



Crew change difficulties remain strong despite improving seafarer vaccination rates, points Neptune Indicator

The crew change Indicator points to a small improvement of the situation and a significant increase in vaccination rates; nonetheless, the industry still faces many challenges in repatriating and sourcing crew.

Copenhagen, 1 November 2021 – New national lockdowns, an increase in flight cancellations, travel restrictions, and increasingly strict crew change requirements, especially in Asia, are preventing seafarers from going back home after completing their contracts. This is despite a strong increase in vaccine rates during the last month, ship managers report.

The latest Indicator shows that the number of seafarers onboard vessels beyond the expiry of their contract has decreased to 7.1% from 7.9% in the previous month, whilst the number of seafarers onboard vessels for over 11 months has remained the same, at 1.0%. The most positive trend reported by the November Indicator is the 9.9% increase in seafarer vaccinations, from 31% in October to 41% in November. Despite limited access to vaccines in large seafaring nations such as the Philippines, the number of ports that now provide vaccines to international seafarers have helped them gain access to vaccines outside their home countries.

Yet challenges remain with governments demanding seafarers be vaccinated with particular vaccines to ensure crew changes. This has resulted in seafarers ending up being over-vaccinated with different vaccines.

“It is positive to see the numbers are slowly improving and there has been good progress with seafarer vaccinations. Nevertheless, the numbers hide the persistent difficulties of global crew changes in repatriating crew and onboarding seafarers, which is likely to continue. We must keep on working together to ensure the wellbeing of seafarers, the implementation of global vaccine standards, and the integrity of supply chains” says **Kasper Søgaard, Managing Director, Head of Institutional Strategy and Development, Global Maritime Forum.**

Furthermore, ship managers also report how some countries are placing still stricter crew change requirements, which has resulted in cancellations or delays on repatriating or onboarding seafarers. Some ship managers also report how the onboarding and repatriation of Chinese seafarers is becoming increasingly difficult, due to stricter Chinese Government isolation requirements on seafarers post sign off and prior to repatriation. This is in addition to new lockdowns, flight cancellations, and high infection rates worldwide, which continue to pose challenges when on- and offboarding.

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](#).

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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.