COVID-19:

EU Guidance for Cruise operations

Guidance for the resumption of operations of cruise ships in the European Union in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic

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EMSA

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Introduction

The novel coronavirus (COVID -19) crisis has during the Spring of 2020 heavily affected cruise operations in the EU and globally. The restart of this important economic and employment activity will probably be a gradual process. The objective of this guidance is to facilitate safely re-starting operations of cruise ships in the EU, by recommending minimum requirements to be implemented by all those concerned. It has been advised[1], that any measure to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease should be implemented, without unnecessary restrictions on international traffic.

The safe operation of a cruise ship normally requires the involvement of several parties, mainly the company managing the ship, ship master and crew, the port and terminal where the ship will berth, the State which flag the ship flies (Flag State) and the State that the ship visits (Port State). The cooperation of these main parties concerned is essential to re-start operations and to respond to the challenges posed by the outbreak of COVID-19.

This guidance is divided in three main parts and follows a goal-based approach, suggesting for each part the relevant topics to be addressed by the parties involved.

The first part addresses the ship side and is recommending developing a COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan, following a tailor-made risk assessment by the cruise company. Such a plan should propose for implementation associated mitigation measures, with the possibility of third-party verification.

The second part recommends the development of a COVID-19 Port Management Plan by each Member State/port/terminal receiving cruise ships, for which also minimum requirements are suggested.

Finally, the third part puts forward the recommended elements on which the cruise company and the port/terminal receiving the ship should agree, with the purpose of having an agreement in place before any voyage takes place. It also suggests how to cooperate best in case of a COVID-19 outbreak.

These guidelines are not intended to provide prescriptive solutions but rather to assist in determining the effectiveness of addressing the identified risks related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This guidance may also be of assistance for Flag States/Port States, before allowing a cruise ship back into service.

This guidance is not intended to replace specific health measure verification, which may be required by health authorities.

The European Maritime Safety Agency would like to express its gratitude to the following organisations who have participated actively during the preparations of this guidance and have contributed to this document:

- ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control);
- European Commission (DG MOVE);
- CLIA Europe (Cruise Lines International Association) ;
- ECSA (European Community Shipowners' Associations);
- ESPO (European Sea Ports Organisation);
- ETF (European Transport Workers' Federation);
- EU Healthy Gateways Joint Action.

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[1] Detailed information is contained in IMO Circular Letter No. 4204: Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) at
http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/PublishingImages/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204%20%20Novel%20Coronavirus%202019-Ncov%20Secretariat.pdf

Part I: Guidance for the development of a COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan

1. Risk assessment

The first step is for cruise companies to assess all identified risks to their ships, crew, passengers and other persons in relation to the COVID-19 disease and to establish appropriate safeguards. It is recommended that this is developed as a **COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan.**

The company should assess all health risks to passengers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, its ships, crews, passengers, the communities visited, and establish appropriate safeguards to reduce the risk the utmost. This assessment should be properly documented.

In establishing safeguards or implementing mitigating measures in relation to COVID-19 pandemic, available relevant codes, guidelines, and standards regarding COVID-19 should be taken into consideration. In particular, relevant IMO and EU COVID-19 related documents, in particular guidance from ECDC, should be considered for implementation as found relevant and applicable.

The following points provide guidance to be considered when developing a COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan, also referred to as the "Plan".

2. Responsibilities in relation to COVID-19 matters

Responsibilities of the company/ship and of relevant personnel for any duty in relation to COVID-19 matters should be defined in the Plan.

It is recommended that the company nominates contact person(s) responsible for COVID-19 matters both on board and ashore. These persons should be responsible for the implementation of the Plan and act as a contact point for the relevant authorities.

3. Resources and personnel needed

The company should ensure that the ship is properly manned to cover all aspects of the Plan, including appropriate and sufficient medical staff and facilities.

The company should define, implement and continuously monitor the training and training requirements for all personnel included in the Plan.

The company should establish procedures to ensure that new crew members and crew transferred to new assignments related to the Plan are given proper (induction) training for familiarisation with their duties prior to taking up functions.

