

Social Aspects of the Seafarers' Integration on the Maritime Jobs Market

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ABSTRACT

Many countries with hundreds of years of tradition in the maritime sectors have less and less enrolled seafarers, while in other countries the national fleet decreased dramatically. The first part of this process is a normal consequence of the economic prosperity in some countries, where shore jobs are relative easy to find and well paid and the maritime sector has an important shore based component, ready to absorb many of the personnel with sea-going experience. The second part of the actual process is generated by the world political evolution after 1990, especially in the Eastern Europe, where the full state economic control was replaced by the free market and competition. Unprepared to face such a challenge, many huge national fleets had lost their ships year after year due to bad management.

For Romania, the reality was very crude. From an aprox. 300 ships fleet and 16000 enrolled seafarers in 1990, after six-seven years we owned less than 40 ships and we lost around 8000 seafarers. The government practical implication for solving this economic and social problem was limited to sporadic interventions of bringing home some crews from the retained Romanian ships in foreign ports.

The aim of this paper is to present the positive changes of the Romanian seafarers perspective after year 2000, the social protection measures undertaken and the problems we still have to deal with for maintaining the Romanian seafarers tradition.

1. Introduction

In 2003, the IAMU General Assembly dedicates special attention to the social aspects, implications and future of seafaring as profession. At the beginning of the XXIst Century these issues must be a general concern for the maritime industry, because the last two decades of the XXth Century revealed a dangerous lack of interest and attraction for this profession.

The same period was the beginning of a new aspect regarding the world merchant fleet - the multinational crews, with a massive participation of far-east seafarers. Today, this situation is a common factor for the maritime transport and we learned to deal with this problem.

An important reference point in the seafarers market was given in 1990, when all the countries from Eastern Europe abandoned the socialist work system and suddenly had to confront the free market competition, including the field of maritime transport. The

consequences of this 180 degrees change of economic policy generated a dramatic situation in these countries. The main part of their national merchant fleet was lost and thousand of seafarers remained unemployed.

In Romania, this category of workers was the first affected by this economical change, while the Authorities, the traditional owners and the whole society were not prepared to deal with such a crisis.

The aim of this paper is to bring into focus, for the first time at a IAMU Congress, the negative and positive experiences of the Romanian seafarers in the last 10 years and the progresses that were made in order to integrate them on the maritime and shore job market.

2. Condition of the Romanian Fleet Before 1990

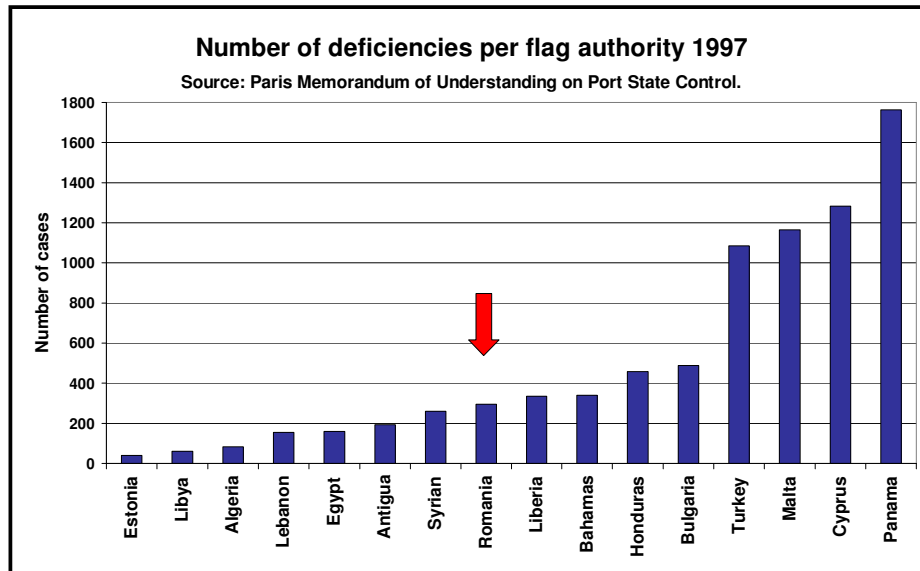
Before 1990, the Romanian fleet counted over 300 maritime ships that had entirely Romanian crews. With a tonnage of 5.614.000 dwt., it was considered to be the 5-th fleet in the world. A single shipping public company (IEFM NAVROM) managed the entire Romanian maritime transport activity. As a matter of fact, the entire maritime transport was considered to be a strategically economic activity, more than 83% of the Romanian import-export operations being run within the framework of this particular sector of activity.

