



**ALL ABOARD  
ALLIANCE**  
GLOBAL MARITIME FORUM

# **Sustainable Crewing Guidelines**



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## Introduction

Everyone in the maritime industry deserves to work in a safe, inclusive, and attractive environment and be treated with dignity and respect. Yet, while the industry is rapidly innovating to address its environmental impact, progress on the social front has lagged behind. The maritime sector continues to fall short in worker protection and employee well-being, making a career at sea significantly less appealing and contributing to high attrition rates.

This challenge is especially pressing given the labour shortage facing the industry. The International Chamber of Shipping has projected a shortfall of 90,000 trained seafarers by 2026. This can have serious consequences—not only for business operations but also for safety at sea. A workforce struggling with inexperience, fatigue, and insufficient resources increases the risks of accidents, endangering both ships and crew members.

There is an urgent need to transform global seaborne trade into a more humanly sustainable industry. The Global Maritime Forum has worked closely with All Aboard Alliance member companies to conduct research into working conditions at sea, beginning in late 2022 with in-depth interviews with 115 female seafarers representing 23 different nationalities. From October 2023 to September 2024, a consortium of 12 forward-thinking shipping companies participated in the Diversity@Sea pilot project, in which a range of concrete measures were implemented to make life at sea more inclusive and attractive (see sidebar). During the pilot, more than 400 seafarers on the 12 participating vessels answered regular surveys on the impact of the implemented measures. These answers were complemented by additional surveys targeting seafarers outside of the participating companies to gain a broader perspective on industry conditions. Based on these cumulative insights, the Global Maritime Forum and the companies involved developed a set of nine practical, research-backed guidelines. The checklist at the end of this document has been designed to make the guidelines both effective and feasible for shipping companies to implement.

While the Maritime Labour Convention (2006) establishes regulatory minimums for working conditions at sea, new guidelines are needed to define what leading companies can and should do to go beyond the bare minimum. Our goal is to improve outcomes for all workers in the maritime industry, ensuring that success is accessible to everyone—regardless of gender, race, sexuality, or socio-economic background. These guidelines should serve as a roadmap for shipping companies striving to improve employee well-being and also help seafarers and other stakeholders identify companies that take sustainability and social responsibility seriously.

Implementation of the following nine guidelines will enhance seafarer well-being and build a stronger, more sustainable maritime industry.

The 12 companies participating in the Diversity@Sea pilot committed to having an ambitious gender balance on board, ensuring proper conditions for menstrual needs and private hygiene, providing 24/7 wifi access, and ensuring inclusive personal protective equipment.

Additionally, the pilot tested measures aimed at creating a more inclusive environment, freedom from abuse, harassment, and bullying, and more flexible conditions to accommodate work/life planning. We would like to thank the pilot companies, staff and seafarers for their dedication to this project.

Companies:

- bp shipping
- Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement
- Cargill Ocean Transportation
- Chevron Shipping
- Diana Shipping
- Dorian LPG
- GasLog
- Hafnia
- MISC Marine
- Stena Group
- Swire Shipping
- Synergy Marine Group

*The quotes in these guidelines are taken from the anonymous surveys conducted by the Global Maritime Forum both during and after the Diversity@Sea pilot.*

*All case study examples are taken from the policies of the Diversity@Sea pilot companies.*

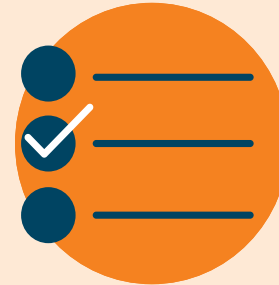
# Sustainable Crewing Guidelines



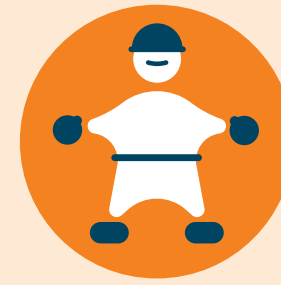
1. Establish clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour



2. Zero tolerance and clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour



3. Set rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals



4. Ensure appropriate equipment and facilities for all



5. Provide a reliable daily connection to the wider world



6. Reduce isolation by building supportive communities



7. Offer flexible contract lengths and respect contract terms



8. Provide paid parental leave



9. Continuously collect feedback and take action

## Guideline 1



### Establish clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour

#### Why?

Fostering respect and inclusion at both the company and crew levels is key to seafarer well-being, teamwork, and a positive work environment. Company policies that clearly lay out expectations of respectful and professional behaviour can improve workplace culture. This was evidenced by pilot vessel crews reporting higher satisfaction in this area than the general population of seafarers. A respectful workplace enhances communication, job satisfaction, and belonging, leading to a safer, more productive environment for all.

