

USV Christened in the Port of Hamburg



A 1.65 meter-long unmanned surface vehicle (USV) was christened on Wednesday morning in Hamburg, Germany. The USV named echo.1 measures water depth and can work continuously for up to six hours without emissions. Senator for Economic Affairs Michael Westhagemann, Managing Director of the Hamburg Port Authority (HPA) Jens Meier and Rike Verheyde from HPA Hydrography christened the yellow drone. According to HPA, echo.1 will be able to travel up to six hours at a time in the harbour to improve the understanding of the water depths and provide information about the condition of the quay walls. With its length of only 1.65 meters, the USV can also explore areas that were previously difficult to reach.

USV Monitored on Land

Sonar, cameras and satellite signals navigate the USV. Its course is monitored on land using a monitor, said Meier. "We are testing autonomous driving on the water here in real operation. To do this, we want to get the port customers used to the fact that such vehicles are in the busy port here between the crewed ships."

Will Autonomous Vehicles soon be Normal?

Tests had started in August 2019. "USVs have rapidly developed into highly complex technical systems that will take on many useful tasks in the near future – in the air and here on the water," said Westhagemann. Harbour captain Jörg Pollmann is also confident: "I am sure that this, perhaps currently still unfamiliar, sight of an autonomously driving vehicle in the Port of Hamburg will soon become normal and echo.1 will not remain alone for long." Another USV worth €70,000 is to follow.

The USV solution is from the combined work of OceanAlpha, a Hong Kong-based USV manufacturer, and Kongsberg, a Norwegian marine products company.