



Merchant Shipping Directorate



GUIDELINES FOR THE ASCERTAINMENT OF SEAWORTHINESS OF VESSELS BEING REGISTERED AS MALTESE SHIPS

Merchant Shipping Notice 127 Rev.3

*Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters,
Owners' Representatives and Recognised Organisations
This notice revokes MS Notice 127 Rev.2*

The Merchant Shipping Directorate draws the attention of all concerned to the Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Act, 2025. The Directorate has reviewed the guidelines for ascertaining the seaworthiness required in terms of Article 12 (a) of the Merchant Shipping Act for vessels being registered as Maltese ships.

As a rule, in terms of Article 3(8), merchant ships of 20 years and over will not be registered, while applications for the registration of other ships will be considered subject to:

- the ship being either in class or in the process of being classed with a Recognized Organization (RO);
- the receipt of an up-to-date class survey status report or, information on the validity of the current statutory certificates including details of any pending recommendations, exemptions granted, acceptance of equivalents or otherwise, related to both class and statutory certificates;
- the receipt of an affirmation by the relative class that the ship is in a position to be issued with all the appropriate statutory certificates without recommendations;
- the receipt of appropriate information on the performance of the ISM managers that are to manage the ship.

Furthermore, registration of merchant ships of 15 years and over is also subject to the outcome of a prior to registration inspection by an authorised flag State inspector; the Directorate may require the inspection to be carried out in dry-dock. When the Directorate allows the inspection to be carried out on registration, only a non-operational provisional certificate of registry will be issued.

Provided further that when all the required documents for the issuance of a Consent in terms of Article 84P of the Merchant Shipping Act for the bareboat charter registration out into a foreign compatible jurisdiction are submitted together with the documents for a provisional registration in respect of ships that have been accepted for registration, the flag Administration may exempt the owners, subject to specific conditions, from presenting the vessel for an inspection prior to registration. In such circumstances the ship shall not operate under the Malta flag and will be issued with a non-operational Certificate of Registry as applicable under the Merchant Shipping

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Act. Upon termination of the bareboat charter registration, the ship shall immediately be subject to an inspection to ensure full compliance with all statutory requirements in terms of Maltese legislation before operating under the flag of Malta or may otherwise be required to close register. A vessel shall not be issued with an Operational Certificate of Malta Registry (provisional or otherwise), prior to the vessel having all valid statutory certificates in terms of applicable conventions and Maltese legislation.

Ships of 10 years and over but less than 15 years shall also be presented for an inspection by an authorised flag State inspector within one month of registration. On payment of the relevant fees, owners may opt to have their ship inspected prior to registration.

A negative outcome of an inspection of a registered ship may lead to the immediate closure of registry.

The fee for pre-registration inspections, even when allowed to be carried out on registration shall be:

1. €500 on vessels of less than 24 metres without cargo carrying capacity issued or qualified to be issued with a licence or permit to operate in terms of the Commercial Vessels Regulations;
2. €1,500 on vessels of less than 500 gross tons; and on vessels falling under category A.i (v) as provided in the First Schedule (Registration Fees) of the Merchant Shipping Act;
3. €3,000 on ships owned or operated by companies that already own or operate 5 or more ships under the Malta flag;
4. €5,000 on ships of 500 gross tons and over which do not fall under category 1, 2 or 3 above.

Payments must be made prior to the authorisation of the inspection. The pre-registration fees are a once only payment. However, unforeseen costs not covered by these amounts, such as higher inspection fees, travel expenses, supplementary inspections, etc will be charged separately. Ancillary costs which may arise as a result of these inspections will be additional to the stated pre-registration inspection fees.

It is emphasised that the final decision on the registration and seaworthiness of a vessel still remains at the discretion of the Directorate.

Merchant Shipping Directorate

24 April 2026