



Recruitment and retention of seafarers and the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers



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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Sectoral Policies Department

Recruitment and retention of seafarers and the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers

Report for discussion at the Sectoral Meeting on the Recruitment and Retention of Seafarers and the Promotion of Opportunities for Women Seafarers
(Geneva, 25 February–1 March 2019)

Geneva, 2019

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, GENEVA

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Preface

This report has been prepared by the International Labour Office as a basis for discussion at the Sectoral Meeting on the Recruitment and Retention of Seafarers and the Promotion of Opportunities for Women Seafarers to be held from 25 February to 1 March 2019 in Geneva.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BIMCO	Baltic and International Maritime Council
ECSA	European Community Shipowners' Associations
ETF	European Transport Workers' Federation
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICS	International Chamber of Shipping
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMHA	International Maritime Health Association
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LNG	liquefied natural gas
LPG	liquefied petroleum gas
MASS	Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships
MET	Maritime Education and Training
MLC, 2006	Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended
OSH	occupational safety and health
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STCW	The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978
STDs	sexually transmitted diseases
UITP	Union Internationale des Transports Publics (International Association of Public Transport)
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WOMESA	Women in the Maritime Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa

Glossary

Definitions under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended

Abandonment: A seafarer shall be deemed to have been abandoned where, in violation of this Convention or the terms of the seafarers' employment agreement, the shipowner:

- (a) fails to cover the cost of the seafarer's repatriation; or
- (b) has left the seafarer without the necessary maintenance and support; or
- (c) has otherwise unilaterally severed their ties with the seafarer including failure to pay contractual wages for a period of at least two months.

Seafarer: This means any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship to which this Convention applies.

Seafarers' employment agreement: This includes both a contract of employment and articles of agreement.

Seafarer recruitment and placement service: This means any person, company, institution, agency, or other organization – in the public or the private sector – which is engaged in recruiting seafarers on behalf of shipowners or placing seafarers with shipowners.

Ship: A ship other than one which navigates exclusively in inland waters or waters within – or closely adjacent to – sheltered waters or areas where port regulations apply.

Shipowner: The owner of the ship or another organization or person, such as the manager, agent or bareboat charterer, who has assumed the responsibility for the operation of the ship from the owner and who, on assuming such responsibility, has agreed to take over the duties and responsibilities imposed on shipowners in accordance with this Convention, regardless of whether any other organizations or persons fulfil certain of the duties or responsibilities on behalf of the shipowner.

Definitions under the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978

Master: The person having command of a ship.

Officer: A member of the crew other than the master, designated as such by national law or regulations or – in the absence of such designation – by collective agreement or custom.

Rating: A member of the ship's crew other than the master or an officer.

Introduction

Background of the Meeting

At its 329th Session (March 2017), the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) endorsed the proposal for including a sectoral meeting on the recruitment and retention of seafarers and the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers in the programme of sectoral meetings for 2018–19.¹ The purpose of the Meeting would be to discuss the issues raised in resolution 11 concerning the recruitment and retention of seafarers, and the resolution 2 regarding the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers, as adopted by the 94th (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2006.² The Meeting may adopt conclusions and recommendations as well as resolutions on related topics.

The ILO has previously carried out research on the labour matters and developments in the maritime sector particularly relevant to this Meeting. This includes: *The global seafarer: Living and working conditions in a globalized industry*;³ *Women seafarers: Global employment policies and practices*;⁴ and *The impact on seafarer living and working conditions of changes in the structure of the shipping industry*.⁵

Recruitment and retention of seafarers

The resolution concerning recruitment and retention of seafarers – adopted at the 94th (Maritime) Session (2006) of the ILC – noted that there was a projected shortage of suitable qualified seafarers and that it was fundamental to the sustainable operation of the maritime sector that it be able to continue to attract new entrants and establish proper career paths for officers.⁶ The resolution acknowledged the industrial change occurring in “traditional” maritime countries which was leading to a substantial loss of their maritime skills base. It considered the need to improve the conditions of work and opportunities for seafarers, and that the recruitment and retention of seafarers in a global labour market was a complex issue, involving a social, political and economic dimension and – where appropriate – the provision of suitable policies by government and industry. The resolution invited the invited the Director-General to request the Governing Body to convene a “tripartite meeting of experts” to examine the issues and propose a set of suitable policy recommendations.⁷

¹ [GB.329/POL/4](#), para. 28.

² [GB.295/4](#), appendix.

³ ILO: *The global seafarer: Living and working conditions in a globalized industry*, 2004.

⁴ ILO: *Women seafarers: Global employment policies and practices*, 2003.

⁵ ILO: *The impact on seafarers' living and working conditions of changes in the structure of the shipping industry*, 2001 (JMC/29/2001/3).

⁶ [GB.295/4](#), appendix.

⁷ *ibid.*

Promotion of opportunities for women seafarers

The resolution regarding the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers, adopted at the 94th (Maritime) Session (2006) of the International Labour Conference, noted the findings of the ILO's report on *Women seafarers: Global employment policies and practices*.⁸ The resolution invited the Governing Body of the ILO to request the Director-General to give due priority in the use of resources to examining measures that could further promote career opportunities and appropriate working and living conditions for women seafarers, keeping in mind the mandate of the ILO to promote equality and opportunities for women and men in the world of work.⁹

Report and outcome

Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the maritime sector in order to place the issues of recruitment and retention in context. Chapter 2 focuses on the factors that impact the recruitment of seafarers. Chapter 3 describes the challenges linked to the retention of seafarers. Chapter 4 addresses the factors that impact the participation of women seafarers in the sector.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

1. General overview

1. The maritime sector carries over 90 per cent of world trade in terms of tonnage. The sector is sensitive to global economic trends including the global demand for goods. Already a quarter of a century ago, the maritime sector had evolved with changes in the structure of maritime trade. The changes included the size and composition of national fleets; new methods of maritime management; the characteristics of seafarers' employment; technological advancements; and better regulation.¹⁰ This evolution continues.
2. A recent industry study indicates that there are over 1.6 million seafarers working on various ships including tankers, bulk carriers, container ships, and passenger ships.¹¹ The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) estimates that there are 300,000–350,000 seafarers engaged in the cruise ship sector alone,¹² and these may not be reflected in this figure.
3. A “seafarer”, as defined by the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, (MLC, 2006) refers to any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship to which the MLC, 2006, applies.
4. Seafarers are essential to international trade and the global economy. The sustainability of the maritime sector depends on the availability of suitably qualified seafarers and the ability to attract an adequate number of new entrants. Seafaring, particularly its living and working conditions, has characteristics distinct from other professions.

1.1. Regulatory and policy framework

1.1.1. International Labour Organization

5. The ILO sets international labour standards, inter alia, to protect the global seafaring workforce. ILO member States have the duty to adopt, implement, and enforce national laws and regulations. This is to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work and ratified Conventions relevant to the maritime sector protect and are applied to all seafarers, taking into account other international labour standards.
6. The MLC, 2006 (a consolidation of earlier Conventions and Recommendations concerning the maritime sector) provides the minimum conditions for decent work in the sector. As of 16 November 2018, this Convention has been ratified by 88 ILO member States. Widely known as the “seafarers’ bill of rights”, Articles III and IV set out the fundamental rights and principles and seafarers’ employment and social rights pursuant to the decent work agenda. The Convention sets out seafarers’ rights on almost every aspect of their working and living conditions, including: minimum age, employment agreements, hours of work or rest, payment of wages, paid annual leave, repatriation, on board medical care, recruitment

¹⁰ ILO Joint Maritime Commission: *Changes in the shipboard environment and in the characteristics of seafarers’ employment*, 26th Session, Geneva, 1991.

¹¹ 46.9 per cent of these seafarers are officers and 53.19 per cent are ratings. This figure does not include those in non-operational roles. Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS): *Manpower Report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015* (London, 2015). This report contained the best information on the worldwide supply of seafarers available to the Office during the period in which the report was prepared.

¹² This estimate is based on ITF collective bargaining agreements signed with cruise ship operators.

and placement services, accommodation, food and catering, health and safety protection and accident prevention and seafarers' complaint handling.

7. The MLC, 2006 requires flag State inspections and certification of living and working conditions on ships. It also provides for the inspection by port States of visiting foreign flag ships. The widespread ratification and implementation of the Convention has contributed, and continues to improve the overall conditions of seafarers, which should help attract new entrants and retain experienced ones.
8. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda focuses on access to decent jobs that ensure equality, dignity, and safe working conditions for all workers, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: Decent work and economic growth. Gender equality and non-discrimination are cross-cutting policy drivers throughout the Decent Work Agenda to ensure that all workers have equal opportunities in the world of work.
9. Social dialogue plays a key role in the ILO's objective of decent work for all. This includes all types of negotiation, consultation, and information exchanges between workers, employers, and governments on issues in the world of work.

1.1.2. International Maritime Organization

10. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has responsibility within the United Nations (UN) system for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships. Nearly all IMO Conventions have an impact on the lives of seafarers. Among these are:
 - The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 (STCW), promotes the safety of life and property at sea through the establishment of international standards of training, certification, and watchkeeping for seafarers.
 - The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended, sets out the minimum safety requirements for merchant vessels from the construction process to their operation and the equipment on board a vessel.
 - The International Convention for Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) is the main international Convention covering prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from accidental or operational causes.

Other IMO Conventions and mandatory codes, as well as IMO Assembly resolutions and other instruments, also influence conditions of work at sea.

1.1.3. Port State Control memoranda of understanding

11. Globally, there are nine Port State Control memoranda of understanding (PSC MoUs). These regional agreements on port State control of ships for compliance with IMO and ILO Conventions have contributed to improving living and working conditions of seafarers, including checks to ensure payment of wages. They have also contributed (together with other types of inspections) to an increase in the number and intensity of inspections experienced by seafarers, notably senior officers.

1.2. The global labour market

12. The global supply of seafarers available for service on ships trading internationally is estimated at 1,647,500. Women seafarers have been estimated to represent 1 per cent of this total.¹³ The composition of the workforce on ships has changed dramatically, with a decline in seafarers from “traditional” maritime countries and an increase in recruitment of seafarers from “developing” countries.¹⁴
13. National labour markets have been increasingly impacted by global markets. Recruitment is organized through a global network that links shipowners, ship managers, crew managers, labour-supplying agencies, and training institutions. The five largest seafarer-supplying countries are China, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.¹⁵
14. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in Article 94 provides, inter alia, that “Every State shall effectively exercise its jurisdiction and control in administrative, technical, and social matters over ships flying its flag.” Seafarers frequently serve on ships flying the flags of countries other than their own. “Some countries have more ships flying their flag than they have seafarers to operate them, and other countries have more seafarers than their national fleet needs to operate it.”¹⁶ The issue of whether and how flag States exercise control over social and labour matters has been of concern for ILO constituents for a long period of time. In 2002, an ILO meeting of experts discussed the living and working conditions of seafarers on board ships in international registers (a category of flag State usually drawing significantly upon seafarers from other States). The meeting adopted a consensual statement, listing and stressing the importance of decent work principles and rights at work.¹⁷ The MLC, 2006, has since addressed many if not all of these principles and rights, but will need to be even more widely ratified and fully implemented to achieve its full potential.
15. Some countries require that a certain number of their nationals be hired or that certain specific positions (such as master) are filled by their nationals on board the ships that fly their flag. Certain national maritime cabotage laws aim to ensure that goods are carried on national flagged ships, for example in Argentina and Algeria.¹⁸ Other countries stipulate

¹³ “Seafarers” here refers to the STCW Convention certified officers or ratings or other operational seafarers holding qualifications or certificates issued in accordance with the provisions of appropriate bodies. BIMCO and ICS, 2015, op. cit.

¹⁴ Seafarers tend to be hired from countries where crewing costs are lower. T. Pawlik: “Maritime policy and the seafaring labor market” in *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (Vol. 14, No. 1, April 2015), pp. 123–139.

¹⁵ It is noted that Ukraine is yet to ratify the MLC, 2006 (information is correct as of October 2018). BIMCO and ICS, op. cit.

¹⁶ BIMCO and ICS, 2015, op. cit.

