



- Vaccination Task Force press release -

02 June 2021

## Vaccination of Belgian seafarers launched today

This morning, the vaccination against COVID-19 of Belgian seafarers started. The vaccinations take place in the port of Antwerp and will also start in the port of Zeebrugge within a few days. About 2,200 sailors will be vaccinated in the course of June. These are people who are often away from home for months or weeks at a time, and who are difficult to schedule into the regular campaign. Belgium is the first European country to vaccinate this group against the virus.

Dr. Rob Verbist is a port doctor and general practitioner at Mediport, and will be carrying out the vaccinations in Antwerp, together with his team: *"Seafarers aged 41 and above will receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, of which only one dose is required, which is very practical given their work situation. The younger ones will receive the Pfizer vaccine, according to the recently introduced age limit. These people have to come back in about five weeks for a second shot"*.

Wilfried Lemmens, Managing Director of the Royal Belgian Shipowners' Association (KBRV): *"We are pleased that the Belgian government will be vaccinating Belgian seafarers in the coming weeks. It is a token of appreciation towards our sailors and their families for the commitment, flexibility and perseverance they have shown over the past 15 months. It is also a guarantee that for the next few months they will be able to continue their challenging job in a safe manner and, as such, guarantee trade between the continents."*

Vincent Van Quickenborne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the North Sea: *"Seafarers are important to our economy. 90% of the things in our homes came to our country by sea ship. At the same time, seafarers spend long periods at sea in closed groups. Which is dangerous if there is a corona outbreak on board. With a vaccine, we offer our Belgian seafarers the security of working in special conditions. But also to be able to move safely and without problems to foreign ports. Belgium is the first country in Europe to vaccinate sailors. This way we can ensure the continuous operation of shipping."*

For more info, contact

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