



Suomen Varustamot  
Rederierna i Finland  
Finnish Shipowners' Association

# EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY FOR THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY



## Contents

OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY .....	2
CURRENT SITUATION.....	2
KEY PRIORITIES .....	3
1. Workplace culture in transition .....	3
2. Diversity in all positions .....	5
3. Ensure zero tolerance of all forms of harassment, discrimination, violence and bullying. ....	6
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS .....	7

## OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY

Non-discrimination is a fundamental right enjoyed by all people. The Finnish Constitution states that no one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the grounds of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns his or her person. Provisions on gender-based discrimination, equality between women and men and improving the position of women particularly in working life are set out in the Act on Equality between Women and Men.

All employers have a duty to actively promote equality and develop genuinely non-discriminatory working conditions and practices. Provisions on employers' obligation to promote non-discrimination are laid down in the Non-Discrimination Act. An equality and non-discrimination plan needs to be prepared for all workplaces with more 30 employees.

The Board of the Finnish Shipowners' Association discussed community culture in the workplace at its strategy meeting on 18 April 2024. At the meeting, the Board reviewed studies carried out on the subject and the best practices employed by the Danish Shipowners' Association in promoting equality and non-discrimination and preventing bullying. The Board unanimously agreed that there should be zero tolerance for bullying and that workplaces in the shipping sector need to be equal and non-discriminatory. To achieve this, a lot of work still remains to be done. Key measures identified at the meeting to accomplish this were extensive in-house training concerning the work culture, cooperation with employee unions, for example by drawing up a joint action programme, and a joint equality and non-discrimination policy to be drawn up by the Finnish Shipowners' Association for adoption across the shipping industry. The policy sets out the Finnish Shipowners' Association's objective, priorities and measures for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the maritime sector.

### OBJECTIVE:

**Everybody working on a ship should be able to feel safe, welcome and valued in the workplace. The objective is to make the sector attractive to young people and substantially increase the number of women engaged in this line of work.**

## CURRENT SITUATION

The operational and management culture of the Finnish shipping industry continues to be influenced by its long and unique history. Its significance cannot be underestimated. As a working environment, a ship differs greatly from a land-based workplace. Given the spatially restricted environment, the importance and meaning of social relationships are highlighted from the individual's point of view. What sort of challenge will the current and future changes pose to corporate culture, HR management and teamwork? Essentially, shipboard work is the same as decades ago.

Over the past 15 years alone, there have been a number of structural changes in crews affecting Finnish shipping lines, the most notable being that mixed crews are now an established fact on cargo vessels. Another consequence of mixed crews is that English has become the common working language. Additionally, due to changes in the operating environment, there will be increasing pressures in the near-term future to improve crew skills and ways of working.

Sarivaara's thesis 'Leadership in Seafaring' (2019) highlights the need for developing the management culture in the shipping industry. The clearest finding of the study was made when seafarers were asked if there was any need for changes in the shipboard interaction and management practices. The answer was a resounding Yes. Other studies have also underlined the need to develop the interaction and leadership culture.

Both Finnish and international studies have uncovered cases of discrimination and bullying in the workplace. This is more common with women than men. By contrast, experiences of discrimination do not seem to be due to the subject's cultural background (mother tongue). According to the study 'Bullying and harassment in the Danish fleet' (CMSS Research report, 2023), in more than half of the cases (60%) the perpetrator was a colleague of equal rank. While the problem is being addressed by shipping companies, a lot of work remains to be done to ensure that every crew member is able to feel safe, welcome and valued in the workplace.

It is important to note that the problem of discrimination and inappropriate behaviour stems from the workplace and its culture as a whole, i.e., from all crew categories. The challenge facing the management is that the cases are not addressed and dealt with. Aside from the workplace community, other parties involved, such as passengers, should also be taken into account as a factor influencing the community.

In early 2019, the Finnish Shipowners' Association, together with the Seafarers' Pension Fund and the Finnish Seamen's Mission, launched a leadership training programme called LOBAS, which focuses on interaction in human resources management. By the summer of 2024, a total of around 100 officers or supervisors had completed the nearly year-long Deep Lead Programme. Aside from enhancing the management skills of the participants, the programme also provided a wealth of knowledge on maritime culture and its development.

