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Legal basis:
Principles and application of channel depths in Finland 515771/03.04.01.01/2021

Modification details:

Notice of channel use

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1 General

These instructions specify the content of the route plan required in different situations as well as the view of the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom (hereinafter 'Traficom') as a regulating authority regarding the oversight measures to be taken by the vessel traffic service and pilotage services in order to ensure safe and efficient channel use.

2 Scope of application

These instructions specify Traficom's instructions 515771/03.04.01.01/2021 *Principles and application of channel depths in Finland*, which instruct vessels to do detailed motion allowance calculations under certain circumstances to estimate the motion allowance needed by the vessel in order to ensure safe channel use. These instructions also provide more detailed guidelines on route planning in the channel area and guidance on the role of the vessel traffic service (VTS), when VTS is the authority monitoring and controlling vessel traffic in the VTS area in the aforementioned situations. These instructions shall apply to port calls in which a vessel is obliged to participate in vessel traffic service under the Vessel Traffic Service Act.

3 Definitions

For the purposes of these instructions:

- 1) **a vessel's route plan** refers to a route plan required of a vessel, which is in line with IMO Resolution A.893(21) – *Guidelines for Voyage Planning* and TRAFI/12134/03.04.01.00/2011 – *Aluksen reittisuunnittelu* ('Vessel's route planning');
- 2) **a design vessel** refers to the size of vessel for which the channel has primarily been designed and which has the same draught when stationary (static draught) as the design draught of the channel;
- 3) **the design draught** of a channel refers to the planned draught at which the design vessel can normally use the channel. The design draught is determined from the reference level. The difference between the actual water level and the reference level is taken into account as an increase or reduction in the design draught indicated for the channel;
- 4) **use (of a channel) exceeding design draught** refers to a situation where a vessel uses the channel at a static draught greater than the channel's confirmed design draught, taking into account the current water level;
- 5) **the safe clearance depth of a channel** (secured water depth) refers to the depth to which it has been secured that the channel is clear;
- 6) **a notice of channel use** refers to a separate prior notice given by the vessel's operator, agent or master necessary for monitoring the use of channels;
- 7) **use (of a channel) according to design** refers to a situation where a vessel similar to or smaller than the design vessel uses the channel under normal circumstances at a speed in line with the channel design, so that there is no doubt of the adequacy of the channel space;
- 8) **use (of a channel) deviating from design** refers to a situation where the vessel uses the channel in a manner that deviates from the channel design and the adequacy of the channel space cannot be ensured based on the design. The

adequacy of the channel space must be ensured on a case-by-case basis. The following circumstances are examples of situations that deviate from the design:

- a. abnormal (weather) conditions
- b. vessel draught, size or other feature diverging from the design vessel
- c. cruising speed.

The definition of abnormal (weather) conditions is subject to interpretation;

- 9) **channel space** refers to the space intended for waterborne traffic limited by the channel's edge lines, safe clearance depth and available headroom.

In addition, these guidelines comply with the definitions in 552253/03.04.01.01/2021 – *Fairway terminology* and 515771/03.04.01.01/2021 – *Principles and application of channel depths in Finland*.

4 Recommendations in brief

4.1 Guidelines for vessels

A vessel shall report its static draught on request. Before its arrival in the channel area, a vessel shall ensure that correct draught has been entered into the AIS equipment.

If a vessel uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design, the vessel shall give a *notice of channel use* in accordance with these guidelines prior to using the channel. If a vessel uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design, the adequacy of the channel space shall be ensured on a case-by-case basis. The master of the vessel is responsible for the case-specific UKC calculations and the vessel's safe passage.

4.2 Guidelines for the vessel traffic service

The vessel traffic service shall monitor the draughts used by vessels. If a vessel uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design, the vessel traffic service shall monitor the adequacy of the channel space as closely as necessary. The monitoring is done by requesting vessels to give at least a *notice of channel use* in accordance with these instructions.

The information provided in *the notice of channel use* is used in the monitoring of safe passage and pilotage planning.

4.3 Guidelines for the channel authority

The channel authority for merchant shipping lanes shall provide channel design information and maintain tools for assessing the adequacy of channel space also in situations where the design is diverged from. The tools shall be publicly available to both vessels and stakeholders.

4.4 Guidelines for the pilotage company

The pilotage company shall agree on the common practices and methods for ensuring the adequacy of the channel space (channel-specific practices) together with the channel authority.

4.5 Cooperation and common practices

The aim of cooperation is to establish a procedure for ensuring safe channel use, that is as uniform as possible, regardless of whether a vessel uses pilotage services or operates under a Pilotage Exemption Certificate (PEC).

The channel authority, pilotage company and regulating authority shall assist the vessel traffic service in the establishment of practices for identifying actual hazardous situations in cases where a vessel uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design. The vessel traffic service and pilotage company record the established policy in their operations manuals.

4.6 Reporting information for hydrography

Finland is committed to undertake hydrographic services as required under the SOLAS Convention. The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom is, as the Hydrographic Office, responsible for hydrography in Finland. The hydrography obligation covers the production of nautical charts and nautical publications. In addition to their own communication activities, all stakeholders shall agree with the Hydrographic Office on the publication of new information, practices, guidelines and regulations in official nautical charts and nautical publications, as necessary, ensuring the flow of information to vessels.

5 Channel use

5.1 Channel information

According to the provisions of the Water Act (587/2011), a public channel is a channel designated as a public channel. Traficom confirms the design draught and the safe clearance depth for each public channel. The design draught and the safe clearance depth are determined from the reference level (chart datum). Channel information essential to navigation is presented on nautical charts and in nautical publications.

