

## Recognition of seafarer certificates of competency if there's no Brexit deal

### Summary

How seafarers would be affected if the UK leaves the EU with no deal.

### Detail

If the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 without a deal, find out how this would affect:

- UK trained seafarers working on board EU flagged vessels
- EU trained seafarers working on board UK flagged vessels

See also:

- [Maritime security if there's no Brexit deal](/government/admin/publications/875513)
- [Hiring crew for ships and yachts: certificates of competency](https://www.gov.uk/hiring-crew/certificates-of-competency)

A scenario in which the UK leaves the EU without agreement (a 'no deal' scenario) remains unlikely given the mutual interests of the UK and the EU in securing a negotiated outcome.

Negotiations are progressing well and both we and the EU continue to work hard to seek a positive deal. However, it's our duty as a responsible government to prepare for all eventualities, including 'no deal', until we can be certain of the outcome of those negotiations.

For two years, the government has been implementing a significant programme of work to ensure the UK will be ready from day 1 in all scenarios, including a potential 'no deal' outcome in March 2019.

It has always been the case that as we get nearer to March 2019, preparations for a no deal scenario would have to be accelerated. Such an acceleration does not reflect an increased likelihood of a 'no deal' outcome. Rather it is about ensuring our plans are in place in the unlikely scenario that they need to be relied upon.

This series of technical notices sets out information to allow businesses and citizens to understand what they would need to do in a 'no deal' scenario, so they can make informed plans and preparations.

This guidance is part of that series.

Also included is an [overarching framing notice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-governments-preparations-fo

r-a-no-deal-scenario/) explaining the government's overarching approach to preparing the UK for this outcome in order to minimise disruption and ensure a smooth and orderly exit in all scenarios.

We are working with the devolved administrations on technical notices and we will continue to do so as plans develop.

## **Purpose**

This notice provides information about the impact of the UK leaving the EU without a deal on the recognition of seafarer certificates. It also outlines the government's approach to providing continuity for EU trained seafarers working on board UK flagged vessels, and the action being taken by government to minimise risks for UK trained seafarers working on board EU flagged vessels.

## **Before 29 March 2019**

At present, the international standards of training, certification and watchkeeping convention (STCW) mandates that if you're a crew member carrying out certain duties, you must have a certificate of competency (COC) (<https://www.gov.uk/hiring-crew/certificates-of-competency>). A COC must be renewed every 5 years.

If you're a seafarer who has trained outside of the UK and are working on a UK flagged vessel, you must have a certificate of equivalent competency (CEC) issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). The CEC allows seafarers holding COCs issued by recognised non-UK countries to work on board UK-registered merchant ships. The UK has recognised the certificates of nearly 50 countries.

EU legislation has harmonised the way that EU countries apply the STCW requirements. This has led to 2 different EU procedures for recognising seafarers' qualifications.

## **Issued under EC Directive 2005/45/EC**

Every EU country recognises the certificates issued to seafarers by the other EU countries. The certificates must be accompanied by an 'endorsement attesting such recognition', issued by the country recognising the certificate. In the UK, the CEC provides this endorsement.

## **Issued under EC Directive 2008/106/EC**

This enables EU countries to endorse the certificates issued by recognised third (non-EU) countries. This directive enables third countries to secure recognition of their certificates by the EU.

### **After March 2019 if there's no deal**

If there's no deal, endorsements issued before withdrawal by EU countries to seafarers holding UK COCs would continue to be valid until they expire. So if you're a UK-trained seafarer with an endorsement issued by an EU country, you would be able to continue working on board vessels flying the flag of that country until the endorsement expires.

After exit, the rights and obligations placed on the UK as a signatory to the STCW convention would remain, including those for recognising certificates issued by third countries.

Therefore, in the event of no deal our intention is to:

- continue recognising all certificates that we currently recognise, including those issued by EU and EEA countries after exit
- seek third country recognition of UK certificates by the EU under the STCW convention

EU countries that wish to continue accepting new UK COCs would need to write to the European Commission, in accordance with the procedure in EC Directive 2008/106. These EU countries would then be able to recognise such certificates. The European Commission, with the assistance of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), would assess our training and certification systems under this procedure.

### **What you would need to do**

Since the UK is already operating to international and EU standards and will continue to do so after exit, we expect EMSA's assessment of the UK's training and certification systems to be straightforward, but it may take some time. Once this assessment is successfully completed, any EU country would be able to accept UK COCs and issue the necessary endorsements. This would mean that as a UK trained seafarer, you would be able to work on board vessels flagged with those EU countries.

Under no deal if an EU country chose not to recognise UK COCs after exit, as a UK trained seafarer you would only be able to work on board vessels flagged with that

country until your certificate expires. However, as noted above this is not an outcome that we expect to occur.

### **More information**

Find out more about:

- [Maritime security if there's no Brexit deal](/government/admin/publications/875513)
- [Hiring crew for ships and yachts: certificates of competency](<https://www.gov.uk/hiring-crew/certificates-of-competency>)

We will publish more information in the coming months. We aim to give businesses and individuals as much certainty as possible as soon as we can, and to ensure that any new requirements are not unduly burdensome.

This notice is meant for guidance only. You should consider whether you need separate professional advice before making specific preparations.

It is part of the government's ongoing programme of planning for all possible outcomes. We expect to negotiate a successful deal with the EU.