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PROJECT DETAILS

Project Title
Enabling Seafarers to
Mutual Endorsement

Project Name
ENDORSEME

Start Date
1-11-2021

Project Total Duration
24 Months

Project End Date
1-11-2023

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) developed the first standard for Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes for merchant navy officers in 1978. Seafarers are trained and certified by national administrations complying with the minimum standards set by the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). Despite these efforts, there are no mechanisms for monitoring how these standards are being applied in various nations, and yet there is an issue for seafarers to get their certificates accepted/endorsed when they are attempting to work from one flag state to another.

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has started to monitor STCW compliance to contribute to safer operations; however, the issue for seafarers having a certification from one country flag not to be able to work in another country flag still exists, as there are still many countries that do not have mutual recognition or endorsement in place. There have been several attempts in the past to unify certifications and endorsements; however, it did not resolve the issue in full.

Maritime Education and Training systems in Bulgaria are being updated regularly, as in many other EU Member States. Their intention is to develop the maritime education and training system, particularly through the development of safety at sea by improving the quality of seafarers, as well as protecting the seas that Bulgaria plays a strategic role in the supply of seafarers to Europe and worldwide. For example, despite the growth of the EU-controlled fleet, most EU ships neither fly the Bulgarian flag nor employ EU seafarers (ITF, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic has limited the seafarers' movement, as well as education and training centres' everyday tasks. It has also had a significant impact on the regular delivery of education, training, and youth policies.

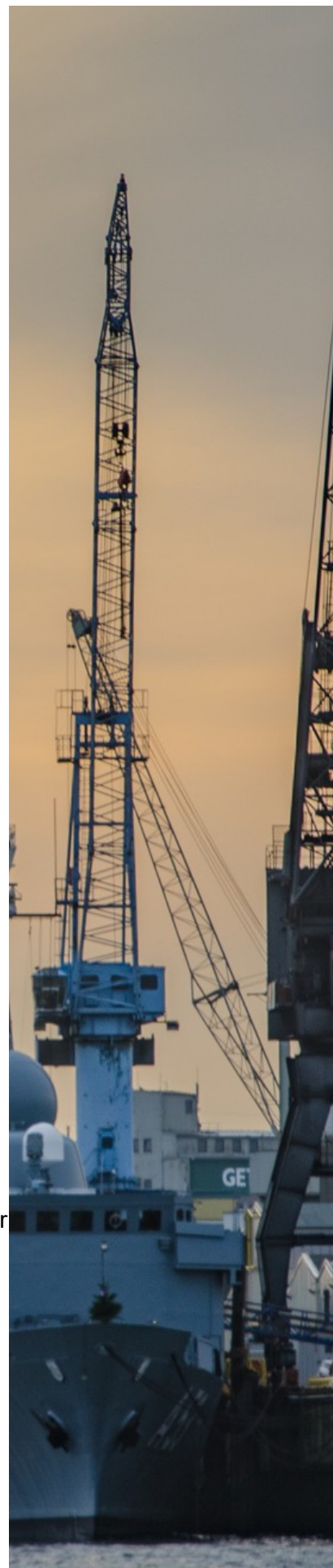
The ENDORSEME project targets the development and provision of VET products and services such as knowledge, skills, and competence development to external actors such as students, companies, and governments. It will develop flexible and learner-centred VET programmes that contribute to closing existing gaps in the access to training for working-age adults to successfully manage labour market transitions. It will also contribute to the development of continuing vocational training programmes designed to be adaptable to the labour market, as well as programmes that facilitate the transfer, recognition, and accumulation of learning outcomes leading to national qualifications.

The ENDORSEME project will ultimately facilitate the recognition of certifications of seafarers, including ratings, throughout Europe and worldwide. The integrated model that the ENDORSEME project will utilize will bring together all of the seafaring qualifications, such as Certification of Competence and ancillary STCW certificates, and attempt to enable each certificate mutually accepted by the European countries first and later on a global scale in a reactive manner. The model will also allow for greater cohesion between international and local requirements in MET in member states, providing a higher quality and more attractive long-term VET programme.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project will develop a platform for various ranks of seafarers. The platform will have an option to investigate acceptance/endorsement of sea-going certificates. ENDORSEME project aims to:

- Identify the problems associated with the recognition/endorsement of certificates in a questionnaire-based needs analysis and information based on the investigation of undiscovered areas,
- Develop an online platform and tool for seafarers, shipping companies, and MET institutions to identify whether the certificates of seafarers are accepted/endorsed by one country to another.
- ENDORSEME will enable authorities to monitor the success of different systems and requirements through developing a quality assurance and control system for the issue of such certificates. It will enable the transfer of 'good practices' between member states and worldwide while ensuring high-quality programs.
- The platform bringing all world authorities together will enable the transfer of innovation to ensure ENDORSEME is of a high standard recognition model.
- ENDORSEME will support the continuous personal development of seafarers in VET (Vocational Education and Training) for all seafarers in the maritime sector across Europe.
- ENDORSEME will cross-reference the STCW requirements, thereby allowing seafarers to be more mobile in any European country, thus promoting the Citizenship program.
- ENDORSEME will also incorporate the local and national requirements of each country, therefore promoting action in Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications between neighboring and international countries.
- The partnership, working in collaboration with major awarding, accrediting, and licensing bodies, will cross-reference and include the international and local/national requirements into the tool, with the aim of embedding the recognition tool initially into 5 partner maritime education and training (MET) systems



across Europe.

- Once developed, the ENDORSEME tool will facilitate all certifications received from one country to another to be endorsed in the partner countries and Europe. A quality assurance and control practice based on a well-respected system for the delivery of ENDORSEME will also be established to guarantee National Authorities continue to follow the requirements.



PROJECT IMPACT

The project aims to have significant impacts on various stakeholders. For participants and seafarers, it will enhance their transferable competencies through a recognized and accessible system, improving their employability and mobility in the maritime sector. Participating organizations, educational institutions, and government bodies will benefit from a ready-made competence-based learning program, leading to a direct impact on vocational training in the maritime sector. The platform's implementation is expected to lead to increased transparency and recognition by national authorities, adding credibility to the tools produced by the project.

At the local, regional, national, European, and international levels, the desired impacts are numerous. The ENDORSEME Tool will promote transparency in the acceptance of certification between European countries, facilitating the mobility of European seafarers and improving safety onboard ships. By complying with the EU's Maritime Transport Policy for 2020, it will positively impact maritime seaborne transportation within the EU. Safer shipping, reduced accidents, lower costs, improved image, and competitiveness in the shipping industry are expected outcomes. The project's ultimate success would be the inclusion of its objectives and results into EU maritime policy papers.

Measurement of these impacts will be achieved through qualitative indicators, such as adoption and promotion of the ENDORSEME Tool by national authorities and stakeholders, feedback from stakeholders leading to talks with authorities and the EU Commission, and the inclusion of the project's objectives and results into EU maritime policy papers. Quantitative indicators, such as publications in maritime media, digital outlets' engagement, and applications for participation in the project's final conference, will also be used to assess impact. Post-funding research will further quantify the impact in target areas, including improvements in certification processes and wider recognition of institutions in their respective countries and regions.

PARTNERS

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