

Proposal for a directive on harmonised River Traffic Information Services in inland waterways COM(2004)392

General

INE welcomes the Commission proposal for a directive on river information services (RIS), since a legislative framework is the most adequate tool to establish a comprehensive framework for a harmonised and interoperable development and deployment of information services on the Union's inland waterways to support traffic *and* transport logistics management in inland navigation.

RIS consists of:

- Traffic management: fairway information, traffic information, traffic management with compatibility to maritime services;
- Transport management: voyage planning, intermodal port and terminal management, cargo and fleet management, value added services.

Many existing RIS applications have been developed independently of each other in the Member States. Ensuring interoperability and compatibility of RIS applications (achieved through common standards and protocols for data exchange, communication, equipment and frequencies) would facilitate continuous cross-border traffic for users. The Directive:

- rightly provides for the obligation of Member States to supply a set of services to RIS users and sets the principles for development of the services;
- rightly defines the specific obligations of Member States as regards both the provision of relevant data for navigation, electronic navigation charts and of notices to skippers and the capability of the competent authorities to receive electronic ship reports on vessels and cargo in transit; while enabling Member States, after consultation with the Commission, to exempt waterways not linked to those of another Member State.

The RIS directive will avoid a patchwork of national and regional systems, which would seriously affect the main objective of linking-up information aimed at by RIS services and increase costs for inland operators and other users.

As such, the Directive will create a European-wide harmonised framework for River Traffic Information Services (RIS) in order to ensure compatibility and interoperability between current and new RIS systems and to achieve effective interaction between different information services on inland waterways of international importance, i.e. accessible to vessels over 1,000 tonnes, and in relevant seaports and inland ports.

This objective is full part of the TEN priorities. Moreover, the Pan-European Minister Conference on Inland Waterway Transport of 5-6 September 2001 invited to establish a pan-European RIS by 2005 based on standards to be drawn up.

RIS is a tool and not a goal in itself. The interoperable provision of RIS services across borders leads to operational benefits (e.g. immediate navigational decisions), as well as strategic benefits (resource planning, capacity management, energy use etc.) for both waterways authorities and users (e.g. shipping operators, terminal managers, lock managers, shippers, fleet managers, operators in calamity centres of emergency services etc.).

RIS is an instrument to increase competitiveness and reliability, to enhance safety and security, to improve environmental performance and to enable a better capacity use of waterway infrastructure. Together with rail and short sea shipping, waterway transportation plays an increasing role to prevent a traffic gridlock on Europe's roads and to maintain a competitive transportation system respectful of citizens and environment.

Installing highly efficient navigational aid and communication systems on the European inland waterway network in a harmonised and interoperable way is an important contribution to tap the full potential of rivers and canals for freight and to encourage business to fully integrate them into their supply chain.

Proposals for amendments of the draft directive

Recital (2):

INE proposes to add:

"In some Member States national applications of information services are already being deployed on various waterways. In order to ensure a harmonised, interoperable and open navigational aid and information system on the inland waterway network of the Community, common requirements and technical specifications should be introduced. **These common requirements and technical specifications should build on the experience in this field by relevant international organisations, such as the International Association for Navigation (PIANC), the Central Committee for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).**"

Recital 7 (bis) NEW:

"In order to ensure a seamless European-wide implementation of RIS services, Member States shall, in cooperation with the Commission, support inland shipping operators with the compliance of the requirements derived from this directive, and shall take the necessary measures to enable users to take full advantage of RIS services."

There will be financial consequences for inland shipping operators with regard to the purchase of software and hardware, training etc. The vast majority of the inland shipping market consists of SMEs with a limited investment capacity. To enable inland shipping operators to fully benefit from river information services, and to ensure an effective deployment, Member States and the Commission should provide adequate support.

Article 2 Scope

INE welcomes the comprehensive wording of the Commission in the paragraph **2.1** referring to both waterways and nodal points. The ports are an essential part for the functioning of the European waterway infrastructure.

