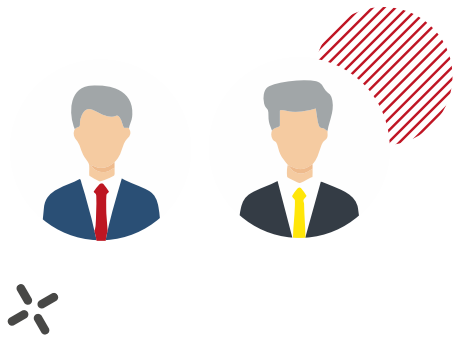




KBRV



ANNUAL REPORT **2024**



Retrospective

For Belgian shipowners, 2024 was another year of major challenges. The geopolitical situation had a significant impact on the safety of shipping and its crews. Belgian shipowners did not hesitate to navigate the Red Sea in order to guide their ships on a safe but long journey via the Cape of Good Hope to their destination.

In 2024, the United States of America introduced a project whereby ships built in China would have to pay high taxes when calling at a US port. The concrete implementation of this taxation will have a significant impact on the entire logistics chain from 2025 onwards. The tax dossiers that must guarantee Belgian shipowners a level playing field with their European competitors were included in the coalition agreement. We expect the government to bring these dossiers to a successful conclusion in 2025.

During MEPC 82 in October 2024, discussions continued on establishing a global, binding legal framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. A final agreement is expected at MEPC 83, scheduled for early April 2025. Reaching a global agreement is essential to prevent the proliferation of unilateral measures and to ensure a level playing field—particularly by avoiding double payments under overlapping ETS systems.

At the end of 2024, the Antwerp Maritime Academy reconstruction project broke the deadlock. A restart of the works is planned for 2026, with delivery expected before 2030!

Also in December 2024, the members of the board of directors decided to support the Havenwereld project. Promoting the Belgian maritime sector is a key objective of the project. We would also like to express our appreciation to the social partners within the joint consultation for their constructive input regarding the future of our sector. Our sincere thanks also go to the Ministry of Defense, and in particular to the Belgian Navy, for their commitment to the security of the Belgian merchant navy.

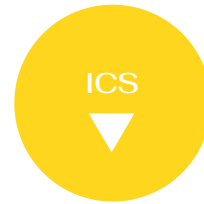
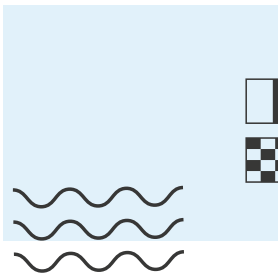


Wilfried Lemmens
Managing Director



Ludwig Criel
Chairman





External relations



International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Resilience at the core

By Guy Platten, Secretary General

The world is ever-changing and shipping remains the integral cog for the continuity of global trade. There is no doubt we are witnessing a shift in the global trade landscape, with geopolitical conflict, rising protectionism, and the breakdown of multilateral cooperation becoming increasingly common. Additionally, we are currently facing one of the biggest challenges ahead – to decarbonise shipping and meet our net zero carbon emissions target by 2050. But one thing that remains constant is that as an industry we are much more resilient and cohesive to meet these challenges. We are fortunate as an industry that we are comprehensively regulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), allowing for truly multilateral, well-formed global regulations.

If we are to look back over the past decade, we have weathered some heavy storms that have impacted our industry; COVID 19, the war in Ukraine, the Ever Given blocking the Suez Canal, the Houthi forces striking merchant ships in the Red Sea, to name but a few. However, with each of these challenges the industry has found solution to ensure trade continues – shipping has and will always find a way.

This resilience is now instilled in our industry and will be key to decarbonising shipping. The recent outcome of MEPC 83 in April is a significant milestone but must now be capitalised on. If the new regulatory framework for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is adopted at MEPC ES (Extraordinary Session) in October, this would reflect a serious commitment by governments to align international shipping with broader climate objectives, whilst simultaneously sending a strong signal to markets, investors, and the public that the maritime industry is prepared to make its contribution to the global energy transition.

The scale of the task ahead is substantial - the work does not end with the announcement of an agreement. The framework must now be implemented, and that implementation must be both effective and realistic. For shipowners and energy producers, the immediate priority is the establishment of a regulatory structure that is not only ambitious but also practical. We need a structure that provides clarity, predictability, and the necessary incentives to support investment in people, new fuels, propulsion systems, and technologies.

