



Funded by
the European Union



MARITIME INNOVATORS
The Maritime Gateway to Maritime Industry 4.0



SEAFARERS EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE BASED MENTORS

01/02/2022 - 01/02/2024

www.seamentors.eu

Project number:

2021-1-RO01-KA220-VET-00002962

January 2024



Table of Contents

Basic Project Information	1
Project Description. Objectives	2
Partners	3
Results	6
<i>Platform Description</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Mentoring Sessions</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Carrier Guidance</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Interview Database</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Mentors Networks</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Dissemination Activities</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Survey's Conclusions</i>	<i>10</i>



Basic Project Information



Project Name: SEA MENTORS

Project Reference Number: 2021-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000029622

Programme: Erasmus +

National Agency: RO01 - Romanian National Agency for
Community Programmes in the Fields of
Education and Vocational Training

Key Action 2: Cooperation partnerships in vocational
education and training

Field: Vocational Education and Training

Duration of Project: 01-02-2022 to 01-02-2024

Partner Institutions: Romanian Naval Academy (coordinator),
Polish Naval Academy, Lithuanian
Maritime Academy, Bulgarian Naval
Academy, Spinaker, Maritime Innovators



Project Description. Objectives

The major objective of the project, was to cover the access of the graduates to the experiential knowledge in the maritime field, smoothing the transition from theory to practice, from descriptive to applicative sides of the training. To achieve this, the project proposed a platform (IO1) and a guidance tool (IO2).

The novelty of this approach consists in the consideration of new skills, as identified in the current maritime study programs, relying on the experience of 4 partner maritime universities, members of the project, committed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one generation of sailors to another, a fact that could lead to the reduction of sea accidents.

The joint partners have created a platform for seafarers' career guidance, for both type of jobs, at sea and ashore, by sharing experiential knowledge for the benefit of such training, providing an environment for counselling, and mentoring in carrier path to facilitate the transition to the professional life at sea, onboard the ships.

SEAMENTORS will support the development of VET programs that offer a balanced mix of vocational skills and create work-based learning opportunities which are evolving jobs and working methods and key competences.

Projects will support VET providers in the adaptation of their training offer to the ongoing changing skills requirements in the maritime sector.

SEAMENTORS project aims to:

- Identify the level of “experiential knowledge” each ranks needs, applying a survey-based analysis and to investigate the undiscovered areas,
- Develop an online Training program for each ranks to facilitate the access to the experiential knowledge database, which incorporates latest developments in the maritime sector,
- Design a guidance tool that provides the user with a certificate for the newly acquired skills based on experiential knowledge.



Romanian Naval Academy 'Mircea cel Batran' (RNA)



Romanian Naval Academy (RNA) is an accredited public institution of polytechnical higher education and scientific research. RNA operates according to the Romanian law of higher education, undertaking the mission to educate and train specialists for maritime and port industry. RNA has its foundation roots in 1872 in ancestor Fleet School, its present value being certified by the Romanian Agency for Quality in Higher Education with highest level of trust, and by different international bodies as high-quality academic institution (e.g. European University Association, International Association of Maritime Universities, EMSA or U-Multirank). RNA is certified since 2003 in its Quality Management System by Bureau Veritas, based on ISO 9001/2015.

Polish Naval Academy 'Heroes of Westerplatte' (PNA)



The Polish Naval Academy (PNA) "Heroes of Westerplatte" is a naval university supervised by the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Poland, with the history, uninterrupted by World War II, dating back to 1922. At present the PNA provides education for officer-cadets, commissioned officers and civilian students at first and second cycles of study (undergraduate and graduate). It also offers opportunities for professional development at specialized courses and postgraduate programs. In accordance with international agreements the PNA trains officers for naval forces of countries in Europe, North Africa, the Middle and Far East (currently Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia).



Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LMA) is an accredited public institution of professional higher education training highly qualified seafarers and other specialists for the maritime industry. LMA operates according to the Lithuanian law of science and higher education, undertaking the mission to educate and train seafarers and maritime business specialists. LMA was established as a Lithuanian Maritime school in 1948. Its present value being certified by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher education (SKVC) with highest level of trust, and by different national and international bodies as high quality academic institution (e.g. EMSA, Lithuanian transport safety administration).

