

## PRESS RELEASE

### Germany's first centre for remote-controlled inland waterway shipping opens

**Duisburg, 29 February 2024 – SEAFAR, the Belgian technology and service provider for remote-controlled inland waterway shipping operations with reductions in crew numbers, has set up the first so-called Remote Operations Center in Germany; it has done so in conjunction with its project partners, HGK Shipping and Reederei Deymann. The site was officially opened on 28 February in the presence of important representatives from the worlds of politics and business and from public authorities. The Remote Operations Center enables captains to navigate vessels on inland waterways from dry land. This innovative technology is one way of countering the shortage of specialist workers. The partners are working with the public authorities to use the permits, which they have already received for the test operations that are underway in the lower Rhine area, and earmark other navigation areas for this forward-looking approach. They are currently involved in the application phase for route sections on the north-west German canal network and on the Mittelland Canal and for other sections of the river Rhine, for example.**

These concepts, which involve fewer crew members, are already being successfully used for different types of inland waterway vessels in Belgium and the Netherlands and some of them are due to be controlled from the new SEAFAR base in Duisburg-Ruhrort too. "Our move to include the inland waterways of Europe's largest economy also represents a milestone for our company," says Janis Bargsten, the Chief Commercial Officer at SEAFAR. "We can make a valuable contribution to modernising this mode of transport and the job description for this profession with our two partners, HGK Shipping and Reederei Deymann; together, they have so far equipped five vessels for this project."

"As a leading inland waterway shipping company in Europe, we view ourselves as a driving force for the development of this sector at all times – in constructing new, resource-saving vessels and in also making use of the innovative solutions that are being introduced into everyday life as part of the enormous trend towards digitalisation. If we're going to reach ambitious climate protection goals during the next few years and decades, this will only be possible with inland waterway shipping and switching goods traffic to the waterways," says Steffen Bauer, the CEO of HGK Shipping, emphasising his point. "Using the guiding principle of 'Greater climate protection despite a shortage of specialist workers', this new technological approach, which provides the option of partly navigating a vessel from an operations centre on dry land, is also designed to safeguard the transport operations for this important means of transport in the long term."

Martin Deymann, the Managing Director of Reederei Deymann, adds his comments in the light of the fact that this sector faces the enormous challenge of attracting new skippers in order to ensure that it can transport significant quantities of goods. "Remote-controlled operations from dry land can make this profession much more attractive. Being able to combine job and family through a job that's close to your place of residence provides valuable incentives for staying in inland waterway shipping or launching a career in this business. The Remote Operations Center and the associated boost in digitalisation offer very significant momentum for this long-standing profession."

The Remote Operations Center in Duisburg currently offers three workplaces for skippers, called ROC operators, to remotely control vessels and there is one workplace for the traffic controller, who also monitors the vessels' movements in the background and is available to be approached as the senior contact person. Using state-of-the-art IT operations, which meet the highest safety requirements, the skippers can remotely navigate the inland waterway vessels using control technology, which has been recreated to resemble a wheelhouse, and an extensive camera system as if they were operating on the water. The project partners are working closely with the responsible public authorities and offices to



gradually increase the number of permits required for these kinds of operations on individual navigable areas of the German inland waterway network.

**About SEAFAR:**

SEAFAR is a technology and service provider based in Antwerp and it focuses on all issues related to remote-controlled inland waterway shipping operations or vessels with crews. SEAFAR develops and uses the latest technologies for highly automated and unmanned shipping. SEAFAR monitors and operates inland waterway and coastal vessels that are unmanned or have reduced crew levels through a control centre (Remote Control Center), where the focus is on effective and safe operations.

SEAFAR's technology offers one way of coping with the increasing shortage of specialist workers and provides the opportunity to improve the competitiveness of inland waterway shipping. This has resulted in an acceleration in the development of a new generation of automated and environmentally-friendly vessels.

**About HGK Shipping:**

HGK Shipping is the leading inland waterway shipping company in Europe. With a fleet consisting of more than 350 company and chartered inland waterway vessels, the company transports about 42 million tonnes of cargo every year. Focusing its operations on the river Rhine and its tributaries and the associated canal system, HGK Shipping links the most important industrial regions in the BENELUX countries, France and Germany. HGK Shipping GmbH is a leading partner in the fields of Dry Goods, Gas, Liquid Chemicals and Ship Management.

**About Reederei Deymann:**

Reederei Deymann (the Deymann shipping company), which Martin Dreymann founded in 1992, is an outstanding example of success and innovation in the inland waterway sector. The company has established itself as a leading provider in Germany with an impressive fleet consisting of 52 modern tanker/freight and container vessels. The shipping company has continually expanded and diversified its operations under the leadership of Martin Dreymann and places great importance on quality, safety and protecting the environment. The shipping company is well known for its tailor-made transport solutions and its unwavering commitment to providing outstanding customer services. With a clear vision and a strong team, Reederei Deymann has carved out a niche for itself as a reliable partner for fast, cost-effective and environmentally-friendly transport operations on European waterways and thereby underlines its position as a leading operator in this sector.

**If you have any questions about this press release, please contact:**

Matthias Arnhold

Medienbüro am Reichstag

Phone: +49 30 20 61 41 30 28

E-mail: [matthias.arnhold@mar-berlin.de](mailto:matthias.arnhold@mar-berlin.de)