

the global

SEAFARER

Wherever you are, so are we

Volume 7 | Issue 3

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River and ocean cruise emerge from the global pandemic



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The front line against abandonment

Front cover image: the river cruise vessel Riverside Bach
CREDIT: Riverside Luxury Cruises

Navigating change

It is time for good shipowners to speak up and speak loudly in support of working with Nautilus to build a better future



Nautilus Federation director
Mark Dickinson

The maritime industry is at a crossroads. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the fragility and vulnerability of the global supply chain, the plight of seafarers and challenges for national resilience. The climate crisis has increased the urgency of the transition to a low-carbon economy, and the need for that transition to be fair and just for all workers – not least those in the maritime industry. The technological transformation has created new opportunities and challenges for the skills and competencies of seafarers, as well as the quality and security of their work.

How can we navigate these turbulent waters and chart a course for a sustainable and prosperous future for all who work in the maritime industry? The answer is social dialogue.

I have written before on these pages about the crucial role that social dialogue can play to resolve the issues we face. I remain fearful that many governments and too many employers do not value the voice of workers. They do not respect us and think they can manage without engaging with trade unions. This is foolhardy in the extreme.

Social dialogue is the key to ensuring that the maritime industry is sustainable and resilient in the face of change

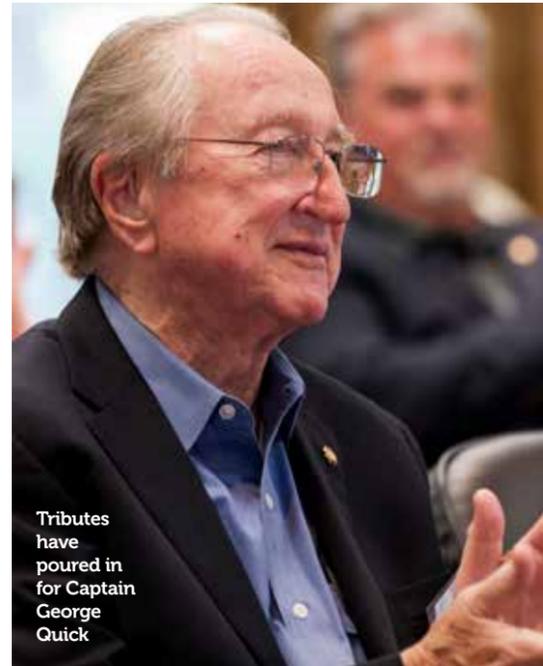
I had the privilege of participating in the Seafarer 2050 summit in Manila. It was hosted under the auspices of the Global Partnership signed last October in Singapore by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), International Chamber of Shipping, and the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC). The summit brought together representatives from unions, shipowners, crewing agents and governments to discuss the challenges and opportunities related to seafarer training, recruitment and retention. Social dialogue was at the heart of the agenda.

The summit called for a new social contract for seafarers, based on mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. It urged governments to create investment and funding streams to address the skills gap and the just transition in the maritime industry. The summit also emphasised the need to create opportunities for seafarers to use their experience and qualifications to transition to shore-based jobs. It recommended that policy makers should collect and analyse data on the value of maritime professionals to national economies.

Social dialogue is the key to ensuring that the maritime industry continuously improves but is also sustainable and resilient in the face of the huge change before us.

It is time for good shipowners to speak up and speak loudly in support of working with us to build that better future – for the sake of all maritime nations and for all those who seek to work and forge careers in this fantastic industry.

Nautilus pays tribute to Captain George Quick



Tributes have poured in for Captain George Quick

CREDIT: MM&P

Nautilus added its condolences as tributes poured in for maritime pilot and maritime professional Captain George Quick, who died in July 2023, aged 93.

Capt Quick, who hailed from Nautilus Federation affiliate the International Organization of Masters, Mates, & Pilot (MM&P), advocated for the welfare of mariners and was remembered for his many contributions to the industry, his role as a mentor and friend, and for working tirelessly to advance the highest standards for the piloting and shipping professions.

Nautilus deputy general secretary Marcel van den Broek said: 'With the passing of George, the international maritime trade union movement has lost an icon. I consider it a privilege and pleasure to have worked together with such a wise and endearing person. George will never be forgotten.'

Just Transition essential following net zero agreement

Nautilus has hailed an agreement at the of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) that will see shipping emissions reduction targeted to net zero. However, the Union has warned that new technologies will have a major effect on seafarers.

General secretary Mark Dickinson said: 'This agreement is a significant step. It is imperative there is a global effort to ensure a just transition by future-proofing skills and training, ensuring there are no compromises in safety and enhancing jobs, pay and conditions.'

20%
emissions reduction by 2030 (from 2008 levels)

70%
emissions reduction by 2040

WORKERS ESSENTIAL TO UNLOCK BENEFITS OF AUTOMATION, SAYS INTERNATIONAL REPORT

Seafarers see the prospect of autonomous ships as an opportunity to solve a number of problems in commercial shipping, but warn that crew expertise is central to making change effective, according to a new report.

The Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) report was presented to the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee on 31 May.

It collates seafarer perspectives and expectations on automation in the global merchant fleet, finding that seafarers feel positive but would like more training.

Read the full report at bit.ly/MASS_report

Dickinson spotlights Flag of Convenience campaign at ITF Seafarers' Expo

Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson has spoken out against sea blindness and the ongoing abuse of the Flag of Convenience (FOC) system at the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Seafarers' Expo in Manila.

The event gave 5,000 people the opportunity to speak with ITF inspectors and legal, labour and health experts. The final day coincided with the International Day of the Seafarer, on 25 June, and also marked 75 years of ITF campaigning against FOCs.

