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GLOBAL MARITIME FORUM



Improving

seafarer

well-being

Preliminary findings from the

Diversity@Sea pilot project



Diversity@Sea
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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and not the views of Diversity@Sea companies, the All Aboard Alliance or its member companies, or the Global Maritime Forum.

CREDITS

The pictures used in this report are of the seafarers onboard some of the Diversity@Sea pilot vessels: Charlotte Schulte, Cheyenne, GasLog Winchester, Apia Chief, and Southern Reverence.

Data collection and analysis was conducted in collaboration with PsyFyi.



For more than ten months, the Diversity@Sea pilot project has engaged daily with a total of 400 seafarers onboard 12 vessels to collect 50,000 data points with learnings about how to make life at sea more attractive to both existing and future generations of seafarers. The collected data provides clear signposts as to how the industry could change its practices and improve conditions for the 1.9 million men and women working at sea.

The Diversity@Sea pilot aims to define ambitious guidelines and standards for how to make life at sea safe, inclusive, and attractive for all. These guidelines will be published by the Global Maritime Forum in early 2025. However, the initial data collection makes it possible to draw some preliminary findings on how to create a more inclusive work environment onboard, how to eliminate abuse, harassment and bullying, and how to accommodate more flexible work/life planning.

These findings stem from a global collaboration with 12 first-mover companies within the Diversity@Sea project, each contributing one vessel. To be part of the Diversity@Sea pilot, all vessels were required to have minimum four women on board, ensure gender-appropriate facilities including appropriate conditions for menstrual needs and private hygiene, provide 24/7 wifi access and inclusive personal protective equipment. All of these requirements have brought essential learnings about what is important to the seafarers involved. The overall ambition of the Diversity@Sea pilot project is to develop clear guidelines and recommendations for how to make life at sea more inclusive and attractive; and to co-design a set of global golden standards for the maritime industry.

This document presents some of our preliminary results and advice that not only address current challenges but also anticipate future needs in the maritime labour market. We have worked together with all parties involved to identify seven key areas with clear indicators for positive change that could be used by maritime companies, institutions, regulators and academics to shape the future work environment at sea.

The areas are:

- Zero-tolerance policy for abuse, harassment, and bullying
- Contracts at sea
- Internet access and social connectivity
- Guaranteed helpline access
- Parental support
- Inclusive personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Transparent training and appraisal systems

These seven points are crucial steps towards creating a safer, more equitable, and supportive work environment at sea.

It is our hope that these preliminary findings and learnings will be embraced by stakeholders across the maritime industry who are looking to make working at sea more attractive and considered by policymakers as valid input for a discussion on minimum standards to ensure that rules and regulations not only keeps pace with the evolving nature of maritime work but also increases inclusivity and safety at sea.

We want to send our deepest appreciation to all the seafarers onboard the 12 vessels in the Diversity@Sea pilot, as well as to all of the leaders involved in the pilot from across the All Aboard Alliance.

Throughout the rest of 2024 and into 2025, the Global Maritime Forum and the All Aboard Alliance will continue to digest the findings and develop projects and recommendations based on the data.



Our preliminary findings

1	Zero tolerance for abuse, bullying, and harassment, including sexual misconduct	6
2	Contracts at sea	9
3	Internet access and social connectivity	11
4	Guaranteed helpline access	13
5	Parental support	15
6	Inclusive personal protective equipment	18
7	Transparent training and appraisal systems	20



1 Zero tolerance for abuse, bullying, and harassment, including sexual misconduct

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Maritime Labor Convention of 2006 (MLC, 2006) emphasises the importance of providing a safe and respectful workplace for seafarers. However, despite these collective and important efforts from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), abuse, bullying, and harassment continue to be prevalent issues in the maritime sector.

Studies have shown that a significant percentage of seafarers have experienced some form of bullying, harassment, or discrimination at sea. For instance, a [Nautilus International survey](#) found that almost 42 percent of maritime workers have encountered such behaviour, while [Safer Waves reports](#) that 58% have experienced sexual misconduct at sea.

