



Nederlandse Vereniging van Binnenhavens  
Fédération Néerlandaise des Ports Intérieurs  
Niederländischer Verband der Binnenhäfen

Speech Marijke van Haaren, Chair Person Netherlands Association of Inland Ports NVB  
Diner Executive Committee EFIP, Vlissingen, 18 April 2013

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

It is an honour for me to be here tonight, as Chair Person of the Netherlands Association of Inland Ports. As representatives of the European inland ports, we have been invited here today by Zeeland Seaports. It is a wonderful environment to become acquainted with the Dutch inland ports and also to experience the extensive and blossoming port area of Zeeland Seaports.

#### **Collaboration with EFIP**

I would like to start by commenting on the excellent collaboration between the NVB and the EFIP. However, just mentioning it is not enough. In the Netherlands, and certainly also in a European context, Isabelle Ryckbost and the EFIP are praised for their dedication in promoting the interests of the European inland ports and their accomplishments in putting these on the map. Also thanks to the efforts of the EFIP, inland ports have obtained a prominent position in the Trans-European transport network. This acknowledges the inland ports as important economic hubs and essential parts of the hinterland connections. As NVB, it has been and is a pleasure to work together with the EFIP in these and other dossiers.

Therefore, the beginning of my speech is a heartfelt word of thanks to the EFIP and our host, Zeeland Seaports.

#### **International perspective NVB conventions**

Ladies and gentlemen, at this international gathering, I would like to share with you some matters concerning the Dutch inland ports and the association I am representing here this evening. The international perspective is not unknown to us. At several NVB conventions, the importance of a sound European policy for inland ports was emphasised. In 2011, the title of the convention, which took place in this beautiful province of Zeeland, by the way, was: 'Blue Ports in a European perspective'. This year, the theme will be 'Inland ports *within* the Trans-European network'.

#### **Blue Ports**

Back to the Netherlands. I just mentioned the Blue Ports. I would like to explain what we mean by this. In 2004, this concept was introduced for the first time, with a study into the economic importance of the Dutch inland ports. With the 'Blue Ports: hubs for the regional economy', the inland ports were strongly put on the political map in the Netherlands. Last year, in collaboration with the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, an update of this study was carried out. And at last year's convention, the report 'Blue Ports, the indispensable links' was presented.

Knowledge of the economic importance of a port is important for policy makers, developers and researchers. It provides administrative understanding of the importance to the regional economy and employment. It enables well-considered decisions about regional policy priorities concerning housing, recreation, the economy, etcetera. Also, the existing policy can be monitored. Finally, it will support the choice of investments in waterways and infrastructure, such as multi-modal intersections.

The NVB intends to further develop the method used for the studies into an Inland Port Monitor. We are convinced that the availability of figures of the economic importance of the integrated network of Mainports, Greenports and Blue Ports is essential.

#### **Importance of inland ports**

In the Netherlands, inland navigation, and, as a result, the inland ports play an increasingly important role. Years ago, the Port of Rotterdam Authority already made bold and probably necessary agreements with the new terminals on Maasvlakte 2 to ensure that at least 45% of the containers transhipped through Rotterdam from overseas, are transported to the hinterland by inland navigation. Therefore, I do not have to tell you anything about the importance to maintain - and, if necessary, obtain - a tip-top condition for our inland ports.



Nederlandse Vereniging van Binnenhavens  
Fédération Néerlandaise des Ports Intérieurs  
Niederländischer Verband der Binnenhäfen

The increasing share of inland navigation is providing hinterland transport with new challenges. As important economic hubs, the Blue Ports are forming an essential part of the hinterland connections. Great challenges are expected to accommodate future growth. One of the ways to cash in on these opportunities is by collaboration and the formation of port networks. At our convention in 2012, called 'Mainports & Blue Ports', Hans Smits, CEO of the Port of Rotterdam Authority, put it as follows: 'The Dutch port infrastructure is among the best in the world, but a seaport is as good as its corresponding hinterland connections. It is essential to create a cohesive network between seaports and inland ports.'

#### **NVB**

The NVB, the Netherlands Association of Inland Ports, is an active and dynamic association. Not a very large one, but our work has made quite an impact over the past years.

After the inland ports were put on the political map in 2004, by means of the report I mentioned earlier, the Dutch government developed a number of Quick-Win arrangements. This financial stimulus, amounting to some 100 million Euros, has had a positive effect upon the quality of the Dutch ports and waterways. The NVB has been involved in these arrangements in a number of ways.

As I have said, we are an active association. For example, we are currently developing a model port regulation. This is proving to be a great success. If the same rules apply to all ports, this will create more transparency for the shipping industry and a win-win situation will be created for port users and port authorities.

I am sure we can share many ideas with each other, these coming days. We are looking forward to learning about your views.

#### **Green Award**

Ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to say something about sustainability. Together with professionalisation and collaboration, this is one of the spearheads in NVB's policy plan. Tomorrow, the EFIP programme will give attention to the Green Award for inland navigation. Already, there are hundreds of barges that have been awarded the Green Award certificate. These vessels have benefited from investments in safety and sustainability. Bargees are provided with incentives to obtain a Green Award, for example by providing them with discounts on harbour fees once they have been granted the Green Award. It's a very relevant recognition. Ships with an environmentally sound system, are less burdening for the ports as well. That is why we have appealed to the members of the NVB to offer incentives to ships with a Green Award certificate calling on their ports.

#### **Summary**

Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard a lot tonight. The next few days are promising to be quite fascinating indeed. Inland ports are of importance! As has often been mentioned over the past years, both nationally and internationally, there has been a growing awareness of the hinterland for seaports and the role played by inland ports in the transport to this hinterland. Because it has become quite apparent that transport by road and rail cannot, as a matter of course, handle the expected logistic flows, there is both social and political support for the development of inland ports. Let's not sit back and see what happens. There's always room for improvement!

If the importance of inland ports as economic hubs is denied or ignored, the power of inland navigation is overlooked. Let's not turn a blind eye to the unparalleled potential of inland navigation and the inland ports as essential links in the Dutch and European logistic chains.

I wish you a rewarding and pleasant time in this beautiful province of Zeeland. Thank you for your attention.