



# Report

Bullying, Discrimination  
& Harassment survey 2010



Nautilus International

# Foreword



**Mark Dickinson**  
General Secretary

June 2011

Workplaces in the UK and Netherlands have made great strides in recent years on matters of equality and fair treatment. In land-based employment, workplace bullying is generally considered a hindrance to productivity and a danger to the mental and physical health of employees.

Yet attitudes at sea do not always keep pace with those on land, and the many attractive aspects of a career at sea have a flipside. If something goes wrong on a ship, crew members can find themselves isolated and unsure where to turn for support.

At Nautilus International, we are committed to tackling that isolation and protecting our members from ill-treatment. We also have a responsibility to investigate issues which have a negative impact on recruitment and retention. This is why, in 2010, we organised a major survey to find out the truth about bullying,

discrimination and harassment in the maritime workplace and hear members' views on what action we should be taking.

The research was about getting a rounded picture of working life in the industry, so we were glad to hear that many companies are well run and have harmonious crews. But equally, it was important to gather reports from those who have not had such a good experience, because it is only by finding out the full story that we can press for change.

This report sets out the findings of the survey and explains how the information gathered from members is informing Union policy. Please join us in our efforts to ensure that all maritime professionals can get on with their work in a respectful, dignified environment — just as they would expect in any other profession.

# Introduction

This report contains the full findings of the Nautilus member survey on Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment, which was conducted online in the second half of 2010 as part of the Union's project to assess the reality of working life at sea in the international Year of the Seafarer.

By the beginning of the Year of the Seafarer, Nautilus International's governing Council had been aware for some time that there was a need for more information on the ill-treatment of members in the workplace. A 1999 survey of women members had provided a starting point, with some disturbing findings emerging: at that time, 76% of respondents reported that they had suffered sexual harassment at sea — and of these, 73% had not felt able to make a complaint. These findings (published in the 2000 **Fairplay** report) led to a partnership between NUMAST and the UK Chamber of Shipping to develop 'best practice' guidelines on tackling bullying and harassment, along with an education package for shipping companies and ships' officers. The UK guidelines later formed the basis of the 2005 ECSA/ETF guidelines on equality of opportunity and diversity in the European shipping industry.

But were the guidelines being followed? In the years since the ECSA/ETF document had been issued, anecdotal evidence suggested that many Nautilus members — both female and male — were still being prevented from carrying out their work effectively because of bullying, discrimination and harassment. There were also reports that ill-treatment was causing some seafarers to leave the industry altogether. Clearly, a systematic way of gathering up-to-date information about this issue was required, so it was agreed that all Nautilus members would be invited to participate in an online survey.

Then, in June 2010, a terrible incident took place which highlighted the pressing need for the industry to reflect on its working practices and reassess the way that reports of ill-treatment are handled. A South African cadet, Akhona Geveza, was found dead in Croatian waters near her vessel — the British-flagged *Safmarine Kariba*. A colleague later told the South African press that Ms Geveza had died only a few hours after she had reported being raped by a Ukrainian chief officer. Ms Geveza had apparently been called in to discuss her allegation with the captain and the chief officer, but never made it to the meeting.

A brief investigation by the Croatian authorities suggested suicide, but did not address the full circumstances of the case (which included other allegations of bullying and sexual harassment onboard the vessel). To date, despite persistent pressure by Nautilus, the UK government has not fully acknowledged its responsibilities as flag state or carried out its own investigation.

While we wait for the authorities to uncover the full facts of the Akhona Geveza case, Nautilus members are asking what can be done to ensure any problems onboard ship are resolved at an early stage and do not escalate to a point where lives are at risk. There are many issues to consider, from the impact of particular crewing policies to the question of whether a seafarer needs to be a particular kind of person. The 2010 Nautilus survey on Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment has allowed those at the sharp end to report what is really going on — both the good and the bad — and submit expert suggestions for action. This valuable information is already informing Union policy, and should make a difference to seafarers' working experiences for years to come.

The 2010 Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Survey was completed online by 539 members of Nautilus International, via the Union's website [www.nautilusint.org](http://www.nautilusint.org). All information given by the participants has been treated in confidence, and the comments published in this report are anonymous. Participants provided their name and membership number when opening the survey to verify that they were Nautilus members, but this information was not permanently recorded or associated with the data entered by the participant.

All Nautilus members were invited to take part in the survey — both from the UK and the Netherlands. The participants were self-selecting, rather than specifically chosen by the researchers as a representative sample of the shipping industry. However, the information they gave on their backgrounds showed that they represented a broad spectrum of maritime

professionals, in terms of employment sector, seniority, length of experience and personal circumstances — as can be seen from the statistical charts below.

Perhaps the most valuable information gathered in the survey can be found in the open-response sections, where participants could write freely about their experiences and opinions. These comments are so numerous that it is not possible to publish them all here, but they have been grouped into broad categories, and the category headings are shown in this report — demonstrating the main trends in Nautilus members' opinions. Sample comments representative of particular trains of thought have been extracted and are shown alongside the category headings; any references to particular organisations in these have been removed to protect the identities of the participants.

The words bullying, discrimination and harassment were used as follows in the survey, and were defined for participants at the beginning:

**bullying** — intentionally intimidating, offending or humiliating a person perceived as weaker

**discrimination** — unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice

**harassment** — the persistent annoying, attacking or bothering of another person

Note: In addition to the core questions about bullying, harassment and discrimination, survey participants were also asked about maternity and paternity rights in the maritime workplace. This data is still being analysed, and will form the basis of a separate report.

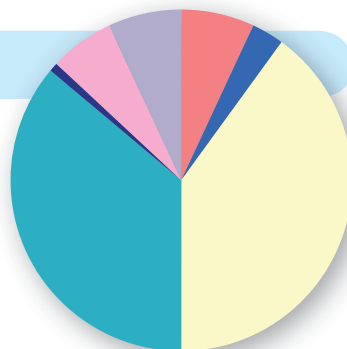
## How long have you been a member of Nautilus International (and predecessor unions such as NUMAST and FWZ)

Answer	%
Less than a year	7
1-5 years	20
5-10 years	13
10-20 years	19
20-30 years	12
More than 30 years	28



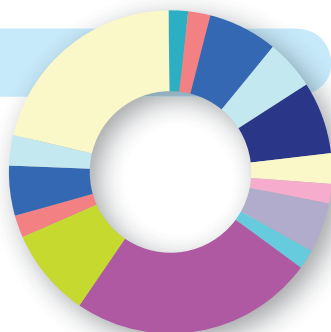
## What is your rank or job title?

Answer	%
trainee officer (cadet)	7
rating	3
officer	40
master/chief engineer	36
pilot	1
shore-based	6
other	7



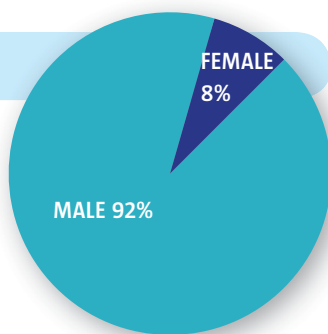
### What is your main workplace?

