

## DEVELOPMENT OF MARITIME HUMAN RESOURCES AND EDUCATION. CAREER EDUCATION IN LATVIAN MARITIME ACADEMY

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*Seafaring profession has traditionally been considered a romantic profession among young people, but in today's labor market has dramatically changed priorities of career choices. At present, the maritime industry has more than 40 thousand vacancies, in addition to the growing trend. If the recent level of sailors (rating) applies for a job from Asia and other developing countries, than the shipping officers with University level are particularly difficult to recruit for crew shipping companies. Standard defines the profession demanding skippers and navigators. Latvia is in good situation in comparison with other EU countries – Latvia is the 5th place in Europe (13 thousand seamen), two Maritime Colleges and the Latvian Maritime Academy (LMA) with over 500 students.*

*The European Commission sponsored project “Youth4JOB” is submitted under domain 2 of the Progress VP/2011/010 call, aimed at contributing to the implementation of the flagship initiative “Youth on the Move”, in particular on the measures to promote the first transition for young people from education to the labour market. LMA is one of 10 partners on this project. At LMA, as an interesting distinctive action, we may mention the orientation efforts of the Academy with high school students to attract them in a sector with low unemployment rates and the job guidance and identification of opportunities during their training period. Latvian Maritime Academy presents the Case Study on “Job opportunities and vocational orientation and guidance in the Maritime sector” – in this case, LMA has highlighted the interesting data that they have to make efforts to attract young people to such studies, for a sector where there is almost no unemployment for professionals.*

*The objective of the study was to use a variety of data collection and analysis methods: an analysis of policy documents, statistical data analysis, a secondary analysis of previous research, database analysis, telephone interviews, focus group discussions and expert discussions.*

**Keywords:** *unemployment, labor market, career education, seafaring profession.*

### Introduction

Quality of studies is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon (Heywood, 2000; Bartuseviciene, Rupsiene, 2010). Motives of choosing maritime profession and approaches to learnin are characteristics of an individual person. J.Holland states that similar people choose similar professions, but satisfaction from work, success and stability depend on how the personality matches to the environment (Holland, 1966). According to Lithuanian researchers G.Kalvaitiene, I.Bartuseviciene and V.Sencilaa (2011) there are the following motivation factors of profession choosing: social, economical, psychological and health. R.Hoppock (1950) explains choosing profession via the satisfaction of need.

**Actuality and scientific problem:** The marine and maritime economic sectors forming the EU's ‘blue economy’ represent roughly 5.6 million jobs and account for a Gross Value Added (GVA) of €495 billion (ECORYS, 2012). The European Commission is seeking to identify and eventually counter bottlenecks and barriers to sustainable growth and to devise the most appropriate policy responses. This initiative will also provide a comprehensive picture of the economic size and employment of all the main marine and maritime sectors in Europe, including emerging sectors with potential high added value and growth perspectives. Shortage of ship's officers is one of the main topics discussed in the maritime

society. In 2008 International Maritime Organization (IMO) launched campaign “Go to Sea” (Mason, 2008) with aim to attract new entrants to the shipping industry

The latest Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and the International Shipping Federation (ISF) report suggests that the current shortage of officers corresponds to 12 per cent of the total workforce (46,000 officers) by the year 2010 (IER, 2000). At some regional and national levels, the crisis has been particularly strongly felt, with the European Union facing serious problems. There is undoubtedly an urgent need to recruit and retain more seafarers and the immediate prognosis is not good, since recruitment and training are already inadequate to meet existing demand (MCA, 2000).

**Aim and tasks:** The discussed theories should help to understand the factors that determine the solution of profession choosin process. The aim of this project is to create awareness on the state of the maritime industry to educational institutions as well as companies providing recruitment services to both existing seafarers and potential seafaring professionals who currently work in the maritime industry, either combined with a service at sea or as a trainee.

This study aimed to determine the perceptions of potential students in high schools in Latvia and the students in Latvian Maritime Academy (LMA) regarding the nobility of the seafaring profession in the light of the shortage of competent

officers. It utilized the interview approach in gathering data. It was found out that in Latvia like in other European highly industrialized countries, the youth today are no longer interested in the seafaring profession. Working on board ships is becoming less attractive for students coming out of the schools and colleges. In the past, seafarers were paid better than their peers on shore, and they had the opportunity to travel across the world.

