

# European Community Shipowners' Associations



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## MEETING THE CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL SHIPPING

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### **“The year of the seafarer” – Marnix van Overklift President of ECSA**

ECSA very much appreciates to be invited to actively participate at this conference concentrating on the challenges for Global Shipping with as background the Commission Communication of January 2009 on the Maritime Transport Strategy 2009-2018.

I assume that this audience knows what ECSA is about. We represent the interests of European shipping, are established in Brussels since 1965 and have daily contacts with the European Institutions. European shipowners are active in all kinds of maritime sectors and services and control about 41 % of the global merchant fleet.

The 2009 Maritime Transport Strategy Paper has been welcomed by the shipping industry. It stressed the de facto global character of shipping services which should be taken into account on all fronts particularly on:

- The competitive position of the European shipping industry
- The policy for maintaining maritime know how in Europe
- Safety and Environment issues
- Global free markets
- Global Governance

Though the Strategy Paper was drafted prior to the economic and financial crisis the key elements of it are very valid as a basis to meet the challenges and opportunities resulting from the crisis.

But let's go back to the theme of this introductory speech.....

I would like to start off by commending the organisers for including the “Year of the seafarer as one of the first themes of this Conference. Indeed it makes a direct link to the IMO and its Secretary General Efthimios Mitropoulos who took the initiative to create this Year of the Seafarer. At the same time it offers an opportunity to put the profession of the seafarer at the front as a high quality and high tech profession and at the same time highlight the issues facing the profession.

As a main trading entity Europe needs a firm basis of high quality maritime know how for the full maritime cluster. However, the global shortage of highly qualified seafarers is endangering the maritime know how basis.

This is confirmed in the Commission Communication on a Maritime Transport Strategy 2009-2018 of January 2009 stressing that:

*“Over the recent years, maritime transport industries have created many jobs, directly and indirectly. Some 70 % of shipping related jobs are knowledge intensive, high quality jobs on shore. The growing shortage of maritime professionals, officers and ratings entails the risk of losing the critical mass of human resources that sustains the competitiveness of the European maritime industries in general.”*

The shipping industry is fully aware of the risk of a global shortage of highly qualified shipping people and many initiatives to attract young people to a maritime career have been launched in different EU Member States often based on cooperation between the social partners - shipowners and the unions - and national Authorities.

There is a wide range of promotion actions such as:

- Campaigns in news papers, brochures, television, etc.
- Travelling promotion teams in schools
- Seafarers lectures at schools

Most of those campaigns are directly funded by the industry.

An intensive and targeted education and training policy has been enhanced by the industry through a policy of:

- More direct involvement of shipping companies in the training process
- Sending teachers more often to sea to get acquainted with the most recent high tech
- The work and learn route
- Enhance the training on board of ships by providing extra cabins and other facilities on board

The industry is also working with a policy of “interest, recruit and bind” where appropriate.

The social partners ECSA and ETF have developed a Maritime Industries Career Path Mapping indicating the possibilities for seafarers going ashore with the different career possibilities in the maritime cluster. Further work is in process to put more flesh on the bones.

The maritime education should take into account this career planning for the maritime cluster giving seafarers a wider background.

The efforts of the industry and positive measures taken by Member States to create a global level playing field for their national shipping sector resulted in an increase of cadets at the maritime academies in:

- Germany by 157%
- Belgium 142 %
- UK 51 %
- Greece 100%

These efforts should be enhanced. ECSA hopes that the Task Force established as a follow up to the Maritime Transport Strategy 2009-2018 will have a constructive exchange of views on the best practices allowing a wider promotion of them. ECSA is ready to contribute to the work of the Task Force with the wide experience gained in this respect.

A key action point that should certainly be taken on board by the Task Force is pressure by the EU towards Member States and the Global Flag States to ratify and apply **the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)**. ECSA wishes to use this opportunity to urge all States present here to ensure an early ratification.

This Tripartite agreed Convention - parts of which have been transferred into EU legislation on the basis of an agreement between the social partners ECSA/ETF – will ensure a global “decent work” culture and create a global level playing field on fair competition.

Having elaborated on the actions that are in process to attract young people for a maritime career I cannot avoid to bring forward some other rather negative points on which action should be taken.

**The first one is the criminalisation of seafarers** which seems to happen more and more the last years even in Europe. The arrest with criminal charges and detention of the crew members of the “Fill City” in 2009 following a pollution incident in Norway, serves to demonstrate that the issue of criminalisation has not gone away.

The shipping industry continues to highlight that the unwanted criminalisation seafarers is contrary to the principles established by MARPOL and UNCLOS. The IMO and its members should act more forcibly against such incidents. National laws that permit unjustified criminalisation of seafarers should be changed or abolished.

Aside from the principle involved there is serious concern about the impact on recruitment and retention within the profession.

**The other point “Piracy at sea”** particularly off Somalia is most certainly well known to most of the audience. The 2009 figures of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) for the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia speak for themselves:

- 217 Vessels attacked by Somali pirates
- 47 vessel hijacked
- 867 seafarers hijacked

We would like to commend the Naval Forces in the area and in particular EU-NAFVOR/ATALANTA for the good work they are doing with the limited resources they have. However, more resources should be made available and there should be a more forceful application of and more robust rules of engagement and pirates should be taken to justice.

The events off Somalia make often forget that piracy is a global issue endangering shipping, the life of seafarers and global trade. In other words a global problem:

- ⊗ SOMALIA GOLF OF ADEN
- ⊗ NIGERIA
- ⊗ INDONESIA
- ⊗ MALACCA STRAITS
- ⊗ SINGAPORTRE STRAITS
- ⊗ SOUTH CHINA SEAS
- ⊗ S.E. ASIAN AND FAR EAST WATERS
- ⊗ BANGLADESH
- ⊗ SOUTH America
- ⊗ ETC

The shipping industry is taking all measures to prevent piracy on the basis of the best management Practices. However, eradicating piracy is a task of the international community. The UN should act more forcibly in line with the UN Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stating that:

**“ALL STATES SHALL COOPERATE TO THE FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT IN THE REPRESSION OF PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS OR IN ANY OTHER PLACE OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF ANY STATE.”**

Superfluous to say that that initiatives and legislation prohibiting ransom payments are unacceptable. Humanitarian considerations – particularly for our seafarers – must always have priority, especially now that about 200 seafarers are being held hostage.

We hope that the international community will take their responsibility on these alarming and unacceptable developments.

I thank you.