



## **Increase in February Crew Change Indicator numbers confirms concerns over the impact of Omicron variant. Vaccine challenges remain**

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*For the first time since September 2021, the February Crew Change Indicator suggests there has been a deterioration of the situation. However, the increase in the February numbers is modest.*

**Copenhagen, 1 February 2022** – The latest Indicator shows that the number of seafarers onboard vessels beyond the expiry of their contract has increased from 3.7% from 4.2% in the last month, while the number of seafarers onboard vessels for over 11 months has remained stable at 0.4%. Despite the increase, these remain the second lowest numbers recorded by the Neptune Declaration Crew change Indicator since it was first published in May 2021. The Neptune Indicator also reports a 7 percentage point increase in seafarer vaccinations, from 59.8% in January to 66.8% in February, as seafarers are increasingly gaining access to first and second vaccine shots.

Ship managers describe new challenges to crew changes that confirm the worsening crew change trend. Due to the fresh wave of omicron infections in several major crewing nations, large numbers of seafarers are falling ill, leading to the postponement of crew changes. This has also led to some reported crew shortages. Additionally, local authorities have again tightened restrictions in the face of increased positive cases, which has further complicated crew changes. Flight cancellations have also delayed the repatriation of seafarers, with severe challenges being noted in China. There are however some positive news from Australia, where some ports have eased quarantine requirements, which has increased the ease and flexibility of crew changes in the region.

Meanwhile, seafarer vaccination rates are increasing, and are reported at 66.8% in February. Despite this positive progress, ship managers still report vaccine hesitancy among some seafarers. There are also issues related to access for booster doses for seafarers as several countries are changing travel rules to require a booster or vaccine certificate that is no older than a specific period. Additionally, difficulties with recognition of vaccines continue as many countries only accept a subset of WHO-approved vaccines for travelling. Finally, there are reports that some shipowners and charterers require vessels to be manned with only vaccinated crew, which disadvantages crew from areas where access to vaccines remains limited.

*“Though the observed increase in the number of seafarers onboard beyond the expiry of their contracts does not confirm our worst fears over the impact of omicron, reports by ship managers describe continued challenges in carrying out crew changes. We must work together to guarantee the health of our seafarers and make sure we do not slide into a situation of renewed high restrictions on crew changes,”* says **Kasper Søgaard, 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 February Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator** can be found [here](#).

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## **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.