The company should establish and maintain procedures for identifying any training needs which may be required in the implementation of the Plan and ensure that such training is provided for all crew concerned. This should include training of all crew on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene measures in place.

The company should establish procedures to ensure that the relevant information on the Plan is provided to the crew in their working language or in a language which can be understood by them.

The company should ensure that the crew is able to communicate effectively in the execution of their duties related to the Plan.

4. Shipboard operations

4.1 Reference documents

The following documents are of particular relevance:

- Communication from the Commission, COVID-19: Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity (13 May 2020, C(2020) 3139 final);

- Interim advice for restarting cruise ship operations after lifting restrictive measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthy Gateways Joint Action, June 2020.

- Information note on maritime labour issues and coronavirus (COVID-19), International Labour Organization, Geneva, 7 April 2020.

- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.15 (6 May 2020) - Coronavirus (COVID 19) - Personal protective equipment;

- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14 (5 May 2020) - Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic;

- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.3 (2 March 2020) - Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships;

- ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers;

- EC Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships.

4.2 Review of shipboard operations

The specific shipboard operations related to the COVID-19 should be included in the Plan. Accordingly, the company should review its procedures, plans and instructions, including checklists as appropriate, for all shipboard operations that may bear a risk of or impact by a COVID-19 infection, with a view of achieving a risk reduction. It is advised to use as a reference the documents identified under the previous point (reference documents).

The company should assess or reconsider the maximum number of passengers onboard in view of being able to effectively implement all the required measures (e.g. safe use of common spaces, etc.).

As a matter of principle, the same level of protection shall be provided to all persons on board, regardless of whether they are passengers, crew members or visitors.

The points below are a non-exhaustive list of subjects that should be considered when including the shipboard operations in the Plan.

4.2.1 Information and communication

It is recommended that companies review the occasions and places where relevant information should be provided, from the pre-boarding to the disembarkation stage. The way in which the information is communicated should also be reviewed and preferably be in a digital format.

It is recommended that the information should cover aspects related to the prevention measures adopted, health screening processes implemented, and protocols related to repatriation and disembarkation in case of an outbreak.

Each space on board should be considered in terms of the information to be displayed, including for example, details on social distancing, maximum capacity, and required PPE.

The information provided should also include measures applicable when communities are being visited.

4.2.2 Social distancing

It is recommended that companies establish a minimum social distance to be respected considering the advice and/or instructions from ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control), and flag and port administrations. In doing so, a precautionary approach should be taken. The Plan should consider all expected situations/events where queues or contact amongst persons could occur and should also contain appropriate measures that will be implemented for ensuring that the social distance is maintained.

Companies should consider for each space, or category of spaces, as well as for the whole ship, whether the maximum capacity of persons should be reviewed to ensure that the social distance can be maintained.

4.2.3 Health screening

Health screening protocols should be established based on the reference documents, such as for example the pre-embarking COVID-19 questionnaire included in Annex 1 of the WHO *Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases or outbreaks on board ships: interim guidance*. The company should closely monitor the updated information on effective health screening methods provided by institutions as the European Commission, national authorities in countries to be visited, ECDC, IMO and WHO.

Accordingly, it is recommended that companies review the occasions and places where health screenings should be carried out, from the pre-boarding to the disembarkation stage, including re-embarkation following an excursion, tour, visit, etc.

Special consideration should be given to the early identification of persons falling within a risk group and the associated measures to be taken in such a case.

Finally, it is recommended to establish a health monitoring system on board and to implement associated reporting and logging of health-related issues and measures.

4.2.4 Use of personal protective equipment

The type of and the occasions when PPE should be used has to be considered in the Plan based on the reference documents. Accordingly, it is recommended that companies review the occasions and places where the use of PPE is needed, both for protection of crew and passengers, and define the appropriate type and certification where relevant.

The PPE to be used in the passenger terminal should be coordinated with the relevant Port State authority/entity.

It is recommended that companies consider having a sufficient stock of PPE needed to be carried on board based on their risk assessment, duration of the voyage and number of persons onboard.

