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**INTERIM ADVICE
FOR PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CASES OF COVID-19
AT POINTS OF ENTRY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION
(EU)/EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA MEMBER STATES (MS)**

Advice for issuing Ship Sanitation Certificates

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Importance of keeping supply chain open

During the COVID-19 pandemic it is important that governments keep supply chains open and maritime trade and transport moving. Around 90% of global trade is transported by commercial shipping. This includes food, energy, raw materials, manufactured goods, and vital medical supplies, as well as items that are necessary for the preservation of many jobs in manufacturing – without which modern society simply cannot function.

Advice for issuing Ship Sanitation Certificates

EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS advises keeping the European ports open for ship calls and to continue implementing the requirements of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) for inspection of ships and issuance of Ship Sanitation Certificates during the COVID-19 the pandemic. IHR requires that ship operators shall provide to the competent authority a valid Ship Sanitation Control Exemption Certificate or a Ship Sanitation Control Certificate. Authorised ports are encouraged to continue inspecting ships in order to check the sanitary conditions on board ships sailing on an international voyage and issue Ship Sanitation Certificates while also focusing on implementation of preventive measures included in the EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS interim advice for ship operators: https://www.healthygateways.eu/Portals/0/plcdocs/EU_HEALTHY_GATEWAYS_COVID-19_MARITIME_20_2_2020_FINAL.pdf?ver=2020-02-21-123842-480 and the WHO Interim Guidance - Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/operational-considerations-for-managing-covid-19-cases-outbreak-on-board-ships>

Port health authorities that do not currently have the capacities to perform inspections could give extensions to existing Ship Sanitation Certificates for one month, and even if the first extension expires, then considering these extraordinary circumstances in affected countries, a second extension for one month could be given exceptionally.

Officers of the competent authorities with responsibilities for ship inspections and issuance of Ship Sanitation Certificates should be granted appropriate exemptions from any restrictions of movement, in order to perform their duties in regard to ship inspections and implementation of health measures as needed.

Requirement for submission of the Maritime Declaration of Health

For risk assessment purposes, competent authorities at ports are advised to request the submission of the Maritime Declaration of Health (MDH) by all arriving ships sailing on an international voyage.



Personal protection of inspectors and ship crew

Inspectors performing inspections on board ships are advised to follow the national policies and guidelines for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and personal protection practices. If such advice is not available then the EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS advice for PPE:

https://www.healthygateways.eu/Portals/0/plcdocs/EUHG_PPE_Overview_07_03_2020.pdf?ver=2020-03-10-161517-680 and the WHO interim guidance for “Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)”: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331215> could be applied.

If there is information of a suspect case on board a ship:

- a) Persons entering the isolation area or any other potentially contaminated area should follow the EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS advice for health care workers entering the patient room: https://www.healthygateways.eu/Portals/0/plcdocs/EUHG_PPE_Overview_07_03_2020.pdf?ver=2020-03-10-161517-680
- b) Persons inspecting all other areas of the ship should perform hand hygiene, use a medical mask and maintain spatial distance of at least 1 m from other persons on board.

If there is no information about the health status on board the ship or there is no suspect case on board the ship, then inspectors should carry PPE and an alcohol-based hand rub with them and use if necessary according to the risk assessment on a case-by-case basis, considering the WHO interim guidance for “Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)”: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331215> and EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS advice for use of PPE:

https://www.healthygateways.eu/Portals/0/plcdocs/EUHG_PPE_Overview_07_03_2020.pdf?ver=2020-03-10-161517-680