EMSA

European Maritime Safety Agency

Promoting best practices among EU VTS centres, The Finnish experience and the Helsinki VTS.

Unit F, Technical Cooperation and Development

1. Background

On the 13th and 14th of June EMSA, in cooperation with the Finnish Maritime Administration (FMA), organised a workshop in Helsinki. This was EMSA's first workshop on "*Promoting Best Practices among EU VTS centres*".
The list of participants is attached as **Annex 1**.
A copy of the Agenda is included as **Annex 2**.
The presentations' details may be obtained by referencing copies of the original papers and presentations, which can be accessed from: http://www.emsa.eu.int/end906.html

The global objective of this project is the enhancement of the process of harmonisation between the VTS centres of E.U. in respect of their organisation, working procedures, training of the staff, services they provide etc, taking into account the experiences and lessons learnt at the level of each single VTS centre.

2. Workshop programme

2.1 Introduction and opening
Mr Lazaros Aichmalotidis, EMSA Senior Project officer on traffic monitoring, acting as the chairman of the meeting welcomed participants to the workshop. He briefly referred to the workshop preparation and emphasised that the main workshop's objective is to look at the practices adopted by Finland and the share of information. The outcome of this workshop will be forwarded to the SafeSeaNet group for further consideration.

2.2 Welcome address
Mr Nyberg from the Ministry of Transport and Communications gave a welcome address and wished to the participants a successful meeting (copy of this speech can be found with all the documentation on the EMSA website).

2.3 Project description and objective
EMSA presented the relevant part of the EU (Dir 2002/59) and international (SOLAS Chapter V Reg 12 and IMO Res A.851 (20) and A.857 (20)) legal framework. The project's description, its objectives and the reporting were also presented to the audience.

2.4 Traffic monitoring initiatives and SSN
EMSA illustrated some of the results of the questionnaires sent to the Member States (MS) in 2004 and 2006 highlighting the differences between MS VTS's in terms of operational procedures, training, technical requirements, services, etc. The current EMSA traffic monitoring initiatives (SSN, STIRES study, SRIT) as well as the areas where harmonisation should be achieved were subsequently listed.

2.5 Gulf of Finland Maritime Traffic Centre
Ms Sirkka-Heleena Nyman from the Ministry of Transport and Communications presented the act 623/2005 which is the formal legal basis for VTS in Finland to incorporate the relevant IMO and EU regulations, listing competences, responsibilities, rights, procedures etc.

Mr Aaltonen introduced the VTS/AIS Finnish system highlighting the fact that Finland has to be considered as an island with 35000 calls per year, very shallow and narrow waters, archipelago characteristics, a major VTS/AIS infrastructure with AIS/radar combinations. The Navy, the Border guard and the FMA are sharing the VTS traffic information. The Finnish VTS centres are all interconnected. The investment to create the complete VTS infrastructure was quite high (24 Million €) but the system has been adapted to SSN with only 200.000 € and to PORTNET with 700.000 €.

Mr Hyppa from the Finnish Boarder Guard confirmed that the VTS is used beside SAR and oil pollution prevention additionally for crime prevention and mitigation of illegal activities. An exercise with many different authorities took place on the second day of the meeting simulating a series of accident involving pollution, rescue activities, sinking of a vessel, etc.

Belgium questioned about the assignment and responsibilities in regard to the vessel movements in the Helsinki VTS area. The workshop noted the legal relationship between master, pilots, ship owners and VTS. Questions of apportionment and fault depend upon the facts of each case.

2.6 Mandatory Ship Reporting System

Mr Kosonen from FMA spoke about the increase of oil traffic volume in the Gulf of Finland with a tendency to further increase in the coming years. The number of transiting vessels is also increasing. The FMA answer to this situation is the GOFREP system which finds its roots in a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2001 by the Ministries of Transport of Finland, Estonia and Russia. Mr Kosonen explained how GOFREP minimises the reporting obligations and facilitates the work of the maritime administrations. Three (3) Databases (one per country) are connected and share information (with an architecture of distributed DBs). The GOFREP organisation was then illustrated, the structure of the experts' meetings and its adoption by IMO (MSC) in 2002. The system is operational from 1st July 2004. The Document of Joint Procedures (DJP) states the common procedures, trainings and requirements for the three sides of the system. The last part of the DJP is being drafted preparing the specifications for training of operators so to guarantee common exercises for a common system. This may be an example for other regions of Europe; it could offer the possibilities, particularly to small administrations to share the cost of training of traffic monitoring operators.