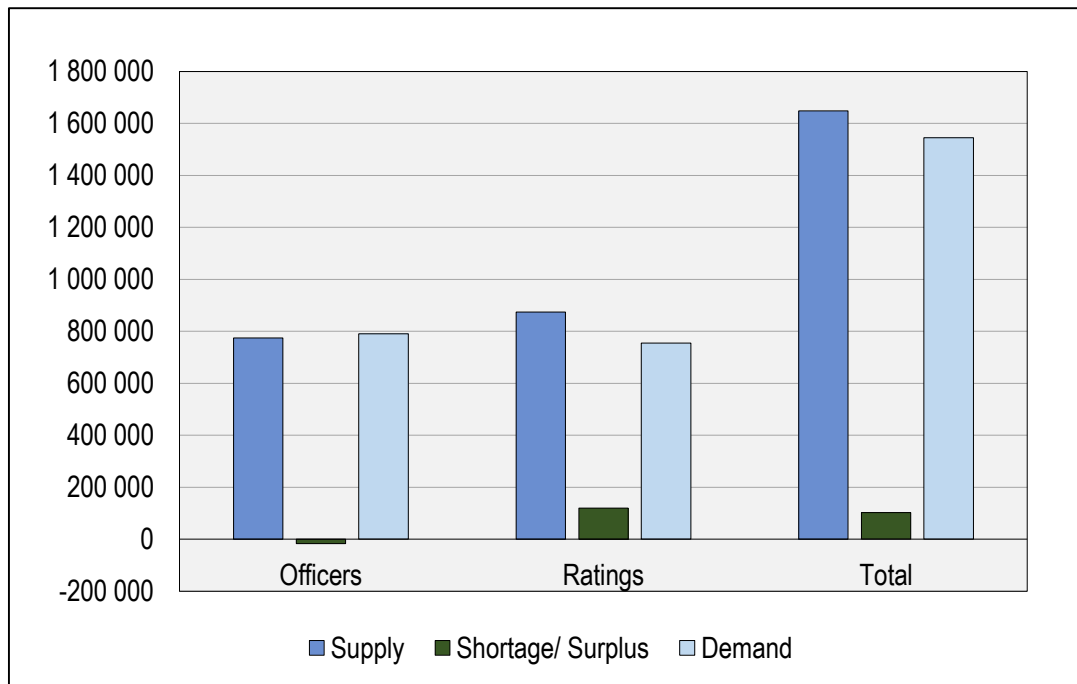
¹⁷ ILO: *Meeting of Experts on Working and Living Conditions of Seafarers on board Ships in International Registers*, final report, ILO Sectoral Activities Programme (Geneva, 2002).

¹⁸ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) describes cabotage as “sea transport between two ports in the same country”. See UNCTAD: *Rethinking maritime cabotage for improved connectivity*, 2017.

that all or a percentage of the crew be nationals or residents of the State, for example Uruguay and Chile. Nigerian cabotage laws state the ship must be “wholly manned by Nigerians.”¹⁹

16. The global demand in 2015 for seafarers was estimated at 1,545,000 seafarers. As shown in figure 1.1, there is a higher demand for officers than the number of available officers. The ship types that have the highest demand for officers are general cargo ships (25 per cent of officer demand); bulk carriers (19.4 per cent); and offshore vessels (12.4 per cent). Those with the largest demand for ratings are general cargo ships (30.1 per cent); bulk carriers (19.9 per cent); and passenger ships (9.9 per cent).²⁰

Figure 1.1. Estimated global supply and demand of seafarers, 2015



Source: BIMCO and ICS: *Manpower report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015* (London, 2015).

17. With the number of ships growing since 2010, there has been a surge in the demand for officers (24.1 per cent). However, the demand for ratings has increased by only 1 per cent.²¹
18. As illustrated in figure 1.2, it is predicted that this balance between supply and demand for officers will rise from 2.1 per cent (2015) to 18.3 per cent by 2025.²² This increased demand for officers will vary in accordance to the specific needs of the different vessels. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carriers, container, and passenger ships are estimated to lead the growing demand for officers.²³

¹⁹ Seafarers’ Rights International: *Cabotage Laws of the World*, 2018.

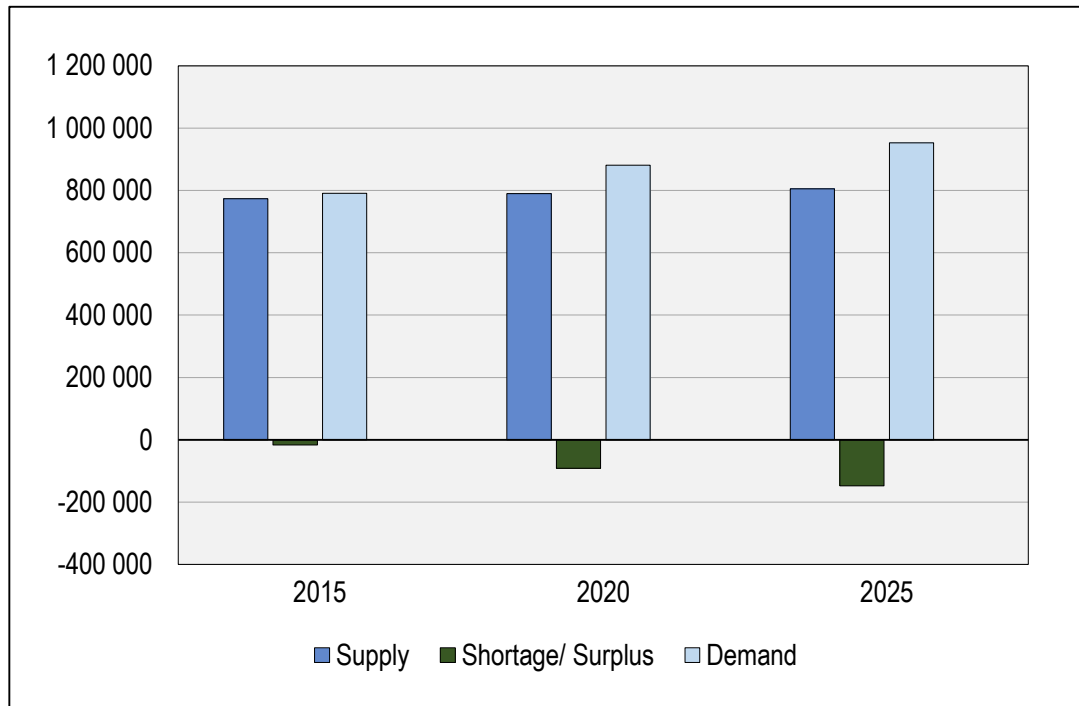
²⁰ BIMCO and ICS, 2015, op. cit.

²¹ Of this figure, 790,500 are officers and 754,500 are ratings. *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

Figure 1.2. Basic forecast for the supply–demand balance for officers



Source: BIMCO and ICS: *Manpower report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015* (London, 2015).

19. Improvements in the system of recruitment and training of seafarers has reduced “officer wastage”. Training numbers, however, do need to grow significantly to avoid the projected future shortage of officers.²⁴ The recruitment of officers has reduced over recent years, particularly from “traditional” maritime countries. This is the consequence of factors such as “high attrition rates amongst cadets during or after training ... and with senior officers, after an average seven years at sea for land-based jobs”.²⁵
20. The estimated future shortage of seafarers highlights the need to address the factors that contribute towards attracting qualified people and ensuring that they, and existing seafarers, have a satisfying career in the maritime sector.

1.3. Technological innovation in the maritime sector

21. In a 1991 report to the Joint Maritime Commission (JMC), the ILO had already identified technological developments as a possible cause of reduction in employment opportunities at sea. Automation and other technological innovations were identified as contributing factors to the reduction of the size of crews and isolation, whilst the need for highly skilled personnel increased.²⁶

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ ILO: *Changes in the shipboard environment and in the characteristics of seafarers’ employment*, JMC, 26th Session, Geneva, Oct. 1991 (doc. JMC/26/1).

1.3.1. Digital technologies

22. The maritime sector has made advances in technology with the bulk of data handling being adapted to computers and high-speed telecommunications. The majority of ships are equipped with computer monitoring systems or control equipment with a higher capacity for data transmission. Digitalization describes the “transformation of processes and models due to digital changes and possible disruptions”.²⁷
23. Systems have become more efficient, sophisticated, and faster. Technological developments have eased or replaced some of the work of the crew, and this has led to a gradual decrease in the number of crew on board a ship.²⁸

1.3.2. Automation

24. There is more and more discussion on the future of automation aboard ships, particularly regarding the regulation of automated ships and their direct impact on employment. This will further be discussed in Chapter 3. The discourse surrounding automation assesses the impact of automation on tasks rather than on jobs. Studies indicate that automation has initially replaced manual routine tasks, increasingly replaced non-routine tasks, and how low complexity, narrow task job profiles have been fully replaced.²⁹ Some maintain that – through the automation of certain tasks and work procedures – human error can be reduced and productivity can be boosted.³⁰
25. The terms “automated vessels” and “unmanned vessels” are yet to be defined, however, the terms are not synonymous. The IMO has defined Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship (MASS) as “a ship which, to a varying degree, can operate independently of human interaction.”³¹ Autonomous shipping is becoming more of a reality as various projects are under way. One such project concerns the *Yara Birkeland* (see box 1.1), the autonomous container ship currently in development. Other projects include the Chinese Alliance for Unmanned Ships, which is expected to launch its first unmanned ship for commercial use in 2021.³²

²⁷ ICS: *Seafarers and digital disruption: The effect of autonomous ships on the work at sea, the role of seafarers and the shipping industry*, 2018.

²⁸ DNV GL: *Remote-controlled and autonomous ships position paper*, 2018.

²⁹ I. Nübler: *New technologies: A jobless future or golden age of job creation?*, 2016.

³⁰ Human error accounts for 75 per cent of the value of almost 15,000 marine liability insurance claims analysed over a period of five years. Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty, *Global Claims Review: Liability in Focus*, 2017.

³¹ IMO: *IMO takes first steps to address autonomous ships*, 2018.

³² ICS, 2018, op. cit.

Box 1.1
Yara Birkeland autonomous vessel

The *Yara Birkeland* is a 120 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) open top container ship, set to be the world's first fully electric and autonomous container vessel ship, with zero CO₂ emission. The vessel will be prepared for autonomous and unmanned operation. Three control centres on shore, each handling a different aspect of the vessel's operation, are expected to handle emergency and exceptional monitoring; condition and operational monitoring; decision support; surveillance and other aspects of ship safety. The designing stages of the vessel are completed and after its initial launch, it will gradually move from manned operation to fully autonomous operation by 2022.

Source: *Autonomous ship project, key facts about YARA Birkeland*, Kongsberg Maritime.

26. MASS can operate with varying levels of human interaction. The level of autonomy will affect the number of seafarers required to operate shipboard systems and the skills required to do so. The degrees of automation are indicated in figure 1.3. It is possible for a vessel to operate at different levels of autonomy during a single voyage.³³
27. The prevailing cautious attitude towards automated ships determines that automated or semi-autonomous vessels will more likely operate, at first, over shorter distances and closer to shore with support by remote control.

Figure 1.3. Degrees of automation

Ship with automated processes and decision support	Remotely controlled ship with seafarers on board	Remotely controlled ship without seafarers on board	Fully autonomous ship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seafarers are on board to operate and control shipboard systems and functions • some operations may be automated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ship controlled and operated from another location • seafarers remain on board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ship is controlled and operated from another location. • no seafarers on board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the operating system of the ship is able to make decisions and determine actions by itself.

Source: *IMO takes first steps to address autonomous ships*, IMO, 2018.

28. The international regulatory and legal framework that governs shipping has and will continue to be affected by technological developments. The CMI Position Paper on Unmanned Ships aims to identify the legal issues surrounding unmanned shipping. Recently, the IMO has begun to assess how MASS operations may be addressed by IMO instruments. This regulatory scoping exercise will include: preliminary definitions of MASS; degrees of autonomy; and the examination of current IMO instruments and their applicability to ships, with varying degrees of autonomy.³⁴ It will also look into how MASS will affect the human element, technology, and operational factors. In a related development, a recently-launched IMO project on the human element will take into account this aspect in the review of new and existing IMO regulations.
29. The movement into integrated technology and automated functions require consideration of how ships are to be manned and operated. The demand for specialized and highly skilled crews will increase as the sector moves towards more digital operating systems on vessels.

³³ IMO, 2018, op. cit.

³⁴ The Lloyd's Register defines the levels of autonomy for merchant ships.

