

ESPO Award 2022
Role of Passenger Transport in Enhancing the City Connectivity and Bringing Added Value to the Local Community

Speaking notes Dimitrios Theologitis, Chair of the ESPO award Jury

Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good to see you all again, **in vivo**, live – and not **in vitro**, through the screen – as we have had to meet so many times in the past two years.

Some would even add “**in vino**” – but that’s another story, trust ESPO to organise sumptuous evenings!

This year’s theme, **passenger transport**. To be precise: Role of maritime passenger transport in enhancing the city connectivity and bringing added value to the local community. A subject going to the core of societal integration.

And have I got **news** for you! **Bad** news and **good** news.

Let’s start with the bad news. Did you know, the **pandemic is not over yet**, health authorities are gearing up for – yet another – **new wave** this winter? Of course you knew, it was just a lame attempt at a joke.

The good news is that **things are picking up**. Big time, as our American friends would say.

First, let’s go off on a **tangent**.

(Slide 1: Covid mortality rates)

We shall not go into the numbers of Covid-19 cases, these fluctuate and we do not want to complicate matters nor become morose.

What we are looking at is the **fatality rates** – and these clearly are **coming down**. I would venture to say that many of us have had Covid – but we’re still here tonight. No, we won’t do a show of hands.

Which means **less fear**, people are going out again, we are travelling more and more, both for work and business as well as for leisure.

At long last, the **pandemic** seems to be **abating** and our lives are getting back to some semblance of **normality** – notwithstanding the new problems facing the world. Let us hope that the next award will not have the theme of “**ports in times of war**” – or ports during the energy crisis or ports in a changing climate for that matter...

But back to the present. What is behind the very elegantly crafted title of **this year’s theme is twofold**.

- **Passenger transport** in the traditional sense, ferries, navettes, from city to city, from mainland to island or between islands, across bays, lines linking parts of maritime cities together.
- And, of course, **cruise passenger** traffic. Let us stop here for a moment.

Cruise all but **came to a standstill** for nearly two years. Cities normally swamped with visitors, some of which had even to resort to capping the number of visitors per day or installing “cruise slot” systems, found themselves nearly deserted. The happy **floating palaces** could be seen tied or even laid out of the way...

(Slide 2: cruise recovery)

Look at this **bar chart**, terrible – 2020 and 2021 – and optimistic at the same time. **Cruise is back in business!** After a slump of nearly 80% the past two years, 2022 will bring us shooting back up nearly to the 2019 baseline and in any case 2023 should be well above.

It has to be said that we are looking at a **new style of cruise**. Some ships are getting larger, many are also getting smaller, offering more “boutique-style” accommodation.

Sustainability is now higher on the agenda, both from the ship and from the port side. Commitments have been made, memoranda have been signed. And the latter, the port side, is well reflected in the applications, as we will see.

On the **passenger transport** front...

(Slide 3: Passenger transport)

...things are **not so clear**. Yes, there was a **slump**, minus 45% in total – but that also includes cruise – in 2020. 2021 data are not yet available. Anyway, let us assume, in line with other transport modes, that **numbers are** more or less **coming back** up to 2019 levels.

Let’s look at another angle. It’s not just the passenger numbers that are important here. It is the **way passengers are transiting through the city** and the port. And also, the **connection** between the waterfront and the city.

It is not the first time that passenger transport had to **bear the consequences** of important international developments. Let us go back 20 years, to 2001, after “**9/11**”, when international security requirements had, rightly, to be stepped up. All modes of transport had to adapt, first of all aviation, but also maritime transport had to follow the **International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code**. This created necessary – but strict – requirements as regards passenger flows, identification of persons in the port facilities, new requirements for passenger terminals which, in some cases, went as far as to create a **separation between the cities and their waterfront**.

How do we give back this, in the view of the old sailor that I am, this loveliest part of a maritime city? Thankfully we can rely on good architects and visionary authorities, ports and city councils, to come to our rescue.

Ok, enough of an introduction, let’s get down to business now.

