

EP Seminar

"Sustainable professions for blue growth – education, mobility and adaptability"

Speech by Lowri Evans

Jobs from the sea

Dear Members of the European Parliament, dear Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

We all have one preoccupation right now: getting our economy back on track and sparking off new growth and new jobs.

The maritime world can help to do that. Let me explain to you how.

The seas are simultaneously ways of transport, sources of raw material, sources of energy, sources of food, water reservoirs, the world's climate engine, and a place for leisure.

The maritime economy accounts for a production value of some 450 billion euro.

In France, over 540 000 people are directly employed in the maritime industry, generating roughly 75 billion euro. Island states like Malta or Cyprus have more than 10% of their total employment in maritime sectors. In Denmark, no part of the country is further away from the sea than 50 km.

I could go on, but I think you see my point. We are still underestimating the seas' importance to the European Union. And already important as it is today, it is bound to grow in the future.

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Let us look for instance at a well-established sector of the maritime economy: tourism.

Cruise passengers are said to spend almost two billion euro a year in European destinations, with a direct economic impact of over 800 million euro. This already generates over 130 000 jobs between direct and indirect employment. There is significant further growth and jobs potential here.

Let's take an emerging industry. Offshore wind energy will be growing by 30% by 2020, with growth prospects by the tenfold over the next decade or more.

Other maritime sectors, like wave and tidal energy, are still in embryonic phase, but they can be the success stories of tomorrow.

I was in a meeting of High Level Representatives [Focal Points] last week - chaired by Anna - and one of our Member States pointed out that, for every job offshore, there are potentially 10 jobs or more onshore! Our thinking needs to move beyond the traditional sectors of fishing and maritime transport so that we properly understand the *huge* potential for the maritime economy to contribute to growth and jobs in the EU – if we get it right.

What we have to do is embrace low-carbon efficiency, invest in marine energy and acknowledge that there's more than a chance that today's innovations and tomorrow's life-changing inventions will come from the marine world and its untapped resources.

As will many of tomorrow's jobs.

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What we want to do is identify the conditions for economic growth to come from the sea and the coastal areas. Our "**Blue Growth**" initiative will identify the maritime sectors that merit immediate attention because they carry the best promise in terms of jobs.

We will rank the best options so that policy makers can see which untapped marine resources and maritime activities we should go for in the medium term.

Then, by early 2013, we will discuss with the EP, with Member States, with regions, with industry and with education institutes on how to direct skills, research and capital so as to create the right products and services at the right time – which means: the right jobs for the right people.

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Maritime industries today can't find enough people with the right qualifications, skills and experience. This is a bottleneck to the growth of maritime industries in Europe

- which is particularly unacceptable at a time of too high unemployment in Europe.

Clearly, we have to correct a situation where training curricula cover one sector only, and opportunities for mobility are opaque or employment prospects for the future, uncertain.

So we have set out to identify the tools that will allow us to match skills, qualifications and education programmes to the needs of the sector and of job seekers.

We need to increase professional mobility between sectors and between countries. If fishermen are hit by overcapacity in their own sector, it is evident that they should be able, after some training, to work in inland navigation or fish farming or in any of the other growing maritime sectors in their coastal community.

And rather than focussing exclusively on the maritime skills needed today, we should prepare people for the technology and skills needed tomorrow.

We can all play a role here – and by 'we' I mean on the one hand we as EU institutions, and on the other you as

representative of policy makers, industry partners and education institutes.

In 2012, we will launch a public consultation to gather your input on maritime growth and employment issues. Please respond. Explain your concerns, your needs and the ideas and solutions you might have.

We very much welcome the initiative of the Polish government, the maritime academies and some industry partners to work together in the context of the Baltic Sea Strategy on maritime excellence.

We need your active involvement and that of all maritime stakeholders and social partners. Our approach to maritime affairs has always been about stakeholders like yourselves: you are the people who matter, you make the policy work and move forward. We will be looking at you to continue providing the Commission with productive input, know-how and support from the ground.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen,

Maritime policy is called on to play a full part in pulling Europe out of the present economic downturn. And it can do so.

Maritime policy not only promotes new skills and advanced technologies. It also implies new and sustainable jobs.

We need to shape a maritime policy that gives more people a better chance to find a good job. And the sooner the better.