**Methods and results:** 70 LMA students were surveyed, which is 30% of the total number of students in LMA 2013 spring semester. During exhibition „ Career Days 2013” 70 people who are interested in studying at LMA were also surveyed. Currently, the topic that should be considered most important is the lack of new and objective information amongst young people on the maritime industry trends, opportunities and possible challenges. This study also looked into the perceptions and opinions of the practitioners, who once also struggled in order to realize their dreams and aspirations in life. The results showed that the motives of choosing profession of the great majority of young people were determined by economical factors. Thus, students aspiring to become officers and ultimately captains or master mariners must study hard, persevere and be disciplined to be able to overcome any problem along the way

### Methodology

Several terms of reference are set for the authors to obtain the main objective of the study:

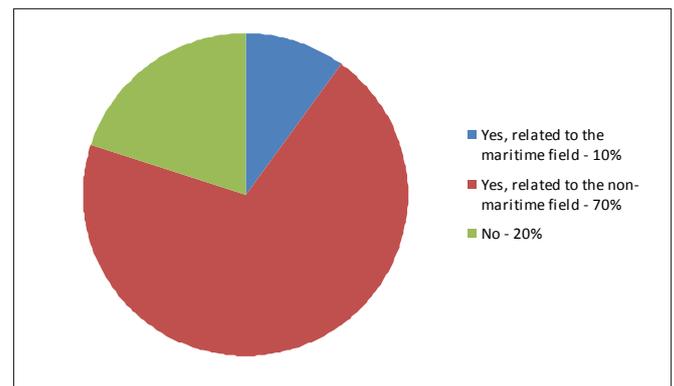
- determine whether the potential maritime specialist has had any work experience directly on the sea before they initiate studies at LMA;
- find out what methods are considered to be the best for choosing and finding future jobs;
- find out what types of characteristics in professionals are currently needed in the maritime labor market of Latvia;
- assess the extent to which the maritime education that can be currently attained meets the requirements and business needs of the maritime industry;
- evaluate the positive and negative criteria specific to work on a ship;
- suggest possible incentive measures for encouraging young professionals to choose to work in the maritime industry.

While researching youth employment aspects of the maritime industry, a survey of young people interested in the maritime field was conducted. The goal was to determine the current and future students of the Latvian Maritime Academy (LMA) opinions on the future profession they have chosen. Up to April 2013 a number of 70 LMA students were surveyed, which is 30% of the total number of students in LMA 2013 spring semester. Along with those 30% of LMA students, 70 people who are interested in studying at LMA were also surveyed.

### Results and Discussion

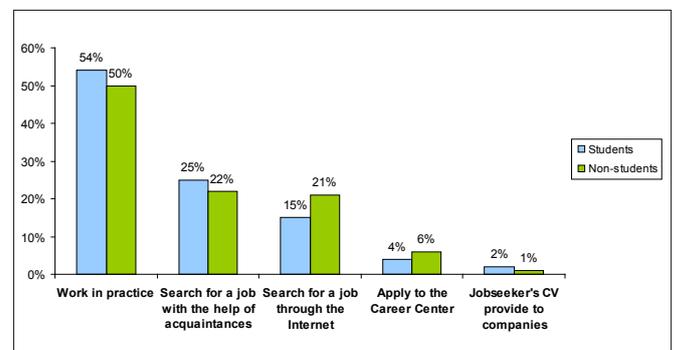
Evaluating the completed questionnaire, a trend can be found that most of the LMA students who, before the commencement of studies have been employed, have established their work with the non-marine field. The figure

1 is reflected in proportion to the answers provided by the respondents.