We will also require trillions of dollars to make this viable. Billions of dollars are already being invested in alternative fuel-capable vessels, fuel infrastructure, and research into carbon-reducing technologies. But progress on this front cannot be sustained without regulatory certainty. Producers of new fuels, for example, must be confident that their investments will have long-term viability. The same applies to ports, operators, and insurers. The IMO framework must now catalyse the broader transition and provide the assurance that international shipping requires in order to move forward at the pace that is necessary.

None of this will be possible without our seafarers of course. They are key to the energy transition, and to the lasting resilience of the industry. One of the key outcomes of our Seafarer 2050 Summit, held in Manila in 2023, was that collaboration and investment are key to tackling the challenges of seafarer training and seafarer recruitment & retention. It is great to see that this has been incorporated in the new agreement at the IMO following MEPC. Without our seafarers the transformation of shipping will be stifled, and global trade put at risk, so I urge all maritime leaders to have them at the forefront of key decisions to ensure for an efficient and sustainable future.



European Community Shipowners' Association (ECSA)

By Sotiris Raptis, Secretary General

2024 was a critical year for European shipping, marked by major geopolitical challenges, the implementation of the EU climate legislations, and a strong focus on enhancing industrial competitiveness. In the first half of the year, the Presidency of the Council of the EU was run skilfully by Belgium, delivering significant progress in a lot of policy files.

With increasing pressure to secure Europe's economic, energy and supply chain security, shipping's strategic role has come at the forefront. One of the main messages of the European Shipowners has been the use of the revenues generated under the EU ETS for the energy transition of the sector and for bridging the enormous price gap between conventional and clean fuels. Through a series of workshops, strategic dialogues, and direct engagement with EU institutions, European Shipowners | ECSA ensured that the voice of European shipowners was clearly heard in Brussels. Ahead of the European elections in June 2024, European Shipowners published their Policy Priorities for 2024–2029 striving for our main objective to keep European shipping internationally competitive. Key priorities for the next five years include boosting the production and uptake of clean fuels for shipping, securing adequate ship financing and funding mechanisms, safeguarding the global level playing field, and supporting maritime skills and jobs as the industry transitions to climate neutrality and digitalisation.

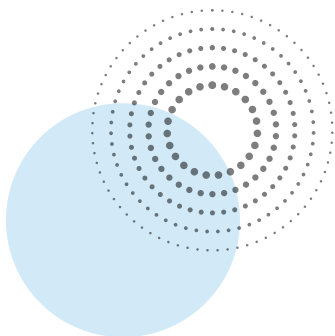
Coalition building was key to this progress. The launch of the Clean Maritime Fuels Platform and a joint event in the European Parliament with Transport & Environment showcased broad support for reinvesting EU ETS revenues to bridge the price gap with clean fuels. We also welcomed the European Parliament's adoption of the Net Zero Industry Act (NZIA), which is a major win for the maritime sector. By recognising sustainable fuels for shipping as strategic technologies and introducing a 40% production benchmark, the Act laid the foundation for an industrial strategy geared to boost the availability of clean fuels in Europe.

Maritime security also returned to the top of the policy agenda, as Houthis' attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea continued in 2024. European Shipowners supported the swift launch of EU NAVFOR ASPIDES and called for robust EU action to safeguard the safety of seafarers and maritime trade routes.

The maritime workforce also remained a priority. To celebrate the International Day of the Seafarer, we co-organised with the Antwerp Maritime Academy a successful day of discussions bringing together students, industry and policymakers to discuss how innovation and training can attract the next generation at sea. Together with the European Transport Workers Federation, we also launched the Seafarers Go Digital initiative, putting forward recommendations to address the digital transition for seafarers. Last but not least, we supported the organisation of the first Maritime Diversity & Inclusion Honours, organised by WISTA Belgium in the context of the 2024 Belgian Presidency of the EU.

