

MALTA

A Guide to Ship Registration



Europe's Flag. Globally Trusted.



MALTA

A Leading Maritime Centre

Building on its long and varied maritime tradition, Malta, a Member State of the European Union, has today established itself as one of the leading maritime hubs and service centres in the Mediterranean region. Placed to become an international centre of excellence in the maritime industry, the Island offers a whole range of international maritime services and facilities as part of a comprehensive package for the maritime industry.



Malta has also developed a very strong legal and regulatory platform that has enabled the Malta flag to become a reputable international ship register, which is now established as one of the largest in the world.

Vessel registration under the Malta flag and the operation of Maltese ships are regulated by the Merchant Shipping Act, a law based on United Kingdom legislation and subsequently revised, amended and aligned with current international maritime standards.



Why register your vessel with the Malta Ship Registry?

- As a reputable European flag with a long maritime tradition, the Malta Ship Registry is active within European Union fora and international organisations.
- The Registry is consistently listed on the Paris MoU and Tokyo MoU White Lists, and features on the Paris MoU Low-Risk Ship List. The Registry also meets the eligibility requirements of the USCG QUALSHIP 21 programme.
- Ships may be registered in the name of legally constituted corporate bodies or entities, regardless of nationality. Eligible non-Maltese entities or individuals not residing in Malta are required to appoint a resident agent in Malta.
- Ships may be registered in the ownership of European Union/ EEA, Swiss, and UK citizens. If not residing in Malta, a Resident Agent shall be appointed by the Owner.
- There are no nationality restrictions for masters, officers, or crew, provided their qualifications are issued by recognised Administrations.
- Maltese law provides for the registration transfer, amendment, and discharge of mortgages. These may be affected immediately on presentation of the relevant documents to the Registrar. Recent legal amendments also provide for the registration of a Finance Charter Instrument executed by the Finance Charterer (lessee) in favour of the owner (lessor). The registration is a new form of security in favour of the owner (lessor) in the case of a finance charter.
- Clients are supported by a professional team that values long-term relationships. The Registry offers a customer-focused approach with 24/7 service.
- Malta's technical and regulatory requirements are well-established and widely familiar to major shipyards and Recognised Organisations, ensuring smooth interactions and predictable compliance processes.
- Maltese law permits marriages on board Maltese-flagged vessels.
- The Registry operates with full cost transparency, with no hidden charges and no inspection fees during the period of registration.
- A clear strategic political vision supporting business and the maritime industry.
- Malta offers a range of maritime services supported by experienced legal and corporate bodies who guide and assist ship owners through the life cycle of a ship.

Eligibility for registration

All types of vessels, from pleasure yachts to oil rigs, including those under construction, may be registered under the Malta Ship Registry provided they are owned by constituted legally corporate bodies or entities, regardless of nationality, or by citizens of the European Union, EEA, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom. In cases of citizens or legally corporate bodies/entities with a non-Maltese residency, a Resident Agent shall be appointed in Malta.

As a rule, trading ships of 20 years and over are not registered, although in certain circumstances this may be considered.

Ships of 15 years and over are required to successfully undergo an inspection by an authorised Flag State inspector before provisional registration.

Ships of 10 years and over but under 15 years are required to successfully undergo an inspection by an authorised Flag State inspector before, or within one month of provisional registration.



