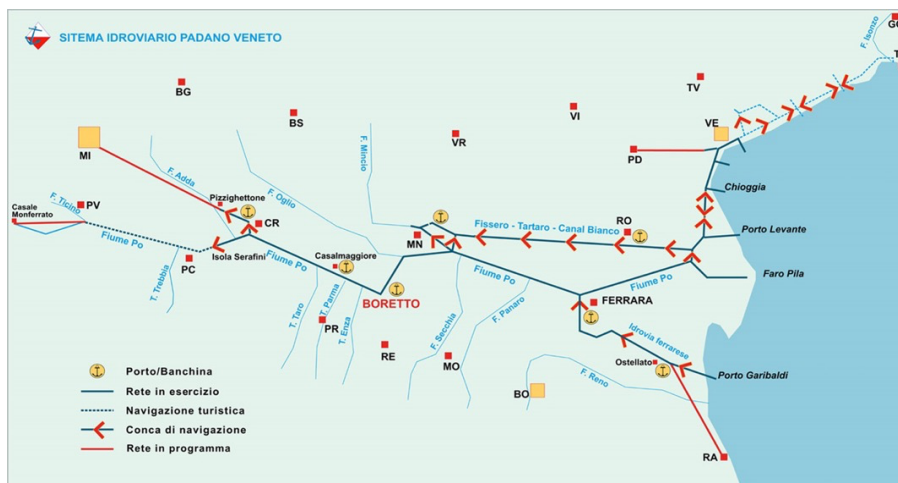


# Manifesto for the Sustainable Development of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterways System. Short and Medium-Term Actions for a Long-Term Vision



Promoted by the European CRISTAL Project [Project: 101069838 — CRISTAL — HORIZON-CL5-2021-D6-01] and Developed in Collaboration with Stakeholders of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System.

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## Abstract

Inland waterways, as transport infrastructure for goods and people, represent an increasingly appealing alternative in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other negative externalities associated with road transport. At the same time, however, inland navigation is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as droughts and floods can compromise essential water levels. Water resources that sustain these waterways are subject to competing demands: for transport (people and goods), irrigation, energy production, and industrial uses.

Although other navigable waterways exist nationally, the Padano-Veneto system—which includes the Po River from Piacenza to the mouth, the Fissero-Tartaro-Canalbianco Canal, the Ferrarese Waterway, the Po-Brondolo Canal, the Venetian Coastal Route, and the ports of Cremona, Mantua, Rovigo, and Chioggia—forms part of the TEN-T networks, integrated within the Mediterranean Corridor, with various core and comprehensive nodes.

In the transport sector, several factors currently discourage the development of inland navigation in Italy: infrastructure maintenance deficits, bureaucratic hurdles, ambiguous regulations that can lead to additional costs compared to other transport modes, limited access to incentives, and incomplete integration with maritime transport.

Added to this are fragmented responsibilities and tasks among various institutional bodies, the absence of a shared vision, and a lack of consultation space among other actors in inland navigation. This fragmented programming and operational approach results in inevitable consequences for the efficiency and reliability of the waterway system.

Against this backdrop, the Horizon Europe CRISTAL project (Climate Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Transport Infrastructure, with a Focus on Inland Waterways) includes as partners in the Italian pilot area two managers of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System, AIPo and Infrastrutture Venete, along with Unioncamere/Uniontrasporti, ENEA, and SOGESCA.

The project aims to develop inland navigation as a sustainable transport mode, integrate it with other transport modes, and overcome issues that reduce its reliability, through technological and governance solutions.

The Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System is one of the project's pilot areas, where both physical and digital technological solutions will be tested and validated.

Addressing the fragmented governance of the waterway system and the daily challenges faced by its users has emerged as a prerequisite for both the system's development and the implementation of project technologies.

For the first time, a Living Lab participatory tool created an open space for dialogue and co-creation among all actors in inland navigation (users, public authorities, infrastructure managers, trade associations, and project partners). These stakeholders shared challenges, needs, and limitations, summarized in this document along with potential solutions that the signatories intend to present to national governance authorities as a unified voice.