Answer	%
bulk carrier	2
chemical carrier	2
containership	7
crude oil tanker	5
cruiseship	7
freight ferry	3
large yacht/superyacht	2
gas carrier	5
general cargoship	2
offshore support vessel	24
passenger ferry	9
reefer (refrigerated cargo)	0*
RFA	2
shore-based office	5
nautical college	3
other	21

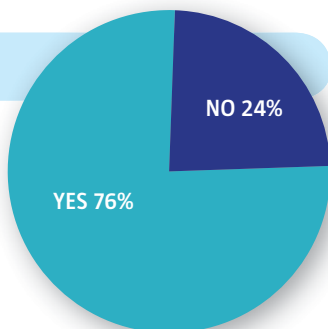


*\*Two respondents did report that they worked on reefer ships, but this has not registered in percentage terms because it is lower than half of one percent of respondents.*

### What is your gender?

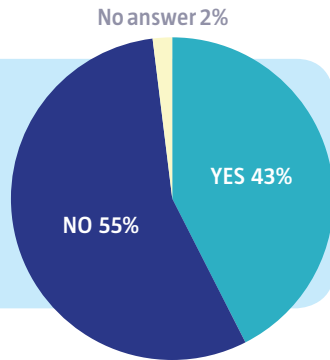


### Are you married/in a long-term relationship?



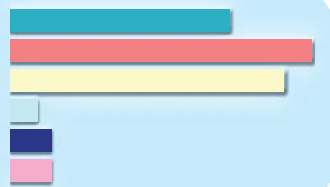
## Fair treatment in the workplace

In the last five years, have you personally experienced any form of bullying, discrimination or harassment in the workplace?



In a 2006 study by the UK Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 20% of all British employees said they had experienced some form of workplace bullying or harassment in the previous two years. A 2007 study from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions reported that the figure is around the same for Dutch employees as a whole. Based on these figures, the Nautilus survey suggests that, when workers from the UK and Netherlands are employed in the shipping industry, they are around twice as likely as their fellow countrymen to encounter bullying, discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

If you have experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment in the last five years, who was it from?\*

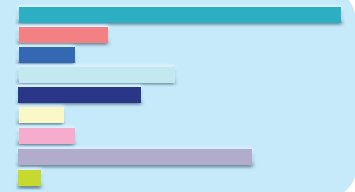


Answer	%
your employer (i.e. via company policy or the actions of senior management)	16
your line manager/immediate supervisor	22
your colleagues	20
passengers	2
other	3
prefer not to answer	3

\*In this question, participants could choose more than one answer (or none), so the categories are not mutually exclusive and the percentages therefore do not add up to 100%

Many comments recorded later in the survey elaborate on the particular problems encountered when bullying, discrimination or harassment are carried out by an employer or manager, as reported by a substantial proportion of respondents here.

Have you experienced any of the following in the last five years?\*

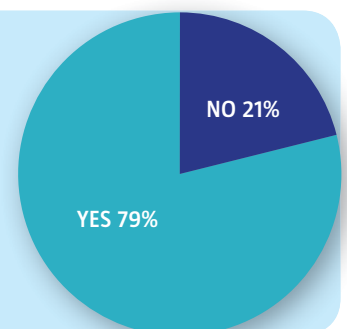


Answer	%
bullying	29
sex (gender) discrimination	8
sexual harassment	5
racism	14
ageism	11
homophobia	4
religious discrimination	5
any other form of unfair treatment based on prejudice	21
prefer not to answer	2

\*In this question, participants could choose more than one answer (or none), so the categories are not mutually exclusive and the percentages therefore do not add up to 100%

Further analysis of the responses to this question has revealed some important findings relating to women members. Of the respondents who reported experiencing sexual harassment, two-thirds were women and one-third were men. Seen as percentages of all respondents to the survey, the figures show that 41% of all female respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment, compared with 2% of all male respondents. Additionally, of those who reported experiencing sex (gender) discrimination, 59% were female and 41% male. When these responses are seen as percentages of all respondents to the survey, we see that 55% of all female respondents reported experiencing sex (gender) discrimination, compared with 3% of all male respondents.

If you have experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment in the last five years, did the treatment you experienced affect your morale at work or your performance?



### How did bullying discrimination/harassment affect you?

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

Response categories	Numbers
Experienced low morale, loss of confidence, deterioration in performance	55
Experienced depression/anxiety/stress	39
Felt angry, uncomfortable or frustrated	28
Lost job/had to resign/considered leaving	26
Missed out on a new job/promotion	3

#### Sample responses

'The incident destroyed my career; I was off with stress for three months and when I returned to work the company said that it was my fault that I had been bullied. I have been branded as a pariah. I have just about regained my confidence in who I am after three years and changing my job. I no longer work at sea because of this incident.'

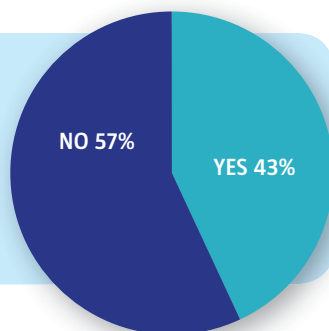
'I was rejected at interview stage by [a large company] when they asked me to give my age.'

'[I have experienced] harassment in the form of demeaning emails to office, comments on professional internal correspondence, hand-over notes, requisitions and many other forms. It leaves me feeling angry and defensive of my own actions.'

'Constant criticism for no valid reason inevitably leads to a hardening of attitudes and a "Why bother" mind set.'

'Severe stress physically manifested in vomiting before start of watches and exhaustion both physical and mental.'

If you did experience bullying, discrimination or harassment at work in the last five years, did you make a complaint about it?



It is notable that, of those who had experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment, less than half made a complaint about their ill-treatment. Reasons for this are given in the comments section below.

### If you were bullied but didn't make a complaint, why not?

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

Response categories	Numbers
Complaining would have made things worse/labelled me as a trouble-maker	28
Believed no effective action would be taken by company/organisation	19
No-one impartial to complain to/Formal complaints procedure inadequate	17
Thought I wouldn't be believed or taken seriously by company/My word against another's	14
Bullying, harassment and discrimination are an inevitable part of working at sea, so you just have to accept it	13
Not serious enough for complaint/preferred to handle things informally	10
Decided to deal with bully myself rather than complaining to others	9
Preferred to leave job rather than make complaint	5
Wasn't sure if I had a case	2
Still putting complaint together/Complaint has already been made by someone else	2

#### Sample responses

'[Complaining is a] waste of time. The most recent occasion the person responsible was well known to the company for his behaviour and actions yet still maintains his current position.'

