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SPECIAL ISSUE
WOMEN OF *Influence* 2026



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Tribute Curation: Efi Kollia

WOMEN OF Influence 2026

Maritime Economies, responding to the meteoric rise of women in leadership positions in the business world, is presenting a special feature on **March 4, 2026**.

This edition is the ninth in a series of special editions on the same theme, which have been published on February 21, 2018, February 20, 2019, February 19, 2020, February 24, 2021, March 9, 2022, March 8, 2023, March 5, 2024, and March 5, 2025.

Featuring interviews with leading women in the business world, as well as articles on the challenges and opportunities facing women in leadership roles.

The questions given for answer are:

1. In today's world, it is becoming increasingly common for women to lead not only small businesses but also major global corporations. To what factors do you attribute this rise and establishment of female leadership in the business sector?

2. Nowadays, geopolitical developments are shifting rapidly and in unprecedented ways, even within established alliances. Given these volatile conditions, how challenging is it for you to plan your future business moves?

3. Tell us about your personal professional journey so far.

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MARINA HADJIMANOLIS

Shipping Deputy Minister to the President of the Republic of Cyprus

The increasing presence of women in leadership positions across both small and large businesses is the result of various inter-related factors. Greater access to education and professional development has equipped women with the skills, expertise, and confidence to lead complex organizations. At the same time, societal attitudes are evolving to recognize leadership based on talent, vision, and results rather than gender, helping to challenge longstanding stereotypes.

From my perspective as Shipping Deputy Minister, I have seen how targeted initiatives can create real opportunities for women to thrive. In Cyprus, we have launched several concrete actions to promote female leadership in the maritime sector. These include the establishment of the “Gender Equality Award in Cyprus Shipping”, which highlights individuals that actively support women in leadership and decision-making roles.

We also conduct educational outreach campaigns in schools, encouraging girls and young women to pursue academic and professional pathways in maritime professions, from engineering and navigation to management and policy.

Moreover, under the framework of our National Strategy for Gender Equality, and in coordination with the Commissioner of Gender Equality of Cyprus, we are implementing an action plan specifically for the maritime sector, beginning with a comprehensive mapping of the needs and challenges faced by women in shipping. These initiatives are implemented in close collaboration with

key stakeholders, including WISTA Cyprus, the Cyprus Shipping Chamber, and the Cyprus Union of Shipowners, ensuring that opportunities for women are not only policy statements but practical realities.

Personally, I have always believed that women bring adaptability, resilience, and efficiency to leadership roles. By providing visible role models and concrete opportunities, we can inspire the next generation of leaders, showing that leadership is about competence, dedication, and vision. Seeing more women succeed in both global business and maritime leadership is a reminder that progress is possible when society, policy, and organizations work together.

2As shipping is a global industry it is more vulnerable to geopolitical developments and challenges since it connects continents, economies, and societies.

Of course, this makes planning more challenging. However, on a personal level, I have learned to adapt to uncertainty by remaining adaptable, alert and proactive, viewing it as a responsibility rather than an obstacle. At the Shipping Deputy Ministry, we closely monitor international developments and remain in constant dialogue with the industry. We focus on strengthening our advantages, maintaining high standards, and building strong partnerships.

As we move through 2026, I remain optimistic. Cyprus shipping enters this new chapter stronger than ever. Over the past two and a half years, our ship registry has recorded strong and steady growth, with an increase of 23% in gross tonnage, the highest

level of the past twenty-five years. This growth reflects trust in the Cyprus flag and in the professionalism of our maritime community. It is the result of consistent effort, targeted policies, high safety standards, and a close partnership with the industry.

We will never stop planning, never stop adapting, and never stop striving to turn challenges into opportunities.

3My personal and professional journey began at a very young age.

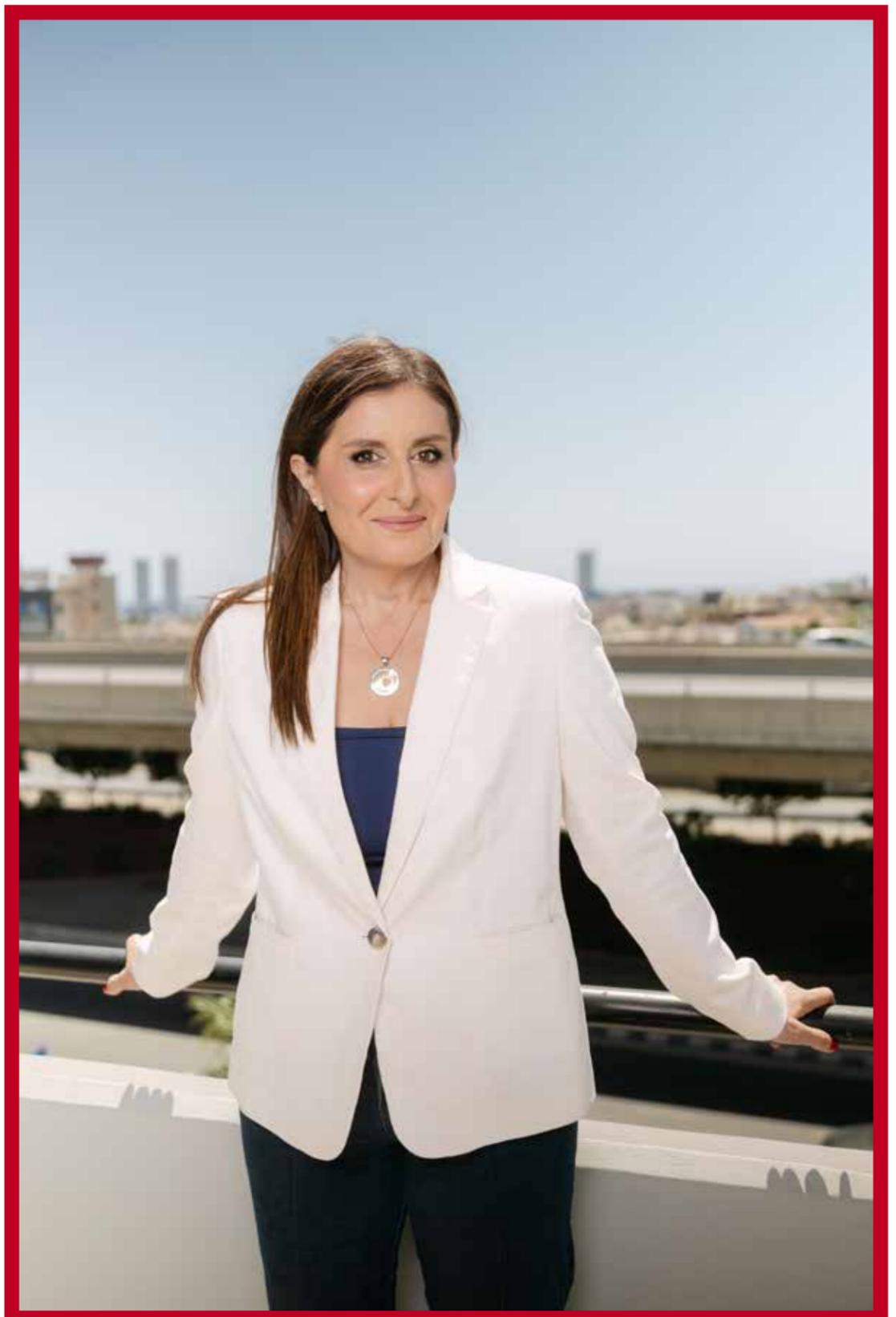
From as early as I can remember, I felt a strong urge to help others, to influence change, and to create meaningful impact. This naturally led me to become involved in politics. Influenced by my father, who was also active in the political sphere, I soon found myself shadowing him at meetings and conferences, learning firsthand how ideas, leadership, and commitment can positively affect society.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by strong and influential individuals, both men and women, who have helped shape my character, values, and perspective. These experiences have been

instrumental in defining my professional path.

In my current role as Shipping Deputy Minister, I strive to carry this legacy forward. My goal is to be an influential female leader in a traditionally male-dominated industry, and to inspire young people, especially women, to consider a career in shipping. It is an industry rich in opportunities, offering not only professional growth but also unique life experiences and challenges.

Ultimately, my journey has been shaped by the role models who guided me, and I hope to have the same positive influence on the next generation.



MAIRA MYROGIANNI

Secretary General for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In today's global environment, the growing presence of women in leadership roles is the result of multiple interconnected factors. First, evolving societal norms and expanded educational opportunities have been transformative. Women today benefit from access to higher education, international exposure, and professional networks, including in diplomacy and global affairs.

Second, reforms promoting transparency and meritocracy within public administration and foreign services have opened doors that were once restricted. As performance-based criteria gain prominence, leadership increasingly reflects competence and expertise rather than inherited patterns.

Third, diplomacy and diaspora engagement themselves have evolved. These domains now require skills such as strategic communication, cultural awareness, consensus-building, and network coordination, areas in which many women have excelled. Public diplomacy in particular places value on dialogue, empathy, and collaborative leadership, attributes closely aligned with contemporary models of international engagement.

Finally, the growing visibility of women in senior leadership roles, both in Greece and globally, has created a powerful multiplier effect. Inclusive leadership reshapes institutional cultures and inspires younger generations to pursue positions of responsibility and influence. Within this context, highlighting the role of women in the diaspora is important, as many women are actively involved in cultural, social, and business sectors, thus contributing to the promotion of Greek identity and strengthening the ties of expatriates with their motherland.

The General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy implements a holistic approach that includes actions to encourage everyone to participate, including women, with the overall goal of strengthening the ties between the diaspora and the metropolitan center.

Some of the initiatives we are currently undertaking, include the creation of Diaspora Women's Networks, an Annual Meeting of Greek Women in the Diaspora, scholarships for Greek Women Abroad, training, funding and mentoring programs,

seminars, the use of Digital Platforms and Social Media as well as the creation of a Digital Library of Greek Women's Art and Creativity.

2At a time of profound communication challenges, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invests strategically in strengthening Greece's international image. We utilize modern technologies and tools of extroversion, while forging strong ties with Greeks of the Diaspora. At the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy, we aim, on the one hand, to enhance global networking among Greeks worldwide and, on the other, to promote Greece's comparative advantages internationally.

For the first time ever, the Foreign Ministry developed a comprehensive strategic plan for Greeks Abroad, which aims to further strengthen the relationship between the Greek Diaspora and the homeland. The Plan was developed because we want to facilitate active participation of the Diaspora in the affairs of Greece, we want the voice of the Diaspora to be heard, we want to address their concerns and celebrate their achievements. In this effort, the General Secretariat of Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy acts as a "connection bridge" between the Diaspora and Greece, facilitating communication and understanding between the Greek communities abroad and the Greek state.

The creation of registries, of diaspora organizations, academic Chairs of Hellenic Studies, and professional communities, allows us to move from fragmented outreach to structured, data-driven engagement. At the center of this ecosystem lies diaspora.mfa.gr, soon to be launched as a dynamic platform connecting expatriate Greeks worldwide. Together with its forthcoming mobile application, it will serve as a cultural and professional hub, educational resource, and interactive meeting point.

Equally important is knowledge-sharing. Greek professionals across the globe are leaders in medicine, technology, education, law, business, and the arts. By organizing conferences on reform and digital transformation, networking events for start-ups and diaspora entrepreneurs, thematic panels in international fora, and roundtables with think tanks and universities, we transform diaspora engagement into a multiplier

of national competitiveness and innovation.

Direct engagement is another pillar of strategic consistency. Through visits to communities worldwide and continuous dialogue, we shape policy based on real needs. At the same time, the digitalization and simplification of consular services improve everyday interactions between Greeks abroad and the Greek state, reinforcing trust.

Youth engagement is particularly critical in uncertain geopolitical times. Through summer camps, internships, leadership initiatives, scholarships, and the Greek Youth Diaspora Symposium, we empower younger generations to act as ambassadors of Hellenism. The Greek Youth Diaspora Ambassadors initiative exemplifies how structured empowerment can transform identity into active public diplomacy across continents. Language and cultural diplomacy further anchor strategic coherence. By expanding support for Chairs of Greek Studies, promoting the Greek language globally and investing in digital tools such as the "staellinika" platform, we ensure that cultural continuity supports geopolitical relevance.

Furthermore, in the modern era, we acknowledge that diplomacy increasingly incorporates elements of soft power. Within this framework, public diplomacy plays a particularly important role. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will soon present a comprehensive Strategic Plan for Public Diplomacy, which sets as its strategic vision the upgrading of the country's international image by promoting all the elements that make it unique: Strategic geopolitical position, stable democracy, recovering economy, reformist momentum, dynamic investment climate and, of course, unparalleled cultural and linguistic heritage, with the Greek language being the foundation of European thought.

In essence, the rapidly evolving geopolitical environment does not make consistency impossible - it makes it indispensable. By combining digital infrastructure, youth empowerment, institutional partnerships, cultural diplomacy, media strategy, and practical service reform, we create a structured yet flexible framework. This allows Greece not only to adapt to global shifts, but to engage its diaspora as a strategic



asset in shaping its future and strengthening its public diplomacy worldwide.

3Working in environments that require coordination between state institutions, international partners, and diaspora organizations has taught me that success depends on communication and trust.

My academic background has profoundly influenced my professional outlook. With a scientific focus on Human Rights and European Law, I have developed a solid framework for addressing issues related to migration, citizenship, and the protection of fundamental rights - matters that lie at the heart of the experience of Greeks abroad and of Greece's interaction with international institutions.

Throughout my career in public administration, I have gained broad and diverse experience, serving for several years as a legal advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, the Ministry of Culture & Sports, the Ministry of National Defense, and the Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs. In these roles, I worked extensively on international relations and cooperation with European institutions and other international organizations, strengthening my ability to navigate complex, cross-sectoral challenges with a strategic and solutions-oriented approach.

These combined experiences - legal, academic, diplomatic, and administrative - have shaped a holistic understanding of issues concerning

Greeks abroad and international public outreach. I perceive diaspora policy not merely through a consular or cultural lens, but as a dynamic field that intersects with economic diplomacy, human rights, education, innovation, and soft power. Effective public outreach requires consistency, credibility, and sustained, meaningful engagement with communities and partners around the world.

The networking of Greeks across the world constitutes a cornerstone of our collective strength and continuity.

By creating favourable investment conditions, facilitating open communication, simplifying bureaucratic processes, empowering youth, leveraging expertise, fostering recognition, and building trust, we can unlock the full potential of a stronger connection between the Greek Diaspora and the Homeland.

In this spirit, I have set a personal commitment to ensure that Greeks everywhere feel empowered to share with us their views, proposals, and concerns. Open dialogue and active engagement are essential to building trust and cultivating a sense of belonging. Every member of the diaspora should feel that their voice is heard, respected, and valued. Within this broader context, public diplomacy plays a pivotal role in promoting the image of Greece abroad. Through sustained engagement with diaspora communities and international partners, we project the values, achievements, and cultural richness of our country.

THEANO KARPODINI

Head & Chairman of the Board of EOPYY

As the Manager of EOPYY—an organization that serves as the vital link between the state, healthcare providers, and millions of citizens—my approach to leadership is deeply institutional yet fundamentally human-centric.

Female Leadership as a Catalyst for Reform and Social Cohesion

As we reach the dawn of 2026, the discussion regarding female leadership has moved beyond the stage of quotas and into the essence of effectiveness.

From my position as Head of a national pillar such as EOPYY, I witness daily that leadership has no gender; however, it possesses qualities that women bring to the forefront with particular momentum.

1. Factors Establishing Female Leadership

The rise of women to top administrative positions is not accidental, but the result of a long journey of asserting professional competence.

Today, leadership requires characteristics that were traditionally

considered “supplementary” but are now fundamental:

The ability to manage complexity:

Female leaders demonstrate exceptional skill in balancing strict administrative frameworks with the need for flexibility.

Emphasis on collaboration:

A culture of “we” over “I” allows for better coordination between different departments and agencies, enhancing the Organization’s work.

Lifelong learning and certification:

Systematic investment in skill development and compliance with international standards ensures that female leadership is grounded in solid scientific and regulatory foundations.

2. Strategic Planning in a Fluid World

In an environment of rapid geopolitical changes, the challenge for a woman in a position of responsibility is to maintain stability.

The planning of our

next moves cannot be static. The ability to absorb the shocks of crises and turn obstacles into opportunities for improving our services is the key to the future.

Leadership today requires us to anticipate tomorrow’s needs by investing in human resources and upgrading processes, always guided by transparency and sound administration.

3. Personal Journey: A Path of Responsibility

My own journey to the leadership of EOPYY has been a continuous exercise in balance and focus on the goal.

For me, leadership is a daily commitment to the citizen and the state.

I believe in leadership that inspires through example.

Every decision, from the simplest administrative act to the strategic planning of

major projects, must be governed by integrity.

As a woman in a position of influence, I consider it my duty to encourage the new generation of female executives to trust their potential and claim their role at the decision-making table.

My message is clear: The modern female leader is not merely called to manage, but to transform the environment in which she works, instilling it with empathy, efficiency, and justice.



YIANNA ANDRONOPOULOU

General Manager, Microsoft Greece Cyprus Malta

1The growing presence of women in leadership is the result of both structural change and personal determination. Over the past years, access to education — especially in STEM fields — has expanded dramatically, enabling more women to pursue paths that were once considered unconventional. This shift didn't happen overnight; it was driven by women who were willing to challenge expectations, break stereotypes, and confidently choose trajectories that fit their talents rather than tradition. At the same time, organizations have realized that diverse leadership is not simply a social imperative — it drives innovation, resilience, and better business outcomes. Purpose driven cultures, inclusive hiring practices, mentorship, and active sponsorship now create environments where women can grow, contribute, and lead authentically. But perhaps the most defining factor is mindset. Women today approach leadership as a continuous journey of learning and self reinvention. They bring empathy, clarity, and strategic focus — qualities that resonate strongly in a world where adaptability matters as much as expertise. As more women embrace their full potential, they pave the way for even more to follow.

2We are living in a time where geopolitical dynamics shift with unprecedented speed. Planning in such an environment is undoubtedly complex, but it reinforces a principle that I hold deeply: lead-

ership requires adaptability, focus, and the ability to stay steady even when conditions are unpredictable — much like navigating on a board against changing winds - I am a windsurf enthusiast. Instead of relying on long-term assumptions, we build flexible strategies, analyze scenarios, and remain close to our customers, partners, institutions, and communities. This proximity helps us anticipate change rather than simply react to it. At the same time, clarity of purpose becomes more important than ever. When you know what your organization stands for — the value it creates and the long-term impact it aims to have — decisions become more grounded. Challenges do not disappear, but they become manageable. Continuous learning also plays a critical role: understanding emerging technologies like AI, investing in new capabilities, and ensuring teams have the skills and confidence to operate in uncertainty. Ultimately, resilience is built the same way progress is built — one informed, intentional step at a time.

3My career has never followed a straight, predetermined path; it has been shaped by conscious choices, a willingness to redefine myself, and a constant desire to learn. Early on, I realized that I was drawn to the world of science and technology, even though the natural expectation within my family was that I would follow the long tradition of law. Choosing to study Electrical Engineering at a

time when women represented barely ten percent of the student body was a defining decision. It taught me not to fear being the exception and not to let stereotypes dictate my direction. Working for major multinational technology companies offered me the privilege of collaborating with talented teams and taking on increasingly demanding roles. A conversation with an executive career coach several years ago proved pivotal: I was challenged to never become too comfortable, to keep stretching my

potential and treating every stage of my career as an opportunity for growth. That mindset has stayed with me ever since. My journey at Microsoft has been equally formative.

Moving through different roles over the years allowed me to understand the organization from multiple angles and to contribute to strategies that shape the broader technology ecosystem of the region. At the same time, my involvement with initiatives like the Women Employee Resource Group Southeast Europe strengthened my commitment to fostering gender balance and opening real pathways for women in tech. If there is one constant

in my journey, it is my belief in continuous evolution. I learn every day — about artificial intelligence, about leadership, about how to empower teams to do their best work. And just like windsurfing, a sport I love deeply, leadership requires focus, adaptability, resilience, and the ability to chart your course even when the conditions shift unexpectedly. Looking back, I wouldn't change a thing. Not because everything unfolded perfectly, but because at every crossroads I felt fully present and ready for the choices I made. That alignment between intention and action is perhaps the most meaningful part of my professional path.



PEGGY ANTONAKOU

Regional General Manager for Southeast Europe at Google

I believe this positive shift is driven by a combination of strategic necessity and cultural evolution. First, companies have finally realized that diversity is not just a 'nice-to-have' metric; it is a business imperative. If you want to build products and solutions that serve a diverse global population, you need leadership that reflects that diversity.

Second, we are actively breaking down long-standing gender stereotypes, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). When I began my career, women in tech leadership were rare. Today, we see more girls being encouraged to pursue these fields, and technology itself offers a flexible, dynamic environment that fosters female entrepreneurship.

We still have a long way to go. However, the combination of targeted mentoring -showing young women what a career in tech truly looks like- and the proven business value of diverse perspectives is fundamentally changing the landscape of leadership.

In my own journey, I have seen how intentional investment in talent development and inclusive leadership creates long-term impact.

Empowering people with the right skills and opportunities is one of the most sustainable ways to drive meaningful change.

2 We live in an era of continuous volatility. In such an environment, the traditional approach to business planning must evolve. You can no longer try to perfectly predict the future; instead, you must build the agility to adapt to it.

This is exactly where technology, and specifically Artificial Intelligence, becomes a critical stabilizer rather than just a tool.

Digital transformation provides the resilience needed to optimize supply chains, understand data in real-time, and respond to sudden disruptions. So, while planning is certainly challenging, my strategy focuses on foresight, adaptability, and investing in human capital. If we equip our people with advanced digital skills and foster a culture of resilience, a business can navigate these uncharted waters and even uncover new opportunities for growth amidst the uncertainty.

