



Attracting young people into the seafaring profession

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The European Community Shipowners' Association in its last annual report (2009) addresses the need to attract young persons from European Union countries in the maritime profession and to improve the image and knowledge about shipping.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of human resources is among the six main areas of action of the EU communiqué on the strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy from 2009-2018 (EU 2009). Moreover, the European Community Shipowners' Association in its last annual report (2009) addresses the need to attract young persons from European Union countries in the maritime profession and to improve the image and knowledge about shipping.

In November 2008, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) launched the "Go to Sea!" campaign in order to attract entrants to the shipping industry (IMO 2008). A further "round table" meeting was held in March 2009 including participants from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), BIMCO, International Chamber of Shipping, INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO and International Transport Federation (ITF). The key points of this campaign were to promote the public perception of the maritime industry in addition to its very good track record of environmental and

safety impact on today's world, to inform young people about the opportunities offered by following a maritime career and to improve the quality of life at sea compared to life onshore. In order to achieve this it was agreed to take various actions in industrial (maritime industry), at governmental and institutional level (see conclusions).

RECENT EU EFFORTS

As far back as 1999, the EU funded the METHAR project (Harmonisation of European Maritime Education and Training Schemes) and identified the decline of interest of young people in seafaring and an insufficient supply of ship officers from EU countries as well as a shortage of shipboard training places. The METNET project that followed revealed several reasons why young people do not prefer the ship's officer career (Zade 2003). These included the lack of awareness of young persons about career prospects, the long absence from home, family and friends, and the bad image of shipping, the uncertainty about the long duration of employment and the potential difficulties of living with multinational crews on board the ship.





In the field of maritime e-training, the E-GMDSS project (Ziarati, 2009) focused on the provision of vocational education and continuing vocational training for Short Range Certificate (SRC) which is mandatory for seafarers operating vessels of up to 300 GRT within the 30 Nm from the coast. The focus of this project was on-line training of all mariners that are either starting their career or want to refresh their knowledge on communication devices like VHF DSC, Navtex, EPIRB and SART.

The Safety On Sea (SOS) project (2005-2007) developed an integrated programme of education and training for merchant navy cadets by using the maritime education and training (MET) programmes developed by north European countries and included good practices. The project also put emphasis on joint development/ harmonisation, delivery and external assessment and verification. The proposed project also addressed compatibility of the training programmes in partner countries (Ziarati and Albayrak 2009).

The EU funded Leonardo project MarTEL (Ziarati et al, 2009) focused on the problem of not having international or European standards for maritime English for application in Merchant Navy education and training programmes for cadet officers and officers of various types and ranks. The standards were based on transfer of innovation from available English language standards and maritime English model courses such as International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) Model course 3.17 and the IMO's SMCP (Standard Maritime Communication Phrases). The standards were developed at three different levels referred to as Phases 1, 2 and 3 to address training from the cadet officer up to senior officers' level. All levels include Speaking, Listening and Writing active skills. The ongoing M'AIDER project (Ugurcan et al, 2010) copes with the systematic attempt in developing accident or incident scenarios

for training young cadets and seafarers working at sea and ports in emergency situations. The project concerns those aspects of human error related to emergency situations which can be corrected through removal of existing deficiencies in Maritime Education and Training (MET) of cadet officers as well as those working on board vessels as officers of various ranks. The study of accidents & incidents at sea is used to identify the emergency situations and provide adequate information as to how various scenarios could be prepared and simulated. The main focus is on the training of Deck officers as the accidents are directly related to the activities on the bridge including communication within the team and engine department (Ziarati 2007).

The HORIZON on-going (Barnet, 2009) project also studies the effects of fatigue on the performance of watch-keepers through the use of simulators in order to assess its impact on decision-making and performance.

OPTIMAR project (Lloyd's Register, Fairplay 2008) studied the formulation of a European maritime transport policy for the period of 2008 to 2018. Among other issues, it addressed the availability and quality of crew with regard to attracting young people including quality education and retaining them in the industry. The most important suggestions included a package of measures for the study of young persons' perception of what and how life is at sea, a joint PR campaign between EU and the maritime industry, an inventory of the maritime education levels in EU member countries and a support scheme for junior cadets onboard the ship.

