

Dear Valued Stakeholders,

We are writing to clarify the requirements for **contract seafarers travelling to the United Kingdom**, particularly in the context of the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme, as we have been made aware of instances of travel being incorrectly refused.

Please note that the guidance below reflects current UK Border Force policy and aligns with published GOV.UK guidance:

Contract seafarers joining a ship in the UK

Non-visa national seafarers do not require an ETA when travelling to the UK to join a ship.

They should carry and be able to present:

- **A joining letter** from the shipping agent or vessel operator confirming:
 - that they are joining a named vessel; and
 - that the vessel will be in UK waters at or shortly after their arrival and will subsequently depart.
- **Where held, a compliant Seafarer's Identity Document (SID)** issued in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention.

Visa national seafarers do not require a visa to join a ship provided they carry and present both:

- a valid **joining letter**; and
- a **compliant ILO Seafarer's Identity Document**.

If a visa national seafarer **does not** hold a compliant ILO Seafarer's Identity Document, they must hold a visa in order to join a ship or work in the United Kingdom.

Please see the Seafarer section of [UK Visa Requirements](#) for a list of countries whose ILO-compliant seafarer's books (ILO 108 or 185) permit visa-national seafarers to travel on duty without a visa.

Seafarers completing their contract

When a seafarer is leaving a ship at the end of their contract and is departing the United Kingdom directly, no ETA or additional permission is required, **provided that** they are not seeking to enter or remain in the UK for any other purpose (for example, visiting or staying ashore).

Carrier support

Where a carrier is unsure whether a passenger can be accepted for travel under these arrangements, advice is available from the **UK Border Force Carrier Support Hub**, who can confirm the appropriate requirements.

Carrier Support Hub: +44 (0)300 369 0610 / +44 (0)204 619 6020

Please note that these contact details are **for carrier use only** and should not be shared publicly.

We would appreciate it if you could share this message with your operations globally.

Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting the smooth operation of UK border processes.

Kind regards,

**Carrier Engagement & Delivery Team
Future Border & Immigration (FBIS) Programme**

