

Abstract from the Technology Review on the Finnish Maritime Cluster

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Abstract

The maritime cluster in Finland consists of several sectors, such as those associated with shipping, marine industries and port operations in the private and public sectors. The main objective of the Finnish Maritime Cluster study was to assess the significance and map the networks of this cluster in Finland as well as to describe its economical and social importance.

The study involved a comprehensive enquiry carried out amongst the most important companies of the various sectors in the maritime cluster to establish its economical and employment-related impacts. This enquiry covered some 260 companies by means of interviews and other methods. In addition to private sector companies, this figure also includes ports operating in the public sector. Additionally, the conductors of the study had access to data collected by the Tax Administration and Statistics Finland on some 2,400 companies associated with the maritime cluster, whose names came up in connection with the study. The total turnover of all companies directly associated with the maritime cluster is some 11.4 milliard Euro. The maritime cluster directly employs approximately 47,000 people in the private sector and in ports. Its indirect impacts seen through consumption are manifold.

The maritime cluster is a functional entity in which the various industries, such as shipping, marine industries and port operations, are in close interaction with one another not only directly but also through their company networks. Through these networks, the large companies in the maritime cluster extend their influence to the whole country, excluding the northernmost parts of Lapland. The economical impact of the maritime cluster is the most significant in the Åland Islands, as well as in the regions of Helsinki, Turku and Rauma. The majority of the companies associated with this cluster are naturally located on the coastline, but there also is a large number of maritime cluster companies inland.

In the enquiry carried out in companies for this study, it came up that co-operation and networking between companies is regarded as very important in the increasingly tough competitive situation. The inquiry also raised the question of government aids offered by different countries. These aids distort the competitive situation in ship-building and maritime transports. The companies in the Finnish maritime cluster want to see themselves in an operating climate corresponding to that of the companies in competitor countries. The companies also emphasise the importance of improving the image of the marine industries and ensuring the availability of a labour force in the future.

Because of the country's geographical location, maritime transport is essential for the Finnish economy. Further development and efficiency of maritime transport and ports are vital for the competitiveness of our export industry. Ports and the companies operating in them are crucial links in the foreign trade logistics chain.

The large companies in the maritime cluster are highly international and play an important part in the export industry. These companies attract notable cash flows to the Finnish national economy, which in turn contributes greatly to the welfare of the Finnish society. Typical features of large maritime cluster companies are the application of advanced technology and a high level of innovation, which have resulted in a significant growth potential in their company networks in particular. The maritime cluster has developed to include important activities in associated fields, such as insurance, financial services and maritime classification.

The public sector plays an important role in the maritime cluster. As the economy develops, the scope of co-operation between the private maritime sector and public administration has become increasingly wide.

Key words: maritime cluster, shipping, marine industry, port operations, sub-contractor network, national economy, competitiveness