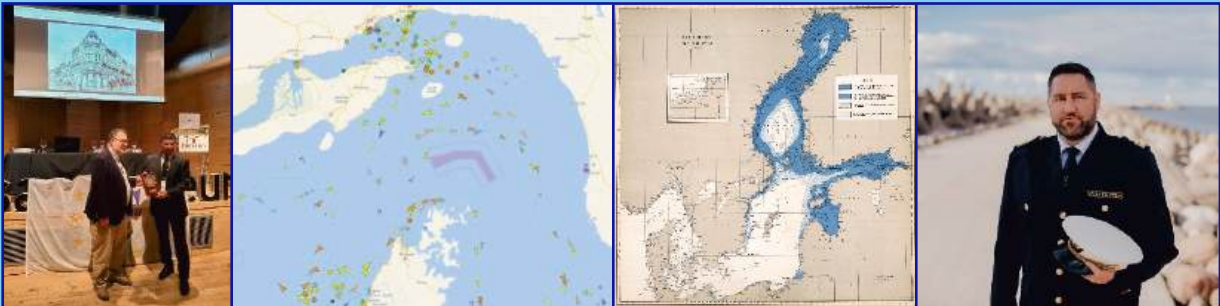


CONFEDERATION OF EUROPEAN SHIPMASTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

# CESMA NEWS



**JUNE 2026**



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# CESMA NEWS

JUNE 2026

## CONFEDERATION OF EUROPEAN SHIPMASTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

**SECRETARIAT:**

MUNTPLEIN 10  
NL-1012WR AMSTERDAM  
THE NETHERLANDS  
TEL: SEE LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS BELOW  
e-mail: [info@cesma-europe.org](mailto:info@cesma-europe.org)  
website: <https://www.cesma-europe.org>

**PRESIDENT:**

CAPT. D. DIMITROV, BULGARIA  
Mob: +359 888 340 160  
e-mail: [president@cesma-europe.org](mailto:president@cesma-europe.org)  
private: [mitko652012@yahoo.com](mailto:mitko652012@yahoo.com)

**DEPUTY PRESIDENT:**

CAPT. G . RIBARIC, SLOVENIA  
Mob: +386 31 375 823 Home: +386 56 772 642  
e-mail: [deputy.president@cesma-europe.org](mailto:deputy.president@cesma-europe.org)  
private: [jrg.ribaric@gmail.com](mailto:jrg.ribaric@gmail.com)

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

CAPT. M. BADELL, SPAIN  
Mob: +34 680 321 138 Home: +34 934 089 288  
e-mail: [vice.president@cesma-europe.org](mailto:vice.president@cesma-europe.org)  
private: [badellmariano@gmail.com](mailto:badellmariano@gmail.com)

**SECRETARY-GENERAL:**

CAPT. H. ARDILLON, FRANCE  
Mob: +33 609 450 057 Home: +33 235 801 505  
e-mail: [general.secretary@cesma-europe.org](mailto:general.secretary@cesma-europe.org)  
private: [hubert.ardillon@gmail.com](mailto:hubert.ardillon@gmail.com)

**ADMINISTRATOR:**

CAPT. H. AMMERLAAN, NETHERLAND  
Mob: +31 646 260 098  
e-mail: [administrator@cesma-europe.org](mailto:administrator@cesma-europe.org)  
private: [h.ammerlaan56@gmail.com](mailto:h.ammerlaan56@gmail.com)

**WEBMASTER:**

CAPT. D. LAKOS, CROATIA  
Mob: +385 98 433 685  
e-mail: [webmaster@cesma-europe.org](mailto:webmaster@cesma-europe.org)  
private: [damirlakos@gmail.com](mailto:damirlakos@gmail.com)

*Opinions expressed in articles are those of the sources and/or authors only*

## CESMA COUNCIL MEETING 28 APRIL 2026

The second on line CESMA Council meeting was done on 28.04.2026 from 15:00 to 16:00 CET. The agenda of the meeting was:

1. CESMA News 2026-1;
2. CESMA AGA 2026 at Bilbao;
3. Other

The meeting was moderated by CESMA President Capt. Dimitrov. The moderator explained the rules for the meeting. All the member associations were advised beforehand that they may invite as much members of their associations as they want. There were 16 participants plus all CESMA board members.



*Part of assistance*

Capt. Dimitrov announced the agreed agenda. The floor was given to Capt. Hubert Ardillon, Secretary General of CESMA, who presented CESMA News March 2026 which is available on CESMA web site and already member associations confirmed the receipt of the paper copy. Again there was no participant from AVCCMM but SG and the President informed the participants about developments of the preparation and organization of next CESMA AGA in Bilbao. The AGA will be at Bilbao Maritime Museum. The agenda was discussed and Secretary General will finalize it in the coming days and he'll send it to the member associations as soon as possible. There will be three presentations in the assembly about decarbonization, maritime autonomous surface ships and GPS jamming and spoofing. CESMA Board plans information and discussion about the geopolitical situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the problems it created to ship captains.

Capt. Dimitrov presented brief information about his participation in EMPA General Meeting in Ghent, Belgium. The most important topics were the changes in the EU Port Strategy, deep sea pilotage and the importance of the seafarers as human capital (more information being published in the following pages).

Capt. Ardillon informed the participants about the situation with subscriptions and he reported the organizations still not transferred their subscriptions for the year 2026.

Capt. Antonio Raggi from USCLAC advised the Council about the intention of USCLAC to make presentation during CESMA AGA about jamming and spoofing. Capt. Dimitrov shared the experience of pilots from Poland to solve the problem. The matter will be discussed during CESMA AGA in Bilbao.

Capt. Ivailo Paskov from BSMA informed about the coming Maritime Forum Global Compass in Varna, Bulgaria in 08th – 09th September 2026. There are already confirmations from ICS, Nautical Institute, maritime companies.

Capt. Stig Sundberg spoke about the case with the Finnish chief officer Albukary still in prison in Turkey. The problem of criminalization of seafarers had been discussed. Capt. Lakos from Croatia said that there is no information about Capt. Bekavac involved in the same case and said that most probably diplomatic efforts from Croatian government led to his release from prison but he cannot travel abroad as his sentence is still in force. Capt. Aine Hyde from IIMM proposed the case to be raised in the EU Court of Justice. Capt. Dimitrov confirmed the readiness of CESMA to assist the case and to raise the matter in EU Commission and EU Parliament. The criminalization is again an issue to seafarers and it shall be discussed during coming AGA and resolution about that will be amended.

Next CESMA Council Meeting will be in Bilbao in person 28<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

**Capt. Dimitar DIMITROV, PHD, FNI  
CESMA President**

## **MINUTES OF THE 31<sup>ST</sup> CESMA COUNCIL MEETING ON 28<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026, ITSASMUSEUM, BILBAO, SPAIN**

### **Those present:**

Captain D. Dimitrov	President, BSMA, Bulgaria
Captain G. Ribaric	Deputy President, ZPU, Slovenia
Captain M. Badell Serra	Vice President, ACCMM, Spain
Captain H. Ardillon	Secretary General, AFCAN, France
Captain D. Lakos	Webmaster, ZHUPK, Croatia
Captain P. Odiaga	AVCCMM, Spain
Captain S. Diaz	AVCCMM, Spain
Captain A. Jauregui	AVCCMM, Spain
Captain J. Zarragoikoetxea	AVCCMM, Spain
Captain S. Stoyanov	BSMA, Bulgaria
Captain I. Paskov	BSMA, Bulgaria
Captain W.Martens	VDKS, Germany
Captain E. Barsingerhorn	NVKK, Netherlands
Captain S. Jurat	ZHUPK, Croatia
Captain B. Kavanagh	IIMM, Ireland
Captain A. Hyde	IIMM, Ireland
Captain A. Pels	KBZ, Belgium
Captain F. Vanoosten	HYDROS, France
Captain G. Lettich	CNPC, Italy
Captain A. Martin	ACCMM, Spain
Captain A. Raggi	USCLAC, Italy
Captain M. Modugno	CTPC, Italy
Captain M. Carobolante	CTPC, Italy

### **ITEM 1: OPENINGS**

We were welcome by Mr. Jon RUIGOMEZ MATXIN, Director of the Itsasmuseum. He presented in few words the museum.

Itsas, in Basque, means Sea. And Itsasmuseum is not only a maritime museum, it is also a place to understand Bilbao and Bizkaia; history, economy, landscape and even identity are deeply connected to the sea.

Bilbao was founded on a port. In other words, the port came first, and the town was officially founded later, in 1300. This port became in a commercial port, with maritime trade. From this port, wool from Castile and iron from Bizkaia were exported to Northern Europe. Then, shipbuilding, maritime trade needed ships, and a strong shipbuilding industry grew around it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bilbao experienced a very powerful industrialization. And the urban transformation is the final chapter: Bilbao we know today.

Itsasmuseum stands on the former docks of the Euskalduna shipyard, right in the centre of Bilbao; Euskalduna opened in 1900 and became one of the key sites of modern shipbuilding in the Basque Country.

After the 1983 floods and the industrial restructuring process, the shipyard finally closed in 1987.

Itsasmuseum is made up of three main spaces.

- First, the outdoor area, around 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> with the docks of the former Euskalduna shipyard, our vessel collection and the Carola crane.
- Second, the indoor museum, around 7,000 m<sup>2</sup>.



- And third, Erain, our traditional boatbuilding workshop, where we build and repair boats. It's the most charming spot in the museum with its smell of wood and the community of volunteers.

Then Capt. Patxi ODIAGA, President of AVCCMM introduced the Council by saying: “After 22 years, CESMA is holding its annual assembly in Bilbao, and we must thank our colleagues for choosing our association to host it and welcome them. There's a saying in the Basque Country that Basques are short on words but long on deeds, and in my opinion, the same can be said of sailors. Several centuries ago, a captain, after a long voyage of several years, fulfilled his shipowner's orders and returned with a full cargo of valuable goods. Upon arriving in port, the first thing he said to his owner was that he had proven the Earth was round and that his crew deserved fair wages. His name was Juan Sebastian ELCANO, and this year marks the 500th anniversary of his death. Today, as in the past, captains transport goods, lead their crews, and constantly update their knowledge. I conclude by wishing this assembly a successful and productive one.”

