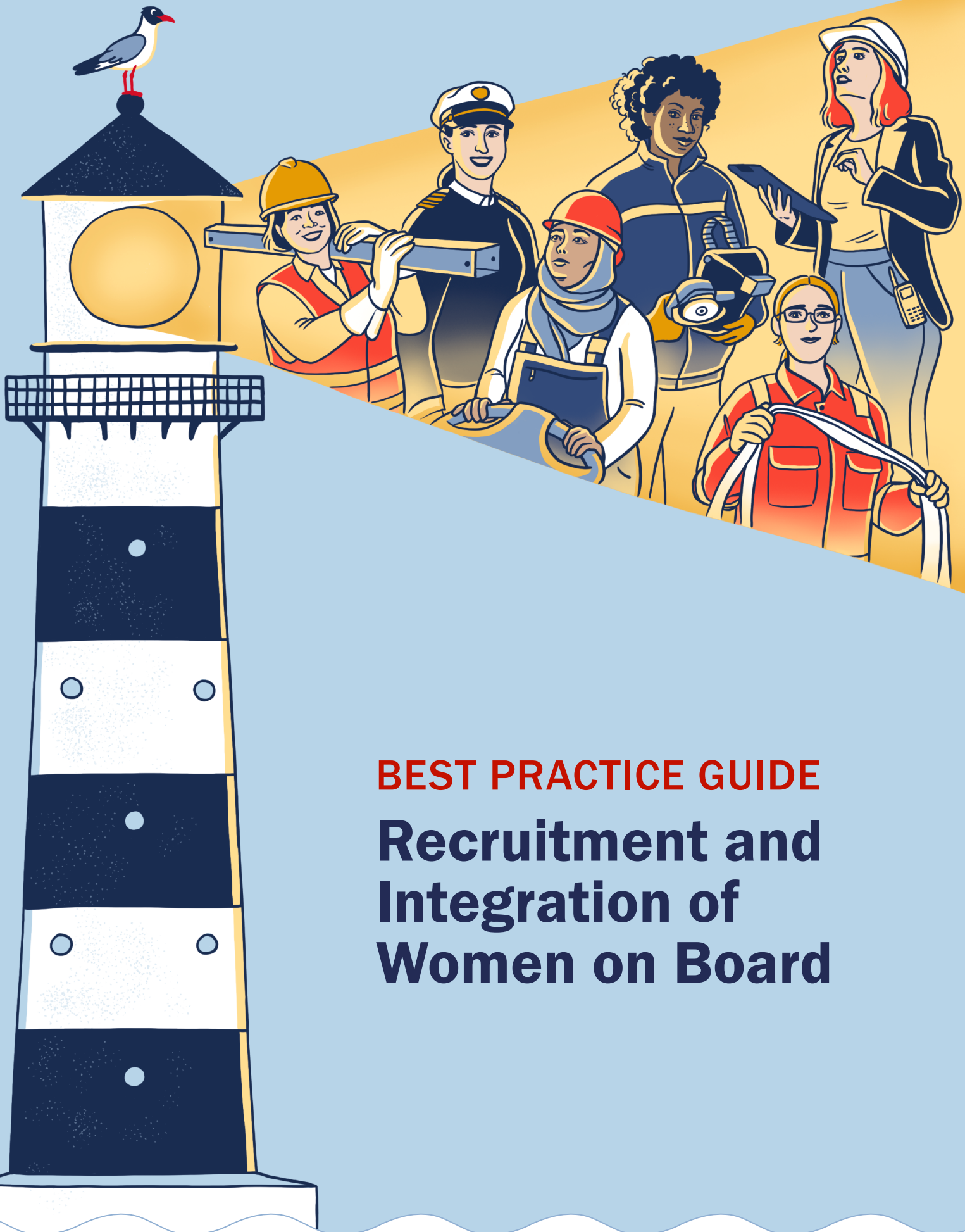




# **BEST PRACTICE GUIDE**

## **Recruitment and Integration of Women on Board**



## Best Practice Guide for the Recruitment and Integration of Women on Board Hamburg, 2026

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We are grateful for the support of:  
Orestis Schinas

### Front page layout and illustration:

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Editing and proofreading:  
05.10.2026

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## **II. List of Abbreviations**

|         |                                                                           |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BIMCO   | Baltic and International Maritime Council                                 |
| CBA     | Collective Bargaining Agreement                                           |
| COC     | Certificate of Competency                                                 |
| CPR     | Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation                                             |
| CSR     | Corporate Social Responsibility                                           |
| CWIB    | Center for Women in Business                                              |
| DEI     | Diversity, Equity, Inclusion                                              |
| DOC     | Document of compliance                                                    |
| e.g.    | exempli gratia                                                            |
| ERG     | Employee Resource Group                                                   |
| ESG     | Environmental, Social, and Governance                                     |
| etc.    | et cetera                                                                 |
| FOC     | Flag of Convenience                                                       |
| FSS     | Fire Safety Systems                                                       |
| GECAMET | Gender Equality and Cultural Awareness in Maritime Education and Training |
| HR      | Human Resources                                                           |
| ICS     | International Chamber of Shipping                                         |
| IDP     | Individual Development Plan                                               |
| i.e.    | id est                                                                    |
| ILO     | International Labour Convention, 2006                                     |
| IMO     | International Maritime Organization                                       |
| ITF     | International Transport Workers' Federation                               |
| JTWG    | Joint ILO / IMO Tripartite Working Group                                  |
| KPI     | Key Performance Indicator                                                 |

|          |                                                                                   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LGBTQ+   | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning                     |
| LSA      | Life-Saving Appliances                                                            |
| MARPOL   | International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships               |
| METI     | Maritime Education and Training Institution                                       |
| MLC 2006 | Maritime Labour Convention 2006                                                   |
| P&I      | Protection and Indemnity                                                          |
| PPE      | Personal Protective Equipment                                                     |
| SOLAS    | International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea                            |
| STCW     | International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping |
| UN       | United Nations                                                                    |
| WHO      | World Health Organization                                                         |
| WISTA    | Women's International Shipping and Trading Association                            |
| WMU      | World Maritime University                                                         |
| WPSI     | Women Peace and Security Index                                                    |

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## IV. Foreword

The project “Best Practice Guide for the Recruitment and Integration of Women on Board” is an initiative of the Project Group Diversity of WISTA Germany e. V. (Women’s International Shipping & Trading Association), in collaboration with the Frauen zur See e. V.

The project aims to establish clear and practical standards that:

- prevent discrimination,
- promote an inclusive working environment,
- facilitate the integration of women into the maritime workforce.

Despite growing awareness of diversity and equality, women remain underrepresented in the maritime industry, particularly at sea. This project aims to drive lasting change by identifying barriers, sharing experiences and developing concrete recommendations to support fair recruitment, equal opportunities, and a positive working culture on board.

Through this collaborative initiative, our goal is to bolster the maritime sector by integrating diversity and inclusion into its core values, ensuring that women at sea are not only welcomed, but also empowered to flourish in their careers.

This publication reflects the dedication and expertise of the following project group members:

Annette Suhrbier, Franziska Eckhoff, Irene Rüpke, Jens Michael Priess, Louisa Troebner, Marina Röhl, Miriam Schlüter, Runa Hornig Jörgens, Sabine Zeller, Susanne Coulibaly, and Vanessa Ani.

Many thanks to our supporter:  
Orestis Schinas.

Together, we are working towards a more equitable and inclusive maritime future – one in which diversity at sea is recognised as a source of strength, innovation, and resilience.

## V. Testimonials

Mikki Koskinen, President of the European Community Shipowners' Association (ECSA)

*“European shipping is in the middle of its most profound transformation. The green and digital transition is reshaping how our ships operate and the skills our people need. This is not only a technological shift, but it is also a chance to open our sector to diverse talents that have traditionally been underrepresented.*

*A successful transition is not only about investment and regulations, it's also about people. The energy transition will require 800,000 seafarers globally to be reskilled or upskilled by the mid-2030s. Within Europe alone, this number goes up to 250,000 seafarers. At the same time, our sector is facing an overall labour shortage. Women today make up a small share of the global seafaring workforce -closing this gap is one of the most direct ways to widen our talent pool. If we want European shipping to stay competitive, we cannot afford to exclude talent.*

*The Best Practice Guide describes diversity as “a strategic necessity for the sustainability and resilience of the sector”. This is why the green and digital transition is an opportunity to make our sector more attractive to new generations, to women, and to underrepresented groups. Diversity brings new skills and better leadership. We have to strengthen cooperation between industry leaders, schools, and organisations that promote diversity and gender equality.*

*This was the main objective of the WESS Project "Contributing to an Attractive, Smart and Sustainable Working Environment in the Shipping Sector", a joint initiative by ES|ECSA and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF). The project delivered a report on good practices for recruiting and retaining women in the industry, an online tool helping people explore maritime careers, and the translation of the ICS-ITF International Guidelines on Eliminating Workplace Harassment and Bullying into 15 languages.*

*Building on the WESS and on the SkillSea Project, the European Maritime Skills Forum was launched in 2025 as a joint initiative of ES|ECSA and ETF. The Forum brings together key maritime stakeholders - shipowners, seafarers' representatives, maritime academies and policymakers - to address the sector's evolving skills needs and share best practices.*

*The Best Practice Guide is a great initiative proving that progress depends on collaboration. This guide not only builds upon the work ECSA and ETF began through WESS but also identifies maritime academies and industry associations as co-responsible actors. We need “All Hands on Deck”.*”

Dr. Gaby Bornheim, President of the German Shipowners' Association (VDR):

*„Shipping needs the best minds – regardless of gender. That is why it is our common goal to attract more women to work at sea and to offer them the best prospects on board. In this day and age, no one in the maritime world can afford to do without 50% of the workforce simply on the grounds of gender. This guide does not merely lament the current situation, but provides clear guidance on the employment of women on board.*

*Whilst the proportion of women in shipping worldwide has remained nearly constant at 2 per cent for years, this guide does not merely lament this situation; instead, it gets to the root of the causes, addresses them head-on and offers practical guidance.*

*Diversity strengthens teams, broadens our view and makes our industry more future-proof. This best practice guide shows how this can be achieved in practice. Because one thing has never changed in shipping: The decisive factor is not who is on board - but that the team keeps the right course together.“*

Dr. Alexander Geisler, CEO, Zentralverband Deutscher Schiffsmakler e.V.

*“The maritime industry depends on skilled and committed people. At a time when competition for talent is intensifying, we simply cannot afford to leave the potential of women untapped. Yet women remain significantly underrepresented across the maritime sector, particularly in seagoing professions. The “Best Practice Guide for the Recruitment and Integration of Women on Board” by WISTA Germany and Frauen zur See addresses this challenge in a practical and constructive way. It not only identifies the barriers women still face but, more importantly, shows what maritime companies can do to remove them. We particularly welcome the Guide’s holistic approach. Equal opportunities do not end with recruitment. They require effective onboarding, an inclusive working and leadership culture, transparent career paths, fair opportunities for advancement, suitable working conditions, and a genuine commitment to combining family and professional life. Support for returning to sea after a career break is equally important. Many of these measures do not require fundamental changes. Clear responsibilities, mentoring, transparent career opportunities, reliable reporting procedures and zero tolerance towards discrimination and harassment can already make a real difference. What matters is that these principles are not simply written into policies but become part of everyday maritime working life, in the office, on the quay and on board.*

*The German Shipbrokers' Association (ZVDS) therefore strongly welcomes this Best Practice Guide. We will encourage our members to review its recommendations and to adopt those measures that are appropriate for their own organizations and operations. The Guide should be understood as a practical toolbox rather than a one-size-fits-all solution. For us, this is about more than equality. It is about the future of our industry. The maritime branch in general and especially shipping needs the best people it can find. Attracting more women, retaining their expertise, and offering them genuine long-term career opportunities will make our industry stronger, more diverse, and more competitive. A modern maritime industry cannot afford to leave talent behind. This Guide provides practical ideas for turning that principle into action. We thank its authors for this important contribution.“*

## VI. Executive Summary

The maritime industry is undergoing a period of significant transition as companies increasingly recognise that diversity and inclusion are essential drivers of innovation, safety, and long-term sustainability. Despite this progress, women continue to be substantially underrepresented in seafaring roles and face a range of structural and cultural obstacles that affect their recruitment, retention, well-being, and career advancement.

This Best Practice Guide consolidates current research, industry data, and practical experience to provide a comprehensive, actionable framework for improving the recruitment and integration of women at sea. It offers concrete recommendations for shipowners, managers, crewing departments, and maritime institutions to foster inclusive, safe, and equitable working environments on board.

### Key Challenges

Women at sea frequently encounter:

- Gender-biased recruitment processes
- Limited visibility of female role models
- Lack of inclusive onboard facilities and equipment
- Incidents of discrimination, bullying, or harassment
- Social isolation, stress, and limited well-being support
- Unequal career development opportunities

These challenges impact not only individual well-being and safety, but also crew performance, retention rates, and the industry's ability to secure the skilled workforce it urgently needs.

### Strategic Areas for Action

1. **Inclusive Recruitment:**  
Use gender-sensitive language, unbiased hiring processes, and partnerships with training institutions to broaden access to maritime careers.
2. **Effective Onboarding:**  
Structured preparation of crews and vessels, designated contact persons, and supportive early career experiences are essential for successful integration.
3. **Work Culture & Leadership:**  
Inclusive leadership, clear codes of conduct, psychological safety, and training on diversity and unconscious bias shape a respectful and productive climate.

4. **Social Integration & Well-being:**

Creating community, mentorship, mental health support, and peer networks helps counter isolation and strengthens emotional resilience.

5. **Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination:**

Zero-tolerance policies, accessible reporting mechanisms, impartial investigations, and adequate protections build trust and safety.

6. **Equipment & Physical Working Conditions:**

Accommodation, PPE, sanitary products, and life-saving appliances must reflect the needs of a diverse workforce.

7. **Career Development & Advancement:**

Transparent promotion criteria, fair distribution of tasks, mentoring, and leadership pipelines enable genuine progression for women.

8. **Work-Life Balance & Long-Term Careers:**

Flexible rotation models, parental leave, reintegration support, and CoC renewal assistance are crucial for sustainable maritime careers.

9. **Monitoring & Continuous Improvement:**

KPIs, data-driven assessments, dashboards, and regular feedback loops ensure accountability, transparency, and long-term success.

## **Conclusion**

Promoting gender equality at sea is both an ethical obligation and a strategic necessity for a resilient future maritime workforce. By implementing these best practices, companies can build safer, more inclusive, and more competitive shipboard environments, while unlocking the full potential of a diverse talent pool. The integration of women at sea strengthens innovation, operational performance, and the long-term sustainability of the entire industry.

## VII. Introduction

The maritime industry is undergoing a fundamental transformation, with an increasing recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion as drivers of innovation, safety, and sustainable growth. However, despite this progress, women remain significantly underrepresented in seafaring roles and continue to face unique barriers to entry and advancement. To address these challenges, the Project Group Diversity of WISTA Germany e. V. has been tasked with developing practical best practices to foster equal opportunities and inclusive working environments at sea.

The mission is to establish standards and guidelines that prevent discrimination, promote diversity, and facilitate the seamless integration of women into maritime workplaces. Through comprehensive analysis, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration with industry partners, the initiative will create a framework supporting fair recruitment processes, inclusive on-board cultures, and tangible support mechanisms for women at sea. The work of the subgroup is structured around four core objectives:

**Status quo analysis:** This involves gathering and evaluating existing experiences, research and industry practices to identify the key challenges and barriers faced by women on board.

**Development of best practices:** Formulating concrete recommendations for inclusive recruitment, safe and supportive working conditions, and effective reporting and mentoring structures.

**Establishment of standards:** Creating voluntary standards exceeding and improving current customary averages and practices to prevent discrimination and promote gender equality in maritime professions.

**Implementation and dissemination:** Produce a practical guide for shipowners and managers to liaise internally for allocating the individual tasks set out in this guide to the DOC holder, HR / Crewing department, DPA or the master depending on which of these is best suited to action and implement; organise workshops; and collaborate with maritime institutions to embed these standards across the sector.

This initiative is expected to deliver a comprehensive best practice and standard document, a pilot project to test these recommendations in real-world settings, and long-term strategies to integrate them into the broader maritime industry.

Backed by the substantial resources and networks of the Project Group Diversity of WISTA Germany e. V., this endeavour is a significant stride towards making the maritime sector more equitable, robust, and forward-looking, ensuring that women can flourish as integral and esteemed members of crews worldwide.

## VIII. Methodology

This Best Practice Guide is based on a structured review of publicly available literature, as well as insights from maritime stakeholders based on their experience. It aims to compile existing evidence, established approaches, and good practices that can be transferred, in order to support shipowners, managers, and maritime institutions in fostering diversity and inclusion at sea.

The development process combined two strands complementing each other. First, relevant literature was identified, reviewed, and assessed from scientific publications, trade journals, industry reports, institutional publications, and practical guidance documents. Secondly, the Project Group Diversity of WISTA Germany e.V. and the Verband Frauen zur See e. V. contextualised these findings through their practical experience, professional networks, and sector knowledge. This approach was adopted to ensure the guide is evidence-based and applicable to day-to-day maritime operations at sea and ashore.