Technological changes are changing ship management processes and altering the traditional patterns of operating.³⁵

1.3.3. Technological developments, the environment and green jobs

30. The maritime sector accounts for about 1 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. The IMO has estimated that technological and operational improvements have the potential to reduce CO₂ emissions by 33 per cent by 2050. The concept of greening in the sector is closely tied to the discussion surrounding automation and digitalization. Technological innovation is driven by considerations such as reducing maritime emissions, and can be a source for environmental sustainability.³⁶ Greening maritime employment would provide continuation of maritime services whilst being more energy- and resource-efficient. Decent working conditions – and the attraction and retention of qualified seafarers – can lessen the number of maritime accidents and pollution incidents. Decent work in the maritime sector is thus essential to the protection of the marine environment. There is an expected shift of job types and the creation of new job profiles. With predicted crew reductions at sea – following increased remote management and monitoring of vessels – it is forecasted that there will be a greater number of jobs ashore.

³⁵ S. Bhardwaj: “Technology, and the up-skilling or deskilling conundrum” in *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (Vol. 12, No. 2, Oct. 2013), pp. 245–253.

³⁶ OECD/ITF: *Decarbonising Maritime Transport: Pathways to zero-carbon shipping by 2035*, 2018.

2. Recruitment

31. The ILO promotes recruitment practices that protect, respect, and fulfil international labour standards and globally-recognized human rights.³⁷ In 2014, the ILO launched the Fair Recruitment Initiative (ILO-FAIR) to protect the rights of workers from fraudulent and abusive recruitment practices, among others. This initiative looks to enhance global knowledge on national and international recruitment practices; improve laws, policies and enforcement to promote fair recruitment; promote fair business practices; and empower and protect workers. For the maritime sector, the MLC, 2006, provides extensive provisions on recruitment, in particular in Regulation 1.4, and the related Standards and Guidelines (see below).

2.1. Attraction: What calls a person to a career at sea?

32. There are many positive and attractive aspects to a maritime career. Seafaring may offer the adventure of being at sea, to travel around the world, good pay, flexibility, and long leave periods. Seafarers are also influenced by the working and living conditions provided on board a ship. These may include: social protection and insurance; salaries offered; activities on the ship and, for some, access to the Internet on board.³⁸ The prospect of a long and rewarding career at sea with the potential for successful transition into a shore-based career afterwards could also draw one into a maritime career.³⁹ Shipping companies do better in this regard if they take into account the seafarers' expectations for career development and future plans.⁴⁰
33. Surveyed cadets identified issues such as multicultural interaction, safety, security, workload/stress, discrimination, harassment, and loneliness as concerns about going to sea.⁴¹ Exposure to the maritime sector tends to be negative, as public attention to seafaring is usually drawn following marine disasters, reports of human trafficking, or incidents of piracy and abandonment of seafarers.⁴²
34. As shown in box 2.1, the IMO has promoted seafaring as a career, launching various projects aimed specifically to the younger generation and women seafarers. This promotes working conditions that are more family-friendly, in the aim of attracting more women seafarers. These measures benefit all seafarers.

³⁷ ILO: *General principles & operational guidelines for fair recruitment*, 2016.

³⁸ P. Arsenie et al.: *Recruitment and retention of seafarers – what calls to and keeps individuals in a career at sea?*, the 13th Annual General Assembly of the IAMU “Expanding Frontiers – Challenges and Opportunities in Maritime Education and Training”, 2014.

³⁹ A.K. Jensen et al.: “The perception and image of shipping”, in *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (Vol. 15, No. 1, Feb. 2015), pp. 41–78.

⁴⁰ P. Arsenie et al., 2014, op. cit.

⁴¹ K. Pike et al.: *The Gender Empowerment and Multi-cultural Crew (GEM) Project Report 2015–2016: For the ITF Seafarers' Trust*, Nov. 2016.

⁴² A.K. Jensen et al., 2015, op. cit.

Box 2.1
Go to Sea!

The “Go to Sea!” campaign was launched in November 2008 in association with the International Labour Organization, the “Round Table” of shipping NGOs – BIMCO, ICS/ISF, INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO – and the International Transport Workers’ Federation.

This campaign recognises that there is a need to have a pool of competent and efficient seafarers to meet the future demand. Following this, the aim of the campaign is the promotion of seafaring as an attractive career option for young people. This includes highlighting the sector as one that could provide a stimulating and rewarding career, both at sea and in the sector as a whole.

Activities included the establishment and maintenance of training institutions, providing support to new and experienced seafarers during their education and training, highlighting opportunities available for women seafarers, having gender-friendly accommodation on board, media promotion and campaign endorsements.

This initiative further encourages industry stakeholders and Governments to mount their own campaigns aimed at improving seafarer recruitment.

Source: *Go to Sea! A Campaign to attract entrants to the shipping industry*, IMO, ILO et al.

2.2. Career development, education, and training

35. In Regulation 2.8, the MLC, 2006, calls on member States to create national policies to promote opportunities for employment, career, and skills development for seafarers domiciled in their territory. Standard A2.8, paragraph 2, encourages member States to facilitate the strengthening of seafarer competency, qualifications, and employment opportunities. The MLC, 2006, envisions both initial and continuous training for seafarers.
36. Guideline B2.8 sets out the different steps that can be taken to promote the objectives of Standard A2.8, including career development and skills-training agreements with shipowners or shipowner organizations, maintaining a list of qualified seafarers and promoting onshore and offshore opportunities for further training and education.
37. Recruitment in the maritime sector has to comply with international and national requirements regarding the compulsory training levels associated with every position intended to be occupied by a seafarer. The education and training of potential seafarers is an important consideration in the shortage of certain categories of seafarers, in particular officers. Research has indicated that there is no major recruitment problem in the sector as a whole; but rather there are recruitment issues related to officers at the management level and officers qualified to work on chemical tankers and LNG and LPG carriers.⁴³
38. Regulation 1.3 of the MLC, 2006, on training and qualifications aims to ensure that seafarers have the required training and qualifications to carry out their duties on board a ship. Seafarers are prohibited to work on a ship unless they have fully completed their training and are certified as competent in accordance with the IMO mandatory instruments.

⁴³ BIMCO and ICS: *Manpower report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015* (London, 2015).

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39. The STCW Convention establishes the minimum requirements on training, certification, and watchkeeping for seafarers. Certificates under the STCW Convention are issued to candidates who meet the “requirements for service, age, medical fitness, training, qualification and examinations” in accordance with the Convention.
 40. Women and men need equal access to training and education. This could be achieved through equal opportunity policies that specifically relate to women seafarers and encourage an increased intake of female trainees. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.
 41. Technological developments could have the effect of creating a skills gap as seafarers’ competences may struggle to evolve as fast as the developments taking place.⁴⁴ This could increase the chances of accidents occurring if seafarers are not trained in the appropriate use of new technology that has been introduced on a ship.⁴⁵ The continuous education and training of seafarers is required to ensure that seafarers strengthen their skills and employability – which includes being tech-savvy.⁴⁶ Training responses to technological developments could include the re-skilling, deskilling, or up-skilling of seafarers. “Deskilling” could mean that less qualified workers would perform the same tasks that, previously, would have required a worker to be highly skilled; now, they would be able to rely on automation.⁴⁷
 42. Training seafarers in new technologies will enable them to benefit from new opportunities that arise as technological developments continue. Technology and digital training was the second most requested type of training by seafarers after equipment refresher training.⁴⁸ The skills identified as being the most important in the context of automation were engineering, electrotechnical, and in-depth knowledge of IT systems and electronics.⁴⁹
 43. Social partners, educational/training institutions, flag States, and international regulatory bodies should work together to assess and evaluate the requirements for future skills and training.

⁴⁴ Futureautics Maritime: *Crew Connectivity 2018 Survey Report*, 2018.

⁴⁵ H. Sampson and L. Tang: *New Shipboard Technology and Training Provision for Seafarers*, 2011.

⁴⁶ The *Vocational Training (Seafarers) Recommendation, 1970 (No. 137)*, states: “Retraining, refresher, familiarisation and upgrading courses should be available as required for suitable officers and ratings to enable them to increase and widen their technical skills and knowledge, to keep abreast of technological changes, in particular in the development of automated ships, and to meet the requirements of new methods of operations on board ship.”

⁴⁷ S. Bhardwaj: “Technology, and the up-skilling or deskilling conundrum” 2013, op. cit.

⁴⁸ 60 per cent of respondents indicated this. Futureautics Maritime, 2018, op. cit.

⁴⁹ Nautilus Federation: *Future proofed? Autonomous shipping research*, 2018.

2.3. Cadet berths ⁵⁰

44. The STCW Convention requires seafarer training both at a maritime institute and on board a ship to gain experience. The STCW Convention sets out the minimum approved seagoing service for the different rankings of crew which can vary from six to 36 months. The availability of cadet berths on a ship represents an opportunity for providing practical training aboard. Further, the 2010 Conference of Parties to the STCW Convention adopted a resolution entitled “Accommodation for trainees”. This resolution urges shipowners, shipping companies, and ship managers to provide suitable accommodation for trainees aboard their ships. This followed from a recognition of the lack of adequate accommodation and the barrier it creates to the training and retention of trainees.
45. There are various factors that impact the availability of cadet berths on ships. Ships may lack the space to accommodate cadets on board, as they are designed with a view to maximizing space for cargo and minimizing port levies calculated according to the ship’s gross tonnage. ⁵¹ Other factors include lack of capacity for on board supervision and mentoring, and the costs associated with providing cadet berths on board a ship. ⁵² Where cadet berths are available, working conditions of trainees can also be an area of concern. Most cadets are treated well. However, some cadets have experienced harsh treatment, hostility from other crew members, and exploitation are some examples of such working conditions. ⁵³
46. Responses in the Maritime Education and Training (MET) Institutional Survey indicated the difficulty for officer trainees and MET institutions to find berths to enable the completion of sea time requirements. This difficulty is illustrated in figure 2.1. For instance, in the case of Australia, it has been noted that the demand for cadet berths on vessels is not being met, resulting in a “major bottleneck in the supply of seafarers”. Further, it was noted that this was an issue for MET institutions globally; some institutions have responded to this through practices such as scheduling short training periods on vessels or using alternate forms of simulator training. ⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Cadets are considered seafarers as defined by the MLC, 2006.

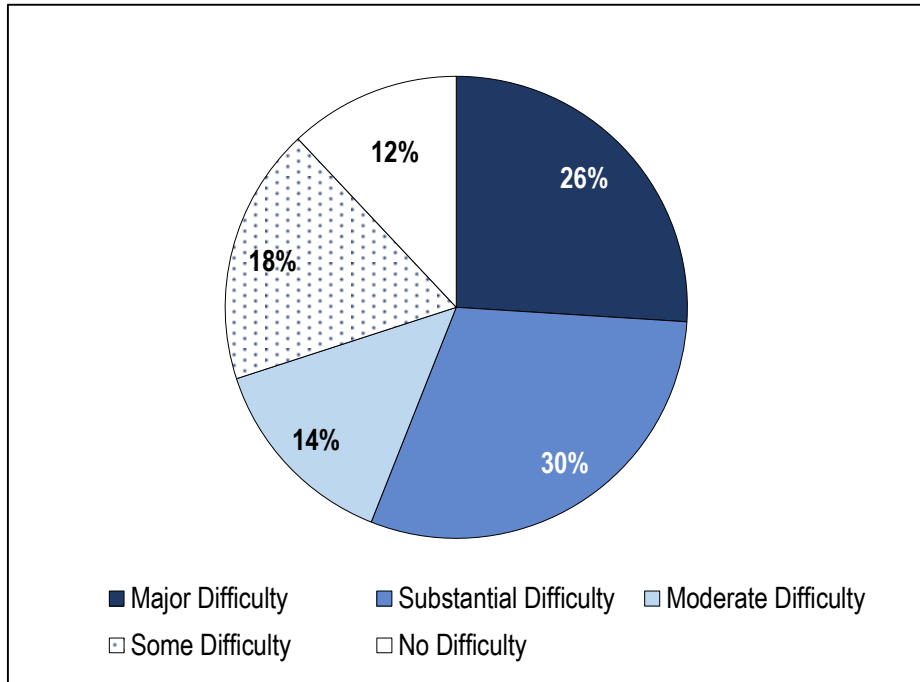
⁵¹ This is in line with the IMO International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969 (TM Convention).

⁵² BIMCO and ICS, 2015, op. cit.

⁵³ L.D. Caesar et al.: “Exploring the range of retention issues for seafarers in global shipping: opportunities for further research” in *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (Vol. 14, No. 1, April 2015), pp. 141–157.

⁵⁴ S. Ghosh: “Management of berths at sea for seafarer students” in *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs* (Vol. 5, No. 1, Jan. 2013), pp. 11–21.

Figure 2.1. Estimated difficulty for officer trainees to obtain sea time before qualification



Source: BIMCO and ICS: *Manpower report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015* (London, 2015).

