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The Netherlands launches vaccination programme for seafarers

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The Netherlands will launch a vaccination programme for seafarers from mid-June. All seafarers working on seagoing vessels flying the Dutch flag or managed from the Netherlands are eligible for this COVID-19 vaccination programme that will be coordinated by the Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR). Thanks to this programme, seafarers can safely continue their work on board seagoing vessels around the world.

Under the direction of the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, the previous months has seen an investigation into the extent seafarers could make use of the regular national vaccination strategy, or, given the special characteristics of this group, whether a separate approach is necessary. The outcome of this survey is that seafarers do indeed require a different approach. The plan of action to be taken will be a tailor-made programme managed by the KVNR. The programme has been established in close consultation with the Dutch government, the Dutch Association of Dredging Companies, the Dutch branch of the Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association and the trade union Nautilus International.

KVNR managing director Annet Koster: "As shipowners, we are grateful that the Dutch government recognises the need to vaccinate seafarers through a tailor-made programme and has given us the confidence to implement this valuable vaccination programme."

Nautilus International chairman Marcel van den Broek: "As an employee representative organisation, we have drawn attention to the specific problems of seafarers during the coronavirus pandemic. We are happy and grateful for this recognition."

Implementation

From mid-June, a total of approximately 49,000 J&J/Janssen vaccines will be made available in instalments, whereby one vaccination per seafarer will be sufficient. This is important because seafarers only spend a limited amount of time in the Netherlands, namely during shore leave or to travel home or to a ship. Because all seafarers are never in the Netherlands at the same time during one consecutive period, the vaccination programme will be spread over the coming months. In consultation with the participating parties and the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, the KVNR will play a central role in developing the logistics of the vaccination programme. Vaccination



will take place in a number of the country's larger ports and at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport.

The vaccines will be made available free of charge by the Dutch Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, while the costs of organising the logistics and the actual vaccination will be covered by private parties in the maritime sector. The fact that seafarers, regardless of their nationality, can be vaccinated allows shipping companies to comply with their duty of care.

This approach means that seafarers will be helped optimally. On a global scale – and since January 2020 – they have faced enormous challenges in carrying out their work. Seafarers could often not be relieved for months at a time. And seafarers have continued to suffer the consequences of international travel restrictions that have varied from country to country. “We must now move ahead of those problems. The risk of an infected ship is too great; after all, acute medical care is not immediately available at sea. Thanks to this vaccination programme, the continuity of the service provided by ships flying the Dutch flag or managed from the Netherlands can also be guaranteed. This is vital, given that no less than ninety percent of all goods are transported by sea,” concludes KVNR managing director Annet Koster.

###ENDS###

Note to editor

The Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR) represents its member shipowners based in the Netherlands. The KVNR focuses its activities on politics, government, the maritime cluster and Dutch society. The KVNR strives to ensure that Dutch shipowners can operate globally while navigating safely with clean ships operated by skilled crews.

▶ [Download a portrait photo of KVNR managing director Annet Koster](#)

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