

**EDUCATION
AND TRAINING**
Dangers of oxygen depletion

INTERNATIONAL
Investigators must respect
fair treatment

ENVIRONMENT
Safety standards
onboard electric vessels

HEALTH AND SAFETY
Caution urged with
hand sanitiser

the global seafarer

Volume 4 | Number 3 | July 2020



SPEAKING OUT ON STCW

Nautilus Federation members pool their expertise to press for changes to the international training standards for seafarers

the global seafarer

Volume 4 | Number 3 | July 2020

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Comment

The unfolding crew change crisis has exposed deep inconsistencies from governments keen to kickstart economies while seafarers remain trapped onboard, says Nautilus general secretary **Mark Dickinson**

As I write this month's foreword, the deadline for the effective implementation of crew changes, in accordance with agreed protocols developed by the industry and endorsed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), has passed. 15 June was the day set by the industry for governments to have implemented those protocols and get our seafarers safely home and their replacements back to work.

There are signs that crew changes are taking place especially in Europe, and I am pleased that the UK and the Netherlands are leading the way. However, like the fairground game of 'whack a mole', as one country loosens its lockdown another tightens it as the virus spreads in a wave across the globe. And of course the dire warnings of a second wave are on the minds of those charged with formulating their national policy responses to Covid-19.

But, as some countries look to kickstart their economies, it feels like getting tourism going via international air bridges is more important to other governments than getting seafarers home. As a recent article in Lloyd's List noted, this is 'morally unacceptable' and the ongoing isolation of seafarers 'inhumane'.

The unfolding crisis is at long last grabbing the media's interest. The unfortunate and deeply saddening reports of suicides and hunger strikes, and the potential threat of crew strikes, have finally woken people to the inconvenient truth that the world relies on seafarers for 90% of everything. It feels far from alarmist to warn we could soon see empty shelves in our supermarkets and queues at petrol stations.

I am proud to say that Nautilus is playing a key part in the global mobilisation. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is standing by with its worldwide network of inspectors to support crews who refuse to extend their contracts further.

Nautilus and 21 other ITF-affiliated unions called



on our members to exercise their professional judgement in the interests of safety. The International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA) followed Nautilus taking the unprecedented step of sending a Notice to all Shipmasters calling on them to register their complaints ashore with the authorities and shipowner in line with the Maritime Labour Convention and International Safety Management Code.

If those complaints are not resolved, IFSMA was clear, shipmasters should refuse to sail their ships; for if they did not, and there was an incident, they may face criminalisation by the very same authorities that block crew changes.

The level and the extent of the outrage does not end there. The leaders of the United Nations, the IMO and the ILO have all been unequivocal in their support for seafarers and in their demand that states facilitate safe crew changes immediately to relieve the horrors unfolding onboard ships globally. The line between denial of workers' rights and forced labour is a fine one.

This is an unprecedented moment. As David Osler in Lloyd's List wrote, "There are many lessons to be learnt from this unprecedented episode. But perhaps the biggest one is that crews should never again be made to carry the can for the shockingly apparent global collective paralysis of the authorities."

The major flag states, most of which are flags of convenience (FOC), have shown how the abuse of the ship registration system has undermined the governance and structure of the industry. These states' lack of responsibility or ability to fulfil their obligations under the current system has been brutally exposed by the pandemic.

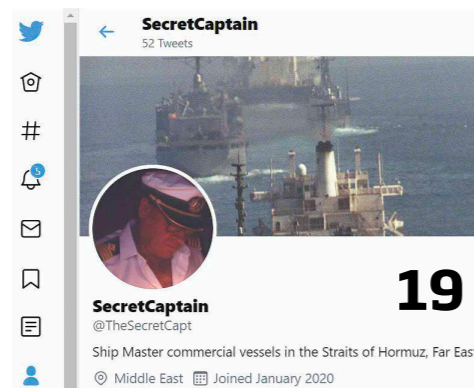
Let's build on the consensus we have forged in this time of crisis and bring this FOC system down. We should rebuild shipping with the priority on support for bona fide flag states that take their responsibilities and obligations under international law seriously and are able to effectively regulate shipping and protect seafarers and the environment. **1**

● ● ●
'It feels far from alarmist to warn we could soon see empty shelves and queues at petrol stations'

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In brief

US hospital ships

Deck officer members of the US Masters, Mates & Pilots union (MM&P) will crew Military Sealift Command hospital ship Comfort, moored off Manhattan to treat patients with Covid-19. Comfort's sister ship, USNS Mercy is docked in San Pedro, California and will also treat patients with Covid-19.

Covid-19 online tool

An online assessment tool has been developed to support officers responsible for medical treatment on board ships and mobile offshore units. The Norwegian Centre for Maritime and Diving Medicine has developed the interactive, web-based decision support tool, which has information on assessment, treatment and follow-up of suspected Covid-19 at sea.

ECDIS blamed for grounding



Accident investigators have raised questions about the safety of electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS) in a report on the grounding of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) carrier off Indonesia in 2018. BSU said ECDIS is systemically not yet fully developed, approved as primary aid to navigation and displaces other important sources of information, such as sailing directions, without a consistent alternative.

Aerosol warning

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has warned of the dangers associated with condensed aerosol firefighting systems, after a fatal accident onboard a fishing vessel. Conor Mosely, 20, died during the installation of a FirePro condensed aerosol fire extinguishing system. **i**

ITF advises crews stuck at sea on how to get usual medicines

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has issued guidance to seafarers on how to ensure they have access to personal long-term medications during extended periods onboard due to the coronavirus crisis.



Prescription medicines can be hard to get at sea

Governments' refusals to lift crew change restrictions put in place due to Covid-19, have forced up to 150,000 seafarers globally to stay onboard after their contracts have expired.

The ITF says that, during the current crew change situation, seafarers should 'request, without delay, access to long-term medications that they require so that they can be purchased and delivered as essential items'.

As legislation differs by country and it is not always possible to obtain certain types of medicine, to use repeat prescriptions or to validate electronic prescriptions, the ITF has issued the following advice:

- A lert the ship's master of the need to obtain

a repeat prescription, providing accurate detail on the medication required, including correct dosage to assist the ship's request to the port agent, and provide information to the port authorities to obtain the medicine

- Where possible, obtain an electronic prescription

from your GP before arriving in a port or pass a hard copy of the prescription (if available) to allow the port agent to verify if it is accepted as evidence to purchase the medicine

- Contact an ITF inspector, seafarers' centre or mission to obtain information, delivery and purchase of medicines, if privacy and confidentiality is required and you do not wish to notify the ship's management

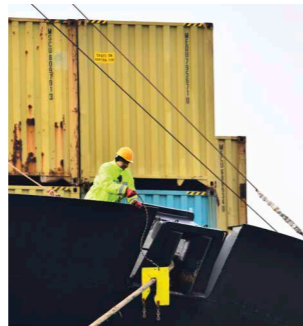
- If possible, seek supply from your country of residence. However, be aware that under the current restrictions, delivery may be affected by limitations and delays, parcels containing prescriptions may also be subject to quarantine **i**

Port workers can refuse unsafe work, says ITF

Port workers can refuse to work if they feel unsafe in the Covid-19 pandemic, according to new universal work site protocols for the protection of dockers and other keyworkers in ports.

The advice, issued by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), recommends the Covid-19 committees be set up in workplaces which would continuously review all preventative measures to limit the spread of coronavirus.

All changes to workplace safety procedures should be implemented through collective



Ports and terminals should have Covid-19 safety protocols in place

bargaining agreements and labour relations structures.

The ITF said all risk assessments must be conducted with union representatives,

including risks of increased workplace violence and harassment. Terminal operators were urged to broadcast all pertinent information and governmental guidance on Covid-19, and unions and management would collectively review Covid-19 guidelines.

'Individual responsibility cannot be used as a pretext to replace corporate responsibility,' the ITF said. 'Employers must recognise that workers are entitled to a safe and healthy workplace and the right to refuse unsafe work remains paramount.' **i**

COVID HELPLINE

Seafarers and their family members can contact Sailors' Society's Covid-19 helpline via www.wellnessatsea.org/covid-19

STAY SAFE, STAY ALERT

Public Health England's 'stay alert' web and social assets are now available online and can be found here: bit.ly/phestayalert



Tug crew safety in the Panama Canal has now been a major issue for four years without resolution

International unions condemn Panama Canal Authority's latest response to safety concerns

Nautilus and its international partners have expressed 'deep disappointment' at the Panama Canal Authority's (ACP) recent response to concerns about unsafe working practices.

Since the beginning of this year, the Union has been working with the International Transport Workers' Federation and the US Masters, Mates & Pilots union to put pressure on the Authority after the alarm was raised by the Panamanian tug captains' union UCOC.

UCOC has highlighted incidents – some fatal – dating back to April 2016, when the expanded Canal was opened. It argues that the Authority has endangered employees by cutting crew numbers and requiring over-long working hours. These measures, it says, have led to constant fatigue and prevented crew members from taking necessary breaks to use the toilet and eat.

However, when these points were put afresh to the employer by the international union partners, the response was dismissive. Ilya R. Espino de Marotta, the Authority's deputy administrator and acting vice president for transit, said that UCOC's concerns had already been successfully addressed.

Employment at the organisation is 'coveted' thanks to its favourable working conditions, Ms Marotta insisted.

In their 28 April response, the union partners write: 'Impartial observers familiar with safe working conditions in the maritime industry do not agree that your agency has maintained and enhanced safety standards for the Canal workforce. A record of workplace injuries, deaths and negative reports from the Panamanian Ministry of Health, US National Transportation Safety Board and the International Transport Workers' Federation contradict you. Even your agency's own study, conducted by The Maritime Group, determined that additional tug captains were needed to avoid increased risk to health and safety.'

The partners also point out: 'Over a dozen tug captains have been unjustly disciplined for raising safety concerns. Work rotations and schedules remain essentially unchanged despite the intense change in workload and job complexity caused by the new Canal. Defective equipment remains in service and your agency's response to the present Covid-19 pandemic has been woefully inadequate.'

'Our effort has been and will remain to bring world attention to the lamentable neglect and wholly unnecessary hazards you are subjecting your workers to on the Canal. It is only a question of time until tragedy will take place.' **i**

Alcohol-based hand sanitiser led to second degree burns

Seafarers have been warned to exercise caution when using alcohol-based hand sanitisers, after reports an offshore employee received second and third degree burns in one incident.

The employee used the hand gel sanitiser as per the current recommendations for Covid-19 personal hygiene requirements.

The individual touched a metal surface before the liquid sanitiser had fully evaporated. A build-up of static created an ignition source and the sanitiser ignited, resulting in an almost invisible flame on both hands.



Alcohol-based gels should be allowed to dry completely before touching metal surfaces, lighting cigarettes or other potential 'ignition sources', the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) said.

'In the interest of safety, remember that alcohol vapours can ignite if exposed to an ignition source, such as light switches or cigarette lighters.'

Seafarers who may be unsure about using alcohol-based sanitisers can wash hands with hot soapy water for the same effect as the hand gel.

