



Workshop and Seminar - Limassol, Cyprus 10 June 2010

Project Report

Captain R. Becker-Heins, MSG MarineServe GmbH



It gives me great pleasure to speak to this group of expert representatives today. And special thanks go to Captain Karayiotas and his team for their positive support.

Let me elaborate on the topic listed in your Agenda: to deliver to you an interim report on our findings with regards to the EU funded SEACHEFS project.

Catering department

Catering is the department on which shipping companies rely for the comfort and feeding of those onboard and don't let's forget it is also a considerable cost item in the daily running of a ship. The cook is, unofficially, the most important man onboard. And you might agree that his job is also the most difficult. Three times a day, every day, he is judged. He is often dealing with mixed nationalities, all who have their own preferences. So he can never please all at the same time. Good health also depends on this man: cleanliness in food preparation, in galleys and in storerooms are of paramount importance.

That the catering department is having the master's special attention seems to be a fact on most ships, since abolition of a chief steward. Factually the cook is head of the department and therefore equivalent to other head of departments, e.g. let's say the chief mate. Thereby the necessity becomes obvious to qualify this person thoroughly and train him with regards to food preparation, victualling, purchasing, and personnel management. You expect a cook, to be able to judge the quality conditions of provisions delivered onboard. Whether hygiene regulations have been observed by food suppliers, or to evaluate if the cold chain of victuals delivered on board correspondences with hygiene instructions according to general food law regulations. On top you expect the cook to be competent to arrange menu planning covering longer periods offering a well balanced and healthy diet.

Standards for ships' cooks

Having all these demands in mind, it was very interesting to find out in the line of our project, that international training standards for ship's cook, officially accepted by the IMO under a specific regulation, are missing at all. What you can find are qualification requirements for cooks stated in the ILO Convention dated 1946, in the Merchant Shipping



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Notice M. 1482 by the UK authorities or the Merchant Shipping Regulations dated 1981. You will agree that all references just mentioned are somewhat outdated, so say the least

It astonishes that even the revised STCW code, which will come into force next year, is missing specific content on ship's cook vocation. Apparently so far nearly all international jurisdiction has ignored legal bases regarding qualification standards for cooks aboard ships.

Since we can hardly find legal references on international level let's have a look on national implementation of ships cook education. In the line of our project we enlightened the national qualification schemes for sea chefs in Germany, United Kingdom, Latvia and Cyprus.

Germany

According to a statement by the government person in charge for maritime training matters in Germany, Mr. Mac Donald, at present any person can enrol as a cook on ships flying the German flag. From a legal point of view this crewmember does not have to pass a particular cook's training. Not even the Basic Safety Course applies to him on a GC vessel, as the cook may not be part of the force group. Only a reduced Basic Safety Course providing an elementary safety familiarisation is needed. In Germany the MV *Emsstrom*, privately operated by Messrs. Marlow, proves to be the sole provider for ship's cook training.

United Kingdom

Looking at the United Kingdom you will find a similar situation. Here likewise Germany for the occupation as a ship's cook training or employment is offered within the civil service and the Navy only. For British seamen it turns out in practise all but impossible to sail in a cook's position on board a merchant vessel. Differences in remuneration and absent regulations have led to an ever increasing employment of more economical workforce from abroad. Naturally the situation reflected on the training landscape for ship's cook in the UK. There is virtually no particular training of sea chefs. What's left is conventional schoolings for cooks ashore.

Cyprus

It is not surprising for you present here today that also with regards to maritime cook training, Cyprus manifests as the South European centre point in this respect. Amongst a high profile spectrum of training courses the Bernhard Schulte Management – Maritime Training Centre under the management of Captain Menelaos Karayiotas is one of the leading outlets for ship's cook training worldwide. Although privately owned, the BSM-MTC is the officially approved provider for maritime training in Cyprus operating under the stringent supervision of the Department of Merchant Shipping. Having graduated in any STCW-courses and completed also the Cyprus cook's training, trainees receive a certificate issued by the Cyprus Department of Merchant Shipping.

But even when the graduates would just hold a company's document of training attendance only this would be of no disadvantage eventually. Meanwhile degrees awarded by private



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training institutions are accepted by the international shipping community in a broad base as well and more and more are substituting official certificates.

Latvia

The just mentioned trend has materialised particularly in Latvia. In Latvia the national schooling of cooks has totally ceased. Government training became unattractive to students because of undue length of studies. According to national laws vocational education as a cook would take approximately four years. Flanking a two year's classroom training, apprentices had to pass further two years recorded sea-service. However all private schools alternatively orientate on the International Cooking Certificate, ICC. Interestingly the ICC evolved from a former EU granted project which was raised by the Latvian International Foundation for Professional Hotel and Catering Certifications (IFP HCC), which was founded 2005 in Riga. Our project Seachefs also takes reference thereto. This change of paradigm has been officially supported by the Latvian Maritime Administration although a special "maritime" module is still missing in the ICC training scheme.

International Cooking Certificate

Generally it looks like that normative regulations for ships cook training are not to be expected from legislative bodies. But rather the maritime industry by itself is going to set the desired standards. State operated catering schools, where still existent, are left empty handed. Increasing emphasis is on private owned cooking centres mostly operated by the maritime management stakeholders. As an example the ICC has established as a sustainable and widely introduced system. Presently it is going to set new industry derived standards in cooking worldwide. It is a chance for the maritime sector to join this trend. What has to be done is to enrich the existing ICC syllabus by a "maritime" module. Regarding contents the ICC already corresponds largely with the core curriculum presently applied at maritime cooking centres. Lessons to be complemented are provisioning, menu planning, hygiene, and ship safety subjects.

MLC 2006

With the upcoming implementation of Maritime Labour Convention 2006 all flag states will have to take action. Latest by then a common understanding must have been arisen concerning common ship's cook training standards. The project on hand might contribute to start such initiative

Conclusion

The lifetime of the Seachefs Project will run until October 2011. Today's event marks a milestone in the run of the project to make an interim balance. I hope that our projected model Seachefs will prompt debate and prove useful as a vehicle for further discussion. And I would like to use the opportunity of this event to share my thoughts with you and to learn from your professional opinions and expert suggestions on how to further improve our project.