The election of the new European Parliament and the confirmation of the new Commission reshaped the political landscape. The landmark report by Mario Draghi on the Competitiveness of the European economy recognised shipping as one of the most difficult sectors to decarbonise, requiring €40 billion in annual investment. The re-election of Ursula von der Leyen included a pledge to convert the Green Deal into a Clean Industrial Deal, while within his mandate the new European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, will put forward an EU Maritime Industrial Strategy, aiming to enhance the competitiveness of the sector. To prepare for this crucial debate, we released in September two strategic position papers: one on the EU Maritime Industrial Strategy, and another on clean fuels, calling for a level global playing field and urgent support for clean fuel production in Europe.

As Europe navigates towards a new institutional cycle, European Shipowners | ECSA will continue to stress the strategic role of shipping as a cornerstone of Europe's energy, food and supply chain security.

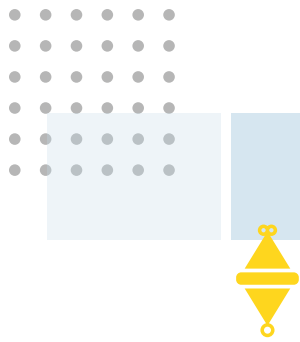


The Belgian Fleet

At the end of 2024, the fleet flying the Belgian flag consisted of 205 vessels with a gross tonnage of 4.516.929. The average age of the merchant vessels was 10,36 years with a weighted average of 8,10 years.

	End of 2022		End of 2023		End of 2024	
TYPE	Nr.	GT	Nr.	GT	Nr.	GT
Merchant vessels	84	5.363.748	76	4.931.662	73	4.093.237
Dredging vessels	28	171.493	27	174.104	26	140.766
Tugs and offshore supply vessels	49	111.805	48	105.833	48	110.253
Passenger vessels	6	10.341	7	10.476	6	10.430
Special Craft	2	510	2	510	2	510
Floating building material	64	111.805	49	128.401	50	161.733
Total Gross Tonnage	233	5.769.702	209	5.350.986	205	4.516.929

Source: Federal Government Agency for Maritime Transport



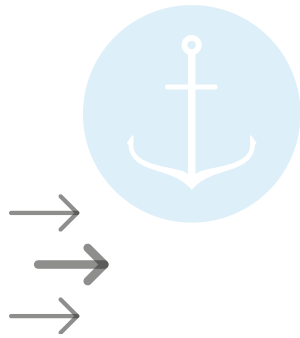
World Fleet

World fleet ownership by carrying capacity in dead-weight tons 2024

Ranked by dead-weight tonnage, 2024 (thousands of tons)

	Country	National flag	%	Foreign flag	%	Total
1	Greece	49.985	12,7%	344.971	87,3%	394.977
2	China	130.737	42,4%	178.336	57,6%	309.870
3	Japan	38.689	16%	203.666	84%	242.366
4	Singapore	67.827	46,5%	78.156	53,5%	146.047
5	Hong Kong, China	76.961	57,3%	57.939	42,7%	135.586
6	Republic of Korea	19.896	20,6%	77.045	79,4%	97.020
7	Germany	7.492	10,1%	66.931	89,9%	74.427
8	Taiwan Province of China	5.826	9,7%	54.846	90,3%	60.735
9	United Kingdom	9.070	16,6%	47.538	83,4%	56.980
10	Norway	17.331	32,4%	36.441	67,6%	53.903
11	Bermuda	-	0%	52.293	100%	52.293
12	United Arab Emirates	596	1,2%	50.624	98,8%	51.247
13	United States	10.477	22,2%	39.245	77,8%	50.416
21	Belgium	7.038	29,1%	17.182	70,9%	24.220
24	The Netherlands	4.145	22,6%	14.162	77,4%	18.308
25	France	5.437	30,1%	12.600	69,9%	18.038
World total						

Source: UNCTAD based on data from Clarksons Research



Maritime Security

Maritime Security – Red Sea & Gulf of Aden

In 2024–2025, maritime security in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden remained a major concern due to ongoing Houthi attacks, geopolitical tensions with Iran, and increased piracy. KBRV monitored developments and emphasized the importance of swift information sharing and coordinated international protection for commercial shipping. The integration of the military components of EMASOH and AGENOR into ASPIDES marked a significant step in safeguarding freedom of navigation. Despite the volatile security landscape, Belgian vessels remained closely monitored, with evolving guidance on routing, threat levels, and protective measures.



