climate change mitigation;

ACKNOWLEDGING the ongoing work and competences of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR), the Danube Commission, the European Committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI), and the International Sava River Basin Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the EU Strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR), as well as other international organisations and fora in the inland navigation sector;

RECALLING the aim of the European Green Deal to shift a substantial part of inland freight carried by road to rail and inland waterways, and WELCOMING the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy goal of developing inland waterways along trans-European transport network (TEN-T) corridors and in inner cities where it is important to green the last mile of city logistics;

WELCOMING the discussions on the proposals on alternative fuel infrastructure and on the revision of the trans-European transport network guidelines on developing and improving inland waterways, which will lead towards more sustainable and resilient inland waterway transport;

TAKING NOTE OF the revised Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the years 2021-2027, as well as the Horizon Europe programme;

1. RECOGNISES the importance of inland waterway transport on the path towards zero-emission mobility as a sustainable and less congested mode of transport, and UNDERLINES the need to fully develop its potential in a sustainable manner, in concrete steps and through appropriate measures at both Union and Member-State level, while ensuring its competitiveness.
2. RECOGNISES the need to take into account the different circumstances in the Member States with regard to the potential of inland waterways.
3. STRESSES the importance of developing strategies for tackling the impact of inland waterway transport on climate change and the environment and vice versa by means of dedicated research and connected investments.

4. RECOGNISES the strong impact of climate change on inland waterway transport, in particular on navigability, operations and water management, as evidenced by ground-water level changes but also by the severe droughts and periods of heavy rainfall in recent years, and UNDERLINES the need to improve navigability by implementing the Good Navigation Status in line with the TEN-T guidelines.
5. RECOGNISES the key role of inland waterway transport in the decongestion of urban agglomerations and in the shipment of heavy goods and large volumes of important construction materials, agricultural, steel, chemical and energy products, including the export of Ukrainian goods through the Solidarity Lanes, in particular via the Danube.
6. UNDERLINES the need to tackle all the remaining administrative and infrastructure bottlenecks in the short, medium and long term, while respecting environmental law, in order to increase the efficiency and the capacity of inland waterway transport and ensure safe navigation in general.
7. FOCUSES on the cornerstones of effective inland waterway transport and the need for further development and coordination in the following areas:
 - fleet renewal, where appropriate, to achieve greater transport efficiency, economic operation of smaller vessels and where possible zero-emission mobility, adaptation to shallow waters while taking into account the need to decarbonise transport and enhance climate resilience, safety of navigation by respecting and protecting the local environmental conditions of each particular inland waterway;
 - reliable, sustainable and continuously well-maintained infrastructure with adequate, economically feasible navigability, in particular, during low-water periods, ensuring swift links to other transport modes;
 - safe and secure workplaces for workers, even in unforeseen situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - digitalisation to support the development of all the above as well as automation, while considering energy efficiency and easy-to-recycle equipment.

8. SUPPORTS the preparation and adoption of standards for technical requirements, qualification of crew members and information technology by CESNI, and further RECOMMENDS the development of technical standards for the use of alternative fuels, sustainable and zero emission technologies and automation as well as professional qualification standards, as part of the abovementioned CESNI standards.
9. WELCOMES plans for smart and sustainable improvements to inland waterway transport and ports. INVITES the Commission to present its proposal for the revision of current Union legislation in the field of River Information Services, while taking into account the work done by CESNI in this field and envisaging a permanent operational structure for a single point of access, with a view to improving harmonisation and interoperability, where geographically possible, and also supporting research on climate resilience and smart shipping. CONSIDERS that inland waterways and ports are an essential component of multimodal transport and thus should be integrated in the revision of the Combined Transport Directive. The aim should be to establish the Directive as an effective tool, supporting multimodal freight operations, with a particular focus on seamless cross-border connections and interoperability, where geographically possible, which would be further strengthened through digitalisation of the inland waterway transport sector.
10. ENCOURAGES the Member States to continue and intensify their cooperation in the harmonised implementation and operation of River Information Services (RIS), as well as the implementation of the eFTI regulation for information related to transport of goods, thereby enabling better corridor management.
11. ACKNOWLEDGES that the inland waterway transport sector faces the challenge of an ageing workforce and therefore, must encourage more diverse, age- and gender-balanced workforce as well as lateral entrants from other sectors.
12. STRESSES the need for Member States and the sector to act to ensure the presence and availability of qualified personnel in the sector and in their administrations also by making education and qualifications more in line with the green and digital transition and therefore fit for the future requirements of the labour market.

13. ENCOURAGES the Member States to prepare and implement long-term strategies, while coordinating actions where necessary within the NAIADES expert group, and build on national support schemes to achieve the objectives of the NAIADES III Action Plan.
14. HIGHLIGHTS the work done within the PLATINA3⁸ project as part of the NAIADES III Action Plan and ENCOURAGES the Commission to support a PLATINA4 project from 2023.
15. STRESSES the importance of appropriate regulatory and financial measures, as well as private and public investments, at both EU and Member-State level for the implementation of the NAIADES III Action Plan and for compliance with legislation connected to inland waterway transport and ports, while maintaining a level playing field. With the costs of materials and energy increasing rapidly, it is essential to prioritise funding for research, innovation and the future-proofing of inland waterway transport, aimed in particular at infrastructure improvement, but also at fleet innovation and emissions reduction.
16. ENCOURAGES the Commission to take all of the above into account when preparing further calls for proposals under the CEF, Horizon Europe and other Union instruments and programmes.
17. STRESSES that the private sector also carries a responsibility for achieving and contributing to the goals concerning the modal shift, digitalisation, climate protection and climate adaptation and CALLS ON the sector to intensify their initiative in light of current developments.
18. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of existing international cooperation mechanisms and the expertise of river navigation commissions for cross-border coordination of waterway infrastructure development and their crucial role in developing inland waterways to their full potential.

⁸ <https://platina3.eu/>

19. ENCOURAGES the Commission, Member States and international partners, such as the CCNR, the Danube Commission, International Sava River Basin Commission, UNECE and EUSDR, to work together with the aim of improving connectivity, securing seamless navigation and opening new market opportunities, and INVITES the Commission to coordinate between EU policies and the policies of these international partners.
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