More than 16000 navigators were involved in the exploitation of the national fleet, without counting the technical personnel on shore. We also must consider the fact that more than 87% of the 300 maritime ships were built in Romanian shipyards. Beside the maritime transport fleet, Romania also had a powerful oceanic fishing fleet (approximately 63 fishing and technical ships), which was also attended by a large number of navigators and technical personnel. Our paper will refer only to the condition and evolution of the maritime transport fleet.

Like in the large majority of the East-European states, the main purpose of the maritime fleet was to assure the continuous traffic of goods to and from Romania; therefore, all voyages had as starting point and final destination the Romanian ports. No ships were loaned to third parties. Taking into account that within centralized economy this activity was considered a strategically one, the economic efficiency of the voyages was not a determinant factor in choosing the chartering contracts, especially for the import of raw materials. The transport relations were determined by the economical cooperation agreements Romania signed with certain states that exported such raw materials.

From the technical endowment point of view, the large majority of the equipment and onboard outfit originated in the socialist states. In the last years (the 80's) a pronounced tendency manifested in the assimilation of this equipment (especially mechanical equipment) and in producing it in Romania. This policy turned out to be disastrous, the ships' liability (especially from the mechanical point of view) dropping from year to year. The parts supplying became also a major problem, particularly after 1983, when the lack of import parts started crisis situations in this field. This lead to a continuous and constant deterioration of the overall technical condition of the ships; shortly, the new built ships had to confront the same crisis.

All Romanian ships were classified and periodically inspected by the Romanian Shipping Register (RNR). With the passing of time and under the political pressure of the government, RNR had more and more often to transgress the standards and the technical conditions specified by the Registry rules allowing many sub-standard ships to leave the shore (see Graph no.1). We must also remember that between 1970 and 1985 the international standard for the ships' technical condition was much more relaxed than after 1990. The fact that there were many powerful national fleets and that retaining such ships in different ports, as a result of the inspections made by the local port authorities, turned, in the majority of cases, in diplomatic incidents which had to be solved amiably.



Graph no.1: Consequence over the years (1997) of the Romanian Shipping Register tolerance regarding the Romanian ships technical standards

In Romania's case, the only domain in which we can certainly say that there was always an international standard compatible level was the one referring to theoretical and practical training of all navigating personnel. As a result, Romanian ships have never provoked any major incidents and both deck and crew have managed to get through emergency situations generated by the technical condition of their own ships.

3. Crisis of the 1990's

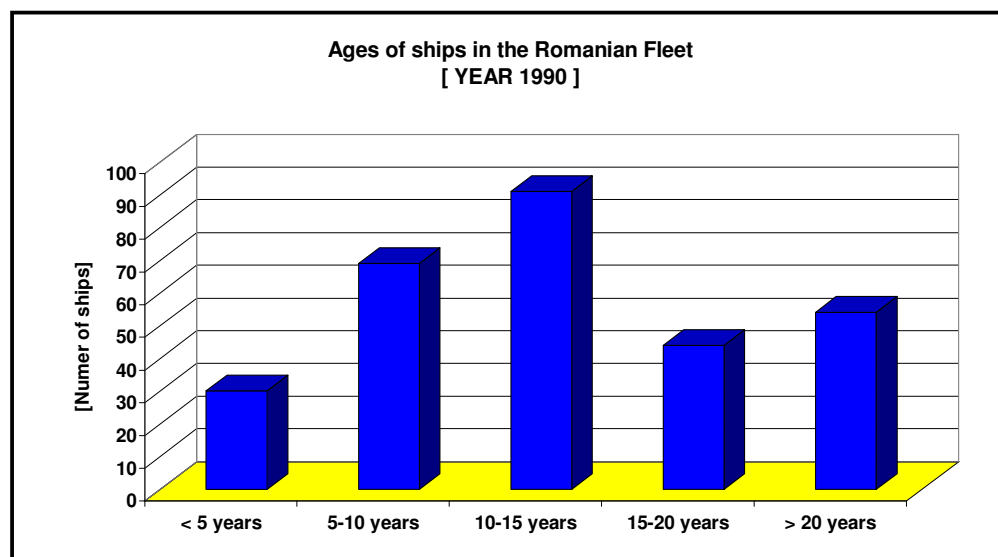
The year 1990 represented a year of major political and economical changes for Romania, as well as for all East-European countries. From the economical point of view, there was a sudden leap from centralized national planned economy to an open market economy submitted to the international competition.

For the maritime transport activity, this change involved mainly the fully awareness of the fact that for the large majority of the established trade routes, the voyages weren't profitable. By the other hand, by dissolving the privileged economic relations of the East European Block, most of the mutual economical facilities disappeared. For the first time, one had to take into account the real cost prices at the international market level.