The MS experts asked questions about the training duration and staff qualifications. The Finnish representative explained that the relevant recommendations of IALA on staffing and training are fully met. In the GOFREP case the common exercises help the staff of the competent authority of Finland, Estonia and Russia to improve their procedures and their capabilities to cooperate.

2.7 Adjacent research

Ms Sonninen from VTT presented the phase approach that may follow in developing the traffic monitoring projects, starting with analysis, continuing with simulation, implementing the systems and developing procedures. This scientific approach was appreciated by MS participants.

2.8 Future plans
Mr Kosonen illustrated the future plans for developing an intelligent traffic monitoring system which will meet the demands of the Finnish public sector. Further efforts are expected to be carried out by countries participating in shared system in order to harmonise procedures, reporting obligations and training of personnel. The attendees noted that there are many similarities between the FMA plans and the EMSA project for promoting best practices among the EU VTS centres.

2.9 PORTNET
Mr Backstrom of FMA presented PORTNET, a single window application which can be used by shipping industry to comply with the various reporting applications required by SSN, IMO-FAL forms, customs, ISPS, etc. PORTNET is a system which meets also the logistic purposes to produce automatic port call invoices and statistics (Eurostat purposes). It modernises the services provided to the shipping industries, creating a saving in terms of time and money, guaranteeing the quality of data exchanged.

2.10 User's vision and opinion
Mr Tuomisto representing the Finnish customs spoke about PORTNET from the point of view of the user of the system. He analysed the work of the customs with PORTNET in terms of manifest data, transit declarations, collecting maritime dues and data for invoicing ship agents. The audience was informed that 99% of shipping agents in Finland use PORTNET through HML.

2.11 Visit to the Helsinki VTS and sensor stations
On the morning of the second day the participants were divided in two groups. While the first group visited the VTS centres (observing also the execution of the joint exercise involving several authorities) the second one visited the sensors station located on the Harmaja Island. The groups inverted the visits during the second part of the morning.

2.12 Intervention of the shipping industry
Ms Meri Hietala from the Finnish Environmental Institute gave a presentation on the current situation of the maritime environmental issues around the Gulf of Finland including the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Mr Jan-Erik Dahlberg, Safety and Security manager from Finnlines, presented the experiences and the proposals for improvement of VTS system from the perspective of the shipping companies. He identified three (3) main areas which needs further improvement as follow:
  a) the lack of one common language for the voice communications between pilots, masters and VTS operators which may cause confusion to the masters if they do not speak the local language. Instead of using three (3) different languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) he suggested to only use English as a common language.
  b) VTS operators are reluctant to give instructions when providing traffic organisation services. He indicated that masters would expect more assistance from the VTS operators since they (the operators) have a better view of the whole traffic image. Mr Kosonen from the FMA informed the audience that the view expressed by the Finnlines representative is the prevailing view of masters navigating in the Finnish waters. Some MS experts supported that this is a very

delicate issue since the ship master is the only one having the responsibility to navigate and VTS cannot give instructions but only advice.

c) The VTS coverage has to be extended to cover not only the port entrance but also the port area itself.

The MS experts noted that the suggestions of the Finnlines representative are quite advanced and toward the right direction.

2.13 Discussions
All interventions generated a cooperative discussion covering all the aspects highlighted during the first and second day.

3. Meeting conclusions

There is a general consensus from MS that ship reporting and traffic monitoring are areas that need further harmonisation work from EMSA (in consultation with the MS) with the objective of reducing both the reporting burden on the vessel and the administrations' workload.

The event was successful and MS experts had the opportunity to receive plenty of useful information on the Finnish Traffic Monitoring System which follows the latest technologies and developments and implement harmonised procedures with Estonia and Russia in the Gulf of Finland. The MS experts appreciated the event as a good start for launching the harmonisation process. Some MS asked to accelerate the process and to launch in depth discussions on each one of the four (4) different areas where harmonisation could be achieved (operational procedures, technical procedures and standards, exchange of information, training and staff issues).

