

*ESPO at 25  
Connecting People  
and Ports*





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# European Sea Ports Organisation

**2018** marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
European Sea Ports Organisation, ESPO.

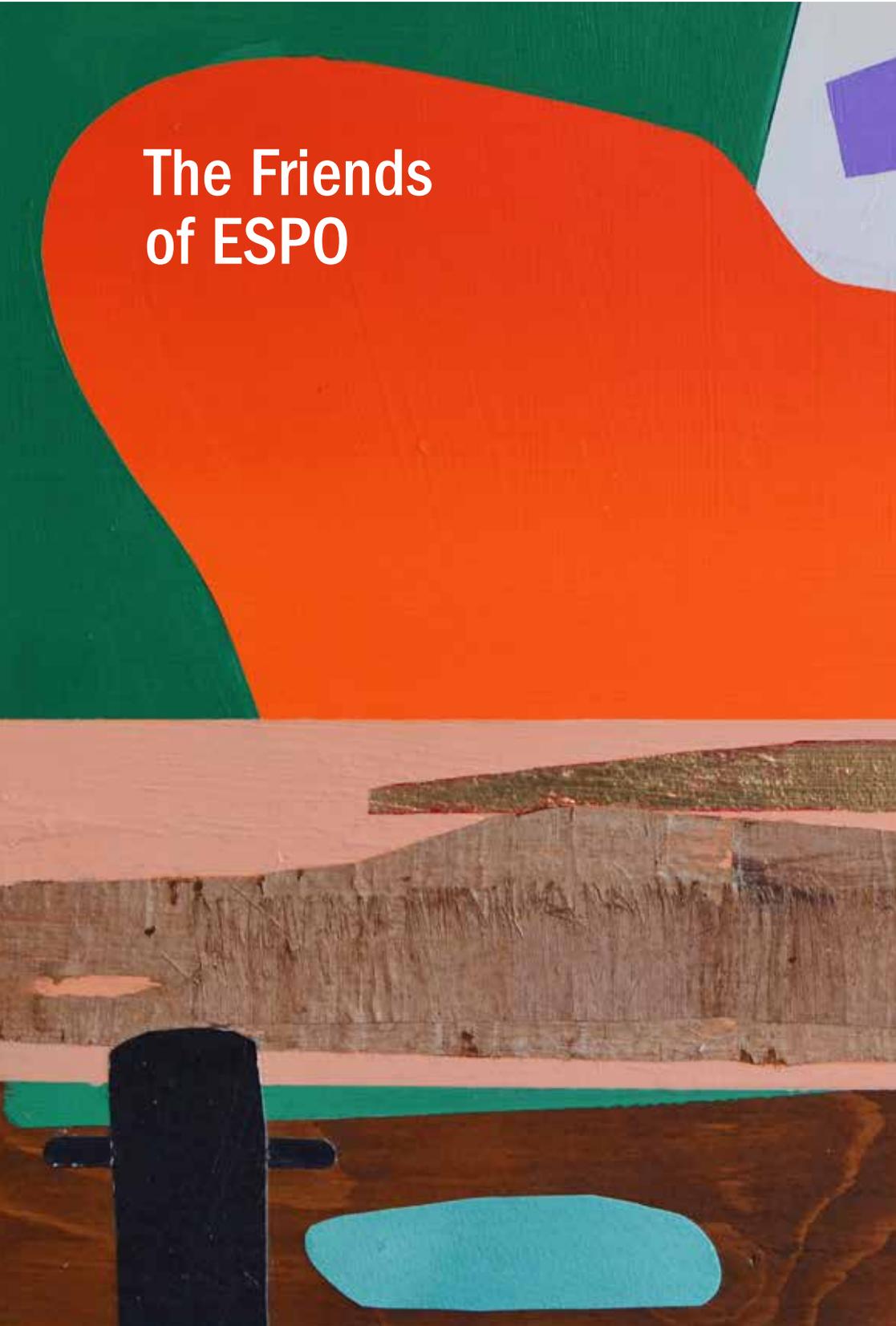
This book of friends of ESPO gathers memories, anecdotes and reflections of people who have been actively contributing to the work and the achievements of ESPO at some point in the life of this organisation, or are still doing nowadays. It brings stories and contributions from policy makers, academics and other stakeholders who have been working closely with ESPO. Unfortunately, some people that have been instrumental in the life of ESPO passed away.

We thank all contributors for keeping the corporate memory alive. We hope that all friends of ESPO, also the many ones that we could not give the floor to in this book, will recognise ESPO in these stories. Maybe they would like to add their own. We will be happy to share them with you through our website.

ESPO is 25 years young. 2018 is a milestone, not an endpoint. We hope the ESPO story goes on.

Enjoy the reading.





# The Friends of ESPO

## How It All Started

**Prof. em. dr. Wim A.G. Blonk**

Former Director of Maritime and Seaports, DG MOVE

Honorary Director General, European Commission

In the early days of the EEC, the EU Commission concentrated on legislation for the three inland transport modes (rail, road and inland waterways). At that time, no proposals were submitted to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers concerning sea and air transport. As a more or less logical consequence, the seaports, the primary hub between inland transport and shipping, were also not a focus for Brussels initiatives. That situation changed in 1974 following the judgment of the Court of Justice in Luxembourg in the French seamen's case\* which stipulated that the general provisions of the Treaty (such as free movement of persons, rules of competition, state aids, etc.) also applied to maritime transport and aviation, and therefore also to seaports.

Well before this judgment, at the beginning of the '70s, I did some experimental moves towards a common approach on European seaports. In that period, besides my duties as a young civil servant in the Transport DG of the Commission, I was teaching transport economics and policy at the Free University of Brussels. In that capacity I also attended the annual Benelux Port Study Days with my students. That assignment gave me a certain degree of academic freedom to launch new ideas under my own responsibility.

In the second half of the '60s the shipping container was introduced in Europe and as a consequence the European ports made huge investments in container handling facilities, with soon a considerable overcapacity as a result. The need to achieve a minimum of coordination, one way or another, appeared reasonable to me. The general feeling in ports circles, however, was the following: "European coordination at the level of neighbouring seaports is considered fine as long as Brussels is not touching my own port". European seaports became unsettled and discretely approached the then Transport Commissioner Albert Coppé. The Antwerp alderman for ports, Leo Delwaide sr., played a clear pioneering role in this political initiative. As careful as the Commission already was at that time, she made it clear that

\* French seamen's case 167/73 from the Commission against France, European Court of Justice 1974, page 359.



Fernand Suykens (1927 – 2002), Founder and Honorary Life President of ESPO and Former Director General of the Port of Antwerp (top) – Certificate granting Fernand Suykens the title of Honorary Life President of ESPO (bottom)

there were no political initiatives in the pipeline concerning the seaports. In order to calm things down Albert Coppé in 1974 suggested the setting-up of a working group of European seaports, the so-called Port Working Group, with the specific assignment of an extensive fact-finding mission. DG Transport provided the secretariat, and the ports had full freedom to record the agenda of its activities. It should be underlined that for evident reasons I had no direct or indirect dealings with the Port Working Group. In 1985 I left DG Transport.

In 1990, more than 15 years later, Transport Commissioner Karel van Miert decided to carry out a rather radical restructuring of DG Transport. Two new directorates were created: one for maritime shipping and seaports and another for aviation. At the suggestion of Karel van Miert, I was appointed as the new Director for maritime shipping and seaports. A few months later, I was asked to chair the forthcoming six-monthly meeting of the fact-finding working group of the European seaports. To be honest, I could not believe my ears. After more than 15 years the European seaports were still busy with their fact findings. All well and good, but I did not think that, from a European taxpayer's point of view, this was justified. The Commission was paying for all the Port Working Group participants' travel and accommodation expenses. If no one defined a deadline for the Working Group's activities, this carousel would certainly continue for many more years to come. In my first meeting with the port representatives, I had put this item of concern on the agenda. My position was clear. Rather than exchanging information and discussing their port interests among themselves under the flag of DG Transport, the European ports should create a strong independent and solid lobby group in order to become a valuable and appreciated interlocutor for the Commission.

At first glance, my intervention certainly came as a surprise. However, after some internal deliberations in which Fernand Suykens, the charismatic Director General of the Port of Antwerp, clearly played a leading role, the European seaports started negotiations that finally led to the establishment of ESPO.

My suggestion to bring together, under one roof, all seaport interests of Port Authorities, terminal operators and stevedoring companies, was discussed but appeared not feasible at that time. That is the reason why in 1993 ESPO saw the light, followed by FEPORT one year later.

Allow me to end with an anecdote. Under the leadership of Fernand Suykens, discussions, leading to the establishment of ESPO, took place in 1991/92 in the meeting room of my directorate in DG Transport.

During those meetings with port representatives, on several occasions our building had to be evacuated due to a fire alarm. After the third fire alarm, it turned out that the originator of these alarms was a sensitive smoke sensor in our meeting room. The alarm always went off when Fernand Suykens, with a lot of ritual, lit one of his famous cigars. We then urgently asked him, when coming to Brussels, to leave his, by the way, very good smelling cigars in Antwerp.

Finally, I would like to congratulate ESPO on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and express the hope that this important port organisation will continue to play its active and constructive role in the first place in the interest of the European ports itself but also for the general interest of the European Union.

## Continue Thinking Ambitiously

### Violeta Bulc

European Commissioner for Transport

Time passes. Things change. But some things remain. Throughout human history ports have remained places where goods and ideas are exchanged, where people come together, start and finish journeys and where civilisations meet.

Today ports are becoming ever more important, and the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) has served them well by promoting their role for the past 25 years.

During this time, ESPO has grown and developed into a valuable contributor to and partner for the European Commission. Through the development of its own initiatives (such as EcoPorts), its technical contributions and analyses, ESPO has helped shape the discussion and European ports policy.

This ports policy, which dates back to many years, was last defined in 2013 with a complete set of actions and initiatives designed to unlock the potential of EU ports and make them an engine for growth. During my term as Commissioner for Transport, I have had the pleasure of seeing this vision become a reality, as we have further worked on new legislation addressing the very latest developments.



ESPO's official visit to Commissioner Bulc in January 2015

Clearer rules on market functioning, on transparency of funding and state aid were adopted. These “level the playing field” and provide the stability that favours private investment. Through targeted support from the Connecting Europe Facility, around 90 port projects have benefited from over €900 million in grants that focus inter alia on removing bottlenecks, improving hinterland connections and promoting innovation.

As times change, ports are decisively entering the digital age. The Commission has supported this by working towards the European Maritime Single Window environment.

And we have supported ports in improving their environmental sustainability and in strengthening their role as facilitators of the broader maritime sector. This has been done both through improved legislation (cf. the Port Reception Facilities Directive) and through “soft” measures (supporting environmentally differentiated infrastructure charges).

Ports can also help the shipping sector deliver under the recently adopted IMO strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships. Examples include the provision of ship and shore-side power from renewable sources and infrastructure to support the supply of alternative low-carbon and zero-carbon fuels.

Last but not least, a social dialogue has been put in place at EU level.

The challenges of the future are numerous and well-known. It will take bold and perhaps occasionally painful steps to overcome the obstacles before us. However, we should not be afraid to dream and set ourselves ambitious goals.

This will help the sector meet the profound changes that digitalisation and automation have already started to bring to the port working environment. The Commission also supports ports' efforts to increase female employment, notably by launching a "Platform for Change" in which ports are invited to play an active role.

Now, the time has come to build on our successes, learn from the challenges we encountered and plan for where we want to be tomorrow. The challenges of the future are numerous and well-known. It will take bold and perhaps occasionally painful steps to overcome the obstacles before us. However, we should not be afraid to dream and set ourselves ambitious goals. Challenges (for example, those related to the environment) force us to think long term, perhaps accepting short-term costs. This is the route our ship should follow.

Throughout this journey, I have enjoyed the exchange of ideas with ESPO. I have appreciated our cooperation. I invite ESPO to continue to think ambitiously and to join us for the next years in shaping the ports of tomorrow.

## ESPO in Many Different Guises

### Pat Cox

Chairman of the ESPO Award Jury  
TEN-T Coordinator, SCAN-MED Corridor

I have met ESPO in many different guises over the years, in my roles as a MEP, more recently as Coordinator of the Scandinavian Mediterranean TEN-T Corridor, and more intimately in the past few years through the privilege of being the Chairman of the jury for the annual ESPO Award. We will celebrate the tenth such award this year on the theme of "Ports as a Good Work Environment for Everyone". I greatly look forward to this occasion. The Award, which focuses on a different theme each year, shines a light on the great diversity of scale, location and activity of ESPO's membership. It also reveals the commitment of ports to their wider host



Pat Cox and Annaleena Mäkilä, Vice-Chairman of ESPO, at the ESPO Award 2017



ESPO Conference Dinner 2015 in Piraeus, Aimilia Papachristou, Peter de Langen and Thanos Pallis

communities environmentally, socially, culturally and not just through their core economic, commercial and trade activities.