The three not shortlisted projects

The **jury was impressed** with the quality of all seven projects we received. It was **not an easy task** choosing the “winners”. You have the full description in your booklet, but I would like to mention them. Let us start with those projects which were **not shortlisted**:

I will mention them in **alphabetical order**. Those who were here last year may remember my joke about the benefits of being first on a list, such as cinemas, restaurants, animal kingdom – who does not remember the aardvark? No, the Port of **Aabenraa** in the south of Denmark still has to submit an application.

(Slide with one photo per non-shortlisted project)

- **Port of Civitavecchia** and the Central and Northern Tyrrhenian Sea ports for “**The port embraces the city**” – something it has always done. Much as I appreciate the port of Civitavecchia, sorry, unfortunately it did not make it into the shortlist.
- **The Finland Project**: Major investment will strengthen the exchange between Finland and Sweden – Ports of Stockholm (Sweden). Again, much as I have admired the response to Covid and much as I have personally enjoyed sailing on the Sweden-Finland route – and who has not fallen under the **magic of this link**, especially when cracking the ice in winter, but, sorry...
- **Ferry Terminal Turku** - Port of Turku (Finland). From personal experience I can very well imagine the upgrading of the already very efficient port of Turku amongst others with this most wonderful building – my dentist daughter did her Erasmus in the wonderful city of Turku, but here again, sorry...

All **admirable** projects and we are most grateful. A round of **applause** please for these projects.

The four shortlisted projects

Again, in alphabetical order – no, not to worry, no old joke this time:

- **ADRIJO NETWORK** – Adriatic Ports Cultural Network - Central Adriatic Ports Authority (Italy-Croatia)
- **Your port opens again** - Port Authority of Barcelona (Spain)
- **Building a “straight way” to connectivity** - Port Authority of Ceuta (Spain)
- **Development of the Tallinn Old City Harbour/Tallinn Old City Harbour’s new cruise terminal** - Port of Tallinn (Estonia)

Let us look into them a little more in **detail**.

(Photos for each project as I describe them)

ADRIJO Network

For those who are wondering, **ADRIJO is derived** from the combination of the Italian word ADRIATICO and the Croatian JADRANSKO to indicate the Adriatic Sea, so the platform’s

name reflects the intention to give in a word **the perception of the ties and links** connecting different cultural identities along the two shores of the Adriatic Sea.

Venice, Trieste, Rijeka, Ravenna, Zadar, Ancona, Split, Dubrovnik: do I need to say more, some of the most **wonderful** Mediterranean ports.

Now, port cooperation in the Adria is not new. Whether it was **NAPA**, the North Adriatic Ports Association, or now **ADRIJO**, it is good to see that **port collaboration is high on the agenda**. How did a prominent member of the port community say it? “Get the fish into the bay and then we’ll see amongst ourselves who will catch it”.

This project does not rely on construction works, it is **non-tangible**, or should we use a more modern word, fungible, like in the “NFT”s, the Non-Fungible Tokens. Rather, **it increases the connection** among ports and local communities, by giving evidence of the role of ports in building the identity, know-how and traditions of local communities in port cities. This has also positive feedback on port-city relations. **It sets up a joint tool** to promote the cultural heritage of ports, tangible and intangible.

Each of the eight ports of the ADRIJO network populated the **digital platform** that was created with videos, audio clips, 3D models, drone panoramas, photos, texts on port culture, producing more than 150 contents that are taken also from the surrounding city.

In the words of Franco Farinelli, ADRIJO is a connector that guarantees the continuity between land and sea.

Barcelona Port Authority – Your Port Opens Up Again

The project includes “**just**” **transferring one ferry and two cruise terminals** from the old port area to a wharf located in the commercial port exclusively dedicated to passengers and **relocating a multipurpose terminal** in the commercial port. It also means the **construction of two cruise and one ferry terminals** on the passenger wharf. Easy. The liberated areas in the old port will be renovated to **improve port-city connectivity and integration**, resulting in the **reduction** of the port’s **environmental footprint** as well as transforming this north end part of the port into a **hub for citizen’s** leisure, training institutions, innovation, and Blue Economy research. It completes the process that started 30 years ago for the **Olympic Games**.

