



EUROPEAN TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION
FEDERATION EUROPEENNE DES TRAVAILLEURS DES TRANSPORTS

Tug conference declaration

ETF affiliates representing workers in tug operations met in Antwerp on the 11th March 2015. 15 member organisations discussed the impact of global maritime business model shifts on towage operations and the possible impact of the draft Port Service Regulation¹ on the sector.

According to the exchanges during the conference, it appears that many global players join forces and impose unilateral, global but first and foremost unfair tariffs and demands on local Tug operators. This aggressive market play in turn forces Tug operators to do likewise and more joint ventures in the sector arise.

In this high level game, the workforce is the one to pick up the tab as they see in turn their labour contracts and terms and conditions worsened. The minimum safe manning level needs to be respected. The full blockage of an important maritime waterway is something no one wants to see happening in his/her backyard. Towage & Salvage remain highly dangerous operations, which require the maximum of skills & competence. The consequences of an operation gone wrong on the local economy are beyond compare. Moreover, towage is an essential service for ports and maritime safety and security: these elements should be taken into account when discussing to further open competition in the sector.

The proposed regulation on port services would not improve the current situation: on the contrary it would impose a purely theoretical market model without any social added value.

Therefore the unions present at the conference:

DECLARE their intention to engage in a closer cooperation in order to tackle jointly every new challenge and change affecting the sector;

¹ COM (2013) 296 final

The ETF represents more than 3.5 million transport workers from more than 230 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.

CONFIRM their rejection of the Port Service Regulation and their engagement to make use of any political and industrial lawful means to oppose it;

PLEDGE formally that collective negotiations and collectively negotiated bargaining agreements and labour contracts will not be further fragmented. Concessions and licences procedures should include social requirements so that only companies engaging in negotiations with the unions and respecting the collective bargaining agreements are allowed to enter the market;

DEMAND the creation of a level playing field based on the best practices and social standards for the entire European Tug sector and fair competition rules and a strict respect of all CBAs and contracts in force.

EXPRESS their strong concern over initiatives that would further encourage tug boat operators to make use of flags of convenience, which would allow social dumping practices in the sector.

DEMAND a neutral and scientifically motivated Risk-Assessment tool to be developed in order to determine – on a ship-to-ship-basis – the safe manning level.

COMMIT the ETF and its affiliates to seeking a meaningful dialogue with the European Tugowners' Association on the present situation in and the future of the European tug industry.

Antwerp, 11 March 2015