ESPO also has been a very active player in the stakeholder call – the Ljubljana Declaration – presented to EU Budget Commissioner Oettinger at the TEN-T days in April 2018. This sectoral mobilisation was an impressive first in strategic terms where all participants rose above their own specific preferences to focus on the bigger picture.

It was striking to see the easy and relaxed engagement of the moment, a great antidote to the jaded cynicism of too often presenting EU officialdom as faceless bureaucrats and technocrats.

A standout ESPO moment for me was when your Secretary General, Isabelle Ryckbost, was the person who stepped up to the speaker’s rostrum to speak to this large pan EU transport gathering and directly address the sector’s call for more funding

to the Budget Commissioner – a manifestation of ESPO’s and Isabelle’s personal standing among the more than forty transport stakeholders who participated in this exercise.

Last but not least, for me, is how events such as the Annual Conference or the Award Ceremony offer an opportunity for direct contact between ports and the policy making community. I recall in particular the conference in my home town of Dublin in 2015 hosted by the CEO of Dublin Port and ESPO Chairman, Eamonn O’Reilly, when we made a tour of the port on a tender. We were accompanied, among many others, by Henrik Hololei, EU Director General for Mobility and Transport. It was striking to see the easy and relaxed engagement of the moment, a great antidote to the jaded cynicism of too often presenting EU officialdom as faceless bureaucrats and technocrats. Happy 25<sup>th</sup>.

## The ESPO DNA

### Peter de Langen

Owner and principal Consultant of PLA and visiting Professor at Copenhagen Business School

I have been involved in ESPO in different roles, probably most visibly as an academic focused on ports and port development. With the aim to live up to expectations, I will put forward a theory of the ESPO DNA (organisational culture). The topic “What is the ESPO DNA?” so far has not received

academic attention and a rigorous empirical analysis is beyond the scope of this contribution (☺) so I will just boldly propose three elements.

First, ESPO is *relationship-based*. There is such a thing as the “ESPO family” with the ESPO Committees as the core, but also extended to other stakeholders. The ties within the ESPO family are often social, not “transactional”. Some of the ESPO routines, such as the set-up of the Congress and Committee meetings – with ample time for social stuff and the annual event in Brussels – are best understood as “family building”.

Second, ESPO is *consensus-oriented* (at least as far as I can tell). The policy initiatives and ESPO views are generally developed in a consensus model. This model is often rather complicated, given the wildly different perspectives on ports, ranging from the port as commercial enterprise view to the port as public facility view, and all kinds of grey in between, and the differences between local and national perspectives. The consensus approach involves first developing a policy stance in very general terms and subsequently a give-and-take process to develop a precise wording, with the necessary disclaimers and allusions. This consensus approach is only feasible given the social ties within the ESPO family.

Third, ESPO is often *offensive*, in its ambition to shape policy debates as well as new developments in the ports industry. Even though I am not at all an insider in European industry associations, my sense is that this offensive approach is not the most commonly followed approach. Examples of the offensive approach include the early ESPO initiative to define core corridors, good practices on concessions and environmental practices as well as port performance indicators, and even an ESPO manifesto proclaiming

a renaissance of European ports. Clearly, this

It is people that make ESPO.

offensive approach is problematic, given the

consensus orientation discussed above, and some of

the initiatives above have been more watered down than some of the early mavericks perhaps had hoped for. Again, the social capital is an invisible but critical enabler (so the time and money associated with “family building” may be well spent after all).

In conclusion, I think of ESPO as an offensive industry association based on relationships and consensus, a mix which guarantees that working with ESPO is always an interesting endeavour (as well as fun, in some fairly off the beaten track places in Europe’s ports ☺). It is people that make ESPO. It is people that discuss ports statistics (with discussions on the differences between Eurostat data and the data from the ports and the best unit to measure RoRo volumes worthy of a description in a novel), develop ports

policies (with discussions between Rotterdam and Antwerp with an intensity that would make a by-standing shrink wonder “Have they been lovers in the past?”), and clearly it is people that have made ESPO in the past 25 years. Well done for all involved. Herewith I apply for membership of the extended ESPO family for the next 25 years!

## Where Industry, Policy and Academia Meet – A Story of Port Friendship

**Prof. dr. Michaël Dooms**

Associate Professor Management and Strategy  
Former PORTOPIA Project Coordinator  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel – Belgium

My first encounters with ESPO took place in 2005. Our university, the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), made part of a consortium of researchers commissioned by the EU to perform a fact-finding study on “Public financing and charging practices of seaports in the EU” (yes, the eternal, or to some, even infernal, topic). The ESPO SG at the time, Patrick Verhoeven, invited us to contribute to a conference celebrating the anniversary of one of the Baltic seaports, by discussing the approach of the study and some results. It was my first encounter with what I would call the generous hospitality that seaport authorities provide their guests with – this in spite of the topic I had to discuss! It showed me foremost the great camaraderie between seaports as also speakers from France, Spain and other countries were invited to the event. The speakers’ dinner the day before the conference will remain in my mind forever, as the next morning quite a lot of us did not immediately feel up to the task of delivering a speech... courtesy of the local brew (or was it distilled matter?). Some of us had serious stability problems when getting a guided walking tour around a quite impressive scale model of the whole port, before the session started. And to finalise: as airline connections were not as developed as nowadays, we could only fly out the next day, leaving us with another evening party to attend as the port in question also kindly invited us to their “internal” party with the staff. Oh yes... I almost forgot, the evening

of the speakers' dinner also led to the start of me enjoying finer handmade cigars, which has turned into an almost full-time hobby (and meanwhile a vague project to start a "Port's Portable" on cigar shops and bars in port cities). So even elements of my personal life remain connected to a port trip.

Many years later, we look back, at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and personally, to an intense and fruitful relationship. We had the privilege to chair sessions at the annual ESPO conferences, provide keynotes, provide input on sessions, and even got the opportunity to organise mixed science/industry sessions at the ESPO conferences (I particularly remember a lively session on port international strategies in Varna, Bulgaria). Since 2009, as universities, we also developed a closer relation with ESPO, working in collaboration as partners on two EU co-financed projects of which the names and also the outputs no doubt have contributed to inspire the industry: PPRISM and PORTOPIA. As in all marriages, there were difficult times to be experienced, but what always surfaced was the mutual respect of each other's competences and interests, and foremost the friendship developed over so many years of joint work and joint trips accompanying the Technical Committees to friendly port hosts around Europe: Malta, Lisbon, Bremen, Rome, London, to name but a few. I therefore sincerely thank ESPO for the opportunities offered to collaborate.

On behalf of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and also personally, I wish ESPO a very happy 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and meanwhile celebrate past, current and future port friendships!

## ESPO Diplomacy Wanted and Delivered: A Case Study

**Wolfgang Elsner**

Head of Unit, Short Sea Shipping and Ports, European Commission,  
DG TREN (2000–2004)

It is said that a diplomat is a man who always remembers a woman's birthday but never remembers her age. Everybody knew ESPO's birthday was on 7 November, but what year? Now we are told: 25 years ago. It seems to have been the same diplomat who worded the invitation to contribute to ESPO's Liber Amicorum without mentioning that a laudation

was not excluded: indeed the latest example of a long line of ESPO's diplomatic skills.

Sure, these skills were often tested. Many will remember the rainy day in June 2001 in Oslo when an important European initiative on ports was to be discussed and, if possible, common conclusions of the port industry to be drawn. The entrance to the building was guarded by two fierce-looking Vikings in full battle gear. Some delegates could be heard whispering that the Vikings' task was to inform the Commission about who owns the ports, who runs them and who decides who is allowed to do what and when and where and how, and about who should not get involved in these matters. European money, however, would be welcome. Other delegates seemed to be less belligerent and opined that the Vikings' halberds and spears were really only made of plywood.

When the Commission representative had made his point, he was escorted from the court room, not without meeting the piercing blue eyes of one Viking whilst the other could be seen invigorating himself with a glass of unspecifiable content. The court's deliberations were protracted. Court jesters hurried along darkened corridors. Why had the Commission's representative not been told to bring a copy of Franz Kafka's "The Trial" to read? Was this omission intentional? Was it part of the proceeding that only Norwegian newspapers were available?

Court proceedings resumed to clarify some outstanding points. Again the court withdrew. Or rather, contrary to conventional court proceedings, the accused was withdrawn from the court room. ESPO had to use all its diplomatic skills to attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable and develop a formula that made everybody equally unhappy: those ports which wanted the European institutions to mind their own business and those who needed, and expected, help from the very same institutions in furthering their development currently stifled by administrative and legal obstacles; the privately-owned and publicly-owned ports; the privately and the publicly-operated ports; those wanting to learn from other ports and those believing firmly that others were best advised to copy their system.

It proved, of course, impossible for ESPO to reconcile the irreconcilable and adopt a common view of all ports with regard to the Commission's policy initiative. But ESPO succeeded in tempering rigour with rationality, and its diplomatic efforts achieved, however, a common desire to continue talks and attempt to cooperate towards a common goal – far more than could be expected at the outset: no slammed doors, no conviction.

The Vikings had gone. The dinner was excellent.



Knut Fleckenstein with Santiago Garcia-Milà and Dimitrios Theologitis at the ESPO Award Dinner 2016

## Port Package III: Working with Stakeholders

### Knut Fleckenstein

Member of the European Parliament  
Rapporteur on the Port Service Regulation

My work with ESPO is a long story because thanks to ESPO, we finally found a good solution for the so-called Port Package III. It took us more than 15 years to finalise and adopt the Port Regulation. As rapporteur during the last years of discussions and negotiations, we reached a breakthrough, especially because of the clear stand against the former Barroso-Commission and of the willingness to find compromises wherever possible.

ESPO's position was always clear: the Port Package III can improve the efficiency and competitiveness of European ports if it defines a level playing field without interfering in the successful work of ports through over-regulation ("One size fits all") and total liberalisation. Freedom to conduct a business, which also means competition between European ports, must be possible within the rules of the Single Market. For me, it is also very important to emphasise that dock workers contribute significantly to the success of a port. Therefore, enabling better training and social conditions for port workers plays a crucial role as well. I remember numerous talks with ETF, FEPURT, pilots and others. It is without doubt that motivated and well-trained workers are the backbone of a competitive European port sector.

Above all, however, I remember the discussions with and in different ports – whether in Porto, Antwerp, Barcelona, Hamburg or Koper. Those discussions influenced me to try and find new compromises. Without my countless meetings with the former ESPO Chairman Santiago Garcia-Milà and ESPO Secretary General Isabelle Ryckbost, we would not have achieved a satisfactory outcome until today. The common position of all relevant stakeholders was strong and ultimately contributed to convince the

more pragmatic Commissioner Violeta Bulc. On this basis, the Council was no longer able to oppose.

I will always remember a very special situation during the final negotiations with the Council: while I was discussing with the Council and the Commission on the third floor of the European Parliament, the Secretary Generals from ESPO, FEPORT and ETF were sitting in my office on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor to advise me if necessary. That's how I enjoy politics! To work together with different stakeholders to find a solution - and to implement it. That is good for the ports, for the port workers and in the end for the credibility of policy as well.

I look forward to continued good cooperation also in the future. Congratulations, ESPO, on your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

## The Role and Power of Port Authorities

### Giuliano Gallanti

Chairman of ESPO (2004 - 2008)

The first thing I have to do is recall the fact that ESPO for me was an important intellectual training field. I have been member of the Executive Committee for over 10 years and I can confirm that the Committee meetings contributed in a decisive manner to improve my knowledge of European ports. The Committee meetings were always high-level and there was a chance to start off a debate on serious matters amongst members.

The issue related to the role and power of Port Authorities that has been reduced over the years, will again be a current topic even for ports in Northern Europe.

Often, the Northern range and the Med had deep and long discussions that were not only political but also cultural.

As the founder of ESPO, Fernand Suykens, once said: "There are two diverse political and cultural visions in European ports: the Hanseatic and the Latin".

It is also important to underline the supportive and friendly atmosphere that there was amongst members; a compromise between positions was always found. The best example of this can be traced back to the first De Palacio Directive. A lot of members were against the approval of the Directive, but in the end a compromise was found with the minority that



The then Commissioner Jacques Barrot, Giuliano Gallanti and Patrick Verhoeven at the ESPO General Assembly 2005 in Brussels

believed that modifications to the draft should be made even if they knew it had to be approved for the good of the port field.

Personally, at that time I was Vice-President of ESPO, of which I became President in 2004, and I was committed to getting the Directive approved. I had many discussions with the then Commissioner De Palacio and Director Wolfgang Elsner, as well as with the Italian and European Unions.

In particular, I would like to recall the position that was taken, after a discussion, by the Italian Parliamentarian Imbeni of the Socialist Party. Differing from his group, he voted in favour of the approval and was strongly criticised by the Head of the Socialist Party, Baron Crespo. Unfortunately, the Directive was not approved by the Parliament due to a difference of only 20 votes.

In my opinion, this vote represented a radical change in European politics and a reflection of the cultural and political vision of ESPO.

