

ATTRACTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE MARINE PROFESSION – SEAFARERS UNDER ARREST.

A global reality which deeply concerns the maritime world is the lack of competent officers.

The demand is already getting greater than the offer in human manpower and it is expected to get aggravated during the next following years.

We consider that the basic reasons that prevent young people to follow the marine profession are the following :

1. Basic lack of information by the State
2. Motivation to attract the youth
3. Upgrading of the Academies and the qualification titles
4. Long-standing legislation which leaves the seafarers, especially the Master, exposed, throwing the blame for everything that happens.
5. Non- existend social coverage of retributive character
6. Devalorisation of seamens' social place
7. Consolidation of marine profession
8. Benefits according to the offer of seamen in the National and World economy

There are incidents where seamen, especially Masters, have been penally persecuted (for accidents, accidental pollution), like common criminals, in order for the public opinion to be satisfied. These are movements of impressiveness which offend the human dignity and the human rights.

There are many recent examples, beggining with our country, where Masters are persecuted with the least reason, with unrealistic sentences and fines, and in international level.

The case of “HEBEI SPIRIT” and the condemnation of the Master and the Chief Mate for an accident that they didn't cause and they couldn't avoid, is an example.

Another very serious case is the one of the greek vessel “ASTRO SATURN”, in which, while it was in a harbour of Venezouela, two stowaways of Colombian citizenship were arrested for having hidden drugs in the rudder tank of the ship. There, the two stowaways admitted their guilt and clearly declared there were no participation of any crew member. Unfortunately, our colleagues the Master and the Chief Mate of the ship are being held in a hostage state , without having being recited to them any accusation at all.

Despite all the Masters and Mates Union's interventions to all responsible institutions, Ministries and the Embassy of Venezuela, our people are being held without an accusation, without a trial for more that six months.

The responsible Ministries are feeble to require justice for these innocent men and we, as fellow human beings and as colleagues, are calling for handing-over of justice.

Except their own shaken mental and body health, there are two families waiting behind, agonizing and believing that at a certain moment their cry of despair and pain will be listened and finally their people will be released.

Another very serious issue that occupies us intensely is the elation of piracy, mostly in Somalia area, which is also a factor that acts suspensively to the decision of a young person to follow the marine profession.

Lots has been said and written regarding this subject so I will not extend it any longer. Our points of view are known. The allied forces must stop being “decorative elements” in this area and must finally undertake the action for which they ment to be there, that is : essential and effective presence, so that all passing vessels and our colleagues of all nationalities, shouldn't have to deal with danger.

Therefore how can a young person be attracted to the marine profession when, except all the other difficulties that he will have to face, he becomes witness of such situations?

Several meetings and forums have taken place regarding the attraction of young people to the marine profession, in various Greek cities, where Masters and Mates Union has participated. Our aim was to talk to the young people with honesty and to invite them to join us to this profession where Greece is pioneer for over 10.000 years.

It is a common belief that the Shipping constitutes national capital. It dynamically participates to the Economy and offers in various ways to the country. It is the most extrovert branch of economy, it serves international trade, it brings valuable exchange and it occupies thousands of people of the marine environment in marine and maritime professions.

The State, along with all the involved institutions, must help so that the pioneering of the Greek Shipping and the Greek seamen must keep up in the future.

The Masters and Mates Union of Greek Merchant Marine stands next to the young colleagues from the first moment they decide to join the marine family, during their studies and in all their later career.

The Masters and Mates Union is the home of all Masters (of all grades).

George Vlachos