



Marine Notice No. 03 of 2026

Notice to all Fishing Vessel Owners, Skippers, Masters, Fishers, Mates and Engineers and all Stakeholders including Training Colleges and Fishery Organisations

Consultation on New Legislation to give effect to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F)

1. Purpose of Marine Notice

The Department of Transport is preparing new legislation to give effect to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F) and wishes to seek the views of stakeholders in the fishing industry, including vessel owners, skippers, crew members, training providers, representative bodies and fishing organisations. The responses received will be considered as part of legislative proposals to ratify the Convention. Formal ratification will enhance international recognition of Irish qualifications, improve safety at sea, and support harmonization with international best practices.

2. Background of the STCW-F Convention

The STCW-F Convention, adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1995, entered into force on 29 September 2012 and currently has 40 contracting states. The Convention sets minimum international standards for training, certification, and watchkeeping for personnel serving on fishing vessels of 24 metres or more or with engines of 750 kilowatts or more. It also mandates basic safety training and watchkeeping principles for all personnel on applicable vessels.

When implemented in Irish law, the STCW-F Convention will apply to:

- Personnel serving on applicable Irish fishing vessels (anywhere in world).
- Personnel serving on applicable foreign-flagged fishing vessels operating in Irish waters or calling to an Irish port.

While the Convention prescribes the minimum requirements on training, certification and watchkeeping for fishing vessel personnel, countries may exceed these standards. The Convention consists of 15 Articles (which set out the framework, including scope of

application, national provisions, Port State Control, procedural matters, entry into force and related provisions) and an Annex containing the technical regulations divided into 4 chapters:

- **Chapter I - General provisions:** Covers matters such as the administration of certification arrangements, control procedures for foreign-flagged vessels, the issue and endorsement and recognition of certificates, exemptions, dispensations, transitional arrangements;
- **Chapter II - Certification Requirements:** Covers the certification requirements for Skippers, Officers, Engineer Officers and Radio Operators;
- **Chapter III - Basic Safety Training:** Sets out the basic safety training required for all fishing vessel personnel;
- **Chapter IV - Watchkeeping Principles:** Sets out the basic principles of watchkeeping for fishing vessels.

Accession would align Ireland's certification system with international best practices for safety and crew competence on applicable fishing vessels and enhance international recognition of Irish fisher's qualifications.

3. Ireland's current framework for training and certification of fishing vessel personnel:

Ireland's current training and certification system for fishing vessel personnel already incorporates many elements of the STCW-F Convention.

- The *Fishing Vessels (Certification of Deck officers and Engineer officers) Regulations 2023* ([S.I. No. 313 of 2023](#)) apply to fishers serving aboard fishing vessels that are 15m in length overall and over. The Department of Transport issued [Marine Notice No. 41 of 2023](#) that sets out the details and the effect of these regulations.
- The *Merchant Shipping (Musters) (Fishing Vessels) Regulations, 1993* ([S.I. No. 48 of 1993](#)) applies to fishing vessels of 16.5m and above in length and provides for the holding of regular musters, the preparation for emergencies, the regular inspection and maintenance of life-saving and fire-fighting equipment and the recording of particulars of each in vessels' logbook.

4. Overview of the proposed new provisions

The Department intends to enact a Merchant Shipping (International Conventions) Act which will contain provisions allowing for Ireland ratify the STCW-F Convention. Once enacted, the Department intends to revoke S.I. No. 313 of 2023, which is made under the Merchant Shipping (Certification of Seamen) Act 1979, and replace it with regulations made under the new Act that:

- Fully implements the STCW-F Convention for personnel serving on board fishing vessels of 24m in length and over, allowing for international recognition of qualifications.
- Provides for a comprehensive national regime for training and certification of fishing vessel personnel, including those outside the scope of STCW-F (i.e. to include fishing

vessels less than 24 metres in length, similarly to what is already covered under the existing regulations).

- Includes transitional provisions and exemptions for certain vessel types and personnel.
- Includes provisions allowing recognition of certain STCW certificates in a corresponding capacity for STCW-F.
- Establishes powers for authorised officers to inspect, investigate, and detain vessels where necessary.
- Enables the Minister to set fees for examinations, training approvals, and certification.