A particularly compelling perspective comes from Demis Hassabis, who has emphasized just how transformative AI will be: according to him, AI's impact is expected to be "10 times bigger than the industrial Revolution, and maybe 10 times faster". This underscores not only the scale of change ahead but also the accelerated pace at which organizations must adapt and innovate.

I've learned that leadership becomes less about control and more about clarity. Internal alignment becomes critical. Clear priorities, transparent communication, and strong decision-making frameworks allow organizations to move forward in any environment.

3 My journey has been driven by a constant desire to learn and step out of my comfort zone. I went to the U.S. as a student to complete my MBA at the University of Michigan. I graduated around the time of the 9/11 attacks, a period of intense global uncertainty. Driven by the need to pay off my student loans and a hunger for experience, I began interviewing across the country, starting my career at Dell in Texas.

I later spent seven years as the CEO of Microsoft for Greece, Cyprus, and Malta. It was a very successful and fulfilling

chapter, but when the opportunity with Google presented itself, I realized it was a chance to challenge myself with new technologies and new horizons. Today, as the Regional General Manager for Southeast Europe at Google, I view my role as a two-way bridge: I am Google's ambassador to Greece, bringing innovation and digital skills to our ecosystem, but equally, I am Greece's ambassador within Google, constantly highlighting our country's tremendous talent and potential on the global stage.

I strongly believe that leadership is not about hierarchy; it is about

impact. It's about empowering teams, creating environments where people feel safe to innovate, and building trust that sustains performance over time. Especially as a woman in technology, I've learned that authenticity is a strength. You don't have to fit a predefined leadership mold; you can redefine it.

At the same time, I feel incredibly fortunate to be living and working at the forefront of the AI revolution. We are witnessing a historic technological shift, and being able to observe and contribute to this transformation up close is both energizing and deeply meaningful.

What makes this moment truly unique is that the tools to learn, experiment, and build are more accessible than ever

before. Today, knowledge is not confined to a select few; the opportunity is there for anyone willing to explore it. Curiosity has become the most powerful skill of our time. But beyond the innovation itself, what excites me most is what it represents for the next generation.

If young women today can see that they have a place at the center of this revolution, then we are truly changing the narrative. Influence is not about occupying a position; it is about expanding possibility.

And if my journey can help even one young woman believe that she belongs in technology, in leadership, and in shaping the future, then that is perhaps the most important impact of all.



SOPHIA KOUNENAKI EFRAIMOGLOU

Chairperson of Lavipharm SA

First Vice President of the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)

Vice President of the Hellenic Association of Entrepreneurs (EENE)

President of the Cultural Center “Hellenic Cosmos”

President of the Foundation of the Hellenic World USA

1The increasing presence of women at the helm of major corporations is the result of long-term structural evolution rather than a sudden shift.

Over the past decades, access to higher education, international careers, and executive development has expanded significantly. Women now graduate from leading business schools and technical institutions in numbers comparable to men, and they accumulate global professional experience earlier in their careers. This has strengthened the leadership pipeline and created a generation of executives whose competence is indisputable.

At the same time, corporate governance standards have matured. Institutional investors and boards increasingly understand that diversity in leadership correlates with better oversight, broader risk assessment, and stronger long-term performance. In complex and volatile environments, homogeneous decision-making structures are more vulnerable. Inclusive leadership teams are better equipped to manage multidimensional challenges.

We have seen this reflected in global corporate leadership. Leaders such as Mary Barra, who has led General Motors through a profound transformation toward electric mobility, or Jane Fraser, the first woman to head a major Wall Street bank at Citigroup, demonstrate that female leadership is firmly established in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Similarly, Ginni Rometty at IBM oversaw strategic repositioning during a period of technological transition, reinforcing the link between leadership and transformation capacity.

Beyond individual examples, institutional mechanisms have played a decisive role. Regulatory frameworks and governance codes in several jurisdictions have encouraged broader representation at board level. More importantly, professional networks, chambers of commerce, and international forums have created

structured pathways for women to move from executive roles to decision-making positions. Leadership is no longer dependent solely on personal resilience; it is increasingly supported by institutional architecture. Another crucial factor is the evolution of the concept of leadership itself. Contemporary leadership requires the ability to synthesise complex information, manage uncertainty, navigate stakeholder expectations, and build long-term trust. These are qualities that align with collaborative and integrative management models — models that are increasingly valued in global markets.

However, it is important to underline that progress remains uneven across sectors and regions. The objective is not symbolic representation but the consolidation of merit-based, institutionally grounded leadership. Sustainable progress will depend on maintaining high governance standards while continuing to remove structural barriers that limit access to opportunity.

2We are operating in an era where geopolitical fluidity has become structural rather than temporary. Trade routes, energy markets, technological alignments, and even established alliances are being recalibrated. For businesses — particularly in maritime economies — this requires a fundamentally different strategic mindset.

The challenge is not only uncertainty, but the speed and overlap of change. Energy transitions, sanctions, regional tensions, supply-chain adjustments, and regulatory shifts often unfold simultaneously, making traditional linear planning insufficient.

In such conditions, the objective is not to predict every geopolitical development, but to design organisations that are structurally resilient. This means strong governance frameworks, diversified partnerships, prudent financial management, and operational flexibility. It also requires

scenario-based planning — preparing for multiple potential trajectories rather than anchoring strategy to a single forecast.

For maritime and trade-oriented economies, geopolitical developments directly affect logistics corridors, insurance costs, compliance requirements, and investment decisions. Strategic foresight is therefore not optional; it is fundamental to long-term competitiveness.

Another crucial element is trust. In volatile environments, relationships — with partners, regulators, financial institutions, and international stakeholders — become strategic assets. In my own approach, I prioritise consistency and institutional clarity. This means maintaining open channels of communication, investing in long-term partnerships rather than short-term advantages, and ensuring that decisions are grounded in transparent governance principles.

When the external environment is unstable, leadership must function as a point of reference. I place particular emphasis on disciplined analysis before major strategic moves, diversification of collaborations, and continuous dialogue with stakeholders. Stability in leadership and coherence in communication are not simply managerial preferences; they are strategic tools that safeguard credibility and continuity during periods of geopolitical turbulence.

Uncertainty will remain a defining feature of our era. The task of leadership is not to eliminate volatility, but to operate responsibly and strategically within it — combining long-term vision with tactical agility.

3My professional journey began within my family’s business environment. From an early age, I was exposed to entrepreneurship not as a theoretical concept, but as a daily responsibility. During my school years, I worked alongside my family in the automotive and motorcycle trade, learning



the operational side of the business — from assembling products to engaging directly in sales. Those formative experiences shaped my understanding of accountability, customer trust, and the discipline required to sustain a growing enterprise.

Education played a central role in my development. I pursued academic studies in Athens and later continued my postgraduate studies in London. My academic path combined humanities, finance, and technology — an interdisciplinary foundation that proved particularly valuable in periods of economic and market transition.

Returning to Greece, I became actively involved in strengthening and expanding our business activities, adapting import channels and responding to shifting international trade conditions. That period reinforced my belief that entrepreneurship requires strategic agility, resilience, and the ability to make timely decisions under pressure. Subsequently, I entered the telecommunications sector with the launch of Vivodi in Greece, at a time when the market was opening to competition. It was a transformative period that demanded vision, technological understanding, and sustained effort in a highly competitive environment. Parallel to my entrepreneur-

ial activity, I have remained deeply engaged in institutional and cultural initiatives. Through the Foundation of the Hellenic World and the establishment of the “Hellenic Cosmos” Cultural Centre, we have focused on innovation in cultural preservation, digital applications, and education. I currently serve as President of the “Hellenic Cosmos” Cultural Center of the Foundation, continuing to support initiatives that demonstrate how culture and technology can generate long-term economic and social value.

Having served as the first female President of the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), I continue today, in my capacity as Vice President, to work toward strengthening the institutional environment that supports Greek entrepreneurship.

Enhancing competitiveness, promoting regulatory stability, and encouraging outward-looking growth remain key priorities. Throughout my journey, one principle has remained constant: leadership is a responsibility. Sustainable progress requires both entrepreneurial initiative and strong institutions. I consider it essential to contribute to both dimensions — the business ecosystem and the broader institutional framework within which it operates.

PAILLETTE PALAIOLOGOU

M&O EMA Senior Vice President Bureau Veritas

The rise of women in business leadership reflects a broader shift in how effective leadership is defined. In complex global industries like maritime, performance depends more on the ability to build alignment, manage uncertainty, and guide organizations through long-term transformation.

These expectations have widened the leadership profile and naturally opened space for more diverse leaders.

In my experience, leadership is not about the individual but about enabling collective performance.

Creating a culture where expertise is respected, different perspectives are heard, and people feel both empowered and accountable is what drives sustainable results.

In a technical sector like ours where safety, innovation, and operational excellence must coexist, this approach is not a soft dimension; it is a business requirement.

Stronger governance, clearer performance criteria, and greater transparency have also reduced structural silos and supported a more merit-based leadership pipeline.

At the same time, industries facing digital, environmental, and regulatory transformation benefit from leader-

ship that is collaborative, adaptable, and long-term in outlook.

Organizations increasingly recognize that diversity in leadership strengthens decision-making and better reflects the global markets they serve.

This evolution is positive not only for women, but for business itself: broader representation enhances resilience and improves the quality of decisions in a more complex world.

2 Geopolitical volatility has increased, but for us it does not change our direction — it reinforces the importance of our role.

Developments across Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Africa, and India, from the Russia-Ukraine war and energy market disruption to trade barriers and tariff uncertainty, directly affect trade flows, fuel availability, shipbuilding strategies, and investment timing.

Planning therefore cannot rely on a single scenario; resilience comes from preparing for multiple possible futures.

For Bureau Veritas Marine & Offshore, this means helping clients find their path to operate and invest with confidence despite uncertainty.

Regulation has become a core business variable.

The IMO net-zero framework, evolving GHG fuel intensity rules, and measures such as EEXI and CII influence asset values and operational strategies, while key parameters remain in flux.

Through close monitoring of IMO and EU developments, participation in technical discussions, and impact assessments on fuels and compliance economics, we help clients understand how different regulatory outcomes could affect their fleets and investments.

Fuel and technology decisions are equally shaped by geopolitical and economic security considerations. Shipowners have to balance decarbonization with access to reliable and affordable energy.

Our expertise on LNG, ammonia, hydrogen, and other alternative fuels and emerging technologies — supported by pilot projects and rule development — focuses on making these options technically robust and safer, alongside realistic evaluations of their economic implications. Shifts in trade policy and regional dynamics are also influencing shipbuilding and fleet planning. Our classification, advisory, and digital services support risk management across the asset lifecycle, from design and fuel readiness to operational performance.

Solutions such as VeriSTAR Green, My Fuel



Consumption, and OptiCARBON™ translate regulatory and technical complexity into practical decision-support.

Volatility makes planning more demanding, but it also underscores the value of a long-term, technically grounded partner.

Our role is to bring clarity where there is uncertainty, enabling clients to protect economic resilience today while preparing for the maritime sector's structural transition.

3 I've built a career in the maritime and classification industry over the past three decades, gradually advancing through key leadership roles. My journey began at Oceanbulk Maritime S.A., where I gained invaluable experience in technical management, ship repairs, and classification matters. In 2005, I joined

Bureau Veritas (BV) as a Marine Center Surveyor, and over time, I took on more senior leadership roles, overseeing business development and regional operations.

Today, as Senior Vice President of EMA at Bureau Veritas Marine & Offshore, I lead strategic initiatives across Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, India, and Africa, shaping and expanding my influence in the global maritime sector.

Based in Athens, I've spent thirty years in the shipping industry, combining my technical expertise as a naval architect and marine engineer, with a deep understanding of the market. My experience has allowed me to lead efforts in securing pioneering projects and major new clients, continuing to drive innovation and growth in the industry.

IRENE S. DAIFAS

CEO STAVROS DAIFAS MARITIME CORPORATION S.A.

1First and foremost, a fundamental difference can be observed in women's very identity, simply, because they are women!

Women often appear to be more organized than men, with a strong tendency to grasp the "bigger picture", to operate with optimism, and to ensure order, organization and proper structure and although the modern business environment proves daily to be demanding and challenging, women, endowed with a positive and forward-looking mindset, as an integral part of their nature, no longer rely exclusively on traditional working models.

On the contrary, recognizing their own dynamism, they "stand tall" and, defending their inalienable right to exist in a world where their voice is truly heard, they claim different and better professional positions – roles, that until recently were considered, if not exclusively, at least predominantly male domains.

Today, women are steadily rising, and their success is becoming increasingly visible.

Their ability to adapt and remain flexible is one of the most decisive factors behind this success and I would say, perhaps the clearest proof that they can work, collaborate, and lead in a unique and innovative way in all circumstances.

Furthermore, by introducing a new approach that emphasizes meaningful communication, they ensure a healthy working environment in which productivity can steadily grow at a high level.

Known also for their exceptional listening skills and their calm attitude toward daily challenges, they have also proven particularly effective in crisis management,

drawing upon their diplomacy, an area in which they undoubtedly excel. Moreover, being extremely and naturally flexible and adaptable, they possess yet another significant advantage. Therefore, if I were to be asked whether these two qualities are essential for an entrepreneur, aiming at long-term success, my answer would be an unequivocal yes.

In any case, the time has come! Women have already taken the reins and businesses have begun to reshape their profile, reflecting this new reality. As a consequence, I feel deeply optimistic about the future of businesses and beyond, as we can expect many new and promising initiatives from women.

2As my nature has always indicated, I am a person who seeks to endure and adapt to every situation, whether at a National, European, or Global level. Therefore, regardless of the difficulties, I always plan and organize my business initiatives.

Especially during challenging periods, I strongly believe that careful planning and strategic foresight are essential. Otherwise, how could we have acted when we were confronted with an unprecedented combination of adverse, unpleasant and unexpected events, during all the previous years?

We are all aware of numerous unsettling developments that have surprised us, having led us abruptly to polarization and instability and shackled us to our core, that created new distortions in the global landscape.

Distortions, that unfortunately persist.

Nevertheless, despite the hesitations or delays caused by such circumstances, the only viable option has always been

to move forward. Consequently, each of us must always plan the next step, continuing to carry with us any potential personal or professional losses that may arise, as far as uncertainty and challenges act as powerful pressure mechanisms, demanding swift, decisive, and flexible solutions, and therefore necessitate serious and above all, timely, decision-making. Therefore, we must always continue advancing with composure and prudent judgment, what I like to call as "wise restraint", upgrading our mechanisms and integrating new, constructive, and beneficial ideas. In doing so, we can remain resilient and adaptable, as I believe, we Greeks inherently are, thereby charting an optimistic and hopeful

course toward an unknown future.

3As is often the case in similar narrations, it has become something of a ritual for me to begin by saying that my starting point was truly my family, as far as my parents stood out not only for their warmth, love, and humanity, but also for being two remarkably dynamic personalities. Despite though, their strong presence and inexhaustible energy, they coexisted with mutual respect and genuine affection, becoming and continuing to be for me, very steady pillars upon which both my worldview and my professional path were shaped.

Furthermore, and although there were clear guidelines from an early age regarding my professional orientation and despite the fact that everything seemed to point toward a pre-

determined path, my parents' influence and their deep conviction that true development does not lie merely in the accumulation of knowledge but in continuous self-improvement, initially led me in a different, yet highly constructive and creative, direction. Therefore, with the aim of truly understanding human psychology and social interaction, I chose to study Psychology and Sociology.

After completing my studies, I had the privilege to work in demanding social environments, supporting children on the autism spectrum as well as serving in facilities for underage girls and in the women's prison department of Korydallos. An experience that was one of intense emotional depth, for which at such a young age, I was not fully prepared. Therefore, gradually, I came to the decision to close that



chapter. Consequently, I chose to redefine my path by completing studies in Business Administration in the United Kingdom and returning to Shipping Industry, which I consider as my “natural professional environment.”

My entry into Shipping marked a period of observation, study, and meaningful familiarization with a sector, which is traditionally characterized by intense competition and high demands. Alongside my father, a strong, disciplined personality and at the same time, a true visionary man, I acquired invaluable skills, such as the ability to adapt, to evolve, and to pursue my goals with pure confidence. At the same time, through my involvement with Olympiacos F.C., where I served for three

years as Head of International Public Relations and for four years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Amateur Club, I gained significant experience and management skills, also in the field of Sports Administration.

In 2014, during a personally difficult and demanding period following the loss of my late father, I was called upon to assume the position of CEO of STAVROS DAIFAS MARITIME CORPORATION S.A., managing not merely a company, but above all, an important family legacy, something I realized from the very first moment. In a traditionally male-dominated sector, consistency, resilience, and daily effort were required, in order to establish my position and maintain a steady professional course.

That same year, my long-standing positive relationship with my fellow citizens and my deep love for the beautiful city of Piraeus, led me to engage in public service, and resulting in my election and re-election as Deputy Mayor for Culture, an important position that allowed me for ten consecutive years, to remain close to the community and contribute creatively to making Piraeus the ultimate cultural destination.

In 2016, I undertook yet another position of responsibility when I was elected President of the Piraeus Marine Club, becoming the first woman in the Club’s history to hold this position, with my two consecutive three-year terms, following my re-election in 2019, to be particularly productive, as through

collective effort, we achieved the desired results in strengthening the Club’s role and continuing to strengthen its presence, as an institution in the Greek Shipping Industry.

At the same time, my long-standing participation, both as a simple member and as a board member, in more than forty associations and foundations, including the “Elpida” Association of Friends of Children with Cancer, the “Together for Children” Association, the Hellenic Society for the Protection and Rehabilitation of Disabled People “ELEPAP”, the MEDASSET association and the “Make A Wish Foundation, reflects my enduring commitment to supporting vulnerable social groups, a commitment that also remains a source of pro-

found joy and fulfillment.

Finally, with a firm belief in the power of education and the importance of the next generation, for the past twelve years I have awarded two annual scholarships in memory of my father, Stavros A. Daifas, with the first to be granted through the Union of Greek Shipowners for studies in Shipping, and the second through HELMEPA, of which I had been General Secretary for several years and also a member of the Board of Directors for the last 20 years, for studies in Environmental Education, Sustainable Development, or Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, aiming through this initiative, to actively support young people and encourage them to move forward with knowledge, responsibility, and vision.

GEORGIA MANIATI

Governor and President of the Board of Seamen’s Pension Fund

1The rise of female leadership in business is mainly due to improved access to education, changing social attitudes, and stronger equality laws. As more women gain professional qualifications, they become better prepared for leadership roles. At the same time, societies are increasingly recognizing women’s capabilities beyond traditional gender roles. Companies also value diversity because it boosts innovation and performance, encouraging them to promote women into senior positions. Additionally, female role models and mentorship networks inspire more women to pursue leadership, while determination and resilience help them overcome remaining barriers. Together, these factors have strengthened women’s presence in the business world. And allow me to further elaborate by stating that the Greek shipping sector has been a pioneer in

this regard: women lead major shipping companies for a long time now, while female seafarer employment in Greece is several times higher than the global average—although we acknowledge there is still significant work ahead. The demonstration of women’s competence through example is kind of a norm within the shipping industry.

2Although the public sector — and especially the Greek Seamen’s Fund (NAT), which I have the honor to head — does not belong to businesses in the narrow sense of the term, political changes and economic crises certainly affect our operations. In today’s rapidly changing geopolitical environment, planning future business moves has become significantly more challenging. As a result, long-term strategies must be more flexible, risk-aware, and scenario-based. Businesses now need to con-

stantly monitor global developments, diversify markets and suppliers, and build contingency plans. While these conditions make forecasting harder, they also encourage agility and innovation, pushing companies to adopt more resilient and adaptive approaches to growth. Again, I will use the example of the shipping industry, whose agility and resilience is the best example of how business can navigate through turbulent times.

3I have been working at NAT for more than forty years. First as an employee, later as Director and General Director and, finally, this path eventually led me to my current role as Governor of the Greek Seamen’s Fund, where I have the honor of overseeing an organization dedicated to supporting seafarers and their families. Over the years, I have held positions of increasing responsibility, gaining experience in



administration. Working in the public sector has taught me the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and long-

term thinking. Each stage of my journey has helped refine my belief in serving with integrity and purpose.

MARIA THEODOSIOU

Managing Director, GENPRO

1 We are seeing more female business owners and more women at executive level because expectations in business have evolved. Boards and shareholders increasingly recognise that long-term value creation benefits from diversity of thought, disciplined governance, and measured risk-taking.

Leadership today requires resilience, clarity under pressure, and the ability to navigate complexity — capabilities that are essential in a volatile global environment. Many organisations have moved toward merit-based evaluation, where competence, commitment, and performance carry greater weight than outdated assumptions.

At the same time, women stepping into leadership roles are better prepared than ever before. Higher levels of education, broader international exposure, and earlier operational responsibility have strengthened the pipeline. Leadership is not improvised; it is built through experience.

Visibility follows experience. In technical sectors, historically smaller talent pools have limited representation. As more women gain hands-on exposure early in their careers, the pool of recognised experts expands organically — and so does leadership opportunity.

Networking has also played a decisive role. Through associations such as WISTA and YoungShip, professionals exchange knowledge, mentor one another,

and strengthen confidence collectively. Leadership can be demanding and, at times, isolating. Structured communities accelerate growth and reinforce standards.

Progress, however, must not be taken for granted. In many parts of the world, access to financial stability, education, healthcare, and economic opportunity remains uneven. Sustainable advancement depends on accelerating that access — because when women are economically empowered, businesses gain stronger talent pools, and societies gain greater stability and resilience.

I do not see this as a “rise of women.” I see it as the steady rise of competence in an ever-changing world — and a necessary broadening of who is recognised as capable of leading.