47. In 2017, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) introduced “Training Berth Relief Support”, which supports shipping companies to provide cadet training.⁵⁵ Further, the MPA – along with the SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) and the Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU) – provided the Tripartite Nautical and Engineering Training Award programmes with funding to support Singaporean seafarers to become deck and marine engineer officers.⁵⁶
48. Another approach is investment in training ships. For example, the T/S Piri Reis University is a training ship for Turkish commercial cadets, proving a solution for the shortage of cadet berths. With a capacity for 400 cadets, the ship has a training bridge, lecture theatre, and classrooms. Cadets also gain practical experience and insight into life at sea.
49. The implementation of national legislation or campaigns to support and enable cadet training and opportunities could play a key role in addressing the predicted seafarer shortage. Such campaigns further encourage companies to invest in providing cadet berths on ships.

2.4. Medical examination of seafarers

50. The MLC, 2006, and the STCW Convention require seafarers to hold certificates of medical fitness.⁵⁷ Seafarers are to undergo pre-sea and periodic medical examinations for their own health and safety, and for the safe operation of the ship. The MLC, 2006, refers to the

⁵⁵ Singapore Maritime Authority: Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore Shipping Circular to Shipowners, 2017.

⁵⁶ “Key Singapore cadet training programmes receive \$10m funding over three years”, in *Seatrade Maritime News*, 2018.

⁵⁷ MLC, 2006, Regulation 1.2.

ILO/World Health Organization (WHO) *Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations for Seafarers* (superseded by IMO–ILO *Guidelines on the medical examinations of seafarers*)⁵⁸ which are the recommended guidelines to be followed when conducting medical fitness examinations of seafarer candidates and serving seafarers.⁵⁹ The guidelines provide maritime administrations with an internationally-recognized set of criteria for use either directly or as a basis for framing national standards; they assist medical practitioners, shipowners, seafarers’ representatives, seafarers, and other relevant persons with the conduct of medical fitness examinations.

51. Flag States are encouraged to participate in the health screening procedures of seafarers who work on ships flying their flag. The medical practitioner conducting the medical examinations must enjoy full professional independence in exercising their medical judgement.⁶⁰

2.5. Recruitment process

52. Certain recruitment practices may encourage careers in shipping. These include:

- practical training on board ships for cadets with access to up-to-date simulation technologies;
- significant investments by governments and social partners in the establishment and support of education and training programmes;
- career plans that enable skilled seafarers to transition to shore-based careers, either when they reach a certain age and level of experience, or for periods during their sea-based career;
- upgraded living conditions on board ships;
- the enhancement of social benefits for employees;
- STCW certificates being recognized in other countries.⁶¹

2.5.1. The recruitment of seafarers under the MLC, 2006

53. Regulation 1.4 of the MLC, 2006, provides that seafarers shall have access to an efficient, adequate, and accountable system for finding employment on board without charge to the seafarer.
54. The primary obligation in Standard A1.4 is to ensure that recruitment and placement services are operated in an orderly manner that protect and promote the employment rights of seafarers. Recruitment and placement services must ensure that seafarers’ employment agreements are in accordance with the applicable laws, regulations, and collective bargaining agreements. Under the MLC, 2006, Guideline B1.4, paragraph 2, public and

⁵⁸ ILO–IMO: *Guidelines on the medical examinations of seafarers*, as revised in 2011 by the Joint ILO–IMO Working Group on Medical Fitness Examination of Seafarers and Ships’ Medicine Chests.

⁵⁹ MLC, 2006, Guideline B1.2.1.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, Standard A1.2, para. 4.

⁶¹ Deloitte: *Challenge to the industry: Securing skilled crews in today’s market place*, 2011.

private recruitment and placement services are obligated to keep records of qualified seafarers, providing and arranging employment, and informing seafarers of their rights and obligations under the employment agreement. The compliance of recruitment and placement services with the MLC, 2006, is key to ensuring that seafarers are protected against unfair recruitment practices.

- 55.** Standard A1.4 of the MLC, 2006, requires member States to ensure that recruitment and placement agencies: maintain registers of the placed seafarers; inform them of their rights and duties under their employment registers; verify seafarers' qualifications and that they hold the correct documents as required by the concerned job.⁶² Regulation 5.3 calls on member States to establish effective inspection and monitoring systems and judicial procedures to ensure compliance with their labour-supplying responsibilities under the MLC, 2006. Member States to the MLC, 2006, are obligated to ensure that recruitment and placement services operating in their territory comply with a minimum set of standards that promote fair recruitment practices.⁶³
- 56.** Shipowners who use recruitment and placement services must ensure that the service is certified or licensed and regulated in accordance with the MLC, 2006. The MLC, 2006, discourages the use of recruitment services that are based in countries that have not ratified the Convention.⁶⁴
- 57.** Standard A1.4, paragraph 5, of the MLC, 2006, calls on member States to ensure that seafarer recruitment and placement services operating in their territory operate in line with a standardized system of licensing or certification:
- require that no fees or other charges for their recruitment or placement or their employment are borne directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, by the seafarer. The costs of obtaining a national statutory medical certificate, the national seafarer's book, and a passport or similar travel documents (excluding the costs of visas) are to be borne by the seafarer;⁶⁵
 - prohibit seafarer recruitment and placement services from using means, mechanisms, or lists intended to prevent or deter seafarers from gaining employment for which they are qualified.⁶⁶
- 58.** Abusive recruitment practices pave the way in some cases to labour exploitation. The MLC, 2006, is aimed at preventing such practices, and the requirement for registration of recruitment and placement services should, over time, reduce instances such as those mentioned below.
- 59.** Reported abuses by manning agencies include, but are not limited to:
- debt bondage (in order to be able to reimburse recruitment fees);
 - blacklisting, for various reasons such as:

⁶² MLC, 2006, Standard A1.4, para. 5(c).

⁶³ *ibid.*, Standard A1.4, para. 5.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, Standard A1.4, para. 9.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Standard A.1.4, para. 5(b).

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, Standard A.1.4, para. 5(a).

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- establishing or joining a trade union or exercising legitimate trade union activities (in violation of the MLC, 2006, and the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), which guarantees workers the fundamental right to freedom of association);
 - complaining about unfair treatment, poor working conditions and other concerns;
 - being subject to pending disciplinary proceedings;
 - misleading information about the nature and conditions of work;
 - passport retention;
 - illegal wage deductions.

60. Seafarers often seem reluctant to use the complaints mechanisms under the MLC, 2006, regarding recruitment and placement services and State supervision responsibility. This is allegedly due to the fear of limiting future employment opportunities and being labelled “troublemakers”. Instead, complaints are submitted in a manner that safeguards anonymity including through channels such as the ITF, other trade unions, or port chaplains who in turn notify the relevant authorities.⁶⁷

2.5.2. Discrimination in the recruitment process

61. The ILO’s Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), defines discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.” Article 1, paragraph 1(b), further notes discrimination to include distinctions, exclusions or preferences which have the impact of nullifying or impairing equality or opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

62. In terms of the MLC, 2006, Article III, the member States are required to satisfy themselves that the provisions of their national legislation respect the fundamental principles and rights at work, in particular paragraph (d) “the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation”. Guideline B1.4.1 calls on member States that operate a public seafarer recruitment and placement service to consider maintaining an arrangement for the collection and analysis of data on the maritime labour market – including data collection on age or sex for statistical purposes – or to be used in programme framework to prevent age and gender discrimination.

63. The promotion of equal opportunities and treatment throughout the recruitment process is one important step in eliminating gender discrimination. Employment policies aim to guarantee equal opportunities in the recruitment process, as well as during training and career development, and in the terms and conditions of employment and benefits.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ European Commission: *Service contract regarding a study on the implementation of labour supplying responsibilities pursuant to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006) within and outside the European Union*, 2015.

⁶⁸ ILO: *Gender diversity journey: Company good practices*, 2017.

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- 64.** Discrimination in the labour market such as the denial of access to employment, training, promotion, and access to social security are concerns that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workers may face.⁶⁹ Detailed information on the nature and extent of discrimination of LGBT workers in the maritime sector is not readily available.

⁶⁹ ILO: *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, Report of the Director-General, Report I(B), International Labour Conference, 96th Session, Geneva, 2007.

3. Retention

65. Career progression, work–life balance, working and living conditions, isolation, and loneliness due to long periods on board are, amongst others, factors that can determine how long a seafarer stays at sea. In order to address and avoid a seafarer shortage, there is a need to address what factors keep people at sea and the issues that make seafarers leave prematurely.⁷⁰ In a recent survey, trainee seafarers stated that they expect to spend ten to 15 years at sea. This expected time corresponds with the actual sea-time seafarers have spent at sea before transferring to shore.⁷¹

3.1. Retention practices

66. Factors that influence the decision of a seafarer to pursue and remain in a career at sea include a safe and secure working environment, decent working and living conditions, internet access, social protection, medical care, fair employment terms, seafarer family support by the company, working on high-tech and usable ships and systems, and long-term career prospects.⁷²

67. A study on the challenges in the recruitment and retention in Viet Nam identified reasons why seafarers are leaving the sector: poor retention management system; unfair promotion and unfair organizational culture; low salary; and poor working conditions.⁷³ Where there is a lack of positive organizational culture and poor shipboard management, seafarers are less likely to remain motivated to stay with one company.⁷⁴ Poor human resource practices can also lead to seafarers leaving the sector. Such practices may include abandonment by shipowners; late or unpaid wages; insufficient shore leave; and lack of shore-based support.⁷⁵

68. Cadets may leave after their training period for reasons such as the inability to cope with life at sea or difficulties associated with training. Other seafarers are identified as leaving the sector when their career progression becomes stagnant. This may be due to various reasons,

⁷⁰ L.D. Caesar et al.: “Exploring the range of retention issues for seafarers in global shipping: opportunities for further research” 2015, op. cit.

⁷¹ ECSA and ETF: *Maritime career path mapping 2013 update*, 2013.

⁷² P. Arsenie et al.: *Recruitment and retention of seafarers – What calls to and keeps individuals in a career at sea?*, from the 13th Annual General Assembly of the IAMU “Expanding Frontiers – Challenges and Opportunities in Maritime Education and Training”, 2014.

⁷³ T. Nguyen et al.: “Current Challenges in the Recruitment and Retention of Seafarers: An Industry Perspective from Vietnam”, in *The Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics* (Vol. 30, No. 2, Aug. 2014), pp. 217–242.

⁷⁴ ESCA and ETF: *The mapping of career paths in the maritime industries*, 2013.

⁷⁵ L.D. Caesar et al.: “Exploring the range of retention issues for seafarers in global shipping: opportunities for further research” 2015, op. cit.

such as lacking the experience or the absence of higher ranking positions. Seafarers may also voluntarily leave the sector for personal reasons such as family responsibilities.⁷⁶

69. As indicated in box 3.1, shipping companies aim to improve welfare and working conditions, developing retention strategies aimed at preventing or reducing the number of seafarers leaving the sector. These strategies should aim at ensuring job satisfaction, which is affected by factors such as: job diversity, salary, opportunity for career progression, professional and personal development, and a good working environment.⁷⁷

Box 3.1
Retention practices

Research on the factors that determine seafarer retention emphasizes the following characteristics: fair recruitment processes, employee-friendly organizational culture, and long-term career aspects.

One of the world's largest shipping lines attributes five factors to its 98 per cent retention rate:

- for all seafarers: training and professional development courses; leadership development, team building, and cultural training for senior crew;
- decent on-board working conditions;
- management/employer communication to crew providing opportunities for feedback;
- long-term, stable employment opportunities;
- wages paid on time.

Sources: Futurenavics Maritime: *Crew Connectivity 2018 Survey Report*, 2018, and A. Papachristou et al.: "The role of communication to the retention of seafarers in the profession" in *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (Vol. 14, No. 1, April 2015), pp. 159–176.

3.2. Career mobility

70. The continuous education and training of seafarers – that combines their practical experience with theoretical training – can help them to achieve nationally and internationally recognized qualifications, allowing them to advance their career. Paragraph 3 of Standard A2.8 of the MLC, 2006, calls on member States to consult with shipowner and seafarer organizations to establish clear objectives on the vocational guidance, education, training, and continuous training. Guideline B2.8.1, paragraph 1(c), calls for further training and education as a way to provide for skills development and portable competencies so as to secure and retain decent work, improve individual employment prospects, and to meet the changing technological and labour market conditions of the sector. Basic and further training equip a seafarer with the skills and knowledge necessary to efficiently conduct their duties and qualify for promotions when they arise. Seafarers, in some cases, bear the cost of training in addition to taking leave time to go for training.⁷⁸
71. Training should consider the seafarers' ability to qualify for opportunities both on ships and onshore to ensure they are able to participate in the sector – even if they are not working at

⁷⁶ S. Cahoon et al.: "Human resource practices in seafaring: Opportunities for improving retention" in Jingjing Xu (ed.): *Contemporary Marine and Maritime Policy* (Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2014), pp. 86–103.

