

Second ECDIS Stakeholders Forum

The first ECDIS Stakeholders meeting that took place in Rostock (Germany) in September 2005 in conjunction with the seventeenth meeting of the Committee on Hydrographic Requirements for Information Systems (CHRIS) asked that the next meeting be held in conjunction with the Worldwide ENC Data base Committee (WEND). This would enable stakeholders to discuss in particular their 'hottest' item, Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs) and related problems. IHB and the WEND committee thus held a Stakeholders Forum halfway through the recent WEND annual meeting.

Rear Admiral Kenneth Barbor, IHB Directing Committee, gave a welcoming address. The meeting was chaired by Horst Hecht, head of the Nautical Hydrographic Department of the Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie (BSH), who told his audience that apart from the five-yearly conferences of IHO member states the present gathering was the largest held by IHB. He emphasised that both the IHO and the industry were working on the same issue and that the industry was desperately needed to provide both expertise and software. We needed to row the boat together in the same direction, and we had to listen to each other. There were, he said, two stakeholders: industry and the IHOs.

Route (ENC) Coverage

In terms of agenda, the meeting covered primarily Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC)-related issues like coverage, availability, consistency, distribution, licensing and pricing, and ECDIS migration.

In general it appears that ENC coverage is yet not adequate for the majority of ship operators. The user could not be expected to have to switch frequently between ENC and paper chart. It therefore made little sense to most attendees that the IMO was considering making ECDIS carriage mandatory. For ECDIS you need data, and it is only useful if you have data for the whole voyage. The conclusion was an obvious need for complete route coverage. And as this will most likely not be accomplished before 2010, we need to prioritise.

ENC Consistency

According to the representatives of RENCs present, there had been recent improvements in consistency policy. One stakeholder said he had been hearing this story for many years. But interrupted traffic-separation zones in adjacent ENC cells of bordering countries were still being noticed. And it was not good enough to carry on telling users that the problem was being worked on: the old story. A simple solution might be to highlight the border between two adjacent cells from different HOs. RENCs might also be given the right to harmonise the data. Another source of inconsistency was too little uniformity in scale levels versus display of objects. The Channel was a good example of a site where detailed depth figures were shown on a smaller scale on the English side than in adjacent French cells.

Conference heard from the IHO side how, if removal of inconsistencies was taken out of the hands of the HO, there was a risk of the problem continuing. If we wanted to see improvement we must ask them to take care of consistency. The RENCs should advise HOs to harmonise data, but should have no right to apply corrections themselves.

Ship-owner Letter

George Arts had received a letter from a major shipping company that he had been asked to present to the WEND committee. The letter, from a company operating about four hundred vessels, described how the company was planning to discontinue the use of ECDIS supported by official digital charts. The reason: the ever-changing international standards for official systems, variety in formats of ECDIS systems and lack of compatibility between various products produced by various HOs.

The ships' operator wrote that he spent on average US\$2,000 on paper charts in addition to US\$4,500 for ARCS per year. Any changeover to ENC to meet chart-coverage requirements would cost the company US\$40,000 to US\$50,000 per vessel. That is six to eight times more per ship as is currently being invested. The company had thus decided to discontinue the use of ARCS and use C-MAP and Transas instead. The letter also observed that only 1% of SOLAS shipping was using ECDIS and this did not particularly contribute to the cause either.

Pro Rata Payment

George Arts (Marine Press of Canada) showed that in some cases, in order to obtain worldwide chart coverage with a maximum of

available official digital products supplemented by paper charts, yearly costs could add up to over US\$50,000 per ship. To arrive at more realistic costs he proposed use of a 'pay per use' system based on a daily fee per used ENC. It could be shown that on average this would result in a cost of about US\$15,000 per vessel per year. He underlined that this system was not based on any ENC price reduction and did not consider ENCs themselves as the basis for the business; the idea was viewed rather as a customer service, taking into consideration the customer's capacity to pay. This could ultimately result in far greater revenues for HOs than rendered by present policy.