2 Planning today is dynamic, not linear. Historically, shipping continues to move regardless of geopolitical turbulence. Trade lanes shift, sanctions regimes evolve, energy markets fluctuate, and regulatory frameworks tighten. In such an environment, fixed strategies become obsolete quickly. What replaces them is disciplined adaptability.

For us at GenPro, resilience is engineered. It is built through diversified supplier networks across geographies, contractual safeguards, transparent governance structures, and continuous benchmarking of cost and performance. We do not rely on single-source dependencies or informal ar-

rangements. We rely on structure and visibility.

Governance becomes a competitive advantage in uncertain times. Clear decision frameworks allow us to act decisively. When markets tighten or political conditions shift, we are not improvising — we are executing within predefined parameters.

Equally critical is relationship capital. Strong partnerships, built consistently over time, create flexibility under pressure. Loyalty, transparency, and fair dealing are not soft values; they are operational assets in volatile markets.

Volatility does not paralyse well-structured organisations. It differentiates them. Those that combine governance, diversification, digital visibility, and disciplined execution are not merely reacting to instability — they are designed to operate through it. That is how we plan. Not for stability — but for movement.

3 My professional journey did not begin in shipping. It began with an ambition to become a sports scientist and work with Olympic teams. Sport taught me discipline early — the value of preparation, resilience under pressure, and the understanding that performance is never accidental. It is engineered.

That foundation shaped everything that followed. I transitioned from Sport Sciences and Psychology into marketing and then into the maritime sector at a time when I had no industry legacy, no inherited network, and no

predefined path. What I did have was curiosity, work ethic, and a strong sense that growth comes from stepping into environments that stretch you. Reinvention is uncomfortable — but remaining static is far riskier.

I spent time on the ground during drydocks, inside operational environments, understanding the practical realities behind procurement decisions. Leadership in maritime cannot be theoretical; it must be operationally literate. Over time, I moved from learning the mechanics of the industry to shaping its structure. Today, as Managing Director of GenPro, I lead a procurement ecosystem serving more than 1,000 vessels globally, with embedded governance, ESG oversight, digital benchmarking tools, and a structured supplier network.

Throughout this journey,

I have remained committed to continuous learning. I have served for several years on the Board of Directors of WISTA Cyprus and currently as Vice President, which has reinforced the value of professional community and international perspective. Exposure to different leadership styles, markets, and conversations strengthens judgement.

I have evolved, but I have not changed at my core. I remain driven by curiosity, disciplined execution, and a belief that leadership is service — to teams, to partners, and to the structures we are responsible for building. The journey continues. I do not see it as a destination to be reached, but as a responsibility to be carried.

And to the younger readers: Take the opportunity when it appears — time and opportunity, once lost, are not recoverable.



KORINNA TAPAKTSOGLOU

CFO & Managing Director of Pioneer Marine

The increasing presence of women in leadership across shipping is both encouraging and long overdue. Our industry has evolved — and with that evolution, so has its understanding of leadership. For decades, access to education, international exposure and professional networks has steadily expanded. Governance standards have strengthened. Companies have become more structured, more accountable and more forward-looking. These developments have created space for talent to rise — regardless of gender.

Shipping today demands strategic clarity, disciplined execution and long-term thinking. It requires resilience in cycles of volatility and steadiness in moments of uncertainty. These are not gendered traits; they are leadership traits. At the same time, evolving corporate governance standards and investor expectations have accelerated change. Boards and executive teams increasingly recognize that diverse perspectives strengthen decision-making and long-term resilience. Inclusion is therefore not only a social consideration — it is aligned with sound governance and sustainable performance.

At Pioneer Marine, we believe leadership must be cultivated at entry level. Through our structured internship and rotational programs, young professionals gain hands-on exposure across operations, technical management and commercial functions. It is particularly inspiring to see young women stepping confidently

into areas traditionally perceived as male-dominated — from vessel operations to seafaring roles. Their progress is a reminder that capability thrives where opportunity exists.

Professional communities such as WISTA Hellas have also strengthened the maritime ecosystem by fostering mentorship and collaboration. When women support one another, progress accelerates. The rise of women in maritime leadership is not symbolic. It reflects competence meeting opportunity — and an industry becoming stronger as a result.

2 Shipping has always operated at the intersection of global trade and geopolitical change. Today's environment — shaped by sanctions, regional conflicts, regulatory shifts and market volatility — requires heightened vigilance and agility.

Geopolitical developments directly influence chartering patterns, counterparty exposure, insurance frameworks, crewing logistics and access to financing. Strategic planning must therefore be dynamic. We rely on scenario analysis, disciplined capital allocation and continuous reassessment of risk. Strong cross-functional coordination is essential. Legal, operations, technical, chartering and SQE teams must remain closely aligned to ensure compliance, operational continuity and risk mitigation. Having an experienced and proactive legal counsel is particularly critical in navigating rapidly changing regulatory frameworks.

Resilience in shipping

is not about avoiding uncertainty — it is about preparing for it. Strong governance structures, cross-functional coordination and balance sheet discipline provide stability when markets fluctuate. In volatile cycles, prudence becomes strength.

Having been closely involved in Pioneer Marine's management buy-out and strategic repositioning, I witnessed firsthand how uncertainty can create defining opportunities. During periods of disruption, clarity of purpose and determination in decision-making become decisive advantages. We plan with tactical flexibility, but our long-term direction remains steady. Volatility may alter our route — it does not alter our vision.

3 My professional journey has been shaped by discipline, continuous learning and the willingness to embrace responsibility.

I began my career at PwC, where I developed a foundation in analytical rigor and accountability. Audit instilled in me the importance of governance, structure and ethical stewardship — principles that continue to guide my leadership approach.

Later, in senior internal audit and compliance roles within a NYSE-listed shipping company, I gained deeper exposure to global markets and regulatory complexity. That experience strengthened my conviction that leadership is built not only on expertise, but on judgment and integrity.

Joining Pioneer Marine in 2014 marked a pivotal



chapter. As VP Finance and later CFO, my role evolved from financial oversight to strategic leadership. In an industry defined by cycles, resilience is built through foresight, disciplined capital management and teamwork.

The 2021 management buy-out was a defining milestone. It required a strong sense of responsibility — the responsibility to safeguard the company's stability and contribute decisively to its long-term direction during a period of uncertainty. That experience reinforced my belief that leadership emerges when accountability replaces comfort.

Throughout both my professional and personal life, I have been fortunate to work alongside principled and capable individuals, whose support and integrity have been instrumental in my development. Sustainable success in shipping, as in life, is never achieved in isolation. It is built on strong relationships, stable partnerships and mutual trust. I

deeply value the meaningful collaborations that have supported me along the way.

Beyond professional achievements, motherhood has profoundly shaped my perspective. Raising two daughters reminds me daily that leadership is also about example. I want them to grow up knowing that ambition and integrity can coexist, and that no industry — including shipping — should feel beyond their reach.

Continuous development remains central to my journey. Through education, industry engagement and participation in women's maritime networks, I aim not only to grow personally, but to contribute to a broader culture of progress within our sector. If there is one lesson my journey reflects, it is that resilience, preparation and integrity open doors that once seemed closed.

May the next generation of women in shipping sail forward without asking permission.

DR. ILIANA CHRISTODOULOU VAROTSI

Senior Legal Consultant (Member of the Athens Bar Association) & Lead Industry Trainer in Private Practice

Female leadership, including in big corporations, is gaining traction but is far from being crystallized in terms of achieving full gender parity. According to research findings released in 2025 by the World Economic Forum (WEF), gender parity is progressing but the number of women at high level leadership roles remains low.

The same research finds that it will take another 123 years before the world achieves full gender parity! Nevertheless, the progress achieved so far in the Western world cannot be negated and it can be attributed to education, the change in social values, the impact of regulations demanding gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination and the change of mindset in both men and women.

Narrowing down the focus on the impact of regulations on female leadership, on the European Union level, Directive (EU) 2022/2381 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures acknowledges the challenges of under-represented sex and seeks to achieve a more gender-balanced representation among the directors of listed companies. This is a first step.

The Directive had to be incorporated into national legal systems by 28 December 2024, and its rules applied from the same date. In Greece,

said Directive was introduced via Law 5178/2025.

In the shipping sphere, while female seafarers aboard ships are still under-represented, it is impressive to see powerful examples of women at the helm of big shipping companies who excel and inspire other women.

That said, as an industry trainer I see highly motivated female trainees with responsibilities in their roles performing admirably well in crew departments, in HSQE and in other departments of large, medium-sized or family-owned shipping companies. Ranging from intermediate to senior level, both men and women engage in life-long learning with the same eagerness and aspire to climb the career ladder and lead by example; this inevitably means embracing new values and sometimes having to fight for equality in senior roles.

2 Indeed, geopolitical developments are evolving at a high speed and, unfortunately, often in a rather incoherent way. Contrary to shipping which unites, geopolitics at present contribute to a fragmented world characterized by uncertainty, including business and legal uncertainty.

As I provide services in a relatively stable environment with high-profile clients who share strong values and adhere to the highest ethical and

business standards, I feel indirectly affected by current geopolitical developments. That said, as both a citizen and a professional, I am obviously concerned about the world around me and the numerous challenges it faces. In an ever-changing world, the dissemination and accuracy of information, as well as sharp analytical and critical thinking skills, are needed more than ever to make sound decisions and operate ambitiously, effectively and in good order.

3 At the age of 27 I obtained my doctorate in law with the highest distinction at the Faculty of Laws Paris I Sorbonne on the adaptation of Greek and Cypriot maritime law to EU law. My career has involved specialist consultancy, education and training, drafting legislation and QA for major law draft-

ing projects, and writing learning materials and legal literature. I am the author of five books published internationally.

As an Athens-based lawyer in private practice and a member of the Athens Bar Association, I provide services in the fields of maritime and EU law. I have experience as a subcontractor for specialised projects on legal studies, compliance assessments and reporting for the European Commission, EMSA and ELA.

As an educator and trainer, I share my knowledge of maritime law and shipping regulations, with the focus on Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), with learners worldwide through leading international training providers.

My learners are maritime professionals engaged in lifelong learning within shipping companies, maritime administrations, banks, shipyards and the navies, as well

as undergraduate and postgraduate students. Supported by high-profile institutional and corporate clients, including leading ship classification societies, my career path has given me the opportunity to develop and interact with the local and international shipping community. I would like to thank all my clients, particularly Lloyd's Maritime Academy (Informa Connect), with whom I have enjoyed successful projects spanning over 12 years.

My work demands that I constantly keep myself informed of current legal developments in a changing world and conveying clear messages to demanding clients in education and legal services.

I enjoy interacting with brilliant maritime professionals. It would be unfair not to acknowledge my family's support for my efforts as an active professional in this very demanding and exciting field.



CHRYSANTHI STEFANO

CEO - Bright Navigation Inc.

It is a fact that in today's world, women are increasingly attaining positions of power and leadership in both small and large businesses, as well as in major public and private organizations.

This development is the result of several factors, the most important of which, in my view, is the transformation of women's roles in modern society compared to the recent past.

Women today enjoy equal rights and opportunities with men in almost all areas of life. They are better educated, professionally active, financially independent, and actively contribute to family responsibilities.

As a result, they are far more visible and influential in public and social life.

Moreover, modern business practices and technological advancements have enabled women to pursue professional careers without sacrificing their roles as mothers, wives, or individuals with personal aspirations. These realities are widely recognized and have been frequently discussed in relation to women's professional advancement and their growing presence in leadership positions.

However, what has long existed in women's nature—but was often overlooked until recently—are certain key skills such as empathy, insight, flexibility, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. These qualities are particularly evident and strongly developed in many

women leaders. The very nature of women therefore represents a significant advantage, as it contributes to better organization, smoother collaboration, effective risk management, and ultimately to the overall success of the businesses and organizations they lead.

2 Geopolitical developments are evolving at an unprecedented pace, making business planning far more complex than in the past and inevitably increasing uncertainty about future outcomes and how best to respond to emerging challenges.

Nevertheless, I do not view this situation as a disadvantage. The shipping industry has historically demonstrated its ability to operate—and even thrive—under conditions of uncertainty.

Shipping professionals have long adapted not only to geopolitical shifts but also to constantly evolving institutional and legal frameworks, particularly those related to environmental regulations and broader compliance requirements.

These demands continue to grow, affecting both vessels and the companies that manage them. For those of us working in the shipping sector, being available around the clock and remaining constantly alert is an integral part of our professional lives.

In my view, the most effective way to mitigate risk and reduce uncertainty is to maintain flexibility in company liquidity, closely monitor global developments,

invest strategically in technology and human capital, and always prepare alternative courses of action.

In conclusion, while planning future business moves is undoubtedly challenging, this very uncertainty can also serve as a pathway to new opportunities.

3 My professional career began in 2008, and while it was perhaps expected that I would follow in my father's footsteps in the shipping industry, the way I would do so was far from predetermined.

I was fortunate to have two successful family businesses already established at that time, yet I initially faced the challenge of deciding where and how to begin. I chose to start with the shipping company managing our bulk carriers vessels, Bright Navigation Inc.

My journey there began in the accounting department and gradually extended across nearly all areas of the organization, as I sought to acquire as

much knowledge and hands-on experience as possible.

Through this process, I gained a deep understanding of the company's structure and daily operations, an essential foundation in an industry where learning never truly ends. At the same time, whenever possible, I was attending vessels during docking procedures, familiarizing myself with the ship's components and operational processes.

In 2014, I joined the second company founded by my father and uncle, which specializes in the crewing of ships with Filipino seafarers.

Once again, I immersed myself in every department, traveling annually to the Philippines to understand the entire process firsthand—from a sailor's initial interview to final departure for boarding a vessel.

The first global lockdown found me in Manila, where I remained for three and a half months. This unexpected period of isolation became a turning point, allowing me to reflect deeply on my professional path, my motivations, and whether this career had

been a conscious choice or simply an inherited one.

Upon returning from the Philippines, I was more certain than ever that shipping was not merely an interest, but my true passion. At that point, the time had come to engage fully in our third area of activity: coastal shipping.

Having acquired the necessary knowledge and, after many years of dedication to developing professional skills and practical experience from all our business establishments, I can now make informed decisions, take responsibility for critical situations, oversee complex operations, and identify and implement effective solutions.

Today, as CEO of the entire group, I strive to preserve the traditional values and family-oriented culture of our businesses while simultaneously driving modernization and sustainable growth.

In this sense, I see myself at the top of the organizational pyramid—fully accountable, forward-looking, and committed to the continued success of our group of companies.



CHRYSSA BANTI

Purchasing Manager at J.H.I. Steamship Co

1The rise of women in leadership reflects a fundamental shift in how organizations define value and effectiveness. In today's global business environment, leadership is no longer measured solely by scale or authority, but by vision, adaptability, and the ability to translate strategy into consistent execution. These demands have created space for leaders who think long-term, manage complexity, and lead with discipline—qualities increasingly demonstrated by women across industries.

In shipping, this evolution is particularly evident. The industry faces unprecedented challenges, from geopolitical instability and regulatory pressure to supply chain disruption and sustainability demands. Success in such an environment requires leaders who combine strategic foresight with operational rigor. As more women deliver measurable results in senior roles, they are helping reshape the industry toward a more merit-based, resilient, and future-oriented model of leadership.

2Geopolitical volatility has become a structural feature of global trade rather than a temporary disruption.

For the shipping industry, this translates into constant pressure on operational planning, procurement strategy, cost control, and supply chain reliability.

However, people working in shipping are inherently accustomed to operating under adverse conditions. Whether facing extreme weather, rapidly changing geopolitical environments, or the need to work across different cultures and regulatory frameworks, adaptability is embedded in the industry's DNA. This long-standing exposure to uncertainty strengthens decision-making and reinforces a pragmatic, solution-oriented mindset.

Planning for the future under such conditions requires a dynamic and disciplined approach. Strategy must remain flexible, continuously reassessed, and closely aligned with operational realities.

From a procurement perspective, this means building resilient supplier networks, anticipating market shifts, and maintaining readiness through alternative sourcing and scenario planning.

While uncertainty increases complexity, it also highlights the value of experience, preparedness, and execution.

Organizations that succeed are those able to respond decisively, adapt quickly, and maintain operational continuity without compromising quality, safety, or financial control.

3My career spans more than 35 years in the global shipping industry, with senior procurement roles in companies such as Vernicos Maritime, Maryville, Samos Steamship, Avin International, and currently J.H.I. Steamship Co. Throughout this journey, my focus has remained firmly on operational excellence—ensuring vessels are supported efficiently, reliably, and cost-effectively in highly demanding environments.



As Purchasing Manager at J.H.I. Steamship, I oversee procurement for a fleet of bulk carriers and tanker vessels, including the requirements of an active newbuilding program in Japan and in Korea.

This role demands precision, strategic coordination, and strict control of quality, cost, and timelines.

I have consistently driven process improvements that strengthen supply chain resilience, enhance efficiency, and

support uninterrupted vessel operations. Operating in a traditionally male-dominated industry has reinforced my belief that leadership is defined by performance, accountability, and integrity. Equally important is investing in people and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. I believe the future of shipping depends on disciplined leadership that combines vision with execution and places long-term sustainability at the core of operational decision-making.

ALEXANDRA GANA

Ops Manager GANMAR SHIPPING , BoD EENMA

1First, expanded access to education has played a crucial role. Over recent decades, women have achieved higher levels of education worldwide, often outperforming men in university enrollment and graduation rates, particularly in business, law, and management-related fields. This has created a strong pipeline of qualified women ready to assume leadership roles.

Second, changing social norms and gender roles have significantly influenced perceptions of leadership. Traditional stereotypes that associated leadership exclusively with men are being challenged, allowing women to be viewed as competent decision-makers and strategists. Media representation of successful female leaders and public advocacy for gender equality have reinforced this shift.

Third, organizational and policy reforms have supported women's advancement. Equal opportunity legislation, diversity and inclusion initiatives, mentorship programs, and leadership quotas in some countries have helped reduce structural barriers that previously limited women's access

to executive positions and boardrooms.

Fourth, economic globalization and competition have encouraged businesses to value diverse leadership. Research increasingly shows that companies with gender-diverse leadership teams often perform better financially and demonstrate stronger innovation, risk management, and employee engagement. As a result, firms actively seek female leaders as a strategic advantage rather than a symbolic gesture.

2One major challenge is the instability of regulatory and trade frameworks. Sudden changes in tariffs, sanctions, energy policies, or cross-border regulations can quickly alter market conditions, making long-term investments riskier and forcing businesses to revise plans on short notice.

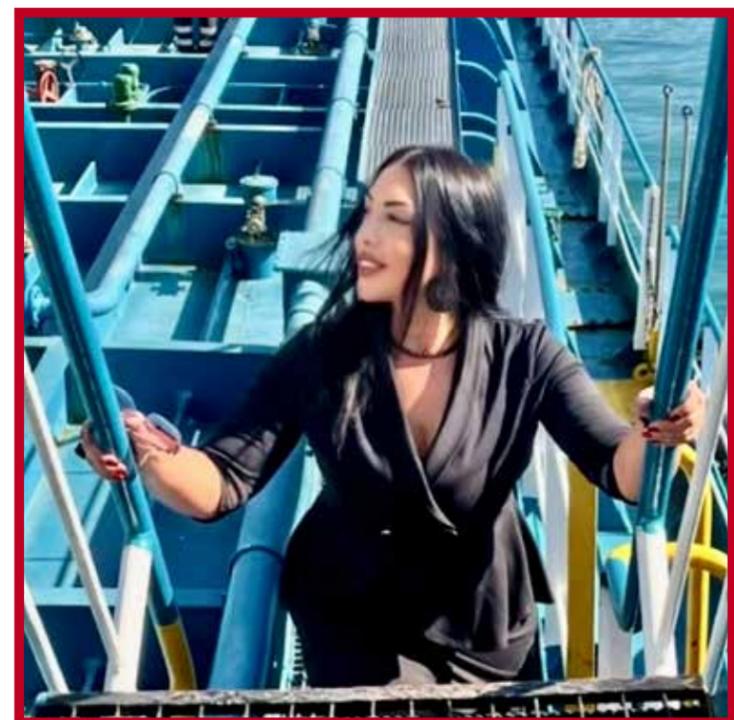
Additionally, supply chain vulnerability has become a critical concern. Geopolitical tensions can disrupt logistics, access to raw materials, and transportation routes, requiring companies to diversify suppliers, regionalize production, or maintain higher in-

ventories, all of which increase costs and complexity.

Another difficulty lies in forecasting market behavior. Political tensions, conflicts, or diplomatic shifts can influence consumer confidence, currency stability, and investment flows. This makes traditional forecasting models less reliable and demand more flexible, scenario-based planning.

To navigate this environment, businesses must adopt agility and resilience as core strategies. This includes continuous risk monitoring, diversification of markets and partnerships, and maintaining financial and operational flexibility. Decision-making today is less about rigid long-term plans and more about preparing multiple pathways and responding quickly as conditions evolve.

3My professional journey so far has been defined by gradual growth, continuous learning, and the ability to adapt to change rather than by a single linear path. As I remember when I was a student, I sought opportunities that challenged me beyond my comfort zone.



This often meant taking on increased responsibility, navigating uncertainty, and learning to manage pressure. Along the way, I came to appreciate the value of collaboration, emotional intelligence, and clear communication—skills that are just as critical as technical or strategic expertise.

A defining element of my journey has been adaptability which required me to rethink strategies, remain flexible, and continuously update my knowledge. Rather than seeing change as an obstacle,

I've learned to view it as an opportunity for growth.

Today, I see my professional path as a work in progress. Each stage has contributed to a clearer sense of purpose, stronger confidence in my judgment, and a deeper understanding of leadership—not as authority, but as responsibility, resilience, and the ability to inspire trust. Looking ahead, I aim to keep evolving, staying open to new perspectives, and building on the experiences that have shaped who I am professionally so far.

