

Opening Mr. Michael vom Baur, President of the EMH

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you for the 6th European Maritime Heritage Congress here in Rotterdam, in the Havenmuseum.

We have the pleasure to welcome nearly 80 participants from 15 countries, which are stakeholders from all the parts and many interested groups which are concerned about the European maritime heritage and which are involved preserving it. People like curators from museums, skippers and operators of traditional ships, representatives of governments and safety authorities, like sail training people and education officials, it is quite a good mixture as we had always on our congresses in this organisation.

The venue of this congress, especially the arrangement yesterday-evening, is a good example for the importance of the maritime heritage in the public perception. We met at this beautiful site of the Havenmuseum, right in the centre of Rotterdam, and I know that many of you have been taking a walk to see all the historic ship moored there. There is a massive public interest in preserving maritime heritage. The fact that we are having this congress today and tomorrow in a modern ship simulator, which is a facility for education and training of seafarers, is a very good bridge to today's reality of operation.

This congress is organised by EMH, which is the umbrella of the associations in Europe dealing with the preservation of the maritime heritage. The EMH organisation is in the 15th year of its existence.

It started all with the first congress in 1992 in Amsterdam, in Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum and now we are meeting for the 6th triennial congress.

It is my special pleasure to welcome two persons here: The first is the founding chairman of EMH, Mr. Henk Dessens from the Netherlands, who will speak to us later in the conference, and second is our former president, today's honorary president, Mr. Anders Berg from Sweden. I am very delighted to see you both here.

What is the unique feature of the EMH organisation?

In a nutshell, it is the capability to bring together all stakeholders in maritime heritage, which may have sometimes conflicting interests in certain issues, but which together provide a unique combined knowledge and experience: These are the museum people and the operators and owners of traditional ships. They all share the concept of 'preservation by operation'. Preservation by operation means that maritime heritage is not only shown in museum displays, which are of course important and also very suitable to teach the historical background in a more academic way. But museum displays hardly allow a personal 'hands on' experience and are less suitable for the trading of traditional skills and craftsmanship. Trading of traditional skills- and craftsmanship together with presenting an ensemble of operating traditional ships to the public, ideally in historical port facilities, which we also have to preserve, enable a live impression of the heritage. To enable a 'hands on' experience, a living museum, to make it possible to experience yourself how hard it was to work on this kinds of boats or how hard it was to work in the boiler room of a steamship, this is what makes the work of EMH special, because EMH is the umbrella of all these preservation stakeholders organisations in Europe.

And you can find in many cases that the associations organised in EMH are the only ones who still trade traditional craftsmanship and skills: for example how to educate people to operate steam combustion plants on steamers. This has vanished from the curricula of any maritime school, but we do it.

EMH is a voluntary association and finances itself since 15 years from membership contributions, a budget of a few ten thousand euros per year. All these contributions are taken away from the preservation budget of the ships themselves, so every euro paid for the umbrella is painful for our members. But we are proud that we could run EMH on this base so far and we thank in particular the sponsor companies and organisations, which have enabled this congress.

EMH is also the (you could say) silent facilitator behind the fact that you can still operate traditional ships in today's world of dense maritime regulations. You know that the amount of regulations has been increased and that is of course an answer to the increasing traffic density which is linked with the growth of trade. But it is possible to operate traditional ships under this modern safety regime, which is reflecting a different era, enabled by policy activities in which EMH had been involved during the last 15 years.

Just to mention two of them:

1. the Memorandum of Understanding of European coastal states. Meanwhile we have nine signatory states which are mutually accepting their national rules, solving the problems in port state control, and describing a minimum standard. EMH is acting as the secretariat for the follow-up process of this Memorandum;
2. the Barcelona Charter. This document was signed in 2003. The Barcelona Charter is providing a guideline for restoration and operation of ships in a cultural meaningful way.

These mentioned issues are closely linked with European policy and this is also the link with one of the main purposes of this congress:

The European Union, as you may know, has launched a discussion process to define a future European maritime policy, the so-called "Green Book". (You will find copies in the foyer). It is one of the main purposes of this congress to contribute to the "Green Paper discussion" which will end in a description and joint adoption of a future integrated EU maritime policy. EMH welcomes especially, that among other important issues maritime heritage has a chapter in the Green Paper. There are five thematic chapters, they are dealing with sustainable development of the coastal regions, with the quality of living in the coastal regions, with a tool to deal with the oceans, maritime policy and, last but not least, maritime heritage. Maritime heritage is mainly seen as a factor of identity for the Europeans and for the awareness to the sea and I can tell you that this chapter has not been written without contribution of EMH, it is consequence of our activities that this chapter is in the Green Paper. At this part of my speech I intended to especially welcome the head of the Maritime Policy Task Force of the EU, Mr. John Richardson. I just heard that he is on his way to us, he will speak to us as the keynote speaker later after his arrival.

In EU policy, the cultural aspect is, according to the principle of subsidiarity, normally a domain of the member states and that's why we are very satisfied, that the very important cultural heritage aspect has become one element of the EU Commission's future ideas about maritime policy.

