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“THE eMAR COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS INTRODUCE THE NEW ERA OF EUROPEAN SHIPPING”

The first official presentation of the eMAR Platform, which is developed under the eMAR Project, took place in Piraeus-Greece, on May 27th, 2014. The eMARITIME systems presented showcased the significant improvement of the maritime and shipping operations through an integrated and innovative maritime transport information management.

BY MARY EFTHYMIATOU

After the formal presentation, Mr. Takis Katsoulakos, Technical Director of Inlecom Systems, explained the philosophy of the Project and described all the benefits it brings in maritime commerce, by saying “until now European shipping dealt with technology that focused on simplifying the processes between a ship and the port authorities on a 1-1 basis. Our approach in the eMAR Project is integrated and collective by creating tools that simplify processes not only for authorities but also for the clients / companies / market / industry. This is what we call the INLECOM Ecosystem”.

>> Mr. Katsoulakos please tell us what's the significance of the e-maritime project regarding European maritime shipping?

T.K. Well, the eMAR project is trying to support the eMaritime initiative generally which again is here to improve the efficiency, the security and the safety, and sustainability of the shipping and maritime market. The way that it tries to do that is by using all the collaborative means of innovation and technology. So we're looking both the shipping company and how it interacts with the authorities, the other shipping companies, the charterers, the shippers, with their own suppliers. Perhaps the way they build their own direct network of interactions has the biggest impact on their own efficiency, mandates the quality of their services, but in order to move further, to grow, to become more competitive they have to interact more efficiently, particularly in ports and terminals, and also in the logistics chains. And this is where there is a big movement particularly ports that takes the initiative to create innovative models like the extended gate and so on. Sea ports are becoming the starting point for wireless specified extended gates of the port, connecting the terminals to rails and other modes of traffic. For example in all of Europe we are creating

a European transport network which is unified and shipping has to be hundred percent linked in that transport system. Generally, in order to eliminate the paper work we are proposing to the maritime industry to work together through eMAR tools to eliminate paper work and to ameliorate the quality of services.

>> How “e-Mar Project” will affect sea commerce at a time that e-commerce which uses shipping is growing?

T.K. If we are looking sea commerce as a part of the broader growth of e-commerce in generally, I think that is a very interesting area. Because what we have seen is that even through this recession e-commerce has grown significantly in every country and there are very special challenges, in this area, because what we need in this project is to link the ‘end of the chain’ and be very careful in the way we distribute the goods in the last mile. So the challenges are how we're dealing with special areas, how we're warehousing, how is it optimized to deal with e-commerce and how all this ‘end to the chain’ is linked to the shipping, the demand side of shipping and how it is harmonized. So what happens in e-commerce is for us a new area of research. It has not been really looked up to know and I think this is an opportunity when the young shipping can play a bigger role to ensure that this growth of e-commerce and sea-commerce is something outstanding for the future. If we focus on the demand chain, then we can understand that all the work done into the shipping, can be easily harmonized with the demands of the ‘end chain’ / end user, by utilizing ‘tools’ like the ones eMAR is proposing. So I think there is a big opportunity for European and worldwide shipping to adopt new technologies and get modernized before 2015, when there are going to be a lot of changes regarding e-invoicing, e-customs etc.



>> Explain to us what "single maritime window" practically means?

T.K. Well let's start by explaining that Single Windows are environments that have been established for special industries and many countries, and has been used for a number of years. Mainly from the customs side, for the trade side. Therefore it has been at least a lot of experience, since it has been more than 100 countries that have implemented Single Windows, and we know that this environment creates a lot of benefits, enormous benefits for improving trade, improving the economies in general. With the Maritime Single Window the motivation has always been to ensure that the formalities at the ports -which are a big burden for shipping operators-, are reduced. So that is the main purpose, and to understand what it means lets have an example: until now, when a ship arrives at a port, it needs to provide information and documents to different authorities. To maritime authorities, to customs, to health authorities, and quite often you have an image in big ports -p.ex. in Barcelona- when you observe a vessel which is coming and you can see about ten trace one next to the other and somebody has to go and put the needed documents to each one and then manually someone else would have to take them to each authority it belongs to. Well, apparently this is a very inefficient system. With the Single Maritime Window, when a vessel comes to a port, it can provide all the required information by the law, once in a single point of contact to every each authority needed. The Single Maritime Window transfers information to the authority, and this authority communicates through the Single Window with the shipping company. The benefits are enormous. It transforms multi channel manual system, into a very efficient single way through which the shipping company can provide its information. What could be more important / interesting is that

up to now, shipping companies had to do all these through agents and the master had to do a lot of work. The big difference is that from now on, all the information which needs to be reported, can be extracted automatically from the ship applications that run onboard the ship, or the office applications that a company has. So a company has the ability to link their own fleet management systems with the reporting system and all the information will automatically be transferred to the Single Window. Practically, the MSW transforms the sea commerce to a more efficient and trustworthy environment. What is important is that since the process is improved, the whole trade chain will be better, upgraded and more efficient.

>> How "e-Mar project" serves EU's policy?

T.K. Well at the top level the EU policy has always been to create from a ship perspective to integrate shipping in the European transport system. At the highest level what EMAR has done, is through these collaboration platforms enable this integration to take place. Through both what we have done from EMARitime strategic framework and the EMAR Ecosystem we have made this possible. In other words, now the shipping services are a hundred percent integrated in a transport system which includes all the stakeholders from the start to the end, the people who runs the chain, those who monitor it, the people who ensure that all compliance takes place. Everything can be integrated within that environment. So we have tried to implement what is the most important goal for the EU Policy at that high level. And of course the sea and port integration has been a significant part of the EU maritime policy for the last years because it creates play field for shipping to become equally flexible in terms of sustainable means of transport. So in terms of the development of the maritime single window, Emar has probably made a huge



• **SC&L** What would you advise the Greek shipping companies regarding the innovations of the project?

- I think there are again those two aspects that are important for the shipping companies: One is in the area of compliance. With the Single Window come in place there is huge opportunity for the shipping community to look how they are doing their whole compliance, to see what are the options to meet the new requirements, and rationalize the best way forward that fits with them. We have now programs that are available to them, that will ensure that with very little cost they can probably 'investigate' this opportunity properly, in time and have them in the following years, something that will eliminate a huge cost for them. So I think that would be my advice to the company "get into the role of preparing of how you will deal with the new era coming".

impact because it has developed two products 'tools' both for the authorities and the business, which has not been done by anybody else. Up to now, all the programs, all the companies were trying to implement innovation regarding the Authorities. We are looking both the needs of the Authorities and the market. At the moment, we have created a report in gateways for the shipping companies and we're testing them with safeseanet. EMSA has created a prototype single window, it is used by all the member states and we are now testing the prototype software that we developed in EMAR for the business side to ensure that this can work efficiently and at list with the confidence that all these will work.

>> How's the program's working so far? What is INLECOM's contribution to the project and how do you evaluate the results?

T.K. I think the two big outputs that come out of the Project is first of all Emaritime strategic framework, to which we have contributed significantly -Inlecom itself, with BMT and Danaos of course- but I think the biggest contribution we have made, is that we have used that in the Emar Ecosystem, something we have designed ourselves and have implemented and I can say that this is the first time such a platform exist in shipping, together with Danaos Platform. We have now two platforms which are totally interoperable, using effectively the e-maritime framework, using new technologies, using the 'cloud', using intelligent systems, using semantic technologies. So we brought everything a step forward from where we were a year ago, and this is the most significant contribution we have made, for the Project and e-maritime generally. We practically have made it realistic for everybody to expect, that shipping software in the future will be interoperable. ■