Wow. Just that? These are **major developments!** Including **environmental considerations** such as the installation of **OPS, On-Shore Power Supply**. In the past I personally have often wondered: Several cruise liners docking at the same time is like a city of 50,000 inhabitants being plugged in for half a day and then in the evening disappearing into the sunset. Which power supply system can withstand that **without major works?**

The project is extremely **complex** and it is admirable that **consensus and agreements** have been reached among public and also private stakeholders. Tourism associations, city council, Port Authority and Barcelona airport worked together with cruise, ferry and multipurpose terminals, and shipping companies to reach a consensus on actions and timing.

In the words of Damià Calvet, “this project increases the port area for social and citizens’ use and completes the physical integration of the Port of Barcelona into the city.”

Port Authority of Ceuta – Building a “straight way” to connectivity

Ceuta, with its **strategic position** where the Atlantic Ocean connects with the Mediterranean Sea, where almost 2 million passengers cross the Straits of Gibraltar, is, together with Algeciras and Tanger Med part of the **Strait Crossing Operation**.

Thus it became imperative to build a more **accessible and safer ferry terminal** for passengers, while improving the functionality of the passenger transport facilities including environmental and social sustainability criteria.

Furthermore, it has been designed with **high security requirements**. Does the word “**migration**” bring anything to mind? European leaders “**discussing**” – to put it mildly, did someone say “**fighting**”? – about what is legal, what is not. Each case representing another **human drama**, how do we deal with it?

And all in **broad daylight**, in an **aesthetically pleasing building**, a **gateway to the city** that blends with its surroundings.

In the words of Adolfo Orozco Pérez, “Ceuta continues to promote the development of passenger transport in order to contribute to the city progress, an interaction in constant evolution with the sea as the only motorway towards Europe in the strait of Gibraltar.”

Development of the Tallinn Old City Harbour and new cruise terminal - Port of Tallinn

This is an **overhaul** of the entire harbour area into an **efficient, enjoyable, attractive and multipurpose urban area** both visitors and locals could enjoy. The Port of Tallinn constructed a **new cruise terminal** building including a restaurant, events venues and a rooftop promenade connected with the city. The harbour aspires to be **the heart of the Tallinn** central area – a place both visitors and locals alike could visit and spend time in. It’s an opportunity for the residents and visitors of Tallinn to reclaim the access to the sea. There is also emphasis on **improving the sustainability and the accessibility** of the harbour with, for instance, the construction of a **new tramline**.

The project is very well advanced, and it has already **won numerous architectural awards**.

In the words of Valdo Kalm: “We are committed to work on towards a general reimagining of the area to connect with the city seamlessly and with the visitors of the harbour not even noticing when they enter or leave the harbour territory.”

The prize

(Slide of the painting to stay on the screen until the end of the speech)

Now comes the time to **introduce the prize** and, same as in previous years, this is a painting by an accomplished artist and long-time friend of the ports, **Saskia Hagens**. We are very **grateful** to her that her port-inspired paintings grace the offices of several ports. And that

she has made a luxurious publication of her most important port paintings for all to enjoy. I will say no more on the painting, you will be able to scrutinize it in detail in due course.

Call on the Commission representative

Enough said, but to sum it up, nothing new: **the jury had a most difficult task** in deciding one way or the other.

I would like to **thank all the personalities** which make up this jury for supporting me in my honorary task of chairing this illustrious panel.

And as a **final word**, I would like, again, to address my most sincere **thanks to ESPO, its director and its staff** for the preparations – not to mention this **splendid feast**.

Now, I will leave you to enjoy your dinner, after which **Magda Kopczynska**, Director for Maritime Policy at the European Commission DG MOVE, will lift the suspense and present to the winner this prestigious award. A symbol that, once again, the work we all do is **inspired by and directed towards people**.