Many of these incidents are never reported due to fear of retaliation. Seafarers risk being labelled as troublemakers or even being fired if they report bullying or harassment. Additionally, the unique working conditions at sea, such as isolation, demanding physical tasks, and hierarchical organisational structures, can make seafarers more vulnerable to these behaviours.

A comprehensive [survey conducted within the Danish merchant fleet](#) revealed that 62% of seafarers received information on how to report bullying and harassment, yet 24% noticed no change in the workplace environment regarding these issues over the past year. Furthermore, although 44% were aware of a reporting hotline, many still expressed uncertainty about reporting procedures due to fear of retaliation or lack of support from management.

Globally, the situation is similarly concerning. [Estimates indicate](#) that 8% to 25% of all seafarers experience harassment and bullying. For female seafarers, the number is over 50%. In the first quarter of 2023 alone, the [International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network \(ISWAN\) reported](#) a 45% increase in cases of harassment and bullying compared to the previous quarter, with many incidents involving abuse by senior officers.

1.2 GOALS

The Diversity@Sea pilot findings suggest companies should implement a clear zero-tolerance policy against abuse, bullying, and harassment, including sexual misconduct. This was one of the requirements of all pilot vessels, and the collected data indicates that it has had a significant impact on working conditions and mental well-being. The pilot has shown how important it is that the zero-tolerance policy also includes mandatory anti-bullying training for all, as well as clear guidelines for how the policy will be enforced. Furthermore, it is important that the policy is clearly communicated to all seafarers before onboarding and reinforced regularly through crew meetings and via visual reminders such as posters, email signatures and the like, to ensure that every crew member understands and follows the policy. Zero-tolerance policies create a safe and respectful work environment, prevent incidents, and ensure that any occurrences are promptly and effectively addressed.

1.3 DIVERSITY@SEA FINDINGS

In the Diversity@Sea pilot, all participating vessels were mandated to have zero-tolerance policies towards bullying, abuse and harassment, and the seafarers onboard agreed to the value of this, by rating its importance as 9.2 out of 10. The pilot data clearly shows how employee well-being is improved with such policies, and how it directly increases overall satisfaction when it comes to:

- Feeling safe from abuse and/or sexual harassment
- Feeling safe from sexualised language and touching onboard
- Feeling physically and mentally safe

When asked why zero tolerance was important, seafarers notably focused on the resulting respect and professionalism (45%), awareness and enforcement of policies (35%), and safety and mental well-being (20%).

1. Respect and professionalism (45% of responses)

- » Regular communication and reinforcement of company policies regarding bullying, harassment, and safety
- » Awareness of the zero-tolerance policy and the enforcement of the rules
- » Regular meetings and briefings are used to remind crew members of the importance of adhering to these policies
- » The policies are well-understood, but there might be occasional lapses in strict enforcement
- » Strong sense of mutual respect and professionalism
- » Positive interpersonal relationships with crew members, feeling supported by colleagues
- » Common understanding and adherence to respectful communication, avoiding inappropriate language
- » Female officers have generally been well-integrated into the crews

2. Awareness and enforcement of policies (35% of responses)

- » Regular communication and reinforcement of company policies regarding bullying, harassment, and safety
- » Awareness of the zero-tolerance policy and the enforcement of the rules
- » Regular meetings and briefings are used to remind crew members of the importance of adhering to these policies
- » The policies are well-understood, but there might be occasional lapses in strict enforcement

3. Safety and mental well-being (20% of responses)

- » Maintaining both physical and mental safety, citing good work practices and support from superiors are regarded as important
- » Mental well-being is a concern, particularly due to the challenging work environment, long contracts, and separation from family
- » While physical safety is generally well-managed, mental well-being can be harder to maintain due to the nature of the job

1.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

We propose to make it mandatory for all vessels to have a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, abuse, and harassment onboard. The policy should clearly define which disciplinary action will be applied to different offences, according to severity. We also suggest all vessels have demonstrable measures for the prevention, response, investigation and reporting of any abuse, bullying, and harassment, including sexual misconduct, and implement it into existing safety protocols with mandatory anti-bullying training required by all seafarers before onboarding.

