



Elbe, one of a pair of Voith Schneider tugs for German ports built by Zamakona.

Tugs for port container traffic

Bremen-based towage company Unterweser Reederei (URAG) has taken delivery of two new Voith Schneider tractor tugs and is reported to be considering further replacements for its 16 tug fleet. The increase in traffic of larger containerships in the ports of Bremerhaven, Wilhelmshaven and Hamburg likely to result in at least two further vessels in the 70tonnes-80tonnes bollard pull range and this may increase to four.

The most recent additions to the URAG tug fleet are the powerful *Ems* and *Elbe* completed by the Spanish shipyard Astilleros Zamakona. Claimed to be the largest Voith tractors in mainland Europe, they measure 37.06m in length overall, with a 13.12m beam, a maximum draught of 6.8m and gross tonnage of 633.

Ems and *Elbe* are designed predominantly for work offshore but will be expected to return to the river Weser during the winter months when additional bollard pull is required to handle the larger container ships. The tugs are fitted with MAK 8M25 main engines generating a total of 7180bhp to power two Voith propulsion units for a maximum bollard pull of 75tonnes and free running speed of 14knots.

One of many interesting features aboard *Elbe* and *Ems* is a unique electronic control system for the Voith propulsion system. The system is reported to have presented a technological challenge for Voith Turbo Marine but has resulted in smoother handling and given the tug master ability to operate the vessel with a single joystick from several locations on the bridge. 