

Towards excellence in port environmental management and sustainability

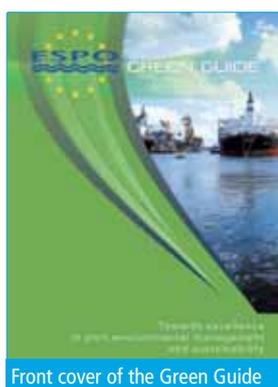
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What is a green port? How can a port authority respond to the environmental challenges relating to port operations? What is the vision of European port authorities towards that direction? Can a common framework for action be developed while respecting the diversity of ports? All these questions are being addressed in the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) Green Guide; towards excellence in port environmental management and sustainability' that was published in October 2012. Far from being a merely promotional tool of the evidence-based progress that European port authorities have achieved over time, the Green Guide demonstrates a common approach for action and a range of options towards further and continuous environmental improvement.

Background

The 'Environmental Code of Practice of 1994' was the first official policy document that was ever published by ESPO, just one year after the establishment of the organisation. The code was then updated in 2003 and the recently published Green Guide is the third edition through which the sector defines its environmental ambitions.

The main aim of the Green Guide is to trigger port authorities to be proactive and to commit to sustainable development and the continuous improvement of their environmental performance. With this focus, the guide demonstrates options and approaches, without losing sight of the fact that each port is unique. Overall, the ESPO Green Guide favours a bottom up approach, in which port authorities are proactively taking responsibility and living up to the expectations of the community. It encourages ports to be responsible for their own initiatives, to benchmark their performance, and to deliver science-based evidence of achievements.



Front cover of the Green Guide

Five principles

There are five long standing principles guiding the efforts of the European port authorities in addressing their environmental challenges:

- Achieving voluntary self-regulation that raises standards beyond regulations through a bottom-up approach
- Cooperating and sharing of knowledge and experience on environmental matters
- Serving in parallel the interests of both the business and the local communities aiming towards the sustainable operation of port areas
- Applying a systematic approach to port environmental management through appropriate structures that enable continuous improvement of performance
- Being transparent in communicating and reporting on the ports' efforts and environmental performance.

Encouraging common action with the 'five Es' approach

A major innovative element of the ESPO Green Guide is the introduction of a common framework for action that demonstrates the range of options that are available while respecting port diversity. The Green Guide calls upon European port authorities to continuously work towards improving their environmental performance through focused action on:

- Exemplifying: Setting a good example towards the wider port community by demonstrating excellence in managing the environmental performance of their own operations, equipment and assets
- Enabling: Providing the operational and infrastructural conditions within the port area that facilitate port users and enhance improved environmental performance within the port area
- Encouraging: Providing incentives to port users that encourage a change of behaviour and induce them to continuously improve their environmental performance
- Engaging: with port users and/or competent authorities in sharing

TABLE ILLUSTRATING THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY EUROPEAN SEAPORTS ON SELECTED INDICATORS OVER TIME

Environmental Management component	1996 %	2004 %	2009 %	2012 %	Percentage change (2004-2012)
Does the port authority have an environmental policy?	45	58	72	91	+33
Is the policy made available to the public?	-	59	62	85	+26
Does the policy aim to improve environmental standards beyond those required under legislation?	32	49	58	73	+24
Does the port publish an annual environmental review or report?	-	31	43	62	+31
Does the port have designated environmental personnel?	55	67	69	95	+28
Does the port have an environmental management system?	-	21	48	62	+41
Is environmental monitoring carried out in the port?	53	65	77	80	+15
Has your port identified environmental indicators to Monitor trends in environmental performance?	-	48	60	71	+23

knowledge, means and skills towards joint projects targeting environmental improvement in the port area and the logistic chain

- Enforcing: Making use of mechanisms that enforce good environmental practice by port users where applicable and ensuring compliance.

It should be noticed that the enforcing element is seen by port authorities as a last resort instrument in line with their belief that a lot can be achieved through cooperation and common understanding in line with the principle of self-regulation.