The ultimate purpose of this document is to contribute practical insights for the sustainable development of the Padano-Veneto waterway system, ensuring increasingly reliable, efficient, economically competitive, user-friendly, and climate-resilient waterway transport for goods and people.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIPo	Agenzia interregionale per il fiume Po
ADBPO	Autorità di bacino distrettuale per il fiume Po
ANAS	Azienda nazionale autonoma delle strade statali
ARSTPC	Agenzia regionale per la sicurezza territoriale e la protezione civile dell'Emilia-Romagna
CEMT	Conferenza Europea dei Ministri dei Trasporti
D.lgs.	Decreto Legislativo
DPR	Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica
Intesa	Intesa interregionale per l'esercizio delle funzioni amministrative in materia di navigazione interna sul fiume Po ed idrovie collegate
IV	Infrastrutture Venete
MIT	Ministero delle infrastrutture e dei trasporti
RER	Regione Emilia-Romagna
RFI	Rete ferroviaria italiana
RIS	River information system
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UNII	Unione Navigazione Interna Italiana

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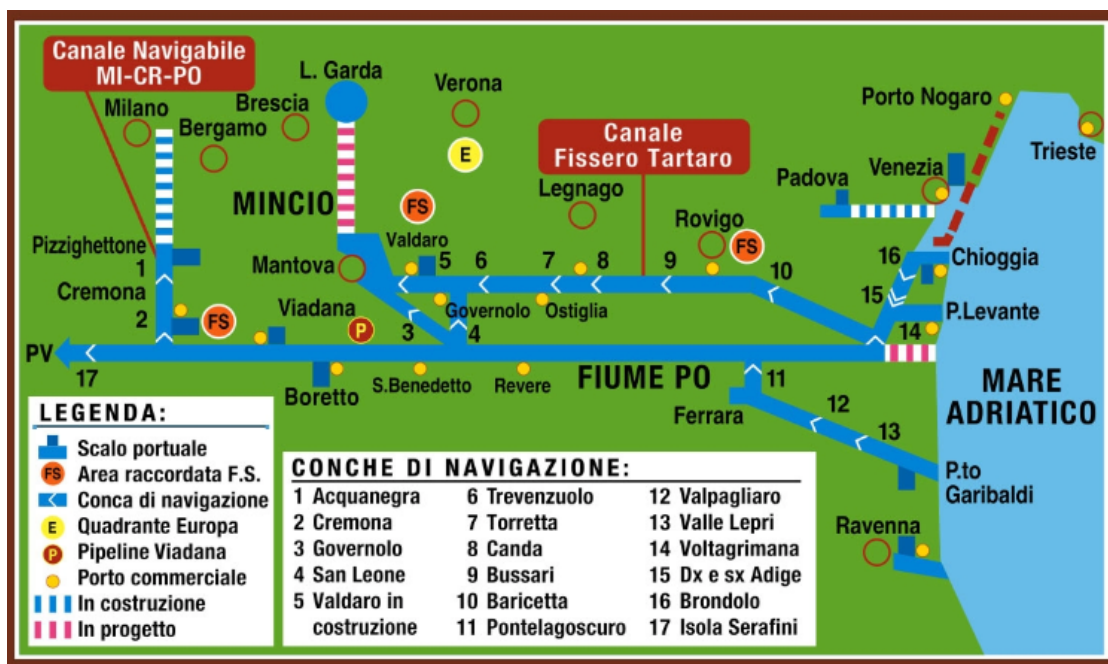
# 1 Context Analysis

In Italy, inland water transport mainly involves the Po River region, including its tributaries and navigable canals, which together form the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System. This system spans four northern Italian regions: Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Lombardy, and Piedmont.

## 1.1 Origins and Framework

Formally established in 1990 under Law No. 380, the Padano-Veneto waterway extends for 957 kilometers, of which 564 kilometers are designated for commercial purposes and meet the Class IV standards of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (CEMT). This network includes three points of access to the northern Adriatic Sea.

- The free-flowing Po River from Piacenza to Porto Tolle, the central axis.
- The Fissero-Tartaro-Canal Bianco Canal, up to the Po di Levante and the Po di Brondolo.
- The Litoranea Veneta Waterway.
- The Ferrarese Waterway.