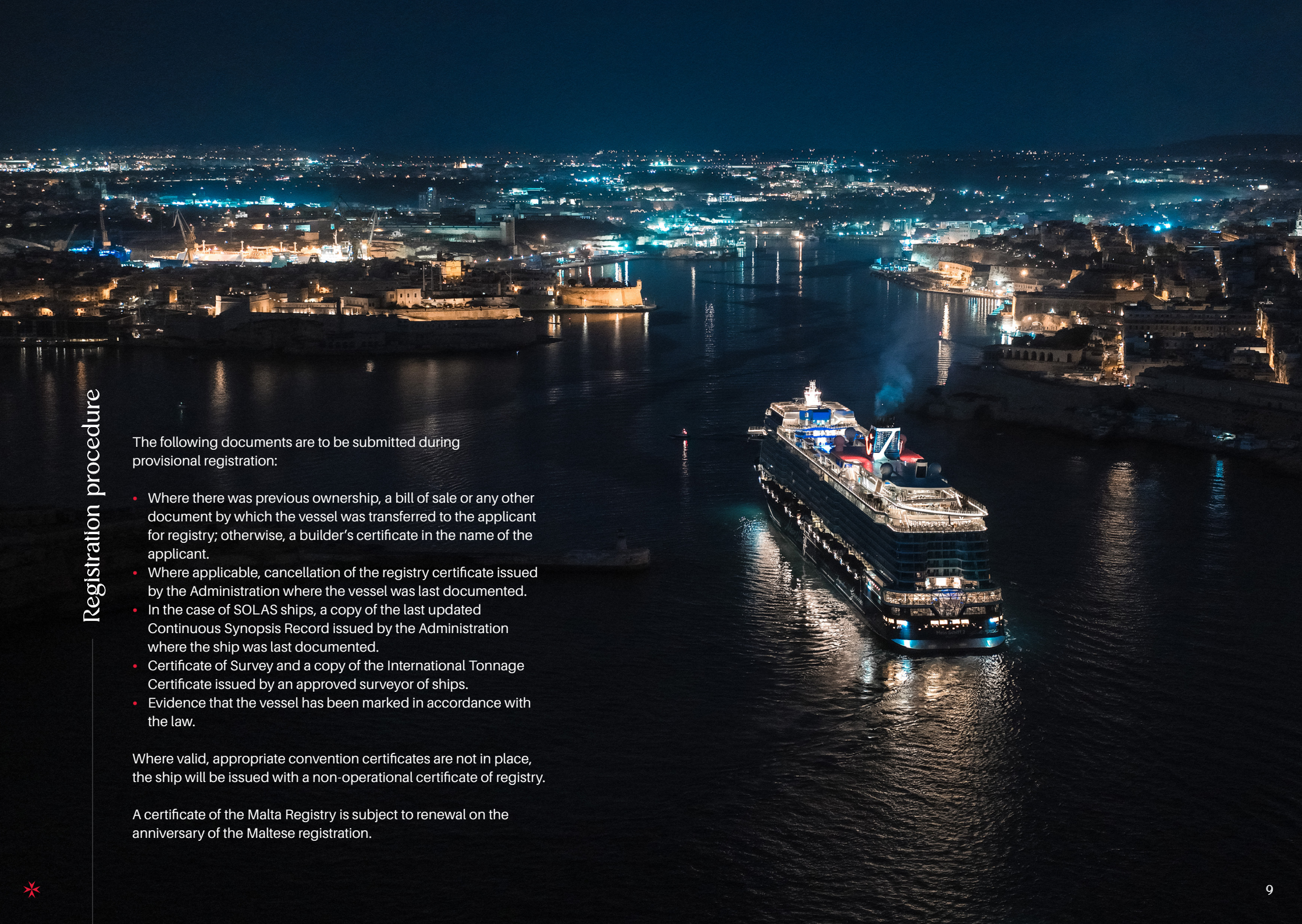


Registration procedure

A vessel is first registered provisionally under the Malta flag for six months (extendible for a further period, or periods not exceeding in the aggregate six months), during which period all documentation needs to be finalised.

The requirements for provisional registration are:

- Application for registration by the owner or an authorised representative, including, if required, an application for change of name of the ship.
- Proof of qualification to own a Maltese ship; in the case of a body corporate, the document of incorporation.
- Appointment of a resident agent where applicable.
- Where applicable, a copy of the current ship's International Tonnage Certificate.
- Declaration of ownership by the owner or an authorised representative.
- Evidence of seaworthiness; in the case of trading ships, confirmation of class with a recognised organisation, and information on the ship's statutory certification, including Company ISM compliance.
- Where applicable, request the Administration to authorise the appropriate Recognised Organisations to issue the Ship's and the Company's statutory certificates.
- Declaration of Maritime Labour Compliance (DMLC)—Part 1.
- Where applicable, an application for a Minimum Safe Manning Certificate.
- Payment of the fee on first registration and the annual fee, including tonnage tax (as applicable).
- Application for Ship Radio Station Licence.



Registration procedure

The following documents are to be submitted during provisional registration:

- Where there was previous ownership, a bill of sale or any other document by which the vessel was transferred to the applicant for registry; otherwise, a builder's certificate in the name of the applicant.
- Where applicable, cancellation of the registry certificate issued by the Administration where the vessel was last documented.
- In the case of SOLAS ships, a copy of the last updated Continuous Synopsis Record issued by the Administration where the ship was last documented.
- Certificate of Survey and a copy of the International Tonnage Certificate issued by an approved surveyor of ships.
- Evidence that the vessel has been marked in accordance with the law.

Where valid, appropriate convention certificates are not in place, the ship will be issued with a non-operational certificate of registry.

