OECD WORKSHOP ON MARITIME TRANSPORT

TRAINING AND SHORTAGE OF SEAFARERS

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TRAINING AND SHORTAGE OF SEAFARERS

1. The human element is one of the most important factors to improve safety at sea. Starting from this concept, this presentation intends to cover two main aspects:
   - The actual situation of seafarers supply and training standards.
   - The forecast.

2. The Romanian experience is also presented against this background.

Supply chain

3. According to Warwick University studies, the worldwide supply of seafarers in 2000 was estimated at 404 000 officers and 823 000 ratings. Worldwide demand was estimated at 420 000 officers and 599 000 ratings. This gave a shortage of 16 000 officers and a surplus of 224 000 ratings. (Diagram A)

4. It should be mentioned that this trend of officer shortage and rating surplus was similar to that of 1995, and the prediction for 2010 is that the ratings situation will not change significantly, but the shortage of officers will get worse, from a 4% deficit in 2000 to a 12% deficit in 2010 (equating to a shortage of 46 000 officers).
5. The most significant reduction in officers comes from the European countries, followed by the North American continent. The increased supply of officers coming from Asia and from former East European countries was not enough to counter-balance the shortage.

6. This means there is not only a constant reduction in the number of officers but also a significant change in the standards of training, because of the different pedagogical and technical standards of the supplying countries.

**Conclusions**

- Continuous decline of interest in seafaring by officers.
- Constant interest by the ratings.
- Lower standard of training at officer level.

7. Repeated efforts have been made to identify the reasons for the reluctance of young people to choose seafaring as a career. Discussions of experts on, and research into, the reasons for this reluctance have concluded that the decline of seafaring as a career objective is most distinct in so-called affluent societies (and that even growing youth unemployment in these societies does not have much of a counterbalancing effect). The main reasons for this reluctance seems to be:

  - An increased unwillingness to accept the separation from family and friends and a desire to lead a private life of own choice, and this despite today's often fairly generous leave provisions.
  
  - The image of the industry is not good, partly because publicity is mainly given to negative events, including the hardships seafarers may have to endure and the sometimes difficult and bad working conditions.
  
  - Better professional alternatives ashore.

8. It should also be mentioned in this context that former seafarers were sometimes motivated for their choice of career by the desire to see foreign countries and used the ship as the "vehicle" to achieve this. This motivation has become invalid with the opportunities offered by today's mass tourism.

9. In addition, the promotion of a seafaring career with catchwords like “independence of decision making and responsibility for people, a very expensive ship and most valuable cargo” has not brought the clients back.

10. It has also to be noted that the introduction of academic degrees in maritime education and training institutions has facilitated the change from ship to shore and that, in the extreme, graduates may consider not to go on board at all but seek employment ashore directly after graduation from a maritime education and training institution. Such behaviour is widely spread in some European countries where those obtaining a Bachelor degree at the maritime department of a university continue to study for a Master degree at the same or another department of the university or seek employment ashore. These graduates are certainly not as qualified as graduates with shipboard experience and they may “misuse” maritime education and training for another objective than it is provided for.
11. The number and, primarily, the “quality” of the ship officers has always been the biggest problem in the international seafarers market and we also need to consider maritime education and training.

**Training standards**

12. In recognising what should be obvious – that skilled, educated, qualified seafarers are of fundamental importance – IMO decided to underpin its emphasis on training and certification by accelerating the much-needed updating of the 1978 STCW Convention, and the new version was adopted in 1995 and entered into effect in 1997. The revised version stipulates in detail the required competencies associated with different tasks, the knowledge and understanding required to perform them, methods for demonstrating competence and criteria for evaluating it.

13. Maritime education and training in almost all countries meets STCW 95 requirements and often exceeds them but there are situations when maritime education and training does not meet the minimum requirements of STCW 95.

14. In this respect, IMO issued a “White List” of the countries complying with STCW 95 requirements and there is now a reciprocal recognition of certificates between those countries.

