



## PROMOTIE BINNENVAART VLAANDEREN

### *Press Release*

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For immediate release

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### **Inland navigation ready for installing AIS on board**

*Survey results confirm interest for 'Automatic Identification System'*

Almost three quarters of all skippers who still have no AIS-application on board, are considering to purchase such *Automatic Identification System*. That conclusion is drawn from a major survey, which was recently conducted by the Promotion Office for Inland Navigation in Flanders (PBV). This outcome has some interest in view of the support measures for providing AIS, that were recently announced by the Flemish minister of Mobility and Public Works, Mrs. Hilde Crevits.

Inland barges with AIS on board are automatically reported to the waterway manager, who can then follow their course. This allows for, a.o.:

- To increase the safety of inland navigation traffic;
- To optimize the use of waterway infrastructure, which in turn will support the expected growth of inland navigation in the following years;
- To improve efficiency at traffic control stations and for servicing the locks;
- To improve logistic planning of shipping companies and port terminals.

The following results can be drawn from the survey which was conducted by PBV:

- Three quarters (74 %) of those who still have no AIS on board, say they are considering to purchase such a device. They do so for several reasons: because they are convinced AIS makes navigation safer (contrary to radar pictures, AIS allows to 'look around the corner', or at least to receive information about approaching vessels that are not visible yet) and, above all other reasons, because installing the feature will become an obligation in all Flemish seaports. A quarter (26 %) of those who did not install AIS yet remain obstinate opponents of the system – in the first place because the device is perceived as being too expensive.
- Those who have no AIS on board say they want to spend a maximum amount of € 500 for it.
- Skippers who already installed AIS find the system significantly more useful, than those who did not (yet) install the appliance.

It is sometimes claimed that privacy might be a delicate issue, since AIS allows for increased visibility and hence for control measures. However, others object that the skipper can decide himself what kind of information he wants to transmit. He can do so by

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leaving blank the so-called 'non-compulsory fields.' In this regard, the survey has found that:

- Both those with and without AIS are of the opinion that AIS-data may be seen by other barges.
- Those who already installed AIS are less reserved than others as for waterway- or port authorities to look over their shoulders – e.g. in view of sluice operation planning.
- Both groups are not eager to expose their AIS-information (especially their actual position) to other public authorities and to their own shipping or chartering company.
- Some 39 % of those who installed AIS on board claim they would allow the client to view information on the actual position of the vessel; 22 % would release that information if the client asks for it; 17 % emphasize they want to have the last word on it in any case; 22 % would never let the client view data on the actual position of the barge.

In addition more skippers with AIS than without the system would like to have all vessels, both professional and recreational, to have AIS on board in all circumstances. Some 96 % of those who did not install AIS want public authorities to subsidize procurement of the system.

The survey was conducted among 1.085 skippers and yielded a satisfying 15 % response rate. Some 13 % of all respondents had AIS on board; 87 % did not.

At this very moment, AIS is only compulsory on the Austrian part of the Danube. The Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine (CCR) did not yet impose AIS but standards for AIS-devices were laid down in a Protocol. Flemish seaports are said to make AIS compulsory in the foreseeable future.

In the Netherlands and in Germany, public authorities grant a € 2.100 subsidy for skippers who want to purchase AIS. All skippers including non-Dutch and non-German are eligible for that subsidy, if only they prove to have made at least three voyages in the Netherlands or Germany in the past three years.

The Automatic Identification System (AIS) is one of the very first major applications in the frame of the so-called RIS-Directive which may have far-reaching consequences for logistic service providers on land. As from 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007 the EU-Directive is enforceable as national law.

For ten years PBV has been involved in the making of this RIS-Directive, and in succeeding applications. In this respect, the association has played a major role with European and Flemish authorities.

**Note for editors:**

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