Class V navigation—for vessels with a tonnage between 1,500 and 2,000 tons—is only possible in certain sections, such as along the Po River between Cremona and Porto Tolle (275 km) and in most parts of the Fissero-Tartaro-Canalbianco-Po di Levante Waterway. Numerous upgrades are underway on the Ferrarese Waterway to improve current standards.

Along the Po River, navigation is only feasible in free-flow conditions, making it dependent on seasonal river levels and thus available only 240 days per year. In contrast, on the Fissero-Tartaro-Canalbianco-Po di Levante and Po-Brondolo canals, navigation is regulated by a series of locks, ensuring stable draft throughout the year, which allows for better navigability.



## 1.2 Networks and Nodes Supporting the Territory

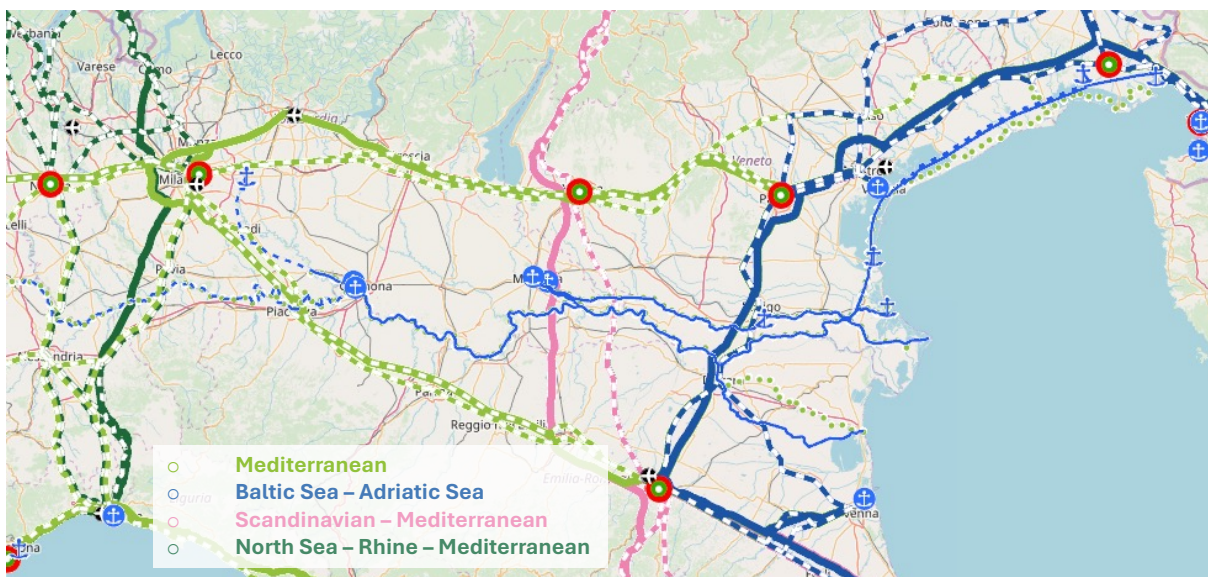
The Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System links northern Italy's most industrialized areas with the Adriatic Sea, passing through several key logistical and industrial centers, including:

- The Port of Cremona and its rail connection.
- The Mantua Port System, which includes the inland port of Mantua-Valdaro, its rail terminal in the dry port area, and the inland port of Mantua-Ostiglia.
- The Inland Port of Rovigo and its rail terminal.
- Porto Levante, near Venice.
- The Port of Chioggia, which also serves as a seaport.

## 1.3 Trans-European Dimension

The importance of this infrastructure extends beyond the national level; it's part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), specifically the Mediterranean Corridor, with three inland port nodes: Cremona, Mantua, and Rovigo. The waterway system also intersects with three additional TEN-T corridors in Italy:

- The Baltic-Adriatic Corridor.
- The Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor.
- The Rhine-Alpine Corridor.



