



**Ylva Johansson**  
Commissioner for Home Affairs  
**Adina Vălean**  
Commissioner for Transport  
**Nicolas Schmit**  
Commissioner for Jobs and Social  
Rights

Brussels, 08 June 2022

Dear Commissioner Johansson,  
Dear Commissioner Vălean,  
Dear Commissioner Schmit.

**Re: Access to work for Ukrainian seafarers**

The war in Ukraine is having a significant impact upon the safety and mobility of seafarers and their families' lives. Many of Ukrainian citizens are currently facing uncertainty about their future, jobs and accommodation for themselves and their families. In addition to the safety issues, due to the introduction and further extension of martial law and general mobilization in Ukraine, **thousands of Ukrainian seafarers are still unable to leave the territory of Ukraine and forced to remain in Ukraine being deprived of an opportunity to join vessels and continue their active maritime career.**

Taking into consideration that:

- Ukraine is the fifth largest labour providing country in the maritime world and according to statistics, Ukrainian seafarers are the second largest nationality among non-EU seafarers working on EU vessels.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Transport Workers' Federation, which took place in Budapest from 24 to 27 May 2022, underlines that the role of Ukrainian seafarers is critical to ensure the stability of international supply chains, including transportation of goods necessary both for the EU and Ukrainian economy.
- As noted by the International Maritime Organization, the ongoing armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine presents a serious and immediate threat





to the safety and security of crews and vessels operating in the region<sup>1</sup>.

- The IMO Extraordinary Council Session (C/ES.35) addressed the impacts on shipping and seafarers of the situation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The Council noted that, taking into account the key worker status of seafarers, States involved should **strongly consider exempting their seafarers from mandatory military service**<sup>2</sup>.
- **Hundreds of crew changes were and are currently disrupted all over the world. The extension of the ban on crossing the border for Ukrainian seafarers from the age of 18 to 60 for another 30-45 days will have critical consequences for the stability of international and European shipping.**

Given the above, the ETF strongly believes that Ukrainian seafarers should be guaranteed the right to continue their active career at sea. Under the current circumstances, **the ETF calls on the European Commission to send a request to the Government of Ukraine asking them to consider granting seafarers the right to cross the Ukrainian border to join vessels in order to ensure the stability of international and European maritime supply chains.**

The ETF stands at disposal to further explain the practical difficulties and the **critical consequences for the stability of international and European shipping** and is committed to assist the European Commission to find urgent solutions.

Sincerely,

Livia Spera  
ETF General Secretary

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<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/MaritimeSecurityandSafetyintheBlackSeaandSeaofAzov.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/pages/ECSStatement.aspx>

