



Felicity Landon asks if there's a case for a global sustainability ranking for ports

Who's the greenest?

MANY PORTS ARE making the most of their sustainable virtues these days, but how can their sustainability be measured and compared? The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) champions Port Environmental Review System (PERS) certification through EcoPorts but, as ESPO secretary general Isabelle Ryckbost points out, this is based on a straight 'pass' of the criteria which demonstrate the port is considering the environment, with no grades involved.

To try to rank ports in some sort of sustainability index would be like comparing apples and pears, she says. "Some ports have integrated systems; others are landlord ports. Some have heavy industry within the port, some don't. For industry within the port area, you could say that they are already subject to sectoral legislation of their own, so you shouldn't measure them twice."

"You would have to establish what is under the direct management of the port authority – is it just the building and staff and people driving cars to and from the port, or is it also operations?"

Ports could possibly be ranked on one pollutant or issue – noise or dust or carbon footprint, for example, but even that would be difficult, she says. "You would have to define the extent of operations and what is direct or indirect. Do you include hinterland traffic and industries, where ports might have influence but are not fully in the driving seat? The picture will be different in many ports."

ESPO's experience, says Ms Ryckbost, is that port performance is being measured 'very seriously' at the individual port level with ISO 14001 and EMAS (the EU's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) well established, along with PERS.

BETTER FIGURES

When comparing 2013 and 2017 statistics, sustainability has definitely improved. In 2013, 54% of the ports interviewed had Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in place. In 2017, the figure is 70%.

The European Port Industry Sustainability Report 2017 gives an update of the 'top ten' environmental priorities of the port sector; the top four are air quality, energy consumption, noise and water quality, and these are followed by dredging operations, garbage/port waste, port development (land-related), relationship with local community, ship waste and climate change.

Twenty-five ports in Europe and neighbouring countries are already in the EcoPorts Network certified by PERS, the only port sector specific environmental management standard.

The PERS criteria are used by the World Bank when assessing projects, says Ms Ryckbost. But in



JOINT EFFORT: there can be a shared interest in operating sustainably

Isabelle Ryckbost ESPO



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any case, with more than 90% of European ports being in urban areas, they know they have to be serious on issues such as noise, dust and pollution, to keep the acceptance of the surrounding community for further developing the port.

"The environmental challenge is the most important challenge for ports, especially those close to cities. The problem we face is that ports can't move – and they are easy targets. We often hear politicians saying 'ports should do something'. But ports can't do everything – they don't have it all in

their hands. They can stimulate, encourage, etc., but they can't obligate their tenants and users."

'QUALITY LABEL'

Patrick Verhoeven, managing director – policy and strategy at the International Association of Ports and Harbors, describes the EcoPorts (PERS) network as a 'quality label' for environmental port management.

At an international level, IAPH has been running the Environmental Ship Index (ESI) project for several years, which gives points to ships that perform better on air emissions than is required under international law. On that basis, port authorities can decide to give them incentives, such as a reduction in port dues.

"We are, however, not in favour of making incentive schemes mandatory," says Mr Verhoeven. "They should remain voluntary initiatives, both for shipping companies and for port authorities."

If a major new sustainability ranking was to be developed, an important consideration is which body or authority would create, implement and monitor the ranking, which would be no small task, says Kathryn Beaven, DP World's director of Global Sustainability.

"Anything that helps the shipping and ports industry to become more sustainable is to be welcomed," she says. "Yet with companies such as DP World increasingly working to meet a broad range of sustainability issues and requirements – which often stretch outside of our own sector – it's important to note that having a specific sustainability ranking for ports would only address

a particular aspect of the wide range of work that responsible companies have under way."

BROAD RANGE

DP World's commitment to sustainability covers a range of areas beyond minimising impacts on the environment, to include investing in its people, safety, and building a vibrant, secure and resilient society, she says.

"Through our work, we're also meeting broader aims, such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the set of 17 aspirational aims to help build a better world."

DP World is "committed to being a world leader in sustainability" and has a strong focus on measurement and evaluation of its sustainability efforts across its 78 marine and inland operations, adds Ms Beaven.

"For example, we rank our ports internally, in terms of total emission and total energy used. Last year, DP World's overall score increased in the comprehensive benchmark for corporate sustainability published by Bloomberg and RobecoSAM. Our ranking went up across the specific environmental and social dimensions. The scores, measured out of 100, assess criteria such as climate strategy, environmental policy, human capital, health and safety and social reporting. Our annual report includes a specific section on sustainability, which helps us to track and evaluate our progress, such as achieving almost 40m litres of reduced water consumption.

"We believe working in a sustainable and



WINNER: Port Boulogne Calais is the latest port to achieve PERS certification

responsible way is essential to us building a strong business for our customers, our people and our society. We will continue to invest in innovation and measure and report on our progress – we know there is always more we can achieve."

Would a sustainability ranking be helpful in attracting environmentally-conscious millennials into the industry? Ms Beaven says young people, the leaders of tomorrow, increasingly want to work for sustainably-minded organisations, so it is very important that companies who want to attract the best talent can showcase their sustainability commitments.

"A sustainability ranking could be one way for

companies to showcase their sustainability commitments – but there are other important ways to engage young people with our industry," she says. "To help educate and engage young people with the port, trade and logistics industries, DP World has developed a Global Education Programme for employees to deliver in schools around the world, which involves our employees teaching young people around the world about the maritime sector and related career options. Since the launch last year, we have reached over 7,500 students in 13 languages across 17 countries, with 96% reporting a positive impact."

PS

Vancouver sets sights on global no.1 ranking

LAST YEAR, THE Port of Vancouver introduced its vision to be 'the world's most sustainable port'. This vision is a reflection of the port authority's long-term goal to operate in a manner that will ensure that every Canadian continues to enjoy a healthy environment and the benefits of trade for generations, says spokeswoman Daniela Jang. "We are now benchmarking ourselves against world ports and will be setting up appropriate goals, objectives and metrics. Going forward, how we are doing will be reported in our biannual sustainability report."

The port authority defines a sustainable port as one that promotes economic prosperity through trade, supports a healthy environment and fosters thriving communities



THINK BIG: Vancouver aims to be the world's most sustainable port

through a carefully balanced approach, she says.

That requires striking a careful balance between meeting the needs of customers and protecting the environment by offering financial incentives, such as discounts to harbour due rates for customers that participate in a suite

of innovative environmental programmes and initiatives.

Are shipping companies and other customers focusing on sustainability as a priority? "There is a shared interest in operating sustainably, including minimising the impact of operations on the environment and surrounding

communities," says Ms Jang. "The port authority partners with industry and other port authorities, where possible, to advance towards its vision."

Through its EcoAction programme, Vancouver recognises carriers that go beyond requirements – offering discounted harbour dues rates to ships that have implemented voluntary emission reduction measures and other environmental practices. Its Blue Circle Awards recognise marine carriers that excel in environmental stewardship and attain the highest participation rates in the EcoAction programme.

Ships can qualify for gold, silver or bronze levels, obtaining up to 47% off the basic harbour due rate, for meeting voluntary industry best practices.