The N2000 fairway and nautical chart reform will bind the depth information of nautical chart products and channels to the N2000 height system between 2021 and 2026. During the transition period, it is particularly important to confirm the reference level for the nautical chart products, channel information and water level information used.

5.2 Principles and application

Traficom has published the instructions 515771/03.04.01.01/2021 *Principles and application of channel depths in Finland*. The instructions present depth concepts related to channels as well as the principles of interpreting the concepts, estimating the needed underkeel clearance and indicating channel information.

The master of a vessel is responsible for ensuring that the vessel is operated and manoeuvred in accordance with good seamanship, and that it always has a sufficient net underkeel clearance. The master of a vessel is always responsible for ensuring that the vessel uses a channel suitable for the vessel in terms of features and design, taking into account the channel's horizontal dimensions, geometry and the vessel's manoeuvring.

5.3 Channel design and use

The determination of the motion allowance of the vessel for each channel is based on the channel design guidelines and planning practices. The motion allowance may vary in different sections of the channel: It is generally greater at open sea than in

more sheltered channel areas. In sheltered ports, where speeds are low, less motion allowance is usually required than in the entrance.

Coastal shipping lanes are designed so that, when used according to design, the water remaining under the keel, i.e. net underkeel clearance (net UKC), is always at least 0.5 m. If a vessel travels at a draught greater than the design draught adjusted for water level, or otherwise uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design, the net underkeel clearance must be determined case by case.

5.4 Vessel's route plan

Information such as vessel draught and trim in relation to the navigable waters must be included in a vessel's route plan. If a vessel uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design, the route planning requirements must be taken into account in the determination of the motion allowance required by the vessel and the presentation of information as part of the vessel's route plan.

6 Notice of channel use

The purpose of the notice of channel use is to prove that a sufficient net underkeel clearance is maintained in situations where an arriving or departing vessel uses the channel in a way that deviates from the design.

The master of the vessel is liable for safety-related decisions and responsibility. The notice of channel use enables the monitoring of vessel traffic, compilation of statistics and identification of long-term risks as well as the review of information related to channel use later.

6.1 Content of the notice

A notice of channel use must include the necessary information about the vessel, the planned route and how the vessel's passage deviates from the channel's design. A more detailed description of the content of the notice of channel use shall be given to the end user in accordance with section 6.4 of these instructions, taking into account practical requirements.

These instructions list some vessel data considered necessary for the assessment of the vessel's motion allowance at the level of detail required. A vessel with a duty to give a notice of channel use under these instructions must be prepared to present at least the information listed below or a calculation based on this information made at an equivalent level of detail, proving the adequacy of the net underkeel clearance.

1. Ship dimensions
2. Static draft
3. Centre of Buoyancy (KB)
4. Centre of Gravity (KG),
5. Metacentric Height (GM)
6. Block coefficient (bC)

6.2 Duty to give a notice of channel use

As the channel authority, Traficom recommends that the vessel traffic service (FINTRAFFIC) and the pilotage company (FINNPILOT) in cooperation establish the detailed practices concerning the duty to give a notice of channel use and record the practices in their respective operations manuals.

6.2.1 Channel use at a draught greater than the design draught

A notice of channel use must always be given if a vessel is obliged to participate in vessel traffic service and travels at a draught greater than the channel's confirmed design draught, taking into account the water level.

For example, if a vessel is loaded to the design draught, the vessel is obliged to give a notice in a low water situation, but not in a high water situation. A vessel shall also prepare for possible changes in water level between the time of notice and the vessel's arrival.

6.2.2 Other channel use deviating from the design

A vessel is also obliged to give a notice if the use of the channel deviates from the design in any other way so that the adequacy of the channel space cannot be ensured based on the design. Circumstances such as abnormal conditions, vessel characteristics diverging from the design vessel or the speed used may lead to a situation where channel use deviates from the design. In ambiguous situations, a vessel should give a notice if either the vessel or the vessel traffic service estimates that the use of the channel deviates from the design. The vessel traffic service may provide separate, more detailed instructions for these situations.

6.3 Provision of information

An arriving vessel must give a notice of channel use at least 24 hours before its arrival at the pilot boarding place or, if the vessel is expected to arrive in less than 24 hours, no later than when the vessel leaves the port of departure for a port in Finland. If the destination is determined only after the vessel has left the port of departure, the notice must be given when the destination becomes known.

Similarly, a departing vessel must give the notice as soon as possible but no later than before the vessel's departure in connection with the vessel's notice of departure.

6.4 Reception and use of information

The stakeholders mentioned in these instructions provide more detailed information on the content, reception and use of information required under these instructions. The Hydrographic Office must be informed of practices and related changes in order to establish procedures for providing information in nautical charts and publications.

With respect to vessels requiring a pilot, the pilotage company shall be provided with the information for evaluation and pilotage planning. The authority collects information from all vessels but does not actively analyse or monitor channel use in advance. The information is used for the compilation of statistics on channel use and utilised in the monitoring of channel use and in channel design. The collection of information also lays the foundation for a more advanced gross underkeel clearance management system.

7 Entry into force and/or transition period

These instructions specify the current instructions and shall enter into force as a recommendation without a separate transition period. The purpose of these instructions is to establish a uniform procedure for channel use and prepare for new gross underkeel clearance management methods at the national level.

In Helsinki on 31 May 2023

Janina Tapia-Cotrino

Stefan Engström