A summary of the proposed provisions is provided below.

4.1. Fishing Vessels under 24m in length

Personnel serving on board fishing vessels under 24m in length are not within the scope of the STCW-F Convention. Once S.I. 313/2023 is revoked, certificates for these fishers will remain valid for a period of five years or until the date of expiration of the certificate, whichever is earliest. Following this, certificates issued to these fishers will be issued under new regulations replacing S.I. 313/2023. However, the training and certification standards are not expected to change.

4.2. Fishing vessels over 24m in length

Fishing vessels over 24m in length fall within the scope of the STCW-F Convention. Under current legislation, certificates need to be revalidated after 5 years. The new legislation would allow for certificates issued under S.I. No. 313 of 2023 in respect of fishing vessels to which STCW-F applies to remain valid for up to 5 years following the entry into force of the STCW-F Convention in the State, or until its date of expiration, whichever is earliest. The holder of such a certificate, which is valid on the date of the entry into force of the STCW-F Convention in the State, may continue to serve on board a fishing vessel in a corresponding capacity under the STCW-F Convention. After this period, any new certificates will be issued under the legislation giving effect to the STCW-F Convention. This will enhance recognition of Irish fisher's qualifications overseas in countries which are Party to this Convention. It is not expected that this change will impose any significant additional training requirements on fishers that are already qualified and hold a Certificate of Competency for service on fishing vessels of 24m and above.

4.3. Skipper (Limited) certificates

S.I. No. 313 of 2023 currently exempts personnel with a Skipper (Limited) certificate from holding a Skipper (Full) certificate if they are serving on board a fishing vessel of less than 100m in length in the limited area only.

Regulation I/2 of the Annex of STCW-F allows the Minister to exempt, by regulations a person or class or persons serving on board an Irish fishing vessel of less than 45 meters in length operating exclusively from an Irish port and fishing in exclusively in Irish limited waters, from having to comply (either wholly or in part) with some of the requirements of the Convention.

The intention is to provide a transitional provision allowing those with the Skipper (Limited) certificate to continue to hold certificates issued under S.I. 313/2023 for a period of 5 years following entry into force of the STCW-F Convention, or until the certificate's date of expiration, whichever is the earliest.

Following this, the issuing of or revalidation of such certificates will be made under the legislation giving effect to the STCW-F Convention. We expect that the change will not impose any significant additional training requirements on fishers that are already qualified and hold a Certificate of Competency.

Note: Skipper (Limited) certificates for personnel serving on board a fishing vessel of less than 24m in length in the limited area are not affected by this change, as the STCW-F Convention does not apply to these vessels.

4.4. Chief Engineer Officer, Engineer Officer, or GMDSS radio operator certificates

The *European Union (Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers) Regulations 2014* ([S.I. No. 242 of 2014](#)) transposes Directive 2008/106/EC (codified by Directive EU 2022/993) and gives effect to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 (STCW).

Under the proposed legislation, a valid certificate issued under these Regulations permitting the holder to serve as a Chief Engineer Officer, Engineer Officer, or GMDSS radio operator will be deemed to be a valid certificate in a corresponding capacity under the STCW-F Convention, subject to any limitations that may be specified by the Minister on the certificate.

4.5. GMDSS General Operator and GMDSS Restricted Operator certificates

The *Wireless Telegraphy (Maritime Radio Operator) (Certificates of Competency) Regulations 2010* ([S.I. No. 8 of 2010](#)) provides for Maritime radio operator certification.

Under the proposed legislation, the certificates of GMDSS General Operator and GMDSS Restricted Operator issued under these Regulations will be valid in a corresponding capacity under the STCW-F Convention, subject to any limitations that may be specified by the Minister on the certificate.

