

MATES – a Sectoral Skills Alliance in the Maritime Sector

Press release: 4 November 2019

The partners of the EU-funded Blueprint project **MATES**, met in Thessaloniki, Greece on 16 and 17 October 2019. The partners made great strides during the hands-on sessions devoted to the MATES Pilot Experiences, with the design of all 11 now well underway. These 11 Pilot Experiences aim to tackle skill shortages in the shipbuilding and offshore marine renewable industries – two sectors of many which are experiencing both opportunities and challenges with the drive towards a greener, knowledge-driven economy.

MATES is tackling these challenges head-on, building on the premise of partnership – or a Sectoral Skills Alliance – between industry and academia. Treated within such a structure, addressing skill gaps becomes a collaborative process. With a specific focus on shipbuilding and offshore marine renewable energy, **MATES** partners have been engaging with stakeholders over the past twenty months. This culmination of efforts has resulted in the publication of the [MATES Strategy Baseline Report](#) which has identified key paradigm shifters for both industries. It is these paradigm shifters which form the basis of the design of the **MATES** Pilot Experiences.

While some of the Pilot Experiences aim to increase the quality and relevance of curricula to better align education and training with industry needs, others will provide real-life work experience through staff and student exchanges between industry and academia. One Pilot Experience will strategically input new skills into ESCO (the European online classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) which is part of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

According to **MATES** partner Margaret Eleftheriou, who took part in the Europe 2020 Initiative ESCO and the EU Expert Group on Skills and Career Development in the Blue Economy, *“ESCO is a tool that provides a common language for the labour market, the education and training sector, and jobseekers, allowing for and leading to better understanding, transparency and labour market mobility. **MATES** contribution to ESCO will ensure that the new emerging occupational profiles in the shipbuilding and offshore marine renewable energy will be transferred to the wider ESCO community assuring extended impact.”*

Andy Kontoudakis, EC Policy Officer for DG MARE, also in attendance at the **MATES** meeting, emphasised the importance of linking with ESCO, *“By revising and updating occupational profiles, through ESCO, Sectoral Skills Alliances will improve Vocational and Educational Training. This grounding in ESCO is one of the key requirements to ensure the success of a Blueprint project.”*

As the **MATES** project progresses, it will capture best practices and develop a sector skills strategy in the form of a Sustainability Roadmap – for future exploitation of the project’s outcomes and as a guiding light for future Blueprint projects.

To keep up to date on the development of the Pilot Experiences, follow [@ErasmusMATES](https://twitter.com/ErasmusMATES), subscribe to our [e-news](https://www.projectmates.eu) or check-out our website www.projectmates.eu.



Photo: MATES partners and Andy Kontoudakis, EC Policy Officer for DG MARE (front row, second from left)

Notes for Editors

The **MATES** Project is co-funded under the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. It runs for seven years, from 2014 to 2020. Erasmus+ aims to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe. It is open to education, training, youth and sport organisations across all sectors of lifelong learning, including school education, further and higher education, adult education and the youth sector.

The **MATES** project will run from 2018-2021 with an overall budget of €4.9 million. “**MATES** - *Maritime Alliance for fostering the European Blue economy through a Marine Technology Skilling Strategy*”.

MATES is coordinated by the Centro Tecnológico del Mar - Fundación CETMAR. The main objectives of Fundación CETMAR is to promote cooperation among institutions, research centers and the maritime and fishery sectors, encourage the involvement of dependent sectors of the sea in research and development, and promote the efficiency of all activities related to the use and exploitation of the marine environment. More information is available at www.cetmar.org. The Project Coordinator is Lucia Fraga Lago (mates@cetmar.org).

For press queries, please contact Olivia Daly, AquaTT (email: olivia@aquatt.ie)

Subscribe to receive MATES news and updates [here](#).