Baseline study on the training and certification requirements for fishers in EU Member States

Final Report

European Maritime, Aquaculture and Fisheries Fund (EMFAF)

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Training and skills enable fishers to be more efficient, resilient, sustainable and work safer. This is important for one of the world's most dangerous professions. It is also important in making the profession more attractive in the EU at a time when generational renewal is a major concern. It is also a key plank of the social dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Fisheries and Oceans Pact.

A number of existing international treaties and EU Directives already provide frameworks for fisher training and skills, but the degree of compliance with these is not well documented. Moreover, despite the European Commission's urging, EU Member States have been slow to ratify the key international treaty in this area, namely the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) adopted in 1995. Only ten Member States have done so, whereas 22 coastal Member States have fishing fleets.

The absence of a harmonised EU-wide approach to the basic safety competences, safe navigation, and safe propulsion of fishing vessels that the STCW-F describes complicates the mutual recognition of certificates, posing barriers to labour mobility and increasing administrative burdens. This lack of alignment also impacts safety, as training standards and competencies vary widely.

Preparing for a revised STCW-F

With a revised STCW-F due to enter into force on 1 January 2026 for those countries that have ratified the Convention, the European Commission considered it timely to start preparations now, by establishing a baseline on which to consider the potential implementation of the Convention into EU law. That is the purpose of this study, which was designed to provide a comparative analysis of training and certification requirements across the Member States affected.

The analysis drew on a stakeholder survey, interviews and extensive desk research to produce case studies by Member State and comparisons across Member States, as well as a gap analysis of the extent to which Member States would need to upskill or re-skill their fishers if they implemented the provisions of the revised STCW-F.

A complex picture of the state of play

The result is a complex picture of great variability across the Member States, reflecting also the variety of fishing fleets across the EU. While some Member States are predominantly engaged in small-scale coastal fishing on owner-operated fishing vessels, there are also several Member States with significant deep-water fleets run by large businesses. Also, the size of the fishing fleet varies between Member States. Member States vary in the extent to which they apply the STCW-F *de jure* or *de facto,* i.e. they base themselves on the STCW-F without

having ratified it; whilst some have legislation that applies at least in part by extension to fishers, but is based on the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) that all Member States have ratified.

There is also wide variability in the definition of the functions for which training is required and the content of those training courses. In some Member States vocational training is available and in others not. In some cases, training at management level is available in universities, in others it is the domain of specialist nautical colleges and training institutes. The extent to which fisher training is funded by the state at post-secondary level, as opposed to having to be funded by fishers or their employers, with an associated opportunity cost in terms of lost earning capacity while training, also varies.

The variability also extends to the spread of responsibilities for fisher training across ministries responsible for transport or infrastructure, to ministries responsible for the sea or fisheries, and to ministries responsible for education and certification of qualifications.

This posed challenges for the study team in obtaining a clear picture and validation of the research as, in some Member States, it seems as if there is no central source of a complete overview. Information from different parts of government was often incomplete or not known to other parts of the government. Regrettably, moreover, not all Member States cooperated as fully with this study as had been hoped or keep their websites fully up to date, leaving gaps in the analysis that could not be filled despite the study team's best efforts. This has led to variability in the depth of the analysis. Nevertheless, we believe that the outcomes of this study do provide a robust baseline for the Commission's further reflections.

Key findings

A key finding from this analysis is that, notwithstanding the fact that ten Member States have ratified the STCW-F in its current version, there are only five Member States which would have only a limited need for re- or up-skilling (BE, DK, FR, NL, RO) all of which have ratified the STCW-F, while there would be some need in nine Member States (HR, DE, IE, LV, LT, PL, PT, ES, SE) and a substantial need for re- or up-skilling in eight (BG, CY, EE, FI, EL, IT, MT, SI).

A significant issue also emerging from the study is that Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, which currently governs the recognition of certificates of fishers, does not adequately take the needs of this profession into account. Member States have to fall back on taking decisions one-by-one on applications from fishers in other Member States. However, the high variety in training and certification requirements, and the lack of resources to obtain a full understanding of the course content underlying certificates, results in time-consuming and complex procedures in cases where Member States are prepared to take this on, which many appear not willing to do. This is likely to be impeding free movement of labour and is likely to be contributing to making an already unattractive profession, struggling, for example, with replacing an ageing

workforce due to retirements, even more unattractive in competition with the merchant marine or other professions.

The potential advantages and disadvantages of a harmonised approach

The study identified a number of potential advantages and disadvantages to the implementation of the STCW-F on a harmonised basis across the EU. Potential advantages start notably with enhanced safety and resilience of fishers by ensuring consistent training, reducing risks and improving safety for fishers across the EU. In other words, a minimum level of training and certification on which fishers and their employers in all Member States could count. This should make the profession more attractive and aid recruitment. Standardisation could also align training with environmental goals, promoting sustainable fishing practices. This would be in line with the expressed objectives of the revised STCW-F.

Some fears were voiced by stakeholders that a harmonised approach would not adequately take local context into account or unnecessarily burden administrations and/or fishers, particularly where vessel length is predominantly below 24 metres in length, which is a key benchmark for requiring minimum training standards in the STCW-F. However, there are provisions in the STCW-F that apply to all fishing vessel personnel (Chapter 3 of the Convention which sets the basic training requirements for all fishing vessel personnel regardless of vessel size, tonnage, engine power and fishing area) and that it would appear desirable for Member States to implement in the interests of any fisher taking to sea. This would be in the interest of any fisher taking to sea and encountering other maritime traffic, as well as for the safety of the marine environment.

Résumé

Introduction

La formation et des compétences adéquates permettent aux pêcheurs d'être plus efficaces, résilients, de travailler en toute sécurité et de façon durable. C'est important pour l'une des professions les plus dangereuses au monde. Il est également important de rendre la profession plus attrayante dans l'UE à une époque où le renouvellement des générations est une préoccupation majeure. Il s'agit également d'un élément clé de la dimension sociale de la politique commune de la pêche (PCP) et du pacte pour la pêche et les océans.

Un certain nombre de traités internationaux et de directives de l'UE fournissent déjà des cadres pour la formation et les compétences des pêcheurs, mais le degré de respect de ceux-ci n'est pas bien documenté. De plus, malgré l'insistance de la Commission européenne, les États membres de l'UE ont tardé à ratifier le principal traité international dans ce domaine, à savoir la Convention internationale sur les normes de formation du personnel des navires de pêche, de délivrance des brevets et de veille (Convention STCW-F) adoptée en 1995. Seuls dix États membres l'ont fait, tandis que 22 États membres côtiers disposent de flottes de pêche.

L'absence d'une approche harmonisée à l'échelle de l'UE en ce qui concerne la formation et les compétences de base en matière de sécurité, notamment concernant la navigation et la sécurité de la propulsion des navires de pêche décrites dans la STCW-F complique la reconnaissance mutuelle des certificats, constitue un obstacle à la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre et alourdit les charges administratives. Ce manque d'alignement a également des conséquences pour la sécurité étant donné la grande variation dans les normes de formation et des compétences.

Préparation d'une STCW-F révisée

Alors qu'une version révisée de la STCW-F doit entrer en vigueur le 1er janvier 2026 pour les pays qui l'ont ratifiée, la Commission européenne a estimé qu'il était opportun de commencer dès maintenant les préparatifs, en établissant une base de référence sur laquelle envisager la mise en œuvre potentielle de la Convention dans le droit de l'UE. C'est l'objet de cette étude, qui a été conçue pour fournir une analyse comparative des exigences en matière de formation et de certification dans les États membres concernés.

L'analyse s'est appuyée sur une enquête auprès des parties prenantes, des entretiens et des recherches documentaires approfondies pour produire des études de cas par État membre et des comparaisons entre les États membres, ainsi qu'une analyse des lacunes sur la mesure dans laquelle les États membres auraient besoin de renforcer ou requalifier les compétences leurs pêcheurs s'ils mettaient en œuvre les dispositions de la STCW-F révisée.

Un tableau complexe de l'état des lieux

Il en résulte un tableau complexe d'une grande variabilité entre les États membres, reflétant également la diversité des flottes de pêche dans l'UE. Si certains États membres pratiquent principalement la pêche côtière à petite échelle sur des navires de pêche exploités par leur propriétaire, plusieurs États membres disposent également d'importantes flottes en eau profonde gérées par de grandes entreprises. En outre, la taille de la flotte de pêche varie d'un État membre à l'autre. Cette variation s'exprime dans la mesure dans laquelle ils appliquent la STCW-F de jure ou de facto, c'est-à-dire qu'ils se fondent sur la STCW-F sans l'avoir ratifiée, tandis que certains disposent d'une législation qui s'applique au moins en partie par extension aux pêcheurs, mais qui est basée sur la Convention internationale sur les normes de formation des gens de mer, de délivrance des brevets et de veille (STCW) que tous les États membres ont ratifiée.

Il existe également une grande variabilité dans la définition des fonctions pour lesquelles une formation est requise et dans le contenu de ces formations. Dans certains États membres, la formation professionnelle est disponible, dans d'autres non. Dans certains cas, la formation au niveau de la gestion est disponible dans les universités, dans d'autres, elle relève des collèges nautiques spécialisés et des instituts de formation. La mesure dans laquelle la formation des pêcheurs est financée par l'État au niveau postsecondaire, par opposition à celle financée directement par les pêcheurs ou leurs employeurs, avec un coût d'opportunité associé en termes de perte de capacité de gain pendant la formation, varie également.

La variabilité s'étend également à la répartition des responsabilités en matière de formation des pêcheurs entre les ministères responsables des transports ou des infrastructures, entre les ministères responsables de la mer ou de la pêche et entre les ministères chargés de l'éducation et de la certification des qualifications.

Cela a posé des défis à l'équipe de projet pour obtenir une image claire et valider la recherche. Dans certains États membres, il semble en effet qu'il n'y ait pas de source centrale fournissant une vue d'ensemble complète. L'information provenant des différents secteurs du gouvernement était souvent incomplète ou inconnue des autres secteurs du gouvernement. Malheureusement, en outre, tous les États membres n'ont pas coopéré à cette étude aussi pleinement qu'on aurait pu l'espérer ou le fait que leurs sites web n'était pas maintenus entièrement à jour, laissant des lacunes dans l'analyse qui n'ont pas pu être comblées malgré tous les efforts de l'équipe d'étude. Cela a conduit à une variabilité dans la profondeur de l'analyse. Néanmoins, nous pensons que les résultats de cette étude constituent une base de référence solide pour les réflexions ultérieures de la Commission.

Principaux constats

L'un des principaux constats de cette analyse est que, nonobstant le fait que dix États membres ont ratifié la STCW-F dans sa version actuelle, il n'y en a que cinq qui n'auraient qu'un besoin limité de requalification ou de perfectionnement (BE, DK, FR, NL, RO) qui ont tous ratifié la STCW-F, alors qu'il y aurait un certain

besoin dans neuf États membres (HR, DE, IE, LV, LT, PL, PT, ES, SE) et un besoin important de recyclage ou de perfectionnement dans huit pays (BG, CY, EE, FI, EL, IT, MT, SI).

Un problème important qui ressort également de l'étude est que la directive 2005/36/CE relative à la reconnaissance des qualifications professionnelles, qui régit actuellement la reconnaissance des certificats de pêcheur, ne tient pas suffisamment compte des besoins de cette profession. Les États membres doivent se rabattre sur la prise de décisions au cas par cas sur les demandes des pêcheurs d'autres États membres. Toutefois, la grande diversité des exigences en matière de formation et de certification, ainsi que le manque de ressources pour obtenir une compréhension complète du contenu des cours qui sous-tendent les certificats, entraînent des procédures longues et complexes dans les cas où les États membres sont prêts à s'en charger, ce que beaucoup ne semblent pas disposés à faire. Il est probable que cela entrave la libre circulation de la main-d'œuvre et de contribuer à rendre une profession déjà peu attrayante, qui peine, par exemple, à remplacer une main-d'œuvre vieillissante en raison des départs à la retraite, encore moins attrayante face à la concurrence de la marine marchande ou d'autres professions.

Les avantages et les inconvénients potentiels d'une approche harmonisée

L'étude a identifié un certain nombre d'avantages et d'inconvénients potentiels à la mise en œuvre de la STCW-F sur une base harmonisée dans l'ensemble de l'UE. Les avantages potentiels commencent notamment par le renforcement de la sécurité et de la résilience des pêcheurs, en assurant une formation cohérente, en réduisant les risques et en améliorant la sécurité des pêcheurs dans l'ensemble de l'UE. En d'autres termes, un niveau minimum de formation et de certification sur lequel les pêcheurs et leurs employeurs dans tous les États membres pourraient compter. Cela devrait rendre la profession plus attrayante et faciliter le recrutement. La normalisation pourrait également aligner la formation sur les objectifs environnementaux, en promouvant des pratiques de pêche durables. Cela serait conforme aux objectifs exprimés dans la STCW-F révisée.

Certaines parties prenantes ont exprimé des craintes quant au fait qu'une approche harmonisée ne tiendrait pas suffisamment compte du contexte local ou pèserait inutilement sur les administrations et/ou les pêcheurs, en particulier lorsque la longueur des navires est principalement inférieure à 24 mètres, ce qui constitue une référence clé pour exiger des normes minimales de formation dans la STCW-F. Toutefois, la STCW-F contient des dispositions qui s'appliquent à l'ensemble du personnel des navires de pêche (le chapitre 3 de la convention qui fixe les exigences de formation de base pour tout le personnel des navires de pêche, indépendamment de la taille du navire, du tonnage, de la puissance des moteurs et de la zone de pêche) et qu'il semblerait souhaitable que les États membres mettent en œuvre dans l'intérêt de tout pêcheur prenant la mer. Cela serait dans l'intérêt de la sécurité de chaque pêcheur qui est en contact avec le trafic maritime, ainsi que pour la sécurité de l'environnement marin.

Acronyms

Table 1 – List of Acronyms

Please note that this list of acronyms focuses on the report without the Member State two pagers and synopsis, to prevent a long list of Member State specific acronyms are in.

Acronym	Full name
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CoC	Certificate of Competency
CoP	Certificate of Proficiency
DCF	European Commission Data Collection Framework
DWF	Distant-Water Fleet
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EMFAF	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GMDSS	Global Maritime Distress Safety System
GT	Gross Tonnage
GVA	Gross Value Added
HTW	IMO Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping
ILO	International Labour Organization
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing
IMO	International Maritime Organization
KVNR	Koninklijke Vereniging van Nederlandse Reders – Dutch shipowners' association
kW	Kilowatt
LSF	Large-Scale Fleet
MLC	Maritime Labour Convention
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSC	IMO Maritime Safety Committee
MS	Member State
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
SSCF	Small-Scale Coastal Fleet
STA	Swedish Transport Agency
STCW-F	International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel
STCW	International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping
STECF	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries
SOLAS	International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the study

This baseline study on the training and certification requirements for fishers in EU Member States is a data collection exercise and an initial assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a common training and certification standard across the EU.

The main objective is to provide a comprehensive overview with accurate data and information on the overall training and certification systems for fishers in the EU Member States, as well as their relationship to the revised provisions of the STCW-F Convention (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F)).

This study serves as a baseline study, aimed at providing information to identify the state of play of training and certification requirements for work on board fishing vessels in all EU Member States. It compares the current training and certification requirements in different Member States with the updated version of the STCW-F Convention. It includes a trend analysis, showing the differences between different groups of Member States in providing training and certifications to fishers.

The study supports the Commission's analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a common training and certification standard into EU law

1.2. Structure and content of the report

This report is structured in six chapters.

- **Chapter 1** introduces the purpose and main objectives of the study.
- **Chapter 2** provides a brief background and our understanding of the social dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the need to improve safety and working conditions, EU legislation and international agreements governing standards for fisher training, the place of the STCW-F Convention within that context, the rationale for ratification and the state of play of ratification.
- **Chapter 3** presents the methodology and approach used during this study.
- **Chapter 4** gives an overview of the outcomes of the study, including a summary view of the fisheries sector and legislation based on Member State overviews in Annex B, a trend analysis in terms of the extent to which Member States are basing themselves on STCW-F (irrespective of whether they have ratified it or not) and a gap analysis of differences between national frameworks of training and certification and STCW-F.
- **Chapter 5** provides an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the STCW-F in EU law.
- **Chapter 6** presents the overall conclusions of the study.

2. Background

2.1. Our understanding

This section describes our understanding of the background to this assignment by first describing the EU context, i.e. the social dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy addressed in the 2023 Communication on the functioning of the CFP and the need to improve safety and working conditions for EU fishers. It then looks at the international context, i.e. the international conventions on training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers and fishers, and the extent to which certain conventions have already been implemented in EU law, before looking specifically at the STCW-F and the specific issue of mutual recognition of certificates under the STCW-F.

2.1.1. The Fisheries and Oceans Pact's social dimension

In 2023 the European Commission launched the Fisheries and Oceans Pact to future-proof the common fisheries policy (CFP). The CFP aims to ensure long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability for fisheries and aquaculture; the availability of food supplies; and a fair standard of living for fisheries and aquaculture communities[1]. The social dimension of the CFP is acknowledged as one of the fundamental pillars underlying the policy. The 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management'[2] refers to social sustainability as being labour conditions, health and safety, as well as job creation and training, social inclusion and a fair standard of living.

One of the key principles of the "Fisheries and Oceans Pact"[3] in this context is the recognition of the role of fishers and support for the ecological and socio-economic resilience of the sector, notably by making fisheries a more attractive sector for future generations. This key principle is based on the fact that generational renewal within fisheries and aquaculture is considered to be one of the major challenges of the sector.

The Fisheries and Oceans Pact points out that generational renewal: "*can only happen if the sector is perceived as attractive, if difficult working conditions are improved through innovation, if the marine environment is kept biodiverse, clean and healthy, and if our societies recognise fishers and aquaculture producers for the professionalism and service they provide. Fisheries have to be promoted as an attractive career choice, with fishers seen as 'stewards of the sea'. The chance to live an outdoor lifestyle or opportunities for innovative working arrangements, such as linking production to direct sales or tourism, should also be emphasised.*

(1) Common Fisheries Policy: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

(2) The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management (COM/2023/103 final): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0103.

(3) Pact for Fisheries and Oceans, COM/2023/103: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/common-fisheries-policy-today-and-tomorrow-fisheries-and-oceans-pact-towards-sustainable-science_en

Similarly, it is crucial to enhance and increase recognition of the important role of women throughout the EU seafood value chain, from the generation of wealth and employment to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources (COM/2023/103)[4]".

The fisheries and aquaculture supply chains are currently facing significant recruitment difficulties, both in finding and retaining workers[5,6]. Alongside these recruitment difficulties, the average age of people employed in the EU fishing fleet is relatively high. About 59% of those employed in the EU fishing fleet are between 40 and 64 years of age[7] (figure 2.1). This percentage was almost similar for both small-scale fleet (61%) and large-scale fleet (60%). The youngest age class (15-24 years old) did only represent 5% of the total EU fisheries fleet. The large-scale fleet employs 45%, the small-scale fleet 50% and distant water fleet 5% of total fishers in the EU. It is important to acknowledge that the resilience of the European fishing sector depends not only on a sustainable use of fisheries resources, but also mechanisms that attract and support the recruitment of new generations of fishers[8,9]. This study recommended that the policy focus for the near future should particularly address recruitment challenges through improved development of skills, working conditions, gender inclusivity, and targeted financial incentives.

(4) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0103

(5) Section 4.1.1 mentioned as social and cultural aspects among Chapter 4 Policy recommendations: Workshop on the European Green Deal − Challenges and opportunities for EU fisheries and aquaculture, III Food security aspects, October 2023: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/752437/IPOL_STU%282023%29752437_EN.pdf

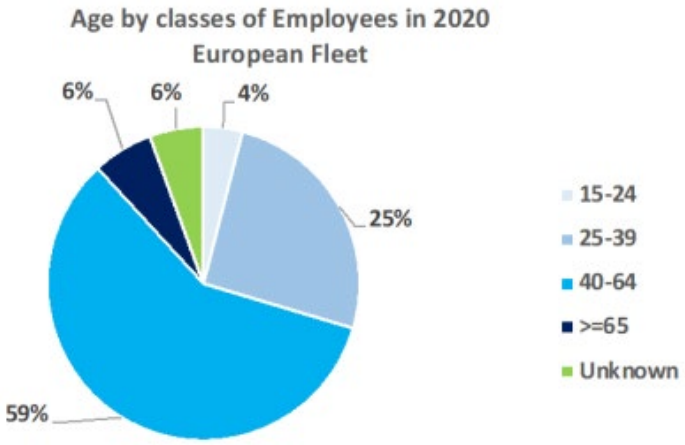
(6) Section 2.1 Policy context (p. 24 social challenges) of the Foresight study on fishers of the future. European Commission: European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency, Davies, M., Macfadyen, G., Brugere, C., Chiarelli, N. et al., Foresight study on fishers of the future – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2926/3984926.

(7) The 2022 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 22-06): https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/d/stecf/stecf_22-06.

(8) Actions for sustainable and resilient fisheries, aquaculture and marine ecosystems, 21 February 2023: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/factsheet-actions-sustainable-resilient-fisheries.pdf

(9) Davies, M., Macfadyen, G., Brugere, C., Chiarelli, N., Dale, F., and Caillart, B., Foresight Study on Fishers of the Future, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, doi: 10.2926/3984926.

Figure 1 - Employment distribution by age for EU Fishing Fleet 2020[7]



2.1.2. Improving Safety and Working Conditions

Various factors are cited in the literature as explaining the perceived unattractiveness of fishing for new entrants. Some of these factors include the working conditions, time away from home relative to shore-based employment, increasing levels of bureaucracy, financial barriers, and lack of effective representation[10]. With the Fisheries and Oceans Pact, the Commission aims to increase the attractiveness of fishing by promoting the modernisation of the sector and opening it to wider social service, and by reaching a high standard of safety and working conditions. Upgrading the skills of fishers through initial and lifelong learning, as well as training, should make them more efficient and resilient, and less exposed to risks of accidents[11].

Reaching a higher standard of safety and working conditions and reducing the risks of accidents in fisheries are notably important. It is common knowledge that fishing is a hazardous occupation compared to other occupations. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, as many as 32 000 fishers and persons engaged in worldwide fish farming and processing are killed every year, putting fishing and related occupations among the most dangerous of all professions (FAO, 2023). EMSA has reported 496 marine incidents and casualties for fishing vessels in 2023. These are only reported incidents and casualties. It is assumed that only a part of the actual incidents is reported. From the total of 496 reported incidents there were 31 marine incidents (lowest level of incident), 211 less serious marine incidents, 239 serious marine

([10]) Reasons for unattractiveness for a career as fisher are describes for multiple regions (Mediterrean, Black sea and North sea) and MS (Italy, Greece, Croatia, Belgium, Denmark).The 2024 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 24-07): https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4e547e17-a627-11ef-85f0-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

([11]) Chauvin, C. (2017). Analysis of occupational injuries in the sea fishing industry according to the type of fishery and the fishing activity: https://www.academia.edu/61215304/Analysis_of_occupational_injuries_in_the_sea_fishing_industry_according_to_the_type_of_fishery_and_the_fishing_activity

casualties and 15 very serious marine casualties (EMSA, 2024).[12] A large number of accidents, including fatal accidents, are due to human failure. Adequate training of fishers on health and safety-related matters has a positive effect on preventing accidents and increases the chances of survival if accidents do occur.

There are various aspects that need to be considered to improve safety at sea of fishing vessels. These include attention to:

- construction, equipment and seaworthiness of fishing vessels;
- training of fishers;
- manning also known as staffing of fishing vessels; it is required to have a sufficient number of competent crew depending on size of the fishing vessel. For instance, a competent skipper is always legally required. If insufficient crew and skipper(s) are onboard this means the fishing vessel is understaffed by national legal framework. Consequences could be that ship owners are fined by inspecting authorities;
- labour conditions of fishers; and
- prevention of collisions.

International conventions and EU directives already address these issues, as described below together with a discussion of the case going a step further by implementing the STCW-F.

2.1.3. International conventions for shipping and fishing

The international community has agreed several conventions to ensure the safety and working conditions of personnel at sea. As the design and operation of vessels in merchant shipping and fishing differ significantly, they are covered by different conventions. The table below provides an overview of these conventions. As this study focused on the fishing industry, the list of international Conventions for shipping is not exhaustive.

([12]) Figure 2.2-2 (p. 15) EMSA (2024). Annual Overview of Marine Casualties and Incidents 2024: https://emsa.europa.eu/publications/download/7981/5352/23.html.

Table 2 – International Conventions on fishing and shipping

In brackets behind each convention the number of countries worldwide are shown that have ratified the convention (IMO, 2025)[13]

Topic of Convention:	Shipping industry Conventions	Fishing industry Conventions
Minimum global standards for the design, construction, equipment and inspections of ships	International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) – (171)	Torremolinos Convention & Cape Town Agreement (24)
Certification and minimum training requirements for crews of seagoing vessels with the aim to promote the safety of life at sea and the protection of the marine environment	Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) (170)	Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) (37)
Minimum standards for working and living conditions on board vessels	Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006) (101)	Work in Fishing Convention (No188) (20)

As demonstrated in Table 2, there are three key international Conventions that set standards on safety at sea in fishing. As described in research for the European Parliament's PECH Committee –on the training of fishers[14] these Conventions are:

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) Torremolinos Convention (1977) for the Safety of Fishing Vessels. This Convention deals with the technical part of fishing vessels. The Torremolinos Protocol (1993) and the Cape Town Agreement (2012) further update and amend the Torremolinos Convention, including providing a lower threshold for entry into force to a minimum of 3 600 fishing vessels from a minimum of 22 States.
- The IMO International Convention on Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995. This Convention deals with the minimum requirements for training and certification of fishers. The Convention sets standards for: the certification of skippers, engineer officers and radio operators; the basic training required for all fishing vessel personnel; and watchkeeping.
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)[15] dealing with labour, such as hours of work and rest, repatriation, the content of a labour agreement, medical examinations, accommodation etc.

It is worthwhile to note that the Conventions on safety at sea in shipping are in force in most of the countries around the world, but the same is not true of the

([13]) IMO (2025): Ratification by state: https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/About/Conventions/StatusOfConventions/x-Status.xlsx
([14]) Research for PECH Committee - Training of Fishers
([15]) https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312333:NO

Conventions on safety at sea in fishing. As of April 2024, there were 167 Contracting Parties to the STCW, including all EU Member States, as opposed to 36 Contracting Parties to the STCW-F, of which 10 are EU Member States[16].

The European Union implemented the equivalent Convention for shipping (STCW) in its acquis at an early stage and updates the Directives concerned regularly. The Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Fisheries,[17] which represents the social partners, sees this as discrimination against fishers and has pushed the European Commission several times to act, notably "The Committee regrets that the Member States be not more emphatically encouraged to ratify the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel (STCW-F) personnel and the Torremolinos Protocol for the safety of fishing vessels. The Committee would prompt EU policymakers to clear this hurdle which hinders more smaller-scale fleets, representing most EU fishing vessels. The Committee believes however that any serious health and safety improvement on board fishing vessels implies to invest significantly in the fishers' training, but it ought to be borne in mind that adequate financial means should be made available for an effective enforcement and sanction scheme" (Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, 2009)[18]. In addition to the social partners, in 2015, the European Parliament urged the European Commission to present a proposal for a directive transposing the STCW-F into the Union's acquis to complete the implementation in EU law of the internationally agreed minimum standards for ensuring safety at sea in fishing.

2.2. EU implementation of fishing conventions

2.2.1. Torremolinos Convention and EU Directive 97/70/EC

Although the IMO Torremolinos Convention has still not entered into force, it has been implemented in the Union's acquis through Directive 97/70/EC[19]. This established a harmonised safety regime for fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and over. It uses Article 100 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)[20] as the legal basis, i.e. transport policy and the need to protect seafarers. The Convention also includes standards for practising musters and drills, on-board training and instruction, and training in emergency procedures. However, only 16 Member States have notified transposition measures[21]. Because it became apparent that neither the Torremolinos Convention nor Protocol would enter into force due to a reluctance on the part of several large flag states to ratify it, the IMO decided to rethink its approach resulting in the Cape

(16) Status of IMO Treaties, April 2024 https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/About/Conventions/StatusOfConventions/Status%202024.pdf
(17) https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-employment-strategy/social-dialogue/cross-industry-and-sectoral-social-dialogue/sea-fisheries-sectoral-social-dialogue_en
(18) https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-09/european_sectoral_social_dialogue_en.pdf
(19) Directive 97/70/EC: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1997/70/oj/eng.
(20) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT
(21) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NIM/?uri=CELEX:31997L0070

Town Agreement of 2012. The Cape Town Agreement (2012)[22] is an international treaty aimed at enhancing the safety of fishing vessels. It sets out minimum requirements for the design, construction, equipment, and inspection of fishing vessels that are 24 metres in length and over. The agreement also includes mandatory standards for stability, seaworthiness, machinery, electrical installations, life-saving appliances, communication equipment, and fire protection.

The Torremolinos Protocol, which updates the 1977 Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, primarily focuses on vessels of 24 meters in length and over. This is because larger vessels generally operate in more hazardous conditions and require more stringent safety measures. Smaller vessels, which often operate closer to shore and in less demanding environments, are not covered by the Protocol to avoid imposing overly burdensome regulations that may not be necessary for their operations (FAO, 2001)[23].

2.2.2. ILO C188 Convention and EU Directive 2017/159

The ILO C188 Work in Fishing Convention[24] entered into force on 16 November 2017 and sets minimum standards for living and working conditions on board fishing vessels for States that have ratified the Convention. This Convention, too, requires fishers to be trained, but does not set standards of training and certification as it was designed not to interfere with the substance of existing international standards and guidance. C188 applies to all fishers (employee or self-employed). The Convention was transposed into European law and applies to fishers who are employed, working in an employment relationship through Directive (EU) 2017/159 as well to all other fishers who are present on the same vessel with employed fishers to ensure the protection of the overall safety and health.

An important aspect of Directive (EU) 2017/159 is that it states that fishers are to be trained in the handling of types of fishing gear they will use and in the knowledge of the fishing operations in which they will be engaged, and that, before going to sea, every fisher should have received basic safety training approved by the competent authority. Through this Directive, under Union law, Member States were required to adopt legislation on training and certification of fishers before 15 November 2019, even for fishers working on board fishing vessels less than 24 metres in length. All but four Member States have reported transposition measures relating to this Directive[25]. Four Member States (Austria, Czechia, Luxembourg and Slovakia) have invoked geographic exemptions not to transpose the directive.

(22) https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/CapeTownAgreementForFishing.aspx

(23) FAO (2021) in section II. II. International conventions and guidelines on safety at sea, of the book by Petursdottir, G.; Hannibalsson, O.; Turner, J.M.M. Safety at sea as an integral part of fisheries management. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 966. Rome, FAO. 2001. 39p.

(24) https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C_188

(25) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/NIM/?uri=CELEX:32017L0159&qid=1737297407902

2.2.3. Other international commitments

Member States also have implicit responsibilities under the *FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* and the *ILO Work in Fishing Recommendation* which states that legislation should be based on available international standards adopted in this field (STCW-F Convention).

The **Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries** from the FAO[26] states that: "States should enhance through education and training programmes the education and skills of fishers and, where appropriate, their professional qualifications while such programmes should take into account agreed international standards and guidelines".

2.2.4. The STCW Convention

The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) is a set of regulations established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It sets minimum qualification standards for masters, officers, and watch personnel on seagoing merchant ships and large yachts. The convention aims to ensure that seafarers are properly trained and qualified to perform their duties safely and effectively. It covers various aspects, including:

- **Training and Certification**: Ensuring that seafarers receive appropriate training and hold valid certificates.
- **Watchkeeping**: Establishing standards for watchkeeping arrangements and procedures.
- **Safety and Emergency Procedures**: Providing guidelines for safety and emergency procedures on board.

2.2.5. The STCW-F Convention

The current international standard on training and certification of fishers is the IMO International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F)[27], which entered into force on 29 September 2012 for those countries that have ratified the Convention. It was drawn up to increase safety on board fishing vessels and to prevent marine pollution by setting a minimum standard for training, certification and watchkeeping of fishers on board seagoing fishing vessels. There was a need for a Convention for fishing vessels, as the STCW Convention applies only to merchant ships and specifically excludes fishing vessels. Although the safe navigation of a vessel is applicable to both fishing and merchant shipping, the work on fishing vessels also requires the safe handling of fishing gear. This is also one of the reasons why there is a separate international convention dedicated to the training, certification and watchkeeping for fishing vessel personnel (STCW-F) because on a fishing vessel you need to perform different tasks next to the safe navigation of the vessel.

(26) https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/89b84fe5-1598-40f9-9e95-a050fbb730c8
(27) https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/HumanElement/Pages/STCW-F-Convention.aspx

The STCW-F Convention in essence is about safety training for fishers. However, the revised STCW-F Convention also contains requirements not directly related to safety in both the mandatory (part A) and voluntary (part B) requirements. These requirements are related to prevention of pollution and sustainable management of the marine environment.

Table A-II/2 of the revised STCW-F Convention contains the following requirements in the mandatory part A on knowledge, understanding and skills:

- Basic working knowledge of the relevant IMO conventions and other relevant international instruments concerning safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment.
- Basic working knowledge of relevant international instruments concerning the responsible conservation, fishing management, responsible fisheries and development of living aquatic resources as well as key international instruments related to the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- Understanding the importance of sustainable development of the fishing industry.

The objective of the STCW-F revision was to align the standards of the Convention with the current state of the fishing industry, thereby making available an effective instrument, which will contribute to addressing the significant challenges of the fishing industry. The adoption of the revised Convention and Code took place in May 2024. As a result, the revised STCW-F comes into effect for all countries that have ratified the Convention on the 1st of January 2026.

The STCW-F Convention provides standards that apply to all fishers on all fishing vessels, but it contains more stringent standards for personnel on fishing vessels of 24 metres and over[28]. The Convention does not deal with standards of vocational training or set standards on fishing skills. It is a Convention on standards of training in basic safety competences, safe navigation, and safe propulsion of fishing vessels. It is therefore a Convention aiming to improve the working environment, and to protect the safety and health of fishers, other maritime traffic and the marine environment.

Apart from the provisions on certification of fishers and the requirements for obtaining certificates, a further important asset of the STCW-F Convention is the possibility of recognition by a flag State party of certificates issued by or under the authority of another party to the Convention. The recognition procedure is solely based on examination of certificates. The recognising flag State must ensure that the requirements for standards of competence, as well as the issue and endorsement of certificates by the issuing State, are fully complied with. This is usually done through a unilateral or bilateral agreement between the flag State and the issuing State laying down, inter alia, inspection of training facilities[29].