Indeed, the Commissioner that was nominated after De Palacio passed away, the French Barrot, expressly declared that he would have abandoned the strong method of intervening, and he followed the criteria of the so-called soft legislation: never again Directives but only Recommendations is exactly what he did.

I believe, however, that the issue related to the role and power of Port

Authorities that has been reduced over the years, will again be a current topic even for ports in Northern Europe. The vertical approach of shipowners (the acquisition of terminals and logistic centres) that is now something tangible in many areas, and the mega-ship issue, will impose the revision of current politics with the strengthening of the powers given to Port Authorities which, in the case this does not occur, risk a marginalisation that will get worse over time in the European port sector.

## Enthusiasm and Friendship

### Santiago Garcia-Milà

Chairman of ESPO (2012 - 2016)

Deputy Executive Director, Port of Barcelona

I can summarise my experience with ESPO in two concepts that have been growing since I started participating in ESPO's activities: enthusiasm and friendship. The enthusiasm of being able to participate directly in some of the main challenges of European ports in recent years; and friendship because my colleagues have become friends and we are all part of the great ESPO family.

My experience at ESPO began in 2005 when I started participating in the Intermodality & Logistics Committee. My colleagues made me feel very welcome from the outset and in 2008 I had the chance to preside over this Committee for a period of four years.

One of the first major challenges that I faced at ESPO was the review process of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), in which I had already participated as Chair of the Intermodality & Logistics Committee. We worked to achieve recognition, for the first time, of the importance of ports as connecting transport nodes and their relevance in the European Transport System. ESPO played an active role and can be rightly proud of the result, although there are always some elements that can be improved in later reviews.

When I was appointed ESPO Chairman in 2012, I faced the challenge of finding a new ESPO General Secretary within a few days after my appointment. Patrick Verhoeven had gone to explore other professional avenues and, after a selection process, Isabelle Ryckbost accepted the challenge of leading the Secretariat. I have nothing but gratitude for the support and professionalism of the ESPO Secretariat over all these years.

As ESPO Chairman I had the chance to live through one of the most significant challenges for European ports in recent years: the approval of the *Port Regulation establishing a framework for the provision of port services and common rules on the financial transparency of ports*. Those of us who saw this process from close will agree that a great many hours of work and negotiation were needed. I hold many happy memories of those years in which we all worked to achieve the desired level playing field for European ports.

A delightful moment of my experience at ESPO was when the ESPO Conference was held in Barcelona in 2017. It was an honour to offer the Port of Barcelona's hospitality to the great ESPO family and the work of the teams of both organisations ensured that the event was a success.

I would like to round off by highlighting the good times that I shared with my colleagues after our meetings. Those relaxed moments after work, with a beer in our hands, when colleagues became friends and we all enjoyed ourselves.

These years spent at ESPO have been a privilege. I am proud of ESPO's work, but above all we need to emphasise the step forward for European ports working together to put the European transport system in the place it deserves to be and, above all, to achieve efficient and sustainable European ports with a bright future ahead.



Birthday cake for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ESPO

# Café Maritime

## Alfons Guinier

Former Secretary General, ECSA

As a previous Secretary General of ECSA (European Shipowners Association) I have been directly involved in the creation of ESPO. It was the then DGVII with Wim Blonk as Director Maritime who suggested the creation of a representative body for European ports. The first Chairman, the late Fernand Suykens, asked ECSA whether we could accommodate ESPO for the starting period in the ECSA office, Rue Ducale 45 in Brussels. Of course, we agreed.

Being in the same office, we met with Fernand and the first Secretary General Pamela Le Garrec very frequently, creating a basis for a good cooperation. I still remember the days when Fernand climbed the stairs, stopped at my office, had a coffee and, going with it, a pleasant chat covering all kind of issues including shipping and ports. Anecdotal: the ECSA office building escaped from a serious fire when Pamela forgot a burning cigarillo in her office.

The cooperation continued and became very intense when ESPO occupied their own office and when Patrick Verhoeven became Secretary General. The key issues during many years were the different proposals for

a European Port Policy. Some which were in close cooperation got rejected. Anecdotal: we had even secret meetings on the issue in Café Maritime (lock house of the canal) in Tildonk.

The whole process towards a European Port Policy and a legal framework had all the symptoms of a procession of Echternach.

The whole process towards a European Port Policy and a legal framework had all

the symptoms of a procession of Echternach: a yearly Catholic procession in Luxembourg on Whit Tuesday. In the past, the participants used to take three steps forwards and two steps backwards moving from the left to the right accompanied by some kind of polka music. Remarkable, but eventually they managed.

Eventually the EU Institutions agreed on a Ports Regulation in the beginning of 2017 on which I prefer not to comment. Nevertheless, the interesting thing about this long process was the organisation of many workshops and seminars allowing an exchange of views between the different parties of the maritime sector, allowing to know each other much better.

Today the key issues on the transport agenda are mainly covering the



Alfons Guinier and Eamonn O'Reilly at the ESPO Conference Dinner 2013 in Varna



Pamela Le Garrec, ESPO's first Secretary General in the first ESPO offices in 1994

environment and clean energy on which all maritime parties have made enormous progress during the last years.

ESPO has also given a lot of attention to relations between ports and port cities and citizens, on which the organisation should be commended. Throughout the years ESPO has become one of the highly respected Professional Associations in Brussels which ports and shipping in general absolutely need.

I wish this 25-year-young Association and the ESPO team a lot of success for the future.

## Congratulations on Turning 25, ESPO!

### Bill Hemmings

Director Shipping & Aviation, Transport & Environment

First, let me join in congratulating ESPO on turning 25. That's a quarter century of effort and achievement that you and your members can be proud of. T&E has got to know you more and more in recent years and that has helped us to better understand the wider shipping industry and the way

it works. T&E has traditionally focused its efforts on IMO processes to reduce ship emissions but that changed substantially when the Sulphur Directive was being revised in 2012 to align it with the changes to MARPOL Annex VI. The competing interests – north and south – resulted in a parliamentary compromise to enshrine 0.1% SECAs in EU seas only on condition that the envisaged global move to 0.5% Sulphur fuel would occur throughout the remaining EU seas in 2020, come what may. And those changes of course have started an important process to clean up air pollution in and around ports. This is an area T&E is increasingly focusing on and one we share with ESPO and its members who have air quality high on their agenda. Today's issues are both air pollution and decarbonisation because these objectives are increasingly synergistic. So it is important that T&E and ESPO align thinking and efforts as much as possible as the transition to a low/zero carbon economy is an imperative. Getting things right in ports will be paramount because new low/zero carbon propulsion will in almost all cases require new bunkering facilities and logistics. The electrification of ferries and much of short sea shipping should now be a high priority for Europe and industry in our view, but it can only happen through a revolution in installing on-shore power facilities and new energy services. Legislative changes in taxation systems will be required to make onshore electricity competitive with tax exempt marine fuel. That's a challenge for both ESPO and T&E and we need to talk more deeply with ports and with ESPO to better understand the task. New investment and state aid mechanisms need to be tapped including the EU Innovation Fund and CEF funds aligned with zero emission goals. These are new areas of work for all of us.

Dieseltgate has kept our colleagues very busy over the past couple of years. And now we see the need to address NOx at both the ship and port level. Again we share a common interest to find effective solutions whether through legislation, standards or other measures. Let's have an open discussion about the best way forward. Through working with ESPO, T&E has gained a better understanding of the ports. A couple of years ago I was invited to join the jury for the ESPO Award. It was a terrific experience and I myself learnt a lot about port innovative practices and finding new solutions. The instrumental role ESPO plays in promoting best practices among its members was very clear. Both T&E and ESPO will always have our own views. Very naturally. But we are confident that there are many areas where we have a shared interest and can deepen our understanding and collaboration. T&E itself turns 28 years old this year. So we are also in for the long haul. Congratulations on the quarter century, ESPO. Way to go!

# Keep Up the Excellent Work

**Henrik Hololei**

Director General, DG MOVE, European Commission

Dear friends,

I would like to warmly congratulate the European Sea Ports Organisation for its first 25 years of activities, and I am particularly honoured to be invited to contribute to this Book of Friends. But, then again, for over the last eight years since we have been liaising together, I do consider you my friends and always very good and constructive partners.

My ties with ESPO go back to 2010, when as Head of Cabinet of the then Vice-President for Transport, Siim Kallas, we laid the basis for what eventually became the EU's Ports Policy of 2013. Later, as Director General of DG MOVE, I have highly appreciated ESPO's cooperation and efforts in



Henrik Hololei, Annaleena Mäkilä and Isabelle Ryckbost raising a glass to the 2016 ESPO Award Winner

implementing the strategy, and for always being a constructive and proactive partner for our team.

At all times, I have benefited from ESPO's openness and deep technical knowledge as well as from many good ideas that are necessary to move forward. Indeed, as the first quarter of century of ESPO ends – and we take the time for due celebrations, we must also keep our attention focused on upcoming challenges.

Ports and the communities represented by ESPO are vital and significant nodes of the larger European economy, as well as privileged gateways to the rest of the world: this applies today with equal, if not stronger force, than 25 years ago.

A shifting geopolitical environment, advancing technological developments, evolving business models and pressing environmental considerations are just some among many new elements shaping the future environment for European ports. Digitalisation, automation and alternative energy sources are also modifying the traditional ways of operating, whilst creating new opportunities, thanks to gains in resource efficiency and to the collaborative economy.

New challenges are not unique to ports, as they reflect a deeper shift in the way we enjoy mobility. However, ports are in a privileged position to ride the wave. Standing between land and sea, they can reap all the benefits arising from multimodal solutions, the circular economy and the boost in logistics, transport platforms and servicing. Ports also play a vital role in our wider efforts to fight climate change and transit to a more sustainable economy as well as smarter transport systems.

Addressing these challenges successfully will be a big task for the next years to come, and it will be important to welcome the new without discarding what is good in the old. I can assure you of the continuing support of the European Commission, as we will spare no effort to create an enabling environment for ports to thrive, innovate and make the right investment decisions for tomorrow.

At the same time, I look forward to continuing our fruitful collaboration built on professionalism and trust, and I would like to once again express my very best appreciation to ESPO for the great achievements, and wish you continuing success for the next 25 years!

Keep up the excellent work and good spirits in the interest of European seaports and for Europe, its people and businesses.

# Reducing Barriers

## Siim Kallas

Vice-President and European Commissioner for Transport (2010–2014)

Congratulations! 25 years of the European Sea Ports Organisation!

During my assignment as European Transport Commissioner in 2010–2014, the European Union mainly adopted three very important documents concerning European transport policy: in 2011, White Paper on Transport; on 13 December 2013 the European Parliament adopted the new set of strategic transport corridors in Europe – TENT-T, Trans-European Transport Network; and in 2013, the Communication “Ports: an Engine of Growth”. All documents and decisions followed the same objectives – to increase the competitiveness of European ports and to increase their contribution to the economic growth in Europe.

Ports are, on one side, part of global maritime transport business, on the other side, vital nodes connecting maritime and inland transport. The Union is highly dependent on seaports for trade with the rest of the world and within its Internal Market. 74% of goods imported and exported and 37% of exchanges within the Union transit through seaports.

The Communication about seaports as engines of growth focused on the following objectives: how to connect ports to the Trans-European Network, how to modernise port services, to attract investment to ports, to promote the social dialogue, to raise the environmental profile of ports, and to encourage innovation.

The problem was that very many leading European seaports were anchored in history. The labour market regulation was historical, excluding free competition, giving disproportionate privileges to various groups of trade unions. Many ports served as a convenient source of cash to local and state political circles. Quite often, access to private capital for ports was restricted. The obvious result of the outdated governance framework was that European ports charged global and local shipping with high prices for their services.

As a whole, the Trans-European Transport Network project, adopted in December 2013, is the biggest comprehensive investment project in the history of the European Union. 28 billion euros were assigned to this project



Siim Kallas at the ESPO Award 2011

for the years 2014–2021. This is four times more than for the previous TEN-T period. Especially relevant, knowing that there was no growth of the Union budget for the period 2014–2021.

The key objective for this huge project was to facilitate transport flows in Europe combined with all transport modes. In this respect, seaports play a very important role as nodes between global shipping and inland transport, roads and railways.

106 ports are included in the TEN-T core network and 225 ports are in a comprehensive network. The negotiation process with Member States concerning which ports to include and which ports, in each country, not to include in the core network is something I will remember forever.

The European Union has worked to abolish and reduce all kinds of barriers. Poorly functioning seaports are the problem for the smooth functioning of trans-European transport. In cooperation with the European Sea Ports Organisation, we have substantially reduced the economic and other barriers in European seaports. No doubt that there is still a lot of work to do.

# An Honest and Genuine Negotiator

## Fotis Karamitsos

Former Acting Deputy Director General  
Director, DG MOVE, European Commission

Ports are one of the most important elements of European transport infrastructure and employ thousands of qualified people. They are key gateways to Europe for their import and export of goods, for transport of people and for tourism. I came to appreciate ESPO, as the European organisation representing ports, when I was Commission Director for more

than 10 years for European ports policy.