Spinaker is a Slovenian SME, having three standalone business departments. In education are, Spinaker is the largest Slovenian maritime VET and adult education provider. All courses it runs are recognized by Slovenian Maritime Administration and are attended by over 3000 Slovenians each year. Spinaker is focusing on development, customisation and usage of online learning systems. Spinaker has expertise on different LMS, web platforms, e-learning and e-assessment. Some of the platforms Spinaker developed are www.egmdss.com, www.smcpeexamples.com and www.ecolregs.com. They support maritime education and training for hundreds of thousands mariners per year.



LMA is certified since 2001 in its Quality Management System comprising seafarers' training and professional development by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Lietuva according to the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 standard. LMA providing 7 study programmes on first cycle level. All educational programs are accredited by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

Spinaker has been involved in a number of international projects as contractor, coordinator or partner. More than ten of these projects are LLP projects (Leonardo da Vinci DoI, Tol and AM) and the others are Erasmus+ project. Spinaker has also special expertise in promoting the project outputs to assure their sustainability on the long term.



The "Nikola Y. Vaptsarov" Naval Academy of Varna is the only higher education institution in Bulgaria for the maritime officers and managers, both civilian and military. It delivers 3- cycle study programmes in the field of maritime transportation, management and security & defense. The Bulgarian Naval Academy has about 3,500 students overall and a professional teaching and research staff. Scientific research is focused on all areas of the maritime industry, thus including the maritime/naval leadership topics.



Maritime Innovators



Maritime Innovators is a limited company based in Turkey. The company was founded in response to lack of innovation that Turkey suffered for decades in the maritime context. The company has been engaged in a number of EU funded project with regards to development, coordination and management which have all been received well by the community and made an impact in the maritime context. The most recent projects from its portfolio are: “PraC-MARENG – Practical and Communication based Maritime English” and “SeaSAFER – Simulation of Sea Accidents for Effective Responses” where Maritime Innovators is coordinator.



RESULTS

Platform Description

One of the major results of the SEAMENTORS project is the dedicated website (<https://seamentors.eu>), where it had been developed the Training platform and the Guidance Tool.

The platform has been designed to offer complex and useful facilities as following:

- **Carrier Guidance Portal** - providing effective tools for trainees and cadets, to evaluate their professional potential and to guide them toward the most suitable maritime job where the vocation to be valued.



- **Mentoring Section** - hosting the mentorship resources (including informative materials), a mentorship course dedicated to the trainees and mentors and the mentorship network directory, where the young cadets will be able to find a real connection to the seafaring life. On this portal, due to the video-conference capabilities, the partners have organized and conducted mentoring meetings with selected trainees in regard of: professional vocation and potential assessment, job orientation, professional models, advisory sessions, good practice exchanges.



- **Mentorship Library** - the trainees have access to a library of professionals' advisory sessions and to a collection of cadets' testimonials, including onboard diversity management practices, to facilitate the good practices exchange.

- **Resources** - the partners have made available the joint studies carried out by the project partners and the respective research outputs.
- **News** - it's about news regarding the project events/seminars or the project activities and the edited newsletters.



Mentoring Sessions

Each of the four maritime institutions partner had organized online and on campus mentoring sessions in period of October 2023 – December 2023.

The professionals have participated to these sessions that valued the mentor role, from both, Navy structures and Merchant fleet companies. More than 20 mentors have provided advisory services to the cadets, according to their 'knowledge' and experience at sea.

Starting with October, each maritime institution has scheduled mentorship sessions as following:

- 2 residential meetings of the local cadets with the local mentors (results: **total of 8 mentoring meetings**);
- 4 international online meetings with international cadets and local or international mentors (results: **total of 4 mentoring meetings**).



All planning details of residential and online mentorship sessions have been uploaded on the project platform (https://seamentors.eu/mentoring_meeting_s.html) and further disseminated to the students and to all interested parties.

Overall, minimum 300 students have benefited from mentoring online sessions, attended by local and international mentors in the Navy and maritime field, while another 400 students, both military and civilian, have participated to the residential mentoring meetings.



Carrier Guidance

To facilitate live mentoring sessions the students have received access to the carrier guidance online testing battery, administrated on external resource, www.marplat.eu, starting from April 2023.

