

Follow up on social issues related to COVID -19 :

I. On how to manage the mental health of seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic

The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) produced a [video](#) providing guidance and information. Seafarers are not only worried about their own health but also about the health of their families and friends back home. The video provides advice to seafarers about staying mentally safe and well while on board and ashore during this crisis.

Action required: Members having information about specific cases/issues encountered or results of surveys made and any specific tools/issues that could be helpful to pursue further are requested to share them with the ECSA secretariat.

II. On testing of seafarers for COVID-19

This has been discussed several times in the various meetings with stakeholders. While indeed more testing would be welcomed by many, the lack of availability of testing kits results in countries prioritising those really in need first. Moreover, it has been argued that a negative test result could give false security, as one could first test negative and then positive within days. Also swab tests are of no use on persons who are not showing symptoms of Covid-19 . **The International Maritime Health Association (IMHA) has** provided guidance which can be accessed [here](#). Other relevant IMHA guidance to shipping companies can be found [here](#) and on medical assistance to seafarers in ports with Covid-19 [here](#).

Action required: Members having information about specific cases/issues encountered or suggestions they consider should be pursued further are requested to share them with the ECSA secretariat.

III. On recommendations to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and contacts between crew and shore based workers:

In the [communication](#) by the European Commission issued last week guidance was provided on contacts between crew and port workers, including pilots and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing. Please see the below extracts:

"35. Contact between crew and port workers, including pilots, should be reduced to an absolute minimum to protect all persons from risk of transmission of COVID-19. For any necessary contact, personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn and social distancing measures put in place.

40. The amount of personal protective equipment on board should be increased to ensure sufficient supplies for the following three situations:

- *Interaction of the required number of crew members with pilots;*
- *In case a crew member falls ill to allow other persons on board to interact with them;*

- *Shore leave (although shore leave should be reduced as much as possible)."*

Action required: Members are kindly requested to inform the ECSA secretariat about difficulties in abiding by the above guidelines. The ECSA secretariat is following up with the European Maritime Pilots Association in view of a suggestion by one of the ECSA members to develop guidance/protocols. This may become also somewhat broader to consider for use with shore based workers. Members having experiences to share in this regard or good examples of best practices are kindly invited to share with the ECSA secretariat.

- IV.** Moreover, **EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS**, an adhoc group of EU Member States' public health contact points under the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE). (DG SANTE), has issued:
- a **guidance document giving an overview of Personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended for staff at points of entry and crew on board conveyances in the context of COVID-19**, which includes also guidance for PPE for maritime context. This can be found in [English](#) (VERSION 2 – 7/3/2020) and [Greek](#) (VERSION 2 – 7/3/2020).

Action required: ECSA has been informed that this guidance is being updated and ECSA has been asked to send any input to such revision – therefore members' input on the guidance and any practical problems being encountered by companies in terms to availability and use of PPE by crew, port workers and pilots are requested to inform the ECSA secretariat.

- Advice on the **use of face masks** on board any type of conveyance which can be accessed [here](#) and includes the following extract: "*Passengers and crew on board any type of public conveyance operating nationally or internationally, who are not ill or showing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should consider wearing a face mask. Transport conveyances include aircrafts, cruise ships, cargo ships, ferry boats, inland navigation vessels, buses, taxis or other non-private vehicles, metros and trains. The use of a face mask doesn't substitute – for passengers, crew and any other person on board – the physical distancing of more than one meter if feasible, frequent and strict hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and avoid touching face, nose, eyes and mouth*".

Action required: Members are kindly requested to share any comments/concerns on this guidance.