4.2.5 Cleaning and disinfection

Companies should review their policy about cleaning and disinfection based on the reference documents. It is recommended that the plan defines for each space of the ship, or space category, the frequency of cleaning, disinfection and the appropriate products and techniques to be used considering its intended use, occupation rate, material of surfaces, furniture, etc.

Special consideration shall be given to those spaces, objects and furniture, etc. that can be used/touched by several persons.

The plan should include the availability of disinfectant hand dispensers, or similar, in the spaces where persons are expected to be present, e.g., entrances in general, restaurants, bars, SPA, gym, lifts, corridors, cabins, sanitary spaces, working spaces, changing rooms etc.

The number of persons dedicated to cleaning and disinfection should be carefully considered in view of the review made as well as the resting times and the increased frequency. The protection of these workers should be specially considered.

It is recommended that companies consider the stock of cleaning and disinfection products needed to be carried on board based on the review made.

4.2.6 Persons going ashore and re-embarking

It is recommended that the Plan gives special consideration to the strategy and measures to be implemented for persons going ashore with the intention to re-embark. Both crew and passengers should be considered. The plan should also specify situations when it is not safe to organise excursions (e.g. in case of a significant level of COVID-19 infections on shore and when crowded areas during individual visits cannot be avoided.)

4.2.7 Spaces with special consideration

It is recommended that the Plan considers spaces where some of the measures could be more difficult to implement or which require special attention. For those spaces, the plan should establish, where relevant, tailor-made or alternative measures, e.g., additional PPE, to ensure that the contagion risk is minimised. (These considerations may include the temporary closing of spaces in case preventive measures are found not to be feasible to be implemented or not sufficient).

4.2.8 Emergency procedures

It is recommended that the company reviews the emergency procedures in view of the Plan and includes considerations to deal with persons infected or suspected to be infected, whilst ensuring that all the other precautionary measures for non-infected passengers and crew are kept.

In addition, normal safety related emergency procedures should also be considered. For example, the procedure to carry out the passenger evacuation drill could be subject to review to ensure that the social distance is kept. Where relevant, also the needed manning levels should be considered for carrying out the reviewed emergency procedures.

4.2.9 Waste management

It is recommended that the Plan gives special consideration to waste management. Special protection for the crew members working in this field should be considered.

Attention should also be given to the disposal of PPE after use, paper towels or similar and infected or suspected to be infected waste.

4.2.10 Utilities

The plan should consider special measures related to the potential infection through utilities like heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, water, etc. HVAC systems should use as much as possible only fresh air.

4.2.11   Handling of Visitors, Pilot, etc.

The Plan should consider the expected occasions where visitors, like inspectors, pilot or supply contractors, are embarking or having contact with the crew and/or passengers, which should be reduced to a minimum. The reference documents include recommendations regarding this point.

5.   Response to a COVID-19 outbreak

5.1   Reference documents

The following documents are of particular relevance:

- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.3 (2 March 2020) - Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships;

- ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers.

5.2   COVID-19 response elements to be considered

The Company should establish procedures to respond to a potential COVID-19 outbreak and establish programmes for drills and exercises to prepare for such outbreak.

It is recommended that the response measures[2] should include at least a description of the following:

- Definition of roles and responsibilities of the crew in case of an outbreak (including medical services, room service, laundry, housekeeping, etc.);

- An isolation plan including the identification of designated spaces for isolation of confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 disease until disembarkation and transfer to a health care facility, including communication to crew on entitlement to paid sick leave in case of infection or quarantine;

- Managing of communications between departments (for example, medical, housekeeping, laundry, room service) about persons in isolation;

- The Clinical management of suspected cases while they remain on board;

- Relevant elements about the spaces for isolation, like for example, identification, authorised persons to enter, disinfection area, potential accommodation of designated to be in this area in case of outbreak, medical installations and capacity;

- Procedures to collect Passenger/ Crew Locator Forms[3];

- Definition of close contacts and how close contacts of the confirmed or suspected case will be managed;

- The measures taken in reference of the infected persons on-board (including isolation, quarantine, food service and utensils, laundry and waste management);