The Professional Guidance Tool consist in 5 online tests (personality, stress management, time management, leadership and teamwork). Once the test levels were completed, the students received the results on their email automatically.

The platform is available, and the students are still allowed to use the following link to register and to get access to the professional evaluation resources: <https://marplat.eu/seamentors.php>.

More than **230 students**, from all partners' universities, were professionally oriented during the period of April 2023 by December 2023.

Otherwise, on the website's Carrier Guidance Portal section, the partners have developed a joint Centre of Carrier Counselling, where a broad range of resources have been uploaded as informative materials regarding the mentoring and coaching activities onboard the ships, including the description of most important jobs that can be accessed onboard the ship.

Different other guidance materials are posted by the partners on the platform as following: model of CV-letter of intention, guides for carrier counselling, interview guidance and simulations, job description models, onboard training record book, recruitment/selection standards etc.

The partners posted here the institutional links toward their Centre of Carrier Counselling. Also, a list of potential seafaring employers from Romania, Türkiye, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania has been uploaded by the partners.



Interviews Database

A list of questions has been prepared by the partners to be applied in the interviews with cadets, young officers and experienced seafarers (mentors).

The questions for mentors were targeted issues like desirable skills for a cadet/young officer, opinions about mentorship, to describe a difficult situation from the daily work life or to talk about the professional barriers and obstacles, as about achieving gender equality in maritime industry.

Otherwise, the cadets and young officers had to mention during the video interviews about their expectation from seafaring carrier (e.g. describing the greatest training challenge faced onboard ship), extending their opinions about the mentoring programs onboard the ships, or about the gender diversity in maritime industry.

As results, a video collection of **82 testimonials** from professionals, cadets and young officers were uploaded on the project website (<https://seamentors.eu/library.html>).

Mentors Networks

A significant section of the Guidance Tool is the mentors network for helping the cadets or the young officers from Navy or merchant fleet to start the seafaring carrier, by valuing the mentorship program, with experienced officers.

Those who have experienced the benefits of mentoring, are more likely to become a mentor. This is part of the cyclical nature of a developing mentoring culture.

Each partner has developed a **database with potential mentors**. Therefore, the name, the current position and the contact details were posted on website (https://seamentors.eu/mentors_network.html).

Dissemination Activities

The project's dissemination strategy was to target seafarers, maritime institution and qualification bodies in order to ensure the online platform adjustment to the updated needs of the maritime community.

The results of the project were disseminated on several workshops organized within international conferences (SeaConf 2022, SeaConf 2023), gathering representatives and audience from maritime education institutions, national governing bodies, qualification bodies, maritime associations. Also, the 2nd Transnational Meeting of SEAMENTORS project, had been hosted by LMA, merging under the Baltic Sea Conference IV auspices.

Not in the last, once per three months in the last two years, the project results have been presented to the Implementation Group meetings, organized under EMILYO program, then reaching to inform the military higher education system and the military cadets about the project progress and facilities.



All these international events offered to the partners the opportunity to network and to disseminate the project to the public audience and stakeholders.

Moreover, the partners have jointly wrote several articles on mentorship and carrier guidance topics, during different stages of the project. These articles have been published in the Scientific Bulletin of Romanian Naval Academy or, are due to be issued in the Journal of Maritime Science - Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, Montenegro. In regard of diversity management, some of the survey results were advertised throughout the webinar Gender analysis for HEALTHY SAILING activities and outputs: gender issues related to the maritime environment, conducted as part of a a Horizon project, "Healthy Sailing".

Not in the last, the partners have used both the social-media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn) and the institutional webpages to release and to progressively disseminate the project news and the issued newsletters.

Survey's Conclusions

Prior to the platform development, the project team had aimed to identify the perception of cadets, young graduates and professionals regarding the mentorship value and impact, collecting their opinions about what types of online services should be provided through the SEAMENTORS platform, to smoothen the young professionals' insertion onboard the ships.

The partners had applied the developed questionnaire to the cadets or young officers and, separately, to the professionals with mentorship experience or identified as potential mentors. The surveys have been distributed through SEAMENTORS's dissemination channels, within various social media platforms including the institutional websites, the LinkedIn or Facebook pages, or directly by email notices. The surveys had been submitted by applicants throughout a period of 6 months, until October 2023.

