

*Breaking away from “tradition”  
Labour Issues in the shipbuilding and marine equipment industries*

C-WP6 Workshop  
Tuesday, 21 November 2023, 9:30 – 18:00 (CET)  
OECD Headquarters, Paris

## Key Takeaways

### Labour and skills shortages pose significant challenge for shipbuilding and maritime equipment industries

Shipbuilding and maritime equipment industries throughout the world are increasingly facing labour and skills shortages. Experts predict that 40% of workers in these industries will retire in the next 10 years, underlining the need to attract workers to the sector. In addition, the green and digital transitions are paving the way for new skill requirements in the sector. At the same time, the industry struggles to attract and retain skilled workers and new, young talent and recently experienced increased international mobility of workers. Despite gradual shifts, the sector still grapples with the underrepresentation of women in the workforce and to ensure that the rights of vulnerable workers in the sector are protected.

### A targeted and comprehensive approach is key for the industries to attract and retain workers and strengthen skills

Discussions during the workshop showed that policy makers need to consider taking into account the industries’ specific challenges regarding skills and labour issues:

- Effective skills and labour approaches need to be embedded in a wider and comprehensive industrial policy approach, that takes the specific circumstances in the sectors into account.
- Embracing automation and artificial intelligence within the sector could present a solution for the shortage of workers. However, this raises the question how investment in this area will be covered and how the impact of workers can be taken into account.
- The industries will need to prioritize training for upskilling and reskilling existing workers, both soft and technological skills. It is crucial that insights in future skills needs are better assessed. Closer cooperation between employers, workers, universities and governments may help identify and answer the needs of the sector.
- The shipbuilding and maritime equipment industries grapple with an outdated and unfavourable image which needs to be improved to make it more appealing to women and young talents. Education institutions play a key role in developing vocational education and training initiatives and apprenticeship programs in cooperation with shipyards, which would enable students to have hands-on experience in the sector. Industries also have a role in providing guidance and making sure apprenticeships are future-ready.

## The Shipbuilding Committee can contribute to addressing labour issues

Given the increasing globalisation of the labour market, which contributes to the shipbuilding industry's specific labour opportunities and challenges, there is a pressing need for international cooperation between all stakeholders.

The Shipbuilding Committee could be well placed to provide insights on future demand of vessels and on new technologies and maritime decarbonisation policies, and their impact on labour and skills demand. The Shipbuilding Committee can also be a platform to facilitate cooperation and dialogue between governments and other stakeholders on good policy practices, for instance in attracting workers to the sector, cooperation between universities, education institutions and businesses, protection of vulnerable workers and gender and diversity strategies.