

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEASURES AND REGULATIONS INTRODUCED IN REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
CONCERNING MARITIME TRANSPORT, PORT RESTRICTIONS AND SEAFARERS**

1. GENERAL

Following the global outbreak of COVID-19 illness, on 11th March 2020, Croatian Ministry of Health officially declared the epidemics of the COVID-19 illness in Republic of Croatia.

Subsequently, preventive measures were introduced, concerning, amongst other, maritime transport, port restrictions and seafarers.

2. MARITIME TRANSPORT AND PORT RESTRICTIONS

On 19th March 2020, Croatian Civil Protection Authority issued the Decision banning the calling of Croatian ports for all ships in international navigation on which the self-isolation or quarantine is imposed, with exemption of:

- all ships registered in the Croatian Registry;
- all ships calling the Croatian ports due to transport of goods;
- passenger ships without passengers, calling the Croatian ports due to lay-up in Croatian port;
- all ships arriving to the shipyards for maintenance or repairs.

All persons on board the ships allowed to call Croatian ports and/or arrive to shipyards are subject to measures imposed by Croatian Health Institute, Croatian Civil Protection Authority and/or other competent authority, as they may be in force.

Ships allowed to call Croatian ports, including crew members and/or any other persons on board the ship, as well as cargo on board, may be subject to sanitary health inspection and disinfection (for ship and cargo).

The ships in international navigation are being monitored by national VTS service and if to enter the Croatian territorial waters, national VTS service shall contact the ship on VHF and inform the competent national authorities / services on the ship's arrival.

Until further notice, Harbour Master's Officers will not board ships on arrival/departure, save ordered so in urgent cases.

2.1. Additional Reporting Requirements for ships in international navigation allowed to call Croatian port

Notwithstanding the regular reporting requirements, the Master is additionally required (through a ship agent) to provide the Croatian Maritime Administration and Sanitary Inspection with the information on port and date of embarkation of all persons on board.

In case of suspected infection on board, the ship will be denied entry to respective port until health condition of persons on board the ship is assessed by sanitary inspectors.

In case the infection be confirmed prior ship's departure, the ship will be denied entry to respective port and the infected person(s) will be disembarked and provided required medical assistance under applicable safety protocols.

In case the ship departs prior the laboratory results are available, the Master and the next port of call will be informed of the laboratory result, when available, as well as on potential confirmation of infection for the respective person(s).

2.2. Inspections

Port State Control inspection procedures are suspended, save in cases of:

- ships suspended or withdrawn from their class for safety reasons since the last inspection carried out in the EU or in the Paris MOU area;
- ships subject of a report or notification by another EU Member State.
- ships that cannot be identified in the inspection database.
- ship that (i) was involved in a collision, grounded or stranded on the way to port, (ii) breached regulations regarding discharge of dangerous substances or effluents, (iii) have maneuvered in an erratic or unsafe manner, not in compliance with IMO-approved maritime traffic management rules or other safe navigation practices, or (iv) have received MLC-2006 complaint.

Flag state inspections are carried out if there are no infected persons on board and subject to strict risk assessment prior the inspection.

Other inspections are carried out as necessary, depending on the situation, but strictly in conformity with safety protocols and subject to strict risk assessment prior the inspection.

2. 3. Extension of validity of ship certificates for Croatian flagged ships

The Croatian Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure has granted extension of validity for existing ship and yacht certificates (including ISM, ISPS and MLC if justified) for up to 3 months, if there is no possibility to carry out the survey due to "force majeure", taking into consideration if the due date of the survey is planned in COVID-19 risk country, cannot be carried out due to transport restrictions or if the crew member is suspected to be infected by COVID-19.

In this respect recognized organizations should inform the Maritime Safety Directorate in advance and obtain written permission for every individual case, allowing the extension of validity for existing ship (and yacht) certificates and postponement of mandatory surveys (e-mail confirmation by Head of Inspection and Technical Standard Sector is sufficient). All extensions and postponements, as granted, are to be reflected in the respective certificate.

