



# Pressemitteilung

17.11.2015 - Loh

INE/VBW-banquet:

**"Infrastructure will be the defining issue of the coming decades."**

A Europe-wide exchange of a special kind was organised by Inland Navigation Europe (INE) and the Association for European Inland Navigation and Waterways Association (VBW) with a first joint banquet, which took place on 10 November 2015 in the House of Entrepreneurs in Duisburg. Around 50 decision makers from the shipping, port and logistics sector as well as representatives of European waterways administrations and associations participated in this event.

The guest lecture entitled "NAIADES II: Opportunities for European Inland Waterways" was delivered by Dimitrios Theologitis, Head of Unit for inland waterways and ports of the EU Commission. He had been present at a VBW banquet of 2012 to introduce the NAIADES II program and used this opportunity to make a first assessment of its implementation.

He highlighted the European investments in waterway infrastructure: "In the first TEN-T Call we awarded around €13 billion for transport infrastructure of which 10% were allocated to inland waterways. This is a good result. Unfortunately, we received so many good, eligible funding requests that we had to very carefully consider which to choose. "

Dimitrios Theologitis justified the Commission's decision for a majority of the funds to be allocated to the project Seine-Scheldt as it constitutes a transnational project of great importance, that would never materialise without EU co-financing.

The second TEN-T Call awards the remaining €5.5 billion: "We will try to spend unspent funds from the Cohesion Fund for infrastructure. We plan to spend every penny."

VBW president Heinz-Josef Joeris of the German Directorate-General for Waterways in Bonn, welcomed the EU's willingness to invest in transport infrastructure, but nevertheless criticised that the budget of Connecting Europe Facility was reduced by €2.8 billion to finance the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), in effect losing this amount for direct infrastructure investment leaving it only as a lever for private investment. "Transport economists currently see no conceivable model for waterway projects that can be effectively implemented in public-private partnership. This is especially true for locks. We ask the European Commission, therefore, to rethink its position, to support lock projects only from the EFSI fund ", said Joeris.

The VBW-President also pointed out that in addition to financial resources for infrastructure, adequate planning capacity and streamlined planning and procurement procedures are crucial: "At the German waterway ad-

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Binnenschifffahrt und  
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# Pressemitteilung

ministration alone, we currently lack around 300 engineers. The legislator has recognized this problem and agreed to create new jobs, but this will take years and years to complete. Given the financial and human resources and the often lengthy planning and procurement procedures, infrastructure will be the dominant challenge in the coming decade."

Karin De Schepper, INE Director, strongly echoed the words of Heinz-Josef Joeris on the importance of infrastructure investments and human resources. "We should not only invest for the exclusive benefit of inland waterways, but because Europe needs a forward looking and sustainable logistics system to handle port-hinterland flows effectively. This is not only essential in light of growing seaport traffic but also because of the increasing call size of oceangoing vessels. We simply cannot afford a traffic gridlock in our hinterland and a disruption of our industrial supply chains." She looks forward to constructively cooperate with the European Commission to find a solution. Finally, she praised the enhanced cooperation between INE and VBW: "We have a number of common interests in particular when it comes to the topics of infrastructure and multimodality. The joint banquet was a successful start for further fruitful exchange and joint thematic events."

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Der **Verein für europäische Binnenschifffahrt und Wasserstraßen e.V. (VBW)** ist eine seit über 140 Jahren existierende fachwissenschaftliche Organisation zur Förderung des intermodalen Verkehrsträgers Wasserstraße. Seine breite Mitgliederstruktur aus Binnenschifffahrt, Binnenhäfen, verladender Wirtschaft, sowie Verwaltung und zahlreichen wissenschaftlichen Einrichtungen bildet alle am System Wasserstraße beteiligten Akteure ab. Kernelement des VBW sind die mit internationalen Experten besetzten Fachausschüsse für Binnenschiffe, Binnenwasserstraßen und Häfen, Binnenschifffahrtsrecht, Verkehrswirtschaft und Telematik.

**Inland Navigation Europe (INE)** is the European platform of national & regional waterway managers and promotion bureaus, established in 2000 with the support of the European Commission. INE sees major opportunities to contribute to long-term strategies for sustainable transportation by moving more goods by water in EU regions and cities with accessible and navigable rivers and canals. INE is a neutral platform without commercial interests.