

Towards Europe's new integrated transport policy

THE European Union has the world's largest maritime territory, while the maritime regions of Europe account today for nearly half of the EU's population and GDP.

"The maritime zones under the jurisdiction of the member states are larger than their terrestrial territory.

"Against this background, it is not surprising that maritime transport is a key link in the European transport networks and a major facilitator of global logistical chains for the European and world economy."

These are the opening lines of the communication of the European Commission president Jose Barroso and Commissioner Joe Borg, entitled *Towards a future maritime policy for the union: a European vision for the oceans and the sea*.

A Maritime Policy Task Force of seven commissioners has been established to create the foundation for such a new integrated maritime policy dealing with all marine as well as maritime aspects.

Its first task will be to produce a Green Paper on a future EU maritime policy which should be adopted by the commission by the first half of 2006. Commissioner Borg is responsible for the preparation of the Green Paper.

On November 17, Mare Forum and the Dutch Maritime Network, in close co-operation with the task force, will hold a conference in Brussels entitled *The New European Maritime Policy*.

This will provide all relevant maritime stakeholders with the opportunity to voice their views and expectations for such an ambitious project. The conference will have a forum format.

The conference papers, which are made up from policy statements of the various European trade organisations, can already be viewed on the website of the conference (www.mareforum.com).

The conference will be opened by the European Commission president Barroso, followed by three sessions.

British Minister for Shipping Stephen Ladyman will open the session on the member states' perspectives. The various chairmen of the European maritime trade organisations will take part in the discussions on the views from the maritime and marine industries as well as the views from non-government organisations and other special interest groups in the second and third sessions.

In the fourth and final session of the conference commissioners Borg and Andris Piebalgs will give their views. Commissioner Borg will also outline the future roadmap and consultative procedures for the Green Paper.

The conference will be concluded by an extensive network event with the commissioners and the members of the Maritime Policy Task Force. For all those involved in European maritime policy, this is a unique occasion to take

As the European Commission grapples with drawing up a ground-breaking Green Paper on the future of Europe's maritime industries, many leading stakeholders are due to speak at a one-day conference in Brussels later this month. **Niko Wijnolst**, chairman of the Dutch Maritime Network, introduces the issues and urges all to join the debate

part in and contribute to the formulation of the future European maritime policy.

What is a European maritime cluster?

There are many different views on the approach of an integral maritime policy, all depending on the definition of the sectors that make up the maritime cluster.

That will not make it an easy task, as a previous study of the commission from

2001 demonstrates. (Policy Research Corporation and Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics: *Economic Impact of Maritime Industries in Europe*, published by the European Commission, DG 3, Enterprise, 2001.)

Member states use different definitions of their maritime sectors and clusters and often the basic economic data is not even available or not available in a suitable format.

The first task of the task force should be to establish a common standard of sector and cluster definitions. This should be used to update the economic impact study of 2001 and to extend it with the 10 countries that joined the EU last May.

This will probably show that the value added of the European maritime cluster is twice the current estimate. Anyway, it will show that the European maritime cluster is very large in terms of value added and employment and that it is a great export earner, as well as a great innovator.

There are several European initiatives to strengthen the various networks between and within the maritime sectors and clusters.

The Waterborne Technology Platform, created in January 2005, currently draws up a strategic research agenda on a cluster-wide basis for the 25 member states which will be an input for the Seventh Framework Programme.

Another event will take place in Paris on November 4, when 10 European maritime cluster organisations will formally create a network in order to promote the cluster approach in their own countries and at the European level. This European Network of Maritime Clusters can also be used to update the outdated economic impact study.

The problems with definitions and the consequent question of maritime policy are clearly demonstrated by the recent study *Marine Industries Global Market Analysis*, by Douglas-Westwood and published in March 2005 by Ireland's Marine Institute.

In this report several sectors are not represented, while other sectors are grossly overestimated or underestimated in turnover due to questionable delimitation of the sector. Without a realistic economic picture of the European maritime and marine clusters, a balanced policy on an aggregated level will be difficult to formulate.

What is a European maritime policy?

For the meeting on the new EU maritime

FirstPerson

Niko Wijnolst



policy, I have summarised already 20 policy papers from the various stakeholders, which can also be found on the conference website. There are many recurring themes, of which I can highlight two.

Many stakeholders are of the opinion that the European maritime policy cannot be defined in isolation.

For example, the shipowners want an explicit link with European transport policy; the environmental NGO's want a link with European environmental policy; the offshore industry wants a link with European energy policy; the shipbuilders and marine equipment manufacturers want a link with European competition policy; and the educational and research stakeholders want a link with European education and science policy.

So the main challenge for the task force is to define a European maritime policy that is focused on maritime and marine issues and, at the same time, can be closely linked to the other policy domains of the European Union.

A second recurring theme is the need for a strong European maritime cluster. It is like the proverbial chain: the chain is as strong as its weakest link.

If we allow one sector to disappear, than this will create many negative effects for the entire cluster.

Or formulated in a positive way: we can better grab the opportunities if we are present in all markets. A good example is the relatively recent offshore industry.

Without the existing maritime know-how, design, construction and operations capabilities, European companies would not have become world leaders in this domain of the future.

Already, 34% of the oil is produced offshore and this figure will increase rapidly. A similar development can be witnessed in offshore natural gas production.

The challenge for the participants in the conference is to help draft the multi-faceted European maritime policy and to support the European Commission in the discussion with the member states.

In the meantime, the many maritime sectors should reinforce their co-operation and maritime cluster organisations could become instrumental in this process as well.

After the conference of November 17, I shall write with Julian Bray, the Lloyd's List editor and co-chairman of the conference, the synthesis of the conference.

Let's hope that our current optimism will become a reality. Europe deserves a coherent and balanced European maritime policy that will create the conditions for a sustainable future.