Having as background a more and more pronounced decrease of the internal industrial production, the import-export operations structure also suffered radical modifications. Goods were no longer imported in quantities sufficiently large to justify transporting them on sea, while the exports decreased substantially. As a result, the traffic of goods began to resume itself to road and railroad transport.

Excepting this macro economical situation, there were also other factors that finally led to the “extinction” of the national maritime fleet.

At the beginning of 1990, there were 288 maritime ships under Romanian flag: 188 cargo ships, 12 oil tankers, 70 bulk carriers, 18 Ro-Ro ships and ferryboats. From the length of service point of view, 18.9% of the vessels had more than 20 years of service, 15.3% of them had 15-20 years of service, 31.1% had 10-15 years of service, 24.1% 5-10 years of service and 10.4% had less than 5 years of service. It can easily be marked that, from the statistical point of view, approximately 66% of the Romanian maritime transport fleet had a less than 15 years length of service, which theoretically, from the exploitation point of view, meant a viable fleet. After 1990, only 3 bulk carriers, whom construction began before 1990, enriched the inheritance of the Romanian fleet (see Graph no.2).



**Graph no. 2: Ages of Romanian ships (1990);
Source: Constantza Chamber of Trade and Shipping**

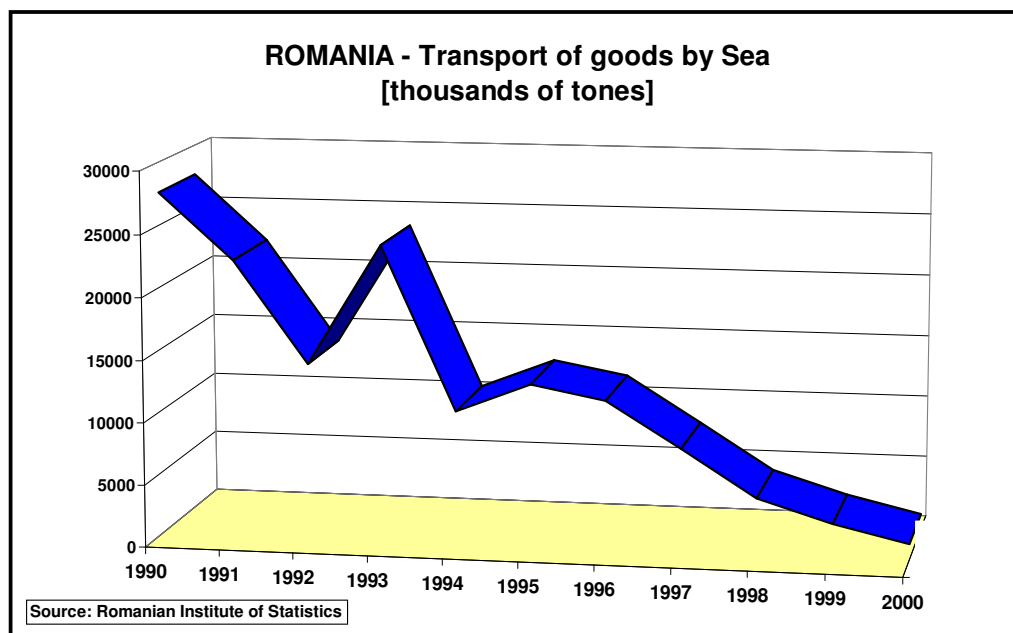
Taking into account that the exploitation of the fleet in the passed years had been done without a rigorous analysis of the costs, it can easily be understood that, at the beginning of 1990, IEFM NAVROM had already accumulated a 29 million dollars debt. Most of this debt consisted in fuel invoices, as the main creditors were Mobil Oil and Castrol.

Between 1990 and 1991, the Romanian fleet continued to function by virtue of inertia, a series of import-export contracts still existing under roll as well as an important money deposit in the state’s budget, which allowed massive imports of general goods (especially home appliances) during these two years. The way the traffic of the goods (import-export) evolved during the 9th decade is shown in Graph no.3.

Despite the sufficiently intense traffic of goods during these first years, IEFM NAVROM got into financial problems and in the impossibility to pay its main contractors. Moreover, because of the lack of money, only 50% of the ships under exploitation had their insurance paid to Lloyd's or P&I.

The first attempt to get out of this financial blockade and to prevent the vessels from being sequestered because of the IEFM NAVROM debt was the dividing, in 1991, of the unique company IEFM NAVROM into 3 shipping companies, which also accounted public capital: NAVROM, ROMLINE and PETROMIN.

NAVROM held the majority of small and middle cargoes, ROMLINE owned large cargoes and the Ro-Ro and ferryboat ships, while PETROMIN included transport vessels for bulk solid and liquid goods.



