

# Bid to break down EU certification barriers

Project seeks to boost mutual recognition of SCV skippers' qualifications

➔ The results of a major European Union funded project to investigate ways of improving the 'employability' of European seafarers in the small commercial vessels (SCV) sector are due to be released next month.

The Transnational Recognition of European Certification in Vocational Education and Training (TRECNET) project was launched in an effort to improve the recognition of SCV certification across Europe.

The two-year initiative was supported under the European Commission's lifelong learning programme to find ways of tackling the current lack of mutual certificate recognition within the EU which means, for instance, that UK-qualified skippers residing in Spain can work on UK-registered ships, but not on Spanish nor on any other EU-registered vessel, and vice versa.

The Commission is concerned that this

restricts the free movement of seafarers across the EU — and specifically in the SCV sector.

The project team has been developing an online tool to break down the SCV training and certification syllabi from EU countries into their smallest parts and then make them comparable with each other.

The initiative has been piloted in three partner countries — the UK, Spain and Germany — and the TRECNET consortium hopes that this approach will enable maritime authorities across the EU to compare each other's qualifications, find areas of compatibility, and therefore enhance the possibilities of mutual recognition of each other's national SCV qualifications.

This would then lead to greater free movement of seafarers within the EU and increased employment opportunities.

A milestone in the project was achieved with the release of the beta version of the

TRECNET tool, called the 'fexTool'. The tool is designed to be scalable and able to accept syllabi from any VET industry within Europe.

One of its developers, Bernie Butler of SeaTeach SI, commented: 'The fexTool offers industry experts and authorities a repeatable, standardised and transparent method for the comparison of sector-related qualifications. The fexTool also provides a means to identify elements within a qualification that can be migrated to other, apparently, unrelated VET qualifications.'

The TRECNET consortium is hosting a conference in Palma de Mallorca next month where the full results of the project and the final version of the fexTool will be presented to maritime authorities and institutions, crew agencies, accrediting bodies, and shipping companies.

» For more information: [www.trecnet.eu](http://www.trecnet.eu) or [email@sea-teach.com](mailto:email@sea-teach.com)