

# **BULLETIN** **I/2008**

## **Editorial**

*Under current legislation, the number of trucks crossing the Swiss Alps should be reduced to 650'000 per year as from February 2009. This figure was stipulated in the Swiss Federal Constitution after the Alpine-Initiative was adopted in 1994. Despite all the efforts and the billions of francs invested in the railways, this goal is far from being achieved. On the contrary: today road haulage accounts for about 1.2 million Alpine crossings a year, and volumes continue to grow.*

*Even with immense State support – and an aggressive price strategy which has resulted in massive losses for some service providers – the railways have lost market share recently. While various environmental organisations want to meet this totally unrealistic target by employing more and more drastic measures (as for example the*

*definition of a fixed number of crossing rights that are to be auctioned off at an exchange), members of the Swiss Parliament are beginning to realise that the objective cannot be attained. The goal to shift traffic from the roads to the railways will therefore be deferred until 2019. However, the subsidies for combined traffic will be maintained, although this policy has had but little success in the past. It would make much more sense to invest these funds in the upgrading of the access routes to the Alpine rail tunnels, so that a full use can be made of the new capacities.*

*Dr. Rainer Füeg  
Secretary General*

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## **March 2008**

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## Hearing on the extension of the Danube waterway



### Option C + C280:

River training and a barrage at Aicha, canal and lock cut through the river bend at Mühlham.

From: "Der Ausbau der Donau zwischen Straubing und Vilshofen: Naturschutz an der Donau" Editors: Anke Kätzel, Nikola Theissen, University of Kassel, Germany, 2005

At a meeting in Straubing on February 7, 2008, the UECC discussed the options for an extension of the 70 km stretch of the Danube waterway between Straubing and Vilshofen with Karla Peijs, the EU coordinator for waterway projects. Currently, only a draft of 160 cm can be guaranteed during low water, which means that only ships with a minimal cargo can navigate this section at that time. A draft of 250 cm can be achieved only on about 150 days a year, and these periods are unpredictable, because water levels may change within a week.

Option A proposes modifications of existing dikes and the construction of new dikes. It would ensure a draft of 180 cm all the year round, but would not permit two-way traffic and be difficult to navigate, increasing the risk of accidents. Water levels would also remain unstable and therefore unpredictable. Option A would increase the capacities of the section to 9.1 million tonnes of freight per year, a minor improvement on today's 8.1 million tonnes. For the companies and industries concerned, option D (a complete extension) would be the only logical solution, but it has no chance of being accepted for political reasons.

Option C280 is a compromise requiring the construction of a barrage at the Isar estuary. Other modifications correspond to those proposed by option A. C280 guarantees a draft of 230 cm throughout the year and a draft of 250 cm on 290 days, which would increase capacities to 19 million tonnes of freight per year. Options A (no improvement) and D (environmental concerns) were rejected during the planning procedure, only option C280 was accepted.

For the UECC, President Menzinger underlined the European significance of the project. Transport volumes have grown considerably in Europe since the political changes of 1989 – a well-known fact – but nothing has been done to eliminate this particular bottleneck which restricts transport capacities along the entire stretch of the waterway. It is not just a local problem, international solidarity is required. The EU has defined major transport axes but does not have the funds to finance them. It would be most unfortunate if a further three years were spent on conducting studies without taking a decision, let alone starting construction work.

W. Keilbart of the Chamber of Commerce of Passau added that the region's industries need to improve their access to the world's oceans. He also said that more transit traffic from the new member States of the EU should be shifted to the waterways in order to increase the capacities of the roads and railways for other uses. Many barrages and locks have been built on other parts of the Danube, with good results.

Various representatives of the local business community claimed that the bottleneck was causing them considerable problems with regard to deliveries and other services to their customers. They also pointed out that large funds have already been invested in ports and production plants, in the expectation of a rapid extension of the waterway. These investments are now increasingly put at risk because of the constant delays.

## Resolutions

### **UECC calls for a provisional injunction against a ban on heavy goods traffic on the Inntal motorway**

In 2003, the Austrian federal state of Tyrol tried to impose a traffic ban on trucks of over 7.5 tonnes that transported certain types of goods that were allegedly more suited to being carried by the railways. This first attempt was stopped by a decision of the European Court of Justice in November 2005. Now Tyrol has announced a set of new traffic restrictions on the A12 Inntal motorway.