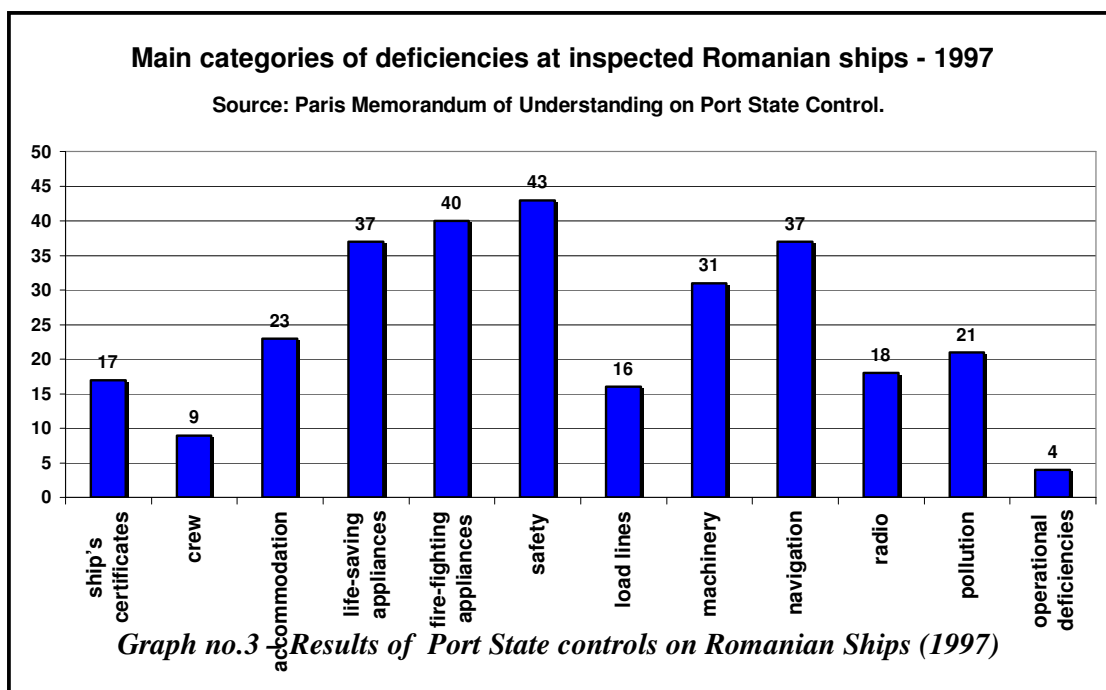
Graph no. 3: Decline of the Romanian maritime transport (1990 – 2000)

PETROMIN was the largest of the navigation companies, considering not only the number of the vessels owned, but also the number of mariners. This fleet was considered to be strategically for Romania, taking into account that through it approximately 72% of the import of raw materials necessary for the national economy could be achieved.

But not even the nominated directors for the three transport fleets were professionally prepared and trained to face the management of such a large number of vessels. Based on some economic criteria of efficiency and by the virtue of inertia they still waited for a substantial support from the state to cover the economical losses. On the other hand, the lack of experience in the open market economy area led to the ending of many contracts with foreign companies (ERMIS, Kasos Maritime, Petroclav, etc.) meant to exploit the ships which finally turned out to be unfeasible or even disastrous from the financial point of view.

Additionally to the general economic situation of Eastern Europe, came the IMO policy consisting in sharpening the technical norms for maritime ships and in the detailed inspection of the vessels by the port authorities, which shortly led to the arresting of a large number of Romanian ships in foreign ports (see Graph no.4). Therefore, between 1992 and 1996, from the number of ship disorders point of view, Romania entered as second the IMO statistics (excepting the fleets under flag of convenience).

The arresting of ships in foreign ports increased the debt quantum of the three shipping companies (which ever since their setting up took over proportionally the debts of the ex-IEFM NAVROM) and the commercial litigation with the charterers were being lost mainly by the ship owners. The state didn't involve in the solving of the maritime transport companies' financial crisis and the absence of Romanian banks specialized in the shipping activity led to the impossibility of obtaining credits which could allow the solving of the situation on a short term.



Graph no. 4: Main types of deficiencies discovered by Port State Control to Romanian ships (1997)

The only solution the managers of the three navigation companies found to cover part of the debts and to save some ships from the sequester was to sell as scrap most of the ships with more than 15 years of service. The way these transactions were effected generated a series of suspicions, which lately materialized in penal inquiries; most of the three navigation companies' managers were arrested and subsequently condemned for different periods of time.

At the end of 1999, the state held propriety rights only on 78 vessels, from which less than 30% could still be exploited without major problems and sold later on to private shipping companies from Romania.