Mr Dickinson, who serves as vice chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section, used the closing speech to highlight the value of seafarers to the world and the important work being done by trade unions to enforce their rights.

'Holding this Seafarers' Expo to inform seafarers of their rights and of the role trade unions play in protecting



Mark Dickinson spoke on the importance of trade unions at the ITF Seafarers' Expo

CREDIT: Nautilus International

their interests – alongside providing guidance on wellbeing and information on where to look for support, and celebrating them today especially – is

one of many ways that we as an ITF family are playing our part in making sure our industry is one in which people really want to work,' he said.

Right to strike: ILO intervenes

Nautilus has welcomed an intervention by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which has declared that the UK government's planned anti-strike laws must be changed.

The ILO, a UN agency, is charged with defending the right to strike. Nautilus strongly opposes the government's Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill, which is in its final stages in Parliament. It would give the

Secretary of State sweeping powers to restrict the right to strike of maritime professionals, preventing them from engaging in legitimate action in pursuit of fair pay and working conditions.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has successfully prosecuted the operator and the master of the Cyprus-flagged cargo ship AAL Dampier, after the marine pilot was injured while disembarking. The accident occurred in August 2022 while the Dampier was under way and departing the Port of Fremantle, Australia. A pilot ladder – which AMSA later found to be in poor condition due to inappropriate storage – broke while the pilot was disembarking. This caused the pilot to fall several metres onto the deck of the pilot vessel, which was traveling alongside the ship, resulting in serious injuries which required urgent hospital treatment.

‘There are international standards for rigging, maintaining and stowing pilot ladders – and with the updated guidance in our [2022] marine notice about pilot ladders, there is simply no excuse for incidents like what we saw on the AAL Dampier last year,’ said AMSA national operations manager Greg Witherall.



The Cyprus-flagged cargo ship AAL Dampier

Serious accidents are occurring on yachts that do not comply with 2020 requirements for side screens/handrails on gangways, passerelles and accommodation ladders

Master convicted after pilot injured in ladder fall

‘If you own, operate or crew a ship with a pilot ladder, the safety of everyone using that pilot ladder is in your hands.’

In Perth Magistrates Court, AAL Dampier Navigation Co. pled guilty to an offense related to marine safety for failing to ensure pilot transfer arrangements in place were in accordance with the relevant regulations and was fined A\$30,500.

The master of the vessel pled guilty to two offences, one under safety and emergency rules for failing to ensure the disembarkation of a pilot was carried out in accordance with the relevant regulations, and the second under the Australian Navigation Act 2012 for taking an unseaworthy vessel to sea. He was fined a total of A\$5,500.

NEW PODCAST LAUNCHES DURING MARITIME SAFETY WEEK

A new maritime safety podcast, *Sea Views*, launched in time for Maritime Safety Week with funding from The Seafarers' Charity.

The Charity announced funding during Maritime Safety Week for the first five episodes of the series, which aims to foster dialogue on safety within the international professional maritime community.

The podcast is hosted by Julia Gosling, an advocate for positive behaviour change

in the maritime sector, who will draw on her 20 years of experience in maritime safety and search and rescue. She is joined by co-host Adam Parnell, director of the CHIRP Maritime Programme.

Mr Parnell said the podcasts that CHIRP is collaborating on would help it reach a broader audience in its mission to 'share insights, raise awareness, and save more lives at sea', and complement its circulated written reports.

- The first three episodes can be downloaded at www.buzzsprout.com/2148311



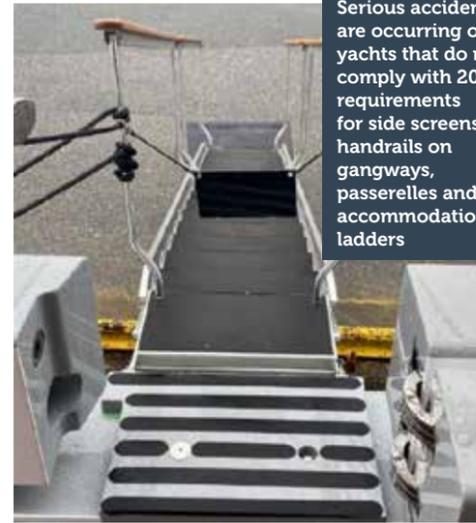
CREDIT: Damny Cornelissen

Mapping our Maritime Future Survey

Your voice matters and the insights you share will help us in our campaign for a 'just transition' that protects seafarers and all maritime professionals now and in future.

Your industry, your voice, your union.





Serious accidents are occurring on yachts that do not comply with 2020 requirements for side screens/handrails on gangways, passerelles and accommodation ladders

Superyacht warning on gangway accidents

Andrew Linington reports on an ongoing safety issue that should have been resolved by a 2020 amendment to the Red Ensign Group's Yacht Code

A major flag state has warned superyacht crew members and owners about the need to improve the safety of access to their vessels following several serious accidents.

Authorities in the Cayman Islands have issued a special safety flyer highlighting a failure to comply with rules to address the hazards posed by gangways, passerelles and accommodation ladders with 'open sides'.

The Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands (MACI) says it has dealt with incidents in recent years in which people have lost their footing while boarding or leaving a yacht on a gangway or ladder lacking intermediate railings or other means to prevent someone falling. MACI points out that the Red Ensign Group's Yacht Code was amended in 2020 in an attempt to tackle the

problem by requiring the use of side screens or handrails on both sides, with detailed specifications for intermediate rails or wires, distances between stanchions, and also covering the use of intermediate rails and toe boards.

Yachts built before the amendment entered into force were required to comply with the requirement no later than their first annual survey after that date.