2 Contracts at sea

2.1 BACKGROUND

Seafarers often spend extended periods away from home, and the length of their contracts plays a crucial role in their well-being and job satisfaction. However, they can feel pressured to extend their contracts beyond the agreed duration without their explicit, written consent, leading to fatigue, mental stress, and increased safety risks.

Research indicates that extended periods away from home can lead to severe mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and fatigue. For instance, [a 2022 study](#) highlighted that many seafarers feel pressured to work excessive hours and face uncertainties regarding their work schedules, which contributed to feelings of insecurity and increased fatigue.

Many seafarers, particularly those from the Global South, report being on contracts they perceive as being too long. This was especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic, which [exacerbated](#) the issue of contracts not being aligned with seafarer needs. A prolonged separation from family and the demanding nature of the work environment can lead to significant psychological stress, further compounded by inadequate rest and poor living conditions on ships.

MLC, 2006 stipulates that seafarers should not spend more than 11 months at sea without a break. To protect seafarers' rights and prevent undue pressure or exploitation, it is essential that the rule of a maximum 11-month contract is upheld without exception and that any contract changes require timely, written, and explicit consent from the employee.

2.2 GOALS

The vast majority of today's seafarers are employed on [single-voyage contracts](#), working an average of 11.5 hours per day, with almost 90% reporting having no weekly day off. The shortening of contracts and the elimination of contract extensions are crucial to addressing fatigue among seafarers. To make a career at sea more attractive, improve mental health and well-being, and improve overall safety, the industry should revise its policies around contract lengths, terms, and the frequent use of extensions.

2.3 DIVERSITY@SEA FINDINGS

According to Diversity@Sea findings, 35% of seafarers reported that their contracts were frequently extended, with 9% experiencing extensions on short notice. Among those dissatisfied with their contract length, 48% felt their contracts were too long, 20% reported frequent extensions, 9% found their contracts were often reduced, 7% considered their contracts too short, and others cited issues such as difficult rotation times and challenges in planning due to trading patterns. All this calls for higher flexibility on contracts, allowing seafarers to choose a contract length better suited to their current needs.

Voluntary contract extensions support seafarers' rights and contribute to a healthier work-life balance, which is closely linked to overall maritime safety and performance. While managing crew rotations and replacements may present operational challenges, the benefits of having a well-rested and motivated workforce are substantial. Clear communication and proper planning can help mitigate potential issues related to this regulation.

2.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Diversity@Sea pilot findings suggest that contract length should be flexible enough to meet individual needs and expectations. While different seafarers may prefer varying contract lengths depending on their personal and professional circumstances, there is a general preference for contracts that are "not too long, not too short" for their current situation. The findings indicate it would be beneficial to offer more flexible contracts to seafarers, ranging between longer contracts earlier in the career, when many are still focused on learning the trade, and shorter contracts later in the career that provide more time spent with family. Additionally, implementing regular rotations with balanced periods of work and leave is seen to greatly benefit seafarers.

One suggested action would be making it company policy to not change the length of a contract without the seafarer's explicit written consent well in advance. A better and more wide-reaching solution would be to implement this policy into international regulations, which would ensure seafarers are not pressured to stay beyond the initially agreed duration, thereby safeguarding their rights and promoting their mental and physical well-being. Clear guidelines and regulations can help prevent any coercion or undue pressure on seafarers to extend or shorten their contracts, ensuring fair and ethical treatment.

We suggest companies offer increased flexibility to employment contracts to accommodate the individual seafarer's particular situation and expectations, including an option to gradually transition to shorter contracts. Companies should also implement a robust planning system for crew changes and ensure clear and effective communication of these plans and any relevant updates.

3 Internet access and social connectivity

3.1 BACKGROUND

In today's digital age, internet access is essential for social connectivity with family and friends, general communication, training, and information. When MLC, 2006 was drafted, the importance of internet connectivity was not as evident as it is today. Now, internet access is standard in most homes and workplaces and is often provided for free in land-based jobs. For seafarers who spend long periods away from home, having internet access is crucial for maintaining contact with their families, accessing news, and pursuing online education. Without it, they often report feeling frustrated, isolated, and lonely.