*"Too often seamen, both officers and crew, do not feel valued and even feel disrespected by their respective manning office ashore. Manning representatives ashore often have a 'take it or leave it' attitude towards the crews at sea. These days, many younger sailors, especially officers, choose to 'leave it'."*

*"There needs to be more trust and respect from superiors, especially in how they speak with the female crew. I should be seen as a colleague and not a child just because I'm younger."*

#### How?

- ✦ Include behavioural expectations related to respect and inclusivity in appraisals and/or the code of conduct
- ✦ Provide ongoing training to promote awareness of inclusive practices
- ✦ Strengthen communication and collaboration between shore-based management and seafarers to enhance trust and support

#### Pilot company case study Creating a culture of respect

*"Our code of conduct defines our core values and behavioural expectations for ship personnel, office staff, contractors, and consultants. It is supported by other policies such as our DEI Policy and Handbook, which uses storytelling to illustrate real-world examples in an engaging way. We also conduct briefings and stay engaged with staff, implementing confidential conversations to address relationship challenges early and find solutions."*

## Guideline 2



### Zero tolerance and clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour

#### Why?

Ensuring psychological safety on board requires a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour, supported by clear consequences and robust reporting systems. Seafarers must feel safe from abuse and confident that any concerns will be taken seriously and addressed effectively. A clear and structured system for addressing incidents not only supports those in need but also builds a culture of trust, accountability, and respect.

*"It is important to me to have access to an anonymous helpline because sometimes I feel like I just want to talk with someone who will just listen to me."*

*"I want to know that the company I work for will have my back in case something arises. I don't always receive the help from some of my co-workers that a guy would receive."*

#### How?

- ✦ Provide access to a confidential, anonymous third-party helpline via phone and/or email to report harassment, bullying, power abuse, or misconduct without fear of retaliation
- ✦ Clearly outline the consequences of violating behavioural standards in the company's code of conduct
- ✦ Appoint a staff member on shore that seafarers can contact with concerns about social challenges and welfare

#### Pilot company case study Promoting a 'Speaking Up' culture

*"Our 'Speaking Up' policy empowers employees to report misconduct without fear or pressure. Reports can be submitted via an online form or freephone numbers, including international and local options. We aim to respond within ten working days with an action plan if needed. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against responsible individuals, including in cases of retaliation or victimisation."*

## Guideline 3



### Set rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals

#### Why?

Clear and transparent criteria for appraisals, task allocation, and rank-specific training are essential to ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for all seafarers regardless of gender, age, and/or nationality. When seafarers understand what is required to succeed, they can better plan their career development. Given reports of companies explicitly stating that they only hire men or specific nationalities, structured and transparent processes are also crucial in fostering a more inclusive and merit-based maritime industry.

*"The decision to assign me a task or not is often based on my gender/appearance and not my skills."*

*"Sometimes my leader thinks women can't do certain things and won't give me a chance to practice. Instead, he'll give the task to someone he likes, which I think is unfair."*

#### How?

- ✦ Define roles and training opportunities by rank and clearly communicate these to all seafarers
- ✦ Publish transparent appraisal criteria
- ✦ State a commitment to equal and diverse recruitment policies in company communications

#### Pilot company case study Ensuring tasks are assigned fairly

*"To ensure equal opportunities on board, we take a comprehensive approach that includes clear communication, training, and policy enforcement. All procedures are designed to be gender-neutral, using inclusive language and objective criteria to assess crew members' suitability for tasks. Company leadership supports our commitment to equal treatment and diversity through consistent communication, while fostering a culture of inclusivity and accountability."*

## Guideline 4



### Ensure appropriate equipment and facilities for all

#### Why?

Providing all seafarers access to proper equipment and facilities is vital for their safety, well-being, and job performance. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is a fundamental safety requirement, yet it is often designed for the average male body, making it ill-fitting for everyone else. A quarter of women and 10% of men in the general survey of seafarers reported being dissatisfied with the fit of their PPE. Additionally, 90% of seafarers in the pilot group stressed the importance of gender-separate facilities. Basic hygiene products should be readily available on board for everybody, along with discreet disposal options in all bathrooms.