Just after those words, as we have with us two representatives of Faeroe Association of Captains, and as they are not members of CESMA, President Capt. Dimitar DIMITROV proposed to vote, by hand, if they can assist to the Council as well as to the AGA of tomorrow. Same was accepted unanimously.

After having thanked AVCCMM for their organization, President Capt. Dimitar DIMITROV declared open the 31st Council of CESMA, having no doubt that the discussions will be on important subjects for seafarers and captains.

## **ITEM 2: APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Members not able to come, due to work, economic or personal reasons. This was the case for CESMA Administrator, Capt. Hans AMMERLAAN – but NVKK President is with us – Finland-HSF, Portugal-SINCOMAR, Latvia-LKKA, Montenegro-UPKCG, Romania-ANCR).

It is noted that as usual IFSMA, EMPA, and NI (Nautical Institute) were invited for the AGA on the 29<sup>th</sup> May and that Capt. Andrew COOK for IFSMA and Mr. Walter VERVLOESEN for NI will be with us this year. Unfortunately, EMPA sent apologies for not coming.

## **ITEM 3: PRESENTATION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

As usual, each council member presents him/herself and mentions the shipmasters' association and which country he/she represents.



## **ITEM 4: RESOLUTIONS SUB-COMMITTEE**

As per last year, President Capt. DIMITROV proposed to create a sub-committee for to write the resolutions which could be adopted during the General Assemblies. Proposition was adopted unanimously.

The sub-committee is composed by:

Capt. Bill KAVANAGH, IIMM – Ireland

Capt. Wilhelm MARTENS, VDKS – Germany.

## **ITEM 5: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda, as presented, was adopted.

## **ITEM 6: ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 30<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL, LISBON, MAY 2025.**

President Capt. DIMITROV reminded that the minutes of 30<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting had been agreed after the event and already published in CESMA Newsletter and Website. It was sent also by Secretary General few days before actual Council and posted again on the Website, Members area. No remark had been reported and the minutes had been adopted unanimously.

## **ITEM 7: RENDERING OF FINANCIAL PAPERS.**

The financial papers were presented by Secretary General.

### **a- 2025 Papers**

Balance of Accounts – Total of both Accounts (Directors and Savings), the total grow up by 3 600 Euros between the years 2024 and 2025. With no savings done in 2025, it could be decreased

by 1 000 Euros because the rent of the office was not paid – demand not received – in 2025.

For quarterly savings' account the interest for the year in more than 850 Euros.

Total shows that we are still above 5 years budget on both accounts.

Assets:

Plaques: After Lisbon, 5 remaining, and all being not in very condition. This is why we ordered a new model of plaque in Bulgaria.

Ties: December 2025, remaining 16. New samples also ordered in Bulgaria, same maker and model than previous time.

Caps: Remaining 10, 5 blue and 5.

Income:

Even if missing one subscription, we are above the figure budgeted. But we have received the ZPU subscription for 2026. We will come back later on the ZPU situation that explains this receipt.

The subscription missing is still from Lithuania.

Saving account: 859 Euros of interests (25 Euros less than 2024). We can note that for the two first quarters of 2026, interests represent already 388 Euros, we can expect less this year.

Expenditure:

Office rent: not paid as already said. Paid 2025 in 2026 (situation on 1st May)

Website: 45 Euros less than what was budgeted. It seems that expenses will not move too much. Already budgeted at 100 Euros for 2026.

Banking fees: Just 5 Euros less than what was budgeted. Budgeted 250 Euros for 2026, the costs increase slowly, slowly, but increasing.

Travel board: Below the budget. Travel costs mainly for ESS Brussels, EMDs Cork and EMSAFE Lisbon.

Board meeting: Few expenses because one board meeting was done at Brussels, the day before European Shipping Summit where we were met by Administrator Hans. Other Board meetings done on video.

AGA: Above what was budgeted. It seems that we are leaving in days where it is harder to find sponsors for organisation of AGA, and fact also that there is inflation in EU zone. Some Board Members are coming to AGA on account of half to Cesma and half to their own association.

Newsletter: Depending of the stamps prices. Printing kept same cost since several years now. In 2025, we have only 3 edition of Cesma News Letter as the December one was paid in January

**b- 2026 Amended budget:**

Subscription:

Subscriptions: I propose to keep 17 000 Euros. Last year we were above, due in part that ZPU paid two year subscriptions, but I noted that in the declaration of members sent with the subscription, the total of active captains is 100 less compared to 2025.

At 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 6 associations did not paid the subscription: ACCMM, Spain (done on 8<sup>th</sup> May); KBZ, Belgium (done on 15<sup>th</sup> May); ZHUPK, Croatia (done 19<sup>th</sup> May); BSMA, Bulgaria; UPKCG, Montenegro; and LCC, Lithuania. To be checked beginning of June before a new reminder msg.

Expenditure:

Banking fees 250 Euros.

Travel Board 2 000 Euros as this year CESMA will not go the EMDs in Cyprus

Board meeting 1 500 Euros but probably it will be Nil – if done on video

AGA costs adjusted to have a total expenses same than income value.

Miscellaneous: 2 500 Euros to buy new wall plaques and new ties.

### **c- 2027 Proposed budget:**

#### Subscription:

Still 17 000, due to amount on saving account, I do not propose to increase the fees. And I do not propose to decrease them.

#### Expenses:

Travel Board back to 4 000 Euros: in 2027 probably a new edition of European Shipping Summit (every two years) – and the EMDs will be at Santander, Spain.

I propose to increase again AGA, because it seems it is more and more difficult to find sponsors enough to cover the cost of AGA organization.

Subject Travel costs: since at least 2015, the kilometer by car is reimbursed at 0.25 euro. Due to inflation in Europe since 2015 and mainly for the price of carburant, I propose to increase the reimbursement rate at 0.35 euro per kilometer. After discussion on the level up to where to increase the 0.25 Euro, it was voted to apply 0.35 Euro as from 28<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

To conclude the financial papers had been adopted.

### **ITEM 8: SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT**

CESMA was represented in different meetings during the last year 2025.

The year unfortunately got off to a bad start since the first trip was made for the farewell ceremony of Capt. KARNINCIC where CESMA was represented by Deputy President Giorgio RIBARIC.

Then in mid-February in Varna, President DIMITROV took part in the “Green Port Alliance Meeting on Reduction of Emissions from Ship”.

On March 18 and 19, the President and the Secretary General attended the “European Shipping Summit” in Brussels, followed for the President by a meeting with KBZ on March 22 in Antwerp.

At the end of March, the President attended the Ship handling webinar organized by the Nautical Institute in London.

In April the Secretary General participated in a conference on drones in Paris, then again in Paris in May, there was the 1000<sup>th</sup> session of the “Safety Commission for Ship”.

In mid-May we had our General Assembly in Lisbon.

At the end of May 2025, the EMDs took place in Cork, CESMA attended in the person of the Secretary General and Capt. Trevor Crawley from IIMM whom I thank again.

Same time, the President participated in the 59<sup>th</sup> EMPA general meeting in Krakow, Poland, which allowed him to meet a member of the Polish captain's association.

In June, Webmaster Damir LAKOS met a Croatian European Parliamentary. The President participated in a conference “on Black Sea Region” in Varna.

In July the Secretary General returned to school for the 1<sup>st</sup> ENSM summer universities in Le Havre.

An interesting format: conferences in the morning and outdoor activities in the afternoon mainly focused on environmental problems and their technological advances. This made it possible to visit a barge running on hydrogen, and assigned to the transport of goods in pallets rather than in containers in the Paris area, after bringing the goods to Le Havre by large container ships, then by feeders or barges to Rouen and finally only barges to Gennevilliers for dispatch to Paris.

This also allowed him to visit a wind farm, and above all to understand how it works and the navigation restrictions, and that contrary to what is said and repeated by local residents' associations against wind farms, navigation, including for fishing, was authorized even if regulated.

In August the President met a Bulgarian European Parliamentary then attended the biannual general assembly of IFSMA in Torshavn in the Faroe Islands.

Then in September, again in Varna, the President participated in the international Maritime

Forum Global Compass. Our Croatian colleagues attended the IMLA conference in Split, the same day the President was in London at a final meeting of IMO Goodwill Maritime Ambassador for World Maritime Day.

Unfortunately, in September, our colleagues from CNPC and USCLAC also represented CESMA at the funeral of Capt Claudio TOMEI, who had organized the General Assemblies in Viareggio and Genoa. No member of CESMA Board was able to travel, the ceremony having been organized very few days after the news of his death.

In October, Deputy President RIBARIC was invited to Trieste for the inauguration of new tugboats.

In November, the Secretary General attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> study day of the ENSM in Le Havre. Study day whose theme was how geopolitics interferes with maritime transport, premonitory day since a few months before the outbreak of the current war blocking the Strait of Hormuz.

Then in December, the President and the Secretary General attended the EMSAFE conference in Lisbon.

For almost all of these attendances, you were able to read a report in our magazine CESMA News.

And I would have to thank all those who sent a report, a photo, after a participation of a meeting in their own country.

This is very important for several reasons:

- When CESMA is informed, it can be shared via the log book published in CESMA Newsletter or via the article published.
- Same could be noted by another association reading the report or logbook, and then it could give an idea for to organize or to participate to meeting on same topic.
- When you participate in the name of your association, as member of CESMA, you participate also in the name of CESMA.
- Everything presented during a national meeting could be of interest for other European associations.

There is no exhaustive list about the topics CESMA is interested of. Of course the main topic actually is the security. But also green navigation, due to the goal given from EU Commission, and other topics such as cyber security, safety on board at sea and during port stay, as well as in ports and terminals, MASS, unmanned vessels are also on the spots.

About security, it is not very easy to understand and to trust what is saying.

Regarding the Strait of Hormuz, a renowned company, despite “all security and safety” language sent 2 ships to the strait in March. One of them was shot at, warning shots but fired into the hull and containers not in front of the ship, and the other turned back at the injunction of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards. Then 3 weeks later in April, another ship from the same company under another flag passed “in force” but was seriously damaged following shots received with injuries among the crew, the shots having been carried out towards the steering gear room, close to the security citadel. The ship passed but ended up towed to a port for repairs. For what gain?