Sources were selected based on defined criteria of relevance and quality. Publications from the last fifteen years were prioritised to reflect current debates, regulatory developments and operational realities. Older sources were included where they were considered foundational or were still widely recognised as authoritative within the field.

Particular emphasis was placed on peer-reviewed academic literature and reports by recognised international organisations, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). Industry studies and guidance issued by established maritime associations and institutions were also considered. The sources were then screened for relevance to the scope of the guide, which covers the recruitment, integration, working conditions, safety, well-being, and career development of women in seafaring roles.

As the body of maritime-specific literature on certain aspects of gender inclusion at sea is limited, material from comparable male-dominated sectors – particularly offshore energy and aviation – was also considered, provided its findings could be transferred to the maritime context.

The selected material was qualitatively assessed against four main criteria: methodological robustness, institutional credibility, the topicality of the underlying data or analysis, and practical relevance to the maritime sector. Publications based on primary data, such as surveys, interviews, case studies or longitudinal research, were given particular consideration. Material based on opinions or advocacy was used more cautiously, mainly where it offered contextual or practice-oriented insights.

Where findings converged across different types of sources, this was treated as an indication of stronger evidentiary support. Where findings diverged, these differences were

retained and reflected in the recommendations where relevant, rather than being artificially harmonised.

Following the review and assessment phase, the material was coded and grouped thematically according to the four core objectives of the guide, as outlined in the introduction: status quo analysis, best practice recommendations, voluntary standards and implementation guidance. Recurring themes, structural barriers and promising interventions were identified and synthesised across the material to produce cross-cutting findings.

These findings were then translated into practical recommendations from the perspective of practitioners. For each issue area, we considered whether an approach could realistically be implemented by shipping companies or maritime institutions, what operational or organisational preconditions would be required, and what potential outcomes or indicators of progress could be expected. Recommendations that were too context-specific to allow meaningful transfer, or that were not supported by sufficient evidence, were excluded or identified as emerging practice.

In addition to the literature review, the framing, prioritisation and interpretation of the material were guided by practice-based insights from the Project Group Diversity of WISTA Germany e. V., the Verband Frauen zur See e. V., and their professional networks. These insights were not intended to replace evidence from the literature, but rather to test the practical relevance of findings, identify operational constraints, and ensure that the recommendations reflect the realities of maritime workplaces.

Where experiential knowledge supplemented or refined the published findings, it was incorporated to strengthen the guide's practical usefulness and sector-specific relevance.

This methodology enabled the development of a guide that is both evidence-based and practical. The resulting recommendations are not intended as prescriptive rules, but rather as well-founded, actionable guidance to help create more equitable, safe and inclusive maritime workplaces for women worldwide.

## IX. Best Practice Guide

The following Best Practice Guide outlines practical measures to support the recruitment, integration, and long-term retention of women on board ships. The chapters that follow address the full career journey of female seafarers, from access to maritime education and recruitment processes to workplace culture, well-being, career development, and work-life balance. Together, sections A to J provide concrete recommendations for shipping companies and maritime stakeholders to foster inclusive, safe, and sustainable working environments at sea.

### 1. Recruitment & Access to Seafaring

To ensure a resilient, skilled, and diverse workforce, the shipping industry must take targeted and intentional steps to improve access to seafaring careers for all, particularly women and under-represented groups. This chapter outlines key best practices that can be used to create a more inclusive recruitment system. These strategies not only align with United Nations Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) commitments,<sup>1</sup> but take into account the growing global demand for seafarers.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.1 Gender-Sensitive Job Advertisements

The way in which job advertisements are communicated can significantly influence who chooses to apply. Maritime entities ought to ensure that job advertisements actively encourage applicants from all backgrounds. To promote a more inclusive environment, it is recommended that all language is reviewed for bias – encouraging the use of gender-neutral terms and avoidance of wording that may unintentionally discourage women.<sup>3</sup>

Here are some examples of biased language and wording that could unintentionally discourage women in maritime job advertisements, along with suggestions for more inclusive alternatives:

- **Biased Language Related to Gender Roles**

Example: “He will be responsible for leading the team on board.”

Inclusive alternative: “The candidate will be responsible for leading the team on board.”<sup>4</sup>

- **Physical Requirement Emphasis**

Example: “Must be able to lift heavy equipment and handle strenuous physical labour.”

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Global Compact, ‘The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact’.

<sup>2</sup> International Maritime Organization, ‘Women in Maritime’.

<sup>3</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, ‘Gender’.

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization, ‘Gender equality’.

Inclusive alternative: “Must be able to perform the physical tasks required by the role, with reasonable accommodation available.”<sup>5</sup>

- **Unintended Stereotypes**

Example: “Strong, resilient individuals needed for challenging offshore roles.”

Inclusive alternative: “Candidates who are adaptable and resilient, with a strong ability to work in dynamic environments, are encouraged to apply.”<sup>6</sup>

- **Use of Masculine Pronouns**

Example: “The captain will guide his crew through the journey.”

Inclusive alternative: “The captain will guide their crew through the journey.”<sup>7</sup>

- **Language Reinforcing Male-Dominated Norms**

Example: “Seeking a seasoned sailor to join our crew.”

Inclusive alternative: “Seeking an experienced maritime professional to join our crew.”<sup>8</sup>

- **Unnecessary Masculine Terms**

Example: “Join our team of hardworking, tough, and gritty individuals.”

Inclusive alternative: “Join our team of dedicated and skilled professionals.”<sup>9</sup>

- **Unbalanced Focus on Physical Labor**

Example: “Crew members must be able to withstand harsh conditions and hard labour.”

Inclusive alternative: “Crew members must be able to adapt to challenging conditions and contribute to team efforts effectively.”<sup>10</sup>

- **Implying Gendered Suitability**

Example: “The ideal candidate will be a natural leader with military-like discipline and strength.”

Inclusive alternative: “The ideal candidate will be an effective leader with strong organizational skills and the ability to manage high-pressure situations.”<sup>11</sup>

## **1.2 Partnerships with Maritime Education and Training Institutions**

Maritime education and training institutions (METIs) are vital incubators for the next generation of shipping experts. By building strong, strategic partnerships with these institutions, companies can gain early access to promising cadets while actively shaping a more inclusive, efficient pipeline from training to employment.<sup>12</sup> Such collaborations

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Global Compact, ‘The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact’.

<sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization, ‘Gender equality’.

<sup>8</sup> International Maritime Organization, ‘Women in Maritime’.

<sup>9</sup> International Labour Organization, ‘Gender equality’.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> World Maritime University, ‘International Day for Women in Maritime 2025’.

benefit the industry by ensuring a steady stream of well-prepared seafarers and foster a more diverse and motivated maritime workforce.<sup>13</sup>

Industry stakeholders can play a key role in strengthening the maritime talent pipeline by actively supporting early career development. One important action is to offer company-sponsored cadetships that provide financial support, mentorship, and onboard training, helping cadets gain essential practical experience and a clearer pathway to employment after graduation.<sup>14</sup>

Stakeholders should also invest in outreach programs by engaging with secondary schools, maritime academies, and vocational training institutions – sending company representatives to speak about maritime careers, offer guidance, and raise awareness of opportunities within the industry.<sup>15</sup>

Enrichment activities such as sponsored workshops, career fairs, industry presentations, and hands-on simulator sessions further enhance student exposure, spark interest, and help build relevant skills.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, close collaboration with Maritime Education and Training Institutions is crucial to ensure that curricula remain aligned with industry needs, emerging technologies, and evolving regulatory requirements.<sup>17</sup>

### **1.3 Unbiased Recruitment and Selection Processes**

In today's competitive and increasingly diverse talent market, shipping companies need to recognize and address the hidden barriers that may prevent qualified candidates from being hired. Unconscious bias and outdated hiring practices can unintentionally exclude capable individuals from seafaring careers.<sup>18</sup> To meet the changing demands of the global maritime sector, companies need to modernize their recruitment systems. This includes putting fairness, objectivity, and transparency at the heart of every recruitment decision.<sup>19</sup>

To promote fair and inclusive hiring practices, organizations should standardize their interview protocols by using structured, competency-based interviews that focus on evaluating specific skills and relevant experience.<sup>20</sup>

Hiring teams – including recruiters, managers, and interviewers – should be trained to recognize and mitigate unconscious bias to ensure more objective decision-making.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Maritime Just Transition Task Force, 'Considerations of Training Aspects for Seafarers on Ships Powered by Ammonia, Methanol and Hydrogen'.

<sup>14</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'Women in Maritime'.

<sup>15</sup> The Baltic and International Maritime Council, 'BIMCO Sustainability Report 2022/23'.

<sup>16</sup> World Maritime University, 'International Day for Women in Maritime 2025'.

<sup>17</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'Women in Maritime'.

<sup>18</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Gender equality'.

<sup>19</sup> Fath, 'When Blind Hiring Advances DEI — and When It Doesn't'.

<sup>20</sup> Harvard Business Review, 'The case for blind recruitment'.

<sup>21</sup> Gino and Coffman, 'Unconscious Bias Training That Works'.

It is also important to diversify interview panels so that they reflect a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.<sup>22</sup>

Implementing blind CV screening by removing personal details such as name, age, gender, or educational institution helps ensure that candidates are assessed solely on their qualifications and experience.<sup>23</sup>

#### **1.4 Visibility of Female Role Models & Testimonials**

In the maritime industry, where tradition and hierarchy have long defined career paths, representation is more than symbolic. It is transformative. Highlighting the contributions and success stories of female seafarers helps to break down stereotypes and send a message to the next generation that a career at sea is open to all.<sup>24</sup>

To strengthen visibility and foster greater inclusion, organizations should actively promote internal role models by highlighting female seafarers in managerial, technical, and operational positions through internal communications, newsletters, and company events.<sup>25</sup>

Establishing a structured mentorship network can further support this goal by connecting experienced female seafarers with cadets and junior officers, helping to guide and inspire the next generation.<sup>26</sup>

Recruitment efforts can also benefit from the use of authentic testimonials and success stories from female employees, showcasing real experiences and career paths.<sup>27</sup> Finally, celebrating the achievements of female crew members – whether through social media, press releases, or award nominations – helps reinforce a culture that recognizes and values their contributions.<sup>28</sup>

## **2. Onboarding & First Assignment for Female Students & Interns**

In the following section we concentrate on the onboarding process and first assignments of female interns and students. The recommendations concern ship, shore side, and normal recruitment and placement processes, presuming that all competent potential female seafarers have the minimum qualifications according to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping

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<sup>22</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Gender equality'.

<sup>23</sup> Harvard Business Review, 'The case for blind recruitment'.

<sup>24</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'Women in Maritime'.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> World Maritime University, 'International Day for Women in Maritime 2025'.

<sup>27</sup> The Baltic and International Maritime Council, 'BIMCO Sustainability Report 2022/23'.

<sup>28</sup> Maritime Just Transition Task Force, 'Considerations of Training Aspects for Seafarers on Ships Powered by Ammonia, Methanol and Hydrogen'.

(STCW) and the ship owner or manager is applying the regulations of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006) and their dedicated flag state.

## **2.1 Onboarding Onshore**

Familiarization with crewing manager from shore side is natural. Personal briefings are more engaging while online briefings can be more convenient. For a company to hire women in the first place or develop more female seafarers amongst their crew pool, we recommend that the hiring company has dedicated female contact persons available for female seafarers. The female seafarer and female contact person shall meet before the on-signing, either in person or via online meeting. Reporting lines and contact lines shall be communicated and provided to the seafarer. It is recommended to hand out the WISTA Germany e. V. and Frauen zur See e. V. emergency flyer.<sup>29</sup>

## **2.2 Vessel Preparation**

Before signing on female seafarers, the crew on board of the dedicated vessels shall be briefed.

This shall include, but not be limited to, behaviour on board, the environment, upcoming changes (if applicable) and working tasks for those signing on. It is understood that the female seafarer shall execute the same tasks as stated in their job assignment and fulfil the needs of the necessary education/qualification according to the STCW.

The recommendation is to nominate a ‘trust person’ on board who is the point of contact for the female seafarer. Ideally, this responsibility should be assigned to the Training Officer or Complaints Coordinator. The same should be added to the job descriptions within the Safety Management System.

Further recommendations are set out in chapter 6 (Equipment & Physical Working Conditions).

## **2.3 Crew Composition**

Public research revealed that companies with diverse teams with different genders, races and nationalities are smarter, more innovative, and have better return on investments than their peers with less diverse teams in the organization. Organisations should ensure inclusive practices are in place so that everyone feels part of the team and is heard.<sup>30</sup>

By including more women and creating a gender-diverse workplace, the morale and overall well-being is increasing. Teams are more collaborative, leading to a healthier work environment, greater employee satisfaction, and better performance.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> WISTA Germany e.V. and Verband Frauen zur See e.V., ‘Seafarers Helplines 24/7’.

<sup>30</sup> Rock and Grant, ‘Why Diverse Teams Are Smarter’.

<sup>31</sup> Suttie, ‘Why Gender Diversity at Work is Good for Everyone’.

By mixing different nationalities with different backgrounds and cultures on board a vessel, seafarers need to have a high standard of cultural sensitivity and awareness, enabling them to interact, work, and communicate in diverse environments, as well as build relationships and mitigate cross-cultural challenges. The United Nations has developed a *Diversity and Cultural Competency in Workplace*<sup>32</sup> course which is tackling the above-mentioned challenges.<sup>33</sup>

Similar courses should be mandatory for any seafarer on board and should be completed prior to boarding. The objective of such a course is that every crew member feels welcomed and respected onboard irrespective of their nationality, sexuality or gender. It is recommended to have a minimum of two female seafarers at the same time on board. Having two people who speak the same language on board is beneficial for everyone.

## **2.4 Management Duties**

Employing more women on board is an opportunity to develop the crew pool by recruiting from a historically neglected workforce. It is still uncommon to have female seafarers on board commercial ships. The Women in Maritime Study 2021<sup>34</sup> revealed that less than 2% of seafarers in 2021 were women, the majority of whom were employed in the cruise sector.<sup>35</sup>

It is recommended that management gives special attention to the development of female seafarers on board and makes this a top priority. Regular follow-up checks, both online and in person, carried out by management, can demonstrate to the crew the importance of including women on board. Regular visits by any other person from the office should be an integral part of the routine.

## **2.5 Seafarers' Rights**

Vessels that are covered by any collective bargaining agreement (cba), for example of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), provide seafarers with better terms and conditions and therefore extra protection.<sup>36</sup>

Everybody has the right to work free of harassment and violence. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Maritime Labour Convention (ILO) started a joint campaign in combating sexual assault, harassment, and shipboard violence. During the Joint ILO / IMO Tripartite Working Group (JTWG), recommendations have been developed to protect seafarers from harassment and violence, including IMO Guidance for shipowners, amendments to MLC 2006, and new mandatory training for

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<sup>32</sup> United Nations System Staff College, 'Diversity and Cultural Competency in the Workplace'.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, 'Women in Maritime Survey 2021'.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Women's Rights'.

seafarers.<sup>37</sup> As Arsenio Dominguez said: *“We remain steadfast in our commitment to creating a safe and respectful working environment on board. Recognizing that this is not only a moral imperative but also a practical necessity for the industry’s sustainable growth, we are committed to preventing and combatting bullying and harassment in the maritime sector.”*<sup>38</sup>

The crew manager, ship manager, or ship owner shall ensure the rights of any seafarer and a no-tolerance policy for any bullying, harassment, or violence on board. The specific mention should enhance comfort and encourage the seafarer to report any incident back to the office.

Further information is set out in the chapter on Bullying and Harassment.

## **2.6 Accompanying Programs**

It is recommended to review the crew composition when planning the deployment of female seafarers and first assign them to vessels with a diverse crew. During the first assignments, regular check-ins between the Crewing Manager/Owner and female Seafarer shall be established, e.g. after two weeks, one month, two months, etc. This allows for guidance to be given and/or problems to be resolved during the contract.

# **3. Work Culture and Leadership**

## **3.1 Definition**

Life onboard a ship presents unique challenges and opportunities for leadership. In this confined, multicultural, and high-stakes environment, cultivating a healthy work culture is not just beneficial, it is essential. Inclusive leadership, strong team dynamics, and clear codes of conduct are the cornerstones of a safe, respectful, and high-performing crew.<sup>39</sup>

The working climate in maritime environments refers to the overall atmosphere and culture within which seafarers operate. It encompasses the attitudes, behaviours, and interactions of crew members with each other and with ship and shore personnel. A positive working climate is crucial for ensuring safety, productivity, and job satisfaction onboard. It fosters mutual respect, open communication, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for the mental and physical well-being of seafarers.<sup>40</sup>

A good working climate is characterized by clear structures, transparency, and fairness. It supports career development and personal growth and is inclusive of all genders, ages, and nationalities. Such an environment encourages reporting of issues without fear of

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<sup>37</sup> International Maritime Organization, ‘Preventing and combatting violence and harassment in the maritime sector’.

<sup>38</sup> International Labour Organization, ‘ILO and IMO recommend new steps against shipboard violence, harassment, and sexual assault’.

<sup>39</sup> Kitada et al., *Book of abstracts of the WMU International Conference 2025: Advancing the blue economy through gender equality*.