PINELOPI KASSANI

Governance, Risk and Compliance Partner Chartered Accountants Moore Stephens S.A.

The rise of women in leadership is not the result of a single development, but of steady and meaningful change across education, business culture, and society as a whole.

To begin with, access to high-level education and professional specialization is now far more balanced. Women are entering demanding sectors—finance, law, technology, and of course shipping—not as exceptions, but as highly qualified professionals together with their fellow male classmates. Over time, this has naturally strengthened the pipeline for senior and executive roles.

In parallel, the definition of leadership itself has evolved. Today's business environment is more complex, more regulated, and more exposed to global volatility than ever before. In industries like shipping—where companies must navigate geopolitical uncertainty, regulatory developments, ESG expectations, and capital market pressures—leadership requires sound judgment, collaboration, resilience, adaptability, and the ability to balance risk with long-term strategy. These are qualities that many women have consistently demonstrated and had the chance to sharpen, as they moved up the ranks.

Shipping in particular has traditionally been a male-dominated industry, especially at senior levels. However, as the sector becomes more sophisticated—financially, operationally, and technologically—it increasingly values diverse perspectives and structured decision-making. Governance, transparency, and accountability have become central to sustainability and competitiveness. Diverse leadership teams simply perform better in managing this complexity. Equally important is visibility. As more women take on leadership roles within the shipping community and its supply chain, they gradually re-

shape perceptions about what leadership looks like. This creates a positive cycle: representation builds confidence, and confidence builds further representation. Ultimately, I believe this shift is not about gender replacing gender, but rather about broadening the leadership model. The organizations that thrive today are those that recognize competence, integrity, and strategic thinking—regardless of who embodies them.

2 Geopolitical volatility is no longer an occasional disruption—it has become part of the operating environment. For businesses in general, and especially for sectors like shipping that are inherently global, developments in trade policy, sanctions regimes, regional conflicts, energy transitions, and regulatory fragmentation directly affect strategy and operations. For us, as an auditing and consulting firm and a member of an international network, this reality does not necessarily make planning impossible, but it does change the way we plan.

Long-term strategy is still essential; however, it must now be built with flexibility at its core. We place greater emphasis on scenario planning with in-built agility, regulatory monitoring, and continuous communication with our clients and within our international network.

In shipping, geopolitical developments translate into immediate business implications—changes in trade routes, sanctions compliance, access to financing, insurance considerations, and ESG-related requirements. Our role is not to predict geopolitical outcomes, but to help our clients remain resilient regardless of the direction events take.

That means strengthening governance structures, enhancing internal controls, improving transparency, and ensuring effectiveness in responding to stakeholder demands.

In that sense, volatility has elevated the importance of our profession. In uncertain times, companies need clarity, reliable information, and sound judgment more than ever. So while planning has certainly become more demanding, it has also become more meaningful. Our focus is less on predicting the future and more on building organizations that can withstand it.

3 My career began in 2000 at Citi in Athens, in the Corporate Customer Service department, where I worked alongside my studies in Finance and Banking at the University of Piraeus. In 2003, after completing my postgraduate studies, I was hired as a trainee auditor at PwC in Athens.

A year later, I moved to PwC London, where I spent the next four years working in the Banking & Capital Markets department. I worked primarily with international investment banks on financial statement audits and regulatory compliance

projects. During this time, I completed my professional training and certification and became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).

In 2008, I returned to Greece and joined EY as an Audit Manager and later Senior Audit Manager in the Financial Services sector, performing assurance and advisory engagements mainly in the banking industry. During the fiscal crisis, I participated in the team that supported the Bank of Greece in assessing loan portfolios and the adequacy of impairment provisions of the major Greek banks, with the aim of estimating the capital requirements needed for the recapitalization and restructuring of the Greek banking sector.

I subsequently worked for the Hellenic Accounting and Auditing Standards Oversight Board (ELTE), the Independent Authority responsible for overseeing the auditing profession in Greece, as a delegated inspector. In this role, I conducted a series of quality inspections of audit firms, evaluating the services they provided in terms of compliance with International Stan-

dards on Auditing and International Standards on Quality Control. It was a very interesting period, during which I saw auditing from the Regulator's perspective and gained a wealth of knowledge and experience.

In 2015, I returned to active auditing, this time with Moore Greece, and was introduced to the world of Greek and international shipping. Since then, I have worked with many shipping companies with the aim of improving the quality and informational value of their financial and non-financial reporting, strengthening the effectiveness of their internal controls, and implementing new regulations in a way that minimizes disruption to daily operations. In 2018, I became a Partner and assumed further responsibilities within the internal organizational structure of Moore Greece, in the development of its services, as well as its active participation in discussions concerning the shipping industry.

Looking back on my professional journey so far, I feel fortunate and blessed that my work has always felt meaningful to me and aligned itself with my personal values and life choices.



ANGELIKI CHOMATA MARGETIS

MJur Oxon, Vice President of Margetis Maritime Consulting

In the current corporate and maritime business environment, leadership is increasingly defined by adaptability, technological competence, and the ability to manage complexity rather than by hierarchy or gender. As digitalization and artificial intelligence reshape global operations, success depends on analytical thinking, collaboration and responsiveness to uncertainty.

Shipping companies and maritime service providers, operating globally, increasingly select leaders capable of navigating ambiguity and complexity, addressing sustainability requirements, cybersecurity risks, regulatory pressures, and geopolitical instability.

In this context, gender does not constitute a factor of leadership effectiveness, as performance is evaluated through measurable outcomes such as innovation capacity, risk management, ESG compliance, and successful digital transformation. Research indicates that women are more collaborative in their decision-making, and therefore their strategic outcomes are better.

Female emotional intelligence enhances team cohesion and productivity, and effective communication strengthens stakeholders' trust. Women also focus on long-term strategic thinking, sustainability orientation, more prudent risk management and strong commitment to mentorship. Together, these elements support resilience, innovation, governance quality, and organizational continuity, demonstrating that successful leadership in today's digital and global economy depends primarily on inclusiveness, strategic vision, and the effective management of both human and technological capital.

2Recent geopolitical and economic developments have created growing uncertainty, disrupting even traditional trade routes and alliances. The war in Ukraine continues to affect Black Sea navigation, energy exports, and sanctions compliance, while the

Gaza war has expanded maritime risks through Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, forcing ships to reroute around Africa with significant cost and delay impacts.

Rising tensions involving Iran and security concerns in the Strait of Hormuz further threaten global oil transportation and tanker operations in the Gulf, increasing insurance and freight volatility. At the same time, the latest developments in Venezuela complicate energy trade. As a result of the above the shipping world is radically changing by designating new shipping routes, altering their vessel operations, compliance obligations, and investment strategies, while the environmental and decarbonization regulations continue to challenge stakeholders to operate with greater flexibility and risk awareness.

The role of service providers such as Margetis Maritime Consulting is redefined. The restrictions imposed on access to ports and high-risk areas, often require surveys to be conducted through remote or hybrid methods, while ensuring safety and regulatory compliance. Surveyors are now more involved in sanctions verification, confirming vessel ownership, cargo origin, and trading history to support insurers, banks, and charterers in managing their legal and financial exposure.

Changing trade routes and rising war-related risks also increase the need for detailed condition surveys, claims assessments, and monitoring of vessel performance under intensified operational stress. At the same time, geopolitical uncertainty accelerates the adoption of digital tools such as remote inspections, drones, and AI-supported analysis.

In this technological landscape, Margetis Maritime Consulting invests in well experienced surveyors with diverse technical background, with data interpretation skills, digital inspection competences, ESG awareness, and cybersecurity understanding, to

facilitate the stakeholders to operate safely, efficiently, and in compliance with the complex international regulations. The challenge lies in integrating digitalization and artificial intelligence into the core of the survey reporting, while maintaining flexibility in an environment marked by constant regulatory changes and operational risks. The competitive advantage, therefore, for Margetis Maritime Consulting lies in adjusting its services into the constant demands of the market.

3I graduated from the Law Faculty of the University of Athens, studied European and International law at the University of Robert Schuman in Strasburg, successfully completed my postgraduate degree, in the field of commercial and maritime law, as well as studies in Executive Leadership and Sustainability at the Oxford

University and attended the Harvard University in Negotiations and Leadership. I am Associate Member of the Association of Average Adjusters in London and a WISTA HELLAS member, maintaining strong bonds with the international maritime community and industry developments.

I began my career as attorney at law in major corporate and maritime law offices in Athens and Piraeus, advising yachting and shipping companies, working both as inhouse and external legal consultant. Later on with George Margetis we established Margetis Maritime Consulting. For the past twenty one years I am engaged in the field of energy law, a sector that has a significant impact on the shipping industry, as the global energy transition policies lead towards decarbonization.

Through my work in this area I have developed a strong focus on sustainability, environmental legislation, and regulatory transformation, issues

with strong impact on shipping. The maritime sector is directly affected by decarbonization, alternative fuels, emissions regulations, and ESG obligations. This background enables me to approach the marine industry with a deeper understanding of the changes caused by the energy policies on vessel operations, funding, and long-term fleet strategies.

My corporate background enables me also to assist Margetis Maritime Consulting in various other aspects as corporate matters and maintain strong relationships with our stakeholders.

In today's world, where regulations, digital transformation, and geopolitical risks are constantly evolving, combining legal expertise with business leadership is essential. My role focuses on ensuring that Margetis Maritime Consulting stays ahead of the curve, keeping pace with industry trends and adapting to new challenges, always on alert to assist the market stakeholders 24/7.



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DANAE BEZANTAKOU

CEO – Navigator Shipping Consultants, Concept – Founder- YES FORUM & 1st Vice President – International Propeller Club, Port of Piraeus

I believe this shift is the result of both persistence and proof. For many years, women had the capabilities but not always the opportunity or visibility. Today, we are witnessing the outcome of the efforts and determination of previous generations of women who worked with dedication, resilience, and consistency, gradually earning trust and demonstrating their value in leadership roles.

At the same time, the results of long-term initiatives aimed at empowering young people are now becoming clearly visible. Through the YES Forum, which for the past 12 years has been actively engaging with schools and universities, we have been working consistently to connect young people with the shipping industry and broaden their horizons.

Today, we see a new generation of young women entering the sector with confidence, ambition, and a clear sense of belonging. This progress is also evident within shipping itself. We now see women holding key leadership positions, both at an institutional level and within major shipping companies, contributing actively to decision-making and shaping the future of the industry. This is not only encouraging but essential for the sustainable evolution of shipping.

At the same time, organizations increasingly recognize that diverse leadership leads to better decision-making, stronger teams, and more sustainable growth. Leadership today is less about hierarchy and more about vision, empathy, adaptability, and collaboration — qualities that are essential in today's complex and rapidly changing environment.

However, progress is never accidental. It is the result of continuous effort,

strong role models, and initiatives that empower younger generations. Through my involvement with the YES Forum, I see firsthand how important it is to inspire and support young women to believe in their potential and to pursue leadership roles with confidence and determination.

2 Shipping has always operated in the wind of change. Uncertainty is not new to our industry — it is part of its nature. What has changed today is the speed and intensity of geopolitical, economic, and regulatory developments.

Greek shipowners have proven their resilience through a disciplined, long-term approach: investing when markets are low and maintaining stability when markets are strong. This mindset, combined with proactiveness and adaptability, has allowed Greek shipping to remain a global leader across generations.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a defining example. While much of the world paused, shipping continued to operate, highlighting not only the strategic importance of the sector but also the dedication and strength of its people. The human element remains at the heart of shipping — the ability of individuals and teams to adapt, make critical decisions, and ensure continuity under pressure.

In such an environment, planning requires flexibility, awareness, and strong partnerships. Those who remain proactive and invest not only in assets but also in their people are best positioned to navigate uncertainty and shape the future. Adaptability, supported by capable and committed human capital, is the true foundation of sustainable success in shipping.

3 I was born into a family whose core activities

were shipping and tourism. Initially, I believed that my path would be in tourism, which led me to study Tourism Management in UK. However, life and practice brought me into shipping — and since then, my journey has evolved between entrepreneurship and meaningful non-profit initiatives.

For the past 25 years, I have been actively involved in Navigator Shipping Consultants, where every day remains a new learning experience. One of the defining milestones in my professional journey has been the creation and continuous development of the NAVIGATOR – The Shipping Decision Makers Forum, established in 2001. What began as a vision has evolved into a respected platform that has brought together more than 10,500 leaders from the global shipping community, serving as a unique meeting point for dialogue, collaboration, and forward thinking, while this year proudly celebrating its silver anniversary, marking 25 years of continuous presence and contribution.

A turning point in my broader mission was my participation in the International Visitor Leadership Program in the United States, an initiative under the leadership of Hillary Clinton. This experience inspired me to co-found iforU – Greek Mentoring Network, with the goal of supporting and empowering women through mentoring and meaningful connections.

At the same time, observing the phenomenon of brain drain, the demographic challenges and the in Greece and the gap between young people and employment opportunities led me to establish the YES Forum (Young Executives Shipping Forum). For more than a decade, YES Forum has been dedicated to connecting school and



university students and young professionals with the shipping industry, helping them discover opportunities and build confidence in their future.

This mission has expanded to include educational initiatives such as writing the first shipping guide book for children “Destination Sea” and actively contributing to the introduction of shipping awareness within primary and secondary education by adding special course in the curriculum. I strongly believe that investing in people and creating opportunities for the next generation is essential for the sustainability of both our industry and our society.

Entrepreneurship and social contribution are not separate paths for me — they are deeply interconnected. Shipping has taught me resilience, adaptability, and long-term thinking, but it has also given me a strong sense of responsibility to give back and help shape the future. In this context, my active involvement in organizations such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Hellenic U.S. Alumni Association and the International Propeller Club, Port of Piraeus

and the Hellenic Association of Entrepreneurs, has further enriched my journey and commitment to the maritime community.

Above all, being a mother has added a new and profound dimension to my perspective. It reminds me every day that leadership is not only about business success, but about values, responsibility, and contributing to a better future for the next generation.

My journey continues with the same passion and sense of purpose: to support the evolution of shipping, empower people, and contribute to Greece's enduring role as a global maritime leader.

Honoring the day of women, I am inspired by the Glykatzi-Ahrweiler words: “If I had one piece of advice to give to young people, it would be to have a dream and pursue it with their feet on the ground and their eyes on the sky. May we all dare to dream and act with purpose.”

And it is our responsibility to ensure that the next generation has the vision, the courage, and the opportunities to reach them.

KALIA HADJIYIANNI

Business Development & Public Relations TMS Management Group Ltd

1 Women today have attained prominent leadership positions, which serves as a strong role model for younger generations. The fact that they can now see women leading large companies proves that this goal is achievable and within their reach.

The rise in educational attainment has played a decisive role. Women now graduate from universities at high rates and acquire the knowledge and skills required for business leadership.

At the same time, the percentage of those who choose to stay at home as housewives has significantly decreased, as their options have broadened.

Efforts toward gender equality have been notably beneficial, even though the issue has not been completely eliminated.

However, steady progress is evident.

Significant changes have also been made in workplace organization; more flexible working hours and arrangements tailored to the needs of working mothers, such as remote work, help balance professional and family life.

Finally, reforms in parental leave, including extended maternity leave and the introduction of paternity leave, contribute to a more balanced distribution of family responsibilities.

Technology, through the option of teleworking, has become another important ally.

Overall, these developments remove systemic barriers and make leadership more accessible to women, enabling them to successfully combine professional advancement with personal fulfillment.

2 The internationalization of a business, while opening the door to new opportunities, simultaneously introduces a world of complexity and uncertainty.

The more intensely it is interconnected with the global economy and dependent on external factors, the more difficult it becomes to chart steady and predictable steps toward the future.

For companies engaged in international trade or dependent on imports and exports, the smooth operation of supply chains is vital. Any delay or disruption immediately leads to product shortages and rising costs.

These disruptions never remain isolated.

They often operate like a domino effect. Increases in costs and shortages translate into inflationary pressures, which in turn affect the stability of banking systems and investment funds, creating a climate of monetary instability.

In particular, international sanctions imposed on energy-producing countries have immediate and significant consequences.

Surges in fuel prices overturn financial plans, dramatically increasing transportation costs.

At the same time, bans preventing ships or shipping companies from accessing certain markets force route reassessments and, potentially, the use of less efficient ports.

In such a dynamically changing world, a company's strategy requires constant reassessment, careful selection of markets and countries for investment, analysis and certification of suppliers, and realistic calculations of costs and potential delays.

The most critical element, however, is adaptability, the creation of alternative plans so that the business can continue its course when the economic or geopolitical situation suddenly changes, as often happens today.

In conclusion, modern business leadership today is less about predicting the future and more about the ability to move cautiously and always be ready to change direction.

3 My professional journey in shipping began as an opportunity that arose without having been planned. Looking back, however, I can clearly see that every step, seemingly random at the time, now appears remarkably well-structured, built upon solid foundations that I knew how to lay from the very beginning.

My practical involvement in the shipping sector prompted me to dedicate time and attention to continuous education and professional development in the



field. My willingness to learn, expressed through active participation in conferences, exhibitions, events, and discussions with distinguished industry executives, were not mere networking opportunities but lessons of invaluable worth that enriched my perspective and broadened my professional horizons.

My determination to succeed in a field that fascinated me, my ability to adapt to different roles and challenges, and my persistent effort transformed every obstacle into a stepping stone for growth.

Today, I have the pleasure of serving in a role that fulfills me completely, Public Relations & Business Development in shipping. Here, I find the great challenge, the art of building bridges of communication and finding common ground even when situations seem to lead to a dead end. It is precisely this

search for shared understanding that makes this profession so exciting and rewarding in its demands.

Although technology has the power to mediate, simulate, and accelerate processes, I remain convinced that the need for authentic, interpersonal communication will never disappear.

Human beings remain, by nature, social and companionable, not automated and isolated entities. It is this human dimension that makes the art of communication so critical and invaluable.

Finally, this unwavering value of human connection has inspired me to publish more personal works. Whereas in the past the idea of publishing caused me some hesitation, today I experience it as a natural and inevitable expression of that same need for communication and dialogue.

STELLA PALEOLOGOU

Audit and Assurance

Partner, Chartered Accountants Moore Stephens S.A.

The growing presence of women in leadership roles is not a sudden phenomenon; rather it reflects a steady and meaningful transformation shaped by long-term educational advancement, social progress, and the impact of women trailblazers who have paved the way.

Access to higher education, professional qualifications, and international career opportunities have reshaped the business landscape. Today, women enter the corporate world with strong academic foundations, specialized expertise, and the confidence that comes from competing on equal terms. At the same time, social expectations have evolved.

Traditional assumptions about leadership being tied to gender have gradually been replaced by a broader recognition of capability, performance, and professionalism. Families, educational institutions, and corporations increasingly encourage women to pursue ambitious career paths, and younger generations now view female leadership as the norm rather than the exception.

Beyond social and educational progress, leadership itself has evolved.

Modern leadership requires adaptability, emotional intelligence, and collaborative decision-making, qualities that many women bring naturally and which are increasingly valued in today's complex busi-

ness environments. This progress has also been reinforced by the success of pioneering women across industries who have challenged barriers and redefined what leadership looks like.

From boardrooms to global enterprises, these trailblazers have demonstrated that women can lead with strength, vision, and innovation, inspiring future generations to aim higher and opening doors that were once closed.

In the maritime sector, which is traditionally male dominated, this shift is particularly meaningful. Maritime businesses operate in highly technical, regulated, and volatile environments.

The inclusion of women in leadership roles introduces diverse perspectives that enhance strategic thinking. For me, female leadership is not about replacing one model with another. It is about expanding the definition of what leadership can look like.

2 Planning our future business moves in today's environment has become significantly more complex. Geopolitical instability, regulatory shifts, trade disruptions, ESG requirements, and technological transformation have introduced layers of complexity that affect global shipping.

Companies must respond quickly to changes that could affect their operations, often navigating unfamiliar or evolving conditions.

In Maritime, companies must now consider sanctions regimes, evolving reporting standards, environmental compliance frameworks, cybersecurity risks, and capital market expectations, often simultaneously.

In the audit profession, these developments heighten the focus on areas such as going concern assessments, asset valuations, compliance with international regulations, and the transparency of disclosures.

For auditors, the challenge is not only to keep pace with these external developments but also to ensure that financial statements continue to reflect a true and fair view under complex and shifting circumstances.

Our role lies in helping clients navigate uncertainty without compromising transparency, governance, or trust. This requires deeper risk assessment, a strong understanding of global regulatory trends, and close collaboration with management teams.

While uncertainty makes long-term forecasting more complex, it also creates opportunities for firms that are well-structured, well-advised, and forward-thinking.

3 My professional journey has been shaped by international exposure, continuous learning, and the pursuit of professional growth. As a US-trained Certified Public Accountant, I began my career in the



United States, where I gained valuable experience in a highly structured and demanding professional environment that profoundly influenced my standards and work ethic.

Early on, I worked with a Big Four firm, where I gained experience in financial reporting under U.S. GAAP and U.S. GAAS and developed a strong foundation in audit methodology and regulatory compliance. I later expanded my professional experience through a role in financial reporting at Traveler Global Business Payments Inc., where I worked on complex reporting processes within a global financial services organization.

This exposure strengthened my understanding of multinational corporations and cross-border financial frameworks. Despite the opportunities abroad, my strong desire and love for Greece led me to re-

turn, and I was fortunate enough to begin working at Moore Greece.

Over the past 21 years, I have progressed from technical audit roles to leadership as a Partner at Moore Greece. This marked the start of a fulfilling journey in the maritime and professional services sector. Over the years, I have worked extensively with maritime companies under both IFRS and U.S. GAAP, helping them navigate complex financial and regulatory environments.