⁷⁷ C.L. Tsai: "Determinant of work performance of seafarers", in *Maritime Business Review* (Vol. 2, No. 1, 2017), pp. 36–51.

⁷⁸ H. Sampson and L. Tang: *New Shipboard Technology and Training Provision for Seafarers*, 2011.

sea. Creating awareness of the transition from sea to shore-based employment may provide seafarers with the knowledge of a career path within the maritime sector.⁷⁹

3.3. Leave, interruption, and re-entry

72. Under the MLC, 2006, seafarers are entitled to leave in terms of Regulation 2.4, which includes annual leave and shore leave to benefit their well-being and health. In terms of Guideline B2.4.1, paragraph 2 – under conditions as determined either by a collective agreement or by the competent authority – absence from work for approved maritime vocational training or for illness, injury, or maternity leave should be counted as part of the period of service.
73. Access to shore facilities and shore leave is vital for the general well-being of seafarers. Nonetheless, they continue to experience difficulties in accessing shore leave and transiting in certain ports and terminals. The inability to travel easily or enjoy essential shore leave or the difficulty to obtain work because of visa restrictions are disincentives to join the seafaring workforce. The Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185), has been ratified by 35 countries.⁸⁰ The Convention aims to address this through the facilitation of shore leave and the professional movement of seafarers. Widespread ratification and implementation of the Convention – including by not only flag States and labour supplying States, but also port States (especially those with high vessel traffic) – should improve the lives of seafarers whose access to shore leave and professional travel has been limited. In this regard, Regulation 4.4 of the MLC, 2006, requires member States to ensure that shore-based welfare facilities, where they exist, are easily accessible.
74. Interruption to a seafarer's career can be caused by the seafarer's personal choices, economic factors, health concerns, job loss, or family issues, to name a few. This period of interruption can occur at any stage, and more than once, in a seafarer's career. Interruption can either lead to re-entry or a transition to shore-based work, or complete withdrawal from the sector as a whole. Re-entry after a period away from sea may be due to an inability to get used to life at shore, to lack of career opportunities, to finding seafaring to be a more preferable lifestyle choice or for economic reasons.⁸¹
75. The Seafarers' Pensions Convention, 1946 (No. 71), calls on member States, in accordance with national laws or regulations, to establish or secure the establishment of a scheme for the payment of pensions to seafarers on retirement from sea service. While Convention No. 71 has been ratified by 13 countries, including important flag States such as Panama, Norway, and Greece, it has not been revised by the MLC, 2006 (Article X MLC) and therefore does not have the widespread scope of application of the MLC, 2006. The MLC, 2006, does, however, set the requirement that all State parties must provide to all seafarers ordinarily residing in their territory at least three of the nine branches of social security protection (Regulation 4.5, Standard A4.5.1 and 2). The MLC, 2006 therefore sets a minimum standard for seafarers' social security, of which old-age pensions may or may not be a part. The right to a pension – a factor in retention – therefore depends on the law of the

⁷⁹ Futurenautics Maritime: *Crew Connectivity 2018 Survey Report*, 2018.

⁸⁰ This figure is correct as of 31 October 2018. ILO: [The Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention \(Revised\), 2003 \(No. 185\)](#).

⁸¹ ECSA and ETF, 2013, op. cit.

seafarer's country of resident, as well as on company policy, which in turn depends on the law of the flag State of the ship that the seafarer is employed on.

3.4. Shore-based work

76. The majority of active seafarers do not plan to remain at sea for the rest of their careers.⁸² Ensuring that experience gained at sea can find its way to the maritime community ashore would facilitate the smooth transition to work in shipping companies, maritime authorities, and other maritime-related entities.
77. There is uncertainty amongst seafarers about the possibility of having a successful career at shore following time at sea.⁸³ Increased information on the change to shore from a sea-based career would assist in providing seafarers with the clarity needed on the steps towards a successful transition. Existing training may need to be reformed to create training for seafarers to bridge the gap between ship and shore. The ability to have transferable skills or qualifications would also provide seafarers with the competencies required to work on shore. One suggested approach is the inclusion of management courses into maritime education.⁸⁴

3.5. Life at sea

78. As stated above, the working and living conditions on board a ship can influence the length of time a seafarer will wish to spend at sea. Seafarers sometimes experience long working hours, high levels of stress, and fatigue. Drug and alcohol abuse, infectious diseases, violence, and harassment are other types of hazards that seafarers are occasionally exposed to. Seafarers also have positive experiences whilst at sea. In one study, on a scale of 1 to 10, the average seafarer's happiness was rated a 6.56. The Seafarers surveyed highlighted the pride of being a seafarer, the ability to provide for their family, and the camaraderie that comes with being aboard a ship.⁸⁵
79. The welfare of seafarers has become a greater concern as shore leave has been reduced. The quick turnover at ports, smaller crews, and long, irregular hours remain the norm – these may have negative effects on mental, physical, and emotional well-being.⁸⁶ Guideline B3.1.11 recommends a list of the recreational facilities that could be placed on board, where practicable. These include, among others: a library, sports equipment, or swimming facilities.

3.5.1. Occupational safety and health

80. Occupational safety and health (OSH) is generally defined as the science of the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, and control of hazards arising in or from the workplace that could

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ P. Bhargava: “How to Quit Sea Life and Settle Ashore?”, in *Marine Insight*, 26 April 2018.

⁸⁴ These could include business and commercial management courses, *ETF Policy on Training and Recruitment in Maritime Transport*, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), 2010.

⁸⁵ *Seafarers Happiness Index: Quarter 2 2018*, the Mission to Seafarers, 2018.

⁸⁶ B. Özsever and L. Tavacıoğlu: “Analysing the effects of working period on psychophysiological states of seafarers” in *International Maritime Health Journal* (Vol. 69, No. 2, 2018), pp. 84–93.

impair the health and well-being of workers, taking into account the possible impact on the surrounding communities and the general environment.⁸⁷

- 81.** The ILO advocates for the promotion of seafarers' occupational health and safety to minimize exposure to occupational hazards and risk while on board ships. This is done through the MLC, 2006, Regulation 4.3 and the related Code (Standard A4.3 and Guideline B4.3). Standard A4.3 regulates the health and safety protection and accident prevention measures to be adopted in national guidelines-seafarer training; occupational safety and health policies and programmes; the inspection, reporting, and correction of unsafe conditions and on board occupational accidents.
- 82.** Supplementary to this are the *Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the MLC, 2006*. These provide practical information to flag States to be reflected in their national laws and other measures to implement Regulation 4.3 and the related Code of the MLC, 2006, as well as other relevant provisions under Regulations 3.1 and 1.1. The Guidelines also emphasize how shipboard safety and decent working and living conditions are linked to: good management and communication between ship and shore, rest periods, nutrition, and accommodation.
- 83.** The nature of the work on a ship – including the carriage of dangerous goods – places seafarers at risk and could serve as a deterrent to work aboard, especially if OSH policies are not in place or adequately implemented. Flag States have the responsibility of ensuring that seafarers aboard ships flying their flags are provided with occupational health protection and that on-board conditions are safe and hygienic. This includes developing national guidelines for the management of occupational safety and health on board ships that fly their flag.
- 84.** The hours of work and work are regulated in the MLC, 2006, Standard A2.3. Fatigue amongst seafarers may be caused by excessive hours and reduced crew sizes. Competent authorities are to take into account the need to minimize or avoid excessive hours when determining, approving, or revising manning levels to ensure sufficient rest and to limit fatigue.⁸⁸ Project Martha, presented to the IMO in 2017, highlighted the growing levels of fatigue amongst seafarers. The project findings include the effects of fatigue on performance, motivation, and ship operation and efficiency.⁸⁹
- 85.** Shipowners are responsible for, among others, ensuring that masters have adequate support to carry out their OSH management on board. The effective implementation of on-board safety committees will make it possible to create the necessary on-board safe working environment. The continuous improvement of OSH policies and programmes for preventative measures and risk assessment by shipowners and competent authorities requires an investment in conducting technology and maritime research.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ ILO: *General Survey concerning the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164), and the Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981*, Report III (Part 1B), International Labour Conference, 98th Session, Geneva, 2009.

⁸⁸ MLC, 2006, Regulation 2.7, para. 1, and Standard A2.7.

⁸⁹ *Project Martha: The Final Report*, the Centre for Maritime Health and Society, University of Southern Denmark et al., 2017.

⁹⁰ ILO: *Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006* (Geneva, 2015).

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86. Furthermore, under the MLC, 2006, the competent authority must ensure that the confidentiality of seafarers' data – such as medical data – is respected when reporting and investigation OSH matters. Shipping companies are encouraged to put policies into place regarding reproductive health, and to facilitate the ability for seafarers to confidentially discuss this on board with medical staff.
87. Seafarers have a risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Health education has been highlighted as a means to increase knowledge on HIV and STDs to decrease the risk of exposure. As seafarers spend long periods of time at sea, access to educational materials is limited. However, on-board campaigns and online courses would increase awareness on STDs and HIV transmission and prevention.⁹¹ Access to contraceptives and condoms for all seafarers could prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
88. Another key health concern is mental health and well-being. Long periods spent at sea, reduced crew numbers, and short stops at ports are factors that contribute to the feeling of social isolation experienced by seafarers. The living conditions at sea, limited contact with family or friends, and the distance from home are some of the factors that are said to contribute to seafarer suicides.⁹² In 2018, initiatives were undertaken to raise awareness on the importance of mental health. In particular, the theme of the 2018 annual Day of the Seafarer (25 June) was seafarers' well-being. The campaign, spearheaded by the IMO, sought to inform on how to address stress and other mental conditions. The International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN)'s *Psychological Wellbeing at Sea* provides guidance for seafarers on how to boost their well-being whilst at sea.⁹³

3.5.2. Diversity and discrimination

89. Workplace discrimination refers to differential treatment based on an individual's personal characteristics and not on their professional qualifications or abilities.⁹⁴ The MLC, 2006, encourages member States to give consideration to seafarers working on board a ship who have different and distinctive religious, cultural, and social backgrounds.
90. Working in a multicultural environment aboard a ship means that seafarers have to adapt to different languages and cultural practices. Communication on board the ship is vital for ship and crew safety, since the inability to effectively communicate in emergency situations can put seafarers at risk. Due consideration should be given to the challenges that arise when crews are composed of people with various backgrounds and nationalities.⁹⁵ Cultural discrimination – where seafarers may be exposed to unfair labour practices, unequal treatment in terms of wages, contract terms and nationality – has a negative impact on the

⁹¹ I. Grappasonni et al.: “Survey on HIV risk perception and sexual behaviours among seafarers” in *International Maritime Health* (Vol. 62, No. 2, 2011), pp. 131–137.

⁹² A. Mellbye and T. Carter: “Seafarers' depression and suicide” in *International Maritime Health* (Vol. 68, No. 2, 2017), pp. 108–114.

⁹³ *Psychological wellbeing at sea*, International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), 2017.

⁹⁴ M. Lansky et al. (eds): *Women, gender and work: Social choices and inequalities*, Vol. 2 (Geneva, 2017).

⁹⁵ ILO: *Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006* (Geneva, 2015).

retention of seafarers. In some circumstances, they may be denied promotional opportunities when ranked based on their nationality or ethnic background.⁹⁶

91. The Gender Empowerment and Multi-cultural Crew (GEM) Project Summary highlighted the experiences of cadets working on board with multicultural crews. Some cadets commented on the potential difficulty regarding working on a multicultural ship. Others expressed more positive assumptions, with one female interviewee expressing that she enjoyed working with mixed crews as she felt encouraged through their training and support. The mix of cultures was said to broaden horizons, and promote tolerance and open-mindedness. Having contacts with colleagues from different countries allowed seafarers to expand their personal and professional network.⁹⁷
92. The project highlighted isolation as a potential consequence of multicultural crews. People of similar backgrounds group together, reducing social interaction; this being felt most by those who are the only one of their nationality aboard. The project recommended that shipping companies consider the “on board cultural mix in order to achieve the best working environment.”⁹⁸ Further, it was recommended to introduce “soft subjects” such as humanities courses into MET curricula to facilitate and promote gender equality and cultural awareness within such institutes.⁹⁹
93. The Human Rights at Sea organization advocates ensuring a safe working environment for all, including LGBT employees, as part of Corporate Social Responsibility.¹⁰⁰ Raising awareness and promoting social dialogue on issues affecting LGBT seafarers – such as LGBT-based violence, discrimination, harassment, bullying, sexual violence and rape¹⁰¹ – would aid in addressing and finding solutions to ensure decent working and living conditions for LGBT seafarers aboard ships. Campaigns, media coverage, collective bargaining, anti-discrimination policies and training have an influence on the attitudes surrounding the rights of LGBT seafarers.

