

BPO powers Baltic Ports for Climate – a determined approach to ambitious goals

by Andrzej Urbaś, Owner, WORTKEKS Copywriting & Communication

The first edition of the Baltic Ports for Climate event took place on 15 March during this year's Transport Week conference in Gdynia. The gathering, organised in cooperation with the Baltic Ports Organization (BPO) and Actia Forum, was attended by nearly 100 participants who focused on the regional ports' approach to climate responsibility.

It won't surprise most experts from all corners of the maritime industry that new environmental regulations and policies, introduced at a very brisk pace, are one of the main factors impacting the sector's development. As of right now, average annual emissions from maritime transport worldwide equate to 2.5% of global CO₂ emissions (for reference, the Baltic Sea region's EU countries were responsible for 3.08% in 2021). At the same time, four-fifths of the world's commodities are transported by sea. The EU is set to lead the charge in reducing the level of emissions from maritime transport, and the number of recently introduced regulations clearly shows that they are not joking around.

Dariusz Kryczka (EY's EU Green Deal Center of Excellence Leader) described the pace of introducing new regulations and policies not as an evolution but a revolution, and it seems a very apt characterisation. With FuelEU Maritime, Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive/Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFID/AFIR), and the inclusion of shipping in the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) on the horizon (to name a few), the time for preparation is there. Still, it is short and requires the industry to act now (if not 'yesterday'): e.g., companies will have to submit

to the verifiers a monitoring plan for each of their ships by 31 August 2024, as part of FuelEU Maritime. The regulation itself is set to come into force on 1 January 2025. The successful implementation of these regulations hinges on rapid technological and infrastructural development. And this will require both money and time.

Baltic ports at the forefront of change

More deadlines are just years away: AFIR will require ports to provide onshore power supply (OPS) for container and passenger ships by 2030. And just as the EU is one of the main driving forces behind introducing these initiatives, the Baltic ports may serve as role models for preparedness. According to Bogdan Ołdakowski (BPO's Secretary-General), there are already well over 20 OPS installations operational in the Baltic, with nearly ten more on their way.

The BPO is deeply involved in supporting the region in such endeavours, as illustrated by its latest project and the namesake of the event – Baltic Ports for Climate. The project aims to further develop and construct OPS systems in the region's seaports by bringing together experts and stakeholders to create a platform for exchanging expertise and knowledge already gained during the successful implementation of existing projects.

The initiative will also consider the differing needs and characteristics of EU TEN-T Core and Comprehensive Ports, differentiating the approach. Baltic Ports for Climate application has been successfully delivered to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency at the beginning of 2023 (**more information is available upon contacting the BPO Secretariat**).

Patrik Hellman (the Port of Kaskinen's CEO) delivered a very important remark regarding the financial side of meeting the demands set by regulators: the regulations are not market-driven and rarely consider the ports' take on the actual costs involved. Furthermore, technological uncertainty is an issue that must be carefully considered when planning such overarching regulations.

Patrik also took part in the discussion on ports' in-house green initiatives, giving a summary of the Port Activity App, a tool used on a national level by Finnish ports, allowing for the optimisation of vessel traffic, hence port operations too. A singular feature of the software is that it's built with data sharing in mind: ports have access to each other's data allowing for an even greater level of vessel call prediction.

The panel was joined by Daria Mróz (Manager of the Port of Gdynia's

Environmental Protection Department), who briefed the audience on CO₂ mapping that allowed her seaport to pinpoint the primary sources of emissions: first & foremost vessels, followed by electricity and heat consumption. These findings, in turn, enabled the port to develop an emission reduction strategy tailored to its unique characteristics, ensuring the most bang for the buck and limiting the risk of asset waste.

Defining climate responsibility

The path to carbon neutrality is not easy, but some Baltic ports have already made great strides towards this ambitious goal and are even on the verge of achieving it. The Copenhagen Malmö Port (CMP), represented by their Chief Communications & Sustainability Officer Ulrika Prytz Rugfelt, aims to become carbon-neutral as soon as 2025. One of the actions that allowed the ports to get within reaching this goal was the switch from fossil fuels to bio-diesel (HVO) for all machines operating within CMP's Swedish part. Copenhagen is set to follow shortly after the completion of the new container terminal.

Others mirror this part of the rich portfolio of green actions undertaken by CMP. Jan Jarmakowski (Hutchison Ports' Gdynia Container Terminal's Managing Director) also mentioned the switch from diesel to green fuels in the context of powering his

terminal's machinery. The company is also looking towards other possible energy sources, such as hydrogen. Still, the supply chain isn't mature enough for commercial use: it will take a couple more years to be viable (though GCT's parent company is boldly exploring producing & using green hydrogen, as, it seems, several transport players, also in the Baltic, already are or gear towards becoming energy producers to secure their sustainable future).

Given the broad scope of challenges today's ports face, it is reassuring that many tools are at their disposal. The complexity and multi-faceted character of port operations means that over decades they have naturally been amassing considerable amounts of data available to them. Stefan Leschka (DHI's Head of Ports Advisory) demonstrated how these data sets could be combined and employed to develop models aiding port authorities in the decision-making process, improving efficiency and minimising risk.

Cold ironing returned as a topic later during the day, with Björn Boström (the Port of Ystad's Managing Director) firmly stating that it should always be prioritised as a solution contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, likewise noise pollution. Yet, it needs to be approached as any other business case, carefully considering the costs involved (including going

the extra mile to get shipping lines 'plugging in'). Tommaso Spanevello (HAROPA PORT's Head of European Affairs) added that it is also vital that the legal framework governing the implementation of OPS takes variable demand and supply into account. Another point he touched upon was the growing pressure ports face from policy-makers and their customers. It appears that environmental awareness has firmly embedded itself in our culture.

The Baltic Ports for Climate event concluded the 2023 edition of the 200-participant-strong Transport Week, the first day of which covered the main trends impacting the development of the transport sector in the Baltic Sea region: geopolitics, smart solutions, cybersecurity, and offshore wind energy projects. The Organizers would like to thank the City Host – the City of Gdynia, the Strategic Partner, all the other Partners, the Honorary Patrons and the Media Partners for their continuous support. We are looking forward to meeting you all again next year!

Meanwhile, BPO's working on its next events, including the Ports 4.0 Conference in Riga (in its third instalment, the meeting will put a rich mix of exciting tech developments in the limelight!) and the Baltic Ports Conference in Ystad (the go-to gathering for all wanting to keep their ear to the Baltic seaports ground!).



BALTIC PORTS CONFERENCE

6–8 September 2023
Ystad, Sweden