

SPECIAL FEATURE: SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Lisa Maher of CEDA's official magazine, IHS Dredging and Port Construction (IHS DPC) caught up with three of the newest faces at the CEDA Environmental Commission (CEC) and asked them why participation is so important and what can it achieve. The interview in full length is reprinted here with the kind permission of IHS DPC.



Astrid Kramer

Pieter de Boer

Rita Ramos

Five new CEC members

- Astrid Kramer, Boskalis, replaces Gerard van Raalte
- Pieter de Boer, Rijkswaterstaat replaces Pol Hakstege
- Rita Silveira Ramos, Port of Lisbon Authority
- Henrich Roeper, Hamburg Port Authority, replaces Axel Netzband
- Mark Bollen, IMDC, replaces Jos Smits

Marine biologist Kramer, eco-engineer de Boer and geomatics engineer Ramos perfectly illustrate a point that Kramer made early on: "Biologists speak a certain language, as do engineers, regulators, etc. Problems arise when they just don't understand each other. So in some ways I'm a translator. There are a number of people on the CEC committee who are like that – we're all from different backgrounds and companies but we come together and translate for each other."

Drawing on diversity

De Boer agreed: "It is the total picture that makes it interesting. However, my main interest is how to keep dredging (water management) possible in an environmentally-friendly and cost-effective way." He added: "I bring experience with, and knowledge about, Dutch projects – goals, planning, tendering/contracting, realisation

– and on the implementation of international and national environmental regulations. CEC provides [examples of] best practices and an international network of experts. This is important [and] efficient because it is very difficult to find all the relevant developments yourself. CEC offers a broad view on developments that are or could be relevant to dredging."

Ramos concurred: "We share problems, solutions and experience of projects [and] works. The best way to find innovative solutions is talking to others with expertise, who share the same problems."

That was echoed by Kramer: "I got involved because one of my colleagues has been on the committee for over 20 years but he's retiring so, when he asked if I'd take it on, I liked it because it allows me to be involved in different aspects of dredging which, day-to-day, I don't usually deal with."

She continued: "I have found it a useful way to learn – I gain from it. If there are projects here at work, or barriers we face, there's always someone on the committee who has seen the same thing so they all help. And we look at best practice and ways to apply that."

"Within CEC we discuss and monitor international developments on both dredging (projects, techniques) and environment and their relationship," de Boer noted. He got involved "because dredging is a very important means of water management in the Netherlands; [such] water systems are regarded as important 'environments'. Knowledge of this is important for water management and for my daily work. Also, we like to showcase our projects that we are proud of and get feedback."

Ramos noted: "[The] dredging department has followed CEDA's work and guidelines for a long time, and being part of this commission is recognition that our work matters. I've worked with dredging [projects] for more than 15 years and, in Portugal, we have to follow an entire dredging project from the design until the works, including the tender. So I hope that my experience can give the group a global vision of how it needs to integrate several aspects of a dredging project from the point of view of the port authority."

Kramer also highlighted the positive aspects of participating on the CEC: "I've only been to three meetings so far, but my aim is to bring in more feedback and more experience of projects worked. Half the committee is under 40 and half are women, so the CEC has many different backgrounds and opinions and experiences to draw on. It's not just marine biology – some are legislators or engineers. It is more diverse now – closer to the real world environment – which is its strength."

Looking ahead

“Environment is not just the ecological environment,” she continued, “it is also the financial and social environment – which is where more efforts are needed over the next few years. Ecologists are interested in links, the interconnectedness; whereas engineers are more focused on quantification. Part of CEC’s role is to bring in other viewpoints by being aware and expanding and talking to different people. Building with Nature is a really good example – it looks at projects from lots of different angles. First you need to really understand the problem or project, then you can move to the design aspects.”

Asked if the current agenda was likely to change, de Boer suggested, “It is difficult to predict the future. I think the current agenda is addressing the most important issues, but I think that regulatory aspects [will] need to be on the agenda for a long time. I think that best practices could be made more important. Furthermore, the trend is towards an integrated approach, so more sectoral issues should disappear (for example, focusing solely on contamination of sediments should be something from the past).

Kramer agreed: “In the last decade, more elements have become an accepted part of the environmental

evaluation of a project – turbidity and contaminated sediment are now integral parts of what has to be considered. Increasingly, the effects of underwater sound and marine mammals are doing the same.”

Ramos agreed: “One of the issues that are under discussion that I consider more important is the dredging carbon footprint so it can be viewed in an integrated way within an entire project, not only the dredging, but by considering other aspects of a project.”

“The CEC has discussed its goals for the next 4-5 years – there are a lot of things it wants to achieve, but it’s difficult to get enough time to do them all. One thing I can do is inform my colleagues in my own organisation – present results, etc, but finding the time to do so...,” Kramer added.

However, all three felt the CEC was a valuable resource for members – whether ports, consultants, contractors, or a government department. “CEC is actively seeking answers for members,” Kramer ended. “From my point of view, everyone benefits with CEC’s work,” said Ramos. “I think there are benefits for all kinds of members,” de Boer concluded.

