The sixth European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) Plenary Meeting took place in Brussels on Tuesday, 28th of June 2016.

It was the first meeting after the decision to extend the duration of the ESSF (Commission Decision C(2015)9741, amending the Decision C(2013)5984 on setting up the group of experts on maritime transport sustainability – the ESSF of 6/01/2016) and the appointment of the new members, who account for around 1/3 of the industry representatives.

The Commission welcomed the new participants and recalled the most important rules regarding expert groups and the ESSF in particular, which can be found in more detail in:

ESSF - public info:
- [http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2869](http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2869)
- [Decision on setting-up the group of experts on maritime transport sustainability – The European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) [C(2013)5984]](http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2869)
- [Commission’s Decision C(2015)9741](http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2869)

Terms of Reference:

Horizontal rules for COM expert groups

After the introductory part, the Sub-groups’ rapporteurs presented the progress made on the respective themes: Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems; Liquefied Natural Gas as Marine Fuel; Competitiveness; Financing; and Port Reception Facilities. The recommendations of the subgroups were then endorsed by the Plenary.

Furthermore, the Plenary approved the final reports of the subgroups on MRV Monitoring and MRV ‘Verification and Accreditation’ and agreed to extend the duration of their work through the next year.

The Plenary also agreed on establishing of the new sub-group ‘Air Emission from Ships’, but the discussion on both Terms of Reference and on the lists of members could not be concluded during the meeting. It was decided to finalise the two points by written procedure.

The following paragraphs provide more detailed information about the progress in the sub-groups.

**Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems Sub-group**

The Plenary ESSF welcomed and supported the progress achieved by the sub-group, especially with regard to the preparation of a submission to the IMO concerning the revision of the "[2015]"
Guidelines for Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (resolution MEPC. 259(68)). The Plenary supported the submission of the document to MEPC 71 (deadline for submission – 23/12/2016).

The Commission invited members of the ESSF who are also members/observers of the IMO, to cosponsor the submission. CLIA and Interferry declared their initial support for co-sponsoring the paper.

LNG Sub-group

The Plenary ESSF welcomed the progress on the development of EMSA guidance on LNG bunkering for Port Authorities and Administrations, as agreed at the last ESSF Plenary meeting in January 2016, and on cooperation with the ISO on the development of a standard for the LNG connectors.

The Plenary endorsed the proposal for actions and relative timetable for the EMSA guidance on LNG bunkering:

(1) Launching on-line questionnaire (https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/LNGBunkeringSurvey2016/1, deadline for replies by mid-September);

(2) Workshop in EMSA planned in November 2016;

(3) Endorsement of the Guidance at the next meeting ESSF Plenary.

The Plenary ESSF welcomed also publication of the EU LNG Study (http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/studies/maritime_en.htm).

MRV Shipping ‘Verification and Accreditation’ Sub-group

The Plenary ESSF welcomed the results of the work of the sub-group and endorsed the final report, agreeing to extend the subgroup's mandate for 1 year with a view to develop further guidance on the issues listed below:

- Risk assessment to be carried out by verifiers
- Recommendations for improvements
- Materiality & verification of the emission report
- Verification of the emission report – backward verification
- Verification of the emission report – verification activities
- Assessment of verifiers by NAB – how accreditation can be obtained in time
- Administrative measures – suspension and withdrawal of accreditation
- Administrative measures – Document of Compliance from a suspended verifier

MRV Shipping ‘Monitoring’ Sub-group

The Plenary ESSF welcomed and endorsed the final report and agreed that continuation beyond June 2016 and further into 2017 is needed.

Furthermore, the ESSF Plenary approved that the Subgroup continues its work on open tasks, in particular:

(1) Development of guidance and a best practices compendium, for instance on expected levels of uncertainty for the different monitoring methods;

(2) Analysis of deliverables in view of input in the IMO discussions on IMO Guidelines supporting the global data collection system as approved by MEPC 69 on 22 April 2016.

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Financing Sub-group

The Plenary ESSF welcomed the development of the Green Shipping Guarantee program (GSGP – a risk-sharing mechanism improving access to financing and reducing the risk of investing in clean technologies) and the development of the Vade-mecum for a better utilisation of EU instruments (informative document).

The ESSF Plenary members agreed that with the developments mentioned above, the mandate of the ESSF Sub-group on Financing has been fulfilled and can be closed at the next Plenary meeting, while its members are invited to join the ESSF Sub-group on Competitiveness.

Competitiveness Sub-group

The ESSF Plenary welcomed the progress made by the Sub-group on the work in relation to its latest mandate and endorsed the Sub-group’s intention to open discussions and decide at its next meeting on:

- How to further organise the collection of data in relation to evolution of fuel prices;
- How to contribute to the follow-up of the Implementation Report of the EU Maritime Transport Strategy;
- Suggestions as to any other ‘critical competitiveness factors’ needing to be addressed by the Sub-group.

Port Reception Facilities Sub-group

The Plenary ESSF welcomed progress in the Sub-group, seen as the main discussion platform not only as regards the legislative revision, but also in relation to the other initiatives on improving the implementation of the PRF Directive:

1) REFIT Evaluation;
2) PRF Interpretative Guidelines and EMSA Technical Recommendations;
3) Common Monitoring and Information System.

So far, the Sub-Group has provided a wealth of information to the Commission on the functioning of the Directive. The Sub-Group will continue supporting the Commission on the revision process which it will carry on throughout the year.

(New) sub-group on Air Emission from Ships

The Commission (DG ENV) presented the Terms of Reference for a new sub-group called ‘Air Emission from Ships’. The idea is to follow up on developments of the sub-group on Implementation the Sulphur Directive (formally closed in 2015) and to broaden the scope addressing a wider set of air pollutants from shipping while keeping the focus on the Sulphur Directive and the shipping community strategy towards 2020.

Members welcomed the idea of establishing a new sub-group, but the discussions on the ToR could not be concluded at the meeting. Therefore, the Plenary members were requested to provide comments to the ToR in writing, in view of approval of the ToR by written procedure. There was also a significant interest in membership to this new Sub-group.

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Some new members suggested that ESSF could consider addressing other issues, like, for example use of methanol as alternative fuel or loss of containers.
Next meeting

The next Plenary is planned to take place in the second half of January 2017.