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TECHNICAL PAPER FROM THE CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT

IMPROVING EDUCATION, MOBILITY AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN MARITIME SECTORS: WHAT NEXT FOR VASCO DA GAMA?

After two and a half years of very intensive work, the "[Vasco Da Gama: Training for Greener and Safer Maritime Transport](#)" (VDG) project is coming to an end. The Final Conference of this pilot project will be organised in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee on 1 March 2016 in Brussels.

Funded by the European Commission (DG MOVE/DG MARE) and coordinated by the CPMR General Secretariat, the VDG project, as designed, fully corresponds to the political initiative taken by the CPMR General Assembly when it approved the Resolution "*In favour of an interregional mobility pilot scheme for young people in the maritime sector*", in Aberdeen (UK) in 2010.¹

This Technical Paper highlights the CPMR General Secretariat's initial conclusions of the results achieved by this pilot project. It also provides an outline of "new" opportunities offered by the European Union in education and vocational training in the field of maritime economies. Finally, it introduces several avenues that might be explored for the practical continuation of the VDG initiative.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VDG PILOT ACTION: A PROMISING INITIAL REVIEW

Throughout the project, VDG has pursued its goals to improve national education programmes and develop new opportunities to increase mobility for students in higher education in order to reduce the existing gap between the academic world of teaching on the one hand and shipowners and shipping companies on the other. More specifically, by building on collaboration with high-level experts - [Kalmar Maritime Academy](#), [l'École Nationale Supérieure Maritime \(ENSM\)](#), and the [Clean Shipping Index \(CSI\)](#) - the VDG project has designed and developed:

- An analysis of the main difficulties that hinder the training and learning process of students as well as their access to mobility programmes in the field of maritime transport² (such as the need for better harmonisation and coordination between the training plans of the various maritime academies, the difficulties encountered by students to access "mandatory" internships at sea and the need to promote the development of schemes such as sandwich courses, etc.);
- 4 modules, which have been integrated into a curriculum of the second cycle in higher education (Master Programme in Sustainable Shipping). These modules are on key topics, such as positioning environmental issues at the heart of the future of maritime transport, the improvement of education and training on risk prevention on board vessels and the development of new specific skills (for example human resources management in a multicultural context, etc.);
- An experimental training exercise in a navigation simulator that aimed to improve students' skills in managing human resources and communication. In this regard, the project proved to be an effective catalyst for technical discussions. It is important to note that in April 2015, VDG organised a brainstorming day between leading manufacturers of navigation simulators and European maritime academies to discuss future European education and vocational training activities that use the simulators;

¹ [Final Declaration, 38th General Assembly of the CPMR](#), 30 September -1 October 2010, Aberdeen (UK)

² [Vasco Da Gama Diagnostic, results of the survey 2014/2015](#)

- The Vasco Da Gama Summer School³, held in August 2015, aimed to provide a concrete response to the need expressed by students and professionals for a better supply of innovative schemes (in terms of curriculum content and “reduced” training time);
- Dissemination and capitalisation actions, which contributed to the gradual development of a multi-actor and multi-level VDG Community, made up of representatives of higher education institutions, maritime clusters, local and regional governments, shipowners, workers' associations and leaders of European cooperation projects in the field of maritime transport. This “Community”, within which the CPMR plays a strategic role – notably through its Member Regions and Geographical Commissions – represents both an important finishing point and at the same time a new beginning for the future development of the Vasco Da Gama initiative.

On the basis of these achievements, it is now possible to establish a promising initial review regarding the implementation of this pilot initiative: the Vasco Da Gama project has made a significant contribution to improving the mobility, education and training of students and professionals in the field of maritime transport.

Thanks to its multi-stakeholder partnership, VDG has helped bring both academies and industries, and territories and their citizens closer together on the one hand and European institutions on the other (in this regard it is important to emphasise the contributions made by some VDG students who will share their experiences during the Final Conference of the project in Brussels on 1 March).

The transnational approach implemented by VDG has helped the capitalisation and the sharing of knowledge and good practice in education and vocational training in the field of maritime transport.

