

ECOsubsea Wins Approval for Hull Cleaning Tech in Antwerp, Zeebrugge

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ECOsubsea, the Norwegian cleantech firm with a unique hull cleaning technology has won contracts to clean in North European ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge thanks to the technology's ability to remove all hull fouling from the water.

The technologically-advanced system has now been approved for use in the two North European ports following around 500 vessel cleanings in Southampton and Norway and its proven ability to meet strict environmental requirements.

Environmentally sound solution

While hull cleaning is an important part of vessel efficiency it has become mired in controversy due to the high risk of invasive species being easily transferred across the oceans and becoming an environmental and economic hazard.

Traditional hull cleaning methods include sending divers down under the vessel when alongside in port or at anchor with hull scrubbing technology. This method is being increasingly shunned due to detritus falling to a harbours' seabed. Hard cleaning is also criticized due to the tendency to also remove layers of hull coating during the cleaning process.

Globally recognized

Founded in Norway by award winning entrepreneurs Tor and his brother Klaus Østervold, ECOsubsea began making a name for itself with its attention to detail and meticulous effort to ensure the system was as sustainable and robust as possible, meaning it efficiently cleaned hulls but did not increase the risk of contaminated coastal waters.

The unique ECOsubsea technology consists of a remotely operated vehicle that gently cleans the ship's hull moving across the surface like a big lawn mower. It applies the latest technology in hull cleaning to carefully remove fouling build-up without causing any pollution.

It has been winning over ship operators and port authorities with its demonstratable ability to clean a hull efficiently, as well as simultaneously remove the fouling, pumping it ashore through a filtration process plant where it is stored in collection bags and later used in biogas production.

Østervold says: "Our operation in Antwerp and Zeebrugge represents a significant milestone for ECOsubsea. Both Antwerp and Zeebrugge have been frontrunners within environmental regulations, and for us it has been important to provide a solution fully complying with the strictest standards. In addition, Antwerp and Zeebrugge are large ports serving many of our existing customers, but also many potential new customers."

Leading technology for leading players

He also points to operators such as Carnival, WWL Ocean and Hoegh Autoliners that have repeatedly used the ECOsubsea system over the last few years.

"We believe we have leading technology, both in terms of our environmental footprint, and in terms of how fast we clean a hull and how gentle the coating is treated. This gives us a strong technological platform for further growth. The most important thing we advise operators to do is firstly to inspect the hull at least two times per year so that they can determine the biofouling condition and monitor this over time," adds Ostervold.

Port authorities are becoming increasingly concerned about the risks posed by shipping and what a vessel can and cannot discharge into local waters.

Increasingly, ports are taking a zero-tolerance approach, making it harder for owners to find an opportunity to ensure their vessels have clean hulls that help reduce fuel bills and CO2 emissions.

Luc Van Espen from the Port of Antwerp comments: "We are happy to welcome companies such as ECOsubsea, that have the technology available to clean ship's hulls in a sustainable way. This not only preserves our dock waters from being polluted by alien species and heavy metals, but also offers a new service to our shipping lines, in a way that even sometimes ships deviate towards Antwerp in order to be cleaned, bunkered and repaired at the same time.

Joachim Coens, CEO Port of Zeebrugge adds: "As a port authority with a Clean Port strategy, we applaud companies like ECOsubsea for offering an environmentally friendly ROV hull cleaning service in our port to our clients. Every measure or innovation in the shipping industry that reduces the CO² footprint of vessels will result in a more sustainable industry globally."

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