

# RESKILLING AND UPSKILLING TO ENHANCE RESILIENCE AND COMPETITIVENESS

**"DEVELOPING A SKILLED WORKFORCE IS  
ESSENTIAL FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING  
PRIVATE INVESTMENTS IN PORTS."**



**Lamia Kerdjoudj**, Managing Director – Secretary General, FEPORT

Historically, ports involved manual handling in general cargo terminals, posing physical challenges for workers. Today's ports feature diverse terminals, including containers, dry bulk, liquid bulk, RoRo, etc. operated with modern equipment and digitised control systems.

Developing a skilled workforce is essential for attracting and retaining private investments in ports. Investing in education, vocational training, and workforce development programmes tailored to the needs of the maritime industry can enhance the attractiveness of port locations for investors.

The European port sector provides a wide range of job opportunities across various fields, including maritime logistics, port management, engineering, operations, safety and security, environmental management, information technology, and customer service. Workers have the flexibility to choose from diverse career paths that align with their skills, interests, and expertise.

Port workers typically benefit from long-term employment prospects and job security, particularly in established ports with robust operations and steady cargo volumes.

FEPORT Members invest in training and development programmes to equip workers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and certifications required for their roles.

Training initiatives may include specialised courses, workshops, on-the-job training, and professional development opportunities that enable workers



to enhance their competencies and stay abreast of industry trends.

Many private port companies prioritise work-life balance and offer flexible work arrangements, shift scheduling, and leave policies that accommodate the needs of their employees. Workers can balance their professional responsibilities with personal commitments, family time, and leisure activities. They also can work with cutting-edge technologies, automation systems, and smart port solutions that drive innovation and transform the maritime industry.

Today, training schemes in European terminals are elaborated to meet the requirements of the new tasks and the evolving nature of work. They vary across Member States and from one port to another, but the quality of training is recognised at a global level as each year many port workers coming from different regions of the world train at European port training centres.

The diverse landscape of training programmes in the European Union spans national, regional, and company levels, emphasizing the need for a flexible approach tailored to local circumstances. Efficiency and safety standards in European port operations are high, but the dynamic nature of the industry requires continuous adaptation.

FEPORT members prioritise high training standards for greater efficiency and safety in European terminals. Safety is integral to efficiency, and employers aim to minimise accidents through effective training systems. With millions invested in port equipment, employers seek optimal returns by ensuring safe operations led by highly skilled individuals.

Upskilling and reskilling of the port workforce is considered a priority for FEPORT members since the activity of port workers now requires the use of complex machinery, operating control rooms, managing conveyor systems, using digital equipment for



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inspections, and plugging ships to On Shore Power Supply. Despite reduced hazards, the port sector requires high training standards to prevent accidents. Substantial resources allocated to improving standards contribute to increased efficiency and safety in cargo handling at ports.

The green transition in European ports is driving the emergence of new jobs, the creation of new profiles, and intensifying the race for talent. As ports transition towards sustainability and adopt greener practices, they require skilled professionals with expertise in various areas related to environmental management, renewable energy, digitalisation, and sustainable logistics.

With the adoption of green technologies such as renewable energy systems, electric vehicles, and energy-efficient infrastructure, there is a growing demand for specialists in green technology implementation and management. These professionals design, implement, and maintain sustainable solutions within port operations.

Environmental engineers and specialists play a crucial role in ensuring compliance with environmental regulations, managing waste, reducing emissions, and implementing sustainable practices in port operations. They assess environmental impacts, develop mitigation strategies, and monitor environmental performance.

As ports increasingly invest in renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power, there is a need for renewable energy experts who can design, install, and manage renewable energy systems within port facilities. These professionals optimise energy production, maximise efficiency, and integrate renewable energy into port operations.

The digitalisation of port operations generates vast amounts of data that require analysis and interpretation to optimise performance, enhance efficiency, and support decision-making. Data analysts, IT specialists,



and digitalisation experts play a critical role in leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence, and IoT technologies to drive innovation and sustainability in port operations.

Sustainable logistics and supply chain managers oversee the integration of sustainable practices throughout the supply chain, including transportation, warehousing, and distribution processes. They develop green logistics strategies, optimise transportation routes, and minimise environmental impacts while ensuring efficient and cost-effective operations.

The race for talent in the green transition presents both challenges and opportunities for FEPORT members. To attract and retain top talents, many companies offer competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment that values innovation, sustainability, and social responsibility.

Collaboration with educational institutions, industry associations, and government agencies can also help bridge the skills gap and cultivate a skilled workforce capable of driving the green transition forward.

In the realm of port work, the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Ports (which involves representatives from employers' and employees'

organisations such as FEPORT, ESPO, ETF and IDC since 2023) is central to discussing sector changes and devising initiatives to maintain competitiveness and attractiveness for workers.

Some of the challenges faced by the transport sector relate to the shortage of workers (often associated with unfavourable working conditions), the need to adapt training programmes to improve workers' skills (upskilling/reskilling) and enable them to handle multiple tasks (multi-tasking), and the advent of technological innovations - digitisation and automation - which provide port terminals with a real competitive advantage, but which require an adjustment of the workforce's skills and which could act as a catalyst, facilitating and increasing the employment of women.

The inclusion of women in the port sector and the reduction of the gender gap represents a priority for private port companies and terminals which are already acting in this respect.

This topic is also discussed in the framework of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Ports, FEPORT strongly advocates for the promotion of equal job opportunities for both men and women within the port sector beyond ports as any shortage in the transport modes upstream and

downstream ports means risks of disruption in European ports.

FEPORT emphasizes the importance of data collection and analysis to identify gender disparities and monitor progress over time. This approach ensures accountability and facilitates continuous improvement in fostering gender equality within the port sector.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Lamia Kerdjoudj has led the Federation of European Private Port Companies and Terminals (FEPORT) since 2014. With over 27 years in maritime and logistics, she boasts an impressive background. She held key positions like Public Affairs Manager at the French Shipowners' Organization and served as an expert for the European Commission. Her diverse experience spans private companies and multinational consulting, and she has shared her knowledge as a lecturer for 15 years.

#### **ABOUT THE ORGANISATION:**

Since 1993, FEPORT represents the interests of a large variety of private port companies and terminals performing cargo handling and logistics-related activities in the seaports of the European Union ([www.feport.eu](http://www.feport.eu)). FEPORT members employ more than 390,000 port workers.