Red Sea: still under the spot at the conference where Board members were, but the Arabian/Persian Gulf War and Strait of Hormuz closing was not yet in force.

Black Sea: nobody spoke about. Too far from West Europe?

Baltic Sea: same, even if the shadow fleet exists with the associated risks to the environment, and some vessels (tankers or gas carrier) stop by military forces.

Unfortunately, well being of seafarers is not on the spot. It is true that actually it is their life, not the well being which is the most important. But we cannot forget that what is happening currently in the Arabian/Persian Gulf will not be attractive for the young people who want to have a carrier at sea. It was also heard, on some media, that the war in Arabian/Persian Gulf is something better than good for the seafarers, as they have double wages, and that there are a lot of voluntaries to go in this area.

Criminalization of seafarers or captains, except some time a question about the shadow captain on a vessel of the shadow fleet, there is no mention of captains or seafarers being arrested or condemned.

#### **ITEM 9: CESMA WEBSITE**

Webmaster Capt. LAKOS, ZHUPK, reported that the website is working well. Could it be foreseen for CESMA to be on LinkedIn that would give CESMA to be better known in maritime sector?

#### **ITEM 10: STATUTES AD BY-LAWS**

No change was proposed this Council on the Statutes or By-Laws.

#### **ITEM 11: MEMBERSHIP**

- 1- Capt. GARDALIDO (Faeroe Association) presented his association to CESMA. He expresses also the feeling that it could be a good idea to be member of CESMA. Thus it is decided that Secretary General will send all documents for application to be member to Capt. GARDALIDO.
- 2- ZPU (Slovenia): Deputy President Capt. RIBARIC confirmed that ZPU is closed since December 2025. The subscription for 2026 was paid in 2025. Capt. RIBARIC has to resign from his Deputy President Function. However he will stay in CESMA as an individual member, as from January 2027. After discussion, and in order to minimize exchanges with Netherlands Administration where CESMA is registered, it is decided that Capt. RIBARIC will stay in the Board till its renewal scheduled for next Council (May 2027). A formal vote gives result that Capt. RIBARIC will be nominated as CESMA Honorary Vice President.

#### **ITEM 12: COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

- 1- CESMA has some contacts with EMPA, IFSMA, NI, EMSA, EU Commission, and very few EU Parliamentarians.
- 2- For Capt. BARSINGERHORN (NVKK), CESMA has not enough connections with EU Institutions. In fact there is an exchange of letter, but it could not be considered as a physical connection with members of EU Committees or Commissions. Same with ECS with whom CESMA has no formal meetings.
- 3- Capt. RAGGI (USCLAC) proposed to send a message to DG Move in order to organize a physical meeting on the seafarers, to be done if possible after the summer period.
- 4- Capt. LETTICH (CNPC) made a statement on the PIANC (Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses) Italy, where CNPC is since this year. PIANC is an international organization that provides guidelines and recommendations for the design of port approach channels and maneuvering and anchoring areas within ports, as well as defining restrictions within a channel. The full speech is edited in following pages.

#### **ITEM 13: MEETINGS**

President Capt. DIMITROV made a small review of the Council Meetings done on video since January. Usually there is one representative from almost each association, however as there is no limit of attendees, there can welcome more members of associations.

Should we continue these meetings? And on which base? Quarterly? More? Less?

Up to now it is organized soon after the edition of the CESMA Newsletter. But it could be organized for another reason if judged interesting.

Capt. MERTENS (VDKS) asked if it could be possible to have a schedule for those meetings in advance. It was proposed to have the meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month which follows the edition of the CESMA Newsletter (means in January, April and October at least). For the June

edition, July being a summer month, it could be postponed to September.

As actual procedure for such meeting does not allow the recording, Board members will have to check the cost to have a better mean.

### **ITEM 14 & 15: RESOLUTIONS (PAST FROM 30<sup>TH</sup> AGA & NEW PROPOSALS).**

Past year resolutions were discussed, same for the introduction of resolutions. A new resolution is necessary, subject Arabian/Persian Gulf war, and the total number of resolutions to be minimized to 4 (four) in order to be better read.

The final text is presented below the AGA minutes.

### **ITEM 16: INVITATION FOR THE NEXT AGA.**

For 2027 VDKS, Germany, intended to organize the 32<sup>nd</sup> AGA in Hamburg. Short presentation was done. Of course details remain to fix, and Capt. MERTENS (VDKS) and Secretary General will be in touch for such organization. Date are expected the second week of May 2027 (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>), however it will be notified clearly by end of 2026.

For 2028, ZHUPK, Croatia, proposed to organize the 33<sup>rd</sup> AGA in Split, Croatia.

For these two proposals, Council gave agreement.

### **ITEM 17: OTHER MATTERS**

Some following subjects were discussed just after the Secretary General report, but all discussions are reported in this item. Several subjects were discussed:

- 1- Shadow fleet: it is a situation of great concern for Helsinki Shipmasters Association. It generates problems for the crews on board those vessels, as they are manned often with substandard crews (VDKS). Belgium has arrested one vessel, but without any cargo (KBZ).



- 2- Strait of Hormuz (SoH): today there are still 180 Croatian seafarers trapped in the Arabian/Persian Gulf. Several vessels trying to transit the SoH were fired. All vessels are not under the same condition: for some owners or flags there is very few or not help for seafarers on board vessels, that means problems of supplies (water, provisions, fuel), and for crew reliefs.

- 3- President Capt. DIMITROV came back on the case of Phoenician-M C/officer Ali Albhokari and on a letter received from HSM (Helsinki on the subject). CESMA should be able to give assistance in that case.
- 4- Tax for seafarers: VDKS, Germany, pointed out the subject as it appears that in EU, seafarers are not under the same tax regime in EU Countries. Same was also stated by KBZ, Belgium.
- 5- IIMM, Ireland, spoke about workshops on accidents where CESMA should be present.
- 6- NVKK, Netherlands, also mentioned that seafarers are often underpaid, minimum wages not being at a good level. Same was confirmed by IIMM, Ireland, representative.

#### **ITEM 18: CLOSURE BY PRESIDENT**

Council was closed at 17:00 by President Capt. DIMITROV after a very fruitful day of debates.

**Capt. D. Dimitrov**  
**President**

**Capt. H. Ardillon**  
**Secretary General**

## **MINUTES OF THE 31<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026, ITSASMUSEUM, BILBAO, SPAIN**

Notes: The AGA itself ran during the afternoon of the 29th May, the morning, as usual, being dedicated to a seminar. For Seminar and AGA, CESMA had the pleasure to welcome the Secretary General of IFSMA, Capt. Andrew COOK, as well as the newly elected President of Nautical Institute, Mr. Walter VERVLOESEM.

#### **OPENING**

Capt. Dimitar DIMITROV, President of CESMA opened the AGA with following words:

In the present challenging geopolitical situation it is very nice to see all of You in person here in the beautiful city of Bilbao. For me personally it's even more exciting to come back after 39 years. For the first time I was here as apprentice on board the training general cargo ship m/v Nikola Vaptzarov when we wore uniforms of the naval academy, we used Spanish pesetas, the wine was about 1 euro per bottle and it was possible to stay in a bar for 2 – 3 euro, which was my apprentice salary at that time. I was fascinated at that time by Bilbao Maritime Museum, lovely atmosphere in Portugalete and Las Arenas.



I cannot forget my first meetings with captains from Asociacion Vizcaina de Capitanes de la Marina Mercante captain Francisco (Paco) Garay and captain Paguagua who used to send me personally RECALADA magazine several years.

Now back to the reality, we are here to discuss the important issues to EU ship masters and EU seafarers. We face the wars in Ukraine and Arabian Gulf. Less than a month ago I was in Ghent, Belgium for EMPA General Meeting and I witnessed the report of Ukrainian colleagues working in war conditions with pilot boat damaged by drone and rocket and crew injured, fortunately survived. We see not more than 20,000 seafarers trapped in Arabian Gulf without normal food, water and fuel supplies and possibility to be repatriated when their contracts expire. UN and IMO are rising the matter but there are no any solutions of the problems at the moment.

Latest news from IMO about the matter:

- Resolution condemning attacks on commercial shipping and related risks of marine pollution (1 May);
- IMO Secretary-General remarks at the UN Security Council (27 April)
- No safe transit through Strait of Hormuz: IMO Secretary-General speaks to a seafarer (VIDEO) (24 April)

EU is directly involved in the actions from IMO and also diplomatically involved with other international powers involved in the Gulf problem but the matter is purely political and the seafarers are at the forefront of the conflict and being innocent they suffer from the circumstances.

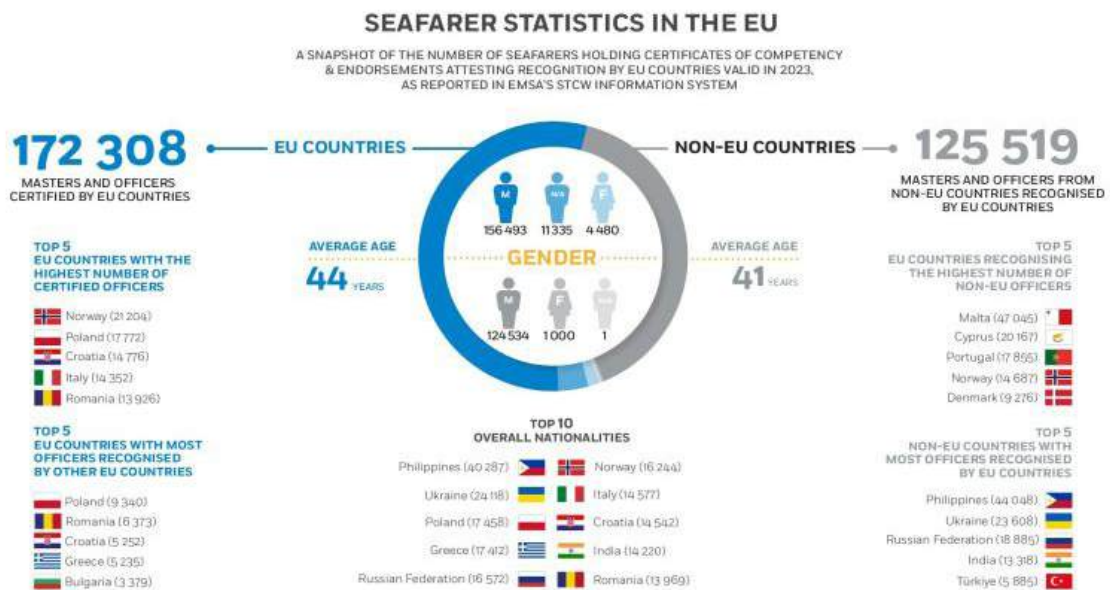
As EU nongovernmental organization CESMA actively participated in EMSA events and together with the Secretary General of CESMA Capt. Hubert Ardillon we participated in EMSASAFE Conference in December 2025. In EMSA headquarters in Lisbon the safety report for the last three years had been presented with the key figures about the shipping in EU and EU waters, EU seafarers, incidents and accidents and investigations.

