



Galerie Agora,
Rue du Marché aux Herbes 105, Bte 11
B-1000 Brussels
Telephone +32 2 285 46 60
Fax +32 2 280 08 17
Email: etf@etf-europe.org
www.etf-europe.org

European Transport Workers' Federation
Fédération Européenne des Travailleurs des Transports
Europäische Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Federación Europea de los Trabajadores del Transporte

Brussels, 14 April 2020

COVID-19: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR URGENT MEASURES IN INLAND WATERWAYS TRANSPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic poses an immense challenge to inland waterways transport (IWT) in Europe. The socio-economic impact of the crisis is vast and continues to grow. As one of the essential and vital sectors for society and industry, it has to remain in safe operational mode throughout Europe. Safety under the present circumstances gets a more profound meaning – in addition to safe sailing, safe working conditions onboard are paramount.

To deal with this crisis, the cooperation of authorities on all levels is critical. ETF calls on the European Commission, competent authorities of all navigating European countries, all local bodies and authorities, as well as the employers to take into account our requests and recommendations.

European Travel Attestation

Inland waterways transport connects the European continent. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many national authorities issued measures, affecting those working in IWT when crossing borders. **We call on all national authorities to follow the recommendations of Danube Commission and the CCNR and to accept a European Travel Attestation, following the CCNR model for work-related travel of IWT crew.** This would help guarantee swift border crossings. A lot of crewmembers have been away from home for quite some time, and a smooth change of crew must be guaranteed at all times. We urge national authorities to inform their services clearly and promptly.

Continuity for shipping companies as well as staff

Many European countries have issued national economic measures in support of their industries and employees. We would like to underline that striving for balance is essential. **Measures have to support the continuity of the shipping companies, but also ensure income security for all crewmembers.** They need to encompass both freight and passenger transport, as well as both nautical and hotel staff. It is of the utmost importance that crewmembers have security in these difficult times. This is the only just guarantee for well trained and qualified crew members to remain available for the IWT sector once the crisis is over and to solidify knowledge and competencies within their sector.



President Frank Moreels

Acting General Secretary Livia Spera

Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
Ekaterina Yordanova



European Working Time Directive

For IWT, the European Working Time Directive offers plenty of flexibility for the organisation of both working, as well as navigation time. One of the essential provisions is on the daily resting/recovery period since only sufficiently rested crewmembers can sail safely. Work and home life constantly alternate in IWT, and under the present circumstances, crew changes can be difficult and burdensome.

Employers and owner-operators need to ensure the continuous respect of the directive in IWT, as it offers sufficient flexibility to them. Additionally, they can adjust by adapting sailing times to create additional rest. In times of lowering freight demands, this can be the right thing to do.

Many EU Member States have issued national 'force majeure' measures that make stipulations of both national and European working time provisions temporarily obsolete. We believe that remaining on board longer than the maximum duration of 31 consecutive working days can only be possible voluntarily. **Every crew member who wants to leave the vessel must be allowed to do so.**

Local organisations and authorities play a crucial role in creating a just and safe working environment for workers in IWT. ETF calls on them to:

- Keep terminals, ports and transshipment places open and accessible for safe crew changes.
- Provide a safe berth for freight vessels as the demand is falling and many are temporarily stopping with navigation. We request that this possibility is available for a more extended period, as needed. These vessels should not be refused as in many cases, crewmembers' workplaces are also their home.
- Exempt IWT barges from paying the local levies in ports and berthing locations in the case of prolonged lay-off period, at least for the duration of the national lockdown period.
- Guarantee safe passage by ensuring the servicing of locks.

ETF calls on employers to:

- Remember that they are responsible for good and safe working conditions - in these times, we expect employers to take extra safety measures.
- Ensure safe transport of crews from and to the vessel, and preferably through individual transport and the disinfection of cars, mini-buses etc.
- Organise crew changes with minimal physical contact between the different crews.
- Provide protective equipment and materials, such as disinfecting soap.

For more information, please contact Myriam Chaffart, ETF Senior Policy Officer for Inland Waterways and European Works' Councils, e-mail m.chaffart@etf-europe.org, tel. +32 475 34 36 51.



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