Model for the medical certificate for the examination of fitness in inland navigation: guideline for medical practitioners

Directive (EU) 2017/2397 and the CESNI standard for medical fitness do not provide for standards for medical documents. However, different models of medical certificates have been elaborated in the past by IMO, CCNR and national authorities.

The development of various models may be a risk for defining correct delays for the validity of certificates of qualifications or to restrict service to certain areas, certain tasks, periods of time or a specific craft. Relevant medical information may not be brought properly to the attention of the competent authority. This may lead to incorrect decisions of authorities concerning the medical fitness of an applicant or concerning possible restrictions and mitigation measures.

This is why a CESNI model for medical certificates has been drafted based on work carried out by CCNR and seven countries having concluded an administrative agreement with CCNR in 2015.

The information below provides explanations on how to fill in some of the fields to be completed or ticked in the model[1].

1. Explanation of mitigation measures and restrictions

1.1 Regarding restriction "04 No solo duty in the steering house", what does "no solo duty" exactly mean?

A second person who holds a certificate of qualification at operational level (boatman, able boatman or helmsman) or another boatmaster needs to be present in the wheelhouse.

1.2 What is to be understood under "navigational duties" in restriction "06 No navigational duties allowed"? Can a combined service record book be issued to someone whose medical certificate has a restriction 06?

A combined service record book may be issued to someone with restriction 06.
Navigational duties are to be construed as all activities that can directly or indirectly influence the operation of the craft. This particularly includes the independent determination of course and speed and the use of signs, signals, navigational instruments etc. While the person with the restriction 06 can therefore be a boatmaster, he or she can never be the boatmaster in charge.

Navigational duties are however also performed by crew members who determine the course and speed of their own accord or who act as person at helm, i.e. they steer the vessel according to instructions. These activities too are precluded where the restriction 06 applies.

[1] See also the explanatory notice for medical standards: https://www.cesni.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/notice-medical-en.pdf

Finally, navigational duties are also performed by crew members whose job indirectly influences the aforementioned individuals, such as the announcement of traffic lights or aids to navigation.
Accordingly, the following does not constitute navigational duties:

- Assistance with mooring of the craft (including in locks)
- Assistance with anchoring operations
- Assistance with coupling operations
- Technical work on the craft's equipment or on-board devices.

1.3 Regarding restriction "08 Limited area" and "09 Limited task", what is the distinction is between the term "area" and "task"?

The restriction to a specific "area" means a restriction of the certificate to a defined geographical area, namely to a specific stretch of river or to a lake, for example. It should be borne in mind that the ES-QIN fitness catalogue does not envisage the 08 restriction for any disease symptoms, i.e. it is only permitted in special individual cases (cf. second point of the introduction to the ES-QIN Standard).
The restriction to a specific "task" means the restriction of the certificate to a specific job on board, namely to a job in the wheelhouse for example.

1.4 If the individual being examined has an implanted cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), is he/she permanently unfit or fit with restrictions?

An ICD does not automatically lead to a permanent unfitness.

A person falling under the diagnostic code I 44-49 (ES-QIN, Part IV) may be declared fit with restrictions or limitations, depending on the individual medical assessment. The right-hand column of this criterion may be used to justify such a decision. Where the risk of recurrence is assessed as low, for example due to the presence and proper functioning of the ICD, the individual may be declared fit with restriction 04: "No solo duty in the steering house".

The decision should always be based on sound medical judgement and the medical practitioner's case-by-case assessment of the individual's condition and risk profile.

1.5 In the case of progressive diseases, such as for example obesity / abnormal body mass (diagnostic code E 65–68), can the examining medical practitioner impose a time limitation [or mitigation measure] where this is not expressly provided for in the ES-QIN medical fitness criteria?

The medical fitness criteria set out in ES-QIN are intended to provide guidance to medical practitioners and should not replace sound medical judgement[2].

Accordingly, the medical fitness criteria, including indications relating to temporary or permanent incompatibility, mitigation measures and time limitations, should not be interpreted as replacing the examining medical practitioner's assessment and professional judgement.

The fact that a criterion is, or is not, expressly mentioned for a particular medical condition should not automatically determine the outcome of the assessment. The examining medical practitioner should always take into account the applicant's overall medical condition, functional capacity and risk profile as well as the potential progression of the condition.

[2] See the introduction to the ES-QIN medical fitness criteria for medical conditions (ES-QIN Part IV).

2. **Field “Fit under the condition that the boatmaster’s certificate was issued before 1 April 2004 in accordance with Directive 96/50/EC”**

ES-QIN provides a differentiated approach relating to vision criteria. For boatmasters with older certificates lower requirements apply:

“Holders of boatmaster’s certificates issued in accordance with Council Directive 96/50/EC whose anomaloscope quotient for colour sense is between 0,7 and 3,0 are deemed fit if their certificate has been issued before 1 April 2004.” (Part IV - Standards for medical fitness, Appendix 1 - Relevant vision criteria).

3. **Date field**

It is important that the medical practitioner fills in this field with the date of the examination, because the medical certificate is usually valid for a maximum of three months from the date of the examination.

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