



Another rule? Bring it on!

Opinion

20 November 2024

#Competitiveness

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Get rid of regulatory pressure

For years, the pressure on workers and companies has been rising due to an increasing number of laws and regulations—not only at the national level but also at the European and even global levels. This regulatory burden has a significant impact on the entire business community, including the Dutch shipping industry. Shipowners, shore-based personnel, and seafarers face daily challenges from administrative burdens and compliance costs. But just how big is this issue, and can anything be done about it?

Regulatory burdens are a common grievance, and the Dutch government recognizes them as a major obstacle to business efficiency and employee satisfaction. A frequent challenge on board ships is the need to repeatedly submit information at each new port. Seafarers, especially those in tramp shipping, often spend hours re-entering data that they had already submitted at a prior port just days earlier. Since each port has different submission formats, the process must be repeated from scratch. At the European level, efforts to address this issue are underway with the “European Maritime Single Window Environment” (EMSWe). This one-stop solution aims to eliminate the complex web of port-specific submission requirements.

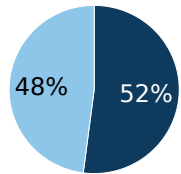
A solution is not always the solution

You might think the problem is solved, but nothing could be further from the truth. National implementation is severely delayed in nearly every EU member state, including the Netherlands. Yet, there’s an opportunity to turn this setback into a constructive outlook by stepping back and seeing the bigger picture—this is just one of many regulatory bottlenecks. Reporting obligations are rising due to a growing number of regulations, so solving one problem doesn’t help if a new one immediately takes its place. Could this be a fundamental issue in the shipping industry?

Identifying bottlenecks is a critical first step. The KVNR tackled this around the summer of 2024 through a survey of its members, both shore-based personnel and seafarers, allowing each respondent to submit up to three key bottlenecks. With 88 bottlenecks reported by 58 respondents representing 30 companies, participation was robust enough to provide a representative sample. Additionally, discussions within the KVNR about regulatory burdens have been ongoing for years.

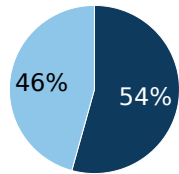
Aspects on which seafarers and shore personnel experience regulatory pressure

■ Seafarer ■ Shore-based position



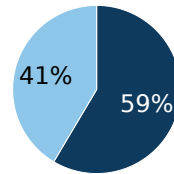
Workability

Total:
73



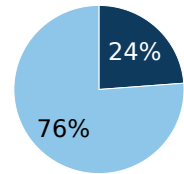
Proportionality

Total:
35



Perceived utility

Total:
41



Regulatory burden costs

Total:
21

NB: KVNR study on external regulatory burden in Dutch maritime shipping, May 2024

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What are the bottlenecks

For shipowners, regulatory pressure is primarily centered around a growing number of climate and environmental reports, which cannot always be addressed by a "one-size-fits-all" harmonization tool.

This was particularly evident during an information session on the FuelEU Maritime component of the European "Fit for 55" sustainability package. The application of the European Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) to maritime shipping is part of this package, yet the reporting requirements for both components do not align. Consequently, this discrepancy results in increased administrative work for employees.

“Everything has to be processed in triplicate. With a port call every day, along with afternoon reports and so on, this quickly becomes unmanageable!”

RESPONDENT

Analyzing the reported bottlenecks reveals three main themes:

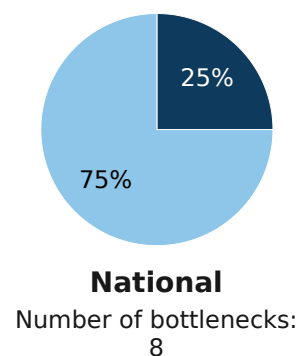
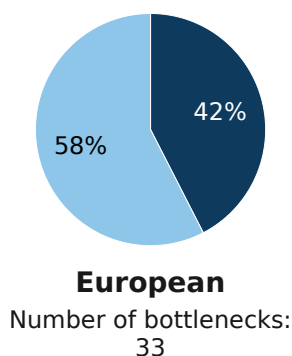
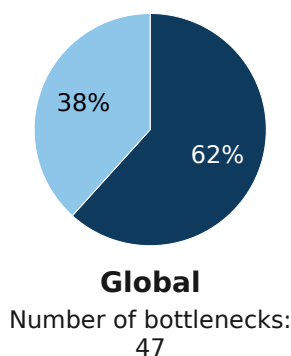
- **Administrative Burden on Board Related to Port Calls**

- **Inspection Pressure on Board Related to Proportionality and Perceived Usefulness**
- **Pressure on Efforts (and Investments) Ashore Related to ESG Regulations**

Interestingly, it appears that national regulatory pressure is less of a concern compared to the pressure from international laws and regulations. This is crucial in an international industry like shipping, where minimizing national rules that diverge from those in other countries is essential. Beyond practical considerations, inconsistent national regulations can negatively impact the overall business climate.

At which level is the regulatory burden most pressing?

■ Seafarer ■ Shore-based position



NB: KVNR study on external regulatory burden in Dutch maritime shipping, May 2024

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And now what?

It's clear that we need to eliminate regulatory burdens, but the reality is far more complex than simply removing one rule for every other. Practical challenges persist, and addressing one bottleneck often does little to alleviate others. The recent survey of KVNR members highlights that much of the regulatory pressure arises from reporting requirements.

In the 21st century, we could develop an efficient system to manage these requirements. However, we need more insight into who should implement this system and how it should be structured. There's a concern that this process may initially generate numerous lists and documents for discussion. Nonetheless, if the end result is a streamlined system that allows users to confidently respond to new regulations with, "New rule? Bring it on!" then the lengthy process may ultimately prove worthwhile.

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Maritime Single Window

To streamline maritime transport, seagoing vessels must be able to submit their port arrival notifications easily, in a uniform manner, and only once. Therefore, the KVNR advocates for the swift and effective implementation of the European Maritime Single Window (EMSWe).

