



## **ETF and ECSA joint statement at the occasion of the EU Digital Assembly June 2017**

### ***Digitalisation in shipping: Smart digital solutions to alleviate administrative workload on crew and companies***

Final

On the occasion of the "Digital Assembly 2017" co-organised on 15 & 16 June by the European Commission and the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU the European seafarers and shipowners highlight the importance that shipping is urgently better served by smart digital solutions to finally decrease the administrative burden they face.

Shipping today is still not enjoying a genuine single market and remains hampered by endless paperwork. This is to the detriment of the crew, which faces increased workload with repercussions on rest-time and job satisfaction. It also affects the overall smooth shipping operations, especially for short sea shipping operators as they frequently call at EU ports within short time spans.

The Reporting Formalities Directive that aimed to simplify and rationalise reporting formalities for ships in European ports as of June 2016 has unfortunately not helped in easing the situation. Crews and companies face a worse situation today than before. Rather than having a single European window, diverging national solutions were developed and even at Member States' level there is very often no single solution in place.

Some illustrative examples include: In port A the master has to insert the date of birth along the following instruction: DD/MM/YYYY for his crew, in the next European port he calls it has to be in the form of DD.MMM.YYYY and in a third port the format obliges to put YYYY/MM/DD. An excel document with 18 tab-pages to be filled in with specific codes requires hours of work in view of calling port A. Unfortunately this work cannot be re-used as for the next call a word document with different data requirements needs to be filled in and sent 72 hours in advance of the vessel's arrival.

This results in shipping companies and crew facing increased paper work, different software requirements, a multiplicity of authorities and intermediate parties. Procedures and requirements are not only complex but also repetitive, resulting in a loss of productivity, job satisfaction and unnecessary workload and stress for ship crews.

Digital solutions are there, all actors just need now to implement them on the basis of harmonised datasets and formats for cargo, crew and vessel data. A joint effort is also required to reduce reporting obligations to a minimum list of truly necessary formalities. The solution should take state of the art technology into account, ideally data is available in a 'cloud' or other platform from where relevant authorities pull the

needed information. Only in this way shipping can be put on an equal par with land-based transport modes, which already benefit from a single market.

The EU Social Partners in the maritime sector call on the European Commission to urgently remedy the situation through a comprehensive revision of the Reporting Formalities Directive. It should create a true European single window environment for crew and companies that fully ensures the 'reporting once' principle and which shares all necessary cargo and conveyance data between governments and relevant authorities.

There is no time for complacency here. A failed EU legislation needs to be remedied as soon as possible.

ECSA and ETF therefore call on the European Commission to prioritise this matter as part of its Digital Agenda and Better Regulation Initiative and to propose a revision in time for it to be completed during this legislature. They call upon the European Parliament and Member States to fully support and prioritise such a revision.

The European Community Shipowners' Associations<sup>1</sup> and the European Transport Workers' Federation<sup>2</sup> have identified the administrative workload as a priority issue on their joint programme for the European Sectoral Social Dialogue.

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*1 ECSA was founded in 1965. It represents the national shipowners' associations of the EU and Norway. ECSA promotes the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade in a competitive and free business environment, to the benefit of both shippers and consumers. The European shipowners control 40% of the global commercial fleet.*

*2 ETF is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces more than 3.5 million transport workers from 230 transport unions and 41 European countries. It works within an overall framework of global solidarity to represent and defend the interests of transport workers throughout Europe.*