## 1.4 Management

The waterway system is directly coordinated by the four regions involved: Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Veneto, and Piedmont. Between 1977 and 1979, following the enactment of DPR 616/77 (Articles 8 and 98), these regions established a convention to coordinate common standards for institutional, administrative, technical, operational, and financial aspects related to the regular maintenance and management of the shared navigable network. The current agreement, called "Intesa" in this document, was signed in 2019, allowing for more efficient use of local, national, and European funds, maximizing the system's potential.

The operational management of the infrastructure is entrusted to regional and/or interregional agencies or local authorities, as detailed below:

- The Po River – managed by AIPo.
- The Fissero-Tartaro-Canalbianco Canal, Po di Levante, Po di Brondolo Canal, and the Litoranea Veneta Waterway – managed by Infrastrutture Venete.
- The Ferrarese Waterway – managed by the Regional Agency for Territorial Safety and Civil Protection of Emilia-Romagna.
- Port of Cremona – managed by the Province of Cremona.
- Port of Mantua – managed by the Province of Mantua.
- Rovigo Inland Port – managed by Rovigo Inland Port.
- Port of Chioggia – managed by the Northern Adriatic Port Authority.

## 1.5 Numbers

This infrastructure offers numerous opportunities and strengths. According to a recent study, in 2022, the inland waterway mode transported 1 million tons of goods—an increase of 150% since 2015. This generated a total of €292.3 million in revenue, €94.9 million in added value, and 1,790 jobs in the northern Italian region. However, inland waterway transport currently accounts for only 0.1% of the total freight volume in Italy, far below the European average of 5.6%, indicating significant growth potential for the sector.



## 1.6 SWOT Analysis of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterways System

Below is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System to evaluate its advantages, challenges, potential, and risks.

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Resilience and multifunctionality.</b> Using locks and artificial canals generates several benefits, including controlling water flows for managing floods and high waters, which enhances resilience to climate change.</li> <li>- <b>Environmental sustainability and safety.</b> Waterways offer a safer and more environmentally friendly alternative to road transport, reducing CO2 emissions and traffic congestion caused by heavy vehicles.</li> <li>- <b>Versatility of transport opportunities.</b> Waterways can address specific transport needs, particularly for oversized and heavy loads, which would be difficult to transport by land.</li> <li>- <b>Coordinated management.</b> The existence of a collective body uniting the relevant regions (Intesa) promotes coordination between infrastructure managers and regional authorities.</li> <li>- <b>Service usage costs.</b> The infrastructure costs are very low (limited to ancillary services), ensuring greater accessibility even for small operators, particularly for transporting over-size goods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Infrastructure constraints.</b> The lack of full adaptation of all branches to Class V navigation creates bottlenecks that, in some cases, limit the volume of goods transported per vessel, hindering full efficiency.</li> <li>- <b>Variability in navigability conditions.</b> The lack of year-round navigability of the Po River due to variable water depths and meteorological inputs represents a significant barrier to the full availability of the infrastructure.</li> <li>- <b>Low transport speed.</b> Water transport is generally slower than road or rail transport, often reducing the attractiveness of waterways.</li> <li>- <b>Maintenance costs.</b> The need for regular maintenance of locks and canals leads to high maintenance costs.</li> <li>- <b>Limited logistical integration.</b> The generally poor integration with existing rail and road networks limits the efficiency of waterways as a component of the intermodal logistics chain, leading to significant transshipment costs.</li> <li>- <b>Fragmented Governance.</b> Users' associations and ports are not involved in the bilateral meeting between infrastructure managers and regional authorities leading to misunderstandings, some delays in interventions and some regulatory and liability gaps.</li> </ul>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Social and economic impact.</b> The enhanced integrated Waterways System has proven capable of generating numerous direct and indirect social and economic benefits for the involved regions, including creating new jobs and the financial returns driven by the growth of the waterway market and its related industries.</li> <li>- <b>Territory and production system.</b> The territorial framework of the Padano-Veneto Waterways System offers excellent opportunities for creating and promoting new industrial districts, synergistic with the already highly developed productive network of the Po Valley, which provides favorable geographical characteristics for this purpose.</li> <li>- <b>Intermodal integration.</b> The development of intermodal logistics hubs that combine water, rail, and road transport could significantly improve the efficiency of the regional logistics chain.</li> <li>- <b>River tourism.</b> The waterway could be utilized to develop new services related to river tourism, such as cruises and other cultural activities, generating further economic and social returns for the region.</li> <li>- <b>Positive environmental and social externalities.</b> The reduction of emissions from river transport, particularly in the freight sector, leads to improved accessibility to the region, especially for tourism, better air quality, and improved public health. Monetizing these positive externalities makes river transport economically more competitive than road transport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Low public incentives and limited funding.</b> Inland waterway transport has often been subject to sporadic and one-off incentives and insufficient funding, which have not supported private sector involvement due to the lack of medium and long-term planning.</li> <li>- <b>Regulatory obstacles.</b> Current regulations on the navigability of Inland Waterways, customs limits, integration with maritime navigation, and the disbursement of funds hinder the sector's efficiency and parallel an uncoordinated planning with maritime transport.</li> <li>- <b>Fleet inefficiency.</b> The average size of vessels in Italy is considerably smaller compared to European rivals, limiting the fleet's competitiveness. There is also a lack of barges for freight transport.</li> <li>- <b>Water pollution and ecosystem impact.</b> Poor management of vessels traffic and the use of vessels powered by unsustainable fuels could pose a threat to the river ecosystem.</li> </ul>

