

# Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation

“Co-operating to create, maintain and implement a safer maritime environment”

## NEWSLETTER 1

### Regional Cooperation in Maritime Safety

The first event of the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation took place in Antwerp on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

The purpose of the “Regional Cooperation in Maritime Safety” Seminar and Workshops was to: bring together and acquaint Interreg project managers with each other and the aims and objectives of each project; develop detailed project to project co-operation proposals, and; provide an opportunity for maritime stakeholders to observe the work of the Interreg projects.

Sixty-six people from international, European, national and local organisations attended the event. These included representatives from the European Commission, national and local governments, maritime agencies and commercial concerns. Fifteen Interreg projects provided presentations on their work.

Identification Systems can be linked to the Safety at Sea Interreg Projects. A presentation by Ann-Kirstin Myleus, from DG Regio, emphasised the importance of Maritime Safety within future regional development funding. Captain Jan Verbist and Peter Verwaerde provided informative presentations on activity within the Port of Antwerpen. The keynote address was provided by Professor Erik Franckx, Director of the Centre for European Law, University of Brussels.



### Delegates at the Antwerp Seminar and Workshops

The following feature article was prepared following the Antwerp Event and has been submitted to Lloyds List.

“THE Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation - a new body designed to co-ordinate regional and local government activities in European funded shipping safety projects across Scandinavia, northern and western Europe - has just held its launch conference. This is news the shipping industry should welcome.

That may appear paradoxical. After all, many industry representative organisations have sufficient clout to deal directly with national governments acting as flag states and port states. Indeed, there are plenty of individual shipowners important enough to get their



**Ann-Kirstin Myleus, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Regio, Unit D1.**

The European Maritime Safety Agency described how work on Automatic



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Co. Interreg III B North Sea Programme  
Jernbanegade 22 DK-8800 Viborg Denmark

Tel: +45 87 27 19 99 Fax: +45 86 60 16 80



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phone calls put straight through to the minister of transport. Meanwhile, maritime safety matters involving more than one country are usually considered the proper province of the International Maritime Organisation alone.

Remember the outcry against alleged European Union 'unilateralism' when Brussels tried to introduce tighter controls on tankers in the wake of the Erika spill? If that's the attitude to intervention from the EU as a whole, one can only imagine how well the prospect of local and regional government involvement will go down in some shipping quarters. Who needs another layer of bureaucracy to deal with?

Such a stance would be a mistake. Everyone gains from improved maritime safety, and the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation has made it plain that it sees shipping not as a scapegoat, but as a potential partner in achieving this end. For an industry not always wildly popular with the general public, the prospect of winning new friends and influencing people doesn't come every day. Let's not forget that local and regional governments have a democratic mandate. People vote for them. Being a shipowner is not an elected position. A seat in a regional assembly is exactly that.

The communities that regional authorities represent are, in the jargon, stakeholders. For a start, they provide the men and women - often volunteers - who staff search and rescue services. They can also end up facing the consequences of accidents, particularly oil spills. A case in point is the Prestige disaster, which devastated both the vital tourist and fishing industries in Galicia.

Although precise arrangements vary from country to country, local and regional governments often have direct maritime safety responsibilities. In Britain, for instance, county councils manage the clean-up of coastal pollution and often control the fire services that tackle blazes at sea. Similar arrangements for tackling the consequences

of shipping pollution to coasts have been established in France and Spain.

In summary, these authorities have vital experience to share. While they fully accept that it is down to central governments and the IMO to write the regulations, it is hardly unreasonable for them to ask for a voice in such matters.

That's one of the aims of the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation. That is the name chosen by a programme operated by a body called Interreg, which exists to provide funding to regional projects across EU member states and neighbouring countries.

In the wake of Erika and Prestige, the issue of maritime safety has evidently moved up the order papers of regional government across Europe. Five of Interreg's Programmes realised that more than a dozen maritime safety projects between local and regional governments in three or more of the countries they cover were operating independently of one another.

