

# ECOL NEWSLETTER

All the latest information on plans for a European Crane Operators Licence



## FIRST ECOL TRIALS COMPLETED SUCCESSFULLY

The first trial of the new European Crane Operators Licence scheme has been successfully completed at Mammoet's training centre in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Four crane operators were processed through the ECOL system which involved 240 hours of training split evenly between theory and practice.

So far, three have passed – one at the second attempt – and one failed, although he will have the chance to retake the test in the near future.

The operators themselves strongly backed the ECOL project, saying that they could see great value in being able to work throughout Europe without having to be retested by local regulators in every country.

ESTA Director Ton Klijn said: "Mammoet

were also very supportive and believe a European licence is long overdue.

"As for the trainers themselves, they said it was good solid training, with a lot of "common sense" in it. The structure leaves room for trainers to adapt the syllabus as they see fit to accommodate better training results with individual pupils, based on their background."

He concluded: "Overall I was very satisfied with the smooth way this first trial went. There were a small number of issues – mostly around communication – but that is what a pilot scheme is for, to iron out such hiccoughs."

The ECOL organisers now intend to run three more pilot projects, one more in the Netherlands plus one each in Denmark and Italy.

## EQF APPLICATION SUBMITTED

ESTA has applied to have the ECOL operator certificate registered and recognised at European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Level 2 across Europe. A decision is expected in June.

## VALIDATION OF NATIONAL TRAINING SCHEMES UNDERWAY

ESTA Director Ton Klijn is calling on European training organisations to send in their training schemes so that they can be validated against ECOL standards.

"The idea is to compare all of the national training schemes and to identify what is needed – if anything – for them to comply with ECOL standards," Klijn explained.

**For further information, contact the ESTA main office on +31 71 572 4705 or by email at [officemanager@estaeurope.eu](mailto:officemanager@estaeurope.eu).**



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The European Crane Operators Licence has been created and organised by



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## WHAT WE ARE DOING AND WHY THE STORY SO FAR



In 2013, ESTA decided to investigate whether a European craft proficiency certificate for crane operators could be established.

Currently each member state has its own rules covering professional competence and certification of crane operators.

These rules differ from country to country and range from compulsory to optional – and even to no rules at all.

These differences can lead to confusion which has a negative impact on safety and also prevents operators being able to move around Europe for work.

As a result, ESTA committed itself to developing a qualification system to support

the delivery of safe and qualified crane operators across Europe in the near future.

**It is ESTA's intention to enable every crane operator in Europe to demonstrate that he or she meets the minimum requirements of the industry.**

Similar initiatives have been established in the United States, through the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO), and Australia by the Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA).

The work of both NCCCO and CICA serve as examples for what can be achieved in Europe.

## THE SIZE OF THE PRIZE THE BENEFITS ARE CLEAR

**ECOL is a major and ambitious undertaking. However, ESTA can build on the work already carried out in the USA and Australia and firmly believes that ECOL will both improve safety and lead to a stronger and more efficient industry.**

The key benefits are as follows:

### 1. Safety

Formulating the minimum skill requirements of a crane operator, and making it demonstrably clear who meets these requirements, will improve safety.

### 2. Mobility of qualified personnel within Europe

ECOL will enable companies to take their own personnel abroad and will help in the process of obtaining personnel from other countries. In addition, ECOL

will makes it easier to verify whether a foreign contractor meets the specific national requirements in force.

### 3. Quality assurance of personnel (licensed personnel only)

Currently in Europe there are widely differing requirements for crane operating. When a company carries out a project abroad and has to make use of local personnel, it is important both for safety and liability that the value of the diploma an employee holds is clear.

### 4. Higher safety standards in operations through Europe

By determining the minimum safety requirements for crane operating, the joint safety level within European countries will increase. Countries with high safety levels will not make concessions in the area of safety; ECOL will act as the highest common denominator, raising the minimum safety standards across the board.

### 5. Reduced training and education costs

Currently, some personnel need to be trained when a project is carried out in another country rather than their own. ECOL will reduce the need for this.

## MAPPING STANDARDS

To establish an ECOL training system in Europe means that the minimum requirements for safely operating a crane had to be mapped - not only for technical knowledge, but also the operator's personal skills, attitudes, behaviours and experience on various machines.

Worldwide, most cranes are the same and 80% of the workplace conditions are identical.

The challenge is finding the right balance between the minimum required standards and the specific national requirements that can vary between countries.

It is important for a crane operator to know what the differences are and where he or she can go to learn how to cope with these variations.

A European craft proficiency certificate will contribute to the harmonization of laws and regulations by explaining what is covered by the craft proficiency certificate and what is nationally regulated.

### 6. Increased effectiveness of industry

Transparency and interchangeability of diplomas and certificates will simplify the process of hiring and deploying personnel. With a European register of ECOL-licensed crane operators it is easily and quickly verified who meets the requirements and can be safely deployed.

### 7. Making the European crane industry more competitive

ECOL will enable medium-sized companies in Europe to operate more efficiently and better able to compete with the few global players, helping strengthen the European economy.



# LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TRAINING PLANS

An ESTA working group with wide representation (for details, see separate box) has visited and analysed the competence schemes and training materials of a number of different member countries – including Germany, Poland, Norway and the Netherlands.

The meetings with national experts focused on the scheme's learning outcomes – that is to say, what the operator needs to know – and the training plan, a framework which sets out how those outcomes will be delivered.

There will also be a "generic training design" to allow training institutes to develop training programmes that matches the requirements of the ECOL licence.

**The European licence will supplement, rather than supersede, existing national qualifications and is likely to be set at a higher qualification level than currently exists in many member states - so countering the fear amongst some in the industry that ECOL could become a "lowest common denominator" qualification.**

In the full project plan, the route to developing a European proficiency certificate for crane operators is set out, with the ambition to achieve this within the next three years.

## THE ECOL FOUNDATION

Establishing ECOL means developing a system that organises and administers the process of issuing certificates. As an industry association, ESTA will have a strategic supervisory role, but will not take part in carrying out training and examination

An ECOL Foundation has been established to supervise and monitor the system of education, examination and

maintenance.

ESTA has set the criteria for being a licensed crane operator and what the key performance indicators are for staying a licensed crane operator.

The ECOL Foundation sets the criteria for becoming an ECOL-educator and for becoming an ECOL-examination institution in this field. Only when you are 'ECOL-approved' can you train and test operators for

the ECOL-license and have use of the ECOL-logo.

Other tasks assigned to the ECOL Foundation are issuing certificates, recognizing diplomas, managing the register and organizing continuing education, and providing the knowledge bank with new high level content. This system will require good relationships between the industry and the education sector.

## STRUCTURE HOW ECOL WILL WORK

The ECOL system has basically three actors - the industry, ESTA and the market.

**1. The industry** is all the companies that employ crane operators, their clients and crane and lifting materials suppliers. Together they determine the job requirements of a crane operator.

**2. ESTA** is the organisation responsible for formulating the standards for crane operators and within the new ECOL Foundation (see left), the conditions for education, validation and examination are established.

**3. The market** is those organisations that take care of education, examination and validation. Based on the professional standard for crane operators and the conditions for good education and good examination, they can qualify the crane operators.

When crane operators pass their exams, they receive their ECOL licence and will be included in the ECOL register. However, they will have to keep up to date with changes in the industry and collect (learning) credit points to maintain their registration.

## INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

ECOL will only be a real success if organisations, governments, labour unions, and industry associations all recognize and acknowledge it. Cooperation agreements and partnerships with different kind of stakeholders will have to be forged to make it work, including groups such as Governments and national bodies, the crane-using industries and Labour unions.

## FUNDING & ERASMUS+

ESTA has been awarded funding for ECOL under Erasmus+, the new European funding programme for education, youth and sport (2014-2020). Its basic premise is that is that investing in education, training and non-formal and lifelong learning is hugely important, both for the individuals concerned and because it makes the European economy stronger. ECOL comes under the Erasmus+ section that covers strategic partnerships, alliances for sector-specific skills and capacity building. One of the key aims is to help increase economic competitiveness.







“The growing sophistication of the equipment and rapid technological change needs to be reflected in training schemes across Europe, some of which are based on structures that were set up many years ago.”

“The issue of an ageing workforce means the existing skills shortages are going to get worse, specifically in Western Europe.”

“Under our proposed scheme, an employer will have the ability to ensure that any crane operator they take on, wherever they come from within the EU, will have an accepted level of competence if they are ECOL-qualified.”

“It is clear that using ECOL as a way of training everyone to the same benchmark will raise standards, improve site safety and boost employment opportunities for qualified operators.”

“We are beginning to see interest in ECOL from major clients in some sectors – every big company that turns to us for support in their international ventures we try to get in the ECOL camp.”

**TON KLIJN, ESTA DIRECTOR AND CHAIR OF THE ESTA ECOL WORKING GROUP**

## WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

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BC Crane Safety and Canadian Hoisting and Rigging Safety Council

\* **Note:** Some of the information in this brochure is based on the draft paper on ECOL produced by Barbara Marcelis of CINOP.

## ECOL EXPERT BOARD

ECOL has announced the nine members of its Expert Board. The board will give independent advice to the ECOL management and will eventually take over the role of the ESTA ECOL Working Group when the latter is disbanded in the future.

The Expert Board will also provide the membership of the Examination and Appeals Committees. The Examination Committee will give the final approval to those operators who have gained an ECOL qualification and the Appeals Committee will deal with any disagreements that arise from the ECOL process.

### THE EXPERT BOARD MEMBERS ARE:

- Fraser Cocks**, BCACS, Canada
- Kim Hvolbøl**, DKF, Denmark (EC)
- Erik Kroes**, Mammoet, the Netherlands
- Pia Metsola**, INFRA, Finland (EC)
- Lion Verhagen**, VVT, the Netherlands (AC)
- Kristof Waelkens**, VDAB, Belgium (AC)
- Paul Zepf**, VDMA, Germany
- Norbert van Schaik**, Siemens-Gamesa (AC)
- Kim Poulsen**, EUC, Lillebælt (EC)

Note:  
AC - Appeals Committee member  
EC - Examinations Committee member

