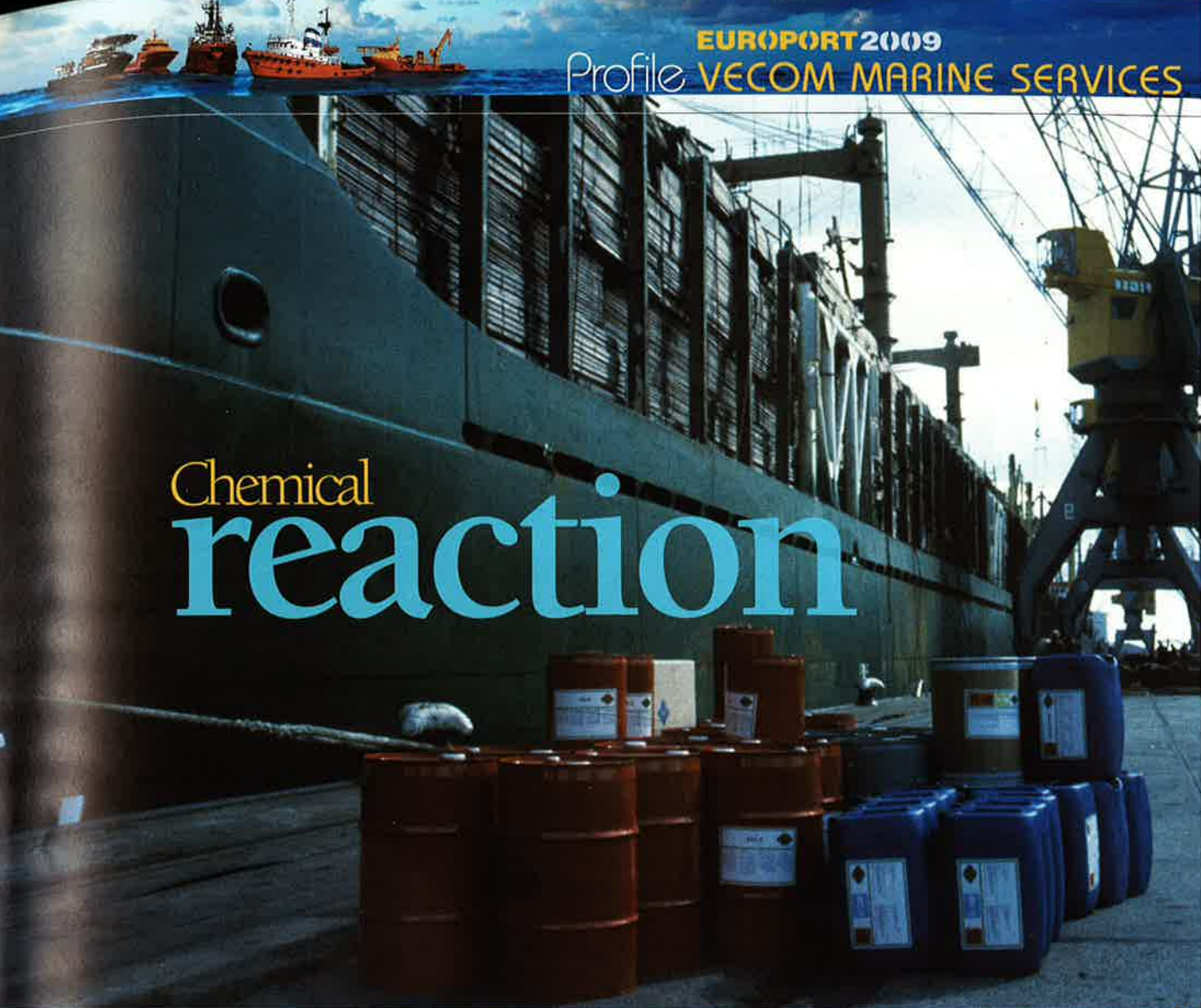


Chemical reaction



Vecom Marine Services (VMS)

was formed as the result of the 2007 merger between Cor van Veen's company, Alert Marine Safety and Vecom, combining two distinct areas of expertise. Alert Marine Safety was a specialist in the supply of safety equipment onboard ships,

while Vecom concentrated on the provision of chemicals (cleaning compounds) to the marine industry. The merger has meant more opportunities for both companies within the shipping sector.

