



## Annual Report 2005-2006



Shortsea Promotion Centre Flanders

### Introduction

For practical reasons it was decided, during the third year of activity under the 2<sup>nd</sup> business plan SSS 2003-2005, to extend the plan by one year until the end of 2006. Work was based on four pillars:

1. Taking and/or promoting concrete initiatives;
2. Locating bottlenecks in shortsea shipping (SSS) and taking action to solve them;
3. Developing the European dimension of SSS and networking;
4. Promoting SSS generally.

Steering of the market prospecting cell was done by the SSS working group: both in 2005 and 2006 the working group met four times. In cases where quick action was necessary, the core team was consulted, in most cases by fax or e-mail. Within the working group a subgroup made preparations for the organisation of the Shortsea forum 2006.

Although the activities displayed by the promotion centre all related to the four pillars mentioned, some specific actions nevertheless stood out:

***Continued attention to a number of bottlenecks for SSS: labour flexibility in the ports, running-in expenses and port dues. In October 2006 a shortsea forum was organised on that subject.***

***Attention to bottlenecks for sea-river navigation. Research on this subject resulted in action directed towards the customs services (2005).***

***Both in 2005 and 2006 an information day was organised with the members of the Transport Committee of the European Parliament.***

***The organisation of a workshop, together with the Turkish promotion centre in Istanbul, focused on road transport and the logistics sector (April 2006).***

***Attention to new EU member countries.***

***The information towards the target groups was presented in as practical a way as possible by using 'best practices', both in the newsletters and on the website.***

***As from September 2006 the electronic newsletter has been steered through professional channels and witnessed rapid growth.***

In the reporting we follow the four pillars and their items as mentioned in the business plan.

Promotie Shortsea Shipping Vlaanderen

Verbindingsdok Oostkaai 13 B10, B 2000 Antwerpen  
Tel : + 32 3 20 20 520, Fax : + 32 3 20 20 524, E-mail : [shortsea@shortsea.be](mailto:shortsea@shortsea.be)



## **1. Taking and/or promoting concrete initiatives (the 'fieldwork')**

### ***a. Specific topics and follow-up of dossiers***

The number of concrete questions about cargo, originating from the market either through e-mail, fax, telephone or during visits, has remained almost stable (2004: 120, 2005: 125, 2006: 128). In most cases they concerned practical information such as sailing opportunities.

Our own database of scheduled services is updated regularly as an increasing number of agents and shipowners keep us informed of any changes. These contacts are also useful to find practical examples that we can use as "best practices" in our e-news, newsletter and on the website (both of SSS and ESN). The aim of the database of scheduled services is to provide as complete as possible a service, which is of great importance to the shipping agents. Still, we continue to encounter problems with a limited number of them to obtain accurate information.

Apart from queries regarding merchandise and cargo, there are also the usual requests for subjects for theses and information about SSS from students and schools; requests for a list of freighters for ad hoc shipments, statistics, as well as questions about emissions, new vessels, ships' classifications, particular rules, technical information on containers, the EU's support programmes etc.

Initially companies are contacted by telephone to assess their export and import flows, after which the most interesting among them are visited. These contacts also result in queries about, for instance, sailing opportunities.

The dossiers are followed up, also with a view to identify possible "best practices".

## **2. Locating bottlenecks in shortsea shipping (SSS) and taking action to solve them.**

The number of pressure points in the European list of "bottlenecks" has been greatly reduced: together with the Flemish Region the bottlenecks for Flanders are followed up steadily. Regular consultation also takes place on the Flemish policy concerning SSS in general. In 2005 the European Shortsea Forum submitted a proposal to the European Commission in which the number of bottlenecks had been reduced to the essence.

Cooperation with the Maritime Industries Forum (MIF) has taken place in order to update the "bottleneck" exercise. That Forum continues to pay attention also to the issues concerning the flow of documents.

The coasters' running-in expenses to the ports have also been scrutinised further: the pilot organisation DAB Loodswezen is now willing to reduce the pilotage dues for SSS coasters. This was made clear, amongst others, at the Shortsea Forum of October 2006.

Measures taken by the Flemish ports to cut the port costs for coasters are being stressed in presentations and press articles.

The sea-river traffic on the Albert Canal and the Brussels-Scheldt Canal has been showing a decline for several years. In the last quarter of 2004 research was launched into the possible causes of that regression. That survey

was completed in 2005. Meanwhile, the agency “Waterwegen en Zeekanaal” (Waterways and Sea Canal) had simplified its tariffs and made them more transparent.

By attracting a number of new traffics, the sea-river navigation on the Brussels-Scheldt Canal has recovered itself as from 2005. In 2006 the upward trend continued, also as far as the Albert Canal is concerned.