The whole process towards a European Port Policy and a legal framework had all the symptoms of a procession of Echternach.

There were bad and good moments when we tried to legislate the liberalisation of ports services at the beginning of the century. In all cases, ESPO has been an honest and genuine



Meeting on the first Port Package in May 2003 (Pomphuis - Antwerp)

negotiator representing the interests of ports and explaining our proposals to its partners. In this process and following the latest proposals during their negotiation, it helped in setting up the first milestones of a European ports policy. During these 25 years, ESPO and its staff have worked hard to set up a genuine collaboration with the Commission for the benefit of European ports.

# Dare to Look not at Tomorrow but the Day After

## Magda Kopczynska

Director for Waterborne Transport, DG MOVE,  
European Commission

Working with the maritime sector, it is inevitable that one visits different ports, both in the EU and worldwide. But as with any visit, it is good to have a guide, in hand or at your side. The European Sea Ports Organisation has for long been one of the regular “ports of call” for European Commission when seeking input, expertise and advice to develop maritime policy at European level. The Port Services Regulation, the Maritime Single Window and the Reporting Formalities Directive, the Directive on Port Reception Facilities, measures to promote the environmental performance of ports including market instruments, infrastructure issues, the European Ports Forum and the EU Social Dialogue are only but a few of the issues I have worked on with ESPO during the past years.

Representing a wide and diverse membership, ESPO’s contribution has always been of high value, well defined and adding quality to the dialogue. “Dialogue” means we talk and listen to each other. Sometimes we will not agree – but agreeing or disagreeing on the specific topic at hand, our discussions were always welcome and provided interesting and important food for thought. For this, I would like to express my appreciation to ESPO secretariat team led by its Secretary General, Isabelle Ryckbost, and also express my recognition for the continuous work of all teams that contributed to ESPO’s growth over the past 25 years.

Equally visible – and equally important – are ESPO’s activities in encouraging its own members to improve individually and the

sector as a whole. The ESPO Awards initiated in 2009 and focusing on enhancing the city port relations, EcoPorts for environment, PPRISM for performance measurement and PORTOPIA for the reporting of key indicators demonstrate this.

We have a long sea-voyage ahead of us, with already well-known challenges and risks whether economic or environmental or social. I would like to urge European ports through and with the help of ESPO to dare to look not at tomorrow but the day after, to aim for long-term goals even if their achievement may call for short-term adjustments; to dare to set ambitious targets, thus going against the, sometimes, general trend of reaching only the lowest common denominator, and to make real efforts to achieve them. The Commission is – and has always been – prepared to work with European ports to assist them along this voyage so that they will perform their role as vital elements of the transport network and of the maritime cluster, and as key contributors to the social and economic growth of Europe.

## A Catalyst and Connecting Body for Many Ports in Europe

**Markku Mylly**

Executive Director, EMSA

ESPO was established in 1993 – so the organisation is celebrating its 25 years anniversary this year 2018. My personal and EMSA's congratulations for this remarkable achievement and we want to wish all ESPO members good years to come.

ESPO has been an extremely important lobby organisation for all European ports towards the Commission but it has also been a catalyst and a connecting body for many ports in Europe. Before ESPO, European ports were independently trying to lobby the Members of the European Parliament as well as Commission services, or the EU major ports were trying to utilise the Port Working Party which was established in 1974. It was obvious that bigger ports and ports with close proximity to Brussels

or with good political national or European Parliament support were more successful in lobbying. A majority of the European ports were outside this EU work and they were not able to participate in the work of the EU Working Party, and level playing field was concretely missing.

During its initial years of existence, the organisation established itself in Brussels, focusing on a variety of policy and technical issues. ESPO has

European Port Policy and Port Package proposals have been one of the major challenges for ESPO during the last years and the organisation has used all the skills and efforts to defend the position of the ports.

been very active in environmental issues related to ports and, already as early as 1994, the first Environmental Code of Practice was published, resulting in the establishment of EcoPorts a few years later. The next big challenge was the debate on the European Commission's ports package, which was issued in 2001. It marked a kind of "coming

of age" period for ESPO. This proposal made members react and reflect and become much more conscious of their role as Port Authorities and it strengthened the internal cohesion of the organisation.

ESPO's role has been of paramount importance in providing and facilitating to its member ports a lot of different types of studies, inventories, analyses and guidance to better align their work, governance and working methods with common principles. The efficiency of ports has also been a topic of those studies and ESPO has been able to provide a lot of analytical information on port efficiency to its members to improve efficiency in operations, governance and environmental performance. Following the adoption of the 2007 EU Port Policy Communication, ESPO started analytical work on how European Port Authorities were using concession instruments by commissioning a survey on the awarding of seaport terminals in Europe. This survey provided a lot of added value for ports, helping them to understand current practices and viewpoints of European Authorities. European Port Policy and Port Package proposals have been one of the major challenges for ESPO during the last years and the organisation has used all the skills and efforts to defend the position of the ports. The EU financial support to the port sector has also been one of the major issues to be defended and there are new issues to come in the coming years.

I would like to once more thank ESPO on behalf of all EMSA staff for its excellent collaboration and to wish ESPO and all its member ports successful years to come.



Theo Notteboom at the ESPO Conference 2016 in Dublin

# Celebrating the Academic Connection of ESPO

## Theo Notteboom

Director and Research Professor, Center for Eurasian Maritime and Inland Logistics (CEMIL), China Institute of FTZ Supply Chain, Shanghai Maritime University, China; Chair Professor “North Sea Port”, Faculty of Law and Criminology, Ghent University, Belgium; Professor, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Antwerp; Professor, Antwerp Maritime Academy, Belgium

It is a pleasure and privilege to contribute to this Liber Amicorum edited at the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ESPO. The organisation was set up at the time I graduated from the University of Antwerp in the early 1990s. I knew of ESPO’s existence given the strong involvement of the late Fernand Suykens, former President of the Antwerp Port Authority, in the founding of ESPO, but even as a PhD student specialised in seaports I had only little interaction with ESPO throughout the 1990s.

It was only after my colleague and friend Patrick Verhoeven was appointed ESPO Secretary General that I had the pleasure to collaborate with ESPO on a frequent basis, mainly via my previous role at ITMMA (Institute of Transport

and Maritime Management Antwerp) of the University of Antwerp. Seaports became more visible in European policy making in the early 2000s, not the least because of the several (failed) port Directive proposals. That also meant that more research was needed on the functioning and governance of the European port system to support policy making. In the follow-up of a cooperation agreement signed between ESPO and ITMMA, I, as Academic Head of ITMMA, had the pleasure to prepare five reports for ESPO, aimed to provide a basis for discussion on key topics relevant to European ports: part 1 of the “Factual Report” (2005), the “Market Report on the European Port Industry” (2007, part of the ESPO Annual Report), a report on terminal awarding practices in European ports (2008), a report on the Economic analysis of the European seaport system (2009) and a report on dock labour and port-related employment in the European seaport

But given the many pressing global and European challenges, ESPO continues to play an essential role in representing the European port system, the second largest port system in the world in throughput terms after China.

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system (2010). Many of these reports could not have materialised without the valuable contributions of ESPO and its members in terms of data gathering and questionnaires. The intense cooperation and interactions with ESPO continued also in the years after 2010 in the context of the EC projects PPRISM and PORTOPIA (both on port performance measurement), in ESPO Committee meetings and in my role as speaker or session moderator in ten ESPO Annual Conferences since 2005. Throughout my 15 years of interactions with ESPO, I particularly enjoyed the support and openness of the consecutive ESPO Presidents (Victor and Santiago to name but a few), Secretary Generals (Patrick and Isabelle) and the ESPO secretariat team members.

ESPO values the interaction with the academic world and vice versa, as exemplified by the many exchanges between ESPO and the scholars who shaped the [portconomics.eu](http://portconomics.eu) initiative. Such interaction has not only helped us to make our academic research more relevant to policy and practice but it has also created an environment in which policy makers, managing bodies of ports and academics can share ideas and viewpoints, and propose solutions to the challenges faced by ports in today's fast changing world. A lot has been achieved by ESPO over the past 25 years. But given the many pressing global and European challenges, ESPO continues to play an essential role in representing the European port system, the second largest port system in the world in throughput terms after China. As a port enthusiast and a Euro-China scholar specialised in maritime and port economics, I look forward to future exchanges and cooperation with ESPO and its members.

## A Reflection on the Place of Ports in the Single European Market

**Eamonn O'Reilly**

Chairman of ESPO  
Chief Executive, Dublin Port

We are living in a time when many people know what's wrong and shout loudly about it without offering solutions. Brexit, with the challenges it creates for many North European ports including in my country, Ireland,



Eamonn O'Reilly showing his port to Belgian ESPO Members at the ESPO Conference 2016

is a case in point. It threatens so much of what has been achieved in terms of efficiency in ports such as Calais and Dublin and prompts me to reflect on the achievements of the European Union in the ports sector and of ESPO's contribution to these achievements.

When I ponder the achievements of the Single European Market, I immediately think of the dismantling of national monopoly airlines and the creation of a competitive, efficient and affordable air sector. In recent years, I think about the ending of usurious roaming charges for mobile phones. I think of the ERASMUS programme and of free Interrailing for Europeans turning 18. I think of EU employment protection laws, the NATURA 2000 network and the EU clean air package. I think of strong and principled EU challenging monolithic data companies and creating new privacy rights for European citizens. And in the heterogeneous and conservative ports sector with deep roots in past empires and city states, I reflect on the sophisticated set of measures introduced to make Europe's port industry compatible with the vision of Lord Cockfield and Paolo Cecchini in the 1980s to eliminate the costs of non-Europe.

Few sectors are as diverse as the ports sector and I first became conscious of this from Patrick Verhoeven's insightful classification of Europe's ports as Hanse, New Hanse, Anglo-Saxon, Latin or New Latin. The concept was so clear and illuminating, I even had to forgive Patrick's categorisation of Irish ports as Anglo-Saxon!

When I first started attending ESPO meetings in 2010, I often heard the phrase "level playing field". I found the concept as vague in its meaning as

I am more convinced than ever that the solutions to many of the problems faced by Member States, whether in the ports sector or beyond, can be found in the coherence of European Single Market, environmental and climate policies.

it was elusive in its attainment. Voluminous reports and consultation processes had to be endured as the Commission sought to find a new path after the European Parliament rejected two legislative proposals on market access to port services in 2003 and 2006. And then in a relatively short period came a series of initiatives: the horizontal Concessions Directive, the Ports Regulation,

the GBER and the framework of the TEN-T network, the corridors and CEF.

Looking back, I now realise that over my eight years attending ESPO meetings, meeting Commission officials and MEPs, I was witnessing and partaking in a small part of the inexorable progress towards the vision of the Single European Market for the benefit of Europe's citizens. There has been a successful implementation of a European ports package which,

if not perfect, nonetheless modernises our sector. Key to achieving this success over the 25 years of ESPO's existence has been the consultative and collegial engagement between the ports, ESPO, the Commission and the Parliament.

As the eighth Chairman in ESPO's 25-year history, I have developed a far greater understanding and appreciation of the European Union and am more convinced than ever that the solutions to many of the problems faced by Member States, whether in the ports sector or beyond, can be found in the coherence of European Single Market, environmental and climate policies.

## Moments

### Thanos Pallis

Professor Port Economics and Policy  
Former Secretary General, MedCruise

Brussels, May 1994. A young doctoral student visits a white building to interview the representatives of a tiny organisation which had been established a year earlier. Fernand, ESPO President, and Pamela, ESPO Secretary General, talk passionately about the different traditions of ports in EU-15 – Hanseatic, Anglo-Saxon, Latin – and the need of European ports to learn from each other and articulate their interests. Short-sea shipping and the Maritime Industries Forum dominate the agenda. I leave the office with the just published – and still valid – "ESPO Environmental Code of Practice".

London, May 2001. Stormy weather forecast: the first Port Package is on the table. European ports feel unease. David, the British ESPO President who had accepted to introduce the book on "European Ports Policy", navigates the author through some vital concepts: "One size policy does not fit all", "need for level playing field". An effective association to advocate such interests is necessary. Fortunately, ESPO proves to be the essential voice for all indeed.

Piraeus/Chios, March 2002. Completing his book, the author realises how lucky European ports are anyway. When the related agenda is expanding speedily, ESPO is the platform to discuss collectively but also to consistently gather updates and intelligence: "ESPO News", "ESPO News Plus", the "Environmental Review", "ESPO Position Papers", the four Committees – Marine, Statistics, Transport and Environment.

Brussels, January 2006. The rejection of Port Package II by the European Parliament ends the "age of discontent" and provides opportunity

to reflect. Since the first evaluation of the first Port Package, and throughout five years, ESPO had managed to embrace different port traditions without limiting itself to the advocacy of common denominator stances. Not difficult to feel the hardship beyond closed doors to reach common stances – effective work by Giuliano, the Italian ESPO President, and Patrick, ESPO Secretary General, who have undoubtedly played a key role.