The IOGP alert followed an incident at an oil company customer where an employee got second and third degree burns after using an alcohol based sanitiser, and touching a metal surface before the sanitiser had fully dried.

The full safety warning can be seen at: safetyzone.iogp.org



In brief

Rhine locks closed

Locks on the upper Rhine will be closed at night between 21:00 hrs and 05:00 hrs in a bid to stem the coronavirus in Europe. All locks between Kembs and Iffezheim are affected by this measure. Locks will reopen at night once special protective measures for personnel are no longer required and enough lock operating staff are available. Traffic control centres and reporting points on the Rhine will remain open.

Belgium drops manning

The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate (BMI) has dispensed with minimum safe manning requirements under Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) in response to the coronavirus outbreak. BMI has also ceased all surveys, inspections and audits of ships flying the Belgian flag and companies operating ships under the Belgian flag until further notice.

Italy cuts crew numbers

Italy will reduce temporarily the number of onboard crew based on passenger vessels. The arrangements will last for a maximum 90 days, limited to the period of the national health emergency. Ships with fewer crew would limit the possibilities of exposure to Covid-19 to seafarers, employer associations said.

Unions: deny Jones waiver

US unions have asked President Donald Trump to deny a Jones Act waiver request made by domestic oil and gas interests. Oil firms want financial stimulus, citing the impact of the crude oil price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia. The Master Mates & Pilots (MM&P) union and MIRAID joined a coalition of employers, maritime advocacy groups and trade associations which argued a waiver was unnecessary and contrary to the need to fight the coronavirus. [i](#)

IBF and ITF in global push for key worker status

Maritime unions and employers have issued a joint statement calling on governments to urgently define seafarers as key workers during the current global coronavirus pandemic, and to ensure they are exempt from travel restrictions so that crew changes can take place.

The statement issued by the International Bargaining Forum (IBF), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) warned: 'If solutions are not identified soon, then governments will be responsible for jeopardising the supply chain and the safety and wellbeing of the world's seafarers. Ultimately this will threaten the supply of the essential goods including medicines that their citizens desperately need.'

The IBF statement echoed one issued by The International Labour Organization (ILO) Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, which emphasised 'the critical importance of maritime trade to the global economy, which relies on shipping for 90 percent of all goods'.

Covid-19 is having a negative impact on the lives of seafarers, with most countries in lockdown and imposing travel restrictions, and the virtual collapse of scheduled air travel preventing regular crew changes and repatriations in general.

The IBF statement said: 'Seafarers in international shipping normally work and live onboard a ship for up to 10 months at a time, but now, due to the restrictions being introduced by many countries, these seafarers are forced to stay even longer because the majority of maritime employers are having to introduce a temporary freeze of crew changes.'

'We are acutely aware that where circumstances require extending maximum tour lengths for seafarers, this is only an emergency temporary solution that is acceptable only for a limited amount of time. We wish to reassure seafarers that the maritime industry is working hard to find solutions so that seafarers can be relieved and repatriated.' [i](#)

EU urged to ease crew changes during coronavirus pandemic

Maritime unions and shipowners have called on European governments to act together to facilitate crew changes during the global coronavirus pandemic.

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and European Community Shipowners Associations (ECSA) requested a 'concrete proposal' be put to the Transport Council for political agreement on designated ports for crew disembarkation and changes.

They want 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'.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) should help in the repatriation of these seafarers, as well as third country seafarers stranded in the EU due to closure of the borders of their home countries.

They welcomed the Commission's 8 April 2020

'Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships'.

The guidelines broadened the definition of 'maritime workers' to exempt from travel bans not just workers essential for the haulage of goods but a broader group of employees working at sea and onboard ships in the operation and maintenance of essential infrastructure and supply chains. [i](#)

SHARE THIS

CMA CGM Gemini crew recorded a YouTube video: 'We stay onboard for you'. Well worth watching and sharing: youtu.be/YOo8RtQtOrY

KEEP SAFE

Piracy and Armed robbery continue to thrive off West Africa according to the International Maritime Bureau: bit.ly/3en00sm



Ruby Princess at Overseas Passenger Terminal, Sydney, Australia Image: Dietmar Rabich, Wikimedia Commons

Oz investigators must respect fair treatment for seafarers

Australian police investigators into a possible Covid-19 related criminal case on the cruise ship Ruby Princess, have been urged to adhere to international standards on the fair treatment of seafarers in maritime incidents.

Nautilus director of legal services Charles Boyle has written to police investigating the circumstances surrounding the deaths of passengers or other persons connected with Ruby Princess expressing concern that lawyers for Carnival are advising they are representing both the company and employees.

Nautilus has retained independent maritime and coronial lawyers to assist members onboard. The union is also cooperating closely with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA).

Members onboard the Ruby Princess are advised to use the Union's independent legal service as it is not considered the company lawyers will represent their best interests.

'It is very clear, even at this stage, that the interests of the employees is likely to diverge from those of the company, and therefore

Nautilus would emphasise that it will be highly inappropriate, unethical and unprofessional if the police or other authorities engage with our members, while they are being represented by company lawyers in a situation where there is a clear conflict of interest,' said Mr Boyle.

Mr Boyle drew attention to the internationally accepted standards for the protection of seafarers in their involvement with law enforcement authorities, as set out in the joint IMO/ILO guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the event of a maritime accident.

'Australia is a member of both the IMO and the ILO, both of which are specialised agencies of the UN in their respective fields,' said Mr Boyle.

Guidelines for the port or coastal State also provides 'that seafarers are, where necessary, provided interpretation services, and are advised of their right to independent legal advice, are provided access to independent legal advice, are advised of their right not to incriminate themselves and their right to remain silent, and, in the case of seafarers who have been taken into custody, ensure that independent legal advice is provided.' [i](#)

READ MORE

Ruby Princess crew received humanitarian support with care packages delivered to each of the 1,100 crew by AIMPE members: bit.ly/3bj6idQ

JOIN THE FIGHT

ITF wants repatriation of cruise crew from as many as 18 vessels stranded off Australia in mid-April, calling it a humanitarian crisis in waiting: bit.ly/3eq0XLI

In brief

IMO guide to crew changes

Nautilus has urged all International Maritime Organization (IMO) member states to follow guidance on crew changes and repatriation during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the guidance refers to effective screening and protocols for seafarers embarking ships, the crew already onboard must also be protected. Member states must do everything possible to ensure the availability of testing kits and make seafarers the high priority groups when testing.

ILO seafarer protection

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has fired a warning shot to governments and employers urging them to respect international labour standards for seafarers and to 'keep a human-centred approach' for all workers during the coronavirus pandemic. Seafarers should be granted shore leave to benefit their health and well-being, and consistent with operational requirements, it said.

ITF fights for workers

Nautilus has welcomed a move by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) to ensure transport workers' rights around the world are upheld during the Covid-19 outbreak. The ITF issued 'global demands' to governments and employers to recognise the essential role of seafarers and other transport workers, and to enable them to go about their business.

EC 'Green Lane' system

The European Commission has approved a 'Green Lane' system for cross-border movement of freight to ensure the delivery of essential supplies in response to moves from several EU countries to close their borders during the Covid-19 pandemic. Transport workers must also be allowed to cross borders. This includes seafarers and inland waterways crews. [i](#)



In brief

#HeroesAtSea

Ships masters around the world celebrated May Day in support of 'heroes at sea' highlighting seafarers' vital role in the global supply chain. Ships' captains sounded their horns in port at 12.00 hrs local on 1 May 2020. Nautilus members on social media used the hashtag #HeroesAtSea.

Crew test positive

More than half of the 50-person crew of the Military Sealift Command (MSC) fleet vessel USNS Leroy Grumman tested positive for Covid-19. The entire crew was quarantined until 20 May. The ship has been drydocked at Boston Ship Repair since January. Five MSC ships have now become infected with coronavirus.

Navy League relief

The US Navy League and the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department are lobbying Congress to demand that the next Covid-19 aid package includes an emergency allowance for ships in the Maritime Security Program. They say without assistance, operators will not be able to maintain vessels in the readiness status needed by the Department of Defense.

Seafarers' certificates

The Paris MOU on Port State Control has amended its Covid-19 guidelines, extending the validity of seafarers' certificates for more than three months. The aim is to ease the difficulties seafarers face in revalidating certificates and operational challenges due to port restrictions.

Piracy warning

US maritime authorities have warned crew to remain vigilant in the Gulf Of Mexico after five attacks by pirates and armed robbers in April. At least 20 fishing vessels and 35 oil platforms and offshore supply vessels have been targeted since January 2018. [i](#)

Kitack Lim: member states must repatriate crew as a matter of urgency
Image: IMO



LATEST NEWS & INSIGHT



Maritime regulator draws up protocols for crew changes

Governments and their relevant national authorities should do everything possible to allow crew changes to happen, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) which has endorsed new protocols designed to lift barriers to crew repatriation.

The wide-ranging protocols contain recommendations to maritime administrations and other relevant national authorities such as health, customs, immigration, border control, seaport and civil aviation authorities.

They address the roles of shipping companies, agents and representatives, including crew agencies and seafarers, and extend to seaports, airports and airlines.

IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim urged states to implement the protocols. 'In view of the importance of international maritime transport to the resilience of the global economy at this critical time, Governments are strongly encouraged to take urgent action.'

Exempt physicians from port restrictions

Port States are urged to ensure physicians and ship inspectors are exempt where possible from national restrictions so they can help renew medical certificates for seafarers and ship sanitation certificates during the pandemic.

Medical certificates are required under the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) and the

G20 governments have committed to minimising disruptions to trade and global supply chains, and have identified the need to prioritise keeping air and sea logistics networks open and functioning efficiently.

Shipping companies and airlines are cooperating to meet this priority by ensuring that reliable operations can continue throughout the coronavirus pandemic. However, these networks will come to a halt if replacement ship crews are unavailable for duty due to national restrictions.

This critical issue is increasingly taking on a humanitarian dimension for those crews which have already spent many months at sea, and which urgently need to be repatriated to their home countries and replaced.

Service periods onboard ships cannot be extended indefinitely due to the dangerous impacts this has for the wellbeing of ship crew and safe ship operations. [i](#)

Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), and are valid for a maximum of two years.

If a medical certificate expires during a voyage, then it will be valid until the next port of call provided a medical examiner is available and the certificate doesn't exceed three months beyond its expired date.

Ports should take a pragmatic

approach to renewing, where a medical examiner is required, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said.

Any personnel allowed onboard should receive proper training and personal protective equipment (PPE). [i](#)

SOCIAL CHANGE

European Transport Workers Federation (ETF) advocates for urgent crew changes: bit.ly/3g1pxoT

TAKE PART

A London university is researching mental health effects of Covid-19. Take the survey here: www.covid19study.org



FOR COVID-19 FAQ

NAUTILUS AT WORK



JNG agrees June 15 deadline for global crew changes

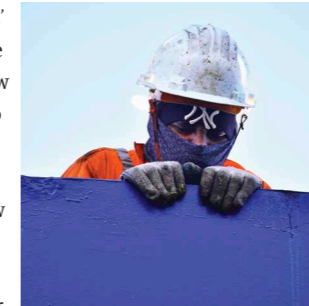
An influential group of seafarers' representatives and owners have called time on extensions to crew contracts and urged countries to step up crew changes.

The Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) said the suspension of crew changes was no longer feasible. Further contract extensions would be detrimental to seafarer mental health and would put their safety, the safety of ships and the environment at risk.

Governments will have 30 days until June 15 to implement safe crew change protocols set out by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), (see opposite page).

'Fatigue should not be underestimated,' JNG partners said in a letter signed by ITF maritime co-ordinator Jacqueline Smith and JNG joint secretary and IMEC CEO Francesco Gargiulo.

'Stress-related sickness on seafarers and their inability to consistently access medical support



Bring them home: crew fatigue a growing risk
Image: Danny Cornelissson

ashore may negatively impact on the commercial viability of ship operations.'

The JNG agreed to support:

- a 30-day transition period for crew changes
- seafarers who continue to work beyond expired contracts should be financially compensated
- seafarers waiting to be deployed should be given advanced salary payments
- seafarers should be provided

with extra bandwidth and internet access while onboard

- crew who have been onboard longest will be prioritised for repatriation regardless of rank

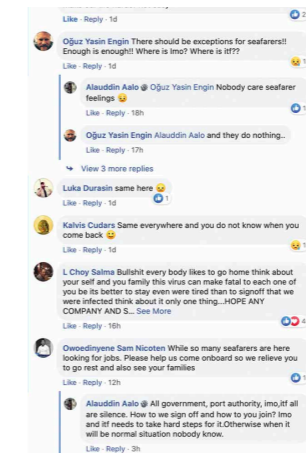
The JNG is made up of the International Maritime Employers Council (IMEC), International Mariners Management Association of Japan, Korean Shipowners Association, Evergreen, and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). [i](#)

Seafarers in social media crew change plea

Seafarers unable to be relieved from duty due to Covid-19 restrictions have taken to social media to highlight their plight, indicating how the prolonged time away from home was affecting their mental health.

Governments refusals to lift crew change restrictions have forced up to 150,000 seafarers globally to stay onboard after their contracts have expired.

Seafarer Alauddin Aalo took to Facebook to say he had been onboard for 13 months and pleaded for a crew change. 'Please do something about crew change restrictions. There are so many crew waiting for



Seafarers facing extended periods away from home due to Covid-19

repatriation. I feel so tired and I am badly missing my family.'

His post prompted a flurry of replies from crew, some of whom said they had also been onboard for even longer.

Moi Gyi has been onboard for 15 months: 'I miss home... But my ship only trades near Taiwan... also Taiwan was lockdown so far.'

Alexander Gomez said: 'Pls help us. My contract has expired.'

Many seafarers agreed they had been forgotten and their appeals were being ignored.

One crew member said regulator International Maritime Organization (IMO) needed to put pressure on all governments to do more to help, or else they should 'all drop anchor'. [i](#)

GET TWEETING

Help promote your union to the international community by retweeting our content via Twitter: [@nautilusint](https://twitter.com/nautilusint)

IN THE KNOW

Members can join our lively members-only facebook group for fast access to news and information: bit.ly/fbnautilus

ITF message to seafarers: 'we will not give up until you are all safely home'

Seafarers have been honoured for their hard work and professionalism throughout the global pandemic by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

ITF Seafarers' Section chair David Heindel thanked seafarers for continuing to transport vital goods and keeping global trade moving during the Covid-19 pandemic. 'Without your sacrifice and the sacrifices of many other transport workers, the world would have been in a much worse state and likely would have come to a complete standstill.'

After weeks of intense lobbying by international unions, a 'roadmap' for governments to facilitate crew changes was agreed. This culminated in the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) 12-step plan on how to 'restart' crew changes so that seafarers can disembark, and fresh crews can be deployed.

This does not automatically mean that restrictions will be lifted immediately, however, since each government must put in place processes and procedures for crew changes to happen, but it is a step in the right direction, said Mr Heindel.

'For people who have not worked on a ship, it is hard to understand what it is like to live and work for six, eight or 10 months onboard. For seafarers it is a lifestyle, but when contracts end, seafarers are ready to go home and have an absolute right under the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC) to do so,' said Mr Heindel.

'The global community must take the collective responsibility and not only acknowledge seafarers as "key workers" but meaningfully demonstrate that their rights as enshrined in international and national legislation such as the ILO MLC are respected.' [i](#)

90 MINUTES THAT COULD SAVE SEAFARERS' LIVES

City of Glasgow College has developed a pioneering programme of blended learning to teach seafarers about the dangers of oxygen depletion

In February 2018, the aggregates carrier Sumiei docked at Banjarmasin Port in Indonesia. Four port workers entered the cargo hold shortly after the hatches were opened. They didn't re-emerge. A port paramedic went in after them and was overcome. All five were taken to hospital. They were found to have died from lack of oxygen.

Year on year, seafarers die from entering enclosed spaces depleted of oxygen. This can be caused by rusting steel, but also by a wide variety of cargoes such as wood, coal or grains.

It's not something new. As far back as the 1960s the UK Department of Transport issued guidance on entering 'dangerous spaces'.

Despite safety campaigns, and an increased awareness, seafarers continue to enter spaces unprepared or become a casualty when attempting to rescue a stricken shipmate.

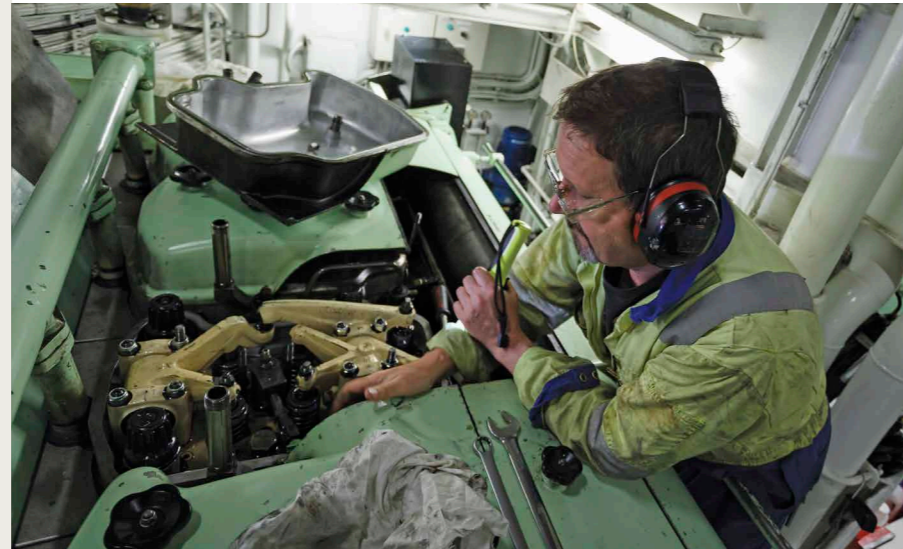
In 2018 City of Glasgow College's STEM & Innovation team received funding from the Maritime Education Foundation (MEF) to develop a pioneering programme of blended learning to teach seafarers about the dangers of oxygen depletion.

Developing the course was part of a wider research programme by Dr Manhal Alnasser, a lecturer in professional maritime engineering at the college, together with consultant marine engineer Daniel Burke, a former principal of Cork College in Ireland. The research aims to determine the rate of oxygen depletion in confined spaces that are typically found onboard ships.

Dr Alnasser explains: 'Our research investigates how quickly an oxygen-depleted atmosphere is created in models that simulate different situations aboard a ship, eg a cargo hold or a chain locker. We demonstrated for the first time that it is significantly faster than previously thought and now have clear figures for how fast a dangerous space is created.'

These findings have now been published in the Journal of Marine Engineering & Technology.

Dr Linus Reichenbach, project manager for



The second engineer onboard an offshore oil platform supply vessel (PSV) in the North Sea, in the process of changing a fuel injector Image: Getty images/ DJDPHphotographics

Innovation & STEM at City of Glasgow College, with responsibility for managing both research and course development, said: 'It is an invisible danger. Oxygen depletion has no smell, no alarm, to warn people off. In an enclosed space, you will be unaware you are not breathing oxygen, because you will still be able to take a breath. We want to make sure seafarers have the knowledge and awareness they need to avoid putting their lives at risk.'

'The online course we have developed aims to raise awareness of the dangers. We want seafarers, regardless of the vessel type they work on, to understand that a situation which may look safe, may not be. Basing our course on peer reviewed research adds credibility and a new dimension to visualise the dangers to students.'

Dr Alnasser points out that oxygen depletion can occur in any enclosed space, as well as spaces adjacent to an enclosed area.

'We also researched adjacent spaces and found that when the oxygen level drops in an enclosed space such as a cargo hold, it can also affect adjacent stairwells and passageways,' he says. 'It is really alarming, and the course includes real life examples to demonstrate the dangers to students.'

The research being carried out by City of Glasgow College, while driving education, has

potential implications for the wider industry in the future. It is supported by an industry steering group comprising Captain Kevin Slade, a former chair of the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB); Gareth Mathias from Clyde Training Solutions; and Neville Jayant from SeaTec UK Ltd.

'Our aim is to ensure those who are new into the industry learn about oxygen depletion from the beginning. We hope our research will change the ways entering enclosed spaces is taught, and we hope that ultimately our research and teaching materials will influence the International Maritime Organization (IMO) guidelines,' explained Dr Reichenbach.

Dr Alnasser said: 'We took the project from early stage investigations, involving basic manometers and models made of pipes, to bespoke equipment and high-level sensory technology to ensure accuracy.'

The oxygen depletion course has now been rolled out through an online learning platform in order to reach a wider audience. The course is currently under consideration for recognition by the MNTB.

'It is free and accessible to all and includes a detailed overview of our research results. Ultimately it is 90 minutes that could save lives,' said Dr Alnasser. **T**



WAVES OF CHANGE

Technological change could lead to a renaissance in European seafaring – if we prepare now. A session at the 2020 European Shipping Week explored how the EU-funded SkillSea project aims to future-proof European training and education

Digital technology is transforming shipping and seafaring and offers a chance for Europe to give its maritime professionals a new competitive advantage, a European Commission official told the European Shipping Week 'Waves of change' session.

Pantelis Lamprianidis, a policy officer with the transport directorate DG MOVE, said the sweeping changes are affecting onboard roles such as the shipmaster and are posing serious questions about the future of maritime training.

As the International Maritime Organization (IMO) begins work to revise the STCW Convention in response to these developments, he suggested that Europe could evaluate areas in which to provide EU seafarers with new skills that would enhance their global competitiveness.

Lidia Rossi, from the EU-funded SkillSea project, told how the four-year programme – which began in January 2019 – is aiming to develop 'future-proof' training and education for European maritime professionals.

Nautilus International policy advisor Andrew Linington stressed the importance of properly involving seafarers in the introduction of new technologies and the development of new training programmes.

Much of the debate over 'smart' and autonomous shipping has been driven by manufacturers and it is vital that new systems are introduced in a way that works with seafarers rather than against them.

Seafarers are not scared of technological change, he said.

