

# Open for business

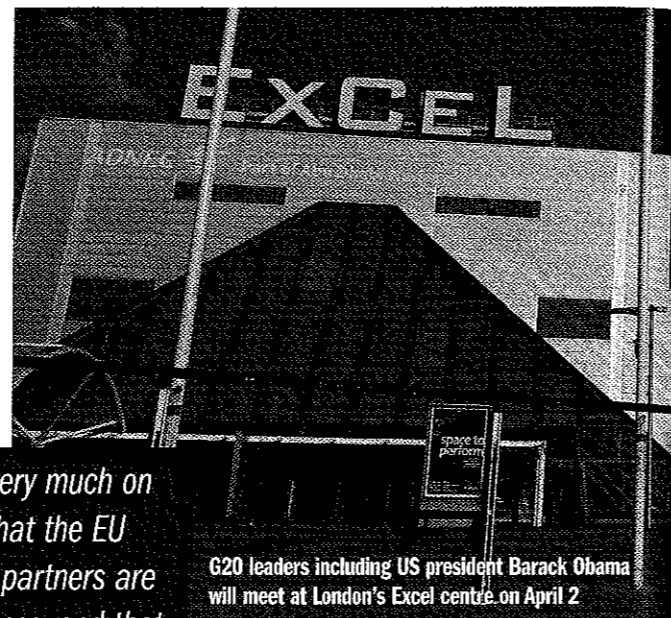
**Catherine Ashton** calls on the G20 to focus on completing world trade deals and send a strong message against protectionism

In the current global economic downturn, more than ever, trade policy must continue to deliver for Europe. Trade is the pulse of the world economy, and it is slowing dangerously. The World Bank predicts that in 2009 world trade will decline for the first time since 1982. Europe is feeling the pinch – even global export champion Germany saw the biggest fall in exports for 15 years at the end of 2008. Given that increases in global trade go hand-in-hand with growth and jobs, my focus is very much on making sure that the EU and our trade partners are open for business, and that we all resist the temptation of protectionism.

The impact of the financial crisis on the real economy has led governments to step in with bank rescue packages, fiscal stimulus measures and enhanced social policies. This is the right response – it is only natural and reasonable for governments to support their economies and to invest in order to foster structural change, through training, research and innovation. What we cannot do however is simply prop up industries in a way that becomes protectionist, as open and fair trade is part of the solution to the problems we face. So, where should we focus our efforts?

First and foremost, we must complete the Doha round of world trade talks. A deal would create new opportunities for trade worth hundreds of billions of euros, and just as importantly would lock in openness and act as an insurance policy against future protectionism. Leaders at the G20 meeting in London on April 2 must reiterate their commitment to completing this deal and send a strong message against protectionism. In the meantime, we must stick to the spirit of the WTO by keeping trade free and fair.

The EU also has the chance to close ambitious bilateral trade deals, which provide broad liberalisation of trade and therefore new opportunities. A free trade agreement with South Korea will provide substantial market access for a wide range of European industries such as machinery, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and footwear, and will deliver a



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G20 leaders including US president Barack Obama will meet at London's Excel centre on April 2

major liberalisation of services trade. The agreement would also be an important sign that two major trading powers are able to provide an impetus to trade, even in the economic downturn.

Finally, we should look at pragmatic ways to support European businesses and especially SMEs through the downturn. We are doing this by stepping up efforts to make sure European businesses, particularly SMEs, can get their goods and services to new and emerging markets. With our market access strategy we are identifying and tackling barriers faced by our companies in foreign markets, including 'behind the border' non-tariff barriers.

These are vital elements of our response to the economic crisis. Trade should be seen as a core pillar of the broader recovery plan. It is key driver of growth yet it is sometimes overlooked. Keeping our markets open and finding new trade opportunities will certainly go a long way to putting Europe, and the world, back on the path to prosperity. ★



Catherine Ashton is EU trade commissioner and a speaker at the European business summit

# Oil Spill Prevention from Ship Wrecks



**DIFIS - Double Inverted Funnel for the Intervention on Ship wrecks**

## Project scope

The scope of the European research project DIFIS is the study, design and validation of an EU reference method for the prompt and cost-effective intervention on ship wrecks, able to deal with oil leaking from wrecks even at very large water depths.

## The DIFIS system

The envisaged solution relies on gravitational forces to channel the flux of spilled fuel towards the surface. This is achieved by means of a light, deployable flexible structure that should stay in place until all tanks of the wrecks are emptied and the pollution threat is eliminated. The leaking fuel is collected by a kind of inverted funnel, consisting of fabric dome, solidly anchored around and covering the wreck. The collected fuel is channelled, through a long, flexible riser tube (diameter 2,0 m) up to a buffer bell, acting as a separator



and reservoir, located 30-50m below the sea surface, where it is not affected by rough weather. A shuttle tanker is used for periodical offloading of the collected fuel and transport to shore.

## Project approach

The project is carried out by a consortium of 8 participants, each with their own field of expertise. The Maritime Research Institute Netherlands (MARIN) is the project coordinator. The European Commission's JRC, at the origin of the project, is involved as a scientific and technical advisor.

The total budget is 3.2 M€, of which 1.8 M€ is funded by the European Commission.

Schedule and expected results  
The DIFIS project had its kick-off in September 2005 and has a total duration of 3 years.

Design of main parts of the system was achieved in 2009. Concept verification was undertaken. The first task has concerned multi-phase (oil water mixture) time-domain flow calculations and system stability.

Two sets of hydrodynamic scale model tests were performed at the MARIN basin, first one confirming system's behaviour in various weather



conditions, and second series focused on several aspects related to the system deployment.

In connection with the work of definitive design, deployment and operational procedures were carried out, verified and illustrated by kinematics simulations.

Finally, in 2009, economical and logistic aspects will be taken into account.

## Contact

More information can be found at <http://www.difis.eu>, or contact :

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