

Press Release

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Completion of the H2020 project IW-NET marks a milestone for European inland navigation

European inland navigation in transition: ISL coordinates pioneering IW-NET project for a sustainable and efficient future on the waterways

The ambitions to transform European inland waterway transport through innovation and collaboration has reached a milestone with the successful completion of the "Innovation-driven Collaborative European Inland Waterways Transport Network" (IW-NET) project. The project, which was funded by the European Commission as part of the "Horizon 2020" funding program, focused on the holistic improvement of the inland waterway transport system in order to effectively meet the increasing challenges in the transport sector.

Challenges and solutions: An overview of IW-NET

Inland waterway transport as an environmentally friendly alternative in freight transportation faces numerous challenges that make a smooth modal shift more difficult. Lower public awareness compared to other modes of transport, a lack of transparency and coordination, untapped potential in urban logistics as well as infrastructure-related bottlenecks and the increasing average age of fleets are just some of the problems facing the industry.

The IW-NET project tackled these challenges by developing various innovative technologies and concepts. The focus was on digitalisation and integration in multi- and synchromodal transport chains, the optimised and IT-supported management of waterway infrastructure, and the introduction of environmentally friendly and intelligent ship technologies. The aim was to pave the way for more efficient, environmentally friendly, and competitive inland waterway transport by taking a holistic perspective.

Consortium

IW-NET was a collaborative project involving a total of 29 companies, research institutions and public organisations from ten European countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Greece, Ireland, Romania and Germany). The Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics (ISL) led the consortium as project coordinator and represented the project to the European Commission and the general public.

The wide-ranging expertise and commitment of the partners enabled ground-breaking measures to be taken to promote and develop inland waterway transport in Europe, giving the consortium a leading role in this important economic sector.

Practical demonstrations and outlook

At the final event of the project in October 2023 in Ghent, Belgium, various presentations and practical demonstrations of the project results impressively illustrated the potential for the future-oriented development of inland waterway transport.

The live demonstrations of autonomous platooning and the presentation of the "Urban Vessels" designed as part of the project, which were specially optimised to meet the requirements of urban delivery traffic, gave participants a unique insight into the technological vision of the project.

The conclusion of the IW-NET project with the successful final review in January 2024 marks a significant turning point for European inland navigation. The implementation of innovative technologies and concepts, the promotion of cooperation between different stakeholders and the creation of a comprehensive framework for efficient and sustainable inland navigation lay the foundation for a promising future in this sector.

The results of IW-NET will undoubtedly have a key impact on the inland navigation industry in Europe and provide the basis for further research and development initiatives in this area. Through a clear focus on innovation and collaboration, IW-NET has made it clear that sustainable and efficient inland navigation is not only achievable, but also essential for future mobility and environmental protection in Europe.

After the end of the project, ISL is continuing to work at full speed on innovations for inland navigation. For example, the "ReNEW" project addresses the question of how inland shipping can be made resilient and sustainable. As part of the "SEAMLESS" project, the focus is primarily on the integration of automated shipping within future logistics chains.

Further information about the IW-NET project can be found at: <https://www.iw-net.eu/>

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About the ISL:

The ISL - Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics was founded in Bremen in 1954. Combining tradition and modern science, it has since established itself as one of Europe's leading institutes for maritime research, consultancy and know-how transfer with a focus on the areas of Maritime Markets, Maritime Environment, Maritime Security, Maritime Transport Chains, Simulation, Digital Innovations and Software Solutions. More at www.isl.org