Finally, throughout its implementation, the VDG project demonstrated the extent to which **maritime regions have now become key institutional partners of educational and vocational training establishments**. The involvement of Regions in the structured dialogue between European institutions, the world of education and training, businesses and other representatives of maritime economic sectors, is clearly a prerequisite that will lead to the full development of the great socio-economic opportunities that blue growth currently offers Europe and its citizens.

EUROPE RISES TO THE EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING CHALLENGES IN THE MARITIME SECTORS

The gradual recognition of the key role played by maritime economies to boost growth and the re-industrialisation process of the “Old Continent” has recently led the European institutions to address the issue of the future of education and vocational training within the European political debate.

This was not the simplest of approaches, considering that newly issued findings illustrated mixed results for Europe: despite the significant achievements made by the many programmes carried out (ERASMUS, LEONARDO, etc.), some European maritime sectors still face structural challenges in education and vocational training.

As demonstrated by some studies⁴⁵, in some member countries the world of education and vocational training doesn't always appear to be able to cope with the rapid technological advances that affect the traditional maritime sectors (shipbuilding, fisheries etc.) or to meet the needs of new skills linked to the emergence of new economic maritime sectors (marine renewable energies, blue biotechnologies etc.).

In this context, consideration of this reality by the European institutions has, amongst other things, led to the European Commission (DG MARE, DG EAC, DG EMPLOI) designing and implementing specific mechanisms with the aim of improving consultations and technical discussions between the academic community on one hand and the representatives of maritime industries on the other, in order to encourage the identification of the main barriers and the adoption of innovative solutions.

³ For further information on the results of the project visit the website: <http://www.vasco-da-gama.eu/>

⁴ CREM - *Centre de recherche en Economie et Management*: The emergence of a marine renewable energies (MRE) sector in France: what employment and training prospects are there?

⁵ ECSA/ETF, Maritime Career Path Mapping 2013 UPDATE

In this regard, it is important to mention the following initiatives as examples⁶:

- [European Sector Skills Councils](#) (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), which support the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships (European Skills Councils) that aim to anticipate the skills needs in certain sectors as well as ensuring a better match between existing skills and the needs of the labour market.

So far the European Commission has funded feasibility studies on the setting up of European Skills Councils in 14 sectors (including fisheries and the shipbuilding industry). The CPMR General Secretariat closely follows the work developed by the European Skills Council particularly in the field of shipbuilding, led by [SEAEUROPE](#). The Final Conference of this initiative will be organised in collaboration with the CPMR, as part of a hearing of the European Parliament's Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup. It will take place on 1 March 2016 in Brussels.

- [Sector skills alliances](#) (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, DG EAC). Funded under Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme (Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices), they are intended to bring the two aspects of the supply and demand for skills closer together within the labour market in order to improve employability. Specifically, the projects to be funded by this initiative will try to identify the skills needs of the labour market that are required for a specific economic sector as well as to develop both initial and further vocational training, in response to the specific skills required.

The CPMR General Secretariat closely monitors this instrument. A draft pilot action should be submitted in the scope of the last Call launched by the European Commission in October 2015 (the deadline for applications is 26/02/2016) in partnership with SEAEUROPE and [IndustriALL](#) in order to create a platform in the field of shipbuilding.

- [Blue Careers in Europe](#) (DG MARE, EASME). Funded through a financial package (EC's direct management) of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2014-2020, "Blue Careers in Europe" is an initiative for structured dialogue between industries and higher education and vocational training institutions and its objective is to design and implement specific responses to the labour market's needs with regard to maritime sectors.

DG MARE considers that, as part of this action, up to 7 projects could be selected in 2016. The indicative budget for the initiative amounts to €3,452,000. The Calls for Projects should be published in the first six months of 2016.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE VASCO DA GAMA INITIATIVE

The VDG project represents the initial operational implementation of an initiative that is among the CPMR's political priorities. This therefore means it is necessary to launch a debate between all Member Regions that are involved in the design and implementation of future VDG pilot actions.

