

Taskforce for more women at sea

10
recommendations for the industry

Purpose

Ensuring diversity in the workplace is important, both to the working environment and bottom line. Therefore, we at Blue Denmark want to recruit, retain and promote employees from the broadest possible pool of qualified persons regardless of gender, age, nationality, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Competitiveness is contingent on the availability of talent.

Only 14% out of an approximate total of 24,000 employees in Danish shipping companies are women. The figure is even smaller among seafarers. 6% of Danish seafarers are women, or 3% if not including ferries. This means that unless the shipping companies begin to focus on recruiting and maintaining women, the sector is quite simply losing out on half the talent pool.

With a view to exploring how the industry attracts and retains more women in relation to maritime educational programmes and careers at sea, a taskforce was established in spring 2019. The taskforce consisted of representatives from Danish Shipping's member companies, professional organisations, legislators and maritime educational institutions, as well as a number of role models.

Their work resulted in the finding that there are three areas of particular importance when it comes to recruitment and retention of women in the maritime sector:

1. **The culture** – The culture in the workplace and in educational institutions is not always supportive and inclusive of women
2. **Career planning** – The lack of awareness of and support for career and in-service training opportunities are a barrier to attracting women to the industry
3. **Conflict management** – There is a need for a clear complaints procedure that gives the perception that complaints are taken seriously.

Based on these three general findings, the taskforce has prepared 10 recommendations for the industry which are described and elaborated upon in the following.

Each recommendation is linked to one or several tools. Because these are highly “malleable” tools, e.g. subject to change, loss of relevance or replacement, they can be found digitally at www.danishshipping.dk

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Checklist

- Have we set up/formulated targets and action plans to attract more women to the industry?
- Is the culture change anchored in management?
- Have we launched initiatives that support our female employees?
- Have we identified our unconscious biases and are we focused on gender neutrality?
- Have we promoted and raised awareness about the many career paths that exist in our organisation and within the industry in general?
- Do we have a gender-neutral recruitment process?
- Are we making active use of our male/female role models in connection with recruitment?
- Are we offering in-service training that can contribute to personal/professional development and which helps retain our talented employees?
- Have we formulated a clear written policy on harassment and bullying, and is knowledge about this policy included as an integrated part of our on-boarding process as well as mandatory instruction?
- Have we made sure to establish and share information about a clear complaints procedure as well as a dignified and fair process for handling complaints?

01

Set specific targets

If you genuinely want to change the distribution of men and women in the industry, setting specific targets to achieve that is necessary.

A specific target as well as action plans that outline how to achieve it send a strong signal that you are serious about it. It is also key to bringing about a change in behaviour.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That shipping companies and educational institutions set specific targets for the number of women in their organisation and outline the specific initiatives required to achieve those targets.

02

Management should take the lead

Setting targets for more women in the staff pool requires some organisational changes, including behavioural or cultural changes. The idea is to create a common desired culture in the organisation that facilitates its goals, strategies and conduct.

The taskforce recommends that the initiatives and changes that are launched should be anchored in management. If the management team does not set the course and lead the way themselves, change rarely happens. All levels of management in the shipping company should get involved and be made responsible for the cultural change.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That diversity-related workplace initiatives are anchored at the senior management level of the shipping company. It is also recommended to maintain close communication with the ship officers, which should function as a natural extension of the targets set by the company.
- To organise in-service training for the ship officers and senior officers on diversity and inclusion. In addition, the taskforce recommends setting targets for how many senior officers should complete the in-service training and that the ship officers should be assessed on the basis of employee satisfaction and retention rates, particularly in relation to female seafarers.
- That the same in-service training requirements and setting of targets apply to any ship and crew managers.

03

Support the women

It can be a major transition to join a ship's crew, especially if it is the first time and you are the only woman among them. Therefore, it can be helpful to focus individually on the female crew member with support, mentoring and other measures that can ensure they have access to any help they require.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That shipping companies and educational institutions actively support women who join ship's crews. Prepare a good onboarding process, offer a mentor, review the shipping company's staff policy, complaints procedure, etc.
- That shipping companies strive to add more women to a crew.
- That shipping companies ensure that everyone on board is aware of the company's values relating to diversity and inclusion and is ready to support the female crew members.
- That the shipping companies strengthen the female employees' attachment to the workplace during and after maternity leave.

04

Clean up language and eliminate prejudices

Language plays a role in defining which gender is being addressed. Therefore, it can be useful to more closely consider how a company communicates in order to switch out highly gender-based expressions with more gender-neutral ones so that no one feels excluded.

