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Executive Summary

The “Sail ahead” is an innovative project (for merchant marine officers). Specifically, it aims at providing an on-line guidance tool for a second career for captains after the career at sea. It previews mapping of transferable skills of captains, by making comparison of training curricula as well as by assessing skills acquired through formal and informal training, through surveying captains and cadets. It also previews selecting possible career paths and mapping the skills required by the jobs corresponding to these paths, drawing the respective job profiles, validating them through personal interviews and video-recorded interviews with captains that have followed these career options. Finally, it previews the development of the on-line guidance tool and questionnaire to be used.

The project is in line with EU policies about LLL, equality of sexes, the Blue Book and the cross-sectoral instruments of the Integrated Maritime Policy.

In the first year of implementation of the SAIL AHEAD project, partners have accomplished the research and surveys for mapping of transferable skills, have chosen 12 career paths, have mapped skills required by each path, have compiled 21 job profiles and have produced 34 videos interviewing captains.

In order to do that, partners have actively involved 889 captains and cadets from at least 20 countries in the surveys and 32 captains in the interviews. This required very intense and coordinated dissemination and exploitation activities at national and transnational levels, which included the development and promotion of the project web site www.sailahead.eu, promotional materials, organisation of events, presentation of the project in major events, writing and publishing of articles in media of very wide circulation in the sector, social networking as well as contacts with stakeholders of the maritime sector, namely ministries, port authorities, maritime academies, Universities, maritime schools, maritime organisations, companies, the International Maritime Lectures Association etc.

Activities preview in the second year of implementation are the completion of the on-line guidance tool, its validation through pilot testing in all participating countries, the completion of job profiles and videos, the conclusion of an IPR agreement between partners, writing of an exploitation plan as well as intense evaluation dissemination and exploitation activities (including 5 national conferences and a transnational one). Final end of these evaluation, dissemination and exploitation activities is to ensure sustainability of the project after its formal completion.

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1. Project Objectives

Seafarers in general have a job with extraordinary features. They usually work overseas for long a period, which puts a real pressure to their personal life and active citizenship. They work in alternating 4hour shifts and often have to face temperature changes of over 30° C every few days. Captains in particular have a multitude of managerial, technical and administrative tasks to perform and suffer from occupational stress. The effort of women to enter the profession is in most cases contradictory with maternity. For these reasons it would be beneficial for captains to know that if their life turns so, there is a possibility for them to engage to an alternative career ashore, using competencies they acquired both through formal and non-formal learning.

The “Sail ahead” is an innovative project targeting merchant marine officers. Specifically, it aims at providing an on-line guidance tool for a second career for captains after the career at sea. Aim of the “Sail ahead” project is to address equally formal and non formal practices at a sectoral level (maritime), to enhance employability of captains of both sexes which due to family demands, health, stress or pattern of life reasons wish to work ashore. It also aims at attracting equally more young women and men in the merchant navy academies by presenting them more choices for their career.

The specific objectives of SAIL AHEAD is to develop a set of concrete, practical and innovative activities to map transferable skills and to make competencies acquired by captains in nautical academies and those acquired through non-formal training transparent.

The main operational objective is to produce an innovative on-line guidance tool, which will assess through a test the personal profile and competencies of a captain and provide him/her with a report indicating which career paths on shore best suit him/her as well as the profiles of these career paths in order that he/she can identify his/her learning shortages and paths to follow. The on-line guidance tool, which will anticipate skills needed in order that marine officers wishing to work ashore are able to follow alternative paths, is being developed by a social partner (PEPEN), sectoral organisations (nautical academies, further nautical training) and technical companies participating in the Sail Ahead project.

In order to do that, in the first phase the partners have cross referenced Merchant Navy Education and training requirements and competencies across the different partner countries as well as the competencies developed on the job. In a second phase, partners have mapped competencies and profiles for a number of alternative career paths and the respective jobs ashore. In the same phase, partners are being recording interviews of captains working ashore describing their experience, competencies needed, how they have coped to acquire those that they lacked, how is their everyday life, what kind of features has the job and are required (interests, character, physical abilities) in the path career they are engaged in.

2. Project Approach

The SAIL AHEAD project is based on the following observations:

1. Seafarers in general have a job with extraordinary features. They usually work overseas for long periods. This puts a real pressure to their personal life and active citizenship. They work in alternating 4hour shifts and often have to face temperature changes of over 30° C every few days. Captains in particular have a multitude of managerial, technical and administrative tasks to perform and suffer from occupational stress.
2. Women are underrepresented in the merchant marine. The effort of women to enter the profession is in most cases contradictory with maternity.
3. There is another big contradiction. On one hand young unemployment, in Europe is over 25%, the EC estimated a lack of around 36.000 European sea officers in 2006 and payments in the sector are very attractive. On the other hand, there is a reluctance of young persons to join the sea. A reason for that is that they are afraid that once they engage in a career onboard, they are obliged to work there for their whole active life, so they feel trapped and they do not chose this path.