'Couldn't see the point [in complaining]; it could easily have been made to look like a difference of opinion rather than bullying depending how good you are with words.'

'I genuinely believed that should I complain I would be labelled as a trouble causer which would seriously affect any future chances of promotion. I still believe this to be the case.'

'Racial and sexual prejudice is entirely commonplace at sea in my experience and attitudes of those displaying it virtually completely entrenched. So long as these prejudices are not directed at myself or harmfully toward particularly vulnerable crew members it is an unfortunate parameter of the job we all learn to live with. Vindictive personalised bullying does occur on occasion though more rarely. I have not needed to report it yet as targets of it I have known have been well equal to the situation and to the perpetrator.'

'Process too long/complicated. Usually means going through the "bully".'

'I addressed the problem myself by confronting the individual. After tolerating continual bullying and harassment by the master for several weeks I finally had enough and on the final occasion ended up by chasing him off his own bridge. I had no further problems after that.'

'In my opinion it was petty actions of stupid lesser individuals than me. Thus being thick skinned from bullying experiences as a child I just wrote it off. I guess others wouldn't have though.'

'I didn't know if I was overreacting or if some of it was my fault.'

'No point [complaining] as company was proceeding with things anyway.'

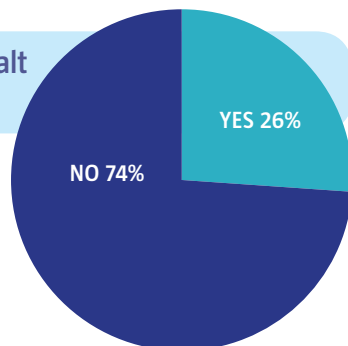
'[I didn't complain] because I'd applied for voluntary redundancy, preferring to leave the industry rather than stay in when I'm obviously not wanted.'

### If you did make a complaint about bullying, who did you complain to?

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

Response categories	Numbers
The company (e.g. to senior management, shoreside administration, to HR or via company's formal complaints process)	57
Captain/master	12
Line manager or other senior colleague	12
Union	11
Training manager/training officer/company (if respondent is a cadet)	3
College (if respondent is a cadet)	2
Directly with the bully	2

### Was your complaint dealt with satisfactorily?



### If your complaint was not dealt with satisfactorily, why was this?

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

Response categories	Numbers
Complaint ignored/No action taken/ Company wanted to sweep it under the carpet	24
Complaint labelled me as a trouble-maker/ Made things worse	9
Company's action was ineffective so problems continue	8
Complaint process still ongoing/Outcome of complaint unclear/ No feeling of resolution	7
Cultural issues at company complicated matters	7
Complaint was blocked by senior colleague	5
Bully was dealt with inappropriately	3
Company told me to pull myself together	3
Couldn't go through with ordeal of complaints process	2

### Sample responses

'[The incident was] whitewashed as if it never happened.'

'The people involved got a slap on the wrist but it did not stop them.'

'Once you do complain you are left in a state of anxiety which there seems no end to.'

'The view was taken by the company that the racial abuse and individual harassment suffered by crewmembers of my nationality onboard the vessel by the crew and staff was being exaggerated and that the allegations were false. The situation was only resolved months later by the crewmembers responsible transferring to another route so they didn't have to work with crewmembers of my nationality any more.'

'There was no route to make a complaint due to the stranglehold my superior had on the situation.'

'I was a cadet at the time when I was threatened by the Bosun. After I made my complaint the Master threatened the Bosun which only served to alienate myself further from the rest of the crew.'

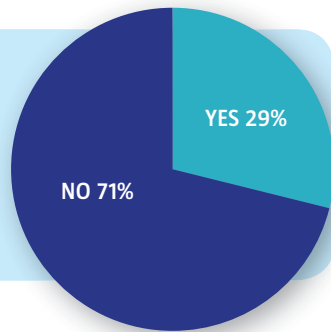
'Not taken seriously and told that I should have stood up for myself! As if I hadn't tried that route...'

'In the end I pulled charges in a letter because after almost a continuous year of bullying and racism, even though I had strong evidence, I could not go through the ordeal of investigation.'

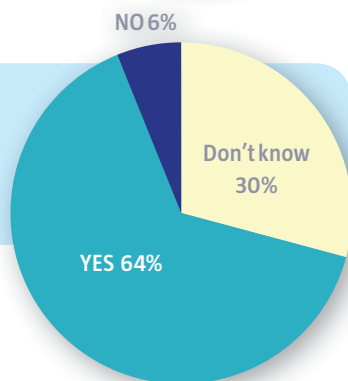


## Policies and attitudes in the industry

Are you aware of the 2005 ECSA/ETF guidelines on equality of opportunity and diversity in the European shipping industry?



Does your employer have an equal opportunities/mutual respect policy?

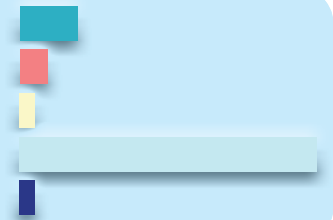


If your employer has an equal opportunities/mutual respect policy, who is responsible for this?

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

Response categories	Numbers
Don't know/can't remember	78
Senior management/head office/specified colleague ashore	62
HR/Personnel	52
Master/senior officer onboard	25
Other	4

Have you ever received any training from a maritime organisation on bullying, harassment or discrimination issues?\*



Answer	%
yes, from my employer	15
yes, at nautical college	8
yes, elsewhere	5
no	71
don't remember	5

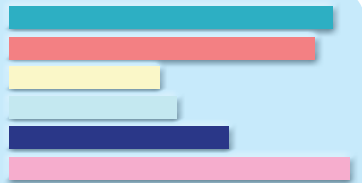
\*In this question, participants could choose more than one answer (or none), so the categories are not mutually exclusive and the percentages therefore do not add up to 100%

If you received training on bullying, harassment and discrimination from a non-maritime organisation, where was this?

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

Response categories	Numbers
Training was via a nautical college or maritime employer (although not necessarily a shipping company)	13
Via the armed forces/Ministry of Defence	6
As part of a professional development programme	5
Other responses	5
Via work in other fields	4
From the Union/Ruskin College	3
During university studies	3

If you have received training on tackling discrimination, which of the following did it cover?\*



Answer	%
sex (gender) discrimination	21
racism	20
ageism	11
homophobia	12
religious discrimination	15
any other form of unfair treatment based on prejudice	22

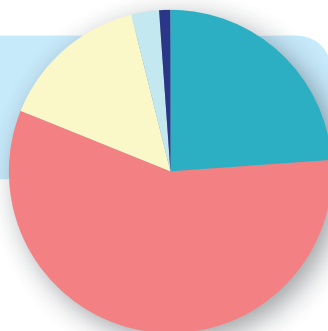
\*In this question, participants could choose more than one answer (or none), so the categories are not mutually exclusive and the percentages therefore do not add up to 100%

How would you rate your employer's commitment to ensuring employees work in an environment free from bullying discrimination and harassment?