Some companies provide internet access for free, some provide quotas of time or data, and according to a [study from Idwal](#), 13% of vessels provide no internet access at all. When the company does not provide sufficient internet access, seafarers rely on prepaid data cards, often at high costs, further adding mental health and financial burdens to the seafarer.

3.2 GOALS

Ensuring free and sufficient internet access significantly improves the quality of life on board, enhances crew well-being by enabling regular communication with family and friends, and provides opportunities for continuous learning and professional development online. Furthermore, offering internet access is important in attracting younger generations to the maritime industry.

3.3 DIVERSITY@SEA FINDINGS

One requirement of the pilot project was for all pilot vessels to provide good quality internet onboard. Seafarers in the pilot rated the importance of this wifi access with an average score of 9.3 out of 10, highlighting the high value they place on reliable communications. However, satisfaction with internet access varied by 3.3 points across different vessels, depending on the amount of free data provided. Respondents who received 8GB or more of free data per week were significantly more satisfied with their internet access than those receiving less.

Seafarers in our study indicated that inadequate internet access can make them feel frustrated (40%), sad (20%), depressed (3%), or a combination of issues (37%). Recent studies from [Idwal](#) and [Inmarsat/Viasat](#) came to similar conclusions, clearly linking mental health at sea to the importance of social connectivity via internet access.

Seafarers in the Diversity@Sea pilot primarily use the onboard wifi for communication (56%), music (11%), learning (11%), or a combination of other purposes, such as news, research, exercise, general browsing, and shopping (22%). Social connectivity with families through various means – such as video calls and messaging apps – is particularly emphasised as it is vital for maintaining morale and reducing loneliness. Consistent access to good-quality internet has significantly improved the ability to stay connected, especially with the introduction of newer systems like Starlink.

3.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

Based on our insights, the maritime industry should look towards a minimum of 1 GB of internet per day free of charge to allow not just for social connectivity but also the ability to provide access to online learning and training while at sea. Another important learning is the importance of separating employee internet access from the operational internet access to ensure stable connectivity and speed for both crew and vessel operations. Additionally, we encourage companies to allow seafarers to purchase additional data at a reasonable cost, to avoid the pricy prepaid cards that many rely on to maintain social connectivity.

These minimum standards could be instituted at the company, national, or international level.



4 Guaranteed helpline access

4.1 BACKGROUND

Seafarers often work in isolated and stressful environments, which can lead to various challenges, such as mental health issues, conflicts, and incidents of abuse or harassment. In such circumstances, access to an independent helpline can offer vital guidance for those in distress. Access to an anonymous, confidential and third-party helpline ensures seafarers can seek help safely without fear of retaliation or privacy breaches. Unfortunately, not all seafarers are aware of or have access to these helplines, potentially denying them the assistance they need.

It is essential that all crew members be informed of the existence of available helplines and know how to use them. Several such helplines already exist, including SeafarerHelp by ISWAN, Sailors' Society, Nautilus 24/7, and The Mission to Seafarers, but many are still not aware of them or know how to contact them.

4.2 GOALS

Every seafarer should be able to find the necessary information to gain access to at least one anonymous and confidential helpline, ideally managed by an independent third party. The helpline needs to be easily accessible and provide support for a wide range of issues, including mental health, abuse, harassment, and other personal or professional concerns. By effectively communicating this information and guaranteeing the confidentiality of the helpline, companies will provide seafarers with a reliable and trusted resource for seeking help when needed.

4.3 DIVERSITY@SEA FINDINGS

Findings from the Diversity@Sea pilot highlight the importance of communicating the availability and purpose of helplines during onboard training, including how seafarers' information is kept confidential and how their anonymity is guaranteed, as this will encourage more people to use these services. Additionally, it is important to define the type of services available through the helplines and inform employees about alternative support methods, such as apps or online resources. Lastly, seafarers should have direct access to a helpline without having to go to the captain or a designated person ashore (DPA).

