

## Denmark as a hub for crew changes

The temporary opportunity created by the Danish government to rescue seafarers left stranded by COVID-19 is now beginning to take shape, and Danish Shipping are now able to comment a little more specifically on what it is about, how it can be used, and by whom. Work continues on making the scheme more flexible and workflows smoother, which is why changes to the process may occur going forward.

First and foremost, it opens the way for seafarers who need a visa, to obtain a visa to enter or leave Denmark under controlled conditions, to either disembark or embark at home or in other countries. In practice, this is done by issuing 'border visas' to seafarers at Copenhagen Airport who, via or after a stay in Copenhagen, then travel onwards to sign on in another Schengen country, not previously possible. Furthermore, particularly where entry is by charter flight, it is possible to keep seafarers separate from other passengers and minimise the risk of infection, and there will be a chance to have a new COVID-19 test before the journey continues.

The scheme is basically reserved for Danish shipping companies, i.e. shipping companies with ships under the Danish flag, or which operate ships under other flags from their base in Denmark. It is assumed that various practical and formal tasks will be handled by the shipping company's agent or by the company itself. These tasks will therefore only be referred to sporadically, or not at all, below. The scheme, which has applied since 4 August until 15 October 2020, is still in its infancy, and adjustments can be expected as experience is gained and/or the situation changes.

### 1. Travelling to and from, or via Denmark:

#### Seafarers from visa-free countries

May in principle travel freely in and out of Denmark while observing the recommendations of the Danish health authorities. The shipping company should advise them of such recommendations in advance.

#### Seafarers from countries where visas are required

Normally a **standard Schengen visa** should be applied for through the foreign representation in the seafarer's home country (the country where signing on takes place). However, seafarers from countries where a visa is required, who travel via Denmark to travel to sign on in another Schengen country, can currently also apply for an ordinary visa through their home country's Danish foreign representation.

Apart from the fact that ordinary visas should still be the main rule, this is also the most optimal solution, especially if the seafarer has to sign on again later in Schengen. Various extraordinary measures have been initiated so that applying for an ordinary visa at the Danish foreign representation in the home country has been made more flexible. The same applies to the visa process through their external partner, VFS Global, which runs all the Danish visa application centres globally. VFS allows

seafarers to apply directly to the VFS centre in Manila (which is the normal procedure), and also offers a so-called mobile solution, whereby they can go out to quarantine hotels (as permitted by local authorities) with a biometrics suitcase, record biometrics and accept visa applications, passports and documents. In addition, VFS offers a postal application process for seafarers who have recorded their biometrics within the last 59 months and can therefore submit their application.

Shipping companies interested in using these solutions with VFS can contact them directly for more information about fees etc.

Seafarers from countries subject to a visa requirement who cannot obtain a visa in their home country, can apply for a so-called **visa at the border** upon arrival at Copenhagen Airport. With such a visa, the seafarer will initially be able to stay in Denmark for up to 15 days, or travel to another Schengen country to board their ship.

Border visas cannot be issued to seafarers from countries where prior consultation is required. An overview of such countries can be found here [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/docs/prior\\_consultation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/docs/prior_consultation_en.pdf).

It should be noted that countries such as The Philippines and India do not appear in the overview, while countries such as Russia and Belarus do, but with the note that consultation should only be conducted for persons with a specific type of passport.

There is both a weekly and a daily capacity limit on how many 'visas at the border' can be issued. Members who need to be issued with such visas must notify Danish Shipping via Nem-registration on the website, no later than Tuesday 12 o'clock noon of the week before the journey commences. Upon registration, information is required about numbers, date of arrival, shipping company, and contact person/agent. If there is capacity on the day of arrival, Danish Shipping can issue a visa commitment as a Nemtilmeld confirmation.

Link to Nemtilmeld

Week 36: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/183/>

Week 37: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/184/>

Week 38: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/185/>

Week 39: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/186/>

Week 40: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/187/>

Week 41: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/188/>

Week 42: <https://danishshipping.nemtilmeld.dk/189/>

On the basis of the visa commitment, the agent or the shipping company can start processing the case, which may result in an 'OK to board' being issued to the seafarer. Possession of this will usually give seafarers from countries where visas are required the opportunity to check in on a flight to Copenhagen, without possessing the necessary visas.

