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Federation,  
Rue de Pascale, 22,  
1040 Brussels

European Community Shipowners  
Associations,  
Rue Ducale, 45,  
1000 Brussels

L11/00

4<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Dear Mrs Lalis,

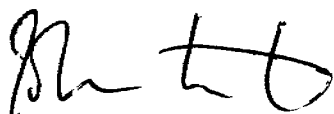
**Seafarer Training and Recruitment in Europe**

On behalf of the Social Dialogue Committee, we have pleasure in enclosing for your consideration a joint ETF/ECSA paper produced in the context of the forthcoming Commission Communication on maritime training and recruitment in Europe.

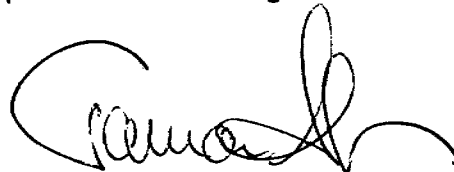
In preparing the paper, the social partners confirmed their wish to take up your proposal for ECSA and ETF to jointly meet the Commission to discuss the issue following the useful separate meetings you with last autumn.

Our respective secretariats will be in touch with your office to discuss the possibilities of such a joint meeting taking place in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,



John Lusted,  
Chairman, Social Dialogue  
Committee.



Tomas Abrahamsson  
Vice Chairman, Social Dialogue  
Committee.

Mrs G. Lalis,  
Director, DG Transport.  
28, Rue Demot  
Brussels 1040

## **SEAFARER TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT IN EUROPE**

### **AN ETF/ECSA CONTRIBUTION**

#### **Introduction**

- 1 On the basis of a number of studies, including the one produced by ECSA/ETF last autumn, the Commission is fully aware of the range of factors resulting in the difficulties and challenges facing the EU fleet in relation to training and recruitment. The central conclusion consistently reached is that in many Member States there is a current or forecast shortage of EU officers and a risk of undermining the continued existence of maritime know-how generally within the EU. Such know-how is essential for the maintenance of the maritime clusters that are vital to the Community's internal and external trade and consequently to the broader interests of society.
- 2 This paper suggests a number of initiatives that could usefully be taken to address such conclusions while fulfilling the fundamental need for the EU fleet to remain competitive in the global market in which it operates. It should be stressed that the extent of the problems being faced inevitably vary within the EU and that it should be for individual countries to tailor and /or select any possible measures to suit their particular circumstances.

#### **Political Initiatives**

- 3 The Commission's 1997 State Aid Guidelines provide considerable scope to Member States to promote and safeguard EU employment and preserve maritime know-how. Firstly by offsetting employment cost disadvantages for EU seafarers compared to many from third countries through reductions in income tax and social security contributions for EU seafarers. Secondly by reducing the costs to shipowners of on board training, the element of seafarers training which is the main financial burden and disincentive to shipping companies. Financial assistance to shipowners for repatriation of seafarers is another area that could be usefully taken up by Member States.
- 4 The social partners regard the use of the State Aid Guidelines as the key instrument with which to tackle the particular problems being faced nationally and it is encouraging that in some Member States such opportunities are being taken up. However, ECSA/ETF believe that there is a strong case for further action and that the Community institutions and the Commission in particular can have an important role in that regard. A clear statement in the proposed Communication making the case for the use of the Guidelines in this area is advocated together with the subsequent promotion of a Commission, or preferably a Council

Resolution containing the same message. A similar initiative by the European Parliament would also be helpful.

- 5 The Community could also take on a useful role in urging Member States to give priority nationally to the maritime sector in the context of Community Structural Funding, notably the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

### **Initiatives by the Industry and the EU**

- 6 In the area of recruitment and training more needs to be done to counter the perception held by many young people that the industry does not offer rewarding and long term careers. The industry accepts that these issues should be addressed through examination of career paths and job content in order to attract candidates in an employment market that offers an increasing range of opportunities.
- 7 It is important that the ongoing requirements of the maritime related industries for substantial numbers of highly qualified seafarers also be fully taken account of in the development of career paths and recruitment campaigns. Moreover, in view of the requirements of non shipping interests for qualified seafarers, consideration should be given to whether, and if so how, such interests should make some form of contribution to the training and recruitment of seafarers.
- 8 Notwithstanding the responsibility of industry, the social partners believe that the Community could also have an important role in contributing to their task through sponsoring a number of research projects. ECSA/ETF have identified the following as potentially useful and practical areas for research ;
  - profiling of suitable candidates in order to improve the selection of seafarers and potentially reduce the high drop out rates;
  - motivational factors that influence people to go to sea and later to take up shore employment. The linked question of the factors that make seafarers decide to remain at sea should also be examined;
  - present and possible future job content and career paths taking into account both sea and shore possibilities as well as the latest job design concepts;
  - communication possibilities between crew members and their families and friends provided by IT.

In proposing such possible research ETF/ECSA would emphasise the need for industry to be involved. The results of these studies should be considered by all parties concerned for use as a basis for the further amelioration of the system.

**9** The following further initiatives with an EU dimension should be pursued;

- the current shortages relate mainly to officers. There is scope for increased up grading of ratings into officers and also some limited scope for retraining fishermen, possibly with EU funds. The possibility of recruiting and converting suitably experienced officers and senior petty officers from national navies should also be explored. The promotion of distance learning, again possibly with EU funding, is relevant to all these opportunities;
- a consideration of whether modern shipboard designs provide accommodation to carry a sufficient number of cadets and other trainees. If not, consideration should be given to some form of appropriate action to address the issue;
- linked to the above, there are difficulties in some countries of finding on board training places for cadets. The social partners propose that public funds be available to EU companies training cadets on those non EU flag ships where an appropriate number of EU nationals are serving as officers and are available to train the cadets to EU standards;
- promoting recruitment and career opportunities for EU national seafarers as deck, engineer and catering officers and ratings.

### **Recruitment Campaigns**

**10** While campaigns to attract young persons would normally be centred nationally, there is potential scope for an EU sponsored campaign. ECSAVETF propose as a first step that a working group be established to examine the common factors within the different cultural and maritime traditions within Europe in order to establish whether agreed messages for such a campaign can be identified. Subsequently, a group of suitably qualified persons, notably industry and marketing experts, could examine the practical possibilities of producing promotional material and content. It could be used either on an EU wide basis or adapted as appropriate for use nationally.

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