

Press release

8 May 2020

PARIS MOU GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 UPDATED AND AVAILABLE FOR THE INDUSTRY

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MoU) acknowledged the crisis which the international shipping industry was facing. In view of the continuing effects of the crisis, the end of which cannot yet be foreseen, the Paris MoU has amended its previously drafted guidelines. To appropriately inform the industry, it has also been decided to make the guidance publicly available.

Temporary guidance for its Member Authorities was drafted earlier, recognising the need to apply flexibility under these special circumstances in a harmonized way. It was at that time agreed that in view of the COVID-19 crisis, extensions of ships' certificates with three months could be accepted.

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing and ships continue to experience operational challenges. Services, surveys and audits are difficult to arrange, ship yards and dry docks have scaled back operations or closed down temporarily. Seafarers have experienced difficulties to (re)validate their certificates and due to port restrictions, crew members face complications in joining ships and being repatriated. At the same time, to keep the global supply chain running, it is essential that trade by sea must continue to flow.

It is impossible to predict how long the pandemic will last, nor how a return to ordinary circumstances will be shaped. In view of this, the Paris MoU has considered that a limitation of three months in the guidance may be too short to address the challenges currently being faced and therefore has amended its guidance. Having considered the exceptional circumstances, extensions of the validity of certificates to an appropriate and proportional grace period specific to COVID-19 may be accepted. In addition, alignment with ILO's "Information note on

maritime labour issues and coronavirus (COVID-19)” has been sought in relation to MLC matters.

The Paris MoU participated in a video conference with the International Maritime Organization and with the various PSC regimes, agreements and USCG worldwide, and it was acknowledged that a harmonized approach in these circumstances is important. The Paris MoU considered that a press release alone would possibly not be sufficient to appropriately inform the industry and other stakeholders of the amendments made to the temporary guidance related to COVID-19, and therefore decided to make the temporary guidance publicly available.

The Paris MoU, as mentioned in an earlier press release, again wishes to express its solidarity with the international shipping sector and the seafarers and their families at this difficult time.

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Notes to editors:

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

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

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

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