*"It's uncomfortable to walk around with coveralls made for men's body type."*

*"It's unsafe to use gloves that are too big for your hands."*

*"There should be separate facilities for women, especially if there are as many women on board as men."*

#### How?

- ✦ Provide PPE appropriate for all body types and different weather conditions, or reimburse seafarers for buying their own
- ✦ Ensure access to gender-separate changing rooms
- ✦ Provide a supply of sanitary products on board and allow seafarers extra luggage space to bring their own
- ✦ Ensure private and hygienic options for disposing sanitary products

#### Pilot company case study Implementing gender-separate facilities

*"We began pilot programmes on select vessels to test gender-separate facilities, including designated laundry and changing rooms. After gathering feedback, we were able to make adjustments to optimise space and resources before scaling up. This approach has helped build trust, inclusivity, and mutual respect while implementing fleet-wide changes."*



## Guideline 5



### Provide a reliable daily connection to the wider world

#### Why?

Staying connected with the wider world supports seafarers' mental health, well-being, and job satisfaction. In addition to staying in touch with family and friends, internet access facilitates online learning, professional growth, and leisure, contributing to both personal and career development. The maintenance of real-world connections is also essential to seafarers, but survey results show that many crew members are highly dissatisfied with the lack of shore leave they receive. Enhancing connections beyond the vessels would improve life at sea, making the maritime profession more attractive and sustainable in the long term.

*"Poor connectivity and less data provided leads to no connectivity with family and creates depression."*

*"One of the main slogans that encouraged me to start this career was 'see the world while working and earning a good salary'. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. With such limited shore leave, this has become almost non-existent in today's world at sea."*

#### How?

- ✦ Provide at least 1GB per day of free, stable and reliable internet connectivity
- ✦ Allow seafarers to make phone calls daily using the ship communications system for a free limited period and then at a reasonable price
- ✦ Enable seafarers to take shore leave at least once per month

#### Pilot company case study

##### Providing internet access around the world

*"All of our ships are equipped with Starlink. In regions where Starlink is unavailable, we use another satellite solution. When vessels are in drydock or operating for extended periods without Starlink, we provide a 5G router connected to the ship's network to maintain connectivity. Our current data allocation is 8GB per week when Starlink coverage is available and 1GB per week when it is not."*

## Guideline 6



**Reduce isolation by building supportive communities**

### Why?

Building supportive communities on board is essential to reducing feelings of isolation, particularly among minorities who may otherwise feel excluded or disconnected. A strong sense of belonging improves well-being, mental health, and job satisfaction. Creating an inclusive environment enables seafarers to navigate challenges more effectively, boosting morale, collaboration, and retention in the industry.

*"Life on board is isolated, and we have no support after the contract ends. No one feels like they are part of the company—just a person who works on contract and nothing else."*

*"There is not much time to create friendships on board."*

### How?

- ✦ Allocate a designated budget for social activities to foster a supportive and inclusive onboard environment
- ✦ Provide mentorship opportunities to all seafarers
- ✦ Establish company-wide support groups or networks for underrepresented communities, including women, youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other minority groups

### Pilot company case study Building a strong team

*"Our company upholds multiple policies that promote positive relationships on board. We organise weekly gatherings to encourage open communication, along with entertainment activities such as barbecues and movie nights. Additionally, we hold crew forums on topics like diversity, sexual harassment, bullying, and fostering a no-blame culture."*

## Guideline 7



### Offer flexible contract lengths and respect contract terms

#### Why?

Respecting contract lengths is crucial for seafarer satisfaction, well-being, and performance. According to survey respondents, the average contract length is six months, but some contracts are as long as 12 months. These are often extended without consulting the affected worker. Unplanned extensions or contract breaches can lead to stress, fatigue, and dissatisfaction. Honouring agreements allows seafarers to plan their time at sea and on shore, supporting a healthy work-life balance and sustained motivation.