## KEY FIGURES



The most important issue for EU is the decline in the number of active EU seafarers and the matter arising out of that to keep the EU seafaring experience and to keep EU waters safe and secure. Using seafarers from the third countries requires more measures for monitoring and

surveillance of ships visiting EU ports and seafarers serving on them in connection with the qualification and certification.



Source: EMSA

Our roles as CESMA as per the statutes, Article 2, AIMS are:

- To consider, maintain and protect the professional interests and status of European shipmasters vis-a-vis professional, political, administrative and economical bodies existing in the European Union.
  - To work together with the above alluded to bodies in order to improve maritime safety and protect the marine environment in European, adjacent and international waters.
  - To work in the best interest of European shipmasters world-wide.
- To promote establishment of effective rules which provide high professional maritime standards and proper manning scales for vessels under a European nation flag.
- To retain and develop the highest maritime knowledge and experience by promoting an efficient and common maritime education and training in Europe.
  - To inform the public in the European Union about problems in its merchant navy and those concerning shipmasters in particular.
  - To keep members informed about current activities and to seek a common position on all relevant matters.
  - To co-operate with all international bodies related to maritime affairs such as IMO, ILO, and IFSMA.
  - To assist colleague shipmasters who encounter difficulties in ports within the reach of nations represented by CESMA member associations.

For the moment in the Board we have no complaints from members about any colleagues in the problematic areas in the world but we are monitoring the situation.

The continued problem of criminalization of shipmasters requires we to continue raising the matter in EU and worldwide as we have at the moment the case in Turkey with 30 years sentence in prison for Croatian captain and Finnish chief officer blamed just because they serve on board the ship as master and chief officer and being held responsible without any proof but because they are responsible for the operation of the ship. There is no such possibility in the aviation industry and we have to insist on equal rights with other international transport workers.

Other important issues for EU shipmasters are continued administrative burden, increased paper work and decreased number of the crew on board, increase of intensiveness of the marine

traffic, more and more wind mill farms endangering the safety of navigation especially in the congested coastal areas.

For all the issues we'll have the opportunity to discuss them in the coming CESMA AGA and to take our decisions in favour of our members, EU shipmasters and EU seafarers.

I declare the 31st CESMA AGA opened and I wish all the participants fruitful meetings and discussions.

### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Agenda is presented by the Secretary General Capt. ARDILLON, and adopted.

### **ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 30TH AGA (LISBON)**

President Capt. DIMITROV reminded the audience that the Minutes of 30th AGA had been published in CESMA News, and agreed by the member associations. He asked for any amendments or corrections, none being issued, minutes were adopted.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

There was a discussion on the resolutions as per drafted last evening and presented. The comments went on a proposal to add words in a resolution subject Black Sea. However, even being a security problem, it cannot add in the resolution 1 (Security – Strait of Hormuz and Arabian/Persian Gulf) because it is a “new war”. Same to be added in resolution 2 (Security – Red Sea and Gulf of Aden) because it is more about piracy than war.

Wording was agreed, final text being at the end of the minutes.

### **MATTERS DISCUSSED**



War zones (SoH, APG, Red Sea, and Black Sea)

Criminalisation of seafarers and shipmasters (Phoenician-M)

Pressure on shipmasters (more and more responsibilities and less and less power)

Shadow fleet and Baltic Sea

ZHUPK Capt JURAT gave some words on the restoration of an old passenger vessel in Croatia BSMA Capt. STOYANOV spoke about the Global Compass International Maritime Forum that is scheduled for 8-9 September at Varna, Bulgaria

### **OTHER**

At the end of the AGA, the floor was given to our guests:

Mr. Walter VERVLOESEM, President of the Nautical Institute, said that NI and CESMA have the same goals – safety, security, environment and seafarers. Discussions were very

interesting and opened to all participants, including guests.

Capt. Andrew COOK, Secretary General of IFSMA, having appreciated to be invited, said also that discussions were good, even during the coffee breaks, and that CESMA and IFSMA have same topics. He had that we, CESMA and IFSMA, can work together to share shipmasters' point of view at IMO.



*Ladies Captains from Spain (Basque Country), Ireland, and Italy*

### **NEXT AGA INVITATION**

It is reminded to all Members that in 2027 VDKS, Germany, will organize the 31nd AGA at Hamburg. Final and exact dates and places will be informed asap.



### **CLOSURE**

Capt. Suzana DIAZ, Vice President of AVCCMM, made a summary of the topics covered during these two days (Council, AGA, and Seminar), and thanked all attendees for their presence.

CESMA President Capt. Dimitar DIMITROV closed the 31st CESMA Annual General Assembly and thanks again AVCCMM for the organisation and the hospitality.

**Capt. D. Dimitrov**  
President

**Capt. H. Ardillon**  
Secretary General

## **RESOLUTIONS FROM 31<sup>ST</sup> CESMA AGA 29<sup>th</sup> MAY 2026 – BILBAO, SPAIN**

**CESMA members attending CESMA 31<sup>st</sup> AGA agreed the following resolutions which are considered to be of primary importance for shipmasters:**

### **Resolution 1: Criminalisation of Shipmasters.**

The Assembly noted that the issue of criminalising seafarers, especially shipmasters, remains a significant concern. Shipmasters and seafarers are arrested because of their positions on board, despite evidence relating to other persons. This is particularly relevant for drugs found on board. CESMA recommends ship owners and/or operators to always provide legal assistance to shipmasters who are detained by local authorities due to an incident, until a final verdict is reached.

### **Resolution 2: Strait of Hormuz (SoH) and Arabian/Persian Gulf (APG).**

The Assembly has noted with deep concern the complicated situation in the Strait of Hormuz (SoH) and the Arabian/Persian Gulf (APG) and that more than 20,000 seafarers are trapped in the APG despite international laws giving freedom of navigation.

The seafarers on these merchant vessels, which are not equipped for military operations or even security reinforcement (apart from those provided for under the ISPS Code – passive means of defense – preventing any reaction to a drone or missile attack) can be considered hostages of hostile nations.

Among the human consequences of this state of affairs, most of the stranded vessels are no longer able to produce potable/drinking water; the same with regard to the supply of food and fuel; and the ships thus blocked are for the most part prohibited from crew changes.

CESMA urgently calls on the EU Commission as well as the EU States to take all the necessary decisions to return to the free navigation of vessels in the SoH and the APG and thus facilitate the supplies and relief necessary for life, well being, and work on board.

### **Resolution 3: Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.**

The Assembly, having noted the risks and dangers when navigating in the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and Northern part of Indian Ocean due to the resurgence of piracy, asks the EU Commission of Transport and EU States Flag Authorities to do all possible to ensure safe passage in these waters. CESMA also asks European owners to minimize/avoid transiting such areas until they are considered to be fully safe for navigation.

### **Resolution 4: Artificial Intelligence (AI) on ships.**

CESMA recognises that artificial intelligence can support shipmasters and enhance operational efficiency, situational awareness and decision-making on board, provided that its use remains safe, transparent and subject to effective human oversight. CESMA therefore calls on EU regulators to draw up a clear legal framework for the development, deployment and use of AI in shipping, ensuring that innovation can progress while maintaining safe ship operations, the master's overriding authority and responsibility, proper training, cybersecurity, accountability and compliance with international maritime safety standards.

**Capt. D. Dimitrov**  
**President**

**29<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Capt. H. Ardillon**  
**Secretary General**

## CNPC, ITALY PARTICIPATION IN PIANC

Il Collegio Nazionale Capitani has been part of the Permanent International Association of Navigation Congress (PIANC) Italy since this year.

The PIANC is an international organization that provides guidelines and recommendations for the design of port approach channels and maneuvering and anchoring areas within ports, as well as defining restrictions within a channel.



# PIANC

The World Association for Waterborne  
Transport Infrastructure

PIANC collaborates with International Maritime Pilot Association (IMPA) and International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (IALA).

It includes guidelines for defining depth and width requirements as well as deck clearances. The guidelines are accepted worldwide.

The PIANC specifically examines ship movements in restricted waters. Ships classified by the PIANC include general cargo ships, bulk carriers, oil tankers, ro-ro vessels, passenger ships, and ferries.

These are guidelines and recommendations, not rules. In the case of the PIANC, the guidelines and recommendations are widely followed, not only during the design phase but also for maritime traffic.

Furthermore, in the event of an accident, it is the most commonly referenced manual.

The PIANC updates its publication approximately every ten years.

We believe that with the growth of naval gigantism and the increase in ship size, certain parameters need to be reexamined.

In particular, I believe two elements are important and need to be studied and explored in depth, intending to contribute to the activities we will undertake.

The first is the breadth of the turning circle. The PIANC, like other manuals, specifies two ship lengths as the diameter of the turning circle, which can be reduced in case of special assistance or favorable conditions. In light of the new dimensions of certain types of ships, such as passenger ships, this element needs to be revised. Today, passenger ships have lengths up to 365 meters and container ships of up to 400 meters. Most ports that call at these ships do not have such large maneuvering areas.

The other key aspect is Under Keel Clearance (UKC), which we no longer consider appropriate based on the terms indicated by the PIANC, especially for the Ultra Large Container Carriers (ULCC).

The PIANC manual has no author but is a study resulting from the work of all its members.

