

SPEECH

Jacques Barrot

Vice President of the European Commission in charge of transport

‘KEY-NOTE OPENING SPEECH’

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Participation of Vice President J. Barrot in ECSA Seminar

Bruxelles, le 6 mars 2007 – Residence Palace

President,

Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt: A European Strategy for Growth and employment relies on a powerful and efficient European shipping industry. 90% of our external trade comes and goes by sea.

European shipping has been very successful adapting to the challenges of globalisation and has obtained excellent results.

I am proud to be "your" Commissioner!

This period of high activity in the shipping markets coincides with a number of policy initiatives at European level: The White Paper on transport policy, the 3rd Maritime Safety Package, the consultation process on a European ports policy, the marine environmental strategy, the competition rules on conferences and pools and also the Green paper on a future maritime policy for the EU.

Where do we stand? Where do we go? Where should we go?

The ECSA seminar could not have been organised at a more appropriate moment. Thank you for bringing so many voices together and for allowing this exchange of views.

I want to kick off our debate with the vision of the European Commissioner for mobility: Europe needs sustainable mobility and we must organise such mobility in the most efficient way. Ports that

are connected to the hinterland by rail and inland waterway; motorways of the sea that take freight from the road, inter modal transfer platforms that optimise shifts between different modes (from truck to train and vice versa, from train to ship and vice versa).

Shipping is an essential part of this "mobility puzzle".

Let me share with you three thoughts on this issue.

1. Need for a predictable and stable regulatory framework for the shipping industry.

Operators need a stable legal environment, which allows for business to develop.

I would like to reassure you that the Commission is fully aware of the global nature of shipping and that we actively work to promote a fair level playing field at world-wide level.

But stable does not mean frozen. Legislation must evolve with economic change and the state aid guidelines for the shipping industry are a good illustration of this.

The Green Paper on a future maritime policy is an open invitation to explore possible ways forward on many issues, including maritime transport. I am interested to hear your views on, for example, issues such as:

- how to achieve a better internal market in shipping; should we create a "Common maritime space", including Motorways of the

Seas and ports? I do not see why a truck should be able to drive through Europe with one set of transport papers and formalities whereas ships have to touch base at every crossing of a border between Member States?

- how to attract young people to the profession,
- what options do we have to protect our coasts, including, for example, common coast-guard efforts.

Keeping markets open and promoting maritime transport services in Europe and globally will remain my priority. Our maritime agreements with China, India and Brazil are just a start.

I want Europe and Europe's industry to interact better and to play a much more active role to support the common efforts of the International Maritime Organisation. All together we have an interest in promoting quality shipping through IMO. Let us stop using IMO as a "brake unit" and, let us pull our weight together. An appropriate representation of the European Union in the IMO will play in the interest of all quality minded operators in the world. It is for that reason that I ask you to re-evaluate the Commission's request for representation in IMO and see the benefits behind this proposal.

2. The challenge of maritime safety.

As we speak, public attention focuses on "Erika", "Napoli", Herald of free Enterprise" and "Segesta Jet"

It is often stated that shipping suffers from an "image" problem. I think this is regrettable, because a whole sector is taken hostage by a small number of operators.

But where is the strong voice of those playing fair? Those who respect the rules and run their business in an impeccable manner?

I do believe that European ship owners are among those responsible owners. Therefore, I expect from the responsible owners that you represent here today, to support the continuous efforts of the European Commission to improve maritime safety. Let us join efforts to restore the image of shipping.

I do not want to "criminalise" the shipping industry as some pretend. I want "responsibilisation" in order to prevent, rather than sanction.

Beyond any doubt: it is time to be pro-active. The sooner we address the weaknesses of today's maritime safety system, the better for all of us and for the shipping sector in particular.

Look at the proposals presented by the Commission in its 3rd maritime safety package: A better targeted port state control system, the high performance of classification societies, an efficient framework for the places of refuge are - just as an example - of prime interest for the

European shipping sector. I hope to be able to come to a conclusion of the discussions with the legislator under Portuguese presidency.

Take also my calls for all Member States to ratify key international conventions. I cannot understand how a Member State can sign and promise to deliver and then stop short of ratification. I hope that ECSA will continue supporting me. Encouraging broad ratification of IMO instruments inside and outside Europe is vital for ensuring fair competition for European shipping in global markets.

3. How to ensure the continued success of European shipping in the 21st century.

From the trends that we know today, I will say that European shipping faces three main challenges.

The first is to ensure that European shipping takes advantage of the new information and communication technologies and is fully integrated in intelligent logistics systems. We need to give birth to the "e-maritime" concept.

The second challenge is the increasing demand for greener shipping, as it is for greener cars or greener airplanes.

The third, and most urgent challenge, is the human element. It is urgent to attract, train and maintain European professionals, both on board and on shore jobs. Without adequate and qualified human resources, European shipping will suffer and decline.

I wish to pay tribute here to all those who contributed to the adoption of the consolidated maritime labour Convention. I very much rely on the social partners to take work forward now in Europe

I am very pleased with the decision of ECSA and ETF to engage in concrete discussions following the invitation of the Commission to ensure that the convention becomes part of Community legislation. The conclusion of an agreement between social partners will be of huge importance for European shipping not only for its content but also for the contribution it will make to "better Regulation".

I expect the best from the talks that start in a few days between ECSA and ETF and I warmly encourage you to finish your conclave with a signal of white smoke.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are convinced that the future in shipping belongs to those operators able to offer added value maritime transportation services both at European and world-wide levels.

Let's conduct today's exchange of views looking at the future, with the conviction that European shipping is in the pole position to succeed.

Thank you very much for your attention.