*"Extended contracts without the consent of the person is extremely harmful."*

*"Two trips in a row I had my trip length extended beyond my contracted length, which makes it impossible to plan anything on my leave and disrupts my expected time at home."*

#### How?

- ✦ Provide flexible contract lengths, including options as short as four months, based on individual needs and operational requirements
- ✦ Ensure at least 85% of seafarers are off-boarded within 15 days of the end of their contract

#### Pilot company case study Honouring contract lengths

"We offer standard contracts based on rank and nationality, while also allowing requests for shorter contracts, extensions, or early disembarkation. Crew changes depend on port availability and timely crew readiness, which can be challenging. An effective rotation plan and sufficient seafarers are key to meeting our goals, and we closely track contract extensions."

## Guideline 8



### Provide paid parental leave

#### Why?

Providing paid parental leave is crucial for job satisfaction among seafarers, as it helps maintain family connections and strengthens well-being. It also aids in retaining talent by encouraging parents to remain in their careers. A supportive approach to work-life balance strengthens both the workforce and the maritime sector. Over 90% of seafarers in the pilot study stated that good maternity/paternity benefits are important to them.

*"They demand so much work output from us that they forget we are people too with family to come back to. A little bit of compassion, crew support, and family support would be much appreciated. Being a seafarer is a very stressful and demanding job, and companies should value their people more and give us enough benefits and support befitting our job."*

#### How?

- ✦ Provide either appropriate onshore work options or paid pregnancy leave to pregnant seafarers, primarily at the wishes of the seafarers and at the latest 24 weeks into the pregnancy
- ✦ Provide a minimum of 14 weeks of paid leave (at least 50% of regular salary) for birthing parents or primary caregivers and at least two weeks for non-birthing parents or secondary caregivers, to be used within six months of birth or adoption
- ✦ Support return to work, e.g. jobs on shore or short contracts on vessels
- ✦ The above should apply to all seafarers currently under contract as well as any seafarer who has completed at least 12 months of service at sea with the same employer within a three-year period. This entitlement should be valid for three years, starting from the end date of the last contract

#### Pilot company case study

##### Facilitating a return to seafaring after maternity leave

"Our maternity policy includes up to 18 weeks of paid maternity leave. We maintain open communication with seafarers about their readiness for assignments after leave. Female seafarers with children under three have the option of shorter contracts, and we implement long-term rotational planning to help balance their time at home. For those unable to join vessels, shore attachment opportunities are available. Feedback from female seafarers has been instrumental in shaping our policies, ensuring they better support their needs."

## Guideline 9



### Continuously collect feedback and take action

#### Why?

Regularly collecting feedback is crucial for ensuring policies meet seafarers' needs. However, to avoid survey fatigue, it is important to balance feedback requests and to take action based on responses. Actively listening to employees and demonstrating a commitment to change builds trust and creates a more inclusive, supportive environment in which seafarers feel valued and heard.

*"If you ask questions, you must take action about it. If I don't see any follow-up, why should I continue to answer the questions?"*

*"Nobody really listens to what we seamen have to say."*

#### How?

- ✦ Monitor overall well-being at least every six months, including all ranks in feedback processes
- ✦ Share survey results with respondents within one month of completion
- ✦ Outline the actions the company will take based on the results

#### Pilot company case study Checking in with our seafarers

*"We use multiple measures to stay connected with our seafarers, both digitally and in person. These include regular pulse surveys, post trip feedback, face-to-face conversations, and ship visits. To ensure fair working conditions, we cross-check rest hours, and review work and training arrangements on board for equal opportunities. Officer ranks are paired with a lead ashore for guidance, performance discussions, and appraisals. Our DEI working group continues to advance inclusion efforts and strengthen support networks."*

## Indicators

The below indicators present a list of criteria that should be used primarily by seafarers, but also by charterers, cargo owners and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate how well a shipping company is aligned with the nine sustainable crewing guidelines.

