The First Operational Year of the New Bulgarian Research Vessel Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodii (RSV 421)

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***Background:***

For the last 30 Austral summer seasons on Antarctica Bulgaria has not owned its own mean of transportation for personnel and cargo to Livingston Island. This has meant that the organisation of the expeditions has been extremely complicated and difficult, and heavily dependent on collaborations with the national programs of many friendly countries – Spain, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Portugal, Columbia, Turkiye and many more. With the acquisition the first Research/survey vessel, the organisation of the Bulgarian Antarctic expeditions become more flexible and adaptive not only to the needs of the Bulgarian Antarctic program, but also to the ones of our collaborative partners.

Timeline:

NAVAL RSV 421 (IMO: 8112586) is a Research/Survey Vessel, built in 1984 in Norway. Her carrying capacity is 1103 t DWT and her current draught is reported to be 5 meters. Her length overall (LOA) is 67.48 meters and her width is 16.82 meters. The capacity is 67 births – 40 for scientists and 27 for crew.

Un barco en el agua con una montaña al fondo

Descripción generada automáticamente

*RSV 421 in front of the Bulgarian Antarctic Base St. Kliment Ohridski, photograph by Aleksandar Nedyalkov*

The ship is owed by a Consortium signed by the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute and the Navel Academy in Varna and was purchased at the end of 2021 with funds provided by the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Bulgaria. During 2022 it undertook a full renovation of engines, mechanics and interior, where needed, overseen by the Consortium.

After obtaining the necessary certifications for sailing, it officially left for its first journey to Antarctica at the end of December 2022.

On its board it carried 26 crew of the Naval Academy in Varna. After 49 days of sailing, the RSV 421 (Sv. sv Kiril i Metodii) reached the Bulgarian Shore on Livingston Island in support of the ongoing scientific work and providing much needed supplies to the Bulgarian Antarctic program, as well as to the Spanish bases on Livingston and Deception Islands. In addition to delivering cargo and providing logistic support for the Bulgarian, Spanish and Turkish programs, the vessel provided work for the 4 scientists and their projects on the subjects of marine biology, microbiology, marine geology and medicine. The ship spent almost a month around the South Shetland Islands, manoeuvring researches, delivering cargo and providing logistic support.

Un barco en el agua

Descripción generada automáticamente

*Nighttime unloading of cargo at the Bulgarian Antarctic Base, photograph by Petko Ginev*

The vessel also accomplished а rescue operation of Spanish and Canadian scientists near Hannah Point.

An important task was accomplished thanks to the availability of own transport – all the accumulated in the past years recycling waste (glass, wood and metal) was uploaded on RSV 421 and transported back to Bulgaria.

RSV 421 arrived back in Bulgaria on 2nd May 2023 at Port Varna.

In the next summer season, the vessel is due to be around the South Shetland Islands again and will be available for requests for scientific research and logistic support to our Antarctic partners, when agreed.