<sup>40</sup> All Aboard Alliance, ‘Sustainable Crewing Guidelines’.

retribution, thereby enhancing trust and cooperation. In a positive working climate, seafarers feel empowered to voice their concerns and contribute to decision-making processes, which in turn fosters a sense of ownership and accountability.<sup>41 42</sup>

### 3.2 Relevance

A positive working climate offers numerous benefits:

- **Increased Safety and Efficiency:** A supportive and inclusive environment helps reduce safety incidents and enhances decision-making processes. When seafarers feel safe and respected, they are more likely to adhere to safety protocols and communicate effectively, thereby minimizing errors and accidents.<sup>43</sup>
- **Job Satisfaction and Retention:** Seafarers are more likely to stay in their jobs when they feel valued and supported, reducing crew shortages. High job satisfaction contributes to lower turnover rates and helps in retaining experienced crew members, which is crucial for maintaining operational continuity.<sup>44</sup>
- **Enhanced Productivity:** Diverse teams with varied perspectives can lead to innovative solutions and improved compliance with safety standards. Diversity in teams brings a range of skills and viewpoints that can enhance problem-solving and creativity.<sup>45</sup>
- **Better Mental Health:** Access to social activities, internet, and regular communication with family can significantly improve mental well-being. Providing opportunities for leisure and personal development helps in reducing stress and preventing burnout.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.3 Guidelines

Guidelines are essential to establish a framework for acceptable behaviour and leadership practices. They should include:

- **Code of Conduct:** Clear policies on harassment, bullying, and discrimination, with zero tolerance for unacceptable behaviour. These policies should be well-communicated and strictly enforced to ensure a respectful and safe working environment. Shared values must be created, defined, and reviewed in

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

<sup>43</sup> Kitada et al., *Book of abstracts of the WMU International Conference 2025: Advancing the blue economy through gender equality*.

<sup>44</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>45</sup> Kitada et al., *Book of abstracts of the WMU International Conference 2025: Advancing the blue economy through gender equality*.

<sup>46</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Employability in maritime – Four key challenges facing women seafarers'.

cooperation between ship and shore, as well as with employees, groups, or unions.<sup>47 48</sup>

- **Reporting Systems:** Anonymous and safe reporting (speak up) mechanisms for issues, ensuring timely and fair responses. Such systems must be easily accessible, confidential, and actively promoted. This encourages reporting and helps in addressing issues promptly. Zero tolerance and clear, robust reporting mechanisms are essential, as well as training staff accordingly.<sup>49 50</sup> The Complaint Coordination System as per flag state regulations is to be followed.
- **Leadership Commitment:** High-level commitment, such as management involvement in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities, to foster a culture of respect and accountability. Responsible persons should actively participate in DEI initiatives and demonstrate their commitment through actions and communications.<sup>51 52</sup>
- **Training for Equity, Inclusion, and Empathy:** Policies and training that ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, age, or nationality. These procedures should address any form of discrimination and promote equal opportunities for career advancement and personal development.<sup>53 54</sup>

### 3.4 Training

Training is crucial to equip seafarers and responsible persons with the necessary skills and knowledge to maintain a positive working climate:

- **Sensitivity and Awareness Training:** To address stereotypes, biases, and the importance of consent and respectful behaviour. These programs should include cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and anti-harassment topics, emphasizing how everyday actions impact others. This helps creating a more inclusive and respectful workplace. Prejudices must be actively addressed to reduce unconscious bias and actively listen to those affected.<sup>55 56</sup>
- **Leadership Training:** Focused on effective communication, conflict resolution, and creating an inclusive environment. Leaders should be trained in

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<sup>47</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'All Aboard Alliance Insights 2024'.

<sup>48</sup> Huesmann, 'Diversity Management und die Mitbestimmung in Deutschland'.

<sup>49</sup> International Chamber of Shipping, 'ICS Diversity Tracker'.

<sup>50</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Conclusions on the recruitment and retention of seafarers and the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers'.

<sup>51</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'All Aboard Alliance Insights 2024'.

<sup>52</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Employability in maritime – Four key challenges facing women seafarers'.

<sup>53</sup> Kitada et al., *Book of abstracts of the WMU International Conference 2025: Advancing the blue economy through gender equality*.

<sup>54</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Employability in maritime – Four key challenges facing women seafarers'.

<sup>55</sup> Kitada et al., *Book of abstracts of the WMU International Conference 2025: Advancing the blue economy through gender equality*.

<sup>56</sup> Olajide, 'Digitalization effects on women seafarers in the era of maritime autonomous surface ship (MASS)'.

motivational techniques, team management, and how to foster a positive team culture.<sup>57</sup> This focus will be explained in detail later on in the chapter.

- **Mentorship Programs:** To support career development and provide guidance, especially for women and minority groups. Mentorship can help in career planning, skill development, and navigating workplace challenges.<sup>58</sup> The long-term success of mentoring programmes is improved by clear structures with defined goals and regular feedback.
- **Continuous Feedback:** Regular training sessions and feedback loops to ensure ongoing improvement and adaptation to new challenges. Constructive feedback to be encouraged at all levels, promoting professional growth and continuous development.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.5 Ship and Shore Relations

Effective communication and cooperation between ship and shore are vital for a harmonious working climate:

- **Regular Visits and Exchanges:** It is recommended to establish frequent visits and exchanges between ship (all crewmembers) and shore personnel (all departments) to build mutual understanding and respect. This helps in bridging the gap between ship and shore operations and fosters a sense of unity and collaboration.<sup>60</sup>
- **Support Systems:** Establishing shore contact persons for seafarers to address their concerns and provide support. These contacts should be inhouse. They need to be well-trained, easily reachable, and capable of handling both professional and personal matters in a confidential manner with the focus on diversity issues. Make sure that all crew members are aware of the relevant information about contact persons for female seafarers etc.<sup>61</sup>
- **Transparent Communication:** Open, friendly and people-oriented communication is key. Ensuring clear and consistent communication regarding policies, procedures, and expectations. One-to-one basis to be established where necessary. Regular updates and open channels of communication help in aligning ship and shore operations and ensuring that everyone is on the same page.<sup>62</sup>
- **Shared Learning and Collaboration:** Joint workshops, debriefings, and feedback sessions can further enhance understanding between ship and shore

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<sup>57</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'All Aboard Alliance Insights 2024'.

<sup>58</sup> Nix, 'Strategien zur Gewinnung und Integration von Frauen in nautisch-technischen Berufen zur Stärkung der Geschlechtergleichheit an Bord'.

<sup>59</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Employability in maritime – Four key challenges facing women seafarers'.

<sup>60</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>61</sup> Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre et al., 'Gender Diversity'.

<sup>62</sup> Justesen et al., 'Improving seafarer well-being'.

teams, encouraging a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement.

### 3.6 The Team on Board

The dynamics and relationships within the team on board are crucial for maintaining a positive working climate:

- **Community Building:** Organize social activities and provide budgets for community-building events to foster team spirit. Activities such as team events (onboard and ashore), celebrations, and team-building exercises can enhance camaraderie and mutual respect.<sup>63 64</sup>
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Promote diverse teams and ensure that all members feel included and valued. Diversity training and inclusive practices and policies help in leveraging the strengths of a diverse workforce and creating a welcoming environment for all.<sup>65</sup>
- **Conflict Resolution:** Implement clear guidelines and provide trainings for conflict resolution to address and prevent bullying and harassment. Training should include techniques for mediation, negotiation, and effective communication to resolve conflicts amicably.<sup>66</sup> Clear guidelines with zero tolerance and robust reporting strategies, as well as appropriate training, are important. Responsible persons and designated mediators should be equipped to recognise early signs of tension and respond constructively before conflicts escalate.
- **Support Networks:** Create and support networks and groups, especially for minorities (like females) and youths, to provide support and mentorship. These networks serve as safe spaces for sharing experiences, seeking advice, and receiving support from peers and mentors.<sup>67</sup>

By focusing on these aspects, ship owners/managers/DOC holders cultivate a working climate that not only enhances operational efficiency but also supports the well-being and professional development of all seafarers.

### 3.7 Leadership

Both on board (management level) and ashore (ship owners/managers/DOC holders) have a significant influence on the working atmosphere and cooperation. They can set an example by positive role modelling and shaping team dynamics. They are responsible for

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>65</sup> Kitada et al., *Book of abstracts of the WMU International Conference 2025: Advancing the blue economy through gender equality*.

<sup>66</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

<sup>67</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

the mental health, motivation, and overall well-being of the crew and a healthy working environment. Leadership based on inclusivity, safety, and respect can develop teams further and realize their potential. Skills beyond traditional command-and-control are necessary. These include, for example:

- **Exemplary Leadership and Prevention of Power Abuse:** Harassment often occurs from positions of power, towards crew members of lower rank or presumed lower status.<sup>68 69</sup> Exemplary leadership requires transparency and accountability, as well as the active prevention of abuses of power, by setting a clear tone from the top down.
- **Communication and Feedback Training:** For leadership positions, regular training in communication and feedback is essential. The focus must be on mutual respect, exchanges between shore and ship, and promotions and/or resource planning, as well as dealing with misconduct.<sup>70 71</sup>
- **Psychological Safety and Mental Health Awareness:** Psychological safety has the potential to improve exchange, communication, and ideas, as well as to facilitate conflict management.<sup>72</sup> Leaders (ashore and onboard) must recognize signs of stress, fatigue, or isolation and ensure that crew members have access to support systems and resources. The well-being of staff also influences the attractiveness of the workplace, staff retention, and recruitment.<sup>73</sup>
- **Coaching and Mentorship Skills:** Managers (ashore and onboard) are responsible for training cadets and junior staff. Mentoring can be used to support any crew in any rank as well as the next generation and minorities to enable them to learn from role models.<sup>74</sup>
- **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Responsible person in charge<sup>75</sup> must be familiar with internal reporting procedures and knowledgeable about further reporting obligations and the involvement of law enforcement agencies to afford protection to the crew involved under the applicable criminal justice system.<sup>76 77</sup>
- **Cultural Competency and Language Sensitivity:** Neutral language is important in engaging in everyday interactions and when drafting guidelines. Undesirable behaviour and harassment often stem from differences in gender,

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<sup>68</sup> Justesen and Javornik, '15 Key Pain Points for Women at Sea'.

<sup>69</sup> St Clair, 'Sexual Harassment in Marine Science'.

<sup>70</sup> Justesen et al., 'Improving seafarer well-being'.

<sup>71</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>72</sup> Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre et al., 'Gender Diversity'.

<sup>73</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> The responsible person is the person in charge of the matter. This person may be the ship owner/manager, the DOC holder or someone on board.

<sup>76</sup> International Chamber of Shipping, 'ICS Diversity Tracker'.

<sup>77</sup> Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre et al., 'Gender Diversity'.

age, religion, or cultural background.<sup>78 79</sup> Leaders must be aware of differences in verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures and adapt their style to maintain respect and clarity.<sup>80</sup>

- **Crisis Leadership and Decision-Making under Pressure:** Strong crisis leadership requires composure, clarity, and empathy to guide persons and teams through uncertainty, especially in critical situations, while maintaining safety and morale. Clear, effective and non-discriminatory communication is vital even though it may be challenging in such situations.<sup>81</sup>

Ultimately, great maritime leaders inspire with trust and accountability by combining technical expertise with empathy, fairness, and vision. Exemplary leadership improves operational efficiency and strengthens the long-term resilience of crews and organisations.

## 4. Social Integration & Well-being Onboard

Creating a respectful and mentally healthy environment at sea is vital, not just for individual crew welfare but also for safety reasons. Seafaring life naturally involves isolation and stress, making it essential for superiors to shape shipboard culture intentionally. Therefore, the implementation of a resilience model is required. This model must focus on personal coping skills, strong social bonds, and effective recovery mechanisms the crew can rely on when board life gets challenging. It offers a practical framework to build emotional strength as a basis and especially in times of need. Embedding such a model into daily operations reinforces crew motivation, accountability, and long-term well-being.

### 4.1 Preventing Isolation - Creating Community

“Being lonely is part of every seafarer’s life. Every seafarer is used to it but doesn’t get affected much if there’s a good working atmosphere that is friendly and conflict free. Good human relationships with coworkers while working for an employer who cares is sufficient to overcome loneliness.”<sup>82</sup>

The above statement points out certain essentials about seafarers’ lives and will be expanded on in the following. According to the Live Sound Blog on Mental Health at Sea<sup>83</sup>, blending personal connections, sharing of responsibilities, and cultural ownership create a nurturing onboard environment that enhances emotional resilience. These strategies form the backbone of emotionally healthy maritime living and can be further enhanced by several additional strategies. One of the most impactful ways to reinforce a healthy environment on board is to foster a shared sense of ownership among crew members.

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<sup>78</sup> All Aboard Alliance, ‘Sustainable Crewing Guidelines’.

<sup>79</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, ‘Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying’.

<sup>80</sup> Cordon, *Seaman's guide to human factors, leadership, and personnel management*.

<sup>81</sup> Klann, ‘How to Lead Through a Crisis’.

<sup>82</sup> Ogahara et al., ‘Diversity@Sea: The Journey to the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines’, p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> Shafique, ‘Mental Health at Sea: Strategies for Overcoming Isolation and Stress’.

People become more engaged and more resilient when they feel that their contribution goes beyond just fulfilling tasks, that they are actively shaping the culture and emotional climate on board, that what they say and do matters. This results in a belief of ‘being in control’.

For instance, rotating informal leadership roles, such as allowing different team members to lead briefings or organize onboard activities such as festive days or game nights, are ways to enhance that feeling of ‘what I do matters’. It cultivates a shared purpose and encourages everyone to feel both accountable and valued.

Emotional resilience also thrives in an environment of reliable personal connection. Small, consistent interactions – such as informal check-ins between crew members – can reduce feelings of isolation, especially on long voyages. Pairing new crew members with appointed mentors is a further way to promote belonging and lower adjustment stress, as buddy programs can do. These relationships help building trust and can normalize help-seeking behaviour, which is critical when personal challenges arise.

Furthermore, normalizing conversations about mental health with each other is essential. Including brief reminders or wellness tips during safety meetings makes mental well-being of the crew part of the ship’s everyday language and routines. Encouraging open dialogue reduces prejudice. It signals that it is normal to talk about emotional challenges. Crew members trained in peer support or psychological first aid can help further by offering informal support, recognizing distress, and guiding others toward professional help when needed.

A basic course takes roughly 10 hours. Persons who are open and receptive to this kind of education are predestined to develop the skills necessary to recognize signs of depression or even suicidal thoughts in others. Like CPR, this type of mental health first aid requires practice, awareness, and a structured approach to be effective. It is not about becoming a therapist, but about learning how to spot warning signs, listen without judgment, and guide someone toward professional help. These skills are life-saving and must be treated with the same urgency and importance as physical emergency response training.

Responsibility for the well-being of the crew is not limited to leadership or medical staff but involves everyone. Sharing this duty through creative, inclusive initiatives can make a meaningful difference. For example, assigning a rotating ‘wellness lead’ each week to introduce stress-relief ideas or host group relaxation exercises can create a rhythm of emotional check-ins within the means and possibilities on board. Technology can also play a role: satellite internet access can support digital mental health services, guided meditations, or confidential counselling platforms, helping crew reach professional support even at sea.

Cultural ownership, the recognition and inclusion of diverse identities/characteristics, can add another layer of psychological safety. Respecting and celebrating cultural differences

through shared meals, music, and storytelling deepens connection and reminds crew members that their unique backgrounds are accepted and welcomed. Providing mental health materials in multiple languages and tailoring wellness initiatives to be culturally sensitive ensures everyone can access the support they need.

The above environment can be enriched through small but regular rituals that create structure and grounding. These rituals, such as morning breathing exercises, evening wind-down or sport routines, can provide crew members with psychological stability and a sense of normality amidst the unpredictability of life at sea. Recreational events, even simple ones like group games or movie nights, can help break monotony and foster camaraderie.

Professional resources remain indispensable. Confidential helplines, remote therapy sessions, and regular emotional health check-ins can bridge the gap between peer support and formal care. When senior leadership on board actively promotes these resources and models open dialogue about mental health, it sets the tone for the entire vessel. Short, anonymous crew surveys can help identify stress or low morale early on, allowing for timely interventions.

In sum, building emotional resilience at sea requires more than just coping mechanisms. Therefore, it is crucial to create a system of mutual care, cultural respect, shared responsibility, and proactive leadership. The emotional climate of a vessel, much like its physical condition, must be maintained regularly and with intent. In the premises, it may become a powerful buffer against the unique mental health challenges of maritime life.

#### **4.2 Dealing with Gossip, Stereotypes & Prejudice**

In the confined and high-pressure environment of a ship, gossip, stereotypes, and prejudice can rapidly erode trust, morale, and mental health. These dynamics often go unchecked due to the informal nature of shipboard communication, yet their psychological impact can be deep and long-lasting, especially when compounded by loneliness, fatigue, and cultural misunderstandings.

Although gossip is sometimes dismissed as harmless, it can become a form of social exclusion that undermines crew cohesion. It often targets individuals who are perceived as ‘different’ or ‘easy targets’, whether due to language, nationality, gender, or demeanour, thereby reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Once deemed normal/acceptable, this behaviour fosters an environment of suspicion and emotional withdrawal. This directly contradicts the previously described resilience-based model of well-being.

To counter these risks, management on board must take a proactive, zero-tolerance stance on discriminatory speech and behaviours. Senior officers and captains must model respectful communication and intervene early when divisive talk or prejudicial jokes surface. When crew members witness a leader challenging gossip or bias, it signals that dignity and psychological safety are priorities on board.