([28]) STCW-F 95 Regulations & Certification: https://www.edumaritime.net/STCW-F

([29]) Data required to be included in documentary evidence of training leading to the award of a certificate of competency (STCW.7/circ. 15, 2004): https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/HumanElement/Documents/STCW7%20Circulars/15.pdf.

2.2.6. Directives relevant to the content of STCW-F

Two existing EU Directives in the field of occupational safety and health have direct relevance to the STCW-F Convention, namely Directive 93/103/EC and Directive 92/29/EC ([30]).

EU Directive 93/103/EC[31] concerns the minimum safety and health requirements for working on board fishing vessels. Article 9 of this Directive prescribes that all fishers should receive at least basic safety training, with additional requirements for those responsible for the management of the vessel. If such basic safety training is not mandatory and/or offered in an EU Member State, then it would need to be checked if the Member State concerned has indeed fully transposed the Directive. Failure to notify transposition measures does not, of course, necessarily mean that the Directive has not been transposed – just as notifying transposition measures does not necessarily mean that the Commission will agree that the Directive has been correctly transposed.

The same applies to **EU Directive 92/29/EEC**[32] on the minimum safety and health requirements for improved medical treatment on board vessels. This Directive is about first aid and medical care on board and prescribes that all persons receiving professional maritime training and intending to work on board ship have been given basic training in the medical and emergency measures to be taken immediately in the event of an accident of serious medical emergency, and that the captain and any worker to whom they delegate the use of medical supplies is trained (Article 5). When looking at training requirements described in the EU Member State overviews, it appears to be clear that not all EU Member States have implemented training and certification requirements on first aid and medical care. This again raises the need to check if the Member State concerned has indeed fully transposed the Directive.

2.2.7. Ratification of STWC-F: State of play

In 2015, Council Decision 2015/799[33] authorised EU Member States to ratify the STCW-F Convention in the interest of the European Union and encouraged them to do so. In March 2019, the European Commission adopted a report to the Council reviewing EU Member States' progress in the ratification of the STCW-F Convention[34]. The report urged European Member States to ratify the STCW-F Convention. At that time, nine Member States had ratified the Convention. Currently, 10 European Member States have ratified the STCW-F Convention:

([30]) It should be stressed that general rules, including on training, regarding Occupational Safety and health in the EU applicable to all sectors, including fishing, are laid down in the Framework Directive 89/391 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (Article 12: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1989/391/2008-12-11). Other EU OSH Directives are also relevant and contain specific training provisions, such as the Personal Protective Equipment Directive 89/656/EC (Article 4(8): https://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1989/656/2019-11-20 and the work equipment directive 2009/104/EC (Article 9 and annex II: https://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/104/oj).
([31]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1993/103/oj/eng
([32]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1992/29/oj/eng
([33]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/799/oj/eng
([34]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2019:157:FIN

Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain out of the total of 36 Contracting States globally[35].

A group of four landlocked countries, Austria, Czechia, Hungary and Luxembourg had informed the European Commission at the time of that report that they did not plan to ratify the convention, since they do not have fishing vessels, fishing ports or training institutions for working on board fishing vessels. Five Member States indicated that they were working towards ratification: France (which has now ratified the Convention), Germany, Greece, Ireland (which has specific plans for legislation to enable it to ratify the Convention) and Sweden (as well as the United Kingdom, which is now a non-EU country)[36].

Four Member States do not consider the ratification of the STCW-F Convention necessary, due to the situation of their fleet. Estonia informed the Commission that it is applying the STCW certification requirements to fishing vessel personnel serving on board fishing vessels larger than 24m in length. Estonia does not intend to take steps towards the ratification of the STCW-F Convention due to the small size of its fishing sector and the limited number (24 in total) of vessels of more than 24m. Finland has not started the ratification of the STCW-F Convention arguing that there are only few fishing vessels flying the Finnish flag that would fall under the scope of this convention. Bulgaria and Slovenia said their fleets did not fall within the scope of the Convention by vessels smaller than 24m or with less than the required engine power of 750 kW. Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Malta and Slovakia did not reply (COM/2019/157). The Commission did not agree with the arguments, pointing out that the STCW-F Convention contains important provisions that apply to all fishers regardless of the length and/or engine power of fishing vessels. It also invited countries whose ports receive seagoing fishing vessels which fall within the scope of the STCW-F Convention, or training institutions for fishing vessel personnel, to become party to this convention. By citing the Commission:

“The Commission notes that not all Member States which have fishing vessels flying their flag, ports receiving seagoing fishing vessels which fall within the scope of the STCW-F Convention, or training institutions for fishing vessel personnel have ratified this convention or are planning to ratify it.

The Commission in particular notes that some Member States do not plan to ratify the STCW-F Convention on the grounds that they have no vessels falling under its scope or have only a small fleet of fishing vessels over 24m or over 750 kW. However, the STCW-F Convention contains important provisions that apply to all fishing vessels, despite their length and/or their engine power, such as the provision on basic safety training (Chapter III, Regulation 1) and the provisions on watchkeeping (Chapter IV, Regulation 1). Furthermore, also Member States which have ports receiving seagoing fishing vessels which fall within the scope of the STCW-F Convention, or training institutions for fishing vessel personnel, are invited to become party to this convention by Council Decision (EU) 2015/799.

([35]) Denmark has ratified with a reservation in respect of Greenland; accession by the Netherlands applies only to the European part of the Netherlands: see *Status of IMO Treaties, April 2024*

([36]) Review of the 1995 STCW-F convention: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_dialogue/@sector/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_910926.pdf

Member States are encouraged to honour their commitments and finalise the ratification procedures, and to support the Commission in its work to promote safety on board and at sea. Ratification of the STCW-F Convention by all Member States concerned will establish a coherent and updated international framework and promote a level playing field for EU flagged vessels and their personnel within the EU and beyond." [37]

2.2.8. Free movement of workers

The European Commission has also promoted ratification of the STCW-F Convention because it would facilitate the free movement of workers between Member States, as it creates a minimum level of training for fishing vessel personnel based on international standards[38]. This is considered important as the free movement of workers in fishing is currently very complex[39]. Directive 2005/36/EC aims to facilitate the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates, and other evidence of formal qualifications, thereby promoting the free movement of labour. However, for fishers, the general system of recognition comes down to examination of their certificates by the competent authority of the flag State and the legislation on basis of which these were issued, followed by, at the fisher's choice, completion of an adaptation period of up to three years or an aptitude test. Due to the great variety and complexity of requirements between Member States and/or hampered access to these requirements, the recognition procedure often results in fishers having to follow a partial or full training programme of the flag State in a language of which they do not have command at a sufficient level for successful training.

A study conducted in 2000 already identified the mutual recognition of certificates in the sea-fishing sector as a potential problem[40]. This report predicted an increase in the movement of fishers between European Member States due to declining interest in the industry amongst young people in some European Member States. Nowadays, there is an increased movement of fishers between European Member States, but also from non-European countries into the EU (Arias Schreiber et al., 2024)[41]. This lack of mutual recognition between Member States for fishers' certificates is for instance also an obstacle within the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements that the European Union has with non-EU countries. Since the Union negotiates and agrees the terms and conditions of SFPAs and the related protocols with the third countries, it is the Union's responsibility to ensure that local fishers to be taken aboard EU fishing

([37]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0157
([38]) https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/HumanElement/Pages/STCW-F-Convention.aspx
([39]) C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188): https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C188
([40]) Europêche (2000). Mutual Recognition of Certificates in the Sea Fishing Sector in Europe, Benodet Oct. 2000: https://europeche.chil.me/download-file/2399326d-57f1-4aab-9e47-3d914c3f36ad/
([41]) Table 11 and 12 in the report by Arias Schreiber, M, Kinds, A & Villasante, S 2023, Research for PECH Committee – Training and social security schemes for fishers – State of play and perspectives in the EU, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2024/747290/IPOL_STU(2024)747290_EN.pdf.

vessels operating under these SFPAs comply with the training and certification requirements of the flag States.. Already back then, the report from Europêche (2000)[42] pointed out that the diverse and complex requirements of European Member States and the absence of a common standard would pose a serious risk for both the safety of fishers, but also for other users of European waters. Research for The European Parliament's PECH Committee -on the training and social security schemes for fishers (Schreiber et al, 2024)[43] concluded that the situation had not really changed in the last twenty years compared with the similar report in 2000. It also concluded that an EU-standard for training of fishers would improve the level playing field for mutual recognition of fishers' certificates, promote mobility of fishers, and contribute to the overall attractiveness of the fishing sector. It also argues that this standard would reduce the administrative costs and burdens associated with the current system of recognition, in particular in countries with large fishing fleets.

However, these developments so far leave open the question of how the process of mutual recognition of certificates will be facilitated in the European Union. In the case of the shipping industry, a common EU mechanism for the mutual recognition of certificates was established and implemented. This was done because the general conclusion was that the mutual recognition of the seafarers' certificates could not be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and could therefore better be achieved at EU level. As a result, the Commission, with the assistance of the European Maritime Safety Agency, assesses the seafarers' education, training, and certification systems (including those of third countries to be recognised at EU level) and verifies their compliance with the requirements of the STCW Convention. There is as yet no similar mechanism and scheme for the mutual recognition of fishers' certificates and this poses a challenge to the mutual recognition of fishers' certificates.

([42]) Europêche (2000). Mutual Recognition of Certificates in the Sea Fishing Sector in Europe, Benodet Oct. 2000: https://europeche.chil.me/download-file/2399326d-57f1-4aab-9e47-3d914c3f36ad/

([43]) Arias Schreiber, M, Kinds, A & Villasante, S 2023, Research for PECH Committee – Training and social security schemes for fishers – State of play and perspectives in the EU, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2024/747290/IPOL_STU(2024)747290_EN.pdf

3. Methodology of the study

3.1. Overall methodological approach

This chapter presents the different tasks and methodology for gathering the data.

The first part of the study consisted of data collection via a literature review, an e-survey and stakeholder interviews. The main literature reviewed is listed in Annex C. The literature used for the Member State overviews is shown in separate Annex B, which contains a detailed description of the training and certification situation in each Member State and includes literature, references and websites used.

As a next step, an e-survey was launched and respondents were grouped into three categories: 'Industry representatives and Policymakers', 'Training and Education institutes', and 'Others'. Those in the other category were mainly representatives of (research) institutes, (trade) unions and producer organisations. One fisher also responded. The target group of the e-survey was found via the contacts available to the consortium, by approaching the OSPAR (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) network, via Advisory Councils and via the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Sea Fisheries. Recipients of the e-survey were also encouraged to forward the e-survey to other people to increase the reach of potential respondents.

The goal of the e-survey was twofold: it was an effective tool for collecting information on how the training and certification of fishers was organised within the various EU Member States. In addition, the e-survey contained a question on which persons and/or institutions should be consulted for this study. This helped the consortium identify the relevant stakeholders to consult in a later phase.

In total, 73 responses were received from 21 different EU Member States. A more detailed overview of the e-survey responses, including a distribution across the different stakeholder categories and Member States, is provided in Annex A. In total eight e-survey respondents were contacted for stakeholder interviews, including six respondents who were contacted to retrieve more in-depth information of specific Member States, an industry representative and a representative of the Dutch shipowners' association, the KVNR (Koninklijke Vereniging van Nederlandse Reders), to get more insight into the seafarers' curriculum. The selection was made based on inputs from the e-survey (respondents indicating that interesting insights in a specific Member State were available) combined with information needs in specific Member States.

The second part of this study aimed to provide a thorough overview of the state of play in each Member State on the training and certification process of fishers based on all the information gathered in part one. In total, 22 detailed Member State overviews were produced. No Member State overviews were produced for five Member States, which are landlocked or have no (active or registered) fishing fleet (Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovakia). Desk research also indicated that there is no fisheries-specific training in these five countries. The Member State overview templates were agreed with DG MARE and follow the same structure for each MS: (1) a brief overview of fleet structure, economic performance and employment, (2) an overview of the legal framework and

requirements for fishers, (3) the training pathways, institutes, training content and financial structures, (4) the certification requirements in the fishing industry and (5) a summary of the results and references used. If available, the overview incorporates an Annex with more detail about the content / competences of the fishery specific training programmes.

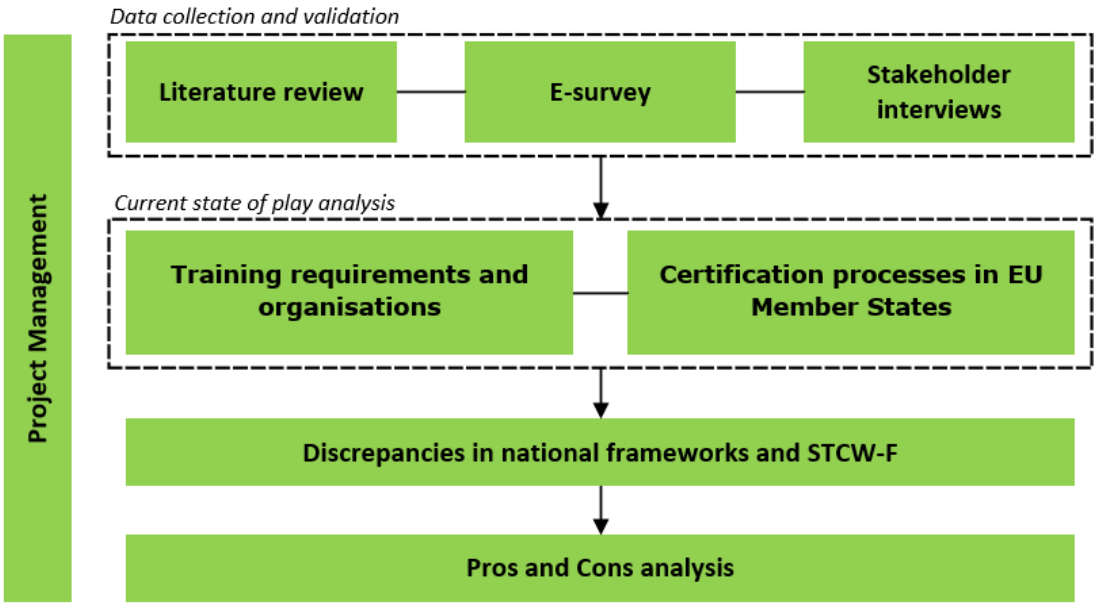
To gather the information for the Member State overviews, the information gathered during the first phase of the study was used as a starting point. A more in-depth search for information on training and certification was carried out via websites and by contacting training institutes and national authorities to obtain national legislation, training curricula and certification requirements. With identified stakeholders per Member State, interviews were conducted to ask for the missing information, either by phone or e-mail. All information was then processed in the Member State overviews. As a final validation, the Member State overview was shared with the fisheries attaché[44] in the respective Member State, (or with other fisheries experts if the fisheries attaché was not responsive or available). These validated Member State overviews were then shared with DG MARE representatives, feedback was incorporated before the Member State overviews were considered final. The complete Member State overviews are provided in Annex B of this report, and two-pager summaries of the Member State overviews are included in Chapter 4 of this report. The Member State overviews serve as the basis for the analysis in this study.

The analysis consists of two parts. First, an analysis was carried out of which Member States have ratified the STCW-F Convention. Based on this ratification per Member State, the information from the Member State overviews was plotted against the requirements of the revised STCW-F per Member State to obtain an overview of which Member States offered which training and certification for fishers, and what gaps exist. A synopsis is provided per Member State (see chapter 4), indicating which up-skilling or re-skilling is needed to align with the revised STCW-F. Member States are grouped, based on the expected amount of re-skilling and up-skilling needed. The second analysis presents a pros and cons analysis of the implementation of the revised STCW-F Convention into EU law. To provide additional input for this analysis, a question on the pros and cons was asked in the e-survey, during stakeholder interviews and also at the meeting of the Social Sectoral Dialogue Committee on 12 November 2024 in Brussels.

Figure 2 below provides a schematic overview of the methodology for this study.

([44]) Permanent Representative per Member States of the fisheries policies

Figure 2 – Overall methodological approach



3.2. Definitions

In this study, three types of fishing fleet are referred to, for which the definitions in the STECF Annual Economic Report 2023[45] are used:

- **Small-scale coastal fleet (SSCF)** - includes all vessels under 12 meters using static gears. According to the European Commission Data Collection Framework (DCF) gear definitions these include: 'drift and/or fixed netters', 'pots and/or traps', 'hooks', 'passive gears only', 'other passive gears', 'polyvalent passive gears only', 'active and passive gears'.
- **Large-scale fleet (LSF)** - segment includes all vessels over 12 meters using static gears and all vessels using towed gears operating predominately in EU waters. According to the DCF gear definitions these include: 'dredgers', 'demersal trawlers and/or demersal seiners', 'other active gears', 'polyvalent active gears only', 'purse seiners', 'beam trawlers', 'pelagic trawlers'.
- **Distant-water fleet (DWF)** - includes EU-registered vessels over 24 meters operating in 'other fishing regions' including EU outermost regions.

This study also refers to two different types of certificates:

- **Certificate of Competency (CoC):** A CoC can be compared to a driver's licence. It is proof that a person possesses the required knowledge, skills and experience to perform a certain function on board a fishing vessel. The CoC usually describes the limitations of the certificate (maximum

([45]) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - The 2023 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 23-07), Prellezo, R., Sabatella, E., Virtanen, J., Tardy Martorell, M. and Guillen, J. editor(s), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, doi:10.2760/423534, JRC135182; https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC135182

vessel length, maximum Gross Tonnage (GT), maximum propulsion power (kW), limitations on area of operation).

- **Certificate of Proficiency (CoP):** A 'Certificate of Proficiency' (CoP) demonstrates that you are trained for a specific task. Often you need to be in the possession of additional CoPs based on your function on board.

3.3. Limitations of the study

Two main inputs were used to retrieve information during this study. First, expert opinions, which were included via e-surveys, interviews and via validation of the national overviews (by experts or fisheries attachés if available). The study team was dependent on these inputs, which were the best available to the study team. However, **some Member States provided more inputs to the e-survey than others** (see Annex A), even if the e-survey provided a good overview of the state of play in different Member States and provided the right contacts for follow-up questions. In addition, **all Member States** were provided with the possibility to give feedback on their respective Member State overview, but most Member States did not respond to this request. The final quality of the national overviews, and Member State validation of results depended to a large extent on the inputs provided..

The second source of information was desk research for the study and national legislation, which needed to be interpreted. Not all Member States have **the same level of information available online and** it is not always possible to know whether it is up to date. For the content of the trainings most information needed to be obtained via the websites of training institutes, if available.

Finally, not all Member States have ratified the STCW-F, which sometimes made it **difficult to compare national legislation to STCW-F competences**. Moreover, there are differences in terminology for certain competences (which makes a one-on-one comparison more difficult) and **differences in the names of roles** of fishers on board a fishing vessel.

This study provides the best information available and analysis possible within the time and budget limits of this study. Differences per Member State need to be viewed in the light of the limitations mentioned above. Overall, we believe that the analysis provides robust insights in differences in the field of training and certification for fishers and the required level of re- and up-skilling needed to meet the requirements of STCW-F competences.

4. Analysis and findings

This Chapter first provides a summary overview of the state of play per Member State both in terms of the importance of the fishing fleet and the approach to and availability of fisher training. It then presents summary trend analysis on alignment of Member State regulation with STCW-F (irrespective of whether they have ratified it or not). This is followed by a summary of the law and regulation applying to fisher training.

4.1. Member State overview

The following sub-paragraphs provide summaries on the framework and relevant institutional and training requirements and structures for each Member State studied. Information is derived from the Member State overviews, which are included as separate Annex B to this report.

4.1.1 Belgium

Summary

In 2021, the Belgian fishing fleet consisted of 70 registered vessels. Some 377 fishers are employed in the Belgian fishing fleet. The fleet is mainly composed of demersal and beam trawlers which have a maximum length of 40 meters.

Belgium has ratified both the STCW and STCW-F Convention. Both have been implemented into Belgian law and additional requirements have been included. The training and certification of fishers is based on the STCW-F Convention. Most functions require the completion of training course(s) and sufficient seagoing service. Basic Safety Training is mandatory for all fishing vessel personnel.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: YES

The training and certification requirements are described in the Annexes to the Royal Decree of 13 November 2009. The Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport is the responsible authority in Belgium for establishing the policy on the training and certification of professional seagoing fishers. All maritime education and training in Belgium is offered by institutions established in the Flemish Community. The Regional Flemish Government Department of Education is responsible for the content and quality of the vocational training programme. The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate is responsible for monitoring and validating the training courses offered at the training institutes, and for the certification of professional seagoing fishers. The entire crew needs to possess a Belgian CoC or a CoC recognised by the Belgian authorities.

Training content and structure

Accredited courses are available for professional seagoing fishers and vocational programmes to become a fisher. The training of fishers in Belgium is managed by two main organisations: the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service (VDAB), under the Flemish government, and Maritiem Instituut Mercator (Mercator Maritime Institute) (MIM), accredited by the Belgian government. VDAB mainly targets adults entering the fishing industry, including job seekers, while

the MIM provides secondary education to students starting from age 12. Training is financed by government and fishing industry funds, and through the personal contributions of participants. The most important industry fund is the 'Zeevissersfonds' (English: Sea Fishing Fund). The Sea Fishing Fund is partly financed by contributions from employers and employees in the sea fishing sector.

Certification requirements

The functions of Ordinary seaman, Deck officer, Skipper, Engineer officer, and Able seaman require a CoC. The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate is responsible for issuing and recognising CoCs. CoCs are valid for a maximum of five years. In order to extend a CoC, the fisher must prove sufficient seagoing experience during the previous 5 years (in accordance with STCW-F) and have completed recognised periodic refresher training. In total 894 CoCs (58%) were issued to Belgian nationals between 2010 and 2024. As CoCs need to be revalidated every five years, the number of CoCs does not necessarily equate with the number of active fishers. Data on age, gender and nationality are collected by the Belgian authorities.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate recognises certificates from various other countries that have ratified the STCW-F Convention. Each case is reviewed individually in order to recognise the certificates of these countries. Most foreign fishers recognised in Belgium are Dutch. There is a bilateral agreement with the Netherlands on the mutual recognition of certificates. In total 646 CoCs (42%) were issued to or recognised for foreign nationals between 2010 and 2024.

4.1.2 Bulgaria

Summary

In 2021, the Bulgarian fishing fleet consisted of 1 182 vessels, divided in a small-scale (92%) and large-scale segment (8%).

The training of fishing vessel personnel is based on the STCW Convention. Minimum requirements for becoming a maritime fisher depend on the position held. Persons fishing commercially must be in possession of a licence that is issued after a training course. There is only one specialised training institution that can provide specialised training in fishing.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

According to Ordinance No. 6 (2021) on the competence of seafarers, the training of fishing vessel personnel is based on the STCW Convention. The main legislation relating to fisheries is the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act (2001). The Executive Agency Maritime Administration (EAMA) acts as a national maritime authority for Bulgaria. The Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EAFA) is responsible for national policies on fisheries and aquaculture.

CoCs are required for (1) Master of fishing vessel in local navigation, (2) Master of fishing vessels of up to 200 GT in near-coastal voyages, (3) Engineer officer on a fishing vessel, (4) Master of coastal fishing vessels of up to 200 GT. In

addition, persons who carry out commercial fishing must be in possession of a licence that is issued after a training course and a successfully passed exam.

Training content and structure

Most young people are educated as seafarers and start their career in maritime shipping. Maritime education varies from vocational secondary education to a bachelor's or master's degree. Holders of maritime diplomas can work on fishing vessels as master or officer.

Training courses for commercial fishing are free of charge and are organised and conducted by EAFA. The course content includes regulations, ichthyology, fishing gear, safety measures and compiling a fishing logbook.

There is only one specialised training institution in Bulgaria that has the capabilities to provide specialised training in fishing. It is the Sveti Nikola Secondary Vocational School of Sea Navigation and Fishing, located in Burgas.

Certification requirements

Minimum requirements for becoming a seagoing fisher depend on the function. In order to be authorised to work as a seagoing fisher, it is necessary to have the following documents.

- CoC under the STCW Convention.
- Certificate of proficiency under chapter VI of the STCW Convention, except for seafarers working on fishing vessels engaged exclusively in local navigation.
- Medical fitness certificate.
- Relevant diploma of training (Maritime Academy, Maritime University, Maritime vocational school or specialised course).

Persons who carry out commercial fishing must be in possession of a licence for commercial fishing. EAFA maintains registers of the issued permits for commercial fishing.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Seafarers in Bulgaria (most of the masters, officers and engineers) are certified according to the STCW Convention. Certificates are therefore recognised according to Regulation I/10 of the STCW Convention.

In Bulgaria, employment of non-nationals in fisheries is minimal. As of 2013, there were only two foreign nationals employed in fishing, two in aquaculture and one in the fish processing sector.

4.1.3 Croatia

Summary

In 2021, the Croatian fishing fleet consisted of 6 240 active vessels, of which 86% (5 370 vessels) were small-scale and 14% (870 vessels) were large-scale.

Commercial fishing activities require professional training. In addition, national Croatian standards describe the maritime qualifications needed, depending on the size of the vessel and the function that the fisher performs on the vessel. The

training of fishers includes many aspects covered by the STCW, including basic safety for fishers involved in safety and navigation.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) is responsible for commercial fishing training. Requirements are based on the Ordinance on Professional Training for Commercial Fishing (2019). At least one person on board needs to have a Certificate of Professional Qualification. The Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure (MSTI) is responsible for fisher's maritime qualifications that have been established in the Ordinance on ranks and certification of seafarers.

- Masters, officers and engineers must have certification and pass training based on national standards.
- Persons involved in navigational or safety operations must pass a Basic Safety Training exam (based on STCW A-VI/1).
- Crew members engaged only in national navigation and operations regarding fishing activities are required to complete familiarisation training.

Training content and structure

Commercial fishing training is conducted by MAFF (8 hours). Subjects include regulations, methods of fishing, environmental protection, data and marketing. Maritime education leading to a CoC is offered by maritime schools authorised to perform training for the different functions.

Maritime training content varies per function and includes subjects like navigation, meteorology, handling of ship and cargo, safety at sea and English language.

Basic safety training includes personal survival, fire protection, basic first aid and personal safety and social responsibility.

The typical path for fishers is to obtain a maritime certificate and then work as a fisher. However, it is also possible to take the Basic Safety Training and then start to work on fishing vessels. Commercial fishing training is free. Maritime training is paid for by fishers or their companies.

Certification requirements

Masters, officers and engineers need a CoC to work on board a fishing vessel. National standards identify six different functions and CoCs that depend on function, size of vessel and area of operation. Crew members involved in navigation or safety operations must pass a Basic Safety Training exam or take familiarisation training when they engage only in near-coastal navigation or fishing operations. CoCs are issued by the MSTI. At least one person on board must have a Certificate of Professional Qualification for Commercial Fishing, issued by the MAFF. Data about CoCs are collected by the MSTI. Since 2010, a total number of 1 829 fishers have been certified for one of the maritime functions.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

The requirements for recognition of a professional qualification for Commercial Fishing for foreign fishers are the same as for Croatian fishers. Stakeholder feedback suggests that few foreign fishers seek employment in Croatia.

The MSTI is responsible for other maritime certificates and recognises STCW certificates from other countries.

4.1.4 Cyprus

Summary

In 2021, the Cyprus fishing fleet consisted of 853 vessels, divided into a small-scale (96%) and a large-scale segment (4%).

There are no training requirements for fishers in Cyprus. It is not necessary to have any certification or training to get a fishing license. Transposing the STCW-F Convention into EU law would have significant consequences for the education of fishers in Cyprus.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

Cyprus law no 8 of 1985, as amended, provides for the ratification of the STCW and the corresponding EU Directives in Cyprus law. The STCW requirements do not apply to personnel on board fishing vessels. The main policy instrument for the Cypriot fishing fleet is the Cypriot Fisheries Law passed in 1931.

The Department of Merchant Shipping (DMS) is responsible for marine education and certification of seafarers. The Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment is the authority responsible for fishery matters.

All Cyprus flag fishing vessels are required to have a fishing licence that is linked to both vessels and fishers. There are no requirements to have a CoC.

Training content and structure

In Cyprus there are no requirements for becoming a fisher. It is not necessary to have any certification or training to get a fishing licence.

The Development Agencies in various cities (Development Agency of Lemesos, Development Agency of Paphos, etc.) provided some training for employees in the fishing industry about environmental issues as well as health and safety issues as part of the LEADER for Fisheries Programme 2014-2020. These training courses were for people who were interested and were not mandatory. No further information is available

Certification requirements

No certification is required to work as a fisher in Cyprus.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

There is no information about mutual recognition of certificates.

4.1.5 Denmark

Summary

In 2021, the Danish fishing fleet comprised 1 592 vessels, divided into a small-scale (867 vessels) and large-scale (352 vessels) segment. Some 1 244 fishers

are employed. The training and certification of fishers in Denmark is regulated and based on the STCW-F Convention. There are vocational training programmes to become a fisher. These training programmes are offered at state-controlled schools. Maritime training institutes offer a range of accredited training courses. All fishers need to complete a certain level of training to receive certificates required to work on board a Danish flagged seagoing fishing vessel.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: YES

Denmark has legally required training and certification requirements in place based on the STCW-F Convention. Denmark has added additional national requirements. The training and certification requirements for fishers are described in the Executive order on qualification requirements for seafarers and fishermen and on certificates of competency and qualification (Order no. 900) of June 2023 issued by the Danish Maritime Authority. The Danish Maritime Authority (DMA) is the authority responsible for the certification of professional seagoing fishers. The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Research, the DMA and the Danish Accreditation Institution oversee maritime educational institutions to ensure that seafarers and fishers are trained in accordance with national and international regulations.

Training content and structure

Accredited training programs in Denmark prepare individuals to become professional fishers. The minimum training that needs to be completed is the commercial fishing safety course:a three-week training programme teaching the basic skills to work as a deckhand. For a CoC, one needs to complete the commercial fishing basic course as a minimum. This course takes two years and consists of a three-week introductory course and a 21-week basic course taken at the Fisheries Training Centre in Thyborøn. The rest of the course is an internship. A ‘Blue Certificate’ is awarded after successful completion. MARTEC Skagen offers training programmes preparing students for higher functions on board seagoing vessels (both fishing and merchant shipping). Vocational education is financed by the Danish government, but industry funds are also available for training and education.

Certification requirements

The minimum certification requirements for seagoing fishing vessels include a Medical Fitness certificate and one of the following: Commercial fishing safety course certificate, Commercial fishing basic course, or Introductory subjects in basic maritime training. The DMA issues and recognises certificates. From 2013-2023, 1 089 CoCs were issued. Data per year and data on the types of CoCs issued are available and can be requested at the DMA.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Denmark recognises STCW-F certificates issued by other EU Member States but does not recognise certificates from non-EU countries. The procedure for recognition involves submitting an application to the Danish Maritime Authority (DMA) via their portal or Kvikskranken, providing documentation like proof of nationality, work experience, educational qualifications, and a valid health certificate. The DMA is responsible for issuing recognition letters if the application

meets the criteria. Denmark has no e bilateral agreements for recognising STCW-F certificates with other EU countries but processes applications from fishers from other countries. These are mainly fishers from Iceland and Norway wishing to work on Greenland-flagged vessels.

4.1.6 Estonia

Summary

In 2021, Estonia's fishing fleet included 1 276 small-scale coastal vessels (SSCF), 28 large-scale fleet trawlers (LSF), and six distant water fleet trawlers (DWF), employing 1 163 people.

Estonia has a regulated fishing sector, with mandatory qualifications for professional fishers and specific training available for fishers. Fishers of the large scale and distant waters fleet are trained as seafarers. Coastal fishers can undergo professional training to obtain a level 4 professional qualification, which includes skills specific to fishing operations. This training is not mandatory.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

In Estonia, key frameworks include:

- Maritime Safety Act:governs LSF and DWF fishers, aligning with STCW standards;
- Training and Qualification Requirements for Crew Members and Certification Procedure:outlines regulations for crew training, qualifications, and certification processes;
- Fishing Act:mandates Level 4 certification for the SSCF, which is required for fishing licences.

The Estonian Transport Administration (ETA) oversees seafarer certification; the Agriculture and Food Board (AFB) manages fishing licences; the Estonian Fishermen's Association (EFA) handles Level 4 Coastal Fisherman qualifications and exams. These laws ensure fisher competency and sustainable fishing practices.

Training content and structure

In Estonia, SSCF fishers can pursue Level 4 Coastal Fisherman certification through vocational training, which is optional but recommended for licence eligibility. Training is provided by the Hiiumaa Vocational School.

LSF and DWF fishers are trained as seafarers, with seafarer training offered by the:

- Estonian Maritime Academy and;
- Estonian Nautical School.

Training covers navigation, fishing techniques, biology, legislation, and sustainability. Practical skills like knot tying and catch documentation are emphasised. Programmes are funded by the EU and participants. Enrolment data is unavailable, though Hiiumaa has offered training since 2013, focusing on adults aged 18+.

Certification requirements

In Estonia, CoCs are required for roles such as skipper, officer, mate and engineer on LSF and DWF vessels. SSCF fishers need a Level 4 Coastal Fisherman Certificate. The Estonian Transport Administration (ETA) issues seafarer CoCs, and the Estonian Fishermen's Association (EFA) certifies coastal fishers.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Estonia recognises certificates from other EU states under the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act provided they comply with STCW standards. The Estonian Transport Administration (ETA) manages recognition, requiring document submission, compliance verification, and possibly additional exams. Estonian certificates are recognised by other EU countries adhering to STCW standards.

4.1.7 Finland

In 2021, Finland's fleet included 1 138 small-scale coastal fishing boats (SSCF), employing 1 104 fishers, mostly part-time.

Fishers are trained through vocational education, such as the Vocational Qualification in Fisheries, focusing on navigation and safety. Certification is mandatory, with requirements including safety training and competency-based qualifications overseen by Traficom. Skipper and boatmaster certifications are tiered by vessel size and area of operation.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

Key legislation in Finland includes:

- Act on Transport Services (320/2017);
- Government Decree on the Manning of Ships and Certification of Seafarers (508/2018);
- National Vocational Qualifications Framework;
- Act on Ships' Crews and the Safety Management of Ships (1678/2009).

Training and certification are tied to fishing licences, requiring safety training and qualifications for vessel classes. The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) oversees certification, training programme approvals, and enforcement, while the Finnish National Agency for Education develops vocational qualifications, and the Ministry of Education and Culture sets educational policies.