The actual results of the activity of these three shipping companies, with integral public capital, led them to declaring, one after another, the bankruptcy situation in which they were in; therefore, at the beginning of 2002, there were practically no Romanian shipping companies with state capital in function.

NAVROM started the bankruptcy procedure on 01.03.1999, only 54 of the initial 116 ships still existing in its inheritance, from which 24 ships were held in arrest in foreign ports, with approximately 300 navigators onboard. NAVROM's debt solely to Romanian banks reached more than 32 million dollars.

ROMLINE was declared bankrupted on 26.11.2001, only 8 ships remaining from the initial 86 and cumulating a debt of over 18.5 million dollars.

The financial situation of PETROMIN was somehow better than the other's but the company had lost or sold all the 87 ships; therefore, in 2002 PETROMIN owned practically no ships.

We must also take into account that between 1992 and 2000, there were also over 25 shipping companies with private capital which set up and functioned for a longer or shorter period of time simultaneously with the three navigation companies with state capital. These companies took over ships by signing bare boat contracts with state companies and exploited them mostly inefficient. Because these new-set up companies had no sufficient financial capital, they shortly reached pay impossibility, losing their ships in different foreign ports, which amplified an accelerated the damage caused to state companies.

At this time (2003) there are 8 navigation companies functioning in Romania, with integral private capital, which manage a number of approximately 40 vessels, from which only 25 under Romanian flag.

4. Seafarers Condition

As shown in the first chapter, in 1990 Romania had over 16000 seafarers working on board Romanian ships, with 100% Romanian crews. 40% of them were deck, engine, electrical and radio officers. On shore, we had another 2500 employees, working in the administration and technical departments of the shipping company IEFM NAVROM.

For more than a decade (1975-1990), around 250 deck officers, 150 engine officers and 90 electrical officers graduated the Romanian maritime high education system each year. The national maritime and ocean fishing fleets hired all of them.

Beside the financial losses, the 90's economic crisis of the Romanian maritime transport also had a strong social impact. Even if the entire Romanian economy had a lot of problems, the seafarers' social category was one of the first to be affected by the major reduction of the working places.

In accordance with the Romanian naval Authority database, in 2000 we had around 8000 registered mariners (60% officers). Statistically speaking, we can say that in twelve years we lost 50% of the seafarers, despite the fact that this profession remained highly attractive for Romanians. Chronologically, there were several stages surpassed by the Romanian seafarers in order to find or maintain their jobs.

Between 1990 and 1993, while the national merchant fleet continued to sail, in conditions relative similar to those before 1990, the managers of the public shipping companies ceased to enroll new seafarers (mainly ratings). In parallel, all the mariners that fulfilled the legal requirements for pension were forced to retire. In the same time, the number of new enrolled graduates from the maritime university was reduced with 60%. These graduates' chance was the 1989 shifting of the Romanian maritime high education system from the 4 years of study, to the 5 years of study, in order to award the graduates with a full engineering diploma. This diploma allowed them to find jobs on shore, in the maritime field or in other technical domains of the economy.

The "explosion" of private initiatives offered another opportunity. In Romania, a few thousand small & medium size enterprises (SMSs) were established between 1992 and 1996. These SMSs absorbed a small number of sailors, but around 15% of the seafarers abandoned the sea and started their own private business. Many of these small businesses (55%) had no connection with the water transport. To be honest, we have to say that the major part of these businesses set up by seafarers failed in the next 4-6 years, due to the lack of managerial experience in the open market competition. After 1999, some of the former officers who had failed with their own firms, returned on sea, to their true profession.

Starting from 1994/1995, some Romanian mariners understood there were job opportunities for them in the international fleet also. The first sailors that tried to find such jobs were members of the crews that had already worked on board Romanian ships managed by joint-venture companies as CASOS (Romanian-Greek) or PETROCLAV (Romanian-Norwegian) in 1992/1993. These seafarers had thereby the opportunity to work under regulations and management rules at international standards and learned a lot of new things regarding the life onboard the international fleet.

Another part of the Romanian seafarers, that had already difficulties in finding jobs onboard Romanian ships, enrolled on small ships owned by owners from the Middle East and sailed in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

In both cases, the employment arrangements were mainly made by a direct agreement between the owner and the seafarer, without any legal protection. It is important to mention that in the 1993-1997 period, 70% of the seafarers that succeeded working on foreign vessels, were still on the payroll of the Romanian public shipping companies. They were not declared unemployed, but they were nominated for a non-paid holiday or let to attend at home, while being paid with 25% of the normal salary. The managers of the public shipping companies made no complains against the seafarers who had such sporadically engagements, because these directors were in fact happy for not having to confront with massive social protests (strikes, riots, etc.).

