

PORTIUS

INTERNATIONAL AND EU PORT LAW CENTRE

WORLD'S FIRST PORT LAW CENTRE INAUGURATED IN GHENT AND SUPPORTED BY GHENT UNIVERSITY, THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE AND THE PORTS OF GHENT AND ZEEBRUGGE

PRESS RELEASE

Ghent, Wednesday 9 September 2010

On 7 September 2009, the world's first ever port law centre, was inaugurated at a ceremony at the Castle of the Counts in Ghent, Belgium which was attended by over 100 port policy makers and key representatives of the maritime industry and the legal profession from various EU and non-EU countries.

Portius is the world's first institution to specialise in the study of the international and EU law of both maritime and inland ports. Port law is essential to the functioning of ports, traditional gateways to global trade. Among other things, it regulates international jurisdiction over ports and foreign ships, the regime of port authorities, port investments, financing and state aid, free access to and non-discrimination in ports, market access, competition and liberalisation of port services, port concessions, port dues, port policing and port state control, shipping agency, pilotage, towage, cargo handling, port labour, safety, security and environmental issues, port-related liability etc.

Portius is an independent non-profit academic institution hosted by Ghent University and the College of Europe in Bruges (Belgium) and Natolin-Warsaw (Poland). Ghent University was founded in 1817 and is today one of the major universities in the Dutch-speaking region of Europe. The College of Europe offers prestigious education in European legal and other matters. Moreover, Portius is actively supported the port authorities of Ghent and Zeebrugge, two major sea ports in the Scheldt-Rhine Delta. In other words, Portius is located right in the maritime heart of Europe and within a stone's throw from Brussels, the capital of the European Union and centre of port policy and lawmaking in the EU.

At the inauguration ceremony, Flemish Minister for Ports Hilde Crevits and Mr Giovanni Mendola, Principal Administrator of the Ports and Inland Waterways Unit of the European Commission stressed the increasing importance of the legal aspects of port policy, management and operations and welcomed Portius as an extremely valuable new initiative. Portius chairman Prof Eric Van Hooydonk delivered an inaugural lecture in which he underlined the rich tradition, vitality and originality of port law, which should be recognised as a separate branch of maritime law. Further support for Portius was expressed by the governors of the provinces of East and West Flanders, the Mayor of the City of Ghent, the rectors of Ghent University and the College of Europe and the chairmen and CEOs of the port authorities of Ghent and Zeebrugge. The main partners of Portius signed a formal cooperation agreement.

Portius is guided by the overall objective to meet the needs of port policymakers, the port and shipping industry and the port-based legal profession. The first Portius event is an Update Seminar on Places of Refuge for Ships in Need of Assistance on 13 October 2010 in Ghent. From 30 March to 8 April 2011, Portius is organising the first edition of a specialised top-level course in port law for lawyers and experienced port managers. From 13 to 17 June 2011, Portius is hosting an international port law conference at Bruges which will cover various topical port law issues.

For more information, go to www.portius.org.



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