A Nautilus Federation survey had shown that well over 80% of seafarer respondents consider that new technology has huge potential

▲ Susie Bogojevic-Simonsen of the SIMAC training centre in Denmark at the SkillSea presentation Image: Andrew Linington

to improve the quality of their work – especially if used to reduce such perennial problems as excessive paperwork, fatigue and entry into dangerous spaces.

Mr Linington warned that the accelerating pace of maritime technology is posing a big challenge to seafarer training systems, with research for the SkillSea project showing that many officers believe that STCW requirements are outmoded and fail to reflect modern-day shipboard operations.

But while there is a clear need to develop new training programmes, he stressed that there must also be a strong focus on retraining for serving seafarers.

World Maritime University technical officer Dr Tiago Fonseca criticised the lack of cooperation between stakeholders in the shipping industry and said there has been a failure to engage seafarers – the end users – in the



development and introduction of technology.

'Technology can bring benefits, but it is not a given,' he cautioned. 'Onboard communications could be used to improve seafarers' connectivity with home, but it's not always good for workers because of supervision and intrusion by shipping companies.'

While air traffic control works well in aviation, with ground control giving the orders, Mr Fonseca said fleet operation centres are presently something of a compromise – with an unresolved challenge of whether the ultimate responsibility lies ashore or on the ship.

ETF policy officer Lotte Ockerman said the industry should take a 'human-centred' approach to technological innovation and think proactively about the skills required for the seafarer of the future.

Professor Hans Petter Hildre, from the NTNU university in Norway, said the €4m SkillSea project is seeking to do this – and

its research has already identified important training needs, in such areas as digital skills, handling Excel sheets, transferring data from one system to another.

The growth of environmental regulation, the adoption of new fuels and new power systems, and strict emissions controls are also creating significant demand for seafarers to have better training in 'green' technologies and equipment, he added.

SkillSea researchers have spoken with key industry leaders, who have given a clear message about the need for change, Prof Hildre noted.

'Seafarers will have very different work in future – the work tasks are changing and the teams will be very different,' he explained. 'STCW is lagging very far behind this, and the gap is growing very fast.'

Susie Bogojevic-Simonsen, from the SIMAC training centre in Denmark, said the SkillSea project is developing new educational packages for seafarers, with the

▲ Lena Dyring, Adrien Alaux, Kim Levka and Mikael Lindmark during the ETF's session on improving the attractiveness of European seafaring
Image:
Andrew Linington

emphasis on transferability, sustainability and adaptability. The initiative is seeking to promote cooperation between companies and educational institutes to ensure that seafarers are given the skills they need and can move easily into jobs in the wider maritime cluster ashore, she added.

Maltese MEP Josianne Cutajar suggested that 'smart' ships will be a critical factor in the shipping industry achieving its goal of halving its environmental impact over the next 30 years.

'This will also mean new and different skills for seafarers, and the SkillSea project is a great example of what you can achieve through Erasmus,' she added. 'It ties the knots absolutely between the industry, the authorities and the whole education system, and policy-makers have to respond by providing the right incentives and opportunities to attract more talent to the maritime sector. New and different expertise is needed, and the industry can make itself more attractive to new talent.' **1**

WORKING TOGETHER ON SKILLS TRAINING

Britain may be leaving the EU, but British shipping will continue with many partnerships in Europe – aided of course by transboundary union Nautilus International. **ANDREW LININGTON** reports from Brussels

How can the shipping industry recruit and retain more European seafarers, and what skills will they need as technology transforms the industry?

These questions – and many more – were hotly debated during a series of sessions held as part of the 2020 European Shipping Week in Brussels, and they came as new figures revealed that just 220,000 of the estimated 580,000 seafarers serving on ships operating in the EU are EU/EEA nationals.

Opening the 'Safe and social shipping' event, European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) maritime transport policy officer Lotte Ockerman warned that it is very difficult to attract young EU seafarers and encourage them to stay at sea when working conditions are under constant pressure.

She said the ETF has developed the concept of a European Maritime Space for Socially Sustainable Shipping. This seeks to create a level playing field for shipping in EU waters, and to ensure that European seafarers are treated in the same way as shore-based workers.

Terje Hernes Pettersen, a lawyer with the Norwegian Seafarers' Union, highlighted the way in which current competitive pressures have impacted his members. With wages for Filipino ABs amounting to barely one-seventh of the rate for a Norwegian AB, many of the country's owners

ETF maritime transport policy officer Lotte Ockerman
Image:
Andrew Linington



have flagged out to cut their employment costs.

Mr Pettersen said the proportion of Norwegian-owned tonnage on the country's mainland register has slumped from 65% to just 20% over the past 15 years. More than 1,400 Norwegian seafarers have lost their jobs in the past three years alone, he added.

Kim Levka, a union rep at Solstad Offshore, described the situation as awful. 'Many of the Norwegian seafarers who have been replaced by cheaper crews have been with their company for many years and have been loyal to the company,' he added. 'It is like being stabbed in the back.'

Jose Christian Castano, from the Spanish union CCOO, said things were as bad in his country, with the

national fleet reduced from more than 800 ships to just 115 today.

'Flags of convenience have been the laboratory for today's globalisation and the EU must revive regulations to establish decent conditions for seafarers on European ships,' he warned.

Mikael Lindmark, from the Swedish union SEKO, said research among his members found that 50% are so tired after their working day that they are unable to do anything else, and one-fifth of women members reported being treated disrespectfully. Unless such problems are tackled, shipping will face a long struggle to attract bright young new entrants, he warned.

On the positive side, Mr Lindmark welcomed the Responsible Shipping Initiative, under which a growing number of cargo owners have committed to use only ships with demonstrably high standards.

Hannah Vik Furuseth, from the Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law, described research which had showed that it would be possible, under both European and international law, for member states to impose regulations governing working conditions of seafarers serving on ships in their coastal waters and cabotage trades.

Adrien Alaux, from the Université d'Angers, told the meeting that state aid for the shipping industry should be conditional on owners' commitment to the employment and training of EU seafarers. **1**

Raising the standards

The International Maritime Organization's STCW requirements for seafarer training have not been reviewed for 10 years, during which there has been massive technological change in shipping. Meanwhile, employers have stubbornly continued to prioritise cost over competence, and flag state enforcement of standards has remained patchy. In a major new research exercise, trade unions in the worldwide Nautilus Federation group surveyed nearly 1,000 seafarers on what is and isn't working with STCW, and what changes they would like to see. **HELEN KELLY** reports

The STCW Convention and Code are not fit for purpose and should be revised, according to the 2020 Nautilus Federation survey of close to 1,000 seafarers.

Known in full as the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping, STCW is the global benchmark for seafarer training set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). But it was last reviewed 10 years ago – a lifetime, considering the advances in technology.

'Training should be future-proofed to respond to the rise of automation and digitalisation and the predicted transformational effects that these will have on the role of crew,'

Nautilus Federation director Mark Dickinson said. The Nautilus Federation is a group of 21 like-minded trade unions in the global shipping industry.

Respondents to the Nautilus Federation survey identified several areas currently lacking in STCW, including IT skills, soft skills and interpersonal skills, familiarity with modern marine equipment and knowledge of new propulsion systems and fuels.

IT computing and networking were identified as key skills that will be in great demand in future, and as a result, there was recognition that the role of the electro-technical officer (ETO) will become increasingly important. Many

▲ Officer on the bridge
Image: Oleksandr Kalinichenko

respondents suggested that traditional distinctions between deck, engine and electrical departments will become obsolete and that seafarers will need to be multi-skilled.

The seafarers surveyed were sceptical about the concept of a remote-controlled ship operated from shore, but felt strongly that if the concept does become reality, shore controllers should be experienced mariners qualified to at least officer of the watch (OOW) standard, possibly with additional training and education on top.

Most respondents felt that STCW would continue to be the appropriate place to regulate those in control of merchant ships – on land or at sea.

Questions of competency

One reason often cited by industry for a need to overhaul STCW is a perceived lack of competency in a significant percentage of certified crew.

Deficiencies in basic skills, seamanship, experience and common sense were flagged as major problems by respondents to the survey. These are all competencies which seafarers should have on completing a training programme that meets the minimum requirements of STCW, which suggests that the problem is not related to the standards themselves but their implementation.

Indeed, feedback indicated that the primary reason for a perceived lack of competency among seafarers was inconsistency in implementation and enforcement of the minimum requirements by flag states, and ship owners knowingly prioritising crew cost over competence.

This has led to a situation where seafarers' competence is being called in to question by employers, while administrations that attempt to rectify the situation by implementing a higher standard are put at a competitive disadvantage by those same employers.

Working conditions onboard play a significant part in the development of seafarers and the quality of training they receive. While this is in large part down to individual shipowners, STCW has a role, as it is the convention from which maximum working hours are derived.

Excessive working hours and insufficient crew levels prevent officers from investing enough time in cadets' training and development. Poor working conditions contribute significantly to a high rate of turnover among crew, which often leads to the loss of highly experienced seafarers and to seafarers being promoted before they have gained enough experience to carry out more senior roles.

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'Training should be future-proofed to respond to the rise of automation and digitalisation and the predicted transformational effects that these will have on the role of crew' Nautilus Federation director **Mark Dickinson**

There was support for raising the overall standard of STCW training, providing it is properly enforced to ensure a 'level playing field' for seafarers as well as ship owners.

Is STCW fit for purpose?

Some 45% of respondents felt that the STCW in its current form is not fit for purpose, with 39% saying it is fit for purpose, and 16% unsure.

When asked what was most lacking from the STCW Convention and Code as a whole, respondents suggested that the differing standards between flag states are the biggest issue and this is caused by lack of enforcement.

As one officer noted: 'International standards vary too greatly. While many international centres provide training to a high standard, many also just provide training to the bare minimum requirements. This leads to a skills gap between officers and crew who have trained in more reputable establishments and those who haven't.'

Respondents also expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the hours of work and rest regime that is permitted under the Code and the lack of any prescriptive crewing requirements.

One respondent stated: 'Rest hours – this is the biggest issue we face ... rest hour rules and the enforcement of them need major improvement.'

There was clear consensus among respondents that this situation is detrimental to the quality of training that seafarers receive, with only 27% believing that crewing levels are enough to allow cadets/trainees to receive adequate training, mentoring and supervision onboard.

It is worth noting that 71% believed simulator training cannot be considered an adequate replacement for seetime.

There were also suggestions that the STCW in its current form is outdated and

does not relate to the roles as experienced by the modern seafarer.

One deck officer commented: 'The equipment and plant I am expected to maintain on my vessel is above and beyond anything I am officially holding STCW training for. I basically need an engineering CoC as well.'

A master mariner stated: 'There is very out of date stuff being taught for mates and masters. It is only there to pass the exam and has no real use in the industry now... It does not relate to the modern job now as it stands.'