In this context, and irrespective of the technical recommendations issued by the current project (e.g. the strategic importance of reiterating the experiences of both the Master Programme and the Vasco Da Gama Summer School), it is clear that such discussions should consider the following aspects:

- ✓ Future work that aims to improve education, training and mobility programmes for students and professionals in maritime areas **must give priority to sectors which have been and/or will be identified among the thematic priorities of the CPMR's [maritime agenda](#)**⁷. The CPMR, through its General Secretariat, is already working on sectors such as **marine renewable energies, shipbuilding, fisheries/aquaculture, maritime transport and port logistics** as part of discussions on the implementation of technical partnerships that should ensure the design and development of European cooperation projects (INTERREG, ENI, etc.);
- ✓ The level of complexity and richness of education and vocational training opportunities differs significantly from one Member State to another. This is particularly the case in certain areas such as emerging maritime sectors (marine renewable energy, biotechnologies, offshore wind turbines, etc.), which experience a very different level of economic maturity in Europe. Given these differences, **before designing and/or implementing pilot actions, it is necessary to build on accurate and comprehensive**

⁶ Non-exhaustive list

⁷ CPMR Maritime Agenda, Florence, November 2015

assessment of the progress made regarding education and training opportunities as well as the needs in these areas.

The CPMR Regions can make an important contribution to this process through the strategic role that they play in supporting the work and/or the financial support from some regional observatories⁸. As a result, the CPMR should **work towards the sharing and capitalisation of this knowledge by establishing “informal multi-stakeholder platforms” in the field of maritime education and vocational training amongst other things.**

In order to do this, the CPMR Working Groups and/or Task Forces (existing or future) could be used to harness the potential of technical partnerships and expertise acquired by some of their Members⁹;

- ✓ **The CPMR actions must be built on and/or coherently developed according to key European initiatives and programmes.** As explained above, the European Union is designing and implementing specific actions (Blue Careers in Europe, etc.) in order to improve maritime education and vocational training opportunities while working to close the gap between the academic world on one hand and the business world on the other. In this context, **in order to remain a “source of proposals” in this field, the CPMR must turn to these initiatives in order to complete them, to develop technical synergies with them and, to participate in them as appropriate;**
- ✓ **The geographical scope of the CPMR’s pilot actions should be at both a “European” and/or sea basin level.** In this regard, it is important to emphasise that some of the CPMR Geographical Commissions (Balkan and Black Sea and Intermediterranean) are already actively implementing pilot actions that have the “VDG label” that could be renewed as part of the Call for Tenders for some Interreg programmes (ADRION, CBC Black Sea etc.). Of course, a bottom-up approach like this, at sea basin level, is and always will be supported by the CPMR General Secretariat, which will provide the roles of coordinator and promoter of common political action in Europe in these fields.

Based on these elements, over the next few weeks the CPMR General Secretariat will take action to kick-start the work of the Vasco Da Gama community and increase its membership.

This is why the Political Bureau in Haarlem and the Final Conference of the VDG project represent two important steps to fuel the internal debate within the CPMR on the future of this initiative.

Member Regions interested in the technical and political discussions that will accompany this mobilisation are invited to express their interest to the CPMR General Secretariat. The General Secretariat, through its maritime unit, will coordinate this focus group of Regions that will carry out or participate in Vasco Da Gama pilot actions in the future.

In this context, a draft Policy Position on “A renewed governance of the Vasco Da Gama political initiative” will be published after this Paper. The results of discussions between the General Secretariat and the Member Regions will be taken on board when drawing up this document, which will be submitted for approval to the next CPMR Political Bureau in June. The draft Policy Position will also be supported by a proposal for a specific work plan, which, amongst other things, will take into account the opportunities offered by the various European initiatives and programmes that are already underway or being prepared.

⁸ For example, in France the synergies with the *Centres Associés Régionaux* of the *Centre national d’Etudes et des recherches sur les qualifications*

⁹ Region of Pays de la Loire’s Initiative: “*Compétences 2020*”, a mechanism for the provisional management of jobs and skills for strategic sectors