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Report

Setting of priorities in the extension of the federal waterways

Federal parliamentary group
Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen

Status report for political assessment

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1. Summary and recommendations

Contrary to all prognoses traffic on the inland waterways barely increases. Last years' prognoses seemed to be political wishful thinking and as such did not come true. Instead, transportation on the federal waterways has been stagnating for twenty years at around 64.0 billion ton kilometers. In spite of high investments the traffic volume did not increase.

A discussion of the causes is reasonable. Apparently, despite considerable resources in capacity the inland waterway vessel is just a partly attractive means of transportation and its benefits is restricted to few goods and transport ways. The question has to be raised which framework requirements have to be changed in order to initiate a change – and if these framework requirements lie within the state's sphere of influence.

According to actual plannings and project proposals of the Federal Transport Network Plan (Bundesverkehrswegeplan = BVWP), the Framework Plan of Investments (Investitionsrahmenplan = IVR), the Report on Traffic Investments (Verkehrsinvestitionsbericht = VIB) and the National Harbour Concept, another approximately 3.8 billion euros are planned for further investment. From 2012 on the current federal budget even provides for almost 4.8 billion euros for new construction and extension as well as for maintenance. In opposition to these wills to invest there are 120 billion euros of factual investment in the year 2011; for the first time in 2009 and 2010 there were 780 billion euros available by means of economic stimulus packages. There is a gap between the wills to invest and the financing which thus necessitates a differentiated examination and evaluation of the development of the federal waterways.

In the light of the given traffic development you have to pose the question of the benefits of the investments in the extension of the inland waterways that already took place. The conservation of the status quo and the qualitative improvement without changes in the standard of extension are certainly up for discussion. Considering aspects of the cost/benefit-ratio, investments with a high expenditure compared to little traffic volume with only limited capability of development or even connected to critical interventions in the environment, have yet to be called into question.

In the Federal Transport Network Plan all waterway projects are prioritized. So far, the federal parliamentary group of Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen as initiator of this investigation does not have at hand any statement of the federal government, concerning the questions if, when and how it will carry out these prioritization. The present report hence furnishes a sound analysis and proposes ways of implementation.

Actions at the Rhine and the Kiel canal are regarded as priorities and have to be implemented directly. The

marine waterways also have a high importance but depending on the fact that possible effects mainly are achieved through optimal cooperation of the marine harbour locations.

All other projects are divided into three sections:

1. Waterways with good developmental potential: These waterways have to be extended for large-size engine cargo vessels and 185 m long and 11,40 m wide push tows (in the case of locks or ship's lifts also including the option of overlong large-size engine vessels).
2. Waterways with limited capability of development: These waterways have to be developed according to the local conditions.
3. Other waterways: The usability of these waterways by larger vessels is not or just conditionally reasonable and strategies for their development have to be worked out on the basis of the given infrastructure.

The current political discussion on inland navigation is heavily influenced by the state's demand for investment in infrastructure. This is inter alia demonstrated by the fact that the planned design of the waterway connection of Berlin and Hannover (traffic project „Deutsche Einheit Nummer 17“) according to the waterway class V, is amongst others based on the argument that vessels and push tows that are suitable for waterways with a lower state of construction in practice are not built any more [].

Due to the situation in the public budgets this status has to be questioned critically. That means that apart from the ecological optimization of vessels the possible shipboard innovations in terms of the future development of infrastructure have to be increasingly emphasized. The significant aspects for this have been extensively described in the study „Prioritizing of the Federal Transport Network Plan's projects for the federal waterway network“ („Priorisierung der BVWP-Projekte für das Bundeswasserstraßennetz“) of the year 2005.

1.1. Communication

The available data shows inconsistencies which make a detailed inspection complex and difficult. It is deplorable that the available information is qualitatively insufficient and that it furthermore only hardly provides up-to-date information concerning the corresponding websites – this being true for tonnage numbers as well as for the state of extension and investments made.

We recommend a political demand for more transparency. In this context future investment master plan should for example separately disclose all sections of maritime tracks that are part of rivers;

which means separate disclosures not only for the Lower and Outward Elbe as well as for the Lower and Outward Weser but also for example for the Peenestrom and Ems.

1.2. Transport policy

By means of a corresponding framework the objectives are

- that inland navigation can develop to the maximum while keeping financial investment and interventions in the environment as little as possible,
- to create optimum conditions for environmentally compatible carriers in goods traffic through optimum harmonization with plannings of the rail network.

For this purpose most essential are

- further development of cooperative and integrated concepts (master plan logistics),
- continuation of a cooperative development of seaports,
- the rail network's extension with the prior objective to increase capacity in order to achieve a re-allocation of transports of goods to rail without compromising the passenger transport's developmental potential,
- to hinder additional pressure to extend the inland navigation's infrastructure which would be the result of an increase of the permitted measures and/ or weights in road freight transport.

1.3. Strategic orientation of the development of the waterway network

In order to achieve best possible conditions for shipping with minimal financial investment and minimal interventions in the environment, it is recommended

- to implement the intended measures at the Rhine and at the Kiel Canal quickly,
- according to the requirements only to develop the upcoming measures of the maritime track's sections that would do well and still be successful under an optimum cooperation of German seaports,
- to extend the waterway connections with high developmental potential for inland navigation for the 110 meters long and 11.4 meters wide large-size engine cargo vessels and for the 185 meters long and 11.4 meters wide push tows while securing the option for 135 meters long large-size engine cargo vessels (overlong motor ship = überlanges Großmotorschiff – üGMS) concerning complex structures such as locks or ship lifts,

- to extend waterways with limited capabilities of development specifically according to regional conditions,
- to develop adjusted strategies for all other waterways on the basis of given infrastructure and to transfer waterways to the Laender where appropriate while paying attention to a useful balancing of interests.