However, MACI says that while the requirements came into effect in June 2021 it is aware that 'open-sided' means of access are still being used, with a recent incident highlighting the risk.

'A crew member was returning to a yacht when he lost his footing on the gangway,' it explains. 'The crew member fell through the sides of the gangway and landed heavily on the quay before falling into the water.'

'Fortunately, the crew member was able to be retrieved from the swim platform of an adjacent yacht,' it adds. 'The crew member suffered back injuries and broken ribs. Due to the extent of the injuries received, the crew member was unable to continue his service on the yacht as it made its onward voyage.'

MACI says this incident 'could easily have resulted in much more serious consequences which could have included life-changing, or even fatal outcomes'.

The safety flyer urges masters and crew to evaluate all means of access to their yachts against the current REG Yacht Code requirements for stanchion distances and intermediate handrails. MACI stresses the need to ensure that all modifications to a means of access are formally accepted by the yacht's classification society or shipping registry.

HSE warns on hydrogen sulphide danger

Checks of onboard specialist production and storage vessels in UK waters have revealed alarmingly high concentrations of a deadly gas.

In response to the findings, the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is warning operators of floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) and floating storage and offloading (FSO) vessels, as well as floating storage units (FSU) to take a series of measures to combat the dangers.

THE PROBLEM

The HSE says investigations using specialist equipment have identified very high levels of hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) in ullage spaces of cargo and slop tanks onboard some FPSOs and FSUs operating in the UK continental shelf.

It warns that the levels found – up to 16,000ppm – are above the upper measuring limits of the standard portable gas monitoring

equipment generally used onboard tankers and FPSOs, and may therefore go undetected. Crew members monitoring tank atmospheres with such gear may therefore be unaware of such high concentrations.

The HSE warns that inhaling even a single breath of H₂S concentrations over 1,000ppm can cause immediate collapse with loss of breathing. It says there is a risk that crew may be exposed to the gas by venting operations to maintain tank pressure or unintentional releases caused by the poor integrity of pipework. Gas from low pressure releases may not disperse in mild wind conditions and can also accumulate in isolated pockets onboard.

The gas can also pit and corrode steel, which may affect the integrity of cargo containment systems and hull structures.

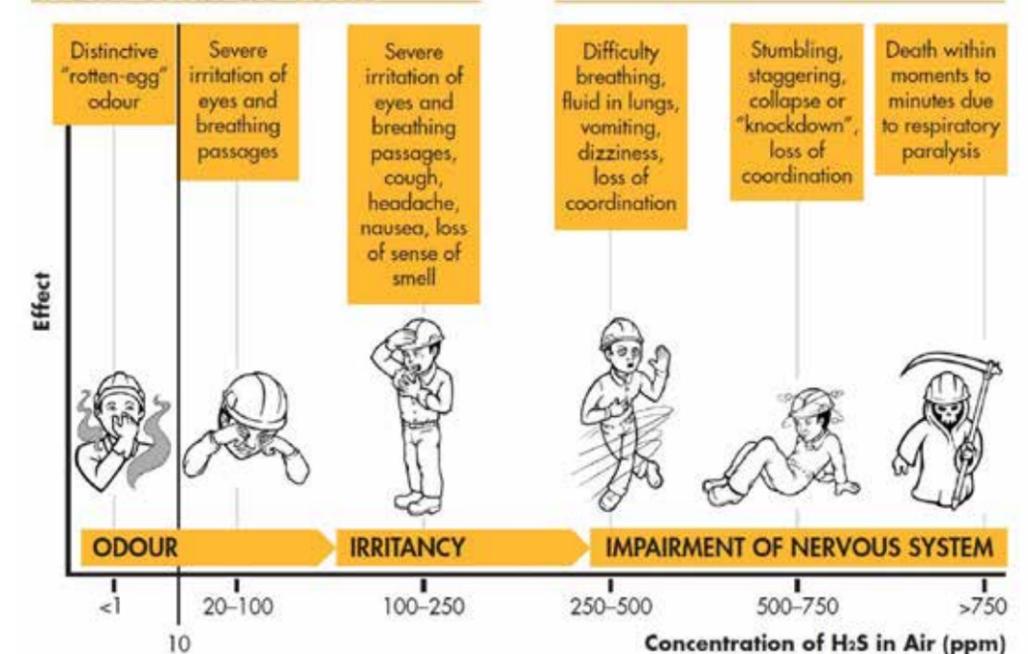
The HSE stresses the need to

provide proper training to crew on managing the risks, and review risk assessments for routine ullage space gas monitoring, sampling and other tasks where individuals could be exposed to H₂S. Crew must be provided with suitable protective equipment.

Operators should also review hull integrity management and inspection arrangements so that any 'accelerated degradation mechanisms' that can affect the structural or watertight integrity of the hull can be identified.

The safety bulletin suggests that operators could use fixed gas monitoring arrangements for cargo and slop tanks to avoid crew being exposed to toxic gas while monitoring with portable equipment, and consider the use of preventive strategies such as increased frequency of dewatering cargo/slop tanks, biociding, and routine maintenance of cargo tank stripping systems.

EFFECTS OF H₂S EXPOSURE



Potentially deadly hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) was sometimes present in levels above the upper measuring limits of standard portable gas monitoring equipment – meaning it could go undetected by crew

CREDIT: UK Health and Safety Executive



CREDIT: ITF

ABANDONMENT ON THE RISE

A recent report has highlighted the increase in cases of ship abandonment – with 2022 the worst year on record. **Rob Coston** reports on how these actions by irresponsible shipowners are continuing to unfairly impact the lives of seafarers

Cases of abandonment place a terrible strain on seafarers and their families: from the uncertainty about when a loved one will return home to the financial chaos caused when a seafarer cannot leave a vessel to find work.