Obviously, it made sense to co-ordinate such activities. Following a preliminary seminar in Stavanger last year, the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation was formally constituted in January 2005. The Operation is led by the North Sea Secretariat - based in the Danish town of Viborg - and has a project area extending from the North of Norway to the Baltic and south through the Channel and Bay of Biscay to southern Spain.

There is already money in the pot to assist in such work, something like E 18 million, has already been awarded and during the next round of Interreg projects, scheduled for 2007-2013, more could be available for maritime safety initiatives.

Its first full conference was held in Antwerp at the back end of April, with representatives of some 15 projects coming together to discuss how best they can achieve common goals.

"If there is any subject in European policy that has no borders, it is of course maritime policy," Yvo Peeters of Belgium's ministry for



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the Flemish community stressed in his opening address.

One obvious function of the conference was to give participants the chance to meet one another and find out what their counterparts are doing. There were also a number of information sessions. Among them was a presentation from Erik Franckx, director of the Centre of European Law at Brussels University, who is an acknowledged expert on the law of the sea. Just in case anyone is tempted to raise the issue of unilateralism again, Professor Franckx stressed that the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea does indeed provide for the possibility of regional agreements, provided only that they fall within the framework of the convention.

Lazaros Aichmalotidis, a senior project officer with the European Maritime Safety Agency, pointed to the political pressure that had built up across Europe since the Prestige. The public wants to know how it can possibly be that coastal states do not know which vessels are sailing in front of their coastlines.

"Unfortunately, for the time being, we cannot give an answer to this basic question," he concluded. But that will change by 2007, as Automatic Identification Systems are rolled out across Europe, in line with an EU directive.

But the main business for attendees was participation in one of three workshops. The first was based on possibilities for risk prevention, and centred on the identification of risks from shipping and other maritime activities, and the development of appropriate strategies. The second considered preparedness and response, focusing on contingency arrangements such as search and rescue and response plans for oil and chemical spills. The third stream concentrated on integration between the projects represented, and how knowledge and experience could be generalised.

The proposals that arose were summarised in the concluding session, which brought together the conclusions from all three

workshops. Among the key findings is the need to develop common methodologies and protocols for determining risk to coastal and sea areas. Linked to this, a common understanding of what constitutes 'acceptable risk' will also be sought.

There are plans to develop IT systems for modelling search and rescue and oil spill operations, and for a new project to research the cumulative effects of repeated small spills of less than 700 tonnes on the environment and the economy. Seminars on use of Automatic Identification System data, and local and regional contingency plans are also in the offing.

It was also decided to seek discussion with the shipping industry on such crucial questions as refuge areas and the risks to cruise vessels operating in remote areas. This is an offer that should be accepted with alacrity. Shipping organisations sometimes complain about lack of consultation. Here are influential decision makers, offering consultation on a plate. Opening up channels of communication is something that would surely benefit both sides.

Sadly, input from the shipping industry during the proceedings was almost zero. A number of trade associations and other groupings were asked along, the organisers point out. None sent a representative. Richard Hill, co-ordinator of the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation stresses that neither side should be in the business of stereotyping each other, and instead approach areas of common interest with an open mind.

All of the projects that make up the umbrella are designed to enhance maritime safety, not to undermine the existing system, he stressed. "There is huge activity in member authorities, and we are looking to co-ordinate that," he said. "That's the goal, and part of that goal is the involvement of the shipping industry."

The conference is likely to be repeated in 2006. Next time the industry would do well to participate."



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## Antwerp and Future Work

The hard work of the delegates at the Regional Cooperation in Maritime Safety seminar and workshop has produced twenty two topic areas which form the basis of the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operations work.

These areas of work include auditing of available maritime data, risk assessment and acceptance, the use of IT, GIS and AIS systems, communication of information, involving maritime decision makers and stakeholders, contingency planning, training, passenger vessel safety, motorways of the sea and refuge areas.

The topics will form the basis of the Maritime Safety Umbrella Proposal and work plan to be finalised at the next meeting of the operation's Management Group on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2005.

The work plan will prioritise which topics will be taken forward between now and December 2006, together with those topics that can be developed into applications for the 2007 to 2013 funding programme.