The survey has revealed some dissatisfaction with the compulsory customs stop at quay 105 in the port of Antwerp for coasters on their way to the Albert Canal. In June 2005 the promotion centre took the initiative to write a letter to the customs services in Antwerp on that subject. Despite a regular follow-up of this matter, by the end of 2006 nobody at the Antwerp Customs had found the time to look into this problem (in fact it concerns the control of the crew’s provisions not of the cargo itself).

The situation of the clearance under the bridges of the Albert Canal is also being followed up.





### 3. Developing the European dimension of SSS

#### **a. European Shortsea Network**

The network continued to expand in 2005-2006 and now officially numbers 18 members, while already 21 promotion centres have been established. Despite the fact that the European Commission via its 'focal points' keeps stressing the need to set aside the necessary financial means in each country, the network has once again been confronted with promotion centres experiencing financial problems.

Notwithstanding those setbacks, ESN has been very active in 2005 and 2006. A number of bilateral workshops have been set up: in April 2006 Turkey and Flanders organised a workshop to throw light on the synergies between road transport, logistics and shortsea.

An ESN application for 'common learning' under Marco Polo I was taken into consideration in 2006. Norway will act as the leading partner in the XML project. Because of the labour intensive nature of the work, our SSS working group decided not to enter the project as a participant. Nevertheless, the promotion centre has given logistic support: out of the possible Flemish parties we consulted, Seagha has been proposed and accepted as a partner.

In 2004 six promotion centres (Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, Poland, Flanders and Italy) concluded a mutual agreement to help launch new centres. Meanwhile, during 2005 and 2006, Flanders has cooperated in the setting-up and/or further development of the promotion centres in Cyprus, Malta and Bulgaria.

In 2006, in the framework of the latter assignment and of the cooperation agreements of the Flemish Region with the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), the promotion centre took part in a logistics mission of Flanders Investment and Trade to those three countries. One of the aims was to make contact with parties that are possibly interested in setting up a local promotion centre. In Estonia and Latvia exploratory talks were held; whereas in Lithuania a conversation took place with the existing promotion centre, which sees its activities impaired by a lack of manpower. Nevertheless, the importance of the promotion centres in each of those countries is beyond dispute because of the strong economic growth (as members of the EU) and of the problems road haulage is encountering in that region (shortage of drivers and wheels, increasing wages etc.)

Both in 2005 and 2006 ESN has published and distributed its report about the preceding year, which in both cases met with a wide response in the (European) press.

Also in 2005 and 2006 the Promotion Centre has made good use of ESN's website to broadcast Flemish news and best practices.

After a meeting with the MEPs of the Transport Committee had been postponed in 2004, due to agenda problems, ESN managed to organise an afternoon session with them in 2005 and 2006. On those occasions the possibilities of shortsea, as well as the actions of ESN, were presented, using "best practices" as examples. In future, the aim is to draw up a list of points of particular interest to the members of parliament. Flanders and the Netherlands took charge of the organisation and presentation of those venues.

ESN is considered by the European Commission to be the partner who carries out the SSS promotion on its behalf. Each year formal meetings with the focal points, ESN and the European Commission are set up. At the request of Flanders and because of the continuing bottlenecks SSS suffers in the field of customs regulations, a representative of DG Taxud was also present in 2006.

#### **b. Other forms of networking**

The contacts with the European Commission, on the one hand, and with organisations such as ECSA (European Community Shipowners Association), ESPO (European Sea Ports Organisation) etc., on the other, remain intense.

There are regular contacts with the Belgian association of shipowners (BRV), the Antwerp Shipping Association (ASV), the shipping agents (VEA), Alfaport, Apzi etc.

Within the MIF (Maritime Industries Forum) the Promotion Centre co-operates towards the further development of SSS.



The existing contacts with ports, authorities etc. are maintained, both through the SSS working group and otherwise.

Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT) continues to be an important partner. With its representative in Istanbul, for instance, the already mentioned workshop with the haulage and logistics industries was set up in April 2006. FIT has also been consulted as far as statistical and background information for the country specials was concerned.

In 2005 and 2006 the contacts with the road transport companies continued on an individual basis.

At the end of 2004 the Flemish Logistics Institute (Vlaams Instituut voor Logistiek – VIL) took the initiative to compound a modular Powerpoint presentation, which can be used on missions (of Flanders Investment and Trade – FIT). The aim is to present each of the players who are important for Flanders as a distribution region on a couple of slides per player. In 2005 and 2006 extensive use has been made of this presentation. We also called upon the VIL and the presentation for the Istanbul workshop. In addition, a six-minute film about Flanders has been realised, in which shortsea is presented as an element of intermodal transport.

