



ANTWERP PORT AUTHORITY

PRESS RELEASE

Antwerp Port Authority freezes port dues and concession fees

Antwerp Port Authority has decided to keep the port dues and concession fees in 2010 at the 2009 level. In fact, most of the dues will be frozen at the 2008 level. Furthermore, a 10% reduction will be granted for transshipment of conventional/breakbulk cargo, provided employers and labour unions manage to make more efficient use of dock labour. With these measures the Port Authority seeks to combat further losses in freight volumes and employment, while extending a helping hand to shipping companies that are having to deal with the particularly sharp recession.

As of next year Antwerp Port Authority will charge 10% lower port dues for transshipment of conventional/breakbulk cargo such as steel, fruit paper and wood, for which Antwerp is the leading port in Europe. These types of freight are faced with a number of structural problems, and so the Port Authority has linked the reduction in rates to the condition that the labour unions and employers must make a serious contribution towards greater efficiency in loading and unloading such labour-intensive items, without compromising safety. "Nobody can deny that the port of Antwerp has lost some trade in the past years due to the overly rigid work organisation in freight handling," said port alderman Marc Van Peel. Port Authority CEO Eddy Bruyninckx declared "We expect to see clear signals from both sides of industry before 1 January, about their willingness to make significant improvements in the efficient use of dock labour."

The Port Authority does not reckon on any further linear discounts, but is open to bilateral talks with shipping companies. In the meantime, the fees charged to concession holders too are being frozen. Companies that declare their willingness to invest in new terminal facilities can count on a helping hand from the Port Authorities. These measures form part of an overall plan for a competitive port, the main principles of which have been approved by the board of directors. In the next few weeks the Port Authority will be holding talks with the various parties involved, and it is expected that these will lead to practical measures in 2010, enabling Antwerp to reinforce its position as the second-largest port in Europe. The port currently provides more than 180,000 jobs in Flanders and contributes nearly 60% of the total added value that the Belgian ports generate for the national economy.

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