



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
35th session
Agenda item 14

STW 35/14
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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STCW CHAPTER VII

Submitted by the International Shipping Federation (ISF)

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	ISF outlines the general attitude of maritime employers towards alternative certification, as permitted by STCW Chapter VII, and suggests that this item be retained on the Sub-Committee's agenda.
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 8
<i>Related documents:</i>	STW 35/1/1

1 When IMO adopted the 1995 amendments to the STCW Convention, in addition to seeking to improve standards of seafarers' competence, it also debated the creation of a certification system that might facilitate more efficient forms of shipboard organisation and training. With the active support of maritime employers, this led to the adoption of Chapter VII containing optional provisions on alternative certification.

2 ISF continues to believe that alternative forms of certification could facilitate the redistribution of work during busy periods, such as when a ship is in port, thus helping to prevent fatigue, as well as enhancing possibilities for career progression.

3 It will be recalled that Chapter VII permits governments, if they so choose, to issue certificates to seafarers which are not based solely on conventional divisions between the deck and engine departments. It also permits a more flexible approach to training. For example, a central shipboard function - *controlling the operation of the ship and care for persons on board* - is now identical whether officers are qualifying in the deck or engine department, and therefore only needs to be studied once by trainees who may wish to serve in both departments. Moreover, a shorter period of minimum seagoing service is now possible to qualify as a dual certificated (or polyvalent) watchkeeper than if seagoing service requirements for trainee deck and engine officers were simply added together, as was normally the case prior to the adoption of Chapter VII.

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4 However, few administrations have yet attempted to apply the flexibility allowed by Chapter VII to their national training and certification requirements. In part this may be due to the preoccupation with implementing all of the other new STCW requirements, and more recently the focus on maritime security. There are also probably some remaining doubts about Chapter VII amongst certain administrations: the adoption of Chapter VII was controversial, which was why its provisions were optional.

5 Arguably the industry has not done enough, both before and after the 1995 STCW Conference, to explain the benefits of alternative certification to governments and seafarers' representatives, who are understandably concerned to ensure that standards of competence are maintained. ISF is therefore currently considering what more can be done to promote the benefits of alternative certification.

6 However, it could be argued that Chapter VII does not in fact go far enough. Even if implemented, Chapter VII requires that a seafarer can still only perform watchkeeping functions if qualified in all of the *functions*, at the level concerned, in at least one department. For example, a deck officer must therefore complete training in all deck officer *functions* before being allowed to qualify in any one area of engineering. As well as reducing the possibilities for more flexible forms of qualification and shipboard work organisation, this also inhibits opportunities for experienced ratings. For example, it is still not possible for an experienced support level deck watchkeeper to be upgraded into someone who can take charge of a navigational watch, without being qualified in all of the *competences* required by full deck officers, such as cargo handling skills or a higher level of medical training.

7 It is recognized that the issues touched on above are controversial, and the industry itself is still developing its own position on these matters. However, notwithstanding the small number of submissions (at the time of writing) that appear to have been made under this agenda item, ISF believes it would be useful to retain this item on the Sub-Committee's agenda.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

8 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the above information and decide accordingly, in particular, that this item should remain on the STW work programme.