A chance for the Romanian seafarers in finding these temporary jobs was the consequence of the 90's trend in internationalization of crews, both in the international and national fleets (see Table no. 1)

<i>Table No. 1</i>																						
<i>Source: SIRC surveys of crew composition in 1992-93 and 1998-99</i>																						
<i>Percentage contribution of selected nationalities to crews</i>																						
Flag	1992-1993											1998-1999										
	Filipino	Korean	Chinese	Italian	Russian	Croatian	Indian	Polish	British&Irish	Norwegian	German	Filipino	Korean	Chinese	Italian	Russian	Croatian	Indian	Polish	British&Irish	Norwegian	German
Panama	17	16	12	10	8	7	-	4	5	-	-	46	5	12	-	1	<1	6	2	1	<1	<1
Liberia	27	10	-	1	9	10	12	2	4	1	-	32	<1	8	-	7	4	7	2	2	2	3
Bahamas	28	-	-	-	-	7	8	25	5	-	-	33	2	<1	<1	4	5	5	15	10	<1	<1
Norway(NIS)	52	-	-	-	3	3	13	6	3	13	-	42	-	-	<1	1	1	7	12	5	24	<1
St.Vincent	26	-	-	-	-	44	-	-	7	-	-	42	-	-	<1	28	21	-	<1	2	-	<1
Bermuda	25	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	33	-	-	57	-	-	-	<1	3	20	1	17	-	-
Antigua	49	-	-	-	4	-	-	18	-	-	21	21	-	-	-	8	1	<1	30	<1	<1	11
Cyprus	31	-	-	4	9	4	2	10	-	-	5	19	-	-	-	17	4	<1	11	1	-	2
Malta	17	-	20	-	-	-	-	5	-	2	-	29	-	-	4	10	3	14	8	<1	<1	<1
Hong Kong		37	-	-	-	-	9	-	28	-	-	15	-	55	-	-	-	28	-	2	-	-

The global statistics regarding seafarers are rare and in many cases based on partial data. Even the ITF (international Transport Workers' Federation) sources are fragmented and mainly based on casuistic. In these circumstances, there is not a clear evidence regarding the East European seafarers integration in the international fleet. For example, the statistics published by ITF and SIRS (Seafarers International Research Centre) made the first reference to Romanian mariners in 1998/1999 (see Table no. 2), when they are mentioned to work in the national fleet of France. In fact, the number of Romanian seafarers that at that moment were enrolled onboard ships under FOC, was 35-40 times greater than the number of Romanians in the French fleet. More than that, after 1998, we can find figures for the Polish or Croats mariners, but no references about the Ukrainian, Bulgarian or Romanian seafarers, which represent, after 2000, the major part of the East European seafarers.

<i>Table No. 2:</i>		
<i>Crew nationalities (officers) aboard selected national flag fleets, 1998-99</i>		
Flag	% nationals	% others
Japan	31	47(Ph) 12(My) 9(In)
Netherlands	49	23(Ph) 8(Indo)
France	43	18(Ph) 18(Cro) 14(Rom)
UK	56	13(Ru) 10(Ph) 6(Pol)
Italy	77	12(In)
Greece	52	34(Ph)
Denmark	43	22(Ph) 17(Pol)

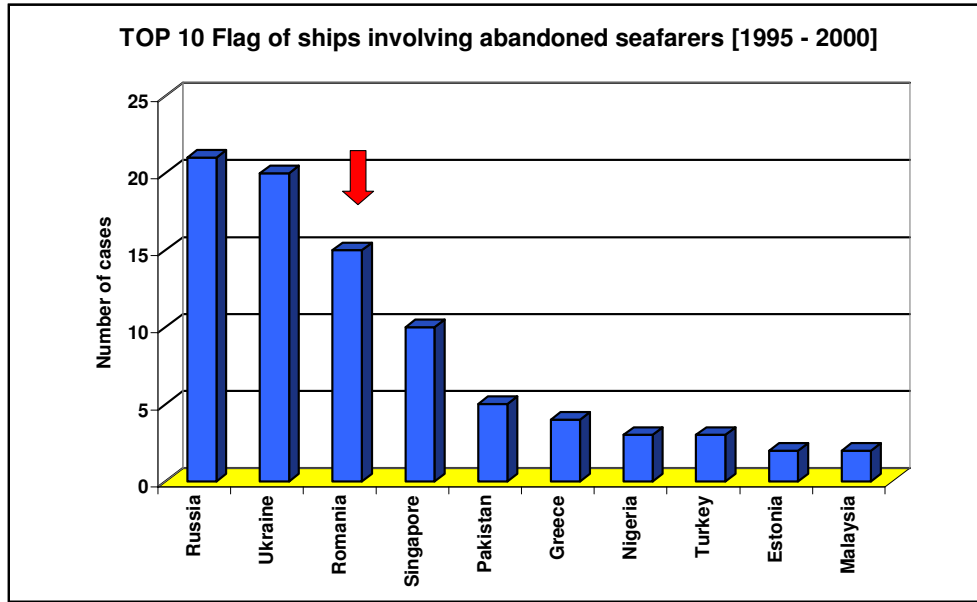
Ph: Filipino; Pol: Polish; My: Myanmar; In: Indian; Indo: Indonesian; Cro: Croatian; Rom: Romanian; Ru: Russian