Brussels, September 2009. Five universities join ESPO and embark on the four-year project “Port Performance Indicators: Selection and Measurement (PPRISM)”. ESPO is not providing only answers. It explores the way forward for European ports, a vital contribution to port competitiveness. The successes and failures of PPRISM and its follow-up project, PORTOPIA, stand as the most illustrative proxies of the many different ESPO activities on how testing and pilot implementing concepts and practices can help European ports to thrive.

Barcelona, September 2014. Ports are also about people. Following the instrumental role of Santiago, the Spanish ESPO President, and Isabelle, ESPO Secretary General, five regional cruise ports associations sign a memorandum of corporation with ESPO in order to promote best practices in cruise and ferry ports. In a very professional manner, and with the active contribution of several ports, ESPO guides the Network to the development of a “Code of Good Practices” – a document of unique value for all cruise and ferry ports.

Rotterdam, May 2018. The 16<sup>th</sup> ESPO Conference returns to the major port of Europe where the first edition had been held. Eamonn, ESPO President, introduces the main theme: “Investing in the Port of Tomorrow”. The Professor looks around: the entire industry is following the works. European ports invested 25 years ago in creating ESPO. Today it looks like one of their best investments.

# The Genesis of ESPO

Jean-Marcel PIETRI

Founding and Honorary Member of ESPO

On 21 November 1972, the European Communities Commission organised the first meeting of Representatives of the Authorities of the major European ports. At the second meeting, on 19 February 1974, the Commission set up a working group, the Community Port Working Group (CPWG), chaired by itself, comprising two representatives of the Port Authorities of each Member State. The main function of this working group was to draw up, on the basis of a survey, an “Inquiry into the Current Situation in the Major Community Seaports” report known as “fact finding”.

This report was completed in March 1977. It was updated in November 1986 and extended to new members of the Community. The Commission launched a new update in 1992. ESPO replaced the Commission for the realisation of the 1996 edition and the following ones (2005, 2010 and 2016).

In the early 1990s, a consensus emerged, including the belief of the European Commission’s Director of maritime transport, Wim Blonk, that the CPWG was no longer sufficient and that the professional sector needed its own organisation in Brussels to defend its interests.

Under the impetus of Fernand Suykens, former Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Antwerp, an association was created in Brussels on 14 January 1993 under the name of “European Community Sea Ports Organisation – ESPO”. Pamela Le Garrec, previously Senior Executive of the Port of Bordeaux in charge of international issues, was recruited as Secretary General.

Each Member State of the European Economic Community nominated three members for the General Assembly. The Executive Committee consisted of the Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen. Fernand Suykens presided over the organisation for two terms of two years, as permitted by the statutes. David Jeffrey, General Manager of the Port of London, succeeded him for two years, then Jean-Marcel Pietri, General Delegate of the French Ports Union, for the following two years.

In practice, it became apparent that the three members of the Executive Committee were insufficient to represent the diversity of European ports and two additional members were added. In 1994, when the Community became a Union, the organisation took its current name: “European Sea



Jean-Marcel Piétri

Ports Organisation” without changing its acronym. In the early 2000s, it was decided to further enlarge the Executive Committee with one member per Member State, including the Vice-Chairmen and the Chairman who did not represent a Member State. Patrick Verhoeven, former Secretary General of FEPORT, took the position of Secretary General and David Whitehead, Secretary General of the British Ports Association, took the presidency after these reorganisations.

Today, this same format still governs ESPO, with Eamonn O’Reilly, Managing Director of the Port of Dublin, being the eighth Chairman and Isabelle Ryckbost being the third Secretary General since the creation of the organisation.

## Happy Birthday, Sister!

### Willy Robijns

President, European Federation  
of Inland Ports (2006–2010)

### Roland Hörner

President, European Federation  
of Inland Ports

The European Federation of Inland Ports, EFIP, has always been the “little sister” of ESPO, which is normal seeing that the impact of seaports in terms of size and treated tonnages is significantly greater than that of inland ports.

On 15 May 2007 a declaration of cooperation establishing a platform between the two organisations was signed. Realising that a cooperation with ESPO would increase the effectiveness of EFIP, in 2008 a document was made up by both ESPO Secretary General Patrick Verhoeven and EFIP Secretary General Diane Chevreux, establishing four possible scenarios: a memorandum of understanding, a platform, a joint secretariat and a merger.

In June 2008 EFIP started up talks with ESPO about setting up a joint office. The negotiations were conducted by Charlie Huygens (Vice-President and former President), Roland Hörner (Vice-President) and Willy Robijns



Isabelle Ryckbost, Willy Robijns, Charles Huygens, Victor Schoenmakers and Patrick Verhoeven marking the start of the joint ESPO – EFIP office in 2009

(President) for EFIP, and Victor Schoenmakers (Chairman) and Patrick Verhoeven (Secretary General) for ESPO.

In the past, maritime ports were mainly looking at the sea, focusing on enhancing their maritime links and their role as gateways. The hinterland was of lesser interest. This changed when flourishing port business created growing pains in some major seaports, obliging them to pay more attention to the hinterland and to team up with these multimodal nodes, the inland ports.

The fact that EFIP and ESPO decided to join forces and create synergies, reflected the reality whereby sea and inland ports were enhancing their cooperation. In the past, maritime ports were mainly looking at the sea, focusing on enhancing their maritime links and their role as gateways.

On 2 April 2009 EFIP and ESPO signed an agreement whereby it was decided that EFIP and ESPO would have a joint secretariat. However, EFIP would stay a separate legal entity with its own decision-making structures. Isabelle Ryckbost was appointed as EFIP Director from 1 May 2009.

It was the time when the Commission prepared the ground for a new Transport Infrastructure Policy, with new TEN-T guidelines and a new financial instrument in the pipeline; the future connecting Europe Facility.

The hinterland was of lesser interest. This changed when flourishing port business created growing pains in some major seaports, obliging them to pay more attention to the hinterland and to team up with these multimodal nodes, the inland ports. This also resulted in a TEN-T policy in 2013 which did not only recognise core and comprehensive seaports but also core and comprehensive inland ports as essential nodes of the multimodal transport network.

So in a way, and paradoxically maybe, while being in a joint office with ESPO during the last decade, EFIP has been able to solidify its identity and the identity of its members towards European policy makers. At the same time, we see that increasingly, seaports are convinced that they do not only have a very important maritime front door but also an equally important hinterland door that they have to consider and maintain.

Looking back at the last ten years, we believe that the joint ESPO-EFIP office has delivered and has allowed both organisations to develop further without losing their identity, independence and strength. We are looking forward to continuing our good cooperation despite, as in all good families, the typical family squabbles. Happy birthday, sister!

## Exploit the Multimodal Dimension of Ports

### Herald Ruijters

Director, DG MOVE, Investments, Innovative and Sustainable Transport, European Commission

Dear colleagues of ESPO,

Please allow me to congratulate the European Sea Ports Organisation on its silver jubilee! It is an honour to contribute to this Book of Friends.

The European seaports are the points of entry and departure for the vast majority of goods that are imported and exported from the EU territory. Their role in the very economical existence of the EU cannot be underestimated. EU ports are continuously evolving from simple transport gateways into fully fledged logistics and energy hubs, brimming with pioneering research and a launch pad for highly state-of-the-art “made in Europe” commercial innovations.

For that very reason, they have played a key role in the revision of the Trans-European Transport Network and were heavily debated in 2011–2013, during the process leading up to the new Regulation. The result is a very solid one, with 106 ports making up the core network and 225 part of a comprehensive network. Some 84 ports are located on one of the nine core network corridors, making them key points of departure and arrival for a multitude of goods that can then – thanks to the robust TEN-T Network – circulate quickly and freely within the EU Single Market. Since the crucial reshaping of transport infrastructure policy, the importance of these long-distance corridors, but also the further irrigation of the TEN-T through other ports (furthered by the Motorways of Sea), has been growing and growing. And I would claim that we have not seen the end of this evolution. By far!

One of the key points to work on is to fully exploit the multimodal dimension that ports can offer. Ideally, all of them should be connected to rail and, where possible, inland waterways. These connections can be used first and foremost to make the goal of full decarbonisation a reality as soon as possible. Transport by road can then complement other transport modes for more fine-maze and shorter distance distribution. The strategic location of ports on the TEN-T map and its very refined and systematic distribution all along the EU’s coastlines creates an exciting opportunity to fully exploit the potential of neighbouring regions.

In recent years, investment in infrastructure has reached a record low.

EU ports are continuously evolving from simple transport gateways into fully fledged logistics and energy hubs, brimming with pioneering research and a launch pad for highly state-of-the-art “made in Europe” commercial innovations.

This translates into increasingly clogged roads on our continent that, in turn, threaten our economic position and citizens’ well-being. The delays in maintenance and in closing gaps that in some cases were identified decades ago, point to a clear need for an increase of funding levels in order to ensure that Europe is endowed with a high-level, quality infrastructure and can assume

its leading economic position. This is even more the case now that we are investing heavily in decarbonised, safe and intelligent transport, including in our ports.

Ships, possibly automated in the future, should be able to enter any port in Europe in full prior knowledge of how its containers, bulk or liquids will be distributed. A single document handling and smooth and effortless transfer between transport modes will ensure a fluid logistical process.

Alternative fuels, shore-side electricity, wastewater management, reception facilities, digitalisation and further automation of ports’ processes are all areas in which investment is ongoing – and will continue – including via various EU instruments that are directing scarce grants towards where they are needed most. Blending, guarantees and loans are also being used wherever possible to maximise the impact.

It is with great pleasure that I can acknowledge the very proactive role that ESPO has always played in all of the issues that I have mentioned above. ESPO’s support for the CEF budget has been constant and culminated in the Declaration adopted in Ljubljana, at the TEN-T Days, in the presence of Commissioners Bulc and Oettinger.

I therefore look forward with great confidence to the continuation of this cooperation over the coming 25 years, during which we will hopefully see a truly connected Europe, with the role of ports having taken a clear lead!

## Brussels’ First Port of Call

Isabelle Ryckbost

Secretary General, ESPO

ESPO entered into my professional life back in spring 2001. I was at that time the assistant of Dirk Sterckx, Member of the European Parliament. Sterckx was the liberal spokesperson for the Erika packages and later also rapporteur for one of the proposals. One of the main issues we had to deal with was the proposal obliging Member States to indicate one or more “ports of refuge”. In the same period, the first port package proposal came out.

Enough reasons for ESPO to knock on our door. It is in those years I got to know Patrick Verhoeven and the then Chairmen: David Whitehead, Giuliano Gallanti and Victor Schoenmakers. The cooperation with ESPO always went well. ESPO was one of my favourite stakeholders. They answered our questions, informed us correctly and defended strongly their views. We did not always agree, but, also in disagreement, we continued to speak, discuss and laugh! A lot.

In 2009, Patrick convinced me to leave the Parliament and to join the ESPO team as Director of EFIP. ESPO and EFIP were like brother and



Isabelle Ryckbost with Santiago Garcia-Milà and Eamonn O'Reilly at the ESPO General Assembly 2016 in Dublin

sister: sitting under one roof, sharing ideas and again many moments of friendship. At that time, I was not yet very familiar with ESPO members. As representative of the inland ports, I was a bit looking at these “big seaports” as an inland barge might be looking when the Emma Maersk is passing by.

This changed in August 2013, when I started as ESPO Secretary General. The latest Ports Regulation Proposal (third attempt!) had just

That meeting made me realise the main strength of ESPO: a coalition of the willing that is based on dedicated and professional members who are not only taking but also giving.

been published. ESPO had to define again a common position on a proposal that aimed at fitting a sector that is characterised by diversity and complexity in one law. For weeks, each phone call, each meeting with a member made me change our draft position.

Arriving in Dublin in September 2013 for what would be my first ESPO Executive Committee meeting, I realised that getting an agreement would not just be a walk in the park. Reading the reservations on the faces of some of the ExCo members, it was with some hesitation that I presented a draft position. But members listened to me and listened to each other. We discussed and at the end of the morning, ESPO had a position, a mandate for us to present and defend in Brussels. That meeting made me realise the main strength of ESPO: a coalition of the willing that is based on dedicated and professional members who are not only taking but also giving.

I am very grateful for the opportunity that has been given to me to lead this organisation for the last five years, for the knowhow passed on to me by Patrick, for the welcome and confidence by Santiago Garcia-Milà, the Executive Committee and the many members when I started, for the continuous good cooperation with the many other associations in our sector, for the constructive debates with many policy makers over the last years and, last but not least, for the fantastic ESPO team I can rely on.

With its 25 years, ESPO is still young, too young to rest on its laurels. Let's hope that in the coming years we can bring the organisation and thus the ports again a step further. Let's hope that ESPO remains that same Brussels' first port of call for all European ports and ESPO members will continue to finish telephone conversations with “looking forward to the meeting next week”. Or would they rather refer to the after-drinks? ;-)

# So Much Stronger with ESPO Than Alone

## Victor Schoenmakers

Chairman of ESPO (2008 – 2012)  
Director Corporate Strategy, Port of Rotterdam

I started my career in the Port of Rotterdam a few years after the start of ESPO. I was not so very much involved in the development of the European port landscape at that time.

