



Day of the Seafarer: Commissioner Vălean supports the rights of seafarers and their vital role

Brussels, 25 June 2020

On 25 June, the Day of the Seafarer, Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** issued a statement. She reiterates the need for the shipping industry to increase the number of crew changes and for States to enable seafarer repatriations around the world, while facilitating access to visas for new crews.

"This year's Day of the Seafarer comes at a difficult time for them. Fewer transport connections and restricted mobility have kept tens of thousands of seafarers on board ships way beyond their normal contracts, with serious effects on their well-being, and potential risks for the safe operation of ships.

Facilitating crew changes is a key priority for us. Seafarers are crucial in supplying us with food, fuel and medical equipment, and keeping our economy running.

In recognition of this, we declared seafarers essential workers at the onset of the pandemic. We put forward recommendations for ensuring safe and timely crew changes. Seafarers are exempt from the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU.

Following these recommendations, the situation has constantly improved in Europe.

But as more and more contracts come to an end, I call on Member States to facilitate access to visas so that seafarers can take their posts, relieving their colleagues who have been in service for months already.

However, given the truly global nature of the sector, we need close international cooperation to find a solution to this building crisis. We have already addressed the relevant UN agencies, and are reaching out to major shipping nations to ensure that seafarers can safely reach their ships or return home. I welcome the efforts already undertaken by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO), as well as initiatives by the maritime and aviation industries to find solutions for transporting crews, and I count on continuous support from the EU Member States to facilitate crew changes across their territories and on their vessels.

I am also inviting the social partners to join me for a discussion on lessons from the current crisis and solutions for the future. Seafarers' work is indispensable to the global trade flow.

I call upon all countries worldwide to ensure that those who keep our families fed and our companies working can go back home or embark on ships smoothly."

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