3.5.3. Violence and harassment

94. Violence and harassment in the world of work include physical, psychological, and sexual aspects. These can affect the dignity, security, health, and well-being of the victim. Violence and harassment at work can have physical and emotional consequences. Anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders are some of the effects of violence and harassment, negatively impacting the welfare of the victim and job performance.¹⁰² A 2010 survey by Nautilus International

⁹⁶ S. Cahoon et al., op. cit.

⁹⁷ K. Pike et al.: *The Gender Empowerment and Multi-cultural Crew (GEM) Project Report, 2015–2016: For the ITF Seafarers’ Trust*, Nov. 2016.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ C. Dragomir et al.: *IAMU 2017 Research Project (No. 20170305): Gender Equality and Cultural Awareness in Maritime Education and Training (GECAMET)* (Tokyo 2018).

¹⁰⁰ *LGBT in the Maritime Environment*, Human Rights at Sea, 2015.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² ILO: *Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work*, Report V(1), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva, 2018.

found that 43 per cent of all respondents had experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination.¹⁰³

95. Amendments to the MLC, 2006, relating to the protection of seafarers against harassment and bullying were approved in 2016 and enter into force in January 2019. Guideline B4.3.1 requires the competent authority to ensure that the implications of harassment and bullying for health and safety are taken into account. This guideline also recognizes the latest version of the *Guidance on eliminating shipboard harassment and bullying* jointly published by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the ITF.
96. Responses to violence may include “innovative and anti-discrimination and OSH legislation, collective agreements and voluntary initiatives”. This can occur at workplace, national, and global levels.¹⁰⁴ These could include adopting a zero-tolerance policy and implementing policies and routines on preventative and corrective measures against various forms of violence and harassment.¹⁰⁵ Guideline B4.3.6 of the MLC, 2006, provides that, in regard to investigations, consideration should be given to the inclusion of problems arising from harassment and bullying. On the side of Government authorities, collecting data on violence and harassment at sea would be an important factor in developing informed law and policy. There is a need for ensuring that grievance mechanisms and preventative sensitization programmes are in place to effectively combat discrimination.

3.5.4. Mentoring

97. Mentoring has been described as “an informal transfer of experience-based knowledge that can assist seafarers with their professional advancement”.¹⁰⁶ Mentoring has been highlighted as a source of support for seafarers, in particular for younger seafarers.¹⁰⁷ Studies have shown that mentoring can improve ship safety through the passing on of knowledge gained from experiences of veteran seafarers.¹⁰⁸ It has also been said to help reduce seafarer isolation, improve retention and seafarers’ well-being.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Nautilus International, 2011: *Bullying, Discrimination & Harassment survey 2010*.

¹⁰⁴ ILO: *Fifth Supplementary Report: Outcome of the Meeting of Experts on Violence against Women and Men in the World of Work*, Report of the Director-General, Governing Body, 328th Session, Geneva, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ ILO: *Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ ITF: “Abandonment: A blight on the industry” in *Seafarers’ Bulletin*, No. 32, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ K. Pike et al., 2016, op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ A.L. Le Goubin: *Marine Accident Investigation: Mentoring & the transfer of experiential knowledge in today’s merchant fleet*, 2009.

¹⁰⁹ ITF, 2018, op. cit.

3.5.5. Internet connectivity

98. The MLC, 2006, recommends providing seafarers with reasonable access to ship-to-shore telephone communications, email, and internet facilities. This is to be done either at no cost to the seafarer where practicable, or at a reasonable charge.¹¹⁰
99. Email services are commonly provided for crew on ships. Seafarers have access to communications services from their cabins; however in the bulk and general cargo sectors, crews have to access these services from the bridge. Globally, seafarers spent an average of US\$229 per month on communications.¹¹¹
100. For some seafarers, the access to more and better connectivity can influence a decision to work at sea. The access to internet connection aboard a ship is a significant factor for young seafarers' decisions to pursue this career.¹¹² Sixty-one per cent of seafarers¹¹³ have access to crew communications services "most of the time"; 75 per cent of seafarers stated that connectivity does affect their choice of employer; and 92 per cent stated that it influenced them strongly or very strongly.¹¹⁴ Some seafarers would rather have limited internet access than none at all. It has been found that unreliable connectivity, access restrictions, blocked sites, and monitored access can create feelings of uncertainty and frustration for seafarers.¹¹⁵
101. Internet connectivity has been said to have a strong effect on the mental well-being of seafarers, as it maintains social bonds with family and allows for better integration when returning home. It has been said to reduce emotional stress and isolation as seafarers are able to receive regular support from friends and family.¹¹⁶
102. Interestingly, the use of personal health monitoring devices by seafarers has increased. This reflects the wider social trend of growth of use of devices promoting a more active lifestyle and health awareness while at sea.¹¹⁷

3.6. Impact of piracy, abandonment and criminalization of seafarers

103. Seafarers may be vulnerable to criminal acts aimed against ships which threaten their well-being. These include situations such as piracy, terrorism at sea, and robbery. In these instances, seafarers are at risk of being taken as hostages, being fired upon, injured, or killed.

¹¹⁰ MLC, 2006, Guideline B3.1.11, paras 4(h) and (j).

¹¹¹ Futureautics Maritime: *Crew Connectivity 2018 Survey Report*, 2018. This excludes Europe and the Middle East.

¹¹² R.B. Jensen and O. Swift: *Navigating everyday connectivities at sea*, 2018.

¹¹³ This study surveyed 6,000 seafarers. See: Futureautics Maritime, 2018, op. cit.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ R.B. Jensen and O. Swift, 2018, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ *The Future of Crewing – Shipping's Challenges and Opportunities: An industry review paper*, Crew Connect Global, 2018.

¹¹⁷ Futureautics Maritime, 2018, op. cit.

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- 104.** The 2018 amendments to the MLC, 2006 sought to strengthen the protection of seafarers in situations where they were held captive as a result of acts of piracy or armed robbery.¹¹⁸ In such cases, a seafarer’s employment agreements remain in effect during the seafarer’s period of captivity, and wages and other entitlements will still be owed to the seafarer, including repatriation. Under Regulation 2.5 concerning repatriation, seafarers have the right to be repatriated at no cost to themselves in the circumstances and under the conditions specified in the Code of the MLC, 2006, as amended.¹¹⁹
- 105.** According to the International Chamber of Commerce’s (ICC) International Maritime Bureau (IMB), there were 180 actual and attempted piracy attacks globally for the period January–December 2017.¹²⁰ The majority of these occurred in South East Asia. A total of 156 actual and attempted attacks were reported in the period of January–September 2018. The majority of these (98 in total) occurred in the West African region. The number of crew held hostage for the duration of the incident totalled 112.¹²¹
- 106.** Seafarers are also at risk of criminalization following maritime disasters, incidents, or accidents at sea or whilst at port. The criminalization of seafarers has a negative effect on their recruitment and retention. This creates a poor image about the safety of seafaring as a career, and the exposure of seafarers to criminal sanctions. Seafarers may be reluctant to work on board ships for fear of prosecution in the wake of a maritime accident or disaster.¹²²
- 107.** The Joint IMO–ILO *Guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident*¹²³ promotes the fair treatment of seafarers during incidents. These guidelines are recommended to be observed in cases where seafarers are detained following a maritime incident. The IMO’s Legal Committee (LEG) maintains oversight over the implementation of the guidelines, including their revision when necessary. At the 104th Session of the LEG, it was noted that some delegates were incorporating the guidelines into their national legislation.¹²⁴ The Government of the Philippines hosted a workshop on the fair treatment of seafarers in July 2018 as part of an initiative to promote regional discussion and action.
- 108.** The abandonment of seafarers is of major concern for the ILO, which, in conjunction with the IMO, operates a database on reported incidents of abandonment of seafarers which contains a regularly updated list of ships that have been reported to the ILO as abandoned in various ports of the world by appropriate organizations. The purpose of the database is to monitor the problem of abandoned seafarers in a transparent and informative manner. Reporting abandonment cases is important in ensuring their fast resolution.

¹¹⁸ These amendments were approved at the 107th Session of the ILC on 5 June 2018 and are expected to enter into force on 26 December 2020.

¹¹⁹ Standard A2.5.1 outlines the situations in which a seafarer has the right to repatriation.

¹²⁰ ICC–IMB: *Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships: Report for the period 1 January–31 December 2017*, 2018.

¹²¹ 107 vessels were boarded, 32 were attempted attacks, four vessels were hijacked and 13 fired upon. ICC–IMB: *Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships: Report for the period 1 January–30 September 2018*, 2018.

¹²² L.D. Caesar et al., op. cit., pp. 141–157.

¹²³ These Guidelines were adopted at the 91st Session of the IMO’s Legal Committee in 2006.

¹²⁴ IMO: Legal Committee, 104th Session, 26–28 April 2017.

109. The 2014 amendments to the MLC, 2006, which entered into force on 18 January 2017, require an expeditious and effective financial security system to assist seafarers and their families in cases of abandonment, death, or long-term disability due to an occupational injury, illness, or hazard. These amendments provide seafarers with the assurance of receiving protection and assistance for their families and themselves in cases of abandonment, death, and injury. For seafarers who are abandoned while serving on ships flying the flags of States that have not ratified the MLC, 2006, reference is made to the ILO–IMO *Guidelines on provision of financial security in case of abandonment of seafarers*.

3.7. The effects of technological advances on crew costs and crew numbers

110. In the sections above, this report has highlighted factors likely to improve the retention of seafarers, which would address and avoid the estimated seafarer shortage in the short- and medium-term. The pace of automation and digital technologies might, however, require revisiting the seafarer shortage issue. The long-term effects that automated and unmanned ships will have on the employment prospects of seafarers are unknown.¹²⁵ Studies visualize that if 1,000 ships are fully automated by 2025, the demand for seafarers may be reduced by 30,000 to 50,000 seafarers.¹²⁶ It is difficult, however, to predict the exact impact of technological developments and automation on job losses or creation in the maritime sector.

111. As stated earlier, studies consider that automation could have an impact on tasks rather than on jobs. For instance: in the railways sector, the automation of metro systems has led to substantial changes in staff qualifications. Metro systems are said to have greatly reduced staff costs as automated lines have reduced the need for drivers. Operational staff tasks have evolved toward maintenance.¹²⁷ Automation in the railway sector has presented the opportunity to develop new organizational models, reskilling and more efficient maintenance and operation.¹²⁸

112. Consideration of issues such as transition to shore-based jobs, increased demand for higher skilled labour, and possible new jobs related to operation and maintenance may be required.¹²⁹ The ICS, in its recent publication, *Seafarers and Digital Disruption*, considered issues such as remote and on-board jobs; staff training; cyber security; and safeguards for seafarer welfare.¹³⁰ Advanced technology on board will require seafarers to have more technologically advanced skills, which will entail the need for up-skilling or reskilling.

113. In this regard, it is noted that seafarers already have a high level of technological knowledge. Of surveyed seafarers, 88 per cent of the respondents reported that they currently use

¹²⁵ Futureautics Maritime, 2018, op. cit.

¹²⁶ *Seafarers and digital disruption: The effect of autonomous ships on the work at sea, the role of seafarers and the shipping industry*, ICS, 2018.

¹²⁷ Union Internationale des Transport Publics (UITP): *Metro automation facts, figures and trends*, 2012.

¹²⁸ UITP: *Statistics Brief: World Report on Metro Automation*, 2016.

