

PRESS RELEASE, 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

## THE BALTIC SEA REGION HAS POTENTIAL TO BECOME A FORERUNNER IN SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTS

Joint actions are needed to shift to more sustainable transport modes and to enhance multimodality. Since 2019, EMMA Extension and COMBINE projects have promoted and strengthened inland waterway transport and combined transport in the Baltic Sea Region with the help of their European stakeholders. Around hundred of them participated in the joint final conference “Baltic Sea Region – Future Forerunner in Sustainable Transports” which emphasized the role of inland waterway transport and combined transport in supporting decarbonisation of the transport sector.

Achieving the ambitious climate goals requires a shift to more environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as rail and inland waterways. In her keynote speech **Maria Koidu** from European Commission’s Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport highlighted the ambitious goals of European Green Deal as well as the European Commission’s Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy which aims to increase the capacity of non-road modes. She emphasized the modal shift and a bigger uptake of multimodal and intermodal transport which, in addition to cutting emissions, will also decrease congestion and accidents—problems that cannot be solved only with cleaner vehicles. Besides rail and inland waterway transport, capacity of short-sea shipping must be utilized to reach the targets. Increasing multimodality requires more focus on terminals and transshipment points, and in order to achieve bigger modal shift and reach the set targets for 2030 and 2050, temporary support measures are also needed.

The COMBINE project was initiated because combined transport plays only a minor role in the Baltic Sea Region. The challenge is the efficient and competitive combination of transport modes, which is more difficult due to rural structures and often long last mile, comparatively low transport volumes and a long tradition of road transport. To overcome these challenges, the COMBINE project has for instance created a market overview of combined transport, analysed cargo flows, piloted new solutions and developed a terminal strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as well as prepared suggestions for region specific funding schemes. Combined transport is usually more competitive in longer distances, but the COMBINE project proved that it could be an efficient mode of transport even in shorter distances or in transport chains that include a rather long last mile. Thus, it demonstrated best practices in integrating transport modes into logistic chains.

The EMMA project was able to prove the feasibility of inland waterway transport in the Baltic Sea Region, whereas its Extension project focused on the market deployment by implementing practical inland waterway transport solutions. A fairway simulation testing the extension of IWW area contributed to planning of new inland waterway zones in Sweden, and in Finland, smart fairway pilot supported digitalization and safety of navigation in Saimaa. The Polish pilot increased safety of navigation by supporting IWT digitalization along the Oder River in Szczecin. As a part of the EMMA Extension project, the commercial container transport took place in the Vistula River for the first time in history. The first commercial barge pilots in the Neman River between Klaipėda and Kaunas included container transports as well as the transportation of the most powerful autotransformer in the Baltic States. Thanks to the successful pilots that gained positive attention, the EMMA Extension encouraged new investments for improving inland waterways, which in turn helps to increase inland waterway transportations.

“In these Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme projects we promoted the benefits of inland waterway transport, short-sea shipping and combined transport and tested new solutions which are now ready for the market”, summarized **Stefan Breitenbach** from Port of Hamburg Marketing, the Lead Partner of both projects.

“Still, sufficient budget must be allocated for infrastructural development of terminal, waterway and railway network as well as for promotion and information initiatives to convince market players to choose the sustainable transportation option. Combined transport and inland waterway transport have potential in the Baltic Sea Region, and we should make use of it”, concluded Projects’ Coordinator **Gunnar Platz** from PLANCO Consulting.

# COMBINE



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Baltic Sea Region



EUROPEAN  
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