Technical and environment

Navigating Challenges and Driving Maritime Sustainability

Throughout 2024, the Royal Belgian Shipowners' Association (KBRV) has played a proactive and strategic role in shaping the maritime industry's response to evolving regulatory, environmental, and operational challenges—both within Europe and on the global stage. With the entry into force of the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), the Royal Belgian Shipowners' Association (KBRV) actively represented the interests of the Belgian maritime sector. The Association raised practical concerns about implementation and called for targeted adjustments through position papers, direct engagement with the European Commission, and close cooperation with the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA). This ongoing work lays important groundwork ahead of the planned revision of the EU ETS in 2026, ensuring that future updates are informed by real-world industry experience.

In parallel, as the sector prepared for the entry into force of the FuelEU Maritime regulation, KBRV initiated and facilitated dialogue with a broad network of internal and external stakeholders. Given the complexity and far-reaching impact of FuelEU, this collaborative approach aimed to anticipate compliance challenges, align interpretations, and support members in navigating new requirements.

At the global level, Belgian stakeholders consistently advocated for a fair and effective maritime decarbonization strategy, emphasizing the need for a unified global carbon pricing mechanism under the leadership of the IMO. During the MEPC sessions and through collaborations such as joint letters with international shipowners' associations, they reinforced the call for a robust Net Zero framework and the urgency of bold industry action.

Environmental protection was another central theme, particularly in marine biodiversity. The launch of the #MakeWayForWhales campaign and a European awareness initiative on ship strikes reflected a growing commitment to safeguarding whale populations and reducing the ecological impact of global shipping.

Operational concerns also took center stage, with webinars and studies highlighting technical challenges around Ballast Water Management Systems and the effectiveness of the IMO's Carbon Intensity Indicator. Meanwhile, ship recycling emerged as a rising regulatory concern, especially as the number of vessels reaching end-of-life grows amid a fragmented legal landscape. Altogether, the past year demonstrated the proactive stance of Belgian shipowners in addressing regulatory uncertainty, promoting innovation, and advancing sustainability across the maritime industry.

Ahead of MEPC 81, Belgian Shipowners once again make the case for a global maritime pricing mechanism (14/03/2024)

Ahead of MEPC 81 in March 2024, KBRV renewed its call for a global carbon pricing mechanism in shipping, warning that regional approaches could lead to complexity and market distortion.

Latest position paper by Belgian shipowners shows implementation challenges of EU ETS and FuelEU Maritime (13/05/2024)

In May 2024, KBRV released a position paper highlighting challenges in implementing the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) and FuelEU Maritime regulations. The paper points out legal ambiguities, compliance uncertainties, and the complexity of applying the “polluter pays” principle.

KBRV meets with European Commission to provide feedback on EU ETS (28/06/2024)

In June 2024, KBRV met with the European Commission to share practical feedback on the implementation of the EU ETS for maritime shipping. The Association highlighted legal and operational challenges and called for clearer, more workable rules—building on its earlier position paper.

New study shows real world complexities/shortcomings IMO’s carbon intensity indicator formula (23/07/2024)

In July 2024, KBRV released a study highlighting the complexities and shortcomings of the IMO’s Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) formula. The study found that factors like port waiting time, idle time and short voyages negatively impact CII ratings, particularly for container vessels, VLCCs, and LPG carriers. KBRV recommends revising the formula to account for these external factors and calls for a broader review of the CII’s scope.

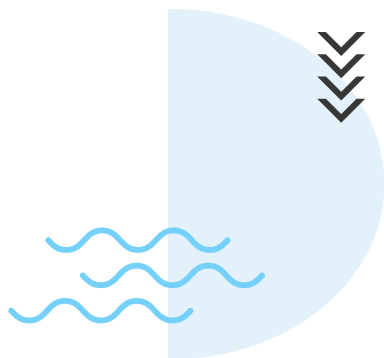
MEPC 82: KBRV supports ICS criteria for IMO Net Zero Framework (30/09/2024)

At MEPC 82 in September 2024, the Royal Belgian Shipowners’ Association (KBRV) expressed strong support for the International Chamber of Shipping’s (ICS) proposed criteria for the IMO’s net-zero framework. KBRV endorsed the ICS’s recommendation for a flat-rate greenhouse gas (GHG) fee per tonne of CO₂ emitted, viewing it as a clear, transparent, and globally consistent pricing mechanism aligned with the “polluter pays” principle. This approach aims to prevent fragmented national and regional initiatives, reducing administrative burdens and avoiding duplicate CO₂ charges. KBRV emphasized that aligning with the ICS proposal is essential for achieving the IMO’s 2050 GHG reduction targets while maintaining a sustainable and competitive maritime industry. (KBRV)

