

## Summary

The Nederlandse Zeevarendencentrale (free translation: Dutch Seafarers' Centre) requested Erasmus UPT to conduct an independent study on the logic and necessary level of structural funding for Dutch seafarers' centres. In this summary, we first answer the main research question whether there is sufficient funding to adequately organise welfare facilities. We then answer the sub-questions related to the welfare needs of seafarers and the facilities that currently exist in Dutch seaports. We also consider the legal basis for welfare services.

### Importance and relevance of this research

The Netherlands has traditionally been a trading country, and as a maritime nation the country is strongly connected to the rest of the world through its seaports. The seaports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam are still considered to be the pillars of the Dutch economy and are strategically important turntables of international trade. Together with the other Dutch seaports (Moerdijk, Vlissingen, Terneuzen, Groningen), these ports account for 590,000,000 tons of cargo (CBS, 2022). These seaports together provide direct and indirect employment to almost 355,000 employees (Havenmonitor, 2021). On top of this, approximately 1,000,000 seafarers call the Dutch seaports with their ships on an annual basis. For the Dutch export-oriented industry, they are of vital importance for products to the world market.

Total Dutch seaports	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Number of seagoing vessels	46,595	45,704	42,224	43,698	28,550
Number of seafarers	1,077,811	1,087,576	790,822	828,947	638,987
Visitors seafarers' centres	29,482	31,966	6,920	5,403	11,551
Visits to ships by welfare organisations	2,824	2,985	3,199	3,884	1,915

Source: North Sea Ports, Port of Rotterdam, Port of Amsterdam, Groningen Seaports. \*) Data until 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2022.

For authorities and companies, cargo throughput is paramount, but there is a responsibility gap when it comes to provisions of facilities for seafarers' welfare in seaports. The welfare of seafarers is a concern for shipowners. However, shore-based authorities do have a responsibility to accommodate shore leave to seafarers. To improve this, the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) of the International Maritime Organisation states that member states must provide seafarers with access to shore-based welfare facilities for shore leave. In practice, the financing of these facilities is for the interpretation of the parties involved, as the MLC does not impose an obligation on who is financially responsible for the provisioning of these facilities. In practice this means, welfare facilities are being carried out mainly by volunteers and maintained by donations and sponsorships.

### Answering the main question: funding needs for seafarers' welfare

Dutch seafarer centres and their welfare facilities fulfil a **valuable function** in contributing to the welfare of seafarers temporarily staying in Dutch ports<sup>1</sup>. This is not only in times of crisis since there is also a historical connection between port and city, between seafarers and society. The bodies involved in handling ships in Dutch ports have an interest in ensuring that seafarers are given the right proper welcome. To date, the seafarers' centres function properly in this regard, mainly based on occasional funding, donations and sponsorships. The centres run largely on volunteers. Nevertheless, this does make **continuity vulnerable**, and some seafarer centres are under financial pressure. To keep the facilities up to standard, to be able to perform the basic functions and from there scale up to fully-fledged facilities, we find that **structural funding** is needed.

Seaports and the businesses clustered in and around seaports benefit directly from ship calls and cargo volumes brought in by seafarers. Obviously, ship calls serve **private interests** that benefit shipping companies, port operators and commercial businesses in the port, under the governance of port authorities. At the same time port authorities have a public task to manage, develop and perform **functions for common use**, such as nautical safety, maritime accessibility and port infrastructure. In this line of reasoning, shipping companies ought to take care for the welfare of seafarers. From desk research, we conclude that welfare facilities on board are improving somewhat, however, for seafarers' welfare ashore shipping companies rely on the facilities and infrastructure provided by land-based authorities and organisations. Looking back on the past, we see administrative structures between **harbour master** and seafarer centres. From the point of view of nautical safety and social welfare for Dutch and non-Dutch seafarers, the harbour master has an interest in centres for seafarers. Even today, we find that the harbour master generally supervises the centres for seafarers. This **administrative organisation** with port authorities supports our conclusion that seafarer centres serve the **public interest**. Seafarer centres provide a **'home away from home'**, a facility where seafarers depend on third parties.

We further argue that the financing and organisation of welfare work is a matter of **cooperation**. If we consider the entirety of welfare services, there is a lack of a **joint vision** and **policy**, but also of a **national structure** to guarantee quality and provide a joint development perspective and secure structural financial resources. In such a

<sup>1</sup> A seaman's house is nowadays also called a 'seafarers' centre' and refers to shore-based welfare facilities for the benefit of seafarers on short-term leave ('shore leave'). In this study, we use the contemporary name, partly because seaman's houses can evoke wrong and outdated associations. In this report, we use the term seaman's house only in the historical context

national structure, the NZC can be a connecting factor in the welfare chain, complementary to the port regions. In the regions, the centres themselves maintain relations with the port authorities for the local organisation of facilities.

Port of Rotterdam has a welfare committee, but we note that this is mainly a **funding facility**. Stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of this welfare committee vary. From the interviews, we note, there is a discrepancy between policy, funding and implementation. We also observe a discrepancy between the definition and implementation regarding the allocation of seaport dues, as stated in the general conditions of seaport dues.<sup>2</sup> These funds – which are made available to ship's agents - enable shipping agents to make efforts for seafarers. It is not transparent whether these funds serve the **commercial interest** of the **shipowner** or the **welfare of seafarers**. What is transparent is an allocation of EUR 140,000 per year to the Rotterdam Port Welfare Committee. This works via a project submission by welfare organisations to the Rotterdam Port Welfare Committee, who will decide on a case-by-case basis.

There is a need for structural financial support for the organisation of welfare work in seafarers' centres. We argue that a stable organisation should run on professionals, being at least an **operational coordinator**, a **financial manager** and a **welfare worker**. They manage a network of volunteers and can also raise additional funds. Structural funding should **cover these staff costs**, equivalent to about 70% of fixed costs. In our funding model, we have calculated this at EUR 216,000 per seafarers' centre, where a seafarers' centre can be open every day. Furthermore, **transport means** are crucial in the operation of a seafarers' centre. The number of means of transport varies by seaport area because of the geographical distribution of terminals and quays where ships are moored.

How should this structural funding be raised? In terms of **mutual funding** by central government and local governments, a **50/50 ratio** seems appropriate. There is no dispute about the national interest of seaports. When seaports also subscribe to the public interest of welfare facilities, a 50/50 ratio would be an adequate interpretation of **guideline 4.4.4** of the MLC. The extent to which seaport dues are or can be used for this purpose and in line with this **distribution key for structural funding** will have to be examined per seaport. This would also restore the relationship with the shipowner, being the seafarers' employer.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoting, "the seaport dues (in Rotterdam) are levied including a percentage of 0.35% for the benefit of Deltalinqs and the Rotterdam Cargadoors Association for representation of its members and for social projects for seafarers in the port of Rotterdam" (General Terms and Conditions, including Port Tariffs, Port of Rotterdam Authority, 2022).