

Koning Albert II-laan 15 bus 454  
1210 BRUSSEL  
T 02 553 77 27  
stafmdk@mow.vlaanderen.be

## IALA Council Note – benchmark study on dual location VTS operations on the Ghent–Terneuzen Canal

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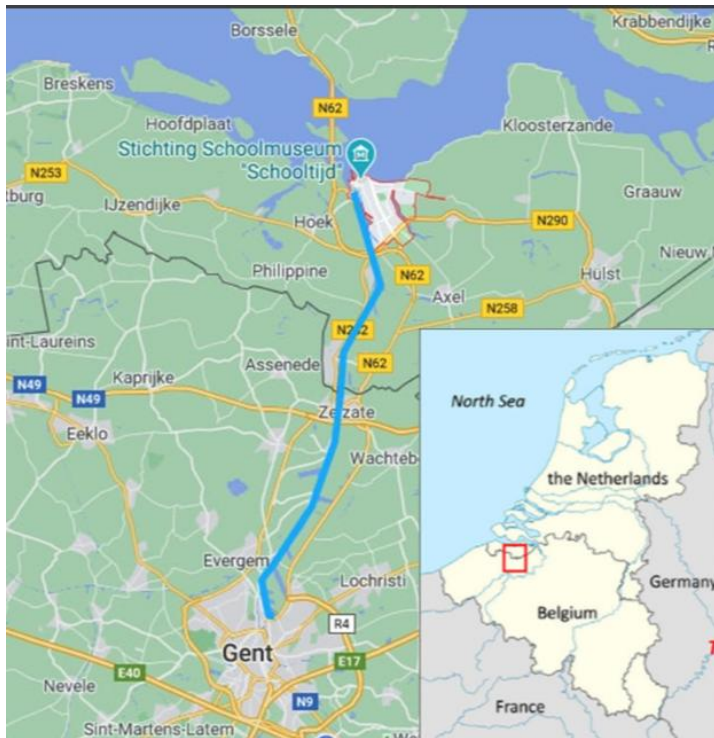
## 1 BACKGROUND

The Ghent–Terneuzen Canal is undergoing major infrastructural developments, including the commissioning of the new Terneuzen lock—one of the largest in Europe—and the future Seine–Scheldt connection, which will establish a direct inland waterway link to Paris. These developments are expected to increase both vessel size and traffic volume.

In preparation for this evolution, the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services (Belgium) and Rijkswaterstaat (The Netherlands) started VTS on the Ghent–Terneuzen Canal on 1 December 2025, operating from two locations with two VHF channels and two VTS sectors. In parallel, both authorities have initiated a joint study to examine whether, in the future, it would be feasible to operate from two VTS centres using **one** VHF channel while still maintaining **two** VTS sectors. In this concept, one VTS operator is located at the VTS Centre in Terneuzen (The Netherlands) and the other at the VTS Centre in Zelzate (Belgium), while both operate on the same VHF channel. The VTS area is divided into two sectors, each monitored from a different location but using the same communication channel.

The characteristics of the canal are described in the accompanying survey. Additional geographical context is available via the following map:

<https://www.vts-scheldt.net/default.aspx?path=System/iMap3>



## 2 DISCUSSION

The joint working group seeks to gather international experience and best practices from the IALA community regarding similar operational configurations. The study focuses on the feasibility, safety, technical requirements, and operational control measures associated with dual-location VTS operations on a single VHF channel.

The central research questions are:

- Do other countries operate a VTS configuration in which two VTS centres work on one VHF channel from different locations?

If yes:

- How is the use of a single VHF channel from two separate VTS centres organised and managed?
- Which technical solutions are used to bridge the distance between operators?
- Which operational control measures ensure safe and feasible functioning of such a setup?

If no:

- Which recommendations, lessons learned, or considerations could support the development of this dual-location concept?

Participants are invited to provide written input through a short online survey:

<https://nl.surveymonkey.com/r/CGSGPDY>

### **3 PROGRESS TO DATE**

The joint working group has completed the initial phases of the study:

- Establishment of the bilateral working group and alignment of objectives.
- Completion of the contextual analysis of the canal and expected traffic evolution.
- Development and validation of the research questions.
- Launch of the international benchmark survey within the IALA community.
- Dissemination of the survey and supporting information to relevant stakeholders.
- Several countries already provided input (South-Korea, Germany, US, UK, The Netherlands)

### **4 NEXT STEPS**

The next steps in the study include:

- Continued collection and follow-up of survey responses.
- Conducting targeted interviews with administrations that operate similar VTS configurations.
- Analysis and synthesis of the collected information.
- Formulation of recommendations for a future-proof VTS concept for the canal.
- Preparation of the final report and consolidation of findings.

A presentation of the study outcomes will be provided to the Council and interested IALA members in the autumn 2026, together with the consolidated conclusions and recommendations.

### **5 ACTION REQUIRED**

Council members are invited to:

- Take note of the progress and ongoing activities.
- Encourage participation in the survey where relevant by end of July 2026.
- Share any operational experience or insights that may support the study.