The international PIANC is an organization that includes almost every country in the world. In Europe, the PIANC members are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Monaco, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In Italy, the PIANC is headquartered in Rome at the Ministry of Transport.

Professionals are part of the organization and, in particular, their working groups, but, until now, the participation of maritime experts has not been central.

We therefore enthusiastically acknowledge the PIANC's favorable reception of our proposal to join the PIANC Italia organization and thus contribute our experience to achieving our institutional objectives, which largely coincide with the statutory purposes of our association. We will be included in several work packages, primarily those addressing ship collisions with fixed structures, an important issue following the Baltimore accident. Il Collegio Capitani will work in partnership with the USCLAC.

We believe that CESMA could also be a part of the international PIANC, like other organizations such as IMPA. We believe that the contribution provided by the captains' associations is essential to completing the refreshed studies.

**Capt. Giovanni LETTICH**  
**CNPC President**

## **FROM HELSINKI SHIPMASTER'S ASSOCIATION BALTIC SEA – SHADOW FLEET DATED 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026**

The Helsinki Shipmasters' Association is still very concerned about the Russian shadow fleet in the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland. Typically, 40 to 50 of these ships are present in the Eastern Gulf of Finland every day.

Last winter was a normal ice winter, but fortunately a short one. If it had been longer, there could have been a lot of problems in the spring, when the ice would have started moving. That was not the case this time. Most of the tankers have no ice class and are relatively old. Old ships without ice class have usually already damage in the hull. This is dangerous, when navigating in ice the hull is pretty much live. Hydrocarbons can end up in spaces, where they do not belong, and can cause an explosion on the ship, when cracks in the hull are moving towards each other.

There is no information how experienced ice navigators these ships have. It is very likely that there have been ships with officers that have no ice experience. It is a very dangerous combination with an old ship without ice class and an inexperienced crew.

It must be remembered that the Gulf of Finland is quite narrow and shallow. When navigating a large ship in shallow ice-covered waters, you must know exactly, what you are doing. When a serious oil accident occurs, the Gulf of Finland will be destroyed for a long time into the future.



After Ukraine has attacked Primorsk and Ust-Luga with drones, there have been even more of these ships anchored along the Eastern Gulf of Finland as the ports have been closed or in limited capacity. Ships are anchored in the Estonian Extended Economic Zone as Russia will not allow them to enter their territorial waters until the loading dates are set. When a lot of these ships are at anchor for a long time, it has also brought a garbage problem. Their garbage is thrown into the sea and found on the shores of Finland and Estonia.

The flagstate of these ships is sometimes unclear, and the ship register is changed quite often. It keeps the Coast Guards here busy trying to figure out, which country's flag the ship is flying. Many ships do not have P&I insurance and if they do, they may be from a Russian insurance company. If an oil spill occurs and there is no insurance, the coastal state will not receive anything from any fund. The pre-requisite is that there is liability insurance to compensate the damages. It is also very unlikely that Russian insurance companies will pay anything. Everything will most likely be paid by the coastal state.

Russia is engaged in GNSS disturbance almost all the time, which further complicates the navigation of ships in these waters. Fortunately, we have a very well-functioning VTS system in the Gulf of Finland. However, there have been near miss cases, and fortunately, nothing has happened yet.

We meet with the Gulf of Finland Coast Guard regularly, and we both agree that we are already living on borrowed time in terms of accidents. Due to heavy traffic, operations cannot continue indefinitely without support, as the ports of the Eastern Gulf of Finland are currently most vital for Russia's oil export.

**Capt. Stig SUNDBERG**  
**Helsinki Shipmasters Association President**

## **FROM HELSINKI SHIPMASTER'S ASSOCIATION PHOENICIAN-M CASE DATED 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026**

Helsinki Shipmaster's Association has supported Elena Albokhari in her fight to get justice for her husband Ali Albokhari. Ali has been in prison since October 2023, serving as chief mate on the vessel M/T Phoenicia-M.

He and the ship's captain were sentenced to 30 years in prison when drugs were found on board the ship in the port of Ergil, Turkey in October 2023.

The ship's captain was released in August 2025, and the reason for his release has not been made public. This has made Ali's situation very difficult.

Elena's own lawyers have done a lot of work on the matter, but no progress has been made. Many organizations have also worked on the matter, but without success. It seems that the matter has become a political issue between Finland and Turkey.

Due to that human rights are on a very high level in Finland it can be a reason that the case is very difficult for Finland, but human rights should be the most important things in cases like this.

Below is a list of what Elena has done and now we ask if EU could promote the matter, because we no longer see any other options.

### 1. Contacts within the Finnish Government:

- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (Consular Assistance Unit)
- Ms. Virpi Hanhikoski
- Mr. Jussi Tanner
- Embassy of Finland in Ankara Ms. Merja Kärkkäinen
- 2 meetings with the Finnish Prime minister.

### 2. Actions taken by Finnish authorities:

- Ongoing diplomatic communication with Turkish authorities

- Requests for prison visits (had a few meetings with Ali, brought him glasses after 2 years of imprisonment)
- Raising the case at a higher level within the Ministry
- Acknowledgement of unequal treatment and human rights concerns
- 2 meetings with the Ministry of foreign affairs of Finland

### 3. Actions and developments in Turkey:

- Confirmation of life sentence by the Court of Cassation (Yargıtay)
- Submission of objection (itiraz) under CMK Article 308
- Initial indication that the prosecutor may consider the case positively
- Recent development: the Chief Public Prosecutor has now unexpectedly decided not to file an objection.

### 4. International actions:

- Contact with International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), Fabrizio Barcellona,, Stephen Cotton
- ITF has initiated contact with Turkish Maritime Authority and Ministry of Justice, meetings with the embassy representatives of different countries
- Contact with International Maritime Organization (IMO) following previous discussions in London, on line meeting with Arsenio Dominguez
- Preparation of materials for escalation to the European Parliament
- ILO meeting with the Ministry of Justice of Turkey (Beatriz Vacotto)
- Elena went to London and had a meeting with ITF and HRAS.

### 5. Key concerns:

- Not a single evidence against Ali Alkobhari which was proved by the Prosecutor
- Clear unequal treatment compared to the captain, who has been released
- Lack of transparency regarding the reason for the captain's release
- Complete absence of employer responsibility
- The company has ceased communication and appears to have changed its identity
- Serious inconsistencies in case documentation, particularly regarding the company
- Ali Alkobhari has not been given a meaningful opportunity to present his position

Ali Alkobhari is willing to fully cooperate and provide all relevant information. He has repeatedly requested the opportunity to be heard.

Given the recent refusal of the prosecutor to file an objection, it is now clear that internal legal mechanisms are no longer sufficient, and international involvement is critically important.

Helsinki Shipmasters' Association is a small association and we have limited opportunities to operate, but we have been involved since the beginning and have done what we can.

It is difficult to understand what is behind this matter, since one has been released from prison and the other is in prison. However, the master of the ship has primary responsibility for the ship and is free. However, his sentence remained the same and has not been overturned, which makes the matter even more amazing.

When the master was released, things changed a lot, especially for Ali Alkobhari, because the reason why the master was returned to Croatia was not told, and has still not been told.

Now ITF are in process to send a letter Turkish Authorities about the sudden stop of financial support to Ali and his family.

They are trying to get support from ICS (International chamber of shipping) to give more power to the letter.

Now it is very important to set power on the Turkish Authorities to get Ali Alkobhari released from the prison. There are no more possibilities than to find a political solution in this case, and there EU has more power than Finland.

It cannot be the so that if two persons are sentenced for the same reason, one is released. Every one should remember that the master has the overall responsibility of the vessel, and the

chief officer is responsibility for the cargo handling. It is big difference and for this reason the case is very complicated.

Ali Albokhari has also been informed by the prison administration that he will be transferred to another prison because now the he is finally sentenced. After receiving this news, he suffered a severe psychological breakdown and panic reaction. He called Elena crying and shouting saying he would commit suicide. Meanwhile the captain is safely at home, even if he cannot travel or go back to work. He has his family around him, and that is important.

Ali Albokhari`s mental and physical conditions is extremely fragile. He is suffering from severe emotional collapse, chronic exhaustion, insomnia, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, visible burns, bruises, and worsening allergic reactions.

Elena has asked the Finnish government that his burns, allergies, grey-haired and psychological conditions should be formally documented. .

**Capt. Stig SUNDBERG**  
**Helsinki Shipmasters Association President**



**CESMA LETTER**  
**PHOENICIAN-M CASE**  
**June, 16<sup>th</sup> 2026**

**To:**

EU Parliament, Mr. David MCALLISTER, Chair Committee on Foreign Affairs  
EU Commission, Ms Kaja KALLAS, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
IMO, Mr. Arsenio DOMINGUES, Secretary General

**Subject:** m/v Phoenician-M, illegal & wrongful conviction of Captain Marko Bekavac, Croatian citizen & Chief Officer Ali Albokhari, Finnish citizen, in Turkey

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The last decades world shipping became truly international with shipowners registered in one country, managers established in another country and crew coming very often from several different nations. All that created the need of international regulation of shipping and it was done via IMO. The ships are visiting different ports in different countries, each of them with specific legislation. The crew has to comply with the local laws, rules and regulations. In most of the time everything is going well and there are no problems.

In recent times use of narcotics is one of the challenges of the world with drug trafficking developed internationally. And the seamen sailing on board the ships are very often used as scapegoats when something goes wrong. The official authorities very often cannot reach the real traffickers and in order to handle the problem they keep seafarers responsible because the seafarers are there. One of the recent examples is the imprisonment sentences of the master and chief officer of m/v Phoenician-M at the Black Sea port of Ereğli, Turkey.