Cor elaborates on Vecom's early history leading up to the merger: "Vecom was originally established in 1953, and quickly became one of the leading suppliers of chemicals to the international marine business. In 1995 the marine chemical business and sales network was sold and though Vecom continued to produce marine chemicals, it no longer had a direct sales channel within the marine sector.

"In April 2002, I started my own company, Alert Marine Safety (AMS). We were based in Ridderkerk, near Rotterdam, and we provided equipment related to marine safety, such as life jackets, breathing apparatus, and fire extinguishers, to the Rotterdam harbour. We began to grow very rapidly over the following years, acting as an agent for Uni-Marine. Meanwhile Vecom re-entered the marine industry in 2006, as the Vecom Marine Alliance. As it no longer had any experience of the shipping business, Vecom employed us as the first agent of the Vecom Marine Alliance in the





Netherlands. As we were providing extensive advice to Vecom on the marine side, we became very closely involved with Vecom's business, and by the end of 2007 we came to the decision that a merger between Vecom and AMS would be beneficial to both companies."

Acting as a platform that offers agents worldwide a guaranteed product quality, Vecom combines a strong corporate identity, based on a reliable name, with a vast array of orders that can be supplied beyond the agent's residential area. Over the past two years the network has grown and today Vecom is able to deliver to over 850 ports worldwide. Having been involved in the marine industry since its founding in 1953, Vecom offers a complete range of products and services to companies in the marine sector. The Vecom Marine Alliance network ensures global quality and service, its local companies and agents supplying 850 ports across 45 countries worldwide.


The merger has meant that Vecom Marine services can now directly supply maintenance and cleaning chemicals, gases and welding and safety equipment to local Dutch and Belgian ports. In the long term the solid basis that Vecom's history has provided enables VMS to offer its customers a much broader choice of products and services. "Our main strength at the moment is the chemicals that we can provide on a global scale, as well as within the local market," explains Cor. "We also have a strong offering in personal protection equipment." The marine division offers a variety of products, including cleaning chemicals, welding-cutting-refrigerants, fire fighting and safety equipment, testsets, as well as an array of related cleaning services.

The Vecom Group operates facilities across north west Europe, in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and England. Cor elaborates: "We have around 21 or 22 facilities, although they do not all operate in the marine industry. These are located in Hamburg, Rotterdam and Antwerp, and we also have marine facilities in these areas,

and also in Greece. We are now looking to expand into the offshore area, because we are sure we can add a lot to this industry, in terms of safety and cleaning products. There is big business for cleaning materials that are required onboard offshore rigs and islands, so this is where we are focusing our expansion."

He goes on to talk further about the company's safety products: "We offer good safety equipment. In the future, I think that if we can find the right way to market these products, we can really expand this area of the company. It is already used in the offshore sector and as we are looking to grow that side of the business, we are currently actively working to promote that. We exhibited at Europort 2009 at the start of November, and this provided us with a good opportunity to promote our safety equipment."

As the global recession has had a strong adverse effect on the shipping industry as a whole, Cor explains how it has affected VMS: "The shipping business has been hit fairly hard by the crisis. It has meant that a lot of the ship owners are being much more careful, so in turn this made our turnover reduce significantly over the last year. I am confident that if we wait, this will recover once more. We are busy every day now, and I think the shipping business will recover because the crisis started for most people in January/February 2009, but for shipping it was at the end of August/September 2008 that business began to suffer. So we are now communicating with bigger ship owners from the Netherlands on a daily basis, and step by step business is recovering. Though it will take another seven or eight years for these companies to get back to the levels they were at before the recession, they will begin to make a fairly small profit again, which is good for us as they will begin to put orders in again. We can help these ship owners, because we offer very good value in our products. They are available at a low cost but with the same quality as more expensive alternatives, making us an attractive supplier."

Finally Cor outlines his forecast for the future of the company: "We will develop and we will grow. I believe that we will be able to double our turnover in the Benelux area within one and half years, and the group as a whole – Vecom Marine Alliance and Vecom Marine Services together, should be able to more than double its total turnover in three or four years, because now we can use the current situation to our advantage. In this way the crisis will bring us more opportunities, as the clients look for ways to save money, and this is one of our biggest advantages over our competitors." 

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