



Navigating towards an inclusive and sustainable maritime future: Perspectives of young professionals

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What does an inclusive transition to a sustainable maritime industry mean to you and what are your recommendations to industry leaders and policymakers on how this could be achieved for future generations?

Responding to this prompt, 112 young maritime professionals and students laid out their vision of an inclusive transition towards a sustainable shipping industry as part of the Global Maritime Forum's Future Maritime Leaders essay competition. The essayists provided concrete, feasible and promising action plans for a successful inclusive transition. Although their ideas varied, all put collaboration at the heart of this roadmap. Collaboration between on- and offshore workers, policymakers and commercial managers, developing and developed countries, young and old. To turn this inclusive transition into a reality for the maritime industry, the essayists suggested:

Developing the workforce and attracting talent

Shipping's transition towards a sustainable future starts with a 'best-in-class' workforce. To attract the top talent in each field, shipping must become more attractive to females, the young generation, and nationals from developing countries. Educational programmes, such as allowing youth to travel aboard merchant cargo ships and collaborations with academic institutes, can increase awareness and popularity of shipping as a career choice. Furthermore, accessibility and inclusivity of training and upskilling offerings need to be enhanced to ensure that workers' skillsets keep up with technological advancements.

Collaborating in action

Teamwork makes the transition work. Shipping's transition can only succeed if all relevant stakeholders move in the same direction. Robust cross-border, cross-generation, and cross-company collaboration is needed for facilitating knowledge transfers, capacity building, and the sharing of best practices. It is particularly important to foster a close collaboration between developing and developed countries, as developing countries are often hit hardest by the impacts of shipping's transition.

Enforcing effective governance

An inclusive transition towards sustainability needs a clear direction. This direction can come in the form of strategic domestic and international frameworks that serve as guides to all stakeholders involved in shipping's transition. This ensures that interests and efforts along the maritime value chain are aligned and no one gets left behind. Green investment schemes, a Pigouvian tax model, or a "Maritime Trade Certified Scoreboard" are just a few examples of such frameworks.

INTRODUCTION: Plotting an inclusive transition

Half of the world's population is under the age of 30. Suffice it to say, most maritime decision-makers, be it in boardrooms or the General Assembly of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), are substantially older than that. While the experience of today's leaders is an incredible resource, it is equally as important to listen to the voices of shipping's new generation. It is their future that depends on a successful transition towards a sustainable maritime industry.

That is why the Global Maritime Forum gave young maritime enthusiasts and aspiring leaders between the ages of 18 to 30 the opportunity to make their case for an inclusive transition to a zero-emission maritime industry as part of the 2023 edition of the Future Maritime Leaders essay competition.

While there is no universal definition for an inclusive transition, the young authors shared their own ideas on what such a transition could look like in the maritime industry. In their essays, they highlighted what is important to them and raised potential issues to ensure that the transition is inclusive at all levels of governance. Most notably, the essays offered specific, measurable, actionable, and impactful recommendations to maritime industry leaders and policymakers.

While the backgrounds of the essayists stretched far and wide, they seemed to agree on one thing: A truly inclusive transition is one in which developing countries and their maritime industries are adequately supported with access to innovation and technology through collaboration and partnerships. It should also increase employment opportunities, gender equality, and social inclusion while addressing the generational gap in the maritime industry and facilitating sustainable economic development and human well-being.

The top three winners of this essay competition were invited to join industry leaders and organisations at the Global Maritime Forum's Annual Summit 2023 in Athens. There, they had the chance to share their vision in a well-attended chatroom session, participate in discussion groups, and, most importantly, share the vision of the future maritime leaders.

This report provides an overview of the key findings from the Future Maritime Leaders 2023 essay competition, offers detailed insights into the participation statistics, and highlights the prominent core ideas that emerged. Emphasising the significance of the essays, this analysis aims to illuminate the diverse perspectives and innovative concepts presented by participants.

