

## Investigation Report No. 117/20

**Date: 9 May 2022**

**Less Serious marine casualty**

**Collision between the coastal motor vessel SCHELDEBANK and Kiel Canal (NOK) ferry HOCHDONN on 8 May 2020**

### 1 Summary

At about 0756<sup>1</sup> on 8 May 2020, the Dutch coastal motor vessel SCHELDEBANK, sailing eastbound on the NOK, collided in the area of the Hochdonn ferry crossing with the canal ferry operating there under the same name. Extremely dense fog with visibility of some 75 m prevailed at the time of the accident.

The ferry HOCHDONN was crossing the canal, which was approximately 120 m wide in the area discussed, had already passed the middle and was just about to approach the southern ferry terminal with several people and vehicles on board when her starboard side was struck by the bow of the SCHELDEBANK. The starboard bow of the coaster scraped past the ferry's side superstructure, deforming it not insignificantly in the process.

Fortunately, the superstructure on the opposite side of the ferry, which accommodates the ferry's control position and is separated from the vehicle deck, was not affected by the collision. The vessel's propulsion system, steering system and buoyancy were not affected, either. The ferry pilot had the presence of mind to manoeuvre the ferry back onto the path towards the ferry terminal after the collision-induced course deviation and to dock there a short time later.

Nobody on board was injured. The vehicles transported were also able to leave the ferry largely undamaged after the accident. There was no water pollution.

The SCHELDEBANK was also thrown off course due to the collision with the HOCHDONN. However, the pilot and the ship's command managed to steer the ship back into the middle of the canal very quickly thanks to a number of skilful manoeuvres. It was thus possible to avoid contact with the embankment or blocking the canal.

Since there was no need to provide assistance to the HOCHDONN, the SCHELDEBANK continued her voyage up until the Dükerswisch siding area in consultation with Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) NOK and made fast there at about 0830 for an on-board seaworthiness inspection. It was found that she had only suffered very minor damage. Her seaworthiness was not impaired.

The HOCHDONN was able to resume the ferry service across the NOK after repairs lasting several weeks.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all times shown in this report are local: CEST (UTC + 2 hours).

## **2 Safety Recommendation(s)**

The following safety recommendations do not attribute a presumption of blame or liability in respect of type, number or sequence.

### **2.1 WSA NOK**

The BSU makes the following recommendations to WSA NOK with regard to the navigational equipment on NOK ferries owned by the federal government.

#### **2.1.1 Integration of AIS into the radar sets at the control position on NOK ferries**

The radar sets at the control position of NOK ferries should – if the version installed so permits – be modified so that AIS signals are also shown on the radar display screen. If such a modification is not technically possible and/or if it is necessary to replace the previously used AIS devices, then the purchase of new radar devices with AIS function included and, if necessary, new AIS transceivers should be considered.

#### **2.1.2 Inspection of the AIS devices at the control position on NOK ferries**

Regardless of the overriding recommendation in Ch. 7.1.1, the current AIS devices on board the ferries should be inspected to ensure they are in proper working order.

#### **2.1.3 Electronic navigational chart on NOK ferries**

The use of a high-resolution electronic navigational chart may assist with approaching ferry terminals in heavy fog. This requires that such a chart can display the contour of ferry terminals, ferries and the exact position of a ferry with a high level of precision. The BSU recommends that the WSA examine the technical feasibility of such a solution and implement it if the effort is reasonable. It is important to note that a solution is only meaningful if the navigational chart, the radar image and the AIS targets can be simultaneously displayed on a single monitor.

### **2.2 Adler-Schiffe GmbH & Co. KG**

The BSU recommends that the operator of the NOK ferries, Adler-Schiffe GmbH & Co. KG, revise the service regulations for the ferry personnel it employs and, if necessary, modify the employment contracts and wage agreements accordingly. Ferry deckhands should be required to assume the role of lookout on the instructions of the ferry pilot, at least in cases where the latter believes that adverse visibility conditions or other special circumstances make this necessary.

### **2.3 WSA NOK and Adler-Schiffe GmbH & Co. KG**

The BSU recommends that WSA NOK and Adler-Schiffe GmbH & Co. KG enter into a contractual agreement on the conditions under which ferry pilots are authorised to suspend the ferry service. The BSU believes that a regulation which enables the operator and especially the ferry pilot to temporarily suspend the ferry service in extremely poor visibility without being exposed to economic risks or risks under labour law, unless transportation involves an absolute emergency, is necessary.

### **2.4 Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV)**

To improve legal certainty and legal clarity, the BSU recommends that the BMDV reintroduce poor visibility conditions to the list of hazards that may require suspension of the ferry service explicitly referred to in Section 12(2) FäV.