Today, as a Partner at Moore Greece, I lead audit and advisory engagements while also guiding our Human Resources strategy.

Returning to Greece and establishing my career here has been incredibly rewarding, enabling me to combine global experience with a passion for creating lasting impact for the businesses and people I serve.

NICKIE. N. GIANNOUTSOU

CEO, Chairwoman of the Board Eurochem Group of Companies

1 Today, women have far greater access to education and professional training, and the “stay-at-home” era is steadily fading. As a result, women are increasingly occupying leadership roles across industries and around the world.

Legal and policy changes have helped remove structural barriers: anti-discrimination laws, parental-leave provisions, pay-equity measures, and board-disclosure rules make it easier for women to advance and stay in the workforce.

At the same time, shifting social norms and visible role models—high-profile female CEOs, founders, and community leaders—have normalized female authority beyond the household and into major organizations. Qualities often associated with women—strong organizational skills, careful planning, and emotional intelligence—are now widely recognized as leadership assets.

Practical changes also matter. Flexible work arrangements, digital technology, and growth in sectors like services, healthcare, and entrepreneurship help women balance careers and caregiving.

Last, but not least, the general mindset has shifted; from the outdated “women as mothers” notion to the equality and actual equity amongst male and female prospect. Women are not perceived as baby-givers and home carers, but as equal em-

ployers. And as research increasingly shows the benefits of diverse leadership, the business case for promoting women to top roles becomes even stronger.

2 I suspect (perhaps because of my youth) that planning future business moves today is far harder than before.

Rapid, unpredictable geopolitical shifts — trade disputes, sanctions, regulatory changes, regional conflicts — make long-term forecasts unreliable and raise the risk of sudden disruptions to not only supply chains, but whole markets, and of course, capital flows.

I therefore prefer planning by scenarios, rather than fixed five- or ten-year plans: develop best- and worst-case scenarios, stress-test assumptions, the classic statistical “what if” hypothesis, and then set clear trigger points for rapid course corrections.

From my point of view, I believe that one of the stronger cards to play is diversification; be flexible around suppliers, markets and funding to avoid single-point failures; keep higher liquidity (or the maximum you can have given the very “slowly-paying” shipping market), and shorter planning cycles to preserve optionality.

Real-time intelligence (news, word of mouth, even rumors) and strong local partners matter: continuous monitoring of political, regulatory, and economic indicators provides

early warning, and trusted in-market partners enable faster adaptation. Compliance and reputational risk management are essential — navigating sanctions, export controls, and local laws requires legal vigilance and ethical clarity. In short: planning is tougher but achievable with frequent reassessment, modular strategies that scale, and readiness to pivot quickly as the geopolitical landscape changes.

However, there is always a factor that we can never measure or predict — and this is luck.

3 When I first considered entering the shipping sector, my father asked, “Shipping needs guts — do you have them?”

Although our company has a long history in a highly regulated niche (aviation and military chemicals), he wanted me to understand the reality I was stepping into. My journey has been demanding, and that challenge is what makes me fall in love with my work, more and more each day.

As a young professional I’ve often been underestimated — to technicians I’m “just a chemist,” to finance people I’m “just technical,” to older colleagues I’m “too young,” and to some men I’m

“just a young woman.” Barriers have been constant, but they’ve fueled my determination: I board every vessel I can (anchorage or dry-dock), talk to people, ask questions and don’t fear failure.

Also, being the second generation of a company is both a blessing and a curse; you inherit a solid foundation that you can build on but also a high reputation to live up to.

Our role isn’t about selling; it’s about solving problems and making day-to-day operations easier for shipping companies. The tougher the challenge, the greater the reward in personal growth and in becoming a stronger contributor to the industry.



MARIA FERATI

General Manager A General Group

The progress is real and the numbers reflect it. According to Mckinsey's 2024 Women in the Workplace report, women now hold 29% of C-suite positions globally, up from just 17% in 2015. That shift didn't happen by accident. It happened because enough people, in enough organizations, started making different decisions.

For a long time, leadership was defined in very narrow terms: hierarchical, assertive, transactional. What we're seeing now is a broader understanding of what effective leadership actually looks like in practice. The ability to listen carefully, bring people together around a shared goal, and stay composed when things get complicated are not soft skills anymore. They are what complex organizations genuinely need, and research consistently backs this up. A 2023 Harvard Business Review study found that companies with more women in senior roles outperformed their peers on both profitability and organizational health.

In maritime, the change has been slower. Women still represent around 2% of the global seafaring workforce according to BIMCO, and leadership roles onshore have historically followed the same pattern. But even here, things are moving. The IMO has made gender inclusion a priority, and more shipping companies are recognizing that diverse teams, especially in a sector that faces constant disruption, simply make better decisions.

I won't pretend everything is equal yet, because it isn't. But from where I sit, women who reach leadership positions in industries like ours

have typically earned it through persistence and performance, not circumstance. That tends to produce a certain kind of leader. One who does not take the seat for granted..

2 Planning has become a different exercise than it used to be. You still set a direction, but you hold it a little more loosely than before because the ground keeps moving.

Maritime is one of the sectors most directly exposed to geopolitical shifts, and the past two years have made that very clear. The Red Sea crisis rerouted a significant portion of global container traffic around the Cape of Good Hope, adding 10 to 14 days to transit times and putting serious pressure on operating costs across the board. According to Clarksons Research, shipping rates on key routes swung by over 200% during peak disruption in 2024. For us, that is not a statistic. It is something we felt directly through our clients.

And that is just one piece of it. The war in Ukraine disrupted Black Sea trade routes that many operators had long treated as stable. Sanctions regimes have become more complex and more consequential, requiring a level of due diligence that simply was not necessary a few years ago. Greece sits right at the center of all this, controlling nearly 20% of global fleet capacity, and our shipping community is deeply intertwined with every major trade corridor in the world.

What I've learned is that trying to predict everything is less useful than building the capacity to respond quickly. In practice, that means staying

very close to our clients and partners, diversifying where we can, and being straightforward about what we can commit to and what remains genuinely uncertain. I would rather have an honest conversation with a client about risk than overpromise and underdeliver.

It is not a comfortable environment to operate in. But it does keep you sharp and it has a way of filtering out complacency, which is not always a bad thing.

3 My path to the maritime industry was not a straight line and I think that is actually what makes it interesting.

I started my career in banking. For over a decade, from 2008 to 2020, I worked my way through the sector, progressing from bank teller to Senior Customer Service Officer. Looking back, those years taught me things that no academic program could fully replicate. How to read people, how to manage pressure, how to communicate clearly when the stakes are high, and how to build relationships that genuinely hold up over time. Those skills have proven more valuable in my current role than I ever would have anticipated back then.

What ran parallel to my banking career, and what people are sometimes surprised to learn, is both my academic background and my volunteer life. I hold a Bachelor's in International and Economic Law from Panteion University, a Master's in Crisis and Emergency Management from the University of Athens, and a second Master's in Marine Science and Technology Management from the University of Piraeus. I am currently complet-



ing a CSAP Mastering Program in Systemic Management, focused on Project Management and Digital Transformation.

I mention this not to list credentials, but because each of these programs genuinely shaped how I think. Particularly the crisis management degree, which gave me a framework for decision making under uncertainty that I draw on regularly even today. The volunteer dimension of my life has been equally formative.

Since 2010, I have been an active member of the Hellenic Red Cross, and since 2013 a First Aid and CPR Instructor, with hundreds of hours spent training people and volunteers to spread first aid knowledge across communities. Beyond the classroom, I have accumulated more than 2,000 hours of active volunteering within the Samaritans, Rescuers and Lifeguards Corps, work that is as hands-on and demanding as it sounds.

Before that, between 2007 and 2009, I volunteered with Médecins du Monde. This is not something I do for appearances. Volunteering has given me a perspective on resilience and human dignity that quietly but consistently informs how I lead. I transitioned into the maritime sector in

2021, starting as Business Coordinator of Turbo General LTD and GET STC LTD, both members of A General Group, before stepping into the role of General Manager of the Group in 2023. I entered a sector that is traditionally male dominated. Greece is home to the largest ship owning community in the world, with Greek interests controlling a fleet of over 5,700 vessels, and this is a world where trust is built slowly, face to face, over years.

Building credibility here takes time. It is not enough to know your subject. You have to show up consistently, follow through on what you say, and earn trust the old fashioned way. That suited me, actually. What I have tried to bring to my role is a pragmatic and collaborative approach. Not managing from a distance, but staying close to the work, the people, and the client relationships that everything depends on. I am still building, still learning, and I am genuinely aware of that.

But I think the breadth of my background in law, crisis management, marine science, banking, and humanitarian work has given me an unusual vantage point. And in an industry that rewards adaptability, that feels like the right foundation.

TINA EDVARDSEN

Managing Director, Advisor & Founder, Comet Growth

The rise of female leadership in business is not accidental. It reflects structural change, generational development and the increasing complexity of global markets.

Access to education, international exposure and professional networks has expanded significantly over the past decades.

At the same time, the expectations placed on leaders have evolved. Modern business environments require strategic clarity, cross cultural understanding and the ability to navigate uncertainty.

Leadership today is less about hierarchy and more about direction. It is about aligning people, managing risk and building long term value in complex environments.

In traditionally male dominated sectors such as maritime and energy, we are also seeing a clear shift.

Technical excellence remains fundamental, but strategic communication, stakeholder management and sustainability awareness have become equally important. This broadens the leadership landscape.

I come from a maritime family. My father served as a Chief Engineer, and my husband is a Master Mariner.

Shipping has been part of our family tradition for generations. I grew up understanding both the technical discipline

below deck and the command responsibility carried at sea. That perspective shaped how I view leadership- not as authority, but as responsibility, competence and accountability.

I do not see this development as women replacing men. I see it as leadership evolving.

Companies that integrate competence, diversity and strategic clarity into their core structure are better positioned to compete globally.

2 Geopolitical volatility has become a structural condition for maritime and industrial sectors. Regulation, trade routes, energy markets and investment flows shift rapidly.

This does not eliminate planning, but it changes how we approach it.

Resilience begins with strong local anchoring. When businesses share language, culture and institutional understanding, trust is built faster and collaboration becomes more effective.

Stability is created through clarity and strong relationships.

At the same time, sustainable growth requires international connectivity.

Through Comet Growth, operating between Norway and Greece, we work at this intersection. By connecting maritime environments across borders, we help companies strengthen their positioning and reduce

risk through trusted networks.

In uncertain times, communication is not promotional activity. It is strategic infrastructure. When companies articulate their value clearly, investors, partners and clients gain confidence. Confidence creates stability. Stability enables growth.

3 Throughout my professional life, I have worked at the intersection of communication, business development and maritime industry. A recurring pattern in my career has been collaboration with technology driven startups.

Many are founded by highly skilled engineers who have developed exceptional products. The technology is often world class, yet they struggle commercially.

When asked to explain their value, they present detailed technical in-

sight. The competence is impressive. However, commercial clarity is not always immediate.

My role has been to translate complexity into clarity.

To refine positioning so investors, partners and customers understand not only what the product does, but why it matters and how it creates value.

Technology that is not understood is rarely funded. Value that is not articulated clearly is rarely adopted.

In parallel, I have made it a priority to create opportunities for young professionals, particularly women entering the industry.

We actively collaborate with universities and integrate students into real projects.

Many talented women are told they lack experience when applying for positions.

My perspective is simple: experience must be created.

This has developed into a mutually beneficial structure. They gain practical exposure in an international maritime environment, and we benefit from their updated knowledge, digital fluency and modern approach to systems and tools.

It ensures that our company continuously evolves and operates smartly in a rapidly changing landscape.

Over the past year, we have also strengthened our Athens office with highly competent women. Not because they are women, but because they are strong professionals.

I often hear that it is difficult to find skilled women in our sector.

My experience is that they are there. It requires commitment, attention and a willingness to invest in long term development.

Leadership, for me, is about creating clarity in complexity and opening doors where competence can grow.



DESPOINA XYNOU

Partner, Advocate | Gauci - Maistre Xynou (Legal)

1 Women today have proved themselves in positions of power, carrying considerable decision-making authority and game-changing leadership positions. Women no longer lag behind men in most study areas and occupations. Women's all-round contribution to society needs recognition not proof. Multi-tasking, productivity, consistency, managerial skills and the ability to adapt to new situations are the main characteristics of working women and these have led us to climb the corporate ladder.

We have inherent qualities of empathy and emotional connection and more than competition, we focus on team-work to better ourselves, others and our work. Women over the last years have begun taking the reins in more and more companies worldwide and they have established their position as business leaders. The achievements of women in all business sectors have been very well noted and the recruitment of more women has been encouraged. Despite ingrained stereotypes, there is a growing number of professional women in all industries.

Organisations headed by women report greater team cohesion, more inclusive communication and more co-operative learning in challenging situations caused by conflict, functional diversity and relocation. This is because women put emphasis on collegiality and bonding. I also believe that we are better listeners. All this helps to create stronger and more motivated teams.

There are studies demonstrating that companies with more women in executive positions attained significantly higher profitability on average, than those with low representation. Having said this, I don't think that all female leaders radiate such abilities or that male leaders lack them. Gender parity

in the top management level can lead to thriving enterprises.

The position of women in our society cannot be generalised as throughout the world women receive different amounts of respect. There has been a change but there is still room in eliminating inequality. Although there is still a great deal to be done to eliminate gender inequality, women believe in themselves more and more. I have no doubt that such a sense of empowerment underlined with delivered success will continue to act as a catalyst for redressing gender bias and discrimination and will allow us to witness more female managers in all corporations.

I would like to think that diversity and inclusion are engrained in our law firm's DNA and are in fact the very foundation on which our firm was formed. In reality at Gauci-Maistre Xynou law firm ("GMX") the female population is higher. We are a team of lawyers and the vast majority we are women. I believe that truly successful results will only be reached when we no longer talk of women striving to succeed as much as men do in the business world, but when such success is regarded as natural.

2 Nowadays, we all live in a volatile geopolitical and economic environment. Geopolitical forces, fluctuating commodity prices, environmental regulations, new technologies, trade disputes, new regulations for financing and other similar situations do not make forecasting any easier.

We live in rapidly changing times, especially for businesses, but there are new opportunities, however, there are also new challenges. Globalisation, technology, borderless business environment, workforce diversity, compliance with all new regulations entering into force,

are just a few of the challenges businesses face. Crisis situations can erupt suddenly and without warning. Every crisis has the potential to significantly impact a company's short and long-term reputation, daily operations, and financial performance if the situation is not handled properly.

Recognising and overcoming the difficulties is essential for the growth of every enterprise.

Flexibility, adaptability, training of employees, reorganisation, updating procedures and policies, amongst others, should assist companies to overcome the challenges and also grow and develop. Creativity and welcoming changes will help entrepreneurs to shape this new business landscape. The challenges of globalisation and compliance with all new regulations entering into force, create a difficult environment for global shipping where there are many linked parties to liaise with in order to satisfy clients' needs.

In our firm, we quickly realised that in the current day economic scenario, innovation has become a major factor which leads to success and that out-of-the-box-thinking is important to generate new value and also sustain your business. Enterprises which act upon the opportunities and possibilities for change through innovation in the current volatile and uncertain business environment, will not only survive but they will successfully compete and even flourish in the fluctuating economic conditions. Innovation i.e. being able to come up with new ideas to keep operations, products and services fresh is one of the keys to any successful business.

At GMX innovation is at the centre of our way of doing things, in our corporate functions, business models and processes. Law firms should learn to



innovate to remain competitive, survive in the ever-changing marketplace and ensure that the client's professional needs are met.

3 I hold a Bachelor's degree in law from the Democritus University of Thrace in Komotini, Greece, and after my graduation I continued my studies with an M.Sc. in Maritime Studies at the University of Piraeus, Department of Maritime Studies, Greece. I have been actively practising the legal profession for more than fifteen years both in Greece and in Malta, specialising in maritime, civil and corporate law as well as litigation.

Moving to Malta I started offering my services mainly in maritime and corporate law, ship registration, ship finance, registration of mortgages and international taxation. While in Malta I furthered my studies by completing the professional certificate in taxation delivered by the Malta Institute of Taxation and the Virtual Financial Assets for VFA Agents Programme delivered by the Malta Institute of Management. Currently I am splitting my time between Malta and

Greece, depending on the needs and necessities of our clients. So far, I have been fortunate enough to work with law firms where there was a family environment, especially in the very first years, where I was guided by respected lawyers/colleagues who helped me to understand the intricacies of the legal profession.

Upon my graduation from law school, I was accepted as trainee with the law firm Sinelis-Xiradaki & Associates, established in Volos, my place of origin, and I remained with them for seven years. I joined the GM Group of companies in Malta in November 2012 and in 2015 together with Dr Jean-Pie Gauci-Maistre we founded the law firm Gauci-Maistre Xynou ("GMX"), a boutique law firm offering legal services. There were difficulties at the very beginning but very soon I adapted and I haven't regretted it. It was also challenging to prove my skills to my new associates but my hard work and their willingness to help addressed all difficulties. Dr Jean-Pie Gauci-Maistre, the co-founder and managing partner of GMX believes in women and in our decision-making abilities so our cooperation is perfect.

PAYOT

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EVI SAKKA

Managing Director, Ergon S.A.

1The rise and consolidation of female leadership in the business sector can be attributed to a combination of social, educational, and economic factors.

First, increased access to education, especially higher education, has played a decisive role. More and more women are acquiring specialized knowledge in business administration, economics, and technology, which makes them competitive candidates for leadership positions.

Nevertheless, the gender of an organization's leader should be of limited importance. Effective leadership is defined by skills and qualities that can be found in people of any gender. While some traits may be more commonly associated with one gender than another, dedication, willpower, and hard work can help any individual develop the capabilities required to lead.

In addition, the presence of successful female role models

encourages younger generations. The more women who occupy high-ranking positions, the stronger the belief becomes that leadership is not an exclusive privilege of a particular group.

2Rapid and unpredictable geopolitical developments make business planning significantly more demanding than in the past. The uncertainty arising from international conflicts, changes in trade agreements, sanctions, or shifts in relations between states directly affects markets, investments, and supply chains.

However, this volatility does not mean that planning becomes impossible; rather, it must be carried out with greater flexibility and foresight. Businesses need to develop alternative scenarios, diversify their markets and suppliers, and invest in risk management mechanisms.

At the same time, continuously monitoring international

developments and adapting quickly to new realities are key elements of a sustainable strategy.

Therefore, although the environment is more unstable and complex, companies that adopt flexible and resilient strategies can not only mitigate risks but also seize new opportunities that may emerge.

3My professional journey, like that of many other people, has not been a straight line. It has included several transitions, and my current involvement in shipping is the culmination of a career path that has touched many different sectors. I find that fascinating. It is a conscious and mature choice.

After all, it is a professional field full of challenges. Moreover, for the past 10 years, as Managing Director of ERGON, I have faced another challenge: the management and organization of the company. This dimension of my profes-



sional career has taught me to engage creatively with diversity and to strive toward achiev-

ing the company's goals with great respect and confidence in—all my associates.

MARINA ALIFEROPOULOU

Shipping Lawyer, LL.M., Mediator, PhD candidate

1Women rising to the top of major companies is not a coincidence or a temporary trend. It is the result of several long-term shifts—economic, social, educational, and organizational—that have finally converged to make female leadership not only possible but increasingly expected.

Women now earn a significant share of university degrees in many countries.

Traditional assumptions about leadership being male have weakened.

Societies increasingly value fairness, which encourages companies to promote women. Younger generations expect gender-balanced leadership, putting pressure on organizations. Many companies have formal policies to increase representation of women in leadership.

High-profile female CEOs and founders have shown that women can lead global corporations effectively.

Businesses now recognize that excluding women is not just unfair—it's economically irrational.

Remote work, hybrid models, and flexible schedules have reduced some of the structural barriers that disproportionately affected women. Many

women bypass traditional corporate hierarchies by starting their own businesses.

The rise of female leadership is not about women suddenly becoming more capable—it's about systems finally evolving to recognize and utilize talents that have always existed.

2Geopolitics has always influenced business, but the current environment is a different. It is more complex, and demands a different mindset. Many companies used to rely on stable trade relationships, predictable regulatory environments, and long-term supply chains.

Leaders now have to plan for multiple scenarios instead of one "most likely" future. Geopolitical tensions can disrupt logistics overnight.

Planning becomes a balancing act between efficiency and resilience. Businesses may now become risky. Data laws, tariffs, environmental rules, and investment restrictions are changing even with no warning.

Companies need legal and compliance teams that can pivot quickly, which adds complexity to strategic planning. Fluctuations in energy prices, raw materials, and exchange rates can reshape cost structures overnight.

According to my opinion, companies should prepare flexible strategies. In addition, clarity will help them navigate through the pressure from governments, consumers, and investors.

Planning in today's geopolitical climate is undeniably challenging, but it's not hopeless. It requires a shift from rigid long-term plans to adaptive strategies that can evolve as the world changes.

3Born in Piraeus, I studied in the Athens Law School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and then I became an expertise with an LL.M. in Maritime Law from the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. I am currently pursuing my PhD in maritime law and marine insurance, further strengthening my long-standing commitment to this field. In addition, I am an accredited Mediator before the Greek Ministry of Justice and speak fluent English and French.

My professional journey has more than twenty-six years in the shipping industry, starting with prominent maritime law firms in Piraeus, and continuing as in-house counsel within the Greek shipmanaging companies.

What distinguishes this career is not only the longevity, but



the dual nature: a rigorous legal practice is combined with a strong academic and intellectual background. I am the author of numerous publications, a contributor to journals, and an active participant in conferences and maritime events both in Greece and abroad.

This path has not been an easy one. I navigated a highly competitive and often unequal professional landscape, relying on my own initiative, resilience, and determination

to advance and sustain my work. I still remain of the few professionals who supported alone my career.

