SHIFTING CARGO

Shifting Cargo to Inland Navigation

**Funding:** European (4th RTD Framework Programme)
**Duration:** Jan 1996 - Dec 1997
**Status:** Complete with results

**Background & policy context:**

In freight transport, inland navigation may be considered as the transport mode most favourable in terms of energy consumption and environmental aspects. In spite of recent initiatives to intensify the use of inland navigation in Europe, its share in overall cargo volumes (tonnes) and transport outputs (tonne-kilometres) stays far below the potential. Market barriers need to be understood as a basis for policy action.

**Objectives:**

Specific objectives of the SHIFTING CARGO project were to:

- analyse current cargo flows (for all land-based modes) in order to estimate the volume of cargo that could be shifted from other modes to inland navigation;
- identify obstacles to such shifting;
- identify measures which could assist the greater integration of inland navigation into intermodal transport chains;
- evaluate and prioritise proposed measures, and to recommend concrete steps and guidelines to policy makers and transport service providers.

**Parent Programmes:**

[FP4-TRANSPORT - Specific research, technological development and demonstration programme in the field of transport, 1994-1998](#)

**Institute type:** Public institution
**Institute name:** European Commission; Directorate-General for Energy and Transport (DG TREN; formerly DG VII)
**Funding type:** Public (EU)

**Partners:**

NA

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**Key Results:**

The main barriers to the development of inland navigation in Europe are the limited coverage of waterway networks, poor flexibility, slow transportation speed, high transhipment costs in ports,
relatively small consignment volumes and difficulties in transporting certain types of goods.

Remedial measures have been identified covering technical aspects (ports, fleet, freight units), organisational aspects (shipping organisation, service quality, management systems) and market aspects (co-operation, standardisation, marketing skills).

Two basic strategies have been outlined:

- integration through restructuring of the supporting policy frameworks and the implementation of the above measures;
- elimination of infrastructure bottlenecks (waterways, ports and information flows).

For transport service suppliers, the main recommendation of SHIFTING CARGO is to focus on the improvement of service quality (the main disadvantage of inland waterways) by means of technical innovations and commercially available technologies.

The project has shown that inland navigation could increase its low modal share in the EU transport system and make the most of its potential. For this, a great deal of investment (technical, organisational and political) by the inland waterways sector (service suppliers and policy-makers) is necessary to meet the requirements of users (shippers).

**Policy implications**

Greater integration of inland navigation into intermodal transport chains would require the implementation of the following policy measures:

- abolition of the alternate turn system (Tour-de-Role) in France and Belgium, and further liberalisation with regard to pricing and contracting;
- improvement of fleet structure (modernisation and standards of safety);
- harmonisation of technical and legal standards (transport of hazardous goods, safety precautions, liability, etc.);
- further development of the inland waterways' infrastructure;
- stimulation of strategic co-operation for a better synergy between transport operators;
- guarantee of fair competition between the modes (internalisation of external costs, respect for the environment, working conditions etc.).

**Related Projects:**

- EUDET - Evaluation of the Danube waterway as a key European transport resource.
- CATRIV - Conceptual analysis for transportation on rivers.
- IMMUNITY - Impacts of increased and multiple use of inland navigation and identification of tools to reduce negative impacts.
- INCATS - Inland navigation Concerted Action Technical Secretariat.

**STRIA Roadmaps:** Network and traffic management systems

**Transport mode:** Water transport (sea & inland)

**Transport sectors:** Freight transport

**Transport policies:** Decarbonisation, Societal/Economic issues