



# Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

Federal Higher Authority subordinated to  
the Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure

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## **PRESS RELEASE No. 09/21**

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) hereby announces the publication of the Interim Investigation Report on 27.08.2021 about the allision between the multi-purpose ship ELSE with a closed lock gate of the Kiel Canal in Kiel-Holtenau on 29 August 2020. The Interim Investigation Report provides information on the subject matter, and the course of the investigation. The report is available for download at

<https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/News>.

### **Serious marine casualty – allision between the multi-purpose ship ELSE with the Kiel Canal lock gate in Kiel-Holtenau**

At 0507 on 29 August 2020, the Panama registered multi-purpose ship ELSE, coming from the Kiel Fjord, collided head-on with the lock gate of the north chamber of the “Neue Schleuse” lock of the Kiel Canal in Kiel Holtenau and got stuck with its bow in the lock gate, which was completely closed at that time. Weather and visibility conditions were unproblematic. No crewmembers or persons on the lock facility were harmed, and no pollutants were released. Two tugs ordered to the scene of the accident were able to free the ELSE from its predicament and towed the still floatable casualty vessel to the nearby Lindenau shipyard for accident investigation, damage assessment and repair.

The affected lock chamber had to be closed off and was not available for shipping traffic until the broken gate had been replaced.

In addition to the usual investigations on board the ship, the BSU's investigations focussed particularly on evaluating the technical records of the ELSE's voyage track provided by VTS Kiel Canal, as well as the relevant VHF radio traffic. This was

conducted between the officer of watch (OOW) of the ELSE on the one hand, who navigated the ship, and the pilot station and VTS duty officers on the other hand.

This confirmed beyond doubt that the ELSE, which was obliged to take on an NOK pilot, had passed the pilot transfer point shown on the chart, contrary to the agreement reached in this regard via VHF, and shortly thereafter changed course in the direction of the locks at an unchanging speed of approximately 6 knots.

Both VTS and pilot station tried to persuade the ELSE by VHF to turn around. The VTS duty officer pointed out that the ship did not have permission to enter the lock, and that the lock gate was closed. However, at the time of these radio calls, the ELSE was already about to enter the lock chamber. The OOW responded verbally and briefly to the radio calls, but continued to move the vessel while maintaining its course and speed. About 1.5 minutes later, the bow of the ELSE buried itself in the closed lock gate.

The described accident sequence makes it clear that the BSU investigators had to clarify a wide range of questions in order to determine the causes of the accident and identify the contributing factors. The investigative steps in this regard have largely been completed. The BSU is currently in the process of preparing the investigation report on this serious marine casualty.

Since the BSU cannot meet the one-year deadline set by the European Union and transposed into national law by the Federal Republic of Germany for the publication of an investigation report, the public is informed of the state of the investigation by way of publication of an interim investigation report.

All investigation reports, safety recommendations and other information published by the BSU are available at

<https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/Publications>.

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Director