| Guideline   | Indicator question  | Yes/No |
|---|---|--------|
| Establish clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour | Are behavioural expectations related to respect and inclusivity included in appraisals and the code of conduct?   |        |
|   | Is ongoing training provided to promote awareness of inclusive practices?   |        |
|   | Does the company implement initiatives to improve communication and collaboration between shore-based management and seafarers?   |        |
| Zero tolerance and clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour      | Do all seafarers have access to a confidential, anonymous third-party helpline via phone and/or email to report harassment, bullying, power abuse, or misconduct without fear of retaliation? |        |
|   | Does the company's code of conduct clearly outline the consequences of violating the behavioural standards?   |        |
|   | Does the company appoint a staff member on shore responsible for supporting seafarers' welfare and addressing concerns?   |        |
| Set rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals        | Does the company clearly define roles and training opportunities by rank and ensure that seafarers are aware of them?   |        |
|   | Does the company provide seafarers with clear and transparent appraisal criteria?   |        |
|   | Does the company explicitly state its commitment to equal and diverse recruitment policies in job advertisements and on its website?  |        |
| Ensure appropriate equipment and facilities for all                   | Does the company provide PPE appropriate for all body types and different weather conditions, or reimburse seafarers for buying their own?  |        |
|   | Are there gender-separate changing rooms on board?  |        |
|   | Does the company have a policy to supply seafarers with sanitary products and enable them to bring their own?   |        |
|   | Does the vessel have appropriate facilities for the disposal of sanitary products?  |        |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Provide a reliable daily connection to the wider world                   | Does the company provide at least 1 GB of free, stable, and reliable data per day to seafarers?  |  |
|  | Does the company enable seafarers to take shore leave at least monthly?  |  |
|  | Does the company allow seafarers to make phone calls daily using the ship communications system for a free limited period and then at a reasonable price?  |  |
| Reduce isolation by building supportive communities                      | Does the company provide an allocated budget for social activities on its vessels?   |  |
|  | Does the company provide mentorship opportunities for all seafarers?   |  |
|  | Does the company have allyship support networks?   |  |
| Offer flexible contract lengths and respect the agreed contract duration | Does the company offer seafarers a choice of contract length, including as short as four months?   |  |
|  | Does the company ensure at least 85% of seafarers are off-boarded within 15 days of the end of their contract?   |  |
| Offer paid parental leave  | Does the company provide parental benefits to seafarers currently under contract or within three years of their last contract if they worked at sea for at least 12 months during that period?   |  |
|  | Does the company provide either appropriate onshore work options or paid pregnancy leave to pregnant seafarers, based on the preferences of the seafarer and no later than 24 weeks of pregnancy?  |  |
|  | Does the company provide a minimum of 14 weeks of paid leave (at least 50% of regular salary) for birthing parents or primary caregivers and at least two weeks for non-birthing parents or secondary caregivers, to be used within six months of birth or adoption? |  |
|  | Is there support provided for returning to work, e.g. onshore assignments or short periods on a vessel?  |  |
| Continuously collect feedback and take action                            | Does the company monitor well-being on board through surveys of all seafarers at least every six months?   |  |
|  | Does the company share the survey results and the proposed actions with the respondents?   |  |





### About the All Aboard Alliance

The All Aboard Alliance sets out to foster safe and inclusive work environments in the maritime industry. The Alliance's member companies are united by a collaborative drive to create a sustainable, forward looking, and innovative sector that treats all current and future employees with dignity and respect and appeals to the next generation of talent. The Global Maritime Forum convenes senior leaders from across the Alliance to drive progress and strengthen collaboration among member companies.



### About the Global Maritime Forum

The Global Maritime Forum is an international not-for profit organisation committed to shaping the future of global seaborne trade. It works by bringing together visionary leaders and experts who, through collaboration and collective action, strive to increase sustainable long-term economic development and human well-being. Established in 2017, the Global Maritime Forum is funded through a combination of grants and partner contributions. It operates independently of any outside influence and does not support individual technologies or companies.

Learn more about the Global Maritime Forum and our work on human sustainability at [www.globalmaritimeforum.org](http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org).