4.6. Powers of authorised officers

To meet STCW-F obligations, authorised officers will be prescribed powers to:

- Board and inspect Irish and foreign-flagged vessels
- Verify crew certification and competence
- Investigate fraud or deception in certification
- Detain vessels with serious safety or environmental deficiencies

Article 1.2 of the STCW-F Convention requires a Party to “promulgate all laws, decrees, orders and regulations and to take all other steps which may be necessary to give the Convention full and complete effect, so as to ensure that, from the point of view of safety of life and property at sea and the protection of the marine environment, seagoing fishing vessel personnel are qualified and fit for their duties.”

In order to ensure the safety of life and property at sea and the protection of the marine environment, authorised officers are provided with a number of powers to board and inspect fishing vessels (both Irish and non-Irish flagged) in order to question crew to verify that all persons serving on board such vessels are appropriately certified or hold the required dispensation, and to ensure that all persons on board have the required knowledge and experience to perform their role competently. It is also necessary for the authorised officer to have powers to act when not on board a ship, including powers to take action in the event of a fisher obtaining, or seeking to obtain, a certificate by fraud or deception. This could for example include uttering false documents or obtaining certificates by impersonation.

Article 8 of the STCW-F Convention and Chapter I, Regulation 4 of the Annex provide that fishing vessels of a Party are subject to port state control by the Irish authorities when in a port of the State. Regulation 4 specifies the limits of the powers of authorised officers under Article 8. Authorised officers carrying out control under Article 8 are limited to

- i) verifying that all persons on board a vessel are properly certified or hold appropriate dispensations and,
- ii) assessing the ability of the crew to maintain watchkeeping standards if there are clear grounds for believing that such standards are not being maintained.

Article 7.2 provides that each “Party shall prescribe penalties or disciplinary measures for cases in which the provisions of its national legislation giving effect to the Convention are not complied with in respect of vessels entitled to fly its flag or of fishing vessel personnel duly certified by that Party”.

Therefore, the powers of authorised officers to board fishing vessels and to question fishing vessel personnel should not be confined to foreign-flagged vessels while in an Irish port. Where serious deficiencies are found on a fishing vessel, an authorised officer should be able to detain the vessel until the deficiencies are satisfactorily remedied.

Article 8 provides for the detention of a fishing vessel where there is a failure to correct any deficiency that may pose a danger to persons, property or the environment. The specific deficiencies that may justify detention are set out in Chapter I, Regulation 4.3 of the Annex. Article 8.3.2 of the STCW-F Convention provides that the “discretion allowed in the case of the personnel of foreign flagged fishing vessels shall not be less than that afforded to the personnel of vessels flying the flag of the port State.”. Similarly, Article 8.4 provides that the article shall be applied as necessary to ensure that no more favourable treatment is given to a vessel entitled to fly the flag of a non-Party than is given to a vessel entitled to fly the flag of a Party. Therefore, in order to effectively achieve the objectives of the STCW-F Convention as regards the safety of life and property at sea and the protection of the marine environment, the powers of detention given to authorised officers should extend to both Irish and non-Irish flagged vessels.

For the purposes of STCW-F, powers are provided to allow the Minister to set out the fees in relation to examinations, designation as a provider of training, the issue of certificates and other matters.

5. Your Views

We welcome views on the potential impacts, challenges and opportunities that ratifying the STCW-F Convention may have on fishing vessel personnel and on the industry. We particularly welcome observations from small and medium enterprises.

The Department invites written submissions from all interested parties. When making a submission, please include:

- Your occupation / organisation / representative group and whether you are a small or medium enterprise
- Any practical concerns or suggestions in relation to the proposed changes
- Potential impacts on your operations or sector

6. Contact Details

Please send any submissions or queries you may have on this consultation process to the Maritime Safety Policy Division, Department of Transport, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, marked "STCW-F Consultation", or by email to stcwconsultation@transport.gov.ie by close of business on 17th February 2026.

Irish Maritime Administration,
Department of Transport,
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.

20/01/2026

For general enquiries, please contact the Maritime Safety Policy Division, email:
MaritimeSafetyPolicyDivision@transport.gov.ie.

Written enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:
Dept. of Transport, Maritime Safety Policy Division, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.
email: MarineNotices@transport.gov.ie or visit us at: www.gov.ie/transport.