

The framework to develop maritime law marks technical progress in shipping. From antiquity, right up to the 18th-century, these regulations, due to the wooden structures of ships which were propelled either by human muscle-power or wind had been focused on private law and merchants' profits, and this was all referred to as *shipping law*. The intensification of sea-based traffic and new vessel structures have contributed to an increase in the scale of potential threats whose source ceased to be only dangers at sea as the sole element in this, and also because it is the ship itself which is often the carrier of cargo that is actually being transported.

The 20th-Century - and in particular the *Titanic* tragedy - focused international attention on problems pertaining to the protection of universal values, the safety of maritime navigation and the protection of the marine environment *stricto sensu*, which changed the axiology of maritime law with a strict sense of the common good being first priority herein: the protection of those involved and that of the marine environment. At this moment in time, it is public law's domain on maritime law which is developing the most significantly. The *Titanic* tragedy aided greatly in reiterating that the number one priority for all such vessels was the safe construction of ships, and subsequently the protection of the lives of the crew and passengers, as well as providing assistance in the standardisation of distress signals, and so on. The era of tankers and chemical-tankers posed a huge threat to the marine environment, and highlighted the necessity to develop regulations on ecological safety. Repeated accidents brought about due to human error led to a growth in regulations which seemed to place the wellbeing of human life as the key element in maritime safety.

These three pillars: the safety of the vessel at sea, ecological safety, and the safety of those people at sea, have expanded to the proportions of four large Sea Conventions: The Convention on the Protection of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1978); The Convention on the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL); as well as two Conventions regulating the labour factor at sea (MLC), and The Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). The aim of the project is to try to demonstrate how the interconnection of all these regulations support the conclusion that a high degree of integration and coherence in their decisions is desirable, and consequently the proposal of a thesis for the formation of a coherent legal system of maritime safety is also needed – one which is distinguishable from the private-law of shipping law.