Training content and structure

Finland provides structured vocational training for fishers. There are three vocational programmes available for fishers, all providing preparation for the four different certificates:

- Vocational Qualification in Fisheries (3 years)
- Vocational Qualification in Seafaring (3 years)
- Further Vocational Qualification in Seafaring (2,5 years);

Publicly funded institutions, e.g. Livia College, offer programmes in fisheries and seafaring. Training covers essential skills, including safety, navigation, fishing practices, fish handling, and business operations, with a strong focus on practical learning. All training is publicly funded, though advanced certifications may incur additional costs. Enrollment at Livia College has fluctuated, with 36 students in 2023.

Certification requirements

In Finland, Certificates of Competency (CoC) are required for the following functions:

- Skipper (Category A and B)
- Boatmaster (Category A and B)
- Engine attendant *(not fishing vessel specific)*
- Watchkeeping engineer (not fishing vessel specific)

Traficom issues these certifications. Finland collects comprehensive data on CoCs; between 2013-2023, 99 CoCs were issued to 63 individuals, who were all Finnish males aged 19-69. Detailed records include age and nationality; applicants were exclusively Finnish.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Finland recognises certificates from other EU states under the Act on Recognition of Professional Qualifications, ensuring alignment with Finnish standards. Applications (electronic or paper) are reviewed by Traficom, which handles both recognition and issuance. Recognition involves submitting documents proving competency and compliance with EU and national requirements.

4.1.8 France

Summary

In 2021, the French fleet consisted of 5-266 active vessels and could be divided into three metiers, small-scale (71% of active vessels), large-scale (28% active vessels) and distant water fleet (<1% active vessels). The total number of employees working in the French seagoing fishery was estimated to be 12 458 in 2021. France has regulated the training and certification requirements for fishers in their national legislation based on the STCW-F Convention. There are legally required training and/or certification requirements in place for all functions on board French-flagged seagoing fishing vessels.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: YES

Decree No. 2015-723 of June 24, 2015, relating to the delivery of maritime professional training titles and the conditions for exercising functions on board vessels operating for commerce, pleasure, fishing and marine products provides the legal framework on the training and certification of fishers. The Ministry of the Sea, and more specifically the Directorate-General responsible for fisheries (DG AMPA), is mainly responsible for the training and certification of fishers, but on several aspects, they cooperate with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. DG AMPA is the authority responsible for establishing the professional

training and educational framework, curricula and standard for professional seagoing fishers. They are also responsible for monitoring and validating the quality of the training provided by the different training institutions and nautical colleges, and for issuing certificates.

Training content and structure

Most people wanting to enter the French fishing industry follow a vocational training programme to become a fisher. These are organised by maritime vocational colleges and the National Maritime School. After successful completion of a vocational training programme, the diploma can be used to apply for a CoC. Vocational training programmes fall into the category ‘initial training’ in France. In addition to ‘initial’, there is also ‘modular training’ and ‘specific training’. These types of training courses are offered at both the maritime vocational colleges and other private maritime training institutes. Modular training courses enable people with an ‘initial’ diploma to maintain their skills and/or to progress in their career. Specific training courses provide specific skills to perform specific functions and tasks. They are complementary to initial and modular training.

Certification requirements

There are legally required training and/or certification requirements in place for all functions on board French-flagged seagoing fishing vessels. Engineering CoCs are not related to a specific sector (merchant shipping, sailing, fishing) but can be used on every type of vessel. A Basic Safety Training certificate is mandatory for all functions on board a fishing vessel. Certificates are issued by the Interregional Sea Directorate and the Overseas Sea Directorate. The French government collects data on the number of active fishers and on the number of CoCs that have been issued. In total 6-792 certificates were issued between 2017 and 2023.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

France recognises certificates issued by other (EU member) States if requirements that France upholds are met. There are no bilateral agreements with other countries for the recognition of certificates. If a fisher from another (EU member) State wants their certificates recognised by the French authorities, they need to request this. The procedure for the recognition of fishers’ certificates is rather complex and is applied with reference to EU Directive 2022/993 for seafarers and the Professional Qualifications Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC), neither of which fully suits the needs of the fisheries sector.

4.1.9 Germany

Summary

In 2021, the German fleet comprised 1 279 vessels divided into a small-scale (73%), large-scale (27%) and distant water fleet segments. Some 1 209 fishers were employed in the German fishing fleet. Germany has implemented specific training requirements for fishers on board seagoing fishing vessels in its national legislation. The legislative landscape does not derive from the STCW-F Convention. Germany's training system follows a three-tier system, which distinguishes between coastal fishing, small deep-sea fishing, and large deep-sea fishing. The distinction is fishing zones based on sea areas and catch areas.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

In general, the relevant laws on training and certification primarily relate to shipping and not directly to fishers. In some laws, specific references are made to fishers, but this is not the case in every law. As a result, it is not always clear if laws apply to all seafarers (including fishers) or if fishers are excluded since they are not specifically mentioned in the law. Relevant national legislation includes the:

- Regulation on Vocational Training in Maritime Shipping (2024);
- Seafarers' Qualifications Regulation (2024.

Relevant regulatory bodies are the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport and the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (FMHA). The FMHA issues, revalidates and registers CoCs and CoPs. It also handles endorsements of recognition of foreign CoCs and CoPs. They also approve and monitor training.

Training content and structure

Responsibility for education lies with the Federal States. However, training and certification of seafarers in Germany falls between the competences of the Federal Government and the Federal States. A Working Group of Coastal Federal States for Maritime Education facilitates the transformation of Federal law into State law.

Entry into the German seagoing fishing industry typically begins with the fish farmer (German: Fischwirt(in)) training programme. This is rather broad and focused on working with fish. Graduates work in fish processing, marketing and sales of fish or in aquaculture, but also as commercial fishers. Anyone wanting to work on board seagoing fishing vessels needs to specialise in small deep-sea fishing and coastal fishing. The Staatliche Seefahrtschule Cuxhaven and the Fachschule Seefahrt in Sassnitz also provide training for fishers.

Certification requirements

Engineers (STCW) can work on all types of seagoing vessels. Germany does have specific CoCs for functions in the deck department (nautical tasks) for seagoing fishing vessels. These CoCs are Nautical Watchkeeping Officer in the small deep-sea fishery, Nautical Watchkeeping Officer in the Large deep-sea fishery, Master in the coastal fishery, Master in the small deep-sea fishery, and Master in the large deep-sea fishery. These CoC distinguish between coastal fishing, small deep-sea fishing, and large deep-sea fishing. CoCs are issued by the FMHA.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Since Germany has not ratified the STCW-F convention, it does not recognise STCW-F certificates issued by other states. When qualifications are not subject to the STCW Convention, a Certificate of Equivalence can be issued. This also applies to all qualifications for service on fishing vessels. Certificates are treated the same as other CoCs from foreign states. Certificates are examined and a Certificate of Equivalence can be issued if requirements are met. There are additional requirements for recognising CoCs for functions at management level, such as a course in German maritime law and the German language. Data are

available on the number of CoCs and certificates of equivalence issued, including by nationality and age.

4.1.10 Greece

Summary

In 2021, The Greek fishing fleet consisted of 9 970 active vessels, divided into a small-scale (93%) and a large-scale segment (7%).

Only skippers/captains on large-scale vessels (LSF) are required to get maritime licences in Greece, there are no training requirements for any other position or for the small-scale fleet.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

According to Greek Law 1314/1983), fishing vessel personnel are exempt from STCW requirements in Greece. However, stakeholder feedback suggests that captains on the large-scale vessels (LSF) do require maritime licences. The licences required in Greece for taking up the profession of fisher are described in the Royal Order No. 666 on fishing boats licences (1966).

The Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) is responsible for Maritime Education and Training and certification of seafarers. The Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food is responsible for the development of the fishing industry in Greece. The port authority issues fishing boat licences. There is no legal requirement to work in professional fishing, apart from the permit to sail the relevant vessel. In 2016, 11 905 fishers worked on boats with limited engine power and needed no permit of any kind.

Training content and structure

There are no educational or training pre-requisites to work on fishing vessels.

In Greece, most of the fishing fleet consists of small vessels with one or two fishers on board. Entry into the sector is largely based on family relations when young people follow their parents into the business. Usually this does not involve formal fisheries-specific training or education and there is minimal opportunity for career progression.

Certification requirements

No certification is required to work as a fisher in Greece. However, stakeholder feedback suggests that skippers/captains on the large-scale vessels (LSF) do need maritime licenses. These are not categorized by the engine's horsepower, but on the gross registered tonnage of the vessel.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

The movement of fishers into and out of Greece is rare, except for Egyptian nationals who make up the majority of fishers in the Greek large-scale fleet, under a bilateral agreement between the two countries concluded in 1984.

4.1.11 Ireland

Summary

In 2021, the Irish fleet consisted of 1 963 registered vessels and is highly diversified with a broad range of vessel types targeting different species or species groups, often in mixed fisheries. The Irish seagoing fishing fleet supported 2 776 jobs. The fleet FTE was estimated to be 1 911.

Ireland has aligned its legislation on the STCW-F Convention even though Ireland has not ratified the STCW-F Convention (but has concrete plans to do so). All crew members working on board an Irish flagged seagoing fishing vessel need to have a Medical Fitness certificate and a BIM Basic Safety Training card and must complete Basic Safety Training.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

Legislation on the training and certification of fishers is described in the Merchant Shipping Act 1979, which is the primary legislation. Primary legislation gives the Minister the power to make secondary legislation and regulations. The specifics of the training and certification of fishers are described in the Fishing Vessels Regulations 2023, which were made under sections 3 and 8 of the 1979 Act. The Department of Transport is the authority responsible for establishing training and education frameworks, curricula and standards for professional sea fishers. This is carried out by the Marine Survey Office (MSO) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The MSO is also responsible for monitoring and validating the quality of the training programmes. Ireland's Seafood Development Agency, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), is the main training provider to fishers.

Training content and structure

Most people wanting to enter the Irish seafishing industry follow the required training course(s) at Ireland's Seafood Development Agency BIM. These training courses are followed mostly be new entrants or fishers wanting to expand their level of competency. There is no vocational training programme to become a fisher in Ireland. Training courses lasting from one day to fourteen weeks are available that lead to certification after successful completion. The required level of training depends on the function, vessel size, engine power, and fishing area. BIM provides training through their two state-controlled nautical colleges (National Fisheries Colleges in Castletownbere and Greencastle), mobile coastal training units, in-person workshops and online programmes. There are government funds for the training of fishers.

Certification requirements

Before CoCs are issued, candidates need to pass written and/or oral examinations. All written examinations are conducted on the Department of Transport's behalf by the National Fishery Colleges. The oral examinations are held at the Department of Transport. Candidates are required to possess all ancillary certification and have passed written examinations prior to attending for oral examination. Certificates are issued by the Marine Survey Office, on behalf of the Minister for Transport, once the requirements are met. There is a database on the number of CoCs for functions on seagoing Irish fishing vessels that have

been issued in the period 2013-2023. They also collect data on age, gender and nationality.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

A commercial seagoing fisher is a regulated profession in Ireland. If it is also a regulated profession in another EU Member State, then Ireland needs to accept their certificates. Ireland does not have any unilateral and/or bilateral agreements with other (EU Member) States on the recognition of certificates for fishing vessel personnel. As a result, the MSO needs to evaluate each certificate presented for recognition on an individual basis.

4.1.12 Italy

Summary

In 2021, the Italian fishing fleet consisted of 10.316 active vessels divided into a small-scale (67%), large-scale (32%) and distant water fleet (1%) segment.

Only advanced positions on board (master and engineer) require an exam to obtain a Certificate of Competence. The specific training programmes for those functions are run by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport. There is no requirement or mandatory training for any other position on board.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

According to legislative decree 71/2015, fishing vessels are exempt from STCW requirements. Italian legislation on fishers' professions is based on the Navigation Code approved by Royal Decree n. 327 (1942) and the Regulation of Sea Fishing (1968).

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport oversees all main aspects related to training of fishers and accreditations.

Fishers (other than masters or engineers) do not need a certificate: they just need to be registered, first as seafarers and then as fishers at the harbourmaster's office.

Training content and structure

The most common pathway to becoming a fisher is direct access. In practice, anyone wishing to become a fisher goes directly to the harbourmaster and registers on the (1) seafarer register and (2) the register of fishers. This only requires them to show personal documents. After registration, a person can go directly to sea.

Thanks to the fishing experience acquired on board, fishers can access exams that are based on government approved programmes to advance in their profession. They can do so through the harbour authorities to acquire maritime qualifications (e.g. as deckhands or for management of fishing vessels or the operation of engine equipment). Among the requirements is the compulsory attendance of a specialised course, through specific ministerial programmes at schools or other institutions. The less common path is through secondary education, at the Nautical Technical Institutes.

Certification requirements

Fishers do not need a certificate; they just need to be registered in the register of fishers at the harbour master's office. CoCs are required for advanced functions and issued by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport for: a) Fishing Master, (b) Fishing Master for coastal fishing, c) Fishing Master for deep-sea fishing, d) Fishing Master for ocean fishing, e) Fishing Master for fishing facilities, f} Refrigeration technician, g) Professional specialisations.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Italian consular offices, operating under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, issue endorsements recognising foreign CoCs under the STCW Convention.If an Italian captain or chief engineer wants to fish elsewhere in Europe and has STCW certification, it is unlikely that his/her qualifications would not be recognised and the same would apply to people coming to Italy from other countries for these positions. However, it may be easier for Italy to find unskilled fishing positions since, as mentioned above, specific training is not required.

4.1.13 Latvia

Summary

In 2021, Latvia's fishing sector comprised three fleet segments: SSCF employing 214 fishers, LSF employing 328 fishers, and DWF employing 370 fishers.

Education for fishers is provided through vocational training programmes specifically designed for the fishing profession. Certification is required for all fishers, with completion of these vocational courses a legal prerequisite for working in the industry, ensuring compliance with national fishing regulations.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: Yes

Latvia's Regulation No. 895 '**Regulations Regarding Certification of Seafarers**' (2005) governs training and certification for fishers. Fishing licences require completion of Basic Safety Training and a Certificate of Competency (CoC). The following Latvian authorities are relevant for the certification and training of fishers:

- Ministry of Transport: sets training frameworks and standards for seafarers and fishers;
- Maritime Administration of Latvia (MAL): oversees maritime training quality, certifies fishers, conducts exams, and approves programmes to ensure compliance with standards;
- Ministry of Education and Science ensures curricula effectiveness and aligns training processes with industry needs.

Training content and structure

In Latvia, coastal fishers do not require formal training. Many learn to fish through family traditions or directly on the job. Fishers working on larger vessels (e.g. pelagic fishers) must complete training. To helm a fishing vessel or be a mechanic

requires completed training as a seafarer under the STCW Convention for the functions of fishing vessel master, deck officer or engineer.

Nautical colleges, such as Liepaja Marine College, Novikontas Maritime College and the Latvian Maritime Academy, primarily focus on training deck officers and engineers for general maritime professions. Training emphasises navigation, safety, and seafaring skills but lacks fishing-specific content. Funding is mostly personal, with some employer and government support. Currently, no students are enrolled in fishing-specific programmes, as these have been inactive since 2013.

Certification requirements

A Certificate of Competency (CoC) is required for masters, chief mates, navigational officers, engineers, deckhands, and other crew on fishing vessels. The Latvian Registry of Seamen, part of the Maritime Administration, issues these certificates under Regulation No. 895. Between 2013 and 2023, Latvia issued 1 051 CoCs, covering diverse roles such as master, engineer, and fisher-deckhand. Demographic data on age, gender, or nationality of CoC applicants was not provided.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Latvia recognises certificates from STCW-F-compliant EU Member States. The Latvian Registry of Seamen oversees recognition and requires applicants to submit identification, health certification, proof of qualifications, and endorsements. Temporary recognition allows service for up to three months while documents are verified. Latvia's CoCs are also recognised in other STCW-compliant EU Member States, ensuring mutual recognition and workforce mobility within the EU.

4.1.14 Lithuania

Summary

In 2021; Lithuania's fleet included 75 small-scale coastal fishing vessels (SSCF), 13 large-scale vessels (LSF), and 6 distant-water fleet vessels (DWF), employing 465 fishers.

There are no vocational training programmes for fishers, but maritime training is offered at higher education level (professional bachelor's degree programmes). Fishers are required to complete approved training programmes that, depending on the function, comply with STCW and/or STCW-F, and require a Certificate of Competency (CoC) to be allowed to work in the fishing sector.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: Yes

The Lithuanian Transport Safety Administration (LTSA) is responsible for the governance, monitoring, and certification of fishers. The LTSA is responsible for issuing Certificates of Competency (CoC) and oversees the validation of training programmes to ensure they meet international standards. Training and certification for fishers are governed by:

- Description of the procedure for the granting of a seaman's degree (2005)

- Requirements for establishing workplaces in fishing vessels (1995)

Certification, including safety training and competency exams, is mandatory for fishing licences. The Lithuanian Transport Safety Administration (LTSA) oversees certification, training approval, and compliance, while its Maritime Department ensures adherence to international standards and verifies documents.

Training content and structure

There are no vocational training programmes for fishers, but maritime training is offered at higher education level (professional bachelor's degree programmes). Fishers are required to complete approved training programmes. Maritime education and training for certification as an officer is provided at the higher education level by the Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LiMA; also known as the Lithuanian Higher Maritime School). Training is funded through a combination of government and industry contributions.

LiMA provides a 'Professional Development course for Deck Officers on Fishing Vessels of 24 metres in length and over operating in waters of unrestricted navigation'. This is in accordance with the requirements of section A-II/1, A-II/2 of the STCW-F Code. This course is intended for deck officers 500 GT and more who wish to work on fishing vessels. The duration of this course is 60 hours.

Certification requirements

Functions requiring a Certificate of Competency (CoC) in Lithuania are:

- assistant captain of fishing vessels
- chief assistant captain of fishing vessels
- captain of fishing vessels.

Each CoC has specific requirements for the designated catch area in which it permits them to operate (Baltic Sea versus unrestricted navigational waters)

The LTSA issues CoCs. Data on CoCs issued is collected; 111 were issued from 2013-2023. Lithuania did not provide data on the age, gender or nationality of applicants.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Lithuania recognises certificates from EU Member States that have ratified STCW-F. Recognition involves submitting applications, identity documents, and training diplomas to the Lithuanian Transport Safety Administration (LTSA), which oversees validation and issuance. Lithuanian certificates are also recognised by EU states following mutual agreements.

4.1.15 Malta

Summary

In 2021, the Maltese fishing fleet consisted of 624 active vessels divided into a small-scale (91%) and a large-scale segment (9%). There are no mandatory training requirements for fishers in Malta. In recent years, voluntary training courses were offered to fishers by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

Training and certification of seafarers is regulated by the Malta Merchant Shipping Training and Certification Regulation (2013). The main legal document for management of the fisheries sector in Malta is the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (2011). The main regulatory body is the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA) within the Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change (MESDC). The primary objective of the DFA is to ensure the sustainability of fish species and to address the requirements of the fisheries sector.

Fishers in Malta who intend to use a local fishing vessel for fishing may apply for registration in the record of fishing vessels. The fishing licence is granted to the master, owner or charterer of a specified fishing vessel.

Training content and structure

There is no structural training for fishers in Malta.

In recent years the Projects Unit of the DFA has promoted further human capital in the local fisheries sector through the provision of specialised training courses for fishers and their spouses. The main aim of the training courses was to improve knowledge amongst fishers about food safety and hygiene, health and safety at sea, and training on how to make the best use of navigation equipment. In 2018, the DFA encouraged fishers to participate in training courses about business diversification, maritime and fisheries laws and regulations, and held practical sessions on IT, Basic Safety, VHF, Security Awareness, Safe Food Handling and Navigation Aids.

Certification requirements

No certification is required to work as a fisher in Malta.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

There is no information about (mutual) recognition of certificates.

4.1.16 Netherlands

Summary

In 2021, the Dutch fleet consisted of 720 fishing vessels with 198 small-scale vessels, 326 large-scale vessels, and 8 pelagic freezer trawlers. Total employment was estimated at 1 878 jobs.

The Netherlands has ratified both the STCW and STCW-F Conventions. They have been implemented into Dutch law and additional requirements are included. Most functions require the completion of a training programme in combination with training course(s) and sufficient seagoing service. The Basic Fishers Safety Training, a Medical Fitness certificate and a Seaman’s book are mandatory for all fishing vessel personnel.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: YES

The regulations on the training and certification of fishers are described in the Seafarers Act which is a so-called 'framework law' (2019). One decree which falls

under this framework and fleshes out the basic legislation is the Seafarers Decree which is supplemented by more detailed regulations. There are two Ministries involved in the training and certification of fishers: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate is responsible for the inspection and accreditation of professional training courses and for inspecting fishing vessels and crews for compliance with certification requirements. Kiwa Register B.V. is authorised to issue permits and CoCs on behalf of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

Training content and structure

Most entrants follow a secondary vocational training programme at one of the state-controlled nautical colleges. There are five nautical colleges in the Netherlands that offer the study programme with the fishing specialisation. The certificate obtained from secondary vocational education determines the level of study programme a student can enter to become a fisher. After completing the study programme, the student receives a diploma which they can use to apply for an initial CoC. The duration and the content of the state-controlled nautical colleges' secondary vocational education programmes varies across four levels. Secondary vocational education is financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Several private training institutes offer accredited training courses. The costs for these courses are usually borne by fishers and/or the fishing company.

Certification requirements

For anyone wanting to work onboard a Dutch fishing vessel, there are various certification requirements that need to be met. The exact requirements differ per function on board, type of vessel (length, GT), and area of operation (limited waters, unlimited waters). For the positions of skipper, stand-in skipper, officer/engineers belonging to the minimum crew, a Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued or recognised by the Dutch authorities is necessary. A CoC can be issued by Kiwa Register BV on behalf of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management once the legal requirements are met. Kiwa Register BV collects data on the number of CoCs issued and on age/gender/nationality of CoC applicants.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

The Dutch authorities do not recognise certificates of fishers from other EU Member States except Belgium. Even certificates from other EU Member States that have ratified the STCW-F Convention are not recognised by the Dutch authorities. Certificates cannot be recognised due to a lack of unilateral or bilateral agreements with other countries. Belgium is the exception as a bilateral agreement is in place. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management to establish unilateral or bilateral agreements.

4.1.17 Poland

Summary

In 2021, employment in Poland's fishing fleet was 1 397 in the SSCF, 812 in the LSF, and 147 in the DWF.

Training specific to fishers includes courses in safety, navigation, and vessel operations alongside vocational maritime education programmes. Certification is mandatory. However, there are substantial gaps in the information available about training and certification pathways for fishers. While general certification requirements and mandatory safety training are outlined, it is difficult to access details about specific training programmes, their availability, and the number of certified fishers.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: Yes

Poland's legal framework for fishers includes the following Decrees:

- Training and Qualifications of Crew Members of Sea-going Vessels (2017)
- Framework Training Programmes and Examination Requirements in Sea Fishing (2017)

Certification is required for fishing licences. The following positions are recognised in the deck department of fishing vessels: junior sea fisherman, sea fisherman, senior sea fisherman and sea fishing skipper (Class 2, Class 1 and Unrestricted Waters).

The Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation oversees regulations, marine education and certification via Maritime Offices. The Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy handles labour law issues.

Training content and structure

In Poland, fishers follow structured training pathways through Maritime Vocational Education (MJE), which is provided at introductory, operational, and management levels. Training is provided by institutes like the Maritime Academy in Gdynia and specialised centres, covering themes such as safety, navigation, environmental protection, and vessel operations, with navigation and safety emphasised. Public education is state-funded, while private training is self-financed.

There are substantial gaps in the information available about training pathways for Polish fishers. While general certification requirements and mandatory safety training are outlined, there is limited detail about specific training programmes and their availability. Data on current student enrolment is also unavailable.

Certification requirements

Poland requires Certificates of Competency (CoCs) for positions including junior sea fisherman, sea fisherman, senior sea fisherman, and various skipper roles. CoCs are issued by Maritime Offices under the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation. The state has not provided data on the number of CoCs issued, nor information on the age, gender, or nationality of applicants.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Poland recognises certificates from other EU Member States under STCW-F agreements, though specifics are not available. Recognition is handled by Maritime Offices, which verify compliance with international standards before

issuing equivalent CoCs. Certificates issued by Poland are also recognised by other EU countries.

4.1.18 Portugal

Summary

In 2021, the Portuguese fishing fleet consisted of 7 678 vessels divided into a small-scale (2 761 vessels), a large-scale (721 vessels) and a distant water fleet (14 vessels). Exact data on employment is not available, but most of it is in SSCF

To obtain a fishing licences, fishers must complete vocational training, particularly fishers in the Azores. Certification is required and aligned with the STCW-F Convention for vessels ≥24m. Training includes courses and exams, ensuring compliance with national and international standards.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: Yes

Training and certification of fishers are governed by Decree-Law No. 166/2019, requiring fishers and skippers to complete training aligned with STCW-F standards to obtain commercial fishing licences (Article 20). Physical and mental fitness, basic safety certification, and registration with the Maritime Administration are mandatory (Articles 4, 8). Relevant authorities include:

- Directorate-General for Natural Resources, Safety and Maritime Services (DGRM): issuing certifications, approving courses, and monitoring training entities;
- National Maritime Authority (AMN): seafarer registration and crew approvals);
- National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP) updating the National Qualifications Catalogue.

Training content and structure

Seafarer training in Portugal is provided by public and private entities, offering Certificate of Competency (CoC) programmes at higher education levels and Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) programmes for ratings. The National Maritime College (ENIDH) is a higher education institution that offers education and training for future officers and current seafarers at the operational and management levels. Institutes like the Fisheries and Maritime Vocational Training Centre (FOR-MAR) and Escola do Mar dos Açores (EMA) provide vocational training focused on maritime careers, fisheries, aquaculture, safety, and environmental management. Training themes include safety, legislation, sustainable practices, and vessel management. Funded by the state, 8 000 trainees (4 380 in maritime careers, 2 224 in fisheries) attended 650 courses between 2021-2023.

Certification requirements

Functions requiring a CoC include deck, bridge, and marine engineering officers. CoCs are issued by Portugal's Maritime Administration under Decree 166/2019, which states that in order to perform certain functions or obtain certificates, seafarers (including fishers) must attend training courses or take an examination,

under terms to be defined by order of the members of the Government responsible for the areas of higher education, education, work and the sea. Data on CoCs is collected through the National Vessel and Seafarer System (SNEM), which centralises records on certifications, vessel registration, and sailor details. Between 2021 and 2023, 2 224 fishers were certified. No specific data on age, gender, or nationality of CoC applicants was made available.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

Article 4 of Decree 166/2019 requires seafarers (including fishers) with professional maritime qualifications from another state to obtain recognition of their qualifications from the Maritime Administration, provided they meet the legal requirements for the profession, as outlined in the recognition regime under Law No. 9/2009.

4.1.19 Romania

Summary

In 2021, Romania's fishing fleet consisted of 130 vessels, divided into a small-scale (83%) and a large-scale segment (17%).

Romania has ratified the STCW-F, so fishing vessel personnel should be certified according to the provisions of STCW-F. However, it is unclear how the STCW-F is implemented, as the only institution providing training (the Center for Professional Training and Regional Development (CFPDR) only offers a course for fishing in inland and coastal waters.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: YES

Decision no. 1135 (2006) addresses minimum occupational safety and health requirements on board fishing vessels, including training requirements. In 2017, Romania ratified the STCW-F through Law no. 229. Personnel on fishing vessels must be certified in accordance with the STCW-F. The overall implementation and responsibility for fisheries policies lies with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – the National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture (NAFA).

There is no information about specific Certificates of Competency for functions on board fishing vessels.

Training content and structure

There is no information about nautical colleges providing fishing training.

The vocational training Center for Professional Training and Regional Development (Centrul pentru Formare Profesională şi Dezvoltare Regională - CFPDR) offers a five-week course for fishing in inland and coastal waters. The content includes types, use and maintenance of fishing gear, how to handle a fishing boat, conditions for transporting the fish, the Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture, biology aspects of different species of fish, catch sizes, interactive communication, teamwork, health and labour norms, fire prevention and extinguishing, enforcement of fisheries and environmental protection legislation. The price of the course is EUR 220.

Certification requirements

According to the CFPDR website, the graduation certificate from the fishing in inland and coastal waters course has international recognition if it is translated and apostilled. It is unclear which countries the website refers to.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

There is no information available about recognition of certificates.

4.1.20 Slovenia

Summary

In 2021, Slovenia's fishing fleet consisted of 137 vessels, divided into a small-scale (87%) and a large-scale segment (13%). All vessels in the Slovenian fleet are 18 metres or less.

Slovenia has regulated the training and certification of fishers in limited waters onboard vessels smaller than 24 metres. There is no vocational training programme to become a fisher. The content of the exams is sent to the candidates so they can study it individually. The exams required for boatmaster and fisher cover a broad range of topics essential for safe and effective fishing practices.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

Training requirements for fishers follow STCW, with additional rules from the EU Common Fisheries Policy and national policies. Key legal documents include the Marine Fisheries Act and Rules on the Training Programme for Commercial Fishing (2005). Main requirements:

- Boat operators must pass the boatmaster exam for a Certificate of Competence (CoC); no course required.
- Commercial fishers must pass an exam for a fishing licence.
- Boats with a radio station must have a certified VHF GMDSS operator.

The Maritime Administration of the Republic of Slovenia oversees the Boat Master Examination and Radio Operator Examination. The Department for Fisheries (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food) handles the commercial fishing examination.

Training content and structure

Currently, there is no formal vocational training programme for fishers in Slovenia. The main pathway to becoming a fisher is to pass both the boatmaster exam and the commercial fishing exam. A STCW-based degree from a nautical college exempts fishers from the boatmaster exam. The boatmaster examination includes knowledge about offshore collision avoidance rules, maritime regulations, basics of navigation, fundamentals of motor science, and seaman's work and skills. The commercial fishing exam includes knowledge of national and EU fisheries regulation, ecology of the sea, environmental protection, fishing vessels and gear, fishing techniques, living resources in the sea, hygiene requirements, sale of catches and reporting obligations.

Certification requirements

Skippers must hold a CoC as a boatmaster by passing the boatmaster exam. The Maritime Administration of Slovenia issues the CoCs.

- Any person engaged in commercial fishing (all fishers) needs to pass the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food's exam for commercial fishing.
- A boat with a radio station must carry a person who holds a CoC to operate a VHF GMDSS station.
- According to the Boat Management Code and the rules on the training programme for the implementation of commercial fishing, records of examinations are kept permanently at the responsible ministries.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

There have been no cases of fishers from Slovenia applying for recognition of their certificates in other EU Member States. Based on all the available information, there are also no cases of fishers from other EU Member States who have requested that their certificates be recognised by the Slovenian authorities.

4.1.21 Spain

Summary

The Spanish fleet is one of the largest EU fishing fleets (7 650 active vessels in 2021). The SSCF represents 52% of the total fleet, 45% belongs to LSF and 3% are DWF.

Training for fishers in Spain is based on STCW-F. Most fishers attend a vocational training institute. Spanish authorities issue Certificates of Competence (CoCs) for captains, skippers, sailors and engineers in eight different functions.

Training for fishers in Spain is fully regulated and organised in close cooperation between the national government and the autonomous communities.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: YES

Royal Decree 36/2014 regulates professional qualifications in the fishing sector and incorporates STCW-F into national legislation. The training of fishers is decentralised. The central government is responsible for establishing basic legislation, but the Autonomous Communities are responsible for implementing this legislation, for creating and managing maritime fishing training centres, and for issuing STCW-F CoCs.

To work professionally on-board Spanish fishing vessels, a valid CoC must be held for one of the following functions: Fishing captain, Deep-sea skipper, Coastal skipper, Multi-purpose coastal skipper, Local fishing skipper, Fishing sailor, Chief naval mechanic without limits, Chief Naval mechanic up to 2000 kW. In addition, fishers must follow the same safety rules as merchant vessels and pass basic safety training.

Training content and structure

The public sector provides maritime training and education for a career in fishing:

- Vocational training leads to professional certificates: fisher sailor, local fishing skipper and multi-purpose coastal skipper. The courses vary from 23 hours to 250 and 600 hours.
- Academic training leading to advanced professional certificates requires a minimum age of 18, and secondary education for the Intermediate Degree, and baccalaureate for the Higher Degree. Certificate classes are coastal skipper and high seas skipper in the deck department and naval mechanic, and major naval mechanic in the engineering department. Students must spend up to 2 000 hours at school.

There are a total of 34 training centres in Spain (32 public and 2 private) which provide nautical fishing training at different levels. Training is free in the public centres; private centres charge fees.

Certification requirements

Spain requires all fishers to obtain a CoC for Fishing captain, Deep-sea skipper, Coastal skipper and Multi-purpose coastal skipper, Local fishing skipper, Fishing sailor, Chief naval mechanic without limits and Chief Naval mechanic up to 2 000 kW. Detailed requirements vary by function and include minimum age, medical examination, training programmes, at-sea onboard time and a basic safety obligation. The regulations specify the qualifications to certify each function.

The Autonomous Communities issue the STCW-F CoCs on behalf of the Spanish government.

Anyone with a CoC must be registered in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment's Register of Fishing Sector Professionals.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

For European Economic Area (EEA) countries that have ratified STCW-F:

- Spain automatically endorses the qualifications of a "simple" fishers –
- Skippers and chief mates are required to pass an additional test on Spanish maritime fisheries legislation.

For EEA countries that have not ratified STCW-F, Spain grants fisher sailor certificates to fishers with a certificate that allows them to work as a deckhand or engineer.

If the fisher's country of origin is a third (non-EU) country, recognition of the certificate will depend on the bilateral agreements between Spain and that country.

4.1.22 Sweden

Summary

In 2021, the Swedish fleet consisted of 1 087 registered vessels and was highly diversified with a range of vessel types targeting different species, predominantly in the Baltic Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat regions. The fleet targets both pelagic and demersal species, and employed a total of 1 421 workers, including owners.

Sweden has not ratified the STCW-F Convention and applies the STCW Convention to its fishers. It has implemented this convention in national law and

included additional training requirements for fishers. Swedish national law does not describe CoCs for specific functions on board fishing vessels.

Legal framework and requirements

Ratified STCW-F: NO

Swedish national law has two pieces of national-level legislation which are relevant for the training and certification requirements of fishers in Sweden. These are Ordinance (2011:1533) on authorisations for maritime personnel and the Swedish Transport Agency's regulations and general advice on training and authorisations for maritime personnel (TSFS 2011:116). The Swedish Transport Agency (STA) is responsible for the implementation of the transport policy established by the Ministry of Climate and Enterprise. The STA is also responsible for issuing and recognising certificates. Swedish law states that there are certification requirements for commercial fishers on board Swedish-flagged seagoing fishing vessels. The certificates required depend on the function, type of vessel (length, GT, kW) and area of operation.

