

CONTINUOUS EFFORTS FROM SEA SMRC TOWARDS THE EU ARE NECESSARY

30 June 2016

On 15 June, the Working Group on Ship Maintenance, Ship Repair and Ship Conversion (SMRC) met in Gdansk in the margin of SEA Europe's General Assembly meeting.

SEA SMRC was created in 2015 as a permanent working group of SEA Europe – the Ships and Maritime Equipment Association of Europe – in order to discuss all matters of interest relating to the Ship Maintenance, Repair and Conversion sector, to become visible towards EU decision-makers and to contribute to a better understanding of the sector and its significance.

1. The SMRC sector is in relative good shape

The last Market Monitoring Report from SEA Europe has shown an increase of SMRC activities in Europe over the past 4 to 5 years. "We are glad to note that our sector is in relative good shape", said Jan-Kees Pilaar, the Chairman of SEA SMRC.

Reports on the national situation in various Member States with SMRC activities have indeed indicated that, in general, the year 2015 has been a relatively good year for SMRC yards. The year 2016, however, is expected to be a moderate year with the Offshore sector remaining quiet (because of the low oil prices) and merchant shipping facing a crisis.

2. Biocides; update and report on EMSA Workshop

Regulation 528/2012 of 22 May 2012 concerning the making available on the market and use of biocidal products – known as the EU Biocides Regulation – entered into force on 1 September 2013. The Regulation is relevant for the maritime sector in that it regulates the use of antifouling paints used on ships. According to the new rules, the paints in use in Europe need to be assessed and if found unhealthy will no longer be in use in Europe.

Whilst introduced with good intentions, notably the protection of the environment and health, the application of Regulation 528/2012 could have unintended negative effects for European SMRC yards. If certain antifouling paints would no longer be allowed in Europe but would still be in use outside the EU, shipowners may wish to opt for a non-European repair yard to paint their vessels, whilst continuing sailing in European waters. This situation would be damaging for European SMRC yards and would be in contradiction with the basic principles of the Regulation.

To seek clarity and avoid negative consequences, the SMRC Board decided to organise a dedicated workshop with the relevant Commission services, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), Member States and relevant industry stakeholders in Brussels in November.

3. NECA

The North Sea and the Baltic Countries have decided to establish a NOx Emission Control Area. Obviously to limit ships emissions to a minimum while a SECA is already in force.

SMRC yards support this effort but have in agreement with all relevant countries and stakeholders submitted a request for an exemption. In order to maintain a level playing field within Europe, SMRC yards in the NECA area should be still able to receive offshore and dredging assets with propulsion systems that do not comply with the NECA requirements.

SEA SMRC drafted a concept text which is currently under discussion in the NECA meetings.

SEA SMRC acknowledged the importance of having an active and dedicated group concentrating on ship maintenance, repair and conversion issues in Brussels in order to ensure that the vision and issues of interest for SMRC yards are well understood by the EU decision-makers. The results achieved with regard to NECA and biocides issues are a clear example of the added value from the SEA SMRC Group.

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