

Depending if they are still there:

Dear Commissioner(s),

Dear Mr State Secretary,

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Dear President of Catalonia,

Distinguished guests,

Dear participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the European Sea Ports Organisation and for myself to participate in this Pan-European dialogue, which is a first and important initiative to bring together all stakeholders active in the cruise sector.

For a long time our organisation, representing the European ports authorities towards the European policy makers, has been working almost exclusively on freight issues. This has changed a few years ago with the creation of a passenger committee within ESPO. Within this committee the first steps have been set to bring together European port authorities that are active in the cruise and or ferry sector.

In September last year we have strengthened this focus of ESPO by setting up a cooperation agreement with all the regional organisations representing the interests of the Cruise port authorities: Cruise Baltic, Cruise Britain, Cruise

Europe Cruise Norway and Med Cruise. All these organisations are now part of the ESPO Cruise and Ferry Port Network. This allows us to really bring together all the existing expertise and intelligence of all port authorities active in the sector. It also allows us to speak with one single voice to all the other stakeholders in the business – the operators, the tourist agencies- the regions – on the one hand and to the European policy makers on the other hand.

Distinguished guests,

The cruise sector is an important sector for European ports. For some ports it is more important than for other ports, but one thing is clear: more and more European ports are getting involved in cruise business.

So, if we consider the business of European ports, we should not only focus on the 3.7 billion tonnes of goods that passes annually through our ports, but we should also care about the 400 million passengers that pass our ports every year. And even if freight business and passenger business, be it cruise or ferry, are very different businesses they are dealt with by one port and one port authority.

That is why in ESPO we believe that the cruise business issues should not be dealt with in an isolated way.

The cruise business in our ports should be on our radar in every policy discussion we have: environment, governance, safety, security, internal market,... We should assess the effect of EU policy initiatives not only in the light of freight but also on their effects on cruise and ferry business.

But to do so, we need to know what are the main challenges for the port authorities active in the cruise business. In January, ESPO launched a survey. The survey was closed on 20 February. On the basis of the first results of this survey, we have decided to focus our work for the coming year on six big challenges. For each of these challenges we want to develop a set of good practices, which will be brought together in a Code of Practice.

What will be the main elements of this **“six pack” for Cruise ports in Europe?**

1. **Competition between cruise ports.** Competition between EU cruise ports has been identified as the challenge n°1 for EU ports. What does it mean? What is healthy competition? Are their distortions to be tackled? Can we create win-wins for each of the EU cruise ports?
2. **The relations with the city,** in particular if the city of arrival of the cruise ship is not the “must see” location. Are there best practices to work with local authorities? What about the local tourist sector, tourist agents?
3. **Infrastructure.** Also here different elements are important: the general infrastructure in the port, the transport infrastructure in and outside the port. How to ensure a good reception of our guests and their mobility to and from the port?
4. **The relation with the cruise lines:** different challenges have been identified in that context. I name some: port tariffs, cancellation of calls, the way to promote excursions, long time engagement, pressure for berth allocation, taxi and other public transport availability,...
5. **The freight versus cruise relationship in our ports.** As said earlier, cruise and freight is being dealt with by one port and one port authority. Two totally different markets with totally different priorities, wishes and

needs that come together in one port area. Are there best practices for matching these two markets?

6. **Security and customs, border control.** European cruise ports together with the other stakeholders in the cruise business are putting a lot of efforts in guaranteeing an optimal security for cruise passengers. Are there lessons to learn from each other? Are there ways to guarantee an optimal security without limiting the travel comfort of the passengers?

Ladies and gentlemen, it is clear that the ESPO's Cruise and Passenger Port network has an ambitious agenda for the coming year. But it is an agenda that perfectly fits in the priorities of the Commission. To develop this "six-pack of good practices for Cruise ports", port authorities in EU will sit together in working groups. But we will also open the dialogue with all other stakeholders. We will need the support, input of everyone active in the sector. We are confident that this two days will contribute to this work.

I would like to thank once more the Commission for setting up this two-days conference and for involving the European Cruise port authorities actively in the programme. I am looking forward to many fruitful discussions which will feed our common aim: to further develop a successful and sustainable European Cruise business.