My serious introduction to the dynamics of port policy started in 2000, when I became the Director Strategy and Communication of the Port of Rotterdam and the Representative of the Netherlands in the Executive Committee of ESPO.

At my very first ExCo meeting in Brussels the first port package was an important topic. I very well remember Eric van Hooydonk's two-hour exposé of the legal implications of the proposal. I was lost. It seemed to me that it would be quite impossible for ESPO members to find a common ground, a way out of this complicated jungle. However, we managed to launch the internal discussion and also, with the support of the European Commission, we were able to identify the threats that would restore and bring us back to the old and traditional landlord position of the Port Authorities. Just in a period in which these same Port Authorities embarked on a journey towards a market-oriented, autonomous and proactive port developer, just when the corporatisation of the European ports got momentum. This development was quite different from a policy that positioned Port Authorities in a simple service mode, only able to facilitate port users and services without any focus or ambition of their own.

It remains a very essential and fundamental discussion. The final Port Regulation, that is after 17 years the outcome of this discussion, acknowledges this ambition of the European seaports in the market place and at the same time safeguards the interests of the different service providers. European ports must now take the responsibility to become a proactive port developer. These last years I have witnessed in the ESPO membership and network a growing awareness of ports towards being a proactive port developer. I am confident that this line will become stronger in the next years.



The former Commissioner for Transport, Antonio Tajani (2008 – 2010), meeting with Victor Schoenmakers and Patrick Verhoeven

All those years I was confronted with a very differentiated and often very amusing set of actors, players and situations. I vividly remember the Oslo night and Agreement on the first Port Package, the arguments and letters that were exchanged afterwards. My election as Chairman of ESPO, the yearly conferences all over Europe from Stockholm to Algeciras. Not to be forgotten the social programme and the survival mode during the very serious debates, all those next mornings.

Most important for me was and is of course the ESPO scene and friendship. The colleagues and competitors in the Hamburg-Le Havre range, the discussions with the ports in the South, the Baltic and Scandinavia. The dynamics in all those countries and the way they influence the position of the ports in ESPO. In spite of all those differences, ESPO is one of the most close-knit communities I ever saw and belonged to. We share the emotion, the love for ports and their strategic role. The many challenges in common make our differences small and not relevant in the scope of finding a common strategy or solution. I have seen that reflected in the rapid recent modernisation of the ESPO organisation, the professionalisation of ESPO on data and information management and the focus on the great challenge of climate policy and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. That is the value of ESPO as recognised by all our colleagues in the world of ports and transport. With ESPO we are so much stronger than alone.

# Happy Birthday!

## Dirk Sterckx

Member of the European Parliament (1999 – 2011)

Mid-December 1999, as I had only been a few months into my first mandate as a MEP, the oil-tanker Erika broke in two during a heavy storm and sank near the southern coast of Brittany. The pollution was dramatic, the loss of marine life immense. Soon it became clear that many mistakes had been made that had affected maritime safety and had caused enormous damage.

Why was a tanker still in operation although structural weaknesses had been found? Why was it impossible to find out who owned the ship? Why was the ship, while it was still afloat, not brought into a safe place where it could take shelter from the storm? Why could the Freedom of the high seas be a passport to unsafe seas for some? The people of Brittany demanded a stronger control of maritime activities and soon the European



Dirk Sterckx with the former CEO of the Port of Antwerp, Eddy Bruyninckx, at the ESPO Annual Lunch 2005

Commissioner for Transport, Loyola de Palacio, presented a “package” of six Directives to regulate maritime transport along the coasts of the Union.

I was the “shadow-rapporteur” on the first Erika-package for the Liberal group in the European Parliament and, later on, also rapporteur on one of the proposals of the second package, and I discovered the fascinating and intriguing world of maritime transport.

ESPO is for me an example of the force of improvement a lobby organisation can be.

That was when I was first contacted by an organisation called ESPO. Its Secretary General was a man called Patrick Verhoeven, from my home town of Antwerp. Soon we got

acquainted and worked together to find the best possible legal definition of a “Port of Refuge” and the most efficient way to improve maritime safety with the Directives we were making. He patiently explained the tasks and problems that port authorities faced. We had long talks on the difference between a “port” of refuge and a “place” of refuge. He introduced me to other important players in the maritime sector.

I found out that ESPO does not only represent huge ports like Rotterdam, Antwerp or Hamburg, but also small ports that don’t have the lobbying power that the big ones have. For them ESPO comes in as a representative organisation for the whole range of ports throughout the very different coasts of Europe. Over the years I had regular “maritime lunches” with Patrick, where he shared his immense knowledge of what was going on in the decision-making circles of Commission and Council, together with another compatriot, Alfons Guinier, who was the Secretary General of the European Shipowners. That was when they must have found out that my Parliamentary Assistant was a woman of talent and initiative. In 2009, at the end of my second mandate as a MEP, Patrick convinced Isabelle Ryckbost to come and work for the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP), from where she went to ESPO when Patrick left.

ESPO is for me an example of the force of improvement a lobby organisation can be. It has played a crucial role in the strengthening of European regulation on ports. Together with so many people in all the port authorities in Europe, large or small, ESPO has many reasons to be proud of its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

# Europe and its Stakeholders: Wrestling Match or Waltz?

## Dimitrios Theologitis

Former Head of Ports Policy, European Commission

How things change... One tends to forget that 25 years ago European policy-making methods were very different from now. There was a standard scheme which could take much more than 10 years to be achieved: first conduct basic policy-related research on a subject; then analyse the results, identify gaps and fill them with smaller, more targeted studies. Based on this, European Commission officials then drafted a legal instrument and had it adopted by the Commission, before sending it out to the world, to the Council and to the European Parliament. The powers of the latter were not what they are today, it was an “opinion” and thus of limited influence on the content.

Stakeholders came in only inasmuch as they were proactive and had good entries towards the policy officials. Others even found out the detailed contents of a proposal after it had been published! The wrestling match seriously started, but because most proposals were about the Single Market, the Commission often won.

Today the situation is very different. Impact assessment, economic, social, environmental and stakeholder consultation are part of the official procedure. Instead of stakeholders trying to find a good contact within the Commission, the officials are under the obligation to reach out to the stakeholders. Transparency is key, each step of the way has to be announced, documented and consulted with the associations and the world at large.

I have personal recollection of the consultation process on the latest European ports policy proposals – after all, it lasted nearly five years! And under ports policy one has to understand not only the latest regulation on port services and transparency but also the whole Commission package in support of ports: hinterland connections – see TEN-T policy and infrastructure funding, environment, air emissions, administrative simplification, research in port efficiency, concessions, public finance and state aid, social issues and dialogue – and relevant infringements, health & safety, training, and statistics.

It must be said that the role of ESPO has not always been an easy one since it has to represent a streamlined position drawn from the diverse



Dimitrios Theologitis at the ESPO Award 2014

circumstances of its members, institutional or individual. It is not easy to bridge the gap between those who defend that ports are purely private enterprises and those who maintain that ports fulfil a public role. On this, the Commission has always kept a balanced attitude, considering that ports fulfil both functions, with some ports leaning more towards a public remit and others, in particular those large ports in geographical areas where competition is fierce, having to obey private competition rules.

In all these aspects, ESPO, as the stakeholder organisation of the European ports, has played a crucial role. The creation and implementation of a successful European ports policy has been a long uphill struggle lasting two decades where both parties grew to understand and have confidence in each other. Substantial input from the ports, facts and opinions, were either available in ESPO’s policy documents or at worst – or best – during a phone call or an after-hour drink away!

Doesn’t this resemble a waltz between two partners needing and respecting each other? \*\*

\*\* The metaphor is from the farewell speech of Mr Jean-Marie Woehrling, former Secretary-General of the Rhine Navigation Commission.



Patrick Verhoeven and Santiago Garcia-Milà  
at ESPO's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## All in the Family

### Patrick Verhoeven

Managing Director, International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH)  
Secretary General of ESPO (2000 – 2013)  
Assistant Professor at C-Mat

Reflecting on 25 years of an organisation's life in 500 words is just impossible, especially if that organisation is very near one's heart. I had the privilege of serving ESPO during thirteen happy and exciting years. What I enjoyed most is that the organisation resembles a big family, complete with its quirky aunts and mad cousins. This remarkable organisational culture was established by my predecessor Pamela Le Garrec and raised to perfection by my successor Isabelle Ryckbost. Testimonials are the Annual Conferences and Award Ceremonies, which today rank among the most hospitable port events around.

I started my tenure with ESPO when the European Commission was seeking input on its port services directive proposal. This consultation had

At twenty-five years old, ESPO has gracefully passed its coming-of-age period. I wish its wonderful staff, members and leadership the wisdom that comes with maturity. But do remain that slightly eccentric family that so positively distinguishes you from other organisations.

nothing in common with the crafty impact assessment procedures that we now have. We had to make do with half a page of basic questions, sent off during summer when most people were on holiday. Those were the good old days of François Lamoureux's administration: never mind too much what people think, the Commission knows best. You may well have the impression that this attitude has regained traction lately. But let's

not dwell on Brexit, I've got only 304 words left!

The port services saga certainly forms a unique chapter in the history of European policy-making; an unseen process of two parliamentary defeats, a reconciliatory soft-law policy and a final regulation that applies to few. ESPO has been at the heart of it all. Often it was even the driving force, think of the workshops and conferences that were held after the second defeat of the Directive.

Back in 2000, it was anything but evident that ESPO would be so influential. The dividing lines among the membership were deep and multiple, north versus south, small versus big, privately owned versus

government funded, etc. The famous Oslo Agreement of June 2001 brought salvation, based on a shared concept of what a port authority is supposed to be. The Oslo Agreement got a bit shrouded in the mists of time. What really happened during that General Assembly meeting in the Norwegian capital is that after a frustrating day of agonising over ESPO's formal position on the port services Directive, some members gathered late in the evening at the bar of the Bristol Hotel for a heated, alcohol-fuelled discussion on a new draft that my colleague Marie-Philippe Coloby and I had prepared on the spot. I recall Italian delegates slamming the table and a tipsy Swedish member pontificating that it was "all about globalisation". The gathering broke up in the wee hours, totally confused. Was it the effect of hangover and/or fatigue, I don't know – but when the General Assembly reconvened later that morning, an agreement was miraculously reached. It served ESPO well. The common sense of purpose not only helped mastering the European policy debate, it also fostered leadership in port governance, environmental management and societal integration of ports. At twenty-five years old, ESPO has gracefully passed its coming-of-age period. I wish its wonderful staff, members and leadership the wisdom that comes with maturity. But do remain that slightly eccentric family that so positively distinguishes you from other organisations.

## ESPO – Brussels Lobby or Religious Institution?

**Eric Van Hooydonk**

Port Law Professor at the University of Ghent  
Port Law Advocate in Antwerp

The world of ports is my professional biotope. Exactly in the same year that ESPO celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary, I look back on thirty years of experience as a port lawyer. Whether I want it or not, ESPO is a part of my life. Together with ESPO and other organisations, I worked on the European Port Package for twenty years. So much time elapsed between the publication of the Green Paper on Sea Ports and Maritime Infrastructure in 1997 and the adoption of the EU Seaports Regulation last year. During that time, ESPO built up a great authority as a constructive

interlocutor for the European Institutions. It has always been an honour for me to be a speaker at ESPO events. The most remarkable memory I have is from the 2006 Conference in the beautiful port city of Stockholm. I decided to throw away my reputation as a port lawyer by speaking about

ESPO is not just a Brussels EU lobby. It is a religious institution. Not because its administrators, directors or committee members meet at the Treurenberg, the De Motstraat or in the Berlaymont building in a bishop's robe, but because port cities are the basis of the wealth and civilisation in our wonderful old continent.

the soft values of seaports. My presentation contained many interesting images, from a fascinating rusty-coloured scrap terminal in Malmö, to a chemical leak near the oil refinery at Grangemouth docks, a caricature of the legendary Antwerp harbour boss Leo Delwaide in an anti-port comic strip story, and nasty warehouses in the port areas of Cardiff and Odessa. Although the speech was a great success, it also became a disaster for my agenda. I was invited to come and tell the story to numerous

ESPO members, from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria to Pori in the far north. There the director proudly showed me the new bench he had installed to allow the population to enjoy the jaw-dropping spectacle of loading and unloading sawn planks and copper and nickel concentrate. At ESPO's suggestion, the social integration of ports became an official policy theme. It actually appeared in the 2007 Port Communication of the European Commission (unfortunately without policy proposals on port prostitution). ESPO started with the award of an annual prize for projects to promote the societal integration of ports. That finally brings me to the theme of this contribution. ESPO is not just a Brussels EU lobby. It is a religious institution. Not because its administrators, directors or committee members meet at the Treurenberg, the De Motstraat or in the Berlaymont building in a bishop's robe, but because port cities are the basis of the wealth and civilisation in our wonderful old continent. Not for nothing did the Romans worship Portunus, the god of ports. For centuries port cities have been centres of attraction and gateways for people, prosperity, knowledge and art. We all know that ports are still a hard competitive business today, a money-making machine and an instrument of the industrial and consumer society. But they are and remain bastions of world peace and foci of culture. ESPO is the guardian of an essential piece of Europe and I wish it happy sailing.

