

The Danish government ensures that stranded sailors can come ashore

Many Danish seafarers are currently stranded on ships all over the world, because the COVID-19 pandemic prevents them from making crew changes. After discussions with the industry, the government is therefore now presenting a solution so that seafarers can come ashore safely.

200,000 sailors worldwide are stranded on ships and are unable to return home to their families due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sailors usually sail on the ships for a longer period and then change with another crew so that they can come home to the family while the ship sails on. But due to the pandemic, it has not been possible to change crew as usual.

It is also a problem on board the Danish shipping companies' ships, where several thousand seafarers have had their enlistment extended. Therefore, the government in collaboration with the industry has set up a task force, which has now come up with a safe solution so that there can be a change of crew.

"While many Danes have used the corona crisis to be together with the family, a large number of Danish sailors have had to do without family and friends for much longer than usual. It is already hard to be away from the family for a long time. But it is extra hard when it is happening in the middle of a pandemic, and it ultimately risks compromising the working environment and safety at sea. That is why I believe that we, as one of the world's largest maritime nations, are obliged to act. I am pleased that we have now found a solution together with the industry, which will ensure that seafarers can once again get solid ground under their feet", says the Minister of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, Simon Kollerup.

"I would like to acknowledge that the government has quickly, across ministries, ensured that Denmark takes the lead and shows that it is possible to change the ships' crews in a responsible manner. Denmark is now taking an active role in alleviating the current unfortunate situation of thousands of sailors in the world. Being the world's fifth largest maritime nation comes with great responsibility - the government has also lived up to that responsibility in this situation", says Jacob Meldgaard, Chairman of Danish Shipping.

"We are really happy that a solution has now been found. Many sailors have been away from their families and friends for far too long, and to that extent they have deserved to return home safely. We have had a really good dialogue with the government and the Minister of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs regarding this problem. It is good that Denmark is taking steps to help solve this major problem for seafarers. We hope that other countries will take similar steps", says Claus Jensen, Chairman of the Danish Metalworkers' Union.

"It is time for the countries of the world to recognize the great efforts of seafarers to secure the global supply chains even in times such as this pandemic! Therefore, we are very pleased that we in Denmark have jointly found a model where we can ensure that crew change can happen in a safe manner and we would like other countries to be inspired to find similar solutions", says chairman Lars Have Hansen, the Danish Engineers' Association.

Specifically, the new scheme ensures that seafarers who need it can obtain a visa to enter or

leave Denmark under controlled conditions, so that they can either get off or get on ships at home or in neighboring countries.

This is done by applying the visa rules in a way that solves the many practical challenges that COVID-19 has created. In addition, the industry itself will take the necessary precautions to minimize the risk of infection for seafarers and Danish society. The seafarers, for example, will be isolated in hotels. Special departments will also be set up for them at the airports so that they do not come into contact with others. It will also be possible for the foreign seafarers to be tested for COVID-19 in Denmark.

Denmark will be ready to receive the seafarers under the temporary scheme within 14 days valid from July 20.

Changing ship crews is a problem worldwide, and at an international high-level meeting on the subject on July 9, Denmark and 12 other governments from the world's largest maritime nations agreed on a joint declaration calling for immediate action to resolve the problems. Therefore, further work is being done to ensure that as many countries as possible, like Denmark, take active steps to promote the implementation of crew changes in Europe and the rest of the world.