

## Shipping sector receives Seafarer of the Year award for role in migrant rescues

The Lloyd's List Global Award for Seafarer of the Year, usually reserved for individual seafarers who have shown bravery and leadership in the line of duty, was this year presented to all of the world's seafarers (and their shipping company employers) in recognition of their collective efforts to rescue thousands of migrants' from the Mediterranean throughout a continuing crisis which shows little sign of ending.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) were invited to the prestigious Lloyd's List Global Awards to receive the award.

Speaking on behalf of the seafarers, Philippe Alfonso, ETF Political Secretary for Maritime Transport said: "All know merchant ships and their crews are not best suited to conduct large scale rescue operations in an often hostile environment. Despite this, seafarers have played a crucial role in maintaining the safety and ensuring the human treatment of rescued migrants. I am therefore grateful that their dedication and commitment are acknowledged today."

ECSA Secretary General Patrick Verhoeven added: "This prestigious award recognises the selfless efforts of the thousands of seafarers that have come to the rescue of migrants and refugees. We welcome the fact that the EU has enabled the deployment of professional search and rescue operations which relieves the pressure on merchant ship crews. I therefore hope that, in the coming years, this award may also be presented to professionals in the field of search and rescue, such as national coast guards and navies."

In 2014, the shipping industry rescued over 42.000 people at sea, while so far in 2015 more than 15.000 migrants were safely brought ashore by merchant vessels. Shipowners organisations and seafarers' unions have also reacted to the crisis by producing widely distributed Guidelines on Large Scale Rescue Operations at Sea (document available [here](#)). In the wake of a tragic accident in April, which led to the death of hundreds migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean, the EU was prompted into action and increased the operational scope, financial resources and available assets of the FRONTEX "Triton" operation, which now patrols hundreds of nautical miles off the Italian coastline. Following months of continuous deterioration, the EU's efforts seem to be paying off as an increasing proportion of the migrants is now rescued at sea by bespoke and dedicated national and EU forces (coast guards, navies, Triton).

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