In the Green Paper, as I said before, it is mainly seen as a factor of identification, as an identity factor, but maritime heritage is not only this. Operating and preserving maritime heritage is an economical factor. It is an economical factor because of the more than 250 events we have in Europe now per annum, which are generating substantial turnover in the regions. We have speakers here who will give us some more information about the economical dimension

Another economical element is the cost for maintaining and operating traditional ships which we have estimated in the magnitude of hundred million euros per annum, not considering the

additional voluntary work done. These expenses of the traditional ship owners generate turnover for others, e.g. yards, craftsmen, insurances etc. Maritime heritage is indeed an economical factor, not to be neglected, in my opinion!

Where operated under commercial terms, maritime heritage could even contribute to generate additional jobs, in particular for those who have difficulties to cope with today's qualification and 'speed' requirements. As you know the preservation of ships requires a lot of people who are acquainted with the traditional technology, but are also adapted to the old way of doing things: a bit slower, handmade with dedication. Today more and more people are not complying with the pattern of employment, - we have requirements always to be qualified, to be faster, to be more adapted to electronics - many people cannot cope with that and hence they are populating the unemployment statistics. If we would realize the chances and would enable to make preservation, operation and maintenance of maritime heritage artefacts a commercial business and allow people to make their living out of it, this could create some ten thousand jobs in European coastal regions, especially for people who are not able to cope with today's speed of economics. I think, this aspect should be considered in the political and legal framework discussion and I hope that future European maritime policy will help to do this.

Let me summarize EMH's main expectation to the Green Paper discussion and to the future European maritime policy, which is twofold:

1. paving the way to mobilize financial support, for example by tax exemptions or by other financing tools, from the private and the public sector for the preservation of maritime heritage, in the same way as it is practice for the preservation of land base monuments. High public awareness and prestige, which could be enhanced through a 'more official role' in European policy, could provide the necessary attractiveness for private sponsors, as we have already some supporting this congress, but also open more possibilities for public support.
2. This is maybe the most prominent expectation: we would like to see and to contribute to a consistent legal framework, in which maritime heritage can be preserved today and also where the operation of traditional ships ('Preservation by Operation'), would be possible in the complex legal framework of today's maritime transport and operation.

In this context I think it is a scandal, how in some countries the governments and the authorities ignore the recommendation nr. 1486/2000 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This recommendation deals with the maritime and fluvial heritage and has three bullet points which are supporting the operation of traditional craft, I would like to mention them here:

1. The European national governments should encourage the preservation of the maritime heritage.
2. The use and operation of this maritime heritage for public enjoyment and public display should be encouraged.
3. This should be facilitated by creating easy and adaptable safety framework for traditional ships.

I can see in some countries that this is completely ignored. On the contrary, we are again discussing issues which we have discussed and solved 15 years ago. We are discussing whether wood is allowed to be used on ships because it burns and similar questions, without any actual reason. As a naval architect I know that modern safety rules are always oriented to the modern trends in merchant shipping which are triggered by economical reasons (e.g. minimum crew on board, maximum automation, use of easy to build modern materials) while

traditional ships represent their era's modern technology. On most traditional ships there is a lot of crew, thus no need to make and detect everything automatic. It goes without saying that preserving the heritage of wooden ships is only possible with original material, even if this might not be in compliance with modern passive fire protection rules. I would not like to be misunderstood: for the persons on board (may they be professional or voluntary crew, trainees, guest, passengers etc) there cannot be any compromise for safety, and EMH is not asking for such compromise. But there are many ways to safety, not only the one in the modern shipbuilding standards. Modern navigation and communication equipment for example is mandatory, but it can also be applied without obstructing the historical appearance of a traditional ship.

We have to achieve a different philosophy and that is what we hope EMH could achieve in such a new European policy framework.

I sincerely hope (with the words of Martin Luther King: "I have the dream") that the European Union would be tackling this safety issue for traditional ships with the same "enthusiasm" as EU regulated the size of bananas or promoted the use of olives or regulated the operation of shepherds (which I recently I heard) or promotes gender issues (to be a bit unfair) and there would be more examples, you name it!

I am looking forward to fruitful and stimulating papers and discussions at this 6th European Maritime Heritage Congress. We will have seven sessions here, which are addressing a lot of issues: regional identity, social benefits, wellbeing and tourism, interdependence of ships and harbours, challenges to European policy and also to cultural policy in general.

I hope you will have a enjoyable congress. I can only encourage you to contribute actively. We are intending to launch a declaration of this congress as a part of the discussion process for the Green Paper, a so-called "Rotterdam Declaration". You will find a draft in your files and you are very welcome to contribute. We intend to take input from the congress in order to make this a good paper, to introduce EMH's position into the policy discussion process.

It remains for me to thank the organisers and hosts of the Havenmuseum, the director Rein Schuddeboom and Monika Lundstrom and her crew. Thanks also to the speakers who have prepared the papers. I wish you a very pleasant congress and as always good talks during the lunches, during the dinner tonight and in between over a cup of coffee.

Thank you.