Ensuring instant access to a confidential helpline can significantly enhance the support system available to seafarers by providing a safe space to voice concerns and seek advice without fear of repercussions. Regular and clear communication about the helpline's availability and its benefits can encourage them to utilise this resource when they need it most.

All 12 pilot companies provided access to an anonymous helpline on their pilot vessels and made an effort to clearly communicate its availability. As a result, 97% of seafarers in the pilot reported being aware of such access, indicating that this goal is highly attainable.

4.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

To support seafarers, who often find themselves far from formal and informal support structures, national or international regulations should stipulate that everyone onboard must have access to and be made aware of a helpline, which needs to be anonymous, confidential, and preferably third-party. Many of these are already out there and freely available thanks to the important work of maritime welfare organisations such as ISWAN, Misson to Seafarers, and others.

5 Parental support

5.1 BACKGROUND

Like most people, seafarers have familial responsibilities. However, the unique challenges of seafaring, such as long absences from home and unpredictable schedules, often make it difficult for seafarers to fulfil these duties. Many, if not most, countries have rules for parental leave and support, such as caring for sick children, for onshore workers but regrettably, these rules rarely apply at sea.

According to the [ILO](#), maternity leave is a universal human and labour right and should last at least 14 weeks. Still, the ILO recommends increasing that period to 18 weeks of paid parental leave so the mother can have more time to rest and recover properly. More than [152 countries](#) now provide paid maternity leave and health benefits by law. [Paternity leave](#) is less common globally, with most countries offering between one and two weeks of statutory paternity leave.

Current policies – including at the company level – typically prevent women with early-stage pregnancies from working at sea, thereby limiting their income and career advancement despite still being fully capable of fulfilling their duties. Being pregnant should not prevent a woman from working or making a living at sea.

5.2 GOALS

Seafarers should have access to parental support, including paid parental leave and, where feasible, flexible working arrangements. Pregnant seafarers should be allowed to work at sea and only repatriated when medically necessary.

5.3 DIVERSITY@SEA FINDINGS

Diversity@Sea pilot findings emphasise the need for a minimum number of weeks of paid parental leave, along with essential healthcare services and job security upon returning from leave. Furthermore, special considerations are necessary for pregnant seafarers, including provisions for repatriation and salary continuity if repatriation must occur early. Unfortunately, pregnant seafarers are often disembarked without discussion upon disclosing their pregnancy, leading to an immediate income loss. This practice can pressure some to withhold disclosure to avoid financial hardship, which poses significant risks to their well-being and vessel operations. Support in these areas is essential for enabling seafarers to balance their professional and personal lives effectively.

Seafarers in our Diversity@Sea study rated the importance of parental support a 9.1 out of 10. Dissatisfaction with parental support was reported as:

1. **Not getting support from the company for starting a family:** paternity package not good enough (24%), not being sufficiently supported by the company (20%), not believing career would be supported if having a family (17%), maternity package not good enough (4%).
2. **Income not sufficient to spend time with family & friends:** salary too low (34%), expenses when at shore too high (25%), other reasons (25%)

Respondents satisfied with parental support mention the following:

1. Health and Insurance Benefits (50%)

- » The provision of health care and comprehensive insurance plans, including coverage for family members
- » Free medical treatments both at sea and on land, along with regular medical check-ups

2. Family and Child Support (30%)

- » Maternity and paternity leave with pay is noted as a crucial benefit
- » The company's sponsorship of children's education, enabling them to attend college

Respondents suggested various improvements:

- » **Pay and career opportunities:** increasing pay to match inflation, providing better annual salary increments, ensuring equal salaries considering exchange rates, and improving promotion opportunities, etc.
- » **Maternity/paternity packages:** offering basic salary during leave, increasing the number of parental leave days, and providing paternity packages for junior officers, etc.
- » **Other benefits:** including maternity and paternity benefits in the annual healthcare coverage, free maternity check-ups, ensuring health insurance during labour, providing family bonuses, and extending medical care for families, etc.
- » **Flexibility:** offering trip length flexibility, temporary desk job options, office secondment opportunities, and enhanced work-life balance initiatives, etc.
- » **Communication and support:** guaranteed option to return to work after leave, ensuring timely sign-on and sign-off processes, improving dialogue with crew managers, and providing more reassurance and job security

