

EBIS: MULTILINGUAL INSPECTION SCHEME FOR EUROPEAN INLAND SHIPPING

The European Barge Inspection System dates back to 1998, and was developed by chemical and oil companies to improve the safety of tanker barging operations on the European inland waterways. “Our goal was and is to make quality assurance more objective and transparent.”

Captain Luc Cassan is vice chairman of EBIS and was involved with the scheme’s development from the very beginning. For an assurance database system to be successful, he argues, it must meet a number of criteria. “It needs to be up-to-date, it should incorporate new insights and current safety concerns. In our case, we want the database to work flawlessly in four different languages. And above all, the system needs to be available at all times.”

Continuous improvement

Over the years, Pharox has worked with EBIS’ IT committee to continually improve the system. Every three years, the system is updated to incorporate both changes in maritime legislation and any functional improvements. These are proposed and agreed on by EBIS’ members, including some of the world’s largest (petro)chemical companies.

Changes over the years reflect new concerns. Capt. Cassan: “Following a large accident on the Rhine in 2011, for example, we incorporated new inspection criteria focusing on the stability of double hull barges. In recent years, we’ve also added criteria focusing on sustainability and security issues.”

Other improvements focused on the database itself, the user interface and the inspection client software. “Some improvements are fairly simple, such as adjusting the interface to wide-screen monitors and mobile devices. Others are more complex. For example, Pharox developed a more intelligent search function and a screening module that automatically checks uploaded reports for possible errors.”

High availability

When discussing such updates and improvements, Capt. Cassan says, Pharox’ added value as a specialist in assurance database systems is evident. “They understand our industry and the perspective of users. Which means they quickly grasp the background of any question and can deliver fast and effective solutions.”

Such changes are intended to make life easier both for users and inspectors. “In the end, however, the most crucial requirement is that the system is available at all times. This was the one of the most important reasons why we chose to work with Pharox. They have ensured high availability percentages over the years, and act swiftly and effectively whenever there seems to be an issue to address.”