It should be stressed, however, that with this recommendation the taskforce is not suggesting that we abolish genders. In this context, gender neutralisation refers exclusively to equality, equal opportunities and reducing the number of obstacles based on gender.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That companies update their staff policy to ensure that all employees enjoy equal terms in their working conditions.
- That shipping companies and educational institutions modernise the content on websites, vacancy listings and other communications material - both internal and external - with a view to eliminating gender-based expressions that serve to exclude rather than include.
- To revise the titles of education and training programmes so that they refer to both genders to a greater extent.
- That both maritime educational institutions and shipping companies adapt their physical facilities to accommodate both genders.
- That uniforms and workwear be adjusted by gender, size and function.

05

Raise awareness of career opportunities

In its dialogue with a number of female role models, the taskforce has found that knowing what career opportunities exist is crucial when women choose their educational track and job.

There are many opportunities to pursue a career in the Blue Denmark, but not all career paths are equally apparent. Similarly, there is also an inadequate level of awareness of opportunities that exist for in-service training.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That maritime educational institutions and shipping companies raise awareness about the many career paths that exist within Blue Denmark.
- That the shipping companies facilitate an open dialogue on career change opportunities (e.g. from sea to shore or vice-versa) that facilitate a good work-life balance.
- That Danish Shipping should work on providing opportunities for retaining/recovering/ maintaining certificates of competency after a period on land.

06

Rethink the recruitment process

The taskforce has worked with proposals on how shipping companies and maritime educational institutions can include the aspect of diversity in their recruitment and hiring processes, as these can often be marked by unconscious preferences and prejudices.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- Taking into account the diversity checklist below in the hiring process.
 - Is the vacancy listing formulated in a way that appeals to both men and women?
 - Is the interview panel/hiring committee composed of both men and women?
 - Do the applicants who have been called in for an interview include both men and women?

07

Make use of role models

Role models can play a major role in a person's choice of educational programme and/or workplace, and more generally, how they learn and develop. The importance of role models is accordingly high in relation to 'progressing' in life and ensuring that there is someone we can see ourselves in and identify with.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That World Careers continues and expands its use of female role models and ensures that there are role models of both genders present at events and all social platforms.
- That shipping companies make use of both male and female role models and encourage/support them in sharing their experiences and career tracks on relevant platforms.
- That male role models be actively used to articulate the need for and desire for more diversity at sea in a way that female candidates and staff feel welcome and valued.

08

Offer in-service training

If seafarers find their life situation or career goals changing, a transition from sea to shore - provided the attachment to the industry can be maintained - may be the solution. Currently, there is no general guidance on how to prepare for a shore based job in terms of competences, which can act as a deterrent for women in particular.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That maritime educational institutions and other relevant parties create an overview of and draw attention to the in-service training and continuing education opportunities that already exist.
- That educational institutions develop relevant, modular in-service training courses that can bridge the gap between a career at sea and on shore in line with demand and provided that they are not already included in their course offerings.
- That shipping companies back the principle of life-long learning and support relevant in-service training/courses for seafarers who have expressed a desire or need to take a new direction in their career.
- That Danish Shipping continue its work on eliminating dead ends in the education system and facilitating as much flexibility and accessibility as possible in relation to maritime education.

09

Stand up to harassment and bullying

A crucial factor in retaining female personnel at sea is to ensure that the company and its staff have a clear set of values that include a zero-tolerance attitude towards harassment, etc., and that the company takes efforts to ensure a healthy and safe working environment seriously.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That shipping companies have a clear policy (in writing) on harassment and bullying being unacceptable. The policy can be made more effective by including possible examples of conduct that is considered harassment and/or bullying, as well as the associated consequences of such conduct if the company learns that it has or is taking place. It should also clearly state where and to whom such conduct or incidents should be reported.
- That shipping companies ensure that all their employees are aware of the bullying policy, such as through employee meetings, officer seminars or other events where employees are brought together, making it clear to everyone that bullying is an important issue that the management takes seriously.
- That the issue of harassment and bullying is incorporated into the compulsory components of all maritime educational programmes.

10

Manage conflicts properly

While it is important to have an explicit policy stating that harassment and bullying are unacceptable, it is just as important to have a clear procedure in place in the event of conflicts occurring in the workplace. Unresolved conflicts can destroy the dynamic and flow of the workplace and end up costing countless hours of lost productivity from employees as a direct consequence thereof. In addition, unresolved conflicts can lead to good employees leaving the workplace and harming the reputation of the company.

The taskforce for more women at sea recommends

- That shipping companies establish a clear complaints procedure that is accessible to all staff.
- That shipping companies ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly, uniformly and with dignity, and with clear communication throughout a complaint procedure.
- That shipping companies encourage their crews to draft and sign a joint statement that harassment and bullying are not tolerated on board their ships.