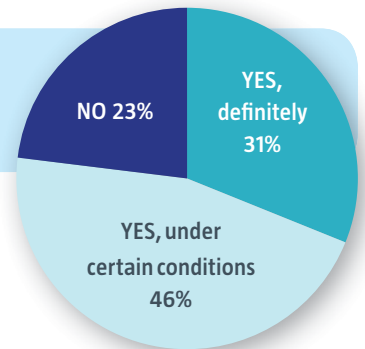
Answer	%
very good	15
good	24
average	29
poor	10
very poor	11
don't know	11

Do you enjoy working at sea (or did you enjoy it if now shore-based)?



Answer	%
Always	24
Usually	57
Sometimes	15
Rarely	3
Never	1

Would you encourage others to go to sea for a career?



If you would encourage others to go to sea under certain conditions, what are these? (e.g. Would you recommend particular sectors?)

The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. In this question, there were so many responses that the category headings have themselves been grouped into 'chapters'. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

### Conditions requiring high-level policy change

Response categories	Numbers
...only if there is wholesale change to the industry to improve conditions and increase respect for seafarers	18
I would recommend a career at sea only if criminalisation is properly tackled	2
...only if employment of junior officers is addressed	1
...only if the SED benefit remains in force	1

### Sample responses

'As a Master nearing retirement I am increasingly concerned at the criminalisation of seafarers. I see this only getting worse and feel this to be a major disincentive to promoting my career to others. This in the context that a career should be just that and not something you dabble with for 5 years before trying something different. There needs to be a major shift away from this enshrined in international law. Action not words!!'

'I enjoyed working at sea when I was treated with respect and if you could guarantee this would always be the case then I would recommend a career at sea. Unfortunately you can't.'

'The fun is going out of working at sea. You can do a 3 month trip and never get ashore. Unless you count reading the draught.'

'I think that until the workplace is made safe (e.g. from piracy, from criminalisation, from the surfeit of inspections, from fatigue and from all types of harassment) then a life at sea is no longer a good choice.'

'[There should be] better communication facilities onboard (free internet), short terms at sea and more respect for seamen [so we are] not treated like criminals or idiots by governments and public.'

### Conditions/recommendations relating to individual circumstances and attitudes

Response categories	Numbers
...consider if you are really suited to the job	35
...consider the effect of the career on family/personal life	23
I would advise people to know what you are getting into	20
...consider your long-term career plan, including what you might need for a future move ashore	11

#### Sample responses

'People have to understand what they are getting into as unfortunately you have to put up with a lot of things that you would be protected against ashore.'

'Working at sea has never been a "normal" job. It is not suitable for everyone.'

'I have recommended it to youngsters I found to be extrovert but also happy to keep themselves occupied when no friends are around.'

'I believe that a career at sea is good for someone who is single and has no children. Unfortunately I have met too many seafarers whose relationships have broken down due to them working at sea.'

'The present seafaring life regarding time ashore and sailing with multinational crews places a strain on a British seafarer. The officer should strive towards qualifications suitable for shore employment after a ten year seafaring career.'

'Make sure you have a technical qualification to fall back on should you decide the life isn't for you.'



Picture: Thinkstock

### Conditions/recommendations relating to company, sector and terms & conditions

Response categories	Numbers
Choose company and sector carefully (consider leave and tour lengths as well as pay)	47
Choose the offshore sector	8
Avoid cargo ships	3
Avoid standby vessels	2
Choose the large yacht sector	2
Train with a company, not an agency	2
Female recruits should avoid the oil industry	1
Choose cargo ships	1
Choose bulk carriers	1
Choose passenger ships	1
Don't choose training schemes in the cruise sector	1

#### Sample responses

'I would recommend you choose a company that offers equal leave time and is established in the industry. Watch for "fly by nighters".'

'[Applicants should look for] full paid leave off; medical cover on/off duty; shorter tours of duty; spousal travel onboard while on duty; equal time rotation only with max trip length of 4 weeks.'

'[I would recommend] the higher end of the market... Gas carriers, offshore, passenger and tankers... [These] offer better training better standards and better leave. I would strongly advise against service in bulk or general cargo trades due to low investment (financial training and human) in these disciplines. I would advise them to steer clear of container ships and tankers.'

### Conditions/recommendations relating to nationality and language of colleagues

Response categories	Numbers
Look for vessels with a well thought-out crewing policy re. languages and nationalities	5
Choose British ships and crews	5
Look for ships with English-speaking officers	2
Look for ships with (western) European officers	2

#### Sample responses

'Try not to get employment on a ship where you are the only one who speaks English as their native tongue.'

'Cadets and younger officers should not be alone on ships with older crew and language barriers.'

'Make sure your employer is not biased towards only considering people from their own country of origin as properly trained or skilled.'

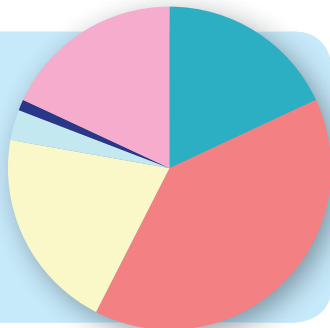
## Other conditions/recommendations

Response categories	Numbers
● Women should be wary of going to sea	2
● Join a union	1
● Become a deck officer	1
● Become an engineer	1

## Sample responses

'If it was a girl thinking about the career at sea I think I would tell them the hassle they would expect to get.'

How would you rate Nautilus International's commitment to ensuring members work in an environment free from bullying, discrimination and harassment?

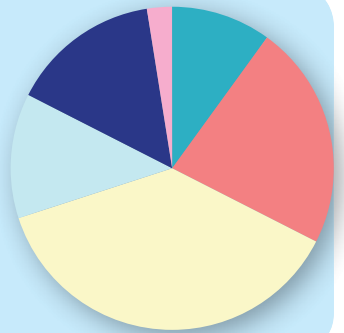


Answer	Percentage of total survey respondents
● very good	18
● good	39
● average	20
● poor	3
● very poor	1
● don't know	18



Picture: Videotel

In your opinion, what should Nautilus be doing to achieve the goal of a work environment for members free from bullying, discrimination and harassment? You can leave this question blank if you prefer



The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. In this question, there were so many responses that the category headings have themselves been grouped into 'chapters'. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.

## Campaigns and lobbying

Response categories	Numbers
● Campaign for a wholesale change in workplace culture throughout the industry	4
● Focus efforts on changing attitudes among older/higher ranked personnel	9
● Press for legislative change and the enforcement of existing regulations	15
● Campaign against the use of multinational crews	5
● Press for UK-registered vessels to carry British officers/increase numbers of British seafarers generally	6
● Press for competency requirements for shore-based personnel	1

## Sample responses

'This would require reconditioning/re-educating members not just employers — a fundamental "seachange" would have to occur in various areas. It could be done — if sufficiently promoted, new ideas and practices are endorsed and adopted at length enthusiastically by sea personnel. A more tolerant, less bigoted international shipping industry would improve the daily working environment at sea and improve how the industry is perceived ashore.'

