

The Voice of Freight Forwarders and Customs Agents in Europe

Brussels, September 6th 2005

RE: European Commission Consultation on "An Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport"

Freight forwarders and logistics operators, being neutral towards transport modes, welcome any initiative aimed at fostering the performance and efficiency of goods transport in Europe, thus enabling a wider selection in transport modes.

Inland waterway transport is among the transport modes used by freight forwarders when crafting logistical solutions, especially where it offers a viable alternative to congestion. CLECAT is of the opinion that the topography of the European continent and the specific qualities of this mode could enable IWT to play a more substantial role in freight transport in Europe, wherever the existing infrastructure is or can be developed.

Indeed, from a geographical point of view, although IWT is limited to certain areas in Europe, its growth potential is considerable both in countries crossed by important corridors (France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands) and in new Member States where transport operations are bound to increase in the near future. Combined with some specific qualities (relatively low cost, environmental performance), these characteristics allow for positive development perspectives of IWT.

Logistic providers and freight forwarders are the ideal counterparts of inland navigation service providers to offer shippers a comprehensive solution.

CLECAT therefore welcomes the European Commission intentions to give IWT the technical and political means to increase its presence within the European transport system.

For the above reasons, CLECAT would like to express its general support to the official comments made by the European Barge Union. These comments can be shared by CLECAT members without difficulty.