

Thursday 4 September 2008

European ports policy

P6_TA(2008)0408

European Parliament resolution of 4 September 2008 on a European ports policy (2008/2007(INI)) (2009/C 295 E/18)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication on a European ports policy (COM(2007)0616),
 - having regard to the Commission communication ‘Towards a future maritime policy for the Union: a European vision for the oceans and seas’ (COM(2006)0275),
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 July 2007 on a future maritime policy for the European Union: a European vision for the oceans and seas ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2008 on sustainable European transport policy, taking into account European energy and environment policies ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to Council Directive 1999/31/EC of 26 April 1999 on the landfill of waste ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development (A6-0308/2008),
- A. whereas market access to port services has been a subject of debate within Parliament, prompting the Commission to undertake an extensive consultation of stakeholders,
- B. whereas the abovementioned Commission communication on a European ports policy proposes no new measures on market access to port services,
- C. whereas a European ports policy at Community level, exploiting their comparative geopolitical advantages, is appropriate for this sector because of its international dimension,
- D. whereas ports are important not only for maritime, river and intermodal transport in Europe, but also as economic axes, sources of employment and means to integrate the population,
- E. whereas, in view of its objectives of boosting the competitiveness of maritime transport and providing high-quality modern services, a European ports policy should promote the following four principles: safety, swift service, low cost, and respect for the environment,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 175 E, 10.7.2008, p. 531.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0087.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 182, 16.7.1999, p. 1.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1.

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- F. whereas there are a number of challenges that European ports will face in the future, particularly in the areas of the environment, globalisation, sustainable development, employment and social conditions, especially as regards safety and lifelong learning, finance, market access and administration, as well as anti-competitive and discriminatory measures taken by non-EU countries in relevant geographical markets,
- G. whereas the lack of potential areas for port development in Europe, together with the rarity and fragility of natural habitats, highlight how important it is for the legislator to ensure balance and legal clarity when it comes to environmental, economic and social obligations,
- H. whereas great diversity exists in the European ports sector and substantial growth is expected in future years,
- I. whereas the widening of the Panama Canal will have an impact, which will probably accentuate the current trend towards larger vessels,
- J. whereas modern infrastructure and effective hinterland and island connections are important to ports,
1. Welcomes the abovementioned Commission communication on a European ports policy;
 2. Commends the Commission on the approach it took when drawing up the communication, particularly the extensive process of consultation;
 3. Welcomes the Commission's focus on soft law measures such as publishing guidelines and removing administrative obstacles;
 4. Emphasises the crucial importance of the ports sector to the EU from the economic, commercial, social, environmental and strategic points of view;
 5. Believes that the Commission's role is important in order to ensure that all European ports are able to reach their full potential;
 6. Welcomes the Commission's intention to publish guidelines on the application of Community environmental legislation to port development and their infrastructure, the main objective being to protect the marine environment and the areas surrounding ports; urges the Commission to publish these guidelines before the end of 2008;
 7. Considers it possible for ports and nature to coexist in a sustainable manner, as the destruction of nature often causes economic damage to other sectors, such as tourism, agriculture and fisheries, and therefore calls on the Transport Commissioner to work closely with the Environment Commissioner in drawing up and enforcing EU legislation and guidelines on ports and on environmental issues;
 8. Believes that the aim of these guidelines should be to tackle the legal uncertainty deriving from certain environmental directives and thereby genuinely to address environment policy, while taking account of the specific situation of ports in the Union;
 9. Underlines the need to involve port and local authorities in drawing up plans to manage the water quality of river basins and maritime ports in accordance with Directive 2000/60/EC;
 10. Draws attention to the need for regional authorities to support the efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions from ships and from land and air transport by laying down air quality management plans and complying with the Marpol Convention and with Council Directive 96/62/EC of 27 September 1996 on ambient air quality assessment and management ⁽¹⁾;
 11. 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;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 296, 21.11.1996, p. 55.

