

# Confederation of European ShipsMasters' Association

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On 13 December 2021

To Mrs Adina VALEAN  
EU Commissioner for Transport

To Mr Henrik HOLOLEI – Mr Matthew BALDWIN  
Mrs Magda KOPCZYNSKA – Mr Sandro SANTAMATO  
Mrs Fotini IOANNIDOU – Mrs Daniela ROSCA  
DG MOVE

to Mrs Maja MARKKOVIC KOSTELAC  
EMSA Executive Director

Subject : Covid-19 – Seafarers face the Omicron variant

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Faced with the emergence of the Omicron variant, many states have barricaded themselves in a reflex that has unfortunately become commonplace, against the advice of the WHO.

The first victims of these border closures will once again be the seafarers. Indeed, some countries which issued exemptions from quarantine to vaccinated seafarers have canceled them. Many countries (including European countries unilaterally) have closed their borders and suspended air links with Southern Africa, which will de facto increase the difficulties of crew relief.

Seafarers have been suffering for almost two years. They continue to run the economy by putting their health at risk (CESMA reminds you that the majority of seafarers around the world have yet not had access to the vaccine).

They deserve a little more consideration: that they finally be given access to vaccines and that the states follow the recommendations of the WHO: that the countries do not close borders in a reckless manner and that they recognize the vaccines validated by the WHO (indeed many countries only recognize their own vaccine, which do not facilitate the circulation of vaccinated seafarers).

As examples Russia (one of the biggest purveyors of seafarers) only recognizes their Sputnik V vaccine. South Korea also makes differences in treatment between people vaccinated in South Korea and those vaccinated elsewhere, even for those vaccinated with Pfizer vaccine which they use to vaccinate nationals. The conditions of quarantine for seafarers arriving in South Korea are worst than prisoners. No box spring, no table, no chair, even no hot water in the shower (actually it is 2degC outside) and no towels. China is enforcing quarantines of up to 3 weeks for people who have been vaccinated. Singapore has a list of approved covid tests and does not accept others which had already put a strain on reliefs (of seafarers vaccinated with Pfizer).

Also, South Korea government already announced entry refusal for a total of eleven nations. The foreigners with a short term visa to embark a vessel coming from these nations cannot enter in South Korea since several days. (South Africa / Botswana / Namibia / Lesotho / Eswatini / Mozambique / Malawi / Nigeria / Ghana & Zambia).

The seafarers being dispersed all around the world it is always difficult to obtain figures but it is certain that too many of them are still waiting to disembark or to embark, that too many of them are in psychological distress and that the appearance of the new variant will make matters even worse.

All above mentioned increases the stress on board ships. It makes life of seafarers and especially captains more difficult and vulnerable to human errors. CESMA strongly recommends and urges EU institutions to take appropriate steps to keep EU borders open to seamen for crew changes and shore leaves and to raise the matter on international level.

Please let's not forget them.

Respectfull regards

Capt ; D. DIMITROV  
CESMA President

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