Dynamic Licensing

Tor Svanes, CEO, C-MAP Norway, proposed a simple, cost-effective and user-friendly method of licensing of ENCs. His 'dynamic licensing' system would provide for fully automatic licensing of ENCs and offer licenses valid for a period of three, six, nine or twelve months. It would be based on the principle that the customer pay per three-month minimum period whilst working in a particular area. The licensing system could be accessed either by internet or email and be made available within one to two months after initiation.

ECDIS Migration

Several attendees expressed concern about the impact of the change from S57 to S-100 in relation to the stability of the ECDIS concept. The chairman remarked that although the new standard would not come into force before 2012, and the IHO will keep to that, he was also a little sceptical about maintaining stability up until then. We need to extend the present standard such that it could support additional data in the meantime. During the following discussion it became apparent that the intended change to the S-100 standard would probably not affect new ECDIS production specifications as developed by the IMO. Norwegian Hydrographer Frode Klepsvik commented that, although we were all for S100, he supported the concern of the industry regarding stability, not only on the ECDIS user side but also regarding ENC production. The new standard would require investments necessary for new developments by HOs. In the meantime, they were still supposed to continue S57 production.

Encryption Standard

Robert Sandvik, chairman of the Data Protection Scheme Working Group, presented the status of S63, the technical standard defining how ENC are digitally signed and protected. S 63 is available on the IHO website and support is available through the Open ECDIS Forum (OEF). The new IMO ECDIS Performance standard will make reference to S63 and the new ECDIS test specifications (IEC 61174) will include assessment of compliance with S63. A new version 1.1 of S63 is underway, with publication expected by the end of March 2007. Gert B ttgenbach of SevenC's expressed his concern about the latest development of S63. He considers S63 an accident and, unlike many other ECDIS standards, not to be serving its purpose. A solution could be S63 'extended' (S63x), developed by the industry under his guidance. This is a workable industry standard that meets the needs of both market and IHO.

Other Business

Various speakers took the opportunity to express their views regarding the subjects discussed. Some said they were most happy with this forum, but that it missed the input of an important group: end users. And more shipping companies should have been invited. The IHB commented that several shipping companies had in fact been invited.

Other participants were disappointed and would like to see more concrete action. This group felt the regulations regarding ECDIS and ENC were too complex and expressed their concern that more users would lose interest. The chairman responded that the purpose of this meeting was to agree on common interests; the interests of IHO, industry and the end user would seem to be quite diverse. There was a need for stability. An attempt had been made during this meeting to address the problems and to do so in a positive way. Whatever was decided was subject to the approval of IHO member states; the IHO was a regulated community.

Follow-on Action

The chairman briefly reviewed a list of follow-on action to be accomplished as a result of this meeting. See the full version of this "We visited for you" on the [Chartworx website](#).

Meeting Closure

Closing the meeting, the chairman said he considered it had been productive and had hopefully served the interest of getting ECDIS promoted in the maritime field. The outcome might not satisfy everybody, but we had to accept the conditions and rules under which the IHO operates. He hoped that all had been convinced of IHO goodwill. It was agreed to hold the next ECDIS stakeholders' meeting in conjunction with the next CHRIS meeting, in November 2007.

Author's note

With almost fifty representatives of the IHO and 34 stakeholders present, this meeting provided an unique opportunity for the industry to share their concern about ECDIS standards and coverage, distribution, pricing and licensing of ENCs with those responsible for these matters. Although there is no doubt that the IHO will take this seriously, it is hoped, in particular in the interest of ECDIS, that we will see some improvements before the next meeting.

Note of the Editor

This report is shortened by the Editor. A full version of the submitted 'We visited for you' is shown on the website of [Chartworx Holland](#) (full report on the meetings) and the official report is published at the [IHO website](#).

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/article/second-ecdis-stakeholders-forum>
