



ESPO Statement

on safeguarding the development of sustainable cruise activity in European ports

November 2019

Cruise activity in Europe is currently under pressure because of its externalities and overtourism in certain cruise destinations. European ports take the concerns expressed very seriously. The vicinity to Europe's cultural heritage and main must-sees makes many European port cities attractive tourist destinations. Their ports are or have become much demanded cruise ports. European port managing bodies are happy to be an access gate to Europe's cultural heritage, but understand that they must do whatever is possible within their remit to keep this activity sustainable and acceptable for the local population. With this statement, ESPO wants to explain how important it is for European ports to keep all their port activities sustainable and what can be done to enhance a balanced development of cruise activities in European ports.

Preliminary remarks

1. **Cruise tourism is following the overall growth of tourism in Europe. While growing, it remains a very small share of the total number tourists.** The top cruise destinations coincide to a large extent with the overall top global tourist destinations.

Global **demand for tourism** grows. Europe is a leader in the global tourism market. It remains the most visited region in the world. **The European Union had 538 million**

international tourist arrivals in 2017, accounting for 40% of global international tourist arrivals.¹

Europe is the world's second most popular cruise destination, second only to the Caribbean. **6.50 million passengers embarked on cruises** from European ports in 2017.²

2. **The prime driver of cruise business is the destination.** The development of the cruise port business in a port is only partially in the hands of the port authority. The changing attractiveness or new branding of a tourist destination can suddenly turn a port into a must as cruise destination. Equally, changing geopolitical situations or any event or circumstance that makes a tourist destination less popular will affect the cruise port, whatever the quality of service or facilities it proposes.
3. **European cruise ports are very diverse.** They serve different market segments and can have diverse roles (e.g. home versus transit ports). Some cruise ports are situated in cities that are at the same time top touristic destinations, while others are situated in port cities, which are not a "must-see" destination and consequently only have a limited amount of tourists. In some European ports the cruise business/industry is the main port activity, in other ports the freight function prevails. Some cruise terminals are located in or very near to the city centre, in other ports the cruise terminal and/or port is situated at a distance from housing areas.
4. **The cruise industry contributes significantly to the European economy.** In 2017, €4.23 billion was spent by cruise passengers and crews in Europe. Passenger expenditures include spending for shore excursions, pre- and post-cruise hotel stays, air travel and other merchandise at ports-of-embarkation and ports-of-call. Crew spending was concentrated in expenditures for retail goods and food and beverages.³
5. **91% of European ports are located in or very close to urban areas.** This makes European ports interesting cruise destinations for tourists wanting to discover the rich cultural heritage of Europe. It equally increases the pressure on European ports to do as much as possible to limit the pollution and externalities of the activity in and around the ports, whether it is the responsibility of the port or not.
6. In 2014, ESPO signed a strategic cooperation agreement with different regional and national organisations representing cruise ports: Cruise Baltic, Cruise Europe, Cruise

¹ European Union Tourism Trends, April 2018, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419470>

² 6.1 % more than in 2015, CLIA

³ <https://cruising.org/-/media/research-updates/research/economic-impact-studies/contribution-of-cruise-tourism-to-the-economies-of-europe-2017.pdf>

Norway, MedCruise and Cruise Britain. The first bottom up initiative of this ESPO Cruise and Ferry Port Network was the publication of a **Code of Good Practices for Cruise and Ferry ports**⁴ in 2016. The Code formulates good practices on five pre-identified challenges and can be seen as an important initiative to improve the sustainability of the cruise port activity.

7. Increasingly, **European ports are openly showing their environmental track record and transparency**. Through its environmental report⁵, ESPO presents each year the main environmental benchmarks of the sector. In addition, more than 100 European ports are part of the EcoPorts network, the main environmental initiative of European port sector. More than 70% of these ports are certified with an internationally recognised environmental standard (ISO 140001, PERS and EMAS).
8. The International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH) has recently started working on the **development of a harmonised format for collecting data on emissions of cruise ships during port calls**. In parallel, the EU Monitoring, Reporting and Verification system (MRV) started publishing **aggregate data on CO2 emissions per ship name on annual basis**⁶, including cruise ships' emissions at berth for all EU ports.

