



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

Directorate D - Waterborne
The Director

Brussels
MOVE.DDG2.D.2/JB

Capt. Hubert Ardillon
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Subject: Facilitating Crew Changes to keep World Trade moving throughout the Covid-19 Crisis

Dear Captain Ardillon,

I would like to thank you for your letter dated 20th of March 2020. I fully share all the concerns you have expressed in your letter. The European Commission is aware of the essential role of the shipping sector and its ongoing efforts to maintain uninterrupted cargo flows and maritime transport operations as much as possible in the current extraordinary circumstances.

The spreading of the COVID-19 has indeed led many countries to impose travelling restrictions. While some ports started restricting passenger arrivals, EU ports remain open for transport of cargo. Keeping cargo flow running is important for secure supply chains and vital for public health and the economy. The European Union is aware of the need to strike a balance between minimizing the contamination risk by restricting the intra-EU as well as outside non-essential EU travels while keeping the essential flows.

On 17th of March, the European Council endorsed Guidelines on border management. According to those guidelines, temporary travel restriction should apply to all non-essential travel from third countries to the EU+ area. This travel restriction includes several exceptions applying *inter alia* to:

- *Transport personnel engaged in haulage of goods and other transport staff to the extent necessary;*

The temporary travel restriction should apply for 30 days. Any possible prolongation of this period should be assessed depending on further developments.

Any of the restrictions should not affect seafarers departing from the UE to reach their home countries outside the Schengen zone.

Even though the Commission guidelines encourage Member States to act in a harmonized way, some of them apply individual measures on travel restrictions including for access to maritime ports and ship crews' changes. The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has established and is constantly updating a webpage with the inventory of the measures taken by Member States in that respect. <http://emsa.europa.eu/news-a-press-centre/covid19.html>

To facilitate a harmonized approach to transport operations and to avoid as much as possible any difficulties in the movement of transport workers, the European Commission adopted and published on 23rd of March a Communication on Green Lanes.

This communication recommend to Member States to take any action in order to “*...ensure the free movement within the EU of all workers involved in international transport in all transport modes, such as drivers, **seafarers**, pilots, crew, wagon inspectors, maintenance workers, etc.*” Members States should as well facilitate the repatriation of seafarers from both UE and non-EU countries.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely together with national maritime administrations and stakeholders and stand ready to take further action to facilitate the best possible solutions for continued maritime operations.

Yours sincerely,

e-signed
Magda Kopczynska

Copy: Commissioner A. Vălean
Messrs. H. Hololei, M. Baldwin, Mmes. S. Prout, B. Sellier, D. Rosca,
Mr. S. Santamato, Mrs. M. Barbaro (DG MOVE)
Mrs. M. Markovčić Kostelac (EMSA)