Sadly, the problem seems to be getting worse, not better. A report released earlier this year by RightShip – a consultancy and software provider focused on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues in the maritime sector – has demonstrated that cases of reported abandonment have been on the rise for five consecutive years.

BUSINESS AS USUAL?

It is true that cases of abandonment have often been driven by world events. A clear example would be the 2009 financial crisis, when 65 cases occurred compared with 17 in 2008 and again in 2010. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic and conflicts including the war in Ukraine have led to an uptick.

However, the steady growth over the years suggests that the problem is driven by poor behaviour and enforcement. It is also clearly a global failure: cases are recorded in 106 countries and 85 flag states around the world, located on all five inhabited continents, with the UAE, Spain and Turkey experiencing the most abandonments.

At the close of 2022, 103 vessels were abandoned, impacting upwards of 1,682 seafarers. RightShip's research indicates that abandonment has affected 9,925 seafarers over the past 20 years, in cases involving 703 vessels.

The financial implications of this for seafarers are vast. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) frequently recovers tens of thousands of dollars in unpaid wages for those affected by abandonment, and RightShip estimates that over 20 years the cost to seafarers could amount to US\$40 million in total.

IS THERE A SOLUTION?

According to RightShip, the solution is increased accountability throughout the supply chain in line with ESG principles.

'The rise in ESG compliance regulations mean that charterers, bankers and financiers are increasingly being asked to evidence due diligence when it comes to selecting their partners, with open abandonment cases reflecting poorly on ship owners and managers,' says CEO Steen Lund.

In the same way that many supermarkets, for example, now actively seek more environmentally friendly packaging for their products, the companies and third-party logistics enterprises that are importing and moving goods should hold themselves responsible if they are caught 'funding and doing business with companies involved in the continued abandonment of seafarers and the mistreatment of the people who move our cargoes.'

As well as the business solution, however, the ITF says that it is vital for insurers, courts and port states to have proper procedures for cases of abandonment, and to honour seafarers' existing rights under international law. The situation for abandoned seafarers can be better or worse depending on this: in Egypt, for example, Captain Vehbi Kara was forced to stay onboard for a year, and navigational officer Mohammad Aisha had to remain for four years, after Egyptian courts designated them as legal guardians of their abandoned ships.

Some recent contrasting abandoned cases (see pages 66-67) further demonstrate how different the situation can be for seafarers, depending on jurisdiction and circumstances. 'Adhering to the rights of seafarers shouldn't be a lottery for crew,' says Ian Bray, national coordinator of the Australian ITF Inspectorate, who was involved in one of these cases. 'Their rights are their rights, no matter where they find themselves being underpaid, exploited, or abandoned. All port states must be encouraged to respond more quickly in the interests of seafarer welfare.'

WHAT IS ABANDONMENT?

According to IMO/ILO guidelines, abandonment is characterised by the severing of ties between the shipowner and seafarer.

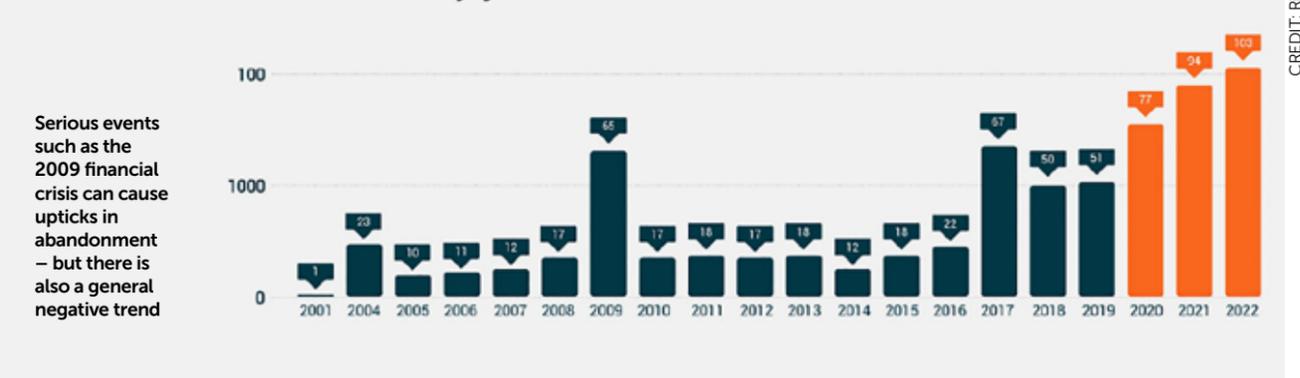
This occurs when the shipowner fails to fulfil fundamental obligations to the seafarer regarding timely repatriation, payment of outstanding wages, and provision of the basic necessities of life (e.g. food, accommodation, and medical care). Abandonment is considered to have taken place when the master has been left without the financial means to operate the vessel.

HOW CAN I HELP?

If you think your own vessel might have been abandoned, go to bit.ly/ITF_advice to find out what to do.

Keeping abandonments databases up to date is vital to tackling this growing problem. If you suspect a ship that is not your own has been abandoned, contact abandonment@itf.org.uk. The ITF will then log the incident in its database and report it to the International Maritime Organization.