The areas where it was felt the Convention and Code were most lacking were:

- enforcement/differing standards
- hours of rest and crewing
- outdated topics
- the revalidation/renewal process
- general level required too low
- the lack of mandatory requirement for electro-technical officers (ETOs)

26%
felt that most seafarers have a level of competency below that required for their role

Skills gaps

Seafarers were asked whether competency levels were adequate for the roles in which colleagues onboard were employed. The responses showed:

- **51%** believed that some seafarers have the appropriate level of competency but not all
- **26%** felt that most seafarers have a level of competency lower than required for the role that they are in
- **21%** agreed that most seafarers have the appropriate level of competency
- **2%** felt that most seafarers have a higher level of competency than required for their role

There was a very strong feeling that any lack of competency by some seafarers was due to inconsistency in STCW implementation among IMO member states, and that the training programmes of certain countries produced seafarers of lower competency than others. →



Companies will say 'safety is our utmost priority', but they don't add 'as long it doesn't cost money'

One deck officer stated: 'Certain countries issue tickets far too easily and the standard of training provided differs vastly from country to country!'

Another officer pointed out: 'Many maritime academies are not providing courses which meet the STCW standard. Why is there no independent body to make sure every training centre is meeting the minimum requirements?'

A large proportion of respondents believed this was a problem that shipowners were aware of yet were willing to accept, choosing crew purely on cost rather than competency – or as one respondent put it: 'Cheap, cheaper, cheapest. Transport in general is not allowed to cost money.'

Many respondents questioned how claims made by shipowners regarding their desire for highly trained, competent crew stacked up against their crewing models: 'Shipowners will hire everybody with a certificate, valid or not. Shipowners don't care about skills; as long the number of people onboard the vessel compare with the Safe Manning Cert, it's fine for them. Money is all. Companies will say "safety is our utmost priority", but they don't add "as long it doesn't cost money".'

Quality failures

The idea that shipowners are failing to invest sufficiently in competent crew was backed up by the three-quarters of respondents who felt that owners are not doing enough to ensure that there are enough quality training berths available to meet future demand.

Respondents also highlighted a lack of practical experience/seasite as a major issue, both in terms of the minimum seasite required for a certificate of competency (CoC), with only 41% believing that this was adequate, and the amount of experience in rank that individuals had before being promoted.

One respondent stated: 'Fast tracking through the ranks is an issue. Money could be a big motivator to take on jobs you're not actually ready for but do have the

certification to do so. Also, the lack of seafarers in this industry can force companies to promote people that aren't actually ready yet.'

A second officer commented: 'There is too high a turnover; there are fewer and fewer incentives to stay at sea throughout one's career so people with less experience are promoted into higher ranks quicker to be able to fill the gaps.'

Training gaps

Seafarers report significant dissatisfaction with having to pay for additional STCW training, which leads to courses being viewed as an unnecessary expense or a 'scam'.

One respondent noted: 'It is generally considered by the seafarers I work with that there is no real benefit from having the refresher training at five year intervals when it is a requirement on a regular basis to carry out training onboard for firefighting, lifeboats, etc. It additionally adds a considerable financial burden to seafarers as most companies do not cover the costs of this repeated training.'

Only 39% of seafarers in the survey believed that STCW currently covers the skills needed for today's maritime industry and a significant proportion reported that basic IT skills are not covered at all. One respondent said: 'Better IT skills are needed. There are still seafarers leaving school who can't make a simple Excel sheet to calculate 1+1.'

Many want an increased focus on interpersonal and social skills and training in how to recognise the signs of stress and fatigue in colleagues. One seafarer said: 'Future officers need to recognise when personnel are tired/stressed due to overwork or long hours.'

This perhaps reflects that seafarers are particularly sensitive to the importance of recognising mental health issues as they are more likely to be prevalent in the difficult conditions experienced at sea.

A failure to properly train seafarers in the use of ancillary equipment onboard could lead to incorrect operation, respondents said.

Training on newly installed equipment including scrubbers and ballast water management systems had been virtually non-existent for many seafarers. The

training gaps in STCW identified by respondents include:

- computing/IT skills
- people skills (social, communication etc)
- basic practical skills
- modern machinery
- new propulsion systems/fuels
- ballasting
- business skills

Future-proofing qualifications

The increased importance of more advanced electrical and digital skills translated into strong support for the mandatory carriage of certificated ETOs, with a massive 80% of seafarers agreeing that this would become necessary.

As equipment becomes more technologically complex, the traditional division of roles into deck, engine and electrical may cease to be appropriate.

An officer in the survey said: 'There needs to be specific training of new/incoming technologies. Technologies such as augmented reality have the potential to overwhelm

unfamiliar users, but used properly will greatly aid in a navigation officer's ability to identify causes of concern.'

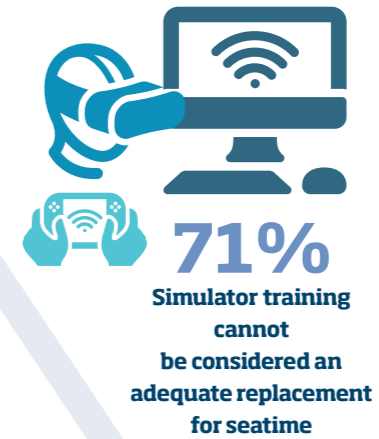
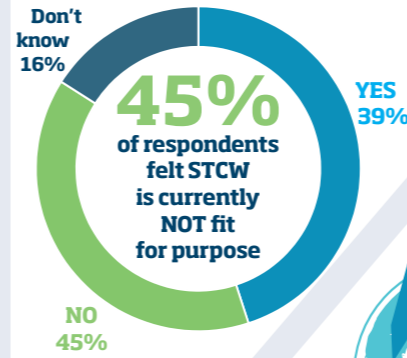
A move to something more like a dual ticket system may be of consideration for the future. 'If automation/smart technologies develop to a point of requiring less bridge time this would allow for crew to carry out other duties. Basic ETO training may be appropriate for maintaining some of these systems.'

As equipment becomes more sophisticated there will be an increased need for type-specific training on individual systems.

One respondent noted: 'There will need to be more training on equipment. You see now that too many accidents are caused by, for instance, not knowing ECDIS sufficiently.' The new skills that will be required were identified as:

- general IT/systems/networking
- system-specific training
- increased academic/soft skills
- dual-qualified/multi-discipline seafarers
- cyber security

IT networking and computing are seen as key skills for the future



Shore-based training

It is possible that ships of the future will be remotely operated from shore. This opens several questions as to what qualifications a shore controller should have and who should be responsible for implementing and enforcing standards.

A large majority of seafarers felt shore-based controllers would require at least some practical experience at sea, with the most popular view being a minimum qualification of OOW level.

A significant number felt that Master Unlimited would be the appropriate level but questioned where the long-term supply of experienced mariners would come from if the concept was widely adopted: 'Shipboard experience is a must. Ideally a master's licence, although this is not sustainable as no one would be able to advance if all ships were autonomous.'

There was also significant support for the idea that additional training would be required on top of maritime experience, with one respondent commenting: 'They would need to be the same as a master mariner, plus specialist training regarding automation technology.'

Some even felt that entirely new programmes would need to be developed for shore-based controllers, which could include: 'A specific training package drawn from all three major specialisations that currently exist (ETO, deck & ME) so system diagnostic can effectively be conducted while maintaining traditional navigational safety oversight.'

Some 68% of respondents said the IMO should regulate training for shore-based ship controllers, and 15% said that this should be the flag state's responsibility.

Next steps

1. The IMO should carry out a comprehensive review of the STCW Convention to ensure that it remains relevant to the modern shipping industry and to raise the overall minimum acceptable standard for competent seafarers.

2. There should be a review into the system of reporting and monitoring of implementation of the STCW with the aim of introducing a system whereby the information contained in MSC.1/Circ.1163 (STCW white list) can be considered a useful and reliable indicator of the quality of the training provided by parties to the Convention.

3. There should be recognition of the responsibilities of ship owners and managers in the training of seafarers which include providing enough time to obtain the necessary experience and a working environment conducive to effective training and mentoring. In this regard, hours of work and rest and crewing should be considered within the scope of the STCW review.

4. Implementation of any amendments to STCW should be arranged in such a way so as to minimise the financial burden on individual seafarers.

5. Recognition should be given to the increasing importance of the role of ETO by its inclusion on the safe manning certificate and the development of a senior ETO certificate of competency.

6. The principle should be established that any shore-side controller should be qualified at least up to OOW level and the standards for their training and certification should be incorporated within the STCW.

CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

The Nautilus Federation surveyed close to 1,000 maritime professionals from more than 18 different countries. The questionnaire was developed to give a voice to the maritime professionals who will be most affected by any future changes to industry training requirements.

The roles most represented within the survey were captains/masters (27%), deck officers (22%), chief engineers (21%) and engineering officers (12%).

Positions held by other respondents include deckhand and bosun, cadet, superintendent, university lecturer and legal professional.

Most of the participants were employed in the main sectors of cargo vessels, containers, ferries, tankers, cruise and offshore supply. But there were also significant numbers serving on tugs, car carriers and yachts, resulting in a broad and balanced view of opinions from across the industry. Survey participants came from more than 18 countries including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Norway, Sweden and New Zealand.

Download the full survey report by scanning this QR code:





COVID-19 CONSEQUENCES

Nautilus member fears for crew safety as his employer insists on a return to work in Brazil. **Helen Kelly** reports

Whilst some Nautilus members are stuck onboard their ships struggling to get home, others are stranded at home contemplating how safe it is for them to return to work.

One member who is working for an offshore services company that operates in Brazil, who asked not to be named for fear of retribution from his employer, has spoken to Nautilus about his concerns around quarantine measures and extensions to trips which are making him reconsider returning to work at all.

'The reassurances which I have received from my company in light of client instructions have left me concerned about hygiene, safety and the mental health of joiners whilst in isolation,' he said.

'We are being asked to spend two weeks in a Brazilian hotel prior to joining the vessel on 50% pay. It is not clear yet if we will be provided with decent rooms with balconies or even

in a hotel with anything more than basic facilities. We don't know if hotel staff will be taking a high level of health precautions or if they remain on site or travel home every day – increasing the level of risk.

'We are expected to accept half pay for this period and then join the vessel for an extended six-week rotation. We are then asked to volunteer to remain in Brazil during our leave, again on half pay. Something we could be forced to do if we cannot disembark or transit the country.'

The member said there is little incentive for him or his colleagues to work within the proposed restrictions, and that his company has underestimated the situation in Brazil. 'The UK Foreign Office advice says that the Brazilian authorities will not permit foreign crew disembarkation in Brazilian ports, but our company appears to believe it does not apply to them as we are not a visiting cargo vessel, we are working in Brazilian offshore waters.

Image:
Getty Images/
shironosov

'Not only are we at risk of contagion travelling to and from Brazil, there are other concerns for our personal safety in the event of almost inevitable social unrest in Brazil.'

The member has repeatedly called on his company to alleviate his and other Nautilus members' questions and concerns and has asked the Union to intervene on their behalf to investigate ways of improving pay and conditions due during isolation.

'As seafarers we understand the need to maintain our service and most of us are ready and willing to step up; however, I am unsure if our type of vessel is seen as necessary at this time, as we are not directly involved in production or transportation of oil.

'This is placing a strain on both myself and my family and I am considering resignation instead of taking this huge risk by travelling. Now more than ever, I realise that my safety and that of my family is the most important thing.'

