

A COOPERATION PROJECT IN EDUCATION: UniMET

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) developed the first standard for Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes for merchant navy officers (STCW) in 1978. A series of model courses for these programmes was introduced in 1991 and were amended to include specific requirements in 1995. The standard was reviewed in 2003 and several significant changes were introduced recently and these changes were announced in June this year in Manila. Despite these efforts there are no mechanisms for monitoring how these standards are being applied. European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has started to monitor STCW compliance, however many VET providers have been found not to follow many of the requirements.

The SOS project (2005-7) was very successful in developing a harmonised programme for the training of merchant navy seafarers and was implemented in Turkey in the TRAIN 4Cs project (2006-7). Since then, the programme has been strengthened with the addition of materials and maritime English standards from the MarTEL (2007-9), EGMDSS (2006-8) and EGMDSS-VET (2008- 10) projects.

The UniMET partnership, working in collaboration with major awarding, accrediting and licensing bodies such as Edexcel, IMarEST and MCA will cross reference and include the international and local/national requirements into the UniMET programme (SOS, MarTEL, EGMDSS, EGMDSS-VET & TRAIN 4Cs) with the aim of embedding the programme initially into 5 partner maritime education and training

(MET) systems across Europe (Holand, Finland, Turkey, Spain and Lithuania). UniMET is in line with and supports the priorities and objectives of the Lisbon treaty and Bologna accord regarding the harmonisation and standardisation of HE programmes in Europe. Once accepted UniMET will ensure VET in the 5 METs are STCW compliant and meet the local and international requirements of the industry for all ranks and types of seafarer. A quality assurance and control practice based on a well respected system for the delivery of UniMET will also be established to guarantee VET providers continue to follow the requirements.

UniMET's AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The UniMET project will use existing networks with extensive knowledge and experience of maritime education and training (MET) institutions whose participants have a vast number of years experience in leading and participating in EU projects. The first aim is to embed the UniMET programme within the partner countries through cross referencing international and local/national requirements. This will ensure that all seafarers are compliant with the international requirements and will therefore increase their employability within the international labour market as well as enabling the needs of local and national maritime industries to be met. The unified model to be employed in the delivery of UniMET will mean that each aspect of the model can be changed one by one in a relative manner should changes to local, national or international requirements be made which will cause minimum disruption to the UniMET in countries applying it . The second aim is to inform local, national and international licensing and professional bodies about the programme, including the Chambers of shipping. By exploiting the programme to key decision makers within maritime and government bodies it is hoped that they will accept and support the programme therefore enabling changes to policies regarding MET to be made. The third aim is to establish a quality assurance and control system for the delivery of UniMET and other vocational programmes based on an existing BTEC/Edexcel system.

Professor Ziarati, General Coordinator of TUDEV and Chairman of C4FF, was involved in the development of the BTEC system and will provide valuable contacts and assistance in enhancing the system for the use in the delivery of maritime vocational programmes. No such system currently exists within the maritime sector. The fourth aim is to spread UniMET further across Europe both during and after the project's completion, raising awareness and transferring good practices with the ultimate aim of improving the level of safety at sea worldwide.

DISSEMINATION OF THE PROJECT

UniMET will disseminate the outcomes of several recent and successful Leonardo projects which were instigated to harmonise the Maritime Education and Training (MET) in the European Union (EU) and seek international recognition for it. Through a rigorous process UniMET will bring together the work and products of three key successful Leonardo da Vinci projects. Each project concentrated on a specific element of MET. The first dissemination will concern the Safety on Sea (SOS, 2005-2007) project, initiated by TUDEV under the auspices of Başak Yücel Akdemir (DTO), which focused on the transfer of innovation by reviewing the MET practices in several European Countries as well as the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) Model and safety (ancillary) courses and the related requirements for education and training of merchant navy cadets and officers. The SOS work led to the development of a set of harmonised MET programmes (one for Deck and one for Marine Engineers at two levels viz., cadet and officer) for application in the EU. These programmes focused on improving safety at sea and in ports primarily through the enhancement of the existing education and training practices and adoption/adaptation of good practices in partner countries involved in the project.

Early in the SOS project it was noted that sea training is an important part of the MET programmes and hence a Leonardo Mobility project named TRAIN 4Cs (2007) was formulated with support from Sualp Ürkmez (DTO), to implement the proposed sea training aspects of the SOS project. TRAIN 4Cs programme also included transfer of several cadets to partner countries. The third project is the successful Leonardo EGMDSS (2006-2008) and EGMDSS-VET (2008-2010). These projects were supported by Şadan Kaptanoğlu (DTO) and concerned the development of an online vocational education training programme for GMDSS Short Range Certificate (SRC) and GMDSS Long Range Certificate (LRC). The SRC is mandatory for mariners operating vessels of up to 300 Gross Registered Tons within 30 Nautical Miles from coast and therefore adequate training is essential; and LRC is the basis of GOC which is mandatory for all merchant navy officers. The intention was primarily to develop an e-learning and assessment platform that can be adopted for all SOS units of education and training. This was an important task as the requirements of MET are changing on a continuous basis and yet since seafarers spend most of their time at sea they do not have the opportunity to attend courses on shore hence unable to benefit from these changes or receive qualifications/certificate for them. The platform is currently being used in the recently commenced MarTEL project. The results have been very successful as noted in the MarTEL interim report.

The final project is Maritime English units developed within SOS. However, it was noted that although there are IMO guidelines in the form of a Model Course (IMO 3.14) and IMO SMCP (Standard Maritime Communication Phrases), there are no standards for Maritime English. MarTEL has developed a set of maritime English language standards through the transfer of innovation from existing English language standards and maritime English models including IMO Model course 3.14 and SMCP.

UniMet will in Phase One of the project, unify the dissemination process of these projects highlighting the common factor of maritime education and secure the recognition of related courses within each of the partner countries. The process will involve the exploitation of international maritime conferences and a host of web based dissemination materials providing appropriate organisation with the full knowledge of UniMET project courses, benefits and applications.

Phase Two will expand the dissemination and recognition of UniMET across the European Union and pursue its acceptance by major awarding bodies and major organizations such as IMO, IMarEST and so forth. This will involve the inclusion of three new partner countries to the existing consortium and direct involvement of at least one major international accrediting body and one major international awarding body. There are currently 9 EU countries involved and the intended involvement of 3 more countries as well as at least a major accrediting and a major awarding body will form a formidable force to promote a harmonised and the most up-to-date MET programme which will have an online learning and assessment tool and in this way dissemination of the UniMET will encourage a unified MET programme for the EU and ultimately will promote safety at sea and in ports.