The Panama-flagged bulk carrier named Phoenician-M was carrying coal from Colombia to Turkish port of Ereğli in October 2023. The Turkish authorities searched the vessel and located 137 kilos of cocaine mixed in among the coal in the vessel's second cargo hold. The ship had a crew of 20 from the Philippines, Finland, Poland, and Russia aboard when it was detained in Turkey. Turkish authorities arrested 10 crew members including Captain Marko Bekavac and Chief Mate Ali Albokhari on charges related to Narcotics. The ship is a 2010-built 34,000 dwt bulk carrier. During loading at Colombia, the ship lacked adequate protection; the captain informed the ship's managers that he believed security should be improved. They claimed that although he asked for more protection and cameras for the port call, the managers did not follow up on his request. Colombian authorities searched the ship prior to its departure. According to reports, they discovered a tiny quantity of cocaine concealed in the aft peak tank. The captain had reported that the ship did not have strong security during the loading in Colombia. According to the testimony, he told the Turkish authorities as much when the vessel arrived in port. The Prosecutors failed to produce any proof that connected the crew to the cocaine therefore eight crew members were found not guilty. The prosecutor did, however, stress to the court that the master and first officer were in charge of overseeing the ship asking for rigorous punishment under the legal concept of Vicarious Liability. After cocaine was discovered concealed in the ship's cargo, a Turkish court convicted the captain and his first officer to 30 years in prison apiece. In a case where eight seafarers were found not guilty of the same narcotics charges, Turkish authorities concentrated on the senior commanders' leadership responsibilities.

The captain and the chief officer were found guilty without any proof but just because they are responsible for the ship and cargo operations. It is unfair to blame the man because of his responsibilities.

CESMA reviewed the case on its annual general assembly in Lisbon, Portugal in 2025 and also in Bilbao, Spain in 2026. We consider the story very serious case of criminalization of seafarers. That is breach of the human rights of the seafarers and the case has very negative effect on the maritime profession worldwide.

We insist on actions of the international institutions to ensure fair trial and release of both the captain and chief officer. In long term we need proper warranty to seafarers that they will not be charged simply because they are on board and they are following their duties.

CESMA Board is ready to meet You in EU Parliament / EU Commission / IMO Headquarters to give You more information and to discuss our combined actions in favor of shipmasters and seafarers.

Yours Very Truly:



..... (Capt. Dimitar Dimitrov, PHD, FNI),  
**President of Confederation of European Shipmasters Associations**

Captain Dimitar Dimitrov  
Confederation of European ShipsMasters' Association  
Muntplein 10  
1012 WR Amsterdam  
The Kingdom of the Netherlands

*By Email:* president@cesma-europe.org

24 June 2026

Dear Capt. Dimitar Dimitrov,

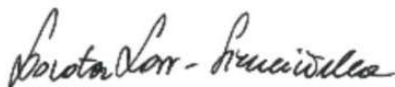
I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter, regarding the convictions of Captain Marko Bekavac and Chief Officer Ali Albokhari of **M/V Phoenician M**, and thank you for the contents set out therein.

I can confirm that the case of these two seafarers has previously been brought to the attention of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Secretary-General, who shares the concerns you have raised regarding the treatment of Capt. Bekavac and Mr. Albokhari.

The IMO places great importance on the fair treatment of seafarers and on ensuring that due process is respected in connection with alleged crimes. In this connection, the Organization is working hard, within its mandate, to assist these seafarers. I can confirm that the Organization is in contact with the relevant authorities, and discussions continue with the Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the IMO.

I trust this provides the assurances you need.

Yours sincerely,



Dorota Lost-Siemńska  
Director, Legal Affairs and External Relations Division

# **EMPA 60<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL MEETING**

## **GHENT, BELGIUM – 14<sup>TH</sup> / 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2026**

### **NAVIGATING THE PAST, STEERING THE FUTURE**

The meeting took place in NH Collection hotel in Ghent, Belgium on 14th – 15th April 2026. It began with the Council of Presidents of member associations where the organization of the general meeting was discussed in detail. The changes in EU Directives concerning ports and port operations had been presented by the president of EMPA. A profound discussion had been made on deep sea pilotage, EMPA position paper and the need deep sea pilotage to be regulated and only qualified deep sea pilots to be allowed to pilot the ships.

The actual meeting was opened by EMPA President Miguel Vieira de Castro. He mentioned that the first EMPA GM was in 1963, 5 associations attended, opened by Marseille pilot. Then he continued with the present challenges to EMPA – digitalization, changing maritime transport, safety, resilience, security – pilots have responsibility on those matters. Pilots stay close to other stakeholders in sharing the responsibility. The value of human capital is vital for pilotage. Technology cannot do the job of the pilots. The opening ceremony continued with the speeches of:

- City of Ghent Vice Mayor Sofie Bracke – port of Ghent merged with Dutch ports of Vlissingen and Terneusen to form North Sea Port, new realities which pilots face on global port operations
- North Sea Port -Harbour Master Wim Van Bogaer
- IMPA President Simon Pelletier – pilot safety, the core of IMPA work, 01.01.2028 the change of pilot boarding arrangement regulation. We, pilots should report any non compliances with pilot boarding arrangements. Every year more than 4 million pilot transfers are made. Pilotage is public service, not a commercial operation. Pilots act primary on the public. Pilotage has to be insulated from the commercial competition. The pilots have to be properly trained, they have to be free from commercial pressure to do proper risk assessment. Competition and commercial pressure compromise the safety. Present example in Argentina is showing that competition in pilotage impairs the safety. Denmark is another example. Chile privatized pilotage and allowed competition. In Romania the door of competition was opened and we have to close that door today. Pilotage system should be free of competition to ensure safety of navigation. Digital transformation and AI change the environment of shipping. AI offers potential to predict risk and improve management but it could not replace pilots. The focus should be on use of technology to improve our job. Foundation was established by IMPA in 2025 for improvement of training of pilots. The public is best served by well prepared pilots.

Keynote speech EU port Strategy was delivered by Torsten Klimke, Head of Unit, Ports Security and Inland Navigation, (MOVE 3) EU Commission:

- EU ports handle 3.4 billion tonnes, 550 ports,
- EU Strategy has 5 pillars :
  - 1) Strengthening competitiveness, innovation and digitalisation
  - 2) Energy Transition, Sustainability and Clean Industries – integration between transport and energy sector, electrification of ports, use of green energy, use of alternative fuels
  - 3) Protect and Secure Ports –ensure ports are safe of crime and drug traffic, increase of cyber security of the port management systems
  - 4) Access to Finance and Investments
  - 5) Social cohesion, Skills and Jobs – importance of small ports – EU will support them to keep workers reskilled in the transition

During the coffee break commercial presentation had been made by ABEKING & RASMUSSEN – Christoph Arndt, captain, navy ships, yachts, pilot boats and vessels. He presented the SWATH principle which reduces the pitching and rolling due to sea waves and that principle is

used when building tender and pilot boats.

The meeting continued with the round tables:

1) EU PORT STRATEGY INDUSTRIAL MARITIME STRATEGY CHALLENGES.

- ECSA Secretary General – Sotiris Raptis – proactiveness and investment to transition from EU
- ETA Secretary General – Anna Maria Darmanin
- ESPO Secretary General – Isabelle Ryckbost – World is changing very fast and ports and port infrastructures should adjust in the new challenging times. Port play role in tackling challenges in security
- FEPORT Secretary General – Lamia Kerdjoudj – ports are strategic asset, they need investment to be in line with the development
- RWS Specialist Advisor Shipping – Carien Droppers – wind farms and safety, extra monitoring what is going on around the wind farms, extra emergency towing ships, extra search and rescue facilities, etc. Human factor analysis – possible solution is use of deep sea pilots. The analysis shows that the stress in the crew is much less with deep sea pilot on board.

2) HUMAN CAPITAL RESILIENCE, moderator Gerhard Janßen

- MDK – PROJECT OLIVIA – CEO Nathalie Balcaen, CEO Maritime and Coastal Services – the project is about diversity in the maritime profession and to bring more women into it
- GREENPORT – Patrick Galvin–Green port alliance, training trainers, students and professionals in green technologies, digitalization in the port sector and behavior change to enhance safety
- EMSF-ETF Secretary General Livia Spera–European Maritime Skills Forum – criminalization, transport workers should be decriminalized when doing their job at sea, they have not to be prosecuted because of their professional activities
- President and CEO of Marine Partners Monaco – Marcello Pica–resilience and team work

The afternoon session of the meeting began with keynote speech from Anne Legregeois – Deputy Director of Fleets & Seafarers / Secretary-General of the superior Council of the Merchant Navy in Belgium and the round tables:

3) PORT SECURITY IN A CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – Moderator

José Antonio Perez Lorente

- Rear Admiral – Spanish Navy – Benigno González-Aller Gross–contribution of pilots protecting critical infrastructure and facilitating secure military mobility through ports
- EMSA Senior Project Officer for Maritime Security, Unit Safety and Security, Department Safety, security and Surveillance- Roberto San Martin – EMSA activities – awareness, guidance, training, IMO Cyber Guidelines technical support for improvement, MASS security paper and integration to Risk-Based Assessment Tool (RBAT), drones' security risk assessment methodology, EU MARSEC Handbook <http://www.emsa.europa/we-do/safety/maritime-security.html>, pilots are not inspectors to inspect security measures on board the ships but they are human sensor to monitor security and to interact with local authorities if there is security breach
- Managing Director Hartmann Reederei – Georg Haase – major problem for shipowners is criminalization of seafarers when drugs are discovered on board,
- Ukrainian Pilot Association presentation from Delta Pilot Branch – pilotage in Ukraine during war times, pilot boat damaged by drones and crew injured.

4) THE ROLE OF PILOTS IN A CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT –

moderator – Kaj Hahtonen – critical entities, military integration of pilots, preparedness of pilots to work in crisis, electrical failures

- Polish Pilot – Tomasz Dobrzyński – jamming –GPS signal is weak or lost and there is no data for position, speed and course, spoofing – the position of the ship, speed and course are wrong, the position is shifted from actual position, the speed is different from the real one. How to handle the jamming and spoofing – use of anti jamming antennas for PPU, use of local RTK signal to enhance positioning, use of RF electronic filters to suppress interference, the possibility to manually choose satellite systems such as GLONASS, GPS, cooperation between Gdynia Maritime University and Gdynia Pilots – pilots receive information about the GPS signal strength and availability of jamming and spoofing
- Dutch Pilot – Hans van Driel – Netherlands emergency law where pilots have special duties in a situation of crisis
- Norwegian Pilot – Johannes Sivertsen – all Norwegian pilots have access to NATO security system and they have special security communication system in case of war. The basic of pilot training should be analog. Use of technology is useful but the most important is visual maneuvering

At the end of the meeting new requirements for pilot transfer arrangements had been presented which will enter into force from January 01<sup>st</sup>, 2028 with the amendments of SOLAS. UK Maritime Pilots Association made interactive card presenting the new requirements <https://ukmpa.org/public-documents/interactive-pilot-transfer-arrangements/>.