Abandonment by year



Serious events such as the 2009 financial crisis can cause upticks in abandonment – but there is also a general negative trend

CREDIT: RightShip



Cunard's Queen Victoria

CREDIT: Andrew Bone/Wikimedia Commons



Holland America Line's Nieuw Amsterdam

CREDIT: Richard N Horne/Wikimedia Commons



Princess Cruises' Royal Princess

CREDIT: Princess Cruises



Riverside Luxury Cruises' Riverside Mozart

CREDIT: Wolfgang Fricke/Wikimedia Commons



Saga's Spirit of Adventure



Windstar's Star Legend

CREDIT FOR TWO IMAGES RIGHT: A Guy Named Nyal/Wikimedia Commons

CREDIT: P&O Cruises



P&O Cruises' Aurora

With ocean and river cruise in full swing following near total shut down during the pandemic, we hear first hand what it's like onboard. **Sarah Robinson** reports

BEYOND THE GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

Right now, cruise holiday advertisements are everywhere. Companies are desperate to move on from the pandemic image of cruise ships as floating disease-carriers and return to the good old days of glamour, high-level hospitality and fun.

It seems that the effort to revive the industry is working, which is good news for Nautilus members as more jobs are

becoming available. But is cruise actually a good place to work? The best way to find out is to ask the cruise sector crew members themselves, which is what we've done for this article.

This isn't a scientific study – more of a snapshot of opinions and experiences. But we had input from a range of Nautilus members: men and women working at different ranks across the deck, engineering and hotel departments. Those who took



part serve on several different kinds of cruise vessels, and we had a particularly strong response from members in river cruise.

The contributors made their comments in an anonymous online interview questionnaire, so they were able to speak freely. If you've been thinking about switching to cruise, here's what awaits you, starting with the big question...

How do the pay and conditions in cruise compare to other sectors?

'20 years ago it was not good. We had to work more days for the same money as on a tanker. Now conditions and free time are good.'

'The pay is almost the same. The difference between river cruise ships and seagoing tankers is that on the river I have a yearly salary divided by 12 (months) and on the ocean I had an allowance per worked month.'

'The crew wi-fi is the same as on cargo ships, and that means it's poor, but it's better than nothing.'

'Compared to cargo ships, for a master it's more comfortable on cruise ships, but the other side the pressure is higher because of the expectations of the guests are getting higher.'

'We have good tips, food and wi-fi.'

What expectations are there about crew behaviour and appearance in the cruise sector?

'You must be very tolerant and accepting of a multi-cultural environment. Immaculate appearance and well-groomed in guest areas, but this has been relaxed a little recently in allowing small visible tattoos and facial hair for men if grown whilst on leave (not onboard).'

'Some owners don't accept crew members with beards and tattoos and in my opinion it's a kind of discrimination.'

'We have a strict uniform policy which includes amount/type of jewellery that can be worn. There are general expectations of presentation standards

too – stubble is not really tolerated for example. There is an expectation regarding behaviour too, but this is well laid out. Guests come first in public areas, cinemas, gyms, bar, by the pools etc, and those in passenger facing roles obviously have higher expectations placed on them.'

'Grooming, appearance. Fluency in English.'
'When working with guests you have to remember names, have to answer questions, need to be open.'

What traditions are still kept up on the cruiseships you have worked on?

'Crossing the line ceremony is still carried out and the Captain still hosts a Sunday interdenominational church service and weddings onboard. Occasionally asked to officiate at a committal of ashes ceremony.'

'There is not much time any more for ceremonies, but what stays is the end of season party.'

'Crossing the line ceremonies, or inviting passengers to dine at the captain's table.'

'Crossing the line, welcome onboard instructions at a cocktail party, weddings are back now after the operational pause.'

What do you personally like about working in the cruise sector?

'Working with people, good atmosphere in the company.'

'Visiting so many different places around the world which I could never have imagined, from the Arctic to Antarctica, the tropics of the Amazon to a number of circumnavigations of the globe. Working with a 1,000+ crew gives me the greatest pride and job satisfaction and how the "operation" just comes together like a big jigsaw puzzle.'

'So far I like the contract (unlimited) and good balance between time onboard and vacation (I work a four weeks on/four weeks off rotation schedule).'

'The variety. Every day is different even if you are sailing the same cruise week after week. There are a lot of challenges and a lot of thinking on your feet is required. Making a guest's day is very satisfying but so is teaching a junior officer something.'



'The long free time between assignments, salary still okay compared to other jobs.'

What do you find are the negatives of working in the cruise sector?

'Working hours, and sometimes the accommodation. From time to time I need to share my cabin with other crew members and sometimes we even share across departments.'

'It's hard to make a team with so many nationalities on the ship.'

'Poor standards regarding training, record keeping of work/rest hours, safety at work.'

'It's a lot of ship to manage. People often have very negative perceptions of cruiseships, their officers and their workload, and one of the worst perceptions I saw was that "female officers work there for an easy ride" (paraphrasing).'

'Crew issues, it's too hard to get good and engaged staff. As a manager on a ship you have to accept what the office sends you and since Covid, professional staff are rare. You have to keep and train them which is not easy since ships are fully booked, and you have to keep up the standards.'

If you have worked in the cruise sector for more than 10 years, how have things changed since you started out?

'Vacation leave got better.'

'Salary and free time better, accommodation and internet onboard better.'

'When I started, we had only two nationalities; now we have over 15 in a crew of 50 persons.'

'Things have changed massively. Attitudes have changed, lessons have been learnt. The cruise industry is constantly trying to do its best with regards to diversity and environmental aspects, which wasn't always the case.'



Members report that expectations and pressure can be higher on cruise ships, but pay and conditions are often better compared to cargo vessels

CREDIT: Pixabay

► 'An important point I would like to raise is about inclusivity and diversity, which is not a new thing for the Merchant Navy; these were always largely embraced long before they became "fashionable" ashore. This is not suggesting that there is not room for improvement, but we do need to be careful of promoting one group over the other and inadvertently creating "positive discrimination" against the other group. This is nowadays the common chatter/concern in the mess.'