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[2] For further reference, it is recommended to review the flow chart developed within the framework of the project EU Healthy Gateways: https://www.healthygateways.eu/Portals/0/plcdocs/Flow_chart_Ships_3_2_2020.pdf
[3] The EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS joint action prepared a Passenger/Crew Locator Form (for ships) which can be downloaded from their website

- Medical resources[4] needed, like personnel (including qualifications), equipment (including certification), tests, analytical equipment, medicines[5] and supplies;

- Cleaning and disinfecting procedures for potentially contaminated areas including the isolation cabins or areas;

- Management of infected or suspected to be infected waste;

- Communication to relevant authorities regarding the suspected cases of infection;

- Procedures for disembarking of the infected persons (medical evacuations).

5.3 Training, drills and exercises for COVID-19 outbreak response

The crew should be provided with the necessary training to perform their response duties. This should include guidance on how to recognise signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and procedures to follow in case of an outbreak. The crew should get acquainted with their specific roles and responsibilities prior to taking their duties. In particular, all persons responsible for entering the areas where the suspected cases are kept in isolation should be trained in terms of following all preventive measures.

Drills and exercises should be organised on board of the ship on a regular basis and recorded in the relevant logbook.

6. Reports and Analysis

There should be procedures for reporting non-conformities, accidents, and hazardous situations of COVID-19 related matters.

This reporting should include confirmed and suspected COVID-19 infections, failures/shortcomings in implementing the Plan and any other hazardous situation in relation to the COVID-19 risks.

All non-conformities, accidents, and hazardous situations in COVID-19 related matters should be reported to the company, investigated and analysed with the objective of improving the efficiency of the Plan and to ensure the implementation of corrective action.

7. Maintenance

The Plan should include a maintenance programme with appropriate actions to ensure a regular review of the relevant COVID-19 related equipment and its proper functioning. The maintenance programme should also consider critical equipment that may require regular tests or the availability of stand-by equipment. Checks and maintenance of the equipment should be recorded.

8. Documentation

All the activities related to the enforcement of the Plan should be appropriately recorded as evidence of its implementation.

9. Company verification, review and evaluation

The Plan should be subject to regular review and internal company auditing based on a risk assessment analysis.

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[4] Council Directive 92/29/EEC of 31 March 1992 on the minimum safety and health requirements for improved medical treatment on board vessels; OJ L 113, 30.4.1992, p. 19–36
[5] Communication from the Commission *Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships* C(2020) 3100 of 8 April 2020.

10. External verification

10.1 Reference documents

The following documents are of particular relevance:

- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) – 'Recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic';
- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.16 – Coronavirus (COVID 19) – COVID-19 related guidelines for ensuring a safe shipboard interface between ship and shore-based personnel'.

10.2 Verification

It is recommended that the COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan, with as a minimum the elements contained as indicated above, is independently verified by a third party, in such a way that it offers reassurances to the Flag State as well as the Port State. This could be done by using the ISM Code as a framework, but there are other possibilities as well, like audit/certification by classification societies of company standards implemented onboard cruise ships.

10.3 Certification and Qualifications

Due to the specific nature of the COVID-19 related issues, a special consideration should be given to the specific qualifications required to perform a verification to confirm that appropriate safeguards in relation with COVID-19 disease risks have been implemented.

It is recommended that the verification team will consist of external and independent qualified and certified maritime auditors, familiar with cruise ship management, and health care professional(s) who are able to assist in the professional judgement of the measures adopted.

Additionally, all verifiers should have been specifically trained on COVID-19 related matters.

11. Protection of communities visited by the ship

Crew, passengers, and residents of the visited port locations should be protected during their interactions. To this end, ship's hygiene practices and local practices should be aligned and agreed beforehand between the cruise operator and the relevant authorities. Cruise operators should communicate with the Port State to ensure that the appropriate measures are implemented to avoid overcrowding and maintain appropriate physical distancing while passengers disembark and re-board the ship.