The participants finally agreed on the following main conclusions:

3.1 Potential for further exploitation of SRS
As Ship Reporting Systems grow further in EU it is recognised as a valuable information source to a list of stakeholders such as pollution control centres, security services, immigrations, customs, etc..
Helsinki VTS, PORTNET and GOFREP information is shared among different organisations (FMA, Border, Navy, etc.). There is a significant potential for further exploitations of similar type of information for a number of possible users and bodies all over EU.
This sharing of information is of particular importance in exercises where all relevant authorities take part and test their capabilities to cooperate.

3.2 GOFREP example of practices' harmonisation
Ships visiting a Traffic Monitoring area have the right to expect logical uniformity in the demands made to them and the services they are offered. The GOFREP system is a good example of harmonisation of practices among Traffic Monitoring centres of three countries aiming to offer better services to shipping which can be followed by other EU regions.

3.3 Reducing reporting burden placed on ship
New systems have been implemented by MS at national level such as the PORTNET in case of Finland. Moreover, SSN has been implemented at EU level for exchanging information between the different MS administrations. These systems have a relative

low cost (comparing to the cost of implementation of Traffic Centres), they modernise the services offered to the shipping industry and facilitate the work of the MS administrations. Harmonised procedures and systems will make easier the exchange of additional information between MS. In the future information collected from ships entering the waters of one MS could be made available to others MS concerned and decrease the reporting burden placed on ships.

3.4 Possible harmonisation actions
VTS in EU offers the possibility to learn from its history. The understanding grows and the need for harmonise procedures is considered and recognised for the whole EU as an important task for the near future.
The harmonisation process could be seen from different angles. The main categories for possible harmonisation actions could be in the area of:
- operational (reporting, internal, communications, etc..) procedures
- technical procedures and standards (DB development, tools for operators, integration of AIS into VTS, data storage, etc)
- exchange of info and integration into SSN
- training, staffing, qualifications

There are not clear boundaries between these categories as they are all interrelated.

3.5 Harmonisation concept and single window
Harmonisation is a concept that should not be limited only to VTS processes but extended to the ship reporting obligation in general. Harmonisation should be considered for data gathering, data processing, distributing and sharing among different authorities of one MS and between different MSs.
The implementation of the "single window" concept is an essential element in the harmonisation process.

4. Follow up actions

The harmonisation of ship reporting is an important and complicated area where EMSA and MS have never worked before and it would require additional resources from EMSA.

The following follow up actions are proposed:

a) EMSA F.1 will further analyse the results of the first workshop and present them to the next SSN meeting (October 2007);

b) Considering EMSA priorities the implementation of this task could be seen as a medium term priority (2008-2010) after completing the implementation of SSN and the SRIT project.

c) EMSA F.1 will monitor the work carried out by Helcom in this area (Helcom recently launched a similar project after the publication of EMSA project "Promoting best practices among EU VTS centres")

d) Considering the organisation of another workshop in the second semester of 2008 (Germany, Italy and Portugal have already volunteered for hosting such event).

Annex I

Participants list

Country	Title	First Name	Name	Organisation
Belgium	Ms	Katrijn	De Maere	Ostend VTS
Bulgaria	Mr	Stoyan Andreev	Baev	Bulgarian Maritime Administration
Denmark	Mr	Habib	Khayat	Royal Danish Administration
Denmark	Mr	Kjeld	Gaard-Frederiksen	Danish Fleet
France	Mr	Jean-Jacques	Morvant	CROSS Gris-Nez
Germany	Mr	Dirk	Bause	Federal Ministry of Transport
Ireland	Mr	Norman	Fullam	Irish Coast Guard
Ireland	Mr	Gerry	Smullen	Irish Coast Guard
Italy	Mr	Giampaolo	Bensaia	Italian Coast Guard
Latvia	Mr	Eriks	Umbrakso	Latvian Maritime Administration
Lithuania	Mr	Adomas	Alekna	Klaipeda State Seaport Authority
Malta	Mr	Anand	Dayal	Malta Maritime Authority
The Netherlands	Ms	Klaartje	Zuiderbaan	Rijkswaterstaat
Norway	Mr	Hans-Erik	Lofthus	Norwegian Coastal Administration
Poland	Ms	Anna	Jarosławów	Ministry of Maritime Economy
Poland	Mr	Andrzej	Waraksa	Maritime Office Gdynia
Portugal	Mr	António	Caneco	Institute of ports and shipping
Romania	Mr	Emil	Gusa	Romanian Naval Authorithy
Slovenia	Mr	Matjaz	Felicjan	Slovenian Maritime Adminstration
Spain	Mr	Adolfo	Serrano	Sasemar
Spain	Mr	Joaquin	Maceiras	Sasemar
Sweden	Ms	Malin	Dreijer	Swedish Maritime Administration
The United Kingdom	Mr	Harry	Leslie	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
EMSA	Mr	Andrea	Tassoni	EMSA - Cooperation with MS
EMSA	Mr	Lazaros	Aichmalotidis	EMSA - Senior P.O for Ship reporting
Finland	Ms	Sirkka-Heelena	Nyman	Finnish Ministry of Transport
Finland	Mr	Matti	Aaltonen	FMA
Finland	Mr	Mikko	Hyyppa	Finnish Border Guard
Finland	Ms	Kari	Kosonen	FMA
Finland	Ms	Sanna	Sonninen	VTT
Finland	Mr	Rolf	Backstrom	FMA
Finland	Mr	Olli	Tuomisto	Finnish Customs
Finland	Mr	Tapio	Kivilehto	FMA
Finland	Mr	Ulf	Skog	FMA
Finland	Ms	Meri	Hietala	Finnish Environmental Institute
Finland	Mr	Jan-Erik	Dahlberg	Finnlines

