# SKILLSEA

UPDATE

JULY 2021

Making progress

Update from the project coodinator
Diedrick Jansen, STC Group

In this newsletter, you will be informed on the developments within the SkillSea project. From the project coordinators point of view, an important achievement was the approval of the technical progress report that described the results of the first two years of SkillSea. Although, it is obvious that still a lot has to be done in

order to achieve the ambitions formulated in the application submitted in early 2018, the approval shows that the project is on the right track.

The coming period, we more and more will focus on working towards the final results of the project. This will require the efforts and support from all partners in and outside SkillSea. Only in that way, we will be able to provide the maritime transport sector with something that will have a sustainable effect that goes beyond the lifespan of the SkillSea project.

3 questions to *Estelle Brentnall ETF Head of Maritime and Nikolaos (Niko) Koletsis ETF Policy Officer Maritime Transport*

Estelle Brentnall
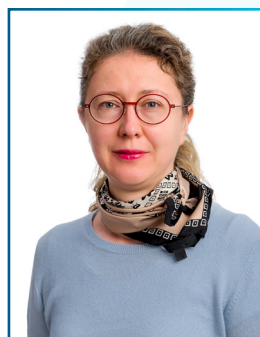
1. What is the role of ETF in the SkillSea consortium?
Estelle: SkillSea has been launched by a Europe-wide consortium established by the industry's recognised social partners, the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) and our organisation, ETF, the European Transport Workers' Federation.

ETF is in the Project Board, chaired by STC Group, and along its social partner ECSA, ETF role is to contribute to directing and monitoring the project. We evaluate the progress of the different work packages and the key deliverables.

2. What are your thoughts on the first outcomes of the SkillSea project?
Estelle: We all know that the emergence of digitization and automation is rapidly changing the requirements needed in the workplace in general. The first outcomes of the SkillSea project have confirmed that more training should definitely be given in sustainability, greening and digitisation. Future seafarers also need to develop cross-disciplinary skills, including soft skills in leadership and management. In addition, there is a need for transition programmes that make the shift from working at sea to working on shore easier.

Niko: I joined recently the ETF team and from what I have learned so far, it seems to me that the first outcomes of the SkillSea project clearly identify that the International Convention on Standards of Trai-

ning, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW Convention) requires a comprehensive and ambitious review to ensure that it is fit for purpose and responsive to the evolving requirements of the industry. The STCW Convention makes no reference to digital skills for example and is not addressing competences for shore-based staff training either.
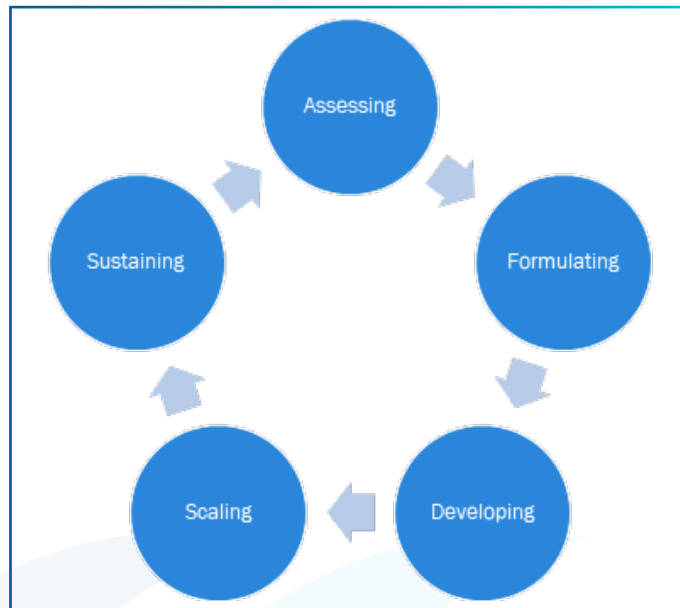
Niko Koletsis

When we finish the SkillSea project by the end of 2022, what would be the greatest achievement for SkillSea in your opinion?
Estelle and Niko: we both agree that the greatest achievement would be for Member States' policies to take...

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SkillSea Strategy *Alco Weeke*

technical project coordinator, STC Group

3 questions to Estelle and Niko

Estelle and Niko: ...the findings and recommendations of SkillSea and roll them out across their different Maritime Education and Training institutions as soon as possible and not wait for the STCW training to be extended to include maritime law, corporate finance, autonomous shipping and other new techno-logy-based skills in its curriculum. We also hope that this project will ultimately create more transparen-cy regarding future skills training options and trigger systematic initiatives for future skills life-long learning and training.

