



Press Release

Brussels, November 30th, 2021

FEPORT calls for a real factual debate with respect to the causes of the current disruption in the maritime logistics chain

During their General Assembly meeting held on November 30th, 2021, FEPORT members discussed the current 5th wave of the COVID-19 and its effects on the maritime logistics chain. They have also commented the heavy pressure on EU ports resulting from some problematic practices as well as disruptive events that have taken place in 2021 (lasting low vessel schedule reliability, cancellation of calls, Suez blockade, Chinese ports' closure, shortage of truck drivers and chassis in non-EU ports, etc.).

The recent debate about international congestion during the Plenary meeting of the European Parliament¹ has shown that MEPs are interested in understanding the real causes of disruption and congestion in ports. They are requesting accurate information, facts and figures to avoid drawing wrong conclusions.

Indeed, it is regrettable that congestion in ports is very easily brought as the main cause for the current disruption and that the situation prevailing in ports outside the EU leads to generalization about European ports. This is not very fair towards port companies and terminals and their workers, who have deployed tremendous efforts to keep most European ports open 24/7 since the outbreak of COVID-19, thus allowing goods to reach the shelves of supermarkets.

“2020 and 2021 have been very testing years for our operations in European ports. The impacts of COVID-19, low vessel schedule reliability, compounded by the incident in the Suez Canal, the closure of Chinese terminals and the resulting congestion in parts of the world have disrupted supply chains. Nevertheless, European ports terminals have remained operational while struggling with deteriorating vessel schedule reliability” states Mr Gunther Bonz, FEPORT President.

In early 2020, the pandemic initially resulted in a decline in ship arrivals, but there was a rebound in the second half of 2020 along with a slight increase in the median time that ships were spending in port.

As mentioned in the recent UNCTAD review of maritime transport², despite the constraints related to COVID-19 on labor organization, median time in port in 2020 changed by 2.9% compared to

¹ [Procedure File: 2021/2980\(RSP\) | Legislative Observatory | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

² [Review of Maritime Transport 2021 | CNUCED \(unctad.org\)](#)

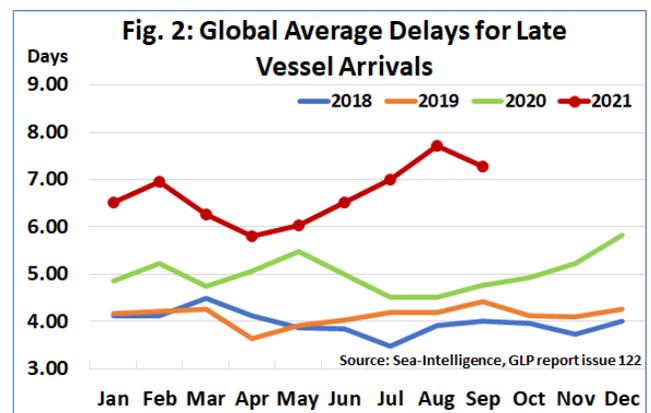
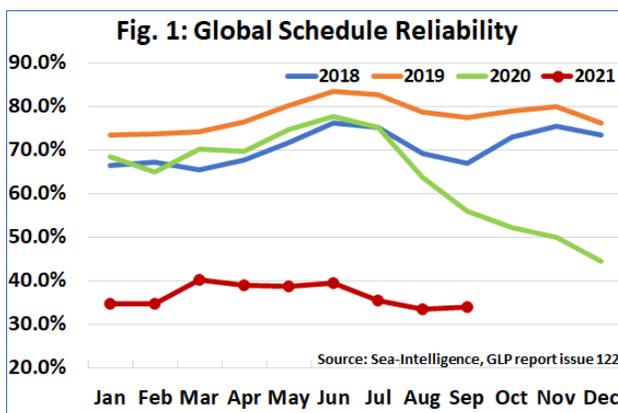
2019. This translates into a change of operational time of around half an hour, negligible compared to the weeks of voyage times of most ships.

The figures regarding schedule reliability before and since the outbreak of COVID-19 are by far more problematic. According to new data from Sea-Intelligence³, two out of three vessels were behind schedule with the number of days delayed also remaining at the highest levels.

On a year-over-year basis, schedule reliability in September 2021 was down 22 percentage points. For the whole of 2021, Sea-Intelligence reports that schedule reliability has been in a range of 34 to 40 percent.

“The low vessel schedule reliability, which was already a very problematic trend before COVID-19, as well as last minute cancellations of calls, are putting more and more pressure on port stakeholders as ports are the place where all inefficiencies of the maritime logistics chain appear. Ports cannot be the buffer which absorbs all those inefficiencies and they certainly do not deserve simplistic generalizations” concludes FEPOR President.

FEPOR reiterates its call to have constructive discussions based on facts and figures with representatives from EU institutions to identify the real causes of the current disruption in the maritime logistics chain.



For more information, please contact:

Ms. Lamia Kerdjoudj-Belkaid, Secretary General of FEPOR

E: lamia.kerdjoudj-belkaid@feport.eu

³ [Sea-Intelligence - Schedule reliability still very poor in September 2021](#)