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For some time the free movement of labour in the Small Commercial Vessel (SCV) sector has been restricted by the refusal of one EU member state to recognise the qualifications of another. EU-funded project TRECNET pledges to break this stalemate.

Standing for Transnational Recognition of European Certification in Vocational Education and Training, the Project has been underway for a year and is operated by a consortium of maritime professionals from across Europe. Currently being piloted in the UK, Spain and Germany, TRECNET's progress has been considerable as it works towards mutual recognition of comparable SCV qualifications from EU member states.

Mike John, TRECNET Project Leader and Principal of RYA Training Centre, Sea Teach, explains, "At the moment employability of commercial skippers is seriously constrained as, for example, a UK-qualified individual residing in Spain can only work on a UK-registered ship, not on an Spanish or any other EU-registered vessel and vice versa – even if the boats are identical. The innovative tool we're working on will break down training and certification syllabi into their smallest parts allowing maritime authorities to compare them objectively from EU member state to EU member state and, we hope, allow free movement of labour and enhanced trading."

The recent release of the beta version of TRECNET's first software tool, fexTool, has been a major project milestone. Now available to the public, it has the capability to extract and store Fundamental Elements from a syllabus in order to compare one against another. The consortium is inviting national authorities, qualification designers, maritime education and training providers and awarding bodies to test this beta version. Meanwhile work continues on the second part of the software which will allow the user to retrieve, manipulate and present meaningful information.

TRECNET's End of Project Conference is scheduled for 20 September 2013 and will be held in Palma de Mallorca. Full results will be showcased with presentations from the consortium as well as from policymakers and the stakeholders across Europe. Maritime authorities and institutions, crew agencies, accrediting bodies, shipping companies and journalists will also be present at the conference.

For more information about the Project, fexTool and Conference visit www.trecvet.eu or write to us at email@sea-teach.com.