Cruise operators should also ensure that any excursion provider, tour operator, and external service providers offer at least the same level of protection as on board the ship, related to physical distancing measures, use of PPE, and cleaning and disinfection protocols, while also following local health regulations. Any external provider who interacts with passengers such as tour guides should follow relevant cruise line protocols. If tender boats or other means of transport are used to move passengers, physical distancing measures and protocols for frequent cleaning and disinfection should be implemented in line with the procedures performed on board. Cleaning and disinfection of any means of transport used, including tender boats should be conducted between each use.

Crew and passengers should be informed before ship's arrival about the measures mentioned above.

Part II: Guidance for the development of a COVID-19 Port Management Plan

It is highly recommended that also ports and/or terminals have their own COVID-19 Port Management Plan, detailing the key processes and key personnel dealing with the implementation of COVID-19 mitigating measures. The contents of such a plan should be similar to the cruise ship's COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan regarding those issues which are also applicable onshore.

To carry out this Plan, it is essential that different authorities cooperate to ensure that all the perspectives are covered.

1. Member States' multidisciplinary teams and contact points

To restart operations of cruise ships it is recommended that different authorities within a Member State work together in close cooperation, namely:

(a) Health authorities, in charge of public health;

(b) Port State authorities, dealing mainly with the implementation of international legislation on the ships berthing in its ports, from the safety and environmental point of view and, in some instances, with other duties, like port reception facilities;

(c) Port authorities/terminals, dealing with all the logistics related to port operations, both for cargo and passengers;

(d) For contingency planning purposes: (if applicable) transport/airport authorities and civil protection authorities.

The way in which this task sub-division is implemented on each Member State differs widely. For example, in some States, all the tasks might be concentrated in one authority while for others they can be spread along different authorities.

Whichever the internal organisation is, Member States are recommended to create multi-disciplinary teams covering all these elements to facilitate the coordination and the communication with the cruise company intending to visit the port. For ease of reference, in these Guidelines, the Member States authorities will be denominated "Port State", but this term should be understood as the conjunction of the different authorities: Health, Port State and Port Authorities, including terminal operators where applicable.

It is recommended that each Port State, establishes and publishes contact points which can be used by cruise companies for direct communication with regard to the re-starting of operations in that State. Ideally, there should be a single contact point per Port State who could internally coordinate all the national procedures. For the cases where this is not possible, the contacts should be provided with a brief description of the responsibilities that each contact has.

2. COVID-19 Port Management Plan

It is likely that many ports and/or Port States have already developed plans on how to deal with maritime traffic under the COVID-19 crisis. For those States that have already such plan, it is recommended, however, to review them and ensure that they cover all the necessary elements to restart cruise ship operations in their ports.

It is also recommended that this Plan is agreed and shared amongst the different authorities involved (health, Port State and port authority/terminal operator) so that all the perspectives are covered. It is also

advised to share it with the individual port authorities which could potentially receive cruise ships, so that it could be adapted to local circumstances.

Such plans should also be made available in advance to visiting cruise ships, as suggested in Part III.

This **COVID-19 Port Management Plan**, when dealing with cruise ships, is recommended to include at least the following elements:

2.1 Responsibilities and authorities

The authorities involved in the implementation of the plan should be identified as well as the responsibilities of each of them.

As indicated above, it is recommended that a single contact point is defined to communicate with the cruise company and ship for COVID-19 matters. This contact point could then coordinate with the other authorities.

Regarding emergencies it would be useful to have 24/7 contact point available.

2.2 Minimum conditions to receive cruise ships

Measures taken on board the cruise ship are likely part of the conditions to receive a cruise ship. The conditions may include, e.g., the implementation of these Guidelines on board the ship, possibly the number of passengers on board or any other relevant consideration. In addition, it could be considered which conditions could lead to the cancellation of a cruise ship visit, e.g., the outbreak of a COVID-19 crisis in the port. If the cancellation has to do with the actual conditions on board the ship, then alternatives should be proposed or mitigating measures before cancelling.

2.3 Passenger terminal arrangements:

2.3.1 Embarkation

This part should include all the embarkation arrangements both for crew and passengers. Different aspects should be covered, like (advance) information and communication, social distancing, PPE, cleaning and disinfections, health screening, etc.

