

# Container mania at Izmir

*Ahmet Çalik, partner at Izmir-based Çalik & Çalik, explains why the Turkish port of Izmir is not only the country's leading container port but also a developing shipping business centre*



Ahmet Çalik

IN 1923, as part of its modernisation programme, the Turkish Republic introduced a series of law reforms and adopted many contemporary European codifications. Today, Turkish law is part of the European continental law system.

The maritime and marine insurance laws are exclusively of German origin. Almost all major international conventions on maritime law have been accepted and ratified by Turkey, ensuring that all areas of maritime law, such as shipowning, charter parties, bills of lading, maritime liens on cargoes and vessels, ship arrests, casualties, salvage, and collision, conform to the international legal system.

Istanbul is Turkey's most renowned city and the country's major point of import. But, today, Izmir is the leading export and container port in Turkey. Izmir has been an important call destination for the largest maritime lines during the last four centuries. Today, the world's top twenty container lines call at Izmir, where they have been represented for more than fifty years.

The annual volume of containers handled by the port of Izmir is approximately 1m teu. The port's crane capacity, container yard, container depots and container trucking fleet are increasing each year, as is the number of shipowning companies. Izmir attracts direct calls, mainly due to its central location in the Aegean Sea, its relatively efficient handling facilities, and its competitive rates.

Many larger general and bulk cargo vessels can also be accommodated at nearby Nemrut Bay port, a region of heavy industry where five privately owned and operated jetties are available for loading/discharging. Along with Nemrut Bay port, Turkey's second largest petroleum refinery is situated in Aliaga port, just half an hour from Izmir. Here, substantial bulk liquid and chemical tankers call every year.

Turkey's Aegean coast has always been popular as a holiday destination, with many cruiseships and pleasure boat calls. Ferry and ro-ro traffic is also continuously increasing between the Turkish Aegean and Italian ports.

Shipping and related businesses have grown considerably in Izmir. Today, in Izmir and its

neighbouring ports, bunkering, ship chandlery, agency, brokerage, chartering, forwarding, stevedoring, pilotage, towage, salvage, and surveying activities are quite intensive. In addition, all the international and local banks, underwriters, and P&I clubs have branches or commercial correspondents in Izmir.

Along with all this shipping business activity comes the possibility of disputes and litigation. The courts of the Aegean region, and especially the Izmir courts of commerce, are experienced in maritime, admiralty and related cases. The presence of a vessel and/or its cargo at one of the regional ports would usually be sufficient for the local court to accept jurisdiction. Therefore, experienced legal institutions in Izmir specialise in advising and litigating in connection with all forms of maritime cases and casualties involving marine insurance, P&I clubs, commodity and agency, all types of charter party disputes, arrests, cargo claims, and maritime liens.

Izmir also has a significant role to play in foreign trade and international relations in Turkey, holding an international fair and exhibition for the past 73 years. Forty-nine countries are represented in Izmir on a consular basis, and the city is also home to the School of Maritime Business and Management at the Izmir University of Dozuk Eylul, which contributes to the education of qualified personnel for the shipping industry to IMO standards.

Theoretically, lawyers from Istanbul and other cities are allowed to render legal services in Izmir. Indeed, some are following cases there. But Istanbul and Izmir are 600 km apart, and it is not that easy to follow an important law case and legal filing from such a distance. In addition, personal relations and knowledge of the surrounding area are still regarded as invaluable.

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*Izmir's handles approximately 1m teu each year*