



## **Maritime interests and the EU port services directive**

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### **Abstract**

A key theme of the EU Port Policy has been the establishment of free market access to the provision of port services in EU ports. However, two successive European Commission proposals for a relevant EU port services directive (PSD) failed to produce a new policy regime. This paper examines the mobilisation of maritime interests, aiming to identify stakeholders' preferences and their contribution to the rejection of this port policy proposal. The analysis suggests that, although they did not share the same perspective, the views of organised maritime interests shared a common denominator: they were against the proposed EU rule due to its structural deficiencies. Assisted by the industrial heterogeneity, the difficulties to implement a 'one size fits all ports' policy, and the observed institutional tensions a variety of vested interests frequently with monopolistic positions contributed to the produced policy output failure.

*Keywords:* Intra-port competition; Port policy; Maritime interests.

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### **1. Introduction**

Following a lengthy consultation process, an overwhelming majority of the European Parliament (EP) voted, in January 2006, against the adoption of a European Commission proposal for a Directive aiming to establish free market access to port services, the so-called 'port services directive' (PSD). The paper analyses the role of maritime interests within this consultation process and assesses their contribution to this policy output failure.

This was the Commission's second unsuccessful attempt to establish a common European regulatory framework regarding the provision of port services in the major European ports. A narrow majority of the EP plenary session rejected the first proposal in December 2003. The almost immediate publication of a revised PSD proposal (PSD II) in October 2004 aimed to iron out the most controversial issues, yet the EP argued that this second proposal resembled the first one. Still, the EP reactions to the Commission's political manoeuvres can partially account for the produced output-

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