The organisation and measures for re-embarkation of persons on board should also be covered.

Measures should cover people as well as the handling of luggage.

2.3.2 Disembarkation

This part should include all the disembarkation arrangements both for crew and passengers. Different aspects should be tackled, like information and communication, social distancing, PPE, cleaning and disinfections, health screening, etc. In addition, the conditions to allow disembarkation of persons who will return on board, if any, should be considered.

2.4 Persons/entities authorised to visit the ship and protection measures

The persons/entities authorised to visit the ship, e.g., pilot, PSC inspectors, Health inspectors, suppliers, should be defined as well as the protection measures for them to go on board the cruise ship.

2.5 Contingency Plan:

This part should include the measures to be taken in case an outbreak of COVID-19 takes place on board a ship using the port/terminal facilities. The following points are suggested to be tackled:

a. Minimum capacities of hospitals in the vicinity, including regional or national resources if needed;

b. Procedures for disembarking COVID-19 infected or suspected persons;

c. Procedures for repatriation;

d. Alternative ports or arrangements.

2.6   Port authorisation

Based on the points above, it is likely that each port would have to implement different measures adapted to its local circumstances. This part of the plan should establish the procedures to approve such local plans where appropriate.

2.7   Authorisation to receive a cruise ship

The procedure to authorise the visit of a cruise ship should be described. This part should consider how cruise companies should apply to visit a certain port, if needed, the documentation required, the preliminary verification of the COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan and the type of authorisation granted, including possible conditions.

2.8   Other considerations

The COVID-19 Port Plan should also envisage health and sanitary measures on how to organise and handle the supply of cruise ships and the use of any port service by the cruise ship (e.g. port towage, bunkering).

Part III: Guidance for coordination between cruise ships and ports in relation to COVID-19 matters

One of the key elements to re-start operations of cruise ships is to ensure a safe ship/port interface, inherent to cruise operations, where roles and responsibilities are well defined, agreed and understood by both parties.

In order to reach this objective, a number of issues have to be settled in relation to, i.e.: exchange of information between the Port State[6] authorities and the cruise ship before arrival, plans to disembark persons with COVID-19 symptoms, embarkation/disembarkation of crew and passengers regardless of whether COVID-19 cases are declared or suspected on board, repatriation and establishment of protocols for those visiting the ship (port workers, pilots, surveyors, auditors, suppliers, etc.).

It is recommended that the both parties share well in advance of the ship visit the respective COVID-19 plans, to ensure its interoperability and take, when needed, necessary adaptation measures.

Besides this, Port States should ensure that any special requirement or pre-arrival information required from arriving ships, due to measures introduced in response to COVID-19, are effectively shared and communicated as quickly as possible to cruise ships and all relevant stakeholders such as ships' agents, operators, etc.

1. Voyage planning stage

During the voyage planning stage, it is recommended that in due time before arrival of the vessel at a port of call:

- The company keeps updated the COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan, as indicated in Part I;

- The company identifies the contact point(s) in the relevant Port State;

- The company contacts the Port State and informs about the port(s) it intends to visit, the ship, the dates, and the company and ship contact point;

- The company shares the COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan with the Port State/port/terminal;

- The Port State/port/terminal shares the COVID-19 Port Management Plan for the relevant port and informs the company about the applicable national/local measures with regard to COVID-19;

- Both parties ensure the interoperability between the COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan and that of the Port, especially of those elements where both parties need to cooperate: embarkation, disembarkation, use of the passenger terminal, re-embarkation after visits, crew change, repatriation, implementation of the outbreak management plan, testing arrangements, disembarkation of COVID-19 infected or suspected persons, and any other relevant element;

- Both parties clarify any doubt which may occur and which may have a negative impact on the interoperability between the two;

- Both parties agree on the respective responsibilities and the specific protocols (information, communication, cleaning and disinfection, social distance, PPE, etc) to be adopted for the elements identified above: embarkation, disembarkation, passenger terminal, re-embarkation, crew change, excursions/visits or similar, repatriation, implementation of the outbreak management plan, testing arrangements, disembarkation of COVID-19 infected or suspected persons and any other relevant element;

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[6] Port State, within the context of these Guidelines, is understood to be the combination of the different Member State authorities dealing with the re-start of cruise ship operations.

