

Sustainable Mobility*

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First of all, on behalf of the port of Antwerp, I would like to thank the organizers for the opportunity to address this convention. In fact, I believe that the theme of this congress, sustainable development in the maritime industry, is one of the most crucial issues that need to be tackled by all policy makers and industries involved.

It is commonly accepted that the shipping and port industry play an important economic, social and environmental role in the European Union and provide a major contribution to the sustainable growth of the communities in which they are established. No less than 90 % of the trade between the third countries and the European Union is seaborne and in intra European trade the share of maritime related activities is ca. 40 %.

It is not always known that Shortsea Shipping has a very substantial share in most ports and remains a powerful source of growth within the port industry. For instance, in the Flemish port area, more than half of the port volumes are short sea related. In all ways, Antwerp is by far the most important short sea port in Belgium. With more than 44 million tonnes, two thirds of all short sea traffic of this area is concentrated in this port.

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The striking dynamics of the short sea market are well illustrated by its remarkable fast development in recent years. In the first half of 2008, short sea traffic in the Flemish ports increased by a record rate of 9%, in Antwerp even with 14%, which is substantially higher than the average growth rate of maritime volumes (7,4%). In the past 6 years, shortsea traffic in Flanders even grew with almost 50%.

In this respect, it is needless to say that maritime transport in general and short sea shipping in particular have made a large contribution to ease congestion on the European road network and to diminish the external effects related to freight transport.

But nevertheless, despite the generally favourable carbon footprint of the shipping industry – if compared to the other sectors of the transport industry – there is in the public opinion as well as amongst policy circles, a growing concern that this particular environmental advantage might be superseded.

For one thing, the environmental performance – when it comes to the emission of pollutants such as NO_x, SO_x, Particulate Matter and other – still more dangerous stuff – is, to put it frankly - bad. In other words, the advantage of shipping on the carbon-footprint-side is outweighed by the disadvantage on those other related issues of environmental pollution.

A second thing is that, while regulation to improve the environmental performance of land based transport is becoming increasingly more stringent, either through norm setting on fuels and engines or other regulations – mainly as a result of European legislation – regulations that concern the shipping industry and its activities are seriously lagging behind, as well in terms of timetables, as in ambition.

As a consequence, it is to be expected that within a few years the relative contribution of shipping activities to local and global pollution levels will only grow. Most experts agree on that qualitative point.

So recently, a lot of policy discussion has been going on internationally about the need to control and where possible reduce emissions from ships.

The IMO's Environmental Division has been doing a lot of work on this subject and has been liaising with several international institutions and many Governments. The European Commission and the European Parliament are eagerly waiting for the results of these talks. More specifically – the European commission is putting a lot of pressure on the IMO to come up with concrete results. And in fact – they have ! A few months ago, the IMO reached an agreement on setting a stricter norm on the amount of sulphur in the fuel that is used. But more needs to be done.

Every one knows that this is a very difficult and complex exercise and it takes a lot of time to convince all parties to the IMO of the urgency. Especially, countries like China want to see a differentiation made between

Annex I-countries and other countries, referring to the different challenges those separate categories have to meet when it comes to tackling Climate Change on a global scale.

And so, the European Commission, together with the European Parliament, is trying to find alternative ways of setting binding environmental targets for the shipping sector and its activities. So, the European Commission is thinking about setting national emission ceilings for the shipping sector and the European Parliament is considering the possibilities of including the shipping sector into the European Trading Scheme for carbon dioxide, to name only two of the initiatives that are being discussed at this very moment.

In a few years from now, the regulatory landscape for the shipping industry could change dramatically.

As a port authority, we find ourselves caught between two ambitions. On the one hand we believe and we keep on believing that ports can be the most environment friendly way of handling large volumes of goods. On the other, the environmental pressure related to port activities is rising and – if no action is taken – could endanger the future of the port.

How do we deal with this situation ?

Well, there are three initiatives to illustrate the way how we, as a port authority, try to play a positive role in tackling the environmental issues at hand.

Generally speaking, we feel that all port actors, including ourselves can and must take action. It is a question of shared responsibilities and this we try to communicate in a consistent way to the different actors.

But we also say – towards the public opinion and to other authorities – that the port community should not take the blame for all environmental bad news that keeps popping up. There is a lot of confusion going around. Too many people and even public agencies still think that the Port of Antwerp is the most important cause of the congestion on the roads in the vicinity of the port.

So the first thing we do is try to set things clear. We've done that for the land based transport that is related to our port and we've just started an investigation in measuring the actual amount of emissions, related to shipping activities that are related to our port. This autumn, we will get the result of a research done by Lloyd's Fairplay register that will calculate the emissions of sea going ships through AIS – live tracking. This measurement - which will be repeated several times – will not only help in setting things straight, it will also be useful in discussions on the responsibility of each and every one.

A second thing we are considering right now is how we – as a port authority – can support initiatives in using shore-side electricity. Rising fuel costs have certainly triggered the interest in this approach and now sev-

eral terminal operators and carriers in the port of Antwerp are studying the issue more closely. They are looking to the Port Authority for answers and support.

At the moment, there is an agreement in principle on co-financing a pilot project, if the project is financially supported by the Flemish government. Secondly, we are considering the opportunity of realising the land based infrastructure ourselves, as part of the overall port infrastructure. As there are no or only very few predecessors and there are a lot of technical issues to be dealt with, a lot of preparatory work has to be done before we can eventually decide. But I do think that – given the environmental advantages of using shore side electricity for surrounding communities and the people working on the terminals – we must try to set the example here for other actors in and outside our port.

A third thing I would like to mention is our eagerness to collaborate with other ports in finding a pro-active approach to stimulate vessels to reduce their emissions. The ports of Hamburg, Bremen, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Le Havre agreed to think about ways to find a common environmental index that will make it possible to compare the environmental performance of vessels and to differentiate between them. It is our hope that we will reach the first conclusions of this joint effort by the end of the year !

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that my remarks may give some food for further thought and may stimulate the debate on this fascinating subject. Thank you for your kind attention.