

# SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR MARITIME TRANSPORT

## Working Group meeting

16 April 2021

## Minutes

**Chair: Mr Kenny Reinhold**, Swedish union for Service and Communications Employees (SEKO),

### Spokespersons:

- **Mr Tim Springett** –ECSA for the employers
- **Mr Mark Dickinson** –ETF for the employees

### A) Approval of the draft agenda

The agenda was approved.

### B) Approval of the minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 4 December 2020 were approved.

### 1. Maritime labour issues and Covid-19

- 1.1. COVID-19 pandemic and shipping:** update, state of play and exchange of views on crew changes and vaccination strategy

**COM (MOVE)** updated the Committee with regard to the most recent measures taken in the field and thanked the social partners for helping with data about the difficulties to conduct crew changes and the cases of denied medical attention in Chinese ports that was helpful in the dialogue with China. COM is working to address the issue of extension of contracts. COM calls on MS to prioritise seafarers for vaccination, however vaccination programmes fall under the competence of the Member States. Co-legislators are also working on the COVID green digital certificate post vaccination but this would not be a condition for travelling within the EU. COM (DG MOVE) will develop together with EUHG training material for seafarers on how to work during the pandemic.

**ECSA** reminded that there are differences of opinion on the extension of contracts, and that in some cases seafarers wish to remain on board up to 12 months in order to accomplish a higher qualification (Certificate of Competency) for example.

**ETF** insisted on the vaccination of seafarers with priority and reminded the importance of finding solutions for ensuring access to vaccination hubs and centres in ports. They underlined that forcing seafarers or suggesting that they have a choice to stay on ships is not acceptable.

**EU Healthy Gateways** presented their work on Covid-19 (see PowerPoint presentation), undertaken under the guidance or in cooperation with COM (DG SANTE, DG MOVE). They have prepared a number of guidelines to support the transport sector during the pandemic. Currently they are working on Guidelines for crew-changes and advice for restarting cruise ship operations.

The social partners (ETF and ECSA) welcomed the presentation but reminded that guidelines on crew changes were developed at international level (i.e. IMO) with full involvement of industry and social partners and that any EU guidance material should be aligned with them. The social partners requested to be closely involved in the development of all the initiatives that affect seafarers and EU shipping in a timely manner, in particular the EU guidelines on crew changes and seafarers' wellbeing.

## 1.2. Fallout from the crisis

ETF recalled that the social partners (ECSA and ETF) have agreed on a joint Statement on the recognition of seafarers as 'key workers' and intend to submit it to the Commission and Member States. Serious issues were raised, such as ships not carrying enough oxygen to care for sick seafarers, impossibility to transfer them to local hospitals in ports or to repatriate bodies of seafarers who died at sea.

ECSA thanked ETF for the initiative and emphasized that in view of the absence of a universal definition of the 'key worker' term, the social partners believe that it is more beneficial to focus attention on the specific rights and entitlements that seafarers should enjoy everywhere. The statement proposes in fact a non-exhaustive list of rights that aims at assisting Member States in ensuring the health and wellbeing of seafarers as they perform their key function.

No real decision was taken and for reasons of timing the item was deferred to the next meeting.

DG MOVE reminded that the UN uses "essential" workers, however in some countries essential workers cannot go on strike, therefore care must be taken when deciding on the definition.

## 2. Update from the Social Dialogue projects

Updates were provided on the following projects:

2.1. **WESS** ("Contributing to an Attractive, Smart and Sustainable Working Environment in the Shipping Sector"):

- **Pillar 1:** Communications on Board (Pillar 1a); and research report on the increased usage of digitalisation on board and the possible improvements/benefits to shipboard safety and welfare (Pillar 1b)
- **Pillar 2:** Women in Shipping

2.2. **MapMar** ("Mapping of Maritime Professionals: Towards a full-scale European data collection system")

2.3. **SkillSea** ("Future-proof skills for the maritime sector")

The social partners continue to oversee these projects and look forward to presenting the results at future meetings of the SSDC-MT.

3. **Health and Safety** - Mental health of seafarers – presentation of joint UK social partners' guide by the UK Chamber of Shipping, Nautilus International and RMT (see PowerPoint presentation).

ECSA reminded that the social partners jointly called for the Directive on medical treatment onboard to be subject to a comprehensive and thorough review.

**The social partners will continue to work together on this topic.**

## 4. Maritime safety and security

4.1. Revision of the maritime Directives

It was noted that no presentation could be made by the Commission on this point.

ETF highlighted that they would like to work together with ECSA on some issues such as the use of remote inspections linked to this subject, if necessary outside the SSDC-MT.

#### **4.2. Stowaways: Recent increase in number of incidents**

The social partners continued to discuss on the recent increase in number of incidents with stowaways on ships, discussion that was started at the last meeting. **ECSA** insisted on receiving a reply to the letter the social partners have sent to the Commission (DG HOME) on stowaways. They indicated that the current rules and guidelines developed by the IMO only deal with the situation of the stowaways but not the impact of such events on shipowners and seafarers.

**ETF** recalled that the safety of crew is at stake and it very important for both social partners to address this important matter. There is need for complete guidelines where the crew is involved in such incidents in the future. Several aspects that need to be covered in such guidance include communication, training, crew protection, etc.

The social partners will continue to work together on this topic.

### **5. Commission presentation on new proposals**

#### **5.1.** Digitalisation of Visas (ongoing [public consultation on online visa application process and digital visa](#) & the proposal for a regulation)

**DG HOME** presented their work on the public consultation on online visa application process and digital visa. For **ECSA**, a key point for seafarers is the ILO Convention C 185 (Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention). The Council of the EU authorized the Member States to ratify it. Based on this Convention, some third countries already issue seafarers identity documents that could be used to grant visa-free access. **ECSA** believes that the Schengen visa code should consider this. **ETF** concurred.

The social partners will follow up together on the public consultation and the ratification and enforcement of ILO C 185.

#### **5.2.** [New Cybersecurity Strategy](#)

**DG CNECT** briefly presented the New Cybersecurity Strategy (see PowerPoint presentation).

The social partners will continue to work on this issue.

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The next meeting of the SSDC is scheduled for 23 September 2021.