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Working Party on Inland Water Transport

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Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

Promotion of River Information Services (RIS) as well as other information and communication technologies (ICT) in inland navigation

International Standard for Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways (VTT) (Resolution No. 63)

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. The Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3), at its forty-first session, considered the proposal by the Chair of the European Expert Group on Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways (VTT Expert Group) for the European acceptance of Automatic Identification System (AIS) Class B stations in inland navigation and agreed to transmit it, with some modifications, to SC.3 for further consideration and action as appropriate (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/82, paras. 40–41).

2. The Working Party may wish to consider the proposal and decide as appropriate. It may wish, in particular, to request the secretariat in cooperation with the Chair of the VTT Expert Group, to formulate an amendment proposal to Resolution No. 63, “International Standard for Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways (VTT)”, allowing the use of type B transponders by small craft on inland waterways.

II. Proposal by the Chair of the VTT Expert Group for the European acceptance of AIS Class B stations on inland waterways

3. AIS Class B Carrier Sense (CS) stations are specifically designed for the recreational market. They are smaller, simpler and of lower cost than Class A transceivers,

while ensuring easy access to AIS data from commercial seagoing and inland vessels as well as from other equipped recreational craft.

4. Many recreational craft navigating in sea waters are equipped with AIS Class B stations and their number is steadily increasing. Such craft may arrive at European ports and navigate to the hinterland using inland waterways.

5. Such craft are usually registered in accordance with national maritime regulations.

6. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to prohibit the use of AIS Class B stations by recreational craft arriving from abroad/sea waters and entering inland waterways since they are legally licenced for use at sea by their competent national authorities. The use of AIS Class B stations may be authorized on certain inland waterways since every country is responsible for the approval or acceptance of AIS Class B stations, issuing AIS radio licences and assigning Maritime Mobile Service Identifier (MMSI) numbers.

7. Given the above, there is a need to authorize the use of AIS Class B stations on European inland waterways.

8. For this purpose the following recommendation has been drafted by the VTT Expert Group:

A. Recommendation for the use of AIS Class B stations

Recreational craft navigating on inland waterways may use AIS Class B stations installed for navigating at sea.

AIS Class B stations installed on recreational craft navigating on European inland waterways must meet the following requirements:

1. Recommendation ITU-R M. 1371;
2. IEC International Standard 62287 (including DSC channel management);
3. For EU member States, Directive 1999/5/EC (R&TTE).

It is the responsibility of the competent national authorities to ascertain the conformity of AIS Class B stations to the above-mentioned standards and requirements prior to issuing an AIS radio licence, assigning an Maritime Mobile Service Identifier (MMSI) number, e.g. type approval of the relevant AIS Class B stations.

Recreational craft equipped with an AIS Class B station and navigating on inland waterways must carry on board a radio licence for the use of the AIS Class B station issued by the competent national authorities.

This recommendation is intended for vessels not covered by provisions regulating inland AIS. Such vessels may use AIS Class B stations to voluntarily or mandatorily transmit and receive AIS data on “inland waterways”.¹

If AIS Class B stations are used on a voluntary basis, the boatmaster must keep the manually entered AIS data constantly up to date. The competent authorities must ascertain the correctness of all static data of mobile AIS stations. No incorrect data may be transmitted over AIS.

¹ The term “inland waterways” can be replaced by the name of the river by the country or body issuing legislation.

B. Explanatory notes

1. Requirements

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) recommends that to ensure the integrity of the AIS VHF data link, AIS Class B stations should meet the requirements set out in ITU-R M.1371 and that AIS Class B devices should be approved by the Administration (MSC 140(76)).²

Technical requirements for AIS Class B are laid down in IEC 62287–1 for AIS Class B CS devices and IEC 62287–2 for Self-Organized (SO) AIS Class B devices.

As IMO resolutions generally do not apply on European inland waterways, it should be specified that these requirements must be met for AIS Class B stations used on inland waterways.

2. Equal treatment and governmental responsibility

The recommendation ensures that the same requirements apply to all recreational craft using an AIS Class B station, be they navigating at sea or on European inland waterways. The recommendation thus provides for equal treatment of recreational craft by the competent authorities.

The competent national authorities must ensure that the AIS Class B station meets these requirements before issuing an AIS radio licence and assigning an MMSI number.

3. Commercial vessels using a Class B transponder

For the time being only AIS Class B CS stations are deployed, but it is expected that AIS Class B SO stations should be introduced shortly. It is questionable whether the use of such AIS Class B transponders would be restricted to recreational craft.

In view of the cost, it may be attractive for non-SOLAS commercial vessels, such as tugboats and service vessels, to use AIS Class B SO stations.

The owner of a recreational craft may install and use an officially approved Inland AIS station. The use of Inland AIS stations provides recreational craft owners with more possibilities, which may be in their interest. However, an extensive use of Inland AIS stations by recreational craft could contribute to overloading the AIS VHF data link and should be discouraged.

Thus, the use of AIS Class B CS stations should be restricted to recreational craft. Particular vessel types of a certain length, such as tugboats and service vessels, should be authorized to use AIS Class B SO transponders. The competent national authorities must ensure the control and integrity of the AIS VHF data link.

4. Enforcement

The use of a AIS Class B station requires a radio licence and an MMSI number. Competent authorities generally dispose of adequate technologies to monitor transmissions by AIS stations and may effectively prevent abuse or dysfunction. Such mechanisms are in place for the use of the Inland AIS on inland waterways, enabling rapid corrective actions by the competent authorities.

In severe cases, such as refusal to obey orders of the competent authorities or in case of repeated abuse, the competent authorities may take the AIS station off the air.

² The Administration in the State where the vessel is registered or where the licence is issued.