Yet, by choosing this profession they get many competencies useful in other fields as well. The SAIL AHEAD project aims at contributing in giving them the freedom to choose.

The Sail Ahead project approach starts by mapping and cross referencing skills deriving from Merchant Navy Education as well as from formal and non formal Training. This has been done by analysing training curricula of formal and non formal training and by surveying captains and cadets as well as professors of nautical academies in all participating countries and internationally. In order to achieve the best possible results, the partners have taken two measures:

- Surveying has been done in parallel with very tense dissemination activities
- Response to the survey could be given through an on-line survey tool accessible trough the project website: www.sailahead.eu.

In order to provide captains and cadets guidance on alternative career paths on-shore, based on their skills/competences and personal profiles, partners have followed the approach below:

- They have taken the opportunity of the transnational meetings in Piraeus and Cracow in order to organise focus groups with partners. In these focus groups they have established the alternative career paths and professions to be examined and they have weighted the skills/competencies that are relevant for each of them.
- Individual interviews with captains that are actually engaged in these career paths have allowed three things. First, the validation (or changes) of the weighting of skills/competencies decided in the focus groups. Second, the compilation of job profiles corresponding to these career paths. Third, video interviews to better display the career paths.
- Development of an on-line guidance tool that will be available on the project web-site, fully operational by M18.

Involvement of the target group in all phases of analysis, development, implementation and evaluation as well as strong focus to dissemination are expected to ensure the quality and sustainability of SAIL AHEAD project results.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Main outcomes and results of the SAIL AHEAD project in the first year of implementation of the project are:

1. Report on transferable skills.

The report includes the methodology followed, the comparison of curricula between participating countries and the international convention STCW (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) of IMO (International Maritime Organisation), findings of the survey among professors, findings and comparison of findings of the survey undertaken with cadets and the survey with captains as far as transferable skills/competencies are concerned, differences due to age and finally conclusions on transferable skills.

2. Career paths

Twelve career paths have been selected by partners, namely entrepreneurs, pilots, cargo operators, managers in shipping companies, port authority officers, arbitrators for disputes on maritime issues, coast guard officers, advisors, teachers, quality managers, auditors and environment protection professions. For each career path there is a number of possible professions.

Partners at a second phase have made a mapping of skills/competences required by each career path and are developing the respective job profiles.

3. Partners have videoed 34 interviews of captains actually employed in the alternative career paths selected.
4. As far as the on-line guidance tool is concerned, in the first year of the project partners have driven operational specifications and finished most of the development work. A first draft of questions that will be included in the tool is ready as well.
5. The project website is available on [www,sailahead.eu](http://www.sailahead.eu). It has sections on the project, the survey, the career paths, interviews, articles, downloads, information panel, contact info and contact form. There is also access from the website to SAIL AHEAD Facebook page and SAIL AHEAD Twitter account. The site is multilingual (EN, EL, TU, PL, FI, SL).
6. Dissemination activities scheduled are displayed in the dissemination plan. Dissemination up to now includes the design and production of a leaflet and two posters. It also includes writing of 8 articles, networking at national and transnational level and sending of direct mails and emails to various stakeholders of the maritime sector. Additional dissemination has taken place through publicising the project in partners' web sites, other web sites developed by partners, web sites of third parties contacted by partners and social networking, namely linkedin, facebook and twitter.
7. Exploitation activities include presentation of the project in various conferences and events, spreading information and asking for the active contribution of shipping companies, public authorities and maritime academies.
8. Evaluation includes the evaluation plan, including evaluation objectives, methodology and tools, as well as Interim evaluation report including process evaluation and product evaluation.
9. Management has gone smoothly up to now. Partners have proved to be competent, well-disposed and very much committed to the successful completion of the project. Two transnational meetings have taken place, the first in Piraeus, Greece on 21-22 March 2011 and the second one in Cracow, Poland on 8-9 September 2011. A communication platform has also been initiated.

4. Partnerships

The partnership consists of 7 partners from 6 countries. It represents well the target group and VET stakeholders regarding the merchant marine sector.

PEPEN (Greece), the applicant is the Masters and Mates Union of the Greek Merchant Marine with 10.000 members working mainly at sea but also ashore. It has full-time staff of 9. It publishes a high visibility in the sector bimonthly magazine. It participates with representatives in several committees of the Ministry of Merchant Marine, the nautical Academies, the Greek Nautical Federation and the IMO.

SUAS (Finland) and TUDEV (Turkey) are two Nautical Academies, the second one a part of the maritime employers association and the Turkish Chamber of Shipping, representing higher education in the sector. SPINAKER (Slovenia) and OPR (Poland) provide further training to seafarers; the first one has also a strong ICT department. The maritime department of the C4FF (UK) has sound experience in the quality of maritime education and belongs to a big transnational network of cooperation. IDEC has a very long record of cooperation with stakeholders of the maritime sector; having experience in evaluation (it has performed the transnational evaluation of systems and structures financed by the ESF for DG Employment), it also develops materials and performs training on it.

All partners have experience in implementing European projects.