One message from the Antwerp Seminar was the benefit of bringing the maritime safety projects together to discuss their work. It is likely that Antwerp will be the first of a series of seminars looking at specific maritime safety issues.



## Richard Hill, Maritime Safety Coordinator

Richard joined the Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation in January 2005. He has 14 years experience, including working within the oil industry, environmental assessment of coastal developments and coastal zone management. Prior to joining the Operation he was the Exe Estuary Officer and then Emergency Planning Officer for Devon County Council, where he was responsible for preparing and implementing oil spill contingency and CBRN plans. He led his employers response to the MV Kodima and MV Willy accidents and was a liaison officer during the 2001 UK Foot and Mouth outbreak. In 1993, Richard worked as part of the response team to the loss of the MV Braer. He has prepared two successful Interreg applications. LOSPAN (IIC) and EROCIPS (IIIB).



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# Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation



## Contacts present at Antwerp

### Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation

Richard Hill  
Maritime Safety Co-ordinator  
[crbrh@vibamt.dk](mailto:crbrh@vibamt.dk)

Trine Beate Solevågseide  
Maritime Safety Assistant  
[crbtbs@vibamt.dk](mailto:crbtbs@vibamt.dk)

### Safety at Sea (North Sea)

André Kroneberg  
Norwegian Coastal Administration  
(lead partner)  
[andre.kroneberg@kystverket.no](mailto:andre.kroneberg@kystverket.no)

Jozef Bosmans  
Nautiv vzw, Belgium  
[jozef.bosmans@skynet.be](mailto:jozef.bosmans@skynet.be)

Lidvard Maaseide  
Norwegian Coastal Administration  
[lidvard.maaseide@kystverket.no](mailto:lidvard.maaseide@kystverket.no)

Jerry Stanley  
BMT Ltd  
[jstanley@bmtmail.com](mailto:jstanley@bmtmail.com)

Robert Vik  
Møre og Romsdal County Council, Norway  
[robert.vik@mrfylke.no](mailto:robert.vik@mrfylke.no)

Thomas Ravn  
RD Administration of Navigation & Hydrography  
[TRA@frv.dk](mailto:TRA@frv.dk)

Dr. Yvo J. D. Peeters  
Ministerie van de Vleemse Gemeenschap  
[natascha.peeters@lin.vlaanderen.be](mailto:natascha.peeters@lin.vlaanderen.be)

Peter Verwaerde  
Antwerp Port Authority, Harbour Masters' Service  
[pjet.verwaerde@haven.antwerpen.be](mailto:pjet.verwaerde@haven.antwerpen.be)

Website: [www.safetyatsea.se](http://www.safetyatsea.se)

### Baltic Master

Application under consideration (June 05)

Daniel Sköld  
Region Blekinge (lead partner)  
Email: [daniel.skold@regionblekinge.se](mailto:daniel.skold@regionblekinge.se)

Åse Allberg  
Region Skåne, Sweden  
Email: [ase.allberg@skane.se](mailto:ase.allberg@skane.se)

Per Gudmund Lindencrona  
Region Blekinge (lead partner)  
Email: [pg.lindencrona@regionblekinge.se](mailto:pg.lindencrona@regionblekinge.se)

Björn Martinsson  
Region Skåne, Sweden  
Email: [Bjorn.Martinsson@skane.se](mailto:Bjorn.Martinsson@skane.se)

Bo Löfgren  
Region Blekinge, Sweden  
Email: [bolof@telia.com](mailto:bolof@telia.com)

### Northern Maritime Corridor

Isabell Munn  
Aberdeenshire Council, Scotland  
Isabel.Munn@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Gwendoline Gonsaeles  
Ghent University - Maritime Institute  
Email: [gwendoline.gonsaeles@ugent.be](mailto:gwendoline.gonsaeles@ugent.be)

[www.northernmaritimecorridor.no](http://www.northernmaritimecorridor.no)

### SAIL II

Alex Midlen  
Colchester Borough Council, UK  
Email: [alex.midlen@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:alex.midlen@colchester.gov.uk)

Francoise Lantsoght  
SAIL Partnership (Belgium)  
[francoise.lantsoght@west-vlaanderen.be](mailto:francoise.lantsoght@west-vlaanderen.be)