A recently completed follow-up study shows a significant positive change in the operational and management culture across the shipping industry in all areas in which performance was measured. On average, leadership skills and overall shipboard atmosphere improved significantly compared to the 2019 survey.

## KEY PRIORITIES

### 1. Workplace culture in transition

We are facing the biggest change in working life for decades. Crises and the related uncertainty, digitalisation and the resulting changes in the ways of working as well as skills and labour shortages represent changes that can only be tackled by improving working life. Competition for labour intensifies both within and between sectors. How will we be able to ensure a high level of job satisfaction and retain employees? What to do to attract young people and new skilled workers? When young people are in a position to choose a future career from a wide range of options in a field that guarantees employment after graduation, there are numerous other factors aside from pay that influence the choice.

Several studies show that young people want their work to be meaningful and consistent with their own values. In particular, young people place more emphasis than previous generations on how interesting the work is as well as self-fulfilment, a pleasant working environment and the work-and-life balance. Above all, work should be meaningful, stimulating and interesting. Young people do not perform work for its own sake; what is more important is that the work has a purpose. The more highly educated a young person is, the greater the work-related expectations. According to the 2022 Youth Future Report, more than 80% of young people find that the content of work is more important than pay. The report shows that the main factors influencing their choice of a future career are reasonable working hours, a safe and pleasant working environment as well as nice fellow-workers and managers. Almost 90% of young people say that they want to work in an environment where all people are valued and treated equally.

Leadership is a highly important part of any organisational culture. Evidence shows that it is the most critical and, in fact, the only function that can influence the overall workplace culture. Leadership culture needs to be capable of redirection in order to modify the organisational culture as a whole, if necessary. Leadership culture is directly related to coping and wellness at work as well as productivity.

Young people's expectations regarding working life and the workplace community have changed compared to previous generations. As new talent enters the workforce, the working life and workplace culture are in transition. It is important to understand that the same change of culture is taking place onboard ships. In the future, inclusive people management will only increase in importance even in the shipping sector. In terms of its attractiveness as a line of work, it is of great significance how shipping is perceived from the outside and from within. An equal and non-discriminatory workplace community, where no one is bullied, harassed or discriminated against, should be a fundamental requirement when working on land and at sea.

In shipping, a young person's first contact with the working world is often through internship completed as part of studies. The first internship period has a big impact on the young person's perception of the shipping sector and their motivation to continue studies.

The workplace culture will not change unless the change is launched by the shipping company. **The change in culture needs to be integrated into daily operations both at shipping companies and onboard ships.**

**Actions:**

- Continue the LOBAS leadership training programme systematically and include a module on equality and non-discrimination.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association in collaboration with the Seafarers' Pension Fund and the Finnish Seamen's Mission, shipping companies
- Develop and harmonise internship procedures in order to ensure a positive internship experience.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association, Harjoittelumyly Onboard Training Association, shipping companies
- Put in place a training programme for the entire personnel (including land organisations) focusing on the recognition of everyone's responsibility for their own behaviour in the workplace in order to eradicate harassment, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Shipping companies
- Appoint a Cultural Change Task Force in the Finnish Shipowners' Association which will regularly report to the Board on developments in the sector.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association

## 2. Diversity in all positions

A diverse workplace is an asset to any company with zero tolerance for bullying, harassment and discrimination. To make the shipping industry an attractive workplace, we need to move on from words to action. Promoting diversity is an ongoing process that is never fully completed. **A diverse, equal and non-discriminatory workplace community is the best way of attracting and retaining people in the shipping industry!**

The shipping industry cannot afford to ignore diversity. Diversity is a broad term covering people's varied backgrounds, family situations, world views, opinions, age, religion, skin colour, sexual orientation and gender. Hence, diversity is more than just external characteristics. It can be a visible or invisible feature or a variable or immutable characteristic.

Shipping is an international industry where different cultures and nationalities meet. Consequently, it is of primary importance to consider and respect different cultures and backgrounds.

Special attention should be paid to preventing discrimination of gender and sexual minorities, and information about diversity should be distributed within workplaces. The special needs of gender and sexual minority groups should be recognised. Active efforts should be made to increase the percentage of women in shipping.

