



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 30 September 2011

14934/11

MAR 124

INFORMATION NOTE

From: European Commission

To: Council

Subject: Blue belt pilot project

- Information from the Commission, requested by the Belgian delegation

Delegations will find annexed an information note from the Commission on the above mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "Any Other Business" at the meeting of the Council (**Transport**, Telecommunications and Energy) on 6 October 2011.

Information Note from the Commission
State of play of the Blue Belt pilot project

The development and implementation of the Blue Belt pilot project is a step towards validating the Blue Belt concept in the context of the *"European maritime transport space without barriers"*. According to the Blue Belt concept, vessels can operate freely within the internal market with a minimum of administrative burden while safety, security, environmental protection and customs and tax revenues are ensured by an optimal use of the existing capabilities to monitor maritime transport.

The Blue Belt pilot project provides customs authorities with vessel voyage information. It was proposed by the Belgian Presidency of the Council in 2010 and endorsed at the informal Transport Ministers meeting in September 2010 and the Transport Council in December 2010¹. The Commission initiated a pilot project in close cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) which has the required surveillance capabilities through the SafeSeaNet system.

The pilot project addresses the uncertainty that presently exists as to the whereabouts or encounters of vessels plying between ports situated in the EU. Its scope is to show to the national customs authorities the services SafeSeaNet can offer to support their mission and thus pave the way to further customs facilitations and eventually to reducing administrative burden on maritime transport within the EU internal market.

The relevant Commission services, EMSA, the national customs authorities and the shipping industry have worked together for the preparation of the pilot project's implementation plan. The shipping industry has welcomed the project which it considers as a step to more harmonised and transparent customs processes in the identification of the transported goods and has contributed more than 250 ships of all types and of various flags (non EU flags included) to participate in the project representing both EU and non EU trades, regular and non-regular services.

¹ See Council conclusions in Document 16266/10

The project has entered its 6 month operational phase in May 2011, during which the SafeSeaNet system monitors the participating "blue ships". The information on the actual routes followed and the last ports visited is transmitted to the EU national customs authorities prior to the ship's arrival in their port. In October, the last month of the operational phase, information on the ship's movement outside the coverage of land-based AIS-stations is added to the report.

Currently, the national customs authorities are finalising the mid term evaluation of the project as per the accuracy and relevance of the information they have been receiving. The results from the responses already received indicate that the customs authorities of the Member States find the information provided through the pilot project to be useful.

Feedback both from the shipping industry and from other relevant stakeholders participating in the maritime logistics operations will also be taken into account during the evaluation.

The project evaluation should help to assess how the pilot project can be transformed into a sustainable service covering all intra-EU trade bringing the overall benefit to all actors in the logistics supply chain.

The Commission takes the view that the pilot project should continue in 2012 in light of its very short duration, the positive preliminary feedback, and the fact that further enhancements may be desired by the customs authorities.

The Commission will inform the Council on the outcome and the next steps in 2012.
