

Platform News – Platform visits Belgian ship recycling yard, boards French end-of-life ship

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On Thursday 22 November, the NGO Shipbreaking Platform visited the Ghent-based ship recycling yard Van Heyghen Recycling in Belgium. Patrizia Heidegger, the Platform's executive director, Colby Self, green ship recycling director at the Basel Action Network, and Delphine Reuter, the Platform's Communication Officer, were able to board the "Tellier", a 11,500-ton LNG tanker formerly owned by French company GDF-Suez.



The "Tellier" had just been stripped of 50 tons of asbestos and was still lying in water. According to Peter Wyntin, the company's Head of shiprecycling, Environment Manager and Health & Safety Manager, the several months it took to remove all the friable and non-friable asbestos onboard represented the most expensive recycling phase. As it was common to use asbestos in ships for almost any type of application, from glue to insulation, it can be found practically anywhere



onboard older ships, and even onboard more recently built vessels.

The Van Heyghen ship recycling yard has a current capacity of about 30,000 ldt (light displacement tons) per year, whereas it has the capacity to recycle nearly twice as much tonnage, Wyntin added. According to him, ship recycling yards could build up capacity if they were assured that a steady supply of vessels was available. Shipowners today often have a ship-by-ship approach to recycling, which does not help to plan for long-term recycling capacity, he said. The Platform is currently working on strengthening the European Commission Proposal for a ship recycling regulation, published in March 2012. The European ship recyclers such as Van Heyghen are directly concerned by the proposal, as EU-flagged ships could be barred from being sent to beaching facilities - like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.