Clive Gilbert  
SAIL Partnership (UK)  
[clive.gilbert@sailcoast.org](mailto:clive.gilbert@sailcoast.org)

### SUMMERI & SUMMERI II

(GOFMEC / INTERREG III A Finland-Russia and Finland-Estonia)

Jorma Laakso  
Kotka Vocational Institute, Finland (lead partner)  
Email: [jorma.laakso@kotka.fi](mailto:jorma.laakso@kotka.fi)



ESPAÑA ESPACIO ATLÁNTICO  
FRANCE ESPACE ATLANTIQUE  
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U.K. ATLANTIC AREA

Co. Interreg IIB North Sea Programme  
Jernbanegade 22 DK-8800 Viborg Denmark

Tel: +45 87 27 19 99 Fax: +45 86 60 16 80

# Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation

## Safety at Sea Northern Periphery

Application under consideration (April 05)

Iain Campbell  
Maritime & Coastguard Agency UK  
[Iain.Campbell@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:Iain.Campbell@mcga.gov.uk)

David Jardine-Smith  
Maritime & Coastguard Agency UK (lead partner)  
Email: [Dave.Jardine-Smith@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:Dave.Jardine-Smith@mcga.gov.uk)

Graham Candy  
Maritime & Coastguard Agency UK  
Email: [Graham.Candy@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:Graham.Candy@mcga.gov.uk)

## Eurobaltic

Dr. Barbara Polak  
State Fire Service, Poland  
[bpolak@kgpsp.gov.pl](mailto:bpolak@kgpsp.gov.pl)

Berith Engström  
Swedish Rescue Services Agency  
Email: [berith.engstrom@srv.se](mailto:berith.engstrom@srv.se)

## Save the North Sea

John Mouat  
KIMO  
Email: [john.m.mouat@sic.shetland.gov.uk](mailto:john.m.mouat@sic.shetland.gov.uk)

[www.savethenorthsea.com](http://www.savethenorthsea.com)

## Coastman

Fredrik Gröndahl  
Industrial Ecology, Sweden  
[fredrik@ket.kth.se](mailto:fredrik@ket.kth.se)

## EMDI

Dr. Karen Sumser-Lupson  
University of Plymouth  
[karen.lupson@btopenworld.com](mailto:karen.lupson@btopenworld.com)

Michael Lloyd  
AMRIE  
[mlloyd@amrie.org](mailto:mlloyd@amrie.org)

Sophie Bahé  
VIGIPOL  
[sophie.bahe@vigipol.com](mailto:sophie.bahe@vigipol.com)

Capt. Fernando Pardo  
AMRIE

[info@amrie.org](mailto:info@amrie.org)

Jacques Mazières  
AMRIE  
[info@amrie.org](mailto:info@amrie.org)

## Cycleau

Steve Winston  
Cornwall County Council, UK  
[swinston@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:swinston@cornwall.gov.uk)

Richard White  
Devon Wildlife Trust  
[rwhite@devonwt.cix.co.uk](mailto:rwhite@devonwt.cix.co.uk)

## EROCIPS

Marisa Fernández  
Centro Tecnológico del Mar, Fundación  
CETMAR  
[mfernandez@cetmar.org](mailto:mfernandez@cetmar.org)

Simon Wilkins  
Devon County Council, UK  
[simon.wilkins@devon.gov.uk](mailto:simon.wilkins@devon.gov.uk)

Richard White  
Devon Wildlife Trust  
[rwhite@devonwt.cix.co.uk](mailto:rwhite@devonwt.cix.co.uk)

## POWER

Susanne Adam  
Univ. of Oldenburg, Germany  
[adam@icbm.de](mailto:adam@icbm.de)

## SAMARCAM

Donato Caires  
Serviço Regional Protecção Civil Da Madeira  
[geral.srpcm@netmadeira.com](mailto:geral.srpcm@netmadeira.com)

## Corepoint

Frank Maes  
Ghent University - Maritime Institute  
[Frank.Maes@UGent.be](mailto:Frank.Maes@UGent.be)



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