A study carried out by Solent University (ECSA/ETF 2005) presented a series of career maps among ten EU member states regarding the potential and actual career paths for seafarers, the



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demand for seafarers at sea and shore-based jobs and the barriers to the mobility of qualified seafarers in between the maritime sector. A number of interviews were performed with personnel from the selected member states from private and public entities including ship-owning companies and associations, trade unions and various other people involved in shore-based maritime companies. The main features of the selected countries was the large number of seafarers as well as the representation of different maritime regimes and cultures. A follow on project (Sail Ahead, Ziarati, 2011), is now developing a tool to enable seafarers to find jobs onshore. This is expected to encourage many young people to join the seafaring profession as they see the opportunity to work onshore if need be, for instance after a period of time at sea. In the case of the Alert! project, it was initiated to increase the awareness of the human element amongst maritime professionals by regular bulletin publications, the creation of a website and an online database with technical and academic papers, presentations etc. Among others, it also addressed the issue of training and retaining seafarers in the maritime industry (Alert bulletin, 2009). The particular bulletin included informational material such as IMO's Secretary-General note on how to boost shipping recruitment, extracts from papers regarding surveys of life at sea, CSR in shipping and a shipping company managing director's point of view about training and retaining seafarers.

OFFICER SKILL SHORTAGES

The latest study regarding the estimates for the demand and supply of seafarers is the one carried out for BIMCO/ISF (2005). The results show that the total number of seafarers was estimated up to 1.27 million, 466,000 of which are officers and 721,000 ratings. Regarding future predictions, according to the same study, the demand for officers and ratings will grow around 4.7% and 3.5 % respectively creating a shortage of over 30000 in the next ten years. The BIMCO/ISF (2010) figures are not dissimilar to those predicted in their report in 2005. However, having in mind the higher actual tonnage rates observed in the last few years, other researchers suggest following the higher prediction growth rate which estimates the supply-demand gap to be around 55,000 qualified officers or even greater (Ziarati 2005, Urkmez 2005, IMO 2008).

THE NEED TO ATTRACT YOUNG PEOPLE

Related to the need of attracting young people, Cahoon and Haugstetter (2008) presented a study about how to draw the younger generation's attention to the shipping industry. They discuss the specific characteristics affecting this group like instant social networking through an online web platforms, job flexibility, fast-tracking of their careers and a mentoring approach in their working environment instead of the old "authoritarian school" of thinking that prevails in the shipping industry. In addition, they point out that the shipping industry needs to be an Industry of Choice (IOC) for the younger generation and shipping related companies recognised as Employers of Choice (EOC) in order to attract and keep the young generation in the worldwide shipping family. Other efforts include a similar attempt to attract teenagers in the shipping industry with emphasis on the technical sector which resulted in a promotional leaflet and a DVD issued by the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (SNAME) entitled "Call of The Sea".

The long term problem has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Purely in terms of numbers, while the point has not yet been reached when ships are unable to sail and cargoes remain on the quayside, it will become an increasingly real prospect as the shortage of seafaring increases. Most importantly the shortfall seems to be absorbed by the existing workforce – but not without adhering to some excessive measures. Officers are working longer hours and, occasionally, not taking their holiday entitlements. Some are awarded exemptions to enable them to serve in positions for which they may not be fully qualified. Training periods are being shortened, hastening the early promotion of younger seafarers, who may lack the necessary experience to shoulder the responsibilities of higher ranks. Ships may receive short-term permits to sail with fewer than the required minimum crew complement. Meanwhile, the demand/supply imbalance is forcing salaries up, which has the effect of enticing older officers out of retirement, thus raising the age profile of the workforce, and giving rise to some undesirable developments. The cumulative impact of all this can only be detrimental to the quality of service provided. In any workplace there is a direct relationship between the quantity of

work required, the resource available to do it and the quality of the output. Unreasonable demands lead to stress, fatigue and a fall-off in performance. No one is immune, least of all ships' officers, whose jobs are challenging and demanding enough at the best of times.

The MariFuture project (outlined in www.martifuture.org) proposes to develop various strategies, which are complementary to each other to tackle the people and skill shortages by addressing the issues of attracting young people, skill enhancement training (e-learning, web based or residential) funded by the shipping industry, re-training of people from different backgrounds and developing a structured career path for existing seafarers from every level (Ziarati et al, 2010).

IMAGE OF SHIPPING AND SEAFARERS

Recruitment and retention, is the nub of the problem. There is a need to promote the industry and improve its public image. The fact that shipping still tends only to make the headlines for negative reasons – accidents, environmental impacts, piracy, oppressive security measures leading to denial of shore leave, criminalization – serves only to fuel misconceptions and act as a disincentive to recruitment. Outside the industry itself, the wider public has little conscious perception of the vital role that shipping plays in everyday life and this, clearly, needs to change. This is an area where the media have an important role. Additional issues are related with the lack of well structured and tailored programmes of maritime education that promote career development or training. Although the industry knows that the image of shipping and the role of seafarers needs to be promoted so far they lack the realistic/attractive plan that suits today's expectations in society. With today's technologies industry can meet the young people's expectation in terms of facilities and inclusive life style. However, first of all industry needs to accept that it is time to depart from the concept of 'traditional seafaring' and promote that today's seafaring career has a significant social inclusion through onboard facilities and modern management. The MariFuture project finds the image of the industry to be the most significant area, which has to be supported by the industry proactively. Most importantly, industry has to live up to the image and develop a genuine strategy to create the right image in the eyes of the public and the young generation. Misinformation and delusion should be avoided at all costs. MariFuture partners have significant expertise and experience on how to create the image but also the right plan should be the way that industry should act upon. Implementation of the ideas will be clearly demonstrated in the project by ship owner partners.

