

Participation of polish maritime educational institutions in implementing ideas of the EU Green Paper

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ABSTRACT: This article undertakes issues included in the Green Paper project on a future maritime policy of the European Union. Emphasis is put on basic features of this study that indicate the need of a holistic approach to the maritime policy, instead of sectoral approach practiced so far.

This author presents and evaluates one of the major problems concerning the human factor in the initiative, namely the role of maritime staff education, proper employment policy and participation in scientific research. Author's view on and proposals of Poland's participation in the development and implementation of the Green Paper ideas are presented.

1 INTRODUCTIONS

The Green Paper is a project aimed at discussion on the future of the maritime policy of the European Union. The discussion in Poland was opened on 12 October 2006 in Szczecin. Talks and debates are in progress in the other EU member states.

All problems lying within the whole of the maritime policy of the Community will be tackled. The policy consists of the following issues:

1. New approach to problems of EU maritime policy.
2. Retaining Europe's leadership in sustainable maritime development.
 - 2.1 a competitive maritime industry;
 - 2.2 the importance of the marine environment for the sustainable use of our marine resources;
 - 2.3 remaining at the cutting edge of knowledge and technology;
 - 2.4 innovation under changing circumstances;
 - 2.5 developing Europe's maritime skills and expanding sustainable maritime employment;
 - 2.6 clustering;
3. Maximizing quality of life in coastal regions, i.e.:
 - 3.1 the increasing attraction of coastal areas as a place to live and work;
 - 3.2 adapting to coastal risks;
 - 3.3 developing coastal tourism;
 - 3.4 managing the life/sea interface;
4. Providing the tools to manage our relations with the oceans;
 - 4.1 data at the service of multiple activities;

- 4.2 spatial planning for a growing maritime economy;

- 4.3 making the most of financial support of coastal regions;

5. Maritime governance

- 5.1 policy making within the EU;

- 5.2 the offshore activities of governments;

- 5.3 international rules for global activities;

- 5.4 taking account of geographical realities.

6. Reclaiming Europe's maritime heritage and reaffirming Europe's maritime identity.

7. The way forward – the consultation process.

This extensive project aims at the following:

- sustainable development of the EU strategy, intended to provide for mutual reinforcement of economic growth, social welfare and environment protection;

- need for developing 'EU maritime policy' which will consider the use of the seas and oceans in a holistic manner, as an integrated organic system, not from a sectoral viewpoint where separate decisions are made in various branches of the maritime economy.

2 THE MARITIME POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The EU is a particular federation that has a broad view on the implementation of sustainable development making use of the seas and oceans. EU sees opportunities for undertaking joint new

challenges in each sector of the maritime economy, attempting at the integration of all efforts aiming at enhancing the effects of these efforts in such areas as sea transport, offshore industry, including offshore power production, fishing, marine environment and at strengthening and expanding relations between the various maritime sectors. This approach integrating our efforts in the set direction will allow to avoid contradictory decisions, adverse effects for the marine environment and will restrict the rivalry between various branches of marine activities.

The realization of these goals of the maritime policy has to be supported by scientific research, new technologies and innovations. Therefore, it has to be based on human competence, skills and qualifications, on people with extensive knowledge and experience, aware of their own role and responsibility for appropriate advice and decisions. The Lisbon strategy guidelines include recommendations of stimulating growth of investments in the human knowledge and skills.

The strategy also expresses care of the marine environment, sustaining and developing the resources of seas and oceans that the whole maritime activities are based on. Finally, there is a conclusion that we people, in the light of the present status quo, have to undertake preparation of a realistic program as well as a Thematic Strategy for the Marine Environment, simply because this environment is global one and calls for unification of those regulations in force that set legal framework for effective management of extremely wide scope. These regulations have to address the EU and descend through national, regional and local management levels reaching every human being.

That is why proposals mentioned in the introduction include a wide variety of problems. One problem of the EU that this author attempts to focus on is the participation of Poland in shaping the EU's maritime education policy in relation to what the Green Paper sets forth.

Of our particular interest here is the problem identified in Chapter 2.5: Developing Europe's maritime skills and expanding sustainable maritime employment. Three issues have been distinguished as research problems to be solved:

- how can the decline in the number of Europeans entering certain marine professions be reversed and the safety and attractiveness of jobs ensured?
- how can better working conditions, wages and safety be combined with sectoral competitiveness?
- how can the quality of education, training and certification be assured?

