

**E U R O P E A N   E C O N O M I C   A R E A**  
**F O R U M   O F   L O C A L   A N D   R E G I O N A L   A U T H O R I T I E S**

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**S E V E N T H   M E E T I N G   O F   T H E   E E A   E F T A   F O R U M**

*Bergen*  
*20-21 June 2013*

**Opinion on the EU Port Policy Review**

**Rapporteur:** Gunnar Þórarinnsson

The EEA EFTA Forum of Local and Regional Authorities (the Forum):

- A. Having regard to Annex XIII to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (the EEA Agreement) on transport;
- A. Having regard to the European Commission's proposal of 23 May 2013 for a regulation establishing a framework on market access to port services and financial transparency of ports 2013/0157 (COD) and the communication "Ports: an engine for growth" COM(2013) 295, adopted the same day;
- B. Having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 9 April 2008 on a European ports policy;
- C. Noting the reinforced subsidiarity principle set out in the Lisbon Treaty and its explicit reference to the local and regional dimension and self-government;
- D. Noting the proportionality principle as laid down in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
- E. Emphasising that the majority of ports in Iceland and Norway are owned by local and regional authorities;
- F. Acknowledging the impact of EU law on local and regional authorities in the EEA EFTA States through the EEA Agreement;
- G. Noting the role of the Forum as a body in the EFTA structure.

1. Highlights the key importance of ports for economic and social development, and for the competitiveness and prosperity of municipalities and regions in Iceland and Norway;
2. Underlines the importance of ports in promoting the efficient and environmentally friendly transport of goods in Europe;
3. Welcomes the Commission's communication on the revision of the European ports policy, and supports the objective to increase the efficiency and quality of port services and to achieve greater financial transparency;
4. Welcomes greater autonomy for ports in certain fields and the recognition of the central role of port authorities;
5. Is concerned about the potentially wide-ranging competencies given to authorities other than the port authorities and elements of the proposal that may negatively impact the commercial freedom of ports, their ability to invest and their administrative responsibilities;
6. Questions the need for a regulation, as non-legislative measures proposed in the Commission's previous communication on ports, such as the state aid guidelines for ports, have not been fully implemented.
7. Instructs its President to forward this Opinion to the EFTA Standing Committee at Ministerial level and to the European Commission Directorate General for Mobility and Transport.