European Maritime Safety Agency

Annex II
"Promoting best practices among the European
VTS centres", the experience of Finland

VTS 01/02 - 13th and 14th June 2007

Marina Congress Center, Katajanokanlaituri 7, HELSINKI

Programme – First day Chairman: EMSA

			Doc. Ref.
08.15	*Bus from the hotel*		
09.00	*Registration*		
09.15	**Introduction and opening**	**EMSA**	
09.30	**Welcome address**	**FMA**	
10.00	**Project description and objectives**	**EMSA**	**VTS/01/03**
10.15	**Traffic monitoring initiatives and SafeSeaNet**	**EMSA**	**VTS/01/04**
10.45	*Coffee*		
	Gulf of Finland Maritime Traffic Centre	**Helsinki VTS**	
11.00	1. **Finnish VTS law and degree**	**Sirkka-Heleena Nyman**	**VTS/01/05**
11.30	2. **Finnish VTS/AIS network, Maritime Functions co-operation**	**Matti Aaltonen**	**VTS/01/06**
12.15	3. **Accident Training**	**Mikko Hyyppä**	**VTS/01/07**
12.30	*Lunch*		
14.00	4. **Mandatory Ships Rep. System, GOFREP**	**Kari Kosonen**	**VTS/01/08**
14.30	5. **Adjacent research**	**Sanna Sonninen**	**VTS/01/09**
15.00	6. **Future plans**	**Kari Kosonen**	**VTS/01/10**
15.30	*Coffee*		
	Portnet	**Rolf Bäckström, FMA**	**VTS/01/11**
15.45	1. **Portnet – a Single Window solution**	**Olli Tuomisto, Customs**	**VTS/01/12**
16.30	2. **User vision and opinion**	**Tapio Kivilehto, Stella Naves**	**VTS/01/13**
17.15	*End of the first day*		
17.30	*Bus to the hotel*		

"Promoting best practices among the European VTS centres", the experience of Finland

VTS 01/02 - 13th and 14th June 2007

Marina Congress Center, Katajanokanlaituri 7, HELSINKI

Chairman: EMSA

Programme – Second day

08.15	*Bus from the hotel*		**Doc.Ref.**
09.00	*Registration and coffee*		
09.15	Wrap up from the previous day	EMSA	
09.30	Visit to the Helsinki VTS's centre premises (1st group)	Ulf Skog Kari Kosonen coast guard off.	
09.30	Visit to the Helsinki VTS's sensor stations (2nd group)	Matti Aaltonen	
11.00	Visit to the Helsinki VTS's sensor stations (1st group)	Kari Kosonen	
11.00	Visit to the Helsinki VTS's centre premises (2nd group)	Ulf Skog Matti Aaltonen coast guard off.	
12.30	*Lunch*		
14.00	Interventions of the shipping industry community representatives		
	1. Finnish Environment Institute	Meri Hietala	VTS/01/14
	2. Finnlines / Tallink Silja	Jan-Erik Dahlberg / Mikael Lindholm	VTS/01/15
14.30	Discussions		
15.30	*Coffee*		
15.45	Round table discussions		
17.15	*End of the workshop*		
17.30	*Bus to the hotel*		