

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0761/07

by Gisela Kallenbach (Verts/ALE) and Milan Horáček (Verts/ALE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Navigability of the River Elbe

The NAIADES action programme is intended to provide a more homogeneous framework for inland navigation in the European Union and help bring about an improved infrastructure in Europe by 2010. Its aim is also to pursue a European plan for inland waterway transport, improve communications between the government authorities responsible and hence secure jobs in the area, too.

Authorisation for Czech subsidies for freight shipping is limited until the damming stage has been completed; indirectly presupposing that, after completion of the damming stage, the Elbe in Germany must also be navigable. In Germany, however, there are no plans to widen the Elbe or build a damming stage, as comments by leading German politicians in the transport field prove.

1. To what extent is NAIADES also a means of expanding transport routes for freight shipping? To what extent is NAIADES intended to ensure that the channel depth is 1.60 m between Geestacht and Dresden and 1.50 m between Dresden and the German-Czech border on 345 days of the year?
2. Does the Commission consider itself obliged to ensure that the Czech Republic has year-round access to the Mittelland canal and is thus becomes incorporated into the European Waterways Network?
3. Do any NAIADES-related plans take account of the research findings of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology in Hamburg on water volume build-up in the River Elbe?
4. Has the Commission recently authorised subsidies for inland navigation on the River Elbe in the Czech Republic? If so, on what is that authorisation based? Is the Commission aware of a cost-benefit analysis on the planned damming stage which justifies such an encroachment upon what is a nature conservation area, and what conclusion does that analysis reach?