How was your job in the cruise sector affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?

'Covid curtailed a lot of guest interaction, but most has returned including cocktail parties – but not shaking hands yet or hosting dining tables.'

'My work was secure because I had the Swiss contract... and it doesn't seem to be much different than it was before.'

'I stayed as a watch on the ship and got my normal salary. 60% of the nautical crew stayed at home on furlough.'

'Things have slowly gone back to the way they were before... only everything is much more expensive, with higher taxes.'

'I was one of the lucky people that was not financially affected by the Covid-19 pandemic but the push from my company for taking the experimental so-called "vaccines" was really hard to dodge.'

'I was stuck onboard a ship for six months during the initial lockdown and the operational pause. For the most part things are pretty much back to normal – just companies trying to repay the debts they have after all the ships were laid up for nearly two years.'

'Ships are fully booked, but crew is half as professional as before.'

'Guests have changed, they are more demanding and most of them just want to cruise without experiencing what comes with cruising, like being together with hundreds of other guests, eating together, joining excursions. Or they just don't want to miss anything since they didn't travel due to Covid, and they feel obliged to join everything.'

Do you think all ranks and roles have been treated fairly on the ships where you have worked, or are some crew members at a disadvantage?

'Utility are sometimes not respected, they work hard and clean all the dishes.'

'Crew from different departments have different contracts and tours of duty, which is the norm on cruiseships and the way supply and demand in the global HR cycle works in reality. More and more Filipino crew contracts are being reduced to six months, which I think is a positive step which will help with a healthier and even happier work force.'

'There is a long time struggle by the nautical staff to be recognised as of equal importance as the hotel staff by the management.'

'Different roles onboard have different access to amenities, but I don't consider that a disadvantage, just part of their position, and the expectation of that position. Everyone has the right to speak up and this is encouraged. There is a confidential reporting hotline which can be called from any phone. Everyone has access to the HR manager and to the crew assistance programme too.'

Would you recommend working in the cruise sector to other Nautilus members?

'Yes, it's a great industry. The important thing is to find a company that fits your values and it needs to feel good.'

'Well, I cannot answer that. But I could definitely encourage people to try working on the river instead of the ocean.'

'I do not have any regrets about my time at sea; I have made great lifelong friends, seen parts of the world I would never have otherwise seen, gained greater appreciation of cultures and people all around me. We all get bogged down in paperwork and day-to-day bureaucracy, but I still feel that it is still a most professionally and personally rewarding career and I would recommend it to anyone.'



Guests have new expectations following the Covid-19 pandemic, according to members working in the cruise sector

CREDIT: Getty Images

'With a serious company, I would say yes. A good company will take care with your working hours, pay fairly and on time and give enough holidays. But there are still some "black sheep".'

'Yes I would. It's a great opportunity to see the world and work with a wide variety of people. There's lots of opportunities to further yourself.'



Nautilus Federation coordinator – and head of international relations at Nautilus International – Danny McGowan represents the Union on the ITF Cruise Ship Task Force

CREDIT: Brad Wakefield

YOUR VOICE IN THE GLOBAL CRUISE INDUSTRY

As well as having collective bargaining agreements with individual cruise operators, Nautilus acts on the international stage to improve the working lives of all crew in the sector. **Sarah Robinson** explores how it's done

International committees and working groups aren't the most glamorous part of trade union activity, but they can have a very important effect on your day-to-day work.

Take the cruise industry. Most cruise ships are flag of convenience (FoC) vessels, so over the years it has been vital for unions to cooperate internationally and agree global minimum standards on pay and conditions.

The FoC standards for all merchant shipping are set by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), of which Nautilus is a highly active affiliate.

The standards are laid out in a document called the ITF Mexico City Policy, which has a special section about cruise ships known as the Miami Guidelines Policy.

MIAMI GUIDELINES

Why the special section? The Guidelines explain as follows: 'The cruise industry has developed a unique operational system which substantially differs from other maritime transport systems. These guidelines reflect the distinctive nature of the cruise industry and set out the instruments for the ITF affiliates signing acceptable ITF cruise agreements.'



CREDIT: TheHolyNougat/Wikimedia Commons

Cruise ships where Nautilus members work:

Clockwise from above: Scenic Cruises' Scenic Eclipse; Virgin's Valiant Lady; Riverside Luxury Cruises' Riverside Bach

This 'unique operational system' means unions have to work even harder than in other sectors to find out where the ownership and control of the companies really lie, explains Nautilus head of international relations Danny McGowan. 'We're looking for the country of what we call "beneficial ownership", because that's where we need to be carrying out union negotiations.'

ITF CRUISE SHIP TASK FORCE

Mr McGowan represents Nautilus on the ITF Cruise Ship Task Force, which provides a forum for unions to work together on ensuring the Miami Guidelines are followed in crew pay and conditions agreements around the world.

The task force is structured so that there is a balance of union representatives from the main beneficial ownership countries and the main labour supplying countries. At present, the beneficial ownership countries represented are Italy, Germany, Norway, the UK and the USA, and the labour supplying countries are Croatia, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Ukraine.

So what happens at task force meetings? 'It's a place where we can discuss which national union should be the main negotiator with a company – which isn't always easy,' says Mr McGowan. 'But our priority at the moment is to review the Miami Guidelines to make sure they are working as well as they can for our members.'

MEMBER REPRESENTATION

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors are a hot topic, with the task force looking particularly at the 'social' side to



CREDIT: Tim Sheerman-Chase/Wikimedia Commons



CREDIT: Riverside Luxury Cruises

make sure all seafarers are entitled to collective bargaining and consultation. The thorny matter of ownership structure also comes into the group's ESG discussions.