Source: SIRC surveys of crew composition in 1992-93 and 1998-99

Table No. 3: Abandoned Seafarers on Romanian Flag Vessels 1 July 1995 - 31 December 2000					
Vessels name	Class	No. of crew	Abandoned seafarers Nationality	Port	Reason
GIURGENI	RNR	6	Romanian,Indian	Kandla	4
GORGOVA	RNR	21	Romanian,Ukrainian	Canary_Islands	1,4,5
OPAL	RNR	11	Romanian	Kuwait	1,4
OSCAR VEGA	RNR	9	Romanian	Piraeus	1,4,5
PLOPENI	RNR	11	Romanian	Malta	4
SMIRDAN	RNR	15	Romanian	Singapore	4
TARCAU	RNR	19	Romanian	Greece	1,4,5
ARDEAL	RNR	15	Romanian	Mongla	1,4
FOCSANI	RNR	16	Romanian	Manila	
NAPOCA	RNR	17	Romanian	Colombo	
OPAL	RNR	11	Romanian	Kuwait	1,4
SOVEJA	RNR	20	Romanian	Orinoco River	4
STAR	RNR	19	Romanian	Susa	4
XENIA	RNR	9	Romanian	Casablanca	4
AVRIG	RNR	8	Romanian	Douala	1,4
Source: ITF Reports 1995 – 2000					
<i>Reasons why seafarers were abandoned:</i>					
<i>1 = Ship arrested (by creditors); 2 = Ship detained (by authorities due to safety deficiencies)</i>					
<i>3 = Shipwreck ; 4 = Non payment of wages, food, bunkers etc; 5 = Company dissolved/bankrupt</i>					

For NAVROM, PETROMIN and ROMLINE, the major problems and great concerns were related to the increasing number of own ships retained or detained in various ports of the world. Many of these ships' crews (see Table no.3 and Graph no.5) were in desperate conditions (without water, food, fuel). Theoretically, not all these ships were at that moment managed by one of the three Romanian public shipping companies. Many of these ships were hired (bare boat contracts) by new established private Romanian shipping companies. These small owners had not the financial strength to solve the claims of the ships managed by them and were forced to abandon these ships in the detention ports. Finally, all costs and expenses derived from the lost of ships and repatriation of crews were supported by the public shipping companies, because they were, de facto, the owners of these vessels.

Only after 1998 big crewing companies (Zodiac, Barber, Fair Play, Barclav) opened branches in Romania and started to recruit Romanian seafarers on legal bases (signed contracts, insurance, taxes, etc.). Year after year, the number of Romanian seafarers employed through these crewing companies steadily increased, the beneficiary owners being pleased by the professionalism of the Romanians. In many cases, Romanians were preferred instead of Russians, Ukrainians and even Polish sailors, due to their adaptability to the working relations and social environment specific for multinational crews.



Graph no.5: Romania was on the 3rd place (1995-2000) among national fleets, regarding the number of abandoned seafarers

5. Analysis and Conclusions

Despite the global economic stagnation and even recession periods in some parts of the world, the world fleet continued to grow in the last ten years, in respect of number of vessels and also in tonnage. Another reason of confidence regarding the labour market offer for the Romanian seafarers is represented by the increasing trend of the owners to have on board their ships highly trained professional seafarers. This policy emerges mainly in respect of the officer's corp.

The safety of ships, mainly after some of the past years' accidents, involving the lost of many lives or disastrous effects upon the marine environment, represents today a major concern for owners, irrespective of their ship's flag. Some countries, with important national and international fleets, decided to undertake practical measures for supporting owners' efforts to maintain competitive ships. By awarding subventions or fiscal facilities, these states want to cover the owners' over-costs implied by the hiring of well-trained crews and to maintain the technical state of their ship over the international required standards.

These political measures, combined with the pressure wield by IMO in the field of maritime education and training (STCW 95 Convention), will restraint the number of seafarers from Eastern Asia in favor of East European crews. Speaking about the seafarers' level of training, we have to emphasize that Constantza Maritime University had foreseen from 1994 this change of attitude when the STCW 95 Convention was still in project and debate phase. Consequently, year after year, we tried to improve the level of knowledge of our students, in order to be well up for the existing international maritime officers' labour market requirements.

