



**WCTRS SIG2 2015 Conference
The Port and Maritime Sector:
Key events and challenges
May 11-12, 2015, University of Antwerp –
Stadscampus – Hof van Liere**

On 11 and 12 May 2015 “Special Interest Group 2” (ports and maritime affairs), organized a two-day Conference “The Port and Maritime Sector: Key Developments and Challenges” as part of the World Conference on Transport Research Society (WCTRS), presided by Prof. Eddy Van de Voorde (Department of Transport and Regional Economics – University of Antwerp / TransportNET) and Prof. Enrico Musso (Department of Quantitative Methods – University of Genoa / TransportNET). The Conference took place at the Department for Traffic and Regional Economics of the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

During the Conference numerous presentations were given, dealing with the key aspects of the development of ports and maritime affairs, at the managerial, operative and strategic level. Special emphases were on the field of maritime and port economics, including the development of port hinterland; then environmental issues, maritime engineering, investments and finances. The presentations covered also topics about the costs optimization, transport chain optimization, human resources management and employment, as well as legal issues related to the mentioned topics.

The concept of the Conference was not exclusively scientific (although it gathered also some biggest names from the field of maritime affairs and port management in Europe), but the practitioners were invited as well. Another specific characteristic (which is also increasingly present at such conferences) is the

multi-disciplinary approach – the main topic is defined, in this case ports and maritime affairs, which is then studied from the technological, economic and legal aspects. Europe, namely, is relating the development of transport technology increasingly to its economic, and not only technological aspects. Here, the legal frame comes to the fore, since the area of maritime affairs and ports is being legally harmonized within the European Union.

Special attention was focused on the Ph.D. candidates – who had the opportunity to present their works in a special session, with appropriate academic support. One nice organizational solution is certainly worth mentioning: the invited (keynote) presentations that preceded every morning and afternoon session were given a longer time frame than the “common” presentations, thus avoiding the situation which is often encountered at the Croatian conferences when the entire session is delayed because of the longer performance of the long awaited and important invited speaker.

The work proceeded concurrently in three panels, and the Conference participants were from the EU, as well as from the maritime countries outside Europe, such as the South African Republic. Apart from the official part, a reception was organized at the City Hall along with other programs that provided opportunity for discussions “on the margins” of the Conference. Apart from being a beautiful and regarding traffic important city, Antwerp has proven to be a nice venue for such conferences due to the University capacities (being in the very centre) and affordable accommodation costs.

***Assist.Prof. Goran Vojković, Ph.D.
Faculty of Traffic and Transport Sciences
University of Zagreb***