# ESPO's Honeymoon Period

## David Whitehead

Founding Member of ESPO and Chairman of ESPO (2001 – 2004)

Before ESPO, there was the European Port Working Group and I started attending its meetings in 1990. It was, rather strangely, chaired by the Commission, with Commission officials providing agendas and papers. European ports policy hardly existed at that time, but by the early 1990s the

The decision was taken, strongly encouraged by the Commission, to set up a new organisation funded by the industry. It took two years to agree on ESPO's constitution. I was a member of the drafting Committee and I remember meetings in the splendid surroundings of Antwerp City Hall where we were served drinks on silver trays by the Stadhuis staff.

Single Market was about to be launched and new Member States with significant port and shipping interests were lining up to join the EEC. Competition issues were becoming more acute and it was clear that the Working Group was not the right vehicle to address these changes. The decision was taken, strongly encouraged by the Commission, to set up a new organisation funded by the industry. It took two years to agree on ESPO's constitution. I was a member of the drafting Committee and I remember meetings in the splendid

surroundings of Antwerp City Hall where we were served drinks on silver trays by the Stadhuis staff. Well, it was over 25 years ago.

ESPO was launched on a very cold January day in 1993. Its first Chairman, and the person who had been the unofficial leader of the European ports industry since the 1980s, was Fernand Suykens, the CEO of the Port of Antwerp. He was a formidable character whose large cigars (you could smoke in buildings back then) would set off the fire alarms in the Commission meeting rooms.

Its first Secretary General was Pamela Le Garrec who had the daunting task of giving the new organisation a role and establishing its credibility with the Commission. ESPO's first office was a single room at the top of a narrow flight of stairs in offices shared with ECSA. We soon moved to Avenue Michel Ange where we had the luxury of our own meeting room. Unfortunately it was below street level, very small and with no air conditioning. We used to recover by going out into the small garden at the back.



David Whitehead and the then Commissioner for Transport, Loyola de Palacio, at the ESPO Conference 2004 in Rotterdam

Deciding ESPO's priorities resulted in some difficult exchanges.

The industry was not used to reaching consensus, mainly because it had never really been required to do so. There were very different approaches to, for example, ownership and state aid issues. A unifying theme was needed and this was eventually provided by the environment. The passing of the Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directives in the early 1990s created the chance for the industry to work closely together. It led directly to the publication of ESPO's first Environmental Code of Practice in 1994. It demonstrated that there were wider societal responsibilities outside those of port performance which only an organisation such as ESPO could address.

ESPO's honeymoon period ended with the publication of the first Ports Package in 2001. Fortunately by that time, ESPO had developed the depth and expertise to cope with what was to come.

I remember those early years with great fondness. They were particularly exciting because we were starting from very little. We had the opportunity to design a completely new organisation, and it's not often you get the chance.

# The Red Wine Goes In – The Ideas Come Out

Christopher Wooldridge

Honorary Research Fellow, Cardiff University, UK

By definition, an organisation is a group of people formed into a society meeting to share a common interest. In the multidisciplinary world of port activities and operations, ESPO has indeed developed and evolved as the point of contact for the wide range of interactions between representative port professionals, as the catalyst for both reactive and pro-active strategic decision-making on behalf of the sector, and as the headquarters of an interactive network capable of providing specialist support within a social framework. An established hall-mark of ESPO over the years has been its ability to deliberate on politics, policies and practices through friendly, convivial (and often jovial) gatherings of its members.

ESPO may justifiably celebrate the direct influence that it has brought to bear on the global issue of port environmental management. Over twenty-five years of collaborative effort, ESPO has established policies that determine practices to this day, influenced the nature of legislation and regulations, and set benchmark standards of quality in terms of applied environmental management. The initial, prime environmental policy statement of “compliance through voluntary, self-regulation” continues as a profound statement of intent and practice. This mantra continues to underpin its activities to provide the sector with strategies toward the environment that are appropriate to the distinctive characteristics and requirements of the port sector and individual port authorities. Port representatives and associated research colleagues alike understand that compliance is non-negotiable, yet every port is unique and thus deserves the option to act in accordance with legislation in a manner appropriate to the conditions and circumstances of its own geographical and operational profile.

Over the years, ESPO’s own initiatives and its partnerships with successive research projects related to environmental management have produced practicable tools, guidelines and good practice examples. ESPO’s contribution to collective achievement is epitomised by its association with, and administration of, the EcoPorts Network ([www.ecoport.com](http://www.ecoport.com)). EcoPorts delivers the only port, sector-specific quality

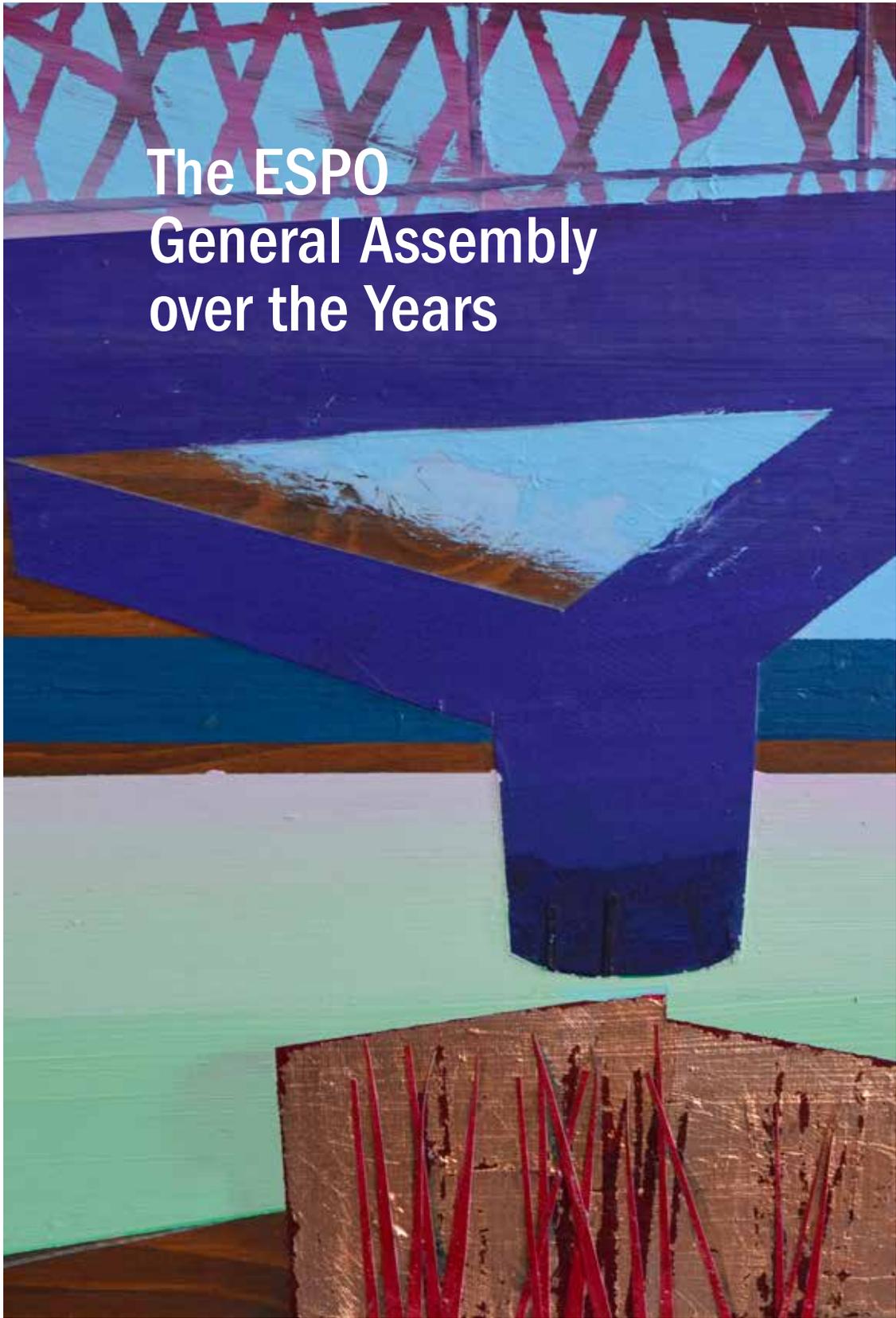


Chris Wooldridge on stage at the ESPO Conference Dinner 2004 in Rotterdam

Environmental Management System (EMS) Standard (Independently audited by Lloyd’s Register). This International Standard is not only adopted by ESPO, but is now recognised by the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), the World Bank (European Investment Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction & Development), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the African Ports Association (including Port Management Association of West and Central Africa (PMAWCA)), the Arab Sea Ports Federation (ASPF) and the Taiwan Ports International Corporation (TIPC) – evidence of the ongoing influence and impact of ESPO’s environmental policies and deliverables (see [www.ecosl.eu](http://www.ecosl.eu) for map of global outreach).

Whether its members and associated colleagues meet in the formal setting of its Committees and Conferences, or in the informal, post-dinner venues of ships, maritime museums, historic buildings – or local tavernas, ESPO is about people and the role it plays in stimulating ideas, and building trust and partnerships to deliver environmental policy in a professional, effective – and sociable fashion:

*Cheers! Proost! Santé! Zum wohl! YTEIA! Sláint! Cin cin! Na zdrowie! Saúde! Salud! Salut! Skål! Terviseks! Kippis! Živjeli! Priekā! Noroc! Şerefe!*



The ESPO  
General Assembly  
over the Years



General Assembly 1993, Copenhagen (top) – General Assembly 1998, Lisbon (bottom)



General Assembly 2001, Antwerp (top) – General Assembly 2002, Gdansk (bottom)

General Assembly 2004, Brussels (top) – General Assembly 2005, Brussels (bottom)



General Assembly 2006, Stockholm (top) – General Assembly 2006, Brussels (bottom)

General Assembly 2007, Algeiras (top) – General Assembly 2008, Hamburg (bottom)



General Assembly 2009, Marseilles (top) – General Assembly 2010, Helsinki (bottom)

General Assembly 2011, Cyprus (top) – General Assembly 2012, Sopot (bottom)



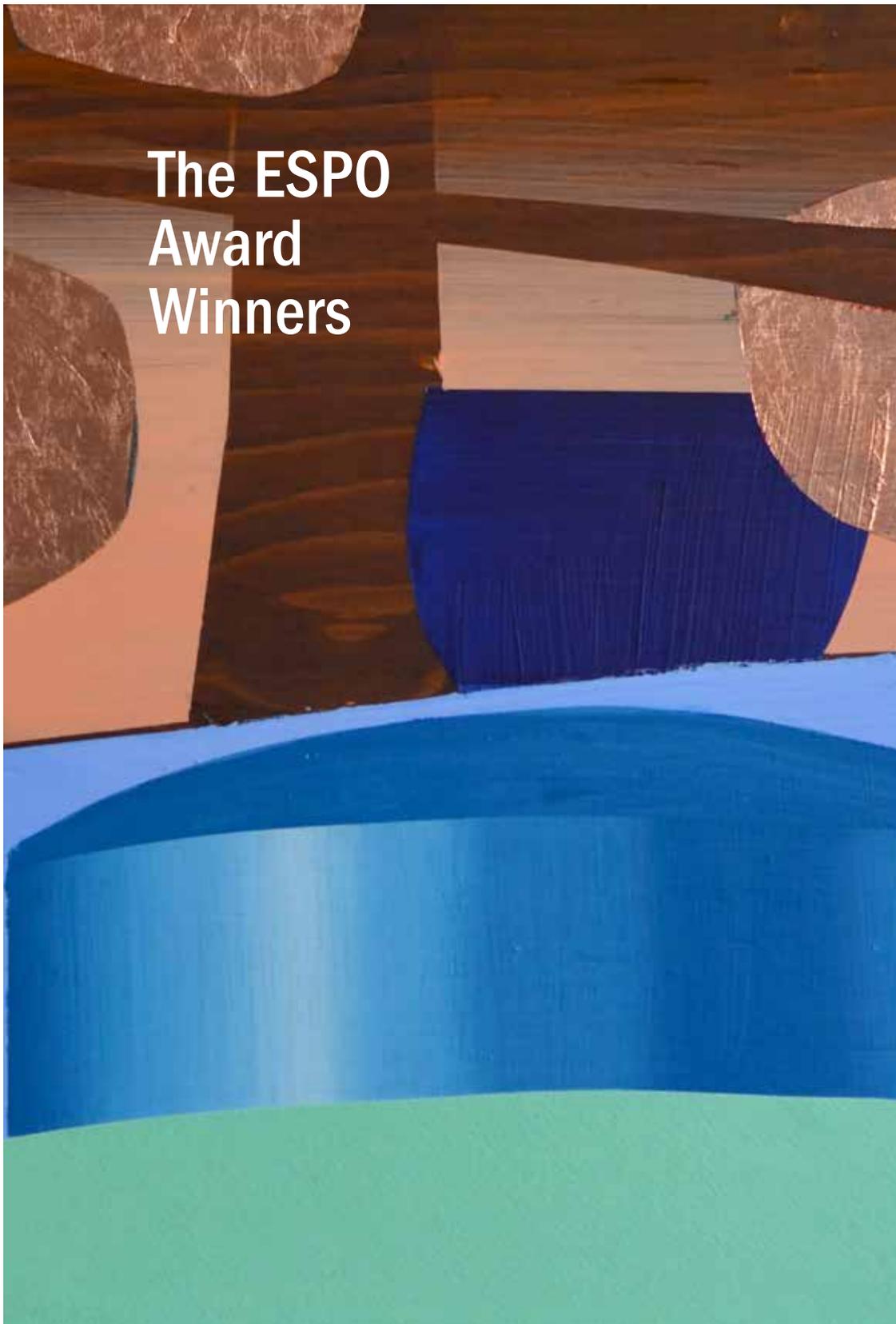
General Assembly 2013, Varna (top) – General Assembly 2014, Gothenburg (bottom)

