

## **Waterways for smart transport: Challenges & successes 04/10/2016**

Dear ladies and gentlemen, hello to all of you attending this meeting,

My aim is to present this association of professionals – founded in 1982 - extremely concisely and make a couple of brief statements.

The members of this association are companies and business leaders who have already made the “mental shift” and are now implementing the “modal shift” by using the waterways as an alternative method of transport. There are many different reasons stimulating them to do this. Their attitude can also serve to attract and encourage their colleagues and competitors, since “anything my competitor can do, I must also be able to do”.

Our members use Flanders' waterways for around 75 to 80 % of their annual goods transport , so the aim of our association

- To encourage maximum use of waterways as a mode of transport: economically and ecologically responsible
- To confront our society, the business world, the political world and all other social players with this alternative method of transport:

The business world: increasing its use and coming up with lots of innovative ideas and methods for avoiding the immobile state of the roads

The political world: to release the required means to turn our navigable waterways into a modern and flowing highway with the necessary exits: depth, automated structures, quay walls and relevant terrains, and, on an administrative level, to approve quickly the necessary environmental and other permits ...

By the way, a recently published World Economic Forum report is adamant on this point: “Belgium would gain considerable competitive strength if the authorities were to invest more in transport and infrastructure projects”

Social players: the financial world for the credits required, the population for a constructively critical attitude, the world of education for professional training,

...

After years of considerable networking I am convinced that those in logistics wish to escape the immobile state of road transport, but come up against a number of arguments for which no solutions are yet available: some examples

- Economic benefits are currently unconvincing
- Unfair and over-subsidised competition

- Historic delay in the maintenance and modernisation of the waterways
- Political world too sensitive to what they class as “social support“

To all of you here, we must dare to challenge ourselves on the urgency of goods delivery, on the absolute necessity of door-to-door deliveries (certainly in urban areas), on the social cost of the immobile state of the roads, extern costs, etc., etc.

In a spirit of mutual understanding and in close collaboration with those managing the waterways in Flanders and our regional flemish authorities we wish to work **together** to incorporate the waterways with all their potential into the economic scene more intensively. And I prefer ( preferably ) today before tomorrow !

I prefer to end my discourse there, because it is more important to hear what is going on in practice, about the issues, how these are handled ... and for that I will pass you on to the next speaker, member of our association.

If you want , the powerpoint presentation of our association will be available to you.

Many thanks for your attention.

® Frans D'HAESE  
Voorzitter W&Z vzw  
Brussel 4 october 2016