

Lloyd's List

Class societies wait in line as IACS admits Indian Register

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- by [Richard Meade](#)

Council to consider Polish Register's application next as new member joins elite club

THE Indian Register of Shipping has been accepted as the first new member of the International Association of Classification Societies since the introduction of new membership rules introduced last year in the wake of a European Commission competition investigation.

The expansion marks the first successful attempt by an IACS outsider to join the elite class body whose current 10 members collectively class over 90% of the world fleet.

Several other class societies are also hoping to join the club but the strict membership criteria being applied has so far prevented any other applicants from joining their Indian counterparts.

The Polish Register of Shipping stands next in line for consideration by the IACS Council, and Lloyd's List understands that less formal approaches have already been made by Croatian and Taiwanese registers. A handful of other class organisations including the Hellenic Register of Shipping are also understood to be considering making an application.

Industry insiders familiar with the rigorous application requirements, however have raised doubts that any of them will meet the standards in the near future.

The IRS's long association with IACS as an associate member of the group prior to 2009, meant that it had long been considered a likely candidate for full membership and had effectively already met around 70% of the criteria before they applied. The IACS Council finally accepted them as full members at a meeting being held this week in Hamburg following a lengthy accreditation process.

"We are very pleased that IRS has satisfied our criteria and we are fully satisfied that they are now equipped to be full members of IACS," IACS secretary-general Derek Hodgson told Lloyd's List.



Dr Hermann Klein, IACS chairman (right), welcomes Capt J.C. Anand, chairman of IRS, to IACS.

The fate of the Polish Register of Shipping's application, however, remains less clear cut and is yet to even be acknowledged publically by IACS.

At present the only outstanding criteria the PRS has failed to meet relates to its lack of a Quality System Certification Scheme certificate, an internally developed and audited scheme.

As an IACS outsider PRS argue the system was previously inaccessible and they are now in the process of seeking accreditation, but according to PRS it remains uncertain whether this process can be completed this year. If that process is pushed in 2011 they could face further delays thanks to new accreditation criteria that may require them to restart the process from the beginning with an external independent accreditation body.

Brussels closed its 22-month antitrust investigation into IACS membership last year after IACS agreed to a series of legally binding commitments as part of the case settlement which included an opening up of its membership rules.

The clear intention from IACS members since the investigation close has been to avoid creating a two tiered body in terms of standards.

IACS insiders argue that the new membership criteria that IRS have just met make it very clear that there is one set of objective criteria that apply to all members and they are necessarily high.

The opinion from within the existing IACS members is that some of those currently vying for IACS membership "are going to find it is a very steep hill they have to climb".

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