Navigating the journey

In their essays, the Future Maritime Leaders clearly laid out how a sustainable and inclusive transition of the maritime industry could look. Coming from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds, the participants were united in suggesting a holistic approach that encompasses the three pillars of sustainability – environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability. Their voices amplified the urgency for solutions that not only prioritise long-term economic growth but also protect the environment and promote the general welfare of society. This echoes the objective of the Global Maritime Forum and underscores the importance of proactively shaping a sustainable future of shipping, the backbone of economic development worldwide.

Transforming the maritime industry, the lifeblood of the world's globalised economy, is no easy feat. However, ten key strategies emerged from the essays, centred around three cross-cutting themes: employment and workforce development, diversity and inclusion, and effective governance and green policies. All proposed strategies are anchored in collaboration, innovative thinking, and progressive policymaking. The future leaders also acknowledged the potential

negative impacts of a net-zero transition and stressed that each strategy should be targeted at supporting countries that are vulnerable to these side effects.

Employment and workforce development

The transition of the maritime industry poses a workforce challenge. When technological development outpaces skill development, bottlenecks are created, and unemployment, deskilling, and technological gaps can ensue. Hence, a truly inclusive transition must ensure that future maritime professionals are best prepared to navigate a new, sustainable era of shipping. Moreover, an inclusive transition also presents tremendous employment opportunities.

- **Creating quality employment opportunities:** The transition towards sustainable energy sources in maritime operations like commercial shipping, research and survey, port logistics, fishing, etc. has the potential to generate meaningful job opportunities that promote economic empowerment, environmental protection, gender diversity, and social inclusion. The participants pointed to green maritime technologies that can bring about these changes in employment as workers will need to learn new skills to operate in a sophisticated and highly advanced working environment that supports an individual's productivity, efficiency, and proficiency. As a solution, collaboration between the maritime industry and educational institutions to develop specialised training programmes tailored to the evolving needs of sustainable maritime practices was suggested.
- **Training and upskilling programmes:** As green technologies are integrated into maritime operations, and as the labour force begins to have a growing need for proficiency in the use of these types of equipment, stakeholders must strategise on ways to promote effective reskilling and upskilling programmes. Several participants added that these programmes should ensure accessibility to underrepresented groups, like women and young professional , and should support developing countries in making massive training programmes for their workforce. This will create a diverse maritime industry that ensures maximum representation irrespective of race, gender, age or financial background. In addition to inclusive training programmes, emphasis was put on continuous learning and adaptability to keep the maritime workforce abreast of evolving technological advancements. Furthermore, the integration of programmes within training frameworks to facilitate knowledge transfer across generations and enhance practical skills development was considered crucial.
- **Fostering youth engagement and generational collaboration:** Engaging young people and encouraging collaboration across generations is essential for maintaining a dynamic maritime workforce. Initiatives to introduce maritime careers to young individuals, along with mentoring programmes, can facilitate knowledge transfer and spark interest in the sector. One innovative proposal was to offer spare cabins on merchant cargo ships to students and young adults for inexpensive, environmentally friendly travel. This would provide them with first-hand experiences and insights into the maritime industry and potentially inspire them to pursue maritime careers. Additional suggestions included recognising the role of youth as active contributors to the transition, providing platforms for their direct involvement in decision-making processes, and establishing a global network that would connect experienced professionals with young talents to facilitate the exchange of ideas and bridge generational gaps.
- Proactive engagement of seafarers in sustainable practices: An effective strategy for an inclusive transition requires engagement and participation from everyone involved in global maritime transport. Guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN

SDGs), the participants saw a need for companies committed to sustainable shipping to develop activities that evoke a proactive response from seafarers, ashore or on board. These programmes should encompass not just the seafarers but all maritime professionals.

