

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **of the Ministry of Transport, Public works and water management Of the Netherlands**

Communication department  
(Ms Yvonne de Keulenaar Tel. : +31 70 351 65 82)  
Postbus 20901  
NL-2500 EX 's-GRAVENHAGE

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### **INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION BEING PAID TO INLAND NAVIGATION IN EUROPE**

Political and administrative bodies in Europe are not paying sufficient attention to inland navigation. Not enough is known about the economic and social importance of this mode of transport, nor about the possibilities it offers to deal with the problem of the increasing volume of transport in Europe. In order to deal with this situation, international institutional co-operation will have to be improved. These are the major conclusions in the report on the future institutional framework for inland navigation in Europe, drafted by an independent international Study Group entitled the European Framework for Inland Navigation (EFIN), under the chairmanship of Mr. Jan Terlouw.

The Study Group explains that legislation and regulation of inland navigation requires a greater degree of harmonisation, with regard to safety rules as well as conditions for competition and access to markets. On the basis of the above, the EFIN Study Group recommends setting up a "European Organisation for Inland Navigation". This would consist of a political forum the "European Conference of Ministers responsible for Inland Navigation", an operational and administrative body entitled the "European Bureau for Inland Navigation", as well as a "Special Intervention Fund for Inland Navigation in Europe".

The Dutch Minister of Transport, Madame Karla Peijs, believes that the report is a major contribution to thinking on the future institutional structure of inland navigation in Europe. Accordingly, she will make this study available to the States concerned, the European Commission, the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR), the Danube Commission, the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations (ECE/UN), the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), as well as to all international bodies and institutions involved in inland navigation. The aim is to encourage open and constructive debate on new desired institutional structures to make navigation more efficient and for its interests to be protected. Madame Peijs announced that the Netherlands will take the initiative of launching discussions with other States concerned and the international institutions mentioned above, indicating that the Netherlands would like to involve France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland in this initiative.

The EFIN Study Group was set up on the initiative of the Netherlands in April 2004, in co-operation with Belgium, Germany, France and Switzerland. The Group consisted of independent experts from the States mentioned above as well as Hungary, Austria and Rumania. The Study Group was chaired by Mr. Jan Terlouw, former Minister and former Secretary General of the ECMT.

This initiative was the result of a number of developments in Europe, such as the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, and the arrival of new Member States, among which several countries with inland navigation experience, and the will to reinforce co-operation between the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR), the Danube Commission and the European Commission. This initiative should also be seen as the concrete outcome of the intention expressed at the Conference of European Ministers for Inland Navigation held in Rotterdam in 2001, which called for the creation of an integrated pan-European market for water-borne transport.

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