5.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

Parental support is just as important to seafarers as it is elsewhere in society – emphasising the need for general ILO recommendations to be applied equally at sea and on land. Furthermore, it is important that women working at sea receive greater job security after giving birth and, where feasible, more flexible work options. A great place to start would be legislative provisions for seafarers to have the right to paid parental leave, covering both maternity and paternity.

Furthermore, we suggest that repatriation for pregnant seafarers be provided only when requested or medically necessary rather than, as is currently mostly the case, automatically upon pregnancy discovery. Repatriation should be provided no later than the 26th week of pregnancy. If it is necessary before then, the seafarer should be offered paid leave to mitigate safety risks and prevent immediate loss of income.



These measures should be clearly communicated before onboarding, allowing employees to make informed decisions about their careers and family lives. By implementing these measures, we can help seafarers manage their familial responsibilities more effectively, improving both seafarer retention and productivity.

Parental support policies are essential to safeguard the rights and well-being of seafarers, as mandated by the MLC. Without paid parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and fair treatment of pregnant seafarers, many may be forced to choose between a career at sea and starting a family. This choice undermines their basic rights and can significantly impact their quality of life and career prospects. The introduction of provisions for early repatriation and continued salary in such cases is critical to ensuring seafarers' economic stability and family life.



6 Inclusive personal protective equipment

6.1 BACKGROUND

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is essential for ensuring seafarer safety, and already a legal requirement for working at sea. However, the current PPE provisions often do not adequately address the need for diverse sizing, leading to potential safety risks and discomfort for many crew members. Findings from the Diversity@Sea pilot highlight the importance of PPE that fits all body types, particularly boiler suits, coveralls, shoes, gloves, hard hats, and safety glasses. These need to be available in a wider range of sizes or be more adjustable to accommodate individuals of varying sizes.

6.2 GOALS

The industry should require, in addition to the latest MLC amendment passed in 2022, the provision of PPE according to a more specific itemised list in a variety of sizes and shapes of to ensure quality and comfort for all workers. Providing comfortable and suitable PPE for all body types can enhance safety compliance and reduce the risk of occupational injuries.

In addition, it will create a better and more comfortable work environment for people who already need to carry out hard and strenuous tasks, inside and outside, in all kinds of weather and conditions.

6.3 DIVERSITY@SEA FINDINGS

Pilot respondents rated the importance of having appropriately sized PPE at 9.4 out of 10, indicating an extremely high level of importance among seafarers. When it comes to satisfaction with PPE, there is a discrepancy between genders, with women on average being 1.5 points less satisfied with the available PPE than their male counterparts. There is also a notable, though smaller, gap between rank groups, with officers being, on average, 0.7 points less satisfied with the fit of their PPE than other crew members.

Those not satisfied – or less satisfied – with PPE list the following reasons:

- » **PPE is too big:** No smaller sizes available, no smaller settings available on hard hats, safety glasses and gloves too large, and crew members do not have the approval to order the correct sizes.
- » **PPE does not fit body type:** Overalls require adjustments because they are too wide at the hips. Shoes and gloves are not fitted for females; boiler suits have excess fabric around the bottom, making climbing difficult; shoes are uncomfortable or too heavy, and fitted sizes are only available for women. PPE is also too small for taller people.
- » **Other input:** Low quality from certain providers, PPE is either too thick or too thin, the material becomes hard and uncomfortable after washing, PPE shrinks when washed, safety glasses are low quality, smaller sizes are overused because they are kept too long, and the annual ‘allowance’ of PPE provided for females is too low.

The quality of PPE needs to be high enough to ensure seafarers feel safe and competent while working, just as it is important for the materials to be durable and maintain their integrity during and after washing. Additionally, PPE needs to be comfortable enough to encourage its use and avoid distracting workers from their tasks. Seafarers in the study also reported thicker boilersuits and cotton as the preferred material and encouraged the supply of PPE to be determined by wear and tear rather than limited availability or quotas.

