

# STRIVE FOR MORE AT HOME TO LEAD IN THE WORLD

ESPO Secretary General **Isabelle Ryckbost** shares an important new European Commission document and see what is in for ports

In mid-July, the European Parliament confirmed the candidacy of the President-elect of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and gave support to her agenda and priorities, which are brought together in a document entitled 'A Union that strives for more'.

This agenda must be seen as the basis for the new Commission and its team, and will steer the content of the mandate letter each candidate Commissioner will receive to prepare for the Parliament hearings and their mandate as such.

It must not come as a surprise that reaching "a European green deal" comes as a first of six headline ambitions of Mrs Von der Leyen. Her ambition in that field is high: the President-elect wants a proposal for a European green deal within the first 100 days of office and wants to enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality into law. Europe must be the first climate-neutral continent. Moreover, Europe needs to move towards a zero-pollution ambition.

Emissions must be reduced by 55% by 2030 (instead of the foreseen 50%). Carbon emissions must have a price: every sector and person will have to contribute. The new Commission also believes that the Emissions Trading System (ETS) must cover the maritime sector. The document further suggests the introduction of a Carbon Border Tax to avoid carbon leakage.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PORTS

The review of the energy taxation directive is also on the agenda. ESPO hopes that such a review can take away the current disadvantage for the use of onshore power supply (OPS), by providing OPS the tax exemption that currently applies for electricity generated onboard vessels.

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Mrs Von der Leyen's agenda has also some concrete ideas on how to achieve the climate targets. The paper states that not everyone starts from the same point and therefore suggests the creation of a Just Transition Fund to support people and regions most affected in meeting the climate change challenge. On top of that, a European Climate Pact should be set up to change behaviour. Moreover, first movers must be rewarded by investing record amounts in cutting-edge research and innovation. Additionally, private investment has to be used: parts of the European Investment Bank (EIB) must turn into a 'Europe's Climate Bank'. The actual 25% of EIB spending on climate investment must be doubled by 2025.

The environmental agenda of the President-elect does not limit itself to climate. Mrs Von der Leyen wants the new



■ Isabelle Ryckbost

Commission to present a biodiversity strategy for 2030, including the conservation and protection of our seas and oceans. The President-elect further believes that Europe needs to move towards zero-pollution with cross-cutting strategies addressing, amongst others, air and water quality, hazardous chemicals and industrial emissions.

She aims at presenting a new Circular Economy Action Plan, focusing on resource-intensive and high-impact sectors, and believes that Europe must take the lead in the issue of single-use plastics. Micro-plastics must also be tackled.

In the other five pillars of her agenda, there are also references to environment and sustainability. As concerns trade agreements, for instance, every new trade deal must have a dedicated sustainable development chapter and the highest standards of climate, environmental and labour protection with a zero-tolerance on policy on child labour.

If this agenda is really to be seen as the reference for EU decision making for the next five years, Europe is really going to play a front-runner role on climate and environment. It remains to be seen what this will imply in concrete proposals and transport policy.

But to me, the core message in the paper is "to strive for more at home in order to lead in the world". This is exactly what we should be ambitious for, but that is also exactly what we have to keep in mind when designing the path to achieve ambitious goals. We must deliver, but must do it in the right way in order to attain promising results, both for the environment and the people's well-being, but also for the future of Europe's ports and Europe's economic and sustainable leadership in the world.