'Onboard culture change is required starting at the highest ranks — it's just no longer acceptable.'

'[Nautilus should be] ensuring British Officers are on EVERY British registered Vessel.'

'I fully support the union's current campaign to bring about equal pay for seafarers of different nationalities doing the same job as I believe that paying someone less or giving them less leave than someone else simply based upon their nationality is also a blatant form of discrimination that should not be allowed in an international industry such as shipping.'

## Education and training

Response categories	Numbers
● Educate members (and indeed all seafarers) about rights and responsibilities	20
● Offer/recommend training courses for members	3

### Sample responses

'Education education education! Remember the bullying/discrimination/harassment is as likely to be generated by our own members.'

'[There should be] more interaction with the membership with a wider and more in-depth explanation in layman's terms as to what actually constitutes bullying, harassment and discrimination.'

## Publicity and awareness-raising

Response categories	Numbers
● Keep up the good work/Make sure the issue stays a priority for the Union	16
● Publicise the issue (e.g. through Telegraph)	8

### Sample responses

'Put regular articles in the telegraph that make the culprits think and be aware of their actions.'

'Highlight the issue in your monthly magazine advising crew members on ways to approach the problem should they have one.'

'[Nautilus should] keep on doing what it does best. Bringing it to the fore with articles and interviews. Keep reiterating it is not OK to bully and harass purely on racial or gender grounds.'

## Punitive action

Response categories	Numbers
● 'Name and shame' those carrying out or allowing bullying, discrimination and harassment	8
● Impose sanctions on Nautilus members shown to carry out bullying, discrimination or harassment	2

### Sample responses

'Expel or suspend any member found to be bullying any other crew member.'

'Well I think nothing will happen onboard vessels until people get it into their heads that it isn't acceptable. So I think until results of bully/discrimination/harassment are made public and people see the consequences nothing will change and people will continue to get away with this behaviour towards people.'

## Support for members

Response categories	Numbers
● Set up a helpline/confidential reporting service	19
● Offer (more) support to members who bring complaints (encourage reporting, listen to members, carry out investigations, intercede with employers, give advice on legal matters)	18
● Focus efforts on providing advice, support and information to cadets	8
● Carry out more ship visits	7
● Nautilus should be doing a better job with existing cases	3

### Sample responses

'Adopt a confidential reporting system for the members so that Nautilus can know where the problem is and can take appropriate action to resolve the issue. Many seafarers don't raise the matter to the company in case they are asked to leave.'

'Let members know that you will actively support cases and promote the fact that you do support members and will help bring perpetrators to book (and use it to recruit new members). If this is understood in the workplace maybe it will make bullies etc think twice.'

'Inform cadets of their rights on joining Nautilus.'

'[Nautilus should do] more ship visits; talking to crew and hearing the feelings of those onboard.'

## Working with employers

Response categories	Numbers
● Work (more) closely with employers to improve their policies and procedures on bullying	29
● Increase the number of recognition agreements with companies	1
● Press for 'zero tolerance' signs to be displayed on passenger ships, as on other forms of public transport	1

### Sample responses

'I do not advocate confrontation but Nautilus must be able to say to the Employer "You are wrong". I may be naive.'

'Encourage employers to consider cultural compatibility of their crews and provide proper training for their senior officers. Lobby for proper penalties for those companies who fail to comply.'

'Try and get some form of formal commitment on this bullying issue and a system where reporting of bullying is encouraged. I actually witnessed a physical assault in one company to which the company turned the proverbial blind eye because it was carried out by the master!! Really get some good guidelines in, make the companies take to them and then get some form of reverse appraisal where the appraisee comments on what's going on above as well.'

## Other suggestions for Union activity

Response categories	Numbers
● Make (more) use of members' wisdom and experience	4
● Work closely with other unions	1
● Go back to a closed-shop policy	1
● Challenge closed-shop arrangements	1

## Sample responses

'I like what I see and would like to have Nautilus taking advantage of my considerable experience to a greater extent. I have plenty of wisdom based on long and varied experience to offer but soon I will retire and not be in a position to pass on what I know and have learned.'

'The union have always tried to look after the work force. Just a pity some of the work force do not see this and so are not members thus undermining some of the work carried out. So let's go back to a closed shop policy. Those that do not want to be involved with the union still need to join on a lesser fee and as such have limited personal backing from the union. By doing this I think it would greatly help the union in its continuing work on this and other issues.'

## Comments sceptical about the issue or suggesting no action should be taken

Response categories	Numbers
● Not much anyone can do/Not the Union's responsibility	11
● Understand the seafaring context and don't assume that certain people or groups are always the victim	6
● Is this really something to take so seriously?	4

## Sample responses

'I think it will be nearly impossible to change the attitudes in the industry. Traditionally seafarers should be "made of stern stuff" so we are almost expected to take a degree of bullying from superiors.'

'These are not Nautilus's responsibilities but those of the government and families (society if you like).'

'Treat men and women equally; do not discriminate against men.'

'Nautilus should remember that seafaring is not the same as working in a factory or an office and the relationship between senior officers and juniors is not the same as between manager and employee ashore. I would not for example allow junior officers to use my first name although I understand this is common ashore. Some junior seafarers may perceive this to be "bullying".'

'My view on this is to spend more time and consequently money on other far more important and relevant issues in this industry.'

## Do you have any further comments on the subject of bullying, discrimination and harassment in the shipping industry?

*The following are categories created in the analysis stage by looking at the members' open responses and grouping them into broad trends. In this question, there were so many responses that the category headings have themselves been grouped into 'chapters'. Numbers are numbers of responses, not percentages.*

## Recognising the extent and nature of the problem

Response categories	Numbers
● Bullying, discrimination and harassment are widespread at sea and harmful to our industry	14
● There are problems at particular companies/in particular sectors	8
● A wholesale change in attitudes is required throughout the industry	6
● Many people are too scared to complain	6
● Bullying is often a subtle problem of insinuation	4
● The actions of shoreside management create or exacerbate the problem	4
● The problem tends to get covered up rather than tackled properly	3
● It all boils down to unpleasant individuals	3
● Bullying is a problem throughout society, not just seafaring	2
● The root of the problem is pressure from employers to carry out bad practices	2
● Discrimination is at the heart of the industry's crewing practices	1

## Sample responses

'The industry loses too many good officers every year because of discrimination. Employing companies need to take a hard line on this so it can be stamped out. There are many ex seafarers who would still be at sea if discrimination didn't exist.'

'Bullying can take the form of a senior officer belittling a junior officer who may be inexperienced in a certain field. This will not teach the officer what he doesn't know and will not instil confidence in the officer that he can ask his superiors for assistance.'