The youth of today seem to be less interested in maritime jobs, which is due to a number of factors. First of all, strong competitiveness in shipping

forces shipowners to offer salaries lower than those of land-based occupations, therefore Europeans do not find them attractive. Besides, it should be emphasized that work on board ship brings more risks of life, injuries, health problems – particularly in the fishing industry. Moreover, seafarers suffer from isolation from their families over a period of time. They have to have specific physical and mental qualities due to changing weather and climatic conditions. No wonder there is a decreasing trend in the number of seafarers, with progressing aging of European ship's officers being another problem. At the same time the number of ships and relevant quality requirements are on the rise. Those seafarers who decide to give up sailing for various reasons such as health or family problems usually find it difficult to get a permanent job on land.

Seeking solutions, the Green Paper proposes actions aimed at:

- creating conditions for job mobility between sectors, by adopting and implementing the concept of maritime clusters;
- encouraging alternative employment to fishermen and women;
- using UE funds for the management of changes, for facilitating retraining and professional reorientation.

Other proposals include:

- covering sectoral costs of job training and apprenticeships,
- revising and updating education and training curriculums and programs,
- research aimed at finding out the reasons for young people losing their motivation to a particular job and for not completing maritime education,
- incorporating a wider range of skills into the educational framework meeting STCW Convention requirements so as to give graduates multiple employment opportunities on land,
- taking widespread actions to promulgate the positive aspects of the seafaring professions, such as good working conditions, high standards of living, competitive to land based jobs,
- improvement of working conditions and salaries that should be in proportion to the effort and professional competence of ship's personnel and to their work quality and efficiency,
- elimination of all legal barriers in respect to the recognition of professional qualifications within the EU,
- revision of regulations concerning the enhancement of occupational safety requirements and special monitoring of their implementation on fishing vessels.

The proposals presented in the Green Paper are accompanied by a number of solid arguments, right observations and remarks and complete analyses. These proposals should be supported and implemented in all EU countries.

However, the above proposals may encounter essential barriers that in European countries will be difficult to overcome. These include demographic low, doubtful approval of shipping and fishing shipowners of assuring higher salaries than those offered on land.

Although these problems are observed in Poland as well, they are not as intense as in Western Europe. Nevertheless, these are facts to be faced in our country:

- high unemployment rate, including jobless youths, particularly in overpopulated villages and small towns of northwestern and northeastern regions,
- drop in the number of candidates, although not so severe at maritime universities,
- much higher salaries of seafarers than land-based jobs.

With EU declarations concerning opportunities of using Community funds for maritime education, Poland should offer educational services for personnel to meet EU needs.

In this respect Poland has rich experience with thousands of seafarers, officers and ratings alike, working for the global fleet. We have well equipped educational facilities and teaching/research staff, educational structures satisfying the requirements of the Bologna Declaration, good reputation of our graduates shared by renowned shipowners all over the world, possibility of increasing the number of admitted candidates in deficit ship's professions. Therefore, we are fully able to participate in the implementation of EU proposals and plans.

Three maritime institutes of higher education, three post-high maritime schools, twelve sectoral secondary schools guarantee steady supply of qualified personnel for merchant marine and inland fleets of EU countries. Besides, there are five other higher education establishments that strengthen our maritime educational and scientific potential: Agricultural Academy in Szczecin, two universities (Gdansk, Szczecin), and two universities of technology (Gdansk, Szczecin). These also educate and train highly qualified staff for the shipbuilding industry, sea fisheries, ports, forwarding and logistic services, marine and coast environment protection, land-based staff of shipowners' companies and maritime administration. In addition to the academies and universities mentioned, scientist teams of three institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences work in the maritime sector, as well as six research and development units dealing with the solution of problems specified in the Green Paper.

Despite these undoubtedly important advantages of Poland's participation in creating and implementing European maritime policy, we have to consider carefully our role in the project. We have to take actions in the country so as to meet the responsibilities undertaken to the best possible degree. There is always something to do to make better best.

In my opinion several actions should be taken.

1. At the government level understanding and recognition of the role and importance of the maritime economy should be reached. Adequate conditions should be created for the development of educational programs, social knowledge of the sea, securing national interest in the discussed strategic EU programs by participating in the fields of education and research.

Efforts and extra financial investments should be focused on the promotion of maritime professions; knowledge of Polish and EU maritime policies should be disseminated by media to make the society more aware of employment opportunities, professional promotion, salaries, social status, attractiveness and work security within the Community.

Besides, EU declarations on the funds for low income youths should be taken advantage of; these would cover such assistance as scholarships, free accommodation or meals, a substantial economic incentive for a young person to undertake maritime studies.