MESSAGE FROM A MYSTERY MASTER

@TheSecretCapt blogs for Nautilus from his ship in the Middle East about his experience of being in lockdown onboard, unable to return home to family

Hello everyone! How are you all doing out there in this crazy world?

I keep seeing some positive words from them 'the industry'. But nothing feeding down to the crew stuck out here on the ships

What is your shipping company/crewing agency doing for you? If you are anything like me, it is precious little. At least my company sends updates on the 'Global Situation'. Crewing agencies not even that. I think their isolation involves a communication blackout.

The situation here is a suspension, worldwide, of any crew changes until May. That's a company directive, nothing to do with port or country regulations.

I see some companies are paying crew members who are stuck on ships an extra 50% of salary until they can get home. No such payments here.

The worst thing is there is no light at the end of this long tunnel. We have been told the suspension of crew changes could be extended.

Everyone onboard is very low.



[The Secret Captain's Twitter page](#)

[Strait of Hormuz map illustration](#)
Image:
Getty Images/
Ingo Menhard
Mediendesign



Just no sign of anyone getting off anytime soon. It does not help when you hear of other companies chartering planes to get crews home.

The only good thing that will come out of this will be a very clear understanding, by all my colleagues, of which are the good companies to work for. The ones who care about us seafarers. The days of being just a number or a bum on a seat could, and should, be coming to an end.

It is plain to see already the Oil Majors are found wanting and conventional shipping companies are leading the way.

Care, companionship, empathy and understanding goes a long way when

being asked again to extend your contract. Some of my guys are heading for 9+ months already.

If asked I would like to be quarantined or in isolation with my family right now. Not an option offered by my employer.

Hang in there guys and stay safe.

The Secret Captain
@TheSecretCapt

THE CAPTAIN'S TWEETS

@TheSecretCapt
Apr 14

1. Well, it's finally happened. We are on tenterhooks with a Covid-19 scare onboard. Awaiting tests from land based medics. The crew are now very low, missing family and loved ones #Coronavirus #Covid19

2. Things are pretty dire right now. After a 6 hour discussion with ship operator and port health my crew member was finally allowed to leave the ship by ambulance and is now in a hospital having tests. Whatever the results he will not return to the ship #Coronavirus #Covid19

3. We await the results to see what happens. All very worried. We are in lockdown, trying to self isolate and observe social distancing. It's not very practical onboard a ship. Even wearing masks and gloves is awkward. We do a lot of hand washing and cleaning #Covid19

@TheSecretCapt
Apr 16

1. Crew member tested **NEGATIVE**. All very relieved. Ship fully loaded and ready to return to service #coronavirus #COVID19

2. Not able to get replacement crew member as everywhere on lockdown. #coronavirus #COVID19

3. Pleased to finally have all-clear, but crew getting tired and stress levels high. Hope loved ones at home are all ok #coronavirus #COVID19



Unions back ships' officers as governments drag feet over crew changes

An influential grouping of maritime trade unions has publicly raised concerns about unsafe ship operations due to the tiredness and mental health of seafarers caused by extended tours of duty during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Nautilus Federation of maritime unions said seafarers have been the most immediately and urgently impacted during the pandemic through the closure of national borders and denial of crew changes. Hundreds of thousands of seafarers remain onboard vessels past their contractually agreed time, some for up to 15 months, with no idea when they might return home.

'This is a crisis and it has the potential to impact heavily on the safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment,' the group said in an open letter to governments and the maritime industry.

'To those senior officers – our members – we say your union has your back. If you feel it is necessary to take measures for the health, safety and welfare of your crew, we will support you in exercising your professional judgement in compliance with the widely ratified international standards.'

'Governments and ship owners worldwide need to know that we will do whatever it takes to ensure that our members are afforded protections against fatigue, caused by long working hours and extended

tours of duty, as enshrined in the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping 1978 and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (as amended).

'Our unions will extend support to their members who, in exercising any decision which, in their professional judgement, is necessary for safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment, as set out in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974.'

On May 11 the International Maritime Organization (IMO) endorsed joint industry protocols designed to lift barriers to crew repatriation.

IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim urged Member States to implement the protocols. 'In view of the importance of international maritime transport to the resilience of the global economy at this critical time, Governments are strongly encouraged to take urgent action to address this issue.'

The Nautilus Federation welcomed the recent easing of lockdowns and introduction of protocols for safe crew changes supported by the IMO but said crew changes are not happening quickly enough.

'Governments need to understand



▲ 'We have your back,' says the Nautilus Federation. Image: Getty Images

that the time is now – they must be focussed on actions to ensure that our maritime professionals at sea and ashore are able to get home and those stuck at home can get back to work.

The Nautilus Federation consists of: Nautilus International; ACV-Transcom (Belgium); Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers; Australian Maritime Officers' Union; CFDT:FGTE (France); Finnish Engineers' Association; Finnish Ships Officers' Union; International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (USA); Lederne Søfart - Danish Maritime Officers; Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (USA); Merchant Navy Officers Guild – Hong Kong; New Zealand Merchant Service Guild; Norwegian Union of Marine Engineers; Officers' Union of International Seamen; Seafarers' Union of Croatia; Singapore Maritime Officers' Union; Singapore Organisation of Seamen; Sjöbefälsföreningen Maritime Officers Association (Sweden); Unión de Capitanes y Oficiales de Cubierta (Panama); Unión de Ingenieros Marinos (Panama).

Read the full message in the Resources section of our website, www.nautilusint.org



While we've all been preoccupied with the pandemic, the need for the shipping industry to cut its emissions has not gone away. Battery-powered vessels are likely to play an important part in this clean-up effort, but seafarer representatives say that urgent work is required on safety standards, firefighting equipment and crew training. **SARAH ROBINSON** finds out how the coming electric revolution looks from the perspective of a Nautilus Federation union

Like electric cars, battery-powered ships provide a way of improving air quality where they operate – doing away with the SOx, NOx and particulate pollution associated with diesel engines. They can also help to reduce CO2 levels in the world's atmosphere, as long as the electricity used to charge them is generated by renewables such as wind, solar or hydroelectric power.

'It's the future – especially for shortsea shipping and inland waterways,' says Odd Rune Malterud of the Norwegian Union of Marine Engineers. 'We have to do it. But we must do it safely, and we must have unions around the table.'

As assistant director and technical manager for his union, Mr Malterud often speaks for seafarers at the International Maritime Organization (IMO). And he's very keen to see that crew safety is prioritised as fully-

electric propulsion becomes more widespread.

'The problem is that we don't have international standards for battery-powered vessels, which are fine almost all the time but can be very dangerous if something goes wrong,' he points out. 'We need special firefighting equipment and crew training that is quite different from what they get at the moment.'

Although there have thankfully been no major accidents on the few fully battery-powered vessels already in operation, one incident we should be learning from is the 2016 case of Samsung's overheating smartphones. Stories of the Galaxy Note 7 model catching fire and even exploding were all over the news that year, and Mr Malterud says we would do well to remember this when developing similar lithium batteries for ships.

'The best thing you can do when a battery like this is on fire at 1,600C is

▲ The pioneering Norwegian battery-powered ferry Ampere. Image: Samferdselsfoto

submerge it in fresh water and wait until the fire burns itself out underwater,' he stresses. 'You can't use salt water, as that makes it worse, which we saw in an incident on the battery hybrid ferry Ytterøyningen last year. So the vessel needs to carry enough fresh water onboard and have a way to seal the casing around the battery, while also dealing with the toxic gases that will be released. And don't forget that the power for the fire and bilge pumps has to come from somewhere, so what do we do if all the ship's power comes from a battery that is out of action?'

Another issue to consider is charging. The vessels we are talking about here are fully electric, not hybrids, so they need to charge whenever they dock. 'It's quite tricky,' says Mr Malterud. 'If you use an automatic arm that connects the ship to the power when it berths, it can be difficult to get a connection with the up and down movement of →

the tides. Wireless charging is being developed but it's not in use yet. We have to be very careful with this, because the charge is at such high voltage that it can kill a person instantly, and civilians can be around where the supply cable is.'

If all this sounds rather downbeat, that is not Mr Malterud's intention. He is pleased to see shipping getting its environmental act together, but with battery-powered vessels set to become more common, the need for standards governing their operation becomes ever more pressing.

The good news is that work is underway at an international level to rectify this situation, issue by issue. In March this year, for example, the IMO Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment agreed to draft a new interim guideline on the safe operation of shore power for ships.

The International Transport

Artist's impression of the new electric Maid of the Mist boats
Image: ABB



THE HIGH-PROFILE ADOPTER

A landmark in the world's adoption of battery-powered vessels could be witnessed in 2020, with the world-famous Maid of the Mist tour boats at Niagara Falls going electric.

Claimed to have zero emissions, the vessels' green credentials are to be enhanced by charging with electricity generated using the falls themselves.

The two electric catamarans are named after Maid of the Mist CEO James V. Glynn and energy pioneer Nikola Tesla, who had the idea in the early 20th century of using

Niagara Falls as an electricity generator.

Classed by the United States Coast Guard (USCG) as subchapter K vessels, the tour boats were built in the USA with batteries from the Norwegian firm ABB.

The vessels are now awaiting final regulatory review as well as the easing of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, so the plan for them to enter service in spring 2020 has had to be revised, but there are still hopes that they will be launched later in the year.

Workers' Federation (ITF) is also involved in the standard-setting work, and Mr Malterud is the chair of the ITF Maritime Safety Committee. In a December 2019 information paper on new fuels and seafarers' competences, the ITF pointed out that the IMO Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) convention requires personnel on certain types of ships have to have specific additional training and familiarisation. In the case of battery-powered vessels, the ITF information paper says:

- appropriate fire extinguishing equipment must be developed
- breathing apparatus and oxygen masks for all personnel must be onboard to protect them from extremely dangerous gases from batteries

This has formed the basis for collaboration between ITF affiliate

unions in a working and correspondence group. The Norwegian Union of Marine Engineers is particularly well-placed to contribute to this, because Norway is arguably the world leader in battery-powered vessels. The Norwegian company ABB is a major manufacturer of ships' batteries, and some are already in regular use on cruise ship tenders carrying visitors to the country's famous fjords, where air-quality legislation prohibits heavy fuel oil.

Norway is also known for having introduced a fully battery-powered ferry – the Ampere – as long ago as 2015. The lessons learnt from developing and operating this vessel are proving invaluable to the effort to draw up international safety standards, and Ampere's chief engineer Frank Kristiansen has been working closely with Mr Malterud on their union's contribution to this.

The ITF working and correspondence group has continued to operate during the first few months of 2020, and has produced a statement on 'Environment and issues affecting seafarers' safety'. The group was scheduled to report to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee at its next session on 13-22 May, as well as to the IMO Sub-committee on Human element, Watchkeeping and Training on 1-5 June, but these sessions have both been postponed due to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic.

As the Telegraph went to press, no new dates for these IMO committee sessions had been agreed, which is frustrating for those who have been working to introduce amendments to the STCW Code and other relevant sets of regulations such as the International Code of Safety for Ships using Gases or other Low-flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code).