15. The Convention determines minimum requirements for standards of competence which should normally be demonstrated through examination and/or assessment, independent of the school time required for acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. In some countries the duration of studies corresponds to that for university degrees and a substantial number of subjects may then be added to STCW 95 subjects.

16. In addition to the new competency standards and clear application procedures, the new STCW 95 Convention brings also new responsibility in respect of training and assessment matters. Not only the Maritime Administrations have a duty to implement the new standards, but also the ship-owners who are called upon to implement their own system of evaluation of seafarer’s professional performance. This responsibility is also emphasised by the International Safety Management Code (ISM), now compulsory for all types of vessels, which requires specific procedures for continuous training, evaluation and appraisal of seafarers by the ship-owners.

**Conclusion**

17. There is now an internationally implemented standard of competency for seafarers which, combined with the new standard of management imposed by the ISM Code application worldwide, has managed to establish better safety standards of shipping activity.

**Romania**

18. In furtherance of the above I will try to make a comparative analysis of the Romanian maritime education and training system with the European community system. Based on studies made by the World Maritime University as to the minimum school and sea time for unlimited certificates, I will try to emphasise the fact that the Romanian maritime education and training system should be considered a good and healthy system.
19. The increasing number and demand of Romanian seafarers, especially officers, employed on board the vessels proves the quality of our maritime education system.

20. Each Romanian approved maritime education and training institution is endowed with sufficient resources to permit Romanian seafarers and others to be trained to the requirement of the policy statement on the subject and STCW 95 Code. The said education and training is equal to or better than that agreed internationally. In order to update and develop specialised skills, prospective/actual seafarers are trained on high-standard maritime simulators, but the Romanian system of education also lays emphasis on practical training on board ships.

21. Romanian maritime education and training for officers is covered by two maritime universities and has a duration of five years school time. The graduates obtain an academic degree in maritime education, and, in order to obtain the watch keeping officer or engineer certificate of competency, the graduates should complete the required practical training on board of 12 months for deck officers (respectively 6 months for engineers), as cadets, before the examination in front of the maritime authority.

22. **Diagram B** - from the point of view of the time spent at school taking maritime education, Romania competes successfully with the European community system, with a total of 62 months, in order to get the master or chief engineer certificates of competency.

23. As to the number of graduates of Romanian maritime universities willing to take seafaring as their profession, we have to admit that the international decline has also affected
Romania during the last three years. It is quite clear from **Diagram C** that a reluctance of this profession does exist.

24. However, the trend of the last three years shows a steady number of young officers, so we can appreciate that there is a tendency for a constant supply for the next years.

![Diagram C](image)

25. In furtherance of the above said, when analysing **Diagram D**, we will see that the number of certificates at management level issued by Romania increased during the last two years, which proves that the “old” seafarers are taking into account the international seafarers market offers.
What will we do in the future?

26. Romania will try to achieve the following objectives:

- To attract young people to a seafaring career by promoting all the benefits and long-term advantages of the profession.

- To continuously improve the standards of training in order to provide a competitive work force to the international labour market.

- To provide the necessary framework and conditions for development of the shipping industry in Romania, with the aim of raising a general interest in it.
Figure 1. Diagram E

Minimum sea time requirements for Romanian Certificates

Deck Officer

SCHOOL TIME:
60 months (University)

SEA TIME:
12 months

Examination

CERTIFICATE: 3rd Deck Officer
(Officer in charge of a navigational watch)

SEA TIME:
12 months

Examination

CERTIFICATE: 2nd Deck Officer
(Officer in charge of a navigational watch)

SEA TIME:
12 months

Examination

School Time
2 months

Examination

Engineering Officer

SCHOOL TIME:
60 months (University)

SEA TIME:
6 months

Examination

CERTIFICATE: 3rd eng. officer
(Officer in charge of an engine watch)

SEA TIME:
12 months

Examination

CERTIFICATE: 2nd Eng. Officer
(Officer in charge of an engine watch)

SEA TIME:
12 months

School Time:
2 months

Examination