General Assembly 2015, Athens (top) – General Assembly 2016, Dublin (bottom)



General Assembly 2017, Barcelona (top) – General Assembly 2018, Rotterdam (bottom)

# The ESPO Award Winners



ESPO Award 2009, winner Gijón (top) – ESPO Award 2010, winner Helsinki (bottom)



ESPO Award 2011, winner Stockholm (top) – ESPO Award 2012, winner Genoa (bottom)

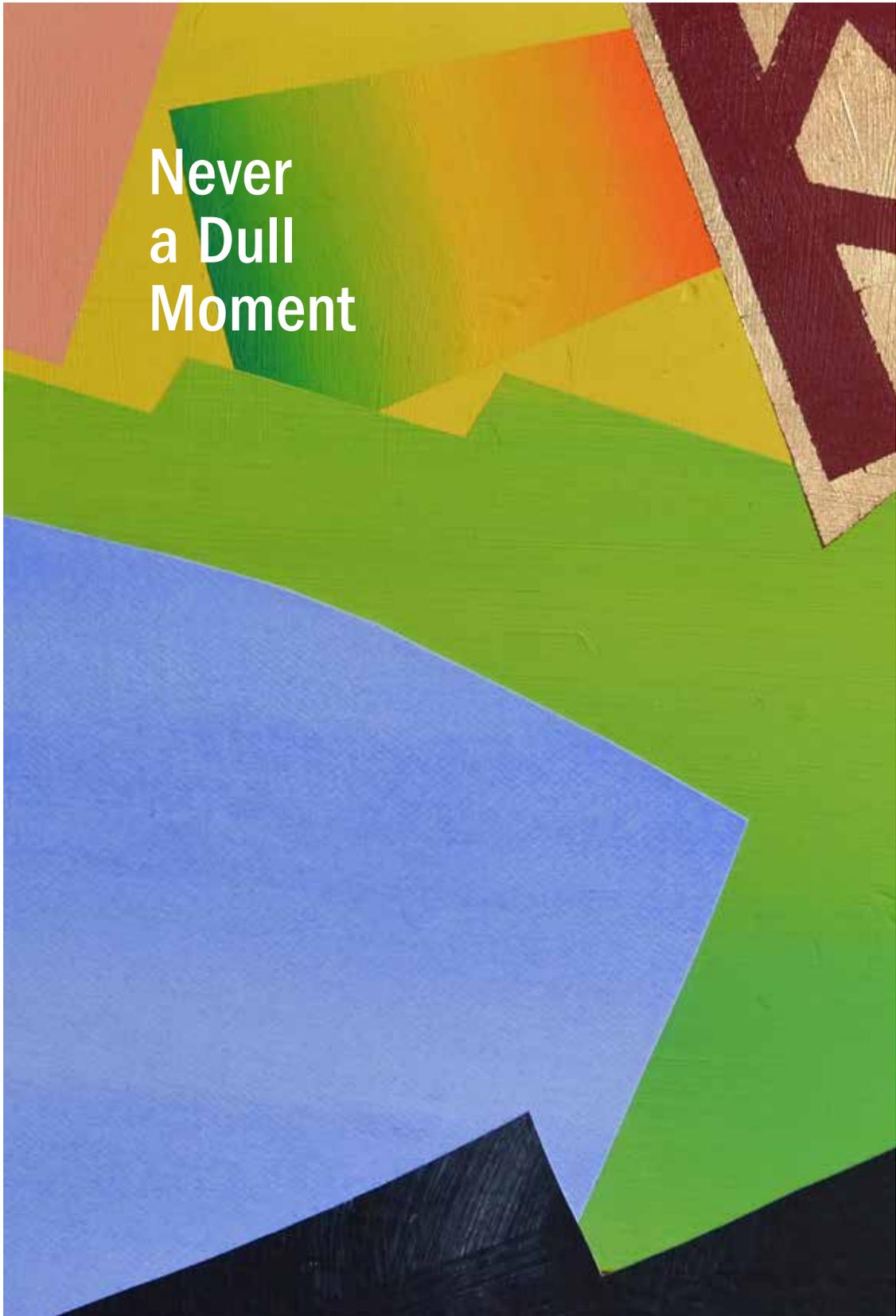
ESPO Award 2013, winner Antwerp (top) – ESPO Award 2014, winner Koper (bottom)



ESPO Award 2017, winner Guadeloupe



ESPO Award 2015, winner Dublin (top) – ESPO Award 2016, winner Bremen (bottom)



Never a Dull Moment



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

Never a Dull Moment



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

Never a Dull Moment



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

Never a Dull Moment

# The After-Meetings



The After-Meetings



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

The After-Meetings



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The After-Meetings



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

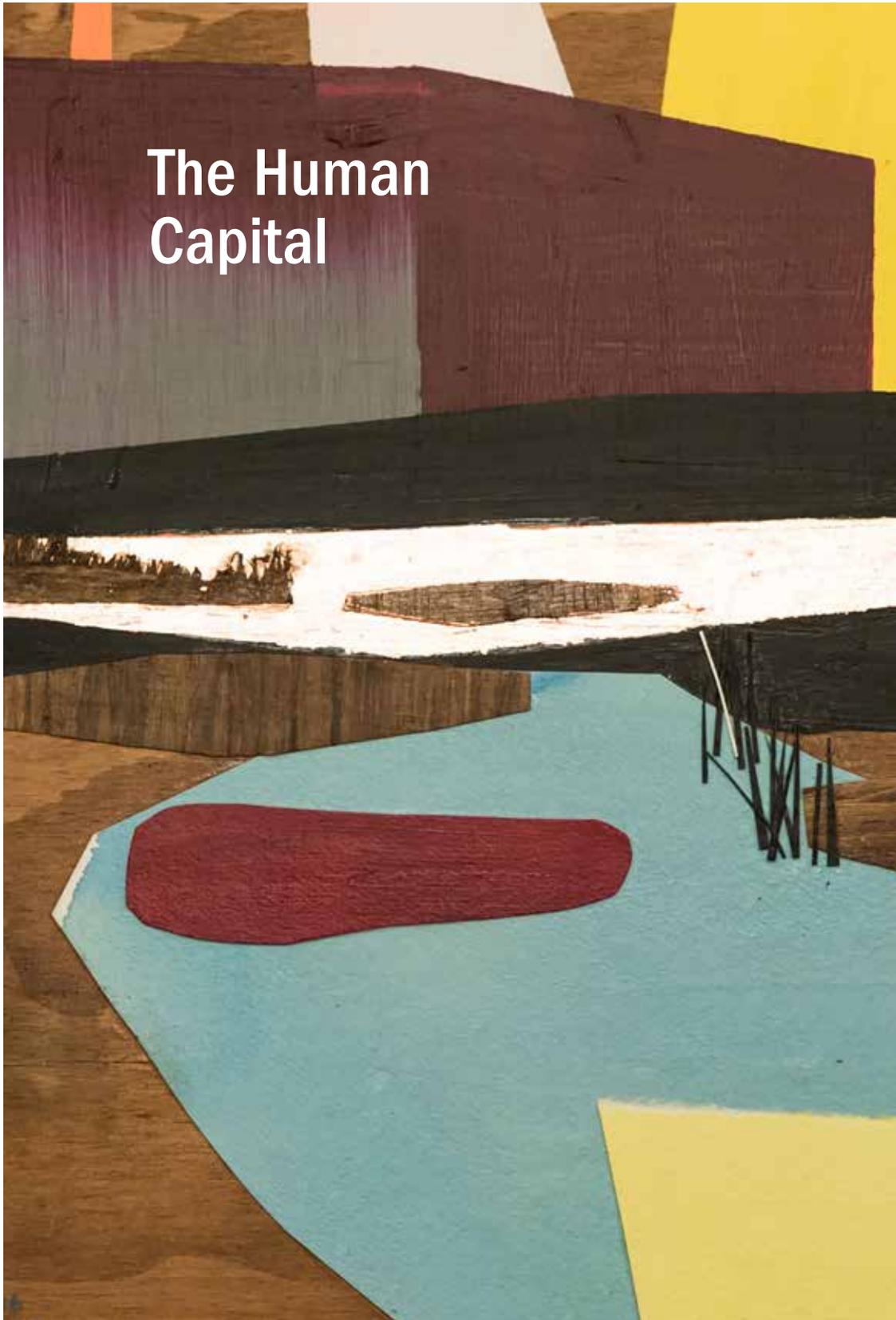
The After-Meetings



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

The After-Meetings

# The Human Capital



The Human Capital



ESPO at 25, Connecting People and Ports

The Human Capital

# ESPO Today

ESPO represents the port authorities, port associations and port administrations of the seaports of 23 Member States of the European Union and Norway at EU political level. ESPO also has observer members in Iceland, Israel and Ukraine.

The following national port associations and port administrations are members of ESPO: Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company, Croatian Ports Association, Cyprus Ports Authority, Danish Ports, Finnish Port Association, Union des Ports de France (UPF), Hellenic Ports Association (ELIME), Irish Ports Association, Associazione Porti Italiani (Assoporti), Transport Malta, Norwegian Ports, Association Ports of Portugal (APP), Administratia Porturilor Maritime S.A. Constantza, Puertos del Estado, Ports of Sweden, British Ports Association / UK Major Ports Group.

The following port associations and port administrations are observers at ESPO: Associated Icelandic Ports, Israel Ports Company (AIP) and State Enterprise "Ukrainian Sea Ports Authority" (USPA).

The following member countries are represented by their ports directly: Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia.

## The First Port of Call for Transport Policy Makers

The European Sea Ports Organisation is the principal interface between European seaports and the institutions of the European Union and its policy makers.

## A Knowledge Network That Drives Ports to Perform Better

In addition to representing the interests of European ports, ESPO is a knowledge network which brings together active professionals from the port sector and national ports organisations. Through various bottom-up initiatives, ESPO drives significant improvements in the port sector in the key fields of environmental management, port-city integration, reporting of key performance data and cruise and passenger issues.

## EcoPorts

EcoPorts is the main environmental initiative of the European port sector. The well-established EcoPorts tools, the Self-Diagnosis Method (SDM) and the Port Environmental Review System (PERS) actively assist ports in their environmental management. The EcoPorts network counts nearly 100 ports. One third of the EcoPorts network are currently PERS certified.

[www.ecoport.com](http://www.ecoport.com)

## Code of Practice on Societal Integration of Ports

Since 2009, ESPO has been proactively working on improving the challenging port-city relationship with a view of improving the societal integration of ports. In 2010, ESPO published a code of practice on societal integration of ports. Since 2009, ESPO has been honouring projects promoting the societal integration of ports by handing out each year an award.

## ESPO Cruise and Ferry Ports Network

In 2014 ESPO signed a strategic cooperation agreement with different organisations representing the cruise ports in Europe and created a common platform: the ESPO Cruise and Ferry Ports Network.

## PortinSights

In 2017, as a follow-up to the EU co-funded PORTOPIA project, ESPO decided to develop a digital data platform for the gathering of throughput data, environmental data and port governance data. PortinSights combines all relevant port data in one platform and enables data collection, sharing and analysis for ESPO members.

[www.portinsights.eu](http://www.portinsights.eu)

## More Information

More information about ESPO and its members and activities can be found on ESPO's website.

The ESPO website is ESPO's library, newsroom and notice board. It gathers all our position papers, publications, press and it updates you about our upcoming events. You can also consult ESPO's annual report which features amongst others the annual throughput of Europe's main ports.

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## European Sea Ports Organisation

The European Port House  
Treurenberg 6  
B - 1000 Brussel / Bruxelles  
T +32 (0)2 736 34 63  
F +32 (0)2 736 63 25  
[mail@espo.be](mailto:mail@espo.be)

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