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are key to maximising the potential of human capital. The essayists left no doubt that a successful transition can only be facilitated through promoting maximum representation, encouraging innovation, and building positive communities. To break down social barriers and boost diversity in the industry, participants presented the following points:

- **Promoting gender diversity:** Addressing the significant gender imbalances that hinder women from thriving and prospering in the maritime industry is crucial. When the industry begins to open more doors for women, it effects a collective and positive change in society by adding another source of economic and social contribution. For this to happen, the participants called for additional policies and practices that encourage more women to enter the maritime workforce, ensuring equal career opportunities and a respectful work environment. Beyond policies and practices, creating mentorship networks and support systems to empower women in maritime professions, the young professionals also advocated for fostering an environment of inclusivity and mutual growth as well as collaboration with schools and communities to inspire young girls to consider maritime careers and break down gender stereotypes from an early age.
- **Enhancing social inclusion through policy and awareness:** Many participants emphasised the need for policies that promote inclusivity in the maritime sector. Governments and international bodies were encouraged to implement anti-discrimination laws, gender equality policies, and initiatives to support marginalised groups and communities. Raising awareness about the maritime industry's vital role in the global economy was also seen as pivotal.

Effective governance and green policies

All strategies and approaches require changes in existing policies to guarantee that the industry remains adaptive to the demands of society and responds to the challenges of an inclusive transition. While many policies can still be crafted for other stakeholders and in various levels of governance, the participants stressed the following:

- **Investing in green technologies:** Moving towards alternative fuels such as green hydrogen, biofuels, and shore power will require significant investment and the development of new infrastructures. Essayists viewed shipping's energy transition as a means to create job opportunities, particularly in developing countries that can utilise their natural resources and geographic advantages. Recognising the global nature of the maritime industry, the importance of international collaboration in funding research and development for green technologies was underscored. Advocacy for public-private partnerships to accelerate the deployment of green technologies and infrastructure, ensuring a more rapid and widespread transition was also evident.
- **Implementing a "Maritime Trade Certified Scorecard":** The maritime industry was encouraged to adopt a "Maritime Trade Certified Scorecard," which moves beyond basic measures like quotas or arbitrary emission targets. Based on economist David Ricardo's principles of Political Economy and Taxation, this scorecard evaluates cargo sustainability, attributing direct costs to its environmental and social externalities, and influencing the entire supply chain from production to end-user. It aims to consolidate global policies and

enable a thorough assessment of a ship's impact across ethical, environmental, and social factors, thus enhancing compliance with sustainability standards.

- **Introducing a Pigouvian Tax:** In line with the previous strategy, a **Pigouvian tax**, an economic solution for offsetting negative externalities, was suggested as a key policy mechanism for standardising economic welfare and promoting inclusivity in sustainable maritime practices. The tax would vary based on the sustainability score of the cargo, with the proceeds being used to directly redress impacted parties.
- **Transparency and accountability measures:** The participants emphasised that transparency and accountability in monitoring employment trends, gender representation, and the environmental impact of maritime policies are crucial for assessing progress and guiding future actions.

Empowerment through collaboration and partnerships

The strategies suggested by essayists can only be successfully implemented through collaboration. Since the maritime industry is composed of many stakeholders, robust international partnerships are paramount. Such alliances are essential for facilitating knowledge transfer, capacity building, and the sharing of best practices. The creation of knowledge exchange hubs and innovation centres was suggested to bring together experts from various regions and fields, drive transformative changes in the maritime industry, and provide developing countries with access to advanced maritime technologies and research.

As many of the entrants wrote, investment in sustainable technologies and infrastructure will be key to ensuring equitable benefits for all. To maximise the impact of these investments, cross-border coordination is key. To this end, essayists called on policymakers to provide clear international frameworks and standards to facilitate investments into shipping's energy transition.

Prioritising developing countries

The essays also recognised that shipping's transition towards sustainability comes with its own unique set of challenges, especially for developing countries. For example, seafarer displacement has a significant impact on the national economies of developing countries, particularly regarding remittances and gross domestic product. Further, the young maritime professionals emphasised the need to bridge the gap in technological advancement and innovation between developed and developing countries.

