



EMPA POSITION PAPER ON DEEP-SEA PILOTAGE SERVICES

European Maritime Pilots' Association Position paper on Deep Sea Pilotage services.

The European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA) is a non-profit organisation created in 1963 by a group of Pilots from the newly established European Economic Community. The initial meeting and formation of our association took place in Antwerp, Belgium. Today, EMPA has member associations of maritime Pilots from countries that lie on the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, The Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Pilotage is a mandatory public service regulated by States to ensure maritime safety and protection of the environment. The Pilot's task is to assist the captains of vessels entering and leaving ports their approaches and the deep-sea coastal areas by exercising their knowledge of local maritime conditions and operational practices. Their professional experience of navigating ships in restricted waters is what makes Pilotage the most significant risk mitigation measure available. Through skill and knowledge developed from years of training, they can efficiently and safely control the traffic flow and the operation of port facilities and offshore traffic separation areas in port approaches while ensuring the risks inherent in sailing ships in sensitive coastal areas are acceptable.

EMPA represents about 4 500 maritime Pilots from 18 European Union member countries and six neighbouring countries: Georgia, Montenegro, Norway, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

The role of EMPA is to facilitate the exchange of information between its members to continuously improve the professional and technical proficiency of maritime Pilots in the European Union and neighbouring countries.

Competent Deep-Sea Pilots (DSP) enhance the safety of navigation in the confined and busy waters of Europe, such as the English Channel, the North Sea, the Skagerrak, the Danish Straits, and the Baltic. This service is becoming ever more relevant with increasing ship sizes and deeper draft vessels navigating sea areas, confined by increased development of offshore installations in particular wind farms.



EUROPEAN MARITIME PILOTS' ASSOCIATION vzw

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With this position paper, we would like to express our concerns that have been raised by our members regarding the DSP services in European waterways.

Official and licenced DSP services are presently offered only by a few member states in the North Sea area, namely France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Germany. In the Baltic region DSP service is offered by Denmark, Sweden, Poland and Finland. DSP services are also provided by few private companies and some private navigators who are in possession of official DSP licences.

The growing demand of the DSP services is attracting providers who offer advisory services exploiting the service without proper DSP certification and limited previous experience. These providers are being contracted unwittingly by some of the major container firms, shipping companies and government bodies around the world who are expecting bona - fide qualified pilots but instead are receiving un-certified and lesser qualified Marine Advisors!

Unlike state and port specific pilot services there is naturally a competition element between DSP providers on international waters. However, this should not be to the detriment of the professional standards each company provides. There are several risks to the member states and the maritime industry with unqualified persons posing as certified Pilots.

EMPA and the established DSP providers are extremely concerned by these developments, as any potential incident will reflect badly on all Pilotage within Europe.

Deep-sea pilotage companies need to make the necessary investments to ensure a pool of skilled professionals are available 24/7 at any time of day or night, including weekends and holidays. These investments include provision of proper personal protective equipment and expensive simulator training, and the acquisition and maintenance of pilot boats used to transport maritime pilots in offshore sea conditions.

We strongly urge the North Sea adjoining countries to reform the North Sea Pilotage Commission or an alternative committee to work together for the improvement of DSP services in the Channel and North Sea areas, and to maintain the highest level of professional qualification and certification of DSP.



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We hope that the Baltic Pilotage Authorities Commission also continues to work on DSP issues. The work of BPAC has been postponed since the COVID pandemic.

We refer you to the EMPA recommendation on Deep-Sea Pilotage which was revised in 2023.

Our recommendation states our position and the significant rules and regulations governing DSP services.

[EMPA RECOMMENDATION ON DEEP SEA PILOTAGE](#)

We will gladly offer our help and participation in any future committee work and would be happy to help to organise a future meeting of interested parties.

Approved EMPA GM Antwerp 05/2024