

# Chinese Hydrography

The Chinese Dragon rears its head in many fields of the world economy and despite the latest reports of a slowdown of growth, it is interesting to see the development in hydrographic surveying and chart production. The Chinese hydrographic sector is certainly increasing. Let's take a look at a few figures from the Chinese Maritime Safety Authority, under which the Hydrographic Office falls, laid down in the annual report of 2010. The Chinese surveyed 26,814.89km<sup>2</sup> in 2010, compared to 15,722.42km<sup>2</sup> in 2006. Of this total, 6,209.5km<sup>2</sup> was surveyed in the North Sea area, 10,830.94km<sup>2</sup> in the East Sea Area and 9,774.45km<sup>2</sup> in the South Sea Area. In the year 2010, the MSA updated or compiled 173 paper port and channel charts. A total of 179 ENC's were produced, including 25 electronic navigational charts for the Yangtze River – China's busiest inland waterway. It must be noted that prior to 2010 China already produced 148 ENC's and 222 paper charts. So production of the charts has not really gone up, but it is possible that the 2011 report (not yet available) shows an increase due to the large amount of surveyed areas that are being processed. The biggest growth in China has been shown in the number of charts distributed – paper as well as electronic – 375,272 on a yearly basis, almost twice as many as the 199,000 in 2006. The Chinese MSA, department for Hydrography, consists of three branches, namely, in Tianjin (for the Northern seas), Shanghai (for the Eastern seas) and Guangdong (for the Southern seas), with a total of nearly one thousand engineers, surveyors and chart makers responsible for the yearly production. Every branch is responsible for its inland waterways as well. To put the Chinese figures in perspective, the Norwegian Hydrographic Service acquired data from around 30,000km<sup>2</sup> while in the Netherlands it was 9,000km<sup>2</sup>. The examples of these two countries, although they border on the North Sea, which is one of the busiest seas with the most heavy shipping routes, shows that China still has a long way to go. A careful conclusion that can be drawn from the increasing demand for charts, paper as well as electronic, might be that shipping is increasing massively. Undoubtedly, it follows on from this that the production of charts and the number of surveyed square kilometres will grow in the coming years. Also in this field China will stimulate itself to be one of the biggest. It would be good for companies and hydrographic professionals alike to already pay attention to the East and realise what is happening. There may be substantial opportunities ahead. On the other hand, as has been the case in other industries so far, Chinese companies active in hydrography will soon start to compete outside their domestic market.