Many parents with young children stop working at sea because it is extremely difficult to combine work and family life. Work-and-life balance should therefore be supported through various arrangements. Especially in the case of parents with small children, efforts should be made to put in place flexible arrangements that permit working at sea.

Moreover, working on ships should also be attractive to those returning to this line of work after having accumulated experience in other fields of activity.

A diverse workplace community is not only a thriving community, but also a productive and innovative one. The benefits offered by diversity should be discussed and shared openly.

### Actions:

- Launch a social media campaign targeting young people to provide information about the shipping industry and the job opportunities it offers. One of the campaign priorities is to attract women to this line of work.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
- Consider gender balance in the recruitment process.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Shipping companies
- Ensure pay equality.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association, shipping companies
- Assess the need to make job titles gender-neutral.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
- Facilitate the renewal of certificates for those returning to this line of work in consultation with maritime training institutes and the authorities.  
  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association in collaboration with training institutes and the authorities.

### 3. Ensure zero tolerance of all forms of harassment, discrimination, violence and bullying

**The Finnish Shipowners' Association and its affiliated shipping companies are committed to zero tolerance of all forms of harassment, discrimination, violence and bullying.** Additionally, it is important to understand that each individual in the workplace is personally duty-bound to promote equality and non-discrimination through their own behaviour and to address inappropriate conduct.

The Finnish Shipowners' Association and the Finnish Seafarers' Union have signed an ancillary agreement regarding unfair treatment in the workplace. The agreement contains definitions and guidelines to eradicate inappropriate behaviour onboard ships.

This programme serves as a tool for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the world of shipping. The programme offers tools and encourages shipowners and seafarers to take action to advance equality, non-discrimination in working life as well as diversity. Ultimately, the programme seeks to eradicate all cases of harassment, discrimination, violence and bullying in the shipping industry. The Finnish Shipowners' Association, together with its member companies, work on a daily basis to ensure equality and non-discrimination in shipping. Shipping is a line of business in which everybody should be able to feel safe, welcome and valued in the workplace.

#### **Actions:**

- Establish a model of direct intervention consisting of whistle-blowing channels, early intervention procedures and a clearer process for holding individuals to account in order to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for disruptive behaviour.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association, shipping companies
- Draw up a Best Practices Guide in cooperation with employee unions.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
- Conduct regular surveys among seafarers on bullying and harassment.  
RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association

## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. Have the Finnish Shipowners' Association prepare a joint equality and non-discrimination policy for adoption by shipping companies. Have the shipping lines take account of the policy in their respective policies and actions. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association and shipping companies
2. Develop maritime training to meet the policy objectives. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association and educational institutions
3. Continue the LOBAS leadership training programme systematically and include a module on equality and non-discrimination. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association in collaboration with the Seafarers' Pension Fund and the Finnish Seamen's Mission, shipping companies
4. Develop and harmonise internship procedures in order to ensure a positive internship experience. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association, Harjoittelumyly Onboard Training Association, shipping companies
5. Put in place a training programme for the entire personnel (including land organisations) focusing on the recognition of everyone's responsibility for their own behaviour in the workplace in order to eradicate harassment, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour. RESPONSIBILITY: Shipping companies
6. Appoint a Cultural Change Task Force in the Finnish Shipowners' Association which will regularly report to the Board on developments in the sector. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
7. Launch a social media campaign targeting young people to provide information about the shipping industry and the job opportunities it offers. One of the campaign priorities is to attract women to this line of work. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
8. Consider gender balance in the recruitment process. RESPONSIBILITY: Shipping companies
9. Ensure pay equality. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association, shipping companies
10. Assess the need to make job titles gender-neutral. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
11. Facilitate the renewal of certificates for those returning to this line of work in consultation with maritime training institutes and the authorities. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association in collaboration with training institutes and the authorities.
12. Establish a model of direct intervention consisting of whistle-blowing channels, early intervention procedures and a clearer process for holding individuals to account in order to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for disruptive behaviour. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association, shipping companies
13. Draw up a Best Practices Guide in cooperation with employee unions. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association
14. Conduct regular surveys among seafarers on bullying and harassment. RESPONSIBILITY: Finnish Shipowners' Association