The significance of adjusted developmental strategies on the basis of given infrastructure for the other waterways manifests in particular in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg. The harbours' cargo handling is dominated by regional traffic from and to Poland for which there is a grown market of providers and employed crafts that gets along with the given shipping conditions.

Moreover and in general

- management plans for rivers according to the Water Framework Directive have to be developed,
- shipboard potential to minimize interventions and financial investments in infrastructure aiming at an overall optimization have to be consequently taken use of.

As explained in the report on the prioritization of the BVWP projects for the Federal waterways network („Priorisierung der BVWP-Projekte für das Bundeswasserstraßennetz“, 2005) it has to be considered that pushing tows with a given carrying capacity, respectively cargo capacity, have lower demands in terms of possible drafts. However, there is need for action concerning an improvement of bend mobility (controllability with articulated coupling such as articulation joints, flow behavior, problem of corrosion of the ballast tanks).

1.3.1. Inland waterways with high developmental potential

Apart from the Rhine, the following inland waterways are considered to have high developmental potential

- the narrower west German canal network consisting of the Wesel-Datteln canal, the Rhine-Herne-Kanal, the Datteln-Hamm canal and the Dortmund-Ems canal,
- the Mittelland canal west of Magdeburg,
- the Elbe-Seiten canal,
- the Moselle, the Neckar in the Mannheim region and with restrictions south of Heilbronn,
- the Main downstream of Frankfurt.

Concerning these waterways, adequate dimensioning of the descent constructions as well as locks are especially important. As long as an effective length of 185 meters for push tows is not producible the effective length of chambers should not fall short of 135 meters.

In general, this procedure also makes sense for the Neckar south of Mannheim as well as for the Elbe-Lübeck canal. With regard to the priority of investments concerning these waterways the comparably low traffic volume has to be considered, especially in terms of the Neckar upstream of Heilbronn against the background of capital expenditure.

Against the background of the given high quality of shipping conditions no further investments in extension are required at the Main-Danube canal and the Saar. Those waterways thus have to be maintained on the current level.

This also applies for the Main between Frankfurt and the Main-Danube canal after the completion of the almost finished extension measures whose implementation could have been postponed to a later date with regard to the priority of other measurements. The deepening of the Lower Main to a possible draft of 3.1 meters should furthermore be regarded as subordinate because these measurements bring only little benefits with regard to surrounding shipping conditions.

1.3.2. Waterways with limited capabilities of development

As waterways with limited capabilities of development are regarded

- the central Weser and the coast canal within the framework of the seaports' hinterland connection,
- the waterways in the Wolfsburg – Berlin – Stettin corridor,
- the Danube's further stream course to the Black Sea considering the ecological requirements.

To connect the seaports in the Bremen region, a sustainable developmental concept for the coast is recommended,

- that with regard to the problems at the Ems also includes business locations, especially of maritime business,
- that fathoms the potential of the coast canal as part of the alternatives to the motorway A 22 and as a reduction of the extension pressure on the central Weser considering the givens of the city route Oldenburg and the avenues along the coast canal,
- that looks at the connection of the Jade-Weser port considering the potential of rail linking,
- that includes the connection of the harbours of Eemshaven and of the Eems canal in the Netherlands via the outward Eems and the related problems.

Concerning the waterway corridor Wolfsburg – Berlin – Stettin it is recommended to implement necessary bank revetments on the basis of what has been achieved so far (potential draft up to 2.5 meters to Berlin-Westhafen and two-ply cargo traffic) as well as

- to cautiously develop meeting points between Magdeburg and Berlin that are oriented towards the traffic volume and the structure of the vessel seizures,
- prior by the means of lifting bridges to create the opportunity between Berlin and Stettin of a two-ply container traffic while implementing the planned construction standard as future developmental options for the gasket ranges of the Oder-Havel canal that are located above the height level of the surrounding countryside as well as for the ship lift Niederfinow.

The available drafts without barrages of the Danube between Straubing and Vilshofen should be optimized on the basis of 11.4 meters wide ships and push tows. A prerequisite for the integration of new approaches without barrages is a better compatibility as included in the variation A in the BVWP 2003 river building projects. Measurements between Straubing and Vilshofen must not result in ecologically problematic construction standards along the further course of the river Danube to the Black Sea.

1.3.3. Other waterways

For waterways in this category it does not or only restrictively make sense to implement constructional measures to create the usability by bigger ships. This affects in particular

- the Elbe upstream of the Elbe-Seiten canal, respectively of the Elbe-Lübeck canal and in this context also the Saale including the side canal plannings,
- the Oder-Spree waterway,
- the Teltow canal,
- and the Oder upstream of the connection to the Havel-Oder waterway.

Constructional measurements at the Teltow canal are to be limited to the lock Kleinmachnow. By doing so the planned extension with a chamber length of 185 meters can be questioned with regard to lock measures of noticeably more important waterways. Due to the low traffic volume it has to be doubted whether the potential to dismantle and recompose push tows as necessary with a shorter chamber length really required larger bank interventions.

Concerning the Elbe solely the planned measurements of maintenance have to be adjusted to ecological requirements. With regard to the Saale the potential of the rail network has to be utilized as a matter of priority. In these premises the Federal Republic of Germany should be reticent towards a prospect waterway connection between the Danube, Elbe and Oder also with regard to the provision of EU funds.

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