

# European ports policy

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**PURPOSE:** to set out a European Ports Policy.

**BACKGROUND:** more than 1 200 merchant ports dot some 100 000 km of European coasts. Several hundred others punctuate the 36 000 km of our inland waterways. They are key points of modal transfer and are of vital interest to handle 90% of Europe's international trade. They are essential for the development of short sea shipping and, in many cases, of inland waterways' traffic. Ports are a direct and in-direct source of more than half a million jobs, and ensure dynamism and development of whole regions including most peripheral ones.

**CONTENT:** the present Communication aims at a performing EU port system able to cope with the future challenges of EU transport needs; it sets an action plan for the European Commission. It follows up from an extensive consultation with the stakeholders in 2006-2007. It follows up the recently adopted Communication on an Integrated Maritime Policy (see [INI/2008/2009](#)).

Ports face the following challenges:

- An increase in the demand for low cost international transport;
- A major technological change, marked by the development of container transport and cleaner operation of ports, but for which a major adaptation effort in land acquisition and management, as well as in technology and social issues is required;
- The commitment to reduce greenhouse gases which calls for a decrease in harmful emissions and road congestion effects, as well as for modal diversification towards rail, inland navigation and maritime transport;
- The need to develop a recurrent dialogue on performance and development of ports between port stakeholders and within the city, the region, and beyond;
- The need to reconcile ports' development and management with transparency, competition, and, in general, the Community set of rules.

The Commission suggests several ways to overcome these challenges and calls on all public and private stakeholders to support this approach:

**Improve port performance and hinterland connections:** the Commission intends, at this stage, to leave this matter to regional and national authorities and to the market. It intends to evaluate the status and needs of ports' hinterland connections and their impact on the balance of traffic flows, during the mid-term review of the trans-European transport network in 2010.

**Expanding capacity while respecting the environment:** the Commission will issue guidelines on the application of the Community environment legislation to port development. Directive 2000/59/EC, on port reception facilities, aims at reducing discharges of ship-generated waste and cargo residues into the sea. The Commission will consult the interested parties on means to improve the existing mechanism of the Directive and to come forward with an appropriate proposal. Finally, the Commission is committed to reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from shipping and will contribute to establishing measures aimed at reducing these emissions in ports, including through appropriate incentives.

**Modernising ports:** In order to simplify the short sea shipping procedures, the Commission has proposed the creation of a paperless environment for customs and trade. It will present a legislative proposal on the creation of a European Maritime Transport Space without Barriers in 2008. The Commission intends to

publish in 2009 a policy document on the deployment of "e-maritime". Finally, the EU Research Framework Programmes, in particular FP7, support relevant research and innovation on port infrastructure and operations.

**Increasing clarity for investors and users:** The Commission will adopt guidelines on State aid to ports in 2008. It plans to take measures towards extending the provisions on transparency of Directive 2006/111/EC to all merchant ports, irrespective of their annual turnover. Finally, the Commission will help disseminate best practices on transparency in port charges and will make an inventory of the problems encountered with a view to addressing them in Community external relations when needed.

**Establishing a structured dialogue between ports and cities:** the Commission will examine possible sources of finance for supporting improved integration of ports with cities. It also considers assessing the impact of security measures and providing guidance on how to reconcile the need for sound security measures with a fair degree of openness and accessibility to port areas. The review of legislation on maritime and port security will provide an opportunity to assess port access requirements and to examine the development of a European model for multi purpose access cards.

**Work in ports:** the Commission will encourage the establishment of a European sectoral social dialogue committee in ports within the meaning of Commission Decision 98/500/EC. If such a committee is established, the Commission will promote an active contribution of the social partners to management of change, modernisation and more and better jobs. The Commission will also propose a mutually recognisable framework on training of port workers in different fields of port activities. Finally, it will closely monitor the implementation, in ports, of Community rules on the health and safety of workers at work.