A common approach does not necessarily result in a common level of responsibility for all port authorities. It is for each and every port to assess its own responsibilities regarding the specific nature of the challenges it faces. The Green Guide is not aiming to define a 'one-size-fits-all' type of response but options that would be applicable to all port authorities. Recognising the need for individual flexibility, the Green Guide leaves enough room for individual port authorities to define their own policies and to implement actions, relative to their respective position in terms of governance, financial means, competences and market power.

Application on five major environmental issues

Providing substance to the 'five Es' framework, the guide applies it to selected environmental priority areas. The environmental priorities that are explicitly addressed are: air quality management; energy conservation and climate change; noise management; waste management and water (both consumption and quantity) management.

The level of analysis for each priority first highlights the main associated challenges and the drivers for action by the port authority in the respective field. Then guidance is provided in terms of potential response options classified under the framework of 'five Es', namely under Exemplify, Enable, Encourage, Engage and Enforce. Therefore, the way that ports can respond to the identified challenges by making full use of their competences as landlord, infrastructure manager, service provider, area manager or regulator, is systematically addressed.

Furthermore, and in order to provide substance to the outlined guidance, the Green Guide is accompanied by an online annex of exemplary response options and good practices that are implemented in European ports. The examples demonstrate evidence and application of the theoretical 'five Es' framework in practical terms. The annex is dynamic, subject to ongoing review and available online through the ESPO website (www.espo.be).

Evidence of progress over time

ESPO has been monitoring selected environmental management indicators since 1996. The aim was to monitor trends over time that would highlight tendencies and assist both the sector and policy makers.

Clear evidence of progress is demonstrated for example, by the increasing trends for ports to produce an environmental policy and to publish an annual environmental report. They are establishing activities and procedures to manage their environmental risks such as designating environmental personnel, having an environmental management system, and monitoring environmental performance by the systematic use of environmental performance indicators. The trends demonstrate that a lot has been achieved through voluntary self-regulation in the sector.

Moving forward

ESPO is most encouraged by the positive trends and considers them as triggering factors for its member ports to continue



The vision of EcoPorts has been to create a level playing field on port environmental management in Europe through the sharing of knowledge and experience between port professionals. EcoPorts serves the principle of 'ports-helping-ports' and promotes continuous improvement of performance through voluntary self-regulation. Since 2011, EcoPorts has fully integrated in ESPO and, through www.ecoport.com, ESPO offers the opportunity to its member ports to use the well established tools, Self-Diagnosis Method (SDM) and Port Environmental Review System (PERS).



With the PPRISM project, ESPO has taken a first step in establishing a culture of performance measurement in European ports. The two year project, co-funded by the European Commission, delivered a shortlist of indicators that form the basis of a European Port Performance Dashboard (<http://pprism.espo.be/>).

evaluating and further improving their environmental performance. ESPO's commitment to increasing transparency in the port sector is demonstrated through its long standing support for the EcoPorts monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Also, more recently through taking the initiative with the Port Performance Indicators – Selection and Measurement (PPRISM) project to further establish a monitoring and reporting culture. The Green Guide builds on the existing tools and methodologies and the established reporting mechanisms and embraces them within its comprehensive framework. ESPO encourages its member ports to commit to this framework and to work towards achieving excellence in port environmental management and sustainability.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Antonis Michail has a background in engineering (Technical University of Crete - 2001), holds a Masters in environmental management (University of Amsterdam - 2003) and a Doctorate in the environmental management of the logistics chain (Cardiff University - 2008). In 2009 Dr Michail joined ESPO as a policy advisor. Within ESPO he is responsible for the coordination of the Sustainable Development and the Marine Affairs and Security Committees. In parallel, and in line with the full integration of EcoPorts in the structure of ESPO, Dr Michail is responsible for the overall coordination of the EcoPorts Network and the service chain of the EcoPorts tools.

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION



The European Sea Ports Organisation was founded in 1993. It represents the port authorities, port associations and port administrations of the seaports of the member states of the EU and Norway. ESPO has also observer members in several neighbouring countries to the EU. ESPO ensures that seaports have a clear voice in the EU. The organisation promotes the common interests of its members throughout Europe and is also engaged in dialogue with European stakeholders in the Port and Maritime sector. ESPO works through a permanent secretariat in Brussels, a General Assembly, an Executive Committee, and eight specialised committees.

ENQUIRIES

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