



## **EU Mobility Strategy paves the way for Green Deal implementation but needs a vision on seaports as engines of growth and recovery**

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On 9 December, the European Commission released its new EU Mobility Strategy entitled “Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European Transport on track for the future”.

**The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) welcomes the ambition of the Mobility Strategy to deliver the Green Deal transport target** to reduce GHG emissions by 90% while also working towards zero pollution in the sector. ESPO fully supports the intention to make all transport modes sustainable and to shift towards more sustainable solutions. ESPO very much subscribes to the technology-neutral approach the Commission is pursuing.

**Europe’s ports can be a strategic partner in making the European Green Deal happen. ESPO considers the “zero-emission port” flagship as an encouragement of the current efforts Europe’s ports are already making** to facilitate emission reduction and to contribute to the energy transition of Europe’s economy. ESPO welcomes in that respect the recognition of ports as clean energy hubs. ESPO hopes this recognition will be followed by a more specific strategy to assist seaports in this role. Such a strategy should include support for the necessary infrastructure and facilities in seaports for the supply and transport of new energies, in particular hydrogen, recognition for the role of pipelines and more in general stronger synergies between transport and energy policies.

Building a zero-emission port will need to **involve the shared and combined efforts of all transport, industry and energy stakeholders in the port ecosystem**. Given the diversity of European ports, ESPO believes that designing port-specific roadmaps combined with well-working monitoring and certification tools such as the EcoPorts tools, and the exchange of best practices, is the best and most efficient way to reach this goal.

Moreover, achieving the zero-emission ambition will **require significant private and public investments** in ports and relevant infrastructure, which cannot be borne by individual port authorities alone.

**Europe’s ports are pleased to see that short sea shipping is being recognised as a sustainable modal shift option** for transport within Europe. ESPO also welcomes the milestones to

increase the sustainable modes of transport (short sea shipping and inland waterways transport by 25% in 2030 (by 50% in 2050) and rail freight by 50% in 2030 (100% in 2050)). While the rail and inland waterway milestones are accompanied by stimulating policies, **no supporting measures for encouraging short sea shipping and ports are being put forward in the Strategy**. To increase the share of short sea shipping, simplifying the Motorways of the Sea criteria, creating a level playing field between the maritime and land links and recognising seaports as cross border infrastructure is a must.

ESPO welcomes the Commission's proposal to support carbon neutral choices for scheduled collective travel below 500 km in the EU. **ESPO regrets however that the strategy does not consider the current role and further potential of ferry connections as a sustainable alternative** to short haul flights and a sustainable option in building back better the seriously hit tourism sector. Any planned TEN-T investments for upgrading the necessary infrastructure should also look at the potential of maritime passenger transport.

**While ESPO applauds the Commission's plea for a completion of TEN-T, it regrets the exclusive focus on the land-based network**, ignoring the maritime dimension and the role of Europe's seaports in terms of stepping up connectivity both internally and externally. ESPO hopes that the forthcoming TEN-T review will follow a more comprehensive approach, considering the central role of ports in achieving a multimodal Transport Infrastructure Network.

Whereas the Commission aims at making Europe's transport system resilient, viewing a coordinated European approach to connectivity and transport activity as essential to strengthen EU's strategic autonomy and resilience, **the Strategy lacks a holistic vision on how to strengthen the role of ports as engines of growth and recovery**.

Over the last months, Europe's ports have proven essential in ensuring the continuity of supply chains. In parallel, ports are proving resilience and agility when it comes to preparing for the Brexit implementation. Moreover, if Europe aims at being the world's connectivity hub, it should embrace its seaports as major gateways for trade, linking Europe with the world. In addition, considering their important role as multimodal hubs, key nodes of energy and clusters of industry, ports form part of Europe's **strategic infrastructure** and should be supported in this role. In light of strengthening Europe's economic resilience and strategic autonomy, ports' connectivity is instrumental and port areas can play an important role in building strategic reserves, as location for re-shoring sectors, or new activities such as circular economy and offshore.

*"Over the last year, the European Commission has been outlining important ambitions for Europe. Both the Green Deal, the Next Generation EU and the Open Strategic Autonomy approach for trade are crucial strategies for enhancing Europe's growth, future and resilience in the world. Maritime ports are at the crossroads of these strategies and are a critical factor for delivering those. We see a recognition of the comprehensive role of ports in the mobility strategy. We now look forward to further discussing with the Commission what is really needed to assist and enable ports in Europe to play their role as engines of growth and recovery as best as they can,"* comments Isabelle Ryckbost, ESPO's Secretary General.

**ESPO is open to further discuss and which role Europe's ports are playing and can play in delivering Europe's Green Deal and Recovery Strategies, and how to reinforce this role.** ESPO and its members fully subscribe the Strategy's aim to strive for a sustainable European transport system that is smart, flexible and adaptable to ever-changing transports patterns and needs.



*The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) represents the port authorities, port associations and port administrations of the seaports of 22 Member States of the European Union and Norway at political level. ESPO has also observer members in Iceland, Israel, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. ESPO is the principal interface between the European seaport authorities and the European institutions. In addition to representing the interests of European ports, ESPO is a knowledge network which brings together professionals from the port sector and national port organisations. ESPO was created in 1993.*