



Brussels, 28 April 2015
(OR. en)

8331/15

FIN 314
TRANS 145
MAR 54

"I/A" ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Special Report 01/2015 of the European Court of Auditors:
- Adoption of Council conclusions

1. On 3 March 2015 the European Court of Auditors published Special Report 01/2015 "Inland Waterway Transport in Europe: No significant improvements in modal share and navigability conditions since 2001".
2. Pursuant to the rules set out in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the European Court of Auditors¹, the Permanent Representatives Committee instructed on 11 March 2015 the Shipping Working Party to examine the report².
3. The Shipping Working Party examined Special Report 01/2015 in its meetings on 27 March and 24 April 2015 and agreed on the draft Council conclusions as set out in the Annex. UK maintains a Parliamentary reservation on the draft.

¹ Doc. 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

² Doc. 6916/15 FIN 189 TRANS 82 MAR 28.

4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to approve the attached draft Council conclusions and transmit them to the Council for adoption as an "A" item at a forthcoming meeting.

DRAFT
COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 01/2015

**"Inland Waterway Transport in Europe: No significant improvements
in modal share and navigability conditions since 2001"**

1. The Council takes note of the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 01/2015 on transport by inland waterways. In particular, the Council notes that the Special Report considers that inland waterway transport strategies have not been effectively implemented and that projects co-funded from the EU budget were not effective in improving navigability and increasing traffic volumes on inland waterways, due to the limited number of projects proposed and executed by the Member States.
2. The Council welcomes in general the report by the European Court of Auditors. Encouraging transport by inland waterways is a vital element of Union transport policy and the report provides the Council with a valuable contribution to the policy debate.
3. The Council considers that the market conditions for the inland waterway sector are particularly challenging. Industrial restructuring has resulted in less demand for bulk goods traditionally transported by inland waterways; the speed of navigation on inland waterways is slow; and door-to-door deliveries are possible only in exceptional situations. At the same time transport by road remains highly competitive. The Council estimates therefore that the policy efforts for the modal shift towards inland waterway transport over the last decade have created a positive momentum. If there had been no policy efforts to promote transport on inland waterways the modal share could have deteriorated substantially instead of the marginal increase recorded by the statistics. The Council therefore believes that the evaluation of the effectiveness of measures should be based on robust analyses, considering the impacts of transport policies and those of the general economic and societal trends separately.

4. The Council considers that elimination of bottlenecks is helpful for developing inland waterway infrastructures. However, generally there is more than one bottleneck in an inland waterway corridor and there are cases where the full benefit of certain investments will be reached only once all bottlenecks are eliminated. In this context the specific circumstances as well as possible interdependencies between projects should be taken into account.
5. The Council agrees that policy measures could be further fine-tuned. The Council notes the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors and the reactions of the Commission to them.
6. The Council underlines that prioritisation of projects is a fundamental tool for ensuring the best policy results in view of the limited availability of funding. The Council points out that the concept of core network corridors provides a framework for such a prioritisation.
7. Finally, the Council confirms that maintenance of inland waterways is a key instrument to preserve good navigability conditions. However, the planning and deployment of waterway maintenance imply major economic costs. The Council reiterates that those actions are predominantly financed by the budgets of Member States and establishing requirements eventually leading to budgetary commitments is not coherent with the underlying principles of Union policies. Broader inclusion of maintenance activities within the Connecting Europe Facility would provide a further incentive to carry out inland waterway maintenance.