One of the most effective strategies for reducing prejudice is the implementation of structured diversity and inclusion training. Such training educates crew to recognize unconscious bias, understand cross-cultural dynamics, and reflect on their own assumptions. According to the Global Maritime Forum, cultural competency training equips seafarers to work more empathetically in multiethnic teams, reducing interpersonal tension and encouraging cooperation.

Celebrating cultural, national, or religious holidays, such as Lunar New Year, Diwali, Eid, or Christmas, not only honours diversity but encourages storytelling and shared joy. These events humanize differences and build camaraderie through recognition. Encouraging less vocal crew members to help plan social activities or well-being initiatives ensures that all voices are heard, not just the dominant few.

It is also essential to have clear, confidential channels through which crew can report instances of discrimination or social exclusion (see chapter on reporting and investigation procedures).

By addressing gossip, stereotypes, and prejudice not as mere behavioural issues but as structural challenges to emotional resilience, persons on board can be protected from alienation which often precedes mental health decline.

### **4.3 Encouraging Team Events & Peer Exchange**

One of the most effective ways to reinforce morale and strengthen crew cohesion is through regular, inclusive social engagement. Seafaring life naturally isolates individuals from family, community, and everyday social rituals, so ships must become places where those needs are actively supported. Shared experiences, laughter, and informal conversation are not luxuries but practical tools for building trust, easing tension, and boosting psychological well-being.

Regular events like karaoke nights, quiz competitions, and film screenings can offer crew members a chance to unwind and connect beyond their professional roles.<sup>84</sup> They can help reducing isolation and preventing frustrations from escalating into bigger issues. Activities like cooking challenges, team sports, and ship-wide competitions can further enhance camaraderie by building informal networks that cut across departmental or rank-based lines. These connections are vital for fostering mutual respect and a sense of shared identity.

Informal learning and peer-led workshops can deepen these connections. When crew members lead sessions on languages, crafts, or hobbies, they not only share skills but also

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<sup>84</sup> These simple activities, highlighted in resources such as [vcrew.com](https://vcrew.com) or [INTERTANKO](https://www.intertanko.com) guidance, create space for shared joy and emotional release. INTERTANKO, 'Crew Welfare Management and Mental Wellness'; VShips Crew, 'Welcome to our V.Care site'.

can invite others into their cultural and personal worlds. These interactions can encourage curiosity and empathy, reinforcing interpersonal understanding.<sup>85</sup>

Recognizing personal milestones such as birthdays, promotions, or contract completions also plays an important role. These moments of acknowledgment can contribute to a sense of belonging and personal value within the team. Whether through a simple celebration or a crew-wide announcement, they can foster emotional continuity and reinforce the message that each individual matters. It is essential to respect varying social needs. Participation in events must always be voluntary, and the social infrastructure should include options for quieter or more introverted crew members as well. Creating a mix of settings, from group activities to calm spaces, can ensure everyone's participation at their own comfort level.

This ongoing exchange and interaction are more than just morale-boosting. It forms a core part of the resilience model being developed for maritime well-being.

#### **4.4 Designated Safe Spaces for Privacy**

While social interaction and shared experiences are essential pillars of emotional resilience at sea, they must be balanced with opportunities for solitude and personal retreat. The ability to withdraw, reflect, and decompress is just as crucial for maintaining mental health. Seafarers operate in an environment where privacy is often limited, noise is a constant and personal space is sometimes shared. Without dedicated areas for quiet and recovery, emotional stress can quickly accumulate and lead to fatigue, undermining well-being and performance.

Privacy within personal cabins is another critical factor especially for female seafarers. Respecting closed doors are subtle but powerful contributors to emotional stability. Just as important are clear policies around the use of general keys, ensuring they are only used for safety-related reasons and held by a minimal number of authorized personnel, ideally a male and a female person.<sup>86</sup>

#### **4.5 Conclusion: Social Integration & Well-being Onboard**

Ensuring seafarers' mental health, emotional adaptability, and interpersonal trust requires far more than ad-hoc activities, it demands a committed, structural approach. At the core of this commitment is full compliance with MLC 2006, which guarantees decent accommodation, adequate rest hours, basic recreational facilities, and fair treatment.

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<sup>85</sup> This aligns with the findings from the ISWAN Social Interaction Matters (SIM) project, which evaluated structured and spontaneous social activities on 21 vessels and found significant improvements in morale and cohesion. One of the most successful elements of the project was the use of Social Ambassadors, volunteers who take initiative in organizing events and motivating participation. Their efforts help maintain momentum and continuity in shipboard social life. The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network, 2023. 'Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project'. Available at: <https://www.iswan.org.uk/our-work/social-interaction-matters-project/> [Accessed 14 January 2026].

<sup>86</sup> Ma and Liao, 'Factors affecting seafarers' fatigue: a scoping review'.

These are not administrative formalities; they are non-negotiable elements of a respectful, supportive, and functional shipboard culture.<sup>87</sup>

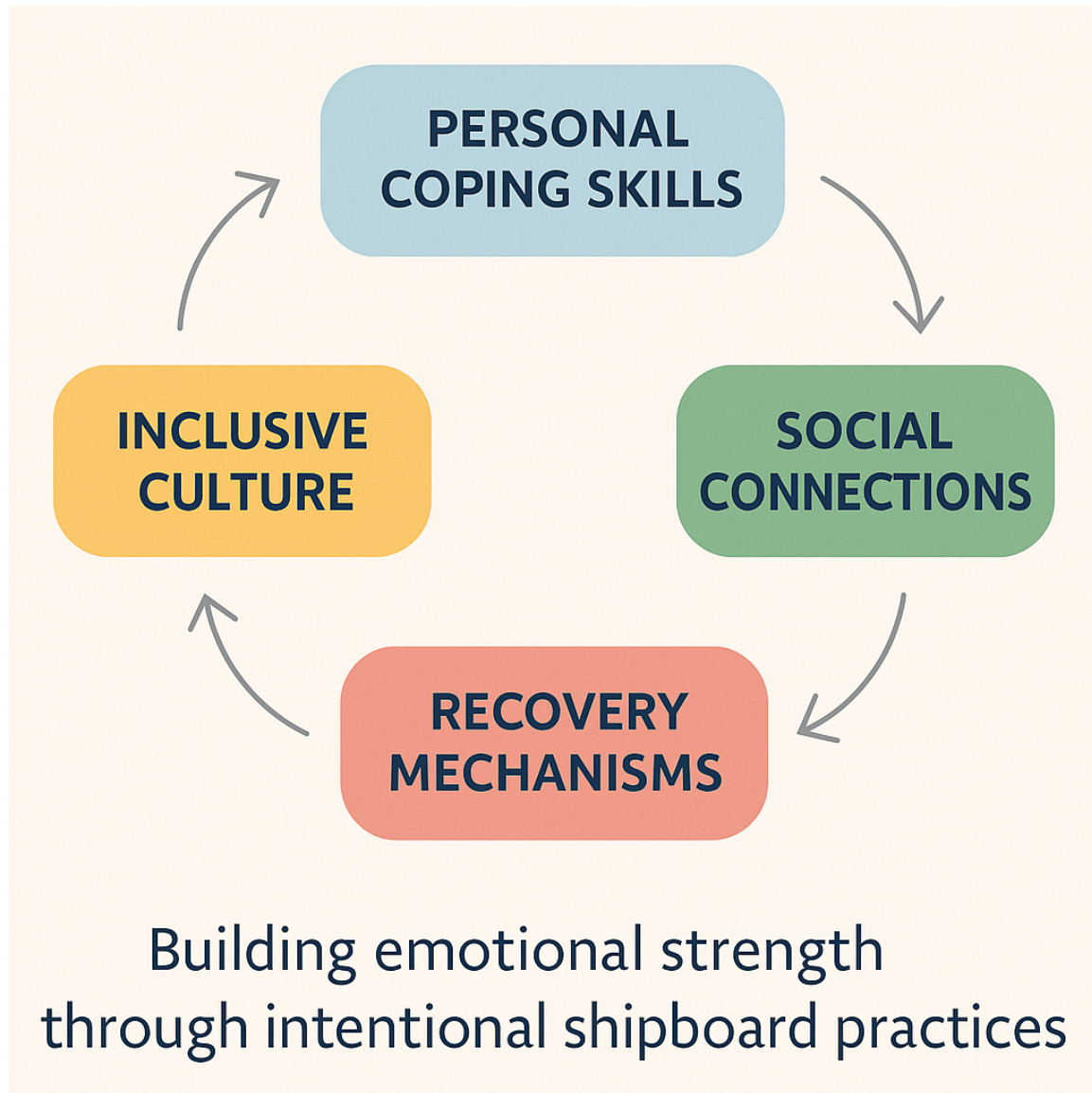


Figure 1 Building emotional strength

<sup>87</sup> Mental Health Support Solutions GmbH, 'Our Service'.



Figure 2 Resilience Model

## 5. Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

### 5.1 Introduction – Why it Matters

The maritime industry must proactively eliminate bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), and discrimination on board ships to ensure a safe, inclusive, and resilient workforce. All seafarers have the right to work without suffering such misconduct.<sup>88</sup>

Beyond being a moral imperative, addressing these issues is essential for crew well-being, retention, and operational safety. Studies indicate that between 8% and 25% of seafarers

<sup>88</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

overall have faced bullying or harassment at work, with the rate exceeding 45% for women seafarers.<sup>89</sup>

Historically, many incidents went unreported due to fear of retaliation or career repercussions. Today, there is growing global attention on these problems, spurred by initiatives like #MaritimeMeToo, and international action from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) to ensure a safe and respectful working environment under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006).<sup>90</sup>

## 5.2 Definitions and Examples

Bullying and harassment encompass a range of behaviours that create a hostile or intimidating work environment.

- **Bullying** refers to repeated, unreasonable actions directed at an employee or group that cause physical or emotional harm, such as verbal abuse, exclusion, or spreading malicious rumours.
- **Harassment** involves unwanted conduct that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, humiliating, or offensive environment – including sexual or racial harassment.<sup>91</sup>

### Common examples include:

- Verbal abuse, shouting, or derogatory language.
- Physical threats or intimidation.
- Exclusion from team or social activities.
- Spreading rumours or gossip.
- Unwanted sexual remarks or advances.
- Discriminatory or humiliating comments.
- Cyberbullying or digital harassment.<sup>92</sup>

Bullying and harassment are not limited to direct confrontation – subtle exclusion, misuse of authority, and persistent belittling can also constitute misconduct.

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<sup>89</sup> Österman and Boström, 'Workplace bullying and harassment at sea: A structured literature review'.

<sup>90</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006)'; International Maritime Organization, 'Preventing and combatting violence and harassment in the maritime sector'.

<sup>91</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

### 5.3 Impact on Seafarers and the Industry

The confined and multicultural environment onboard ships makes crew particularly vulnerable. Victims often suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation, which can reduce performance and endanger safety.<sup>93 94</sup>

Women are disproportionately affected.<sup>95</sup> A global survey of over 1,000 female seafarers across 78 countries revealed that 60% had experienced gender-based discrimination, 66% had witnessed harassment, and 25% reported that sexual harassment was widespread.<sup>96</sup>

Beyond the impact on individuals affected, these behaviours have operational and economic consequences especially for female seafarers:

- Lower morale and motivation.
- Reduced teamwork and safety awareness.
- Increased turnover, reputational risks, and recruitment challenges.

Addressing bullying and harassment is therefore both a moral and strategic necessity to ensure safety, productivity, and long-term industry sustainability.<sup>97</sup>

### 5.4 Prevention Through Leadership and Company Culture

A strong, positive company culture discourages misconduct before it starts. Leadership from the top is essential – company executives and ship officers must communicate a zero-tolerance stance and lead by example in treating all personnel with respect.<sup>98 99</sup>

This is described in more detail in the chapter on Work Culture and Leadership. Some of the qualities of good leadership mentioned there are particularly relevant when dealing with bullying: This includes a zero-tolerance approach to such incidents and an atmosphere in which guidelines do not just exist ‘on paper’ but are also put into practice in everyday dealings. Anonymous surveys and transparent communication of actions taken reinforce trust.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Justesen et al., ‘Improving seafarer well-being’.

<sup>94</sup> International Chamber of Shipping, ‘ICS Diversity Tracker’.

<sup>95</sup> Kitada, *Handbook on gender mainstreaming in the maritime sector*, p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, ‘Women in Maritime Survey 2021’.

<sup>97</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, ‘Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying’.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> International Maritime Organization, ‘Preventing and combatting violence and harassment in the maritime sector’.

<sup>100</sup> Ng, ‘Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships’.

## 5.5 Training, Mentorship, and Inclusion

Training is one of the most effective tools to prevent bullying and harassment. It should be mandatory for all crew and employees onshore, beginning in cadet training and refreshed at regular intervals, in particular to create awareness for needs female seafarers.

### Effective training includes:

- Modules on gender sensitivity, unconscious bias, and communication skills.
- Practical role-play scenarios to help identify and manage harassment.
- Training in conflict resolution and respectful leadership.
- Encouragement of bystander intervention, empowering crew to act safely when witnessing misconduct.<sup>101</sup>
- Lessons on recognising early warning signs, such as social withdrawal or changes in behaviour.

### Mentorship and inclusion measures:

- Implement a buddy system for new or vulnerable crew.<sup>102</sup>
- Create mentorship networks for women, in cooperation with WISTA or IMO Women in Maritime initiatives.<sup>103</sup>
- Celebrate cultural diversity through team-building and cross-cultural awareness.

Promoting inclusion and visibility of women in leadership roles helps normalise diversity and change shipboard culture over time.

## 5.6 Reporting and Investigation Procedures

Even with preventive measures, incidents may occur. Every seafarer has the right to a fair and effective grievance mechanism under the MLC, 2006.<sup>104</sup>

To ensure safe and accessible pathways for reporting concerns, companies should establish multiple low-threshold reporting channels such as hotlines, dedicated email addresses, and confidential contact persons ashore. Anonymous reporting options must also be available so that crew members can raise issues without fear of identification. If a supervisor is involved in a complaint, alternative reporting lines should be clearly designated to protect the integrity of the process. All crew should be informed about reporting procedures during onboarding and through company handbooks to ensure that everyone understands how to seek help. Building

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, 'Women in Maritime Survey 2021'.

<sup>104</sup> Ng, 'Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships'.

confidence in the system also requires close cooperation with trade unions and welfare organizations.<sup>105 106</sup>

Additionally, companies should ensure that the WISTA Germany e.V. and Frauen zur See e. V. Emergency Flyer is distributed and visibly displayed on board.<sup>107</sup>

All cases must be documented systematically in accordance with legal requirements to maintain transparency, traceability, and compliance.

Supporting complainants requires a structured, compassionate, and protective approach. Companies should assign a trained shore-based contact person or welfare officer who can guide victims through every step of the reporting and investigation process. It is essential to ensure full protection from retaliation, including shielding individuals from social exclusion, intimidation, or fears about job security. Where needed, counselling services and legal support should be offered so that complainants receive both emotional and practical assistance.<sup>108</sup>

A fair and effective investigation process is equally important. Investigations must be impartial and conducted promptly by trained personnel who have no conflicts of interest. When interviewing female complainants, the involvement of a female representative helps create a safer and more comfortable environment.<sup>109</sup>

Whenever appropriate, the victim and the alleged offender should be physically separated to prevent intimidation or further harm. All findings must be carefully documented, and outcomes must be communicated sensitively and in accordance with the applicable legal requirements. Disciplinary actions should be proportionate to the severity of the case, ranging from corrective measures to termination or legal proceedings for serious incidents.<sup>110</sup> After a case is closed, follow-up with the victim is essential, demonstrating continued care and helping to prevent recurrence.

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<sup>105</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

<sup>106</sup> Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre et al., 'Gender Diversity'.

<sup>107</sup> WISTA Germany e.V. and Verband Frauen zur See e.V., 'Seafarers Helplines 24/7'.

<sup>108</sup> Ng, 'Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships'.

<sup>109</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers' Federation, 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

<sup>110</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

## 5.7 Addressing Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment – including inappropriate jokes, comments, physical contact, or coercion – remains one of the most reported forms of misconduct at sea. Addressing it requires specific, proactive measures.<sup>111 112 113</sup>

To ensure a safe and respectful working environment, companies should enforce a clear zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual misconduct. Confidential reporting lines and independent helplines must be available so that affected individuals can seek help without fear of exposure. Support should also include access to counselling services and professional assistance ashore. Privacy must be guaranteed, and gender-sensitive medical care should be available onboard to address health needs with discretion and respect. Regular training on sexual harassment awareness and appropriate response procedures is essential for all crew members. Women should have consistent access to menstrual products as well as medical privacy and assistance. During investigations, the victim and accused should be separated whenever appropriate, unless the victim explicitly requests otherwise, to ensure safety and minimize distress.

