
6 December 2023

FOCUSED INSPECTION CAMPAIGN ON PILOT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS

From 10 July to 9 August 2023 the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Port State Control conducted a Focused Inspection Campaign (FIC) on Pilot Transfer Arrangements (PTAs).

The Paris MoU is trialling an alternative approach to the regular Concentrated Inspection Campaigns (CICs) by conducting several short targeted inspection campaigns referred to as Focused Inspection Campaigns (FICs). In the coming months more such FICs are scheduled. After completion of the trials, the results, ease of implementation and effectiveness will be assessed and, on this basis, further decisions will be made on inspection campaigns and their format. Part of the trial also involves assessing with whether or not to pre-announce the inspection campaign.

The first FIC was carried out on PTAs. This subject was chosen as several incidents during pilot transfer, within the Paris MoU region and beyond, occurred which warranted carrying out this campaign. Most of the time pilot transfers are carried out safely, but the potential consequences of a person falling from a ladder can be fatal and the high-risk embarkation and disembarkation of the pilot by ladder requires constant management and supervision.

The purpose of the campaign was to verify whether the PTAs on board the ships inspected were fulfilling the SOLAS requirements. A total of 1262 Port State Control inspections were carried out, during which 100 ships were found with one or more deficiencies with the PTA. Deficiencies found indicated that:

- when requested by Port State Control Officers to demonstrate, pilot ladders were not properly rigged to allow pilots to embark and disembark safely. On several occasions it was found that the weight of the ladder was not taken by its strongest point but, for example, by the steps;
- pilot ladders were damaged and/or not properly maintained;
- identification of ladders and record keeping of surveys and repairs were missing.

As the transfer via an embarkation ladder is a high-risk operation, flag States, Ship Management companies and ship crews should be aware of the associated risks and PTAs should be rigged in line with the SOLAS requirements.

As usual, if deficiencies are found, actions by the port State may vary from recording a deficiency and instructing the master to rectify it within a certain period of time, to detaining the ship until the serious deficiencies have been rectified. In the case of detention, publication in the monthly detention lists of the Paris MoU website will take place.

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Notes to editors:

Regional Port State Control was initiated in 1982 when fourteen European countries agreed to coordinate their port State inspection effort under a voluntary agreement known as the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MOU). Currently 28 countries are member of the Paris MOU. The European Commission, although not a signatory to the Paris MOU, is also a member of the Committee.

The Paris MoU is supported by a central database THETIS hosted and operated by the European Maritime Safety Agency in Lisbon. Inspection results are available for search and daily updating by MoU Members. Inspection results can be consulted on the Paris MoU public website and are published on the Equasis website.

The Secretariat of the MoU is provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and located in The Hague.

Port State Control is a check on visiting foreign ships to verify their compliance with international rules on safety, pollution prevention and seafarers living and working conditions. It is a means of enforcing compliance in cases where the owner and flag State have failed in their responsibility to implement or ensure compliance. The port State can require deficiencies to be corrected, and detain the ship for this purpose, if necessary. It is therefore also a port State's defence against visiting substandard shipping.