



Improving seafarer vaccination rate, suggests Neptune Indicator, but challenges in repatriating and sourcing crew still remain

The Crew Change Indicator points to a small improvement of the situation and a significant increase in vaccination rates, nonetheless many of the challenges the industry has been facing in repatriating and sourcing crew still remain.

Copenhagen, 1 October 2021 – Travel restrictions, strict crew change requirements, and national lockdowns are preventing seafarers from going back home and have accentuated continuing seafarer shortages, ship managers report. Yet, a positive trend of stabilization first reported in August is also shown in the October Indicator, which reports further improvement of the situation. The latest Indicator shows that the number of seafarers onboard vessels beyond the expiry of their contract has decreased from 8.9% to 7.9% in the last month.

Similarly, the number of seafarers onboard vessels for over 11 months has slightly decreased from 1.2% to 1.0%. The October Indicator also sheds encouraging light on seafarer vaccinations picking up pace. The percentage from the past month is up from 21.9% to 31.1% of vaccinated seafarers from the sample. This uptick in the number of vaccinated seafarers rose from 6.6 percentage points between August and September to 9.2 percentage points in the last month, suggesting that seafarers are gaining increasing access to vaccines. These numbers are still lagging behind the rates of many large shipowning nations, the European Union, or the US.

“It is encouraging to see the vaccination rate for seafarers going up and the number of seafarers onboard their vessels beyond the expiry of contracts is decreasing slightly. However, lockdowns, flight cancellations, and travel restrictions persist, thus posing continued challenges to crew changes globally,” **says Kasper Søgaard, Managing Director, Head of Institutional Strategy and Development, Global Maritime Forum**

Nevertheless, the crew change crisis is far from over as ship managers still report difficulties in securing vaccines and carrying out crew changes.

Continued lockdowns, strict crew change requirements, flight cancellations, and high infection rates still pose the same challenges in on- and off-boarding crew that the industry has been grappling with since the start of the pandemic. Ship managers also continue to report travel bans and restrictions for certain geographies, challenging crew supply from those countries. Issues were also cited with the approval of specific vaccines and of vaccines where both doses were received in different locations.

A shortage of crew was first reported last month and this arose again as a difficulty that the ship managers have faced. Due to continued lockdowns, seafarer academies have been closed or operating remotely which has delayed the training of seafarers and lockdowns and travel bans have also impacted crew supply.

The Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator builds on aggregated data from 10 leading ship managers: Anglo-Eastern, Bernhard Schulte, Columbia Shipmanagement, Fleet Management (FLEET), OSM, Synergy Marine, Thome, V.Group, Wallem, and Wilhelmsen Ship Management, which collectively have about 90,000 seafarers currently onboard.

The Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator is published once a month and builds on aggregated data provided by the ship managers to the Global Maritime Forum. The data is used to calculate a weighted average of the percentage of seafarers who have been onboard vessels beyond the expiry of their contract of employment, a weighted average of the percentage of seafarers who have been onboard vessels for over 11 months, and a weighted average of the percentage of seafarers who have been vaccinated. As top ship managers are making significant efforts – and are often better placed – in facilitating crew changes, the Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator cannot be used directly to calculate the full numbers of seafarers impacted by the crew change crisis. Likewise, the calculated percentage of seafarers who have been vaccinated is likely to overestimate the actual proportion of vaccinated seafarers.

The October Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator can be found [here](#).

For further information: Interim Head of Communications, Sofie Rud at rud@globalmaritimeforum.org or +45 2810 2332.

About the Global Maritime Forum

The Global Maritime Forum is an international not-for-profit organization committed to shaping the future of global seaborne trade to increase sustainable long-term economic development and human wellbeing.