The results for the cadets' and young officers' perception study

There was a total of **262 cadets' and young officers'** responses collected, from 9 different nationalities, out of which 222 (84.7%) were cadets respondents and 40 (15.3%) were young officers respondents. From a total of 222 responding Cadets, 25% were Navy cadets and 75% were cadets from merchant fleet.

To be considered as valid, there was a pre-requirement for experience, consisting in a minimum of two months onboard ship serving as cadet and a maximum of 12 months as 3rd Officer/Engineer/ETO in short or deep-sea voyages, in case of young officers.





The survey has highlighted that some shipping companies have already invested resources into mentoring programs implementation, but these are only few and the progress is just incipient. In order to enhance this priority for an effective transition of the cadets toward the professional onboard life, the support for mentoring programs should be encouraged and actively driven by the shipping companies and by the crewing agencies in particular.

If this mentorship programs would be correlated with the academic programs, then the efficiency could find a more effective focus on harmonizing the theory in practice. The lack of formal mentoring schemes is resulting in an enhancement of the informal mentoring as the most often type of onboard guidance for newcomers in the profession.

DECK CADET	ENGINE CADET	ELECTRICAL CADET	3RD OFFICER	3RD ENGINEER	ETO	NAVY CADET	TOTAL
92	58	16	15	22	3	56	262

The survey has shown that the mentoring can provide the following positive results:

- the assurance of technical and non-technical skills and knowledge support for trainees during the first voyages as newcomers in the profession;
- offers active support to the cadets by encouragement, motivation, industry experience acquisition, career development advice and networking opportunities;

- recognizes the need for masters and officers to take charge of their teams, with an early involvement attitude, in terms of communication, leadership and professional skills development.

The results for the professionals’ perception study

There was a total of **173 professionals** responses collected, from 16 different nationalities, out of which 90.75% were officers respondents and 9.25% were manager respondents. From a total of 157 responding officers, 21% were Navy officers and 79% were officers from merchant fleet.

The selected participants to this survey were professionals from maritime industry. To be valid, it was required a minimum 24 of months experience onboard ships, serving as officer or a minimum of 12 months expertise on a managing position in a company from maritime sector.

MASTER	CHIEF OFFICER	CHIEF ENGINEER	1ST ENGINEER	2ND OFFICER	2ND ENGINEER	ETO	NAVY OFFICER	MANAGER	TOTAL
31	52	10	4	18	7	2	33	16	173

The survey respondents noticed the presence of some mentoring initiatives being undertaken at sea and on-shore, implemented on different names like Cadet Training Program, Employee Development, Junior Officer Mentoring Scheme or Cadet Mentoring Program. The conducted research has indicated that there are generally low numbers of formal mentoring initiatives available at sea, the shipping companies investing not much resources into mentoring.

In order to address this imperative, the support for mentoring should be encouraged and driven mainly from shipping companies and crewing agencies in particular.





Successful mentoring initiatives are continuously improved, but nevertheless, have provided better resilience and positive outcomes for the maritime companies. The mentorship programs work the best in the conjunction with a good training based on a long-term perspective in regard of the seafaring skills' and abilities' improvement.

If the on-board culture is not conducive enough to create a proper environment where mentoring to be developed, this will limit the effect that the mentoring is able to provide. The survey has highlighted that the mentors can be required to undertake very varied supporting roles, depending on the mentees' training background and social skills.

Some officers didn't want a mentor position due to the scarcity of free time, available to be spent for mentoring activities. Time is a precious resource at sea and its lack would restrict the mentoring programs implementation. The lack of time can act as a barrier for learning and the establishment of mentoring relationships.

Mentoring can have a positive impact on attracting new recruits into the industry and retaining staff. Those who have experienced the benefits of mentoring, are more likely to become a mentor. This is part of the cyclical nature of a developing a mentoring culture onboard the ships.



Seeking to valorize the cadets', young officers' and professionals' collected responses and suggestions, regarding the services and options considered as being the most suitable for an online mentorship platform, the project team has designed and developed the web platform for SeaMentors project (<https://seamentors.eu>) in its structure and content.

Both analysis of surveys were posted on the website (https://seamentors.eu/dissemination_results.html)

SEAMENTORS

www.seamentors.eu



Disclaimer: "Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the ANPCDEFP. Neither the European Union nor the ANPCDEFP can be held responsible for them"