Sustainable and Holistic Management of Irish Ports (SHIP)

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Identifying pressures

As an island nation, Ireland's ports and harbours are of strategic importance and are essential for its local, regional, and national economies. They are vital hubs that connect manufacturers, traders and consumers within global supply chains. Ports also play an important role in sustainable transport, as shipping is the most energy-efficient way to move freight and goods over longer distances. However, ports can also be responsible for adverse environmental, health and social impacts such as air, water and noise pollution; traffic congestion; and damage to terrestrial and marine ecosystems. How these challenges are managed is essentially determined by how ports are governed, and the complex nature of ports and the diverse range of port activities and stakeholders, can make sustainable management challenging. Despite these challenges, ports are key actors in the transition to sustainable development.

The Sustainable and Holistic management of Irish Ports (SHIP) project has investigated how these challenges may be overcome through active research engaging with a wide range of maritime stakeholders and will contribute to national efforts to transition towards sustainability within these sectors.

Informing policy

SHIP evaluated the sustainability of Irish ports and assisted them in the development of a policymaking framework to help Irish ports to minimise and prevent potential negative environmental impacts caused by unsustainable port operation practices.

Developing solutions

The policy framework (Port Framework for Sustainability) developed as part of SHIP includes recommendations and enabling conditions under the themes of port governance, innovation, decarbonisation, port connectivity/linkages, efficiency and investment. The recommendations are presented across three different timeframes for implementation (short, medium or long term). The framework also includes a set of enabling conditions which focus on key actions that port need to do to ensure that these recommendations can be implemented. These recommendations and associated enabling conditions can be used to inform planning and implementation processes to advance port sustainability in Ireland. The research also identifies gaps concerning the role of particular port stakeholders in developing future sustainability actions and planning for the long term in Irish ports. It is recommended that ports, in collaboration with a diverse range of port stakeholders, identify key actors from the public, private and civil sectors to help them create a vision and implementation plan for their long-term future.