EU Directive 2024/1385 serves as an example of how to address sexual violence; it defines sexual violence as a criminal offence, but also addresses victim protection and prevention.<sup>114</sup>

## 5.8 Accountability and Continuous Improvement

A harassment-free workplace requires consistent accountability. A zero-tolerance approach means that no one is exempt, regardless of rank or performance. Senior officers must be held to the same, or higher, standard as junior crew.<sup>115</sup>

Continuous improvement requires a consistent and structured approach to monitoring and strengthening safety and reporting practices. This includes tracking and analysing reported cases in order to identify recurring patterns, emerging trends, or high-risk areas that may require targeted intervention. Anonymous climate surveys should be conducted regularly to understand crew perceptions and detect issues that might not be captured through formal reporting channels. Sharing anonymised outcomes with the workforce reinforces transparency and shows that incidents are taken seriously and addressed appropriately. In addition, behavioural correction measures or professional counselling should be offered to

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<sup>111</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, 'Women in Maritime Survey 2021'.

<sup>112</sup> Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre et al., 'Gender Diversity'.

<sup>113</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Conclusions on the recruitment and retention of seafarers and the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers'.

<sup>114</sup> European Parliament and Council, 'Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence'.

<sup>115</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

offenders under qualified supervision, helping to prevent repeated misconduct and fostering a healthier, more respectful workplace culture.<sup>116</sup>

Participation in industry initiatives such as the ‘All Aboard Alliance’<sup>117</sup> or WISTA<sup>118</sup> networks help exchange best practices and benchmark progress.

By addressing bullying and harassment comprehensively through prevention, reporting, accountability, and inclusion, shipowners can build safer and more attractive maritime workplaces. A culture of respect strengthens not only well-being but also safety, teamwork, and retention.

Zero tolerance is not merely a slogan but a daily practice requiring commitment, empathy, and action at every level of the maritime community.<sup>119 120</sup>

To maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment, companies should adopt a clear policy and code of conduct that defines unacceptable behaviours, such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination, and outlines the consequences of such actions. This policy should be integrated into the Safety Management System as well as employment contracts to ensure its relevance and enforceability.<sup>121</sup>

Strong leadership commitment is essential: leaders at all levels must consistently communicate a zero-tolerance stance and model respectful behaviour in their daily interactions.

Training and education for all personnel form another critical element of prevention. Mandatory, recurring training should be implemented for every crew member, covering topics such as bystander intervention, effective communication skills, and diversity awareness.<sup>122 123</sup>

Furthermore, women and minorities should be actively supported through mentorship programs, access to privacy facilities, and connections to external support networks, including organizations such as WISTA.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ng, ‘Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships’.

<sup>117</sup> Global Maritime Forum, ‘All Aboard Alliance’.

<sup>118</sup> WISTA International, ‘WISTA International’.

<sup>119</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers’ Federation, ‘Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying’.

<sup>120</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, ‘Women in Maritime Survey 2021’.

<sup>121</sup> Ng, ‘Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships’.

<sup>122</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers’ Federation, ‘Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying’.

<sup>123</sup> Ng, ‘Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships’.

<sup>124</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, ‘Women in Maritime Survey 2021’.

To ensure that concerns can be raised safely, companies should establish multiple reporting channels that allow for confidential and anonymous complaints both onboard and ashore.<sup>125</sup>

When issues arise, responses must be prompt, impartial, and fair. Investigations should protect the individuals involved, and appropriate disciplinary actions must be taken when necessary.<sup>126</sup>

Support and aftercare are equally important. Victims should be offered psychological, legal, and practical assistance, along with follow-up after incidents to ensure their well-being.

Continuous improvement should be prioritized by monitoring cases, gathering feedback, and using insights to strengthen organizational culture, policies, and leadership practices. Another priority must be ensuring access to information. Complaint procedures, contact details, and emergency information should be clearly visible and easily accessible in both common areas and private spaces, so that all personnel know where to turn when help is needed.

## **6. Equipment & Physical Working Conditions**

This section focuses on key points regarding ship accommodation and equipment requirements, which are recommended for review and implementation in order to accommodate a diverse crew.

### **6.1 Accommodation**

According to MLC 2006, the flag states shall adopt laws and regulations to meet the minimum standards for accommodations for seafarers to work and decent living according to the relevant provisions and shall inspect and ensure compliance for ships flying their flag.<sup>127</sup>

Title 3 of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006), including 2022 amendments, deals with accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering. The regulation 3.1 deals specifically with accommodation and recreational facilities to ensure a decent standard for seafarers on board.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>126</sup> Ng, 'Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships'.

<sup>127</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006)' Article I-V.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Article I-V.

Standard A3.1 – 9(b) states that women and men shall have separate sleeping rooms; standard A3.1 – 11(a) requires separate access to sanitary facilities, meeting minimum standards for hygiene and health and reasonable comfort for women and men on board.<sup>129</sup>

Guideline B3.1.9 – other facilities e.g. changing rooms regulates that changing rooms should be outside the machinery space (B3.1.9. a), fitted with individual clothes lockers, washbasin and showers (B3.1.9. b).<sup>130</sup> The regulation is not distinguishing specifically between women and men. It is suggested either to have changing cubicles and lockable showers in changing rooms or establish separate changing rooms for men and women.

In addition to the MLC 2006 regulations, it is recommended that all sanitary accommodations outside the cabin area are for unisex use and not only for men. Decent standards of housekeeping shall be a matter of course. A separate timetable for women and men allows them to do their laundry to ensure privacy and comfort. If women feel uncomfortable to exercise in front of men on board, a dedicated time schedule is also recommended for the gym or pool area.

## **6.2 Health Protection**

The regulations set out that member states must ensure that all seafarers on ships flying their flag shall be provided with health protection and medical care as comparable as possible with workers ashore and implement adequate measures for the protection of the seafarer's health.<sup>131</sup>

Title 4 of MLC 2006, requires standards of health protection, medical care, welfare, and social security protection, where regulation 4.1 specifically deals with medical care on board ships and ashore to protect the health of seafarers.<sup>132</sup>

Standard A4.1 – 4 (a) explains that the contents of the medicine chest, medical equipment and medical guide are subject to the national requirements by the flag state, considering the ship type, number of persons and trading areas. Competent authorities are in charge of regular inspections and ensuring compliance.<sup>133</sup>

The *International Medical Guide for Ships* as well as national requirements and international recommendations shall be considered for the content of the medical chest and medical equipment.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.Standard A 3.1.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.Guideline B 3.1.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.Regulation 4.1.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.Regulation 4.1.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.Standard A 4.1.

<sup>134</sup> World Health Organization, *International Medical Guide for Ships*.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *International Medical Guide for Ships* provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) has no guideline to carry rape kits, contraceptive pills or the morning-after pill on board of ships.<sup>135</sup>

While the contraceptive pill and the morning-after pill are specifically designated for women, a rape kit is for gathering and preserving physical evidence following an instance or allegation of sexual assault which can apply to women and men. This Best Practice Guide is designed to go beyond existing rules and regulations; therefore, we highly recommend upgrading the medical chest on board of vessels.

Designated officers/personnel on board shall receive basic awareness training on handling such kind of medical emergencies, including trauma-sensitive responses after incidents of sexual assault.

### **6.3 Sanitary or Hygiene Products**

For the comfort of women on board, sanitary or hygiene products should be standard items within on-board supplies and shall be available in the stores, as well as other toiletries like toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, etc. This includes a variety of selection of pads (sanitary napkins), tampons in different strengths and sizes and period panties. This goes in line with the introduction of containers for disposal of sanitary waste for all female crew on board. For disposal of sanitary waste, dark or non-transparent garbage bags shall be provided if possible.

### **6.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) refers to protective clothing for the feet, body, hands, respiratory system, head, ears, and eyes. The risk of injury shall be minimized by exposure to chemical, biological, physical, or any other hazards by wearing proper PPE during work.<sup>136</sup>

MLC 2006 sets out in the regulation 4.3 – Health and safety protection and accident prevention - Standard A4.3 – 1. (b) that “all necessary appropriately sized personal protective equipment”<sup>137</sup> shall be available on board on ships to reduce and prevent the risk of injuries and diseases which might arise during work from the use of machinery or any equipment.<sup>138</sup>

Ship owners and managers have their own requirements and guidelines when to use which type of PPE. Most of the time, safety signs are available in all places on board to send a reminder on the proper usage of PPE. In practice, PPE is available on board but not fitting all seafarers. Overalls might be too big or too small or otherwise not fitting. The same applies

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>136</sup> Tarlengco, ‘Everything You Need to Know About PPE Safety’.

<sup>137</sup> International Labour Organization, ‘Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006)’.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Regulation 4.3.

for gloves and shoes. Those circumstances make it difficult for the crew to apply all safety measures every time. It can be even more dangerous if the PPE is not in the right size as this may lead to ignorance or neglect of certain safety rules resulting in accidents/injuries on board (e.g. eye injuries).

Prior to joining the vessel, crew members shall be asked for relevant sizes and other requirements, ensuring that proper PPE is on board in time. For safety reasons, the right size for overalls, shoes, gloves, etc. are essential. High quality modern PPE benefits all seafarers, especially female seafarers. Collecting regular feedback from female seafarers regarding the comfort, mobility, and wearability of PPE ensures the improvement of the procurement standards.

## **6.5 Life-Saving Appliances**

Chapter III of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) specifically concentrates on Life-Saving Appliances (LSA). Arrangements on board need to comply with the LSA Code.<sup>139</sup>

The LSA Code sets out the specific technical requirements, testing, maintenance and number on board, depending on size and vessel type of LSA. Appliances are e.g. lifeboats, lifebuoys, lifejackets, immersion suits, fire suits, etc.; anything to be used in case of emergency to protect lives at sea.<sup>140</sup>

According to SOLAS, every person on board of a ship shall be provided with a lifejacket. The same applies to immersion suits and anti-exposure suits.<sup>141</sup>

Chapter II of SOLAS focuses on fire protection, detection and extinction on ships. The Fire Safety Systems (FSS) Code is a set of treaties under SOLAS designed to aid in emergency response aboard ships and reduce risk, as well as including regulations for fire prevention and protection.<sup>142</sup> While SOLAS is requiring at least two fireman's outfits complying with the requirements under regulation 17, neither SOLAS nor the FSS Code are stating any requirements regarding available sizes on board of ships.<sup>143</sup>

In the same way that PPE is reviewed, it is recommended that LSA equipment such as life jackets and immersion suits, as well as firefighting equipment, are reviewed and fitted to the persons on board.

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<sup>139</sup> International Maritime Organization, *SOLAS*.

<sup>140</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'International Life-Saving Appliance Code'.

<sup>141</sup> International Maritime Organization, *SOLAS*.

<sup>142</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'International Code for Fire Safety Systems'.

<sup>143</sup> International Maritime Organization, *SOLAS*.

## 7. Career Development & Advancement

Advancing diversity in shipping means ensuring equal access to growth opportunities for all individuals. This chapter highlights inclusive practices – such as mentorship, training, and fair promotion pathways – that help build a more equitable and innovative workforce across all roles in the industry.

Preliminary findings from the Diversity@Sea pilot project revealed ongoing challenges in applying clear and consistent criteria across all vessels.<sup>144</sup>

Therefore, it is essential not only to establish transparent criteria but also to communicate and promote them effectively throughout the fleet.

### 7.1 Transparent Promotion Criteria

The same project identified the need to outperform male peers to be perceived as competent or to be promoted as one of the 15 main issues for women at sea.<sup>145</sup>

| Difficult for women to succeed professionally                                            | Challenging social relations                                 | Employment challenges                                                                    | Physical conditions onboard                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A culture onboard where women get treated as 'less' competent than their male colleagues | A culture in which (avoiding) rumors and gossip is a concern | Contracts at sea are too long                                                            | Access to female sanitary products onboard                                           |
| Women having to outperform male peers to be perceived as competent                       | Women feeling isolated, unsupported and/or alone onboard     | Lack of family planning option, included maternity leave and sea-shore rotation programs | Access to appropriate PPE equipment, e.g. boilersuit size, fire suits and boot sizes |
| Women having unequal access to on-the-job training onboard                               | Power abuse by officers                                      | Companies not wanting to recruit women                                                   | Access to designated woman changing rooms, bathrooms, laundry area, etc.             |
| Getting assigned different tasks than male colleagues                                    | Sexual abuse and sexual harassment                           | Women seafarers go elsewhere                                                             |                                                                                      |

Figure 3 15 key pain points for women at sea<sup>146</sup>

The tenth report on women in the workplace in 2024 by the LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, with a participation of more than 1000 companies, showed that the experiences of women at work are basically the same or worse than ten years ago:

<sup>144</sup> Justesen et al., 'Improving seafarer well-being'.

<sup>145</sup> Justesen and Javornik, '15 Key Pain Points for Women at Sea'.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

*“As we reflect on the results from this year, and from the past ten, three things are true. First, companies took action that has led to important progress. Second, change is hard and messy, and we’re somewhere in the middle of the shifts needed to fix the pipeline and make the culture of work more equitable. Third, the gains made are more fragile and less extensive than they appear.”<sup>147</sup>*

In the context of promotion, transparency refers to the clear and open communication of the criteria, processes, and decisions that guide career advancement within a company.

This includes:

- Clear criteria for what is required to be promoted (skills, achievements, time in role, etc.).
- Visibility into the decision-making process (who decides, what they consider).
- Fair communication of opportunities and outcomes (why someone was promoted or not).

## **7.2 Transparency in Promotions is Beneficial**

For the company:

### **1. Builds Trust in Leadership**

When employees understand how decisions are made, they are more likely to trust managers and leadership. This trust improves morale and reduces resentment or suspicion.

### **2. Reduces Turnover**

Employees are less likely to leave if they feel their career path is clear and based on merit, not favouritism or company politics.

### **3. Improves Performance and Motivation**

Knowing what is expected for a promotion can push employees to develop skills, hit goals, and perform better.

### **4. Promotes Equity and Inclusion**

Transparency helps reduce unconscious bias, favouritism, and discrimination by making the promotion process objective and standardized.

### **5. Enhances Company Reputation**

Organizations that promote fairly and transparently often attract better talent and are seen as desirable employers.

For employees:

### **1. Clarity on Career Path**

Employees understand what they need to do to advance, helping them set meaningful goals and stay motivated.

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<sup>147</sup> LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, ‘Women in the Workplace 2024: The 10th-anniversary report’, 3.

## **2. Sense of Fairness**

When promotions are based on transparent criteria, employees feel they are competing on a level playing field.

## **3. Opportunity for Feedback and Growth**

If someone is not promoted, transparency allows them to get specific, actionable feedback on what to improve.

## **4. Increased Engagement**

Employees who see a clear and fair system are more likely to feel engaged, committed, and loyal to the organization.

In summary, transparent promotion practices align expectations, foster fairness, and support both individual development and organizational success.

To ensure that promotion processes are fair, transparent, and consistently applied, it is essential to begin by defining clear criteria. This includes developing standardized requirements based on employees' skills, experience, performance, and potential. These criteria should always be specific to each role – for example, by referencing required certifications – and should reflect the company's core values.

Equally important is documenting and communicating all processes in a clear and accessible way. This involves creating written, gender-neutral guidelines that outline the entire promotion procedure, including timelines, evaluation methods, and the individuals involved in decision-making. These guidelines should be shared openly with all employees, both across the fleet and within shore-based teams.

To maintain fairness across the organization, the same criteria and processes must be applied at all locations – on every vessel and in every office. Training for supervisors and HR personnel is essential to ensure consistent interpretation and implementation.

Promoting accountability is another key element. Oversight mechanisms such as promotion review panels or regular audits help ensure that decisions are made fairly and without bias. At the same time, employees should have the opportunity to provide feedback, raise concerns, or appeal promotion decisions when necessary.

Supporting career development is also critical. Offering mentorship, coaching, and targeted training programs helps employees prepare for advancement. In addition, progress should be tracked through regular performance reviews that provide actionable, meaningful feedback.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are necessary to keep processes effective and aligned with workforce needs. Collecting and analysing data on promotion outcomes can reveal trends and highlight potential biases. Promotion criteria and related processes should be

reviewed regularly and updated to reflect evolving organizational and employee requirements.

### **7.3 Fair Distribution of Tasks, Responsibilities, and Training Opportunities**

Another key pain point referred to is the difference in assigning of tasks between male and female colleagues as well as unequal access to on-the-job training onboard.<sup>148</sup>

To support fair and inclusive working conditions, shipowners, ship managers, and DOC holders should apply clear principles of fairness and equity. This begins with recognizing that equity is not the same as equality: true fairness may require providing different forms of support to different individuals in order to overcome systemic barriers. All criteria for task assignments and training opportunities should therefore be transparent, clearly defined, and accessible to every employee. At the same time, an inclusive approach is needed to ensure that people of all genders are equally considered for high-visibility tasks, leadership roles, and opportunities to build their skills.

Task allocation and responsibility distribution should follow the same principles. Assignments must not be based on traditional gender stereotypes – for example, by assuming that women should handle administrative duties or that men should take on physically demanding work. Instead, ships should implement rotation systems for routine or less desirable tasks to prevent them from consistently falling on a single gender. All tasks should be allocated based on individual strengths, qualifications, and career aspirations rather than assumptions tied to gender.

Ensuring equal access to training and development opportunities is another essential element. All employees should have access to relevant training programs, mentorship options, and development resources. Shipowners and managers should actively encourage underrepresented genders to participate in leadership or technical development programs. Monitoring participation is equally important; tracking who attends which trainings helps identify potential disparities and address them early.

Leadership awareness and accountability are crucial for maintaining fairness. Managers should receive regular training to help them recognize unconscious bias and distribute tasks and opportunities objectively. Clear and safe feedback channels must be established so employees can report concerns about unfair distribution without fear of repercussions. Regular audits – reviewing task allocation and training participation by gender – help ensure that practices remain fair and transparent over time.