- The Port State confirms whether the specific port has the capacities to provide appropriate public health emergency response by establishing and maintaining a public health emergency contingency plan (International Health Regulations 2005, Annex I). This public health emergency contingency plan should also be made available to the visiting cruise ship in advance;

- The Port State confirms whether, in case of a COVID-19 outbreak on board, arrangements are in place to provide medical assistance, for passengers and/or crew, including evacuation to medical facilities ashore. These arrangements may include regional or national resources, if appropriate;

- The Port State indicates whether the visit is accepted and, if relevant, indicate the conditions for such acceptance;

- Define and agree with the relevant authority which conditions should be monitored that could lead to a cancellation of the ship call and/or restrictions for disembarkation, including excursion, etc. In case the ship call is cancelled, an alternative should be foreseen.

2. Reporting requirements

The following points describe the recommended exchange of information prior to the arrival and upon departure between the ship, agent or ship operator and the Port State within the framework of these guidelines.

2.1 Ship to shore

2.1.1 Arrival

Ship calls at EU ports is a well-established process. Member States have National Single Windows for reporting formalities, including the Maritime Declaration of Health ("free pratique").

The notification of ship calls at EU Ports is defined in the Directive 2002/59/EC, as amended. In general, the pre-notification period is 24 hours before arrival. However, cruise ship companies are recommended to extend the pre-notification period due to the current circumstances to allow for a better coordination with the port authorities.

Similarly, the Maritime Declaration of Health (MDH) is also required to be reported through the National Single Window prior to arriving in a port situated in an EU Member State as specified above in accordance with EU law (Directive 2010/65/EC).It must be reported by the master or any other person duly authorised by the operator of the ship to the competent authority designated by that Member State. Any COVID-19 confirmed or suspected case on board shall be communicated without delay. It is recommended that Member States request the ship's master to keep the Maritime Declaration of Health (MDH) updated and communicate the following information to the relevant authority 4 hours before the estimated arrival to the port of call:

a. Total number of persons on board (both crew and passengers);

b. Number of persons infected with COVID-19;

c. Number of persons suspected to be infected with COVID-19.

This information can be communicated through the updated MDH via radio/telephony in case of imminent arrival.

The company shall facilitate the application of health measures and provide all relevant public health information requested by the competent authority at the port. If it is considered that symptomatic suspect case/cases should not stay on board the ship, the disembarkation arrangements between both parties should be conducted as quickly as it is feasible.

Member States receiving information on the suspected COVID-19 case may share it on a voluntary basis with the Member States along the planned route of the ship and the ship's flag (if EU) via the SafeSeaNet

system. For this, an addendum to the SafeSeaNet Incident Report Guidelines was agreed in order to provide guidance to Member State Authorities on the best ways of exchanging information relating to possible cases of COVID-19 infection on board vessels, and on the measures taken by the competent authorities in Member States located along the routes taken. Member States can share this information with other Member States on a voluntary basis using the Incident Report type "Others."

2.1.2   Departure

While the reporting requirements include normally the provision of the crew and passengers lists at departure, it is recommended that Member States request the ship's master or any other person duly authorised by the ship operator to provide to the competent authority designated by that Member State the list of crew and passengers disembarked in that port. The Personal Locator Form (PLF) of the crew/passengers disembarked should be made available to the Port State at any time, on request.

2.2   Shore to ship

The Port State should convey to the ship operator and the cruise ship information on the applicable safety/hygiene/health measures applicable at the destination port/area as well as the COVID-19 Port Management Plan. The information provided should be updated as soon as the relevant national, regional or local regulations and rules change.

In addition, during the voyage planning stage, the Port State should confirm that the visit of the cruise ship is accepted in the date and conditions are established.

In the pre-arrival stage, once the required documentation provided prior the ship call is verified, the Port State should confirm access to the port, either electronically (e.g., via the NSW) or by other means.

