

'Italian ships are changing flag' warns shipowners' group

Other European flags guarantee simple bureaucracy - Assarmatori



(ANSA) - ROME, JUN 20 - A growing number of ships under Italian ownership are changing flag for bureaucratic reasons, shipowners' association Assarmatori said on Tuesday.

President Stefano Messina said the percentage of ships under Italian ownership but flying a foreign flag has risen from 36.43% in 2021 to the current 40.83%, citing data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) referring to larger ships of 1000 gt and above.

"The decision to register ships abroad does not favour flags of convenience but European flags, such as Malta, Cyprus, Finland and Portugal, which guarantee a simple bureaucracy" that "in full compliance with the countless international rules governing our sector, is attuned to solving the problems that shipping places before us every day", added Messina.

So "it is not just a question of costs or taxation", he went on.

"Lowering the Italian flag means lowering an important part of the Italian identity in the world, as well as weakening our negotiating power in international contexts. However, there is no doubt that the protection of the flag cannot be entrusted only to the resilience of Italian shipowners," concluded the Assarmatori president. (ANSA).