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12. Notes that the Commission is concerned about the distribution of traffic flows in Europe, and points to the diversity of the ports sector and the increase in small and medium-sized ports in Europe; considers also that the Commission should take account of the major changes expected in international maritime traffic as a result of technological and economic progress, the widening of the Panama Canal and the increase in the size and capacity of vessels, which will undoubtedly have a substantial impact on the sector;
13. Highlights the territorial dimension of the development of European ports, particularly the need for cross-border cooperation and coordination between neighbouring port regions; stresses the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the regional strategy for the Mediterranean, Baltic and Black Seas; welcomes the Commission's proposal for drawing up a list of bottlenecks between EU ports and ports of the EU's neighbouring states;
14. Calls on the Commission systematically to monitor the development of new technologies and management methods used internationally at ports and ship service, freight, passenger and land transport terminals with the aim of promoting policies and initiatives to develop Community ports and enhance their efficiency and productivity for the benefit of themselves and users;
15. Considers that the technological changes needed to enable intermediate ports to meet the challenges of an increased volume of traffic will have major financial implications for the regions concerned; considers that these regions should be entitled to draw on the structural funds to that end, 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;
16. Considers that the legal certainty of the Community legal framework in the maritime field, flowing from the international legal framework, depends on the speedy approval of the Erika III maritime package,
17. Calls on the Commission and Member States to promote cooperation between European ports; stresses in this connection the role which ports play in the regional economy of their hinterland; in this regard, underlines that the harmonious development of ports is a key element of the Union's integrated maritime policy;
18. Stresses the social and cultural role of ports for the population of the hinterland and considers it essential to improve public awareness of the importance of ports as means of development;
19. Considers that maritime and river transport cannot be considered in isolation from land and air transport and that links to a port's hinterland are of great importance to its commercial success, and that it is therefore necessary to establish interconnections between ports, inland logistics platforms and 'dry ports'; with this in mind, also believes that the co-modal participation of ports is needed in relation to both the trans-European transport networks (TEN-Ts) and the future Community green corridors to ensure better exploitation of transport capacity in the area of cabotage and river transport, and also as regards connections with land and air transport, so as to ensure a coherent and genuine transport policy;
20. Supports the intention of the Commission, therefore, to evaluate ports' hinterland connections status and needs and their impact on a balanced network of traffic flows on the occasion of the mid-term review of the TEN-T in 2010 ⁽¹⁾;
21. Considers that one of the aims of the mid-term review of the TEN-T in 2010 should be to integrate maritime and river transport with land transport via European ports;
22. Calls on the regional authorities concerned to implement a more multimodal transport policy in order 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;

⁽¹⁾ Cf. Article 19 of Regulation (EC) No 680/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2007 laying down general rules for the granting of Community financial aid in the field of the trans-European transport and energy networks (OJ L 162, 22.6.2007, p. 1).

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23. Notes that EU ports are in competition with third country ports which are often not subject to the same rules, and also face discriminatory economic policies implemented by EU neighbouring countries, for example via discriminatory tariff policies;
24. Calls on the Commission to study port safety issues anew and to factor in the increased cost with regard to the competitiveness of European ports;
25. Welcomes the Commission's intention to conduct a survey of the problems encountered by European ports in this area and calls on the Commission to consider compiling a log of these problems, so as specifically to tackle problems generated by competition with non-EU ports and anti-competitive and discriminatory measures taken by EU neighbouring countries;
26. Stresses the need to develop cooperation with third countries in order to prepare and submit programmes for the development, coordination and transfer of know-how among neighbouring ports;
27. Considers that the Commission should examine the possibility of introducing a Community programme on the renewal of cargo vessels, particularly those intended for cabotage and river transport;
28. Believes that new technologies, particularly information technologies, are key elements that will enable European ports, which are already facing competitive pressures from third country ports but also in some cases suffering from a lack of space, to expand, and to increase their efficiency and profitability;
29. Urges the Commission and the Member States to hasten, through the appropriate bodies, the implementation of remote pilotage systems in order to increase efficiency and security in traffic management in ports as well as in roadstead areas;
30. Urges the Commission to pursue research and innovation in this sector under the Union's framework programmes and calls on the Commission and Member States to support research into safety issues, so as to keep accidents to a minimum, into logistics, so as to improve the use of space in ports, and into environmental questions, so as to curb CO₂ emissions and pollution caused by waste;
31. Calls on the Commission and Member States to support the proposals before the International Maritime Organisation to replace the current fuel with diesel by 2020, and the possibility of including the maritime sector in the emissions trading scheme;
32. Calls on the Commission and Member States to support actively the continuous improvement of the 'Search and Rescue' (SAR) fleet and other SAR functionalities in ports, under SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) and SAR Conventions and to further improve cooperation between Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres;
33. Considers that there is a need for the further development of the 'Clean ship' and 'Clean port' programmes;
34. Calls on the Commission and the sector to encourage shipping companies to reduce the number of empty containers transported and to make full use of this capacity and to support initiatives with this aim (e.g. via research programmes), taking account of the real and specific needs of clients as well as reducing the environmental impact;
35. Warmly welcomes the Commission's intention to submit a legislative proposal on creating a barrier-free European maritime transport area and considers that the aim of this proposal should be to ensure fair competition between maritime transport and land transport in the Union;
36. Recommends that Community-cleared goods should be exempt from customs controls in short-sea shipping in the Community and also advocates, as far as possible, the creation of separate port zones for intra-community and international traffic, together with simplification of internal transport, standardisation and identification of special containers;
37. Calls on the Commission to review and improve policies to develop and support short sea shipping;