3.   Disembarking persons with positive or suspected COVID-19

3.1   Reference documents

The following document is in particular relevant:

- Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases or outbreaks on board ships, Interim Guidance, World Health Organisation, 2 March 2020.

3.2   Disembarking persons with confirmed or suspected COVID-19

In accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005), it is recommended that the officer in charge of the ship immediately informs the competent authority at the next port of call about any possible case of COVID-19. Port States which receive calls of cruise ships in their ports must have the capacities in the port of call itself or a nearby port to provide appropriate public health emergency response by establishing and maintaining a public health emergency contingency plan, which also should be made available to the cruise ship. Port States should design procedures for disembarking infected passengers that are to be transferred to hospital facilities.

During the disembarkation of positive or suspect cases, every effort should be made to minimise the exposure of other persons and to avoid environmental contamination.

Any available medical record, PLF form or any other relevant information should be provided to the relevant health care personnel onshore.

4. Repatriation

4.1 Reference documents

The following documents are of relevance:

- EC Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships (C(2020)3911 final, 8/04/2020);

- IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14 Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

4.2 Repatriation of persons

If a need for repatriation of passengers arises, it is recommended that the ship's operator will make necessary arrangements to this effect. The Port State, and if applicable the Flag State, should support the cruise ship operator in making the necessary arrangements for repatriation and access to appropriate medical care. The level of support possible should be specified in the pre-agreed arrangement as well.

The repatriation should be as quick as possible while providing for good medical infrastructure and transport connections for repatriations. The arrangements may include facilitating the docking of the vessel, disembarking of passengers, health screening and treatment. Specific attention should be paid to the needs of vulnerable persons.

For persons who are neither positive nor suspect COVID-19, it should be considered whether they should be put in quarantine, if this is necessary for follow-up medical checks, or otherwise be directly repatriated.

4.3 Repatriation and changes of crew

In relation to crew, it is recommended that Port States and their relevant national authorities should do everything possible to facilitate ship crew changes, notwithstanding any restrictions that may continue to apply in response to the pandemic, as set out in the framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus as outlined in the reference documents. Access to medical care onshore for crew members in need should also be granted.

Possible application of this guidance to ro-ro passenger ships[i]

In general, this guidance can also be used for ro-ro passenger ships, with the necessary adaptations to the type of activities on board. The main difference between the service provided by a cruise ship and a ro-ro passenger ship is that the first is intended for leisure whereas the second is a means of transportation, operating -in general- on regular routes. Unlike cruise ships, ro-ro passenger ships carry vehicles (cars, trucks, trains, etc) in dedicated spaces where special safety measures apply.

When developing a COVID-19 Company and Ship Management Plan for ro-ro passenger ships, it is recommended to also follow the *COVID-19 Guidance on Reopening Passenger Ferry Services* published

by *Interferry*, the global ro-ro passenger ship industry association. This document includes a very useful flow-chart with the most important measures to be implemented and proposes the sub-divisions of responsibilities between the ship and the relevant authorities.

From an operational point of view, the turnaround time of a ro-ro passenger ship is in general quite short as it is serving routes based upon pre-defined timetables. Therefore, one of the key issues is boarding at the terminal, finding the right balance between carrying out required COVID-19 prevention protocols, like health screening, whilst not delaying the ship's departure, respecting the timetable in place.

On the other hand, the alignment with the COVID-19 Port Management Plan should be easier, as the alignment has to be carried out only once per port as long as the same regular ship route is maintained.

It is important to note that, in general, passengers are not allowed to stay inside their vehicles during a voyage for safety reasons, mainly due to possible fire or flooding of a ro-ro deck, but this could be a solution to be further explored when not enough common space is available where the COVID-19 measures can be maintained (such as social distancing). When providing exemptions to this requirement, Flag States should consider the voyage duration, significant wave heights *en route* and the alternative measures put in place to ensure an equivalent safety level.

ⁱ The application of these guidance to ro-ro passenger ships will be further reviewed and will be updated before it reaches its final version.

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