

Panel Discussion

The Seafarers' Bill of Rights turns 20: Assessing the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

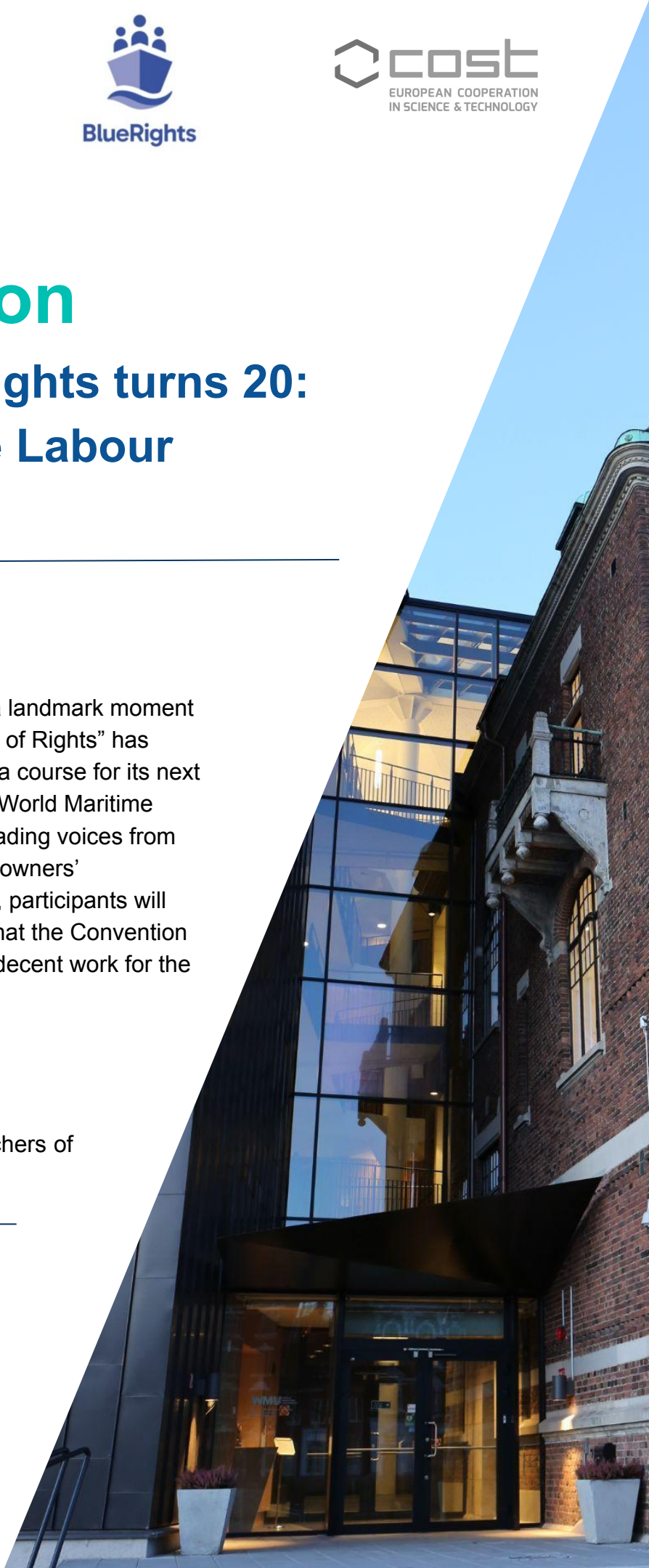
Information

The 20th anniversary of the MLC, 2006 presents a landmark moment to take stock: to celebrate what the “Seafarers’ Bill of Rights” has achieved, to confront what it has not, and to chart a course for its next chapter. This high-level round table, organised by World Maritime University (WMU) and BlueRights, will convene leading voices from international organisations, seafarers’ unions, shipowners’ associations, civil society and academia. Together, participants will identify concrete, actionable pathways to ensure that the Convention remains a living, effective instrument for securing decent work for the world’s seafarers in the decades ahead.

Target Audience

The event is open to faculty, students and researchers of the World Maritime University.

15 October 2026
Malmö, Sweden



Panel Discussion - The Seafarers' Bill of Rights turns 20: Assessing the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

Background

The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), adopted on 23 February 2006, consolidated more than 65 ILO maritime labour instruments into a single framework and is often described as the “fourth pillar” of international maritime regulation, alongside SOLAS, MARPOL and STCW. It establishes minimum global standards for seafarers’ working and living conditions across five areas: minimum requirements for work at sea, conditions of employment, accommodation and recreational facilities including food and catering, health protection and medical care, and compliance and enforcement. Over two decades, its certification and inspection regime has become central to promoting compliance, improving welfare on board and supporting port State control in addressing substandard shipping.

At the same time, persistent challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation, including enforcement gaps, flags of convenience, uneven inspection practices and varying levels of protection in national legislation, while new pressures such as technological change, decarbonisation and geopolitical tensions are reshaping maritime work. Marking the 20th anniversary of the MLC, 2006 offers a timely opportunity to reflect on its negotiation history, achievements and limitations, and to consider how the “Seafarers’ Bill of Rights” can be strengthened to better respond to contemporary and future challenges. This panel discussion, organised by WMU and BlueRights, will bring together key stakeholders from international organisations, seafarers’ unions, shipowners’ associations, civil society and academia to discuss concrete avenues for ensuring that the Convention remains a living, effective instrument for securing decent work for seafarers in the decades ahead.

Expected Outcome

The round table discussions will be documented and published as an open-access proceedings volume, providing a lasting reference for scholars, practitioners and policy-makers working on the future of maritime labour governance.

Panel Discussion - The Seafarers' Bill of Rights turns 20: Assessing the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

Tentative Schedule

Room: Sasakawa Auditorium

13:00 – 14:00	Registration
14:00 – 14:15	Opening remarks: WMU President
14:15 – 15:30	Panel Discussion
Session 1	Making History - Negotiating the MLC, 2006
Session 2	Promise vs. Practice - Implementation gaps and ongoing challenges
Session 3	Charting the Course Ahead - Strengthening the Convention for the future
15:30 – 16:00	Q&A