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North Adriatic Association - Queen of the Sea

History of „Association of Captains of the North Adriatic – Queen of the Sea“

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Dear friends and colleagues,

I am pleased to be able to take part in this CESMA meeting in Antwerp and have the opportunity to present the work of the “Captains of the North Adriatic Association - Queen of the Sea” operating in Rijeka, Croatia’s largest port.

The city of Rijeka and its port have been developing over the centuries, primarily because of the favourable geographic position, so that the city has long been the centre of merchants and shipping trade and the crossroad of sea and land routes towards central Europe. The maritime orientation of Rijeka with its port, shipyards, shipping companies, a nautical school and the faculty of maritime studies, and seafarers has had its historical ups and downs, but in modern times it has been adapting to new competitive conditions and has gained its place in European core corridors.

In such a business environment there has emerged the need for professional maritime skills of all profiles. Nautical School has been operating in Bakar since 1849. The Austro-Hungarian naval academy had operated in Rijeka from 1866 to 1914. The Faculty of Maritime Studies in Rijeka has been operating in various forms since 1949 and today there are also a number of private institutions. Today Rijeka is the seat of many crewing companies employing thousands of Croatian seafarers who are sailing on various world renowned maritime companies.

Our maritime profession has passed through various historical periods, following a number of technological changes. Sometimes a marine captain would start his career as a deck boy, to progress slowly by practice and hard work to the position of ship’s master, while today it is unimaginable to progress without a university degree and lifelong education in accordance with international conventions.

In order to better represent the interests of marine captains’ (master mariners’) profession, there has emerged in our areas the need for the founding of Marine Captains’ Association. The history of the association of marine captains and related

professions (engineer officers, radio officers and pelagers) is particularly interesting as they had operated in several different government structures that had power in Rijeka at the time.

According to available archives, the earliest data on the founding of the Marine Captains' Association date back to 1897. Marine captains and marine engineer officers had met with the intention of establishing their associations. The meeting was attended by 38 marine captains and 36 marine engineer officers. At the Assembly held in 1901, the Statute of the „Club Capitani Marittimi“ (Association of Marine Captains) was adopted, which was to be confirmed in Budapest. The first president of the association was Capt. Bela Cosulich. The stamp of the Association symbolizes a captain with an officer's cap.

This association of marine captains encouraged other maritime regions in the northern Adriatic to establish associations, so that other societies were founded: St. Nicholas' Society at Kostrena Santa Barbara, Society for Austro-Hungarian Seamen in Bakar and some others. It is well known that in 1921 the “Alliance of Yugoslav Seamen” was founded in Sušak, followed by the “Alliance of Radiotelegraph Operators of Yugoslavia” in 1932, and by the “Club of Marine Engineer Officers” in 1934. In Sušak, in 1937, the “Club of Marine Captains of Yugoslavia “ was founded.

In the Second World War Rijeka was heavily destroyed and the subsequent renewal of the city and its port lasted several years.

As conditions for the re-development of maritime and shipbuilding industries were beginning to emerge, Rijeka was again linked to the world and became the main Yugoslav port. Again, there was the need for a marine captains' association and the one denominated the “Association of SFRY Marine Captains” counted hundreds of members (I was the 348th member in 1979). The association operated in accordance with social circumstances of the time and was valued in its field of expertise. In the eighties of the twentieth century, the association was renamed “The Croatian Association of Marine Captains and Pilots”. In October 2002, already in the independent Croatia, the “Association of Marine Captains of the North Adriatic - Queen of the Sea” was founded as the successor of previous professional associations of marine captains. In that spirit, the Association became a member of CESMA - the Confederation of European Shipmasters' Associations from different European countries with headquarters in Amsterdam and ZHUPK – the Community of Croatian Marine Captains' Associations.

Today, our association has 110 members, consisting of active marine captains on board ships, retired marine captains, marine captains employed with numerous land-based companies (ports, agencies, freight forwarders, trade unions, nautical school, faculty of maritime studies, etc.). All of them, each in their own way, participate in activities of the Association. Speaking of our members, let me first point out our active colleagues who are sailing all the seas of the world serving on board various ships and companies, who are ambassadors of our country, as well as our ambassadors

worldwide. Retired members also contribute with their knowledge and experience. Many of our brave captains have been successful in the rescue of persons and property at sea. Many of them have received international awards, and some have been also carriers of the “Blue Ribbon of Vjesnik”, the traditional annual award for individuals for heroic rescue operations at sea.

There are members of our association who are also professors at the Nautical School of Bakar and lecturers at the Faculty of Maritime Studies of Rijeka. Many of them are authors of scientific books in the field of maritime affairs. Among our members, there are also prominent artists, painters and sculptors, as well as renowned model ship builders and writers of marine travel guides. Some of our members are also recognized in international organizations. Captain Sergio Kos is member of the European Academy of Science and Arts (EASA) and also of the British Royal Institute of Navigation (RIN). Dr. Pavao Komadina, Professor Emeritus, and Master Mariner, a former long-time dean of the Faculty of Maritime Studies, is member of the British Nautical Institute. Captain Berislav Vranić is member of the British Nautical Institute and the IMO Maritime Ambassador. Captain Jakov Karmelić is Vice President of FONASBAe for Education and the IMO Maritime Ambassador.

There are four female members in our Association as well: Capt. Vera Zec Dešković – Master Mariner, Uta Percic – Marine Deck Officer, Nikolina Eva Pahljina – Marine Deck Officer and Marica Njegovan, Marine Deck Officer.

Our ongoing efforts are to link marine captains with the aim of protecting professional standards and preserving maritime traditions, encouraging professional and scientific advancement of seafarers, participating in the management of maritime affairs, providing expert opinions in solving various issues related to our seafaring profession, cooperation with related associations in Croatia and worldwide and organizing social entertainment for the membership.

Until a few years ago, we used to publish the “Queen of the Sea” print magazine, which was very well accepted, but financial reasons encouraged us to start publishing it by electronic media. In this way, we inform members of our activities, announce numerous maritime affairs and give our professional views.

We have been actively involved in drafting legislation from the wide field of maritime affairs. It is our desire to set a monument to the RMS Carpathia that had been running on the line between Rijeka and New York and was the first ship to provide assistance in rescuing people from the Titanic. The collection of the Maritime and History Museum of Rijeka holds a rescue waistcoat from the Titanic.

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you to Rijeka, inviting you to the 25th annual CESMA Assembly to be held on 7 and 8 May 2020. In that year, Rijeka will also be the European Capital of Culture and will be hosting numerous cultural-artistic as well as entertaining programs.

May all of you be productive in your work and take with you unforgettable memories of Rijeka - the European port of diversity.

