WRITTEN QUESTION E-0759/09
by Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Investment in European inland waterways

In January 2009 the Dutch research institute NEA reported that during the period 1995-2005 only 1% of European infrastructure investment went to inland waterways. The major part went to rail and road projects. At the same time it emerged that investment in inland waterways gives the highest return.

It is true, of course, that inland waterways are relatively uncongested in comparison with other forms of transport infrastructure, but this does not mean that transport by water is not slowed down by a large number of bottlenecks. One thinks particularly in this connection of the inland waterway projects forming part of the priority trans-European networks, and also of the other TEN waterways. There are also bottlenecks preventing growth of water transport in the area of estuaries and locks.

With the Naiades action programme the European Union has taken a step in the right direction towards improving inland waterway transport in Europe. A European development plan for inland waterways is scheduled to be drawn up under the action programme.

1.   Is the Commission aware of the conclusions of the NEA research institute as regards investment in inland waterways?

2.   What is the Commission's view of the results of this research? Does the Commission recognise that the share of total investment devoted to inland waterway infrastructure is small when set against the ambitious aims of the Naiades programme?

3.   What measures is the Commission considering with a view to improving inland waterway infrastructure and increasing investment in it? When does the Commission plan to publish the European development plan for inland waterway infrastructure?

4.   Does the Commission regard the review of the TEN-T policy as a promising opportunity to give greater priority to the construction and improvement of inland waterway infrastructure and to give it a firmer footing in EU policy?