



## **Further increase in March Crew Change Indicator as the impacts of Omicron are being felt. Good progress in vaccine rates despite challenges**

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*The March Crew Change Indicator confirms increasing trends since January in percentage of seafarers onboard vessels beyond contract expiry, as the industry is feeling the full effects of the Omicron wave.*

**Copenhagen, 1 March 2022** – The latest Indicator shows that the number of seafarers onboard vessels beyond the expiry of their contract has increased from 4.2% from 5% in the last month, while the number of seafarers onboard vessels for over 11 months has remained stable at 0.4%. The number of seafarers onboard beyond the expiry of their contracts is the highest number since the December 2021 Indicator. The Neptune Indicator also reports a 6-percentage point increase in seafarer vaccines, from 66.8% in February to 72.8% in March, as seafarers are increasingly gaining access to first and second shots. However, there are calls for increased access to booster shots for seafarers.

With increased numbers of seafarers onboard beyond contract expiry, ship managers cite challenges to crew changes. The effects of the Omicron wave are causing a high number of infections among crew members onboard vessels as well as among crew members who are due to join vessels. This has caused the postponement of many crew changes. Additionally, crew change and entry restrictions remain in place in many countries. Crew changes in China and repatriation of Chinese seafarers are especially hard as the country has tight restrictions in place. This has led to increased costs, operational disturbance, and delays as owners try to accommodate crew changes.

There are, however, some positive reports of eased restrictions. The Philippines have removed the quarantine rule for inbound travelers, but still require PCR-testing. Australia, whose borders have remained tightly shut throughout the pandemic, has announced it will open borders and this is expected to ease crew changes in the region.

Simultaneously, seafarer vaccination rates are still increasing at an encouraging pace. The seafarer vaccination rate is at 72.8%, which is similar or above to the percentage of some large North American, Asian, and European shipping nations. Despite this overall good progress that ship managers note, they also highlight some continuous challenges. Vaccine hesitancy remains strong in certain geographies. Additionally, an increase in breakthrough infections among crew has caused some seafarers to raise questions on vaccine effectiveness. Practical challenges also remain in ensuring seafarers' access to vaccines. Short and overnight port stays make it hard to find the time for seafarers to benefit from vaccine opportunities while on land, and some countries lack flexibility in crew change protocols to allow for seafarers to be vaccinated.

*“The March Indicator confirms the feared effects of Omicron: the number of seafarers onboard beyond the expiry of contracts continued to increase and ship managers described several challenges to carrying out crew changes. The good progress on seafarer vaccines however sheds some positive light, but this must not blind us from focusing on carrying out safe and timely crew changes,”* says **Kasper Sogaard, Managing Director, Head of Institutional Strategy and Development, Global Maritime Forum.**

The Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator builds on aggregated data from leading ship managers: Anglo-Eastern, Bernhard Schulte, Columbia Shipmanagement, Fleet Management (FLEET), OSM, Synergy Marine, Thome, V.Group and Wallem 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 March Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator** can be found [here](#).

**For further information:** Interim Head of Communications, Sofie Rud at [rud@globalmaritimeforum.org](mailto:rud@globalmaritimeforum.org) or +45 2810 2332.

## **About the Global Maritime Forum**

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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.