

## **A PRESENTATION OF INTERMED**

### **European Economic Interest Group comprising the Port Authorities of Barcelona, Genoa and Marseilles**

- 1. Founded in 1998, INTERMED is the result of a long-standing commitment to increase the competitiveness of the principal ports of the Northwestern Mediterranean (MEDNOC).**

The Ports of Barcelona, Marseilles and Genoa have already worked together in projects of common interest, but today's climate of ever-increasing economic globalisation calls for an even closer working relationship.

To date, this co-operation involves only to the three ports present here today, but the association is open to other large MEDNOC ports which find themselves in the same situation and handle similar volumes of traffic.

In 1998 the total volume of traffic handled by the three MEDNOC ports amounted to 163 million tons, of which 44 million tons of general cargo and 3 million TEUS of containerised cargo. These figures represent respectively the 32%, the 24% and the 23% of the same categories of traffics handled by the three main ports of the European Northern range (Rotterdam, Hamburg and Antwerp).

Although the scope of the MEDNOC ports is as yet limited when compared to their northern counterparts, it is important to stress the following points in order to appreciate the significance of previous figures:

The consolidation and consistent growth of traffic, in particular general cargo and containers. From 1993 to 1998, container traffic has risen by 50% in the previously mentioned Northern Ports, and 137% in the INTERMED ports. The increase in specialised traffic (cars, perishable goods, special products) and in added-value cargo.

The restructuring of the workforce and port services, and port management in general.

The specialisation of terminals and the development of logistic zones.

The introduction of simpler and more flexible Customs procedures and the development of data processing services.

The fact that these processes are now underway clearly demonstrates that the Port Authorities are looking to the future and are firmly committed to the revitalisation of the MEDNOC ports. INTERMED is firmly committed to:

Improve rail links in order to provide rapid and efficient transport links to bypass natural barriers such as the Pyrenees and Alps and connect ports with their European hinterland, and offset the absence of natural waterways from which the Northern European ports derive tangible benefits.

The development of the ports and outlying areas through the application for funds designed to benefit the Southern European ports. Unlike the Northern European ports, located in river estuaries affording natural protection, the Southern European ports must bear the costly construction of breakwaters.

**2. The purpose of INTERMED is to highlight the potential that the Mediterranean ports represent for the European Union.**

The Mediterranean -and in particular the North-western Mediterranean which boasts the highest concentration of industrial and consumer centres of the basin - is called upon to play a key role in achieving a harmonious development of the European Union. First, due to the new shipowners' world strategies: developing East-West services calling at Mediterranean maritime hubs or at continental gateways. Moreover,

because it is necessary to redress the balance between the Northern and Southern EU ports, to avoid increasing congestion delays and costs and to assure the sustained development of the Community.

Today, owing to the high quality service on offer, the leading ports of MEDNOC may be considered the natural and most efficient gateways for traffic to and from North Africa, the Middle East and the Far East route, and origin/destination for the South of Europe and the Mediterranean area. Use of the Mediterranean routes offers: a reduction in maritime and inland transit times (at least two or three days), a reduction of hinterland connections costs and also permits to have inland and maritime (short sea) distribution services specialised on these areas and high quality level.

**3. The activities of INTERMED must have an impact in the Mediterranean, as well as in a wider European context.**

Given the underlying reasons for this alliance and in view of the regional and the EU objectives, INTERMED operates on two levels. INTERMED develops its own activities within its sector and, on the other hand, lobbies to the relevant EU institutions to improve the status of ports in The European Community.

It must be stressed that INTERMED has not been set up to inhibit or curb competition between its member ports. On the contrary, INTERMED aims to create a competitive environment for clients and enhance the quality of the service they receive.

The plan of action includes the following items:

- Joint promotional campaigns aimed at shipping liners, shipping agents and freight-forwarders.
- Joint studies conducted with a view to promoting short sea shipping and upgrading port services
- Provision of technical assistance to North Africa
- Agreements on data exchange
- Concerted action with regard to EDI and EUROMAR

Finally, INTERMED will present its proposals to the relevant European institutions and implement a specific plan of action.

