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LEGAL OPINION

Exploiter and owner liability

A seafarer was contracted to serve onboard a coastal ferry; dispute having arisen as to his wages due, he filed a lawsuit against both the owner of the vessel and the exploiter of same.

The Court found that the exploiter of the vessel is liable in full towards the seafarer and is also liable for acts or omissions of the master, whom the exploited appoints and is considered as the latter's servant.

The owner has no contractual relationship with the seafarer. By virtue of law provision, however, owner is liable in rem, and up to the value of the vessel.

Piraeus One-membered Court of Appeal Judgment no 31/2025, Judge: K. Lekkou, attorneys at law: E. Papantonopoulou, A. Kontosea, NOMOS legal platform.

NOTE: The distinction of the notions of owner, shipowner, exploiter of a vessel is crucial, as it defines which tasks are performed by whom, and also extent of liability. The notion of shipowner encompasses both ownership and exploitation of the vessel. Where the owner delegates operation and employment of the vessel to a third party, the latter exploits the vessel and is answerable on anything related to her operation.

*The legal column was written by Manolis Eglezos, Attorney at law,
Manolis Eglezos & Associates Law Firm, Attorneys at Law and Consultants*



132 Syngrou Avenue, 117 45 Athens, Greece

Tel: +30 210 9214.205 • E-mail: natvas@otenet.gr – sbacoula@otenet.gr • Website: www.newsfront.gr

Editorial team: Panagiotis Nikolakopoulos, Evangelos Tsouris • Subscriptions: Sophia Bacoula

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