Cullen Scholarship: A strategic management approach to identifying growth opportunities for the maritime commerce sector in Ireland (MSc Award)

Background

Ireland's Ocean Economy report (2024) states that shipping and maritime transport is the largest sector of Ireland's ocean economy in terms of turnover, the second largest in terms of GVA and the third largest in terms of employment with over 4000 people directly employed in the sector. Furthermore, the emerging sector of maritime commerce has also demonstrated growth in terms of turnover, GVA and employment between 2018 and 2023. It is the fifth largest sector in Ireland's ocean economy in terms of turnover and GVA in 2024. However, while the sector has experienced job growth, it is a relatively small portion of jobs overall in the ocean economy.

Therefore, the maritime commerce sector represents a small portion of Ireland's ocean economy and has much more potential for growth given the performance of this sector in other jurisdictions with similar characteristics to Ireland. Over the past 5 years, the Irish sector has experienced significant growth with turnover increasing by 40%, GVA increasing by 45% and employment growing by 20% (Ocean Economy Report, 2024). However, further market analysis needs to be conducted to understand the key drivers of growth and how the maritime commerce sector can fully capitalize on other developments in the Irish economy in areas such as offshore renewable energy and the ambitions for job creation set out in related government strategies such as the Government's Industrial Strategy for ORE: Powering Prosperity, White paper on Enterprise 2022-2030 and IDA's Adapt Intelligently: A Strategy for Sustainable Growth and Innovation 2025-29.

Proposal

We propose **a structured two-year Master's project** on a full-time basis to use frameworks from the strategic management literature and international trade and marketing theory to better understand how Irish Government policies can increase the competitiveness and job creation opportunities of the Irish maritime commerce sector.

The project will aim to build on existing work completed by the IMDO to:

- Carry out an in-depth analysis of the businesses operating in the maritime commerce sector in Ireland and the nature of their activities and compare this to the types of activities conducted in other jurisdictions widely cited as international maritime hubs.
- Identify suitable tools and frameworks from the strategic management literature and conduct a literature view to identify how these have been applied to diagnose key issues of strategic importance in a sector of the national or global economy (e.g. Macro-environmental analysis, market/competitive analysis, value chain analysis, national competitive advantage theory, Barney's resource based view, value innovation, business model innovation, cluster theory etc.)
- Apply these frameworks to diagnose key issues of strategic importance in Ireland's maritime commerce sector
- Conduct a detailed international competitive analysis to identify key drivers of success in becoming an international hub for maritime commerce globally

- Consider how all these elements interact with plans for the development of other related sectors in the economy e.g. growth in offshore wind, Government's white paper on enterprise 2022-2030, IDA Strategy etc.
- Set out strategic recommendations for the future development of the sector taking a near-term, medium-term and long-term view based on the analysis clearly setting these in a strategic management and marketing context – identifying key elements of a value proposition, key differentiators between other markets, new markets of opportunity, etc.

Location of Scholar and Training Provided at the Marine Institute

The scholar will be based for circa 50% of their time over the four/two years at the Marine Institute, Hatch Street, Dublin.

Outcome

The expected outcomes from the project will be a detailed analysis of the maritime commerce sector in Ireland along with a pathway for growth that is grounded in strategic management theory. This sector has significant growth potential and is of strategic importance for the national economy. This is reinforced by the findings of recent reports which have analysed opportunities for Ireland in related sectors of the economy such as ORE, where Ireland' strengths in relation to services have been identified for growth. This is further outlined in IDA's most recent strategy – Adapt Intelligently: A strategy for sustainable growth and innovation 2025-29. The maritime commerce sector represents a key area of opportunity in this regard.

Marine Institute Corporate Strategy 2023-2027

Under the strategic priority "Delivering impact through research and innovation" of the Marine Institute's corporate strategy Ocean Knowledge that Informs and Inspires, this research will address strategic initiative number 5 by providing the knowledge to inform government policy and decision making in the maritime commerce sector.

Specific Requirements

The scholar should have a primary degree in business, economics, marketing or a management related discipline.

Financial Details

Scholarships will be up to €34,000 per annum (maximum funding €68,000 over two years for a MSc). This amount comprises a maintenance award of €25,000 to the student as well as payment of fees to the host higher education institution (HEI). The maximum fees payable to the HEI will be €6,000 per annum. The scholarship award also includes a budget of up to €3,000 per annum for eligible research costs (travel & subsistence, publication costs, consumables and other costs, such as minor kit purchase e.g. camera) for the sole use of the student, and are payable on a reimbursement basis direct to the host institution where the postgraduate student (scholar) is registered. There are no overheads payable on the scholarship.

Publication costs are intended to cover publications on which the scholar is listed as first author and are published under Open Access.

Scholars can also supplement this funding by applying to the Marine Institute's Networking & Marine Research Communication Awards annual call.

In addition, the cost of a laptop will be covered by the Marine Institute (purchased via the Research Funding Office).

Marine Institute Co-Supervisor

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