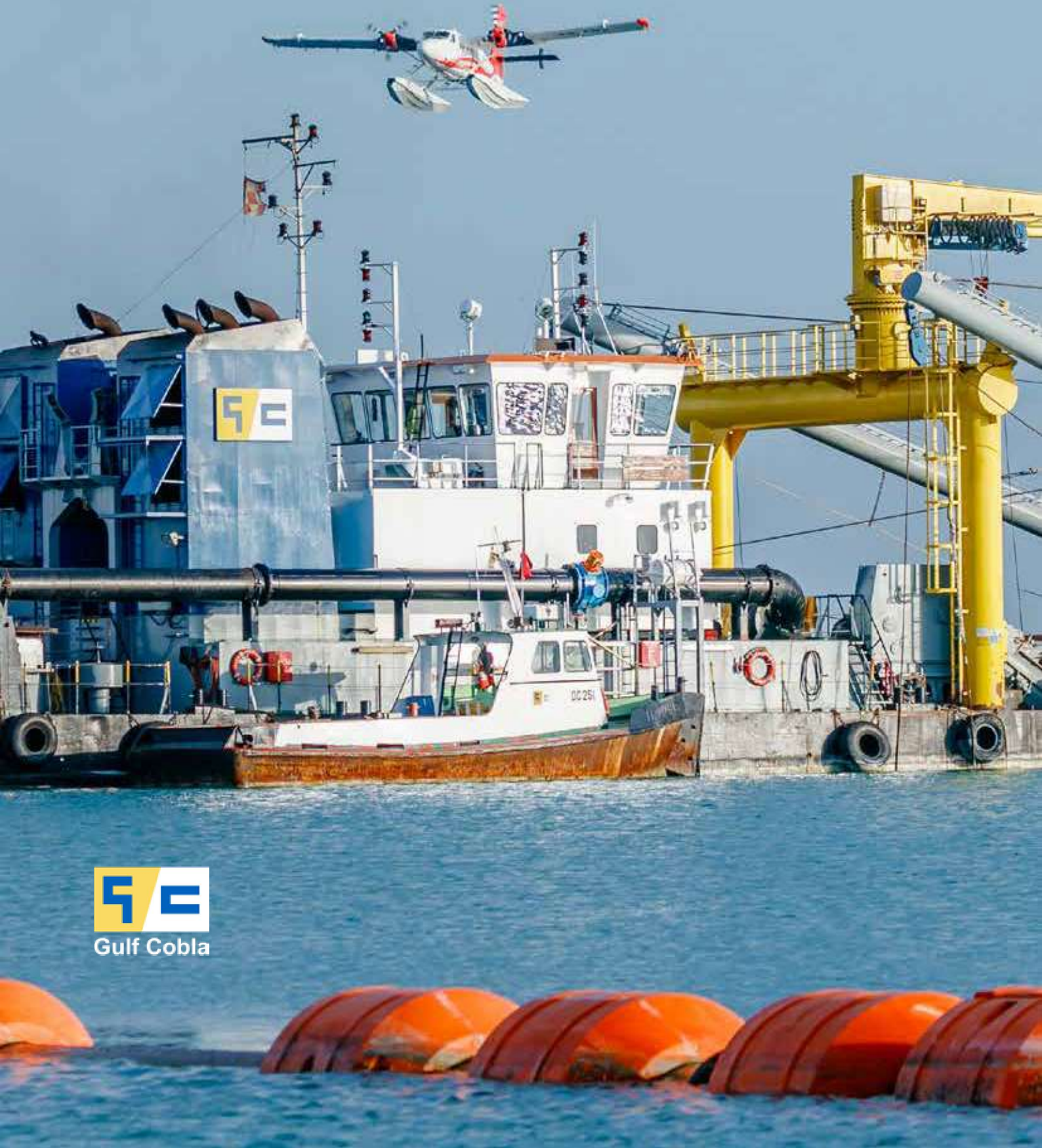


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ESPO Secretary General Isabelle Ryckbost

Port Pollution - Increasingly clean and green, but what's it costing ports?

High added values, but low financial returns – that about sums up what ports globally face in their efforts to decarbonise, respect the environment, look for sustainable methods of working, and slash pollution generally.

According to a European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) consultation document prepared in March this year to make a case for cash from the EU's new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF II proposal, 2021-2028, due for publication on May 29th), European ports will need around €48bn in investments. And while it's true that basic infrastructure, maritime access infrastructure, and hinterland connections account for over half the projects ports foresee over the next decade, decarbonisation and other environment/anti-pollution requirements are significant in their costs but rarely in their returns.

"In many cases, the main benefits of port projects accrue to the wider community and economy rather than to the port authority itself," ESPO secretary general Isabelle Ryckbost points out.

It's why ESPO will plead for a strong CEF II to reflect green projects in a study to be presented at its May to June Investing in the Port of Tomorrow conference in Rotterdam. That conference will likely build on ESPO's existing environment/anti-pollution agenda, which looks for:

- A review of the first (2010) Code of Practice on the Integration of European Ports and Port Cities, especially in terms of moving toward a zero-carbon economy and society
- Tax exemption for onshore power supplies used by ships to further enhance air quality

- An efficient, responsible ship waste management policy, and
- An initial CO₂ reduction target, accompanied by short-term measures in 2018.

Air quality

The need for IMO's 2020 ban on marine fuels with over 0.5% sulphur was highlighted earlier this year by a UK government report stating that sulphur dioxide (SO_x) levels around major ports are three times higher than previously thought, while nitrogen dioxide emissions (NO_x) are four times higher.

New analysis in the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory report concluded shipping is a far greater source of pollution in Britain than estimates made in 2014 suggested, with about 10% of the country's NO_x emissions coming from ships.

Meanwhile, IMO has settled on a seven-point strategy to eventually kill carbon in world shipping that's being developed this year. The announcement came as Dutch bank ING and the European Investment Bank pledged €150m each to fund clean-tech investments on existing vessels so that they cause fewer emissions - important steps in reaching the Paris Agreement on Climate Change goals, true, but not directly backing ports' needs targeting those goals.

Garbage and sewage

The March 2018 enforcement of Garbage Amendments to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Annex V can be viewed in a similar light.

The main amendments will see solid bulk cargo residues divided into two categories: Harmful to the Marine Environment and Non-harmful to the Marine Environment. Additionally, there's a new Garbage Record Book format that now includes 'e-waste' – electronic gadgets etc.

Ships will also have to retain on board for two years any receipts received from port reception facilities (PRFs).

PRFs are an example of high added value but low return on investment. Take Annex IV of MARPOL, which will see a ban on passenger vessel sewage discharges into the Baltic Sea begin to take effect in 2019, with every IMO-registered passenger vessel subject to the restriction by 2021.

Vessels must either discharge all sewage at PRFs, or treat it with a certified on-board plant.

It affects ports throughout the nine Baltic coastal countries: Denmark,



Connecting a sewage waste pipe