



## Press Release

### The lifeboat needs to be reinvented

**Hamburg, 08 May 2023.** *Lifeboats are an essential part of crew safety onboard every vessel but seafarers are way too often getting injured when launching the lifeboat. Instead of focusing on how to improve the lifeboat itself, focus has been on compliance and training. Container Ship Safety Forum e.V. (CSSF) calls for a reinvention of the lifeboat onboard cargo vessels.*

Over the years, many seafarers have been injured – some of them fatally – while launching the lifeboat during evacuations or evacuation drills. Not because the lifeboats have not been compliant with safety standards, but simply because the launch of a lifeboat is a dangerous task to perform.

“We need to reinvent the lifeboat and its launching equipment onboard cargo vessels. For way too long, we have seen able seafarers being injured when launching lifeboats even though crews have been trained and the lifeboat is modern and fully compliant,” says Aslak Ross, Chairman of the CSSF. “Everyone knows we have a problem; seafarers are scared to launch lifeboats; however, no one has offered a plausible path towards a solution to the problem for cargo vessels. A change is needed to provide a safe environment for seafarers and to regain trust in lifesaving equipment,” he adds.

**Known problem:** In 2017, the UK Chamber of Shipping issued an article ‘Lifeboat drills: We need to save lives, not lose them’ in which they identified 60 fatalities during testing of lifeboats over a 10-year period. In the article, it was stated that simulation training could improve safety.

“Simulation and use of new technology is one way to conduct drills in a safer environment, and we support the intent to reduce the risk of accidents, however, it does not solve the core of the problem: Launching a lifeboat is too dangerous. And even though simulation has its advantages, it should only be used as a supplement to well-conducted onboard abandon ship drills where crews are familiarized with the ship specific equipment,” says Aslak Ross.

In the so-called hierarchy of controls – a 5-level system widely used in industries to minimize or eliminate exposure to hazards – training is on second lowest level to minimize risks, while removing and replacing the hazards are considered the two most effective actions to eliminate risks.

Therefore, the CSSF encourages the industry, classification societies, flag states and suppliers to launch innovation to replace current lifeboats with a safer technology. Alternative designs are already available for offshore installations and for passenger evacuation on PAX vessels through Marine Evacuation Systems (MES) and the like.

“Such systems should also be made available to cargo vessels without delay. It is long overdue to change the current environment and innovate to eliminate the risk of lifeboat accidents. We need approved systems that can be fitted to newbuildings – we need to safeguard our seafarers,” says Aslak Ross.

### **About CSSF**

Launched in 2014 and incorporated as a registered association in 2018, the Container Ship Safety Forum e.V. (CSSF) is a global business-to-business network and industry association that is aiming to improve safety performance and management practices in the container shipping industry. To achieve this, CSSF members collaborate through measurement, reporting and benchmarking as well as sharing best practices and engaging with industry stakeholders.

With its 32 members, the CSSF represents more than 50% of the worldwide available TEU capacity on fully cellular container vessels.

**The CSSF will hold its next regular member meeting on 10 and 11 May 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal. The meeting is kindly hosted by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).**

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