



Draft speech of Mr. Juan Riva (Vicepresident of ECSA)

The previous speakers have already touched upon all the aspects of the problem, so that I don't think it is possible to put new elements on the table for discussion. Let me, nevertheless, try to draw some considerations and some conclusions from this discussion.

As a main trading entity, Europe needs a firm basis of high quality maritime know how for the full maritime cluster. This was confirmed in the Blue Paper on a Future Maritime Transport Policy issued in June 2006 stating that: *"Maritime education and training should be designed to provide recruits with skills which are of the highest quality and which can provide multiple employment opportunities"*.

The recent Commission Communication on a Maritime Transport Strategy 2009-2018 of January 2009 stresses that: *"Over the recent years, maritime transport industries have created many jobs, directly and indirectly. Some 70% of shipping related jobs are knowledge intensive, high quality jobs on shore. The growing shortage of maritime professionals, officers and ratings entails the risk of losing the critical mass of human resources that sustains the competitiveness of the European maritime industries in general."*

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

The shipping industry is fully aware of the risk of a global shortage of highly qualified shipping people and many initiatives to attract young people to a maritime career have been launched in different EU Member States often based on cooperation between the social partners - shipowners and the unions - and national Authorities. The initiative included, among others: Campaigns in newspapers, brochures, television; Travelling promotion teams in schools ; Seafarers speeches at schools, etc. Most of those campaigns are directly funded by the industry.

With regard to training, an intensive and targeted education and training policy has been enhanced by the industry through a policy of:

- More direct involvement of shipping companies in the training process
- Sending teachers more often to sea to get acquainted with the most recent high tech
- Enhance the training on board of ships by providing extra cabins and other facilities on board as well as making increasing use of computer assisted training.

I cannot avoid at least mentioning briefly other two rather negative points on which action should be taken. The first one is the criminalisation of seafarers which seems to happen more and more the last years, even in Europe, with a recent example in Norway in 2009. The criminalisation seafarers is contrary to the principles established by MARPOL and UNCLOS

Conventions. The IMO and its members should act more forcibly against such incidents. Aside from the matter of principle there is serious concern about the impact that criminalisation may have on the recruitment and retention of seafarers within the profession.

And, secondly, but equally important is the problem of “Piracy at sea” particularly off Somalia where, just in 2009, 217 vessels were attacked, 47 of them were hijacked, with a total of 867 seafarers hijacked. We would like to commend the Naval Forces in the area and in particular EU-NAFVOR/ ATALANTA for the good work they are doing with the limited resources they have. More resources should be made available and there should be a more forceful application of and more robust rules of engagement and pirates should be taken to justice.

Piracy is not only a problem off Somalia, but also in other areas. The shipping industry is taking all measures to prevent piracy on the basis of so-called “Best Management Practices”.

However, the international community, through the United Nations should act more forcibly in line with the UN Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stating that: **“ALL STATES SHALL COOPERATE TO THE FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT IN THE REPRESSION OF PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS OR IN ANY OTHER PLACE OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF ANY STATE.”**

To finish, let me draw some conclusions:

1. The shipping industry has many elements that should make it very attractive for the young generations, since it is:
 - Essential for the modern economy.
 - Extremely sustainable and environmental friendly in comparison with other transport modes.
 - Innovative and high-tech oriented in many aspects.
 - Highly globalized both in economic and regulatory terms, hence offering many opportunities for developing an international professional career, by travelling virtually all the world round and fully applying the expertise and know how acquired in other countries and, to a great extent, based in one common language: English.
 - Offering also the possibility to apply in many land based jobs of the maritime cluster industries the practical experience acquired on board. This is true for land offices of shipping companies, shipbuilding, shipping agents, class and maritime administration surveyors, maritime education and training, etc. Therefore, maritime professionals can develop a full-life professional career being all the time directly linked to ships in a variety of aspects: operation, design, inspection, etc. ... if they so will. Obviously, some of these professional steps may require some additional education or training update. But all the previous experience acquired in other maritime fields will be useful to a large extent, and valued as such in the labour market.
2. But, at the same time, the on-board jobs have also some aspects that make it hardly desirable for youngsters of most developed countries:
 - It imposes personal separation from family, friends, home, etc. at long distances and in some cases without the availability of the permanent communication and internet social tools to which youngsters are today not only used to, but in many cases highly dependent.
 - Apart from exceptional cases, such as large cruise vessels, it requires living in a rather confined space, co-operating with a rather limited number of colleagues, and subject to a tight time routine, a working environment that may be not optimum for all characters.

- In several on board positions, and in general for officers, the level of responsibility, and hence of stress, can be very high and again not suitable for everyone.
- The ever growing frequency of inspections and the severe penal charges that can be imposed to seafarers.
- Due to the public image of shipping, which is not fair with its excellent environmental performance, young people may in many cases reject to join this industry.
- And last, but not least, the adverse marine environment and the unavoidable risks of the navigational adventure.

It is our challenge and our responsibility to find ways to conciliate these pros and cons... But this is increasingly difficult. And it is difficult because the key element that may be an incentive for youngsters from developed countries to compensate the cons is to add **a good salary and social package**. But shipping is also a highly competitive industry and the freight levels are established by the market, normally on the basis of the most competitive ships. Obviously, good and professional ship-owners and operators are normally willing to pay a premium for a higher training level, better experience, etc. But normally not just for some specific nationality. The maritime labour supply countries (such as Filipinas, India, Peru, Cuba, etc.) are constantly supplying well trained junior officers which are ready and willing to hire themselves for salaries that, while providing them a more than decent and acceptable living conditions and buying capacity in their countries of residence, will be considered unacceptable for seafarers from the EU or other developed countries, ... just because their home cost of living is much higher.

For some 20 years, the European Special Registers have been able to compensate the difference, thanks to the reduction and even in some cases elimination of the income taxation and social security contributions. And, in the case of Spain, many shipping companies still have their complements integrally formed by Spanish or EU nationals. The freight boom we saw from 2003 to 2008 postponed temporarily the problem. But now we have a freight crisis, fierce competition is back and the problem is also back, harder than never.

In my personal view, if we want (and I assume that WE WANT), continue having experienced European seafarers, **we need to apply four remedies, without delay and at the same time:**

- **Continue the promotional** actions, especially targeted to young people in the EU, to make the pros more evident and to compensate the negative image from shipping. In particular, we must show, from the very beginning that, after a seafaring career, the maritime cluster have a number of attractive, socially recognised and well paid land based occupations. We should not forget that this is a long term task that will not probably produce visible results in several years.
- At the same time, we have to **rely on mixed crews**, with a core fraction of European personnel working together with professionals from other countries, so that the mixed cost/quality ratio can be assumed at market freight levels.
- In parallel, we have to ensure the **regular egression of well trained maritime professionals from developing countries** which are prepared for the increasingly complex technology of the new ships. Several large European shipping companies already have direct implication in this essential task.
- And last, but not least, we have to **obtain the support of our maritime Administrations and Unions for this long term strategy**, in the conviction that other ways will only lead us, in the long term, to increasing flagging out and hence to lower opportunities for keeping the core group of experienced European seafarers that are needed for the shipping industry and the maritime cluster.

Thank you!