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Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

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Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

Establishment of common principles and technical requirements for pan-European river information services (RIS)

International Standard for Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways (VTT)

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction and mandate

1. The Working Party may wish consider the proposal of the Expert Group on Vessel Tracking and Tracing (VTT expert group) for European acceptance of Automatic Identification System (AIS) Class B stations in inland navigation. On that basis, the Working Party may wish to discuss and agree on adaptation of the VTT Standard contained in the annex to Resolution No. 63 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/176).

II. Proposal for the European acceptance of AIS Class B stations on inland waterways

2. AIS Class B Carrier Sense (CS) stations are specifically designed for the needs of the recreational market and to ensure easy access to the AIS data from commercial inland and maritime vessels as well as from other equipped recreational craft.

3. Currently there are already a lot of recreational craft equipped with an AIS Class B stations sailing in the maritime area and the number of equipped boats is increasing. Many visit European ports and may sail in some cases also to destinations in the European hinterland using inland waterways.

4. Many of these craft are registered in European countries under the maritime regulations.
5. It is not reasonable to prohibit the use of AIS Class B stations by recreational craft from abroad/maritime area entering inland waterways since they are legally licenced by their national competent authority for maritime use. It is also possible that the use of AIS Class B is allowed on inland waterways falling outside the CCNR or EU regulations since every country is responsible for their own approval or acceptance of AIS Class B stations and the issuing of the AIS radio licence and the Maritime Mobile Service Identifiers (MMSI) number.
6. There is a strong need to allow the use of AIS Class B stations in the European inland waterways as well.
7. For that purpose the following proposal has been developed taking into account several contributions from members of the VTT Expert Group and the discussions during its last meeting:

A. Proposal for the use of AIS Class B stations

Recreational craft navigating on inland waterways may also use AIS Class B stations as they do navigating in maritime waters.

AIS Class B stations installed on recreational craft sailing on European inland waterways need to:

1. meet the appropriate requirements of Recommendation ITU-R M. 1371;
2. conform to the requirements defined in Directive 1999/5/EC (R&TTE);
3. conform to the requirements defined in the international standard IEC 62287 (including DSC channel management).

It is the responsibility of the competent national authorities/administration to ensure the conformity of the AIS Class B stations according to the above-mentioned international standards and requirements before issuing the AIS radio licence, including the MMSI, e.g. by national type approval of the relevant AIS Class B stations.

The radio licence issued by the competent national authorities for the use of the AIS Class B station should be carried on board.

This recommendation is intended for vessels not falling under any inland AIS legislation. Those vessels may use AIS Class B stations to participate either voluntarily or mandatorily on “inland waterways”.¹

If AIS Class B stations are used on a voluntary basis, the skippers shall keep the manually entered AIS data constantly up to date. The competent authorities shall enforce the correctness of all static data of any kind of AIS mobile station. No incorrect data must be transmitted over AIS.

¹ The term “inland waterways” can be replaced by the name of the river by the country or body issuing legislation.

B. Explanatory notes

1. Requirements

The IMO document (MSC 140(76)) dealing with the protection of the AIS radio channel (AIS VDL) states that a AIS Class B station shall meet the requirements of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (AIS standard ITU-R.M.1371) and that Class B AIS devices should be approved by the Administration.²

The technical requirements for AIS Class B are laid down in IEC 62287–1 for AIS Class B CS and IEC 62287–2 for the Self Organizing (SO) Class B stations.

As IMO rules are in principle not effective on European inland waterways, it is recommended to adopt these requirements also for inland waterways.

2. Equal treatment and governmental responsibility

In this way there is no difference between recreational craft sailing with an AIS Class B station in the maritime area and recreational craft sailing with an AIS Class B station on European inland waterways. They are treated equally by the authorities and must meet the same requirements.

National authorities must ensure that the AIS Class B station meets these requirements before an AIS radio licence and a MMSI number are issued.

3. Commercial vessels using a Class B transponder

For the time being there are only AIS Class B “CS” stations, but it is expected that soon there will be also AIS Class B “SO” stations. It is questionable if the use of these latter AIS Class B transponders will be restricted to recreational craft.

In view of the cost, it may be attractive for non-SOLAS commercial vessels, like tugboats and service vessels to use these AIS Class B “SO” stations.

To prevent this from happening on European inland waterways, the use of AIS Class B stations should be limited to recreational craft only.³

However, the possibility remains that an owner of a recreational craft can install and use an officially approved Inland AIS station. This Inland AIS station will give recreational craft owners more possibilities which may be of their interest. However, an extensive use of Inland AIS stations by recreational craft will contribute to the overloading of the VHF Data link (VDL) and should be discouraged.

4. Enforcement

For a Class B AIS station, a radio licence and a MMSI are required. Fortunately, most countries have sophisticated analytical tools to analyse the possible abuse or dysfunction of an AIS station. This happens now already for the use of the Inland AIS on inland waterways. In this way, corrective actions can be taken by the authorities.

In severe cases, such as refusal to obey orders of the authority or in case of repeated abuse, authorities have the possibility to take the AIS station off the air.

² The Administration in the State where the vessel is registered or where the licence is issued.

³ Another option may be that commercial vessels with a certain length are allowed to use AIS class B transponders.