

Comment to German federal concept for water tourism

German federal Ministry of Transport and digital Infrastructure has published a draft concept for water tourism fulfilling the running coalition treaty of the governmental parties and an order of the federal parliament. The concept is dealing with secondary federal inland waterways without any or only marginal commercial use. The primary net of highly frequented commercial main waterways will be open for recreational use without restriction as it is today.

Main issues of the water tourism concept:

- There is a map showing all secondary federal waterways with a sum of 2.800 km and its relevance for leisure and tourism. Secondary waterways spread all over Germany build only internal regional nets. Often you only can reach secondary waterways by using main waterways.
- Secondary waterways don't need a unique standard for infrastructure in all districts. The concept defines two types of waters:
 - Recreational waterways
Important use for cruising, passenger transport or boating.
 - Natural waters (counted from the map with a sum of 700 km)
Low frequented waterways by shipping. In future without technical infrastructure focused for manual boating without motors. There is free hand for renaturing following the "Blue Belt" project.
- As a first step recreational waterways will be taken off from the net of federal waterways and specially concentrated in a separate organization with an own budget. Federal waterways administration shall remain ownership, maintenance and operation of recreational waterways. This first step gives transparence to the cost benefit situation of individual recreational waterways.
- As a further step federal government plans change the legal status of federal recreational waterways for cooperative models with German regional governments following the idea of GB canal and river trust or NL stichting recreatiervoert.
- In future only public use by manual watersport without motors will be free of charge. Later on other boat activities, passenger transport and cruising could possibly be charged by the users pay principle.
- German watersport associations and tourism organizations are not happy with the presented concept and try to reach changes in the now opened process of political acceptance.