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38. Calls on the Commission to examine the possibility of introducing a single transport document for containers in the Community so as to streamline administrative procedures;
39. Calls on the Commission to undertake a study of the funds provided by public authorities to European commercial ports so as to identify possible distortions of competition and to clarify in the State aid guidelines which types of aid given to port authorities should be seen as State aid; believes that possible investments by public authorities to develop ports must not be seen as State aid where they are directly intended for environmental improvements or decongestion and reducing the use of roads for freight transport, particularly when it is considered to be essential to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion (e.g. in relation to islands), unless it would benefit a single user or operator;
40. Urges the Commission to publish guidelines for State aid to ports in 2008, and believes that 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;
41. Approves the extension of the transparency requirements laid down by Commission Directive 2006/111/EC of 16 November 2006 on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings as well as on financial transparency within certain undertakings ⁽¹⁾, but calls on the Commission to consider a reduced minimum threshold for annual revenue rather than an absolute obligation;
42. Takes note, in particular, of the Commission's analysis of port concessions and calls on it to bear in mind the importance of some flexibility for port authorities in this area, particularly as regards the renewal of concessions linked to major investments, but believes that this flexibility should not be used to prevent competition within ports;
43. Believes that it is of the utmost importance to maintain a balance between the freedom to provide services and the specific requirements of ports, while stressing the need for cooperation between the public and private sector in order to modernise ports;
44. Encourages the use of European territorial cooperation programmes under the cohesion policy and cooperation programmes under the EU neighbourhood and enlargement policy, but also urges the Commission, the Member States and the regional authorities concerned to employ a trans-border approach as far as possible to the use of existing capacity when co-financing port infrastructure;
45. Strongly supports the role of locally owned, not-for-profit trust ports, and urges local, regional, national and European authorities to take steps to protect them from disrepair, as their social, recreational and touristic benefit for the surrounding communities goes beyond their original economic function;
46. Emphasises most strongly that any debate on Europe and its maritime policy, if it is to succeed, must include the major role played by the European recreational craft sector in terms of local economic development, since marinas are not only a showcase for their hinterland, and a powerful tool for promoting the exploitation of the port and its environs, but also an essential supply service for local businesses;
47. Welcomes the emphasis placed on dialogue in the port sector; calls for a European social dialogue committee to be set up and considers that it should deal with subjects related to ports, including workers' rights, concessions and the 1979 International Labour Organisation Convention No 152 on occupational safety and health (dock work);
48. Stresses the importance of protecting and securing the highest possible level of training for port workers; supports the Commission's desire to provide port workers with a mutually recognisable basic qualification so as to foster flexibility in the sector; with this in mind and, as a first step, considers that a comparison should be made between the different existing systems of professional qualifications for port workers; considers, however, that this basic qualification must not have the effect of lowering the average level of qualification of port workers in a Member State;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 318, 17.11.2006, p. 17.

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49. Proposes that the topic of professional qualifications and lifelong training be addressed together with the social partners within the future European social dialogue committee;
50. Urges the Commission to promote the exchange of good practice in the port sector in general and with regard to innovation and the training of workers in particular in order to improve the quality of services, competitiveness and the level of investment attracted;
51. Welcomes the introduction of the European maritime day, on 20 May, and in particular supports the introduction of an 'open day' which could help the public gain a better understanding of the work and importance of the port sector;
52. Urges the Commission, in line with Parliament's resolution of 8 May 2008 on the Transatlantic Economic Council ⁽¹⁾, to continue its efforts to ensure that the US regulation to scan 100 % of US-bound cargo is changed to ensure cooperation based on the mutual recognition of 'authorised economic operators' and of security standards agreed by the World Customs Organisation (C-TPAT, SAFE) framework; calls on the Commission to evaluate the potential costs to business and to the EU economy of scanning 100 % of US-bound maritime cargo containers, as well as its potential impact on customs operations;
53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

⁽¹⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0192.

Freight transport in Europe

P6_TA(2008)0409

European Parliament resolution of 4 September 2008 on Freight transport in Europe (2008/2008(INI))

(2009/C 295 E/19)

The European Parliament

- having regard to the Commission communications entitled 'The EU's freight transport agenda: Boosting the efficiency, integration and sustainability of freight transport in Europe' (COM(2007)0606), 'Freight Transport Logistics Action Plan' (COM(2007)0607), 'Towards a rail network giving priority to freight' (COM(2007)0608) and 'Multi-annual contracts for rail infrastructure quality' (COM(2008)0054),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Freight Transport Logistics in Europe — the key to sustainable mobility' (COM(2006)0336),
- having regard to the Commission communication on the deployment of the European rail signalling system ERTMS/ETCS (COM(2005)0298),
- having regard to the Conclusions of the Council of 29-30 November and 3 December 2007 on the Commission communication on the Freight Transport Logistics Action Plan, and of 7 April 2008 on the Commission communication entitled 'Towards a rail network giving priority to freight',
- having regard to the Commission Green Paper entitled 'Towards a new culture for urban mobility' (COM(2007)0551),
- having regard to its resolution of 5 September 2007 on Freight Transport Logistics in Europe — the key to sustainable mobility ⁽¹⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 187 E, 24.7.2008, p. 154.