The day ended with presentation of Harbor Pilots' Sailing World Cup, Marseille, France – The Pilot Cup 06-08<sup>th</sup> of May 2027, Marseille, France, regatta with 30 ft grand surprise boats, 6-7 crew on board.

The second day of EMPA GM started with deep sea committee chaired by Kaj Hahtonen – affiliated membership confirmed on a closed session of the CoP. EMPA has position paper on deep sea pilotage and is against use of advisers to the master who call themselves deep sea pilots but they have either no pilotage certificate or non recognized deep sea pilot certificate. With the increase of wind mill farms deep sea pilots are more important nowadays. Deep sea pilotage has to be performed by former pilots or former ship masters after specific training. The proposal deep sea pilotage to be done by young officers just coming from the college is not reasonable. EMPA will be updated with list of licensed deep sea pilots in order shipowners to be able to know who they employ when they contract deep sea pilots.

TRAINING & TECHNICAL Committee was chaired by José Antonio Perez Lorente.

- diversity in doing the pilotage in different member states;
- resilience – stronger safety culture, faster collective learning, reduced systematic risk, future-proof pilotage
- EMPASafe project status – EMPASafe – AMURA – Airam Rodriguez–some new developments in the application, easy share with colleagues not registered, all the data belongs to EMPA.
- EGNOS project presentation – Sergio Cabrera Bona – ESSP (European Satellite Service Provider), the owner of the system is EU Space (EU Space program), EGNOS improves the performance of GPS signal and Galileo signal, the service is open, EDAS (EGNOS Data access service), another tool to improve accuracy, RFI (radio frequency interference), [egnos-adoption@essp-sas.eu](mailto:egnos-adoption@essp-sas.eu)
- Legal impact / Liability EU pilots – Jan-Niklaas Brons – Germany – 40 cases had been found liable (up to 1984 no pilots had been kept liable)
- three main models of employment of pilots:
  - (1) Civil servants (belonging to the government structures : Belgium (SP), Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Ukraine, UK;
  - (2) Employed by private institutions : Croatia, Belgium (HP), Georgia, Ireland
  - (3) Self Employed : France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland
    - Contract for pilot services – via pilot association or with individual pilot

- Insurance cover – for private pilotage companies insurance is compulsory, limitation of liability – general exclusion of liability, liability limits regarding the amount, limitation of the liability depending upon the fault:
  - Belgium – gross negligence or intent – 12,500 euro
  - Croatia – gross negligence or intent
  - Estonia – intend or incorrect advise
  - Finland – gross negligence or intent
  - France – 10,000 euro
  - Italy –1,000,000 euro
  - Malta
  - Norway
  - Poland – 20 times pilotage fee
  - Portugal – no limit
  - Spain – 20 euro / GT and max 1,000,000 euro
  - Sweden – no limitation
  - Ukraine – connected with the fund
  - UK – 1000 GBP plus the pilotage fee
  - Claims last 10 years – Italy 10, ...
  - Pilots deal on a daily basis with multimillion assets



The EMPA GM continued with closed session with internal matters –affiliated members deep sea pilots approved, minutes from previous GM approved, approval Delegates’ list (Effective Members) present at GM + proxies (AVR).

- CoP report – support to Romania, inconsistent national practices in deep sea pilotage,
- Resolutions approved
- (1) EMPA sounds the alarm – growing shortage of maritime pilots, call for action from EU institutions, maritime sector and organizations, seafarers are asset to the maritime sector

- (2) Pilots critical to national security
- President's Report (MVC) – cooperation with EU institutions, representation of EMPA in the events of the maritime sector, role of pilots in sustainable shipping, EMPA engagement in EU Court of Justice case with Romanian pilots, added value of EMPA to its members,
- Secretary General's Report (AVR)–DG Move EU Port Strategy – exchange of opinion and EU institutions cooperate with EMPA about the strategy, personal meetings with Fotini Ioanidu from EU Commission about Directive on Port regulations and its amendment
- Report Technical & Training Subcommittee meeting (JAP), presentation EMPASafe update
- Report Deep Sea pilots Subcommittee meeting (KH) – satellite positioning problems and revising recommendations,
- Financial report
- Member Countries' reports
- Bulgarian Maritime Pilot Association – 100 years Varna Pilot Station
- Italy –
- Denmark – merge of the two pilot associations into one

**Capt. Dimitar DIMITROV, PHD, FNI  
CESMA President**

## NEW PRESIENT AT LKKA, LATVIA

Our Latvian colleagues (LKKA) have elected a new president of their association. The new president, relieving Capt. Jazeps SPRINDZANS who was at this position since 14 years, is Capt. Ainars AUNSTRUM.

Capt. AUSTRUMS, after education in Latvian Maritime Academy and Riga Technical University was Master Mariner on Oil and Product Tankers for International Shipping Companies from 2012 till 2023.



*Capt. AUNSTRUM, 1<sup>st</sup> on left – Capt. SPRINDZANS, 4<sup>th</sup> from left*

Capt. AUNSTRUMS is qualified as Master Mariner (Unlimited), Harbour Master, and Maritime Safety and Port Operations Specialist, with several expertises (such as Maritime Leadership, Tanker Operations, Port Management, Navigation and Pilotage, Maritime Safety and Security, Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), International Maritime Regulations, Crisis and Risk Management, Team Leadership, and Organizational Development).

After being Master Mariner with more than 20 years of international maritime experience in navigation, tanker operations, port management, maritime safety, and leadership – an extensive worldwide seagoing experience aboard large crude oil and product tankers, including command of Suezmax-class vessels, and expertise in leading multinational crews, managing port operations, vessel traffic services (VTS), pilotage, and ensuring compliance with international maritime regulations –, in 2023 he became responsible for navigational safety and efficiency within the port of Ventspils, Latvia, area; oversee pilotage services, vessel traffic management, and harbour operations; and lead modernization and development projects related to port infrastructure and maritime services.

Since this year he is Harbour Master in the port of Ventspils, Latvia.

**Capt. Jazeps SPRINDZAN**  
**LKKA ex-President**

**Capt. Ainars AUNSTRUM**  
**LKKA President**

## **PRESS REVIEW**

### **1- CREW**

#### **The Swedish Club publishes crew guide on managing stress**

Published Apr 15, 2026 by **Ship Management International**

The Swedish Club has launched a new crew guide, ‘Managing stress in high-risk areas’ to support seafarers working under prolonged uncertainty and pressure. The guide has been developed as part of the Club’s ‘Check Your Pulse’ wellbeing initiative and offers practical advice to help crews recognise and manage the effects of sustained stress while continuing to work safely on board.

Created in response to the pressures crews can face when operating in high-risk areas, the guide looks at how extended periods of heightened alertness can affect sleep, concentration, mood, decision-making and energy levels. It also provides straightforward steps seafarers can take on board, from staying connected with colleagues and limiting repeated exposure to distressing news, to using simple breathing and movement techniques to reduce tension.

The Swedish Club developed the guide with input from clinical psychologists to help ensure the advice reflects both professional understanding and the realities of life at sea. The aim is to give seafarers support that is practical, relevant and easy to use in demanding situations.

Lorraine Hager, Senior Loss Prevention Executive, Loss Prevention, The Swedish Club, said: “When crews are operating in high-risk areas, the pressure can build over time, even when everything appears calm on the surface. This guide was created to give seafarers practical support they can use in their day-to-day routine on board, and the input from clinical psychologists has helped ensure it reflects how prolonged stress can affect people in real terms. We hope it helps crews recognise those signs early and gives them some simple ways to manage the strain.”

The guide forms part of ‘Check Your Pulse’, The Swedish Club’s seafarer wellbeing initiative, which is designed to strengthen awareness, offer practical support and promote healthier working conditions across the maritime community.

## **2- SAFETY**

### **Vessel fires increase in numbers and severity**

Published May 12, 2026 by **Seatrade Maritime**

Fires caused seven deaths and nine injuries on vessels insured by Gard last year as the insurer warns that the severity and number of fires are on the rise.

Bulk carriers, as well as car carriers and container ships, are now in the frame for serious fires according to insurer Gard as the use of lithium-ion batteries has increased substantially.

Speaking at the Marine Insurance Greek conference, Alexandra Chatzimichailoglou, senior claims adviser and Lawyer at Gard Greece, told delegates that Gard members alone had seen 23 container fires, of which two exceeded the club's retention of \$10m.

Moreover, it is understood that scrap metal, which was often carried to Asia for recycling in containers, has increased substantially and is now carried in bulk carriers and that these cargoes are now seeing misdeclarations resulting in fires. In one of the most recent events, the 40,500dwt Nord Houston saw its cargo of scrap metal catch fire while the ship was docked at Newport docks in South Wales, UK.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFS) reported that it deployed five pumping appliances, two hydraulic aerial platforms, and a range of specialist units, including drones for situational awareness, to combat the blaze. "Firefighters are carrying out external firefighting operations using multiple main jets and an aerial ladder platform, with fire service boats in attendance to support water safety operations," said an SWFS statement at the time.

The solid bulk cargoes are regulated by the International Maritime Solid Bulk Cargoes (IMSBC) Code which governs the safe stowage and shipment of bulk cargoes.

A Gard report on the issue, published last year, said that accident investigations were concerned to find that scrap metal declared by shippers as Group C, which under the IMSBC Code is cargo which is neither liable to liquefy (Group A) nor to possess chemical hazards (Group B), does on occasion contain lithium-ion batteries.

According to Gard's scrap metal report, several serious scrap metal fires involving Group C cargoes, "contained quantities of combustible and/or potentially hazardous foreign materials, such as batteries, rubber, plastics, wood, foam, oils/greases, gas bottles and rags which do not qualify for Group B status."

The alarming spread of lithium-ion fires to bulk carriers could see a similar increase in the numbers as seen in the container shipping sector, with the Swedish Club's David Nichol telling delegates that the number of container-based fires seen last year was more than the number over the previous four years.

