

AIDE MEMOIRE: RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN FISHING CREW

Employment of Russian and Ukrainian crew

- Three New Zealand companies employ Russian and Ukrainian fishing crew to operate deepsea fishing vessels: ^{s9(2)(b)(ii)}
- Currently, 402 Russian passport holders and 67 Ukraine passport holders are working on New Zealand vessels. The majority come from Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.
- Russian and Ukrainian Crew operate the vessels on six-month terms. There are two crew changes per year. The next crew change is scheduled for April/May.
- The New Zealand companies work with Russian partners to recruit the crew.

Why New Zealand recruits from Russia and Ukraine

- Fisheries New Zealand and the New Zealand companies advise that they rely on Russian and Ukrainian crew because they cannot source the crew locally. They have also advised that they cannot source the crew from countries other than Russia and Ukraine in the short-term because the vessels are from Russia and require specific skills to operate.
- The conditions the vessels operate in require a high level of experience, competence and certification. Not having the right knowledge of the vessels' capabilities in the environment they operate in (e.g. Southern Ocean) would be hazardous to the safety of the crew and the vessel. Maritime New Zealand rules require a certain number of appropriately qualified crew to be onboard. Currently there are no available New Zealanders with the experience and qualifications.
- ^{s9(2)(b)(i)}

Impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine

- New Zealand's travel bans will have no effect because they only target specific individuals associated with threats to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They do not target Russian nationals as a whole.
- s6(a)

Given our sanctions only target individuals and entities associated with the aggression against Ukraine or that are economically or strategically relevant to Russia, it is unlikely that the New Zealand companies' Russian agents would be affected. There would need to be evidence of a direct link to aggression in Ukraine or that they are of significant economic value to Russia's economy for them to be captured in the sanctions.

- Russia could respond to New Zealand's sanctions with countermeasures and could look to target sectors of economic value to New Zealand. Officials consider it unlikely that Russia would prevent New Zealand hiring Russian crew – it would like target New Zealand exports to Russia first – but we cannot rule out the possibility.
- While Ukraine is prohibiting men aged 18-60 from leaving the country in most cases, officials are not aware of Ukrainian plans to prevent Ukrainian men leaving for overseas work. Remittances from Ukraine's overseas labour force are an important source of revenue for the country.
- s9(2)(c)
- If New Zealand cannot source a replacement crew in April/May, the New Zealand industry will want to extend visas for current crew. ^{s9(2)(b)(ii)}
- Extending visas will depend on the crew's willingness to stay, which is not a given, especially since Russian crew are struggling to send money home following Russia's removal from SWIFT. Immigration New Zealand would need to be satisfied that there are no welfare concerns in order to extend visas.

Next steps and mitigations

- Encourage the New Zealand industry to organise New Zealand visas for Russian crew as soon as possible, to mitigate the risk of Russian retaliation after our sanctions regime comes into effect in the coming weeks.
- MFAT will enquire whether Ukraine is still permitting expatriate workers to leave.
- Industry to continue contingency planning to hire all-Ukrainian crew if Russian crew are unavailable, or all-Russian crew if Ukrainians are unavailable.
- s9(2)(b)(ii)

Ukraine Task Force
MFAT
March 2022