



# Maritime transport without barriers

## ● European initiatives for more effective and competitive maritime transport



### ● Initiatives for making European ports more efficient

The freight passing through European ports is increasing constantly. For example, the volume of containerised freight entering and leaving seaports has doubled within the space of several years. Indeed, around 90% of the European Union's trade with third countries passes through the ports of Europe, with some 3.2 billion tonnes of freight being loaded and unloaded annually. The European Union's seaports play a vital part in ensuring the competitiveness of both its internal and external trade, and they provide essential links to its islands and remote regions. Moreover, the ports generate more than half a million jobs either directly or indirectly, and they drive the dynamism and development of entire regions, including most of the EU's remote regions.

## MEMO - MARITIME TRANSPORT WITHOUT BARRIERS

Consequently, Europe needs a network of accessible and efficient ports. It needs greater port capacity, and existing capacity has to be streamlined. The Commission Communication on the European ports policy identifies all of the issues which European ports must resolve if they are to meet the ever-growing demand for transport, cope with technological change (such as containerised freight and new ICT technologies) and address the need to reduce emissions. The Commission wants, above all, to **help European ports meet these challenges, develop their operations and become more competitive.**

The Communication is the result of an eight-month **consultation** with interested parties. In March 2006, Vice-President Barrot decided to launch a broad-based consultation in a move to better understand the port sector. This consultation covered a wide range of issues such as port services, port funding, environmental issues, employment at ports, hinterland connections, and relations with third-country ports.

The Communication sets out an **action plan** and announces future legislative initiatives to meet the five main challenges facing the European port network today:

- increasing the **efficiency and productivity** of all European seaports;
- balancing the need to **increase investment capacity** with **respect for the environment**;
- modernising the ports network by, among other things, **simplifying administrative procedures** and making **increased use of information technologies** (e-maritime);
- guaranteeing **fair competition** between ports;
- addressing the human aspect within a new framework for **social dialogue**.

The common aim of these initiatives is to set up a framework enabling European ports to achieve sustainable development and to obtain the investment they need for modernisation. The modernisation of port facilities should help attract new customers and play a crucial part in providing real intermodal solutions for European carriers. The action plan will thus contain a set of indispensable practical tools for investors, **including guidelines on environmental regulations** (and how to apply them to port development projects) as well as on **State aid for ports**.

The Communication also includes **legal guidelines on access to the port services market** (port concessions, technical nautical services and boatage) and **on employment in ports**. The Commission has focused particular attention on the latter. It is working to make the profession more attractive and ensure that there is a well-trained workforce in this sector by proposing a directive on the training of port employees, by closely monitoring the application of health and safety rules and by helping to create a sectoral dialogue committee.

- **Promoting a European maritime transport area without barriers**

Unlike road transport, which has been reaping the benefits of the internal market since 1993, shipments of goods by sea between the ports of the European Union are treated in the same way as shipments to third countries. Consequently, maritime transport between Member States involves many documentary checks and physical inspections by the customs, health, veterinary, plant health and immigration control officials.

The fact that modes of transport should be treated differently is no longer justified. It penalises maritime transport, which is cheaper and has less of a negative impact on the environment, even though maritime transport should be used to cut the number of lorries on an increasingly congested road network. It is paradoxical, for example, that goods shipped by sea between ports as close together as Antwerp and Amsterdam should be considered to have left the territory of the European Union whereas lorries can drive unhindered throughout Europe.

To rectify the situation, the European Commission has introduced **the idea of a European maritime transport area with a view to eliminating or reducing the numerous administrative procedures which apply to goods shipped by sea between European ports**. The general use of ship tracking systems will mean that national authorities will be able to monitor the area to ensure that it is operating correctly. The aim of this is to allay fears of an increase in fraud resulting from the lifting of controls.

On 17 October, the Commission is launching a two-month consultation period with interested parties to discuss the idea of a European maritime transport area. The Commission will present the results of this consultation, as well as an impact analysis of the various scenarios for implementing this maritime area and other relevant proposals, in 2008.

- **Motorways of the sea**

The establishment of a European maritime transport area is absolutely crucial in ensuring the effective development of the “motorways of the sea” - key sea routes between the Member States of the EU. Combined with other modes of transport, they provide regular, high-quality services which offer an effective alternative to transporting goods only by road. The motorways of the sea represent a cleaner, more cost-effective solution for transporting freight and will reduce congestion at the main bottlenecks on Europe’s roads. What is more, they also provide effective, viable links to the remoter regions of Europe. A whole network of motorways of the sea will have to be established to absorb a significant portion of the growth expected for road freight traffic. At the same time, short-sea shipping will have to continue improving its performance.

Six years after announcing this initiative in the White Paper on European transport policy, the Commission is publishing a **report on the progress made in developing**

## MEMO - MARITIME TRANSPORT WITHOUT BARRIERS

**the motorways of the sea.** The report shows that the Member States are actively involved in setting up support mechanisms for the motorways of the sea. It also demonstrates that the private sector has shown great interest in the idea, and not just in the financing options offered through Community instruments.

In order to address these developments, the Commission is launching a **consultation on a number of new ideas.** These include devising performance indicators, benchmarking the various options for getting goods from their point of origin to their destination, and recognising some existing services as motorways of the sea.

The Commission is very hopeful that a first list of “motorway of the sea” projects can be adopted in 2010. The Commission believes in this policy and is ready to play its part. It has set up **financial instruments** such as the TEN-T (trans-European transport network) and Marco Polo programmes which enable greater financial Community support to be given to developing motorways of the sea. In a move to facilitate cooperation between all the public and private sector parties involved, the Commission has appointed **Luis Valente de Oliveira as European coordinator for these projects.**

The ball is now in the court of the public and private sectors. They need to come up with good “motorways of the sea” projects which will shift a significantly greater share of freight transport to the seas and thus reduce congestion in our transport system as well as making it cleaner and more energy-efficient.

For more information on the public consultations open until the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2007 please visit:

European maritime transport space without barriers:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=barriers&lang=EN>

Motorways of the Sea:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=mossea&lang=EN>