6.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

The preliminary Diversity@Sea findings clearly indicate a need for all PPE – including specific items such as gloves, shoes, safety glasses, hard hats, and boiler suits – to be made available in sufficient quantities and appropriate shapes, sizes, quality, and comfort, to meet the needs of everyone.

These policies can be implemented at a company level, but to ensure greater safety in the entire industry, the impact would be substantial if national and international regulations, such as MLC, 2006, also reflected these needs.



7 Transparent training and appraisal systems

7.1 BACKGROUND

A transparent onboard training and appraisal system is essential for promoting fairness and improved career development at sea. However, the current state of training and appraisal systems in the maritime industry shows the need for improvement, particularly to prevent discrimination and biased promotions. While many companies have established systems for training and performance evaluations, there are ongoing challenges in applying clear and consistent criteria across all vessels. This lack of uniformity can hinder seafarers' ability to learn and advance their careers fairly and transparently.

The Diversity@Sea pilot findings have pinpointed the need for clear and consistent appraisal criteria across all vessels to allow employees to learn and advance their careers in a fair and transparent way and address any disagreements or perceived unfairness with their superiors. Another learning has been the importance of securing access to rank-specific training and clear instructions on what is required learnings for each rank to allow for equal access to learning and development.

7.2 GOALS

It is a general challenge across the maritime industry to attract and retain talent. The pilot findings suggest the importance of ensuring transparent, fair, and objective criteria for appraisals and rank-specific training in order to have a fair and clear understanding of expectations and the pathways to career advancement.

7.3 PROJECT FINDINGS

Implementing regular and transparent appraisal systems and adequate training significantly enhances seafarers' professional development and job satisfaction. Clear criteria, preferably based on numerical measures, ensure objective appraisals, reducing biases and favouritism. Designated learning and development officers can play an important role in overseeing all steps of evaluation and ensuring its consistency. Access to rank-specific training, together with clearly communicating which trainings are required for each rank, equips workers with the skills necessary for career advancement, benefiting both individuals and the company.

The importance of fair and transparent appraisal systems was clear as seafarers rated the average importance at 9.2 out of 10. Those satisfied with the appraisal system on their pilot vessel highlighted the following:

1. Fairness and transparency (50%)

- » A clear appraisal system with well-communicated expectations.
- » Open discussions with superiors, providing a chance to resolve any disagreements.
- » Positive feedback on electronic appraisal systems for their ease of access and review.

2. Impact on teamwork and morale (30%)

- » The appraisal process enhances teamwork and overall work attitude onboard.
- » Appraisals boost confidence and morale, especially when conducted by respected leaders.
- » The process is seen as an opportunity for personal and professional growth, contributing positively to the work environment.

3. Consistency and professionalism (20%)

- » Appraisals are consistent and conducted with professionalism.
- » They follow clear criteria and standards.
- » Appraisals are based on performance rather than personal biases.

7.4 PROPOSED ACTIONS

Seafarers place high value on demonstratively transparent, fair, and objective criteria for regular appraisals and access to rank-specific training; especially when these are also included in safety management systems to ensure transparency.

Such transparency builds trust, enhances job satisfaction, and ensures equitable treatment and inclusion for all crew members. Effective communication of these criteria before onboarding and throughout employment, along with regular updates, is crucial to achieving these objectives.

Conclusion

The goal of Global Maritime Forum’s human sustainability programme is to define and implement better global standards for working conditions within and across the maritime supply chain. We want to create an industry in which everyone is treated safely and with dignity and respect and we work towards making the industry’s impact on civil society positive rather than negative.

