

EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR E-FERRIES

Interferry and the European Sea Ports Organisation are pushing to establish an onshore power supply network for the majority of TEN-T ports across Europe

Ferry trade association Interferry has teamed up with the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) to promote an extensive roll-out of electric charger facilities across high-traffic European ferry ports and terminals, and to recommend a series of steps to establish a workable onshore power supply (OPS) network.

As part of the collaboration, Interferry and ESPO will table a series of meetings with senior decision-makers from governments, ports and energy companies, with a view to securing further investment into OPS infrastructure. ESPO secretary-general Isabelle Ryckbost comments: "The best way to go forward is to engage in dialogue with the different stakeholders... each segment has its own priorities and solutions.

"The role ferry transport can play in greening passenger transport in Europe is severely underestimated; ferries are connecting people, regions and economies, as well as providing a green mode of urban transport. This should be better reflected in Europe's transport policy; in particular, in Flagship 3 of the EC Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy." Published in 2020, Flagship 3 seeks to boost sustainable and healthy urban and interurban mobility, although its stated aims appear to focus heavily on rail traffic – downplaying, somewhat, the alternative that pax and ro-pax ferry routes can offer to short-haul flights.

Selective investments

Interferry and ESPO say that ferry ports should commit to deploying OPS as soon as possible. "Increasingly, many ferries will use OPS not only for their energy consumption at berth, but also to recharge batteries for propulsion," the partners state. "[This] significantly higher power demand will require corresponding upscaling of the grid network."

Mike Corrigan, Interferry CEO, stresses: "Major expansion of the electricity grid network is absolutely crucial to supporting the ultimate objectives. Electrification of ship propulsion is key to meeting massive regulatory challenges for reducing maritime greenhouse gas emissions: interim cuts of some 50% are due by 2030, leading to 'net zero' status by 2050."

Of course, costs are heavily impacting on everything these days, and so Interferry and ESPO recommend a strategy of selective investments: namely, prioritising the deployment of chargers in terminals experiencing high volumes of ferry calls, to maximise emissions reductions per installation.

The partners add: "The OPS obligations set out in the EC proposals for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation, which refer to a specified minimum number of calls per



Isabelle Ryckbost, ESPO and Mike Corrigan, Interferry: the organisations have called for an OPS network across European ports as soon as possible

port, should be adapted to foresee a minimum number of calls per terminal."

Ryckbost tells *Ship & Boat International*: "Our proposal is that OPS should be installed in terminals in ports that receive at least 40 ferries per year, as opposed to underused berths." This would cover the key ports that make up the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), she adds.

Funding and tax breaks

Investing in OPS will certainly not come cheap, and so Interferry and ESPO believe that the EU should provide funding – potentially via revenues generated by the Emissions Trading Scheme – to participating ports (and, possibly, operators). Additionally, the partners recommend: "An EU-wide permanent and total tax exemption for electricity provided to ships at berth should be introduced in the Energy Taxation Directive, in order to provide stronger and clearer incentives that promote the uptake and use of OPS."

Interferry and ESPO add that the European ferry sector and its associated ports should promote a range of alt-fuel options, and not just latch onto electrification as the sole alternative to traditional marine fuels. "The accompanying financial and regulatory framework should be technology-agnostic, to ensure due consideration for all viable options," they comment.

However, they acknowledge: "With the exception of OPS, at this early stage, it does not seem desirable to impose a requirement to deploy infrastructure for certain other technologies or fuels. Developments and investments should be based on bottom-up projects and bilateral commitments among different stakeholders." **SBI**