Training content and structure

Most of those wanting to work on board a seagoing fishing vessel in Sweden follow a maritime education programme at a higher education institute or an upper secondary vocational school to become a seafarer as there are no specific education programmes to become a fisher. Although there are no full-time fishery-specific vocational training programmes, it is mandatory to complete fishery-specific training course(s).

All future fishers need to follow the safety training course for duty on fishing vessels.

Those wishing to serve as master of fishing vessels with a length of at least 12 meters need to follow an additional training course.

Training of seafarers (including fishers) is organised through a combination of both state-controlled schools and private structures. The fishery specific training courses are financed by both government funds and personal contributions.

Certification requirements

Swedish national law does not describe CoCs for specific functions on board fishing vessels. CoCs issued by the Swedish authorities are related to the STCW Convention with functions as captain, officer, engineer and deckhand. Anyone wanting to work onboard a Swedish flagged fishing vessel needs to possess a dedicated safety training certificate to work on seagoing fishing vessels or certificate as master on board seagoing fishing vessels of 12 meters and over in length. A Medical Fitness certificate is mandatory. The STA is responsible for issuing and recognising certificates. There are no data on CoCs issued to fishers since there are no fishery-specific CoCs in Sweden.

Recognition of certificates from other (EU member) states

If a fisher from another (EU member) state wants to work on board a seagoing vessel under the Swedish flag, they must apply to the Swedish authorities to recognise their certificates before they start working. Their certificates need to be approved by the STA. The Agency approves certificates issued by Member States of the EEA and states with which they have an agreement on approval.

Few requests from fishers have been received. Most came from Denmark. CoCs issued by the Swedish authorities have been recognised by authorities in Denmark and Germany.

4.2. Synopsis on main common trends and national specificities

In this paragraph, we describe the main trends and national specificities which we encountered during our analysis of the training and certification requirements of the various EU Member States. The description of main trends and national specificities follows the structure of the Member State overviews.

For ease of analysis, all countries that have ratified STCW-F (**BE, DK, ES, FR, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO**) will be highlighted **in bold** throughout the remainder of sections 4, 5 and 6.

4.2.1. Fleet structure and economy

The Annual Economic Report on the EU fishing fleet of 2023 (STECF, 2023) was used for data on fleet structure, economic performance and employment. This report identified the trends and specificities set out below.

- In 2021, the EU fishing fleet numbered 71 628 vessels with a combined gross tonnage of 1.31 million and engine power of 5.24 million kW.
- There were 17 415 inactive vessels (24% of the total number of vessels), bringing the number of active vessels to 54 213.
- Of the active fishing vessels, 76% belonged to the small-scale fleet (SSCF) segment, 23% to the large-scale fleet (LSF) segment and less than 0.5% to the distant water fleet (DWF) segment. Currently, 3.7% of the EU fishing fleet is 24 meters and over ([46]).
- The total number of vessels in the EU fishing fleet continued to decline in 2021, while other indicators of fleet capacity such as engine power and gross tonnage remained stable compared to 2020.
- Landings amounted to 3.57 million tonnes of seafood (a decrease of 9.5% compared to 2020), amounting to a value of EUR 6 billion (an increase of 4.0% compared to 2020).
- Revenue (gross value of landings plus other income) amounted to almost EUR 6.2 billion representing a 5% increase on 2020 figures. Other income represented 3.4% of this revenue.
- Gross Value Added (GVA), gross profit and net profit (all excluding subsidies and fishing rights) generated by the fleet were EUR 3.3 billion, EUR 1.2 billion and EUR 0.5 billion, respectively. GVA and gross profits remained stable in 2021 compared to 2020. However, net profit increased by 23%.
- Overall, the EU fishing fleet was profitable and net performance improved when compared to 2020. Regarding economic performance at Member State level, four of the 22 Member States generated net losses, namely: Cyprus, **France**, Greece and Germany.
- At Member State level, none suffered gross losses in 2021.

([46]) 2570 of 69076 vessels (as of 13/12/2024 based on the fleet register data).

- The EU fleet directly employed circa 121 917 fishers, corresponding to 81 747 FTE. Of the total employed, at least 35 199 were estimated as being unpaid labour.
- Employment decreased by 9.7% in total employed over the period 2018-2021; and the number of FTE decreased by 16.7% over the same period, while average wages per FTE increased by 8.7%.
- Average annual wages per FTE (including crew wages and unpaid labour) was estimated at EUR 26 387, ranging from EUR 122 104 for Belgian fishers to EUR 2 289 for fishers in Cyprus.

4.2.2. Legal framework and requirements

By studying the various Member State overviews, the following trends and specificities were identified:

- There is considerable variation between EU Member States when it comes to the legal framework on the training and certification of fishers.
- In some Member States it was not possible to identify a legal framework or requirements on the training and certification of fishers (CY, EL, MT).
- Some EU Member States (**BE, DK, FR, NL, LV, LT, PL, PT, RO, ES**) have ratified the STCW-F Convention and base their legal framework and requirements on this Convention, often combined with additional national requirements (e.g. language requirements for ranking officers).
- Some EU Member States (IE, DE, EE, FI, BG, IT, HR, SI, SE) have a specific legal framework and specific requirements on the training and certification of fishers which is not based on the STCW-F Convention but sometimes makes references to other international conventions (e.g. STCW) and/or EU law (e.g. Council Directive 2017/159). These references are not always specific, and, in those cases, it is unclear what the legal framework and requirements are based on.
- When it comes to the relevant authorities, various ministries often have legislative competences in the training and certification of fishers. This often involves ministries and agencies responsible for fisheries management and/or transport/shipping and/or education. Within the EU Member States with a legal framework and requirements on the training and certification of fishers, there does seem to be a clear division of tasks and responsibilities between the ministries involved and other bodies (e.g. inspection agencies). In many cases, ministries are not fully aware of the work other ministries are doing and information about training and certification of fishers is not centrally available.
- EU Member States that have a legal framework and requirements in place for the training and certification of fishers, and which have based this on the setup of the international conventions STCW-F (fishing) and STCW (shipping) generally link requirements for the various functions on board seagoing fishing vessels to a Certificate of Competency (CoC). Often it is possible for fishers to progress to higher functions through experience and by obtaining additional certificates (e.g. Certificates of Proficiency). A CoC is not required for all functions on board. CoCs are usually required for functions in the nautical department (e.g. safe navigation of the vessel) or engine department (safe operation of technical systems on board). The

deckhand/rating function usually does not require a CoC as they do not perform tasks related to the operation of the vessel. However, this is different for deckhands/ratings with a watchkeeping task. Often a CoC is needed to perform watchkeeping duties. Although these functions do not require the possession of a CoC, they often do need to meet minimum requirements for training. A completed Basic Safety Training is the minimum in most EU Member States that have a legal framework and requirements in place for the training and certification of fishers.

- For the functions in the engine department (engineers) often no distinction is made between shipping and fishing. The technical systems on vessels are rather similar and it is usually possible to use a CoC to work on both fishing vessels and merchant shipping vessels. For the nautical functions this is different. Although the safe navigation of a vessel is applicable to both fishing and merchant shipping, the work on fishing vessels also requires the safe handling of fishing gear. There is a high diversity in function titles that are being used in the CoCs issued by EU Member States concerning functions on seagoing fishing vessels.
- Some EU Member States that do have a legal framework and requirements for the training and certification of fishers in place, do not link these requirements to the setup of the international conventions for (fishing) vessel personnel (STCW and STCW-F) and therefore do not work with CoCs and CoPs. In most of these cases, training and certification requirements are linked to a boating licence or a fishing licence (SI, CY, EL, MT).

4.2.3. Training content and structure

By studying the various Member State overviews, the following training pathways were identified:

- A dedicated vocational training programme for all functions.
- A vocational training programme for seafarers in combination with a fishery-specific training course.
- A vocational training programme for seafarers that applies to higher functions on fishing vessels.
- Mandatory training course(s), sometimes linked to a boating licence or a fishing licence.
- No training programmes, courses or requirements in place for fishers. Fishers board a vessel and learn by doing.

If there is a dedicated vocational training programme that leads to a career as fisher, the setup generally varies between the following options:

- Full-time vocational training programme of several weeks, months or years with internships to build-up the required seagoing experience to apply for a starting qualification. It is possible to progress to higher functions by building up seagoing service and by completing additional training courses leading to additional CoPs and potentially a higher CoC.
- Part-time vocational training programme where students intersperse attendance at a nautical college for a couple of days for theoretical classes and examinations with seagoing experience. This often requires self-study

and discipline from the students. They also receive a starting qualification and can progress to higher functions based on experience and by obtaining the required training certificates belonging to the higher functions (CoPs).
- These training programmes are usually offered at a nautical college[47] or training institute[48].

If an EU Member State does not have dedicated vocational training programmes to become a fisher but still has training requirements in place to work as a fisher (e.g. a Basic Safety Training certificate), then basic training course(s) must be completed. These training courses are usually offered by training institutes. Training courses usually vary in duration between a couple of hours to several days. Training institutes are usually commercial enterprises offering a variety of courses linked to model courses described in the STCW and STCW-F Convention.

Additional observations:

- Based on the input received from the e-surveys, the desk study and the stakeholder interviews, men and women have equal access to training. Where data on gender is available, it is clear that despite equal access to training, the fishing industry is a male-dominated industry.
- It is possible for adults with no fishing experience to enter a career in fishing. Some EU Member States promote a career in fishing for unemployed adults that look for employment opportunities (e.g. **Belgium**) and sometimes government funds are made available for re-training adults (e.g. **France**).
- There is a huge variation in the training content between the various EU Member States. Some EU Member States offer a very broad range of training topics in the training of fishers, covering topics like navigation, safety, biology, fisheries management, fisheries economics and entrepreneurship, whereas other EU Member States only cover a limited number of topics in the training requirements of fishers (safety, navigation). See for more details the synopsis overview, in which a gap analysis is provided between the competences required in STCW-F and competences offered in the Member States.
- In general, government funds from the national, regional or local level and industry funds are important sources for funding the training of fishers. Vocational training programmes are usually covered by government funds, whereas training courses usually need to be covered by trainees and/or employers although in some cases government funds are also available to cover (part of) the costs. However, even though the training programmes and courses are generally (partially) funded, there is still a challenge of missed income for active fishers since they cannot fish when they need to attend training programmes or courses.
- It proved challenging to collect data on the number of trained fishers, or on their gender, age and nationality. Data is generally collected at a college

([47]) Nautical college: offers vocational training programs to become a maritime professional (seafarer, fishers).

([48]) Training institute: offers training courses like the Basic Safety Training leading to a certificate (CoP) after successful completion.

or training institute level, but the type of data varies greatly. Some shared data on the number of trainees that registered, some on the number of trainees that received a certificate, and in some cases, it is hard to distinguish between fishers and seafarers. To give an example, someone completing a training programme or course for a technical function (engineer) can work both in the fishing industry or the shipping industry. In the case of training courses, some fishers complete several training courses during a year, so data on the number of trainees also does not necessarily say anything on the population of fishers.

- In many EU Member States, the regulations indicate that the responsible ministry should collect data on the number of trained and certified fishers. Nevertheless, collecting such data was challenging due to a lack of response from several EU Member States.

4.2.4. Certification requirements

By studying the various Member State overviews, the following trends and specificities were identified:

- When it comes to the certification requirements of fishers, we identified the following two categories:
  - There are no specific certification requirements for fishers in place.
  - There are specific certification requirements in place for fishers and the national law distinguishes requirements based on function, vessel length, vessel size (GT)[49], engine power (kW) or area of operation (limited waters, unlimited waters). An important element is that sometimes no training and certification requirements are described in the national law for certain functions (deckhand/rating) and/or categories of vessels (small-scale vessels, near shore).
- It proved challenging to obtain data for a lot of EU Member States on the number, age, and gender of certified fishers. Those EU Member States that did share data asked us to treat these data with caution as not every CoC holder will necessarily be an active fisher (e.g. they may have retired, be employed in another sector, or be temporarily or permanently disabled due to accident or illness, or be deceased, etc.) and sometimes CoCs need to be renewed and fishers appear more than once in the data.
- When it comes to the recognition of certificates for fishers from other (EU member) States, we identified that some EU Member States have no (formal) procedure in place to recognise the certificates issued by other (EU member) States, which makes it hard to obtain this data. Other EU Member States have procedures in place to recognise certificates issued by other (EU member) States. This usually requires a one-by-one approach since there is no EU Directive in place similar to EU Directive 2022/993 on the minimum level of training of seafarers which ensures that all EU Member States need to meet the minimum requirements of the Directive. The European Maritime Safety Association (EMSA) was designated by the European Commission to perform assessments in the EU Member States to assess fulfilment of the requirements.

([49]) Requirements based on GT might/cannot be based on STCW-F because STCW-F does not use GTs.

- The procedure and approach to the recognition of certificates varies a lot between EU Member States. Generally, a fisher has to make an application and needs to provide information and copies of certificates. In general, the following approaches have been identified:
    - The application is immediately declined (**the Netherlands** declines all applications except from **Belgium**). This can happen as the EU Member State has no agreement with the other (EU Member) State for the mutual or unilateral recognition of certificates. Since there is no common standard on the training and certification of fishers within the EU, it is difficult to assess if the applicant has acquired the required knowledge and skills to perform the function.
    - The application is processed (**BE**, **DK**, **FR**, DE, IE). In this case the procedure varies greatly. In some cases, the EU Member State trusts that authorities of other (EU member) States safeguard that their fishers have received appropriate training, whereas other EU Member States contact the authorities of the other (EU member) State to retrieve additional information on the training and certification requirements that apply in the country of the application. The extent to which further information is requested varies a lot between EU Member States.
- It seems that requests for the recognition of certificates for fishers in most EU Member States are made by neighbouring countries.
- The EU Directive 2022/993 on the minimum level of training of seafarers and EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications were mentioned by several EU Member States as relevant Directives for the recognition of certificates, although both Directives were also seen as inadequate by some EU Member States to use for fishers.

4.3. Comparative analysis of discrepancies between national frameworks and STCW-F

In this paragraph, the outcomes of the Member State overviews are compared to the revised STCW-F Convention[50]. To do so, the competences per function of the STCW-F Code (Annex 11 of the revised STCW-F Convention) are taken as a baseline. These competences are compared to the training and certification curriculum of different Member States, as laid out in the Member State overviews and drawn up in a gap analysis per Member State. The gap analysis per Member State follows the same structure for each Member State, focusing on:

- Compliance with STCW-F
- Standards below STCW-F mandatory standards (Up-skilling and re-skilling needs)
- Recognition of foreign certificates.

This gap analysis is the basis to determine whether up-skilling or re-skilling might be necessary in the future if the STCW-F Convention were implemented in EU law.

([50]) International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995

Of the 22 countries assessed, the assessment of the level of re- and upskilling required is:

- **Limited re- and upskilling** needs are expected in five countries (**BE, DK, FR, NL, RO**). These countries generally already comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F. Most of these countries also have additional requirements on top of the STCW-F requirements, which would require them to harmonise their training and certification curriculum upon implementation of the revised STCW-F (where additional requests by MSs can be maintained).
- **Some re- and upskilling** needs are expected in nine countries (HR, DE, IE, **LV, LT, PL, PT, ES**, SE). This would involve a wide variety of topics for the different roles that have been identified (e.g. for skippers this includes coordination of search and rescue operations and watchkeeping and for officers it includes competencies around medical assistance).
- **Substantial re- and upskilling needs** are expected in eight countries (BG, CY, EE, FI, EL, IT, MT, SI) as no requirements or only limited requirements are currently in place.

A brief overview of the outcomes is provided in the summary table below, with more details per Member State in Annex D. The last column provides a brief summary of the gap analysis per MS, with more details in Annex D.

Table 3 – Ratification of STCW and STCW-F and summary gap overview

Legend related to the table:

	Limited re- and upskilling expected
	Some re- and upskilling expected
	Substantial re- and upskilling expected
R	**Ratified**
NR	**Not ratified**

	Training and Certification		Gap analysis related to re- and upskilling
	STCW	**STCW-F**	
Belgium	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Limited up- and re-skilling expected**. **Curricula for skipper and officer roles appear to satisfy almost all STCW-F competences, with a few exceptions** (e.g. upskilling expected for skippers for the use of navigation systems other than radar for decision-making and upskilling for officers in unlimited waters around the response to a distress signal at sea). **A few competences are also missing for engine officers and watch functions** (e.g. manage fuel, lubrication and ballast operations, control trim and stability). **Basic safety training appears to follow STCW** requirements. In **addition to the revised STCW-F Convention,** Belgium recognises additional functions for the issuance of Certificates of Competences (ordinary seaman, engineer officer 221 kW and able seaman – which follow the requirements set in Regulation II/4 of the STCW).
Bulgaria	R	NR	Bulgaria **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. **Substantial re- and up-skilling are expected** for all fishing vessel personnel. Information is missing on several professional roles. For those specified, no information was found on specific competences and examination content. Details on revalidation of certificates and refresher courses were also not found. **No additional requirements** beyond the revised STCW-F were identified.
Croatia	R	NR	Croatia **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F;** training and certification of fishers are **based on national requirements**. **Some re- and up-skilling** are expected. Curricula reported **for masters** on fishing vessels are aligned with the STCW-F role of skipper in limited waters. Only **a few competences are missing** (the use of navigation systems to assist command decision-making and for provision of medical care on board). **The same is true for officers** who lack medical aid skills and monitoring compliance with legislative requirements. **Engine officers and watch functions** currently lack competences relative to managing fuel, lubrication and ballast operations, controlling trim and stability. **No information was found for GMDSS radio operators**. In addition, the Croatian **Basic Safety Training** miss competences relative to the control of fatigue. Finally, **limited validity after 5 years and refresher**

			courses are not in place for Chief engineer officers on vessels up to 750 kW propulsion power. **In addition to the revised STCW-F Convention** Croatia offers a professional course for commercial fishing activities and a familiarisation course on ship emergency procedures complementary to basic training.
Cyprus	R	NR	Cyprus **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. Given the existing lack of identified standards, Cyprus would need a **complete up-skilling** of its fishers' training and certification. The country would also need to implement a framework differentiating between the various professional roles recognised by the revised STCW-F. **Revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all professions**. There are no additional requirements beyond the STCW-F.
Denmark	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Limited up-skilling expected**. **Engine officer functions** on fishing vessels **and GMDSS radio operators follow STCW requirements**. Thus, with the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Denmark will need to ensure that all its competence requirements are satisfied. Since there are **multiple basic training courses** (and it is mandatory only to have passed one of them), they all should fully satisfy STCW-F competence requirements. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F some **re-skilling** will also be needed. Refreshers every 5 years will be needed for Basic Safety Training, as well as revalidation of GMDSS radio operators' certificates. In **addition to the revised STCW-F Convention**, Denmark has differentiated the requirements for additional categories of fishing vessels based on length (< 9 metres, >= 9 metres to < 15 metres, >= 15 metres or more). It also recognises additional roles on the deck of fishing vessels: masters and second hands (in addition to mates and skippers).
Estonia	R	NR	Estonia **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. **Substantial re- and up-skilling would likely be needed** for all fishing vessel personnel. **The curriculum of the level 4 qualification for coastal fishers is not aligned with the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code**. Navigational competences are missing overall. Personal survival techniques, fire prevention and firefighting, communication and human relationships skills are not included among the basic safety competences of Estonian fishers. Moreover, there is currently no clear distinction between the different roles on fishing vessels. **Revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all professions**. There are **no additional requirements** beyond the STCW-F.
Finland	R	NR	Finland **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. There are **currently no qualifications for fishing in unlimited waters**. Thus, these roles would need to be introduced and the necessary upskilling provided. **Substantial up-skilling is expected, mostly for skippers and officers in limited waters** (e.g. determine and allow for compass errors, coordinate search and rescue operations, weather and oceanographic forecasting, vessel manoeuvring and knowledge of maritime communication). The certification for

			skippers in domestic service seems not to comply with the revised STCW-F. It lacks most of its competence requirements. **Training for engine officers and watch functions in Finland complies with the STCW Convention**. The only missing competences are maintaining the stability of the ship and developing emergency and damage control plans. **Boatmaster certificates do not comply with STCW-F revalidation standards**. Re-skilling would be needed for these roles. **Different from the minimum requirements of the revised STCW-F convention**, Finland distinguishes between three different categories of vessels length and three separated catch areas (no unlimited waters). Additional Certificates of Competence with respect to those indicated in the revised STCW-F are: Boatmaster's certificate (categories A and B), and Engine Attendant. There are also two separate categories of Skipper's certificate (A and B). These certify officers and masters on vessels and catch areas relevant to the STCW-F.
France	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Limited up- and re-skilling expected**. The Fishing Master curriculum aligns with the competences of the revised STCW-F Code for both skippers and officers in unlimited waters. The curriculum for **Captain 200 Fishing** is **not aligned with the revised STCW-F** for deck roles in limited waters (the only relevant skills included in this curriculum are medical and radio competences). For **engine officers and watch functions**, the only missing competence is maintenance of the operational condition of life-saving and firefighting appliances. From the information found, **no up-skilling or re-skilling is needed for GMDSS radio operators, basic training and revalidation standards**. France **categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently** compared to the revised STCW-F Convention. There are multiple certificates authorising work as an officer. The same is true for captains and mates. GMDSS certifications vary based on the type of vessel, the sailing area and on whether the person is responsible for the maintenance of GMDSS installations. There are also some **additional roles** relative to the revised STCW-F Convention.
Germany	R	NR	Germany **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F** and training and certification of fishers are generally aligned with the STCW Convention. **Some up-skilling and re-skilling will be needed. Masters in coastal fishery lack many of the competence requirements** of the revised STCW-F **for skipper positions** (e.g. determining position, using compasses, watchkeeping, fishing vessel power plants, using ECDIS navigation systems, controlling stability, providing medical care on board). More detailed information is needed for Masters in large and small deep-sea fishery, but no major gaps was detected. **Navigational Watch Officers lack watchkeeping skills**. **Engine Officer and Watch functions, as well as Basic Safety Training follow the requirements of the STCW Convention**, while **information is missing on revalidation standards**. **Different from the revised STCW-F**, **most functions** on board fishing vessels **are specified for a vessel length of 12 metres or more** (>= 24 metres in the Convention). **Masters in coastal fishery** is an additional role found in Germany. There is a training course for **fish farmers**, which is not aligned with the Conventions. It is unclear whether Deckhands are also recognised on fishing vessels.

Greece	R	NR	Greece **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. Given the existing lack of standards, Greece would need a **complete up-skilling of its fishers**. Training and certification curricula in line with the revised STCW-F would also need to be introduced. In terms of **re-skilling**, revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all professions. There are no additional requirements beyond the STCW-F.
Ireland	R	NR	Ireland **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F** and training and certification of fishers are **based on national requirements**. **Some re- and up-skilling** are expected. A few competences are missing for skipper roles in unlimited waters (watchkeeping, power plants, medical aid). Medical aid competences are missing in curricula for officers. Competences on the use of navigation systems for both skippers and officers are guaranteed by a specific certification (ENS Fishing). The curriculum for Class 3 engineers lack skills relative to troubleshooting on electronic equipment. **GMDSS certificates are required for skipper and officer roles on fishing vessels**. **Basic Safety Training appears to generally follow STCW** requirements. **Certificates of Competence need to be renewed** in Ireland. In **addition to the revised STCW-F Convention**, Ireland recognises additional functions (e.g. deckhand and skippers on seagoing vessels of 24 metres or less) for which Certificates of Competence are needed.
Italy	R	NR	Italy **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. Given the existing lack of standards, Italy would need **a thorough up-skilling of its fisher training and certification curriculum, and to make courses mandatory**. There are **courses for deck and engine officers in compliance with the STCW**. They satisfy almost all the competences of the STCW-F Code for both qualifications. As such, they **could represent a solid basis to set up STCW-F compliant training**. **Some** competences are specified for **fisher roles**, which however are **not aligned with any of the positions specified in the revised STCW-F**. **Maritime Master for Fishing I and II Class satisfy only some of the competences in the STCW-F Code for skippers**. Other fisher roles in Italy are: **Seafarer Authorised to Fish, Boatmaster for Coastal Fishing, Sea and Inland Water Operator**. To be aligned with the revised STCW-F, **these qualifications for fishers would need** to match the requirements for specific roles specified in the Convention, which would require **consistent up-skilling**. Even in terms of re-skilling, **revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place** for all professions. Renewability of certificates after 5 years is currently specified only for those embarking on merchant ships, which however follow STCW requirements. **In addition to fishing activity in limited and unlimited waters** (Mediterranean fishing and fishing beyond the straits, respectively), Italy also recognises c**oastal fishing** - fishing in the Adriatic Sea, as well as along the continental and insular coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, at no more than 40 miles from the coasts. There are **no additional requirements** beyond the STCW-F.

Latvia	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention via national legislation that integrates both STCW and STCW-F. Even though Latvian legislation refers to both Conventions, all **competence requirements for roles on board fishing vessels refer to STCW**. Thus, fishers are trained as seafarers, which does not adhere to the revised STCW-F because fishery specific aspects are not covered. The information available shows that training in radio and navigation systems, medical competences, firefighting, and survival and rescue are provided depending on the role, the characteristics of the vessel and the navigation area. **Latvia would need to make sure that its competence requirements for qualifications on board fishing vessels were aligned with the revised STCW-F**. Basic Safety Training certificates have unlimited validity. Thus, this training would require re-skilling in compliance with the revised STCW-F-. Requirements are generally defined based on fishing vessels of 45 metres (instead of 24 metres). Latvia differentiates between masters, chief mates, navigational watch officers and skippers (the latter applies only to small boats of less than 12 metres). Engine officer roles below both 750 kW and 300 kW of propulsion power are also recognised, as well as fishing vessel ratings personnel.
Lithuania	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the STCW and the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Some up- and re-skilling expected**. **Skipper qualifications' training follows STCW** competence requirements. **With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Lithuania would need to make sure that its requirements were aligned with the Convention**. **For positions in unlimited waters, further training** for captains/masters is necessary. This **only partially complies with the STCW-F Code** (some missing competences such as vessel manoeuvring, the use of compasses, weather forecasting). However, the combination of the STCW-compliant training and of the course for captains/masters guarantees compliance with the revised STCW-F. **Officers** operating **in the Baltic Sea comply with the STCW-F Code for officers in unlimited waters**. **The professional development course for Deck Officers is only partially compliant with the STCW-F Code for** both **skippers and officers in unlimited waters** (competences such as helming the vessel, fixing position, and maritime communication are missing). **Engine officer and watch functions follow STCW requirements**. The same is true for **GMDSS certifications and Basic Safety Training**. Finally, revalidation procedures are in place, even though **no information** was found **on refresher courses**. In **addition to the revised STCW-F Convention,** Lithuania recognises electromechanics on board fishing vessels. No direct reference appears to be made for skippers, as they are referred to as masters. The qualification of chief mate is recognised in unlimited waters, besides that of officer.
Malta	R	NR	Malta **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. **Substantial re- and up-skilling would be needed** for all fishing vessel personnel. Recertification procedures and refresher courses need to be organised in compliance with the revised STCW-F requirements. There are no additional requirements beyond the STCW-F.
Netherlands	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention.

			Little or no up-skilling are expected with the introduction of the revised STCW-F. From the information found, the fishing specialisations in the MBO-3 and MBO-4 training programmes cover all the sections in the competence requirements for professional figures established in the STCW-F Code. The only competence to be introduced concerns knowledge on the protection of the marine environment. In terms of revalidation standards, once the new version of the Convention is implemented **all fishers will need to take a refresher for the Basic Safety Fishery training after five years**, which is currently not the case. **Some additional qualifications on board fishing vessels are recognised** in the Netherlands. Skipper roles are divided in four classes based on vessel length. Substitute Skipper and Mate/Engineer qualifications are also available. Ratings on board fishing vessels follow STCW requirements. With the diplomas obtained after successful completion of a vocational training programme for fishers at a nautical college, it is also possible to apply for a Certificate of Competence for functions on seagoing vessels other than seagoing fishing vessels.
Poland	**R**	**R**	**Generally compliant with revised STCW-F** Convention. **Some re- and up-skilling** will be needed. Watchkeeping and stowage capabilities are generally missing for skipper positions and for officers in limited waters. The training for skippers in unlimited waters also lacks visual signalling competences. **No officer position in unlimited waters is specified** for fishing vessels. **The same is true for engine officer and watch functions**. Basic Safety Training lacks social responsibility competences (e.g. controlling fatigue). **Information on revalidation of certificates and refresher courses was found only for Safety Training**, which meets the revised STCW-F requirements. **Some additional qualifications on board fishing vessels are recognised** (e.g. junior sea fisherman), with different specifications in terms of vessel length, propulsion power and type of navigation.
Portugal	**R**	**R**	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Little information** is available for Portugal **in terms of competence requirements for fishing vessel personnel**. So, it is possible to perform only a partial analysis of the up-skilling and re-skilling needs for the various professional roles on Portuguese fishing vessels. The **Boatswain Fisherman certification satisfies only some competence requirements of the STCW-F Code for officer roles**. Responding to a signal of distress at sea, as well as maritime and English communication skills appear to be missing. Others (e.g. watchkeeping, medical aid) are not clearly specified. **Currently, Portugal does not recognise specific roles for radio operators**. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Portugal **would need to introduce recognition procedures and specific up-skilling and re-skilling courses**. **Basic Safety Training is required for all seafarers in Portugal**. From the information found, no up-skilling or re-skilling need is present. Courses compliant with STCW Basic Training generally satisfy the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code. **Little information was found on revalidation standards**. From this, **no gap was detected** with respect to the revised STCW-F. Portugal recognises several different qualifications of seafarers, divided in **three different ranks: officers, masters and seamen**. **This categorisation is also applied to fishing vessels**. **Access requirements for higher categories** are usually based on experience on board and additional

			qualifications or aptitude assessments. Further qualifications for fishers are also offered in Madeira: **Fisherman, Fisherman Sailor, Local Fishing Arrais, Fishing Arrais, Master Coastal Fisherman, Boatswain Fisherman**. The training institute EMA, in the Azores, offers **additional training on environmental management**.
Romania	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Limited up- and re-skilling expected**. From the information found, skipper and officer requirements lack competences on pollution prevention and protection of the marine environment. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Romania would also need to **apply the new categorisation of engine officer and watch functions** and to check whether some re-skilling may be needed. Basic training currently does not include competences relating to elementary first aid, or personal safety and social responsibility (e.g. comply with emergency procedures, prevent marine pollution). **Information was not found relative to specific curricula for qualifications on fishing vessels**. The same is true for **GMDSS radio personnel and revalidation standards**. There are no additional requirements beyond the STCW-F.
Slovenia	R	NR	Slovenia **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**. **Substantial re- and up-skilling are likely to be needed** for all fishing vessel personnel. Slovenia recognises only three functions on board fishing vessels: Boatmaster, Commercial fisher and Radio Station Operator (VHF GMDSS). **The boatmaster exam is not aligned with the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code** (missing competences: e.g. watchkeeping, catch handling and stowage, protection of marine environment, medical care). **The same is true for the commercial fishing exam**. **No** specific **information** was found **on revalidation of certificates and refresher courses**. **Some additional standards are in place** (e.g. knowledge of veterinary medicine and food hygiene is required in the commercial fishing exam).
Spain	R	R	**Generally compliant with** the **revised STCW-F** Convention. **Some re- and up-skilling** expected. Some competences are missing for skipper qualifications in limited waters (e.g. use of navigation systems). Not enough information is available on the competences in other skipper curricula. The curriculum for Fishing Captain satisfies most competences of the STCW-F Code for officers in unlimited waters, with some missing elements (e.g. watchkeeping responding to a signal of distress at sea). Details for officers in limited waters were not found. **Spain does not recognise the engine watch function**. Since such a role is found in the revised STCW-F, Spain would have to recognise it and assess whether up-skilling or re-skilling was needed. Spain does not recognise a specific role for radio operators on fishing vessels. **Basic Safety Training follows STCW provisions**. **Information on revalidation standards was not found**. Spain **categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently** from the way they are established by the revised STCW-F Convention, even with some additions. Multiple certifications are in place for both skipper and officer positions. Different specifications of propulsion power are reported for engine officer positions with respect to the revised STCW-F. The role of Fisher/Deckhand is also recognised. Skippers and officers in unlimited waters, and engine officers need to have

			a qualification issued by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in order to obtain certification.
Sweden	**R**	**NR**	**Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Sweden are **based on the STCW**, with additional requirements set by national legislation. There are concrete plans to ratify the STCW-F Convention. In general, with the introduction of the revised STCW-F (and with the ratification of the Convention, as planned), **Sweden will need to align its current framework and qualifications** with the new standards and assess the need for up-skilling and re-skilling of its fishers. Detailed competences are reported only for a few training curricula. The curriculum for **masters on fishing vessels with a length of at least 12 metres is generally not in line with the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code for officer and skipper positions**. **Safety Training** is **only partially aligned with the** requirements of the **STCW-F Code**. Missing competences include effective communication and human relationships, as well as actions to control fatigue. **Both GMDSS radio operator certificates and revalidation standards are aligned with the STCW**. **Additional standards** are based on the structure and functions established in the STCW Convention. There are f**urther roles** for mechanics, mechanical engineers and ship technicians with respect to the STCW. These professional figures **have no equivalent in the revised STCW-F**.