'Changing attitudes is a big factor, I feel, in this issue. It is amazing what people accept at sea as being normal behaviour which ashore would be completely unacceptable. It seems there are many people who believe bullying is a part of life at sea and if you can't handle it you shouldn't be there. I had a captain who actually believed that normal employment law didn't exist at sea and you could say whatever you liked! I've no idea how you can change the attitude of people like this but I wish you all the best.'



Picture: Thinkstock

'Working in areas other than UK normally, I see from the way workers are treated, e.g. Filipinos, that companies think of them as expendable. If they complain, they are offered options to leave or they will not return after their [shore] leave. Local area management are guilty of this as they are of the mindset that there are always others willing to work and [who will] say nothing rather than lose their job.'

'I despise bullying discrimination and harassment but unfortunately there is as much in a seagoing environment as in the rest of society.'

'The worst bullying comes from people that create an atmosphere of mistrust around an individual behind their backs. And that happens all the time.'

'Never mind the racial question there are still some people out there who are just plain NASTY irrespective of their race.'

### The special traditions and requirements of the seafaring profession

Response categories	Numbers
● Seafarers need to be resilient people who can stand up for themselves	4
● Seafaring is not like shore jobs — firm discipline is required onboard ship	3

### Sample responses

'We must not lose sight of the fact that we are in a uniformed disciplined service. Within that context there will be occasions when people have to be told what to do without question and if they do not have the self-discipline to conduct themselves responsibly they have to accept there will be a degree of compulsion. Maritime law still requires the Master to demand much of those on board and the Master will be judged as having failed in his duty if he has let things go "so as not to hurt someone's feelings". This is the unpalatable truth I'm afraid.'

'It seems that "bullying" of young trainee crew on board is standard practice, probably deriving from the fact that everybody else had to put up with it when they were training. We need strong characters at sea — best to allow human beings to sort themselves out. No good nannying people.'

### Multinational crewing

Response categories	Numbers
● Multinational crewing increases the likelihood of bullying, discrimination and harassment onboard ship	9
● Problems among multinational crews are down to officers of particular nationalities	4
● Don't assume that the Britons are the ones in the strong position onboard ship	3
● Many multinational crews actually get along very well	2
● Cadets should sail with officers of their own nationality	2
● Having different pay for different nationalities doing the same job onboard ship exacerbates problems	1

### Sample responses

'Bullying etc. is not acceptable in any form and even "micky taking" must be done with caution. What is acceptable to one race or ethnic group may well be inappropriate to another. I work for a multinational company and it is noticeable that the workforce's attitude to racial harassment varies noticeably between the various European nations.'

'I have witnessed clear cases of certain nationalities of officers bullying particular nationalities. It's relentless!'

'I work on a multi cultural/racial/national vessel but to be honest I can't say I've ever come across any bullying or harassment. Maybe I've just been on a good boat for the last 10 years. (We have had Brits, French, Croatian, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Filipino, Indian, Canadian and Brazilian personnel onboard. We even get along with the Welsh).'

'We as the ethnic minority suffer a lack of consideration from employers as it is considered ridiculous for Brits to be discriminated against.'

## Female seafarers

Response categories	Numbers
● Ill-treatment of female seafarers is a major problem	14
● The Akhona Geveza case should be a wake-up call for the industry	2
● There should be a full enquiry into the Akhona Geveza case	2
● Some female seafarers don't help their own situation with the way they behave	1
● There are occasions where female seafarers should be treated differently	1
● Women seafarers do a good job and we should have more of them	1

### Sample responses

'I was 19 when I went to sea and I'm 27 now. I went through hell during my cadetship but thought that was part of the training to toughen you up. Then when I qualified at 23 I thought things would improve but they didn't, and then I realised looking back at my cadetship it shouldn't have been like that. I had a lecturer tell me I wasn't clever enough to complete my course and he just went on to embarrass me every lesson, and he was too concerned with wanting to get the male cadets through before the females. Other females in my year felt the same and we all went through similar things so it wasn't just me. By the time you had finished your trip you had "slept with half the crew" and men just gave you such a bad untrue character so when you went on another ship in the same company people just judged you straight away from all the crap that they heard. It's disgusting really. The only reason I'm still here in my company is because every month when that crew list comes out and my name is on it they know they haven't won in trying to get rid of me and they hate it. There's only three women in my company so that says a lot!'

'I do not see much racial or religious prejudice but I do still see an underlying almost subconscious prejudice against the ability of female seafarers who in my opinion have generally superior powers of concentration and make excellent officers. The industry loses far too many of them to shore jobs simply because they get tired of the constant strain of performing against prejudice however mild.'

'I have on occasion given a dangerous job particularly in an emergency situation such as a fire where serious injuries have already been sustained to male seafarers and put females into a place of safety. In the future and in similar circumstances I would do the same and suffer the consequences later if necessary.'

'The murder of the young female cadet recently says it all. Whoever it was in management who decided to send a young woman on her own to join a ship with a multinational/multicultural crew and put her in such a vulnerable position deserves to be sacked. The management should be ashamed.'

'In the case of the poor lassie who was allegedly violated, this is so terrible I would dearly like to see Nautilus investing heavily in the pursuit of the truth of this matter.'

## Tackling the problem

Response categories	Numbers
● We should focus on re-educating senior officers who mistreat others or tolerate abuse	13
● We should be wary of false accusations and misuse of labels	9
● Nautilus needs to take a strong and high-profile stand against bullying, discrimination and harassment	6
● Good company policies and procedures make all the difference	6
● As a manager/senior officer, I do not tolerate bullying, discrimination or harassment	5
● Nautilus should be doing a better job	3
● Whatever you do, it doesn't really make any difference	3
● It is up to all individuals to stand up against bullying when they see it happening	2
● Companies should set up a confidential reporting line/ email address	2
● If you don't like the way things are done at your company, you should vote with your feet	2
● We need to clarify legal responsibilities and standardise them among all flags	1
● Most company policies on this are just window dressing	1
● Employment legislation can make it difficult for companies to get rid of bullies	1
● Use trained external investigators to combat the problem	1
● Companies should always have someone ashore for crew members to go to when they are being ill-treated by the most senior officers on their ship	1

### Sample responses

'There will always be issues in any environment where people live and work together, but the companies involved must make it clear that they support the stand against abuse and will act with authorities if needed in the same way as they do for drug abuse and smuggling... not [like the situation is] now as it is all hidden under the carpet. The Union should apply direct pressure in this regard.'

'Nautilus should be doing more to set up negotiating agreements with ALL employers/operators where their members are employed.'

'If a bullying situation onboard doesn't involve you, don't stand to the side and let it continue, support the victim as best you can.'

'I have witnessed bullying by company officials and by classification personnel. These [incidents] I have addressed immediately and they went no further. However abuse of power is a big problem at sea (in ports especially) and for so-called professionals is quite unnecessary.'

