

Mediterranean ECA signed by a group of NGOs

by Ewelina Kroll

European environmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as: BirdLife Malta, Cittadini per l’Aria, France Nature Environnement, Ecologistas en Acción and the German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) have adopted a declaration to designate the Mediterranean Sea an Emission Control Area (ECA).

The signatories urge policymakers to take action on shipping-related air pollution and work in particular towards establishing a Mediterranean Emission Control Area, also known as the “Rome Declaration”. The document pinpoints that: “The ongoing success of the existing ECAs in Northern America and Northern European seas proves that a Mediterranean ECA would also deliver remarkable air quality benefits not only along the shipping routes and coastal areas but also in port cities and far in the hinterland. This will immediately improve public health, limit damage to ecosystems and cultural heritage and allow member states to reduce local air pollution and their impact on global warming.”

Introducing SECA in the Baltic has had a positive environmental effect, combining a significant drop in emissions with moderate costs carried by the transport sector. Over the years, Baltic ports have gathered a great amount of experience in the field of environmental management. Based on this knowledge, they can present a set of good practices that can be followed by other European ports. The regionally developed cooperation method can be considered a role model approach to the topic at hand.

“The BPO follows various initiatives and discussions on the introduction of similar limits in other regions in the EU. We have openly declared that we would welcome the same regulations being applied throughout the EU. We will be glad to share our experience with other ports and the maritime transport sector in the EU, which is part



Rome Declaration

Declaration to designate the Mediterranean Sea an Emission Control Area to limit air pollution from ships

Air pollution from ships is a significant threat to human health, environment and global climate. The European Commission estimates that every year 50,000 people in Europe die prematurely because of ship air pollution, notably from particulate matter, sulphur, nitrogen oxides and ground-level ozone. In order to tackle these emissions coastal states in Northern Europe have agreed to designate the North Sea, the Baltic Sea and the English Channel Emission Control Areas for sulphur (SECAs) and nitrogen (NECAs). The former has already delivered immediate air quality improvements by up to 60% from 2015 and respective socio-economic benefits worth billions of euros. Yet, a lot still needs to be done in order to also limit ship black carbon and particulate matter emissions, reduce nitrogen emissions from existing ships and to ensure strict enforcement of the agreed rules. States acting regionally through ECAs has turned out to be an effective way to reducing air pollution from ships.

This however raises the question as to why coastal populations and the environment around other EU seas are not accorded the same level of protection against ship emissions as in the North?

The signatories of this declaration urge policy makers to take action on shipping related air pollution and work in particular towards the establishment of a Mediterranean Emissions Control Area (ECA).

The ongoing success of the existing ECAs in Northern America and Northern European seas proves that a Mediterranean ECA would also deliver remarkable air quality benefits not only along the shipping routes and coastal areas but also in port cities and far in the hinterland. This will immediately improve public health, limit damage to ecosystems and cultural heritage and allow member states to reduce local air pollution and their impact on global warming.

Moreover, the establishment of a Mediterranean ECA will restore the level playing field in the single European market where ship owners/operators and ports in the South face the same regulatory requirements as in the North. It would also enable the uptake of low-emission technologies and the transfer of necessary know-how within the European Union leading to leadership in technology and jobs creation in the maritime industry. Therefore, tighter emission standards in the Mediterranean are also a vital guarantor of ensuring the sustainability of the EU maritime sector and economic competitiveness.

Find more information on the Mediterranean ECA project on www.nabu.de/mediterranean-eca



of our policy: The Baltic as a model region for green ports and maritime transport,” Bogdan Ołdakowski, the BPO’s Secretary General, said.

A detailed paper on regulatory compliance and advances made in the Baltic region in the area of sustainable

environmental solutions in maritime transport is available in the report: *The Baltic Sea as a model region for green ports and maritime transport*, prepared and published by the BPO as part of the aforementioned policy. The paper can be found directly on the BPO website. ■

Equal Competition

by Ewelina Kroll

The BPO has established the Comprehensive Ports Group (CPG) to identify the main challenges and opportunities faced by TEN-T comprehensive seaports in order to better present their needs to EU institutions. We talk with the Port of Ystad's Managing Director Björn Boström, chairing the CPG, about how small and medium-sized ports fit into the EU's transport policy, what can be changed here to level the playing field, as well as ask what will be topical for the Baltic Sea region's shipping in the days to come.

■ *What are your thoughts on establishing the CPG?*

First, it's an important step towards improving communication between the EU and its comprehensive ports, so that any future cooperation will be organised in a better way by taking into account the particular requirements (e.g. infrastructure developments) each seaport has, originating from often specific market conditions they're subjected to. Second, helping in re-thinking the manner in which EU funds are allocated will be crucial, too. For instance, some comprehensive ports are located closely to their core counterparts. The latter often separates their activities when applying for investment funding, therefore offering lower prices and get the grant in the end, meaning that the former must cover 100% of their plans. This situation needs a new balance, so that comprehensive ports will have more possibilities to invest.

I don't want to sound too grim in this context, but leaving things as they are today might result in some comprehensive ports not being there in the medium- to long-term. That is also one of the chief reasons we're now raising our voices openly and aloud, advocating for a system that is more fair and sensible to those who don't have the capacities of the Big Ones.

■ *What is the rationale behind the proposition of including the Port of Ystad into the Baltic-Adriatic Core Corridor?*

Our seaport in Ystad is constantly developing, both freight and pax volumes are on the rise, and we're setting new records year-after-year even despite not having the same investment possibilities as core ports. And that's also maybe one of the ways out of the whole core vs. comprehensive hurdle, i.e. show that you're capable enough of being levelled up. After all, flexibility is key in the transport



and logistics industry, so perhaps it should be incorporated in the way we think about the TEN-T map as well. All things counted, we're aiming at becoming part of the Baltic-Adriatic as a core port in the future.

■ *What are the most common challenges for small and medium-sized ports in the Baltic?*

While at first glance the Baltic is what it is, namely a "region" in its entirety, there are important differences between ports situated along our sea's coasts, and that's why it's hard to pinpoint issues with whom all are concerned (e.g. think of a Danish port on Zealand and a Finnish one in the north of the Bothnian Bay, or even Swedish harbours, but separated by a 1,000 km long coastline). But if I were to choose one task for them to execute, it would be maintaining diversification. When passenger and cargo concentration becomes far too dense, it impacts

competition negatively, which in the long-run isn't a good thing for the port market, the countries' economies, and the EU as a whole.

■ *How do you see the future of the Baltic Sea region?*

I think that shipping will be even more crucial, with fair road volumes shifting onto seaways. It will therefore be instrumental to further develop port infrastructure for smooth Baltic- and EU-wide flows. The CPG sees TEN-T comprehensive ports as essential means of securing the likelihood of this scenario, or in other words – making things run in an optimal manner for all of Europe and its trade partners.

Next, environmental issues will be even more enshrined, yet not only in future EU policies, but also in the strategies of shipping companies; developing green solutions and reducing harmful emissions will to a greater extent stand for profitability in the future. ■