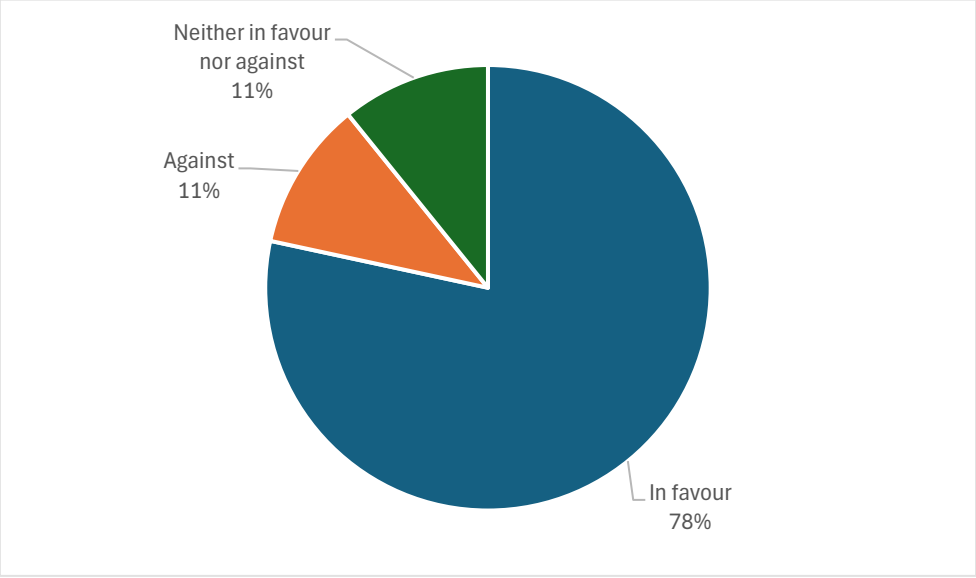
5. Advantages and disadvantages of implementation of a common standard of training and certification based on STCW-F

This chapter looks at potential advantages and disadvantages of implementing a common standard of training and certification in the EU, based on STCW-F. For the analysis on the general potential advantages and disadvantages of implementing a common standard on the training and certification for fishers based on the revised STCW-F, information was gathered in three different ways: through the e-survey, through expert interviews and by collecting feedback from a meeting of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Sea-Fisheries (12-11-2024).

Respondents to the e-survey were asked their position on a common training and certification standard for fishers (favourable, unfavourable, neutral) and the reasons for their position.

37 respondents answered this question. Annex A provides a detailed overview of the responses. Responses were gathered for 15 EU Member States: **Belgium**, Croatia, Cyprus, **Denmark**, Estonia, Finland, **France**, Germany, Ireland, Italy, **Latvia**, **Netherlands**, **Portugal** (including a response from the Azores), **Romania**, and Slovenia. Figure 2 provides an overview of the responses to this question, showing that 29 respondents were in favour, 4 respondents were against, and 4 respondents were neither in favour nor against.

Figure 3 – E-survey responses on desirability of a common training standard for EU fishers (n=37)



Source: E-survey 2024, conducted for the Baseline study on the training and certification requirements for fishers in EU Member States.

Looking into more detail to these answers, two more overviews are shown below. The first overview shows how respondents from different Member States have responded on the question of implementing a common standard on the training

and certification for fishers based on the revised STCW-F. The second overview provides the same analysis, specified towards the type of respondent[51].

Figure 4 E-survey responses on desirability of a common training standard for EU fishers per Member State (n=37)

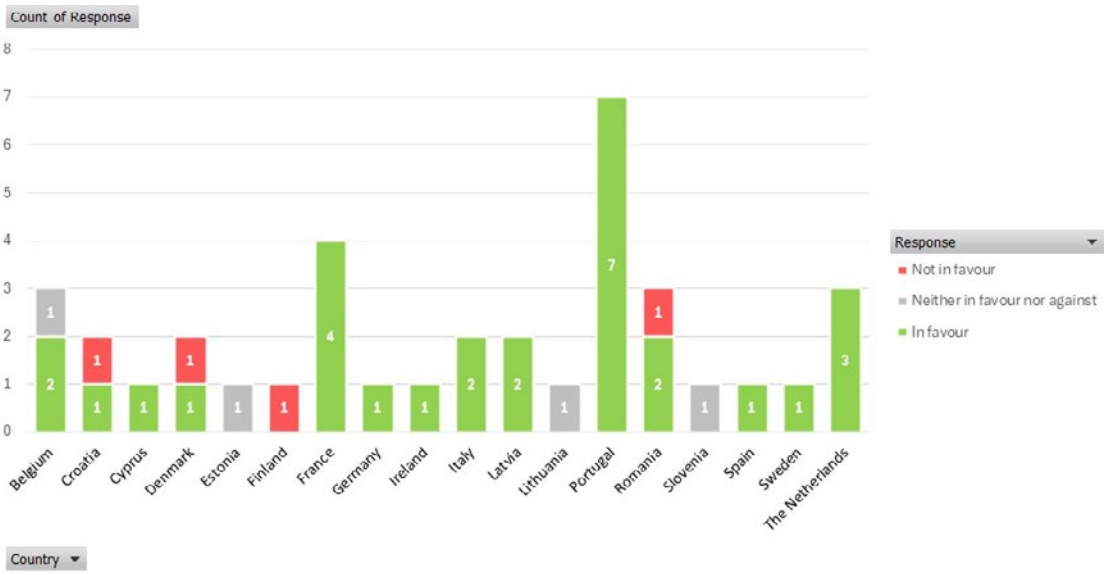
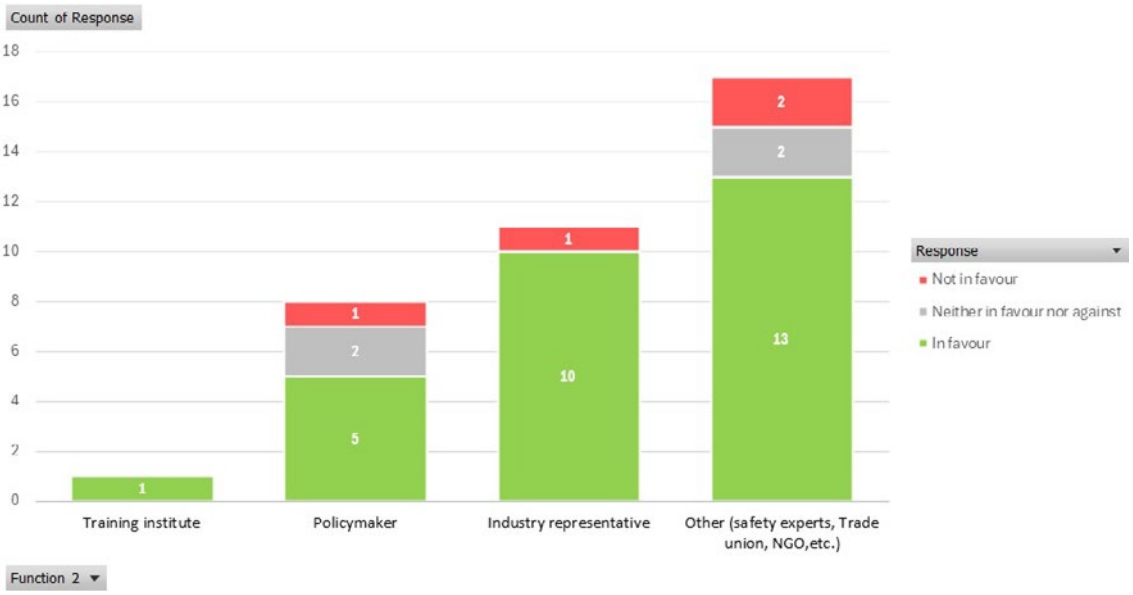


Figure 5 E-survey responses on desirability of a common training standard for EU fishers per type of respondent (n=37)



When then asked about the potential advantages and disadvantages of implementing a common training and certification standard across the European Union for fishers, there were a variety of answers. The same question was asked during expert interviews in case where the interviewee had not already responded to the e-survey. The table below summarises the answers from the e-survey and interviews in eight different categories. Annex E of this reports provides a full overview of the arguments 'in favour' and 'not in favour' of a common standard,

([51]) The other category is only specified for a couple of respondents which indicated their function.

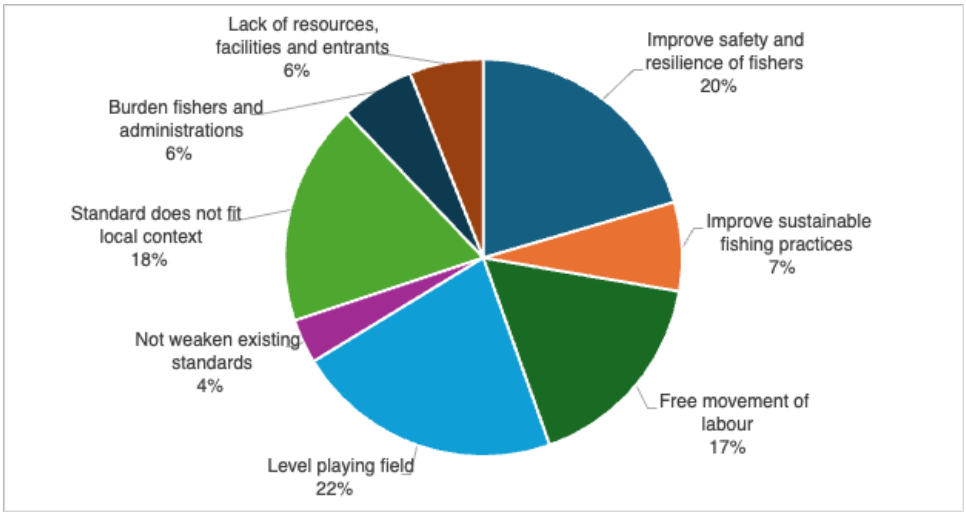
as provided by the e-survey respondents and during interviews (full answer overview).

Table 4 – Summary of e-survey respondents' views of the advantages and disadvantages of an EU training and certification standard for fishers

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Level playing field	1. Standard does not fit local context
2. Improve safety and resilience of fishers	2/3. Burden on fishers and administrations
3. Free movement of labour	2/3. Lack of resources, facilities and entrants
4. Improve sustainable fishing practices	4. Risk of weakening existing standards

Most arguments in the 'advantages' category related to the category 'Level playing field' (18 of 54 responses). This was followed closely by 'Improve resilience of fishers' (17), 'free movement of labour' (13) and 'improve sustainable fishing practices' (6). In the 'disadvantages' category, 'Standard does not fit local context' was the most frequent answer by far (15 responses), followed by 5 responses each to 'a burden on fishers and administrations' and 'lack of resources, facilities and entrants'. Only 3 respondents were concerned about the risk of weakening existing standards. An overview of the frequency with which category was mentioned can be found in figure below.

Figure 6 – Frequency with which category of advantages and disadvantages were mentioned (n=54)



Source: E-survey 2024, conducted for the Baseline study on the training and certification requirements for fishers in EU Member States.

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Sea Fisheries

In addition to input gathered through the e-survey and interviews, the question on potential advantages and disadvantages of a common standard on the training and certification of fishers in the European Union was presented during a meeting of the EU Social Dialogue Committee on Sea Fisheries on 12 November 2024.

This Committee consists of representatives of the social partners, comprising an equal number of employers' and workers' representatives (European Commission).

This meeting was attended to validate the input that was generated through the e-survey and expert interviews, but also to retrieve potential new contributions. During the meeting, various aspects mentioned in the e-survey and expert interviews were repeated and thereby validated. However, in addition to those advantages and disadvantages, several relevant remarks were made.

- The basic principles of navigation are mostly the same and the text in the international conventions is not rigidly defined. There is room to make it more specific if the target group and/or the type of gear used in a particular EU Member State requires this.
- STCW-F provides a minimum standard. EU Member States are always free to add more stringent requirements.
- Labour shortages lead to use of migrant labour. There are concerns about the position of immigrants in the fishing industry, on how they are being treated and protected, even within the EU fishing fleet. However, if the EU does not make it possible to facilitate the exchange of labour within the EU for fishers, immigration will be a trend that will continue. There will be more immigrant fishers from outside the EU, especially since there are countries outside the EU that have ratified STCW-F. The STCW-F Convention states that if a country has ratified the Convention, it may only recognise certificates from countries that have also ratified STCW-F. The current situation forces EU Member States to look for fishing personnel outside the EU. This raises the question of whether this is desirable, especially since the EU wants its own nationals to stay in the industry and wants to attract new people. On the other hand, the transposition of the STCW-F convention into EU law also provides opportunities to combat IUU fishing outside the EU. If non-EU nationals would like to work on board of EU fishing vessels, these countries would need to ratify the convention as this is required by the convention. In such case, these fishers also need to be trained on topics like fisheries management and IUU which might increase awareness around the world, and this could positively contribute to the fight of IUU fishing.
- The Directive on the implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention (Council Directive (EU) 2017/159) allowed for progressive implementation. Not everything needs to be done at once. This could be an interesting approach for potential EU legislation on the implementation of the STCW-F Convention for EU Member States that have to make large investments. This possibility would not be open to Member States who have ratified the STCW-F Convention as this requires them to implement the Convention within two years of ratification.
- It is important to think about the consequences for the current workforce. Do people that have been working in the industry for over 20 years still need to undergo training? It is important to ensure that they can continue to practice their profession. The suggestion was made to include a grandfather clause (provision in which the old policy continues to apply to (part of) the current workforce while the new policy will apply to all future fishers).

- Vocational training (like all education) is not an area of EU competence (i.e. not an area for which it has legal responsibility); it is the responsibility of the individual Member States.

5.1 Expert views and additional analysis from case studies ([52])

Level playing field and improving the safety and resilience of fishers were seen in the e-survey as overriding benefits from implementing the STCW-F. This is a paradox since Member States appear not to be doing all they could in this direction at present. While the research team for this study encountered limitations in obtaining comprehensive and up-to-date information (see Chapter 3), the interviews (and desk research) suggest that compliance with existing EU directives relevant for fisher health and safety, and therefore the safety and resilience of fishers, is incomplete, even where Member States have notified transposition provisions as discussed in Chapter 2.

Despite the survey result, some EU Member States believe that there would be no added value to them in ratifying the STCW-F Convention as described in chapter 2.2.7. Their main argument was that their fleet consists of vessels below 24 metres in length, which would mean that their fleets would not fall under the scope of the STCW-F Convention. This is a common misconception on the content of the STCW-F Convention which also sets a number of basic training standards for all fishing vessel personnel, regardless of vessel size, power or area of operation (chapter III). Only chapter II provides for additional training and certification requirements for officer functions in the nautical department on fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and over or engineer officers in the technical department of fishing vessels with a propulsion power of 750 kW and over.

EU Member States with a small fishing fleet which solely operates in territorial waters might have a case to question the need for such standards (or seek an exemption). However, even when operating only in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), vessels (big or small) may encounter other maritime traffic that require understanding of the rules of safety at sea.

Establishing a baseline on which Member States can build

Implementation of the STCW-F Convention in EU law could strengthen current national standards in most cases. Fears that this would weaken current national standards, which surfaced among a small minority in the e-survey, seem unfounded as the Convention provides a minimum standard. Countries are always free to uphold and/or add more stringent requirements. If the revised STCW-F Convention was transposed into EU law, it would still leave differences between EU Member States. However, all EU Member States would have a shared baseline approach to the training and certification of fishers (categories, functions, type of competences required). If a similar approach was adopted as

([52]) We would like to thank in particular Ment van der Zwan for his input in an interview in December 2024. He is a recently retired spokesperson for employers in the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea fisheries and in the Fisheries Committee of the International Labour Organization (ILO). During his career he has been extensively involved in the training and certification of fishers.

with the implementation of the STCW Convention into EU law, this issue in the variation between training and certification requirements of EU Member States could be tackled.

It is important to stress that the STCW-F Convention in essence is about safety training for fishers. However, the revised STCW-F Convention also contains requirements not directly related to safety in both the mandatory (part A) and voluntary (part B) requirements. These requirements are related to prevention of pollution and protection of the marine environment. In Table A-II/2 of the revised STCW-F Convention for example, you find the following requirements in the mandatory part A on knowledge, understanding and skills:

- Basic working knowledge of the relevant IMO conventions and other relevant international instruments concerning safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment.
- Basic working knowledge of relevant international instruments concerning the responsible conservation, fishing management, responsible fisheries and development of living aquatic resources as well as key international instruments related to the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- Understanding the importance of sustainable development of the fishing industry.

Of course, it is possible for individual EU Member States to implement additional training requirements on topics related to sustainable fishing practices. Overall, the health and safety of fishers are interconnected with socio-economic and environmental aspects of sustainability. The interviewed expert from **France** (DG AMPA, 2024) also reflects on this interconnectedness in the example given on the closure of all fishing activities in the Gulf of Biscay for two months due to the by-catch of dolphins. This affects the well-being and position of fishers themselves, and it would make sense to train fishers on the importance of sustainable fishing practices also to make them more resilient. However, it would be up to the individual EU Member States to include additional training requirements on these topics if not covered in the STCW-F Convention.

Some EU Member States covered in this study referred to EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications as a tool to facilitate the free movement of labour but pointed to difficulties of interpretation and shortcomings to this Directive when applying it to fishers. First, the procedure under this Directive is time-consuming and may require an aptitude test if there is no proof of three years of prior relevant education. This does not match the practical realities experienced by fishing vessels and companies: they may hire a fisher on a vessel which then leaves the following day, if they find themselves in port and short of crew members. This is too short for them to hire a fisher from another EU Member State under Directive 2005/36/EC.

Another element that was raised is the status of additional requirements on national language and/or knowledge of Member State maritime law, which are currently imposed by a number of Member States.

Regarding language requirements, a case could be made for English as it is the maritime language de facto. The need for agreement on language is recognised by SOLAS, the Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea, which is the equivalent

of the Torremolinos Convention for merchant shipping. While the Torremolinos Convention is silent on this issue, SOLAS mandates a common working language on merchant vessels, but the choice of the working language is not given to the individual countries, but to the crew. The highest ranked officer on board determines the working language. That would be in line with the tendency of the crews of fishing vessels to become increasingly multinational.

Mutual recognition of certificates is currently a significant issue as there are few bilateral agreements and recognition is often ad hoc or indeed not possible, or possible only as entry-level fishers even where fishers have more advanced certification. Member States often have neither the knowledge (including language knowledge) to assess and verify the training content in other countries, including countries which have ratified and implemented the STCW-F. The solution found for EU Directive 2022/993 (which implements the STCW Convention into European law) is seen by experts as a possible model for addressing this, at least in the case of EU Member States and using an EU agency (such as EMSA's role under the EU Directive 2022/993) to perform assessments. In addition, harmonised formats for certificates would be a first step in making it easier for Member States to recognise CoCs, whereas currently they are confronted with a plethora of different CoCs based on different formats and definitions.

It is also important to protect fishers when a fishing vessel changes its flag (e.g. because of fishing rights). Under these circumstances, crew members may be obliged to work under another flag, with resulting complexities. In such a situation, a country might conclude that the crew no longer meets the training and certification requirements of the country of the new flag. These complex situations may also occur when a fishing vessel enters the port of a country which upholds the training and certification requirements based on another convention. An example was provided of a German-flagged fishing vessel, i.e. a vessel from a country that has ratified STCW but not ratified STCW-F, entering a port in **the Netherlands**, which has ratified the STCW-F and being asked by the Dutch authorities to be controlled on the basis of STCW-F standards for its whole crew. That could lead to a finding that the crew of the German-flagged fishing vessel have not received proper training and certification. It is not unlikely that these complex situations will occur under the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This MoU conducts a pilot to evaluate whether it could be of added value to implement a harmonised approach to Port State Control on internationally operating fishing vessels of 24 meters and above. However, it should be noted that any member authority of the Paris MoU currently already has the possibility and right to inspect fishing vessels visiting their ports. The STCW-F convention will be taken into account as one of the international conventions that will be checked under the Paris MoU[53]. This convention also provides countries that have ratified the convention to perform Port State Control (regardless of being a member of the Paris MoU or not). The high variation in training and certification requirements also make it difficult for countries to ensure if every fisher on board has received basic safety training approved by a competent authority during port

([53]) Paris MoU on Port State Control (2024). Paris MoU pilot on PSC on Fishing Vessels. https://parismou.org/2024/01/paris-mou-pilot-psc-fishing-vessels

State control, which is one of the requirements under Council Directive (EU) 2017/159 (Article 35.3 (b)).

Costs and benefits

A number of respondents mentioned increasing administrative burden on fishers and administrations as a deterrent to implementation of STCW-F standards. A proper impact assessment would be required to ascertain the compliance burden for fishers or administrations both in countries that are fully compliant and those who are not.

- Refresher courses after five years would be an additional burden, albeit with benefits in safety gains. For those MS who have ratified STCW-F, they are aware of this new requirement and have agreed to fulfil it as parties to the Convention.
- For those countries that have not ratified STCW-F, they still need to comply with STCW as well as other EU Directives (on working conditions, health and safety). Implementation of the STCW-F would mean adding a fishery-specific component to the basic safety training provided under STCW.
- The biggest change would be that all commercial fishers would need to complete this basic training regardless of vessel size, engine power or area of operation. However, in the area of health and safety at work, it is to be stressed that training requirements already exist under the EU OSH Directives 92/29/EEC and 93/103/EC and have to be applied ([54]).
- Apart from the above-mentioned existing health and safety at work training requirements, further changes would only be required for fishing vessel personnel with a navigational task on seagoing fishing vessels of 24 metres or over and for technical functions (engineers). The STCW-F Convention states that a certificate based on STCW for a technical function may also be used for fishing vessels since their tasks are comparable regardless of the type of vessel. This is different for the navigational functions on fishing vessels. For example, a skipper on a fishing vessel not only needs to perform the nautical tasks but must also safely operate the fishing gear. The skippers of a fishing vessel should also know what rights they have compared to merchant vessels when navigating.

Fishers could also gain new opportunities. According to experts consulted, a certificate issued under the STCW Convention currently provides far more international opportunities and security compared to certificates issued under the STCW-F Convention. EU Member State fishers could gain in status and opportunities within the EU and with countries that have ratified STCW-F, if there is a single system of EU certificates for fishers clearly based on STCW-F, similar to the system of seafarers based on STCW.

([54]) The Medical Treatment on Board Vessels Directive 92/29/EEC already requires that all persons receiving professional maritime training and intending to work on board ship have been given basic training in the medical and emergency measures to be taken immediately in the event of an accident or serious medical emergency (Council Directive 92/29/EEC of 31 March 1992 on the minimum safety and health requirements for improved medical treatment on board vessels, OJ L 113, 30.4.1992, p. 19, Article 5(2)). See also Articles 9 and 10, and Annex III of the Fishing Vessels Directive 93/103/EC.

Some administrative costs could be saved if a similar system implemented for seafarers certification was set up for the verification of certificates and training systems. This would ensure that standards of recognition are the same. Currently, processes vary widely among Member States:

- Some report they are not in a position to verify certificates and the courses that have led to them being issued;
- Some carry out thorough checks;
- Some work on a trust basis, validating certificates from other Member States have ratified STCW-F.

Moreover, countries that have ratified the STCW-F Convention are obliged to inspect the training courses of other countries that have ratified the Convention to recognise certificates[64].

Common minimum standards would also provide a clear basis to compare the situation in different Member States and see whether any additional requirements, e.g. proficiency tests for additional training components, were justified or were 'gold-plating' by a Member State that would likely create unjustified obstacles to free movement of labour.

6. Conclusions

This section summarises the findings from the previous chapters and draws conclusions on the:

- Legal requirements and training pathways related to training and certification of fishers;
- Recognition of certificates of fishers;
- Re- and upskilling needs in Member States;
- Challenges and opportunities for training and certification of fishers.

6.1. Legal requirements and training pathways related to training and certification of fishers

This baseline study took a detailed first look at both the training and certification requirements for fishers. It revealed considerable variation between EU Member States on how they have regulated the training and certification of fishers. Due to this high variation, complex situations occur in practice when fishing vessels and their crew operate across various European waters.

There are **three broad groups**. First, ten EU Member States[55] have based their legal framework and requirements on the International Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F). Second, there are nine EU Member States[56] for which this study identified a legal framework and requirements on the training and certification of fishers, but which have not formally based these on the STCW-F Convention. Some of these EU Member States have based the legal framework and requirements on the STCW Convention. Third, there was a group of three EU Member States[57] where it was not possible to identify a legal framework or requirements on the training and certification of fishers based on the research during this study[58].

A challenge in analysing these frameworks was the fact that **legislative competences for the training and certification of fishers often fall to various ministries and agencies**. It is often a shared responsibility of ministries and agencies responsible for fisheries management, transport/shipping and education in which there is compartmentalisation of attention and involvement. Within the EU Member States that do have a legal framework and requirements on the training and certification of fishers, there does, however, seem to be a clear division of tasks and responsibilities between the ministries involved and other bodies (e.g. inspection agencies). However, in many cases, ministries are not fully aware of the work of other ministries, and information and data on training and certification of fishers is not centrally available.

Member States that do have training and certification requirements in place for fishers often distinguish between various functions on board a fishing vessel. There is fishing vessel personnel with navigational tasks, with

(55) **BE, DK, ES, FR, LV, LT, NL, PL, PT, RO**
(56) IE, DE, EE, FI, BG, IT, HR, SI, SE
(57) CY, EL, MT
(58) Five landlocked EU Member States were not considered because they indicated that they do not have any registered fishing vessels and fishers (Austria, Czechia, Luxembourg, Hungary, and Slovakia)

technical/engineering tasks, and with actual fishing tasks. The navigational tasks are often carried out by officers who are responsible not only for the safe navigation of the vessel but also for the safe operation of the fishing gear. This latter activity sets them apart from officers with nautical tasks in merchant shipping falling under the STCW Convention. Fishing vessels are excluded from the STCW Convention precisely because different knowledge and skills are required from an officer operating a fishing vessel compared to an officer on a merchant vessel. This distinction is not so clear for officers tasked with a technical role like engineers. Most Member States that follow the international standards on training and certification allow officers with a technical task to work on both fishing vessels and merchant vessels. However, many crew members onboard fishing vessels are usually 'fishers', not engineers nor officers. They do not perform tasks related to the navigation or technical operation of the vessel and focus purely on fishing. Often these are deckhands/ratings (without watchkeeping duties) who do not need a CoC: a completed Basic Safety Training would be the minimum training requirement.

Training pathways of fishers also vary greatly between the Member States. Some Member States offer vocational training programmes to become a fisher, whereas other EU Member States have no formal education and training programmes for fishers and in such cases, they learn on the job. In general, government funds from the national, regional or local level and industry funds are important sources for funding the training of fishers. Most of these funds cover (part of) the costs for training, and sometimes fishers are compensated for attending training since they cannot fish and receive no income.

6.2. Recognition of certificates of fishers

Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications currently governs the recognition of certificates of fishers, but the **high variety in training and certification requirements and the time-consuming and complex procedure** makes it an unsuitable instrument for the fishing industry. As a result, data on the number of recognised certificates in the detailed Member State overviews may not reflect the actual need for recognition, but it is conceivable that demand is being artificially throttled by the unsuitability of this instrument and the absence of any commonly recognised certification or categorisation of onboard roles (and their associated training) within the EU. This may be impeding free movement of labour and, if so, is likely to be contributing to making an already struggling profession with generational renewal even more struggling in comparison with the merchant marine or other professions. Based on the data retrieved, where there is information on requests for the recognition of certificates for fishers, these usually come from neighboring countries.

6.3. Re- and upskilling needs in Member States

Based on an analysis of the training curriculum in the 22 Member States looked at in depth, the likely level of re- or upskilling was determined for each Member State. Broadly speaking, three groups of Member States have been identified from looking at the currently identified training and certification curriculum for fishers: five Member States with a limited need for re- or upskilling (**BE, DK, FR, NL, RO**), nine Member States (HR, DE, IE, **LV, LT, PL, PT, ES**, SE) with some

need for re- or upskilling and eight Member States with substantial need for re- or upskilling (BG, CY, EE, FI, EL, IT, MT, SI).

All five Member States with a **limited need for re- or upskilling** have ratified the STCW-F, and the training and certification curriculum aligns closely with the competency requirements of the revised STCW-F. Furthermore, the fishing functions defined in the training and certification curriculum are similar (or fairly similar) to the fishing functions under the STCW-F, which makes a comparison of competences per function easier. Most Member States that apply the STCW-F have implemented additional functions in their law in addition to functions described in the STCW-F. A common trend seems to be that no information could be found for the GMDSS radio operator role in three out of five Member States in this category. A reason could be that the GMDSS radio operator role is not a specific function on most fishing vessels (but it is part of the revised STCW-F Code competences). Usually at least one of the crew members is trained / certified for this task. In this group, most need for upskilling relates to the competencies related to first aid, personal safety and social responsibility.

For those Member States with **some need for re- or upskilling**, there are differences in which competences or functions are missing compared to the STCW-F. Four of these Member States have not ratified the STCW-F (HR, DE, IE, SE), five have (**LV, LT, PL, PT, ES**). As there are differences in the gaps in competences of these Member State, it is hard to draw general conclusions for this group. It is more difficult to identify all the different fisher functions in the training curricula of these Member States. The competences which seem most often to be missing are fisher functions relating to the use of navigation and radar systems, medical aid, fire prevention and firefighting. Also, within this group of Member States (similar to the situation in the group with a limited need for re- or upskilling group), information of the GMDSS radio operator role is often missing. Some Member States in this group offer additional courses for fishers, such as Germany and Croatia (commercial fishing, training course for fish famers).

For those Member States with a **substantial need for re- or upskilling**, none has ratified the STCW-F (but all have ratified the STCW). For some of these, it was nevertheless possible to identify a certification curriculum for fishers, but most of these Member States lack identifiable standards for fishers' training and certification. Overall, if there are training courses, it is difficult to relate these to professional fishing functions identified in the STCW-F. Furthermore, Member States must demonstrate/show how each role defined in the Member State matches the requirements in STCW-F competences. As functions and roles in this group of Member States are difficult to compare to the terminology in STCW-F, it is likely that substantial upskilling would be needed in the training and certification curriculum for fishers in these Member States, both in terms of defining fishing functions and competences offered. In most of these Member States, there are no additional requirements beyond the revised STCW-F provisions. This is not surprising, given the general lack of provisions around fishers' training and certification in these countries.

6.4. Challenges and opportunities for training and certification of fishers

The high diversity across the Member States on how they have regulated the training and certification of fishers poses several challenges:

- The recognition of certificates is complex, since there is no harmonised approach to the training and certification of fishers. This could be one of the reasons that hampers the free movement of labour.
- Due to the lack of a harmonised approach, the recognition of fishers' certificates requires a one-by-one approach. Sometimes this is time-consuming and places a high administrative burden on individual Member States.
- The absence of a harmonised approach to the training and certification of fishers poses a potential risk to the safety of fishers, all other parties with whom fishers share the waters, and for the marine environment since there is no certainty that they have received adequate training. Viable training and certification systems might exist in EU Member States, but the high variation between EU Member States on how training and certification of fishers is organised, makes it hard to ensure they are adequately trained and certified.
- For some Member States, it is unclear how they comply with various international Conventions, Codes of Conduct and EU Directives that also relate to the training and certification of fishers. For example, EU Directive 2017/159 on the implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention required EU Member States to adopt legislation on training and certification of fishers by 15 November 2019[59].
- It is difficult to obtain data on the number of trained and certified fishers for most Member States. Since all fishers should receive Basic Safety Training in accordance with EU Directive 2017/159 (article 6 § 6) ([60]), the number of Basic Safety Training certificates issued should provide an indication of the number of fishers within the EU. However, it is unclear how several Member States have implemented the Directive, and this makes it hard to quantify the actual numbers. Enforcing the Directive would provide more reliable data on the total number of fishers active in the European fishing fleet and would guarantee that EU Member States ensure that all fishers receive adequate Basic Safety Training.

In addition to the challenges, this study also identified opportunities, such as the existence of a structure on the training and certification of seafarers. There is a partial overlap in the training and certification requirements of seafarers and fishers. The STCW Convention has been ratified and implemented by all 27 EU Member States. The training and certification structures could therefore be extended to fisheries. Regarding inspections carried out by EMSA under Directive

([59]) Article 6.6, Article 7.1, Article 8, Article 34 (a,b), Article 35.2 (b), Article 35.3 (b) deal with training and certification

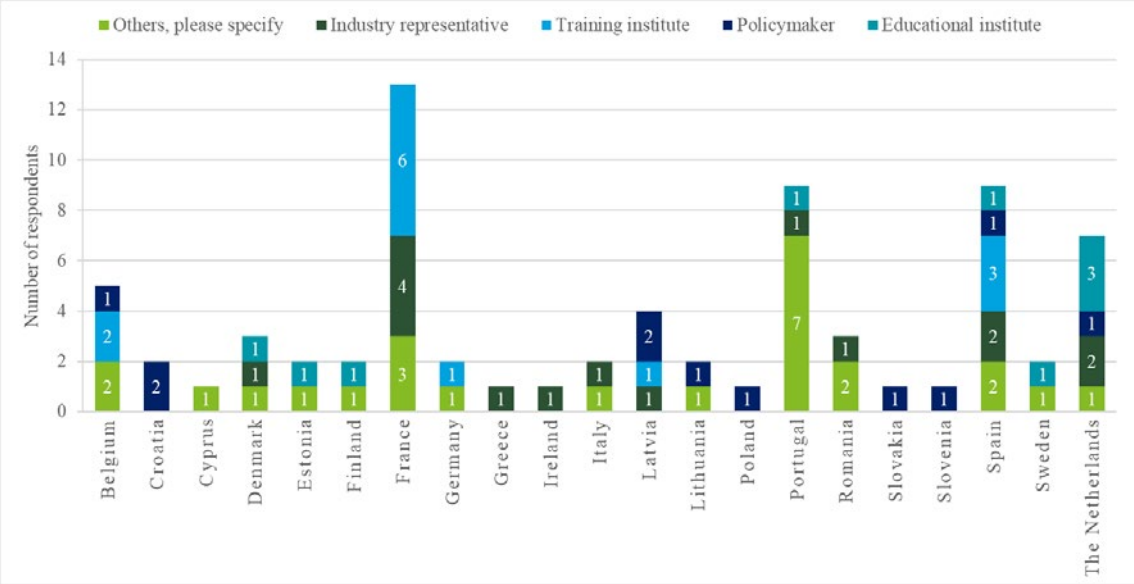
([60]) The provisions of Directive 2017/159 apply without prejudice to the EU OSH Framework Directive 89/391/EEC, the Medical Treatment on Board Vessels Directive 92/29/EEC and the Fishing Vessels Directive 93/103/EC, which all contain training requirements (see Article 33 of the Annex to Directive 2017/159).

2022/993 (seafarers), they provide a robust basis of existing methodology and knowledge.

Annex A: E-survey output

Characteristics of the respondents and high-level summary.

Figure 7 – Summary of e-survey respondents



The figure presents an overview of the characteristics of respondents in an e-survey, categorized by country and their respective roles. The respondents are grouped into five categories: "Others, please specify," "Industry representative," "Training institute," "Policymaker," and "Educational institute." France has the highest number of respondents, with a notable concentration in training institutes (6 respondents) and significant participation from industry representatives (4 respondents) and those categorized as "Others" (3 respondents). Portugal also shows a high level of engagement, predominantly from respondents in the "Others" category (7 respondents), along with contributions from policymakers and training institutes. The Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden display a more varied representation across different categories, particularly from training institutes and educational institutes. Belgium and Latvia have a relatively balanced distribution among different categories but with fewer overall respondents. Several countries, including Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, and Greece, have minimal representation, often limited to one or two categories with only one or two respondents. It is important to note that different respondent groups (training/education institutes vs policymakers/industry representatives) were shown different sets of questions and not all respondents answered all the questions. Therefore, there is a variance in number of respondents per question.