One important aspect of that mission is to ensure that seafarers are directly involved in shaping the evolution of maritime labour standards and in identifying key areas where change is needed. These preliminary Diversity@Sea findings from 12 companies and supported by many more companies from across the All Aboard Alliance, pave the way for important learnings when it comes to confronting unacceptable conditions at sea. These companies worked together in the pilot to address abuse, inadequate social connectivity, and systemic challenges related to parental responsibilities, and they will continue working together to find ways to improve overall work conditions and well-being at sea. If we do not find ways to address these systemic challenges, we not only harm the well-being of those at sea today but also threaten the future viability of the maritime industry. If our sector does not keep up with common standards on land, it will not be able to attract and retain the talent we need.

The Diversity@Sea pilot project, through direct engagement with a diverse group of seafarers and the collection of over 50,000 data points, has provided a clearer understanding of the realities of life at sea. These findings highlight the need for changes to policies at the company, national and international levels. An effective vehicle for such changes is the Maritime Labour Convention. The upcoming amendment discussions to MLC, 2006 that will be held in Geneva, on 7-11 April 2025 can help set better minimum standards for a safe, inclusive, and supportive working environment at sea. Other important policies that can facilitate positive developments are labour policies on national levels and administered by maritime administrations, particularly in the countries that supply large proportions of the maritime workforce.

As we move forward, it is essential that the MLC continues to serve as the fundamental “Seafarer Bill of Rights” – a baseline that all maritime companies must meet, not merely aspire to. The learnings from the Diversity@Sea pilot can hopefully drive improvements across the industry and ensure that the maritime sector remains an appealing and sustainable career choice for future generations. While the MLC, 2006 defines the minimum standards, we believe the industry as a whole needs to aim higher. This is why the Global Maritime Forum is working together with a coalition of companies within the All Aboard Alliance committed to setting higher standards and fostering an environment where every individual, regardless of race, nationality, gender, or background, can thrive and feel valued.

Our Diversity@Sea pilot project reflects a collective effort in listening to and acting on the real experiences of seafarers. By implementing these necessary changes more widely and into international regulation, together we can make the maritime industry one that collectively prioritises the safety, dignity, and well-being of its workers.

Ultimately, the MLC, supported by the shared commitment of all stakeholders, can become more than just a regulatory framework – it can be a dynamic tool that guides us toward a future where seafarers’ rights are fully upheld and their contributions are genuinely recognised. Through our combined efforts, we can make the essential changes that will lead to a maritime industry that is attractive, resilient, just, and inclusive for all.





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GLOBAL MARITIME FORUM

About the All Aboard Alliance

The All Aboard Alliance sets out to significantly improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the maritime industry. The Alliance's member companies are united by a collaborative drive to create a sustainable, forward-looking, and innovative sector that treats its current and future employees with dignity and respect and appeals to the next generation of talent. The Global Maritime Forum brings together senior leaders from across the Alliance to drive progress and facilitate collaboration among member companies.



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About the Global Maritime Forum

The Global Maritime Forum is an international not-for-profit organisation committed to shaping the future of global seaborne trade. It works by bringing together visionary leaders and experts who, through collaboration and collective action, strive to increase sustainable long-term economic development and human well-being.

Established in 2017, the Global Maritime Forum is funded through a combination of grants and partner contributions. It operates independently of any outside influence and does not support individual technologies or companies. Most of its roughly 45-person staff is based in the organisation's headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Learn more about the Global Maritime Forum and our work on human sustainability at www.globalmaritimeforum.org

All Aboard Alliance member companies

Ardmore Shipping
BP
Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement
Bureau Veritas
Caravel Group
Cargill Ocean Transportation
Chevron Shipping Company
Danaos Corporation
Diana Shipping
Dorian LPG
Euronav
Fednav
Fleet Management
G2 Ocean
GasLog
Gorrissen Federspiel
Hafnia – Member of the BW Group
Höegh Autoliners
International Seaways
Lloyd's Register
Mitsui O.S.K. Lines
Navigator Gas
Ocean Technologies Group
Olympic Shipping and Management
PSA BDP
Philippine Transmarine Carriers
Purus
RightShip
Rio Tinto
South32
Stena
Stephenson Harwood
Swire Shipping
Swiss Re Corporate Solutions
Synergy Marine Group
Turtle

Founding knowledge partners

Global Maritime Forum
Diversity Study Group
Swiss Re