

JULY 2013  
DANISH MARITIME AUTHORITY

# SURVEY ON ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS AMONG INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS

FINAL REPORT – INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS





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# 1 Introduction

Purpose of this report	<p>This report shows the findings from a survey conducted among international seafarers. The survey has collected data with the aims of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Mapping differences in types of work-related activities perceived as administrative burdens among seafarers</li><li>› Mapping characteristics and perceptions of an administrative burden</li><li>› Offering reflections on national differences and ways to move forward to reduce administrative burdens</li></ul>
Survey methodology	<p>The data collection process was carried out by using open links on international websites in the period 15 November to 14 December 2012. Three prizes were offered to motivate seafarers to participate. No individual seafarer received an email, and participation in the survey was thus entirely voluntary. All responses were anonymous unless the respondent supplied an email-address, which was used when drawing the prize winners.</p>
Survey responses	<p>The respondents were asked to indicate the flag of the ship on which they last sailed. We found no systematic patterns in the answers that could be attributed to this information and we have therefore focused on the nationalities of the seafarers.</p> <p>The representation of different countries in the sample is given in Table 1 below. We show the number of seafarers who participated in the survey, which included 55 questions. For nationalities with relatively large samples, we show their individual representation in the data. All in all, the survey has obtained responses from 59 different nationalities.</p>

Table 1 Seafarers taking part in the survey (nationality - large samples)

Nationality of respondents	# of respondents	Proportion of respondents
Ukraine	1062	54,9 %
Philippines	405	21,1 %
India	87	4,5 %
Denmark	71	3,7 %
Other countries*	309	16,0 %
Total	1934	100,2 %

\*The label “other countries” mainly includes European countries, US and Canada.

This distribution shows a large population of Ukrainians. As a consequence, when looking at overall figures for the survey Ukrainians are overrepresented and skew the total averages. This of course also means that the survey results cannot directly be generalised to represent the whole population of international seafarers. However, the representation of nationalities in the survey roughly resembles the representation of nationalities labouring on board the ships.

Survey technique

For all of the results that we present in this report, we have employed a survey technique where respondents have been asked to their level of agreement to a certain statement. They have been allowed to answer using a scale of 1-6, reproduced in the figure below. A scale without a mid-point has forced respondents to take a stance in relation to all statements. In many cases, we have recoded responses into two categories in order to simplify the interpretation process. Respondents have additionally been allowed to have ‘No opinion’ in relation to each statement.

Table 2 Survey scales

Scale level	Original scale	Recoded scale
1	Totally disagree	Disagreement
2	Disagree	
3	Mostly disagree	
4	Mostly agree	Agreement
5	Agree	
6	Totally agree	

## 2 Administrative burdens in seven main areas of work

In the survey, we have asked seafarers about seven tasks or main areas of work<sup>1</sup>. In previous studies, these seven areas of work have been identified as containing elements of administrative burdens.

- 1 Preparation of and participation in **PSC, FSC or class inspections** (not vetting).
- 2 Preparation of and participation in **vetting inspections**.
- 3 **Handling of ISPS requirements** (International Vessel and Port Facility Security), including filling out ISPS-papers and mandatory watch duties on deck.
- 4 Planning and execution of **exercises and drills** according to ISM/ ISPS codes.
- 5 Using and maintaining **internal management systems** (e.g. QMS, ISM, GSMS, etc.).
- 6 Completion of various **journals** (e.g. garbage journal, oil journal, deviation journal, etc.).
- 7 **Completion of port and pre-arrival documents**, including crew lists, passenger lists, crew effects declarations, bonded stores & provisions, vessel stores, vaccination lists, port of call lists, WHO health declarations, special local declarations, etc.

In this chapter we explore the survey responses in respect to: i) Perceived levels of administrative burdens in relation to the seven areas of work, and ii) Perceived relevance of the seven areas of work.

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<sup>1</sup> Seafarers are only asked questions about each area, if they have experience in participating in tasks related to that work area.

## 2.1 Perceived levels of administrative burdens

In the following tables, we seek insight into the level of administrative burdens by looking into two characteristics of an administrative burden, namely the level of repetition and the amount of documentation/paperwork. We do this for all seven areas of work.

### Repetition of tasks

In the table below, we show the results from asking seafarers whether they think that tasks related to different areas of work are being repeated too often. The answers should be interpreted in the manner that ‘agreement’ indicates that seafarers see some potential for reduction in the recurrence of tasks. ‘Disagreement’ should be interpreted as an indication that they feel that tasks related to this work area in general are not recurring too often.

