

Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own-initiative report by Peter van DALEN (ECR, NL) on strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018, in response to the Commission's communication on the same subject.

The report stresses the importance of the maritime transport sector to the European economy, not only as a carrier of passengers, raw materials, goods and energy products but also as the core of a wider cluster of maritime activities such as the naval industry, logistics, research, tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, and education. Members would like to see EU maritime policies being designed within the framework of a **'single European sea'** henceforth and, consequently, calls on the Commission to develop a European maritime transport policy as part of a common maritime area.

The market: Members call on the Commission to continue to combat abuses of **flags of convenience**. Member States are urged to encourage the use of their flags and to support their maritime clusters on shore, for example by providing fiscal facilities such as a tonnage tax system for ships as well as fiscal facilities for seafarers and ship owners.

Parliament's committee considers that the maritime sector must in principle be governed by the **rules on State aid**. It underlines that State aid should be used exclusively to support European maritime sectors that are committed to social standards, the promotion of jobs and the training of personnel in Europe, and to ensure the global competitiveness of European shipping.

Members consider that the Community guidelines on State aid to shipping, which expire in 2011, must be retained and extended. They call on the Commission to submit the promised new rules on State aid for maritime transport in 2010, as well as the guidelines on State aid to sea ports.

The Commission is invited to: i) to give greater consideration to maritime transport and its land-based structures during the forthcoming revision of the Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, ii) encourage short sea shipping.

Social aspects: the report stresses the need to provide lifelong learning and retraining for seafarers at all levels, on shore and on board, with a **view to strengthening the professional qualifications and skills of the workforce**. Members States are urged, within the scope of international conventions, to improve and modernise existing training programmes.

The committee emphasises the fact that **seafarers from third countries** must comply with satisfactory training requirements and calls on ship owners and national inspectorates to guarantee and enforce this. It invites the Member States to encourage the use of EU seafarers in their own fleets and to create sufficient facilities to prevent the migration of seafarers outside the Union.

Members underline that the social dimension and the **working conditions** of EU seafarers are closely linked to the competitiveness of the European fleet. They encourage the exchange of good practices in relation to employment conditions and social standards, as well as an improvement in living conditions on board vessels, particularly through the development of information and communication technologies, better access to healthcare, better safety standards and training.

Environment: the report recognises that considerable progress must be made on **reducing emissions** of sulphur oxides and nitrogen oxides, particulates (PM10) and CO₂. It stresses that the sector can contribute to the fight against harmful emissions and climate change. In this regard, public and private investments in research and development will be of particular interest.

Members underline that emissions reductions must be agreed rapidly and implemented with **binding force** via the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in order to limit disparities in competitive conditions, but that this must not prevent the Union from taking initiatives aimed at further reductions by the fleets of its Member States. Member States are urged to make more use of the option of **designating maritime emission control areas**.

The report deplores the fact that the Copenhagen Climate Summit did not succeed in reaching any conclusions with regard to reducing emissions from seagoing vessels, but stresses that intensive efforts must continue to agree **global measures to bring about such reductions**. It invites Member States to make every effort to ensure that the IMO receives a mandate for the next international climate negotiations, with quantifiable reduction targets for maritime transport.

Parliament's committee supports measures that **encourage modal shift towards maritime transport** with a view to easing congestion on major roads. It hopes to see the rapid and extensive introduction, within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, of 'motorways of the sea'. It is concerned, however, about a possible shift back from short sea transport to road haulage as a result of the introduction of the 0.1% sulphur limit, envisaged as of 2015, in the sulphur emission control areas in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The Commission is invited to submit a relevant impact assessment to Parliament as swiftly as possible and by the end of 2010 at the latest.

Members consider that all modes of transport, including maritime transport, must gradually internalise their external costs. They call on the Commission and the Member States to work on alternative instruments such as the introduction of **a levy on bunker fuel** or the concept of '**green ports**', where clean vessels are dealt with more quickly and/or pay reduced harbour dues. It stresses that, as part of its research and development policy, the Commission must give priority to innovation in the area of **renewable technologies** for use on vessels, such as solar and wind technologies.

Safety: the report welcomes the adoption of the Third Maritime Safety Package, and calls on Member States to implement the package speedily. It supports the change of course in the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Port State Control, which entails replacing regular inspections with **risk-based inspections**, so that precisely those vessels which display numerous shortcomings are tackled effectively. Members also advocate stringent checks on shipbuilding, including on the **quality of steel** used and on vessel design and maintenance.

The committee calls on national inspectorates and other national authorities **to cooperate more closely in exchanging data** on vessels and their cargoes, so as to reduce regulatory pressure but increase the effectiveness of inspections. It calls for the rapid introduction of **an integrated information management system** through the use and improvement of resources already available, especially SafeSeaNet. The Commission is invited to put in place, as soon as possible, an EU-wide cross-border and cross-sectoral surveillance system.

Aware of the danger of **piracy on the high seas**, notably in the Horn of Africa area and the waters off the coast of Somalia, Members call on all ship owners to cooperate with government initiatives to protect them against piracy, along the lines of the EU's successful first naval operation, Atalanta.

The report stresses that shipping is a global industry and that **agreements ought, in preference, to be concluded on a global scale**. It calls on Member States to make more effort to ratify and implement quickly IMO conventions which they have signed.

Lastly, Members underline the need to speed up the modernisation and expansion of port infrastructure capacities in anticipation of the expected rise in the volume of goods transported by sea. They point out that this will require huge investments, which will have to comply with transparent and fair financing rules in order to ensure fair competition among European ports. The Commission is invited to ensure that the regulatory framework is coherent in this regard.