The promotion centre also took part in VIL's project on intermodality.

In 2005 ten and in 2006 nine meetings were spent on both projects.

Together with Promotie Binnenvaart Vlaanderen, the Promotion Centre takes part in the working group Market Research (5 meetings in both 2005 and 2006).



#### 4. Promotion of and communication about SSS.

The pure promotion of SSS, i.e. explaining what SSS is about, is getting less and less attention. The market approach consists of presenting “best practices”, which include both “cases” concerning cargo and information on new services, new vessels and shipping capacity.

##### *a. Own publications*

###### **1. Own website [www.shortsea.be](http://www.shortsea.be)**

The Promotion Centre's own website (18,796 visits in 2004) has been consulted even more frequently in 2005 (24,653 times), a figure which remained almost stable in 2006 (23,864). Some minor adjustments to the website have been made. The news section is updated regularly and relevant documents and publications are placed on the site also.

###### **2. SSS leaflet/brochure**

It had been decided in 2004 not to replace the obsolete and pedantic SSS introduction brochures for the time being. In 2005 and 2006 documentation packs have been put together for each of the events specifically.

###### **3. Country specials**

In 2005 the United Kingdom and Ireland were highlighted. For practical reasons this was done in a single special.

Poland was the subject for 2006: as the collection of data ran into a delay, this special will only be published at the beginning of 2007. At the same time the Finland special has been updated (to be published at the beginning of 2007 also).

Of those specials some 6,000 copies are distributed. As far as text copy and figures are concerned, Flanders Investment and Trade gives a considerable input. The specials are produced simultaneously in a Dutch and English version.

###### **4. Magazine “Binnenvaart”**

In this magazine a number of editorial articles were included on, amongst others, SSS statistics, shippers' goods flows, the meeting with members of the European Parliament. The annual reports of PBV include an insert on SSS also.

###### **5. Newsletter**

The newsletter remains our main publication for the players on the market. Because of its impact, as many practical examples as possible are included. The information on new services also appears to appeal. The newsletter is published 4 times a year in a separate Dutch (4,750 copies) and English (1,000 copies) version. Inquiries have shown that these newsletters circulate on the companies' shop floor and consequently have an even greater reach.

###### **6. Electronic newsletter**

In 2004 a first attempt was made with an electronic newsletter in which a number of news items were brought together, referring to the website for complete information. This newsletter was published in a Dutch-English version and distributed at the end of each month. At the end of 2004 the newsletter was sent to 126 e-mail addresses. This action was continued into 2005. There were, however, some practical problems: because of their layout those newsletters were sometimes blocked as “spam”, our server was overburdened, large photographs couldn't be sent along, the newsletters could only be sent to a limited number of addresses at the same time etc. After an interruption of a few months the service was relaunched in September 2006 using a professional tool. The response was excellent and the number of readers had risen to 1,500 by the end of 2006.



## ***b. Promotion and communication***

### ***1. Articles in other publications***

The attempts to encourage as many free advertorials and editorial articles as possible continued in full force. We obtained a response in the trade press on such subjects as the figures over 2004 and 2005 and the shortsea forum of October 2006. We issued press releases and wrote the advertorial in Export Services ourselves. We also collaborated on the Shortsea Journal of the Lloyd newspaper and articles in Transport Echo. The list of press contacts is adapted regularly in cooperation with PBV.

### ***2. Advertisements***

Thanks to the use of a 1/3 A4-page advertisement, in which the content concerning the traffic figures was adapted annually, it has been possible to spread the advertisements more within the available budget, which means that more target groups could be reached. Wherever possible the impact of these ads has been measured. On the occasion of the "Antwerp Port Week" an interview with the market prospector was broadcast several times during the day on Radio Antwerpen (part of the Gazet van Antwerpen media group) (2006).

### ***3. Waterpower mosaic***

Cartoons are still being used as a communication tool towards both the market players and the general public, schools etc.

### ***4. Address file***

The address file was kept up-to-date continually and new contacts have been added. After a thorough survey and cleaning-up the list includes, at the end of 2006, 4,750 Dutch-speaking and 1,000 English-speaking addressees.

### ***5. Trade fairs, seminars, workshops, missions, presentations...***

Workshops and seminars offer excellent opportunities to make contacts, to network and to spread the SSS gospel. The Promotion Centre participated in 12 such events in 2005 and in 9 venues in 2006

In 2005 there have been participations, either on a common stand or not, in trade fairs in Bilbao, Venlo and Antwerp (Transport & Logistics). In 2006 a stand has been occupied at the Ro-Ro conference/exhibition in Gent and another stand was shared in Istanbul (Caspian & Black Sea Exhibition/Conference).