My story is of independence, and dedication to maritime law.

I am also the proud mother of Miss Alike Peppas, who is now following her own studies in maritime business management—a testament to the continuity of the maritime tradition across Greek generations.



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VASSILIKI VLACHANTONI

Chief Financial Officer of Langlois Grain Group

Indeed, there is a clear and growing presence of women at the helm of both small and large businesses. This development is neither accidental nor temporary. It is the result of decades of hard work within highly demanding environments. In the business world, and especially in shipping, which has traditionally been a male dominated sector, nothing is taken for granted. Everything is earned.

In my view, there are three key factors that have reshaped the landscape.

First, women have secured substantial access to education and international business exposure. My generation has invested heavily in academic training and has had the courage to pursue positions of responsibility.

Second, the mindset within organizations has gradually evolved, and companies have started to recognize that leadership has no gender. It is defined by competence, strategic thinking, resilience under pressure, and sound judgement.

Third, society itself has matured. The modern family, as I have experienced it personally as a mother of two children, is grounded in partnership and mutual support rather than stereotypes.

I believe no one can any longer question the fact that women who hold leadership positions do so because they have proven their ability to make difficult decisions, manage risk, and inspire teams. This represents a significant achievement for women across all industries, including maritime business, where decision making often carries substantial operational and financial exposure.

2 There is no doubt that geopolitical developments today are evolving

at a pace we have never experienced before, even within alliances that once seemed stable. For an industry such as shipping, which depends on the stability of sea lanes, energy policy, and international trade agreements, this means that uncertainty has become part of our daily operational environment.

However, to be honest, shipping has learned to survive through periods of crisis, whether these involve economic turbulence, armed conflicts, or unforeseen circumstances such as the pandemic we experienced a few years ago. The key is not to predict everything, because that is impossible. The key is adaptability and resilience.

Within our company, we invest in clear corporate structures, strong organization, reliable partnerships, and continuous monitoring of global developments across freight markets and regulatory frameworks. No matter how demanding the conditions may be, I make a conscious effort to remain calm under pressure, evaluate the data carefully, and identify workable solutions.

There is no doubt that businesses require stability. At the same time, leadership is also tested during challenging periods such as the one we are currently navigating. With discipline, foresight, and confidence, challenges can be transformed into opportunities for those who are properly prepared.

3 Although my family had absolutely no connection with shipping, I was fascinated by this field from a very young age. After finishing school, I began my studies at the Technological Educational Institute of Athens in Shipbuilding Technology. My enthusiasm was so strong that, alongside my

studies, I started working for a naval architecture office.

Immediately after graduating, I decided to sit for the entrance examinations to join the Department of Maritime Studies at the University of Piraeus. I succeeded, and at the same time I secured a position in a newly established shipping company.

The company's small size provided me with hands-on exposure to the full scope of operations within a ship management organization overseeing ocean-going vessels. Gaining this experience alongside my academic studies proved highly beneficial for my subsequent career development.

Building on this early foundation, two years after obtaining my degree, and having already gained valuable professional experience, I moved to a larger and well-organized shipping company, where I worked for five years.

This experience gave me the essential foundations to further develop as a well-rounded professional through both hands-on industry exposure and specialized training, helping me stay aligned with ongoing developments in the sector, as shipping is inherently dynamic and constantly evolving due to its global nature.

Following this period, in 2008 I joined Newport SA during its initial establishment phase, when the fleet consisted of a single vessel, and have since progressed to my current position as Chief Financial Officer.

Over the years, I have contributed to the company's operational and financial development, and today I am also involved in the management of almost 38 bulk carriers, alongside a newbuilding vessels



programme in Japanese shipyards.

In this context, my role operates in parallel with the business environment of Langlois Enterprises Ltd, a grain transportation company with an established presence in the shipping market for more than 16 years. From its establishment until the end of 2025, it achieved a carrying capacity of 135,833,000 MTS of grain and operated 2,252 vessels.

As personal development never stops for me, in 2020 I also went on to complete a postgraduate degree at the University of Bolton. Today, it is also an honor for me to serve on the Advisory Board of the Department of Maritime Studies at the University of Piraeus, the department from which my own journey in shipping first began. Over the past year, I have also been serving as a member of the Board of Directors of the Piraeus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI).

In parallel with my professional career, I remain

actively involved in several industry associations, including WISTA Hellas (Women's International Shipping & Trading Association), and the Association of Banking and Financial Executives of Hellenic Shipping. I am also a proud member of the Propeller Club of Piraeus.

At the same time, I have consistently maintained an active presence in public, charitable and cultural initiatives.

Throughout the years, I have served as an elected board member of the Association of Pyrgians of Athens and the Young Women's Christian Association of Neo Faliro.

Equally important to me is my participation in organisations such as the charitable foundation Student Residence of Ilia ("Stegi Ileion Spoudaston") of the Holy Metropolis of Ilia, the cultural division of the Young Women's Christian Association of Neo Faliro, the European Women's Union and the organisation Melathron Ecumenical Hellenism.

SAMANTHA LOURANDOU

Purchasing Manager Atlantic Bulk Carriers Management Ltd

Over the past decade, there has been a notable increase in the number of women attaining the highest corporate positions.

Nevertheless, female representation still falls significantly short of parity, with figures considerably lower than those of their male counterparts.

The factors contributing to this shift are not merely ideological; they are rooted in quantifiable business incentives, regulatory changes, and evolving standards of corporate governance.

Research has demonstrated a correlation between diversity and performance, prompting shareholders and board members to regard the appointment of women leaders as a strategic business imperative.

Furthermore, diversity has become intertwined with ESG metrics, thereby rendering the promotion of women into leadership roles an integral part of risk management and long-term value strategies.

Some countries have also introduced legal frameworks mandating a certain percentage of female representation on boards.

In addition to the changing corporate landscape, there is a global social and cultural transformation, with an increasing number of women engaging in higher education and MBA programs,

thereby broadening the pool of qualified talent.

The evolution of equality trends can also be attributed to organizations operating internationally that raise awareness about the benefits of inclusion and meritocracy, advocating for the dismantling of systemic barriers.

The advent of social media further acts as a lever for corporate transparency, as public accountability has become more readily enforceable than in the past.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that equal opportunities are intrinsically linked to meritocracy; although the numbers are improving, they remain disappointingly low.

2 Adaptability and resilience are the defining capabilities of modern business.

In the supply chain sector, where I am professionally engaged, optimization is essential to achieving financial targets and ensuring on-time deliveries.

Yet under current circumstances, planning has become increasingly difficult—and forecasting even more so—making daily operations significantly more complex.

Complexity, however, comes at a cost. That cost can either accumulate through delays and inefficiencies, or it can be contained through

quick, well-informed decisions and rapid responses to emerging needs and shifting policies.

“Business as usual” no longer has a place in today’s environment; each day presents new variables and fresh challenges. At the same time, technology offers a wide range of tools capable of reducing the cost of complexity.

Advanced analytics, automation, and intelligent systems can support better decision-making,

streamline repetitive tasks, and free up valuable time and resources.

By leveraging these tools, organizations can transform operational pressure into strategic advantage.

Mitigating challenges by turning them into opportunities is the pathway forward in this fast-changing environment. This is precisely where adaptability becomes not just a competitive advantage, but a necessity.

3 My professional journey is rooted in a solid academic foundation, holding a BSc in Shipping from the University

of Piraeus and an MSc in International Trade and Transport.

Specializing in procurement for more than twenty years has taught me the value of transparency, strategic negotiation, planning and teamwork.

I am a firm advocate for lifelong learning, constantly pursuing new certifications to stay ahead of industry trends.

Beyond my professional life, I am a mother of two teenagers, a role that keeps me grounded and fuels my desire to build a more inclusive and equitable industry for the next generation.



DR KATERINA KONSTA

CEO, World Maritime Academy

The question was never whether women could lead. The question was always whether the world was ready to follow.

The rise of female leadership is not a trend or a moment — it is the natural result of smarter societies, wiser policies, evolving values, and the undeniable reality that when you combine knowledge, emotional intelligence, and ambition, leadership has no gender.

Thus, a Demographic shifts have quietly reshaped the talent landscape — as populations evolve and birth rates change, organizations can no longer afford to overlook half of their potential leadership pool.

Simultaneously, we are witnessing a generation of entrepreneurs and business owners with daughters, men who have watched a capable woman and suddenly understand, personally and deeply, why equal opportunity matters. That shift in perspective at the family level translates into cultural and organizational change.

Societies and business structures are also maturing. Policies, regulations, and governance frameworks have emerged as critical pillars in this transformation — increasingly recognizing that diversity is not a gesture of courtesy, but a measurable competitive advantage. Boards and regulators are demanding greater accountability and transparency, and forward-thinking businesses are not merely responding — they are leading the change.

Then there is the growing recognition of emotional intelligence and soft skills as core leadership competencies — not secondary ones. Empathy, collaboration, communication, and resilience have moved from the margins to the center of

what defines an exceptional leader. These are qualities that women have long demonstrated but that were historically undervalued in favor of more transactional leadership styles.

Increased visibility has played a transformative role. The rise of prominent female leaders across industries — from technology to finance to retail — has fundamentally shifted perceptions of who belongs in the boardroom. When women see capable, accomplished leaders who reflect their own potential, ambition is validated and ceilings begin to crack. The maritime sector is no exception. Representation matters because it transforms the exceptional into the attainable. Every female maritime executive who speaks at an international forum, every woman appointed to a senior role at an organization or a company in the shipping cluster, sends a clear and powerful message to the next generation: this industry is yours to lead.

Finally, technology has been a quiet equalizer. It has dismantled geographical barriers, created new industries built on meritocracy rather than legacy networks, and given women platforms to build influence, credibility, and businesses entirely on their own terms.

Yet, beyond institutions and industry icons, the most powerful source of inspiration is often far closer to home, for women to leading either small businesses or global corporations.

For me, the most profound source of inspiration was my mother. She married young, immediately after finishing school, although being an A-class student, and dedicated her life entirely to her family. Yet, not a single day passed without her telling me, with un-

wavering conviction: you will go to university — no matter what. The sky may fall and the earth may rise, but you will go to university. Despite living a life largely shaped by the expectations of her time and society, she was absolutely determined that mine would not be. In that quiet, daily insistence — repeated with love and absolute certainty — she changed the entire trajectory of my life.

And I believe it is those mothers — women whose mission was their family, who perhaps never had the opportunities they deserved — who have been among the most powerful forces behind the rise of women in leadership. They carried the dream forward through their daughters. Because education is the foundation of it all. When you are educated, you break the frontier. You develop the confidence to step up, to raise your hand, to pursue the next level.

Education alone may not be sufficient — the policies, the culture, the networks must also be in place — but when those conditions align, education becomes the accelerator. It transforms potential into performance and ambition into achievement.

My mother never led a corporation or commanded a vessel. But she understood, with absolute certainty, that knowledge is the one thing no one can take from you — and the one thing that opens every door.

That is where leadership begins. Not always in the boardroom. Sometimes, at the kitchen table, in the words of a mother who dared to dream beyond her own horizon.

2Managing geopolitical volatility is indeed one of the most complex dimensions of leading an educational institution in



the maritime sector today. Shipping has always been inherently global — and when the world shifts, our industry feels it first and feels it deeply. Sanctions, rerouting of trade lanes, evolving flag state relationships, and realigning alliances all have direct and immediate implications for maritime education and training.

At World Maritime Academy, our response to this uncertainty is rooted in something that transcends geopolitical borders: knowledge. Core shipping knowledge does not become obsolete when trade routes change or alliances fracture. If anything, volatility makes it more valuable. The professionals who manage uncertainty best are those with the deepest foundations.

This is precisely why our collaboration with ISSA — the International Ship Suppliers and Services Association — as the training arm of ISSA — is so strategically significant. Partnerships with globally respected organizations allow us to remain relevant, responsive, and con-

nected to the real-world challenges that maritime professionals face on the ground, regardless of where geopolitical winds are blowing.

What keeps us steady is our commitment to a principle we hold without compromise: what we promise is exactly what we provide. In an era of uncertainty, trust becomes the most valuable currency — for governments, for corporations, and for the individual professionals who invest in their education with us. Our ethical foundation is not a marketing statement. It is the architecture of everything we do.

Consequently, while I cannot predict geopolitical developments — no one can — I can build an institution that is agile enough to adapt, principled enough to be trusted, and academically rigorous enough to remain indispensable. In volatile times, integrity and knowledge are the most resilient business strategy of all. And this is only the beginning.

More collaborations are on the horizon — partner-

ships with strong, globally respected organizations that share our unwavering commitment to core shipping knowledge and the highest ethical standards. We are deliberately selective in who we align with, because a partnership is not merely a commercial arrangement — it is a statement of shared values. Every institution we choose to collaborate with must reflect the same promise we make to our learners and customers: that what is offered is substantive, credible, and delivered with absolute integrity.

In a world where uncertainty is the new normal, we are building an ecosystem of trusted partners — each one bringing

deep industry expertise, each one aligned with our mission to advance maritime education at the highest level. The organizations joining us on this journey are not peripheral players. They are core voices in the global shipping community, and together we intend to set a new benchmark for what maritime education and professional development can and should look like.

Watch this space — because the best is yet to come.

3 The salt air found me before I could walk. Born into a shipping family from Vrontados (Chios Island), I was three years old the first time I stepped aboard a bulk

carrier. I once had my sights set on becoming a lawyer — but looking back, my path feels less like a choice and more like destiny. How could it have been anything else? My family tree reads like a maritime registry, populated almost entirely by seafarers. Shipping was who we were. That identity shaped everything.

My academic path flowed as naturally as a tide — undergraduate studies, postgraduate qualifications, and ultimately a PhD, all anchored in maritime business, logistics, and policy across universities in both the UK and Greece.

Twenty years of international experience later, I

founded the World Maritime Academy www.e-wma.com, bringing world-class distance learning to maritime professionals across the globe. Yet, achievements and accolades only tell part of the story.

I built a career rooted in purpose — consulting, educating, establishing shipping departments from the ground up, forging collaborations between institutions across borders, authoring textbooks, contributing to peer-reviewed research, and serving as an examiner for leading maritime associations.

What moves me most isn't the podiums or the publications. It's the stu-

dents, the trainees, the mentees also. I mentor aspiring maritime students and professionals at the University of Plymouth.

I champion women in the industry through the Women on Top initiative and WISTA's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Because I know what it means to love an industry that wasn't always designed with you in mind — and to transform it from the inside, one classroom, one mentee, one conversation at a time.

Now, I spend my life educating and consulting — making sure the sea welcomes everyone who carries the knowledge, the skill, and the will.

MARIE-CLARE BOYES

Global Sales Director Marine, Oil & Gas, C Teleport

1 The rise of female leadership roles in the business sector can be attributed to a combination of social, economic, educational, and organizational factors that have evolved over time. Access to education and professional trainings and courses can play a crucial role in leadership. Today, more women have access to pursue higher education, business degrees, and specialized skills than ever before, enabling them to pursue effectively for leadership positions.

Changing social attitudes toward gender roles have reduced traditional barriers that once limited women to domestic roles. Access to information and awareness of females in leadership positions can create aspirations for women to successfully pursue executive positions.

More networking discussions and social events open the narrative and create visibility for women to create dialogue.

There is more opportunity to share experiences and

strategies for advancement. Equal opportunity laws, diversity and inclusion programs, mentorship schemes, and flexible work arrangements have made workplaces more accommodating and have helped women balance professional and personal responsibilities.

The presence of successful female role models has created a positive cycle. Women leaders such as CEOs and entrepreneurs inspire younger generations, challenge stereotypes, and demonstrate that women can lead effectively at the highest levels of business.

Seeing more and more women in leadership roles reinforces that it is an attainable aspiration for women to pursue.

2 The global landscape is evolving rapidly, and that naturally creates uncertainty. The geopolitical climate is undeniably complex, with alliances, regulations, and market conditions shifting faster than we've seen in previous decades. Rapid policy changes, from sanctions and trade restrictions to

evolving visa regimes, along with airspace closures, diplomatic tensions, energy price fluctuations, and regulatory adjustments across regions, all directly impact our daily operations.

That said, long term success today depends less on predicting stability and more on preparing for change. Volatility is becoming the new normal in global business.

It requires organizations to stay agile, think proactively, and continuously learn from previous developments to strengthen day to day decision making.

3 My professional journey in the marine travel industry spans over 30 years, beginning during my university years at Griffin in London, where I developed a strong foundation in the business and was mentored by my father, who was working in the industry.

Watching him navigate complex business challenges with integrity and focus left a lasting impression, and those

early lessons in diligence, relationship building, and strategic thinking became the foundation of my own career.

I started in London and later moved to Athens, which gave me the chance to experience different markets and merge my British and Greek roots within two cultures and ways of doing business.

Over more than three decades, I've witnessed the sector evolve from a largely manual, relationship driven industry to a tech enabled, global operation.

That transformation has reinforced the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and innovation.

Being in a traditionally male dominated industry has taught me that leadership is as much about listening, mentoring, and empowering others as it is about decision making.

Today, my focus remains on creating practical solutions, supporting teams, and shaping the future of marine and energy travel a sector I've been passionate about for my entire career.



MARIANTHI KAFETZI

Partner, Prescience Ex Vice President of the BoD of Olympia & Bequest Committee - Zappeion Megaro

The rise of women in leadership across global business, including shipping, reflects structural progress, economic evidence, and a generational shift in how leadership is defined.

Shipping has long been male-dominated, particularly in technical and seafaring roles. Today, however, women are increasingly visible in executive management, maritime law, finance, classification, and flag administration. They are no longer exceptions, but integral to strategic decision-making across the sector.

Three factors are driving this evolution.

First, pipeline development. Greater access to maritime education, executive training, and mentoring initiatives has created a stronger cohort of qualified women entering both operational and shore-based roles. The industry is benefiting from a broader and more diverse talent pool.

Second, performance outcomes. Research consistently shows that diverse leadership teams enhance governance, risk management, and long-term profitability — all critical in a capital-intensive and globally exposed industry such as shipping. In an environment shaped by regulatory complexity, decarbonisation targets, and geopolitical volatility, varied perspectives support more resilient decision-making.

Third, institutional commitment. Organisations such as the International Maritime Organization actively promote gender inclusion, while leading maritime companies

increasingly view diversity as a competitiveness imperative rather than a social initiative.

From our perspective at GM International Services Limited, where leadership has evolved across generations since the company's founding by John A Gauci Maistre, the most forward-looking shipowners prioritise competence, strategic judgement, and integrity above outdated leadership models. The sector is becoming more merit-driven and internationally minded.

Ultimately, leadership in shipping requires resilience, foresight, and the ability to navigate uncertainty. These qualities are not gender-specific. The growing presence of women strengthens the industry's capacity to adapt and ensures its leadership better reflects the global communities it serves.

2 Shipping has always been closely tied to geopolitics, but the speed and scale of recent developments have made strategic planning significantly more complex. Trade routes, sanctions regimes, energy markets, and environmental regulation are shifting in ways that directly affect asset values, compliance exposure, and operational risk.

We have seen how quickly conditions can change. Tensions in key chokepoints such as the Red Sea and the Black Sea have altered routing decisions and insurance costs almost overnight. Sanctions and regulatory updates require immediate due diligence. At the same time, the IMO's decarbonisation agenda demands long-

term capital investment in an environment where fuel pathways and regulatory details are still evolving.

In this climate, planning is no longer about forecasting a single trajectory. It is about resilience. Owners must think in scenarios — assessing jurisdictional stability, regulatory credibility, and long-term compliance implications before making structural decisions.

From a ship registration perspective, volatility has elevated the importance of flag choice. A flag state today is not simply an administrative consideration; it is part of a vessel's risk profile. Legal certainty, international recognition, responsiveness, and alignment with European and global regulatory frameworks are increasingly decisive factors.

Through our work at GM International Services Limited, we help clients navigate this complexity with confidence and regulatory certainty. Malta's established maritime infrastructure and EU framework provide continuity in an uncertain environment.

Volatility undoubtedly increases complexity. However, it also reinforces a core truth about shipping: resilience is engineered through careful structuring, trusted partnerships, and informed decision-making. Those who approach uncertainty with discipline and foresight are best positioned not only to navigate disruption, but to capitalise on it.

3 After qualifying and practising as a



barrister in England, I moved on to hold senior positions including Head of Legal, MLRO, and Company Secretary across various financial and credit institutions in Malta.

Those years shaped my understanding of governance, risk, and regulatory discipline in highly scrutinised environments.

As global compliance standards intensified, particularly around sanctions, due diligence, and financial transparency, I developed a strong regulatory and risk management focus. Over time, it became clear that these competencies were increasingly relevant beyond banking.

My transition to GM International Services Limited was therefore both strategic and organic. Shipping today operates in an environment of heightened regulatory oversight, geopolitical sensitivity, and complex compliance obligations. My background in developing regulatory frameworks and overseeing structured governance systems allowed me to add immediate value at a time when the industry is navigating more

stringent international requirements.

Now serving as Managing Director while also heading the legal function, I focus on strengthening internal compliance structures, enhancing due diligence processes, and ensuring that our clients operate within robust and internationally recognised frameworks. Legal precision and regulatory foresight are no longer auxiliary functions in maritime business, they are central to long-term resilience. Building upon the foundations established by my father, John A Gauci Maistre, I am committed to evolving the company to meet contemporary challenges, ensuring clients benefit from both continuity and innovative solutions. Continuity and modernisation must coexist.

For me, leadership is about preparedness, accountability, and adaptability. In a sector as globally exposed as shipping, credibility and regulatory strength are strategic assets. My journey reflects that conviction, and the belief that strong governance underpins sustainable growth.