Overall, cultural and structural support mechanisms should be strengthened. Flexible work arrangements that promote work-life balance for all genders enable equal participation in

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<sup>148</sup> Justesen and Javornik, ‘15 Key Pain Points for Women at Sea’.

any onboard position. Recognition and reward systems should operate fairly, ensuring that contributions are acknowledged based on merit rather than gendered expectations. An inclusive culture – reflected in language, communication, and day-to-day behaviour – is essential so that all genders feel respected, valued, and empowered to contribute fully.

#### **7.4 Women’s Advancement Programs and Leadership Pipelines**

While supporting the advancement of women has been a key issue for many companies over the last ten years, the leadership pipeline is still fragile, and efforts have even been scaled back in places.<sup>149</sup>

Avoid the pitfall of traditional empowerment efforts that fail to recognise the need for different approaches to leadership for women and men.

Existing programs should be evaluated with a focus on potential bias and adapted to accommodate individual needs and personality traits. According to a study by the Center for Women in Business (CWIB), the perception of power by women differs critically from men’s – as in ‘power to’ not ‘power over’. Embracing the different approach in leadership not only empowers women, but offers a multitude of benefits for teams, and ultimately the company.<sup>150</sup>

To advance gender equity and support long-term career development, it is essential for organizations to establish a strong strategic vision backed by committed leadership. This begins with defining clear goals for gender equity and career progression and ensuring that senior leaders actively sponsor these initiatives. Embedding gender diversity within the ISM system reinforces its importance across all operations. Advancement programs should be aligned with both the challenges and opportunities that exist on board and ashore to create a cohesive development framework.

A structured approach to career path mapping and development planning provides employees with clarity and direction. Individual Development Plans tailored to onboard roles help chart specific steps for progression. Using career ladders or lattices illustrates the variety of possible career paths – whether technical, nautical, or leadership-oriented. Identifying critical experiences, such as team management, project leadership, or obtaining specific certifications, helps employees understand what is required for advancement.

Skill-building and professional development are critical components of a robust talent strategy. Providing technical training, certification opportunities, and leadership development programs ensures that employees can continuously grow. Access to

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<sup>149</sup> LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, ‘Women in the Workplace 2024: The 10th-anniversary report’, 4–5.

<sup>150</sup> Tolan et al., ‘How to Improve Women’s Advancement Programs’.

maritime learning platforms and cross-functional project assignments broadens experience, while encouraging participation in external conferences, panels, and competitions helps strengthen professional visibility and expertise.

Mentorship, sponsorship, and networking play an essential role in supporting advancement. Formal mentorship programs connecting employees with senior officers and peers foster guidance and learning. Sponsorship helps ensure that women are actively championed for promotions and high-impact roles. Structured networking opportunities – facilitated through Employee Resource Groups, industry forums, and internal events – further strengthen professional support systems.

Promoting visibility and influence is equally important. Organizations should support women in speaking engagements, publishing efforts, and leading key initiatives. Sharing success stories and showcasing role models helps normalize advancement and inspire others. Encouraging a strong presence, both online and offline, contributes to greater thought leadership in technical and operational fields.

Cultivating an inclusive culture and mitigating bias are foundational steps for sustaining progress. Bias awareness training and inclusive leadership workshops help create more equitable decision-making. Reviewing hiring, promotion, and performance management processes ensures that they remain fair and gender-equitable. Flexible work policies should be normalized and used consistently across genders to avoid reinforcing stereotypes.

Building resilience and psychological safety is vital for empowering employees. Coaching and peer support can help address imposter syndrome and stereotype threats. Creating safe spaces where women can share experiences openly fosters trust and emotional well-being. Peer support groups and affinity circles contribute to a sense of community and reinforce resilience.

To ensure accountability, organizations must track progress through clear metrics, including representation, promotion rates, pay equity, retention, and engagement. Setting targets and consistently reviewing progress helps maintain momentum. Transparent sharing of results builds trust and signals a genuine commitment to continuous improvement.

Finally, an intersectional approach is essential. Organisations must recognise that different groups of women, including women of colour and LGBTQ+ women, may face specific barriers. Programmes should be inclusive, culturally competent and accessible, ensuring that support reaches everyone who needs it.

## 7.5 Regular Feedback and Development Conversations

According to Right's Management Survey of 4,400 employees in 15 countries, 82% of respondents would be more engaged if managers held regular career conversations.<sup>151</sup>

As there has been only modest progress in the representation of women in leadership positions, efforts to promote women's advancement must be stepped up.<sup>152 153</sup>

Career conversations offer a personalized approach to other issues addressed within this guide, which have been shown as pivotal for female employees – such as flexible working arrangements, gender equality, mentorship programs, and targeted talent development initiatives.<sup>154</sup>

In order to promote fair and unbiased development practices, shipowners, ship managers and DOC holders should start by raising awareness and providing effective training for managers. Senior officers and shore-based managers should be provided with the tools to recognise and mitigate gender bias in feedback through targeted awareness training. Case studies contrasting biased and inclusive feedback illustrate the real-world consequences of certain language and evaluative habits. Additionally, leaders should be encouraged to use behaviour-based, neutral language, using expressions such as 'collaborates effectively' rather than subjective descriptors such as 'nice to work with'.

Standardizing feedback processes is another essential step in reducing subjectivity. Consistent templates for performance reviews and development conversations help ensure that all employees are evaluated using the same criteria. Feedback should be anchored in observable behaviour and concrete outcomes rather than personality traits or perceptions. Incorporating 360-degree feedback allows a broader set of perspectives to support a more balanced evaluation and helps mitigate individual biases.

Ensuring equity in development opportunities requires a structured and transparent approach. Regular audits should be conducted to understand who receives stretch assignments, promotions, and mentorship opportunities. These opportunities must be grounded in clearly defined and publicly available criteria. Development plans should be tailored to individual goals and should consider potential barriers employees may face, such as caregiving responsibilities or other constraints affecting their career progression.

Fostering an inclusive feedback culture is equally vital. Feedback should become part of regular two-way conversations rather than being confined to annual performance reviews. Creating psychologically safe environments encourages employees of all genders to ask for

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<sup>151</sup> Neitenbach, 'Women in Leadership: Promoting Ongoing Career Conversations in the Workplace'.

<sup>152</sup> LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, 'Women in the Workplace'.

<sup>153</sup> LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, 'Women in the Workplace 2024: The 10th-anniversary report'.

<sup>154</sup> ManpowerGroup, 'ManpowerGroup's 2023 Workforce Trends Report Reveals "The New Human Age" Is Upon Us'.

feedback and voice concerns. It is also important to ensure that all employees receive feedback with equal frequency and that the guidance provided is meaningful, specific, and actionable.

Clear monitoring and evaluation processes help organizations maintain transparency and accountability. HR analytics can be used to identify patterns in feedback, performance ratings, and development outcomes across gender. When disparities emerge, organizations should intervene early to address the underlying causes. Sharing results and corrective actions transparently helps build trust and reinforces the commitment to equity.

Finally, it is essential to cultivate inclusive leadership. Cross-gender mentorship and sponsorship programmes can help to broaden access to leadership pathways, particularly for female seafarers. Having a diverse range of people in leadership roles also matters: gender-diverse leadership teams model inclusive behaviours and demonstrate the value of equitable and unbiased feedback practices.

## **8. Work-Life Balance & Long-Term Career Perspectives**

The maritime industry is at a pivotal moment, facing growing pressure to evolve into a more inclusive and sustainable workplace. Despite its global significance, the sector has long struggled to support diverse career paths and equitable work-life balance particularly for seafarers. As highlighted in multiple essays submitted during a competition by Young Maritime Leaders on the Global Maritime Forum, the industry has historically taken little responsibility for enabling seafarers to balance work and family life or even to start a family. According to the article evaluating the input for the competition, these essays point to deep-rooted structural issues, including the fact that the industry was built by and for male employees, with insufficient effort made to attract and retain a broader range of talent.<sup>155</sup>

This chapter explores how these legacy challenges impact long-term career perspectives and personal well-being, especially for underrepresented groups. It also examines emerging strategies and cultural shifts aimed at fostering a more inclusive maritime workforce, one where diverse professionals can thrive, both at sea and ashore.

### **8.1 Flexible and Transparent Rotation Systems (Sea-Shore)**

Classic rotation systems, often rigid and opaque, have long posed barriers to work-life balance, career progression, and long-term retention, especially for women who may seek greater flexibility due to family responsibilities or aspirations for shore-based roles. In contrast, flexible and transparent rotation systems, including time-share models and hybrid career pathways, offer a promising alternative. These systems allow for smoother

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<sup>155</sup> Justesen and Qin, 'Young maritime leaders determined to see the industry improve its approach to human sustainability'.

transitions between active seafaring and shore-based employment, fostering equality and enabling more diverse career trajectories.

Recent research underscores the importance of such reforms. The study ‘Shore Leave Policy – Paving the Path to a Sustainable Career Environment for Seafarers’ by Feng-Chu Yang, Rong-Her Chiu, and Yen-Hsu Lin highlights how shore leave policies significantly influence seafarers’ well-being, job satisfaction, and retention. These findings reinforce the need for holistic rotation systems that prioritize not only operational efficiency but also human sustainability.<sup>156</sup>

By embracing flexibility and transparency, the maritime sector can unlock new opportunities for women, support diverse career paths, and build a more resilient and equitable workforce for the future.<sup>157</sup>

This is further reinforced by Guideline 7 of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines issued by the All Aboard Alliance, which calls for “offering flexible contract lengths and respecting contract terms.”<sup>158</sup> Adhering to agreed contract durations – despite the logistical challenges of crew changes – is essential to minimizing stress, fatigue, and dissatisfaction among crew members.<sup>159</sup>

Shipowners, ship managers, and DOC holders should provide a variety of contract lengths that balance individual needs with operational requirements. Agreed contract durations must be respected, and transparency is essential whenever internal or external factors delay or prevent scheduled crew changes. In addition to flexible onboard arrangements, organizations should offer options for shore-based roles and explore alternative models such as time-share arrangements or hybrid career pathways to support diverse career and life circumstances.

## **8.2 Parental Leave, Maternity Protection, and Return-to-Work Opportunities**

In an industry defined by long voyages and unpredictable schedules, seafarers – like all professionals – face the challenge of balancing work with family life. Yet, the maritime sector has historically offered limited support for parental responsibilities, often leaving seafarers without adequate resources to start or care for a family. Findings from the Diversity@Sea pilot project underscore this gap, revealing a strong demand for paid parental leave, healthcare access, and job security upon return. Alarming, pregnant seafarers are frequently disembarked without discussion, resulting in immediate income

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<sup>156</sup> Yang et al., ‘Shore Leave Policy—Paving the Path to a Sustainable Career Environment for Seafarers’.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> All Aboard Alliance, ‘Sustainable Crewing Guidelines’.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

loss and prompting some to conceal their pregnancies – posing risks to both personal well-being and vessel safety.<sup>160</sup>

With seafarers rating the importance of parental support at 9.1 out of 10, dissatisfaction remains high due to insufficient paternity and maternity packages, lack of company support, and financial barriers to spending time with loved ones.<sup>161</sup> This chapter explores how targeted policies and inclusive practices can reshape parental leave and return-to-work pathways, making the maritime industry more equitable and sustainable for all.

While over 190 countries globally provide maternity leave, the levels of duration and compensation vary greatly. The majority of states offer between 10 and 20 weeks of maternity leave, with half of these paying employees in full during that time. Less than 15% offer maternity leave with a duration of more than 6 months.<sup>162</sup>

Maternity rights depend on the vessel's flag. Some flag states might have no maternity rights at all. Requirements for repatriation may vary depending on the ship's flag. Different factors may determine the time of repatriation, depending on the trade. These factors need to be assessed in each individual case.

ITF-approved agreements and the ILO Convention 183 regulate further rights and stipulations.<sup>163</sup>

The separate issue of paid parental leave is set out in Guideline 8 of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines.<sup>164</sup>

To develop an effective and transparent parental-leave policy for the maritime sector, companies should clearly communicate a set of core principles that apply across fleets, vessels, and shore offices. These principles should emphasize equity by ensuring that all employees – whether ashore or at sea – have access to meaningful parental leave, regardless of gender, rank, location, or family structure. Transparency is essential as well: policies must be communicated consistently and made easily accessible to everyone in the organization. Flexibility is also key, allowing the policy to comply with local legal requirements and cultural norms while still upholding a global company standard. It must be clear which rules apply to seafarers working under international contracts and which apply to shore-based staff. Inclusivity should remain a guiding value by recognizing all family types, including biological, adoptive, LGBTQ+, surrogacy, and foster-care arrangements, and offering tailored provisions that address the realities of seafaring work.

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<sup>160</sup> Justesen et al., 'Improving seafarer well-being'.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Kieren Trinder, 'Maternity & Paternity Leave Statistics Around the Globe'.

<sup>163</sup> International Transport Workers' Federation, 'ITF Standard CBA 2015'; International Labour Organization, 'Convention No. 183'.

<sup>164</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

The structure of the policy itself should be adapted to the operational context of maritime environments. A global minimum standard serves as the foundation, for instance by establishing a baseline parental-leave entitlement such as 16 weeks of paid leave for primary caregivers – regardless of gender – and 4 weeks for secondary caregivers. This standard should meet or exceed all relevant local legislation as well as international maritime labour conventions, and it should be applied consistently across vessels and shore locations, with additional enhancements wherever feasible.

Beyond this global baseline, the policy must incorporate local adaptations. It should align with the laws and regulations of each country, including flag-state requirements and national acts such as maternity-protection legislation. Where statutory leave is insufficient, especially for seafarers employed on international contracts, the company should provide supplementary benefits. A centralized policy document should be maintained, accompanied by localized annexes that reflect country-specific regulations and vessel types.

The policy should also define the full range of leave types covered. These include maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption and surrogacy leave, and parental bonding leave. Caregiver leave – regardless of gender – should be available for dependents or urgent family situations. Additionally, for pregnant seafarers, the policy should include repatriation leave with pay to ensure their safety and well-being.

### **8.3 Family-Friendly Communication**

Creating a family-friendly work environment starts with how companies communicate. Clear, supportive messaging around parental leave, flexible scheduling, and work-life balance signals that female seafarers are valued, not just as professionals, but as individuals with family responsibilities. This kind of communication builds trust, encourages long-term commitment, and makes maritime careers more accessible and appealing to women.

Shipowners, ship managers, and DOC holders should demonstrate a strong organizational philosophy that supports family-friendly values. This begins with clearly articulating a commitment to these values in both company policies and workplace culture. Leadership must actively model supportive behaviours themselves –for example, by taking parental leave or making use of flexible work options – so that such practices are normalized throughout the organization. Family-friendly goals should also be fully integrated into broader diversity, equity, inclusion, and employee well-being strategies.

Effective communication is essential for ensuring that these values are understood and accessible across fleets, vessels, and shore-based teams. Communication should be transparent and inclusive, using clear and empathetic language when outlining policies and benefits. Messages must be accessible to employees with diverse family structures, such

as single parents, LGBTQ+ families, or those caring for elderly relatives. Regular updates about available resources, policy changes, and support programs help strengthen awareness and encourage utilization.

A key part of communication is normalizing the use of family-friendly benefits. Sharing employee stories and testimonials can help break down stigma and make the organization's support more visible. Managers should proactively discuss available options during onboarding, performance reviews, and relevant life events. It is important to avoid language that implies that using family-related benefits is a burden to the team or an exception to normal practice.

To reinforce this culture, manager training is essential for both onboard and shore-based managers.

#### **8.4 Family-Friendly Benefit Structures**

To attract and retain more women in seafaring roles, companies must recognize the importance of family-friendly benefit structures. Seafaring careers often involve long periods away from home, making support for family life, such as parental leave, flexible rotations, and childcare assistance, not just beneficial, but essential. These benefits signal a company's commitment to gender inclusion and help create a more sustainable and appealing work environment for all seafarers irrespective of gender.

Shipowners, ship managers, and DOC holders should adopt a comprehensive approach to supporting employees with parental and caregiving responsibilities. This begins with offering paid parental leave for all genders, ensuring that the policy explicitly includes adoptive and surrogacy arrangements. In addition, organizations should provide dedicated family-care leave to support employees who are responsible for elder care or who must handle serious illness within their families. Job protection and structured reintegration support after a period of leave are essential to ensure a smooth and fair return to duty.

Flexible work arrangements form another core element of a family-friendly maritime environment. Employees should have the option to transition from active seafaring roles to shore-based positions – for example, working in the office, shipyard, or in supervisory capacities – when needed. Time-share models for crew onboard can help distribute responsibilities more flexibly and sustainably. Temporary flexibility should also be available during major life transitions such as becoming a new parent or facing caregiving emergencies. For shore-based employees and seafarers completing temporary land-based assignments, family-friendly office solutions, such as mother-child facilities, should be provided.

Support for childcare and elder care is equally important. Companies should offer access to on-site childcare during shore-based rotations, as well as provide childcare subsidies or backup care services for families. Elder-care support can include counselling, referrals,

and financial planning assistance. Maritime families also benefit from access to childcare resources, mental health services, and parenting workshops tailored to their unique circumstances. Practical guidance – such as leave-planning tools, financial counselling, and assistance navigating repatriation and re-embarkation processes – further strengthens the support system.

