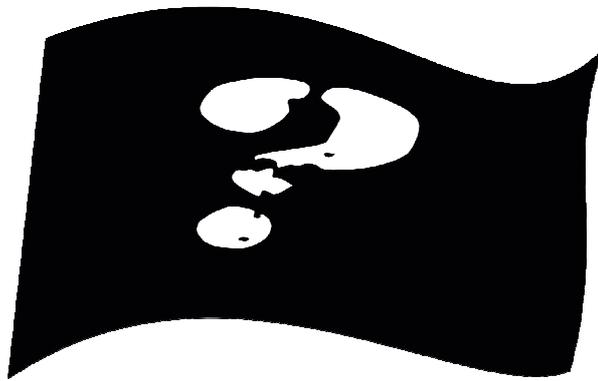


BLACKFLAG

Give traditional vessels a chance to operate across national borders again!



Have you wondered about those black flags flown by many of the traditional vessels at “Kieler Woche”?

Formatiert: Nicht Hervorheben

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Traditional shipping is a very popular and multi-faceted type of cultural activity. Currently, our operating radius is extremely limited as we are often not allowed to call at even the nearest foreign port. That is why we are flying

the black flag with a question mark in it – we simply do not know how to keep going under the current interpretations of legal framework.

Increasingly, European countries are in disagreement about the mutual recognition of national provisions for traditional vessels and this is leading to some countries going it alone.

The very concept of traditional shipping is threatened if we are only allowed to operate within the national waters before our doorstep. Heavily restricting cross-national operation will effectively end maritime exchanges, preclude visits to maritime events in other countries and thus run counter to the endeavour of preserving traditional seamanship by organising long cruises.

European integration is increasingly based on legislation common to all member countries. National sets of rules for traditional vessels are a clear exception to this trend.

What we need is a reliable international legal framework for the operation of our vessels.

If you agree with this statement we would greatly appreciate your signature on our list of supporters. The list will be presented to the competent politicians.

Further information can be found on the back of this page.

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Traditional Vessels are:

- Vintage steamers or sailing ships that have been preserved or renovated true to their original designs
- Vessels for Sail Training,
- Converted vessels (e.g. lighthouse ships, freighters, tugs, fishing vessels or vessels formerly used by state authorities converted into sailing ships)
- Reconstructions (e.g. classic types of sailing ships such as barques, brigs, schooners etc.)
- Replicas (e.g. reconstructions from the time of the Hanseatic League)

What can traditional vessels offer?

- They are carriers of cultural heritage, traditional craftsmanship and seamanship and thus help preserve these also in future. Traditional vessels make such heritage visible for everyone
- They contribute to preserving historical ships and to keeping know-how about them alive
- They provide opportunities for social and cultural learning and education in general
- They add to the liveliness and colour of ports, cities and maritime events
- They are a cradle of young professionals in the maritime sector
- They provide an excellent learning environment for joint cross-generational and cross-national exchanges and constitute a forum in which to practice team work and respect for Nature.

Which type of framework do traditional vessels operate in?

Because of the way they were built traditional vessels can often not comply with today's standards for commercial shipping. Retrofitting them so that they do fulfill such requirements would destroy their historical character. Wood as shipbuilding material is a case in point: For reasons of safety it is no longer permitted to use wood below deck. However, the same degree of protection against fire risks can be ensured using other methods. Traditional vessels are not less safe than modern ones. In most countries operators of traditional vessels and the authorities have drawn up national provisions to cover this field.

A consensus was found ...

In a lengthy negotiation process most important European seafaring nations reached consensus on the basic rules for the operation of traditional vessels. They also agreed to mutually recognise national provisions in this field. This has ensured that traditional vessels and their crews could to some extent freely move in and out of European ports and national waters. These agreements were enshrined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU): <http://www.european-maritime-heritage.org/sc.aspx#MoU>

... but the agreements reached at the level of the MoU-Conference have for the most part not been implemented in national legislation (in Germany, for instance, they have not) and have been lying idle for years.

This means that national (often economic) interests are getting the upper hand exerting pressure on the operators of traditional vessels. For example, you are only allowed to call at a Danish port, if you can prove you are in full compliance of requirements for passenger vessels. As a result there are now hardly any Danish traditional vessels to be seen anywhere. Germany is putting restrictions on Dutch vessels using German territorial waters. In other words, vested economic interests and conflicts arising from them are being fought out at the expense of traditional shipping and threaten to suffocate the latter.

Now it is up to politicians to take action

and see to it that the situation is finally settled. Failing that, events such as the Kiel Week, the Hanse Sail and many other international maritime highlights will very soon stop featuring traditional vessels. An otherwise lively part of shipping, namely traditional shipping, would thus be foundering on legal formalisms and the difficulties resulting from these.

Organisations representing traditional shipping

In Germany, operators of traditional vessels have formed the umbrella organisation Joint Commission for Historical Vessels ("Gemeinsame Kommission für Historische Wasserfahrzeuge e.V." (GSHW <http://www.gshw.de>)). Members of this association include small and medium-sized clubs and associations operating traditional vessels, but also institutional groupings such as the Working Group of German Vintage Ship Ports ("Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Museumshäfen") and the Sail Training Association Germany.

There are similar interest groups and associations in other European countries which together form the European umbrella organisation European Maritime Heritage (EMH <http://www.european-maritime-heritage.org>) which most flag states are members of.

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