A certificate of the Malta Registry is subject to renewal on the anniversary of the Maltese registration.



Bareboat charter registration

Maltese legislation allows both the bareboat-charter registration of foreign ships under the Malta flag, and the bareboat-charter registration of Maltese ships under a foreign flag.

The underlying registry retains responsibility for ownership matters such as title, mortgages, and encumbrances, while operation of the vessel falls under the jurisdiction of the bareboat charter registry.

A ship bareboat-chartered and registered in Malta enjoys the same rights, privileges, and obligations as any other Maltese-flagged vessel for the duration of the registration. Bareboat-charter registration is valid for the period of the charter or the validity of the underlying registration, whichever is shorter, and may not exceed two years at a time, although extensions are permitted.

Bareboat charter registration in Malta follows the standard registration process, with a few specific requirements:

- The vessel must be bareboat chartered to a person or entity eligible to own a Maltese ship.
- It must be registered in a compatible foreign registry and not simultaneously registered in another bareboat registry.
- Registration fees and annual tonnage tax as applicable are the same as for full ownership registration.

The following documents must be provided::

- Application for Bareboat-Charter registration
- Declaration of bareboat charter and charter party
- Transcript of the underlying foreign registration
- Written consent of the underlying registry, owners, and any mortgagees

Vessels under construction

Maltese law provides for the registration of vessels that are being built or equipped. The requirements relating, inter alia, to the survey and safety of ships already built and to the declaration of ownership where the builders have not yet effected delivery to owners will be suspended until construction is completed or until delivery has been made. Vessels intended to operate as trading ships are to be built under the supervision of a Recognised Organisation.

Commercial yachts

Yachts in commercial use of 12 metres in length or more, which do not carry cargo and do not carry more than 12 passengers, can be registered as commercial yachts. Maltese law is very advantageous for the operation of commercial yachts. A Commercial Yacht Code setting the required standards of safety and pollution prevention can be downloaded from [here](#).



International conventions

Malta has adopted all the major international maritime conventions, including: CLC 92, Tonnage 69, COLREG 72, Fund 92, INMARSAT, LLMC 1996 Protocol, Load Lines 66 (including 1988 Protocol), London Convention 72, MARPOL 73/78, SOLAS 74/78 (including 1988 Protocol), STCW 78, as amended, 2002 Protocol to Athens 74, Bunkers 01, AFS 01, SUA 88 (including SUA Protocol 1988), SAR 79, FAL 65, OPRC 90, OPRC-HNS Protocol 00, BWMC2004, WRC 07, HKSRC 2009 and ILO Conventions Nos. 87, 98, 108, 138, 180, MLC2006.

For a ship to operate under the Malta flag, it must always carry valid statutory certificates issued on behalf of the Malta government by a recognised organisation.

Recognised organisations

Survey, tonnage, and convention certificates may be issued on behalf of the Malta government by the following Recognised Organisations:

American Bureau of Shipping, Bureau Veritas, China Classification Society, Croatian Register of Shipping, ClassNK, DNV, Korean Register of Shipping, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, Polish Register of Shipping, Registro Italiano Navale and Indian Register of Shipping.

Manning and certification of seafarers

Maltese ships are subject to the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, ancillary regulations, and the STCW 78 Convention (as amended) regarding the manning and certification of seafarers. There are no restrictions on the nationality of the master, officers, and crew engaged on Maltese ships, provided they are duly qualified in terms of the relevant conventions. Foreign certificates issued in terms of the STCW 78 Convention require an endorsement issued by the Maltese Administration attesting to their recognition. A Minimum Safe Manning Certificate is issued by the Administration.

Registration of a Finance Charter Instrument

The Merchant Shipping Act provides for the registration of a Finance Charter Instrument executed by the Finance Charterer (lessee) in favour of the owner (lessor). The registration is a new form of security in favour of the owner (lessor) in the case of a finance charter. The consent in writing of any registered mortgagee shall be required for registration of a finance charter instrument.

Mortgages

Registration, transfer, amendment, and discharge of mortgages may be affected immediately on presentation of the relevant documents to the Registrar.

The Merchant Shipping Act and its subsequent amendments offer safeguards with respect to registered mortgages, thus making financing of Maltese ships more attractive.



Registration fees and tonnage tax

a. (i) The fee on registration and the annual fee for non-tonnage tax ships.

