



## **SAFETY RECOMMENDATION No: 37/2014**

### **Text of Safety Recommendation:**

Consider of reintroducing ROPAX speed limitation when transiting Corfu Channel and Peristerai Passage for safe navigation purposes.

### **No of Safety Investigation Report:**

04/2014: Impact of RoPax EUROPALINK on Peristerai Islet shoal reef.

*(See the full Report [here.](#))*

### **Safety Recommendation addressed to:**

The Corfu Coast Guard Authority

### **Date of publication:**

28/09/2016

### **Comments-Remarks:**

## **INFORMATION OF ACCIDENT**

Type of vessel: RoPax  
Year of built: 2007

### **Impact of RoPax EUROPALINK on Peristerai Islet shoal reef, Italian Flag, IMO 9319454**

#### **Course of events**

On 21 September 2014 Ro-Ro Passenger Europolink, under Italian Flag, was en route to Ancona, Italy having departed from the port of Igoumenitsa, Greece with 693 passengers, 70 crew members and loaded with 366 vehicles. At about 0220 she was running at approximately 24 knots keeping a course of 360° while helm was in autopilot mode. Actual weather conditions were reported to be good with moderate sea and variable winds 2-3 bfts and good visibility. At 02:33':09", while under turn to port by continuously setting the autopilot, she hit on the rocky shoal reef South of Peristerai Islet, located 0.6 nm off the Northeast coast of the island of Corfu, Greece. The Master seconds before the grounding, at 02:32':11" counteracted by ordering the setting of rudder in manual mode however the impact could not be avoided. The heavy impact generated a noisy, shuddering vibration that alerted the Master and the crew. No injuries to crew or passengers were reported and no pollution occurred. Although her voyage plan provided passage through the narrow channel between Corfu and Peristerai

islet however it was not exactly followed as planned, due to a sailing boat navigating on Europolink's port bow which partially obstructed her timely turn to port, post to the preplanned waypoint.



RoPax EUROPALINK.

During the marine accident the 2nd Officer was on Duty, however the Master being also on the bridge had the con. Following the heavy impact she continued on the same course with her speed having slightly decreased.

As reported she had sustained breaches to several void and engine compartments and sea water was flooding in the void spaces, however neither her rudders nor her propellers were affected by the impact.

The Master contacted the Coast Guard Authority of Corfu and reported that he intended to proceed to Corfu's passenger port and crew mustered the passengers for precautionary reasons.

At approximately 0341 Europolink managed to reach the port by her own means running at 20 knots. Due to the water ingress at critical engine compartments, her main Engines were stopped as she was approaching the berthing dock, meters away from the mooring position whereas a failure of the electrical generating system occurred almost simultaneously, causing a black-out.

She finally berthed with her starboard side and her stem post facing the dock while her stern was pointing towards the port entrance. A list to starboard close to 1° was reported by Europolink's crew.

At approximately 04:40 the evacuation of the passengers started through the Bunker Station starboard door using a portable ladder, provided by the Port Authorities and lasted for almost 50 minutes.

At about 0700 a diving team, called by the Coast Guard Authority, came on scene and two divers inspected Europolink's hull with a camera so as to estimate the extent of the damage.

It was decided to shift her on the same dock and moor her alongside with her port side so as to unload trucks and vehicles through the stern ramp. The shifting operation was completed at approximately 1238. Following, the stern ramp was opened and the discharging operation of the garage spaces commenced while the team of two divers started chocking wooden wedges and other materials inside the breached bottom platings.

Europolink underwent temporary repairs and following an inspection by her Class, on 31 October 2014 she sailed under towage to Yalova shipyard in Turkey for drydocking.

### **Consequences (to individuals, environment , property)**

EUROPALINK severed extended hull damages (deformations and cracks and intends), as follows:

- port side from fr. 115 to fr. 204 (62,3 m)
- stbd side from fr. 82 to fr. 154 (50,4 m).

Several Void Spaces were also breached and engine room compartments were flooded. Damages to critical equipment such as her Main Engines, boilers, motors, pumps, electronic components, etc were reported.

No injuries to crew or passengers were reported and no pollution occurred.



Photos from the bottom damage and counter flooding underwater operations carried out by the local divers' team

#### **Probable cause**

The investigation carried out has highlighted that the navigation by the Officers on the Bridge of Europolink was poorly scheduled and executed prior to the occurrence, despite the monitoring and plotting navigational aids available. However, the decision of her Master to try to reach to the nearest port by vessel's own means after the impact, despite the water ingress in many compartments was considered to be appropriate although to some degree delayed.

#### **Conclusions**

1. Actions should be taken by the ship's Managing Company to supplement its Safety Management System in specific sections related to safety investigation report's findings and address key contribution factors fleet-wide.
2. Corfu Coast Guard Authority should reactivate PORAX speed limitation order when transiting Corfu Channel and Peristerai Passage that had implicitly become inactive for safe navigation purposes.
3. The competent Authorities of Greece should consider of introducing a "shore-based transportable Passengers emergency evacuation arrangement" capable for facilitating passengers' disembarkation-evacuation from ROPAX or passenger ships' upper decks in emergency situations that regularly call at major Ports or may project them as a "safe return port".