

# 'NINA HAS TRANSFORMED OUR CULTURE BY MAKING SAFETY COOL'



Preparations for a new safety program had already begun in 2008. The Board of Management set up a working group consisting of Rick Maliepaard, Martijn Schuttevâer, Bart Pröpper, Wilfred Haaijer and Lodewijk Wijngaard. 'When I joined Boskalis thirty years ago, there was a bit of a cowboy mentality on some projects,' says Bart Pröpper, project director of the Fehmarnbelt Tunnel project. 'At times, the approach back then seemed to amount to getting the job done first and then worrying about safety later. Even though there were certainly rules and regulations. Indeed, there were perhaps too many, particularly where there was a culture of ducking them.' Lodewijk: 'When I joined Boskalis in 2006, the culture was still pretty

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BART PRÖPPER, PROJECT DIRECTOR



macho, and there was a worrying rise in the number of accidents as a result.'

## OWN STANDARD

*Was that the main reason for setting up a Safety working group?*

Bart: 'That was certainly one of the drivers. Our job was to standardize the safety policy. That was definitely needed back then. We even had clients pressurizing us to make safety improvements.' Pim van der Knaap, group director of the Dredging division: 'We always had a range of clients who expected us to adapt to their safety programs. We worked on all sorts of projects around the world and so we were always dealing with multiple safety demands and challenges. As a result, our safety policy consisted of an enormous number of rules designed to meet those demands and challenges.' Bart: 'That is precisely why we needed our own safety standard. We wanted to be able to sail our own safety course without having to change tack every time to satisfy all our different clients.' Marinka Verhage, HR director of the Offshore Energy division: 'The fact that we had a demonstrably effective safety program with NINA also turned out to be very important when Boskalis started to focus more on offshore activities. The safety regulations in the oil and gas industry have traditionally been even stricter than in dredging. NINA has certainly helped with the successful acquisition and execution of many of our offshore projects.'

A decade has passed since the Boskalis safety policy took shape as NINA: No Injuries, No Accidents. Our projects worldwide are now unthinkable without NINA on board. Cohesion looks back at the past ten years with colleagues who were present at NINA's birth. 'NINA has not only improved our safety awareness enormously, it has also had a positive impact on our corporate culture,' says Lodewijk Wijngaard, HR director of the Dredging & Inland Infra division.



## AS FEW RULES AS POSSIBLE

*How was the safety program established at the time?*

Lodewijk: 'It wasn't an overnight thing. We began in the Boskalis way, as if we were working on a project. We approached the subject of safety from the different perspectives of the individual business disciplines. The program was a result of extensive company-wide consultations: we talked to a lot of colleagues at the office and on the fleet, and we even consulted former colleagues. Ultimately, all those discussions led to the production of a bulky document about forty pages long. When we presented it to the colleagues, the fleet in particular said: *Even more rules? But we've already got so many rules and regulations!* So then we tried to boil that information down to a couple of pages. The outcome was the formulation of the Values & Rules.' Bart: 'We quickly arrived at the conclusion that it was impos-

sible to come up with the right rule for every specific situation. So we basically turned things around by emphasizing the values and basing them on as few rules as possible. That was an important component of the NINA approach and one that was very much appreciated throughout the organization.' Pim: 'We formulated five values in combination with just a handful of rules. We have had far-reaching discussions about this as senior management. It was important for the entire management to demonstrate their full commitment. So we recorded personal safety statements and put them online.'

## 'NINA SAYS NO!'

*How did the concept of 'No Injuries, No Accidents' originate?*

Lodewijk: 'We were convinced that some form of branding was needed to introduce the program successfully.'

Looking back, it was certainly a good idea from a psychological point of view to opt for the slogan 'No Injuries, No Accidents', with the letters forming a name. The fact that NINA was introduced as a female cartoon character helped to get it accepted. It wasn't long before colleagues were making jokes about NINA says NO. We tried to make NINA a character everyone would like and there were even discussions about her skin color.'

## CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

*What impact has NINA had on Boskalis?*

Pim: 'The program transformed the culture by making safety cool. That is an important change in our mentality as a company thanks to NINA.' Lodewijk: 'You actually build up respect when you dare to discuss safety and show you are committed to the safety of your



## NINA DECIMATED THE LTIF FIGURES AND HALVED THE TRIR FIGURES FOR BOSKALIS

**Since NINA was introduced, the key performance indicators in the field of safety, LTIF and TRIR, have improved significantly at Boskalis.**

The Boskalis LTIF figure was literally decimated, dropping from 0.78 in 2010 to 0.07 in 2019. LTIF stands for Lost Time Injury Frequency and it

represents the loss of productive working time when an employee, either temporary or permanent, cannot work as a result of injury. It consists of the number of safety incidents with absenteeism per 200,000 working hours. In addition, the Boskalis TRIR figure has also been more than halved since the introduction of NINA, dropping from 1.52 in 2010 to 0.73 in 2019.

