

European ports policy

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own initiative report by Josu **ORTUONDO LARREA** (ALDE, ES), warmly welcoming the Commission's communication on a European ports policy.

MEPs recall the crucial importance of the ports sector to the European Union from the economic, commercial, social, environmental and strategic points of view. They welcome the Commission's intention to publish **guidelines on the application of Community environmental legislation** to port development and their infrastructure and urge the Commission to publish these guidelines before the end of 2008. The aim of these guidelines should be to tackle the legal uncertainty deriving from certain environmental directives.

The resolution also stresses the need to develop an **integrated European policy** to boost regional competitiveness and territorial cohesion, taking account of social, environmental, economic and security aspects at all territorial levels, by organising interinstitutional, intersectoral and multi-territory partnerships. MEPs highlight the territorial dimension of the development of European ports, particularly the need for cross-border cooperation and coordination between neighbouring port regions.

Stressing the social and cultural role of ports for the population of the **hinterland**, MEPs call on the regional authorities concerned to implement a more multimodal transport policy to ensure that, in addition to motorways, more traffic goes by rail and inland waterways, to connect port areas effectively with the TEN-Ts and to give ports more effective hinterland connections, in particular through the use of railways and inland waterways.

The European Commission is called upon to systematically monitor the development of new technologies and management methods used internationally at ports and ship service, freight, passenger and land transport terminals. MEPs consider that the regions concerned should be entitled to draw on the structural funds, particularly to finance the acquisition of advanced technological installations, to create jobs in innovative fields and to rehabilitate urban areas freed up by the transfer of port business to out-of-town areas.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon, inter alia, to:

- promote cooperation between European ports;
- hasten the implementation of remote pilotage systems in order to increase efficiency and security in traffic management in ports as well as in roadstead areas;
- support research into safety issues, so as to keep accidents to a minimum and to improve the use of space in ports, and into environmental questions, so as to curb CO₂ emissions and pollution caused by waste.

MEPs welcome the Commission's intention to conduct a survey of the **problems encountered by European ports** in terms of competitiveness and costs. They call on the Commission to consider compiling a log of these problems, so as to specifically tackle problems generated by competition with non-EU ports and anti-competitive and discriminatory measures taken by EU neighbouring countries.

MEPs also welcome the Commission's intention to submit a legislative proposal on creating a **barrier-free European maritime transport area** in order to ensure fair competition between maritime transport and land transport in the Union. In this context, they recommend that Community-cleared goods should be exempt from customs controls in short-sea shipping in the Community and advocate the creation of

separate port zones for intra-community and international traffic, together with simplification of internal transport, standardisation and identification of special containers.

Lastly, the Commission is called upon to publish guidelines for **State aid** to ports in 2008. These guidelines should cover the port area as such, with a distinction made between access and defence infrastructure, project-related infrastructure and superstructure and with no distinction made between different categories of ports.