

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Gradual resuming of operations by cruise ships

ECDC and EMSA issue guidance in response to COVID-19 challenges

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In their joint guidance published today, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) outline ways to facilitate the gradual restart of cruise ship operations which were seriously affected by the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The guidance follows a goal-based approach and identifies measures to be taken on ship and ashore addressing health-related issues for passengers, crews as well as the visited communities in order to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Planning and coordination between all parties involved will be crucial.

The safe operation of any passenger ship normally requires the involvement of several parties - from the shipping company and crew to the port and terminal where the ship will berth/anchor and visit. That is even more so when cruise ships are gradually allowed back into service. It is recommended that measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission on board or during boarding and disembarking are in place, applied and verified.

The recommendations presented in the joint guidance focus on fostering cooperation between all parties involved and on measures that would enable cruise ships to gradually resume operations under the ensuing pandemic. More specifically they cover:

- the development of a Company and Ship Management Plan based upon tailor-made COVID-19 risk assessment by the (cruise) company, proposing also suitable mitigation measures;
- the development of a Management plan for each Member State/port/terminal that receives cruise ships, for which measures are also suggested;
- recommended elements on which the (cruise) company and the port/terminal receiving the ship should agree in advance, including cooperation in case of a COVID-19 outbreak on board.

Adina Vălean, Commissioner for Transport said: “The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the cruise industry to a halt. Before passengers consider returning to this type of holiday, they need to be reassured of the highest safety standards, as need to be those cities receiving them during their journey. The EMSA-ECDC guidance provides concrete recommendations to ship operators and port authorities which should be implemented before cruises set sail again. I recall the ultimate responsibility of cruise operators for their passengers and crews, and invite them to implement today’s guidance, while working closely with port authorities for the safe resumption of their services”.

EMSA Executive Director, Maja Markovčić Kostelac and ECDC Director Andrea Ammon highlighted: “The joint EMSA-ECDC guidance on resumption of cruise ship operations in Europe is another example of added value for the EU citizens by building on synergies between EU agencies. The cooperation of the main parties involved - from cruise companies to port authorities - is essential to restart cruise operations and to respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important at this

stage to facilitate the gradual recovery of this segment of the maritime sector by building trust in all stakeholders involved through the implementation of the highest safety standards”.

In this context, strict adherence to the known personal protective measures such as physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, meticulous hand hygiene and avoiding touching the face, nose, eyes and mouth are important to reduce infection risks. The use of a face mask should be considered as a complementary measure, especially when physical distance cannot be maintained, as a way to control for droplet spreading for both crew and passengers.

The guidance is meant for cruise ships flying flags of countries of the European Union and the European Economic Area (EU/EEA) that are engaged in international voyages and for cruise ships calling at an EU/EEA port.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Company as used in the press release means the owner of the ship or any other organisation or person such as the Manager, or the bareboat Charterer, who has assumed the responsibility for operation of the ship from the Shipowner and who on assuming such responsibility has agreed to take overall the duties and responsibility also on health issues.

A passenger ship means a vessel that carries more than 12 passengers.

Cruise ship means a passenger ship which provides voyages for pleasure and normally visits several ports and/or anchorages.

COVID-19 can be transmitted through close contact with infected people and via surfaces or objects that have been contaminated by the secretions of infected persons. Any activity or situation that involves the gathering together of people poses a risk for the transmission of infection. Thus, all forms of transport that bring people into close proximity, particularly in closed/indoor spaces, poses an increased risk of transmission. Such forms of transport include busses, trains, planes and ships. Measures to maintain appropriate physical distancing and avoidance of contact with contaminated surfaces, together with strict hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette, hygiene will decrease the risk of transmission, although but some risk will remain.

The full EMSA- ECDC guidance:

<http://emsa.europa.eu/emsa-documents/latest/item/3978-covid-19-eu-guidance-for-cruise-ship-operations.html>

EMSA resources

Covid-19 measures

<http://emsa.europa.eu/news-a-press-centre/covid19.html>

Weekly reports on the impact of COVID 19 on shipping:

<http://emsa.europa.eu/news-a-press-centre/covid19-impact.html>

ECDC resources:

Get all the info on data and situation regarding COVID-19: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19-pandemic>

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The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an EU agency tasked with identifying assessing and communicating threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. It supports the work of public health authorities in the EU and EEA Member States.

The European Maritime Safety Agency is one of the European Union's decentralised agencies established for the purpose of ensuring a high, uniform and effective level of maritime safety, maritime security, prevention of and response to pollution from ships, as well as response to marine pollution from oil and gas installations. The agency promotes safe, clean and economically viable maritime sector in the EU.