



**COUNCIL OF  
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**NOTE**

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From: The Presidency  
To: Council

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Subject: Informal Council of Ministers of Transport of the European Union  
Towards full integration of waterborne transport into the EU transport and  
logistics chains  
- Presidency conclusions

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Delegations will find attached the Presidency conclusions "Towards full integration of waterborne transport into the EU transport and logistics chains", following the discussion which took place at the informal meeting of the transport ministers (Antwerp, 15-16 September 2010). The item will be dealt with under "other business" at the meeting of the Council (Transports, Telecommunications and Energy) on 15 October 2010.

**Informal Council of Ministers of Transport of the European Union  
Antwerp 15-16 September 2010**

**Towards full integration of waterborne transport into the EU transport and logistics chains**

**PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS**

Background and objectives

The main discussion results can be summarised as follows:

1. Ministers welcomed the progress made in relation to the "European maritime transport space without barriers" (notably the new Customs Regulation and port formalities Directive). Ministers asked the Commission to develop further elements, such as a single window for administrative procedures, the facilitation of third country calls and advanced electronic communication and information systems ("e-Maritime").
2. Ministers agreed that the "European maritime transport space without barriers" should become a fully-fledged European "**Blue Belt**". Inside this area vessels can operate freely within the internal market and safety, security and environmental protection are ensured through integrated maritime transport surveillance capabilities; provided that existing systems are integrated. Ministers welcomed the Commission idea to initiate a pilot project to be carried out by EMSA, thus using and further improving the technical means for traffic management at its disposal.

The pilot project should:

- validate and further refine the "Blue Belt" and "Blue Lane" concepts;
- closely examine all relevant aspects of customs and border procedures in cooperation with the competent authorities and Commission services.

An analysis of requirements for an integration of the River Information Services system, facilitating the interface between Short Sea Shipping and inland waterway transport, should be carried out.

3. Regarding the reduction of sulphur emissions, Ministers confirmed the previously-agreed IMO emission limits. At the same time, Ministers expressed concerns about possible modal backshift resulting from expected higher fuel costs. Ministers agreed to monitor developments and evaluate possible responses. Such responses should be based on increasing efficiency, including port efficiency, and innovation. Advanced technical solutions should be assessed and promoted. Ministers agreed that the present geographical coverage of the Emission Control Areas (ECAs) in Europe would need to be assessed with a view to its possible extension.

Ministers agreed that in order to meet CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets, an instrument at a global level would be the best way forward. Any instrument would need to avoid market distortion, ensure a level playing field for EU actors, vis-à-vis third country operators, and avoid out-flagging.

4. Ministers concluded their discussions on the above by asking for a comprehensive approach to environmental issues which could lead to the creation of "**a sustainable waterborne transport toolbox**", comprising notably the following components: regulatory measures, alternative fuels such as LNG, green technology, adequate infrastructure, economic and funding instruments, research and innovation.
5. Ministers pointed out that in order to release the full potential of Short Sea Shipping and inland waterway transport and to optimise the European transport system, it is necessary to optimise modal interfaces and work towards better co-modal logistics chains. Ministers agreed that seamless co-modal logistics would also require co-modal arrangements for liability issues, as well as a single transport document. In this context, the "Rotterdam Rules" seem to have great potential. However, some further examination of how they could serve this purpose, might still be necessary.

6. The Ministers welcomed the Commission's intention to evaluate the **Motorways of the Sea (MoS)** concept. They asked the Commission to seize this opportunity to better align MoS with the emerging integrated European co-modal transport system - as envisaged in the framework of the revised TEN-T policy - and to fully exploit the synergies between Motorways of the Sea and the various modal transport policies. They highlighted the importance of avoiding distortion of competition against the common interests of the SSS operators already active on the market. Ministers also underlined that MoS should include ports as key nodal points, well connected to their markets through the necessary hinterland connections. Ports development with involvement of the private sector must be a key element of the revision of the TEN-T network. In this context, special attention must be given to the situation of peripheral Member States and Island Member States.
7. Ministers welcomed the proposal to refocus structures and tools relating to transport policy, with a view to improving the EU multidisciplinary approach and co-modality. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the interoperability of Intelligent Transport Systems, notably between SafeSeaNet, River Information Services, e-Freight, e-Customs and e-Maritime; providing continuity of management and information services, and supporting logistics operations.
8. Ministers insisted on the vital role of both sea and inland ports for the co-modal transport network. The Commission was asked to present, as soon as possible, guidelines on environmental aspects and State aid to ports. In this context, the need to increase the cost-efficiency of ports was underlined, with particular reference to port handling and services. Ministers also stressed the importance of ensuring a level playing field between EU ports and ports in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, port development must be looked at from a business perspective, with a proper return on investments.

9. Ministers supported the Commission's approach to developing a comprehensive **social agenda** for waterborne transport and to both promoting and better integrating careers related to maritime and inland waterways. Such a proactive approach would help create further employment and quality jobs in Europe. Intra-waterborne transport labour mobility should be further encouraged.
  
  10. Ministers recognised that, within a sustainable European transport system, inland waterway transport is a key contributor to seamless hinterland connections. Ministers asked for the continuation of present efforts promoting inland navigation and for a more proactive policy for increasing its use. The financing of common actions, aiming at the modernization of the fleet and of infrastructure at EU level, is an important element for the development of inland waterway transport.
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