Addressing these issues and empowering developing nations in the maritime industry requires a multifaceted approach centred on collaboration, technological adaptation, and investment in human capital development. These strategies are pivotal for creating a level playing field and ensuring the active participation of developing countries in the global maritime sector's sustainable transition. Not only do developing countries bear the biggest consequences of climate change, they are also most vulnerable to increased shipping costs as a result of decarbonisation regulation. Thus, developing countries must be prioritised in every leg of the journey towards a sustainable shipping industry

Addressing the workforce challenges in developing countries requires a comprehensive approach to human capital development. This includes investing in education and training infrastructure to enhance maritime skills from early childhood through secondary education. One of the three winning essayists proposed an innovative "**Worldwide Crew Pool Concept**" as a centralised system for efficient and sustainable crewing management while reducing carbon-intensive travel methods.

Charting a holistic and inclusive energy transition

The young maritime professionals' essays presented a compelling vision for an energy transition in the maritime sector. Their advocacy went beyond merely switching to cleaner fuels and reducing emissions. Participants advocated for a multifaceted strategy that does not just address environmental concerns but also fosters quality employment opportunities and advances social inclusion and equity.

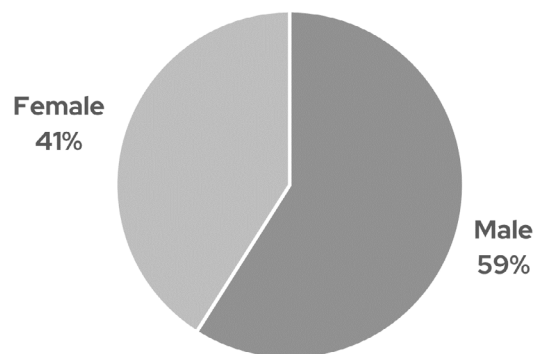
Another key recommendation was the customisation of technological solutions to meet local needs and ensure that developing countries are active participants in maritime sector advancements rather than merely passive recipients. Developed countries were encouraged to engage in technology transfer initiatives, including collaborative projects and training programmes, tailored to the specific challenges of each country.

Demography of participants

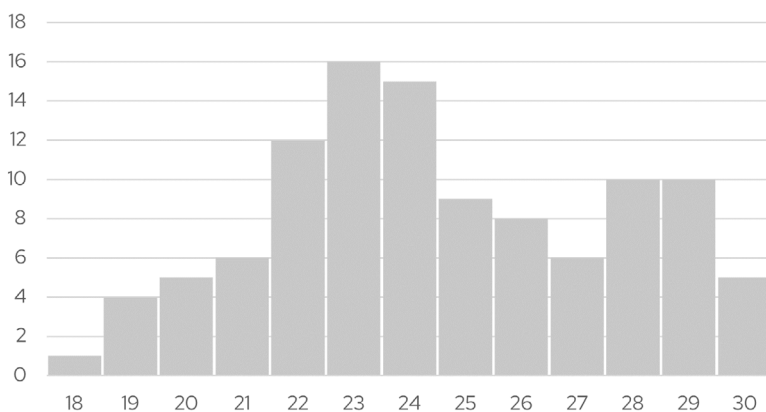
With more than 100 young maritime professionals worldwide offering insightful recommendations on the importance of an inclusive transition to a sustainable maritime industry as part of the Global Maritime Forum's Future Maritime Leaders essay competition, this fifth edition had a wider global reach than previous editions.

The Global Maritime Forum received a total of 112 entries from 37 countries across six continents, which marked a 37% increase in terms of participation by nationalities in comparison to 2022. This global representation included significant contributions from Asia, Africa, and Europe, with the Philippines, Nigeria, and India having the highest number of entries. Female participation surged by 140% compared to 2022 and young women made up 41 percent of all total entries in the latest edition. This indicates a growing confidence and interest of young female maritime professionals to partake in discussions in an industry historically dominated by men. The participants' age distribution suggested a balanced participation among maritime professionals at different stages of their careers and/or education.