Health and wellness benefits should extend to employees' families by including mental health support for dependents, such as counselling or therapy. Finally, financial support mechanisms can help those caring for dependents manage education-related expenses and family emergencies by offering targeted financial assistance and resources.

### **8.5 Support for Refreshing Certificates of Competency (CoC) After Parental Leave**

Parental leave may affect renewal of Certificates of Competency.

To ensure that parents can re-enter their careers with relative ease, the legislative requirements of the respective issuing country/flag state must be known beforehand.

Regulations regarding the validation of said CoCs vary slightly subject to the rules and regulation of the country issuing the CoCs.

As an example, Germany requires either

- 12 months of seafaring time within the period of the last 5 years **or**
- three months within the last six months **or**
- 1,5 months within the last 5 years **in combination** with an approved professional activity of at least 12 months within the same period.

The approved professional activities range from service at sea on non-STCW-compliant vessels to service ashore related to the maritime industry.

Should none of these requirements be met, a certificate of competence will be issued at a lower rank, if medical certificate, refresher courses and passport are valid. Required time at lower rank is 3 months for re-issuing of certificate at higher rank.

Alternatively, participation in an approved training course can be employed as proof of continuation of qualification, both for the certificate of competency and the certificate of competency as GMDSS radio operator.<sup>165</sup>

Shipowners, ship managers, and DOC holders should offer structured consultation to help employees balance career progression and family planning. This support can include guidance on renewing Certificates of Competency early to avoid interruptions during

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<sup>165</sup> Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie, 'Seefahrtzeiten und Schiffe: Gültigkeitsverlängerung Befähigungszeugnisse und Befähigungsnachweise'.

family-related periods. Companies can also provide the option of shorter contracts toward the end of the five-year validity period, enabling seafarers to meet the required three or six months of service without prolonged time at sea. In addition, employees should be informed about approved professional activities that can count toward certification requirements for at least one year and may be combined either with previous seafaring time of one and a half months or with new sea service completed within the five-year period. Such options help ensure continuous career development while accommodating individual family needs.

## **8.6 Reintegration After Extended Career Breaks**

Returning to life at sea after an extended career break presents a unique set of challenges. Technological advances, evolving regulations, and changes in onboard culture and routines require careful preparation and structured support. This chapter outlines the key aspects of reintegration, explores potential difficulties, and offers practical recommendations for shipping companies, senior officers, and seafarers resuming their maritime careers.

## **8.7 Challenges After Extended Absence**

### **Technological Advancements**

Modern vessels are highly digitalised, with integrated systems for navigation, machinery monitoring, communications, and compliance documentation. Seafarers returning after several years ashore may encounter unfamiliar interfaces and automation technologies that demand retraining and adaptation.

### **Regulatory Developments**

International conventions such as the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS),<sup>166</sup> the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL),<sup>167</sup> and the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW)<sup>168</sup> from the IMO<sup>169</sup> and the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)<sup>170</sup> from the ILO<sup>171</sup> are subject to regular revisions. Updates to safety procedures, environmental protocols, and certification requirements can create knowledge gaps for returning seafarers, potentially compromising compliance and safety.

### **Psychological and Social Factors**

Readjusting to the structured, hierarchical, and often isolated environment onboard can be mentally challenging. After time ashore, seafarers may face emotional challenges,

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<sup>166</sup> International Maritime Organization, *SOLAS*.

<sup>167</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)'.

<sup>168</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW)'.

<sup>169</sup> International Maritime Organization, 'Introduction to IMO'.

<sup>170</sup> International Labour Organization, 'Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006)'.

<sup>171</sup> International Labour Organization, 'About the ILO'.

including homesickness, stress, or difficulty reintegrating into a close-knit crew dynamic. Differences in generational attitudes or communication styles may further complicate social reintegration.

## **8.8 Preparing for Return to Sea**

### **Refreshing Technical Competence**

A structured re-entry training programme is essential prior to rejoining a vessel. This may include simulator sessions, refresher courses, e-learning modules, and practical workshops. Key areas of focus should include:

- Bridge/engine room resource management and navigation/engine room systems
- Emergency response procedures
- Engineering systems and maintenance routines
- Updated regulatory requirements and onboard documentation practices

### **Medical and Psychological Fitness**

In addition to the standard medical examination, a psychological assessment may be beneficial to ensure mental resilience for life at sea, particularly after long absences or major life changes.

### **Mentoring and Peer Support**

Assigning a mentor or onboard sponsor for the initial phase of deployment can greatly ease the transition. Experienced colleagues can provide guidance, answer questions, and help returning seafarers rebuild confidence and situational awareness.

## **8.9 Role of Shipping Companies and Leadership**

Shipping companies play a crucial role in facilitating successful reintegration. Their responsibilities include:

- Clear and proactive communication regarding expectations, duties, and changes since the seafarer's last deployment
- Tailored deployment planning based on the returning seafarer's skillset, training status, and personal circumstances
- Supportive leadership and realistic expectations from officers and crew
- Ongoing monitoring and feedback during the initial voyage(s)

Captains and senior officers should be trained in managing reintegration sensitively, fostering an inclusive and positive onboard environment that enables returning seafarers to contribute confidently and safely.

## **8.10 Conclusion**

Reintegration after an extended career break is not automatic; it requires preparation, support, and cooperation. By investing in targeted training, fostering open communication,

and promoting psychological readiness, both shipping companies and seafarers can ensure a smooth and sustainable return to life at sea. With the right systems in place, such transitions can strengthen the individual's long-term career prospects and enrich the maritime workforce.

## **9. Monitoring & Impact Measurement**

It is desirable and beneficial to adapt working conditions at sea to the needs of women and ensure compliance and furthermore establish systems that monitor this compliance and document progress within the organization. This enables companies to better position themselves for the future and visibly demonstrate improvements, especially with a view to becoming more attractive to skilled personnel irrespective of gender.

To ensure continuous development of initiatives, companies should place a strong focus on monitoring and impact measurement. The effectiveness of measures should be assessed at regular intervals to maintain consistent quality and to develop and implement corrective actions when necessary. This should be duly reported.

The following section will address the definition of success indicators and present various methods for data collection, along with practical examples of monitoring tools that facilitate implementation within companies.

Finally, it is crucial to analyse the collected data to derive classic 'lessons learned' and engage in continuous improvement. Benchmarking will also be highlighted to make the success of these initiatives' measurable for maritime stakeholders.

### **9.1 Definition of Success Indicators**

To evaluate the effectiveness of gender-focused measures, clearly defined success indicators are necessary. These indicators provide a measurable foundation to assess whether implemented actions are leading to meaningful change.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) may include the percentage of women onboard, both overall and differentiated by rank, as well as the retention rates of female seafarers, measured by duration of service at sea or within the company. Additional quantitative markers include the number of newly recruited female seafarers, promotion rates, and participation in leadership or professional development programs.<sup>172</sup>

Beyond the numbers, qualitative success indicators are equally important to understand how inclusive the working environment is perceived to be. These include feedback on

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<sup>172</sup> Dragomir et al., 'Key performance indicators (KPI) for evaluating economic efficiency of gender policies in shipping companies with mixed crews'.

satisfaction with the onboarding experience and how inclusive team dynamics are perceived by female crew members.<sup>173</sup>

A valuable contribution comes from the international research project GECAMET (Gender Equality and Cultural Awareness in Maritime Education and Training), supported by the International Association of Maritime Universities and the Nippon Foundation. Within this study, 55 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were developed specifically to evaluate the economic efficiency of gender policies in shipping companies with mixed crews.

The indicators were designed through a four-stage research process in collaboration with maritime industry stakeholders and cover a wide spectrum:

- Financial KPIs (e.g., costs of recruitment, training, crew changes, salaries)
- Time KPIs (e.g., contract duration, crew change times, retention)
- Health & Safety KPIs (e.g., incident counts, occupational health and safety measures, prevention programmes)
- Educational KPIs (e.g., diversity training, language or cultural competency offerings)
- Social KPIs (e.g., number of gender audits, CSR initiatives, media exposure, team-building activities)

This comprehensive classification enables companies to measure not only quantitative but also qualitative aspects of their gender strategies. Particularly noteworthy is the focus on ‘shipping gendering’, an approach that frames gender equality as an integral part of organizational culture, both at sea and ashore.<sup>174</sup>

The GECAMET study therefore complements industry-wide benchmarks (such as the IMO-WISTA International Women in Maritime Survey 2024<sup>175</sup>) by providing concrete tools for companies to systematically evaluate progress, make achievements visible internally and externally, and develop measures based on rigorous evidence.<sup>176</sup>

Benchmarking internal results against external reference points, such as industry averages as stated in the latest IMO-WISTA International Women in Maritime Survey 2024 offers valuable perspective and helps to identify both progress and areas for growth. Currently women represent just 1% of the active seafaring workforce in surveyed companies hiring seafarers directly, which indicates a decline since the last survey.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, ‘IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey 2024’.

<sup>176</sup> Dragomir et al., ‘Key performance indicators (KPI) for evaluating economic efficiency of gender policies in shipping companies with mixed crews’.

<sup>177</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, ‘IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey 2024’.

These figures highlight persistent gaps. Comparing internal KPIs against such external benchmarks help organizations to:

- Track their own progress with nuance
- Justify investments in diversity measures
- Set realistic but ambitious targets
- Contribute to broader industry transparency and accountability

## 9.2 Data Collection Methods

Reliable and consistent data collection is essential for measuring progress and supporting strategic improvement. Studies highlight the effectiveness of electronic, anonymous surveys, which ensure confidentiality and encourage honest responses.<sup>178</sup> According to the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines<sup>179</sup>, feedback systems should be applied regularly, both digitally and in person, for example through pulse surveys, post-assignment feedback, or ship visits. It is crucial that feedback is followed up within one month and that measures taken are clearly communicated, to build trust and avoid survey fatigue.<sup>180</sup>

These standardized surveys should be deployed at key points in a seafarer's journey, directly after onboarding, following the first assignment, and as part of recurring annual engagement surveys.

In addition, exit interviews are a valuable instrument: they may reveal reasons for turnover, such as insufficient compensation or working conditions and help identify patterns and structural weaknesses.<sup>181 182</sup>

Research further confirms that recognition, respectful communication, and continuous feedback are decisive in retaining seafarers. Engagement is positively correlated with retention and long-term commitment.<sup>183</sup>

## 9.3 Monitoring Tools

To ensure that defined success indicators and systematically collected feedback are effectively utilized, companies should consolidate all relevant data into monitoring dashboards. Such tools allow management ashore to visualize trends, benchmark progress against industry standards, and identify areas for improvement at a glance.

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<sup>178</sup> Karakasnakis et al., 'Investigating seafarers' perceptions of well-being onboard: do company size and vessel type matter?'

<sup>179</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Safety4Sea, 'NorthStandard: Seven tips to think about crew retention'.

<sup>182</sup> Kulik et al., 'Shocks and final straws: Using exit-interview data to examine the unfolding model's decision paths'.

<sup>183</sup> Brentnall, 'Recruitment and retention of seafarers'.

Key data points included in these dashboards are:

- Gender distribution across vessel types and ranks, ensures visibility on recruitment and promotion trends in comparison to benchmarks such as the IMO-WISTA International Women in Maritime Survey.<sup>184</sup>
- Retention and career progression of female seafarers, measured over time to track whether implemented initiatives translate into sustainable change.<sup>185</sup>
- Feedback scores related to inclusion, team climate, and well-being, derived from standardized surveys and exit interviews, to complement the quantitative indicators with qualitative insights.<sup>186</sup>

To foster trust and accountability, this information should be reviewed at regular intervals, communicated transparently within the organization, and linked back to the continuous improvement cycle. Dashboards create visibility and ensure that lessons learned from KPIs and feedback mechanisms are actively translated into specific actions.

In addition, companies can enhance their employer branding by sharing aggregated dashboard results externally, for instance on their websites or in sustainability reports. Visible progress in gender diversity, staff retention and crew well-being makes shipping companies more attractive to female and male seafarers alike, while also enhancing their credibility among wider industry stakeholders.<sup>187 188</sup>

#### **9.4 Lessons Learned & Continuous Improvement**

Simply collecting data is not enough; it must be translated into actionable insights that drive genuine change. Therefore, companies are encouraged to establish a structured 'lessons learned' process, celebrating success stories while systematically identifying recurring challenges. Feedback given on board should be more than just a formality. It should have a direct impact on the design and adjustment of improvement strategies.

An effective continuous improvement cycle follows a clear pattern:

- Analysing the collected data through dashboards and KPI evaluations to identify trends and deviations.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Dragomir et al., 'Key performance indicators (KPI) for evaluating economic efficiency of gender policies in shipping companies with mixed crews'.

<sup>186</sup> Hayes-Mejia and Stafström, 'Wellbeing and Happiness and Their Association With Working Conditions at Sea: A Cross-sectional Study Among the Global Workforce of Seafarers'.

<sup>187</sup> Diversity Study Group, 'Annual DEI in Maritime Review 2024'.

<sup>188</sup> International Chamber of Shipping, 'Maritime Diversity and Inclusion Charter'.

- Adjusting or redesigning strategies based on these findings, ensuring alignment with both internal goals and external benchmarks such as the IMO-WISTA International Women in Maritime Survey.<sup>189</sup>
- Re-testing and re-measuring outcomes to validate effectiveness, ensuring that improvements are sustainable over time.<sup>190</sup>

To reinforce this process, a gap analysis framework can help highlight discrepancies between policy intentions and actual practices onboard. Closing these gaps ensures that initiatives formulated with good intentions are fully embedded in day-to-day operations, not just on paper.<sup>191</sup>

By communicating lessons learned and visible improvements transparently to both internal and external stakeholders, companies can build trust among their workforce and present a more attractive proposition to female and male seafarers. This approach also demonstrates accountability to industry stakeholders.<sup>192</sup>

## **9.5 Accountability, Transparency & Organisational Learning**

Creating a harassment-free and inclusive workplace requires more than policies alone; it demands consistent accountability and continuous organisational learning.<sup>193 194</sup>

A zero-tolerance approach means that unacceptable behaviour is addressed regardless of rank, seniority, or professional performance. Senior officers and management personnel must be held to the same, if not higher, standards of conduct as junior crew members, as leadership behaviour strongly influences onboard culture.<sup>195</sup>

To strengthen accountability, companies should establish structured processes for monitoring, analysing, and responding to reported incidents and feedback. This includes identifying recurring patterns, emerging risks, or operational areas that may require targeted intervention. In addition to formal reporting systems, regular anonymous climate surveys can provide valuable insights into crew perceptions, inclusion, psychological safety, and workplace culture, particularly in cases where concerns may otherwise remain unreported.

Transparency is equally important in building trust. Wherever possible, anonymised findings, lessons learned, and implemented corrective measures should be communicated

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<sup>189</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, 'IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey 2024'.

<sup>190</sup> Dragomir et al., 'Key performance indicators (KPI) for evaluating economic efficiency of gender policies in shipping companies with mixed crews'.

<sup>191</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>192</sup> Diversity Study Group, 'Annual DEI in Maritime Review 2024'.

<sup>193</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

<sup>194</sup> Ng, 'Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships'.

<sup>195</sup> All Aboard Alliance, 'Sustainable Crewing Guidelines'.

within the organisation to demonstrate that concerns are taken seriously and addressed appropriately. In cases of misconduct, companies should not only apply fair disciplinary measures, but also consider behavioural correction programmes or professional counselling under qualified supervision in order to reduce the risk of repeated misconduct and support long-term cultural improvement.<sup>196</sup>

Continuous organisational learning should further be supported through participation in industry initiatives and professional networks such as the ‘All Aboard Alliance’<sup>197</sup> or WISTA<sup>198</sup>, which enable the exchange of best practices and benchmarking across the maritime sector.

By embedding accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement into daily operations, shipping companies can foster safer, more respectful, and more sustainable working environments that strengthen well-being, teamwork, retention, and operational safety alike.

Zero tolerance is not merely a slogan but a daily practice requiring commitment, empathy, and action at every level of the maritime community.<sup>199 200</sup>

## **10. Conclusion**

This Best Practice Guide has outlined a comprehensive and practice-oriented framework for the recruitment, integration, development, and long-term retention of women at sea. It demonstrates that meaningful progress in this field cannot be achieved through isolated initiatives or symbolic commitments, but requires a structured, holistic, and measurable approach embedded across the entire maritime employment lifecycle.

The maritime industry is facing structural challenges: demographic shifts, increasing global competition for skilled personnel, evolving regulatory frameworks, and growing expectations in the context of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards. In this environment, expanding and strengthening the talent pool is not optional – it is essential. Women remain significantly underrepresented in seafaring professions. Addressing this imbalance is therefore both a question of equity and a strategic necessity for the sustainability and resilience of the sector.

Throughout this guide, it has become evident that inclusion begins long before the first day on board. Gender-sensitive job advertisements, unbiased recruitment procedures, and partnerships with maritime education and training institutions create access to

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<sup>196</sup> Ng, ‘Addressing Harassment Incidents on Board Ships’.

<sup>197</sup> Global Maritime Forum, ‘All Aboard Alliance’

<sup>198</sup> WISTA International, ‘WISTA International’

<sup>199</sup> International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers’ Federation, ‘Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying’.