Another issue being explored is how cruise ships are affected by cabotage laws (rules governing whether a vessel operating in national waters has to be crewed by seafarers from that country).

In addition, there is the perennial challenge of tips and service charges for cruise crew – looking at how these affect the 'basic wage' figures used to calculate sick pay and other benefits.

These issues are likely to be familiar to Nautilus members working in the cruise sector, because the principles of the Miami Guidelines underpin all the Union's own cruise collective bargaining agreements, whether in the UK, Netherlands or Switzerland.

'We seek to go beyond the international minimum standards for our members,' says Mr McGowan, 'but the Miami Guidelines are a useful starting point in negotiations, and it's important to be at the international table to make sure there's a level playing field. If we all agree at the task force to stick to the Miami Guidelines, that helps to stop problems arising.'

Seizing the opportunity to end seafarer exploitation

European seafarers are tired of being excluded from national and international legislation that should be protecting their rights at work. The time has come for concerted action to get rid of these loopholes and introduce a new set of policies across the continent, says **Nikolaos Koletsis**



Nikolaos Koletsis
ETF policy officer for maritime transport

Since the 2022 sacking of nearly 800 seafarers from P&O Ferries, European countries have woken up to the need to improve legal protections for maritime workers.

In France, the Assemblée Nationale recently approved a law proposal targeting social dumping in the English Channel (La Manche) to block low-wage ferry companies from French ports. It includes, among other principles, the provision that time worked should be equal to time off.

A similar initiative in the UK, the Seafarers' Wages Act 2023, received royal assent on 23 March this year.

Meanwhile, an Act has been proposed by the Norwegian government to promote fair and decent working conditions in Norwegian waters, in the Norwegian exclusive economic zone, and on the Norwegian continental shelf by ensuring that workers onboard ships are

provided with Norwegian wages and working conditions.

But we still have much further to go. At the ETF, we're now focusing on getting a set of policies adopted across the EU and EEA which would overhaul maritime employment conditions and state aid. Our concept note is called **A European Maritime Space for Socially Sustainable Shipping**.

A vision for better maritime employment

The European Maritime Space is the ETF Maritime Transport Section's vision for addressing social dumping and boosting employment for EU/EEA seafarers in an innovative way.

An important principle we are highlighting is the need for a complete reform, if not eradication, of the system of flags of convenience. We are also seeking to address how individual laws and state aid policies are currently failing seafarers.

What's wrong at the moment?

Under the current system, seafarers are not treated in the same way as shore-based workers. They are excluded from several EU directives and regulations, including the Posted Workers Directive, and their working conditions and wages are different and of lower standards compared to those of land workers.

If we look at the European Pillar of Social Rights, its 20 principles are far from being reached with regard to seafarers.

Meanwhile, the current state aid system has failed to provide any value for money or protect jobs. It is not acceptable that shipowners can benefit from state aid without any social responsibility.

The EU's maritime subsidies policy must change so that taxpayers' money is used in a far more effective way, and stricter monitoring and



CREDIT: Nautilus International

In the wake of the P&O Ferries scandal, Nautilus members and staff campaigned to end seafarer exploitation in UK national waters – work which continues alongside the ETF's wider efforts to end social dumping in Europe

enforcement of the obligations are needed by the European Commission through the State Aid Guidelines for Maritime Transport.

How will the European Maritime Space change the situation?

All crew members must be granted European conditions onboard ships operating regularly between European ports, irrespective of their nationality or place of residence, and irrespective of the flag of the ship.

Seafarers working in European waters must be treated in the same way as shore-based workers.

Companies benefiting from EU state aid must give back to the community and provide quality training and jobs.

There is a clear momentum now for action, and we need to see the European Commission and the industry set a level of ambition that has never been seen before.

● The full text of the ETF European Maritime Space concept can be downloaded from: bit.ly/Euro_maritime_space

EXPLAINER: what is social dumping?

Social dumping is a term you'll often come across in the trade union movement, especially relating to the shipping industry. It tends to mean a situation where jobs are moved from a country with higher pay and labour standards to a country where workers are offered less, and employers can therefore boost their profits. But sometimes social dumping can happen even within a country's borders when there are loopholes in employment law.

For example, until recently, companies operating within UK territorial waters were not obliged to pay seafarers the UK national minimum wage. This essentially made the vessels themselves equivalent to countries with low pay, and many workers onboard were recruited from nations with lower labour standards than the UK. Since this legal loophole was closed, another persisted – the Offshore Wind Workers Concession – until pressure from Nautilus and the RMT union led to its demise in May 2023.

Across Europe, the ETF is working to end social dumping through creating relatively high minimum labour standards throughout the continent – and the ETF European Maritime Space is an important tool for achieving this.



The front line against abandonment

The International Transport Workers' Federation and its inspectors get seafarers home when they are abandoned by unscrupulous employers, and fight for the pay the crew are owed. With a record number of cases last year, **Rob Coston** reports on two recent successes, both involving the same shipowner, which show the importance of port state cooperation

Soar Harmony Shipping Ltd is well known to the ITF. The Hong Kong-based shipowner has a long history of abandoning crew, and its vessels have been detained before for violating safety and crew welfare rules. Yet even the ITF did not expect it to abandon two crews at the same time.

Following the release of the 43 Filipino seafarers onboard the livestock ships Yangtze Harmony and Yangtze Fortune, the ITF has managed through its work to not only win freedom and flights home for the crews, but also recover more than USD \$1 million in backpay for them.

