

Press release

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PARIS MOU GUIDANCE REGARDING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MoU) acknowledges the crisis which the international shipping industry is facing. The Paris MoU is working to help Member Authorities protect the health and safety of our Port State Control Officers and also the seafarers on the ships. The Paris MoU acknowledges further that at this time it is essential to keep supply chains open and also that it is proving very difficult for shipowners to arrange vessel surveys. It is also very difficult for seafarers to attend the required training courses and to revalidate their certificates.

In this regard the Paris MoU has developed temporary guidance for its Member Authorities during the COVID-19 crisis. The guidance recognises that there is a need to apply flexibility under these special circumstances. Forced by the current situation, Member Authorities have implemented national measures which are affecting the region's port State control regime.

The temporary guidance sets out parameters for the adoption of a pragmatic approach to be taken in the region. The key to this approach is the recognition that measures are being taken by flag States recognising the challenges the maritime industry is facing. Guidance for the port State control Authorities has been drafted regarding:

- Impact of delays for surveys, inspections and audits
- extensions of validity of the ship's certificates
- extended periods of service on board
- delaying periods for personnel certification (STCW'95 and MLC,2006)

As a general principle, a pragmatic approach regarding the mentioned issues is suggested to be taken on a case-by-case basis for periods up to maximum three months. In such cases it is expected that there is active involvement of the flag State, and, if appropriate, the Recognised Organisation. This would include evidence that

the ship has a plan that covers how the ship will be brought back in compliance with the requirements.

Whether an inspection takes place remains the decision of the port State. A vessel can be considered self-isolating only if there are no ship-shore interfaces.

The temporary guidance may be reviewed, as appropriate, to keep aligned with the rapidly successive developments of the COVID-19 virus and future initiatives by relevant stakeholders.

The Paris MoU wishes to express its solidarity with the international shipping sector and the seafarers at this difficult time.

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Notes to editors:

Regional Port State Control was initiated in 1982 when fourteen European countries agreed to coordinate their port State inspection effort under a voluntary agreement known as the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MOU). Currently 27 countries are member of the Paris MOU. The European Commission, although not a signatory to the Paris MOU, is also a member of the Committee.

The Paris MoU is supported by a central database THETIS hosted and operated by the European Maritime Safety Agency in Lisbon. Inspection results are available for search and daily updating by MoU Members. Inspection results can be consulted on the Paris MoU public website and are published on the Equasis website.

The Secretariat of the MoU is provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and located in The Hague.

Port State Control is a check on visiting foreign ships to verify their compliance with international rules on safety, pollution prevention and seafarers living and working conditions. It is a means of enforcing compliance in cases where the owner and flag State have failed in their responsibility to implement or ensure compliance. The port State can require deficiencies to be corrected, and detain the ship for this purpose, if necessary. It is therefore also a port State's defence against visiting substandard shipping.