DESPINA D. VOURLIDI

Financial Manager and Solicitor Marpo Group of Companies Worldwide Corrosion Services Ltd

The increasing presence of women in leadership positions within the business sector can be attributed to a combination of educational, institutional, and socio-cultural developments. Greater access to higher education and specialized professional training has enabled women to acquire the technical, financial, and legal expertise necessary to compete effectively for senior management roles. For example, a growing number of women now hold MBAs, engineering degrees, and professional certifications in finance, law, and logistics, which have traditionally been gateways to executive positions.

In traditionally male-dominated industries such as maritime and shipping, this shift is particularly evident, as women increasingly combine technical competence with strategic and regulatory knowledge. In the marine industry, this is evident in the growing number of women qualified as naval architects, marine engineers, maritime lawyers, and port management specialists. For example, women now serve as fleet managers, port operations directors, and maritime safety auditors, roles that require both technical competence and regulatory expertise under international frameworks such as SOLAS and MARPOL. The appointment of female executives in global shipping firms and port authorities illustrates how expertise, rather than gender, is becoming the primary criterion for leadership.

Additionally, contemporary management theory and empirical research increasingly support the value of diversity in leadership. Diverse executive teams are associated with improved governance, enhanced risk management, and more balanced strategic

decision-making. For instance, multinational corporations with gender-diverse boards have been shown to demonstrate stronger compliance practices and more sustainable long-term planning. In sectors where safety, compliance, and long-term asset integrity are paramount—such as energy, aviation, and maritime transport—leadership approaches that emphasize accountability, collaboration, and systematic risk assessment contribute significantly to organizational resilience. For instance, shipping companies with gender-diverse leadership teams have demonstrated stronger compliance cultures and more proactive approaches to risk assessment and accident prevention. Female leaders are often recognized for fostering inclusive decision-making environments, which can reduce operational blind spots and improve crisis response.

Finally, evolving cultural norms and institutional frameworks have facilitated the normalization of female leadership. Policies promoting equal opportunity, mentorship programs, and corporate governance reforms have helped remove structural barriers to advancement. As more women demonstrate sustained success in complex managerial roles—such as leading multinational corporations, serving as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, or heading global financial institutions—they challenge traditional stereotypes and create visible role models. Leaders such as Indra Nooyi in the consumer goods sector or Mary Barra in the automotive industry exemplify how merit-based leadership transcends gender expectations.

International bodies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have promoted gender equality through

initiatives like the “Women in Maritime” program, encouraging capacity building and leadership development. As a result, women increasingly occupy senior roles as port authority executives, heads of classification societies, and maritime regulators. High-profile examples include female CEOs of global shipping companies and women leading national maritime administrations, whose sustained success challenges traditional gender stereotypes. This cumulative effect has contributed to the gradual establishment of women as credible and influential leaders across global business environments.

2Rapidly evolving geopolitical conditions make planning future business moves increasingly complex, particularly in globally exposed industries such as shipping, maritime services, energy, and industrial operations. Geopolitical instability directly affects trade routes, supply chain reliability, regulatory frameworks, investment decisions, and operational risk, reducing predictability even within long-standing alliances.

Recent developments illustrate this challenge clearly. Maritime security incidents in the Red Sea, the Russia–Ukraine war’s disruption of Black Sea shipping and grain exports, and ongoing US–China trade tensions have reshaped global trade flows, altered shipping routes, and increased costs.

At the same time, shifts in trade policy and protectionism—such as the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and Asia-Pacific trade agreements like RCEP and CPTPP—add further layers of regulatory and compliance complexity for businesses operating



across multiple jurisdictions.

In response to these pressures, companies are increasingly reconsidering supply chain strategies through reshoring and nearshoring to reduce exposure to tariffs and geopolitical disruptions. Environmental regulation is another critical factor: measures such as the IMO 2023 Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) are forcing shipping companies to invest in cleaner fuels and adopt practices like slow steaming, raising costs and affecting operational planning.

Given this environment, traditional long-term forecasting has become less effective. Strategic planning now depends more on flexibility, scenario analysis, and robust risk management frameworks. From my experience in shipping, financial management, and maritime law, regulatory preparedness and compliance resilience are essential to sustaining operations and protecting asset value under volatile conditions. While geopolitical uncertainty undeniably increases complexity, it also highlights the strategic importance of services that enhance safety, reliability, and asset longevity. Organizations that emphasize technical excellence, regulatory awareness, and proactive risk mitigation are better positioned to adapt, maintain continuity, and remain competitive despite ongoing global uncertainty.

3With many years of experience in the shipping industry and as the daughter of a master mariner, I have developed a deep respect for seafarers and their unwavering commitment to safety in maritime operations.

I hold a BA in Accounting and Business from the University of Sunderland, UK (1998), an MBA in International Financial Management (1999), and an LLM in Maritime Law, which I completed in 2019.

I am married to Dr. Alexandros Glykas, founder and owner of DYNAMARINE Ltd., a company specializing in the risk management of Ship-to-Ship (STS) transfers. We have a 17-year-old daughter who is a national champion in water skiing.

Since 2005, I have been managing Worldwide Corrosion Services (WCS), an Athens-based company specializing in cathodic protection solutions.

WCS provides engineering, design, installation, and maintenance services for pipelines, tanks, marine structures, and industrial facilities.

Through advanced corrosion prevention technologies, the company helps ensure the longevity, integrity, and safety of metal structures exposed to harsh environments, delivering tailored, high-performance solutions that enhance asset durability.

SARAH ENGERER

Barrister-at-law GM International Services Limited

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ELENI SKAFIDA CETINDAG

SALES & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER at ADAMAR INT. MARITIME SERVICES Inc.

1The rise of female leadership in the business sector is one of the most significant social and economic developments of recent decades. The fact that today women lead not only small businesses but also large multinational companies is not a coincidence, it is the result of many factors.

First of all, Improved access to education has equipped women with the skills and qualifications needed for leadership roles, and it is therefore natural that they are increasingly distinguishing themselves in senior positions.

In addition, the gradual change in social perceptions regarding gender roles has contributed significantly. The stereotypes that confined women to specific fields have begun to collapse. Society now recognizes that leadership abilities are not related to gender but to an individual's qualifications, diligence, and vision.

The role of legislation and equal opportunity policies is also important.

Nowadays, many countries have implemented measures and established legal frameworks to promote women's participation in senior management positions. At the same time, businesses themselves acknowledge that diversity in leadership enhances creativity and decision-making, resulting in high competency and overall success.

Last but not least, the personal drive of many women who claimed their place in traditionally male-dominated fields should not be overlooked. With confidence, innovative ideas, persistence, and determination—based on cooperation and empathy—they have succeeded in establishing new, successful and highly promising models of leadership.

2The rapid geopolitical developments of recent years have made business planning particularly demanding. Especially, in maritime sector, changes in international relations, trade tensions, sanctions, regional conflicts, energy realignments and fluctuations in fuel and raw material prices create an environment of increased uncertainty.

In this context, long-term planning becomes more complex than ever in the past.

Nevertheless, this difficulty does not make planning impossible; rather, it makes it more strategic. For a company in shipping industry which is operating in an international environment and serving vessels of different nationalities, compliance with regulations and sanctions is critical and requires constant monitoring. In order to respond to the challenges arisen daily, flexibility, strong presence in multiple markets, partners' diversification and continuous monitoring of international developments are essential. Speed of response, geographical flexibility, and effective risk management are the key tools for sustainable growth in an unstable geopolitical environment.

By investing in data analysis, risk control and assessment and the creation of resilient structures we are one step ahead and create greater chances of responding effectively to challenges. In conclusion, planning in an unstable geopolitical environment is undoubtedly more difficult and demanding.

However, with the right strategy, foresight, and adaptability, uncertainty can be transformed not only into a challenge but also into an opportunity for innovation and enhanced competitiveness.

3Adaptability, commitment to lifelong learning, and the drive to seize every opportunity have always been at the core of my professional journey. I studied Psychology and later completed my Master's degree in Mass Psychology, which enabled me to combine insights into human behavior with strategic behavioral skills. While I began practicing psychology in Athens, fourteen years ago I relocated to Turkey—a period that proved both demanding and transformative. Despite the challenges, I leveraged my academic background and proficiency in English, initially working as an English teacher.

The turning point in my career came when I received an offer for a position where I could utilize both my native language, Greek, and English while remaining based in Turkey. That is how I joined Adamar, working as a Sales Rep-

resentative in the shipyards sales department. I was fortunate to enter the industry during one of its busiest and most demanding periods in Türkiye, a few months before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, when shipyards were operating at their peak. Although it was a challenging time, it proved to be invaluable for my professional growth.

I had the privilege of collaborating with the right people at the right time—professionals who guided and supported me throughout my entire journey. During this busy period, I had the opportunity to gain extensive knowledge directly from the source in a relatively short time and, along with my colleagues to contribute to creating a continuously growing, successful and dynamic work environment. With strong personal dedication, persistence, and a deep eagerness to learn, within four years, I was promoted to the position of Sales Manager for the shipyards.

The next major step was undertaken with the en-

couragement and support of Mr. Taner Topkara, owner of Adamar, whose trust and guidance have always played a pivotal role in my professional development.

With his backing, we proceeded to establish our branch office in Greece, where for the past three years, I have been actively operating as Sales & Business Development Manager, maintaining a strong professional presence in both Greece and Turkey.

Overall, my journey has been one of continuous growth, shaped by challenges, international exposure, and meaningful collaborations that have strengthened me both professionally and personally.

Looking ahead, I remain committed to sharing my experience and expertise, confidently facing upcoming challenges, identifying and expanding international business opportunities, and contributing to organizational growth while embracing every opportunity for ongoing professional development.



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In today's world, it is becoming increasingly common for women to lead not only small businesses but also major global corporations. Recent developments clearly confirm this trend, as more women assume top executive roles across major industries.

For example, ADNOC Gas announced the appointment of Fatema Al Nuaimi as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective January 1, 2025. Al Nuaimi, an accomplished industry leader with extensive experience within ADNOC's gas and energy sectors, has been entrusted with steering the company's ambitious growth strategy, focusing on business expansion, decarbonisation, and future-proofing operations. Similarly, Collette Hirstius assumed the responsibility of President of Shell USA, in addition to her existing role as Executive Vice President, Gulf of America, effective August 1, 2025. In another landmark appointment, BP's board recently named Meg O'Neill as its first female Chief Executive Officer, marking a historic milestone in the company's 116-year history and making her the first woman to lead any of the world's top five oil companies. Furthermore, Karin Orsel was appointed the first female President in the history of the European Community Shipowners' Association (ECSA), beginning her two-year term on January 1, 2024, with Mikki Koskinen joining as Vice-President.

These examples highlight a broader structural shift. Several key factors have contributed to the rise and establishment of female leadership in the business sector:

First, there has been a significant increase in diversity within executive

boards. Companies increasingly recognize that diverse leadership teams contribute to improved decision-making, innovation, and overall performance.

Second, modern organizations place greater emphasis on soft skills and transformational leadership. Qualities such as emotional intelligence, empathy, communication, and collaboration are now considered essential leadership competencies, and these are areas where women have often demonstrated strong capabilities.

Third, corporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, combined with shareholder pressure, have made companies more accountable for promoting gender equality. As a result, executives are increasingly selected based on merit, performance, and skills rather than gender.

Finally, educational advancements and the growing presence of female role models in business have encouraged more women to pursue leadership positions. Greater access to higher education and professional development has equipped women with the necessary knowledge, confidence, and expertise to assume high-level decision-making roles.

Historically, women striving to establish themselves professionally were often expected to conform to traditionally male leadership models. Due to deeply rooted stereotypes, leadership was associated with traits such as strictness, emotional detachment, authoritarianism, and absolute control.

However, modern leadership has evolved significantly. Today's

leadership model emphasizes characteristics more aligned with inclusive and human-centered management, such as active listening, empathy, inspiration, and employee recognition.

Research and real-world experience demonstrate that women in leadership positions often exhibit what is described as the core elements of empowerment: confidence, authenticity, and resilience. Women leaders frequently possess high emotional intelligence, strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to foster teamwork and cohesion. These qualities enable organizations to operate more effectively, particularly in complex and rapidly changing environments. Moreover, women leaders increasingly possess advanced digital competencies and "green" skills, along with heightened awareness of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles. This contributes to more sustainable and socially responsible corporate strategies.

The benefits of increasing female representation in leadership are substantial. Firstly, it positively impacts women throughout the corporate hierarchy. Female leadership contributes to improved working conditions, reduction of the gender pay gap, increased female employment rates, and the implementation of policies addressing workplace harassment and discrimination. Secondly, gender balance in leadership improves business performance. Organizations benefit from enhanced corporate governance, improved team effectiveness, increased innovation, and more balanced decision-making that reflects broader societal needs. Following the COVID-19



crisis, fully utilizing the entire talent pool—including both women and men—has become more important than ever. Numerous studies confirm that companies with gender-diverse leadership teams demonstrate stronger financial performance, greater profitability, and more sustainable long-term growth.

Despite significant progress, female representation in senior leadership remains relatively low in certain traditionally male-dominated industries, particularly maritime, shipping, and trading.

The IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey (2024) highlights both progress and ongoing challenges. A total of 1,206 women serve on the boards of surveyed maritime organizations, representing 34% of board members. However, some subsectors have experienced declines. Female representation in bunkering dropped from 33% in 2021 to 9% in 2024. In IT hardware and electronic equipment, representation fell from 20% to 0%. Similarly, marine engineering, ship repair, and shipyards saw a decrease from 35% to 14%. Conversely, other subsectors have demonstrated substantial progress. Female

board representation increased significantly in advertising, marketing, and public relations, rising from 29% to 63%. Port operations and services increased from 21% to 53%, while ship brokers and charterers rose from 18% to 47%. Geographic disparities also remain evident. Countries such as Denmark and Spain report female board representation below 20%, while countries including China, South Africa, and the Philippines report representation between 41% and 60%.

Overcoming the barriers that limit women's access to leadership positions will require sustained effort, organizational commitment, and strategic investment. Modern businesses seeking long-term growth and competitiveness must recognize that gender equality is not merely a social responsibility but a strategic investment. Diversity enhances innovation, strengthens organizational resilience, and improves overall performance. Ultimately, it is clear that innovation and sustainable success are driven by diversity rather than uniformity. Organizations that embrace gender-inclusive leadership will be better positioned to navigate future chal-

lenges and achieve lasting success.

2 Geopolitical events are reshaping global shipping in profound and unpredictable ways. The geopolitical competition between the “Oceanic” (USA, EU, Japan) and the “Eurasian” (China, Russia, Iran) coalition has exposed maritime trade to unprecedented risks. The war in Ukraine is a classic example. Russia and Ukraine have deliberately attacked from both sides commercial ships and maritime infrastructure to achieve strategic goals, making the northern side of the Black Sea dangerous for commercial shipping. The Red Sea is a second “red” maritime zone as a result of this geopolitical competition. The Houthi (allies of Iran) have been effective enough to disrupt the maritime trade in the Red Sea, forcing ships (mainly the largest ones) to avoid the Suez Canal and change course. The choice of the route bypassing Africa -via the Cape of Good Hope- has increased the duration of the journey, and correspondingly the (fuel and other) cost.

A second dimension of the geopolitical competition affecting maritime transport has to do with the trade war that began with the United States’ decision in early 2025 to impose import tariffs on a vast range of products from China, Canada, Mexico and E.U. Trade wars traditionally reduce trade volume and at the same time increase bureaucracy and costs. And despite the partial de-escalation of trade tension between the US and China with mutual concessions regarding the imposition of tariffs, the basic restrictions on bilateral trade remain. Also, the strategy of decoupling Western economies from China is leading to restructuring of supply chains (“onshoring”, “nearshoring”, “friendshoring”) and (to) significant rearrangements in global maritime trade: need for new infrastructure, port modernization, investment in new trade routes etc).

2026 finds global shipping in a peculiar transitional phase. The continuation of the conflict in Ukraine,

the uncertain course of sanctions on Russia and Iran, the prolonged insecurity in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, as well as ongoing piracy threats in areas such as the Gulf of Guinea, shape an environment where “detours” and distortions in routes are the rule and not the exception. Shipping has now been transformed into a tool of geopolitical negotiation. Geopolitical confrontations have unfortunately left their mark even within the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Global shipping needs a single sailing line so that the energy transition is fair, equitable, safe and efficient for all. The IMO is the sole responsible international body for the adoption of a global and enforceable regulatory framework for decarbonizing shipping, avoiding fragmented and regional approaches that endanger the coherence of international trade. However, it is a fact that multi-level legislative mobility is already observed. The EU has already implemented the Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) and FuelEU Maritime. The US have left open the possibility of establishing their own regulations. The recent decision to delay the process at the IMO for the voting of the proposed Net-Zero Framework presents a new opportunity to shape a sustainable and effective international framework.

The challenges of the next decade require continued adaptation, a coordinated strategy at multiple levels and cannot be addressed with fragmented solutions. The energy transition towards zero emissions and the integration of new technologies and digital systems, as well as the retention and upgrading of human resources, are all critical pillars for the sector’s future. However, these shifts/challenges - more often than not - present fertile ground for bold players who are ready to seize new opportunities and fill the gaps left by the evolving market dynamics in global shipping. For example, imposing a US entry fee on Chinese-built ships could provide life to Greek and European shipyards. At the same time,

it is likely to allow the further privileged involvement of Greek shipping in the transport network. Shipping, particularly Greek-owned shipping, having the characteristics of insight and flexibility, has proven that it can correctly assess geopolitical risk, as it has done so many times in the past. The trust that the Greek shipping community has won on a global scale is directly related to our know-how, experience, adaptability, consistency and dependability under all circumstances.

3 From an early stage in my career, I was determined to forge my own path in the legal profession without any pre-existing family ties to the field. My journey has been one of dedication, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. My career has been a continuous pursuit of knowledge and impactful contributions, ranging from serving as a Supreme Court Lawyer to advising key governmental institutions and organizations.

I graduated at the top of my class (ranked 1st) from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and pursued postgraduate studies in Civil Law. My academic pursuit led me to Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, where I obtained my Doctorate in Law (Dr. jur.) with the highest distinction, *summa cum laude*. Throughout my studies, I was a scholar of the State Scholarships Foundation, which further reinforced my belief that hard work and determination can open doors to great opportunities. Currently, I serve as an External Associate - Researcher at the Laboratory of Tourism Transport, Infrastructure, and Destination Development (TTIDD-Lab) at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management, University of the Aegean.

As a distinguished and highly accomplished Legal Counsel, registered after successfully passing the Athens Court of Appeal Bar exams with an “Excellent” grade (10) and achieving first (1st) place, with over 25 years of au-

thoritative practice across public organizations, major law firms, and corporate entities, I possess a rare combination of deep dogmatic legal knowledge and practical executive leadership. Expertise spans Civil and Business Law, Competition Law, Public Procurement, and Energy/Environmental Law, with a specialized focus on Corporate Governance & Board Advisory, Regulatory Compliance & Risk Management, ESG & Sustainability Strategy, and Legislative & Policy Making, Digital Law & AI Ethics. Proven track record in navigating complex institutional transformations, steering high-level policy-making, and advising Boards on risk mitigation and sustainable development. What has defined my professional journey is my commitment to always delivering results. Whether advising on complex legal matters, drafting regulatory frameworks, or shaping policies in emerging legal fields such as ESG compliance and maritime sustainability, I approach every challenge with precision, resilience, and a results-driven mindset.

A significant portion of my career has been dedicated to providing legal counsel on the frameworks that define maritime operations, ESG compliance, and sustainability. ESG compliance and sustainability reporting are no longer merely a reporting exercise but a core governance imperative. Recent regulation such as the CSRD, EU Taxonomy, and SFDR is reshaping how organisations integrate sustainability into their strategic and operational frameworks, requiring transparent, comparable disclosures and evidence of robust internal governance and controls. In an increasingly interconnected business environment, cross-border perspectives and regulatory insight are essential for organisations navigating sustainability challenges, managing risk, and driving resilient, future-proof growth.

As the maritime industry in particular and much more so faces increasing regulatory pressures related to environmental standards and sustainabil-

ity practices, I have helped businesses in navigating intricate legal obligations and shaping policies that balance legal compliance with commercial viability, while also addressing the legal challenges of global supply chains. My involvement in high-level discussions on maritime sustainability and ESG frameworks has allowed me to offer strategic legal guidance on critical legal reforms within these dynamic fields of industries.

Through a strategic collaboration with Quantum Adviser (formalised via MoU), I am privileged to support the practical interpretation of these frameworks. My work focuses on translating regulatory requirements into operational governance, internal controls, and evidence-based decision-making that enhances long-term value creation and risk management.

Beyond the above or further, my engagement in legal networks and policy-making committees has allowed me to contribute meaningfully to shaping the legal landscape in various sectors. In particular, I have the honor to be (indicatively) Coordinator for Maritime Affairs at Secretariat for Commercial, Industry and Business Affairs of New Democracy (ND Greece), Coordinator of the ICC Hellas Shipping Cluster, Legal Advisor to the Institute of Marketing, Management, and Leadership (ICC/IMM Hellas), a Member of the Scientific Committee of Civinet Greece - Cyprus, the Greek-speaking Network of Cities for Sustainable Mobility in Europe (CIVITAS) under the auspices of the European Commission, a Member of Hellenic Maritime Law Association, a Member of the Association on Artificial Intelligence “AI Catalyst”, a Founding Member of the Athens Women Lawyers’ Association and Friends of “Eleni Karidi”.

My career is a testament to the fact that success is built on hard work, integrity, and a constant drive for excellence. The path may not always be easy, but for those willing to persevere, the possibilities are limitless!

SOFIA PERTESSI

(MSc), Crew Manager, EQUINOX MARITIME LTD

1The rise of female leadership is not the result of coincidence or temporary trend.

