

Guidelines for the Formation of National Maritime Law Associations

Broad Membership and Executive Committee

Before adopting a constitution, you should already have gathered some support from your community. Although one or two persons will act as the main promoters at the beginning, you should not envisage forming an association that will not have sufficient membership to ensure that it is able to generate sufficient funds from its membership subscriptions to pay the annual fee to CMI and to sustain the association and its work. To this end, you should get the commitment of several prominent members of your community to serve on the Executive Committee (usually a President or Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary). They may be lawyers, representatives of ship owner's organisations, insurance companies, insurance brokers, freight forwarders, ship agents, stevedores, seafarers, academics or government officials having responsibility for maritime and transportation law and related legislation. From there, you can build up your membership.

Classes of membership should be well defined from the beginning and should be included in addition to individual membership; eg. corporate membership (for corporations and associations), honorary membership and student membership (with reduced fees). You can also consider the opportunity of providing for non-resident membership. A fee structure should be established as soon as possible after preparing a pro-forma budget for your first year of operation. As the association develops, more committees could then be set up.

Other Committees

Initially, the officers on the Executive Committee may have to take charge of most of the association's activities, but eventually other committees can be appointed. For example, in addition to an Executive Committee, you may want to give consideration to establishing a Nominating Committee, a Finance Committee, a Membership Committee and/or a Communication Committee. The latter could be in charge of establishing a website in which the Association is described and its objects set out and of publishing a membership list and/or even a hard copy of such list for ready use. This is generally viewed as an extremely useful and popular tool, which is easy to prepare and maintain.

You may also want to establish a committee which will be responsible for the necessary link with government officials and decision makers of your country and for organising regular meetings with them to discuss proposed legislation or matters of marine policy. If you have government officials as individual members, you may need to discuss the issue of payment of fees by these individuals and ascertain if they need to be appointed to specific committees to justify their presence at the meetings of your association. You may also wish to consider establishing a Finance Committee which can consider ways of raising funds in addition to the normal subscription. Lastly, Committees on work in progress will be useful as they can be empowered to follow international and national developments on particular subjects and suggest improvements.

Once the association grows, it may also be useful to have an Education Committee which would organise the regular meetings of the Association. This Committee could also liaise with National Maritime Law Associations in your region.

Funding

The most common way of raising funds by National Maritime Law Associations, in addition to annual subscriptions from their members, is to hold regular (at least annual) conferences and/or seminars, either solely organised by the National Association or jointly with other bodies which represent maritime interests in your country, such as ship owners, insurers and the like, or on a regional basis with other National Maritime Law Associations. Another method of raising funds is to seek sponsorship or funding from government, large corporations or other organisations having an interest in maritime or transportation matters in your community. Additionally, other purely social activities can be organised to generate funds. At all such events, both members and non-members can be required to contribute fees designed to generate moderate profits over and above the cost of the events.

The revenues from such activities should be sufficient to pay for the administrative expenses of the Association, including the CMI annual subscription. In that respect, it must be noted that very few associations have the means to have an office and permanent staff. The majority use the office of their President and/or his/her support staff, or that of another Executive Councillor acting as Secretary or Treasurer of the Association. Ideally, that individual or individuals who incur expenses in carrying out their duties for the Association should have those expenses met by the Association.

Once established, you may wish to invoice your own membership before the end of the year to ensure that you have sufficient funds in hand to pay your annual subscription to CMI before the end of April of the following year.

Involvement of CMI

Support from the CMI can be sought for meetings which you organise. For example, you may wish to invite the President of CMI (or other Executive Councillors), who could talk about the history of the CMI, its work and the current collaboration with IMO and other international organisations such as UNCITRAL.

Obviously, setting up a new association is a challenge, but it is a most rewarding one. The CMI will try and help you as much as it can.

Please do not hesitate to contact the President of CMI, or any other Executive Councillor to seek their help or obtain further information.