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## **EC COMMITTS MILLIONS TO IMPROVE SHIPPING'S IMAGE**

The European Commission has heeded industry concerns about the poor image of shipping and launched a €3 million programme it hopes will boost seafarer recruitment and open up awareness about the industry to the general public.

The programme, which should get underway by the middle of next year, will last three years and involve significant participation by interested parties from the shipping industry.

Addressing industry leaders at a presentation of the InterManager-supported Key Performance Indicator initiative in London recently, Dimitrios Theologitis, head of unit for Maritime Transport & Ports Policy, Maritime Security, at the European Commission's DGTREN, said the programme would be a joint initiative between Brussels and the shipping industry and would concentrate on the image of shipping as well as improving awareness of the maritime sector.

Addressing attendees, Mr Theologitis praised InterManager's KPI project describing it "as brilliant as it goes straight down the path we have been thinking."

He added: "In January, we brought out our maritime strategy for the next ten years so we have regulated a lot and created one of the best regulatory environments in the world in terms of safety and environment. It is now the time to capitalise and look forward. This is why we want to ensure there are actions such as the KPI programme, which go beyond the regulations," he stressed. Under the terms of the image framework programme, the Commission will call on interested parties at least two or three times a year, to submit sets of proposals which will then be looked at by specially set up consortia. They, in turn, will be encouraged to submit their own applications for action.

"The idea is to form large consortia which can cover all facets of a particular area. They will work on key issues and they will have to raise some of the necessary funds which is a good thing because they will assume some level of ownership," he said.

"We are talking between €2m and €3m and details will emerge any week now. It will eventually become a research and development project where material can be developed and thought out as to how best promote shipping's image.

The idea of the initiative was "not just about making a video to show to Member States," he said. "It is a comprehensive project which will have to be defined by the submitting parties. It will cover education, promotion of the shipping industry and it will look at ways to address the media and the way information about shipping is collected and distributed to the public." /2 . . .

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The European Commission was among a number of leading industry associations which lent their support to the KPI project, headed up by InterManager. Representatives from Intercargo, Intertanko, Bimco, OCIMF and the IMO among others, debated the importance of the initiative and all pledged their support in one way or another.

**For Further Information Please Contact:**

Elaborate Communications  
Sean Moloney / Debbie Munford

Tel: +44 (0) 1296 682356