'The virus has taken us all away from this, and that's no good because the vessel manufacturers are going ahead without us,' laments Mr Malterud. 'We have regulations for nuclear-powered ships dating all the way back to 1955, but nothing for batteries or most other new fuels, so this must be a priority as soon as the IMO committees start up again.'

The battery-powered Danish island ferry Ellen, being charge at berth
Image: E-ferry project



THE EUROPEAN MODEL

As work continues at the IMO on global safety and crew training standards for battery-powered vessels, the EU has developed the world's largest fully-electric ship as a working prototype for future European ferries

In commercial operation since August 2019, the Danish island ferry Ellen is the product of a four-year, €21.3 million 'E-ferry' project funded by the European Commission and industry as part of the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Ellen is able to carry 31 cars or five trucks, and as many as 198 passengers at capacity, sailing between the Danish ports of Sjøby and Fynshav. It's a distance seven times greater than that covered by the vessel's Norwegian predecessor Ampere, and Ellen's battery capacity is four times larger.

Henrik Hagbarth of the Danish maritime college Marstal Navigationskole has been involved with the development of Ellen since 2013, when he was the coordinator for the feasibility study. He now teaches battery operation and safety and is working on the E-ferry project's evaluation report.

'We are using two AC reluctance permanent magnet high efficiency engines of up to 750 kW each,' says Mr Hagbarth. 'This gives us a service speed of around 13 knots and top speed of around 15 knots. The ferry is

also equipped with a couple of bow thrusters for manoeuvring purposes. All power is supplied by two independent battery rooms. These are also approved for emergency power units, which means that Ellen is the first battery ferry approved to run without any kind of fossil emergency generators at all.'

Now approaching the end of its EU demonstration period, the ferry is considered to



'Battery operation is a no-brainer in shortsea shipping'

have performed very well on speed, energy consumption and reliability.

To address the thorny fire safety issue, a special foam fire extinguishing system has been adapted which is claimed to cool fires in lithium-ion batteries more effectively than the water mist standards seen on other battery

ferries. 'At the same time,' says Mr Hagbarth, 'Ellen's batteries are liquid cooled, which makes a big difference in daily operation and a very efficient first barrier to thermal runaway issues.'

From the environmental perspective, the vessel is charged using some of the greenest electricity in the world, with half of Denmark's power having been generated by wind and solar power in 2019. Studies are also underway to look at the overall climate impact from the electric operation of ships including production of batteries.

All in all, argues Mr Hagbarth, battery operation is a 'no-brainer' in shortsea shipping. 'The climate impact is reduced by magnitudes of order, operating and maintenance costs are reduced, and even crew costs are reduced in some cases. The investment costs for the first prototypes have been somewhat higher than conventional fossil power, but our recent evaluation of present battery prices and power electronics indicates that price difference to fossil engines in maritime applications is also levelling out now.'





Buy a rose and support seafarers

The maritime welfare charity Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) has launched a special new variety of rose to mark its centenary year and raise funds for seafarer support worldwide.

Available to buy online for UK delivery, the Stella Maris Centenary Rose was developed with the industry volunteer group Container Shipping Supporting Seafarers (CSSS). Each purchase of the fragrant yellow flower at World of Roses will include a donation to Stella Maris. Chief executive Martin Foley said: 'Stella Maris is very grateful to the World of Roses and CSSS for this wonderfully innovative initiative to raise valuable funds for our vital work in support of seafarers and their families.'

The Apostleship of the Sea was founded in Glasgow in 1920 and is now best known internationally as the Stella Maris network, providing care to all seafarers regardless of nationality, race or faith. The network operates the single largest ship visiting system in the world, with more than 1,000 chaplains and volunteers in nearly 350 ports, visiting over 70,000 ships and reaching more than 1,000,000 seafarers annually.

Stella Maris usually gets nearly 40% of its annual funding from its Sea Sunday service in July. With Covid-19 restrictions in place, it is unlikely to hold that service this year, thus leaving it with a potential black hole in funding.

World of Roses will give 40% of all sales proceeds to Stella Maris.

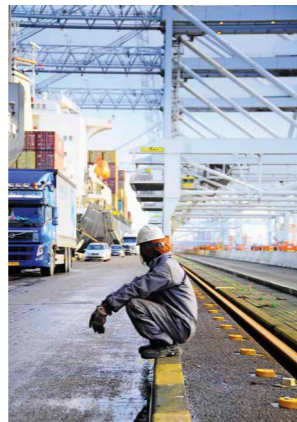
Formed in 2017 by a group of industry professionals active in the international container and maritime sectors, CSSS harnesses its volunteer members' experience and contacts for the benefit of seafarers. The Stella Maris Centenary Rose is the latest in a series of projects facilitated by the group that include developing the outdoor communal space at London Tilbury Seafarer Centre and co-ordinating funding for the UK shipping industry's Coming Ashore project – which was featured in the April 2020 Telegraph. **1**

ITF Seafarers' Trust throws £1 million lifeline to seafarers

The ITF Seafarers' Trust (ITFST) has launched an emergency fund to address the impact of the global pandemic on seafarers and their families.

The fund will provide a lifeline for welfare services at risk due to the financial impact the virus has had on business, fundraising and activities.

ITFST chair Dave Heindel said: 'At the best of times seafarers struggle to get recognition for the amazing job they do ensuring the steady flow of household goods, food and commodities around the world. Now they have the incredible stress of being



▲ Seafarers do the amazing job ensuring the flow of household goods, food and commodities

stranded far away from their families at a time of extreme distress.

The Trust's head Katie

Higginbottom added: 'As well as providing for seafarers, we also want to make sure that the welfare services that currently offer much appreciated welfare support for seafarers, survive to serve another day after this crisis is over.'

The Trust is working closely with the TK Foundation to ensure a coordinated approach to funding. Cases relating to individual seafarers can be addressed, but applications must be made via ITF affiliated unions, ITF inspectors or welfare organisations. **1**

For more information, go to: www.seafarerstrust.org/covid-19_grants

Seafarers Hospital Society extends free access to mental health advice

The Seafarers Hospital Society (SHS) has joined forces with free confidential online mental health service Big White Wall to extend its seafarer support services to retired seafarers and families of serving seafarers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Seafarers already deal with challenges such as intensive hours, isolation, prolonged periods away from family, and fatigue. Big White Wall provides online support 24/7 in a safe and anonymous environment, with access to trained counsellors, a support network, self-help materials and one-to-one therapy. **1**

HELPING HAND

Families of working seafarers can access the service via the Sailors' Children's Society: www.seahospital.org.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing



ISWAN helps seafarers with Covid-19 quarantine stress

The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) has produced a video to help seafarers cope with Covid-19 restrictions.

Counselling psychologist Dr Kate Thompson reassures seafarers they have the skills to stay safe and well.

'Seafarers have special strengths that will serve them well when at sea during the coronavirus,' Dr Thompson says. 'Please do draw on your strengths and share them with others so we can all manage the

pressure and boredom of the coming weeks.'

Crew feeling the effects of the intense pressures of being under quarantine also need to let their employer know. It is important for designated safe places to be set up onboard. **1**

INSTANT REPLAY

Watch the ISWAN video with Dr Kate Thompson via the Nautilus International website at: bit.ly/3cFHxZ

Seafarers UK £2 million fund for seafarers and fishers

Seafarers whose wellbeing and livelihood has been adversely affected by the pandemic, are set to benefit from a new £2 million emergency fund announced in April.

The fund, created by Seafarers UK, is intended for distribution in 2020/2021, with 75 percent allocated to the international merchant seafarer community and 25 percent to UK coastal fishing fleets.

Seafarers UK chairman Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB CVO BA said: 'We will work with our charity partners to provide both hardship funding and innovative new projects to support our seafarers through and beyond the current crisis.'

The new emergency fund is



▲ Seafarers UK chairman Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson: here for crew through the current crisis

in addition to Seafarers UK's existing annual budget of £2m grants to support delivery partners.

At the end of March Seafarers UK announced an additional £100,000 in

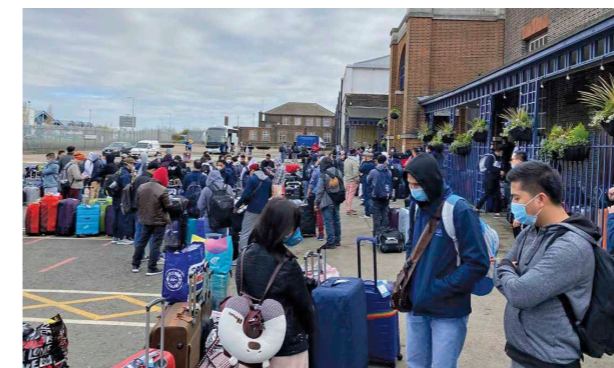
emergency funding for maritime charities.

The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) has received a much-needed funding boost to help it cope with increased demand during the pandemic.

Another major beneficiary will be SAIL, the citizens' advice service for the British maritime community. The organisations can choose for themselves how to put the funds to best use. **1**

To contact ISWAN, call +44 (0)300 012 4279, email iswan@iswan.org.uk or visit

www.seafarerswelfare.org For SAIL, call 0800 160 1842 in the UK, email advice@sailine.org.uk, or visit www.sailine.org.uk



Charities step in to aid stranded crew at Tilbury

Seafaring charities rallied to assist about 3,000 overseas and British cruiseship crew stranded at Tilbury in March.

Seafarers from four cruiseships were laid off at Tilbury when their ships all berthed at once as a result of cruise cancellations. The cruiseships included the Viking Star,

the Magellan, the Saga Sapphire and the Spirit of Discovery.

Seafarers could not be repatriated immediately as their flights were cancelled. They were helped by the Tilbury Seafarer Centre run by the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR). **1** Full story: bit.ly/2XOPmBQ

Sailors' Society in fundraising appeal

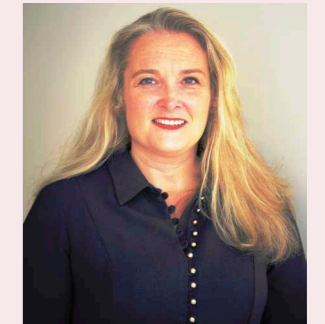
Sailors' Society has launched a suite of seafarer resources and a funding appeal to help it support the 'key workers of the sea' during the Covid-19 pandemic.

'We rely on them to transport the goods we all need to restock our supermarket shelves. Now, more than ever, seafarers rely on us,' the Society said in its appeal.

The charity's COO Sandra Welch said: 'We may not be able to greet seafarers in port right now, but we are here for them and their families as we always are. **1**

to donate to the appeal visit www.sailors-society.org/coronavirusgive

The peaks and troughs of funding seafarers' welfare



by Catherine Spencer, chief executive officer of Seafarers UK

At the end of March, the welcome news that Seafarers UK's trustees had released £100,000 to deal with some immediate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on global maritime communities was tempered with the knowledge that merchant seafarers were succumbing to Covid-19.

On cruise ships the plight of passengers received plenty of media coverage, while the challenges facing crew stuck on board quarantined vessels were largely ignored by commentators.

As ports around the world denied seafarers access to welfare services and pastoral support it became obvious that merchant seafarers should be designated as 'key workers', in recognition of their contribution to keeping world trade flowing.