High-level response summary from training/educational institutes:

The figure presents responses from 14 training institutes from EU Member States on whether they provide (accredited) training programmes for professional seagoing fishers. The majority of countries (10 out of 14) have confirmed that they do offer such training programmes. We asked for (accredited) training

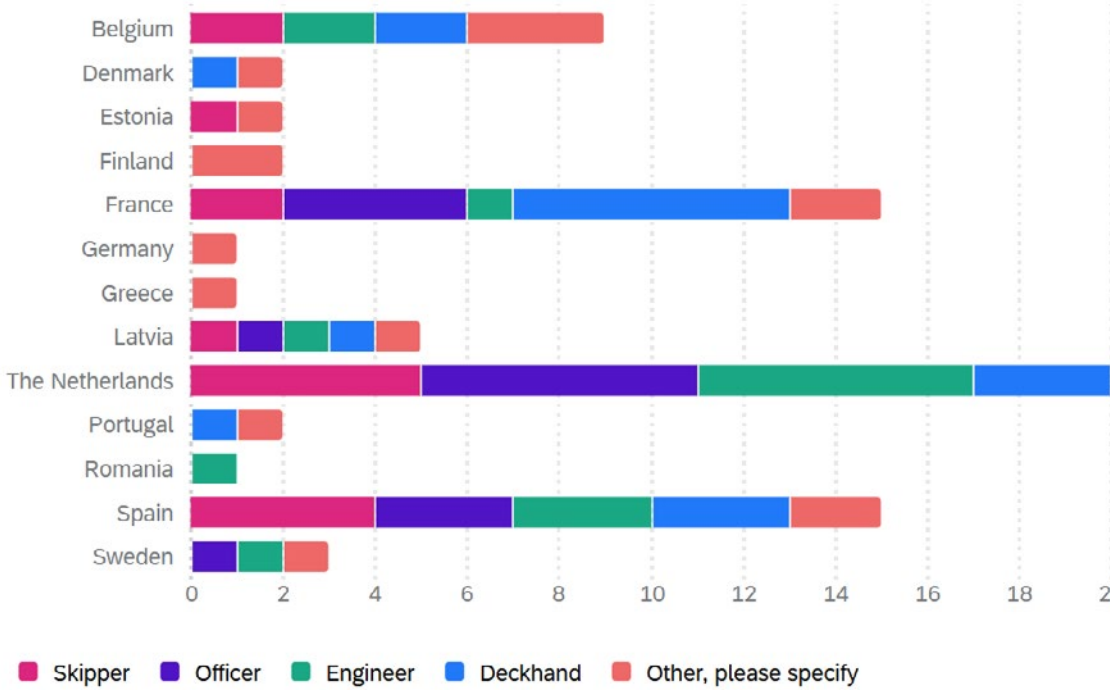
programme for professional sea fishers. Sweden has accredited training programme for seafarers (STCW) which also apply to seagoing fishers. Probably they therefore do not consider it to be a training programmes for professional sea fishers and answered no. Whereas some EU Member States probably answered 'yes' because they apply STCW to their seagoing fishers, this is NOT addressing the specifics of the fishing industry (STCW-F). As a result, we can only conclude that they apply 'a form of accredited training programmes for their professional sea fishers either based on STCW or STCW-F.

Figure 8 – Summary of response: Do you offer (accredited) training programmes for professional sea fishers?

The figure below presents an overview of the accredited training programmes offered by 13 EU Member States for various roles within the fishing profession. The Netherlands stands out with offering training coverage across multiple roles, including Skipper, Officer, Engineer, and Deckhand. Difficulty with a lot of different functions in the Netherlands is that these are sometimes hard to compare to the functions used in the STCW and STCW-F Conventions. France and Spain also show extensive offers, with a balanced focus on Skipper, Officer, and Engineer roles. In contrast, Belgium, Denmark, and Estonia offer more limited training, primarily targeting Skipper and Officer roles, while Latvia provides a diverse but less extensive range of training options. Portugal, Romania, and Sweden show minimal participation in providing such accredited programmes, indicating potential gaps in the availability of training for these critical certifications. This data suggests significant disparities in the availability and breadth of accredited training programmes for fishers across EU Member States, with some countries offering a broad spectrum of training while others have limited or no provisions.

Figure 9 – Summary of response: type of (accredited) training programme offered

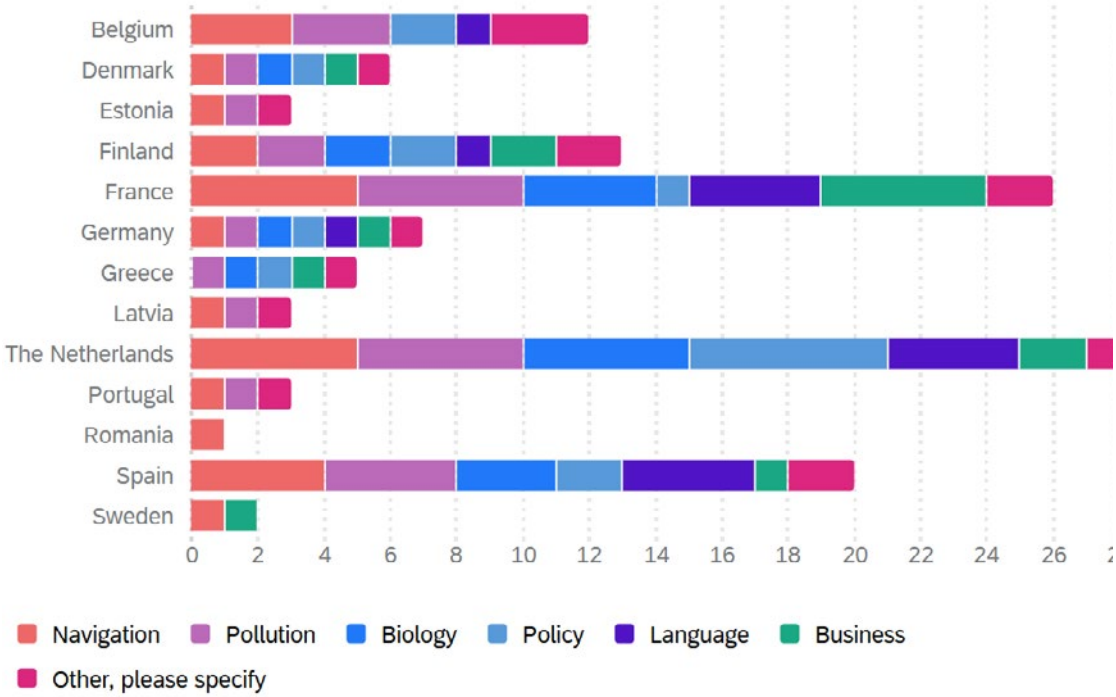
Question 2: What (accredited) training programme(s) do you offer? Indicate the different levels of training provided



The figure below illustrates the content areas covered by accredited training programmes for fishers across 13 EU Member State respondents. The most frequently covered topics include Navigation, Pollution, and Policy, with these areas being well-represented across most countries. The Netherlands, Spain, and France provide the broadest coverage, encompassing a wide array of subjects such as Navigation, Biology, Language, Business, and Policy. This indicates a comprehensive approach to training that addresses various competencies required in the fishing profession and exceeding the minimum requirements of the international convention. Conversely, countries like Estonia, Latvia, and Romania offer more focused training programmes, with limited content diversity with a possible implication as they may be more focussed on meeting the minimum requirements of the STCW Convention. This disparity suggests that while some Member States provide holistic training aligned with international standards, others may have more specialized or limited educational offerings, potentially affecting the uniformity and comprehensiveness of training for fishers across the EU.

Figure 10 – Summary of response: Content of the training programme

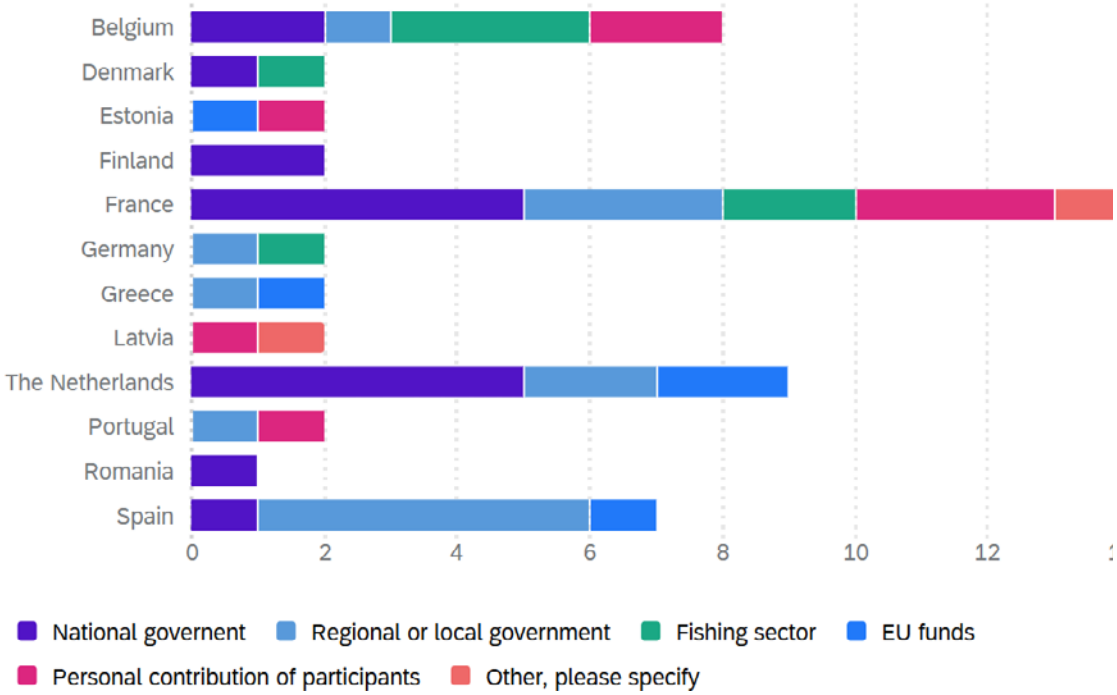
Question 3: What is the content of this/these training/education programme(s)? Please provide documentation of the content.



The figure below provides insights into the various funding sources for the education and training of professional seagoing fishers across 11 EU Member States. The most common funding source is national government support, as indicated by the extensive responses from countries like France, the Netherlands, and Spain. Regional or local government funding also plays a significant role, especially in Greece, Germany, and Estonia. EU funds are a notable source in Greece, Germany, and Latvia, indicating support from broader European initiatives. The fishing sector itself contributes to training in countries like Germany and Belgium, while personal contributions from participants are also most prominent in Belgium and Germany. This diverse range of funding sources highlights the varying levels of support and investment in fisher training across the EU, with some countries relying heavily on government and EU funding, while others depend on private sector contributions and personal investment.

Figure 11 – Summary of response: Financing of training programmes

Question 5: How is the education and/or training of professional fishers financed?



The two figures below illustrate the responses from EU Member States regarding whether they have provided training to fishers from other EU countries since 2013. In total, out of 12 countries surveyed, France, Finland, Portugal, and Spain indicated that they have trained fishers from other EU Member States, with a maximum of three positive responses per country. The remaining countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, and the Netherlands, reported that they have not offered such training to fishers but seafarers (STCW) and therefore provided 'no' on this question.

Figure 12 – Summary of response: Training of fishers from other EU Member States, V.1

Question 9: Did you train fishers from other (EU-Member) States since 2013?

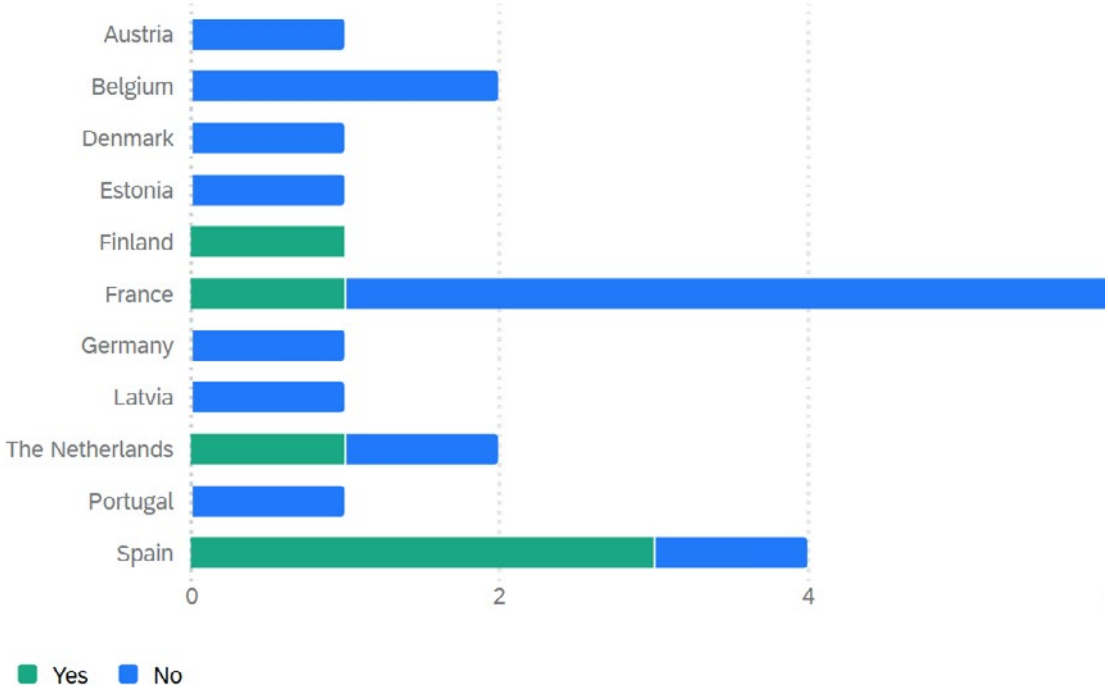
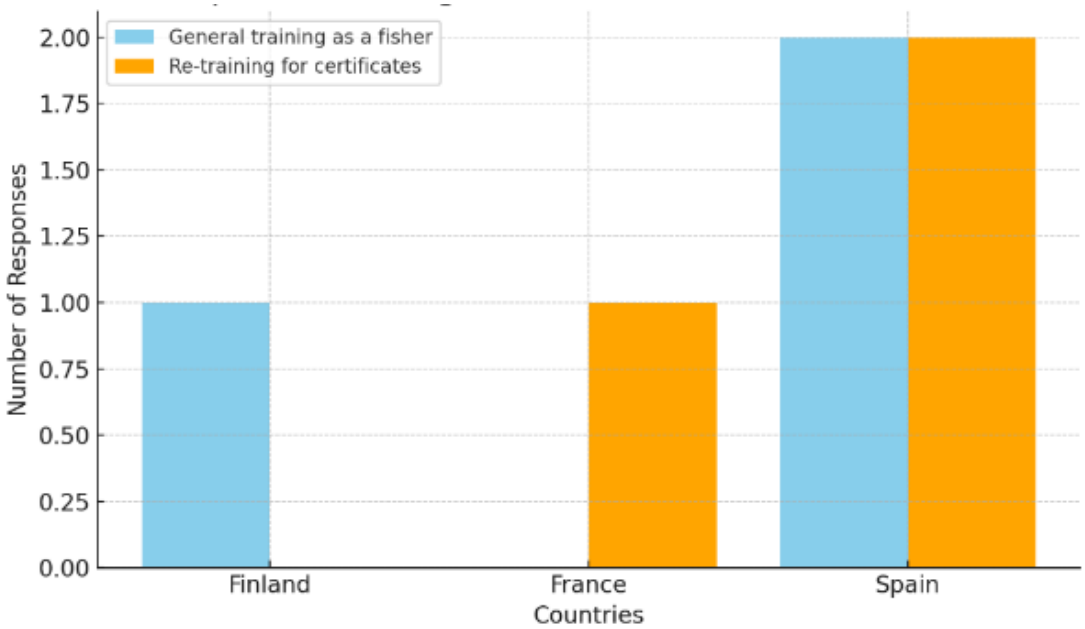


Figure 13 – Summary of response: Training of fishers from other EU Member States, V.2

Purpose of Training for Fishers from Other EU Countries



High-level response summary from policymakers/industry representatives:

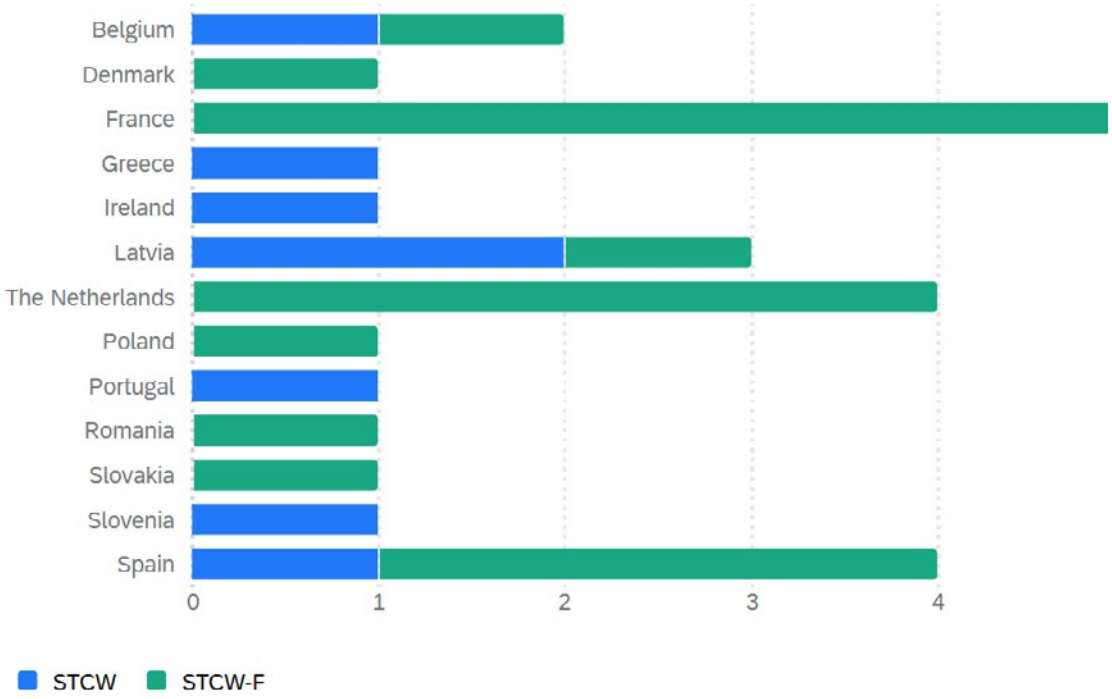
The figure below shows the presence of legally required training and certification requirements for fishers in 19 EU countries. The majority of the countries (15 out of 19) have confirmed that such legal requirements are in place, as indicated by the green bars. However, Finland and Lithuania indicated that they do not have such mandatory requirements, as shown by the blue bars. This suggests that there are still some countries where training and certification for fishers are not legally mandated, potentially leading to inconsistencies in the professional standards across the region.

Figure 14 – Summary of response: Legally required training for fishers

The figure below illustrates the adherence of 14 EU countries to legally required training and certification standards for fishers based on either the STCW-F or the STCW Convention. Respondents indicate that countries, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, have adopted the STCW-F convention, which is specifically tailored for fishing vessel personnel, indicating a strong focus on industry-specific standards. In practice, France and Belgium have demonstrated a bigger focus on industry-specific requirements than for example Ireland, Poland, and Romania. It is important to understand that the STCW-F Convention had hardly any content before the latest revision. As a result, the standard for fishers would be lowered considerably if a country would ratify STCW-F and apply it to its fishers. Therefore, most countries that ratified STCW-F prefer to apply STCW provisions that are more stringent. This allows them to meet the minimum requirements of the fishery-specific convention, without having to downgrade the system that they already had in place for their fishers.

Figure 15 – Summary of response: legally required training for fishers based on STCW or STCW-F

Are the legally required training and/or certification requirements for fishers based on the STCW Convention or the STCW-F Convention?



Annex B: Member State overviews

In a separate Annex related to this report, all individual Member State overviews are delivered in full.

Annex C: List of general data sources

Table 5 – List of data sources (non-exhaustive)

Source Title	Source link
Training the fishers	https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/617484/IPOL_STU(2018)617484_EN.pdf
Fishers training	https://catchingthepotential.eu/
Training and certification of fishermen	https://ldac.eu/images/MentvdZwan_Training_and_Certification_of_Fishermen_SSDC-F.pdf
Training and social security schemes for fishers – State of play and perspectives in the EU	https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2024/747290/IPOL_STU(2024)747290_EN.pdf
From Waves to Wisdom: Empowering Fishers through Sustainable Fisheries Training	https://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/NSAC-report_From-Waves-to-Wisdom_Catching-the-Potential_21-Sept-23.pdf
Training and certification for fishermen	https://fishfocus.co.uk/training-and-certification-for-fishermen/
International Labour Standards on Fishers	https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/fishers/lang--en/index.htm
STECF data on fishers	https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/economic https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/fdi https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/balance
The pillar of the sea : joint action of the European social partners of the sea-fishing sector	https://europeche.chil.me/download-file/d8690c1a-2216-46e7-9139-f1a74a53551f/

For detailed national data sources, please refer to the relevant Member State overview.

Annex D: Detailed synopsis per Member State

For each of the 22 Member States investigated during this study, a detailed gap analysis is provided below. These synopsis per Member State follow the same structure: ratification status of STCW / STCW-F, Compliance with STCW-F, standards below mandatory STCW-F standards, standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards and recognition of foreign certificates.

Belgium

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law in 2009

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Belgium generally complies with the regulations of the revised STCW-F Convention**. It is the main basis for the training and certification requirements of its fishers.
- There are **some differences**, **which would require limited up-skilling or re-skilling** of Belgian fishers.
- Additional requirements that have been put in place.

Belgian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- For **skippers:**
  - General assessment: the curricula for **Skippers in unlimited and limited waters satisfy almost all the competences of the STCW-F Code** for these professional roles.
  - Missing elements: reference is made to radar, but not to other navigation systems to assist command decision-making (i.e. ECDIS). No direct reference was found to the use of visual signalling for skippers in unlimited waters.
- For **officers:**
  - General assessment: the curricula for **Deck officers in unlimited and limited waters satisfy almost all the competences of the STCW-F Code** for these professional roles.
  - Missing elements: respond to a distress signal at sea for officers in unlimited waters. Officer positions in limited waters appear to lack communication requirements (knowledge and use of the English language).
- For **engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: the curricula for **Engineer officers for 750 kW and unlimited propulsion power satisfy most of the competences of the STCW-F Code** for these professional roles.
  - Missing elements: Manage fuel, lubrication and ballast operations, control trim and stability. No information was found on life-saving procedures other than fire prevention, firefighting and first aid.
- For **GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: no information was found for this professional role.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: Basic safety training appears to follow STCW requirements. It is reported that training courses offered by Belgian institutes on this topic can match the legal professional requirements of both STCW and 1995 STCW-F. However, training curricula seem to refer only to STCW. So, with the introduction of

the revised STCW-F **Belgium will need to make sure that its competence requirements are aligned with the Convention**. In particular, from the information found it is not clear whether minimum standards of competence in personal safety and social responsibilities are satisfied.

- **Revalidation standards ([61]):**
  - General assessment: **revalidation of certificates and refresher courses appear to be in line with STCW-F requirements** (the only information not found concerns the revalidation standards for GMDSS radio operators).

Belgian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- In addition to the roles established in the revised STCW-F, Belgium recognises the following functions for the issuance of Certificates of Competence:
  - **Ordinary seaman**: basic function on board fishing vessels. Only basic safety training, medical fitness and a minimum sailing period of 100 days are required.
  - **Engineer officer 221 kW**: the seagoing service requirement differs for the other engine functions. A minimum of six months is required, instead of twelve. Only some limited engine knowledge, operations and maintenance are required for this position.
  - **Able seaman**: follows the requirements of Regulation II/4 of the STCW (Ratings forming part of a navigational watch).

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- **Belgium recognises foreign STCW-F certificates for fishers from several other EU countries** of which the Netherlands, Spain, France, Latvia, and Poland are the main ones. Nonetheless, between 2010 and 2024 a few certificates have also been recognised from Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, and Ireland (a total of 15 certificates, compared to the 581 recognised in the same period for the former group of countries).
- A **bilateral agreement is in place with the Netherlands**. For this reason, 76,3% of foreign fishers recognised in 2010-2024 were Dutch.
- Mostly Dutch fishers seek recognition in Belgium. The reverse is rare because the Belgian fleet is small and works mainly locally.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- Over the period 2010-2024, a few certificates have been recognised also from the following non-EU countries: the United Kingdom, Russia, Philippines.

([61]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following "refresher" training.

- They have been 15 in total, cumulatively representing less than 3% of the certificates recognised by Belgium in this time span. 13 of them were from the United Kingdom.

Bulgaria

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 2021
  STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Bulgaria has only ratified the STCW and **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**.
- According to the Ordinance No 6 of 17 June 2021 on the competence of seafarers in Bulgaria, **the country applies the requirements of the STCW Convention to the training and certification of fishing vessel personnel**.
- The Bulgarian fleet is composed mostly of vessels under 12 metres in length used for small-scale coastal, seasonal fishing. This means most of the fleet would not be covered by the minimum requirements of the revised STCW-F.
- Certificates of Competence are not required for persons with secondary or higher education in fisheries and aquaculture. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Bulgaria would need to require such certificates for all professional qualifications on board fishing vessels.

Bulgarian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **Bulgaria would need to validate the certificates held by its fishers based on the revised STCW-F**.
- **This** process **would imply checking that the current competence requirements satisfy those of the STCW-F Code and, if needed, formulate re-skilling** accordingly.
- Information is missing on several professional roles. For those specified, no information was found on specific competences and examination content.
- Information on revalidation of certificates and refresher courses was not found.

Bulgarian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- There are currently no additional requirements.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- **Bulgaria recognises foreign certificates based on the STCW Convention**.
- Employment of non-nationals in fisheries is reported to be minimal. As of 2013 (most recent data found) there were only two foreign nationals employed in fishing.

Croatia

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Croatia has only ratified the STCW and **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**.
- **Training and certification of fishers are based on** national requirements, established in the Ordinance on ranks and certification of seafarers.

Croatian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- For **Skippers:**
  - General assessment: Croatian training for masters on fishing vessels operating within the exclusive economic zone (R-HR VI/1) and engaged in near-coastal voyages (R-HR VI/2) **satisfies most competences of the STCW-F Code for skippers** on fishing vessels in limited waters. R-HR VI/2 presents a more complete curriculum, with higher competence requirements in terms of vessel manoeuvring and cargo handling, safety at sea, knowledge of power machinery and language skills.
  - Missing elements: the only competence requirements of the revised STCW-F which do not appear in any of these training curricula are the coordination of search and rescue operations, the use of navigation systems to assist command decision-making and provision of medical care on board.
- For **Officers:**
  - General assessment: the training for officers in charge of navigational watch on a fishing vessel engaged on intercoastal voyages (R-HR VI/2) satisfies most competences of the STCW-F Code for **officers** on fishing vessels in unlimited waters.
  - Missing elements: medical aid, monitoring compliance with legislative requirements.
- For **Engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: the training for engine officers on a fishing boat with a machine with a propulsion power of up to 1 500 kW (R-HR VI/6) partially satisfies the competences of the STCW-F Code for chief and second engineer officers. Information on the competence requirements for other engine and watch functions in the country was not found.
  - Missing elements: Manage fuel, lubrication and ballast operations, control trim and stability. Troubleshooting and maintenance are reported only as hydraulics concepts. In Croatia, the competences relative to engineering, machinery and propulsion power seem to deal more with technical knowledge than with skills in the planning

and management of operations related with these concepts (as appears to be the case in the STCW-F Code).

- For **GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: no information was found for this professional role.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: Basic safety training in Croatia satisfies almost all the competences of the STCW-F Code for basic training and onboard safety familiarisation.
  - Missing elements: Understand and take necessary action to control fatigue.
- **Revalidation standards** ([62])**:**
  - General assessment: most Certificates of Competence have a validity of five years.
  - Missing elements: from the information found, the certificate for Chief engineer officer on a fishing ship powered by the main propulsion machinery up to 750 kW propulsion power (R-HR VI/5) does not expire.

Croatian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Croatia also offers an eight-hour-long professional course for the performance of commercial fishing activities. This covers topics such as marketing, supervision and methods of commercial fishing, as well as knowledge of the regulations and environmental protection. It is not aligned with any Section in the STCW-F Code.
- In addition to basic training, the country offers a content familiarisation course on ship emergency procedures, which generally appears complementary to the former in terms of competences.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- The requirements for recognition of a professional qualification for commercial fishing of fishers from other countries are the same as for Croatian fishers. Applicants need to hold the following:
  - a certificate of professional qualification for commercial fishing at sea;
  - basic safety training (for crew members who are involved in navigational or safety operations on board vessel);
  - evidence of completion of familiarisation training if they are crew members engaged only in national navigation and solely in operations regarding fishing activities;
  - a Certificate of Competence based on Croatian national standards if they will exercise higher functions on board.
- Stakeholder feedback suggests that few foreign fishers seek employment in Croatia. More specific data were not found.

([62]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

Cyprus

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 1985
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Cyprus does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F. The country has only ratified the STCW, which does not apply to personnel on board fishing vessels (as explicitly excluded by Cyprus Law no 8 of 1985).
- From the information found, the only requirement for fishers and vessels is to hold a fishing licence (3 categories: full-time, part-time or periodic). No training requirements or specific competences are mentioned to obtain these licences.
- Importantly, in Cyprus, large-scale vessels represent only 5% of the total fleet. Most vessels are between 12 and 18 metres (while STCW-F focuses on fishing vessels of at least 24 metres in length for the deck personnel – officers, skippers). Therefore, only a small part of the fleet would be covered by the Convention's minimum requirements.

Cypriot standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- Given the existing lack of standards, Cyprus would need a complete up-skilling of its fishers.
- The country would also need to implement a framework differentiating between the various professional roles recognised by the Convention.
- In terms of re-skilling, revalidation certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all professions. Fishing licences are currently renewable after five years. However, no information was found concerning specific requirements needed for the renewal.

Cypriot standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Cyprus currently has no additional requirements.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- No information was found on the recognition of foreign certificates, whether from EU or non-EU countries.

Denmark

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Denmark generally complies** with the regulations of **the revised STCW-F Convention**. It is the main basis for the training and certification requirements of its fishers.
- There are however some **differences**, which would require up-skilling or re-skilling of Danish fishers, as well as additional requirements that have been put in place.

Danish standards below STCW-F mandatory standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: the Danish trainings for fishing skippers of the 1st and 3rd degree satisfy the competency requirements of the STCW-F Code for **skippers** on fishing vessels in unlimited and limited waters.
- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: Danish **officers** in charge of a navigational watch (who are referred to as "mates" in Denmark) on fishing vessels in limited waters are required to have a 3rd degree skipper certificate as well, in order to be qualified in Denmark. This training appears to satisfy the competency requirements of the STCW-F Code for officer roles.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: contents on curricula and competence requirements for other professional roles were not found. **Engine officer functions follow STCW requirements for fishers,** since no distinction is made in Denmark between merchant and fishing vessels for these functions – contrary to the scope of STCW-F.
- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: for **GMDSS radio operators**, Certificates of Competence are issued as radio **certificates with a STCW endorsement**. So, with the introduction of the revised STCW-F **Denmark will need to make sure that its competence requirements for engine officer functions and GMDSS radio operators are aligned with the Convention**.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: all fishing vessel personnel forming part of the minimal crew must have completed *one of the following* training courses: Commercial fishing safety course; Commercial fishing basic course and/or Introductory subjects in basic maritime training. However, the contents of these courses appear not to be fully aligned with each other and with respect to the competence

requirements of the renewed STCW-F. Since a Danish fisher needs to complete only one of them, they should all contain the minimum competence requirements of the STCW-F Code.

- Missing elements:
  - the commercial fishing **safety** course does not include competences in prevention of maritime pollution or personal survival techniques.
  - the commercial fishing **basic** course appears, however, to include the above competences.
  - no information was found on the content of the course on introductory subjects in basic maritime training.

- **Revalidation standards ([63]):**
  - **General assessment:** With the introduction of the revised STCW-F some re-skilling will be needed. Refresher courses every 5 years will be needed for Basic Safety Training, which is currently not the case, as well as revalidation of GMDSS radio operators' certificates.

Danish standards in addition to STCW-F mandatory standards:

- Denmark differentiates between **different lengths of fishing vessels**: < 9 metres and overall length x breadth (LOA x B) of less than 100, ≥ 9 metres to ≤ 15 metres, ≥ 15 metres or more with an overall length x breadth (LOA x B) of 100 or more. In the STCW-F, instead, requirements are directed only at the professional figures working on board fishing vessels with a length of 24 metres or more.
- **Denmark also differentiates between 4 roles on the deck of fishing vessels**: masters, mates, second hands and skippers (these last three are referred to as navigators). Mates and skippers correspond to the professional roles included in the STCW-F (officers in charge of a navigational watch and skippers, respectively). The function of master appears to be recognised only for fishing vessels of less than 15 metres in length. The certificate for second hands instead refers only to fishing vessels of at least 15 metres in length, and no distinction is made between unlimited and limited waters.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- Denmark recognises foreign STCW-F certificates for fishers issued by other EU countries.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- There is no legal basis to recognise certificates issued by non-EU countries.

([63]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following "refresher" training.

- There are **no bilateral agreements** with other (EU member) states. People of non-EU nationality can, however, apply to courses to obtain diplomas.
- Combined data for the period 2013-2023 concerning the Commercial fishing safety course and the Commercial fishing basic course show that this has happened very rarely, 11 people out of a total of about 1.400.

Estonia

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Estonia has ratified the STCW; it **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**.
- Fisher training and certification are governed by a national regulatory framework designed to align with the STCW.
- To operate professionally within Estonia's coastal waters, coastal fishers a level 4 qualification for coastal fishers is necessary. **Training** to obtain this qualification is highly advised but **not mandatory**.

