

SEA EUROPE LOOKS FOR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE US

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From 6 till 12 February, SEA Europe visited Washington DC to seek support for an ambitious maritime manufacturing chapter in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

The purpose of the visit was threefold: first, to present the European shipbuilding industry to US stakeholders; secondly, to gain a better understanding of existing US maritime restrictions; and third, to look for market opportunities which can create growth and jobs for both sides of the Atlantic.

Under current US legislations, it is very difficult for European shipyards to operate on the US domestic market as the result of protectionist measures. A well-known example of such a trade barrier is the US Jones Act. Under this Act, which dates from the 1920s, all commercial vessels transporting cargo between ports and points located in the United States and on the outer continental shelf need to fly a US flag, be owned and manned by US citizens and to be built in US shipyards. This law makes it very difficult – if not impossible – for European shipbuilders to build and repair ships destined for the US domestic shipping market.

SEA Europe is only concerned about the US build requirement under those restrictive legislations. The consequences of such restriction are not only felt by European businesses, but also by the Americans themselves. Today, US commercial shipbuilding has almost disappeared as a direct result of lack of competition. Cargo transport is mainly done over land, primarily by trucks, which results in highly congested US roads with an adverse effect for the environment.

SEA Europe firmly believes that a relaxation of US maritime restrictions – will create extra business and employment opportunities for both the European and American shipbuilding industry. The US will also gain better access to European advanced marine technology and equipment, to modern and sustainable vessels and infrastructure and to specialised know-how. Ultimately, an increase of US domestic transport by sea will also improve road safety and the US environment.

SEA Europe regards the current TTIP negotiations as a unique opportunity and political momentum to discuss and seek a relaxation of the current trade barriers.

Hans Voorneveld, SEA Delegation leader said: “We hope that the US TTIP negotiators will seriously consider our views and demands for improved US market access that benefit both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. We are very happy to have full support of our European Commissioners for Trade and Transport to defend our case within the TTIP”.

Background Note

SEA Europe is the European Association for Ships and Maritime Equipment and is the voice of the European maritime technology industry in the European Union. The association represents close to 100% of the European shipbuilding industry in 18 nations, an industry which generates more than €91 billion turnover annually and offers employment in high profile jobs for more than 500 000 Europeans.

For further information please visit: www.seaeurope.eu or contact:

Jing SHEN, Policy Advisor – Legal Affairs, Intellectual Property Rights and Trade Policy.
js@seaeurope.eu Tel: +32 (0)2.282.03.55