**Figure 1. Respondents' employment before the commencement of studies** (created by authors of the basis of completed questionnaires)

Conclusion: A young person, who does not have a specific marine-related occupation, the required professional qualifications and who does not meet the qualification requirements and criteria necessary for a maritime profession before the start of the course, is a subject to the potential difficulty in finding a job in the maritime field. However, 10% of people surveyed who before the start of the study course have already been employed have indicated affiliation with a maritime occupations in their questionnaires. But those that have not been employed at all – the total number of whom is about 90% of the respondents in the whole study – have not been in direct contact with the industry challenges. However, the survey results indicate that previous work experience is not a determining factor in the choice of study direction.

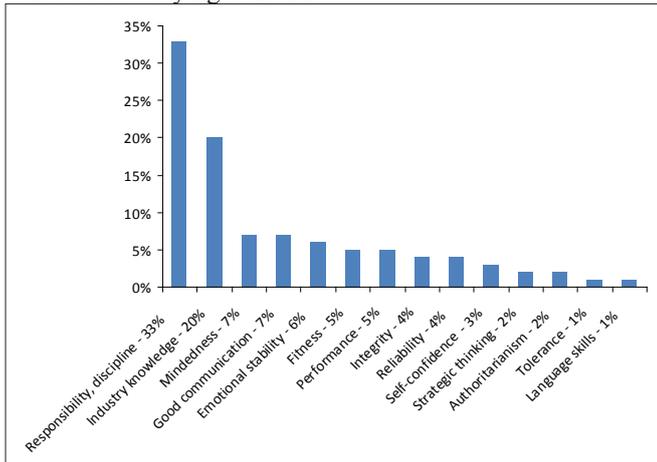


**Figure 2. Respondents' opinion about job finding possibilities** (created by authors of the basis of completed questionnaires)

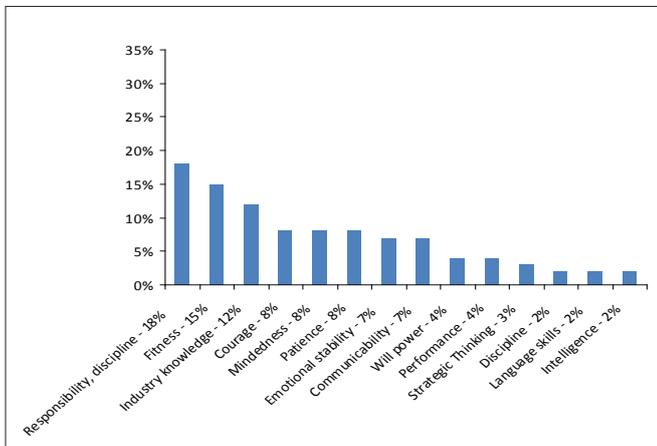
Figure 2 comparatively shows comparatively what job finding possibilities are considered by existing LMA students or those who are soon planning to start their studies in the maritime field.

Conclusion: The majority of respondents (both existing students and potential students) believe in obtaining the best job opportunities after completion of their studies as a result of an employment relationship occurring at the company they have before served as trainees. The next best option indicated by both groups of respondents is job search through corporate relationships. Greater interest in terms of career

center services is shown by respondents who have only yet considered studying at LMA.



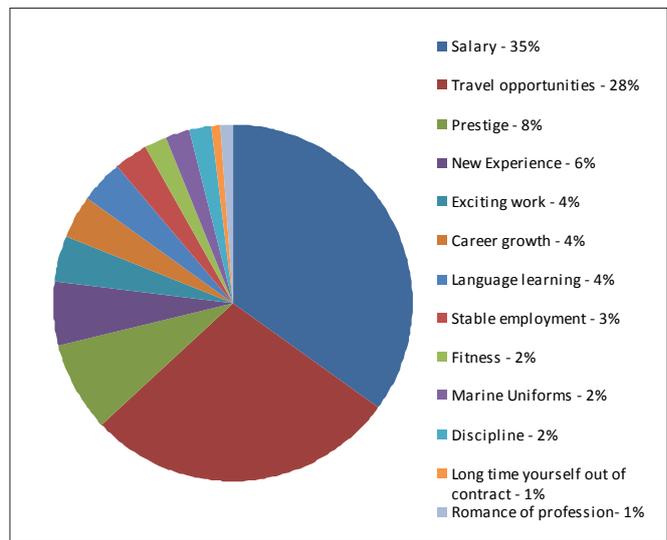
**Figure 3. Students' answers about qualities for a maritime employee** (created by authors of the basis of completed questionnaires)



**Figure 4. Potential students' answers about qualities for a maritime employee** (created by authors of the basis of completed questionnaires)

Students (Fig. 3) and potential students (Fig. 4) as the most important qualities for a maritime employee indicate such characteristics as responsibility and discipline. Also as one of the most important qualities respondents have pointed out the need to be informed about the regulatory requirements of the maritime industry.