Notification to Danish Shipping does not exempt or replace the standard notification to the police,

which means that all documentation necessary for the visa processing must be sent to the Danish Police no later than five days before arrival. In addition, the following documents must be completed in advance and carried by the individual seafarer:

- 1) The application form for a Schengen visa (with the applicant's signature can be found at [www.nyidanmark.dk](http://www.nyidanmark.dk))
- 2) Guarantee letter  
The guarantee letter must be signed by the shipping company or their agent and contain:
  - a. The name of the ship the applicant will sign on and date of signing on and port
  - b. Why the applicant cannot apply for a visa in their home country or country of residence
  - c. Confirmation of a financial guarantee from the shipping company/ shipbroker
  - d. Confirmation that the shipping company/shipbroker will pay for the journey home if necessary
  - e. Confirmation that the shipping company/shipbroker will pay for travel health insurance which also covers COVID-19
  - f. Contact person (whom we can contact if necessary when processing cases at Copenhagen Airport)
- 3) Copy of passport
- 4) Seafarer's log and copy of seafarer's log
- 5) Copy of employment contract

#### *The letter of guarantee*

Shipping companies can issue a single guarantee letter for crew members signing on for a named ship. Shipping companies must also enclose a list for each ship, with an overview of the crew members covered by the guarantee. The list should contain the first and last name, and passport number per crew member. The list will be archived in accordance with current GDPR regulations. Furthermore, a fee of DKK 600 is payable for issuing a visa at the border. Danish Shipping pays the fee for seafarers who travel with a visa commitment, and the fee is subsequently charged to the contact person listed on Nemtilmeld.

If a member wants to bring in a large number of seafarers via a charter flight, involving issuing a number of 'visas at the border', this must be done in coordination with Danish Shipping.

## **2. Upon arrival at a Danish airport**

Upon arrival by specially chartered aircraft, travellers will be met by guides who will allocate the next stage of the journey for the individual seafarer, depending on if the seafarer has a visa or needs to obtain a visa, is going directly to the next destination, or will stay at a hotel.

Upon arrival by scheduled flights, travellers with visas, or who are not required to have a visa, will, as usual, be able to use regular exits. If three or more seafarers needing visas arrive on the same day, they will be referred and transported to a special area at the airport where the visa process will occur. Seafarers arriving in groups (over three) must be guided through the airport by staff from the shipping company (approved to work at the airport) or by one of the airport staff. If the company wishes to use CPH's guides, this must be agreed

separately with Copenhagen Airport as soon as possible, once the arrival time is known.

Seafarers who are to go through the visa process must bring an extra face mask that can be used after biometric information has been recorded.

Some waiting time must be expected when applying for a visa at the airport. On days when many seafarers arrive needing visas, this can be significant, as case processing time per visa is estimated at 45 minutes. Seafarers will be assigned special waiting areas, with access to rest facilities, meals, washrooms etc. as needed.

Seafarers arriving by scheduled aircraft must travel in accordance with the safety guidelines of the shipping company to avoid infection. In the absence of such guidelines, reference is made to the IMO protocols. Where the guidelines recommend testing on arrival after a flight, special free access to this has been set up at the airport, but a certificate stating if you are positive or not cannot be issued, as the result will come by telephone. If a test is required where a certificate showing the result is subsequently issued, companies can contact the Medical Office, which will arrange for a referral to the test site. The test is free, but a fee of DKK 600 is made for referral and issuing a certificate.

Seafarers arriving by

- a scheduled flight and kept together with seafarers who have arrived by specially chartered aircraft, must follow the containment procedure stipulated for this situation, and follow the instructions.
- charter flight have a special screened collection point for luggage.

### **3. Waiting for onward travel**

After leaving the airport, seafarers who are not travelling onwards immediately are taken to the place where they are to be accommodated until their journey can continue.

### **4. Seafarers who are signing off**

The process for this is being developed.

### **5. CrewBridge**

A crew bridge has been established between Copenhagen and Manila and Mumbai respectively, using charter flights. There will be between 200 and 300 seafarers on each flight. After short or long stays in Copenhagen, seafarers will be sent to crew change destinations primarily Bremerhaven, Rotterdam and Algeciras, using smaller charter flights.

A shipping company has established a process that enables the air bridge to be offered to and used by other members of Danish Shipping. The entire journey, as well as the prior mandatory quarantine stay at designated locations, is assumed to take place in accordance with the safety guidelines laid down by the provider.