Table 3 Are the tasks repeated too often (%)?

	PSC, FSC, class inspections	Vetting inspections	ISPS requirements	Exercises and drills	Internal QMS	Journals	Port and pre-arrival
Disagreement	34	35	34	49	37	41	29
Agreement	66	66	66	51	63	59	71

In general, the results indicate that some tasks related to the work areas that we investigate are performed too often.

Results indicate that 71 % of seafarers find tasks related to the filling out of port and pre-arrival documents to be performed too often. This is the task with the highest level of perceived needless repetition compared to the other tasks, and it would probably be worth looking into how demands for repetition in this work area can be reduced.

For inspections (PSC/FSC/Class and Vetting) and ISPS requirements, two-thirds of seafarers find that at least some tasks are being performed too often. According to the seafarers, there is thus also a potential to reduce time usage on board for unnecessary repetitions of tasks related to these work areas.

Even though carrying out exercises and drills is perceived as the least burdensome of the seven work areas, every second seafarer finds that some tasks in this area of work are being performed too often. We interpret the fact that exercises and drills score the lowest in ‘agreement’ (51 %) as an indication that seafarers find these types of tasks most relevant – possibly because they can see clearly how they contribute to the safety of the ship. This interpretation is supported by the qualitative remarks that were collected with the survey.

### Documentation and paperwork requirements

When it comes to paperwork, most seafarers think that there is too much paperwork and documentation involved in many tasks, and that this takes up too much time and energy.

Table 4 The tasks require too much documentation and/or paperwork (%)

	PSC, FSC, class inspection	Vetting inspections	ISPS requirement	Exercises and drills	Internal QMS	Journals	Port and pre-arrival
Disagreement	24	24	27	37	24	35	21
Agreement	76	76	74	64	76	65	79

In the area of work, where paperwork is most accepted (exercises and drills), almost two-thirds of seafarers think that there is too much paperwork. Accordingly, we may deduce that a lot of the paperwork and documentation that is being produced on the job contributes too little value to the work of the seafarers. Some seafarers even suggest it could lead to less safety:

*"Safety is always good because it will help the seafarer, but paperwork does not help us. So less time spent on paperwork the more time we could spend on safety itself and maintenance of our safety equipment"*

*"There is too much paperwork - some crews will falsify paperwork to save time. This is not safety and can lead to disaster"*

*"Work at sea is dangerous - I see no reason to complicate it further with unnecessary paperwork"*

For this question, we replicate the finding from above that the highest level of agreement is related to port and pre-arrival documents. Not only are tasks in relation to this work area performed too often (as documented above) – there is also a perception that a lot of the paperwork is superfluous. The level is almost equally high for inspections of any type and for internal QMS and ISPS requirements. The qualitative comments from the seafarers give the general impression that the amount of necessary paperwork has exploded in recent years, and in some cases takes time away from more urgent and meaningful tasks in terms of guaranteeing ship safety. Seafarers suggest easing the rigid control slightly and instead put more focus on culture and competences in order to effectively and meaningfully improve efficiency and safety on the vessels.

This confirms the findings in previous COWI reports that many seafarers are frustrated because they feel that the time usage are disproportionate to the gains of many of the tasks.

Journals and exercises and drills have the most acceptable levels of demand for documentation, but still, for both areas two-thirds of the seafarers find that the amount of paperwork is excessive. In general, we may conclude that seafarers find that there is much too much paperwork involved in their work. This indicates a large potential to rationalise and/or digitalise at least some processes. Many seafarers hint at digitalisation as a means to 'work smart' and avoid much of the paperwork.

Main findings

In summary, the data presented so far indicates that seafarers experience too many administrative burdens in their daily work. This finding is warranted based on the fact that many of them feel that some tasks are being performed too often and even more of them feel that much of their work entails too much paperwork and documentation. A corresponding conclusion is that there is probably room for sensible reductions in administrative burdens across the entire sector. Seafarers themselves – in their qualitative comments – often suggest easing rigid procedures and control systems somewhat and instead focus on culture and competences as a more effective and meaningful way to improve efficiency and safety on the vessels.

## 2.2 Perceived relevance of the seven areas of work

Diving into some other aspects of the study, we present some more data that give extra depth to the understanding of the responses presented so far.

In general, seafarers acknowledge and recognize the need for activities to ensure safety and efficiency on vessels. They also recognize that the work areas in the survey help in some ways to run a safe and efficient ship. These comments are based on the data in Table 5.

