

Baltic Ports Conference 2021

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During the Baltic Ports Conference (BPC), the most important annual event for the Baltic Ports Organization (BPO), all its members and guests join together to discuss the key and most urgent issues for the port sector. Above all, it is a great networking platform for exchanging knowledge and experiences between various stakeholders making up the maritime community in the Baltic Sea region (BSR) and beyond.

This year's event – free to attend! – also marks BPO's 30th anniversary, about which you can read more in the second article in this newsletter. The webinar will identify the key trends that will define the port sector's development in the years to come – such as digitalisation, sustainability, and technological advancements. The conference will also feature an analysis of ports' function as a driver of entrepreneurship and innovation, including their upcoming role as alternative (green) energy hubs.

Virtually from Tallinn!

We couldn't be more proud to announce the host of this year's conference – the Port of Tallinn. As one of the Baltic digitalisation leaders, they are the perfect host for an online edition of the BPC. It also certainly doesn't hurt that Estonia is one of the most digitalised countries in the whole world!

Our hosts have been riding the digital waves for quite some time now, with many exciting projects and initiatives. Their FlexPort management programme, in use since 2011, integrates operational data and financial recording. The Smart Port solution minimises waiting times for vehicle check-in and vessel boarding, a system specifically designed with ferry ports in mind. The port also utilises digital innovations to reduce their impact on the environment. An air quality monitoring and anomaly detection system, dubbed eNose, has been operating since 2016.

"I would like to warmly welcome all participants of the BPC 2021 to the Port of Tallinn as we are virtually hosting the event this year. With smart and green solutions, the Port of Tallinn aims to become the most innovative port on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Let's discuss how we can guarantee the sustainability of the Baltic region together and share the best practices of using technological advancements

to enhance the port business as well as protect the environment," Valdo Kalm, the Port of Tallinn's CEO, said.

You will have the chance to learn more about Tallinn's approach to the smart port concept, understood not just as a catchphrase but a solid business case in a presentation by their very own Margus Vihman.

Shifting the mindset

These days ports aren't just essential transport nodes responsible for the flow of cargo. While this role indeed remains the most important one, as shown by the most critical months of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are much more these days.

A port is an ecosystem encompassing a broad range of companies. It supports economic activities in the immediate area and farther into the hinterland – within and beyond country borders. With the rise of the importance of intermodal connections, a port is a crucial stop between the sea and land transport. It results in many



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industries flocking to coastal areas, creating more employment opportunities and leading to new ones sprouting up in the linked hinterland.

Ports also drive innovation since so many of their activities are dependent on efficiency, reliability, and support of global logistic chains. Since the challenges are many, so is the need for answers. It is no surprise that ports and terminals are home to great strides in automation or digitalisation. The conference will allow you to learn more about how ports approach and explore these new opportunities.

Ports and the green transition

Sustainability and reduction of negative environmental impacts are among

the most important topics discussed in connection with nearly every industry. The ambitious decarbonisation goals set by the European Union are possibly one of the most significant challenges that ports will need to meet in recent history. Switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources will significantly influence the economic structure in Europe and worldwide.

Ports' role as energy hubs and development bases for offshore wind will be one of the main items on the agenda of the event's closing sessions. The decrease and ultimate stop of fossil fuel usage will create opportunities for the rapid uptake of alternative fuels and energy sources. The BSR already has access to

a growing liquefied natural gas (LNG) bunkering network, an advantage that could play a vital role during the transition period. Naturally, fossil fuels are not only a source of energy; they are also the cargo that moves through the ports. With these eventually disappearing, the event will also address the issues related to the resulting vacuum and how to fill it.

This year's edition will be a special one for many reasons. We will meet virtually to celebrate BPO's long-running history. While meeting in person may still be difficult these days, we encourage you all to join us on 2 September and once again be a part of one of our most exciting annual events. With a bit of luck, we will see each other next year, this time face to face! ■