## 2 Principles and General Objectives for Sustainable Development of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System

To outline the general development principles for the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System, the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been considered and adapted to the specific context.



**Build Resilient Infrastructure:** Promote a more sustainable and environmentally and socially conscious industry and logistics sector, while fostering innovation through technological and governance tools.



**Utilize Waterways as an Alternative to Road Infrastructure:** Position waterways as a more environmentally friendly alternative to road transport, with lower greenhouse gas emissions, in an intermodal framework that integrates rail, waterway, and road transport.

**Promote Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAP):** Encourage riverside municipalities to develop and implement climate and sustainable energy action plans.

**Encourage Climate Adaptation and Mitigation in Manufacturing and Logistics:** Support manufacturing and logistics companies in adopting actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.



**Partnership for common goals.** The stakeholders of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System aim to collaborate and build a network to create a critical mass that stands out at the national level. This unified approach will allow them to present issues related to inland waterway navigation to policymakers with a single voice. The goal is to establish a more cohesive governance structure for the waterway system, focused on shared development objectives.

## 3 Challenges and Proposed Solutions from the Stakeholders of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterways System

### 3.1 Governance-related issues

#### 3.1.1 Challenges in communication among the various stakeholders

**CHALLENGES:**

Fragmented Governance has led to communication challenges and a lack of shared vision between infrastructure managers with the Interregional Intesa on one side and operators of ports, inland ports, and private docks on the other.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Organize regular, structured meetings between the various port and inland port operators (Port of Mantua, Port of Cremona, Rovigo Inland Port), the Interregional Intesa, waterway users, UNII, Assonautica, and the Propeller Club.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

Provinces, Rovigo Interporto, Riverside municipalities, UNII, Propeller Club, Intesa, IV, AIPo and ARSTPC

### 3.2 Infrastructure-related issues

#### 3.2.1 Bridge height

**CHALLENGES:**

Bridges with insufficient clearance for the passage of Class V CEMT convoys on the Fissero-Tartaro-Canalbianco Canal, Po di Brondolo Canal, and Ferrarese Waterway.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

1. Ensure operational continuity for projects that have already been approved and partially funded by IV.
2. Secure funding for interventions that have not yet been financed.
3. Develop an integrated bridge intervention plan:
  - a. Comprehensive planning (at the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System level) of necessary interventions, including the creation of a timeline.
  - b. Schedule interventions to minimize the impact on navigation and related logistics.
  - c. Implement a monitoring system to track the progress of interventions.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

1. Infrastructure Owner (State, RFI, provinces, municipalities, ANAS), IV and ARSTPC
2. Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport
3. Intesa

### 3.2.2 Maintenance of locks

#### CHALLENGES:

Closure of locks for maintenance work (which affects the full usability of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System): planning, scheduling, and related communication.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