'Anyone found to be guilty of bullying harassment or discrimination on my ship is dealt with under the terms of the company policy. This is well known to all employees and has resulted in an environment on my company's vessels of a fair and equitable workplace.'





Picture: Thinkstock

'Bullying, discrimination and harassment at sea has always been a problem in my experience even within all British crews. Senior officers would benefit from proper training on how to motivate their crew without bullying with emphasis on how this would engender better work performance and cohesiveness.'

'It will always happen; pointless training and paperwork will never end it, just make it change its form.'

'There is another side to this of course: I have personally seen females and ethnic origin seafarers use the sexual discrimination and racism cards for their own gain.'

'A victim is not always the person who has been bullied or discriminated against. It can also be someone unfairly accused. Privacy above all needs to be respected and everyone's rights upheld.'

## It's not all bad at sea

Response categories	Numbers
● Things are better than they used to be	10
● I've never encountered any real bullying	9

## Sample responses

'During over 30 years at sea with crews of various nationalities and occasionally with female officers I only once came across a case of bullying and this was a result of gang warfare in the crew members' home country. I never came across racial or sexual discrimination even where members of a mixed crew came from mutually hostile countries. If governments were composed of the kind of seamen I sailed with the world would be a better place!'

'I am ashamed to read what happened in a sister company but feel in our Dutch part (at least the ships I was on) such things will not happen.'

'Situation is improving generally e.g. Have sailed with females at sea for past 40yrs. They have been accepted and generally treated as "one of the boys" which is what most want. This wasn't always the case.'

'Times are changing and some of the old school characters are disappearing; however, the industry does need to move with the times and become more forward thinking and acting.'

'This questionnaire queries events in the previous five years. Prior to this time period I would say bullying and discrimination was more widespread. It is much less common nowadays. People these days are more likely to challenge a bully and are less tolerant of the "only-having-a-laugh" mentality used by bullies in the past. People are more empowered by legislation and grievance procedures to tackle this problem.'



## Conclusions

The findings of the Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment survey 2010 have shown that there is widespread concern among Nautilus members about ill-treatment in the maritime workplace.

42% of respondents said they had personally experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment at work in the past five years — around twice the figure for all workers in the UK and Netherlands

Line managers (22%), colleagues (20%) and the employer (16%) were said to be the main perpetrators of the ill-treatment.

The main form of ill-treatment identified was bullying (29%), followed by 'any other form of ill-treatment based on prejudice'. Comments in the open response sections elaborated on these statistics, showing that many respondents had experienced or witnessed bullying of juniors and trainees by senior personnel, and also that bullying can be linked to prejudice against a crew member's nationality (in addition to the 'usual' categories of racism, sexism, homophobia and ageism).

8% of respondents said they had experienced sex (gender) discrimination, with 5% reporting sexual harassment (which could be in addition to discrimination). Further analysis showed a much higher incidence of these reports among female respondents to the survey than among male respondents. 41% of all female respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment, compared with 2% of all male respondents. When it came to sex (gender) discrimination, 55% of all female respondents reported experiencing this, compared with 3% of all male respondents. Many comments in the open-response sections also raise strong concerns about the treatment of female seafarers.

Of those respondents who reported experiencing ill-treatment in the maritime workplace, 79% said this had affected their morale at work or performance. In the comments section, there are stories of depression and even despair, with numerous members reporting that they had considered leaving the profession, or had already come ashore because life at sea had become intolerable.

Another striking finding was that less than half of those who had experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment had felt able to make a complaint. The comments section revealed that many members thought their companies would not take any action if they did complain, or that they would be labelled trouble-makers. Several remarked that bullying was simply a part of seafaring culture and therefore had to be accepted without complaint.

The participants' fears about complaining appear to be borne out by the next set of responses, which show that 74% of those who did complain felt that their complaint had not been dealt with satisfactorily. The comments show a range of reasons for this, with reports of companies ignoring complaints, inadequate or inappropriate action being taken, and of the complainant being victimised.

Given the level of concern about the way some shipping companies are dealing with complaints of ill-treatment, it is unsurprising that the vast majority of respondents say they have not encountered the industry-wide guidelines which are supposed to form the basis of company policies on bullying, discrimination and harassment (the 2005 ECSA/ETF guidelines on eliminating bullying and harassment in the European shipping industry). 64% of respondents say their company does not have an equal

opportunities/mutual respect policy, and 71% say they have never received any training from a maritime organisation on bullying, harassment or discrimination issues.

However, a later question reveals that there is actually quite a mixed picture when it comes to company policy, with a substantial number of positive responses balancing the negatives. In response to the question 'How would you rate your employer's commitment to ensuring employees work in an environment free from bullying discrimination and harassment?', 39% of respondents reported that this commitment was 'good' or 'very good', 29% saying 'average' and 21% saying 'poor' or 'very poor' (11% responded 'don't know').

It is also notable that the vast majority of respondents (81%) said that they always or usually enjoy working at sea. It is heartening to hear that the day-to-day experience of most seafarers is a positive one, and it indicates that there is good practice in the industry to build on when tackling the serious problems revealed elsewhere in the survey.

In addition, there was a degree of optimism in the responses to the question 'Would you encourage others to go to sea for a career?' 31% gave an unqualified 'yes' response, with 46% saying that they would encourage others to go to sea under certain conditions. The comments section showed that members feel a wide range of issues should come into play when deciding whether to recommend a seafaring career to others, including: a potential applicant's personality and family situation; the choice of company or sector; the potential drawbacks of mixed-nationality crewing; and attitudes towards seafarers among the authorities and the general public.

The penultimate question in the survey invited open responses on how Nautilus should be

dealing with bullying, discrimination and harassment in the industry. Suggestions ranged from campaigning for a change in the prevailing workplace culture to putting pressure on individual employers to improve their anti-bullying policies. In addition, the Union was asked to review and expand the support it offers to members reporting ill-treatment. It should also be noted that a fairly substantial minority objected to using Nautilus resources on this matter — with some respondents arguing that the problem was being overstated, and others suggesting that labels such as bullying, discrimination and harassment were being used to make trouble for senior personnel who were merely enforcing necessary shipboard discipline.

Finally, respondents were invited to make any additional comments they had on bullying, discrimination and harassment in the shipping industry. It was here that some members expressed their dismay at the industry's handling of the Akhona Geveza case, and several female respondents told of their own ill-treatment at sea. There were also serious concerns about the industry's willingness to recognise and tackle the problems of bullying, discrimination and harassment, as well as a number of comments arguing that the practice of multinational crewing was creating friction among crew members which could translate into bullying. However, the findings ended on a positive note, with several members reporting that they had not encountered any ill-treatment in their own workplaces or that attitudes and policies were gradually changing for the better.

