

2ND EUROPEAN SHORTSEA CONGRESS.

30th June /1st July 2009

Liverpool

Report by



This event, organised by Navigate Events Ltd., took place in Liverpool on 30th June and 1st. July 2009. It attracted an attendance for UK, Ireland and continental Europe of about 150 representing shipping lines, Ports, logistics providers, cargo owners and a range of related services. I attended the event and took an active role on behalf of the IEA. The Irish Ports of Dublin, Drogheda, Cork and Shannon/Foynes were represented. The IMDO was a co-organiser of the event.

Nicolette van der Jagt, secretary General of the European Shippers Council chaired the very active session on unitised cargoes in which the recurring theme was need to attract cargo away from roads and onto sea and rail. She voiced the ESC's concerns that the imposition of the "Rotterdam Rules" governing shipment by vessel and replacing the early "Hague/Visby" and other rules could impose carriage conditions on goods moving by sea that are more complex and are incompatible with those for other transport modes.

John Hie from BG Freight Line was strongly critical of the UK and Irish Light Dues regimes. Such dues are not charged elsewhere in Europe. Recent increases will mean that each 366 TEU vessel operating into UK or Irish waters will pay € 7716.78 light dues a year. The lower frequency services operated by each Lo-lo vessel compared to a Ro-Ro vessel means that such costs are greater per cargo unit. The regime is also a dis-incentive for deep-sea vessels to come to UK or Irish ports, but to feed those markets via continental Ports.

John Hie was also critical of the continued imposition by European ports of ISPS fees, which is an imposition on sea freight.

Glenn de Clercq of AGB Agencies, Antwerp spoke about their innovations in shipping 'White Goods' from Germany using 10' 6" containers to optimise stowage and make the mode competitive. These boxes are used for traffic into UK depots.

Frank Robotham of Peel ports spoke about their Mersey based operations and the increase in cargo volumes since the abolition of the dock labour scheme in 1989 from 9 million tonnes to 34 million tonnes in 2008. 8 million tonnes of this is short sea and the recently introduced MSC Lines, Liverpool – Antwerp service will add 120,000 units to throughput p.a.

Anders Johansson General Manager of the Port of Gothenburg spoke to the theme of efficient short sea ports. Gothenburg handles two thirds of Sweden's container Trade and 25% of the Ro-Ro traffic.

They found that higher oil prices favour Lo-Lo traffic growth over Ro-Ro. Their major product development is the "Gothenburg Rail Port". In 2004, four shuttle trains a day ran out of the Port, the current figure is 24 each day, operated by 10 rail companies and serving 21 destinations. The route length ranges from 8 km. to 400 km, with several being quite short. The traffic on these routes is growing at a double digit rate with record carryings in May 2009. It is this "Rail Port" concept that he credits for their strong Lo-Lo growth and it gives large environmental savings.

Mary Gallagher of STS spoke to the theme. "Is short sea Transport more cost effective?" Her studies found that current trade trends would support a Dublin to Zeebrugge Ro-Ro service while Cork to Gijon in North Spain could also be attractive. For both, to get adequate vessel utilisation, the routes would have to be combined with other shorter routes. Her work with the Short Sea Promotion centre in Flanders found that a truck travelling on Ro-Ro service from Ireland to Belgium would reach its destination quicker than would the cargo travelling in Lo-Lo container; the intermodal container would be 200% cheaper.

Several speakers spoke about the recent imposition of Local Council Rates at UK Ports and the potentially serious effect on Port costs and, thus, the attractiveness of short Sea Shipping.

There was not a great awareness amongst the people that I spoke to about the EU PROPS programme.

The third European Short Sea Congress will be hosted by IMDO and will be held in Dublin in June 2010.

Howard Knott.

Director Logistics & Maritime Projects

Irish Exporters Association

9th August 2009.