Tasks of the project have been distributed according to partners' interests and capacity. PEPEN is responsible for the management, exploitation wps and for the tasks of surveying and interviewing professionals. IDEC is responsible for evaluation and development of website/dissemination material. SPINAKER is responsible for tool specifications and development. C4FF is responsible for questionnaires and report on skills mapping. TUDEV is responsible of development of data to be included in the tool, OPR for dissemination and SUAS for the development of path profiles. Partners have rich networks of contacts and partnerships.

In the framework of the implementation of the project partners have presented the SAIL AHEAD project to partnerships with ministries, port authorities, maritime academies, Universities, maritime schools, maritime organisations, companies, the International Maritime Lectures Association etc.

5. Plans for the Future

In the following we give our plans for the future of SAIL AHEAD per work package.

Work package 1. **Mapping of competences** is finished. The on-line survey will however be open if more captains and cadets wish to contribute with their views and experiences. The report now produced only in English will be translated into Greek, Slovenian, Turkish, Polish and Finnish right after the approval of the commission.

Work package 2. **Mapping of potential career paths**. The partnership has concluded to 12 potential career paths. Interviews for additional validation of the mapping of competences of these career paths and additional job profiles corresponding to these paths will be on-going for the first trimester of 2012. Then the job profiles will be translated into Greek, Slovenian, Turkish, Polish and Finnish.

Work package 3. **Development and testing of the on-line guidance tool**. Remaining activities are:

- Finalisation of the on-line tool development (M15)
- Finalisation of data to be included (M15)
- Piloting (at least 12 persons in each participating country) M16
- Corrections, adjustments and debugging (M20)

Work package 4. **Dissemination**. Partners have already undertaken considerable efforts for the dissemination of the project. This has had as result on one hand the involvement of a great number of persons belonging to the target group in the first phase of the project and on the other the creation of a lot of expectancies about its future results/products. Dissemination in the second year of the project will be intensified. It includes the printing of promotional material in national languages, the organisation of national conferences in the UK, Slovenia, Poland and Finland, the organisation of a transnational conference in Greece.

Work package 5. **Exploitation**. Additional networking with ministries, nautical academies, maritime further training organisations, local administrations, trade unions, chambers, schools and international institutions will take place in the second year of the project. Presentation of the projects to other instances is also previewed in the second year of the project. Main aim of the wp is the creation of conditions favouring sustainability of the project results. Products of this wp are the IPR agreement and the exploitation plan, scheduled to be ready by M17 and M20 respectively.

Work package 6. **Evaluation of SAIL AHEAD project and results**. Evaluation of SAIL AHEAD products and results, as well as processes followed, will go-on as prescribed in the evaluation plan during the whole duration of the project. The main purpose of the evaluation, which all partners have in mind, is the achievement of quality of SAIL AHEAD products corresponding to the needs of the target groups. To this end, the active contribution of the target groups is embedded in project activities and forms an integral part of the project.

Work package 7. **Management**. The management wp previews the smooth continuation of the project, the continuous communication between partners and the effective administration of the project and the reports. Three more transnational meetings, the first in M14 are also scheduled.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The project is based on the mapping of competences acquired by captains through their formal, non formal and informal learning and how they can be used in order to open alternative career choices. Sail Ahead is also in line with EU policies about equality of sexes, the Blue Book and the cross-sectoral instruments of the Integrated Maritime Policy.

It is well known that nautical professions are among the last to be penetrated by women. One of the main reasons is that a job in sea cannot easily reconcile with the obligations of maternity and family life. The Sail Ahead project proposes an innovative way of alleviating this real discrimination problem by adding career paths or choices whenever the woman captain decides she wants to work ashore.

7. Impact

The objectives put in the proposal as far as the impact of SAIL AHEAD is concerned for the project duration, against those actually achieved are the following:

| Preview in the project proposal | Actually achieved |
|--|---|
| The survey of competencies and characteristics will enrol at least 200 cadets in 4 countries | The actual number of cadets who have replied the questionnaire is 385, coming from at least 19 countries (18 countries specified plus those who indicated "other"). |
| The survey of competencies acquired on the job will involve at least 250 captains | The actual number of captains who have replied the questionnaire is 504, coming from at least 20 countries (19 countries specified plus those who indicated "other"). |
| Interviews with captains working ashore will include at least 50 captains. | Already 47 persons are contacted with questionnaires and personal interviews (19 professors and 37 professionals with 9 persons having double role professor/professional). 34 videos are already filmed corresponding to 21 profiles. The task is going-on. |
| Pilot testing will include at least 70 captains and cadets. | Piloting is preview for the second year of the project. |
| At least 600 captains and cadets will be directly involved in dissemination activities. | Google analytics show that in the six months the site is on-line, there are 1960 visitors, of which 1364 absolute unique visitors and 8614 page views. Articles about the project have been published in wide circulation magazines of the sector (over 60.000 recipients of the target group). The target number of 600 has been largely surpassed by those attending the presentations and events where SAIL AHEAD objectives, methodology and results up to now have been displayed. |

