

Question for written answer E-001973/2022
to the Commission
Rule 138
Ska Keller (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Revision of the TEN-T Directive: The draught of the Elbe

The EU's TEN-T guidelines require a draught of at least 2.50 m for inland waterway vessels. This corresponds to an effective channel depth of at least 2.70 m (Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013, Article 15). The plans drawn up by Germany's Federal Government, however, set a minimum depth of just 1.20 m for the free-flowing Inner Elbe between Lauenburg and the German-Czech border. This corresponds to a channel depth of 1.40 m (see the Overall Strategy for the Elbe¹). The TEN-T parameters for waterways will therefore not be met.

1. What does the Commission think of the fact that the minimum draught of 1.20 m envisaged for the Elbe deviates significantly from the TEN-T requirement of 2.50 m, and how does it justify such an exemption from the existing requirements regarding infrastructure?
2. What added value does the Commission see in the Inner Elbe as an inland waterway given that over the last 20 years shipments have fallen by 90% to less than 0.2 million tonnes per year – despite extensive building work – and that owing to low water levels every year between 2014 and 2020 the 1.20 m minimum channel depth target was not met for months at a time, meaning that shipping had to be suspended?
3. Given that water levels are expected to become even lower owing to climate change, does the Commission take the view that rail is a viable, environmentally friendly and reliable alternative?

¹ <https://www.gesamtkonzept-elbe.bund.de>, p. 23.