### Follow-up to the survey

The responses to the survey represented a wide spectrum of experience and opinion, including many participants who had never encountered ill-treatment at work, and a few who did not feel the Union should become involved in anti-bullying initiatives. However, the overarching



Akhona Geveza

message from the participants is that bullying, discrimination and harassment are a significant problem in the maritime workplace, and that members want Nautilus to be involved in tackling them.

#### Setting standards and developing guidelines

Nautilus has long been committed to promoting dignity and professional treatment for all members in the workplace. The Union has its own Mutual Respect Policy which sets out the standards of behaviour expected of members, officials and staff. This is available in the *About us* section of the Nautilus website [www.nautilusint.org](http://www.nautilusint.org) and is attached to this report as an appendix.

As explained in the introduction to this report, the Union was a major driving force in the development of industry-wide UK standards on tackling bullying and harassment, which were subsequently adapted and adopted Europe-wide in 2005 as the ECSA/ETF Guidelines on eliminating harassment and bullying in the European shipping industry. Work is now underway with the International Transport

Workers' Federation (ITF) and the International Bargaining Forum, in the anticipation that guiding principles can be agreed and applied on an international basis.

Nautilus will also be working at company level to encourage firms to follow the best practice guidelines and take other measures to tackle bullying, discrimination and harassment, such as appointing an equality officer onboard every ship.

#### Supporting members

Nautilus aims to give the appropriate support to all members who contact the Union reporting bullying, discrimination or harassment at work. This support initially takes the form of confidential advice — but with the member's agreement, it could involve measures such as informal discussions with the member's company or, if necessary, initiating grievance procedures. The responses to the Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment survey have indicated that the Union could perhaps be doing a better job of communicating the support on offer to members and ensuring this is provided in a consistent way; this point will therefore feed into the activities of officials and the production of future publications.

Numerous respondents to the Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment survey pointed out that trainees are particularly vulnerable to ill-treatment in the workplace. Nautilus is aware of this problem, and has assigned named industrial officers to colleges in the UK and Netherlands to provide support to cadet members studying there (both while at college and during sea phases).

Nautilus is also taking steps to enhance support for women members and encourage their participation in Union activity — recognising that female seafarers are still pioneers and thus face particular challenges. The Union has assigned named female staff members as contact points for female members, and has established a Women's Advisory Forum

to provide Nautilus Council with a steer on particular issues affecting women members.

In response to the survey findings, the Union will consider additional ways to deliver advice and support to members, including the possible development of a 24/7 telephone hotline and/or a web-based confidential contact scheme. Efforts will also be made to increase awareness of publications informing members of their rights and responsibilities at work.

***Promoting mutual respect through education and informed debate***

The need for better education for seafarers on bullying, discrimination and harassment emerged as a recurring theme in the survey findings. In response to this, Nautilus will be working with training authorities in the UK and Netherlands to ensure training in mutual respect becomes a compulsory part of the syllabus at nautical colleges. An important aim will be to see if appropriate training under STCW can be incorporated within the provisions of personal, social and safety responsibility training (PSSR).

Consideration will also be given to whether the Union should initiate a review of industry recruitment methods to ensure life at sea is portrayed in a balanced, realistic way and new recruits are genuinely suited to the job.

Many survey respondents identified the importance of ensuring departmental heads have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying, discrimination and harassment and how best to deal with reports of ill-treatment. Nautilus will be taking up this issue at company level, encouraging firms to provide appropriate training as part of their regular meetings with senior personnel.

The Union is also leading the important debate on the impact of multinational crewing policies — for example by publishing regular articles by cultural awareness experts in the Telegraph, its monthly journal.

***Further measures***

The findings of the 2010 Nautilus survey on Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment have already begun to inform Union policy and activities, and will continue to underpin the

decisions of the Union's governing Council and other maritime bodies for years to come. Nautilus will continue to monitor the standards of mutual respect in the maritime workplace, and there are many ways in which individual members can make a contribution to the Union's work in this field, from writing to the Telegraph to standing for election to Council.

The Union will also continue to press strongly for the UK and Netherlands governments to ratify the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, known as the 'Seafarers' bill of rights'. The MLC is intended to improve the treatment of seafarers across the board, and will provide a valuable foundation on which to build mutual respect among crew members.

Nautilus International is committed to tackling ill-treatment in the workplace and ensuring members can go about their work in an atmosphere of professionalism and dignity. It is hoped that future surveys will show considerable progress on this, and that the shipping industry will eventually be known as a leader in mutual respect and equal opportunities.



# Appendix: Nautilus International Policy on Mutual Respect

Nautilus International is opposed to any discrimination based on age, colour, disability, marital status, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or creed and has adopted a statement on equal opportunities to give effect to this commitment.

Among trade unionists there is a very high degree of appreciation of the need to respect the dignity of every individual. Nevertheless, in all organisations there should always be vigilance to ensure that all participants in Nautilus's meetings and events feel they are able to work in an atmosphere in which they feel comfortable and safe.

Nautilus International is committed to creating and maintaining a working environment based on dignity and mutual respect. Nautilus neither condones nor tolerates behaviour that undermines the dignity or self esteem of any individual or creates an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive environment. This commitment applies to all delegates and participants, women and men, in Nautilus meetings, activities and social gatherings and Welfare Fund activities wherever they may take place.

As an employer, Nautilus has a legal as well as moral responsibility to protect its employees from any form of harassment, abuse or similarly unacceptable behaviour. This applies to the working environment in London, Rotterdam and Wallasey and to Nautilus meetings wherever they are held. It also applies to social occasions where the attendance of

Nautilus staff is linked to their employment and where Nautilus is liable as an employer.

In order to give effect to this policy, Nautilus has prepared the following guidelines.

## Guidelines on the policy

Nautilus International is committed to creating and maintaining a working environment based on dignity and mutual respect and Council has adopted a statement on Equal Opportunities giving effect to this commitment.

In all organisations there should always be vigilance to ensure that all members of staff and participants in Nautilus meetings feel they are able to operate in an atmosphere in which they feel comfortable and safe. This should apply to meetings, socialising and all the events around Nautilus activities.

### *What we ask of you*

- **To treat everybody, including other members, as well as Nautilus officials and staff members, with respect and dignity**
- **To make absolutely sure your own behaviour does not cause offence or misunderstandings**
- **To think before you make personal remarks**
- **To accept responsibility for challenging all forms of unacceptable and offensive behaviour, and for upholding personal dignity**

This may involve such forms of unwanted behaviour as:

- **Unwanted physical contact**
- **Physical or sexual assault**
- **Sexual or compromising propositions**
- **Racist, sexist or religious jokes**
- **Offensive language, insults and obscene gestures**
- **Unwelcome gifts**
- **Intrusion by pestering or stalking**

These lists are not definitive.

We are aware that among trade unionists there is a very high degree of appreciation of the need to respect the dignity of every individual. We welcome your cooperation in our practical efforts for making Nautilus as a workplace and all Nautilus meetings a positive experience for everyone.

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