

# An Environmental Code of Practice for sustainable port development and management - Europe

## 1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

## 2. Key Approaches

- Ecosystems based approach

## 3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The use of an Environmental Code of Practice for all port administrations in order to make port development sustainable.

## 4. Overview of the case

The Environmental Code of Practice was adopted by the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) in 2003. The new Code reiterates the port sector's collective commitment to contributing to sustainable development in its three dimensions – social, economic and environmental – and demonstrates that the port sector is improving its environmental performance. It recognises that the future for new port development and new investment must be done with environmental protection to the forefront.

## 5. Context and Objectives

### a) Context

The maritime sector is responsible for over two thirds (70%) of all trade between the Community and the rest of the world, as well as 41% of goods traffic within the Community (Short Sea Shipping). Ports are the gateway for the movement of millions of passengers each year and a wide range of goods (including vehicles, fresh food, steel, timber, building materials, machinery and manufactured goods) and raw materials (oil, petroleum, chemicals, ores, grain and animal feedstuffs) which are needed to fuel the European Union's economy. Ports also provide a range of other services e.g. fishing, leisure and recreation. They also accommodate various industrial installations (refineries, power plants, etc.). As a result, ports act as magnets for trade and industry and as generators of employment.

Global competition puts pressure on port administrations to offer infrastructure and facilities which accommodate the wishes of their customers. However, port development is constrained by scarcity of land, urban development and ecological considerations. It is affected by a number of EU Directives: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the Habitats and Birds Directives. Moreover, port development now falls within the context of ICZM which requires a comprehensive assessment, setting of objectives and planning of coastal systems and resources.

Sustainable port development and management have become an imperative because society, clients and stakeholders see sustainable development as a necessity for the acceptance of the port in the local economy. Increasingly, environmental legislation requires that ports are managed sustainably. However, an environmentally friendly attitude can also be advantageous commercially.

Within Europe, ports differ in their ownership, financial structure, activities and environmental responsibilities. Some port organisations are responsible for the management of the whole port area and may own at the same time port companies (including cargo operation companies), while others may only act as landlord or have mixed functions with respect to port

operations. The port area management is in some cases governed by environmental permits and in other cases not. Companies in the port area are almost in all cases governed by environmental permits. Stakeholders, however, often see the port area as one system. They consider the port manager as the contact-person for every environmental issue in the port area, even if the port administration has no direct responsibility. Moreover, even if they are not immediately responsible for the activities carried out in the port area, port administrations still bear, to a certain degree, a general public responsibility which will be further strengthened by the Environmental Liability Directive.

## **b) Objectives**

An Environmental Code of Practice has been developed by the European Sea Ports Organisation to advise port administrations, with or without direct environmental responsibility. This Code is designed to help them in developing tools to manage environmental issues and contribute to the full integration of ports in their wider community. The aim is to ensure that shipping is reaching its fullest potential by ensuring that ports, that are the natural starting and ending points of every sea voyage, are efficient and effective, yet environmentally friendly.

# **6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)**

## **a) Management**

Responsibility for the implementation of environmental legislation and policy varies from port to port and from member state to member state as determined by national legislation.

## **b) ICZM tools**

The Environmental Code of Practice provides practical guidelines to port administrations when developing their environmental policies. It also makes a number of important recommendations to port administrations to manage the implementation of EU legislation in accordance with the principles highlighted in the "Environmental Policy Code". It does not include mandatory requirements. EU legislation is implemented in different ways at the national and local levels.

The main environmental objectives which the EU port sector should seek to achieve are:

1. To contribute to the development of a sustainable logistics chain, as ports are key elements of the Trans-European Network.
2. To encourage wide consultation, dialogue and cooperation between port administrations and the relevant stakeholders at the local level (port users, public, NGOs) to facilitate the reconciliation, at an early stage, of differing interests and the acceptance of port projects by the local community.
3. To generate new knowledge and technology and to develop sustainable techniques which combine environmental effectiveness and cost efficiency. The aim is to achieve self-regulation and develop a bottom-up approach. Even if the EU decides to issue environmental regulations, the existing self-regulatory instruments, developed by the port sector itself and which address day-to-day practice, will provide a port-accepted background to be used as a basis for EU environmental policy. This will enable EU legislation to be more easily supported and implemented.
4. To enhance cooperation between port administrations in the field of the environment and facilitate the exchange of experiences and implementation of best practices on environmental issues to avoid unnecessary duplication and enable port administrations to share the costs of environmental solutions. This can be notably achieved through the participation of port administrations in a network e.g. the ECOPORTS Foundation. The aim is to create a level playing field by limiting poor environmental practice as a competitive factor between port administrations.
5. To increase awareness of environmental concerns and to integrate sustainable development into ports' policies, by encouraging port administrations to prepare a publicly available environmental policy setting out their strategies and methods of achieving them. This will contribute to promote a "corporate social responsibility" on the port.
6. To encourage port administrations to conduct appropriate environmental impact assessments for port projects and appropriate strategic environmental impact assessments for port development plans to assess, at an early stage, how their effects on the environment can be minimised.
7. To stimulate continual improvement in the port environment and its port environmental management by promoting the use of Environmental Management Information System tools (such as environmental audit, environmental review,

environmental management system, decision support system, port visitor internet tool).

8. To promote monitoring, based on environmental performance indicators, as recommended by the 2001 ESPO Environmental Review, in order to measure objectively identifiable progress in environmental port practices.
9. To promote environmental reporting as a means of communicating environmentally good behaviour to stakeholders and the European institutions, in line with the recommendations of the ESPO Environment Review published in 2001.
10. To intensify the communication about environmental improvements achieved by ports, with the aim to create a better understanding of the role of ports and their efforts towards sustainability.

The ports industry is developing voluntary schemes to move towards self-regulation. Since the activities of industries in the port area affect the area as a whole, the interests of the port administration are also related to the environmental effects of the actions undertaken by those industries in its port. A number of recommendations have been made with respect to important port activities, viz.:

1. port development,
2. dredging and disposal of dredged material,
3. soil contamination,
4. noise management,
5. port waste management,
6. water quality and management,
7. air quality and management,
8. monitoring the port environment & reporting,
9. port preparedness and contingency plans,
10. ship waste management,
11. cargo handling and
12. hazardous cargo.

## **7. Cost and resources**

No costs are available.

## **8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)**

The first version of the Code (1994) was welcomed by all involved in maritime transport and environmental affairs, including the European Commission, as a groundbreaking initiative. It put on the agenda the close relationship between ports and environmental protection, admitting that ports must, like all industries, commit to obey and respect environmental laws and regulations. It increased the awareness of the shipping industry with respect to the protection of the environment and the public demands that industrial activities have the least possible negative environmental impact.

## **9. Success and Fail factors**

It is the ports' industry itself which set its own standards, objectives and goals in relation to environmental protection through self-regulation and then proceeded to the monitoring of those through a peer review.

## **10. Unforeseen outcomes**

None

## **11. Prepared by**

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## **12. Verified by**

It has not been possible to verify this case.

## 13. Sources

- Environmental Code Of Practice (2003) European Sea Ports Organisation
- [www.espo.be/publications/index.asp](http://www.espo.be/publications/index.asp) (The ten environmental objectives of the code of practice are available in all Community languages on this website)
- [www.ecoport.com/foundation](http://www.ecoport.com/foundation)



ESPO Code of practice (716.65 KB) 