A tale of two ships

Yangtze Harmony was arrested in October 2022 in Singapore over an unpaid fuel bill, at which point Soar stopped paying the entire crew, leaving them without wages or a way to get home. By April, they were owed a massive USD \$429,972.

Meanwhile, Yangtze Fortune, Harmony's sister vessel, was seized by the Australian Federal Court at Portland, Victoria over the owner's refusal to make urgent repairs.

The crew of the Fortune turned out to be much more fortunate



The crew of the Fortune pictured with ITF volunteer Graham 'Yappy' Archer (right) during one of many visits that took place in their five months-long abandonment

CREDIT: ITF

than their colleagues aboard the Harmony, however.

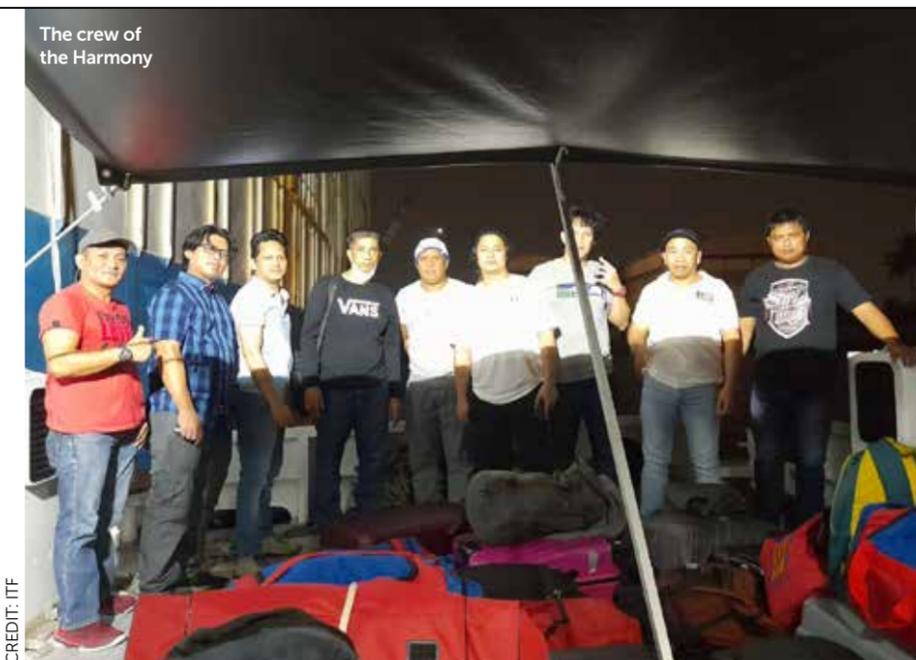
Assistance in Australia

Firstly, half the Fortune's crew went home in a matter of weeks because the ITF successfully lobbied to have the flag state reduce the ship's minimum manning levels from 30 to just 16. The ITF was able to make the case because the Fortune would not be leaving anchorage anytime soon, as Australian authorities required

expensive repairs to the vessel.

The second major difference between the two crews' experience of abandonment comes down to support for, and adherence to, labour and human rights by the parties with obligations.

In Australia, the crew of the Fortune did not have to endure months of uncertainty. Efforts were made to prevent legal wrangling from delaying the seafarers being paid and flown home. The Federal Marshal kept them updated on



CREDIT: ITF

The crew of the Harmony

Read more about the rise in abandonment cases on pages 10-11

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Before you start work on a vessel, the ITF recommends that you check what the conditions are like onboard. Visit the ITF's database to search for a ship at www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up

progress towards the ship's sale and provided options for them to consider, reiterating key information about their labour and human rights such as those under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC). They knew how to access shore leave and medical care and were visited several times by local welfare and union representatives.

Slow pace in Singapore

Singapore's legal system, however, left the crew of the Yangtze Harmony in limbo.

While lawyers, insurers and bureaucrats slowly went through the process of selling the ship to pay its debts, the seafarers waited and waited. Unable to return to the Philippines or to earn money, their families struggled. Some fell into debt and in one case money ran out, leaving a seafarer's loved one unable to pay medical bills.

'It's a complex process in any jurisdiction when a shipowner defaults on payments,' says ITF inspectorate coordinator Steve Trowsdale. 'But authorities must realise they have a clear responsibility under

international law to act swiftly in cases where crew welfare is in jeopardy.'

Singapore ratified the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) in 2011. This specifies how cases of abandonment should be handled. Trowsdale argues that in delaying proceedings for more than five months, Singapore may have contravened the MLC.

Trowsdale said he was looking forward to the publishing of joint ILO-IMO guidelines authored by the ITF and shipowners' association ICS. The guidelines on how to deal with cases of seafarer abandonment are aimed at port states (in this case, Singapore and Australia), making clear that they should prioritise getting crew home before worrying about money matters.

They explain how port states can adhere to the provisions of the MLC through practical examples, such as replacing abandoned crew with a local team or putting the vessel in dry dock/shifting it to a guarded anchorage. These methods can reduce the number of seafarers required to stay onboard.

Mental health and welfare

The ITF's Flags of Convenience Campaign network coordinator for Asia Pacific, Sandra Bernal, worked for six months to get the 13 seafarers home and paid.

'The seafarers onboard the Yangtze Harmony were suffering from fatigue, anxiety and stress,' she says, adding that the contrast between the way authorities in Singapore and Australia handled the two abandonment cases showed how a port state's response to an abandonment can make a huge difference to the welfare and mental health impacts for affected crew.

REPORTING ABANDONMENT

If you suspect a ship has been abandoned, you should contact abandonment@itf.org.uk. The ITF will then log the incident in its database and report it to the International Maritime Organization.

the global
SEAFARER



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