ICS Webinar on Ballast Water Management Systems (10/03/2025)

On 12 March 2025, KBRV participated in the ICS webinar “Ballast Water Management Systems – Navigating the Challenges”. Panelist Yvan Vlamincx from Fast Lines Belgium shared insights on the operational challenges of Ballast Water Management Systems (BWMS), particularly for short voyages. He called for a more pragmatic regulatory approach to ensure effective implementation. The webinar fostered discussion between shipowners, regulators, and maritime professionals on overcoming BWMS challenges.





Social



(7/03/2024)

KBRV at the Brussels Conference on the Wellbeing of Seafarers

Under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for the North Sea organized a conference on the wellbeing of seafarers. Belgian shipowners attach great importance to the wellbeing of their crew members.



**read
more**



(25/06/2024)

Day of the seafarer: preparing for the next generation

The importance of students at the maritime academy cannot be overstated, as they are the seafarers of the future.



[read more](#)

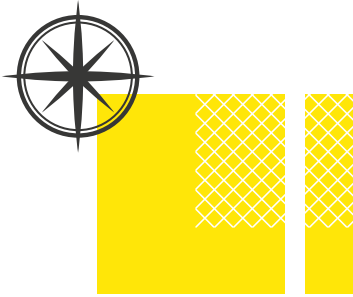


(26/06/2024)

The future of European shipping's global competitiveness lies in maritime education, seafarer welfare and innovation uptake



[read more](#)



Legal



(11/01/2024)

Belgian shipowners welcome the country's Presidency of EU Council



Environmental Crime Directive (ECD)

The new directive on environmental protection through criminal law (ECD) was adopted on 11 April 2024 replacing the 2008 ECD and entered into force on 20 Mai 2024.

This directive now includes offenses related to ship-source pollution, ship recycling, and shipments of waste. The new ECD extends criminal penalties for additional MARPOL Annexes due to the enlarged scope of the ship source pollution directive (SSPD).



Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes

During a joint ILO-IMO working group held in November 2024, new Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers Detained in Connection with Alleged Crimes were issued.

The objective of these Guidelines is to ensure that:

- the human rights and legal interests of seafarers involved in alleged crimes are recognized;
- seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes are treated fairly by public authorities;
- investigations or detentions do not last longer than necessary and are carried out in accordance with the laws of the port or coastal State.

Although these Guidelines are non-binding, they provide guidance to port States, flag States, coastal States, the seafarers' States of nationality, shipowners, and seafarers themselves.



Ship Source Pollution Directive

The Ship Source Pollution Directive (SSPD) proposal forms part of the maritime safety package submitted by the Commission on 1 June 2023 and entered into force on 5 January 2025.

The agreed text:

- Includes in addition to illegal discharges of oil and noxious liquid substances (Annex I & II of MARPOL which are covered by the existing directive), discharges of harmful substances carried in packaged form (MARPOL Annex III), sewage (MARPOL Annex IV), garbage (MARPOL Annex V), as well as discharge waters and residues from Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (wet scrubbers) (MARPOL Annex VI). The directive leaves air emissions (MARPOL Annex VI) out of the scope, for the time being but envisages a future possible inclusion;
- Aligns MARPOL and the ship-source pollution directive in terms of "serious negligence" by merging Article 5 of SSPD (exceptions) into Article 4 of SSPD, which makes direct reference to MARPOL provisions.
- Amends the directive to cover only administrative sanctions and no longer criminal penalties, which now are included in the Environmental Crime Directive (ECD).
- Incorporates international standards into EU law but does not create new EU standards, namely regarding infringement and Exhaust Gas Cleaning System definition.