Table 5 The tasks help us to run a safe and efficient ship (%)

	PSC, FSC, class inspections	Vetting inspections	ISPS requirements	Exercises and drills	Internal QMS	Journals	Port and pre-arrival
Disagreement	13	17	27	8	16	18	39
Agreement	87	83	73	92	85	82	61

Activities such as the *filling out port and pre-arrival documents* and *ISPS tasks* are perceived to be relatively less important to ship efficiency and safety compared to the other activities. It is perhaps not surprising that port and pre-arrival documents are not perceived as especially fruitful in terms of promoting safety as this is not their first and foremost function. But it is interesting that 27 % of the seafarers do not find that ISPS requirements actually contribute to safety on board. Qualitative remarks provided indicate that seafarers see these requirements as unnecessary and ineffective, since port security is not effectively enhanced by having ordinary seamen to prevent highly hypothetical situations like terrorist attacks etc.

The numbers indicate that most of the tasks carried out in relation to the other five work areas really do contribute to improved safety on board. However, this does not disqualify the need to reduce recurrence and the amount of paperwork that was documented above. It only means, that most of the tasks make sense to seafarers, but they think that the tasks can be carried out in a less time consuming and more efficient way.

It is evident from the qualitative remarks made that the critical attitude of the seafarers towards paperwork reflects their professional knowledge of how to maintain safe ships. This is well reflected in this statement from a Dutch captain:

*“Most of the inspections are done by checklist. This has nothing to do with safety”.*

He and others respect the purpose of inspections, but find that inspections are increasingly being carried out in a manner that only produces documentation but no real increase in ship safety. A Ukrainian Chief Engineer repeats these reflections:

*“In the beginning it was helpful for improving safety of seamen/ships. In the present it has become a kind of needless bureaucracy.”<sup>2</sup>*

A large proportion of the seafarers complain about the way these tasks are implemented, but do not doubt the relevance of the tasks themselves.

In Table 6, we supply more data that illuminates the seafarers’ perception of tasks relating to the work areas. Here, we have asked whether tasks are mainly done for the sake of others, i.e. not primarily done for the sake of ship safety to assist seafarers in their work. The impression from previous COWI studies was that e.g. market demands and varying port or flag state practices that have nothing directly to do with safety are increasingly influencing the daily operation of ships.

*Table 6 The tasks are mainly done for the sake of others (shipowners, customers, regulators) (%)*

	<b>PSC, FSC, class inspections</b>	<b>Vetting inspections</b>	<b>ISPS requirements</b>	<b>Exercises and drills</b>	<b>Internal QMS</b>	<b>Journals</b>	<b>Port and pre-arrival</b>
Disagreement	44	37	37	55	41	44	30
Agreement	56	63	63	45	59	56	70

Table 6 supports this previous finding. Exercises and drills is the only work area where a majority of seafarers think, that the tasks are performed mainly for the sake of ship safety. Without going into more detail, it is evident that seafarers often do not feel that the tasks that they are performing are adding value in terms of onboard safety and efficiency. This does not imply that tasks are unnecessary, but it does indicate good reasons to examine whether certain demands placed on ship personnel can be eased or relinquished. Also, the motivation of seafarers to perform these tasks relies to some degree on their understanding of the background for these tasks. Shipowners and other stakeholders may need to communicate more clearly to seafarers about the relevance of certain tasks, even though they may not

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<sup>2</sup> These remarks are taken from the section that has to do with inspections, but remarks along the same lines often recur in other sections of the survey as well.

be directly intended to improve ship safety or operations, which is the main concern of seafarers.

### 3 Conclusion

This report shows that administrative burdens in the maritime sector is a concern among seafarers of all nationalities. The survey confirms the findings from earlier studies among Danish seafarers that seafarers find a range of work tasks to be unnecessarily complex and time-consuming compared to the value they are perceived to add.

Having presented the main findings and observations, we will now outline a preliminary agenda for addressing the issue of administrative burdens and continual safety and efficiency improvements in the maritime sector. We suggest that the main ingredients in such an agenda are:

- › A revived focus on seamanship and safety culture with a view to reducing the number of procedures and burdens.
- › Increased cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders in all areas of the sector: seafarers, shipowners, authorities, classification societies and customers, e.g. oil majors.
- › Development of harmonious ‘work smart easy to use’ digital solutions to reduce paperwork and time consuming manual workflows.

In particular, the studies show that improvements in efficiency and reduction in levels of administrative burdens seem to be possible in relation to port and pre-arrival procedures, inspections and internal QMS.