

Provision of port services and financial transparency of ports

2013/0157(COD) - 23/05/2013 - Document attached to the procedure

This communication reviews **European Ports Policy** and builds on the progress achieved. It accompanies and supplements a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework on market access to port services and financial transparency of ports. This revised European Ports Policy covers the trans-European transport network seaports, which account for 96% of freight and 93% of passengers transiting through ports in the Union.

According to the Commission, ports **can contribute significantly to the economic recovery** and long term competitiveness of European industries in world markets while adding value and jobs in all EU coastal regions. Ports will have a key role to play in the development of an efficient and sustainable trans-European network by diversifying transport choices and contributing to multimodal transport.

Nevertheless, today, **European Ports Policy finds itself at a crossroads**. While some European ports perform well, structural problems regarding the insufficient connectivity to the hinterland, the lack of transparency in the use of public funds, market entry barriers, outdated governance models and excessive bureaucracy affect the performance of many other ports.

With a view to addressing these long-standing problems, the communication identifies **a set of EU actions** needed to further unlock the potential of ports.

1. Connect ports to the trans-European network:

- in the governance of corridors which will be set-up in the framework of guidelines for the development of the TEN-T, ports will be encouraged to act as enablers of inter-modality;
- in partnership with the Member States, the Commission will strengthen the alignment of transport projects funded under the Structural and Cohesion Funds with the TEN-T, promoting priority to projects concerning port access and hinterland connections.

2. Modernise port services:

- for cargo-handling and passenger terminal concessions, the Commission will ensure that the [horizontal Directives on Concessions](#) (soon to be adopted) and Public Contracts are effectively applied;
- the [future Regulation](#) on the access of third-country goods and services to the Union's internal market in public procurement proposed by the Commission in 2012 will be used as a lever to facilitate the negotiation of reciprocal access to non-EU markets for EU-based global players;
- the Regulation proposed in parallel to this Communication introduces common rules to ensure supervision by an independent authority of the port service charges levied by operators which have exclusive rights and which have not been designated through a procedure which is transparent and non-discriminatory;
- the Commission will present new initiatives aiming to further simplify administrative procedures in ports, in particular customs procedures; initiatives such as the "Blue Belt", the "e-maritime" initiative and "e-freight" should be further developed or complemented.

3. Attract investment to ports:

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- action will focus on the transparency of public funding in ports, the clarification of state aid rules, and the increase efficiency of port infrastructure charges,
- it is also necessary to enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries, in order to achieve a sustainable transport system benefiting all EU partners based on the core principles of fair competition, transparent use of public funds and fiscal instruments and respect of social and environmental standards.

4. Promote Social Dialogue:

- the Commission will facilitate the Social Dialogue at Union level by providing technical and administrative support, and a review will be carried out in 2016 that will assess the functioning and progress of the European Social Dialogue for the ports sector ;
- under the 7th RTD framework programme for transport, the Commission will launch before the end of 2013 a concerted action project to examine health and safety, training and qualification challenges in EU ports.

5. Raise the environmental profile of ports:

- to encourage a more consistent application of environmentally differentiated port infrastructure charges, the Commission will propose principles for environmental charging and promote the exchange of good practices by 2015;
- the Commission is planning a review of the Directive on port reception facilities in 2013/2014 with the view to further improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

6. Encourage innovation: the competitiveness of European ports will depend on their ability to innovate in terms of technology, organisation and management. Their critical roles as multi-modal hubs require innovative and efficient ways of cross-modal connections and use of management tools in order to further increase their attractiveness. In the context of the implementation of the Horizon 2020 programme to support research, development and innovation from 2014 to 2020, the Commission will propose priority tasks where EU support could be envisaged.

Follow-up: the Commission will check progress against delivery of the policy objectives defined in this Communication, notably progress in developing multimodal connections to the port hinterland, modernising port services and attracting investments.