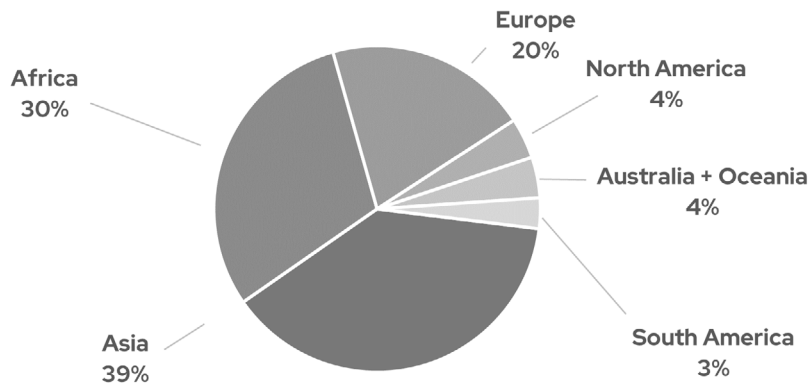
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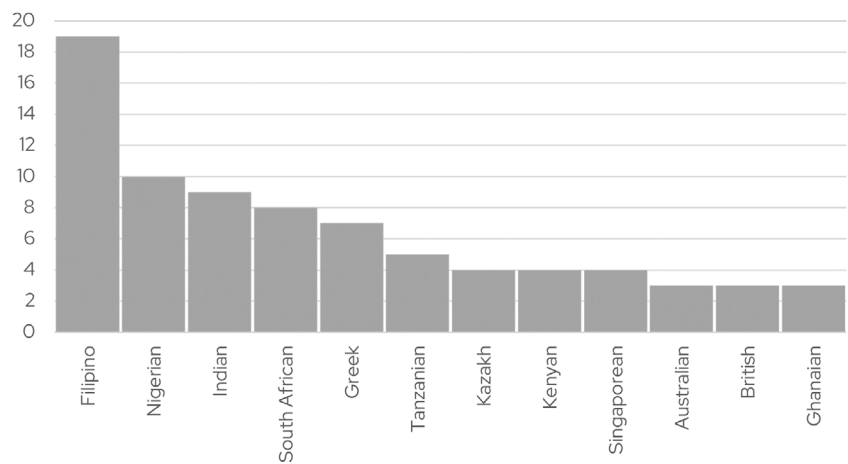
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SUBMISSIONS BY CONTINENT



NATIONALITIES WITH MOST SUBMISSIONS



Conclusion

The 2023 Future Maritime Leaders essay competition not only provided a platform for young professionals under 30 to voice their perspectives on an inclusive transition to a sustainable maritime industry but also illuminated a compelling vision for the future of the sector. The remarkable increase in global participation, with 112 entries from 37 countries, reflects the growing interest and confidence of young maritime professionals, especially among women.

The insights shared by the participants offer a comprehensive view of what an inclusive transition entails. The strategies proposed underscore the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental pillars in shaping a sustainable maritime industry.

The challenges and opportunities presented in the essays underscore the need for collective action, collaboration, and innovative thinking to ensure a successful transition that benefits current and future generations. Moreover, the holistic vision presented by the young maritime professionals goes beyond environmental concerns to encompass economic viability and social equity. It addresses bridging the technological gap between developed and developing countries, customising technological solutions to meet local needs, and investing in human capital development in developing nations as essential components of an inclusive approach.

The message of the essayists is clear: Shipping's next generation looks to the future full of hope and optimism. While the industry's transition bears complex and plentiful challenges, it also comes with enormous potential and opportunity. The maritime industry stands at a crucial crossroads, and the insights of these young leaders serve as a guidepost for charting a course towards a more inclusive and sustainable future. All that's left to do is to follow them.