



# Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung

## Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

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### **PRESS RELEASE No. 11/22**

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) hereby announces the publication of the Investigation Report No. 285/20 on 26 October 2022. The report deals with the contact of the multipurpose ship ELSE with a closed lockgate of the Kiel-Holtenau lock which occurred on 29 August 2020. The report is available for download at

[https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/Publications/Unfallberichte/Unfallberichte\\_node.html](https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/Publications/Unfallberichte/Unfallberichte_node.html)

#### **Serious marine casualty – allision of the multi-purpose ship ELSE with a Kiel-Canal lock gate**

At 0507 on 29 August 2020, the Panama registered multi-purpose ship ELSE coming from the Kiel Bay in unproblematic weather and visibility conditions, struck the lock of the north chamber of the “Neue Schleuse” lock of the Kiel Canal in Kiel-Holtenau. The lock gate was completely closed at that time, and the ship got stuck with her bow in the gate. No crewmembers or persons on the lock were harmed. No pollutants were released either. Two tugs ordered to the scene of the accident were able to free the ELSE from its predicament at around 1055 and towed the still-floatable stricken vessel to the nearby Lindenau shipyard for accident investigation and damage assessment. The affected lock chamber had to be closed and was not available to shipping until the destroyed gate had been replaced.

In addition to the usual investigations on board the ship, the BSU’s investigation focussed on the evaluation of the technical recordings made available by the VTS Kiel Canal. These recordings showed the course of the voyage of the ELSE on the one hand and the relevant radio communication between the watch officer on board the

ship navigating the ship and the watch officer in the pilot station and the nautical officer in the VTS on the other hand. This confirmed that the ELSE that was obliged to accept an NOK-pilot had passed the pilot transfer point shown on the navigational chart contrary to the agreement reached in this regard via VHF and shortly afterwards altered her course at an unchanged speed of approx. 6 knots purposefully towards the lock entrance.

Both, the VTS as well as the pilot station attempted to persuade the ELSE to turn back. The nautical officer in the VTS explicitly pointed out that the ship had no permission to enter the lock and that the lock gate was closed. However, at the time of these radio calls the ELSE was immediately before entering the lock chamber. The watch officer responded verbally to the calls briefly, however continued the voyage of the ship with unchanged course and speed. The ELSE bored its bow into the closed lock gate about 1.5 minutes later.

In addition to inadequate voyage planning, a major reason for the disorientation on board causing the accident, was most likely the fact that the time (on board time) used by the watch officer as a basis for the arrangement with the pilot watch deviated one hour from the relevant time (CEST) in Germany.

In addition to clarifying the sailing behaviour of the ELSE, the BSU dealt elaborately with legal and factual issues of the organisation of traffic control and pilotage on the Kiel Bay, particularly in the approach to the lock facility Kiel-Holtenau during the investigation of the accident.

The investigation report concludes with safety recommendations to the shipping company of the ELSE, to the General Directorate of Waterways and Shipping (GDWS) and to pilot association NOK II / Kiel / Lübeck / Flensburg (Lotsenbrüderschaft NOK II).

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