European ports:

1. Are combining different roles and responsibilities. In each of these roles, **port managing bodies aim at combining commercial interests with wider societal responsibilities**. As mission driven and mostly public entities, port managing bodies invest in sustainable port development and in guaranteeing that any port activity remains sustainable in the long run.
2. Understand that **ports are the face of the maritime transport and logistics sector in the port city**.
3. **Strongly believe in the sustainable growth of the European cruise business**.
4. **Call on the cruise lines to step up efforts in order to further reduce the environmental footprint of cruise activity**. European ports welcome in that respect the commitment of the global cruise industry to reduce the rate of carbon emissions across the industry fleet by 40 percent by 2030.⁷ In particular, ports

⁴ <https://www.espo.be/publications/code-of-good-practices-for-cruise-and-ferry-ports>

⁵ <https://www.espo.be/media/Environmental%20Report-2019%20FINAL.pdf>

⁶ Emissions reporting for 2018: <https://mrv.emsa.europa.eu/#public/emission-report>

⁷ <https://cruising.org/news-and-research/press-room/2018/december/cia-emissions-commitment-release>

welcome the recent efforts and investments made by some cruise lines to change towards more environmentally friendly sources of energy and encourage the sector as such to continue on this path.

5. **Understand/are fully aware that the demand for clean air is a priority for European citizens.** Air quality will become a key determinant of public acceptance of port activity in the years to come. Cruise port activity, as any other port activity, must be looked at from this perspective. Keeping the emissions in ports and in the vicinity of housing areas to a safe and acceptable level must in that sense be seen as a first priority.
6. Believe that the energy transition of the shipping sector, including the cruise lines, will be the first and most important way to guarantee the sustainable development of the cruise business in Europe. European ports therefore ask for **a prompt implementation of the IMO target for shipping.** The first priority is to roll out the measures to reduce emissions and to define pathways to be pursued in terms of future fuels. Cleaner fuels for cruise shipping must deliver both in terms of air quality and decarbonisation. European ports therefore ask European policy makers to discuss the **implementation of an EU Emission Control Area (SECA and NECA),** in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders.
7. Understand that **reducing the emissions and noise at berth and in the port area – or even bringing those at zero – is a top priority.** One of the available technologies to achieve this goal is Onshore Power Supply (OPS). Further deployment and use of **onshore power supply must in that respect be encouraged where possible.** It must however be acknowledged that the corresponding investments both at port and port-grid connection are costly and often without direct return on investment for the investing port authority. Moreover, the use of OPS by the shipping sector is often hampered by remaining barriers, both in terms of taxation and standards. Finally, OPS can only deliver in terms of environmental performance, if the energy supplied is green. To address these issues, funding must be made available and use of OPS should be tax exempted, taking away the disadvantage compared to electricity generated on-board which enjoys a tax exemption. While OPS is an important way to reduce emissions in ports and at berth, other upcoming technologies, such as hydrogen, can be equally effective in mitigating emissions in the port.
8. Must continue to facilitate a close **dialogue with the port citizens and local community.** Any development of the cruise business should be discussed in an open dialogue with the surrounding community. Cruise ports cannot develop further without the licence to operate of their local community. Issues as tourist saturation/over tourism must be discussed and addressed in close dialogue with the

local community in view of finding the right balance between the need to show and share Europe's heritage and the need to preserve a sustainable and liveable environment for the citizens living in or near these touristic hotspots.

9. Must better explain the added value of the cruise business/industry/sector for the port and the city, and share the knowledge of the sector with the surrounding community and wider public (through the media and new forms of communication). Ports must be **fully transparent towards the local community** about the economic added value, but also about the environmental and/or societal impact of the sector as well as the way it is going to address those challenges. Ports must show, wherever possible and relevant, more transparency on the externalities generated by cruise activity. They should at the same time promote good practices in place and inform the local community with facts and figures about the real share and impact of cruise tourists compared to the total amount of tourists in a given destination, which contributes to a better understanding of the problem.
10. Realise that they do not function in isolation: **a constant dialogue between the cruise ports along one journey and the tourist destinations along that voyage** on how to limit externalities is essential. A commonly agreed approach for ports on one journey is essential. A one-fits-all approach on concrete measures for all cruise ports in Europe seems less effective, given the diversity of the sector.
11. Believe **sustainability should be at the core of the partnership between cruise lines and cruise ports**. Improving the operational understanding and optimising schedules and itineraries can help avoiding congestion and peak hour traffic and improving the passenger experience at the same time.
12. Engage themselves to further exchange, promote and build on the good practices developed in the ESPO Code for Good Practices for Cruise and Ferry Ports.