

Covid-19 Update - Issue 27/2020

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Cruise Shipping Scenario

The Guidance on cruise activity's restart in EU

The Coronavirus 2019 pandemic has heavily affected cruise operations in the European Union and globally, thus the restart has to be gradual. Operators need to ensure that cruise trips do not expose passengers and staff to high health risks.

The "joint EMSA-ECDC (European Maritime Safety Agency - European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) guidance on the gradual and safe resumption of operations of cruise ships in the European Union in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic" has been released on July 27th and it is meant for EU/EEA flagged ships engaged in international voyages and for ships calling at EU/EEA ports, irrespective of flag. Its objective is to facilitate a safe re-start of cruise ships' operations in the EU, by recommending minimum measures to be implemented by all those concerned, while maintaining general safety and security standards.

Cruise activity resumption

In recent days the cruise activity has restarted in Germany, with Tui Cruises' Mein Schiff 2 sailing from Hamburg on July 24th, and in Taiwan, where Dream Cruises has dropped the moorings of the Explorer Dream ship from the port of Keelung. In the meantime Greece has reopened six ports to cruises: Piraeus, Rhodes, Heraklion, Volos, Corfu and Katakolo and cruise ships are allowed to visit any of the ports, after completing clearance at the first Greek port.

On the contrary, cruises will not sail in US waters until October, after the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) extended its 'no-sail' order. The CDC solicited the public's contribution, stating that the feedback "will be used to establish the future orientation of public health and the preventive measures relating to cruise ships". The public is invited to answer a list of 28 questions covering a wide variety of topics by September 21st.

Green light to cruise ships in Italy

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte declared to support the resumption of the cruise activity in Italy underlining cruise activity's fundamental contribution to the Italian Economy.

The National COVID-19 Technical Scientific Committee approved on August 5 the safety protocol, defined by the Italian Health Minister together with the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure and aimed at ensuring a safe restart of cruise operations in Italy.

The final green light to cruise ships will be formally given by the Italian Government through a specific decree to be released in the next days.



Shots of the port of Genoa on the inauguration day of the new Genova San Giorgio bridge (August 3rd)

MSC Cruises's and Costa Cruises's Safety Protocols

On the same day, August 3rd, both MSC Cruises and Costa Cruises officially presented the details of their safety protocols.

MSC Cruises Health and Safety protocol

MSC Cruises' Health and Safety protocol has been defined to support the restart of operations in the Mediterranean, aiming to protect the health and safety of guests, crew as well as of the local communities that the company's ships will visit.

The comprehensive protocol, developed by a dedicated task force, with the input and support of leading external medical experts, establishes the new MSC Cruises' operating procedures, going beyond the regional and national guidelines and effectively setting a new safety standard.

Costa Safety Protocol

Costa Cruises has introduced the Costa Safety Protocol, consisting in a set of procedure for the safeguard of its guests and crewmembers.

Once allowed to restart, Costa's cruise activity will follow a comprehensive set of health procedures, developed by the company with the support of a panel of independent scientific experts.

The protocol sets a comprehensive set of measures and procedures, including the safety of crew members as they return to work on board, the booking process, embarking and disembarking operations in ports, life and medical care on board and shore excursions.

Ports of Genoa

With an official press release on the 24th of July, the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority confirmed to fully support the cruise industry's request to resume sailings from the Italian ports.

MSC Cruises is preparing for the restart in the Mediterranean in late summer and, whilst awaiting the necessary final approvals, MSC Grandiosa and MSC Magnifica are presently laying up in the port of Genoa. According to MSC's resumption plans, in the initial phase the two ships will only welcome Schengen's area guests. Itineraries will include Greece and Malta, where the authorities have approved the health and safety protocol to support the restart of operations and re-opened their ports to cruising.

Also Costa Crociere is preparing its fleet in order to be ready to restart operations when allowed in Italy. Units are completing pre-start procedures and safety controls to protect passengers' and crew's health, promptly reacting to any possible new risk, as happened in the port of Civitavecchia a few days ago. Costa Smeralda is ready to reach Savona from Marseille where it has been laying up in the last months.

Cruise Industry economics

Cruise companies post-COVID-19

The cruise industry was expected to reach 32 million passengers worldwide in 2020, then COVID-19 occurred and operations were halted globally, causing troubles for cruising companies.

Among them, Carnival Corporation announced the revision of the sales plan of their ships and the future selling of 15 cruise ships. Even smaller companies have suffered from the pandemic disaster, in fact the German tour operator FTI Group announced the closure of their cruise branch (FTI Cruises) as part of a group-wide restructuring.

However, some glimmers of light filter among the shadows enveloping the cruise industry: such as those coming from the Meyer Werft shipyard, where Saga's Spirit of Adventure boutique cruise ship touched the water last week, while the chimney was mounted on another unit under construction.

Another beacon of hope is Royal Caribbean's parent company that changed its name into Royal Caribbean Group, a new name for a new life after COVID-19.