

Implications of the EU Water Framework Directive for Ports, Harbours, Commercial and Leisure Navigation, and Dredging

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PIANC, ESPO, EFIP, CEDA, INE and IADC

This position paper has been prepared by the International Navigation Association (PIANC), European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP), Central Dredging Association (CEDA), Inland Navigation Europe (INE), and International Association of Dredging Companies (IADC). These associations represent a sector which is of vital economic importance to the European Union.

The goal of this paper is to contribute towards the integrated and sustainable implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

Importance of the port and navigation sector

The maritime sector is responsible for 90% of all trade between the European Community and the rest of the world and for 40% of intra-EU trade. European ports are the gateway for the movement of 350 million of passengers each year. They also handle a wide range of goods – including vehicles, fresh food, building materials, machinery and manufactured goods, as well as raw materials such as oil, chemicals, coal and cereals. In total 3.5 billion tons of cargo pass through EU ports annually, fuelling the EU economy, and enabling European industries to trade and export within and outside the Community.

Ports do not only facilitate trade, they also act as magnets for industrial installations and logistic services. Moreover, they provide for a range of other activities such as ship building and repair, dredging, bunkering, ship insurance, fishing, leisure and recreation, etc. Such a dynamic range of activities generates a wide variety of direct and indirect port-related jobs.

Inland waterways similarly provide a wide range of societal benefits – not only in transporting bulk cargoes and manufactured goods, but also for recreation, water supply, nature and flood protection. They can act as a significant catalyst for urban and rural regeneration.

Inland waterways and inland ports thus form a backbone network for commerce and industry. The EU15 navigable network covers 30,000 km. The Community freight fleet numbers 11,500 vessels, transporting some 500 million tonnes annually.

Recreational water use is also of huge economic significance: in England and Wales, for example, the gross economic impact of tourism and leisure activity on the British Waterways network is estimated to be some £1,500 million expenditure per year, supporting in excess of 60,000 jobs.

Dredging, in turn, is of vital importance to many of the EU's ports, harbours and waterways - providing and maintaining adequate water depths and hence safe navigational access.

Waterborne transport is also environmentally efficient. As recognised by the European Commission's White Paper *European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to Decide*, ports make a major contribution to improving the overall environment in Europe. By interconnecting environmentally friendly water and rail-based transport modes, they clearly help facilitate the development of a sustainable EU transport system. In terms of identifiable environmental benefits, inland navigation alone is estimated to lead to savings of in excess of 12 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually: an ordinary Rhine vessel, for example, replaces four complete trains or 220 trucks.

Key issues for the port and navigation sector

The aims of the WFD in promoting sustainable water use are broadly supported by the port, harbours, navigation and dredging sector. The sector endorses the holistic approach to decision making required to achieve this.

However, the WFD also raises issues which are of fundamental importance to the sector and require

urgent attention. If the objectives of the WFD are to be achieved in a sustainable manner – compatible with the reality of the maritime and inland waterways sectors – these issues must be addressed:

- ***Wider environmental issues and the EU transport policy***

When implementing the WFD, proper consideration of both wider environmental issues (eg. air quality, noise, etc.) and also the EU transport policy context will be vital. For example, integration between the WFD and the EC initiatives aimed at the much-needed expansion of inland waterways and short-sea shipping is clearly required.

- ***Clarity, consistency and transparency***

Clarity and consistency of interpretation across member states are essential if WFD implementation is to achieve a level playing field – for example, in the process of designating heavily modified water bodies, and in applying derogations. Related to this, there is a clear need to develop a transparent reporting system with the breadth of information necessary to determine consistency of application.

- ***Practical and economic implications of the WFD***

The WFD could have potentially adverse consequences for the ports, harbours, navigation and dredging sector. Early consideration must be given to the practical implications of the Directive, including possible constraints on activities and operations, increased costs, and delays or uncertainties. Further, the economic analyses need to include an assessment of the financial and economic implications of the WFD for port, harbour, navigation and dredging activities.

- ***The natural role of sediments in aquatic systems***

WFD implementation must recognise both the important natural role of sediments in aquatic systems, and the need for several 100 million cubic metres to be dredged annually in Europe to provide safe depths for waterborne transport. WFD implementation should also seek to solve existing sediment contamination problems, which pose a threat to ports and waterways and increase costs. River Basin Management Plans provide an important opportunity to achieve improved source control.

Effective implementation of the WFD

To improve the effectiveness of WFD implementation, the following points must also be emphasised:

- ***Decisions*** reached during implementation must be transparent, well-informed, and scientifically and technically robust – for example in respect of heavily modified water body designation, and in determining protection and restoration measures.

- The ***advice*** of the sector should be sought by relevant institutions at EU, national and local levels. The sector's active participation in the WFD implementation process must be ensured from an early stage. Such participation – via both local and national stakeholders – is essential in the Pilot River Basin investigations, in River Basin Characterisation, and in River Basin Management Plan preparation.
- ***Dialogue*** between the environmental authorities responsible for WFD implementation and the relevant transport authorities in both EU and national institutions is vital to achieve proper integration between WFD objectives and those of sustainable transport.

Task Group

The associations responsible for the preparation of this position paper are collaborating within a Task Group, which aims to understand the likely implications of the EU Water Framework Directive for the port and navigation sector. Amongst its various activities, the Task Group organised an international seminar "Navigating the EU Water Framework Directive", held in Brussels on October 30th 2003 (for more information see www.pianc-aipcn.org). The Task Group associations and their members have much to offer to the WFD implementation process and are keen to participate and cooperate.

The way forward

The undersigned associations and their combined membership have valuable knowledge and published information to offer the WFD implementation process – not only on port and harbour activities, dredging and navigation, but also on potential environmental impacts and on appropriate mitigation measures.

Together, these associations can provide ready access to a significant network of professionals working in the sector.

The Task Group members therefore invite the Commission and relevant member state institutions to draw on these resources. Adequately addressing the interests and concerns of the sector will contribute to the integrated and sustainable implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

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