3. SEAFARERS

Considering the present situation as "force majeure", the Croatian Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure has decided to grant a general extension of the validity of seafarers' personal documents in order to allow them to work legally

3.1. Extension of validity of documents

For Croatian Certificates of Competency (CoC) and Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) which are to expire prior 18th June 2020, the extension of validity is granted for up to 3 months.

For Medical Certificates, the Ministry has decided to follow provisions for urgent cases provided by the Regulation 1/9 of the STCW Convention 1978, as amended, and Regulation 1.2. of the MLC Convention 2006, as amended, and accordingly a seafarer is permitted to work without a valid medical certificate, provided that the period does not exceed 3 months and the expired medical certificate is of recent date.

For Seamen's Books, Embarkation Permits and seafarers' identity documents which will expire prior 18th June 2020, general extension of validity is granted for up to 3 months.

3.2. Endorsement of foreign certificates

The validity of Croatian endorsements will be linked to the validity of the seafarer's national Certificates of Competency (CoC) and Certificates of Proficiency (CoP).

If the seafarer's national Certificates of Competency (CoC) or Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) is revalidated, it will be possible to apply for a new endorsement to the competent Ministry and a seafarer will then be granted a Temporary Endorsement valid for a period up to 3 months.

If the maritime administration that issued the seafarer's national Certificates of Competency (CoC) or Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) opts for a general extension of the validity of the national Certificates of Competency (CoC) or Certificates of Proficiency (CoP), the validity of the Croatian endorsement issued based on the current Certificates of Competency (CoC) or Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) will automatically be considered extended accordingly.

3.3. Extension of sea service beyond the seafarer Employment Agreement period

The shipowners are allowed to extend the duration of the Seafarers Employment Agreement for a maximum period of 3 additional months, if the seafarer concerned agrees with the extension period and if it is in accordance with applicable Collective Agreement. In this situation, it is required to conclude an Addendum of the Seafarer Employment Agreement on the same terms and conditions.

3.4. Crew changes and repatriations

As of 19th March 2020, pursuant to the decision of the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia, crossing the state border at all border crossings of the Republic of Croatia is temporarily banned.

The passengers in transit are exempted from the aforesaid Decision, but are subject to the instructions and measures imposed by the Croatian Institute for Public Health, including screening measures upon entry into Croatia. Passengers in transit must immediately proceed to leave the country, without any delays.

Croatian citizens are allowed to return to Croatia or to go to a country where they work and live, implementing the instructions and measures imposed by the Croatian Institute for Public Health.

International commercial flight options exist in Croatia, but are severely limited and subject to changes on daily bases.

All public transportation in Croatia except for individual taxi services has been suspended until decided otherwise.

Rules and regulations concerning border crossing (including air and sea travelling) are subject to unannounced changes.

In case the foreign seafarer is disembarked from the ship in Croatia due to crew change and suspected to be infected, i.e. showing signs of illness, the seafarer can be denied crossing the border from Croatia into other country (including boarding the airplane on the airport in Croatia) and referred to hospital for diagnostic processing and potentially quarantined.

Vice versa, if the foreign seafarer is to arrive to Croatia to board the ship in Croatian port due to crew change and is suspected to be infected, i.e. showing signs of illness, the seafarer can be denied free pass to the ship and mandatorily referred to hospital for diagnostic processing and potentially quarantined.

Regarding the repatriation of Croatian seafarers, Croatian citizens traveling from COVID-19 affected countries / areas are subject to health monitoring on arrival in Croatia. These individuals, even if not showing signs of illness, are ordered to mandatory self-isolate 14 days and report their condition to the nearest epidemiologist for further instructions. Individuals showing signs of illness arriving from the affected areas are referred to hospitals for diagnostic processing and potentially quarantined. Those refusing self-isolation will be denied entry into Croatia and be instructed to return to their point of origin.

If your or any of your Members have any queries in relation to this issue, please do not hesitate to approach us at z.kacic@kacic.t-com.hr or kacic@kacic.t-com.hr