

Press release

EBU BOARD AT ITS MEETING IN THE PREMISES OF THE CCNR IN STRASBOURG APPOINTED MATTHIEU BLANC AS NEW PRESIDENT AND MARTIN STAATS AS VICE PRESIDENT. IT SET ITS NEW PRIORITIES UNDER THE NEW PRESIDENCY.

EBU on 5 June gathered at the premises of the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine in Strasbourg to hold its board meeting and Annual General Assembly. At this occasion it organised a dialogue with the Secretary General, Lucia Luijten, and her deputy, Jörg Rusche, to exchange positions regarding major policy discussions and challenges of the IWT sector.

EBU combined its meeting with the organisation of EFIP's "Inland Ports Navigating Climate Change" conference on 6 June at the premises of the CCNR in Strasbourg.

CHANGE OF PRESIDENCY

The EBU Board appointed **Matthieu Blanc**, Board member of the French association E2F Entreprises Fluviales de France and CEO of CFT Compagnie Fluviale de transport, SOGESTRAN group, as President for a period of 2 years. **Martin Staats**, President of the German association Bundesverband der Deutschen Binnenschifffahrt eV and Managing Director MSG eG, was appointed as Vice-President.

Dr. Philippe Grulois stepped down as President after having presided EBU for the second time during the past two years. As President he successfully contributed to the strengthening of the IWT sector at European level and the cooperation with the relevant European and international institutions. EBU under his presidency was challenged with major topics resulting from the EU Green Deal and Fit for 55 package, in particular the energy transition of the sector. On top, he had to cope with the impact of the Russian war on UA on the IWT sector and the important role inland navigation played and still is playing in support of UA within the Solidarity lanes.

The newly elected President aims to build on this heritage. *"I owe my predecessor many thanks for his engagement to the benefit of the IWT sector. In the coming two years as EBU President I will build on this important achievement and the strong relationship with the European institutions, the River Commissions and stakeholders. In view of the challenges ahead the major focus of our association - next to the contribution to the overall policy agenda - will lie on the labour market as well as the energy transition and the greening of the sector"*, Matthieu Blanc emphasised.

PRIORITIES UNDER THE NEW PRESIDENCY

The priorities of EBU in the coming years will closely follow the EU policy agenda by voicing the needs of the IWT sector. In this context, the President, supported by the Secretary

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General, will focus on building up relationships with the newly elected European Parliament and the new Commissioners.

Obviously, from a sector's perspective the implementation of the NAIADES III program with the two core objectives, shifting more freight transport to inland waterways, and setting the sector on an irreversible path to zero-emissions accompanied by a paradigm shift towards further digitalisation, as well as accompanying measures to support the current and future workforce, plays an important role. EBU supports the proposed focus as well as the notion that the IWT sector needs to be reinforced to meet the Green Deal objectives in terms of modal shift and lower pollutants and Greenhouse Gas emissions.

“Keeping already a very positive environmental record today the intended increase of the modal share of IWT will substantially contribute to an overall decrease of GHG emissions of transport in Europe. The IWT sector is prepared to take the necessary steps towards emission reduction and to take over much higher volumes of freight and passengers on the waterways if the right framework conditions are met. This requires in particular favourable state aid guidelines and dedicated funding for the energy transition of the fleet. The current funding gap for the energy transition of the fleet amounting between 5-7 billion Euro – depending on the very scenario - cannot be borne by the sector alone as a lack of business case” the newly elected President emphasises.

INLAND WATERWAYS PIVOTAL TO SUPPLY EUROPEAN INDUSTRY AND CONSUMERS

EBU welcomes the Commission proposal setting out the new guidelines for the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), in particular the acknowledgement of the important role of Inland Waterway Transport in line with the EU Green Deal.

While the proposal is its final stage of adoption by the co-legislators, EBU points to the need of sufficient CEF funding under the new financial framework. **If Europe is to strengthen its resilience, be a leader in the shift to net-zero and finally complete the Trans-European Transport Network, it must translate its words into deeds and reflect these ambitions in the new EU budget for transport.**

The massive oversubscriptions of the current CEF transport budget underline once again that the ambitions and challenges of the transport sector are high, yet are not met with the necessary EU support. The take-away for European leaders and policymakers should be clear: this is the moment for **Europe to reverse the trend of continued underfunding of the transport sector and set the bar high.** A strong CEF instrument for transport is the best guarantee to deliver high EU added value, foster a level playing field across Europe and enable *no regret* investments.

Inland waterways transport has a huge modal shift potential with free capacities on the network of European waterways. However, neglected waterway maintenance in the past years or even decades, together with the increasing impact of climate change on water levels endanger the reliability of inland waterway services. This calls for immediate action to

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address the current shortcomings and to prepare the infrastructure for the future. With small investments huge results can be realised by an effective rehabilitation of the waterways, leading to an efficient and resilient waterway network in the future.

Therefore, EBU calls upon the responsible public authorities to sufficiently invest in the effective rehabilitation and maintenance of waterways and the elimination of bottlenecks to make inland waterways resilient and future proof.

Major industries and consumers are dependent on a well-functioning waterway network. This has been demonstrated during the COVID period where all essential goods including pharmaceutical raw materials have been carried smoothly on inland waterways. More recently, the Danube river has demonstrated to play a pivotal role in the export of grain and essential raw materials from Ukraine as part of the Solidarity Lanes. Besides, in July the river Seine will be in the full picture of the world when the opening of the Olympic games will take place entirely on inland vessels” Matthieu Blanc emphasises.

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The European Barge Union (EBU) represents the inland navigation industry in Europe. Its members are the national associations of barge owners and barge operators of 9 European inland navigation countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania and Switzerland). Besides it represents the interests of a number of international organisations dealing with IWT and Short Sea Shipping. www.ebu-uenf.org

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