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PRESS RELEASE

50 YEARS SOCIAL DIALOGUE

IN EUROPEAN INLAND WATERWAYS TRANSPORT

European Social Partners in Inland Waterways Transport, EBU (European Barge Union), ESO (European Skippers' Organisation) and ETF (European Transport Workers' Federation) celebrate 50 years of social dialogue. The tasks facing the Social Partners now will change fundamentally as new challenges emerge rapidly in the area of automation and digitalisation.

But the European Social Partners are committed to addressing them in an open spirit and striving to create an Inland Waterways Transport sector offering an attractive career perspective to current and future boatmen and boatwomen based on the pillars of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

"In this process the instrument of Sectoral Social Dialogue has proven to be indispensable and the Social Partners express their thanks to the Commission for its continued commitment and support." says Jacques Kerkhof, President of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Inland Waterways Transport.

After some early years of uneven and interrupted activity the last thirteen years have witnessed a systematic development of relations between the social partners aimed at making this small but economically vital transport sector socially and economic sustainable and future-proof.

The social partners are currently addressing their work through 4 interlocking building blocks:

- The 2012 Agreement which led in turn to the 2014 Working Time Directive was the first step in the establishment of a fair organised transport sector.
- Secondly, the Draft Directive on the harmonisation of professional qualifications, which is currently in Trilogue, which should establish a level playing field in the area of skills and competencies required for all functions on board of the vessels.

- Thirdly, the creation of a secure digital controlling capacity, i.e. a digital “board unit”, which is at an advanced development stage, to monitor the sailing time of the vessel as well as individual crewmembers’ qualifications and working and resting times.
- Finally, the task of creating a harmonised set of manning requirements is being addressed by the Social Partners working in the European Union funded project TASCs - Towards A Sustainable Crewing System – a scientific workload analysis aimed at developing proposals for a modern system bringing flexibility and enhanced labour mobility as well as incorporating modern standards of occupational safety and health.

These building blocks will ensure that the Inland Waterways sector progresses towards a sustainable and prosperous future.