Uncitral Judicial Sales of Ships

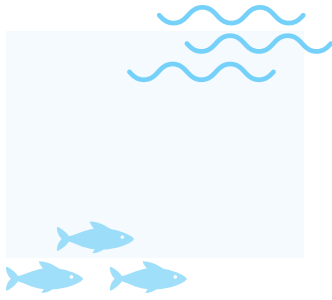
Belgium was the first EU country to sign the UNCITRAL Convention on the International Effects of Judicial Sales of Ships, dated September 5, 2023, also known as the Beijing Convention. To mark this event, the Belgian Maritime Law Association, the Directorate-General for Shipping and RBSA organised a lecture on the Convention, followed by a panel discussion with representatives from the Belgian Ship Register, bailiffs, the bar, and RBSA on Thursday, November 7, 2024.



Draft Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers detained on suspicion of committing crimes

In 2020, the IMO Legal Committee agreed to develop guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers detained on suspicion of committing maritime crimes. The committee decided in 2023 to use the Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident, adopted in 2006, as a model. At the third meeting of the Joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group to Identify and Address Seafarers' Issues and the Human Element (ILO-IMO JTWG-SIHE 3) was decided to progress the ongoing work of the IMO Legal Committee, to develop '*Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers detained on suspicion of committing crimes*'.

This meeting took place in Geneva from 26 – 28 November 2024. The Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident were used as a model. These guidelines are intended to be a reference tool for principles that can be reflected in the design and implementation of policies, strategies, programmes, legislation, administrative measures and social dialogue mechanisms on the fair treatment of seafarers detained on suspicion of committing crimes, and that can be adapted to different national systems and circumstances



MASS Think Tank

MASS: Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) is a think tank that brings stakeholders from the entire maritime value chain and technology providers together to share (technical) knowledge by presenting and discussing ongoing projects resulting in a 360° perspective on the challenges that are being faced.

MASS community grew to 125 members representing 87 companies.



**The
Partners**

Sessions

20/09
2024



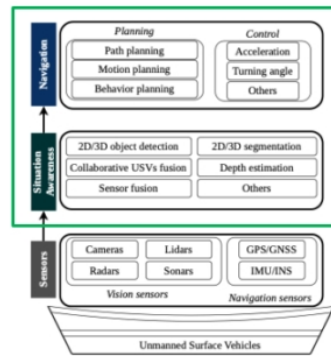
- DG Navigation
- Mahi

29/10
2024



- Belgium organises first MASS North Sea MoU Symposium
- MASS Symposium

06/12
2024



AI is very much present here.

6 DECEMBER 2024

- GeoYYZ
- IMEC
- WWS

20/02
2025



20 FEBRUARI 2025

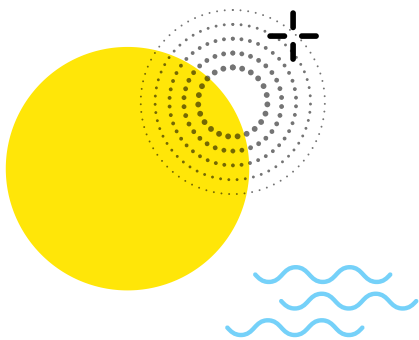
- University of Antwerp
- Damen
- Waterborne TP
- MARS

30/04
2025



30 APRIL 2025

- DotOcean
- Vlaio Cooek
- Vlaamse Waterweg



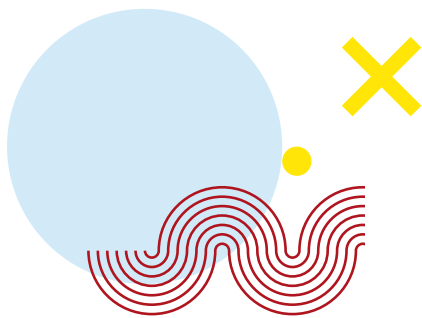
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Seatalk

23/01/2024

**Seatalk interview with Iga Cierpal (Fast Lines):
“Every day is fascinating!”**





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Varia

24/01/2025

**Official groundbreaking of the maritime
experience centre Havenwereld**



Samenwerking Whale Guardians

05/06/2024

KBRV BRINGS LIFE-SIZED BLUE WHALE



VRT
Article

De tijd
Article

12/06/2024

#MAKEWAYFORWHALES: WHAT CAN THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY DO TODAY TO PROTECT WHALES



18/06/2024

BELGIAN SHIPOWNERS LAUNCHED EUROPEAN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON SHIP STRIKES



Sea you next year