Before 1990, the maritime students came from almost all parts of the country, but after 1995, the enlisted geographical area restrained very much (Figure no.1). This was mainly the result of the mass-media influence, because during the last ten years the TV stations and the newspapers presented many stories regarding the Romanian maritime fleet's decline and the desperate situation of the Romanian seafarers abandoned in various ports of the world. Most of these stories were ended with the remark that Romania has no more a merchant fleet. Under this mediated pressure, the Romanian Ministry of Education reduced year after year the number of tax-free places assigned to our institution. For example, in 1990-1991, the Constantza Maritime University had allotted for the Navigation Faculty a number of 100 tax-free places. This number has been reduced gradually, only 30 tax-free places existing in 2001.

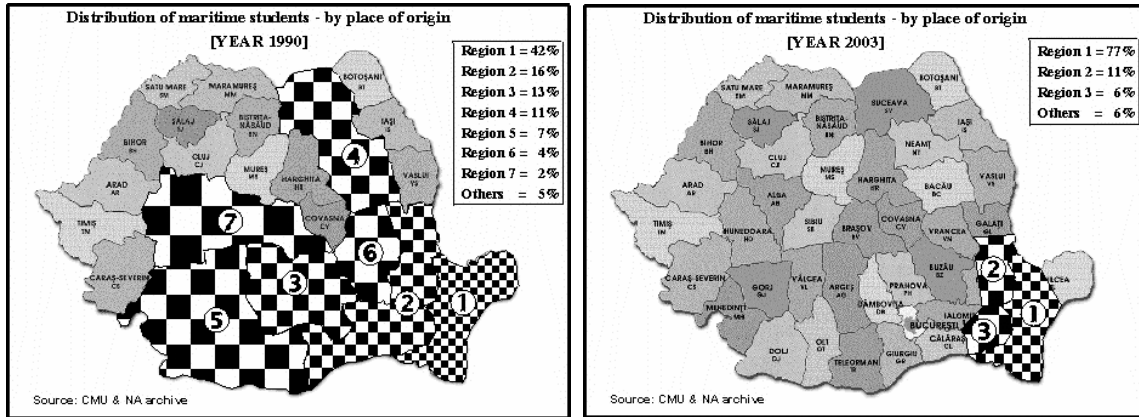


Figure 1: Distribution (by place of origin) of the students enrolled to Constantza Maritime University.

In many occasions, between 1995 and 2000, we were blamed of training students on public money, students that will work after graduation for foreign owners. This Governmental attitude could have killed very easy the Romanian maritime education system. We were lucky that, after 1995, the Romanian education law admitted tax paid places for students also in the public high-education sector. Because the seafarer profession is still an attractive one in Romania, during the last three years the Constantza Maritime University supplemented the 30 tax-free places of the Navigation Faculty with another 60 tax paid places. In these circumstances, in 2003, CMU has a number of students with only 10% lower than in 1990, when Romania had a merchant fleet of 300 ships. In accordance with the CMU statistics, from the 1842 students that graduated our University in the last decade, 51.24% still sail on board ships under different flags, 25.67% are working as engineers in economic fields related to water transport, 13.12% work as engineers in non transport related domains and 6.3% run their own business.

The Romanian politicians needed almost a decade of free economic competition and democratic life, to understand that the free circulation of the labour force could be a very important economic and social factor for a country in transition. In September 2001, the deputy Aurel Daraban (also the President of the Constantza Chamber of Commerce and Navigation) made the first statement in the Romanian Parliament regarding the need of governmental support for the seafarers' integration on the world job market. He asked for practical measures, based on diplomatic initiatives, in order to settle agreements with European countries as France, Norway, Greece, Italy, Holland, for the Romanian cadets and seafarers enrollment. More than that, he asked for governmental monitoring of the activity of

the 58 crewing companies that are working now in Romania. The crewing companies with best results in the last five years must be identified and a governmental lobby must be made for them in order to increase their relationships with the owners from European countries that could hire Romanian seafarers. Another interesting remark of the deputy was that in 2001, in the Romanian seafarers' branch, the unemployment was 0% and we had no seafarers in need for social assistance.

Besides, in particular talks with representatives of the Romanian Naval Authority and of the Romanian Seafarers' Union, they were optimistic regarding the future for the Romanian seafarers. In accordance with their opinions, in the next 5 years, the number of Romanian seafarers employed in Western European countries will increase with at least 25%. More than that, they estimated that in the next 10 years, a number of 12 (twelve) Romanian private shipping companies will grow steadily and they will have the financial power to own and manage a total fleet of 52-68 well-equipped ships. From this fleet, new build ships will represent 11%.

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