

BlueTraker® chosen for a couple of Mediterranean fisheries' VMS systems

EMA Ltd. Slovenia, an established total solutions provider of VMS and eLogbook systems featuring BlueTraker® VMS terminals for tracking, surveillance and control of fishing fleets, has been selected by the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) of Albania to provide an integrated Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) for fisheries management. After the company completed a small Slovenian VMS, Croatia chose EMA and the BlueTraker® for their fishing fleet.

Both Albanian and Croatian VMS include the provision of Iridium satellite network airtime (i.e.: VMS data communication ...).

The Albanian system will be installed before the end of 2011 on 220 fishing vessels. With the installation of VMS systems, Croatia and Albania are completing yet another requirement in their approach to the full membership in EU. Albania is a potential candidate for the membership in the EU from 2003 and hopes to be an official candidate soon, this way joining other official candidates like Croatia and Montenegro. Albania's status qualifies the country to receive the EU financial aid for installation of VMS system under the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

Croatia is an official candidate for the full membership from 2004. With the installation of VMS systems in Croatia and Albania respectively, both countries become part of EU VMS network which already includes almost 10.000 fishing vessels over 15 meters length. In January 2012 the system will expand by another 11.000 EU fishing vessels between 12 and 15 meters. Other non European members of *General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)*, as well as its European member Montenegro, at the same time the last European country yet to install the system, should install the VMS before the end of 2013. Montenegro is an official EU candidate from December 2010.

Tracking and monitoring terminals with dual operation (using satellite and mobile networks) are probably the best solution for both countries, having in mind characteristics of the Adriatic sea with a large number of islands in Croatia and the mountainous back country in Albania. This type of geography is ideal for the GPRS communication along the shores and satellite communications on the open seas. As the switching from GPRS over to satellite channel and vice versa is seamless, fishing vessels that mostly navigate in coastal waters incur much less communication cost that they would if the communication would be done via satellite channel only...

Even more, because of using a relatively broadband and inexpensive GPRS channel while in port or in a close proximity of a shore, the on-board BlueTraker® terminals can have their functionality upgraded, built-in software debugged and operation diagnosed. This is done remotely from the Fisheries Monitoring Centre for a fraction of the cost of getting service technicians physically on board their ships to do the upgrade job...The VMS system technological lifetime can therefore be substantially extended! The Albanian waters will have no blue border after the accession to EU. The aquatic resources will become available to other flag state fishing vessels as well. The new system will therefore provide transparency to any fishing activity in the area.

The EU requires from its member states to conclude installation of eLog system for catch reporting no later than June 2011. Albanian and Croatian BlueTraker® solutions are eLogbook ready i.e. the on-board PC with eLog software just has to be connected to the BlueTraker® terminal and the whole service activated...

The BlueTraker® solution is currently the most cost effective VMS/eLogbook system on the market as it offers an all integrated VMS plus eLogbook satellite terminal with exceptional efficacy in catch report data communication. This solution is most adequate for nations with limited budgets. The system allows not only a modest running cost, but effectively helps in preventing overfishing in the Mediterranean by integrating IUU sighting reports and optional space-based radar imagery for cross correlation with VMS data to the system.

And this is not yet an end to the story: BlueTraker® terminals need no antennas and antenna cables to be connected what greatly secures the system against the geo-position forgery which is usually done by manipulating the antennas or antenna cables...

An integrated back-up battery (not as a separate pack, like some other terminals on the market) enables up to 72 hours of operation even when the vessel's battery is switched off or the ship's electrical power is down. This solution enables that any attempt to cut the cable to the terminal or opening an enclosure is immediately detected and reported to the Fisheries Monitoring Centre. It offers better safety to the fishermen as well.

By installing the Distress Selective Call button (i.e.: sort of SOS button) as a standard, fisherman is in a position to alert the FMC operator about a distress situation on board (extreme weather, water ingress, fire on board, pirates attack etc...). The DSC button is build upon stringent SIL3 safety standards and operates under any circumstances. It has "two way functionality" built-in which means that not only alert messages can be sent to FMC but also FMC operator's "receive-acknowledgement" can be shown on the DSC button to greatly improve fisherman's confidence in rescue operation.

The alert message is sent via Iridium satellite network which is the only satellite network with truly 100% coverage of the Earth and the lowest messaging delay at the same time...

Latest technology contributions of EMA to the VMS/Logbook initiatives are therefore raising the bar for fisheries management, security and safety. More and more national authorities of Europe and wider are recognizing it and are specifying this technology for their fishing fleets