

## **Investigation Report No. 285/20**

**Date: 26 October 2022**

**Serious marine casualty**

**Allision with a lock gate at Kiel-Holtenau on the Kiel Canal (NOK) by the multi-purpose vessel ELSE on 29 August 2020**

### **1 Summary**

At 0507<sup>1</sup> on 29 August 2020, the Panama-registered multi-purpose vessel ELSE, approaching from Kiel Fjord in calm weather and good visibility, sailed head-on into the gate of the north chamber in the NOK's 'Neue Schleuse' lock at Kiel-Holtenau, which was fully closed at that time, and her bow remained trapped in the gate.

Contrary to the arrangement made with the Kiel-Holtenau pilot station, the ship had passed the Holtenau Pilot boarding point, which is situated north-east of the lock entrance on the southern edge of the Holtenau roadstead and plotted on the navigational chart, about ten minutes earlier without waiting there for the pilot to board, which was arranged for 0600. Instead, the ELSE turned into the lock entrance at about 0500 and then headed directly for the closed lock gate at a constant speed of some 5-6 kts and with minor course alterations that were undoubtedly made with the aim of entering the lock until the very last.

The watchkeeper at the pilot station and Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) NOK noticed the ELSE's dangerous course at about 0505 and called her ship's command on VHF in an attempt to make them aware of the error and turn back. Although the ship responded orally to the radio messages, she did not comply with the request to turn around and return to the pilot boarding point immediately but continued her voyage unperturbed. The ELSE's bow inevitably sailed into the lock gate two minutes later.

The gate was heavily deformed in the process but in conjunction with a stop manoeuvre carried out by the ship in the meantime was able to reduce the ELSE's speed to zero.

Neither the ELSE's crew members nor personnel on the lock facility were harmed during the accident. No pollutants were released. Two tugs were ordered to attend the scene of the accident and succeeded in freeing the ELSE from her predicament at around 1055. They then towed the still buoyant vessel to the nearby Lindenau-Werft shipyard for the investigation and damage assessment.

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

VTS NOK took the lock's north chamber out of service and the south chamber was used for incoming and outgoing NOK traffic in the days that followed. The damaged gate was dismantled and replaced by a spare one.

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

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

### **2.1 The MV ELSE's shipping company**

The BSU makes the following recommendations to REGENCY SHIP MANAGEMENT SA, which is responsible for the ship's ISM system:

#### **2.1.1 ISM manual**

The ISM manual of the ELSE and the other ships managed by the shipping company, as well as the related internal procedures of the shipping company for monitoring the proper implementation of processes laid down therein (e.g. for communication on board, for voyage planning and for adjusting ship's time to local time) should be carefully reviewed and improved as necessary.

#### **2.1.2 Voyage planning**

Ship's commands of the fleet managed by the shipping company should be made aware of the importance of proper and careful voyage planning in briefings and training courses.

## **2.2 GDWS**

The BSU makes the following recommendation to the GDWS:

### **2.2.1 Position report at Friedrichsort Lighthouse**

The GDWS should review the system of reporting on Kiel Fjord in the approach to the NOK in consultation with VTS NOK (which the GDWS supervises) and with the involvement of the NOK II pilot association and either consider fundamental changes or harmonise current practice and legal requirements.

### **2.2.2 Implementation of automated traffic flow control in the SDA system**

The SDA system currently being implemented around the coast and across the various districts should be extended to include computerised control or be linked to such control. The application should be designed to detect discrepancies between a ship's planned (or reported to the VTS and pilot stations) movements and the actual course of her voyage in real time based on AIS data and to generate related alerts.

## **2.3 NOK II / Kiel / Lübeck / Flensburg pilot association (NOK II pilot association)**

The BSU makes the following recommendations to the NOK II pilot association:

### **2.3.1 Reporting times for a pilot request**

The current reporting time system (12-hour report and 2-hour report) in connection with the request for an NOK pilot should be reviewed for practicability. Discrepancies between formal requirements and practical procedures should be examined internally. It is recommended that the pilot association then discuss with its supervising GDWS any need for amendment of the NOK-LV identified as expedient in order to harmonise formal requirements (which may need to be amended) and practical processes (which may need to be amended).

### **2.3.2 Qualification requirements for newly employed watch supervisors at the Kiel-Holtenau pilot station**

The BSU recommends that the NOK II pilot association carry out an internal review of the advantages and disadvantages of revising the qualification requirements for future watch supervisors to be employed at the Kiel-Holtenau pilot station and discuss any need for change with the supervising GDWS.