That move in itself has not overcome the difficulties faced by ship operators seeking to change crews in accordance with seafarers' contracted time at sea. As countries closed borders, so it became impossible for seafarers to be repatriated, a problem compounded by many airlines cancelling services altogether.

At the time of writing this, there are a few hopeful signs for the future. Apparently in China the worst effects of Covid-19 have been overcome. Other countries are seeing fatalities reduce as severe 'lockdown' restrictions appear to be having a positive effect.

But seafarers continue to suffer. With many effectively stranded on ships around the world and unable to return home to their families, our thoughts are with them as we fund our delivery partner charities in their efforts to provide the advice, communications and practical help that will support seafarers through this crisis. **1**

THE MARITIME CHARITY COLUMN is intended to be a regular feature in the Nautilus Telegraph. Submissions will be invited from a range of organisations by the Telegraph editor.

THE BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

As the International Labour Organization celebrates its 100th anniversary, NICK BRAMLEY looks back at the beginning of a great international movement to support seafarers and the birth of a system of tripartite regulation in maritime that is the envy of other industries

Shipping has a long history of multinational crewing – and it was 100 years ago that maritime unions, shipowners and government representatives sat down to discuss the first moves to regulate this globalised workforce, recognising that the international community of seafarers would be most effectively protected by a uniform law.

In the aftermath of the carnage of the First World War, there was a strong desire to build a better world – and it was those hopes that lay behind the creation, in 1919, of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as part of the Versailles peace treaty.

Founded on the premise that

the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice, the ILO sought to set global standards for working conditions that would, in turn, be incorporated into the national laws of member states.

Of particular and lasting value was the establishment of the tripartite principle in the workings of the ILO, with each delegation consisting of two government delegates and one each from workers' and employers' organisations.

The first ILO conference, held in Washington in October and November 1919, had agreed six conventions and six recommendations covering such things as hours of work,

minimum working age, unemployment and maternity protection. However, there was a recognition that the shipping industry was a special case deserving special treatment, and the ILO decided to devote the whole of its second conference in the following year to maritime matters – most notably questions about the implementation at sea of the eight-hour day and 48-hour week, which had been adopted as the standard for industry ashore.

A spirited intervention by Herbert Warington Smyth, the South African government delegate, secured the inclusion of inland waterways in the conference agenda with the support of the Canadian and Finnish governments. Smyth, an RNR and RNVR officer in both

▲ Seafarer representatives, shipowners and government officials at the opening of the ILO maritime session at San Giorgio Palace in June 1920
Image: ILO historical archives

world wars, had worked in Thailand and was the author of several books on river transport in SouthEast Asia.

The maritime conference was convened at a time when the international seafarers' organisations were in a difficult position. There was still considerable antagonism between unions of different countries which had found themselves on opposite sides of merciless campaigns of submarine warfare and blockade. British, French and US seafaring unions – including the Nautilus predecessors Imperial Merchant Service Guild (IMSG) and Marine Engineers' Association – were even seeking 'full reparation and compensation' from their wartime enemies 'for the crimes committed on merchant seafarers of all classes'.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) had been reduced to inactivity during the war and had lost most of its seafarer affiliates to the International Seafarers' Federation (ISF) – led by Havelock Wilson, of the British ratings' union NSFU – amid concerns that it was either dominated by the interests of dockers or was too 'socialist'.

Officers' unions were in general not part of the ISF, and its umbrella organisation, the International Merchant Marine Officers' Association (IMMOA), was not established until 1925. As the United States didn't join the ILO until 1934, the voice of the US unions working in the world's second largest fleet was absent. Ironically, the chair of the Commission on International Labour

Legislation at the Paris peace conference had been the legendary US union leader Samuel Gompers.

It was against this background that the ISF convened a preparatory 'international conference of seafarers' in the Italian port city of Genoa from 11-14 June 1920 to make it possible for the world's merchant seafarers to present a solid front to the League of Nations meeting. At least in terms of representation, it was a success, with 75



▲ International Labour Organisation director Albert Thomas, third from left, is pictured with a group of shipowners at the maritime session in Genoa in 1920
Image: ILO historical archives

delegates from Belgium, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the UK, working under the chairmanship of Havelock Wilson. Unity was present as long as the discussions remained on the desirability of the eight-hour day. In fact, the conference united around a resolution calling not only for an eight-hour day but also for a

44-hour week, leaving free Saturday afternoons in port.

Delegates divided when discussions moved to a proposal from the International Seamen's Union of America (ISU). Fresh from the achievement of the US Seamen's Act of 1915 – which it regarded as 'the emancipation proclamation for seamen of the world' – as well as the signing into force of the Jones Act on 5 June 1920, the ISU sought support for the principle of seafarers being able to leave ship at

• an international seamen's code

• inland navigation
Not surprisingly, the first commission generated the most discussion, and ultimately, the most disappointment for the seafarers. The unions held to their position that the general shore-based rule of an eight-hour day and a 48-hour week should also apply to seafarers. But the employers and some governments tried repeatedly to arrive at a formula which would dilute this principle, make longer hours possible and weaken the provisions proposed by the ILO. British owners, in particular, argued forcefully that regulating working hours at sea was impractical and that the sort of controls being put forward at the conference could 'set up a standard which, if attained, would ruin the shipping trade'.

Equally unsuccessful were the unions' attempts to introduce a 44-hour week as agreed at the earlier seafarers' conference. Attempts were also made to dilute the principle of universal application by making exemptions for Indian seafarers – a proposal made both by governments and representatives of Indian seafarers keen to maintain their position in the labour market. The final proposal was a special clause stipulating that the working hours of Indian seafarers should be subject to agreement between employers and the emergent Indian unions, but also aimed at a reduction of hours.

Nevertheless, the commission's final draft

any port of their choosing. This was opposed, among others, by IMSG general secretary Thomas Moore, and in a final vote, from which the officers' unions were excluded, the proposal was defeated.

When the ILO conference convened, 27 states were represented, of which 20 included seafarer delegates, either from maritime unions or national union confederations. The work was divided between five commissions dealing with:

- working time
- articles of agreement, hiring and unemployment
- minimum age



- reached broad agreement on:
- a 48-hour week for all except for masters, supervising officers, wireless operators and cattlemen (the draft had foreseen a 56-hour week at sea and 48 hours in port)
 - a three-watch system for vessels over 2,000 tons (draft 2,500 tons)
 - maximum overtime of 14 hours per week or 60 hours per month to be compensated in pay or time off
 - a 45-hour week for ratings in port, with Saturday limited to five hours
 - a written statement of hours to be worked onboard and a reporting obligation of the flag state to the ILO

When this draft went to the vote on 10 July, the seafarers may have hoped for a breakthrough – indeed, the proposal won a clear majority of 48 to 25 with no abstentions. But according to the ILO constitution, a two-thirds majority was necessary – so the motion was lost by just 0.67%.

The governments who voted against were the UK, Denmark, Japan, Norway, Spain and Thailand, but it should be noted that the shipowners of Argentina, France and the Netherlands voted in favour.

The international regulation of working time would now have to wait until 1936 and the passing of Convention 57 on the hours of work and manning at sea.

The rest of the conference agenda met with more success and saw the adoption of three conventions enforceable after ratification and four recommendations, a weaker form of regulation.

Convention 9 on establishing facilities for finding employment for seamen came into force in 1921, as did Convention 7, fixing the minimum age for admission of children to employment at sea, with Convention 8 on

▲ The 1920 maritime session saw the adoption of the first ILO convention for shipping – covering the minimum age of seafarers
Image: ILO historical archives

unemployment indemnity in case of loss or foundering of the ship following in 1923. All of these conventions ultimately found their way into the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) of 2006, which united the provisions of 36 ILO conventions and one protocol adopted between 1920 and 1996.

As to the recommendations, which represented a weakening of the original intention of the ILO itself, two of them dealt with seafarers' matters. The original hope of drawing up an international seamen's code resulted merely in Recommendation 9, to draw together at a national level legislation relating to seafarers, and the aim of 1920 was first met with the MLC in 2006. Similarly, Recommendation 10 simply recommended to member states that they set up or support unemployment insurance schemes for seafarers.

The hopes for a binding instrument for inland navigation ended in Recommendation 8, which encouraged member states to establish a 48-hour week and eight-hour day in inland waterway transport. This remains the only ILO instrument for that sector.

In the course of the commission's deliberations, the members realised that the interests of fishers had been overlooked, and this resulted in Recommendation 7 on the hours of work in fishing, again recommending the eight-hour day and 48-hour week. This recommendation was withdrawn in 2018 after the entry into force of Convention 188 of 2007, which drew together the rights of fishers in a convention comparable to the MLC.

Looking back from a century later, we can see the beginning of a great international movement and the birth of a system of tripartite regulation in maritime that is the envy of other industries. The birth pains were not easy, with distrust, strong personalities, isolationist governments and imperial interests to be confronted. That the ITF and ISF found their way to each other in 1922 was an important step forward, and with the officers' IMMOA merging with the ITF in 1948 seafarers' interests could be finally represented by the solid front' which the ISF had propagated in 1920. 📌

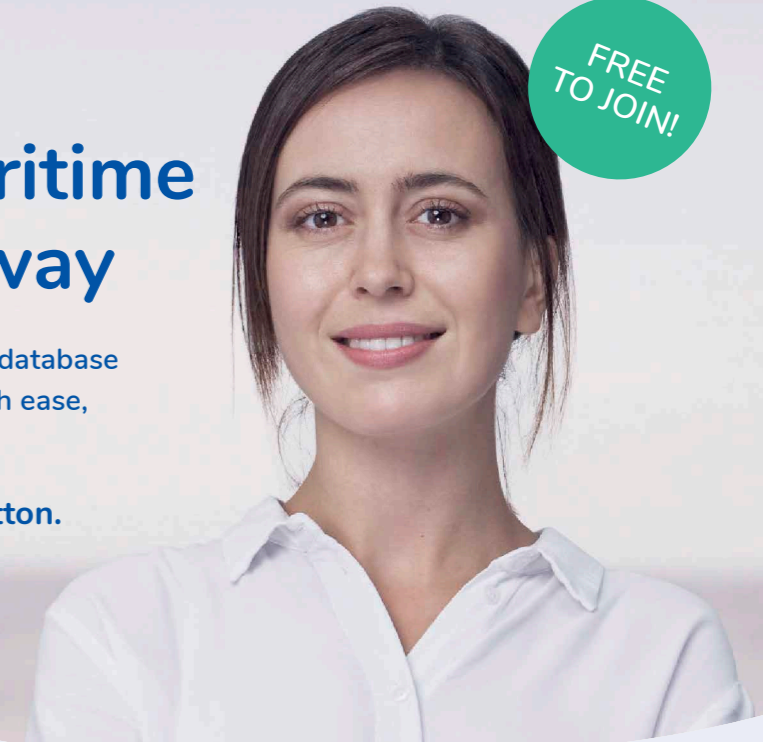


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1 & 2 The Shrubberies | George Lane | South Woodford | London | E18 1BD | UK

T: +44 (0)20 8989 6677
www.nautilusfederation.org