<sup>200</sup> International Maritime Organization and WISTA International, ‘Women in Maritime Survey 2021’.

opportunity. Structured onboarding processes, vessel preparation, and clearly defined reporting and support mechanisms determine whether that opportunity translates into retention.

Work culture and leadership practices play a decisive role in shaping daily reality at sea. A respectful working climate, psychological safety, cultural awareness, and consistent zero-tolerance policies against bullying, harassment, and discrimination are not supplementary measures. They are fundamental prerequisites for safety, operational efficiency, and crew well-being. Leadership commitment, both on board and ashore, sets the tone and determines whether policies remain theoretical or become lived practice.

Accommodation standards, appropriate sanitary facilities, access to hygiene products, correctly fitted personal protective equipment, and adequately sized life-saving appliances signal whether diversity has been systematically considered in operational planning. Physical infrastructure must reflect the actual composition of the workforce.

Career development and advancement represent another critical dimension. Transparent promotion criteria, fair distribution of tasks and training opportunities, structured mentorship and sponsorship programmes, and regular development conversations are necessary to ensure that representation evolves into leadership. Without clear pathways and accountability, progress remains fragile.

The guide further highlights the importance of work-life balance and long-term career perspectives. Flexible and transparent rotation systems, parental leave frameworks, reintegration strategies after career breaks, and support for maintaining or renewing Certificates of Competency are central elements of a sustainable employment model. Modern maritime careers must accommodate diverse life models if the industry intends to attract and retain qualified professionals over the long term.

Monitoring and impact measurement complete this framework. Clearly defined success indicators, reliable data collection, monitoring dashboards, benchmarking against industry surveys, and structured continuous improvement processes transform diversity objectives into measurable management practice. Transparency in progress strengthens trust internally and credibility externally.

Taken together, the chapters of this guide form an integrated system of recommendations that address cultural, structural, operational and strategic dimensions of inclusion. The objective is not merely to increase numbers, but to create working environments in which women can enter, contribute, advance and lead without structural disadvantage.

Implementation remains the decisive factor:

- Policies must be consistently applied.
- Training must be regular and practical.

- Reporting systems must be trusted and accessible.
- Leadership must demonstrate accountability.
- Data must inform decisions and adjustments.

Sustainable change requires persistence, coordination and continuous evaluation. However, the benefits are substantial: improved safety culture, stronger retention rates, enhanced innovation capacity, greater employer attractiveness and increased resilience in times of workforce shortage.

Creating equitable and inclusive maritime workplaces is a shared responsibility. Shipowners, managers, DOC holders, crewing departments, senior officers, maritime academies, regulators and industry associations all contribute to shaping the culture and structures of the sector.

This guide provides a structured foundation for that collective effort. It is intended as a practical reference, a strategic orientation tool, and a contribution to the ongoing dialogue on the future of maritime employment.

A maritime industry that fully integrates women into its workforce – at all ranks and across all functions – strengthens not only equality, but also safety, sustainability, and long-term competitiveness.

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## Appendix

### Checklist 1:

| Strategic Objective: Implementing Recruitment and Integration Processes for Women on Board |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Goal                                                                                       | Specific Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Attract diverse applicants by eliminating gender bias in recruitment language.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review and revise job ads for gender-neutral language.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid stereotypes and masculine-coded terms.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive phrasing for physical requirements and leadership traits.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           |
| Build a diverse talent pipeline and support cadet development.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer company-sponsored cadetships (financial support, mentorship, onboard training).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop outreach programs to schools and academies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor enrichment activities (workshops, fairs, simulator sessions).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with METIs to update curricula to match industry needs.</li> </ul> |
| Increase visibility of female role models.                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote internal female role models via newsletters and events.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create mentorship networks for female cadets and junior officers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use testimonials in recruitment campaigns.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate achievements publicly (social media, press releases, awards).</li> </ul>                                |
| Align with ESG and industry commitments.                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Integrate inclusive recruitment practices into ESG reporting.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor progress on diversity targets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Engage with international frameworks (e.g., UN ESG goals).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                       |
| Remove hidden barriers and modernize hiring practices.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Standardize interview protocols (competency-based).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Train hiring teams to recognize unconscious bias.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diversify interview panels.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement blind CV screening.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     |

**Checklist 2:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Facilitating Onboarding &amp; First Assignment for Female Students &amp; Interns</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Facilitate onboarding onshore.                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assign dedicated female contact persons for female seafarers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct personal or online briefings before on-signing.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide reporting and contact lines.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Distribute WISTA Germany e. V. and Frauen zur See e. V. emergency flyer.</li></ul> |
| Prepare vessel for female seafarers.                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Brief crew on behavior, environment, and tasks.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Nominate a trust person (Training Officer or Complaints Coordinator).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Include trust person role in Safety Management System job descriptions.</li></ul>                                                                       |
| Ensure inclusive crew composition.                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote gender and cultural diversity on board.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Mandate diversity and cultural competency training.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assign minimum two female seafarers per vessel.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure language compatibility among crew.</li></ul>                                      |
| Support management duties for female seafarers.                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize development of female seafarers.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct regular follow-up checks (online and in-person).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Review trading areas for safety using WPSI and travel advisories.</li></ul>                                                                                              |
| Protect seafarer's rights onboard.                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure compliance with collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement IMO/ILO anti-harassment guidelines.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote zero tolerance for bullying and harassment.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage incident reporting.</li></ul>                                    |
| Implement accompanying programs.                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assign female seafarers to diverse crews.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish regular check-ins during first assignments.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

**Checklist 3:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Adjusting Work Culture and Leadership in Seafaring</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                    | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Establish clear guidelines for behaviour and leadership.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement and enforce a Code of Conduct with zero tolerance for harassment, bullying, and discrimination.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Create anonymous and safe reporting systems with clear complaint coordination protocols.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure leadership commitment to DEI through active participation and communication.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide training on equity, inclusion, and empathy for all staff.</li></ul> |
| Deliver comprehensive training programs.                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct sensitivity and awareness training addressing stereotypes and unconscious bias.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide leadership training on communication, conflict resolution, and team culture.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish structured mentorship programs with defined goals and feedback.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage continuous feedback and regular training updates.</li></ul>                                       |
| Strengthen ship and shore relations.                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Organize regular visits and exchanges between ship and shore personnel.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish shore-based support contacts for seafarers with focus on diversity issues.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure transparent and people-oriented communication across all levels.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate shared learning through joint workshops and feedback sessions.</li></ul>                                           |
| Foster positive team dynamics on board.                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Organize community-building activities with dedicated budgets.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote diversity and inclusion through training and inclusive policies.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement conflict resolution guidelines and training for early intervention.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Support networks for minorities and youth to provide mentorship and safe spaces.</li></ul>                                                   |

**Checklist 4:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Enhancing Social Integration &amp; Well-being Onboard</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                       | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Prevent isolation and foster community.                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Rotate informal leadership roles for onboard activities.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage informal check-ins between crew members.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement buddy and mentorship programs.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Include mental wellness tips in safety meetings.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Train crew in psychological first aid.</li></ul> |
| Promote cultural ownership and inclusion.                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate cultural differences through meals, music, and storytelling.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Tailor wellness initiatives to be culturally sensitive.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure psychological safety through inclusive practices.</li></ul>                                                                                                                        |
| Establish supportive rituals and activities.                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce morning breathing and evening wind-down routines.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Organize recreational events like games and movie nights.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assign weekly wellness leads for stress-relief initiatives.</li></ul>                                                                                                                              |
| Normalize mental health support.                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote open dialogue about emotional challenges..</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide access to digital mental health services</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer mental health materials in multiple languages.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct anonymous crew surveys to monitor morale.</li></ul>                                                                    |
| Ensure access to professional resources.                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide confidential helplines and remote therapy sessions.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote leadership modeling of mental health support.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct regular emotional health check-ins.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prevent gossip, stereotypes & prejudice.    | <input type="checkbox"/> Implement zero-tolerance policies for discriminatory speech and gossip.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Model respectful communication by senior officers.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce structured diversity and inclusion training<br><input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate cultural and religious holidays to foster inclusion.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure confidential reporting channels for discrimination. |
| Encourage team events & peer exchange.      | <input type="checkbox"/> Organize regular inclusive social events (e.g., karaoke, quiz nights).<br><input type="checkbox"/> Host informal learning sessions and peer-led workshops.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate personal milestones like birthdays and promotions.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Provide options for introverted crew members to participate comfortably.                                                                   |
| Provide designated safe spaces for privacy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure personal cabins offer privacy and respect closed doors.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Limit access to general keys to authorized personnel only.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Establish clear policies for cabin access and privacy.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Balance social interaction with opportunities for solitude.                                                                                           |

**Checklist 5a:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Eliminating Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                      | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Build awareness.                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Implement zero-tolerance policies communicated by leadership.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure all crew are aware of their rights under MLC, 2006.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Distribute WISTA Germany e.V. and Frauen zur See e. V. Emergency Flyer onboard.                                                                           |
| Define and communicate misconduct.                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide clear definitions and examples of bullying and harassment.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educate crew on subtle forms of misconduct like exclusion and belittling.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Promote respectful company culture.                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership to visibly engage in respect and inclusion campaigns.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Integrate inclusive behaviour into performance appraisals.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Reward respectful leadership behaviour.                                                                                                                |
| Mandatory training and mentorship.                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct training on gender sensitivity, bias, and respectful communication.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Use role-play scenarios and conflict resolution modules.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Implement buddy systems and mentorship networks for women.                                                                                    |
| Establish reporting and investigation procedures.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide multiple confidential reporting channels.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Assign trained welfare officers for complainant support.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct impartial investigations with gender-sensitive protocols.                                                                                                       |
| Address sexual harassment.                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Enforce zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure access to confidential support and gender-sensitive medical care.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Provide menstrual products and privacy protocols.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educate crew on legal consequences, i.e. under EU Directive 2024/1385. |

**Checklist 5b:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Establishing Accountability and Continuous Improvement Routines</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                                 | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Ensure zero tolerance and accountability.                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Track and analyse reported cases to identify trends or high-risk areas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct anonymous climate surveys to monitor crew perceptions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share anonymised outcomes to reinforce transparency.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer behavioural correction or counselling for offenders under professional supervision.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Participate in industry initiatives such as 'All Aboard Alliance' or WISTA networks.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adopt a clear policy and code of conduct defining unacceptable behaviours and consequences.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Integrate policies into Safety Management System and employment contracts.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Communicate zero tolerance consistently and model respectful behaviour.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement mandatory, recurring training for all crew including bystander intervention and diversity awareness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide mentorship, privacy facilities, and external support networks for women and minorities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure confidential and anonymous reporting channels onboard and ashore.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Investigate complaints impartially, protect victims, and apply appropriate disciplinary actions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer psychological, legal, and practical assistance to victims with post-incident follow-up.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use data and feedback to strengthen culture, policies, and leadership practices.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make complaint procedures and emergency information visible in common and private spaces.</li> </ul> |

**Checklist 6:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Improving Equipment &amp; Physical Working Conditions</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                       | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Ensure gender-sensitive accommodation.                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide separate sleeping rooms and sanitary facilities for men and women as per MLC 2006.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Install changing cubicles or separate changing rooms for privacy.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure unisex sanitary accommodations outside cabin areas.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement separate laundry and gym schedules for privacy.</li></ul> |
| Enhance health protection standards.                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Include rape kits, contraceptive pills, and morning-after pills in medical chest.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Train designated personnel in trauma-sensitive medical emergency response.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure compliance with WHO and national medical guidelines.</li></ul>                                                                                           |
| Provide sanitary and hygiene products.                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Stock sanitary products like pads, tampons, and period panties.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide disposal containers and dark garbage bags for sanitary waste.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Ensure proper fit of personal protective equipment (PPE).                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Collect crew size data before boarding to ensure proper PPE availability.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Regularly review PPE comfort and fit, especially for female seafarers.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Update procurement standards based on crew feedback.</li></ul>                                                                                                              |
| Adapt life-saving appliances (LSA) and firefighting equipment to crew needs.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure life jackets, immersion suits, and firefighting equipment fit all crew members.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Review and adjust LSA equipment sizing.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

**Checklist 7:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Offering Career Development &amp; Advancement</b>           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                         | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Establish transparent promotion criteria.                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Define clear criteria based on skills, experience, performance, and potential.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Document and communicate gender-neutral guidelines for promotion processes.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure consistency across locations and provide training for supervisors and HR personnel.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish oversight mechanisms and encourage feedback to promote accountability.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Support career development and track progress.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor and evaluate data on promotion outcomes to identify patterns and address biases.</li></ul> |
| Encourage fair distribution of tasks, responsibilities, and training opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Apply Principles of Fairness and Equity.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Allocate tasks and responsibility based on skills.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid gender stereotyping and rotate responsibilities.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer equal access to training and development opportunities proactively and monitor participation.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Inform and train leadership, ensure accountability with feedback mechanisms and audits.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer cultural and structural support through flexible work arrangements, rewards, and inclusive language.</li></ul>                      |

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Evaluate and adjust advancement programs and leadership pipelines.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Define clear goals for gender equity and career progression.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Embed gender diversity in ISM System.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer technical training, certifications, and leadership development programs or provide access to training.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage participation in external conferences, panels, and competitions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish formal mentorship programs and promote sponsorship to advocate for women in promotions and high-impact roles.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Highlight role models and support women in speaking engagements etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct bias awareness training and inclusive leadership workshops.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review hiring, promotion, and performance processes for equity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure programs are inclusive, culturally competent, and accessible.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Hold regular feedback and development conversations.</p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct bias training and monitor language.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Standardize feedback processes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote equity in development opportunities via transparent criteria and tailored development plans.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Foster inclusive feedback culture.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor and evaluate processes to identify disparities and be able to intervene early.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage inclusive leadership.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

**Checklist 8:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Establishing Work-Life Balance &amp; Long-Term Career Perspectives</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                                                                    | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Establish flexible and transparent rotation systems (sea-shore).                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer a range of contract lengths to accommodate both individual needs and operational requirements.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respect contract lengths.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be transparent if internal or external factors impede crew changes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer options for shore-based roles.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore time-share models, hybrid career pathways, etc.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Offer parental leave, maternity protection, and return-to-work opportunities.                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop and communicate a transparent policy regarding parental leave.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish a baseline parental leave policy (e.g., 16 weeks paid leave for primary caregivers irrespective of gender, 4 weeks for secondary caregivers) applicable to both seafarers and shore-based employees.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Align with country-specific laws and maritime regulations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a central policy document with localized annexes for each country and vessel type.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure all types of parental leave are covered, i.e. maternity, paternity, adoption, surrogacy, caregiver, repatriation for pregnant seafarers.</li> </ul> |
| Employ family-friendly communication.                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Articulate a clear commitment to family-friendly values in company policies and culture.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure language used is transparent &amp; inclusive.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid language that implies burden or exception when employees use family-related benefits.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Train managers to communicate supportively.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Offer family-friendly benefit-structures.</p>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer paid parental and caregiver leave.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure job protection and reintegration support post-leave.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enable flexible work arrangements.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide access to vital resources regarding childcare, mental health, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer leave planning tools and guidance for navigating repatriation and re-embarkation processes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include family mental health support.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide financial support aids, education assistance, and family emergency grants.</li> </ul>          |
| <p>Offer support for refreshing Certificates of Competency (CoC) after parental leave.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer consultation on balancing career and family planning within your company.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer options of early renewal of CoC.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer short contracts at the end of the 5-year period to fulfil 3 months/6 months.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer approved professional activities for at least a year that may be combined with prior seafaring time of 1,5 months or new sea service within the required period of 5 years.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>Ease reintegration after extended career breaks.</p>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Address challenges regarding technological advancements, regulatory developments and psychological/social factors after extended absence.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear and proactive communication regarding expectations, duties, and changes since the seafarer's last deployment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tailored deployment planning based on the returning seafarer's skillset, training status, and personal circumstances.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Supportive leadership and realistic expectations from officers and crew.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing monitoring and feedback during the initial voyage(s).</li> </ul> |

**Checklist 9:**

| <b>Strategic Objective: Monitor &amp; measure impact</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goal</b>                                              | <b>Specific Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Define success indicators.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish KPIs for gender diversity, retention, promotion, and development participation.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Include qualitative indicators such as onboarding satisfaction and team inclusion.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Utilize GECAMET KPIs for comprehensive evaluation across financial, health, education, and social domains.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Benchmark internal KPIs against industry standards like IMO-WISTA International Survey.</li></ul> |
| Implement reliable data collection methods.              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Deploy anonymous electronic surveys at key career stages.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct exit interviews to identify turnover reasons.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure feedback is followed up within one month.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use pulse surveys and ship visits for regular engagement.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                      |
| Utilize monitoring tools.                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Create dashboards to visualize gender distribution, retention, and feedback trends.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Review dashboard data regularly and communicate transparently.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Link dashboard insights to continuous improvement actions.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Share aggregated results externally for employer branding.</li></ul>                                                                                                        |
| Establish lessons learned & continuous improvement.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Analyze data to identify trends and challenges.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Adjust strategies based on findings and benchmarks.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Re-test and measure outcomes for sustainability.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure feedback leads to actionable changes.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                               |