Ship	Fee On Registration	Annual Fee	
		Basic Fee	Registration Fee
(i) Ships less than 24 metres length overall			
a. Fishing vessel	€70	€25	€36
b. Commercial Yacht	€115	€150	€250
c. Pleasure Yacht less than 50 gross tonnage	€115	€25	€175
All other ships of less than 24 metres length overall			
d. Less than 50 gross tonnage	€115	€25	€400
e. of 50 gross tonnage or more		€150	
Ships of 24 metres length overall or more:			
(ii) Pleasure Yacht	25 cents per net tonnage, subject to a minimum of €187.50	€255	40 cents per net tonnage, subject to a minimum of €400
(iii) Commercial Yacht that does not fall under category (iv)	Rates as appear in para B	€625 for a year of registration	Rates as appear in para B
		€1,095 thereafter	
(iv) Non-propelled Barge, bareboat charter registered in a foreign registry, laid up or under construction excluding ships in category (ii)	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction as appear in para C	€150	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction as appear in para C
(v) Commercial Vessel and Fishing Vessel less than 2500 gross tonnage, and do not fall under categories (ii), (iii) and (iv) above		€255	
(vi) All other ships of 24 metres length overall or more that do not fall under categories (ii), (iii), (iv) or (v) above			
a. Ship less than 300 gross tonnage	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction as appear in para C	€370 for year of registration	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction or increase as appear in para C
b. Ship of 300 gross tonnage or more		€840 thereafter	
		€625 for year of registration	
		€1,095 thereafter	

a. (ii) The fee on registration and the annual fee for tonnage tax ships

Ships	Fee on Registration	Annual Fee		
		Basic Fee	Registration Fee	Tonnage Tax
(i) Ships less than 24 metres length overall				
(a) Commercial Yacht	€ 115	€ 150	€ 100	€ 250
(b) less than 50 gross tonnage	€ 115	€ 25	€ 350	€ 400
(c) of 50 gross tonnage or more		€ 150		
(ii) Ships of 24 metres length overall or more				
(a) Commercial Yacht	Rates as appear in para B	€625 for a year of registration	Rates as appear in para B	Rates as appear in para B
		€ 1095 thereafter		
(b) Ships less than 300 gross tonnage	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction as appear in para C	€370 for a year of registration	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction or increase as appear in para C	Rates as appear in para B subject to reduction or increase as appear in para C
		€840 thereafter		
€625 for a year of registration				
€ 1095 thereafter				
(c) Ships of 300 gross tonnage or more				

Subject to the provisions of article 7(4) of this Act, when there is a change in the particulars or category of a registered ship and the new applicable fee or tonnage tax payable on registration or annually is higher than that already payable, the provisions of article 19(7) of this Act in respect of laid up vessels shall mutatis mutandis apply

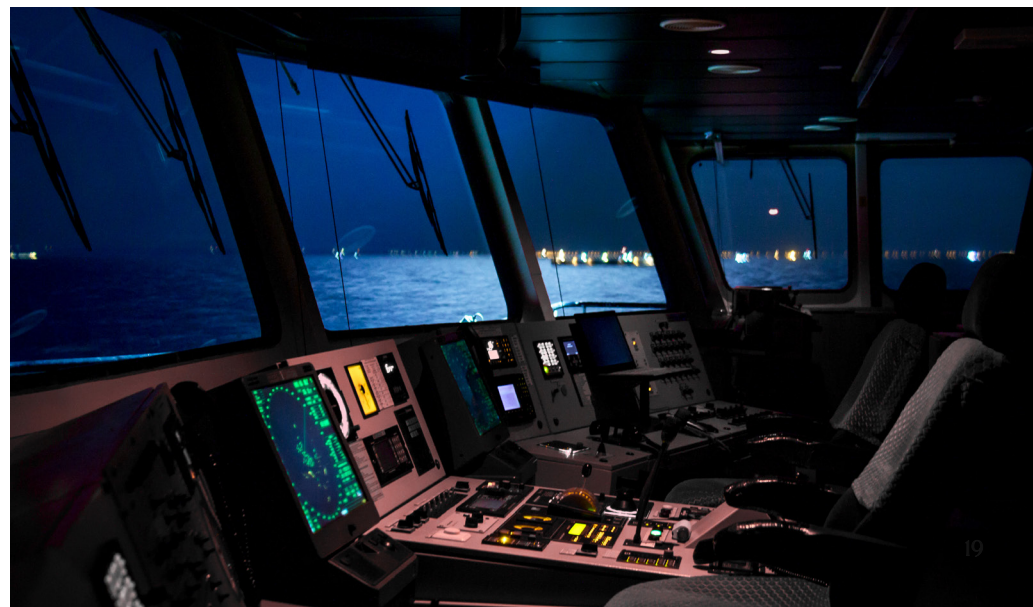
b. The rates per net tonnage payable on registration, the annual registration fee and the annual tonnage tax when referred to in paragraph A.(i) and A.(ii).

