

Fluvial Transport – a Neglected Carrier? A case study from Danube Ports in Germany

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Abstract—In general, the economic importance of fluvial transport within freight traffic is underestimated: in Germany, it realizes 12% of total ton-kilometers, and for the European Union, a figure of 6.1 % is given. Its ecological advantages are most significant. Using one ton of fuel it carries, in comparison to road transport, 12 times more freight, and in relation to rail transport fuel efficiency is still the double. However, with regard to a continuing general growth of freight transport in United Europe, the share of fluvial transport has decreased, although absolute figures of ton-kilometers performed on waterways remained stable. Within the overall picture the utilization of the Danube waterway has seen a marked growth. The inauguration of the Rhine-Danube Canal in 1992 and the integration of its South-Eastern riparian states into the European market were positive elements with a fourfold increase of cross-border traffic since 1990. Our case study of the Regensburg and Passau fluvial ports starts with a focus on the European scene and then shows the potentials as well as the geographical and political constraints. It includes an analysis of potential demand originating from forestry and automotive industry.

A long way has yet to be made to realize the goals of the EU White Paper on transport (2011): Our transport policy would like to shift 30% (until 2030) to 50% (until 2050) of road freight (distance over 300 kms) towards rail, rivers and canals – so we need them.

Key words—Danube Basin, Fluvial Ports, Fluvial Transport, Transport Ecology.

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