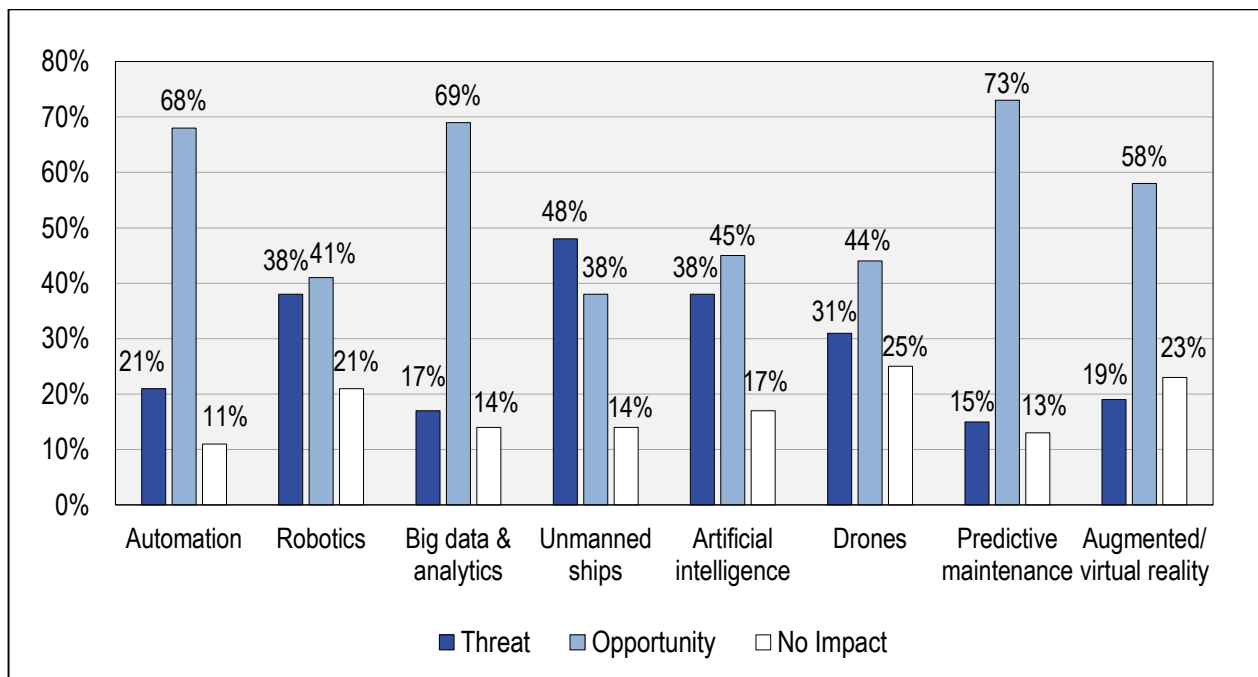
¹²⁹ DNV GL: *Remote-controlled and autonomous ships position paper*, 2018.

¹³⁰ The full list of questions can be found in the study, ICS: *Seafarers and digital disruption: The effect of autonomous ships on the work at sea, the role of seafarers and the shipping industry*, 2018.

technology, understand how it works, and are able to assist others with technology.¹³¹ Consequently, additional technological upgrades may not be too difficult to acquire.

- 114.** Figure 3.1 illustrates the views of seafarers towards technologies. The chart illustrates that seafarers see these as providing more opportunities than threats to their roles in the future. More than half of the seafarers surveyed stated that at least one element of their role became automated in the last two years. Additionally, 90 per cent stated that automation had a positive impact on their role.

Figure 3.1. Technologies viewed as a threat or an opportunity by seafarers



Source: Futurenautics Maritime: *Crew Connectivity 2018 Survey Report*, 2018.

- 115.** The automation of certain tasks may improve the working lives of seafarers, with 83 per cent of surveyed seafarers in a study on autonomous shipping believing that technological developments could potentially improve working conditions at sea. Automation could reduce the number of physically burdensome activities and dangerous, monotonous, or tedious tasks; this would reduce excessive working hours and fatigue in addition to work-related injuries and other occupational health and safety concerns. Yet, the use of unmanned ships, robotics, and artificial intelligence have been perceived by the surveyed seafarers as the main threats to their careers in the future.¹³²

¹³¹ Futurenautics Maritime, 2018, op. cit.

¹³² Nautilus Federation: *Future proofed? Autonomous shipping research*, 2018.

4. Women Seafarers: Promotion of opportunities for women seafarers

116. The number of women in the maritime sector remains low – albeit increasing over the last decade. There are limited recent data regarding women seafarers in general, and disaggregated data (by vessel, nationality, or position) on their employment in the sector in particular. Table 4.1 shows the data used by BIMCO/ICS to estimate the number of women seafarers in the sector. One estimate suggests there are 16,500 women seafarers (excluding those working in non-marine operational roles).¹³³ However, this figure would appear to not include all women working in the cruise ship sector who are defined as seafarers under the MLC, 2006. The ITF estimates that 28 to 30 per cent of cruise ships workers are women seafarers.¹³⁴

Table 4.1. Women seafarers

	Number of women seafarers in the sample	Percentage of the seafarers in the sample by rank (%)
Officers	540	0.7
Officer trainees	734	6.9
Ratings	306	0.4
Rating trainees	7	0.4
Total	1 587	1.0

Source: This sample is of 164,550 seafarers, of whom 1,587 were women. It was used to estimate the number of women seafarers in the maritime sector. BIMCO and ICS: *Manpower report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015* (London, 2015).

117. The primary goal of the ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity. Gender equality is a key element in reaching this goal and is a cross-cutting policy driver for all ILO policy outcomes. Access to equal opportunity is a human right. In using standards and other tools, the ILO is dedicated to ending discrimination against women in the workplace and to ensuring the right to equal education opportunities for girls. The ILO’s mandate to promote women’s employment in the maritime sector and to raise awareness of the issues that women seafarers face is in line with SDG 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*, providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation.

118. The ILO’s mandate on gender equality is to promote equal opportunities and treatment of all workers in the world of work. A range of international labour standards highlight the importance of this mandate, such as: the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Convention No. 111; the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156); and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). Conventions Nos 100 and 111 are also among the eight fundamental Conventions of the ILO Declaration in 1998 on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Relevant declarations also include the ILO Declaration in 2008 on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The 2004 ILC resolution concerning the promotion of gender equality, pay equity, and maternity protection; and the

¹³³ This refers to women qualified and holding certificates in accordance with the STCW Convention. BIMCO and the ICS, *Manpower Report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015*.

¹³⁴ This estimate is based on ITF collective bargaining agreements signed with the cruise ship operators.

2009 ILC resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work further underline the commitment of ILO constituents to gender equality.

119. Collecting data and research regarding women seafarers would help to provide insight as to how to effectively create equal opportunities for women seafarers.
120. In order to attract women to a career at sea it is essential to address the particular challenges that women could be faced with when living and working on a vessel. These challenges range from overt abuse, covert discrimination, and systemic barriers.
121. A survey was held among female maritime students and graduates on their motivation to choose a career as a seafarer. Up to 52.38 per cent of women seafarers linked their participation in the sector to potential income. The prospect of career advancement was the driving force for 38.09 per cent, whilst 9.53 per cent were motivated by family tradition or encouragement.¹³⁵

4.1. The career cycle of women seafarers

122. MET institutions play an important role as the entry point for women seafarers to the sector. Special consideration needs to be given to how seafarers' educational and training programmes are marketed, so as to attract more women.¹³⁶ Encouraging participation in a wider range of programmes, offering a greater number of cadet berths on board, or apprentice placements to women seafarers would give more women the incentive to join the maritime sector. Data indicate that those who have experienced international exchange programmes as cadets tend to be successful in their careers in the long-term.¹³⁷
123. In 2015, women represented 6.9 per cent of officer trainees globally, which indicated a positive upward trend of women seafarers in the future. This figure may be a useful indication that there is likely to be an increase in the future.¹³⁸ According to a survey of 75 MET institutions, 24 reported that none of their students were women; one institute indicated that 40 per cent of its cadets were women. Another indicated that 25 per cent of officer trainees and 5 per cent of rating trainees were women.¹³⁹
124. Some maritime training institutions have lifted their longstanding bans on the training of women. In 2000, the Shanghai Maritime University began to enrol female cadets following

¹³⁵ C. Dragomir and F. Surugiu: *Seafarer women – Perception of the seafaring career*, presented at WSEAS/NAUN 2nd International Conference on Economics, Political and Law Science (EPLS 2013), Volume: Advances in Fiscal, Political and Law Science, 1–3 June 2013.

¹³⁶ J. Horck: “The Gender Perspective in Maritime Education and Training”, in *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (Vol. 9, No. 1, April 2010), pp. 93–119.

¹³⁷ M. Kitada et al. (eds): *Maritime women: Global leadership*, Vol. 3 of WMU Studies in Maritime Affairs (Springer, 2015).

¹³⁸ BIMCO and ICS, 2015, op. cit.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

a multi-year ban on their enrolment. Until 2016, it was the only maritime course open to women in China.¹⁴⁰

125. MET institutions have taken initiatives such as curriculum revision to improve student awareness on gender and cultural issues; provide equal opportunities for all students; and increase the number of women in leadership positions. Further, exposing students to senior figures in the maritime sector through alumni networks allows them to see the various opportunities available to them.¹⁴¹
126. Although more institutions now include women trainees, the actual number of women employed as seafarers has not improved correspondingly, as some shipping companies are still reluctant to take women on ships.¹⁴² This is not the case for the cruise ship sector where more women are hired. There is a high number of women in this sector with cruise ship companies expressing preference for women seafarers to work in the hotel section.
127. There are also cases where employers hesitate to take on female cadets or qualified seafarers in the belief that they will not stay long in the sector. This is based on assumptions that women will prematurely leave the sector for reasons such as childbearing and other caring responsibilities.¹⁴³ This, however, has not actually been proven to be true, as studies show that male seafarers also abandon a life at sea as a consequence of long separation from family, therefore making retention an issue for all seafarers.¹⁴⁴
128. Workplace training and awareness raising can play an impactful role in challenging stereotypes and transforming workplace cultures, particularly in male-dominated industries such as the maritime sector. SAFETY4SEA has identified how mentoring programmes are effective in promoting inclusion and can change the workplace culture.¹⁴⁵ Examples of how to address negative biases are: further training aimed at gender sensitization; identifying role models in the industry; and ensuring equal treatment of seafarers during the education and training phase.

4.2. Motivation to go to sea

129. Encouragement, support, and adequate resources enable women to pursue a career in shipping.¹⁴⁶ This includes the integration of women into the sector through mainstream programmes and gender-specific training. More women are likely to be attracted to the maritime sector if decent working conditions with opportunities for career development are present. In terms of career progression and promotion, women often face barriers that hold

¹⁴⁰ K. Pike et al.: *The Gender Empowerment and Multi-cultural Crew (GEM) Project Report, 2015–2016: For the ITF Seafarers' Trust*, 2016.

¹⁴¹ C. Dragomir et al., 2018, op. cit.

¹⁴² M. Bhirugnath-Bhookhun and M. Kitada: "Lost in success: Women's maritime careers in Eastern and Southern Africa" in Palgrave Communications, 6 April 2017.

¹⁴³ ILO: *Promoting the employment of women in the transport sector – Obstacles and policy options*, 2013.

¹⁴⁴ IMHA et al.: *Women Seafarers' Health and Welfare Survey*, 2015.

¹⁴⁵ SAFETY4SEA: *Women in maritime: How to encourage participation*, 2018.

¹⁴⁶ ILO, 2013, op. cit.

them back. These can be categorized into two areas: barriers related to perceptions of women's roles and capacities, be it their own or the perceptions of others; and barriers created by management structures and institutions, organizations, and company structures which are not conducive to the advancement of women.¹⁴⁷

4.3. One of the boys: How do women fit into the work culture of seafaring?

130. Gender-identity management is a strategy used by women seafarers to cope with – and in some cases to avoid – confrontation on ships. Such strategies result in women adopting behaviour or altering appearances, such as their clothing or hair styles, that are usually associated with a masculine identity. They often have to work harder in order to “prove themselves” or to seek acceptance and be seen as able to perform their job.¹⁴⁸
131. Gender-based occupational segregation sees women seafarers in roles such as hotel and catering personnel. Creating awareness of other seafaring positions is essential in promoting the access of women to other seafaring jobs. Further to this, women seafarers face scepticism over their abilities and competences to perform physically demanding tasks. Technological developments have led to less physical labour on the part of seafarers, as physical tasks have been mostly taken over by automated systems. This allows women to perform tasks that were once deemed too physically strenuous.¹⁴⁹

Box 4.1
Reducing stereotypes in the sector

Having women seafarers on board has long been seen as bad luck, with some shipping companies perceiving that having women on board was more trouble than it was worth. This perception affects the employment prospects of women seafarers as recruitment processes are often conducted by men who hold this negative stereotype. Reducing these perceptions would encourage and provide more access for women seafarers into the maritime sector.

A 2013 study on the progress of women in seafaring in the context of the Greek-owned maritime sector looked at the acceptance of women on ships by their male co-workers. It revealed that more than 60 per cent of respondents believed that the female nature was compatible with seafaring. However, only 19.6 per cent believed that a woman could perform all her tasks as well as a man.

