



# Position Paper RIS

position paper on the public consultation on  
River information services-directive  
10/10/2019

**Position paper of De Vlaamse Waterweg nv  
on the public consultation on the implementation of River Information Services  
(Directive 2005/44/EC)**

**Introduction**

De Vlaamse Waterweg nv (Flemish Waterways plc) was established on 10 February 2017 as an autonomous agency and limited liability company under public law for the maintenance, operation, management and commercialisation of the inland waterways of the Flemish Region. It is the legal successor of nv De Scheepvaart and Waterwegen en Zeekanaal NV and is responsible for the Flemish navigable Waterways such as the Albert Canal, the Scheldt, the Leie, the Campine Canals, the common Meuse and the Flemish part of the canal Brussels-Charleroi.

In total De Vlaamse Waterweg nv takes care of 1076 km of canals and rivers, 131 locks, 800 bridges, 195 km of quay walls, 1.100 km of banks, 2.046 km of towpaths and almost 6.600 hectares of public domain along these waterways. De Vlaamse Waterweg is also responsible for the implementation and the further development for the River Information Services within the Flemish Region.

Within the TEN-T and CEF program, De Vlaamse Waterweg nv has developed its River Information Services to a standard and service level that goes beyond the strict requirements of the RIS-directive. This has led to the creation of a one-stop-shop VisuRIS web portal and VisuRIS app, with following functionalities:

- Relevant information for the skipper in relation to the fairway: up-to-date traffic information, notices to skippers, water level information, bridge clearances, depth and width, lock information, operation / operating hours, ...
- Route and voyage planning taking into account works, limitations, ship dimensions, ...
- Reservation of (public) berth places
- Automatic notices of problems along the planned route
- Up to date Inland ECDIS charts
- Payment of fairway dues
- Efficient calamity abatement through communication with calamity services and skippers
- Information for the shippers

The efficiency and scalability of the web portal has led to the decision within the RIS COMEX project to re-use VisuRIS as the basis for further developments of RIS in the partner countries of the project.

**Recommendations on updating the RIS-directive**

In first instance the Vlaamse Waterweg nv is in favour of updating the existing RIS-directive and the accompanying regulations. Since this package of directive and regulations was published in 2005, a lot has changed in the field of data requirements and supporting technologies, the exchange of data and more specific mobility and the needs of the transport sector (i.e. supply chain).

Secondly, it is necessary to take the **following issues** into account:

The objective of the current RIS-directive was to introduce the use of River Information Services with technical standards to develop these Services. However, there is no focus on doing this in a **harmonized** way. This has led to the current situation, i.e. different more or less isolated islands where the RIS-directive has been implemented. One Member State developing it strictly to the bare necessities of the Directive, the other trying to go forward and develop (an) up to date tool(s) for Inland Waterway Transport to be able to be competitive, safe, efficient and innovative. There is need for a more coordinated and supporting role of the EC.

However, if we want to be able to get to a more safe, efficient and environmental friendly Inland Waterway Transport with the possibility **to interconnect with intelligent transport systems of other transport modes** to guarantee maximum integration of IWT within the logistical supply chain, a more harmonized approach and finetuning between Member States is necessary. With the RIS-COMEX project, 13 countries across Europe are joining forces to make RIS THE synchromodal link of Inland navigation taking care of a harmonized implementation of RIS-services.

Additionally, it is important to have technical standards for the development of RIS, but these **standards should leave enough flexibility** for further development and innovation in order to be able to adapt to fast changing needs and data systems. The current standards are very strict and encoded, which means that it is difficult to adapt to changing circumstances, needs and innovations. Possible approaches are to allow the results of EU-projects, under supervision of the EU, to act as de facto standards, to have a quicker process in acceptance of new standards by the EC of the standards and to be able to implement new ideas and technology outside the scope of these standards

An example of such an approach for further development and possibility to adapt to changing and growing needs is the Flemish **one-stop-shop web portal VisuRIS**, with different functionalities as described in the introduction. Almost all of the functionalities of VisuRIS go beyond the requirements of the RIS-directive and are inspired by PIANC. Furthermore, VisuRIS is developed in such a way that functionalities can easily be adapted and new functionalities can be added.

Another important aspect in the further development and adaption of the RIS directive is the relation with Smart Shipping (autonomous and automated navigation) and Smart Logistics. It is the believe of De Vlaamse Waterweg nv that a revision of the Directive is needed to **incorporate** these **new technologies**, to see what the influence will be on the Directive and how this can be adapted into the different standards.

Last but not least, in relation to the expertise with RIS, VisuRIS, Smart Shipping and European projects such as RIS-COMEX, De Vlaamse Waterweg nv is prepared to offer this expertise to support the European Commission to draft an updated version of the RIS-legislation.