1. Lock monitoring plan
2. Routine maintenance plan for the waterway system, developed through user consultation
3. Extraordinary maintenance:
  - Prompt communication to Users
  - Adherence to the scheduled timeline

#### RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:

1. AIPo, IV, ARSTPC, Intesa
2. AIPo, IV, ARSTPC, Intesa
3. AIPo, IV, ARSTPC

### 3.2.3 Sediment accumulation

#### CHALLENGES:

Presence of critical points along the waterway where sediment accumulation reduces the available draft for navigation.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

1. Enhance dredging activities (as-is) with a corresponding budget review for this activity.
2. Revise the approach to dredging activities: outsourcing, partnerships with private entities.
3. Implement a daily depth bulletin with five- and ten-day forecasts (CRISTAL Project).
4. Perform extraordinary re-sectioning of the navigable channel in artificial canals.

#### RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:

1. Intesa
2. AIPo
3. AIPo
4. IV, ARSTPC, AIPo

### 3.2.4 Management of dredged sediment

#### CHALLENGES:

Management of sediments derived from the re-sectioning of the navigable channel in artificial canals: where to deposit them and how to reuse them.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Collaboration between infrastructure managers and other entities that could reuse the material. Reclamation consortia and municipalities, in compliance with the regulations on excavated earth and rocks (DPR 120/2017), could use this material to reinforce embankments.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

IV, AIPo , ARSTPC and Regions

### 3.2.5 Bank cleaning

**CHALLENGES:**

Maintenance and cleaning of banks to ensure optimal visibility of navigation signals.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Provide adequate funding to enable the waterway system manager to outsource these services.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:** Intesa

### 3.2.6 Cleaning of bridge piers

**CHALLENGES:**

Cleaning bridge piers of debris buildup (floating material).

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Prompt intervention by the bridge manager/operator.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

Bridge manager: Provinces, ANAS, RFI, highway operators, municipalities.

## 3.3 Tourism Navigation-related issues

### 3.3.1 Tourist docks

**CHALLENGE No1:**

Mooring difficulties at certain docks due to shallow waters. Sediment removal from the riverbed is the responsibility of the dock operator often unable to intervene.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

1. Dredging near private docks, with access to regional funds if needed.
2. Communication/information on water depths for tourism operators and boaters, for example, through the Portolano del Po app.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

1. Regions
2. AIPo/AdBPo, IV and ARSTPC



**CHALLENGE No 2:**

Lack of clear information on services and pricing at certain dock.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

1. Define a minimum service level to be guaranteed at docks (safety measures, waste collection, etc.).
2. Enhance the range of services offered at docks.
3. Request the dock manager to provide information on services and mooring fees, and subsequently publish this information on the Portolano del Po.
4. Develop cold ironing (CRISTAL) and map docks along the Fissero-Tartaro-Canal Bianco, adding this data to the IV website.
5. Integrate the Portolano del Po with links to the IV and RER websites for services across the remaining parts of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

- 1.2. Docks Operators and/or UNII, Assonautica
3. AIPo/AdBPo
4. IV for the mapping of docks along the Fissero-Tartaro-Canal Bianco and cold ironing
5. Intesa, for a uniform approach along the waterway system

## 3.4 Commercial Navigation-related issues

### 3.4.1 Commercial Ports

**CHALLENGE:**

Difficulty finding information on mooring fees and other services at ports on the websites of the Provinces of Mantua and Cremona and Rovigo Inland Port.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

1. Create a dedicated section on the websites of the Provinces and the Inland Port where this information is missing.
2. Consider creating a specific website for the Ports of Cremona and Mantua with this information.
3. Add port-related information on the AIPo and IV websites.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

Provinces, AIPo and IV

## 3.5 Inland Navigation Personnel-related issues

### 3.5.1 Employment contracts for inland navigation personnel

**CHALLENGES:**

1. Lack of a national collective labor agreement for inland navigation personnel, unlike the existing agreement for maritime personnel.

2. Existing legal provisions (Art. 375 of the Navigation Code "Employment Contract for Inland Navigation Personnel") are impractical to apply, as they are outdated and inadequate for regulating the current work environment and ensuring minimum rights for workers (the legal framework dates back to 1942).
3. The current use of collective agreements for other categories, as a stopgap for the above issue, is unsatisfactory due to the unique nature of this type of work.