Source: I. Theotakas I. and C. Tsalichi: *Employment of women at sea. Perceptions, attitudes and experiences of male seafarers in the Greek context*, presented at the International Association of Maritime Economists Annual Conference 2013, Marseille, France.

132. Similar to their male co-workers, women feel isolated or lonely at sea. This may be exacerbated if they are the only woman on board. Having more than one woman aboard for voyages can provide a more positive experience.¹⁵⁰ Shipping companies, managers, and

¹⁴⁷ ILO: *Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum*, Global Report (Geneva, 2015).

¹⁴⁸ ILO, 2013, op. cit.

¹⁴⁹ ILO, 2015, op. cit.

¹⁵⁰ M. Kitada: *Risking marriage and family: Maintaining women seafarers' gender identities*, the 1st SIRC–Nippon fellow maritime conference. Cardiff: Seafarers International Research Centre.

senior officers have the ability to mainstream gender and respect for the rights of women seafarers through gender-sensitivity training and training for those in authority.¹⁵¹

4.4. Support for women at sea

133. Studies have indicated that women seafarers would fare better in their careers if they had knowledge of and access to women leaders in shipping. As highlighted earlier in this report, mentoring plays a key factor in the development of a seafarer's career. Exposure to serving women seafarers may assist trainees who are entering the sector, and provide networking opportunities.¹⁵²
134. The increased number of international, regional, and national associations or networks of women seafarers have created valuable platforms for discussion on issues affecting women seafarers. There are regional associations across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands.

Box 4.2

Women in the Maritime Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa (WOMESA)

WOMESA is a regional association with members from countries such as Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Eswatini, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The association was initiated by the IMO under its Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector Programme.

Its objectives include, among others, enhancing capacity building, developing mentorship programmes and undertaking research for the advancement of women and development in the maritime sector. Beyond providing support for members, the association has also held awareness talks to girls in secondary schools on consideration of pursuing a maritime career (this was conducted by the Mauritian Regional Chapter).

The association also hosts networking opportunities, conferences, and roundtable events covering topics such as the challenges faced by women professionals in the sector and how to address them.

The Kenyan chapter, which was launched in 2010, had over 125 registered members in 2016. The chapter provides mentorship opportunities, partakes in community service along with participating in activities that enhance industrial awareness and training and capacity building.

Source: [WOMESA](#).

135. These networks and associations provide networking opportunities, disseminate experiences, and provide support services to women in the maritime sector. They have the potential to play a larger role in attracting more women to sea through promoting career opportunities. Promoting the leadership of women in the sector further enhances gender equality and empowerment of women seafarers.
136. Maritime unions also provide support to women seafarers. [Nautilus International's Women's Forum](#) supports women seafarers to engage in discussions related to challenges they have to tackle. The ITF women's committee assists women in addressing issues they face in the workplace and taking measures to empower them. Around half the cruise ship workforce is covered by an ITF standard agreement, which has provisions for maternity leave, maternity pay and repatriation.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ ILO, 2013, op. cit.

¹⁵² C. Dragomir et al., 2018, op. cit.

¹⁵³ K. Pike et al., 2016, op. cit.

4.5. Occupational safety and health

4.5.1. Work gear

137. All seafarers, including women, require work gear that takes into account their dimensional and physical specifics: boiler suits, harnesses, lifejackets, gloves, shoes, raincoats, and parkas should be made to fit, as loose clothing may pose a danger to seafarers. For women to be able to work efficiently and effectively on board it is imperative that safety protection equipment be constructed properly. Designs need to be adjusted to take into account the physical differences between male and female seafarers. This also includes the provision of special equipment that may be necessary to assist in the lifting of heavy items.¹⁵⁴

4.5.2. Health concerns

138. The *Women Seafarers' Health and Welfare Survey*¹⁵⁵ highlighted the health risks and concerns of women seafarers and the problems related to access to medical care.¹⁵⁶ Nearly half of the respondents highlighted joint/back pain¹⁵⁷ and anxiety/stress/depression as the two biggest health challenges they faced.¹⁵⁸ Women seafarers also face other concerns such as the risks associated to women's sexual health, confidential access to a ship's doctor, and few opportunities to seek medical advice or treatment ashore.¹⁵⁹

4.5.3. Sanitary materials

139. Women require access to feminine sanitary items and discreet disposal mechanisms. It is estimated that 40 per cent of female seafarers do not have access to sanitary bins on board ships.¹⁶⁰ Female hygiene products could be sold on ships through bonded stores, and toilets should be equipped with sanitary disposal bags or bins.¹⁶¹

4.5.4. Maternity

140. As stated earlier, the MLC, 2006, Standard A4.5, paragraphs 2 and 3, provide – in respect to social protection – that each State party to the Convention shall “take steps according to its

¹⁵⁴ Some women have faced discrimination in the form of being denied equipment available to men on board. See: IMHA et al.: *Women Seafarers' Health and Welfare Survey*, 2015.

¹⁵⁵ This survey was completed by 595 women seafarers. It included women working in the cruise ship sector.

¹⁵⁶ The lack of access to confidential medical advice on board a vessel has been identified by female seafarers as 48 per cent of the women surveyed stated that they had problems seeking medical care. See: IMHA et al., 2015, op. cit.

¹⁵⁷ More ratings (56 per cent) than officers (40 per cent) reported joint/back pain, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ ILO, 2013, op. cit.

¹⁶⁰ UNCTAD: *The Review of Maritime Transport 2017*; 37 per cent of the women surveyed stated that they did not have access to sanitary bins. IMHA et al., 2015, op. cit.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

national circumstances” to provide social security protection including at least three of the nine branches of social security, to seafarers ordinarily resident in its territory.¹⁶² Of the 88 countries that have ratified the MLC, 2006, 54 provide maternity benefit as part of their social security protection. This social security protection may also be contained in bilateral or multilateral agreements, taking into consideration the provisions of relevant collective bargaining agreements. The MLC, 2006, does not refer to paternity leave; flag State legislation, collective bargaining agreements, or company policies may provide for paternity leave for seafarers.

- 141.** Pregnancy testing of women seafarers before going on board a ship, particularly in the cruise sector, is widespread. However, this is a form of discrimination that violates the rights of women. Pregnancy testing before employment may be considered a violation of Convention No. 183, Article 9(2).
- 142.** Responses to pregnancy of women seafarers may include disembarkation at their own expense,¹⁶³ and offers of transfer to shore-side employment or permission to keep working on board. Cases of “maternity harassment”¹⁶⁴ have been reported. In some instances, pregnant women – as well as workers returning from paternity, maternity or parental leave – have experienced harassment from co-workers, subordinates, or superiors.¹⁶⁵

Box 4.3
Maternity and paternity benefits

As part of an initiative to increase the retention of women seafarers, a Danish business conglomerate introduced new maternity benefits in 2016. This included a global guaranteed minimum of 18 weeks maternity leave on full pay for all employees, subject to local workforce regulations; a “Return to Work” programme which enables women to have a smoother transition back to work through working less hours within the first year of childbirth or adoption, at full contractual pay; and one week of paternity leave.

Source: [Maersk: Maersk Group introduces improved maternity benefits worldwide](#), 14 Jan. 2016.

- 143.** Access to maternity protection and measures that enable balancing work and family responsibilities promotes gender equality. Pregnancy and maternity protection is meant to provide a measure of job security, such as: job access; wage and benefits maintenance during maternity leave; and no fear of dismissal. Additionally, maternity protection and childcare provisions enable all seafarers to have families and remain part of the workforce. This is closely linked to re-entry into the workforce and includes: not being downgraded from a certain post; flexible working arrangements; and having full opportunities for training.¹⁶⁶ Social dialogue has been highlighted as an important mechanism in the protection of working

¹⁶² The nine branches are: medical care; sickness benefit; unemployment benefits; old-age benefit; employment injury benefit; family benefit; maternity benefit; invalidity benefit; and survivors’ benefit.

¹⁶³ The ITF, in its collective agreements stipulates that pregnant seafarers are to be repatriated at the cost of the company. ILO, 2013, op. cit.

¹⁶⁴ This refers to the harassment of a woman because of pregnancy, childbirth or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth or a worker because of family responsibilities.

¹⁶⁵ ILO: *Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work*, Report V(1), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva, 2018.

¹⁶⁶ ILO, 2013, op. cit.

parents, especially when the interruptions for childbearing and childcare are compounded by contractual arrangements.¹⁶⁷

4.6. Discrimination, violence and harassment

144. Gender-based direct and indirect discrimination reduce female labour force participation and place women at a disadvantage in the labour market.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, they face discrimination based on the social responsibilities assigned to them due to gender stereotyping.¹⁶⁹ Women's roles in the workforce are often seen as supplementary and not inclusive; an example is in management posts. This leads to gender-based occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical.
145. Gender-based violence has been defined as “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately” including acts that “inflict physical, mental, sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, sexual harassment, coercion and other deprivations of liberty”.¹⁷⁰ Gender-based violence is more likely to occur in male-dominated workplaces and/or when there is an unequal power relationship between men and women.¹⁷¹ This form of violence may also occur against people who do not follow socially accepted gender roles and can be committed by or against both women and men, such as violence against non-gender-conforming persons or members of the LGBT community.¹⁷² Research shows that encouraging gender sensitization¹⁷³ in the workplace can assist in the reduction of stereotypes and encourage changed behaviour towards others.¹⁷⁴
146. Sexual harassment is typically defined as “unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature that is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating.”¹⁷⁵ According to UN standards and national laws, any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct, gesture of a sexual nature, or any other sexual behaviour that

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ ILO: *World employment social outlook: Trends for women 2017* (Geneva 2017).

¹⁶⁹ ILO: *Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work*, Report V(1), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva, 2018.

¹⁷⁰ UN, CEDAW Committee, *General Recommendation No. 19: Violence against Women*, para. 6, 1992, A/47/38.

¹⁷¹ ILO: *Promoting the employment of women in the transport sector – Obstacles and policy options*, 2013.

¹⁷² ILO: *Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work*, 2018, *op. cit.*

¹⁷³ Gender sensitization refers to behaviour modification through awareness raising on gender equality concerns. See: Anglo-Eastern et al.: *Gender Diversity: Towards Building and Maintaining a Diverse Shipboard Team*, 2017.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ ILO, 2013, *op. cit.*

might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause someone offence or humiliation falls within the definition of sexual harassment – be it from any person.¹⁷⁶

- 147.** Though male seafarers can also be victims of sexual harassment, the majority of reported cases relate to women seafarers. Over 18 per cent of women seafarers state that they have been subject to sexual harassment on ships.¹⁷⁷ Sexual harassment is considered a key issue by women seafarers aboard cargo ships. Women seafarers have to be cautious on board to protect themselves from sexual harassment, such as locking their cabin doors to prevent intrusion from other crew members. Five out of nine female cadets have been subject to or witnessed sexual harassment at sea. This includes acts such as verbal abuse, inappropriate behaviour, and innuendos.¹⁷⁸
- 148.** Women seafarers who are sexually harassed are often reluctant to file a complaint in fear of social and personal implications such as further harassment or isolation, or loss of their job. There is a need for increased knowledge and use of policies that allow a complainant to report cases of sexual harassment without fear of negative consequences. Increased reporting of sexual harassment cases will aid in gauging the magnitude of the issue and giving room for dialogue on recourse measures.
- 149.** Sexual harassment can also be an obstacle to women entering and/or staying in the workforce. Previous studies have indicated that one of the intentions behind sexual harassment aboard ships was to pass the message that “the ship is not an appropriate workplace for women”. Women seafarers may leave a particular ship and in some cases a career at sea as a result of workplace violence and harassment.¹⁷⁹
- 150.** Policies aimed at eliminating sexual harassment could be conveyed through pre-boarding training or on-board safety meetings. The development and dissemination by shipowners of zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment are also to be followed with positive action to prevent sexual harassment and effective disciplinary action. States also play a key role in preventing sexual harassment through the development of national anti-harassment legislation that also applies on ships flying their flag. For example, the Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Act of 2018 extends the protection against discrimination and sexual harassment to all Norwegian ships.

¹⁷⁶ UN: *Secretary-General’s bulletin: Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority*, 2008.

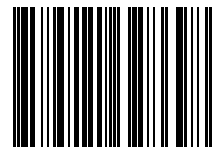
¹⁷⁷ IMHA et al., 2015, op. cit.

¹⁷⁸ K. Pike et al., 2016, op. cit.

¹⁷⁹ ILO, 2013, op. cit.

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