ONBOARD FACILITIES AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY

Employment issues and most importantly employment retaining issues in the seafarers' profession are not simple and there is no simple answer to the problem. To increase salaries, for example, is not enough on its own. Officer salaries are already competitive, yet the demand/supply imbalance is worsening. At the same time, shipping needs to address other perceived "negatives" that act as a disincentive to recruitment, while stressing the unique advantages that a career at sea can offer. "quality of life" issues, with "time spent away from family and friends", "time spent away from children"



**SADIKCAN ÖZDAMAR AND BAŞAR BEYAZOĞLU
SPONSORED THROUGH EU PROGRAMMES TO STUDY
THEIR FINAL YEAR DEGREE STUDIES AT
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**BURAK KONAĞOĞLU RECENTLY GRADUATED FROM
TUDEV AND PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY SUPPORTING THE
SURPASS PROJECT AT TUDEV**

and "difficulties in keeping in contact with home" also rank highly; and, on the other hand, "quality of work" issues – such as "too much paperwork", "fatigue", "fear of being treated like a criminal" and "onboard living conditions", "lack of professional development" are equally important. Onboard facilities and responsible management should create the necessary resources, environment and working conditions that will eliminate the negative aspects of a seafaring job. This should include onboard facilities for communication, networking, training, a work environment that will eliminate the fatigue issues. Furthermore, management should provide the social responsibility to make sure that the family concept does not suffer by creating flexible working hours to eliminate the separation of families and that they are looked after in the absence of the seafaring partner.

COLLABORATION OF INDUSTRY AND PROACTIVE NETWORKING

The MariFuture project promotes proactive networking which can only help the image and the prosperity of the maritime community including shipping companies, training centres and the educational establishments. Cooperation is needed between European maritime

training institutions for upgrading seafarers' competences and adapting requirements to the prerequisites of today's shipping industry. A wider collaboration in the form of exchange of students and developing and sharing courses as well as establishing joint facilities are key to such fruitful collaboration. E-learning/virtual learning including video conferencing are ideal ways to facilitate the access to such courses and knowledge enhancing activities.

The partnership of training institutions and industry including between industry partners towards establishing 'maritime certificates of excellence' (European maritime postgraduate courses) through projects such as UniMET (www.unimet.pro) may well go further than STCW requirements will create good collaboration as well as cost savings. This will provide the environment that companies can pick good practices from each other or at least may realise that in certain areas there are better practices than theirs.

CONCLUSIONS

Along the lines of the EU maritime transport strategy for 2018 there is a genuine interest to make the maritime profession in Europe more attractive to young people, women and minorities and improve the employment of seafarers. There is no doubt that the long term strategy of the EU will be driven by positive measures that will facilitate life-long career prospects in the maritime clusters; will enhance the image of shipping; will support the work of international organisations on the fair treatment of seafarers; and implement simplification measures that aim at reducing the administrative burden on masters and senior ship officers. The current EU funded project in developing online facilities such as MariFuture (www.marifuture.org), e-learning platforms and courses such as EGMDSS (www.egmdss.com), MAIDER and SURPASS (www.maider.pro and www.surpass.pro respectively) for seafarers and support measures to improve language competencies of the seafarers, for example MarTEL (www.martel.pro) are vital keys to allow them to have more satisfying experience at sea. The harmonisation of maritime education and training and acceptance of one country's qualifications by others across the world is an important step to overcome problems with mobility. A great deal of work has been done to harmonise maritime programmes and obtain international recognition in some countries such as the Safety On Sea (SOS) project and through mobility projects such as TRAIN 4Cs. (www.maredu.co.uk). The new projects such as for example UniMET (www.unimet.pro), GETAFIX and TRECNET (Ziarati, 2011) are on-going but are expected to be crucial for harmonising maritime programmes at different levels

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Industrial/social partners action: promotional activities through conferences and media, improve the existing lifestyle on board ships, promote shipping career paths at school level, shore-based education to be considered as time "on duty" etc.
- Governmental/national/local action: promoting school kids' visits on board ships berthed at ports, training of jobless persons, investing in women's shipping career.
- Regulatory/voluntary action: promotion of seafarers career opportunities at every possible occasion.

Development of innovative Maritime Education and Training in global higher education models (Sag et al, 2009), EU Safety On Sea programmes and in recent years EU UniMET projects are essential

blue prints for paving the way for young people to be given the opportunities to work on different flag ships and through mobility to improve themselves and to overcome the shortages of seafarers in the future.

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