



The Renaissance of Port Management and Policy

A Manifesto for Port Authorities, Governments and the European Union

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Preamble

The position of seaports has evolved dramatically in the last decades. From being mere places where ships are loaded and unloaded, seaports became turning points in value-driven logistics chains. The competitive landscape became very different as well, with hinterlands becoming more contended and port competitiveness becoming largely dependent on factors external to the port as such. These are in turn influenced by important shifts in the bargaining power of market players which underwent processes of horizontal and vertical integration. On the other hand, port expansion needs induced by economic growth are influenced by other user needs, ecological concerns (both at local and global level), urban development pressure and NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) attitudes. These market-related and societal trends are interwoven and have created a highly uncertain and complex environment for ports and fundamentally changed the port concept as such.

Throughout this dynamic process of change, one thing has remained constant. Seaports are as vital as ever to Europe's external and internal trade, business development and the welfare of its citizens. As such, seaports are the principal multi-modal facilitators of economic growth. To ensure that this essential function for Europe's economy remains safeguarded, a 'renaissance' of port management is required, together with a political awareness of port development needs.

Management of European seaports is in most cases devolved to a port authority, an entity which, regardless of ownership and other institutional features, assumes both public and economic responsibilities. This hybrid character makes port authorities ideally placed to meet the various challenges that both market forces and society impose upon seaports. But to fulfill this mission, the traditional role of port authorities needs to be fundamentally revised. Port authorities that confine their role to conserving port land and regulating nautical safety will be unable to make a difference. Though essential, these basic functions need to be developed pro-actively in a wider portfolio of tasks that add value to the wider port community, the logistics chain, business in general and the societal and environmental context in which ports operate. Port authorities essentially have to become dynamic port developers and policy-makers need to give them the necessary means and tools to perform this role.

The European Sea Ports Organisation represents the common interests of port authorities from 27 countries in the European Union and its neighbours. Together, these port authorities manage more than 800 seaports, great and small. ESPO ensures that they have a clear voice in the European Union. The organisation promotes the common interests of its members throughout Europe and is also engaged in dialogue with European stakeholders in the port and maritime sector. Convinced that a renaissance of port management and policy is essential to safeguard the sustainable functioning of seaports, ESPO has established this manifesto. A renaissance of port management requires first of all a change of management culture among port authorities themselves, one that combines a dynamic business policy with good corporate governance and transparency, both within and beyond the port area. Secondly, it needs responsible governments to devise frameworks that guarantee autonomous port management, removing all necessary bottlenecks. Finally, it requires an adequate European ports policy. The European Union indeed has the potential to be a positive force in establishing a renaissance of port management and policy, by ensuring a level playing field and legal certainty on the one hand and fostering growth and development of ports on the other hand. Well-performing port authorities will unmistakably contribute to the ambition of Europe to establish a competitive and resource-efficient transport system.

Taking into account these considerations, the European Sea Ports Organisation calls upon

Its Members to

1. Create the appropriate business climate for customers, investors and service providers, by investing in infrastructure, facilities and ancillary services within the port area and in broader networks and innovative clusters where appropriate, and pro-actively develop the overall port complex;
2. Pursue an active interest in optimizing the performance of the various service providers that are active in the port, through a dynamic concession policy which goes beyond simple land lease or licensing;
3. Adhere to principles of good corporate governance, including transparency and non-discrimination, in relation to customers, tenants and other contractual partners, shareholders, staff, investors and societal stakeholders;
4. Invest in good neighbourly relations with societal stakeholders, promoting the positive values of seaports with local communities and the general public
5. Maintain and enforce high standards of environmental and safety performance for the entire port complex, while simplifying or avoiding multi-layer levels of regulation.

Local, regional and/or national governments responsible for port governance to

1. Establish governance structures which allow port authorities to perform their functions in an independent way, without conflict of interest;
2. Maintain or establish financial autonomy of port authorities, both in terms of investment decisions and managing of income charges, and consequently focusing public funding mainly on maritime and land-side connections of ports;
3. Ensure that port authorities have control over the quality performance of all relevant services provided by third parties within the port area;
4. Avoid proliferation of other agencies with port-related governance competencies, but establish transparent appeal systems to deal efficiently with complaints against decisions taken by port authorities;
5. Abolish restrictive practices, simplify planning and consent procedures as well as customs and other administrative procedures.

The institutions of the European Union to

1. Establish clear and proportional guidance on the application of relevant Treaty rules regarding public funding of port investments, the granting of concessions and the provision of port services;
2. Monitor the implementation of the said guidance in Member States and act in case of manifest breaches of Treaty rules, promoting a renewed industrial policy for ports;
3. Simplify or increase the efficiency of implementation of legislation in the field of environment, customs, border controls and security, ensuring harmonised application;
4. Create an internal market for shipping and respect the international nature of seaborne trade in all forthcoming initiatives that affect the maritime sector;
5. Establish a network of core and comprehensive ports and financially support port-related projects with demonstrated EU added value in terms of transport efficiency, sustainability and/or territorial cohesion under the new TEN-T framework and other funding instruments.