INE proposes to modify the second paragraph:

2.2: "A Member State may exempt one or more of its waterways of class IV or higher which are not linked by a waterway of class IV or higher to a waterway of class IV or higher of another Member State from the application of this Directive. The Member State concerned shall inform the Commission of such decision."

Member States should have the possibility to exempt non-relevant waterways from the application of the RIS-directive in as far the exemption does not interrupt the provision of transboundary RIS services.

Article 3 RIS definitions

- (a) *River Information Services* (RIS) means the harmonised information services to support traffic and transport management in inland navigation, including interfaces to other transport modes. RIS does not deal with internal commercial activities between one or more of the involved companies, but is open for interfacing with commercial activities. **RIS shall comprise fairway information, traffic information, traffic management, calamity abatement support, transport management information, statistics and customs services and waterway charges and port dues.**

This provision replaces article 4.2. The group of RIS services considered in the directive should be defined in the definitions of article 3.

It is important that Member States *shall* provide mentioned services as a minimum set of services. Competent authorities make use of advanced information and communication technology to increase the safety and the efficiency of navigation operations. The RIS framework directive aims to avoid a patchwork of national and regional systems, which would seriously affect the main objective of linking-up information aimed at by RIS services and increase costs for inland shipping operators and other users.

- (f) *RIS centre*, means the place **established by the competent authority of the Member States** where the services are managed by operators.

The Commission rightly points out that the establishment of the RIS centres is a responsibility of the competent authorities of the Member States.

- (h) *Interoperability* means that services, data contents, data exchange formats and frequencies are harmonised in such a way that RIS users have access to the same services and information at a European level **regardless of the equipment used.**

Member States may decide to introduce different types of equipments, but they have to ensure that RIS users have interoperable access to the same services and information across borders where RIS is deployed. Interoperability between systems is an obligation of the Member States. RIS users cannot be obliged to install different types of equipment on board to match the Member States' systems, since this would inflate investment costs and undermine the cross-border philosophy of the RIS concept.

Article 4 Setting-up of RIS

INE fully supports the specific obligations referred to in the paragraph 4.4. Without these obligations, the establishment of RIS will end up in a patchwork of services, which would undermine the underlying philosophy of RIS and endanger the ongoing development of RIS. Such an approach risks leading to more costs for users rather than to the initially envisaged savings. E.g. The supply by Member States of relevant data for navigation on the waterways within the scope of Article 2 to RIS users exceeds the supply of data relevant for voyage planning.

4.5. "The **competent authorities of the** Member States shall establish RIS centres according to regional necessities."

This wording is consistent with Article 3(f).

4.7: "Member States **in cooperation with the European Commission** shall **encourage** boat masters, operators or agents of vessels navigating on their waterways, shippers or owners of goods carried on board such vessels as well as the vessels **to fully profit from the services which are made available under this Directive.**"

The Directive is addressed to Member States and does not imply any obligation for inland shipping operators and users. There will however be financial consequences for inland shipping operators with regard to the purchase of software and hardware, training etc. To fully benefit from river information services, Member States should be authorized to provide state aid to encourage users and this within the strict boundaries of the Community law on state aid to avoid distortion of competition.

Also Community co-financing would be most appropriate to safeguard the European-wide introduction and use of river information services. Community co-financing offers the advantage of safeguarding a level playing field. A comprehensive programme should be elaborated to this end. This would support the inland shipping SME market to come into line with modern developments in traffic information and communication systems for a seamless integration in the logistics chain.

Article 6 Satellite positioning

"For the purpose of River Information Services **for which tracking and tracing is required the use of** satellite positioning technologies **is recommended.**"

Satellite positioning is useful for exact positioning.

Article 6 bis Unique European vessel identification number

"**For the purpose of River Information Services the use of a unique European vessel identification number is mandatory.**"

There is no single identification system for inland vessels in the EU. Currently different systems are in use. The use of a unique European vessel identification number however is the only technical solution to ensure an unequivocal recognition of vessels by RIS.