A survey of UK fire brigades by business insurer QBE, released today, revealed that UK fire services are now tackling an average of 4.8 lithium-ion battery fires a day. According to QBE, the number of lithium-ion battery fires has increased by 147% since 2022 and is continuing to rise year-on-year. "By comparison, in 2022 fire brigades dealt with the equivalent of two lithium-ion fires a day," said a QBE statement.

Gard, in its container fire report said that misdeclaration was a significant factor in the increase of onboard fires, and one of the reasons behind this could be the complex International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code which categorises some goods, such as portable telephones, laptops and tablets, as non-dangerous goods.

An IMDG exemption is dependent on battery energy limits and other criteria such as packaging, which includes protection to prevent battery short circuits and damage that can trigger thermal runaway.

Gard further cites incidents which saw a cargo declared as mixed aluminium scrap that had electronic waste concealed inside. In another case a cargo of used electronic vehicles was declared as cars, and not, as is required, in accordance with Class 9 requirements, which includes lithium-ion batteries.

### 3- TECHNICAL

#### **NYK car carrier completes Singapore autonomous navigation trial**

Published May 12, 2026 by **Seatrade Maritime**

Elder Leader demonstration verifies interoperability of port and vessel autonomous navigation systems

NYK and Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) successfully completed a demonstration trial of autonomous navigation systems on 29 April when car carrier Elder Leader made its first call to the port of Singapore.

The ship is equipped with an autonomous navigation system and undertook interoperability trials with MPA's port systems. The companies said the trials verified:

- Transmission of voyage planning data from the vessel to MPA's next generation vessel traffic management system prototypes
- Sharing of pilotage route information from the onshore support system to the vessel, as well as real-time transmission of live operational data and video from the vessel
- Utilisation of MPA's Just in Time (JIT) platform to enable smooth and efficient vessel arrival

The results of the demonstration trial will be used in the study of MPA's next generation vessel traffic management system and other shore-based support systems that interface with autonomous vessels.

"These results represent a significant step forward toward the practical deployment of autonomous vessels in international shipping," said NYK.

MPA and NYK signed a wide-ranging MoU in 2024, which included digitalisation alongside decarbonisation and human resource development. The autonomous navigation demonstration was carried out under the MoU and using strict safety management following a risk assessment carried out with the ship's master, bridge team, and pilot in attendance. "Remote pilotage was limited to navigation through the channel and fairways only," said NYK.



The exercise followed a port-to-port Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship (MASS) trials workshop in June 2025 which brought together more than 60 participants from MPA, NYK, MTI and ClassNK along with research institutions. The workshop focused on MASS trials to test the interoperability of port-based systems and autonomous vessels.

## CESMA LOGBOOK (2026-2)

We were represented at the following occasions:

14-15/APRIL	60 <sup>TH</sup> EMPA GENERAL MEETING, GHENT, BELGIUM (P)
28/APRIL	CESMA VIDEO MEETING COUNCIL
28/MAY	31 <sup>ST</sup> COUNCIL MEETING AT BILBAO, SPAIN
29/MAY	31 <sup>ST</sup> CESMA AGA AT BILBAO, SPAIN
16/JUNE	LETTER TO EU AND IMO – PHOENICIAN-M
17/JUNE	FRENCH RADIO INTERVIEW – HORMUZ STRAIT (SG)
25/JUNE	INTERNATIONAL SEAFARER'S DAY CELEBRATED WITH THE PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATION OF CESMA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

On the front page:

AVCCMM PRESIDENT AND CESMA PRESIDENT AT END OF AGA 2026, BILBAO

TRAFFIC IN STRAIT OF HORMUZ – END JUNE 2026

ICE CHART IN BALTIC SEA

CAPT. AINARS AUNSTRUM, NEW PRESIDENT OF LKKA, LATVIA

(abridged)

### AIMS OF THE ORGANISATION

- TO WORLDWIDE PROTECT THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS AND STATUS OF EUROPEAN SEAGOING SHIPMASTERS.
- TO PROMOTE MARITIME SAFETY AND PROTECT THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT.
- TO PROMOTE ESTABLISHMENT OF EFFECTIVE RULES WHICH PROVIDE HIGH PROFESSIONAL MARITIME STANDARDS AND PROPER MANNING SCALES FOR VESSELS UNDER AN EUROPEAN NATION FLAG.
- TO INFORM THE PUBLIC IN THE EU ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EUROPEAN MARITIME INDUSTRY AND THOSE CONCERNING SHIPMASTERS IN PARTICULAR.
- TO CO-OPERATE WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATIONS.
- TO RETAIN AND DEVELOP THE HIGHEST MARITIME KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN EUROPE.
- TO BE INVOLVED IN RESEARCH CONCERNING MARITIME MATTERS IF APPLICABLE IN CO- OPERATION WITH OTHER EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR ORGANISATIONS.
- TO ASSIST MEMBER SHIPMASTERS WHO ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTIES IN PORTS WITHIN THE REACH OF NATIONS REPRESENTED BY CESMA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS
- TO PROMOTE THE SEAFARING PROFESSION IN EU MEMBER STATES

#### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:

EURO 16.00 PER SEAGOING MASTER (WITH A MINIMUM OF 25)

EURO 8.00 PER SEAGOING MASTER FOR ASSOCIATED MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS (WITH A MINIMUM OF 25)

## LIST OF CESMA MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

<b>NAME – COUNTRY WEBSITE</b>	<b>REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT</b>
<b>VDKS – GERMANY</b> <a href="http://www.vdks.org">www.vdks.org</a>	<b>CAPT. Wilhelm MERTENS</b> <a href="mailto:office@vdks.org">office@vdks.org</a>
<b>AFCAN – FRANCE</b> <a href="http://www.afcan.org">www.afcan.org</a>	<b>CAPT. Hubert ARDILLON</b> <a href="mailto:courier@afcan.org">courier@afcan.org</a>
<b>HYDROS – FRANCE</b> <a href="https://hydros-alumni.org">https://hydros-alumni.org</a>	<b>CAPT. Francis VANOOSTEN</b> <a href="mailto:associationhydros@gmail.com">associationhydros@gmail.com</a>
<b>NVKK – NETHERLANDS</b> <a href="http://www.nvkk.nl">www.nvkk.nl</a>	<b>CAPT. Hans AMMERLAAN</b> <a href="mailto:info@nvkk.nl">info@nvkk.nl</a>
<b>CTPC – ITALY</b> <a href="http://www.collegiocapitanitrieste.it">www.collegiocapitanitrieste.it</a>	<b>CAPT. Milena MODUGNO</b> <a href="mailto:info@collegiocapitanitrieste.it">info@collegiocapitanitrieste.it</a>
<b>CNPC – ITALY</b> <a href="http://www.collegionazionalecapitani.it">www.collegionazionalecapitani.it</a>	<b>CAPT. Giovanni LETTICH</b> <a href="mailto:info@collegionazionalecapitani.it">info@collegionazionalecapitani.it</a>
<b>USCLAC – ITALY</b> <a href="http://www.usclac.it">www.usclac.it</a>	<b>CAPT. Antonio RAGGI</b> <a href="mailto:segreteria@usclac.it">segreteria@usclac.it</a>
<b>IYM – ITALY</b> <a href="http://www.italianyachtmasters.com">www.italianyachtmasters.com</a>	<a href="mailto:secretary@italianyachtmasters.com">secretary@italianyachtmasters.com</a>
<b>ACCMM – SPAIN</b> <a href="http://www.capitansmercants.com">www.capitansmercants.com</a>	<b>CAPT. Mariano BADELL SERRA</b> <a href="mailto:info@capitansmercants.com">info@capitansmercants.com</a>
<b>AVCCMM – SPAIN</b> <a href="http://www.avccmm.org">www.avccmm.org</a>	<b>CAPT. Patxi ODIAGA GOROSTIZU</b> <a href="mailto:avccmm@avccmm.org">avccmm@avccmm.org</a>
<b>KBZ – BELGIUM</b> <a href="http://www.kbz-crmb.be">www.kbz-crmb.be</a>	<b>CAPT. Alain PELS</b> <a href="mailto:secretary-general@kbz-crmb.be">secretary-general@kbz-crmb.be</a>
<b>IIMM – IRELAND</b> <a href="http://www.mastermariners.com">www.mastermariners.com</a>	<b>CAPT. Aine HYDE</b> <a href="mailto:cesma@mastermariners.com">cesma@mastermariners.com</a>
<b>ZPU – SLOVENIA</b>	<b>CAPT. Giorgio RIBARIC</b> <a href="mailto:jrg.ribaric@gmail.com">jrg.ribaric@gmail.com</a>
<b>BSMA – BULGARIA</b> <a href="http://www.bsma-bg.org">www.bsma-bg.org</a>	<b>CAPT. Stanislas STOYANOV</b> <a href="mailto:chairman@bsma-bg.org">chairman@bsma-bg.org</a>
<b>LKKA – LATVIA</b> <a href="http://www.lkka.lv">www.lkka.lv</a>	<b>CAPT. Ainars AUSTRUMS</b> <a href="mailto:president@lkka.lv">president@lkka.lv</a>

**ZHUPK – CROATIA**  
**www.ukptmz.hr**

**LCC – LITHUNIA**  
**www.portofklaida.lt**

**SINCOMAR – PORTUGAL**  
**www.sincomar.pt**

**HSF – FINLAND**

**ACNR – ROMANIA**  
**www.acnr.ro**

**UPKCG – MONTENEGRO**

**CAPT. Damir LAKOS**  
**udrugakapetana@zd.t-com.hr**

**CAPT. Juozas LIEPUONIUS**  
**jurukapitonuklubas@gmail.com**

**CAPT. Jose TEIXEIRA**  
**sincomar@fesmar.pt**

**CAPT. Stig SUNDBERG**  
**sundberg.stig@outlook.com**

**CAPT. Marius TUTUIANU**  
**office@acnr.ro**

**CAPT. Ivica FAZO**  
**captain@t-com.me**

***HON. VICE PRESIDENTS:***

***CAPT. W. VON PRESSENTIN***

***HON. MEMBERS:***

***CAPT. G. KIEHNECAPT. J-D TROYAT***

***ADVISORS:***

***TBN***