



ANTWERP PORT AUTHORITY

PRESS RELEASE

Largest ships can now reach Antwerp more easily

The very largest container carriers can now visit Antwerp in full safety. The successful test visits by MSC vessels of 14,000 TEU and more than 360 m LOA have resulted in greater accessibility for the port. The Permanent Commission for Supervision of Scheldt Navigation now permits a maximum draught of 14 metres upstream and downstream, and has widened the time windows.

The most important change is the increase in the maximum draught sailing downstream, from 13.5 to 14 metres; the maximum upstream was already 14 metres. The time windows within which ships are allowed to proceed up and down the Scheldt have also been extended, permitting a more flexible sailing schedule. The more flexible conditions will form a specific part of a new nautical and technical evaluation planned for the end of November. If the evaluation is positive, the Permanent Commission will issue a new version of the upstream and downstream sailing regulations.

History

The arrival of the MSC Beatrice on 7 April this year marked the start of a series of seven test visits by ships longer than 360 metres, held between April and June this year. On 24 June the Permanent Commission decided to allow access to the port for MSC ships with a length of 360 metres or more, making accessibility even more flexible. However, certain conditions were set. These concern the sailing schedule, the draught of the ships, simulator training for the pilots, and direct supervision by the vessel traffic control system. The use of tugs, visibility and wind conditions will also be taken into account

At the order of the Permanent Commission, a new nautical and technical evaluation was carried out in September. The evaluation was based on a series of nine tests (upstream and downstream each time) from the end of June to the beginning of September. As the evaluation showed that the nine tests were successful and that safety was never compromised, the Permanent Commission decided on 23 September to continue the more flexible access policy, while fine-tuning some of the conditions.

With this evaluation, Antwerp confirms its good access for shipping. As well as being located deep inland, the port offers fast, direct and environmentally-friendly access to the economic heart of Europe.

Antwerp, 6 October 2009