FPS MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT
DG SHIPPING

BMI Circular 2021/002/Rev.3

Electronic ship certificates by BMI - Navicert

Date: 19/02/2025

This is a revised version of the BMI Circular 2021/002. Adjustments to the text are <mark>highlighted in yellow</mark>.

To whom it may concern,

The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate hereby wants to inform all concerned parties (shipowners and managing companies, Port State Control officials, ships' crews and all other stakeholders) on the use of electronic certificates on board Belgian ships.

All electronic ship certificates that are issued by the Belgian Maritime Administration or by the Recognised Organisations on behalf of our Administration that conform to FAL.5/Circ.39/Rev.2 Guidelines for the use of electronic certificates shall be deemed valid in accordance with all applicable international instruments that Belgium is a party to.

This BMI Circular relates to all Belgian flagged vessels provided with electronic ship certificates.

I.   Ship certificates issued by the Belgian Maritime Authority - Navicert

The Recognised Organisations (RO) are authorized to issue statutory and class certificates electronically under the authority of the Kingdom of Belgium for the Belgian vessels. More information can be found in BMI Circular 2019/001 Use of electronic certificates issued by the RO on board Belgian flagged vessels, as revised. This BMI Circular is available on our website[1].

From 1 May 2021, the Belgian Maritime Administration will issue certificates to Belgian vessels in electronic format. Original hardcopy certificates issued by the Belgian Maritime Authority will remain valid and must be kept on board until electronic certificates are available or until their validity expires.

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[1] https://mobilit.belgium.be/en/shipping/maritime-shipping/ship-flying-belgian-flag/bmi-circulars

For signing, issuing and managing electronic ship certificates issued by the Belgian Maritime Authority, the web application Navicert has been developed. With Navicert, these ship certificates can be easily verified by the shipowner and by other authorities.

Navicert can be accessed via the web link https://navicert.mobilit.fgov.be. The previous web link (https://navicert.apps.mobilit.fgov.be/) will soon no longer be available.

II.   Validation and authentication

The electronic ship certificates are transmitted through Navicert and they are protected by encryption and electronic signature from alteration or tampering.

For the purpose of checking validity and authenticity of the ship certificates in Navicert, all certificates have a unique tracking identification number as well as a QR Code. Electronic certificates can be verified in either of the following ways:

A.   QR Code

The simplest method to verify the electronic ship certificate is by scanning the QR Code located under the electronic signature of the authorized surveyor on the electronic certificate with any internet connected device with a camera and a QR Code reader installed. The QR Code contains a URL which links to Navicert, where you can check the certificate validation. The URL will return to a web page confirming the details of the certificate.

B.   Direct link in the electronic certificate

Each electronic ship certificate issued by the Belgian Maritime Administration is provided under the electronic signature with an electronic seal which is accompanied with the following text:

> 'This document is signed electronically in accordance with IMO FAL.5/Circ.39/Rev.2. Validation and authentication can be obtained from https://navicert.mobilit.fgov.be/ by using the Unique Tracking Number (UTN) *(BE. + number)* and ID: *(number)*'.

By clicking on this link, you are referred to Navicert where you can check the certificate validation.

C.   Unique Tracking Number

It is also possible to verify the authenticity by directly opening the web application of Navicert via https://navicert.mobilit.fgov.be/.

There you can enter the Unique Tracking Number together with the Identification of the ship (ID). Both can be found under the electronic signature of the authorized surveyor on the electronic certificate. This will return a web page where you can check if the certificate is valid as well as the details of the certificate.

Important

The signature on the electronic certificates can be validated by opening the PDF in Adobe Acrobat Reader or Adobe Acrobat Pro. The validation of the PDF-file confirms only if the electronic signature is authentic. The validity and authenticity of the electronic ship certificates is to be checked by using Navicert.

Please note that it may be necessary to update your Approved Trust List settings on the device the electronic certificates are viewed on in order for this to work correctly.

III. Periodic Endorsements

Though Navicert relates only to electronic ship certificates issued by the Belgian Maritime Authority, a surveyor of the flag, as well as a surveyor of the RO are to endorse the electronic certificate remotely in Navicert upon successful completion of the survey with the endorsement being immediately available for verification.

If the surveyor is unable to access the internet onboard the ship, this will be carried out at the first available opportunity, as soon as the surveyor is able to gain internet access.

In the case that a ship needs an endorsed certificate as a matter of urgency (for instance it is the last day of their survey window) and it is not possible to add the endorsements electronically in time, then the attending surveyor should print the electronic certificate and sign by hand. The surveyor is to inform the BMI immediately. Upon receipt of the endorsed electronic certificate, the hand signed certificate should be discarded.

IV. Document Management

Shipowners, managing companies and crews on ships that carry and use electronic certificates must ensure that the valid certificates, including all endorsements, can be presented on board whenever requested for.

The management of these certificates must be controlled through the Safety Management System, as described in section 11 of het International Safety Management Code. For vessels which are not subject to the requirements of the ISM Code, the same principles of a controlled document system have to be applied for the use of the electronic certificates.

In this regard, it is important to note that the electronic version of the certificate should be considered as the original and this must always be available for inspection. The certificates can also be printed, but it should be noted that a paper copy is uncontrolled when printed.

Notwithstanding the compliance to the requirements of the Belgian Maritime Administration, shipowners of Belgian ships should continue to exercise due diligence to address any entry and clearance requirements that are specific to each port that the ship calls at.

The content of this BMI Circular must be well known by the responsible crew of the vessels provided with electronic certificates. The crew must be able to present this BMI Circular whenever necessary or requested by any interested party.

The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate urges all concerned parties to accept these electronic certificates as genuine and on the same level as paper certificates.

V. Specific certificates and documents
A. DMLC Part II

During development of the platform Navicert, the Belgian Maritime Administration encountered the issue where an electronic document, such as a DMLC part II, must be signed by two unrelated parties.

A DMLC Part II is completed by the MLC shipowner. The flag administration has no control over the template of the document including the position for the digital signature, the Quick Response (QR) code, and the Unique Tracking Number (UTN). These elements must be well positioned in order to be easily read. There is also the issue of locking the document and protecting it from tampering when it is signed by two parties.

The Belgian Maritime Administration has addressed this issue by creating a flag approval page that is merged with the DMLC PII in a single protected and locked document.

The approval page is, in view of the above, the only place where a signature from an authorized person of the Belgian Maritime Administration is placed ensuring the validity of the DMLC Part II.

VI. Contact

The BMI can be contacted:

- For assistance regarding the authenticity or validity of electronic certificates: navicert@mobilit.fgov.be,
- For other questions related to the certification and inspection of Belgian vessels: Ship.Belflag@mobilit.fgov.be,
- For urgent matters: +32 473 70 03 53.

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