

Accreditation of the CAT. B Hydrography Program in Belgium

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Key words: Education; Hydrography;

SUMMARY

In 2013, a 1-year English spoken curriculum degree of "Postgraduate in Hydrography" in Belgium was accredited by the IHO (International Hydrographic Organization). The program (Cat-B) is a cooperation between the Geography Department of Ghent University and the Institute for Hydrography of the Antwerp Maritime Academy, which is the hosting institute. Based on IHO standards for certification and quality, a postgraduate program was established that included four 3-week periods of theoretic course teaching, each theoretical period separated by 6-week periods of practice. A study that was carried out a few years ago about hydrographic education in Belgium pointed out a shortage in hydrographic training in this country. Before the introduction of the new "Postgraduate in Hydrography", most hydrographic surveyors in Belgium work in one of the big dredging companies where they received additional specific hydrographic surveying training. For the construction and implementation of the program, a round table discussion was set up to assess the audience, procedures and desired outcomes for the industry. Governmental organizations and the maritime industry participated in this discussion. A unique fact is that these entities are involved very actively in the program. The aim is to combine the compulsory theoretical courses with on-the-job practice with partners in the industry to ensure maximum competence. All courses are lectured in English, and courses can be taken up over several years to facilitate part-time work. Furthermore, a selection committee has been installed to assess exemptions, in order to enable active hydrographers to study only the modules that are relevant for them. These procedures allow for a qualitative and professional yet accessible program.