

(Mar 2014)

The International Contribution of IACS to Safer and Cleaner Shipping

What is IACS

The International Association of Classification Societies, presently comprising 12 member societies which comply with the specified membership criteria.

What do Classification Societies do?

The purpose of a Classification Society ("CS") is to provide classification and statutory services (when authorised by flag Administrations or other governmental organisations) and assistance to the maritime industry and regulatory bodies as regards maritime safety and pollution prevention, based on the accumulation of maritime knowledge and technology.

The objective of ship classification is to verify the structural strength and integrity of essential parts of the ship's hull and its appendages, and the reliability and function of the propulsion and steering systems, power generation and those other features and auxiliary systems which have been built into the ship in order to maintain essential services on board for the purpose of safe operation of a ship.

Classification Societies aim to achieve this objective through the development and application of their own rules and by verifying compliance with international and/or national statutory regulations on behalf of flag Administrations. Classification and statutory certification are, except in rare cases, inextricably linked since classification by a society recognized by the flag administration is usually a prerequisite both for registration of a ship with the flag and for certification of the ship's compliance with the International Convention on Load Lines and the International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

A system of periodic surveys checks that a vessel is maintained in compliance with the relevant classification and statutory requirements. Proper maintenance and operation by ship owners or operators and the seafarers on board between surveys are equally key and form part of the overall safety net for protection of life and property at sea and the marine environment, which involves various stakeholders.

It is fundamental for Classification Societies to have a thorough understanding of internationally applicable technical requirements for ships and other floating structures. IACS has therefore established a robust process for contributing to and collecting such information, primarily through its role as a non-governmental organisation of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Classification Societies' participation in IACS in its role as technical advisor to the IMO, gives them first-hand access to development of international regulatory instruments. It provides IACS member societies with a means to share such information with the industry, and to secure consistent implementation of the international mandatory conventions and codes as part of statutory services the societies perform under authorisation from flag states.

What does IACS do?

IACS is an association of Classification Societies which:

- a) establishes, reviews, promotes and develops minimum technical requirements¹ in relation to the design, construction, maintenance and survey of ships and other marine related facilities.

- b) assists international regulatory bodies and standard organisations to develop, implement and interpret statutory regulations and industry standards in ship design, construction and maintenance, with a view to improving safety at sea and the prevention of marine pollution.

IACS has a wide perspective on relevant matters through monitoring the developments in EU legislation related to shipping safety and environmental performance in addition to its technical advisory role to the IMO and its interaction with the industry and flag states. IACS technical representatives can therefore bring cross-cutting knowledge and experience from one forum to another.

¹ IACS requirements are minimum requirements. Any member or group of members remains free to set and publicise requirements that result in an equivalent or higher safety level compared to the IACS requirements.

Values guiding IACS' support to regulators and industry

The support that IACS can offer to regulators, e.g. IMO and ILO, and the industry relates to the following values:

- **Leadership:** ability to be ahead and co-operate with regulators and industry on initiatives that can effectively promote maritime safety, protection of the environment and sustainability;
- **Technical knowledge:** collective and individual knowledge and experience, leading to the development, adoption and implementation of technical rules and minimum requirements that reflect current practice and changing demands of the society, supporting innovation and new technologies;
- **Quality performance:** commitment of its members to define and adhere to the highest global quality standards;
- **Transparency:** ability to provide advice on the implementation of regulations, interpretations or enhancements thereof, if need is identified, so that practical solutions can be effectively developed in cooperation and with the support of other stakeholders, increasing the trust on class.

IACS' representation in Brussels

IACS has a Representative to the EU, based in Brussels. The Representative promotes the aims of IACS by interacting as required with EU Commissioners and Cabinet advisors, MEPs and Intergroups, maritime industry associations and EU Member State governments.

IACS also has an Expert Group on the European Union (EG/EU), comprised of its members, which monitors and, where appropriate, can make technical contributions to EU regulatory developments related to shipping. Items can be referred to other specialist working groups or decision-making bodies where necessary.

Contacting IACS

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