



ESVAGT recently sold the 'Esvagt Supporter'. The vessel's operation in the wind farm Belwind laid the foundations for the SOV concept that has made ESVAGT today's market leader in servicing offshore wind turbine farms.

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The 'Esvagt Supporter' put the wind in ESVAGT's sails

ESVAGT's first wind vessel has retired but the legacy of the 'Esvagt Supporter' lives on in the many SOV vessels in the shipping company.

The starting point for ESVAGT's journey into the offshore wind energy industry in 2010 was ESVAGT's capabilities within boat transfer and Vestas Offshore's need for personnel transfer to offshore wind turbines.

The wind turbine manufacturer needed access to the turbines in the offshore wind farm Belwind in the Belgian sector, and at the same time, ESVAGT recognised the potential in expanding its capabilities in safe and efficient transfer of personnel to include the emerging offshore wind energy industry.

‘Using our extensive experience in working safely at sea in the offshore oil and gas industry as a starting point, we started working with then Vestas Offshore on the first tests of a service vessel at a wind farm in Horns Rev 1 in 2002’, says Ole Ditlev Nielsen, Stakeholder Liaison Manager at ESVAGT:

‘When the time came a few years later for Vestas Offshore to choose a logistical solution for Belwind in Belgium, they decided to test our SOV concept as an alternative to the usual Crew Transfer Vessels (CTV) solutions, and together we began sketching the outlines for developing the SOV concept that was to come,’ he says.

ESVAGT decided to retrofit the ‘Esvagt Supporter’ so that it could fulfil the functions they had defined together with the customer. The solution was based on transfers by boat.

‘It became the start of a strong and developing working cooperation. Belwind was the starting point for ESVAGT’s involvement in offshore wind and laid the foundations for the SOV concept that has made ESVAGT today’s market leader in servicing offshore wind turbine farms,” elaborates Ole Ditlev Nielsen.

Continuous development

At the beginning, offshore wind was both challenging and educational for ESVAGT. They developed and tested the concept for wind turbine transfers in Horns Rev 1, and Steffen Rudbech Nielsen, Head of Ship Management – Operations, remembers the time as a “steep learning curve”:

‘We tested transfers using our rescue boat that we of course had extensive experience with, but there is an enormous difference between saving a person from the water and transferring someone to a boat landing on a wind turbine. Not least because our boat design had been optimised for rescue missions,’ he says:

‘Transferring safely and efficiently was extremely demanding at first.’

ESVAGT developed a new boat stern with ‘lugs’ that could assist in the boat landing process and maintain the boat’s position, and the design of the boat was adapted to increase storage capacity and improve manoeuvrability. At the same time, experience was built up and shared, and training developed the skills of the crew:

‘We learned a lot about transferring to turbines, not least from the technicians we needed to transfer. The fitters and our boatmen formed an effective development team that worked together to find the optimal operation,’ says Steffen Rudbech Nielsen.

It is this concept that has now been further developed for the purpose-built transfer boat, the STB7, that ESVAGT uses today.

The legacy lives on

In 2017, the ‘Esvagt Supporter’ was succeeded by the ‘Esvagt Mercator’ for a new 10-year contract with MHI Vestas on Belwind/Nobelwind at Bligh Bank, and ESVAGT has recently sold the ‘Esvagt Supporter’ after its long and excellent service.

The vessel’s legacy is absolutely central for the ESVAGT of today and tomorrow:

‘We have five SOV vessels and four new ones on the way, and we have worked for most of the major operators and wind farm owners with an SOV concept that has set the standard for safe and efficient operations,’ says Ole Ditlev Nielsen:

‘The fact that we are leaders in the SOV area today is largely due to our ability to transfer experiences from the sea, our crew and our customers to the concepts that we develop. We are currently the only SOV operator that can deliver a new SOV with an experienced crew because we have transferred and shared almost ten years of experience within offshore wind,’ he adds:

‘There is a direct link from the ‘Esvagt Supporter’ to all the SOV vessels that

we are currently building, where all our knowledge, capabilities and experience are built into their design and concept,' says Ole Ditlev Nielsen.

About ESVAGT

ESVAGT is a dedicated provider of safety and support at sea and a market leader within offshore wind solutions.

We support the offshore Oil & Gas industries with a wide range of specialized services: Standby, Emergency Response and Rescue Vessels (ERRV), Oil spill response, Firefighting, Tanker assists, Rig moves, Supply services and Interfield transfer of cargo and personnel.

We service offshore wind farms and have a fleet of dedicated Service Operation Vessels (SOV), which ESVAGT pioneered in 2010. The SOVs provide accommodation for technicians, spare time facilities, offices and conference room, storage for small turbine parts, workshops, etc. The SOV offers flexible personnel and equipment transfer capabilities by either Walk-to-Work gangway system or Safe Transfer Boats.

ESVAGT was founded in 1981 and has a fleet of more than 40 vessels and approximately 900 employees on- and offshore.

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