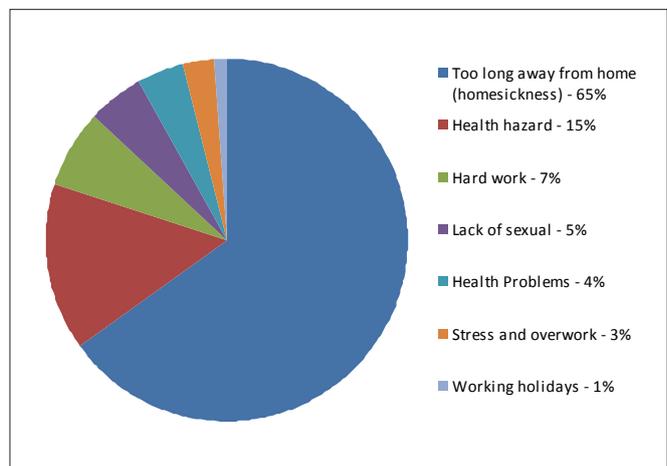
Conclusion: Students who are already familiar with the nuances of the largest maritime professions in proportion to other human qualities rely on two characteristics – the ability to be accountable for their actions, discipline (33%) and the need to know the rules governing the sector (20%). Potential students who have not yet been involved with any labor relations in the maritime sector, recognize the before mentioned qualities as important by 18% and 12% volume. Potential students place physical fitness and courage significantly higher than the current students. An unexpected trend found in during the study could be the two groups of respondents estimating the importance of language skills very low.



**Figure 5. Respondents' opinion about positive aspects for working in the maritime sector** (created by authors of the basis of completed questionnaires)

Figure 5 shows what potential students in their responses have overwhelmingly stressed the salary as a key motivating argument for working in the maritime sector. Slightly fewer respondents have identified opportunities to combine work with traveling.

Conclusion: The material incentive in today's consumer society has become a key factor to be acquired while in the search for a profession and potential job choices. Criteria such as romance, job prestige, or others specified in the graph are considered to be much less significant in comparison with the possibility to obtain a decent salary for the work done.



**Figure 6. Respondents' opinion about negative aspects for working in the maritime sector** (created by authors of the basis of completed questionnaires)

An overwhelming majority of potential students as the most negative attribute to the work in the maritime sector have indicated long-term absence during a trip, which denies appropriate contact with relatives (Fig.6). A relatively small proportion indicates the hazards of the profession directly related to potential health problems. The respondents have pointed out the characteristic 'health problems' without reinforcing the concept of potential danger involved with a

maritime profession. The contradiction is formed in the fact that only a few of those potential students surveyed have recognized good physical shape and fitness as one of the positive attributes of employment in the maritime sector.

Conclusion: Potential students offer diametrically opposing views in their answers. There is no single understanding of what should be considered a positive or negative aspect for employment in the maritime professions.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The motives of choosing profession of the great majority of young people were determined by economical (good salary, possibility to maintain family welfare, career possibilities and etc.), social (wish to acquire education, seafarer's work is responsible, seafarers are valued as specialists, seafarer's profession is one of the most perspective for those who live in seaside region and etc.) and psychological (seafarer's work seemed to be very interesting, dream to become a captain or chief mechanic and etc.) factors. Both external and internal factors predetermine the choice of seafarer's profession.

The conclusion can be done that maritime education and training institutions have to explain young people all merits of maritime profession and show possibility for them to find emotional attractiveness and realization of their interests if they choose maritime professions. In this case, according to the results of the research the studies will be continue to compare results of other parts of research in EC project "YOUTH4JOB". The results will be published in the end of 2013.

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The article has been reviewed.

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