Estonian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **General assessment:**
  - **Estonia would need a thorough up-skilling of its fishers**.
  - Estonia would also need to implement a framework differentiating between the various professional roles recognised by the Convention.
  - The curriculum of the **level 4 qualification for coastal fishers** is **not aligned with the competency requirements of the STCW-F Code**.
  - Competences of Estonian coastal fishers:
    - preparations for fishing, fishing, fish handling and general competences (mainly related to health and safety and to compliance with legislation);
    - prevention of pollution, compliance with legislation and assistance in case of accidents.
  - Missing elements:
    - **Navigation competences appear to be totally missing**.
    - The following basic safety competences established by the revised STCW-F are **not reported** for Estonian fishers: **personal survival techniques, fire prevention and firefighting, communication and human relationships skills**.
- **Revalidation standards:**
  - General assessment/Missing elements: **revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all professions**. Certificates of coastal fishers are currently permanent in Estonia and no revalidation is required.

Estonian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- None.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- **Estonia recognises foreign professional qualifications if they comply with the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act**, the

foreign CoC is issued by a country recognised by Estonia and complies with the STCW.

- From the information found, **no bilateral agreements are currently in place**.
- Since 2013 (when the current system took effect) no one not of Estonian citizenship has been granted certification as a coastal fisher.

Finland

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Finland are **defined by several national legislative and regulatory frameworks**. They are designed to be in line with the STCW and the STCW-F (prior to the most recent amendments).
- **Some differences have been found**, **which would require up-skilling or re-skilling** of Finnish fishers.

Finnish standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: The curriculum of the **Further Vocational Qualification in Seafaring only partially satisfies the competences of the STCW-F Code** for skippers in limited waters. The qualifications are based on limited catch areas (see the next section for further details). There is no curriculum in Finland for working in unlimited waters.
  - The competence requirements in the certification for a skipper in domestic service after fulfilling the maritime service requirement on small vessels is not equivalent to that of a skipper in limited waters as defined in the revised STCW-F.
  - Missing elements: The curriculum for skipper in domestic service only covers navigation and the use of navigation systems, first aid, use of firefighting and life-saving (radio) equipment.
  - The Further Vocational Qualification in Seafaring lacks the following competences for skippers in limited waters: determine and allow for compass errors, coordinate search and rescue operations, weather and oceanographic forecasting, vessel manoeuvring and knowledge of maritime communication.
- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: officers receive the same training as skippers in Finland. The curriculum of the **Further Vocational Qualification in Seafaring only partially satisfies the competences of the STCW-F Code** for officers in limited waters. As already specified, there is no qualification and training for roles in unlimited waters.
    The Vocational Qualification in Seafaring provides details on competences specific for officers. It is not clear what length of vessels and catch areas this qualification covers. However, this curriculum **satisfies most competences of the STCW-F Code for officers in limited waters**.

  - Missing elements: the Further Vocational Qualification in Seafaring lacks for officers the same competences missing for skippers in limited waters.
    The Vocational Qualification in Seafaring, instead, appears to be missing only the following competences: respond to a distress signal at sea, manoeuvring the vessel.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: **training for engine officers and watch functions in Finland complies with the STCW** requirements for officers in charge of an engineering watch in a manned engine-room/ designated duty engineers in a periodically unmanned engine-room. Finnish engine officers are not compliant with the revised STCW-F since the relevant Certificates of Competence give the right to work on fishing vessels with a propulsion power of less than 750 kW. **However**, their training **satisfies almost all the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code**.
  - Missing elements: maintaining the stability of the ship and developing emergency and damage control plans are the only competences which appear to be missing for engine officer and watch functions in Finland.
- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: GMDSS certificates are required for at least one crew member per vessel; typology depends on the vessel's length and on the area of operation. Specific competence requirements are not reported, but there seems to be no major up-skilling or re-skilling need for fishers on this topic.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: **Basic Safety Training is reported to be directly compliant with the STCW-F requirements.**
- **Revalidation standards ([64]):**
  - General assessment: skipper's certificates are valid for 5 years; boatmaster's certificates are valid until further notice. To revalidate the certificates, candidates need to complete either an appropriate seagoing service or a refresher course. **With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Finland will need to align revalidation procedures, renewing all compliant certificates after five years following refresher training**.

Finnish standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Finland categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently from the revised STCW-F Convention, and has some additions.
- Finnish fishing vessels are divided into three categories:
  - **Class I**: Vessels of less than 15 metres in length.
  - **Class II**: Vessels of 15 metres but less than 24 metres in length.
  - **Class III**: Vessels of not less than 24 metres in length.
- Three distinct catch areas are defined:

([64]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following "refresher" training.

  - **Catch area I**: Inland fishing and the inner and outer archipelago to the outer limit of Finland's inner territorial waters.
  - **Catch area II**: Sea area limited to the Gulf of Finland, the northern Baltic Sea and part of the Gulf of Bothnia.
  - **Catch area III**: Other sea areas in the Baltic Sea.
- **Certificates of Competence** additional to those indicated in the revised STCW-F are:
  - Boatmaster (category B) for fishing vessels: entitling the holder to work as a master (coincides with skipper in Finland) on a class I fishing vessel in catch areas I and II.
  - Boatmaster (category A) for fishing vessels: entitling the holder to work as master on class I and II fishing vessels in all catch areas.
  - Engine Attendant: giving the right to work as a chief engineer on a vessel in domestic trade with a propulsion power of less than 750 kW.
- As implied by the previous section, officer roles on fishing vessels and catch areas compliant with the STCW-F are certified through the skipper category B for fishing vessels. Masters on compliant vessels and catch areas are certified through the Skipper (category A) for fishing vessels.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- Fishers certified in other EU/EEA Member States can apply to have their qualifications recognised. Their certificates are evaluated to ensure they meet Finnish standards, particularly regarding competency in navigation, safety, and fish handling.
- Four applications for recognition of foreign EU certificates were received in 2013-2023. All four applicants were Dutch fishers. Only two lodged complete applications; these received a Finnish Certificate of Competence.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- Fishers from non-EU countries need to approach training providers to complete their training to meet all Finnish requirements.

France

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (unclear whether transposed in 2015 or earlier)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law in 2015

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in France are **based on STCW-F**. They are also reported to be aligned with the STCW Convention.
- In addition, it is reported that with the introduction of the revised STCW-F, France will not have to implement major changes since their national law already meets, and mostly exceeds, the basic requirements of the Convention.
- There are nonetheless **some differences**, **which would require up-skilling or re-skilling** of French fishers.

French standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: the curriculum for **Fishing master seems to satisfy the competences of the STCW-F Code** for skippers in unlimited waters. The curriculum appears to be much more focused on specific skills concerning fishing and treatment on the catch, as well as on knowledge of fishing markets and competences concerning compensation of the crew. Competences of interest for the analysis are only reported in general terms. Navigation, handling and stowage of cargo, control of the operation of the vessel, assistance to people on board, and the Navigation Bridge module are all part of the training. However, further information on them was not found.
    The curriculum for Captain 200 Fishing, instead, appears mostly not aligned with the competences of the revised STCW-F for skippers in limited waters (see the next sections for details on the names and types of French Certificates of Competence).
    Information on competence requirements for other curricula of interest for these roles was not found.
  - Missing elements: the only relevant competences reported for the Captain 200 Fishing training are medical and radio competences. All the rest appears to be missing.
- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: the same considerations made for skippers seem to apply here. The **Fishing master curriculum appears to satisfy the competences of the STCW-F Code** for officers in unlimited waters, even though details on the training modules of interest were not found. The Captain 200 Fishing Certificate does not comply with the revised STCW-F for officers in limited waters.

Information on competence requirements for other curricula of interest for these roles was not found.

- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: the curriculum for **750 kW Mechanic satisfies almost entirely the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code for engine officer and watch functions**. In fact, the competences and knowledge demanded appear to be more detailed and technical and are aligned with the requirements for all seafarers established in the STCW.
  - Missing elements: The only competence which appears to be missing is maintenance of the operational condition of life-saving and firefighting appliances. Maintenance skills are generally included and well-detailed. They only seem to be missing on this specific topic. It is also not clear whether dealing with emergency situations is a skill included in the French training and examination path for this role.
- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: GMDSS certificates are recognised. France recognises multiple GMDSS certificates (see the next section for details). No specific detail is reported on requirements on this topic. From the information found, no up-skilling or re-skilling need seems to emerge.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: **Basic Safety Training** is required and offered in France for different fishers functions, and it appears to be in compliance with STCW-F requirements. .
- **Revalidation standards ([65]):**
  - General assessment: the only information found is that recertification is applied in France. However, since requirements for fishing vessel personnel are based on the STCW-F, it is likely that no major needs have to be included in terms of re-skilling.

French standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- France categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently from what established by the revised STCW-F Convention, even with some additions.
- There are **multiple Certificates authorising work as an officer**:
  - Fishing Lieutenant's Certificate.
  - Fishing Master certificate.
  - Fishing Captain's certificate.
  - Captain's Certificate 200 Fishing: for officers on either on vessels < 24 metres or between 24 and 45 metres, navigating within 100 miles of the coast.
- No direct reference appears to be made to Skippers. **France recognises the roles of captain and mate**. The certificates enabling the holder to work in these positions are:

([65]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following "refresher" training.

  - Fishing Master certificate (except for captains on vessels equipped for deep-sea fishing).
  - Fishing Captain's certificate.
  - Captain's Certificate 200 Fishing:
    - For mates on either vessels < 24 metres or between 24 and 45 metres, navigating within 100 miles of the coast.
    - For captains on vessels < 24 metres navigating within 100 miles of the coast.
- The **additional roles** with respect to the revised STCW-F Convention are:
  - Command position (officer, mate, captain) on small-scale fishing vessels (less than 9 metres in length, only suited for navigation around sheltered waters).
  - Engine officer and watch functions on vessels with a propulsion power below 250 kW and 750 kW.
  - Deckhand.
  - Bridge Watchkeeping Sailor.
  - Qualified deck seaman and Qualified seaman machine.
- There are also **multiple certificates for GMDSS radio operators** in France, **depending on the type of vessel, the sailing area and** on whether the person is responsible for the **maintenance of GMDSS installations**.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- Certificates from foreign EU countries are recognised if the requirements that France upholds on training and certification are met.
- There are no unilateral or bilateral agreements with other countries for the recognition of certificates under the STCW-F Convention.
- Usually, the recognition procedure starts with a company/employer reaching out to a local maritime affairs office to recognise the certificates of one of their employees. They must produce all that person's certificates as evidence of training. In addition, the applicant needs to undergo a medical examination.
- Additional information may be required. The French Administration can ask a country for details of the training for a thorough comparison.
- There are also **further requirements for certain qualifications**. Captains need to meet the nationality criterion, learn the language (basic French) and also need additional training on French regulations. After the appropriate training, an examination jury will determine if the language skills and the understanding of French regulations are sufficient.
- It is reported that transposition of the revised STCW-F Convention into a EU law would facilitate the recognition process.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- Most requests for the recognition of certificates in France come from French- speaking African countries, Indonesia and former French colonies.

Germany

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Fisher **training and certification requirements** are **based on the STCW Convention** for nautical and technical functions on board seagoing fishing vessels, with additional specifications.
- As Germany is not a contracting party to the STCW-F and bases itself on the STCW, with some fishery-specific additions, alignment with the STCW-F could **require up-skilling or re-skilling** of German fishers.

German standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: Detailed information on the curriculum for **Master in coastal fishery** indicates that this position is not in line with any of the roles specified in the revised STCW-F (see next section for further details). In terms of competence requirements, **this curriculum lacks many of the competences required in the STCW-F Code for skipper positions,** but information on the German curricula for Masters in large and small deep-sea fishery would allow for a more thorough analysis. From a general overview of the activities performed by these figures on board fishing vessels, **it seems that Masters in large and small deep-sea fishery generally comply with the competence requirements for skippers in unlimited and limited waters**.
  - Missing elements: The curriculum for Master in coastal fishery lacks competences relative to determining position, using compasses, watchkeeping, fishing vessel power plants, maintaining the safety of navigation through the use of ECDIS and associated navigation systems, controlling stability, and providing medical care on board. In addition, the extent of the requirements for competences relative to operating life-saving appliances are not clear.
- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: The curricula for **Nautical Watch Officer in large and small deep-sea fishery satisfy almost all the competence requirements of the revised STCW-F Code for officers in unlimited and limited waters**.
  - Missing elements: for both curricula the only competences which appear to be missing compared to the STCW-F Code are watchkeeping skills. In addition, the extent of competences relative to operating life-saving appliances is not clear.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: There are no specific CoCs for engine officer and watch functions on board seagoing fishing vessels in Germany.

Engineers are trained based on the STCW Convention and can work with their CoC on all types of seagoing vessels regardless of fishing or shipping. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F **Germany will need to make sure that its competence requirements** for these professional roles **are aligned with the Convention**.

- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: The General Operating Certificate for Radio Operators (GOC) and Restricted Operating Certificate for Radio Operators (ROC) are reported among the minimum requirements for certification for most figures on board fishing vessels. No further information was found. However, **it seems that little or no upskilling and re-skilling would be needed for GMDSS radio operators**.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: **Basic Safety Training** is provided in Germany following STCW requirements. **Germany will need to make sure that its competence requirements are aligned with the revised STCW-F**.
- **Revalidation standards ([66]):**
  - General assessment: No information was found.

German standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- **Germany categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently from those in the STCW-F Convention** and uses STCW terminology, e.g. Masters rather than Skippers.
- Masters (and nautical watchkeeping officers) can qualify for service in unlimited and limited waters (large and small deep-sea fishery, respectively) on vessels of 12 metres in length or more**.** There is a function of Master on a coastal fisheries vessel of 24 metres or more.
- The vocational training programme to become a **fish farmer does not directly comply with either Convention. It is not a pathway** programme to a Certificate of Competence. That requires additional training.
- The function of **deck hand** is recognised but without a specific Certificate of Competence**.**

([66]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- **Germany recognises foreign certificates** for captains and ship officers wishing to work on German-flagged vessels based on the **STCW** if they satisfy STCW requirements.
- Germany **does not recognise STCW-F certificates issued by other states** but can and does issue **a Certificate of Equivalence** (108 between 2013 and 2023.)
- Applicants for recognition for functions at management must complete a course in German maritime law.
- There is no evidence of **unilateral or bilateral agreements** on the recognition of fishing certificates specifically.

Greece

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 1983
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Greece has only ratified the STCW and **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**.
- There is **no legal requirement for training to work in commercial fishing.** 94% of the Greek fishing fleet consists of small vessels with one or two fishers on board. Thus, most of the fleet would not be covered by the STCW-F minimum threshold of fishing vessels of 24 metres in length or more.

Greek standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **Greece would need complete up-skilling of its fishers** working on vessels of 24m or longer.
- The country would also need to implement a framework differentiating between the various professional roles recognised by the Convention.
- Such a radical up-skilling would also imply more stringent requirements to become a professional fisher and the need to pass an examination assessing competences. This is currently not the case with professional fishing licences in Greece.
- The only relevant competences provided to fishers seem to have been offered by the non-profit organisation ENALEIA, which founded the first professional school for fishers in the country in 2016 but currently appears only to offer programmes focused on marine ecosystem sustainability through circular and social economy solutions.
- Even in terms of re-skilling, **revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all professions**. Fishing licences are currently renewable after two years (one year for the special licence authorising fishing beyond territorial waters). However, no information was found on specific requirements for renewal.

Greek standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- There are no additional requirements.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- No specific information was found concerning recognition of certificates from other EU countries.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- **Greece has had a bilateral agreement with Egypt** since 1984.
- **80% of the fisheries workers in large vessels are of Egyptian origin**.

Ireland

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Ireland are **based on national legislation**.
- Ireland has recently amended its national legislation, making it closer to the content of the revised STCW-F. This was done to make the Irish legislation "**STCW-F-ready"** without having primary legislation in place.
- There are however **some differences**, **which would require some up-skilling or re-skilling** of Irish fishers, as well as additional requirements that have been put in place.

Irish standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: the curriculum for **Skipper Full (skipper in unlimited waters) partially satisfies the competences of the STCW-F Code** for this professional role. No information was found on the specific competences of skippers in limited waters.
  - Missing elements: No watchkeeping competences are required. In addition, nothing is reported on knowledge of fishing vessel power plants and on medical aid competences. Instead, competences on the use of navigation systems appear to be guaranteed by the Electronic Navigation Systems Certificate (Fishing) (ENS Fishing), which is required for all Skipper qualifications. Further details on the contents of this certification have not been found.
- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: the curricula for **Second Hand Full and Limited partially satisfy the competences of the STCW-F** Code for officers in unlimited and limited waters, respectively.
  - Missing elements: For Second Hand Full, specific competences on medical aid appear not to be required. For Second Hand Limited, no competences appear to be required on watchkeeping and catch handling and stowage. Competences on medical aid appear to be missing also for this professional role. As for Skipper positions, the Electronic Navigation Systems Certificate (Fishing) (ENS Fishing) is required also for Second Hand qualifications.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: the curricula for **Class 1 and 2 engineers generally comply with the STCW-F Code** for chief and second engineer officers. **Class 3 engineers satisfy most competence requirements** for these professional roles.
  - Missing elements: For Class 3 engineers, no specific competence was found on management of troubleshooting on electronic

equipment. Direct reference to maintenance competences for this qualification is made only for firefighting appliances and fire alarm systems.
In general, curricula for engineers in Ireland appear to be more focused on technical knowledge than on management and planning competences.

- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: **GMDSS** radio operator **certificates** are **required** in Ireland for both officer and skipper qualifications.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: based on the information found, **Basic Safety Training appears to follow STCW requirements**. The Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness course is an exception. In fact, it is reported to be non-STCW certified. However, no further details were found. Overall, with the introduction of the revised STCW-F **Ireland will need to make sure that its competence requirements are aligned with the Convention**.
- **Revalidation standards ([67]):**
  - General assessment: Certificates of Competence need to be renewed in Ireland. However, no further information on this was found.

Irish standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- In addition to the roles established in the revised STCW-F, Ireland recognises the following functions for the issuance of Certificates of Competence:
  - **Deckhand**: the only requirements are Basic Safety Training and medical fitness.
  - **Skipper Limited < 24 m**: this has the same minimum mandatory requirements for skippers in limited waters but is restricted to seagoing fishing vessels of 24 metres or less.
  - **Second Hand Special**: carries the entitlement to work as a skipper on board fishing vessels of less than 24 metres in limited waters or as an officer in limited waters.
  - **Class 3 Engineer**: carries the title to work as Third Engineer Officer on fishing vessels of 3000 kW and over or as Second Engineer Officer fishing vessels of less than 3000 kW propulsion power. For this role, seagoing service is required on fishing vessels of 200 kW or more registered power.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- Ireland is legally bound to recognise qualifications of commercial seagoing fishers from any EU country where it is a regulated profession.

([67]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

- The Marine Survey Office evaluates certificates individually for recognition: the level of training that the applicant has had in their home country is compared to that provided in Ireland for an equivalent certificate.
- Most foreign fishers follow the three-day Basic Safety Training at the BIM training institute, since both basic safety training and a BIM Safety Training Card are needed to work on seagoing fishing vessels in Ireland.
- Since 2023 Ireland has also recognised STCW-F certificates. The only additional mandatory requirement that is assessed is the level of English.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- The number of fishers from non-EU countries is currently increasing.
- Employment of non-EEA fishers has been facilitated by the government over the last eight years through permit schemes. This was done because there is a high need of workers on smaller fishing vessels (< 24 metres).
- Non-EEA fishers are reported to come largely from Egypt, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, and Africa.

Italy

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 2015
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Italy has implemented the STCW (over a transitional period to 2022) and **does not comply with the regulations of the renewed STCW-F**.
- **No mandatory training is required in Italy to become a fisher**.
- **Italian fishers wanting to advance in their professional careers can access exams** to obtain maritime qualifications, including deckhand and management of fishing vessels and operation of engine equipment. These qualifications follow national provisions. They can be accessed through experience acquired on board and by attending a specialised course.
- **Other professional qualifications** relative to technical and complementary fishing services and fishing facilities **are also available**. Practical experience, a minimum age, and specific examinations are required. **However, these professional roles do not coincide with those specified in the revised STCW-F.**

Italian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **Italy would need a thorough up-skilling of its fishers**.
- Professional qualifications, courses and examinations would have to be aligned with the roles and requirements established by the revised STCW-F.
- Training would need to become mandatory to allow fishers to develop and certify their competences.
- There are curricula for deck and engineer officer positions based on STCW. These curricula are not applied to fishers. However, they could offer a solid basis for the country to set up STCW-F compliant trainings for its fishers.
- **For officers:**
    - General assessment: **the course for deck officers at the management level satisfies almost all the competences of the STCW-F Code** for officer positions.
    - Missing elements: the only competence which appears to be missing is the use of standard maritime communication and knowledge of English.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
    - General assessment: **the course for engine officers at the management level satisfies almost all the competences of the STCW-F Code** for engine officer positions.
    - Missing elements: there is no evidence that competences on the management of electrical and electronic control equipment are included, whereas troubleshooting and restoration are included.

- **The only explicit competences for fishers are those offered for specific profiles, which** however, **do not seem to be in line with** any of the professional roles on fishing vessels specified in **the revised STCW-F**. An overview of these roles and of their training is as follows:
    - **Maritime Master for Fishing, Class I**: This seems to **comply with some competence requirements of the STCW-F Code for skipper positions**: reading nautical charts, determining position, radio and navigation systems, meteorology, conducting navigation, stability and handling of the ship, rules to avoid collisions at sea, international conventions on safety at sea and pollution prevention.
    - **Maritime Master for Fishing, Class II**: This appears to be **less aligned with SCTW-F competences for skippers than Fishing Class I since it lacks radio and navigation system skills and knowledge of meteorology**.
    - **Seafarer Fisher** – relevant competences: estimation of navigation and routes, determining position, nautical charts, basics of meteorology, basics of navigation and use of compass, notions on manoeuvring, equipment and power plants, behaviour in case of accidents, rules to avoid collisions at sea, marine biology.
    - **Boatmaster for Coastal Fishing** – relevant competences: use of compass, rules to avoid collisions at sea.
    - **Sea and Inland Water Operator** - relevant competences: managing and monitoring the plant and equipment offering navigation assistance.
- **To be aligned with the revised STCW-F, the above qualifications** for fishers would need to match the requirements for specific roles specified in the Convention, which **would require consistent up-skilling**.
- Even in terms of re-skilling, **revalidation of certificates and refresher courses would need to be put in place for all fishing professions**.
    - Renewability of certificates after 5 years is currently specified only for courses necessary to embark on merchant ships. These courses offer training in fire prevention, survival and rescue, personal safety, social responsibility and medical first aid. However, they only comply with STCW requirements since they do not refer to fishing vessels.
    - Fishing licences are currently renewable after eight years. The renewal procedure only requires filling a specific application and paying a fee.
    - Boat licences expire after ten or five years depending on age of fisher.

Italian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Even though the country does not apply the minimum requirements of the revised STCW-F, it appears to have differentiated fishing activity in terms of limited and unlimited waters (respectively named Mediterranean Fishing and Fishing Beyond the Straits). In addition to these two categories, Italy also recognises **Coastal Fishing** - defined as fishing activity in the Adriatic Sea, as well as along the continental and insular coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, at a distance of not more than 40 miles from the coast.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- **Italy recognises foreign Certificates of Competence based on the STCW Convention**. However, it is not clear if this is true also for fishers.
- **The non-recognition of foreign certificates for fishers is reported to be unlikely**.
- For Italian fishers wishing to work abroad, unskilled positions may be more easily accessible since training in Italy is not mandatory.

Latvia

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 2005
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law in 2005

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Latvia are **based on national legislation, which integrates both STCW and STCW-F** under a legislative framework that is *applied to all seafarers*.

Latvian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

General assessment:

- The information below is based on the information that is available, which is not sufficient for an analysis for the various professional roles on Latvian fishing vessels.
- Latvian legislation refers to both Conventions, but **all competency requirements for roles on board fishing vessels appear to be based on the STCW**.
- Thus, **fishers in Latvia are trained as seafarers**. It is unclear whether this training adheres to STCW-F standards. Being trained as seafarers, however, implies that navigation, safety, and general maritime skills are included in the curricula for professional qualifications.
- The following training is included in the qualifications for professionals on fishing vessels based on their role, on the characteristics of the vessel and on the navigation area:
    - radiolocation and ARPA training programme;
    - medical care programme;
    - medical first aid programme;
    - training in advanced fire-fighting management;
    - programme for handling survival craft and rescue boats
- These courses satisfy the corresponding competences for professional figures in the STCW-F Code. However, to assess the degree of up-skilling and re-skilling needed in Latvia would require detailed curricula for the different roles on board fishing vessels.

Missing elements:

- **Latvia would need to make sure that its competence requirements for qualifications on board fishing vessels are aligned with the revised STCW-F**.
- Basic Safety Training is mandatory for all personnel on fishing vessels over 12 metres in length. After the completion of the training programme "Basic Safety Training for the Personnel of a Fishing Vessel" the educational institution or training centre must issue a certificate of unlimited duration. It is not clear to what extent this training satisfies the STCW-F requirements.

- Revalidation of certificates and refresher courses must be done after five years (https://www.lja.lv/index.php/en/registry-seamen/certification-seafarers/procedure-issue-qualifications-documents).

Latvian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Contrary to STCW-F requirements, Latvia generally defines roles based on a length of **45 metres** for fishing vessels (instead of 24 metres).
- The **three functions** recognised on fishing vessels are:
  - **Fishing vessel masters and deck officers**: this function differentiates between masters, chief mates, navigational watch officers and skippers (the latter applies only to small boats of less than 12 metres).
  - **Fishing vessel engineers**: in addition to chief, second, and watch engineer officers for vessels above either 750 or 3000 kW, Latvia also recognises the roles of engineer officers on vessels below both 750 and 300 kW.
  - **Fishing vessel ratings personnel**: this function includes fisher-deckhand, seaman, motorman, chief trawl operator (on fishing vessels longer than 45 metres), and skilled fisher (on fishing vessels of 45 metres in length or shorter).

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- **Latvia recognises qualification certificates issued by other EU Member States in accordance with the STCW Convention, the STCW-F requirements and national regulations implementing EU legislation**.
- Recognition is conferred on masters and officers on fishing vessels provided that they have a valid qualification certificate issued by the competent authority of a Member State meeting STCW or STCW-F standards.
- For certificates issued by an EU country that is not a Member State of the STCW-F Convention, the competency of the master or officer is assessed in accordance with the requirements of the STCW-F Convention. The same is true for certificates for fishing vessels up to 24 metres in length.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- No information was found on the recognition of certificates from non-EU countries.

Lithuania

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Lithuania are **based on legislation and regulatory frameworks**.
- Specific **requirements** for professional roles on board fishing vessels **refer either to STCW or to STCW-F, depending on the qualification**.

Lithuanian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
    - **Skipper qualifications** – which appear to be referred to as Masters (see next Section for further details) - generally **follow STCW competence requirements**. In general, thus, **with the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Lithuania would need to ensure that its competence requirements are aligned with the Convention** and provide the necessary up-skilling, if needed. In addition to the training compliant with STCW requirements, qualifications in unlimited waters need to complete a course for **fishing vessel captains/masters**. For this course, the topics of the examination have been reported. They **seem to only partially comply with the requirements for skippers in the STCW-F Code**. Missing competences in the examination are the following:
        - No practical competence seems to be required on vessel manoeuvring and the use of compasses;
        - No competence was found concerning watchkeeping, weather forecasting, catch handling and stowage, and maritime communication;
          Fire prevention, firefighting, use of life-saving appliances, and medical care should be covered by the topic “6. Occupational safety requirements for fishing”. However, more precise information has not been found.

      Nonetheless, the combination of the STCW-compliant training and the course for fishing vessel captains/masters should guarantee the compliance with the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code.
    - The Professional Development course for **Deck Officers on Fishing Vessels of 24 metres in length and over operating in unlimited water** is reported to **follow the requirements of the STCW-F Code for skippers in unlimited waters**. **However**, from the information found on the topics covered in this course, it seems that **the requirements** of the revised STCW-F **are only partially satisfied**.

        - Missing navigation competences: conducting the vessel, determining and fixing position, determining compass errors, coordinating search and rescue operations, forecasting meteorologic and oceanographic conditions, using navigation systems to assist command decision-making (ARPA courses are listed among the requirements for most roles on fishing vessels; however, no such competence appears to be included in this curriculum).
        - Other missing elements: maritime communication and knowledge of the English language, visual signalling, fishing vessel power plants. Safety competences appear to be included, even though further details would be needed on this topic.
- **For officers:**
    - General assessment: The requirements for **Officers in charge of a watch of fishing vessels of 24 metres or more operating in the Baltic Sea** are reported to **comply with the STCW-F Code for officers in limited waters**. Officer positions is unlimited waters are generally reported to follow STCW requirements. Thus, also in this case **with the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Lithuania would need to ensure that its competence requirements are aligned with the Convention** and provide the necessary up-skilling, if needed. In addition, the Professional Development course for **Deck Officers on Fishing Vessels of 24 metres in length and over operating in unlimited water is also reported to follow the** STCW-F Code **requirements for officers in unlimited waters**. **However**, from the information found on this curriculum, it appears that also in this case **it only partially satisfies the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code**.
    - The Professional Development course presents an additional missing element with respect to those already mentioned in the analysis of this curriculum for skipper positions: the use of radars for the safety of navigation.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
    - General assessment: **Engine officer and watch functions** in Lithuania are reported to **comply with STCW competence requirements**. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Lithuania would need to ensure that its competence requirements are aligned with those of the Convention.
- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
    - General assessment: GMDSS radio operator requirements comply with STCW. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, **Lithuania would need to ensure that its competence requirements are aligned with those of the Convention**.
- **Basic training:**
    - General assessment: **Basic Safety Training appears to follow STCW requirements**. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, **Lithuania would need to ensure that its competence requirements are aligned with those of the Convention.**

- **Revalidation standards ([68]):**
  - General assessment: the only information reported on revalidation of certificates is that masters and chief mates must have completed ARPA courses in the five years prior to applying for the renewal of the validity of the CoC. Based on this information, it appears that revalidation procedures are in place. Nothing was found on refresher courses.

Lithuanian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Besides engine officer and watch functions, the **qualification of electromechanic** on ships with engines of 750 kW or more **appears to be recognised** and a CoC needs to be held that satisfies specific mandatory requirements, including training in line with the STCW Code.
- **Skipper roles** in Lithuania appear to be referred to as masters.

For functions in unlimited waters, **chief mates are recognised in addition to officers** in charge of a watch.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- Lithuania recognises seafarer certificates from other EU Member States and recognises foreign certificates in accordance with STCW provisions and mutual recognition agreements.
- GMDSS certificates supported by a CoC and evidence of professional activities are recognised.

([68]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following "refresher" training.

Malta

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 2013
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Since Malta has only ratified the STCW, it **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**.
- The fishing sector in the Maltese archipelago is governed by regional and national legislation.
- There are **no mandatory training requirements for fishers** in Malta.
- Some fishing-related legislation is in place. A fishing licence is needed for the master, owner or charterer of a fishing vessel. However, no examination or training seems to be needed to obtain them.
- As (in 2021), 91% of those employed in the Maltese fishing industry worked on small-scale fishing vessels. Thus, a high percentage of fishers would not be covered by the requirements of the revised STCW-F, which refer to fishing vessels of 24 metres in length or more.

Maltese standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **Malta would need a complete up-skilling of its fishers**.
- The country would also need to implement a framework differentiating between the various professional roles recognised by the Convention.
- **Compliant recertification procedures and refresher courses would also need to be organised**.
- **Some courses were offered to fishers in recent years:** a 2018 project by the Malta Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA) encouraged over 250 fishers to participate in STCW-compliant training courses **improving knowledge and skills of fishers in basic training, radio use, security awareness, food safety, hygiene and navigation aids.** These had limited scope and duration. **No structural training appears to be in place**.

Maltese standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- There are currently no additional requirements beyond mandatory STCW-F standards.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- No information was found on the recognition of foreign certificates, whether from EU or non-EU countries.

Netherlands

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in the Netherlands are described in the Seafarers Act **based on the STCW-F**.
- The Netherlands published legislation in January 25 which provides for implementation of the revised STCW-F in national legislation.

Dutch standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- The Netherlands follows a **peculiar structure for the training and certification of fishers**. The analysis of up-skilling and re-skilling needs follows the information found on Dutch training programmes for fishers.
- Nautical colleges offer accredited vocational training programmes to become a fisher at four different levels:
    - **MBO-2/Maritime officer**: coastal fishing
    - **MBO-3/Maritime officer**: for all fishing vessels between the smallest coastal vessels and the large pelagic trawlers (> 45 metres long)**.**
    - **MBO-4/Maritime officer**: for large vessels engaged in unrestricted sailing.
    - **HBO** (Dutch higher professional education): currently there are no specific fishery study programmes at this level.
- MBO-3 and MBO-4 courses present a ‘semi-dual’ structure. This means that all students receive training in line with the STCW standard and are eligible to apply for a CoC under the STCW. Students choosing the fishing specialisation receive education on the STCW-F-specific requirements during their specialisation.
- The fishing specialisations in MBO-3 and MBO-4 cover all the sections in the competence requirements for professional figures established in the STCW-F Code. From what was found, it can be concluded that **little or no up-skilling would be necessary with the introduction of the revised STCW-F for professional certifications obtained through these two courses**.
- It is also reported that with the implementation of the revised STCW-F, no major changes are expected for the Netherlands. Only one competence that will need to be introduced is explicitly indicated: knowledge for all fishers of the impact of plastics and Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) on the marine environment.
- **Basic Safety Training appears to be in line with the requirements of both the STCW and STCW-F**.

- From the information found, the same appears to be generally true for **revalidation standards ([69])**. The only difference found with respect to the requirements of the revised STCW-F related to Basic Safety Training certificates. Once the new version of the STCW-F Convention is implemented all fishers will need to take a refresher course on Basic Fishery Safety training after five years, which is currently not the case.

