



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 543 of 07th March 2019

To: All Surveyors/Auditors

Applicable to flag: All Flags

ILO: Recommendations to ensure equal opportunities for seafarers

Reference: MLC

ILO: Recommendations to ensure equal opportunities for seafarers

The Sectoral Meeting on the Recruitment and Retention of Seafarers and the Promotion of Opportunities for Women Seafarers took place in Geneva from 25 February to 1 March 2019. The Meeting agreed on specific conclusions regarding the recruitment and retention of seafarers, as well as the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers.

The Meeting said that qualified seafarers are key to achieving safe, secure, environmentally sound and efficient shipping. The sustainability of this dynamic sector is based on the ability to continue to attract a enough quality new entrants and retain experienced seafarers, including women seafarers and other under-represented groups.

The report discusses how to advance gender equality, seize the opportunities presented by technological change and effective social dialogue can promote decent and sustainable work.

However, the shipping industry experiences specific challenges, that need to be addressed, such as:

- Recruitment and retention of seafarers
- Cadet and trainee berths
- Recruitment and placement
- Automation and digitalization
- Loneliness and isolation, and social media and internet connectivity

In order to mitigate these issues, several actors in the sector must take responsibility.

Governmental responsibilities

Government programs should encourage the recruitment and development of seafarers, like subsidy programs for training or tax incentives. In addition, they should provide equal opportunities for seafarers, including women seafarers.

Nonetheless, a one-size-fits-all approach to tackle the discrimination of women seafarers is not realistic since there are notable differences in the life at sea of women across different types of ships, cultures and different trading patterns.

Information by shipowners and others are not always adapted to attract both women and men seafarers

One of the biggest challenges is ensuring diversity in the hiring of seafarers. In many cases, women graduate with excellent results, but sometimes see their job applications being turned down

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systematically. This can be solved through the use of:

- Publication of guidelines on equal employment opportunities;
- The calculation of an annual index on gender equality for companies with more than 50 workers, engaging in awareness-raising and identification of barriers when the figure falls below a certain threshold.

Moreover, mandatory pregnancy testing, as part of the pre-employment medical examination of seafarers, is a concern for many women seafarers. There are Members that have equality and anti-discrimination legislation which prohibits the employer from asking a worker or a potential worker whether she is pregnant or other questions that are considered to be discriminatory.

Harassment and bullying

Solutions to effectively address harassment and bullying could include an independent hotline or reporting process, sensitization and diversity training of all cadets and trainees and seafarers, as well as amendments to relevant ILO instruments for seafarers.

Age discrimination

Every seafarer, regardless of their age, have the right to equal employment opportunities based on skills and qualifications and equal treatment on board. To ensure this, the promotion of crew balance in terms of age, reskilling and schemes for transition to shoreside jobs is necessary.

Governments in which recruitment and placement agencies operate should:

- Ratify and effectively implement the MLC, 2006, and other instruments relevant to the shipping sector, including the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003, as amended (No. 185);
- Ensure that national laws, regulations, policies and other measures use language that is gender neutral so as to encourage equal opportunities in the sector and take a proactive approach with respect to the elimination of harassment and bullying;
- Encourage the establishment of welfare boards in their territory and establish welfare facilities in ports;
- Facilitate the transit of and shore leave for seafarers;
- Effectively and in a timely manner discharge their obligations towards seafarers in cases of criminalization, piracy and armed robbery against ships, and provide adequate support in migrant rescue and abandonment;
- Facilitate the expedited repatriation of abandoned seafarers.

Shipowners and seafarers should:

- Consider widely disseminating, in not only English but also other languages, guidance, including ICS-ITF publications, regarding bullying and harassment, seafarers' welfare and other issues;
- Provide market opportunities for women in positions at sea and ashore;
- Identify role models and establish mentoring and networking programs for women seafarers and groups vulnerable to discrimination;
- Consider establishing a working group to identify the best way forward to provide seafarers with an independent counselling network available to seafarers who may develop mental health issues;
- Consider cooperating in the promotion of the provision of qualifying sea time for seafarers under training via collective bargaining agreements or other appropriate means.

Shipowners should:

- Ensure that recruitment and placement agencies they use operate according with the

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requirements of the MLC, 2006;

- Ensure that seafarers are provided with enough recreational facilities, internet connectivity at no or reasonable cost, rest time, shore leave and annual leave in accordance with the MLC, 2006;
- Provide opportunities and facilities for women and men cadets and trainees to serve upon their vessels;
- Provide safe and gender-friendly working environments, including appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), access to sanitary items and hygiene products and discreet disposal mechanisms for women seafarers, zero tolerance measures to harassment and bullying including sexual harassment;
- Ensure that pregnancy testing for women seafarers is in line with Convention No. 111.

Finally, ILO should:

- Promote the ratification and effective implementation of the MLC, 2006, and Convention No. 185, and instruments relevant to the shipping sector and build capacity of constituents through technical advice and development cooperation;
- Promote decent employment in the maritime sector and encourage career and skills development and greater employment opportunities for seafarers, especially young persons and women;
- Should convene a Meeting of Experts to adopt guidelines on fair and non-discriminatory practices for the recruitment and placement services;
- Improve its partnership with the IMO on issues such as flag and port State control inspections and barriers to recruitment and retention of seafarers;
- Establish an ILO-IMO tripartite working group to identify and address seafarers' issues and the human element;
- Develop a research agenda, which could include a study on age discrimination issues faced by seafarers;
- Conduct a study which will include statistical research, an analysis on the numbers and distribution of women seafarers within the industry, identify the positions and sectors they work in, and analyses the legislation member States have in place to ensure equal opportunities;
- Carry out a review of the international labour standards regarding the maritime sector to identify biased language in order to address and to promote diversity and inclusion.

REFERENCES:

- MLC

- ATTACHMENTS: No

kindest Regards,
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