These issues are creating serious difficulties in managing inland navigation personnel and are discouraging young people from entering the profession. This situation could soon result in part of the fleet being grounded due to the inability to assemble crews.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Creation of a working group to discuss an existing proposal for a national collective labor agreement for inland navigation personnel.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:**

1. Trade Unions.
2. Employer Organizations.
3. Ministry of Labor and Social Policies.

### 3.5.2 Shortage of onboard personnel

**CHALLENGES:**

1. The professional qualifications for inland navigation are inadequate to meet the current operational and commercial needs of the sector, as the relevant regulations are outdated (DPR 631/1949), highly restrictive, and present unjustified barriers to entering the profession. Some of these restrictions are partially incompatible with EU and international law (e.g., foreigners are barred from taking exams; there is no process for recognizing foreign professional qualifications outside the scope of Legislative Decree No. 237/2021 and DPR 545/1999; excessively restrictive physical requirements for entry).
2. Lack of an equivalency system between maritime professional qualifications and inland navigation qualifications, except for the professional path of chief engineer on vessels with a main engine power under 750 KW and equivalencies with inland navigation engine qualifications (as per MIT Decree No. 132 of May 22, 2023).

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

1. Urgent revision of the regulations on professional qualifications for inland navigation under DPR No. 631/1949.
2. Related urgent revision of the regulations under DPR No. 332/1957 concerning health assessments for registration in the inland navigation personnel rolls and for obtaining respective professional qualifications.
3. Development of new legislation introducing a simplified equivalency system between maritime and inland navigation professional qualifications (e.g., granting equivalency based on completion of a supplementary training course or passing an additional exam).)

RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:

1. Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, Ministry of Education and Merit, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Policies
2. Civil Motor Vehicle Authority
3. Trade unions and employer associations

### 3.5.3 Shortage of personnel in the civil motor vehicle authority

CHALLENGE:

Shortage of Civil Motor Vehicle Authority staff dedicated to navigation-related procedures.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Ensure that office staffing levels are adequate to meet specific regional need.

RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS: Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

## 3.6 Regulatory sector-related issues

### 3.6.1 Legislative Decree No. 114/2018 implementing EU Directive 2016/1629, which establishes technical requirements for vessels used in inland navigation

CHALLENGE:

The fees set by the May 10, 2022, decree of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, implementing Article 23, paragraph 3, of Legislative Decree No. 114/2018, are extremely high and have a negative impact on the relevant stakeholders.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Urgent revision of the May 10, 2022 decree by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport to achieve a reasonable reduction in fees.

RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS: Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

### 3.6.2 State incentives for the development and enhancement of freight transport and tourism via inland and river-sea waterways

CHALLENGES:

1. The requirements set by Ministerial Decree No. 476/2020 for accessing the so-called "idrobonus" appear too restrictive: the aid is intended only for vessels registered in the inland navigation registers, while most vessels are registered in maritime registers. Additionally, the aid is granted to the owner of the transported goods, which may change during transit. Lastly, the amount of aid appears too low, making inland navigation less competitive than other modes of transport (e.g., road).
2. State aid does not cover the tourism sector.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

1. Extend the idrobonus to maritime vessels that undertake commercial trips to inland ports, subject to verification that there are no similar State aids for maritime vessels for the same purpose.
2. In addition to the shipowner as the pro-rata beneficiary, allow the contracting transport company to be a pro-rata beneficiary of the idrobonus.
3. Increase the idrobonus coefficient to €2.00 per metric ton of cargo loaded.
4. Adopt a specific measure for the tourism sector regarding State aid for the modernization of the inland navigation fleet.

RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS: Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

### 3.6.3 Access to seaports for inland navigation vessels

CHALLENGE:

The access fee for seaports is "flat," meaning it is the same for all types of vessels. This creates economic disadvantages for inland navigation shipowners, as these vessels typically have a much smaller tonnage than maritime ships.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Adjust the fees according to the tonnage of the vessel.

RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:

Port System Authority

### 3.6.4 Coastal navigation by inland vessels

CHALLENGES:

1. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport has still not established, even after ten years, the additional technical requirements that would allow inland navigation vessels to extend their navigation up to three miles from the coast. This is a serious oversight by the Ministry, despite repeated formal reports, and occurs in the presence of EU legislation—Directive 2016/1629 (Article 23)—which expressly allows inland navigation vessels to operate in marine areas, provided that specific additional technical requirements, outlined in an annex to the directive, are met.
2. The definitions of “protected waters” and “waters adjacent to protected waters” (included in Legislative Decree No. 71/2015 (see Article 2), "Implementation of Directive 2012/35/EU, which amends Directive 2008/106/EC concerning minimum training requirements for seafarers," as amended by Legislative Decree No. 194/2021 (see Article 2)) do not allow inland navigation personnel (working on inland navigation vessels used exclusively in these waters) to operate in such waters. These definitions are excessively restrictive and undermine the objective set by the legislator, as defined in the delegation granted to the government under Law No. 53/2021 (see Article 28).

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Address these two issues urgently, as this combination of omission on one hand and excessive rigidity on the other distorts the market, harms the competitiveness of various transport modes, and prevents the development and promotion of river-sea transport. This mode of transport has long been standard practice in other, more forward-thinking EU countries (France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, etc.).

The adoption of the RIS directive, as mentioned in point 3.6.5, is also a necessary prerequisite to enable inland navigation vessels to operate along the coast.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:** Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

### **3.6.5 RIS - existing River Information Services activation**

**CHALLENGE:**

The RIS (River Information System) equipment is available on the market but is used by only a few shipowners, as there is currently no regulatory requirement for its use due to Italy's failure to adopt Directive 2005/44/EC.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Adoption of the aforementioned directive, especially considering that on January 26, 2024, Proposal COM (2024) 33 final was issued to amend Directive 2005/44/EC. The amendment proposal states the following:

"This directive applies to the implementation and operation of RIS for all inland waterways and inland ports in Member States that are part of the trans-European transport network, as specified and listed in Annexes I and II of Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council."

With this amendment, adopting the directive will become mandatory for Italy as well, since national inland waterways and ports fall under the TEN-T network as per the relevant EU regulation.

**RECIPIENTS OF THE INTERVENTIONS:** Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport.

## 4 Conclusions and Programmatic Requests for the Vision and Development of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterways System

From discussions with various stakeholder groups, two major challenges emerged as priorities for achieving the full development of the Padano-Veneto Inland Waterway System, making it fully usable for the transport of goods and passengers:

1. **Infrastructure:** Upgrading infrastructure and ensuring continuous routine maintenance.
2. **Governance:** Enhancing coordination and improving information flow among all stakeholders in the waterway system, including users, infrastructure managers, policymakers, and the public.

### *Key Programmatic Requests:*

- a. **Development of a Master Plan:** Create a comprehensive master plan for the waterway system, including navigable routes, ports, inland ports, connections to road and rail networks, and links to industrial areas, all in line with the environmental, social, and economic needs of the regions involved.
- b. **Coordination of Regional Transport Plans:** Ensure alignment between the various regional transport plans of the regions crossed by the waterway system.
- c. **Integration with the National Maritime Plan:** Include the waterway system more fully in the National Maritime Plan to enable coordinated rather than parallel planning for maritime and inland water systems.
- d. **Centralized Information Access:** Integrate links to all information on the entire waterway system on the websites or apps of the waterway management entities.
- e. **Formation of Operator Consortia:** Encourage the formation of consortia among inland waterway operators to optimize costs, pool personnel, address the shortage of barges for freight transport, and create a unified entity for participating in funding opportunities.
- f. **Urban and Regional Planning:** Incentivize urban and regional planning to support better connections between industrial activities and the waterway system.
- g. **Structural Investments for Multimodal Connectivity:** Promote structural interventions to improve connections with other transport modes, such as rail for freight transport and bicycle paths for tourism.
- h. **Implementation of a Sychromodal Transport Corridor Management System:** Develop a sychromodal management system for the transport corridor, as envisioned by the CRISTAL Project.