V. Other advice on health and safety protection in view of COVID-19

The EU HEALTHY GETWAYS has produced other advice related to maritime transport in response to COVID-19. Since they consider cargo ships on long sea voyages without regular port calls, are at a particular risk if COVID-19 infection has been spread on board among crew members, they highlight the importance of health monitoring and reporting and the availability on board of adequate PPE and trained staff to implement isolation plans. They therefore have produced the following guidance:

- Advice for ship operators for preparedness and response to the outbreak of COVID-19:
 - [English](#) (VERSION 3 - 20/02/2020)

- [Chinese](#) (VERSION 3 - 20/02/2020)
 - [Polish](#) (VERSION 3 - 20/02/2020)
- Advice for health authorities and ship operators who have decided to suspend sailings and for the long-term docking of ships at the ports of EU/EEA MS during COVID-19 pandemic in [English](#) (VERSION 1 - 18/03/2020).
- Public health measures at points of entry in [English](#) (VERSION 3 - 20/02/2020).

All of the attached documents as well as further guidance for points of entry and a Q&A about COVID-19 can be found on the EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS website at this [link](#).

They are also working on **guidance for cleaning and disinfection of ships during COVID-19** – a draft version thereof can be found attached (**Annex II**) and has been shared with ECSA for any comments.

Action required: EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS has reached out to ECSA seeking comments on their draft documents but also for any input/suggestions for changes of the already adopted guidance. **Therefore Members are requested to consider these guidance documents, and in particular the draft on disinfection of ships, and send the ECSA secretariat any comments/suggestions for changes they may have at the earliest convenience.**

VI. Ship Sanitation Control Exemption Certificate/ Ship Sanitation Control Certificate

As mentioned ECSA is engaging with the EU Commission and EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS in order to seek a practical and reasonable solution is found, so as to ensure that in view of COVID-19 ships are not restricted from sailing due to expired SSCs. Since this requirement is under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) any guidance beyond the possibilities already provided under the regulations (1 month extension) should be provided by the WHO. DG SANTE and EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS and also the contact points in EU Member States were also involved in the process of elaboration of these guidance and therefore ECSA has engaged with them in order to push forth its suggestion for a waiver, of for example 3 months, rather than the originally suggested monthly extensions. The latest information received is that the WHO is due to publish guidance probably this coming week and that it is considering proposing that multiple 1 month extensions may be allowed based on submission of administrative documents so as to avoid the need for inspections. ECSA still considers extensions of the certificate for a period of 3-6 months is more reasonable and practicable than monthly extensions.

ECSA is informed that a number of States are proposing to suspend SSC so as to issue instead "Contingency SSC for Covid-19 Emergency" (or "SSC-lite"), issued not on the basis of an inspection, but on submission of documentation such as scanned copies of the existing/expired SSC, Master's Declaration of Health, medical log, garbage log, water analysis results and crew list. According to the

information available they proposal to have this certificate valid for a maximum 3 months.

Action required: Members are requested to report back to the secretariat with:

- **any news about the guidance/position taken by their national authorities or suggestions/reactions;**
- **the current situation in ports and if inspections have been suspended;**
- **if the SSC-lite approach is being adopted**

VII. Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships – 8 April 2020

Following up on the [EU guidance of 8 April](#) regarding the repatriation of passengers and seafarers and other persons on board ships, the Maritime Transport Social Partners, ECSA and ETF sent jointly on 14 April a [letter \(Annex III\)](#) to four European Commissioners and the High Representative of the EU "calling upon the EU institutions and Member States to support the industry and its workforce with the challenges they are facing". In particular, the letter was sent to the Commissioner of Transport, Ms Adina Vălean; the Commissioner for Crisis Management, Mr Janez Lenarčič; the Commissioner for Justice, Mr Didier Reynders; the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Ms Stella Kyriakides; and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles. The letter further stated that "Special measures and actions have to be taken with the greatest urgency to ensure that the shipping industry and the maritime transport workers can play their role in supporting the EU economy to the fullest extent possible, and the social, operational and economic impacts are reduced as much as possible". The letter also urged the European External Action Service (EEAS) to assist in "the expeditious repatriation of European seafarers who are currently stranded in third countries or on vessels that have been unable to obtain permission to dock". A similar letter ([Annex IV](#)) was sent on 16 April to the EU Member States urging them to ensure the continuing functioning of the global maritime transportation system by following the Commission guidance through:

- i) *Facilitating the essential movement of maritime transport personnel (including seafarers) - ensuring that national guidance and procedures are adapted to ensure that all seafarers and the broader category of critical maritime transport personnel, irrespective of nationality, are designated 'essential worker' status and exempted from travel restrictions and quarantine rules so as to be enabled to disembark, have access to medical care, travel to join their ships, be repatriated and take shore leave.*
- ii) *Coordinating arrangements at EU level so as to designate ports where crew changes can take place safely and unhindered so as to allow crew changes and repatriations are able to continue and resume, taking into account geographical spread, capacity, proximity to health facilities and international airports.*

Action required: Members are requested to draw their Member States' attention to the guidance and ECSA and ETF's position thereon. Calling upon them to following the guidance and to work together with other MS

and Commission in coordinating arrangements at EU level so as to resume crew changes. It would be important that on the occasion of the second informal Transport Council's videoconference on 29 April, Member States show that they support having a coordinated effort at EU level and mandate the Commission to work on an action plan in this regard. In view of the work required to coordinate such an action plan, the Commission is well placed to help in this coordination and EU can help lead the way to reinstate confidence for crew changes to start to happen again. This could also be seen as a good opportunity for a strategic approach to recovery of different economic sectors in EU.

VIII. Passenger Rights Regulation (1177/2010) and Package Travel Directive (2015/2302) - calling for amended guidance/legislation to allow use of vouchers and delay cash reimbursements

As mentioned during the call, ECSA was, as a follow up to Circular C-11376 of 2 April, working with Interferry and CLIA on a joint letter (**Annex V**). **This was sent to** Commissioner of Transport, Ms Adina Vălean and the Commissioner for Justice, Mr Didier Reynders, to Permanent Representations of the Member States (Permanent Representatives and Deputy Permanent representatives and shipping and justice attachés) and is now being sent to MEPs.

The letter asks for an adjustment of the Commission's interpretative guidance issued on 18 and 19 March 2020 on the EU rules related to the reimbursement obligations established in [Passengers Rights Regulation \(EC\) 1177/2010](#) and [Package Travel Directive 2015/2302](#) in view of COVID-19 and if necessary temporary changes to the EU rules themselves so as to enable maritime passenger operators to make reimbursements in priority in the form of credit notes (or 'vouchers') with a long term validity (period to be defined), without waiving the rights of the consumer for reimbursement or compensation at the end of this period.

ECSA is working to get enhanced support from MEPs and MS this week. It is asking MEPs to raise the matter in an exchange with Commissioner Breton on 21 April and with Commissioner Valean on 28 April. It is also asking Member States to raise at the Informal High level video conference for Ministers of Transport Council of 29 April.

As this is an issue the national industry has put forward, lot of Members States have been more focussed on the aviation industry's concerns - requesting changes to the package travel directive and the sectoral regulation for the aviation sector. FR, DE, LT, IE, PL, CZ, BG, MT, EL, BE, NL, SL and probably also PT, IT, CY and DK. Not a lot of Member States raised the shipping requests yet but a number are now expected to raise the maritime aspect at the informal videoconfernece call for transport ministers being held next week. It is clear that we need changes for both sectors - clear and horizontal rules not differentiating between the maritime and aviation sector.

Action required: Members are kindly requested to:

- **Make contact with their national authorities urging them to support the ECSA-INTERFERRY-CLIA position and urging them to send a letter to the Commission and to intervene in the second informal Transport Council's videoconference on 29 April on this matter (and also in the COREPER I meeting of Wednesday 22 April that prepares the Ministerial meeting).**
- **Make contact with MEPs/any Commissioner's cabinets they may have a national contact with given that this is a request to provide quick support for national industries being affected by the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **To keep ECSA informed of any input from MS and MEPs**

Thank you in advance for your co-operation amidst these difficult times.