



ANTWERP PORT AUTHORITY

Six trial voyages to Antwerp by container ships longer than 360 metres

In the coming weeks six container carriers with an LOA of more than 360 metres will make trial visits to the port of Antwerp. Below is the text of a press release issued by the Permanent Commission for Supervision of Scheldt Navigation.

First trial judged successful

To be followed up by a series of trial voyages by large container ships on the Western Scheldt

During the course of the next few months a series of six test trips will be carried out on the Western Scheldt with ships longer than currently permitted under present guidelines. This decision was reached by the Permanent Commission based on a positive assessment of the test visit made by the *MSC Beatrice* on 7 April. From this the PC considers that it would be reasonable for the Mediterranean Shipping Company to send six more outside ships to the port of Antwerp.

Visits are planned for the *MSC Francesca* (15 April, due to pass Flushing around 1600 hours), *MSC Luciana* (19 April), *MSC Sola* (29 April), *MSC Danit* (4 May), *MSC Daniella* (27 May) and *MSC Ivana* (1 June).

The Permanent Committee, in which the Netherlands and Flanders collaborate closely, made extensive preparations for the first test voyage, with the necessary organisational and preventive measures being taken to ensure that it went safely without hitch. Strict nautical and safety conditions were laid down. It was agreed that the first test voyage, by the *MSC Beatrice*, should be assessed in depth by the various parties and stakeholders involved. The conclusion of this assessment, carried out yesterday, was that further test voyages could take place in the near future, under proper conditions. Beyond the primary focus on a safe and smooth trip, the PC took into consideration the very large economic benefits of larger vessels being able to use the Western Scheldt.

With due regard for earlier agreements, the Permanent Commission further concluded that permanent changes to the present policy for admitting ships on the Western Scheldt should not be made until there have been several successful trips demonstrating that vessels longer than 360 m can sail to and from the port of Antwerp in full safety. The Zeeland Safety Region also plays a role in this process. Until now 360 m has been the upper limit for ships permitted on the Western Scheldt.