Specific missions as the representative of ESN took place to Cyprus and Bulgaria (2005).

There was a participation in 2006 in the mission to the Baltic States organised by Flanders Investment and Trade, one of the aims of which was to examine the possibilities for the launch (Estonia-Latvia) or relaunch (Lithuania) of a local SSS promotion office. This mission fitted in with the cooperation agreements of Flanders with the three Baltic States.

Together with the port of Zeebrugge a visit was made to Göteborg in 2005 and to Cork in 2006.

2006 saw the organisation by the Promotion Office of the "Shortsea Forum 2006", which attracted 102 participants and focused on the possibilities of establishing a shortsea terminal in the port(s), under which circumstances this would have to take place and what the added-value of such an initiative would be. The event met with an adequate response in both the printed press and on radio and television and it also prompted a response from a member of the Flemish Parliament.

Presentations were also given before Apec (2005), Voka Zeebrugge (2006), the christening of a new vessel (2006)... and in companies, professional associations and business clubs.

All in all 13 SSS presentations were given at all the initiatives mentioned in 2005, and 18 in 2006.



## **6. Contacts with embassies and consulates**

Our publications are sent out to all embassies and consulates of coastal countries.

## **7. Schools and the general public**

The 'Waterpower Mosaic' cartoon continued to be distributed in schools and among the general public, as well as on fairs such as 'Belgian Boat'. The 'Waterpower' CD-ROM was also used regularly.

SSS together with PBV SSS takes part in the "Are You Waterproof" project.

On the website a "Youngsters" section has been developed for young people.

Contacts were maintained with the Universities of Leuven, Ghent and Antwerp and with the university colleges Ghent and Antwerp. Presentations were given (3 in 2005, 5 in 2006), students worked on SSS-related subjects etc.

Both in 2005 and 2006 some 15 students requested information on SSS for their dissertation or thesis. The Promotion Centre acted as supervisor or commissioner for a dissertation of one of the participants of the Port Management course in Ghent.

## **8. Portcentre Lillo**

Regular contact with the Portcentre is maintained and the data presented on the stand (traffic figures) are updated. We have introduced the Portcentre to the initiators of the 2 E 3 S project in Barcelona, which in 2007 hopefully will result in a reciprocal visit and a cooperation agreement.

### **c. Miscellaneous**

The Promotion Centre maintains contact with the Flemish Logistics Institute (VIL) through two working groups (Intermodal transport, Flanders Distribution Country). In the "Flanders Distribution Country" project shortsea shipping is discussed in a Powerpoint presentation (which can be updated annually with the newest figures) and in a 6-minute promotional film. There has been cooperation with VIL in April 2006 in Istanbul, where VIL gave a presentation of "Flanders Distribution Country" too.

In 2006 shootings took place for a DVD that will appear on the occasion of 15 years of Promotie Binnenvaart Vlaanderen in 2007. In the scenario the necessary attention is paid to SSS.

### **d. Outlook**

In 2007 the new SSS business plan will be drafted, in which 2008 will be an important year as it will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Promotion Centre.

### **e. Profile**

Since its establishment, the Promotion Centre has presented itself as a neutral, non-commercial go-between. That position makes it possible to bring to the attention on a permanent basis certain bottlenecks associated with SSS. For example, since 2000 the problem of the inflexibility of port labour for SSS has been put forward in presentations, a viewpoint that has drawn some criticism. Some years later this problem became debatable and the unions no longer closed their eyes. At the Shortsea Forum which we organised ourselves (October 2006) and in other workshops parties are calling for talks, because they sense that the time for action has come if one doesn't want to lose traffic.

The ports are undoubtedly the protagonists as far as SSS is concerned. Still, they are not only the gateway to/from Flanders (and by extension Belgium) but also to a number of countries in Europe. The Promotion Centre therefore advocates that a second dimension – a shortsea dimension – be given to the concept of hinterland. All too often that hinterland is limited to the North of France, the Ruhr area and Switzerland. Through the Flemish ports an entire area within Europe is served by SSS, so the notion hinterland should be considered in its wider sense. We therefore argue in favour of a European SSS dimension, over and above the "extended gateways" concept of the Flemish Logistics Institute.



**Promotie Shortsea Shipping Vlaanderen**

Verbindingsdok Oostkaai 13 B10, B 2000 Antwerpen  
Tel : + 32 3 20 20 520, Fax : + 32 3 20 20 524, E-mail : [shortsea@shortsea.be](mailto:shortsea@shortsea.be)