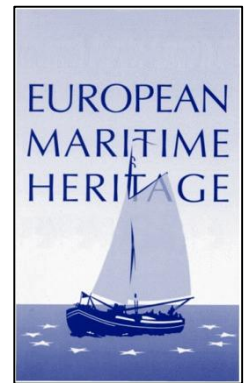

EUROPEAN MARITIME HERITAGE

ROTTERDAM DECLARATION



The triennial Congress of European Maritime Heritage, meeting at Rotterdam on 17-18 April 2007;

- applauds the initiative from the Commission of the European Communities to promote strategic objectives that embrace all aspects of maritime and coastal activity in Europe, as summarised in the Commission's Green Paper *Towards a future Maritime Policy for Europe*
- welcomes the recognition in the Green Paper that maritime culture and heritage retain a central role in understanding how Europe's present dominant position in maritime trade has evolved, and in planning for the future.
- recognises the potential of maritime culture as a non-political and benign expression of regional identity and European identity at the same time, enabling neighbours across political, religious or geographical boundaries to enjoy and celebrate their shared values and heritage, and to demonstrate the distinctive status of their region without recourse to divisive contention or jealousy.
- reiterates that monuments of the maritime heritage, such as traditional ships, historic port facilities and maritime museums can act as focus points for economic renewal and regional development, creating significant new local employment opportunities
- recognises the need to improve "convergence of the regions that are lagging behind" outlined in the Green Paper, where traditional vessels originating from such regions offer the potential to attract tourism and act as cultural ambassadors
- endorses the concept of the "living monument", preserving the ship and its support facilities, together with related craftsmanship and skills, by continued operation
- warns that the goal of "preservation by operation" could be obstructed by the reluctance of some shipping authorities to adopt a pragmatic approach, and by the increasing density of regulation.
- reminds the European Commission, as well as national governments and agencies, that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe urged all its member governments in 2000 to support "preservation by operation"
- seeks wider acceptance by governments and shipping administrations that traditional ships fulfil a valuable and largely self-supporting role in taking lands-people afloat for recreation and improving their appreciation of seafarers' contribution to our quality of life ashore
- stresses the valuable role of traditional ships in 'sustainable tourism', relying significantly on wind power, a renewable energy source, for their propulsion
- highlights the role of traditional ships and seamanship in teaching social skills in a world of growing individualism, while also creating an interest in maritime careers

- resolves to work with the European Commission and its Agencies, as with international organisations having a wider remit, to support the owners and operators of traditional ships in their efforts to keep alive traditional seafaring skills, and to recognise the value of such skills in a world of dwindling natural resources

We shall continue to seek private and public financial support, as well as fiscal and other concessions for maritime heritage associations and operators of traditional craft, in recognition of the substantial burden they willingly shoulder in keeping such vessels in operation for public enjoyment, and in thus providing an attractive and welcoming environment for commercial and regional promotion and development.