



28th February 2011

FLAGSHIP-RCS presents world first semantic maritime search engine
offering saving potential of €8.94 million per year

FLAGSHIP, a Pan-European maritime transport project part funded by the EU, has successfully developed the first intelligent regulatory search and automated form filling system known as FLAGSHIP-RCS (Regulatory Compliance Support). The system could significantly reduce the regulatory compliance and administrative burden ship owners and operators currently experience with estimates indicating a 50% time saving, compared with conventional text based search methods. If every European ship adopted automated form filling this could lead to a total time cost saving in the region of €8.94 million per year.

Luke Speller, Senior Research Scientist at BMT Group Ltd and FLAGSHIP-RCS project leader explained: "There are currently hundreds of thousands of shipping regulations including class, territorial and local variations that ship owners and operators must comply with. Being caught in breach of these regulations can cost a ship owner tens of thousands of pounds in fines. The current regulatory framework makes each ship owner or operator responsible for assembling and complying with all the regulations related to the voyages and stop overs that any of its ships make. Compliance can be a very onerous and expensive process."

FLAGSHIP-RCS was developed to address these challenges by providing the maritime industry with an electronic regulations database; a regulations search system; regulation suggestion; automated compliance checking; form filling notification and assistance, as well as a lexicon of maritime terms in one user-friendly system.



The system enables an individual vessel to call down only the regulations that are directly relevant to its classification and location. Searches are based on meaning rather than on the individual word so, for example, a search on the word 'environment' would deliver regulations relating to pollution, hydrocarbon and oil, as well as those under the generic 'environment' description. Based on the course that has been plotted for a vessel, FLAGSHIP-RCS will also identify and flag imminent changes in regulations as a vessel approaches and enters waters under different jurisdiction. All of which helps with on board efficiency and burden reduction while optimising compliance.

FLAGSHIP-RCS has been developed to provide compliance checking so it can highlight if a vessel is definitely breaking a regulation such as a speed limit and can advise against certain actions for example: 'don't clean bilge tanks here'. Finally, the system has been designed to automatically complete relevant docking forms and to recognise information that is entered repeatedly over sequential voyages. This means that, over time, it can auto-suggest with increasing accuracy a partially completed form for the captain to check, amend and sign-off.

Mr Herman de Meester, Coordinator of FLAGSHIP commented: "The shipping industry always works hard to meet the twin objectives of reducing the risk and the environmental impact of the world's commercial fleet, whilst generating the opportunity for real commercial benefits. FLAGSHIP-RCS is an excellent example of the industry collaborating to achieve just such purposes."

Led by BMT Group in the UK, FLAGSHIP-RCS was supported, delivered and trialled in conjunction with Regs4ships in the UK, Danaos and NTUA in Greece and TEMIS in France.

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Notes to Editors

FLAGSHIP

FLAGSHIP is a consortium of more than 40 European maritime organisations taking part in a part EU-funded project the focus of which is on improving safety, environmental friendliness and competitiveness of European maritime transport. The project was designed to further increase the capacity and reliability of freight and passenger services and to further reduce the impact from accidents and emissions.

The emphasis of the project is on on-board systems and procedures, ship management systems on shore, impact of new technology on present ship-, owner- and operator organisations, effective and efficient communication interfaces and impact of standards and regulations.

Website: <http://www.flagship.be/>

For further information and images, please contact:

Lorraine Emmett, Liz Churchman or Stephen Hooley

FLAGSHIP Press Office

c/o Emmett & Smith

Tel: +44 (0)20 7819 4800

E-mail: lorraine.emmett@emmettandsmith.com

liz.churchman@emmettandsmith.com

stephen.hooley@emmettandsmith.com