

Maritime Transport: blue horizons of commitment. The European Commission is preparing a strategic reflection on the future of EU Maritime Transport in the horizon 2008-2018

On the eve of the first European Maritime Day, the European Commission has invited a number of senior shipping professionals¹ to discuss the strategic challenges and opportunities for European shipping and the maritime transport system over the next decade.

The European Commission has initiated a strategic reflection into the best ways to ensure a prosperous future for European shipping.

Maritime transport carries 90% of European imports and exports and 40% of intra-EU trade. The availability of quality shipping services is crucial for the EU trade and security of energy supply. Shipping is also a most economic and sustainable mode of transport.

Europe needs to guarantee that maritime transport can accommodate the fast changes in the globalised world and look into a bright future.

Europe needs also to maintain a competitive European maritime cluster with highly qualified seafarers and maritime professionals.

This dedicated think-tank is composed of highly esteemed professionals, in their personal capacity, covering different sectors in shipping and the maritime transport cluster.

This strategic exercise is carried out in a joint effort with the maritime transport administrations of the European Economic Area Member States.

Strategic importance of shipping

The current exercise is part of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy. It covers the strategically vital sector of maritime transport that creates, among others, significant added value and EU employment. The exercise follows the renewed Lisbon strategy and 2006 mid-term review of the White Paper on Transport Policy².

¹ List of senior maritime professionals is in annex.

² See the Mid-term review of the Transport White Paper "Keep Europe moving", at http://ec.europa.eu/transport/transport_policy_review/index_en.htm

European shipping is one of the most competitive shipping industries in the world. It represents 42% of the world merchant fleet and is present in all segments of the shipping markets. European shipping services sustain also a substantial part of the intra EU sea-borne trade, of the seaborne connections between Europe and its main trade partners and of cross trades between third countries.

Almost 90% of the European Union's external trade goes by sea. Short sea shipping performs over 40% in intra-EU tonne-kilometres. That equates to about 3.5 billion tonnes of freight loaded and unloaded (of which more than 90 million container transfers) in EU ports and 350 million passengers transported every year.

The EU is committed to supporting this sector to thrive, contribute to the EU economical growth and provide jobs in an innovative, safe and environmentally sustainable manner.

Looking forward

Over the next ten years we can expect a substantial increase of both international and intra-EU seaborne trade. This implies a considerable growth in shipping operations in all the maritime façades of the Union and significant challenges to the sustainable development of the overall transport chain.

A strategic vision looking at the development of shipping, ports and related sectors for the short, medium and long terms is essential for streamlining the EU maritime transport policy so that it can best benefit from future opportunities and face the incoming challenges.

Maritime Transport: blue horizons of commitment

In 1996 the Commission presented a Communication "Maritime Transport: blue horizons of commitment". It put forth a long-term vision on Europe's strategic thinking in the maritime transport sector. It has served well as a basic guideline but need to be updated.

Before the end of 2008, the Commission intends to present a Communication "Maritime Transport: blue horizons of commitment". These blue horizons will encompass the input from the senior shipping professionals and from the Member States together with an economic analysis of trends, opportunities and challenges until 2018. It will be the result of a wide consultation with all interested parties, building also on the input received that led to the adoption of the Maritime Policy Communication in October 2007. The "Maritime Transport: blue horizons of commitment" will provide the strategic framework for EU policy development in the years to come.

List of invited senior European maritime transport professionals

- Mr. Detthold Aden, BLG Logistic Group
- Mr. John Coustas, Danaos Corporation
- Mr. Leo Delwaide, ex-Port of Antwerp
- Mr. Philippe-Louis Dreyfus, Louis Dreyfus group
- Ms. Cecilia Eckelmann-Battistello, Contship Italia, Eurokai
- Mr. Nikos Efthymiou, Union of Greek Shipowners
- Ms. Elisabeth Grieg, Grieg Shipping Group AS
- Mr. Emanuele Grimaldi, Grimaldi Lines
- Mr. Dagfinn Lunde, DVB Bank AG
- Mr. Brian Orell, NAUTILUS
- Mr. Knud Pontoppidan, A.P. Møller – Mærsk A/S
- Mr. Marnix van Overklift, Seatrade Group