Dutch standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- The Netherlands categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently from what is established by the revised STCW-F Convention, even with some additions:
  - Four different Skipper qualifications are recognised:
    - **Skipper on all fishing vessels**.
    - **Skipper on fishing vessels < 60 metres**.
    - **Skipper on fishing vessels < 24 metres**.
    - **Skipper on fishing vessels < 24 metres in limited waters**.
  - Four different Substitute Skipper qualifications are also present:
    - **Substitute Skipper on all fishing vessels**.
    - **Substitute Skipper on fishing vessels < 60 metres**.
    - **Substitute Skipper on fishing vessels < 45 metres and < 1500 kW of propulsion power**.
    - **Substitute Skipper on fishing vessels < 24 metres and < 3000 kW of propulsion power in limited waters**.
  - **Dutch officer categories are divided into Mates and Mates/Engineers**. These apply only to vessels with a propulsion power < 3 000 kW and vary based on the length on the vessel and the type of navigation.
  - Contrary to the other qualifications, engine officer and watch function categories seem to follow the structure included in the revised STCW-F.
  - A category of ratings on board fishing vessels is also found in the Netherlands. This follows the competence requirements of STCW for Ratings forming part of a navigational watch.
- With the diplomas obtained after successful completion of a vocational training programme for fishers at a nautical college, it is also possible to apply for a Certificate of Competence for functions on seagoing vessels other than seagoing fishing vessels.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- The Dutch authorities do not recognise certificates of fishers from other EU Member States except Belgium. Even certificates of fishers from other EU Member States that have also ratified the STCW-F Convention and possess all the necessary requirements, are not recognised by the Netherlands.

([69]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

- Belgium is the only country with which a bilateral agreement is in place. It is considered too difficult to assess whether other countries uphold the same standards of training and certification for fishers under the STCW-F framework.
- Foreign workers from other EU countries can still work on Dutch vessels if they are not part of the minimum crew and hold Medical Fitness and Basic Safety certificates.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- Non-EU workers (including those with officer certificates) can only work on board a Dutch flagged vessel if they are not part of the minimum crew since their certificates are not recognised in the Netherlands. They can only work on a Dutch fishing vessel if a basic safety training in the Netherlands or Belgium is completed.
- A Medical Fitness certificate and a Basic Safety Fishery certificate recognised by the Dutch authorities are needed. In addition, non-EU fishers are subject to the following requirements:
    - Holding a work permit. Otherwise, they can only perform work outside the 12-mile zone.
    - Adequate certificates are in place (minimal requirements are a Basic Safety Training Fishery certificate and Medical Fitness certificate).

Poland

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Poland are set by two documents, namely the Training and Qualifications of Crew Members of Sea-going Vessels and the Framework Training Programmes and Examination Requirements in Sea Fishing.
- There are **some differences with the revised STCW-F**, so **up-skilling or re-skilling** of Polish fishers **would be required**.

Polish standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: The curricula for **Skipper of Unrestricted Sea Fishing and Class 1 Sea Fishing Skipper satisfy most of the competence requirements in the STCW-F Code for skippers in unlimited and limited waters respectively**. The curricula for these two positions appear to be comparable to each other in terms of topics covered. The only two differences are: the length of the training, which is higher in the case of navigation in unlimited waters, and maritime communication skills, which are included only in the course for Class 1 Sea Fishing Skipper.
  - Missing elements: Navigation competences are reported for skipper positions. However, no further detail is provided. Thus, it is not clear whether competences such as the use of compasses, planning voyages and fixing position are included in the training for these roles. The same is true for firefighting, life-saving and medical care competences. The only information found on these topics is that occupational health and safety competences are included in the curricula. Watchkeeping and stowage capabilities appear to be generally missing for skipper positions. Communication by visual signalling is missing in the training for skippers in unlimited waters.
- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: the role of officer on fishing vessels of at least 24 metres engaged in limited waters is covered by the curriculum for **Class 2 Sea Fishing Skipper**. **This training satisfies most competency requirements of the STCW-F** Code for the qualification specified above. **No officer position in unlimited water seems to be specified on board fishing vessels**. Officers in restricted waters seem to be also recognised, but only on-board vessels of less than 24 metres. This qualification does not comply with the revised STCW-F. Indeed, the training for this role appears to lack most of the competences established in the STCW-F Code for officer positions. The only relevant competences included in this

curriculum are maritime communication and English language, rescue, navigation safety, and prevention of marine pollution.
Missing elements: the considerations for officers in limited waters are similar to those made above for skipper positions. Navigation competences are reported, but not further specified. Thus, it is not clear whether the competences to plan and conduct a passage and determine the position of the vessel are included in this training. The same is true for firefighting, life-saving and medical aid. The only information found is again that occupational health and safety competences are included in the curriculum. Also in this case, watchkeeping and stowage capabilities appear to be missing.

- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: Engine officer and watch functions appear not to be included in Poland among the qualifications on board fishing vessels. So, **with the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Poland would need to implement a framework for the training and certification of these figures, with the necessary up-skilling**.
- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: An up-to-date radio operator's certificate in line with maritime radio operator certification regulations appears to be needed in Poland for officer positions. No further information was found.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: **Safety Training satisfies most of the competence requirements of the STCW-F** Code on this topic.
  - Missing elements: competences on social responsibility appear to be missing. Specifically, contributing to effective communication and human relationships, and controlling fatigue are not among the required competences. The prevention of pollution appears not to be included in this curriculum, but based on the information found, this competence is included in the training for all the qualifications on board fishing vessels.
- **Revalidation standards ([70]):**
  - General assessment: I**nformation on revalidation of certificates and refresher courses was found only for Safety Training**. Training certificates for individual rescue techniques and basic fire protection are initially valid for five years. To renew these certifications, a refresher course and at least six months of maritime experience within the last five years are needed. Anyone not meeting the maritime experience requirement must undertake the full training course again.
    For fishing vessels in domestic waters, safety training certificates can be replaced with one specifically for domestic navigation. A refresher course after five years and specific minimum maritime experience are still required for renewal.

([70]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

Polish standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Poland recognises additional qualifications on board fishing vessels.
    - **Junior sea fisherman**: junior fisherman position on any fishing vessel.
    - **Sea fishing fisherman**: fisherman position on any fishing vessel or manager of a unit without the right to carry passengers on fishing boats with a length of up to 9 metres and an engine power of up to 200 kW in domestic navigation. Based on the specific propulsion power of the boat, an additional examination on combustion engines may be needed for a management position.
    - **Senior sea fisherman**: specified for the position of watch officer on fishing vessels of less than 24 metres in length engaged in navigation in limited waters.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- Foreign fishers' qualifications are recognised in accordance with international agreements.
- The process for mutual recognition of certificates follows the guidelines of the STCW-F Convention.
- No detailed information on the number of certificates recognised is available.

Portugal

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law in 2016

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Decree-Law No. 166/2019 has set the legal regime for the professional activity of all seafarers. As established in Article 2 of the Decree-Law, **training and certification requirements for *seafarers performing duties on board fishing vessels with a length equal to or greater than 24 metres* in Portugal are based on the STCW-F Convention**.

Portuguese standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

Little information is available for Portugal in terms of competence requirements for fishing vessel personnel. So, it is **not possible to perform a thorough analysis of the up-skilling and re-skilling needs for the various professional roles** on Portuguese fishing vessels. The following paragraphs provide an analysis only for those roles for which relevant information was found.

- Some **courses** for fishers are offered **in Madeira**. Most of the professional roles, however, are **not aligned with** the categories of fishing vessel personnel envisioned by **the revised STCW-F**. The only **exception** is represented by the **Boatswain Fisherman** certification. In fact, after completion, candidates can become officers on any fishing vessel.

- **For officers**:
  - General assessment: The **Boatswain Fisherman** certification appears to be **only partially aligned with** the competence requirements of **the STCW-F Code for officer roles**. Available information mainly focuses on the modules of the course, without delving much into detail. Nonetheless, it provides a general overview of the gaps in this certification.
  - Missing elements: respond to a signal of distress at sea, Maritime Standard Communication and use of the English language. No clear reference is made to watchkeeping, even though it may be contained in the module relative to seamanship tasks. Although no precise reference is made to ARPA and ECDIS systems, competences relative to the use of radars and electronic aids in navigation are reported. The use of firefighting appliances, medical care and legislative safety standards, as well as catch handling and stowage may be contained in the modules of vessel and crew management. More precise information was not found.
- **For GMDSS radio operators**:
  - General assessment: **No specific radio operator roles seem to be recognised** for seafarers (under both the STCW-F and STCW Conventions) in Portugal. **Knowledge of GMDSS is however reported for some certifications** (e.g. Boatswain Fisherman).

With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, the country would need to introduce recognition procedures and specific courses for radio operators, guaranteeing sufficient up-skilling for these professional figures. **In doing so, Portugal would also need to verify** if the training activities already offered on the topic are sufficient or **if some reorganization and re-skilling may be necessary**.

- **Basic training**:
  - General assessment: from the information found, **Basic Safety Training appears to be required to all seafarers in Portugal**. Further details have been found in the training for seafarers offered by FOR-MAR – in accordance with Decree 166/2019. The Basic Safety Training offered by this course follows STCW competence requirements. More specifically, it is composed by 4 STCW modules, focusing on: Personal safety and social responsibilities, Basic first aid, Fire prevention and fighting, Personal survival techniques. These modules correspond to the standard of competence Sections included in the revised STCW-F Code. Thus, **from the level of information found, there would be no up-skilling or re-skilling need for Portugal on this topic**.
- **Revalidation standards ([71])**:
  - General assessment: from the information found, there do appear to be **revalidation of certificates and refresher courses**. They should follow STCW-F requirements for fishing vessel personnel.

([71]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

Portuguese standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Portugal appears to recognise several different qualifications of seafarers, divided in three different ranks: officers, masters and seamen.
    - **Qualifications under the rank of officer**: Captain of the merchant navy; 1st class pilot; 2nd class pilot; Chief engineer; 1st class engineer; 2nd class engineer; Electrical officer; Officer trainee.
    - **Qualifications under the rank of master**: Master of the high seas; Coastal master; Local master; 1st class practical engineer; 2nd class practical engineer; 3rd class practical engineer; Electrical engineer; Cook.
    - **Qualifications under the rank of seaman**: Seaman; Engineer seaman; Trainee seaman; Hotel technician; Specialized technician.
    - **As established in Ordinance No. 235/2020 the above categories are applied also to fishing vessels**, with varying specific requirements and additional limitations.
    - Within this framework, **Portugal also envisions requirements to access higher categories** (e.g. requirements for 2nd class pilots to be qualified as 1st class pilots). Generally, these requirements concern specific seagoing service periods on varying types of vessels. Additional certifications or aptitude assessments may also be required (e.g. to be qualified as 1st class pilot, the 2nd class pilot must be qualified with the management level course for officers in the area of piloting or equivalent – in addition to seagoing service requirements).
- As anticipated in the Section above, evidence of **additional qualifications for fishers** have been found in the offering of the education and training institute IPTL in Madeira:
    - **Fisherman** - Completion of the course gives right to be registered as seafarer.
    - **Fisherman Sailor** - Completion of the course gives right to be registered as seafarer.
    - **Local Fishing Arrais** - After completion, candidates are allowed to conduct vessels of less than 9 metres in specific areas.
    - **Fishing Arrais** - After completion, candidates are allowed to conduct vessels of less than 12 metres along the coasts of the Portuguese mainland or of Madeira and the Azores.
    - **Master Coastal Fisherman** - Boatswain Fisherman who has one year of embarkation on fishing vessels with a length equal to or greater than 12 metres.
    - The **Boatswain Fisherman** qualification has already been analysed in the previous Section. In addition to what already discussed, it also allows to become: a) a master on fishing vessels of less than 24 metres in limited waters; b) a second in command of navigation on fishing vessels of less than 33 metres.
- The training institute EMA, located in the Azores, offers additional training on environmental management.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- Portugal recognises foreign certificates under both STCW and STCW-F.

- More specifically, Article 4 of decree 166/2019 establishes that **the Maritime Administration recognises foreign qualifications provided that the legal requirements defined for the professional activity are met**.

Romania

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law in 2017

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Romania generally complies with** the regulations of **the revised STCW-F Convention**. It has **ratified both the STCW and STCW-F and applies the latter for** the training and certification requirements of its **fishers**.
- Competence and training requirements concerning occupational safety and health are nationally regulated by Decision no. 1135 of 2006.

Romanian standards below STCW-F mandatory standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers and officers:**
    - General assessment: Article 14 of Decision no. 1135 states that *any person likely to command a vessel* shall be given detailed training on:
        - The prevention of occupational illness and labour accidents on board and the steps to be taken in an event or accident.
        - Stability and maintenance of the vessel under all foreseeable conditions of loading and during the fishing operations.
        - Navigation and radio communication, including procedures.
    - Missing elements: **pollution prevention and protection of the marine environment**. Further information would be needed relative to the whole training curricula of professional roles in the country to provide further insights.
- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
    - General assessment: the revised STCW-F differentiates among three categories of engine officer and watch functions. Since the old version of the Convention, instead, only recognises Chief and second engineer officers of fishing vessels powered by main propulsion machinery of 750 kW propulsion power or more, **Romania would need to apply the new categorisation to its professional roles and to check whether some re-skilling may be needed**.
- **Basic training:**
    - General assessment: Article 13 of Decision no. 1135 is aligned with the STCW-F Code on personal survival techniques and fire prevention and firefighting.
    - Missing elements:
        - **Elementary first aid**: taking immediate action upon encountering an accident or other medical emergency;

        - **Personal safety and social responsibilities**: comply with emergency procedures, prevent marine pollution, observe safe working practices, contribute to effective communication and human relationships, take necessary action to control fatigue.
    - Information was not found on specific curricula for qualifications on fishing vessels in Romania or on GMDSS radio personnel or revalidation standards.

Romanian standards in addition to STCW-F mandatory standards:

- There are currently no additional requirements beyond STCW-F.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- No information was found on the recognition of foreign certificates, whether from EU or non-EU countries.

Slovenia

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law in 2014
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- Slovenia has only ratified the STCW and **does not comply with the regulations of the revised STCW-F**.
- **Training and certification of fishers are based on the STCW, with additional provisions** related to the EU Common Fisheries Policy and national fisheries policies.
- **Slovenia considers that the STCW-F Convention is not needed as all vessels in the Slovenian fishing fleet are less than 24 metres in length and have engine power of less than 750 kW**.

Slovenian standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **Slovenia would need a thorough up-skilling of its fishers**.
- The country would also need to implement a framework differentiating between the various professional roles recognised by the Convention. In fact, the country appears to recognise only three functions on board fishing vessels: Boat master, Commercial fisher and Radio Station Operator (VHF GMDSS).
- Training for all fishing positions in the country would need to become compulsory. It is currently not the case for the Boat masters course.
- **The Boat master exam is not aligned with the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code**.
    - Navigation competences are required. However, contrary to the STCW-F requirements for skippers, nothing is specified on watchkeeping, as well as the use of information systems to aid decision-making in navigation. The same is true concerning dealing with navigational emergencies and maritime communication for safe navigation.
    - Nothing is reported concerning catch handling and stowage.
    - Firefighting and maintaining seaworthiness of the vessel are competences included in the exam. Instead, protection of marine environment and medical care are not reported.
- **The Commercial Fishing exam is not aligned with any of the Sections in the STCW-F Code**. Nonetheless, it includes two relevant competences missing in the Boat master exam: protection of marine environment and catch handling.
- **The VHF GMDSS curriculum, instead, appears aligned with the competence requirements in the revised STCW-F for GMDSS radio operators**.
- No specific information was found on revalidation of certificates and refresher courses.

Slovenian standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Even though Boatmaster appears to be a deck function, the exam includes fundamentals of motor science.
- Knowledge of veterinary medicine and food hygiene is required in the commercial fishing exam. Knowledge of the position of fishers in Slovenia is included in the curriculum as well.
- The VHF GMDSS curriculum also includes knowledge on the basics of radiotelephony.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- Information on recognition of foreign certificates in Slovenia is reported only in relation to radio station operators from other EU countries. The person must carry a proof of competence or equivalent documentation to operate a boat or a VHF GMDSS station issued in Slovenian, English, or Italian.
- There have been no cases of fishers from Slovenia applying for recognition of their certificates in other EU Member States. Based on all the available information, there are also **no cases of fishers from other EU Member States who requested their certificates to be recognised by the Slovenian authorities**.

Spain

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: yes, transposed into national law in 2014

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Spain are **based on 1995 STCW-F**.
- Additional requirements relative to STCW-F are also added by national legislation.
- There are nonetheless **some differences**, **which would require up-skilling or re-skilling** of Spanish fishers.

Spanish standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **For skippers:**
  - General assessment: the curriculum for **Multipurpose Coastal Skippers partially satisfies the competences of the STCW-F Code** for skippers in limited waters. Only high-level information was reported for other skipper positions. From the information found, the curriculum for **Skipper in deep-sea fishing** seems generally aligned with the STCW-F Code for skippers in unlimited waters, even though more detail would be needed for a thorough analysis. The competences of **Coastal Skippers** (different from Multipurpose Coastal Skippers, see the next Section) appear instead to be aligned with those reported in the STCW for masters. Thus, Spain would need to decide whether to align the competences for these professional figures to the revised STCW-F, determining potential up-skilling or re-skilling needs.
  - Missing elements: Nothing is reported for **Multipurpose Coastal Skippers** relative to maritime communication skills, as well as the use of navigation systems to assist command decision-making. Compliance with maritime law is reported, but nothing specific is said for this position relative to prevention of marine pollution. Finally, provision of medical care on board and the use of life-saving appliances appear not to be included in the curriculum for this qualification.

- **For officers:**
  - General assessment: the curriculum for **Fishing Captain satisfies most competences of the STCW-F** Code for officers in unlimited waters. Details for officers in limited waters were not found.
  - Missing elements: No information is reported relative to watchkeeping. The same is true relative to responding to a signal of distress at sea, fire prevention and firefighting and the use of life-saving appliances. Competences relative to medical aid on board are not specifically reported for Fishing Captains. However, this

competence appears to be generally required for officer positions on board fishing vessels. Also manoeuvring and handling of vessels is not directly reported for this qualification. Nonetheless, navigation courses are required.

- **For engine officer and watch functions:**
  - General assessment: Only high-level information was reported for engine officer positions. From the information found, the curriculum for **Chief Engineer** with no propulsion power limits seems generally aligned with the STCW-F Code for engine officers with propulsion power above 3000 kW, even though more details would be needed for a thorough analysis. It is less clear the extent to which the competences of **Engineers** on fishing vessels with propulsion power up to 2000 kW (see the next Section for details on Spanish engineer roles) satisfy those in the revised STCW-F for engine roles on vessels with propulsion power below 3000 kW.
    In line with the provisions of 1995 STCW-F, Spain appears not to recognise an engine watch function. Since such a role is found in the revised STCW-F, the country would need to make sure that this role is recognised and assess whether up-skilling or re-skilling is needed for its engine roles.
- **For GMDSS radio operators:**
  - General assessment: GMDSS certificates are recognised. However, no further information was found. In general, Spain does not seem to recognise a specific function for radio operators. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F, Spain would need to make sure that this role is recognised and to assess whether up-skilling is needed.
- **Basic training:**
  - General assessment: **Basic Safety Training appears to follow STCW provisions**. This is reportedly due to the lack of specific training requirements on the topic in the 1995 STCW-F. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F **Spain will need to make sure that its competence requirements are aligned with the Convention**.
- **Revalidation standards ([72]):**
  - General assessment: revalidation of certificates and refresher courses should follow STCW-F provisions. However, information was not found.

Spanish standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Spain categorises functions on board fishing vessels differently from the way in which they are established by the revised STCW-F Convention, even with some additions:
  - Four different Skipper qualifications are recognised:

([72]) The revised STCW-F Convention comes with a refresher requirement for the basic safety training and the radio operator certificates. These certificates will need to be renewed every five years following “refresher” training.

        - **Skipper in deep-sea fishing**: specified for vessels up to 70 metres in length.
        - **Coastal Skipper**: specified for vessels up to 42 metres in length.
        - **Multipurpose Coastal Skipper**: specified for vessels up to 32 metres in length and no more than 100 miles from the coastline.
        - **Local Fishing Skipper**: specified for vessels up to 16 metres in length and 140 kW of propulsion power, and no more than 12 miles from the coast. This does not correspond to any specific function recognised in the STCW-F. Basic navigation, bridge and machinery knowledge appear to be needed for this qualification.
    - Different specifications of propulsion power are reported for engine officers position with respect to STCW-F:
        - **Chief Engineer**: specified for vessels up to 3000 kW. This can be expanded to fishing vessels without power limits.
        - **Engineer**: specified for vessels up to 1400 kW. This can be expanded up to 2000 kW of propulsion power.
    - The role of **Sailor-Fisher/Deckhand** (Marinero Pescador) is also recognised. This does not correspond to any specific function recognised in the STCW-F. The knowledge required for this role deals with fishing gear, fish handling, vessel manoeuvring, watchkeeping, safety and protection of the marine environment.
    - For officers, it seems that their role is covered by multiple qualifications. In fact, **being qualified as** a **Fishing Captain**, as a **Skipper in deep-sea fishing**, or as a **Coastal Skipper carries the right to work as an officer on fishing vessels without limitations in terms of length and navigable waters**.
    - To obtain a Certificate of Competence corresponding to the STCW-F functions of skipper in unlimited waters, officer in unlimited waters and engine officer, it is necessary to previously have a qualification issued by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. This is not the case for certificates for skipper and officer positions in limited waters.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

- Foreign fishers have their qualifications validated based on the STCW-F treaty or the existence of bilateral agreements.

Certificates from other EU countries:

- If the fisher's country of origin is an EEA country and that country has adopted the STCW-F, the Spanish authorities automatically endorse the qualifications in accordance with regulations I/3 and I/7 of STCW-F Convention.
- Skippers and chief officers are required to pass an additional test on Spanish maritime fisheries legislation (carried out in Spanish).
- Nationals of EEA countries who have an STCW certificate can also obtain recognition for duty on fishing vessels.

- Spain automatically grants the Marinero Pescador (sailor-fisher) certificate to EEA citizens with certificates as a deckhand or engineer on a fishing vessel.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- Fishers from non-EU countries can have their certificates recognised, depending on the presence of bilateral agreements. No further information was found.

Sweden

Ratification status:

- STCW: yes, transposed into national law (no date specified)
- STCW-F: no, not transposed into national law

Compliance with STCW-F:

- **Training and certification requirements** for fishers in Sweden are **based on the STCW**, with additional requirements set by national legislation
- There are concrete plans to ratify the STCW-F.

Swedish standards below mandatory STCW-F standards (up-skilling and re-skilling needs):

- **Sweden directly follows the competence requirements set in the STCW**. **A precise analysis cannot be performed since detailed competence requirements for most qualifications are not reported**.
- In general, with the introduction of the revised STCW-F (and with the ratification of the Convention, as planned), **the country will need to align its current framework and qualifications with the new standards and assess the needs for up-skilling and re-skilling of its fishers**.
- Detailed competences are reported only for Masters on fishing vessels with a length of at least 12 metres and for safety training for duty on fishing vessels of 5 metres in length or more.
    - **The curriculum for Masters on fishing vessels with a length of at least 12 metres is generally not in line with the competence requirements of the STCW-F Code for officer and skipper** positions. There are only a few common competences: the use of navigation systems, oceanography, vessel stability, international maritime safety and environmental regulations. This implies that to align this professional role with the revised STCW-F Convention, up-skilling would be needed in most of the competences established by the Code for deck roles on fishing vessels.
    - **Safety Training appears to be only partially aligned with the requirements of the STCW-F** Code. Personal survival techniques, fire prevention and firefighting and first aid competences are generally reported. However, there is no clear equivalent in the Swedish curriculum for specific requirements, such as minimising the risk of fire or taking immediate action in the event of an accident. In general, the curriculum seems to focus more on theory rather than practice. Thus, **re-skilling is likely to be needed on these topics. Furthermore, up-skilling will be needed for effective communication and human relationships, as well as actions to control fatigue**.
- From the information found, **GMDSS radio operator certificates appear to be in line with the STCW**. With the introduction of the revised STCW-F Sweden will need to assess whether any re-skilling is needed on this topic. **The same appears to be generally true for revalidation of**

certificates and refresher courses. Certificates appear to be valid for no more than five years, in line with both Conventions.

Swedish standards in addition to mandatory STCW-F standards:

- Swedish additional standards are still based on the structure and functions established in the STCW Convention.
- There are several Deck Officer and Engineer Officer roles. Qualifications are differentiated based on the dimensions of the ship, sea area of activity, and/or propulsion power.
- Relative to the scope of the STCW, there are additional roles for mechanics, mechanical engineers and ship technicians. These professional figures have no equivalent either in the roles established in the revised STCW-F.

Recognition of foreign certificates:

Certificates from other EU countries:

- If a fisher from another EU country wants to work on board a seagoing vessel under the Swedish flag, an application needs to be made. The requirements are set out below.
    - A valid Certificate of Competence.
    - Documents showing competences relative to the position, ship and sea area of application, or special competences. The documents must clearly state the regulation of the STCW Convention upon which the competences are based.
    - A medical certificate not more than two years old, which clearly fulfils the Swedish requirements.
    - A certificate of approved training in Swedish maritime legislation (needed mainly for masters and chief mates on large ships, and for chief and second engineer officers on ships with at least 750 kW of propulsion power).
    - Two photographs for recognition.

Certificates from non-EU countries:

- Sweden has an agreement for the recognition of foreign certificates with the Philippines and India.

In addition to the standard requirements, information about the shipowner and the ship of service is needed for fishers with competences issued outside of the EEA.

Annex E: Overview of arguments in favour and not in favour of a common standard

The table below contains a complete overview of the answers provided by respondents, including Member State and type of respondent, on the question related to arguments in favour and not in favour of a common EU standard. These are raw answers as provided by respondents, analysis is provided in chapter 5 of this report. Blue and white colours are for readability only, to indicate the response for different respondents.

Table 6 Overview of the responses related to arguments in favour and not in favour of a common EU standard

Arguments in favour of a common standard (full answers as provided by respondents)	Arguments not in favour of a common standard (full answers as provided by respondents)	EU Member State	Category respondents
1. Increase safety on board for all jobs on board in a sector that unfortunately remains dangerous for workers	MS would not be pushed to have better standards above the minimum. Existing better standards could be weakened	Belgium	Other, trade union
2. Training fishermen in sustainable fishing practices with the effect of reducing accidental catches			
3. The application of common protocols in the event of an accident can be intervened safely and with minimal negative effects on the marine environment			
4. Increase the possible mobility of fishermen in the EU, helping them and the employers to better match vacancies and workers			
5. Show that the EU cares about adopting measures to better protect workers			
6. Push other international fishing countries to adopt similar standards, with the objective of improving working conditions and safety on board			
Fishers can work all over the EU		Belgium	Other, fishery safety/prevention expert

Level playing field + easier mutual recognition of certificates	Common standard not sufficiently adapted and/or flexible for different vessel types. Fishing industries differ quite a lot in different countries, thus leading to many different requirements for training (and certification) of fishers based on the vessel type, sailing area,... which could lead to either a very widespread (and therefore not easy-to-use) standard or a standard which is not compatible for several branches of the fishing vessel fleet (e.g. too broad for small-scale fishery, but not enough emphasis on ship stability for beam trawlers).	Belgium	Policymaker
The advantages are a uniform level of education and an easier labor exchange	Needs of the regional approach and the particularities of each member state	Croatia	Policymaker
	The disadvantages are an additional burden for fishers who fish with smaller vessels and at the local level (eg SSF)		
It will be a good way to train all countries in the same way. Something to be the same across countries, since now every country has its own way of teaching and learning		Cyprus	Other, policymaker
	A common standard will often be based on the lowest denominator to get all on board...	Denmark	Industry representative
	I have the feeling that establishing common training and certification standard is complicated because the specificities of fishing differ from region to region	Estonia	Other, research institute
	Too large area to apply common certification	Finland	Other, FLAG
Create links between all schools, facilitate the mobility of professional sailors throughout the Community territory, strengthen the Community maritime administration by giving it an educational vocation	Not all Member States are equally concerned by maritime issues. How can we involve the least concerned Member States, so that the most concerned States can count on their interest in this project?	France	Training institute

This should encourage those that have not yet done so to ratify the STCW-F convention. The objective is to facilitate and make much faster/more automatic recognitions within the EU but also for non-EU fishers		France	Industry representative
The situation of fishing labour recruited at the European transnational level, if not outside the Community, is now an indisputable reality		France	Other, union
1. The common approach at European level allows for dual recognition of the training and skills of European fishers in a context of mobility of the European workforce and also provides shipowners with a common base in the recruitment of intra-community fishers		France	Other, union
2. The implementation of a common certification standard, subject to the principle of compliance with quality standards, will allow the training of a quality European workforce, moreover capable of professional mobility			
1. Enables the integration of internationally recognized nautical training into national vocational training		Germany	Other
2. Simplifies access to the international labor market			
3. Standardized EU-wide training content and regulations for access to the labor market			
There is a need to improve the skillset of fishers particularly at the level of deckhands		Ireland	Industry representative
Greater professionalism and competence of fishers	Lack of education and training institutions	Italy	Industry representative
1. A mandatory common guideline could be beneficial to initiate a process of unification and standardization	The wide diversity among EU countries, including differences in professions, fleets, and job requirements, must be carefully considered	Italy	Other, research centre
2. Establishing a common framework is crucial for ensuring consistent standards and greater coherence within the EU, thereby facilitating the development of clear and accessible maritime career paths			
3. This approach would also create more opportunities for professional growth, enabling workers to acquire skills that are recognized and valued across all EU countries			
4. By acknowledging the significant differences, we can start with shared basic minimum standards and develop varying levels of training to enhance skills for those who seek to advance, ensuring that everyone can adapt according to their individual needs and circumstances			
Mutual recognition	Bureaucratic burdens	Latvia	Policymaker

Awareness and knowledge how to act and know that others work in the same direction. Less misunderstandings. You can compare it with the aviation-sector. Common procedures have lead to less accidents end less casualties.		the Netherlands	Other, union
1. It creates a level playing field		the Netherlands	Industry representative
2. The EU stands for free movement of people and labour and this can only be achieved at the moment we have a common training and certification standard			
3. Recognition of certificates and free movement of labour helps to release pressure from fish stocks that are under pressure or overfished. Fishers can work in other regions in a similar position with their own/original certificates			
4. Safety should be important to everyone, so also to fishers who operate in areas together with merchant vessels			
It is essential for security, updating knowledge, standardizing requirements for access to the profession and good practices	I think that in our reality as an archipelago with several islands (Azores, 9 islands) there are logistical challenges, when fishermen are forced to have training, centralized in a single place. Also, we are a small-scale fishery, training must be adapted to each person's reality	Portugal (Azores)	Policymaker
Standardization of certification	Not meeting regional needs	Portugal	Policymaker
1. Anyone who wants to leave their country can work in another member State		Portugal	Industry representative
2. More learning, more knowledge			
Is the best way to transmit reliable information while avoiding the propagation of errors		Portugal	Other, ngo
Fishers receive more training and education in the fishing area, which can help to prevent accidents in everyday life		Portugal	Industry representative
I have noticed that there are different conditions in different places in Portugal and outside Portugal.		Portugal	Other, research institute
Experience can be exchanged with other fishing organizations in the EU, new maritime fishing technologies in the Black Sea used in other EU states can be adapted, etc.	Different methods of fishing	Romania	Industry representative
1. Improving the quality of fishing data collection in order to apply an adequate management	1. The existence of language barriers, difficulty in expression	Romania	Other, research institute

2. Training fishermen in sustainable fishing practices with the effect of reducing accidental catches	2. The free movement of the labor force will kill professionals in countries with a high degree of development, creating gaps in countries with less economic performance		
3. The application of common protocols in the event of an accident can be intervened safely and with minimal negative effects on the marine environment	3. The low interest of young people to be active in marine fishing		
	Many of the requirements of the common standard will not be applicable to fishing in the Black Sea, since there is a regional specificity of the skills needed by fishers depending on the type of fishing practiced, tools used, target species, etc.	Romania	Other
	Very specific circumstances in different seas across Europe and in different national fisheries sectors	Slovenia	Policymaker

Additional interview response

Arguments in favour common standard	Arguments not in favour common standard	EU member State	
1. Promote solidarity across the EU by creating a unified approach to safety and certification	1. Increased burden on the industry since they already struggle with recruiting enough certified fishers and implementing additional requirements puts further strain on an industry under pressure	Finland	Other, the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom
2. It would contribute to improving the overall safety standards within the fishing industry	2. Limited demand for training. There is insufficient demand to justify schools to offer the required training at the necessary scale. The lack of demand makes it difficult to establish a sustainable system for providing such certifications		
	3. Implementing new legislation would create significant administrative work for authorities, potentially with limited tangible benefits. This could be seen as an unnecessary exercise with little practical need or impact, particularly for countries with small fishing fleets		

	4. Questionable relevance for small fleets. The small size of the fishing fleet in certain countries means that EU legislation may not provide meaningful safety improvements. There are no clear safety indicators suggesting that such amendments are urgently needed for small fleets		
	5. There are concerns that the changes could create unnecessary complications without addressing critical issues in the local context		
The EU tends to have a strong communication about safety at sea, environmental protection and so on, but they do nothing on implementing proper regulations for the training of fishing vessel personnel. If the EU want to be consequent, they should enable EU fishers to be as good as we expect them to be. Let's train them properly			
Many fishing communities struggle with social issues and difficulties. Sometimes we tend to think that we help them by not asking them to be properly trained. Of course, it costs money, takes time, and is an administrative burden for these people, but also in France it is the deadliest job you can choose. And if we don't train them, that also comes with other consequences. During the last winter we closed a part of the French maritime area for fishing vessels because they killed dolphins. During two months, no fishing vessels were allowed to fish in the Bay of Biscay, which was a big deal. So we need to improve our training on these particular aspects as well to protect our fishers		France	Policymaker
Ireland could implement the STCW-F through the Directive and apply the standard without having to ratify the convention which is currently? difficult to do	1. Training and certification of fishers is now part of the work of the Department of Transport, but potential EU legislation could become a responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. Currently this department has no competence in seafarer certification. Therefore it is unclear how they could transpose EU legislation without knowledge and competence of seafarer certification	Ireland	Other, Marine Survey Office

	2. BIM is responsible for the training and they are a State agency falling under the Department of Agriculture. If they would both deliver training and this same department would also become responsible for approving training, they would be self-approving and that cannot be the case		
On the one hand, the conversion into EU legislation leads to binding EU-wide introduction and thus to a uniform structure of the certificates of competency. On the other hand, the EU could incorporate the requirements of the member states with greater weighting in the future design of the STCW-F Convention. Furthermore, there would be the possibility of finding an EU-wide definition of limited waters and thus security with regard to fishing in foreign EEZs. However, this would require that the EU states were in agreement on this.	Changes to STCW-F would have to be agreed at EU level beforehand. This would involve additional resources in view of the current revision of STCW and entails the risk that national needs can only be mentioned during the HTW meetings if the other EU states agree	Germany	Policymaker

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