2. At the industry and educational/research institutes level:

A. Maritime education:

- start maritime education in kindergartens; create a network of maritime vocational, secondary and post-secondary schools; assure educational flexibility for maritime universities to meet national and EU needs.
- establish and promote legislative and financial instruments for the development of modern technologies in education, including the European e-learning program for the maritime educational institutions,
- create mechanisms for co-operation of the industry and maritime sectors with educational and scientific institutions,
- establish Maritime Examination Centres in order to enhance teaching and training quality and to standardize the criteria of graduate competence assessment,
- undertake training in sea pilotage that would cover particularly sensitive areas and passages in the seas and adjacent waters under the competence of EU member states,

- improve the process of teaching and training of modern designing methods, technologies, management and logistics,
- in relation to technological advancements and current needs, the list of maritime fields of study and courses should be extended to include such areas as exploitation of the seabed, multimodal transport systems, oil rigs operations, attractive forms of marine tourism (sailing and submarine boats), anti-terrorist protection of ships, ports, marine oil production facilities, special terminals,
- introduce at least two European languages into curricula as well as the 'computer' language,
- create conditions to attract and promote outstanding practitioners from the maritime companies to the educational sector.

To sum up the educational issues, it should be emphasized that there exists an apparent convergence of both Bologna Declaration and latest communiqués from Bergen¹, of the requirements of the STCW 78/95 Convention and draft EU policy towards educational standards.

Polish national legislation on higher education as well defines educational standards as 'a set of educational principles at higher education studies conducted in various forms within particular fields, macro-fields and international studies'².

All aforementioned documents tackle the problem of qualifications presenting the viewpoint that educational standards should focus on the learning outcome and graduates competence as a priority, not the fulfillment of formal inflexible program framework. Although a certain framework of teaching curricula remains, there is room for a variety of forms and conditions for introducing such new methods of education.

Although the communiqué from the meeting of ministers responsible for higher education at Bergen recommends the adjustment of national structures of graduate qualifications and to align them with the European Qualifications Framework, it leaves space for wider incorporation of those principles that help assure high quality of the teaching process.

In this connection strategic plans of the EU maritime policy should stipulate that the autonomy of each university/academy will be retained in terms of its internal structures due to several factors including tradition, provided that the priority of **graduate qualifications quality** is maintained.

B. In the field of scientific research the following should be done first of all:

Take part in creating data bases on various phenomena and economic, social and recreational

activities in the maritime sector. These data bases have to make up a basic tool for implementing EU maritime policy and the management of human interaction with the sea. Such data bases have to be reliable and comprehensive to enable appropriate decisions and harmonized activities.

To this end the existing research and educational establishments should be adjusted to reach such objectives as monitoring water cleanness, living marine resources, soundings, identification of debris, location of wrecks and war hazards (gas containers, mines, unexploded bombs, etc.), accuracy of navigational systems used, seamarks, traffic surveillance, water state changes, currents, planning of zones and streams of safe traffic flows, etc.

The establishment of research plans has to be harmonized with the adopted overall maritime policy of the EU, with thematic priorities set on the global, European and regional scales. Other goals include the continuation of co-operation between domestic and EU higher education institutes, joint scientific projects, joint research in theoretical and applied fields. The maritime sector provides a wide area for research, overlapping themes and problems that unite the marine environment.

It goes without saying that the research done so far will not be neglected by the universities, each specializing in areas strictly connected with the fields of offered education. The maritime universities in Poland do research aimed at operations of ships, technical facilities used in transport, fishing and cargo handling in ports and on ships. The deep-sea fishing at the Academy of Agriculture, in turn, should rather expand its present directions of research focused on the exploitation of organic and non-organic resources of the oceans as well as European seas.

The universities will definitely find it necessary to integrate their research outcomes, in both fundamental and applied sciences, in such disciplines as biology and physics of the sea, oceanography, oceanology, economics, organization and management of maritime industries, maritime commerce and law, integrated (multimodal) transport with sea ports as its important elements.

The scope of scientific interests of technical universities includes designing and construction of vessels or other technical equipment and machinery needed in research and exploitation of the marine environment by transport, seabed exploration and deep sea fishing. These may be directed to tackle preferable supplementary topics and innovative design solutions.

3 CONCLUSIONS

¹19-20 May 2005, EU Conference of Ministers at Bergen.

²Act on Higher Education (Journal of Laws no 164, item 1365, art. 2 par. 18).

The activities of all educational and research institutions in Poland (universities, research and development institutes and centres) should be coordinated to meet national and EU needs.

We should actively participate in creating and executing EU educational and research programs for the maritime sector. We ought to make use of the experiences acquired, set the special areas for Polish maritime education and research centres that would move our country into European research space with the aim of executing common maritime policy of the European Union states.

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