On January 1, 2008, Tyrol enacted a decree which forbids the transport by truck of debris, stones, earth and excavated material between Kufstein and Zirl as from May 2, 2008. As from January 1, 2009, the ban shall also include log wood and cork, non-iron ore and iron ore, automobiles and trailers, steel (with the exception of reinforcing steel and steel intended for building sites), marble, travertine and ceramic tiles. The UECC strongly opposes this exaggerated measure which blatantly contravenes the principle of the free movement of goods in Europe. The UECC calls upon the European Commission to request that the European Court of Justice issues a provisional injunction as soon as possible – as in 2003 – in addition to the legal proce-

dings already initiated against Austria. Although fully recognising Tyrol's need to solve its traffic problems and reduce air pollution in the Inn valley, the UECC cannot accept a restrictive measure that is clearly incompatible with the rules of a free market economy.

Banning the transport of certain types of cargo instead of focusing on the amount of pollutants emitted by the vehicles concerned is the wrong approach. Moreover, the intended ban is evidently not covered by Austrian legislation, i.e. the law on the protection of the air against pollution (IG-L). Transborder traffic is made more expensive and more difficult, and the number of empty trucks on the roads increases, thus aggravating rather than reducing pollution. The ban may even put the existence of logistic services providers and other companies at risk. Furthermore, it cannot be in the interest of the European Union and its member States to allow federal states or provinces to ban truck traffic from sections of major European transport axes on the basis of arbitrary criteria.

The full text of this resolution (German version only) and other topical position papers of the UECC can be downloaded from the website [www.uecc.org](http://www.uecc.org).

### ***New member of the Executive Committee***

The Chamber of Commerce of Rotterdam has nominated Mr. D.A. van Plas to repre-

sent the Dutch group of Chambers in the Executive Committee. Mr. van Plas replaces Mr. Teun Muller.

### ***Working group "Transport"***

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### **EU Green Paper on Urban Mobility**

The Green Paper published by the European Commission contains proposals that may create serious problems for the cities' business environment. At its meeting in Würzburg (Germany) in February 2008, the working group prepared a position paper to be submitted for approval by the Executive Committee.

The UECC's reservations regarding the Green Paper can be summed up as follows:

- *Rules of subsidiarity are not respected*

The situation differs greatly from one European city to the next. Since urban traffic problems can only be solved by the responsible bodies in the cities themselves, the EU is not entitled to enact regulations in this case. Furthermore, the cities can already implement many of the measures suggested by the Commission locally. The UECC firmly rejects the EU's attempt to obtain regulatory powers for decisions that fall within the purview of city authorities.

*- City tolls hamper urban development*

The Green Paper proposes a European legal framework for an urban toll charging system that is incompatible with the EU's objective to launch urban development processes, revitalise currently unused premises in the inner cities and ensure that the cities remain vibrant and attractive locations for trade and services.

*- Charges for private car-holders increase*

The negative external effects of pollution on the environment are difficult to calculate scientifically. Costs cannot therefore be precisely attributed to the cause. The UECC is against additional unilateral charges for private cars in the cities.

*- Political influence on goods flows*

On a local level, regular talks between all actors involved must be held in order to remove any obstacles that restrict the improvement of goods traffic flows. The UECC however opposes any further influence of local politics in this matter and firmly rejects proposals for centrally controlled urban deliveries.

**TEN projects**

In the EU's budget for priority TEN projects for 2007-2013 about 89 % of the funding is allocated to rail transport and the waterways. The majority of the traffic however

still uses the road networks. The UECC believes that projects to upgrade road infrastructure should be given a larger share of the funds.

**Logistics and freight traffic**

A new master plan on "freight traffic and logistics" is currently being discussed in Germany. Its aim is to improve transport flows and traffic regulations in all modes of transport. Measures are proposed for the following areas: information and communication technologies, education, infrastructure, financing, market conditions and deregulation, protection of the environment and the marketing of services. The plans are to be reviewed by the Federal Government in the first quarter of 2008.

**TGV Rhin-Rhône**

Construction work on the first part of this important European transport axis began in 2006. The UECC has called upon the relevant French authorities to speed up the completion of the second part, a section of about 30 km between Belfort and Mulhouse. Preparations for an upgrading of the axis' East and West connections and better links to the German railway network should also be pushed forward.

**Agenda 2008**

**Executive Committee:**

24 September 2008

Basel (CH)

**General Assembly:**

24/25 September 2008

Basel (CH)

**Working group "Transport"**

28/29 May 2008

Stuttgart (D)

**Working group "Waterways"**

28/29 May 2008

Stuttgart (D)