TRIR stands for Total Recordable Injury Rate and it is the total number of safety incidents involving absenteeism, alternate work or a medical treatment per 200,000 working hours.



colleagues.’ Pim: ‘The rapid drop in the number of incidents and accidents is not the only improvement to result from the program. Open discussions about safety have made the entire corporate culture a lot more open, which is a nice side-effect.’

Bart: ‘You can see that safety awareness is an established value on the projects and the vessels. Our levels of safety have risen enormously thanks to NINA. We comply with client requirements but on the basis of our own system.’ Marinka: ‘NINA has also been a great success with colleagues from companies who joined us later such as SMIT and Dockwise. I think the “NINA moment” at the start of every work meeting played a major role here. It gives colleagues the opportunity to talk about not only safety aspects but also other topics. That openness has led to an enormous improvement in the team spirit on the fleet and at the office.’

Lodewijk: ‘NINA has been a recurring theme in the various acquisitions in recent years. The discussions about it formed the basis for talking about how to align corporate cultures.’ Pim: ‘Following on from NINA, we now have toolboxes for tackling the risks during berthing vessels or the danger of tripping and falling. Thanks to NINA, everyone is aware of their own responsibility. Since the program was introduced, I have even started to do things differently at home. When I change a light, I ask my son to hold the ladder.’

Bart: ‘NINA has indeed improved the links between the office and the fleet. The lines have become shorter and people now understand each other's situation much better. During NINA sessions, the crews of our vessels sometimes come up with initiatives or insights that are not expected by the office colleagues. NINA sessions mean that our employees get to know each other better and lower the different thresholds. Project managers also have more opportunities to explain why a certain approach has been chosen, for example because a client simply

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LODEWIJK WIJNGAARD, HR DIRECTOR, DREDGING & INLAND INFRA DIVISION

has certain requirements. When crews hear this, they understand more why a particular approach has been chosen and that motivates them.’

## SHUTTING DOWN WORK

*Under NINA, any colleague can ask for a project, or a part of a project, to be suspended if he or she feels that a job is becoming too dangerous. Does that ever happen?*

Bart: ‘It certainly does. Recently, we shut down a project for a while in response to the initiative of one of our crews. Of course, a decision like that has a significant impact, both financially and in terms of operational planning, but we always take safety seriously. These decisions are usually taken in consultation with the client; ultimately, it is also in the client's interest for the work to be done safely.’

## PASSING ON ENTHUSIASM

*How do you see the future for NINA?*

Bart: ‘Safety awareness remains crucial on all our projects. I think it's important to maintain our focus so that NINA continues to be a self-evident component of our corporate culture. In the future too, we will also be working on large numbers of projects with temporary employees who are not familiar with our safety culture; we have to tell them that safety is not negotiable.’

Pim: ‘Thanks to NINA, our safety record has improved but highs can also be followed by lows. It's vital to keep on looking for new inspiration to maintain the success of NINA and to continue passing on the enthusiasm we felt ten years ago.’

## STANDING STILL IS NOT AN OPTION

As NINA Program Manager, Annette Panajoti is the point of contact for the whole of Boskalis. Talking about ‘Ten years of NINA’, she says: ‘NINA's strength is that it is moving all the time with the organization and so, for example, new business units embrace NINA as a safety philosophy and we, as Boskalis, have a single shared identity in the



field of safety. In addition, it's crucial to keep responding to the needs of colleagues on the projects and vessels, and to the trends in the accident rates. We do this, for example, by developing the training courses and tools in the program. In 2018, we developed the interactive Lifting & Hoisting Workbox and we launched an in-depth Safety Leadership course in late 2019. We are currently working on rolling out the new e-learning method for subcontractors. Standing still is not an option.’

> For more information: Go to NINA Plaza on BokaNet or send an email to [lodewijk.wijngaard@boskalis.com](mailto:lodewijk.wijngaard@boskalis.com), [marinka.verhage@boskalis.com](mailto:marinka.verhage@boskalis.com), [pim.vd.knaap@boskalis.com](mailto:pim.vd.knaap@boskalis.com), [bart.propper@boskalis.com](mailto:bart.propper@boskalis.com) or [NINA@boskalis.com](mailto:NINA@boskalis.com)

