



 **Green** Inland Ports

Good Practices

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Binding regulations from ports
regarding treatment of wastewater

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1.1 Description

Within the shipping sector, there are different types of wastewater, such as ballast water, scrubber wastewater and domestic wastewater. The treatment of these wastewaters is governed by multiple overlapping legal frameworks, such as international maritime law (IMO Marpol), European Union law (Directive 2019/883 and the Convention on the collection, deposit, and reception of waste generated during navigation on the Rhine and other inland waterways), and national laws in some countries.

Up to 2021, no uniform national procedure had been agreed upon for the enforcement of these requirements. The Federal State of Bremen has independently established regulations and published guidelines for the treatment of ship-generated wastewater. These were intended to provide clarity about the valid requirements, not only for shipping, but also for the ports and public authorities. The guidelines have subsumed existing regulations on different levels and were adopted to the specific conditions in the different areas of the port (Giebelhausen, B., 2024). Bremen is one of the first German federal states to implement a permit requirement for the discharge of biocide-treated ballast water in ports (Freie Hansestadt Bremen, 2021). More information on the specific requirements and the situation of waste-water regulation in Bremen Ports can be found [here](#).

1.2 The aim of regulations

The goal of this good practice is, according to the Bremen Ports, twofold. On the one hand, the handling of ballast water containing biocides had to be regulated. On the other hand, a clarification for the Bremen Ports was necessary whether and under what conditions scrubber wastewater and domestic ship wastewater could be discharged.

1.3 Ports that have binding regulations for treatment of wastewater

- Currently only Bremen/Bremerhaven has a binding regulation.

1.4 Stakeholders

- **Port authority and/or local government:** When there is demand for transparency in or additional regulations, they are responsible for developing the regulations.

- **Overarching (national) authorities:** In an ideal situation, when stakeholders address that regulation is not clear, transparent or sufficient, this party should solve the issue by implementing additional or more transparent regulations.
- **Shipowners/shipping companies:** They are responsible for complying with the additional regulations.
- **Waterway police:** They are responsible for making sure that all relevant parties comply with the Regulations. When Regulations are not followed up, those parties should be penalized.

1.5 Voluntary or mandatory

It is voluntary for an inland port to implement local regulations regarding the treatment of wastewater. It would only be relevant or necessary for inland ports when there are no (uniform) national requirements for the treatment of wastewater. This good practice can help making the requirements of the Regulation more transparent and clearer to follow, or they can impose requirements when regulations regarding the topic are absent. When a regulation has been imposed by an inland port, it is mandatory for shipowners and shipping companies to follow up the requirements, otherwise they might be penalised.

1.6 Realised/potential impact

According to an interview with Giebelhausen, B., (2024), the regulations regarding the treatment of ship-generated wastewater have been fully accepted by the shipping companies and shipowners and other stakeholders. All parties agree that it is helpful to now have the possible to act clearly and consistently. The shipowners can now prepare themselves for those regulations. The waterway police indicated that no bad criticism has been made against the concretization of the regulations. No measurable data has yet been uncovered, but due to this decision by Bremen ports to make the regulations around wastewater more transparent and accessible, awareness was risen with local authorities, the waterway police, BG Verkehr, but also with shipowners regarding the treatment of ballast water. All stakeholders are willing to work on solutions. An example of how it became a point of interest is that in the port of Hamburg and Bremen ports, a mobile facility for ballast water treatment has been set up.

1.7 Possible obstacles

- It could be time consuming and expensive to set up such a regulation. In the case of Bremen Ports, the binding regulations have been drawn up in collaboration of the port authority of Bremen Ports, the Federal State of Bremen, the Senator for Climate Protection, Environment, Mobility, Urban Development and Housing, and the Senator for Science and Ports (Freie Hansestadt Bremen, 2021).

1.8 Key learnings

- Useful when regulations regarding the treatment of ship generated wastewater are absent or not transparent due to inconsistency among different legal levels, such as the international maritime and environmental law, European Union law, and national laws.
- The creation of binding Regulation with corresponding requirements for a specific port can create more **transparency** and **clarity** for the **shipping sector**, but also for **other ports and public authorities**. It can even create a larger effect, such as in the case of Bremen Ports and port of Hamburg, in which the port of Hamburg implemented a mobile facility for the treatment of ballast water treatment.

1.9 Sources

Freie Hansestadt Bremen. 2021. Mehr Umweltschutz in bremischen Häfen: Regelungen zum Umgang mit Schiffsabwässern veröffentlicht,
<https://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/pressemitteilungen/mehr-umweltschutz-in-bremischen-haefen-regelungen-zum-umgang-mit-schiffsabwaessern-veroeffentlicht-371908?asl=bremen02.c.732.de>.

Giebelhausen, B., 2024. Regulations for the treatment of waste water from ships.