Ship of Net Tonnage (NT)		Fee on Registration	Annual Registration Fee for non- tonnage tax ships	Annual Registration Fee for tonnage tax ships	Annual Tonnage Tax
Exceeding	Not Exceeding				
0	6,250	€ 1,562.50	€ 2,500	€ 500	€ 2,500
6,250	8,000	€1562.50 plus 25 cents for every NT in excess of 6,250 NT	€2,500 plus 40 cents for every NT in excess of 6,250 NT	€500 plus 8 cents for every NT in excess of 6,250 NT	€2,500 plus 40 cents for every NT in excess of 6,250 NT
8,000	10,000	€2,000 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 8,000 NT	€3,200 plus 19 cents for every NT in excess of 8,000 NT	€640 plus 1 cent for every NT in excess of 8,000 NT	€3,200 plus 19 cents for every NT in excess of 8,000 NT
10,000	15,000	€2,140 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 10,000 NT	€3,580 plus 14 cents for every NT in excess of 10,000 NT	€660 plus 1 cent for every NT in excess of 10,000 NT	€3,580 plus 14 cents for every NT in excess of 10,000 NT
15,000	20,000	€2,490 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 15,000 NT	€4,280 plus 12 cents for every NT in excess of 15,000 NT	€710 plus 1 cent for every NT in excess of 15,000 NT	€ 4,280 plus 12 cents for every NT in excess of 15,000 NT
20,000	30,000	€2,840 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 20,000 NT	€4,880 plus 9 cents for every NT in excess of 20,000 NT	€760 plus 1 cent for every NT in excess of 20,000 NT	€4,880 plus 9 cents for every NT in excess of 20,000 NT
30,000	50,000	€3,540 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 30,000 NT	€5,780 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 30,000 NT	€860 plus 1 cent for every NT in excess of 30,000 NT	€5,780 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 30,000 NT
Exceeding 50,000		€4,940 plus 7 cents for every NT in excess of 50,000 NT	€7,180 plus 5 cents for every NT in excess of 50,000 NT	€1060 plus 1 cent for every NT in excess of 50,000 NT	€7,180 plus 5 cents for every NT in excess of 50,000 NT

C. Reduction or increase on the rates per net tonnage on registration, registration fee, and tonnage tax, when referred to in paragraph A.(i) or A.(ii).

Age of Ship		Reduction on Fee on Registration %	Reduction or Increase on Register fee and Tonnage Tax %	
Equal to or Exceeding	Less than			
Years				
0	5	50	-30	
5	10	25	-15	
10	15	-	-	
15	20	-	+5	
20	25	-	+10	Subject to minimum increase. (Compounded for both register fee and tonnage tax as applicable) of €1,500
25	30	-	+25	
Equal to or exceeding 30		-	+50	

Annual fees for any one year paid after the anniversary of registration for that year shall be increased by ten per cent. Pre-registration inspections are subject to a charge provided for in Merchant Shipping Notice 127 Rev 2. The unit of currency is the Euro.







Closure of registry

The registry of a Maltese ship may be closed at the request of the owners, provided all liabilities and obligations in respect of the ship towards the State of Malta have been fulfilled, and the consent of all registered mortgagees is produced.

Cancellation of registry by the Administration for non-compliance with the provisions of the law may also be affected after adequate time has been given to the owners to regularise matters and for the financiers to take the necessary action to protect their interests.



Further information

The text of relevant Maltese laws, including subsidiary legislation as currently in force, may be downloaded from our website.

From time to time, the Malta Ship Registry issues notices to give information, expound on procedures, and communicate the parameters for the exercise of discretionary powers. Shipowners, operators, and masters of Maltese-registered vessels are required to regularly review these notices to ensure awareness of, and adherence to, any requirements issued by the Malta Ship Registry.



The information contained herein is meant to serve as a guide only and is subject to change without prior notice. Further information may be obtained from the Malta Ship Registry.

Inquiries may be directed to:
Registrar of Ships,
Merchant Shipping Directorate, Malta
Transport Centre,
Triq Pantar, Lija, LJA 2021, Malta

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