After a lot of groundwork where all work package leaders were steering all participants in their work pack-ages into perfect deliverables on all tasks, the project comes into a more strategic phase. Collaboration beco-mes more evident in this phase as the work packages are becoming more connected.

Three main deliverables can be mentioned concerning strategies:
D2.3 Structured cooperation
D5.2 The roadmap towards a sustainable skills strategy
D3.7 Strategy key findings

These three deliverables must clarify how the SkillSea wheel can be kept in motion for the future, as shown in the figure above.

Assessing relates to the current research work done in work pack-age 1 (WP1) and the outcomes of the tools developed in work pack-age 3 (WP3).

The formulating is where the found gaps in WP1 are reformulated in learning outcomes via the develo-ped procedures of work package 2 (WP2).

Developing is bringing the learning outcomes into education as it is now done in WP2, including piloting and validating.
The scaling brings the learning outcomes and educational material to close the found gap to the stakeholders and beyond. Every future student and via upskilling,

every seafarer can profit from this knowledge. Sustaining is needed for keeping the roadmap from work package 5 in execution. When there is a need for an adjusted strategy, work package 3 like work needs to be activated to deliver this new strategy in the future.

I hope that many Maritime Educati-on and Training (MET) institutions can work in structured cooperation to formulate and develop materials in the future. Materials that can close the knowledge and/or compe-tence gap identified by all kinds of stakeholders who have been brought together via the roadmap.

Good luck to us all.

E-learning: yes or no? Andrew Linington, Naulilus

Over the past 18 months, the Covid-19 pandemic has fuelled a remarkable acceleration in the pace of change in seafarer training – something that strikes at the heart of the SkillSea project's ambitious target of developing 'future-proof skills for the maritime transport sector'. As a shipping writer, I find that barely a day now passes without the arrival of another press release about a new package or a new program claiming to make the best use of technology to deliver crew training, competency and assessment, and to provide cloud-based e-learning, simulation, coaching and mentoring.

The World Maritime University's global Maritime Training Insights Database (MarTID) report, published last year, noted that the gap between face-to-face teaching and internet-based e-learning for seafarers was already closing before the pandemic began. It predicted that the use of tech in teaching is set to increase substantially as a result of 'the increased acceptance – and need to – conduct business remotely, online'. Even before the pandemic struck, the MarTID researchers found that there had been a 16% reduction in face-to-face training over the previous year and that 56% of maritime training institutions had increased the use of internet-based e-learning over the same period. Another, more recent, survey, published by the German crewing specialist Danica showed that almost one-third of seafarers receiving training from their company over the past year had been trained online – a huge increase from just 4% in the previous year. Interestingly, almost two-thirds of the 8,329 seafarers surveyed said that they found their training to be useful – a 10% increase on the previous year – and 85% said they preferred online training to classroom training.

Some of the attractions of online training are clear. Distance learning can help seafarers to study at home or onboard at a time that suits them, without the need to travel to a classroom, and reducing the time they have to spend away from their families during their precious leave. It is also claimed that online video-based teaching could cut companies' training costs by as much as 80%, with potentially big savings on travel, accommodation, expenses and room hire. On the downside, however, are concerns over variable quality, the costs for seafarers and patchy connectivity at sea.

So, what does this all mean for SkillSea? Digital delivery has been dramatically fast-tracked as a consequence of the Covid crisis, making the project's findings and recommendations more topical and more relevant than anyone could have imagined at the start.

Skills gaps according to seafarers and the industry Christina Troumpetari, Eugenides Foundation

At the start of 2021 SkillSea shared a questionnaire to identify the perceptions of employers and employees about gaps and future skills needs. We received 1,206 responses from seafarers (on board or on leave) and 41 responses from shipowners. The analysis of the survey findings indicates a shared strong perception of the importance of skills' development. Most respondents on the side of maritime professionals perceive more than half of their current skills and knowledge as outdated and agree that further training is necessary, especially 'on the job' training.

The analysis of the employees' responses clearly indicates an emphasis on the need for new era skills, such as green shipping and data analytics.

Employers observe skills' gaps mainly in the areas of data processing, mentoring, and conflict management. The skills demanded the most include communication, situational awareness, risk assessment, and observation and monitoring. Finally, employers confirmed the shortage of European trained Officers indicating the inability to attract highly skilled professionals as well as the difficulty for the workforce side to keep up with technological changes as key causes.

Recruitment difficulties are attributed by the respondents to the preference for on-shore career opportunities, competition, and the lack of a sufficient pool of graduates from European Maritime Education and Training Institutes.