It is the outcome of long-term structural changes in education, corporate governance, and performance-driven business cultures.

For decades, women had the competence but not always the access. Today, organizations increasingly recognize that leadership is defined by capability, strategic thinking, resilience, and emotional intelligence — not by gender. Modern corporations operate in complex, multicultural, and fast-evolving environments. In such conditions, inclusive leadership models often prove more sustainable and adaptive.

Additionally, transparency requirements, ESG frameworks, and stronger corporate governance standards have shifted the focus toward measurable performance and accountability. This merit-based evaluation has allowed many capable women to rise naturally into leadership positions.

In shipping — traditionally a male-dominated industry — this shift is particularly visible in shore-based management roles. The industry now understands that diversity in decision-making enhances risk assessment, crew management, and long-term strategy. Female leadership is no longer

perceived as an exception; it is increasingly seen as an asset.

2Shipping has always operated within geopolitical uncertainty. Trade routes, sanctions regimes, regional conflicts, regulatory changes, and energy transitions continuously reshape the operating environment.

Today's volatility certainly increases complexity. However, rather than attempting to predict every external development, our strategy focuses on adaptability, compliance, and strong internal structures.

In crew management specifically, geopolitical instability directly affects sourcing, mobility, visa processes, and crew welfare. Managing multinational crews requires constant monitoring of regulatory frameworks and close coordination with manning partners worldwide.

Planning under such conditions requires scenario-based thinking rather than fixed projections. Flexibility, liquidity management, strong compliance culture, and reliable communication channels with seafarers are essential.

In reality, resilience has become more important than certainty. Companies that invest in people, transparent processes, and regulatory awareness are better positioned to navigate instability.

3Although my family was not directly involved in shipping, my roots come from Andros, one of Greece's most historic maritime islands. From an early age, I was influenced by the stories of captains and ship-owners — narratives of responsibility, endurance, and global perspective. That early exposure shaped my mindset long before I formally entered the industry. The maritime "virus" was already in my blood.

With more than 26 years of experience in shipping, I have developed my career step by step, gaining exposure to operational, crewing, and regulatory aspects of vessel management. Throughout these years, I learned that shipping demands decisiveness, discipline, and the ability to manage people under pressure — often across cultures and time zones.

Today, I lead the Crew Department of Equinox Maritime Ltd, a role that carries significant responsibility. Crew management is not merely administrative coordination; it is about safeguarding compliance, supporting seafarers' welfare, ensuring operational continuity, and protecting the company's reputation.

Being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry required consistency and results-driven performance. Credibility is built through competence and reliability. Over time,



I have witnessed the gradual but meaningful transformation of the industry toward greater inclusivity.

My journey reflects not only personal ambition but also a deep respect for the maritime profession and for the people who serve at sea.

Closing...

Looking toward the future, I am convinced that shipping will continue to transform — technologically, environmentally, and culturally. In this transformation, women will not simply participate; they will actively shape the industry's direction. The presence of women in leadership is no longer about

representation alone. It is about strategic value. Diverse leadership teams make more balanced decisions, manage risk more effectively, and foster healthier organizational cultures. In an industry that operates under constant pressure and global uncertainty, this diversity becomes a competitive advantage.

My hope is that in the near future we will no longer refer to "women in shipping" as a separate category.

Leadership in maritime should be defined by competence, vision, and responsibility. When that becomes the standard narrative, we will know that true progress has been achieved.

VIVIAN RIGA

Vice President, Regal Travel Management Company

1My personal view is that — although female leadership requires special explanation — reflects an outdated assumption about gender and capability. It assumes that the rise of female leadership needs to be explained by new factors, as if women have only recently acquired the skills required to lead. In reality, women have always possessed the full range of competencies associated with effective leadership.

What has changed is not capability, but access and recognition. The increase in female leadership reflects the removal of barriers, not the emergence of newfound aptitude.

For decades, women have entered the workforce at rates comparable to men and, in many countries, now surpass men in higher education attainment, including business and management degrees. Yet their representation declined significantly at each higher level of leadership.

Even today, women account for roughly half of the global workforce but hold only about 30 percent of senior leadership roles and a much smaller share of CEO positions. That gap is not a reflection of ability; it is evidence of structural barriers,

biased promotion pathways, and historically narrow definitions of leadership. As those barriers are gradually weakening—through more transparent promotion processes, greater scrutiny from boards, and cultural shifts around who is perceived as a "leader"—talent that was long present has become more visible.

Therefore, the increase in female leadership should be understood not as a trend driven by special interventions or changing skill sets, but as a market correction. When organizations begin to evaluate leadership potential more broadly and more fairly, women naturally appear in leadership roles in proportion to their talent. Eventually, leadership outcomes reflect equitable inclusion of talent, not remedial advantage.

2Planning for the future in today's business environment has become a very challenging task due to rapid geopolitical changes, financial fluctuation and unforeseen market disruptions of a big scale, e.g a pandemic. Especially tourism is a very vulnerable industry and it has been fiercely hit by international conditions and uncertainty. We focus on mid-term strategies, on staying

flexible, monitoring developments closely, and adjusting our strategy when needed. At this dynamic environment, we have adopted a responsive approach of risk diversification, operational agility, and digital transformation to keep up with the continuously growing and changing market needs.

3My father established the first tourism company in 1981, the year I was born, and as a result, I grew up immersed in the industry. I studied Economics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens while working in the company, an experience that enabled me to combine academic knowledge with practical business application.

As our company expanded, I recognised the importance of further developing my expertise. At the age of 30, I acquired a Master's degree in Tourism Management at the University of Surrey, graduating with Distinction.

Having developed a strong affinity for the UK, I chose to pursue professional exposure within a highly structured and competitive international environment. I subsequently worked abroad for four years, gaining valuable experience



and broadening my professional perspective. In 2016, I decided to return to Greece and rejoin the family business, bringing with me an enhanced skill set and a more corporate, strategic approach. Since then, the tourism company has evolved into a group of companies and transitioned to the next generation of leadership. My brother Panos Rigas became the President and I hold the position of Vice President at Regal Travel Management Group, a key player in the tourism industry. With more than 100 highly trained professionals, we hold a promi-

nent position in the market, and we have expanded our business from a retail office in 1981 to a big group of tourism companies delivering high quality B2B services for: Marine, Air ticket consolidation, Corporate travel, Pharma, M.I.C.E., Incoming, VIP, B2Bhotel platform and Airline representation services. Building on the strong foundation established by our parents, we have successfully evolved and expanded our group, guided by motivation, a clear vision for sustainable growth and an enhanced international presence.

CHRISTIANA PREKEZES

**MA Energy & Environment, Certified Coach
ICF Global and ICF Greece Chapter Member
Climate Coaching Alliance member**

It is true that there is a steady, nonetheless slow, rise from previous years in numbers of women leaders in the business world. Among the Fortune 500 companies, 11% have female CEOs today. There is also progress in the boardroom. Women now hold about 33% of board of director seats at Fortune 500 companies, a necessary pipeline for future female CEOs.

Several parameters are contributing to this development, a major one among them, I believe, is that women are now stepping on past successes of pioneering women who led the way, were acknowledged in their fields and proved beyond doubt that they were assets for their organizations. These women leaders provided the role models to be followed and emulated.

It is also a fact that where women are on the top, they encourage others to follow, they create an environment emboldening aspiring women to pursue their dreams. Women nowadays irrefutably have impressive qualifications and have proven their performance impact. They are often more open minded and adaptable to changing circumstances making them qualified for the top management positions.

Mentoring by a senior team member is also a factor that builds confidence in women as is leadership and life coaching.

Confident female professionals can seize opportunities, overcome stereotypes, successfully confront challenges and not let themselves be deterred by unhelpful behaviors. Mentoring is being practiced ever more widely while a proper coaching culture is being adopted by an increasing number of forward looking organizations.

Networking and development of soft skills are also playing an important role in women advancing in the business sectors. Associations like WISTA and Lean In Network, in Greece and worldwide, are contributing in helping women climb the corporate ladder.

However, as we all very well know, informal decision-making about promotions can overcome fair evaluations as it often happens in male-dominated spaces (e.g., golf, after-work drinks), leaving women out of crucial networking opportunities. Studies consistently show that companies with diverse leadership teams outperform their peers in innovation, decision-making, and profitability.

It seems that finally the biggest obstacle of the "glass ceiling" at the top, is being removed. Interestingly enough though, there is also the so-called phenomenon of the "Glass Cliff". That is when women are sometimes only appointed to top leadership roles during crises, when the risk of failure is high, which can reinforce negative stereotypes if they fail. It is undeniable that women are breaking through in traditionally male-dominated industries, including tech, finance, engineering, automotive, and even defense.

But let's not rush to rejoice. The gender pay gap remains a glaring issue with women earning between 65 and 85 per cent of what is earned by men in comparable roles. And a recent McKinsey "Women in the Workplace" report highlighted that women in senior roles are twice as likely as men to cite burnout as a significant challenge in their careers.

Companies and organizations have still some way to go in order to foster an

environment where talent and potential are the only measures of success.

2Living amid constant change, we all face common challenges as the widely used term "VUCA world" suggests: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. On both a personal and a business level, priorities should be reevaluated, aims and means adapted and resilience practiced.

In the field of my coaching practice, I aspire to support individuals to keep the bigger picture clear, to properly engage their teams, to strengthen their resilience and nurture optimism. The trusted partnership between a head of organization, manager or entrepreneur and a coach aims at developing the entity with a vision aligned to their values.

These values should be used as a compass to navigate through today's turbulent times. The need for agile leadership to cope with disruptions and instability is greater than ever. Foresight and strategic adjustments need to be employed by companies and organizations.

Who can disagree with the words of B.C. Forbes, the finance journalist and founder of Forbes Magazine: "Business, more than any other occupation, is a continual dealing with the future."?

And dealing with the future, we have to embrace uncertainty and stay curious and alert so that we make sense of all that evolves around us. My personal aim is to be empowered to make informed decisions, grow my learning and my practice and deliver greater impact to my partners/clients.

3From early on, I developed an interest in



environmental protection and my graduate studies took me to the Energy & Environment Center of Boston University, USA, where I pursued the topic of coastal zone management.

For 33 years, I had the wonderful opportunity to be able to apply my knowledge and skills in the noteworthy cause of Helmepe, the Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association.

From heading the technical sector of the association at the beginning to coordinating all its programs and initiatives later on, I had the chance to contribute to the development of Helmepe, its expansion to several other countries, the establishment of a safety and pollution prevention culture within maritime companies and, last but not least, the environmental awareness of thousands of kids all over Greece.

As my personal motto is:

Work for a cause, not for applause, in 2021, I chose to turn a page and embark upon something new, but dear to my heart. I trained as a Coach

to acquire skills and practical tools so as to encourage others to pursue their goals in their personal and business life. Building on my experience and contact with so many - and of diverse cultures - professionals in shipping, from top management to officers to crews, I offer today my services to those who wish to find alignment between their values and goals.

Combining my interest to people and love for nature, I also aspire to include climate change in the agenda and promote the finding of inner balance in harmony with nature.

As we'll soon celebrate the International Women's Day 2026, on March 8th, I have to say that this year's theme "Give to Gain" resonates another personal motto and belief. That is to possess a mindset of generosity, collaboration and selfless giving. When we give, we gain; it's so true! So, I would humbly urge us all to share our knowledge, give encouragement and support to professional women and celebrate their advancements as they pursue their dreams!

MARIA M. TRIPOLITIS

General Manager of Piraeus Marine Services S.A. General Secretary of Chios Marine Club

1The rise of female leadership is particularly significant in the shipping industry, which has traditionally been male dominated. This shift reflects both structural change and proven performance.

As shipping has become more complex and globally interconnected, leadership based on resilience, strategic thinking and adaptability has become essential. Women in shipping have increasingly demonstrated these capabilities, supported by stronger educational backgrounds, international exposure and growing professional networks.

Their presence in leadership roles is the result of sustained effort, competence and the industry's gradual recognition of the value of diversity in decision-making.

2Shipping is among the industries most directly affected by geopolitical developments, making strategic planning particularly demanding. Disruptions in global trade, regulatory uncer-

tainty and shifting alliances require constant vigilance and flexibility. For women leaders in shipping, navigating this environment often involves balancing operational complexity with long-term strategic vision. While uncertainty increases risk, it also reinforces the importance of experience, adaptability and decisive leadership in guiding businesses through challenging periods.

3My professional journey has been shaped within the shipping industry, where consistency, responsibility and a global perspective are essential. Building a career as a woman in shipping has required perseverance, continuous learning and the ability to adapt to a demanding and highly competitive environment. Each stage of my career has deepened my understanding of the industry and strengthened my commitment to professional excellence and long-term value creation.

My connection to shipping is also rooted in a strong maritime family background.

I come from a seafaring family originating from Chios, widely regarded as one of the most important maritime islands in Greece. My grandfather was a ship captain, while my father pursued maritime studies and worked for many years as a Technical Manager in a shipping company. In 2008, he founded Piraeus Marine Services S.A., a trading company specializing in the supply of marine equipment and technical solutions to the shipping industry.

Although my professional background initially lay in a different sector, I joined the shipping industry in 2014 to support the family business during a period of growth, when the company employed just five people.

Gradually, I assumed greater responsibilities and gained hands-on experience across multiple areas of the business, which eventually led to my current role as General Manager. Today, the company has grown significantly and employs a team of 20 professionals.



ALINA SOUTSIYOU

Regional Sales & Marketing Specialist, Ozgen Ship Supply

1The increasing rise of women in leadership roles, both in small businesses and global corporations, is mainly driven by social progress and the growing recognition of the value of diversity in the business sector. Companies now understand that inclusive leadership improves innovation, decision-making, and long-term sustainability.

Women leaders also tend to bring strong communication, negotiation, and teamwork skills — qualities that are essential in today's global and multicultural business environment. Their ability to build trust, maintain long-term relationships, and create collaborative work cultures often strengthens a company's reputation and international partnerships.

In sectors such as maritime and shipping- where precision, reliability, and resilience are essential, women frequently contribute a balanced leadership approach.

By combining strategic thinking with strong communication skills and emotional intelligence, they are well positioned to manage operation-

al complexity, navigate uncertainty and foster collaborative organizational cultures. This blend of skills enables companies to respond more effectively to market volatility while maintaining long-term stability and growth.

In my visions, more women are being recognized and promoted based on merit, expertise, and their proven ability to lead successfully in complex environments.

2In an era marked by rapid geopolitical developments, shifting alliances, and ongoing global uncertainty, business planning has become increasingly complex.

For professionals operating within international and maritime-related markets, flexibility and strategic foresight are no longer optional—they are essential.

In my experience, effective planning depends on continuous market monitoring, close coordination with international partnerships, and the ability to adapt strategies quickly when conditions change.

Rather than relying on rigid

long-term plans, I focus on building resilient and flexible business approaches that allow stability and growth even in volatile environments.

The ability to adapt quickly has become one of the most valuable assets in sustaining growth and continuity.

3My professional journey has developed within the maritime and ship supply sector, an industry that demands precision, reliability, and a high level of responsibility.

Working in an international environment has strengthened my ability to manage complexity, communicate across cultures, and deliver consistent results under pressure.

As a woman in a demanding and highly competitive sector, I have learned that credibility is built through performance, consistency, and trust.

Each professional milestone has reinforced my belief that leadership is not defined by position alone, but by accountability, resilience, and the ability to add value in demanding environments.



KATERINA KOKKINI

MSc, LL.M, CEO- KMK Marine Consultants

1I believe this shift reflects a broader transformation in how leadership itself is defined.

Access to education and professional development has empowered women to enter highly specialized and demanding sectors, including shipping, with strong academic foundations and international exposure. At the same time, the modern business environment increasingly values adaptability, strategic thinking, resilience, and emotional intelligence. These qualities are essential in industries like maritime, where complexity, compliance, and human factors intersect daily. Organizations are also recognizing that diversity strengthens decision-making and governance. Female leadership is no longer viewed as symbolic, it is understood as a strategic advantage.

In maritime especially, as the sector becomes more digital, compliance-driven, and globally interconnected, leadership requires collaboration and long-term vision. Women are stepping confidently into these roles because they are prepared, capable, and results-oriented.

The rise of female leadership is not a trend, it is the natural outcome of competence meeting opportunity.

2Shipping stands at the center of global trade, which means geopolitical shifts affect us immediately and directly.

Sanctions, regulatory changes, evolving trade routes, and energy transitions create an environment where traditional long-term planning models must be reconsidered.

However, rather than making planning impossible, volatility reshapes how we plan.

Today, strategy must be scenario-based, data-informed, and flexible. In our organization, we focus heavily on preparedness, strengthening internal systems, investing in digital tools, and emphasizing competence-based training.

When internal foundations are solid, external uncertainty becomes more manageable.

Leadership in such times requires composure and clarity. While we cannot control geopolitical developments, we can control how prepared we

are to respond to them. Volatility, in many ways, sharpens strategic thinking.

3My professional journey has been deeply connected to shipping, but it has also been a journey of continuous learning and self-definition.

Growing up as the daughter of a captain, I was exposed from a young age to the realities of maritime life, the discipline, the responsibility, and the sacrifices behind every voyage. I remember listening to conversations about operations, weather challenges, and crew management long before I fully understood their complexity. Those early experiences shaped my respect for the industry.

However, I was always aware that proximity to shipping was not enough. I wanted to build my own path within it.

My career has therefore been grounded in structured development, strategic involvement, and active contribution to the modernization of maritime services.

As CEO of KMK Marine Consultants, I am involved not only in management but also



in strategic planning, training development, and the integration of digital tools into compliance and inspection preparation processes.

What drives me most is the human element. Behind every regulation, audit, and operational decision, there are people working under pressure, often far from home.

Supporting them through structured systems, clarity, and competence develop-

ment is something I consider both a responsibility and a privilege.

My journey continues to evolve alongside the industry itself.

Maritime is transforming through digitalization, sustainability demands, and generational change. Being part of this transformation, while honoring the values I grew up with, is what motivates me every day.

GEORGIA KONSTA

Purchasing Officer, Alassia Newships Management Inc

1The growing presence of women in leadership positions represents one of the most significant social and economic shifts of our time. I believe several key factors have contributed to this change. First and foremost, women now have far greater access to education and professional training than ever before. This educational advancement has given us the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to compete for leadership roles, even in traditionally male-dominated industries like global shipping.

Equally important is the transformation in societal attitudes. Organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of diverse leadership, which has opened doors for many talented female executives. What's particularly encouraging is what we've witnessed in the shipping industry over the last five to ten years—women have established a much stronger presence in leadership roles. Today, women aren't just participating in shipping; we're leading it.

2Shipping is one of the industries most directly exposed to geopolitical, operational, regulatory, and envi-

ronmental volatility. Whether it's disruptions from sanctions, regional conflicts, regulatory changes, or new environmental requirements, any of these factors can immediately impact our routes and costs. That's why flexibility, adaptability, and careful risk and cost management aren't just beneficial—they're absolutely essential.

That said, geopolitical uncertainty isn't new to shipping. This industry has always operated under pressure and navigated complex challenges, yet it has consistently demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. Just look at COVID-19 as a recent example. Despite unprecedented global disruption, port congestion, and crew restrictions, the shipping industry adapted quickly and kept global trade moving. Volatility is simply part of our sector's reality, and I believe adaptability remains our greatest strength.

3I actually hold a degree in Library and Information Science, which might seem unusual for someone in shipping. My early career took me through various cultural and administrative organizations—I worked at the Ministry

of Culture, Aegean Airlines, Athens University of Economics and Business, and the Astir Palace Hotel Four Seasons.

Each of these experiences taught me valuable skills in organization, communication, and project coordination. In 2011, I joined Alassia NewShips Management as a Purchasing Officer, stepping into an industry that was completely unfamiliar to me. While my academic background wasn't directly related to shipping,

I've found that hard work, consistency, and adaptability have been crucial to my growth in this demanding environment. One thing I've learned is that you must embrace continuous improvement to keep pace with the rapidly evolving demands of the shipping industry. Over the past 14 years, I've been responsible for the procurement of stores, provisions, spares, and forwarding services.

My role involves evaluating suppliers, negotiating prices, coordinating logistics, and maintaining accurate internal records and procedures. It's been an incredible journey of professional growth, and I'm proud of how far I've come.



AGATHI NATSI

Co-founder of Oriani Hellas & Health4Crew

1 It's no coincidence that we're seeing more women in leadership roles across both small businesses and major global corporations. This isn't just a passing trend. It's the payoff from decades of hard work. The result of a massive shift in education, a systemic evolution and a fundamental change in what "good & effective leadership" actually looks like. Some key factors contributing to this development are:

The Educational Pipeline / Higher educational attainment

The last decades, women have outpaced men in higher education completion. In EU (2023), women accounted for 57.8% of all tertiary education graduates. Combined with women's growing share of the overall workforce, it has created a strong pipeline of qualified female leaders equipped with strategic, financial, and managerial expertise.

Evolution of Leadership Models

There is a shift in nature of leadership and work demands increasingly emphasising in Soft Skills. Inclusive leadership, Emotional Intelligence (EQ), collaboration, empathy, communication, negotiation, and team leadership are qualities that women often have an advantage.

Policy, legal, and corporate initiatives

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, transparent promotion processes, anti-discrimination laws, equal pay legislation, and gender quotas for boards have accelerated change.

Cultural and societal changes & role models

Shifting norms around gender roles make leadership less gender-coded. As more women reach the top, they create a roadmap for others. High-profile CEOs like Mary Barra | General Motors or Safra Catz | Oracle, serve as "proof of concept" inspiring more women to excel.

Networking and leadership development programs

We are seeing a growing culture of mutual support among women. Professional associations like WISTA are focusing on promoting diversity, networking, and career development, while mentoring the next generation ensures the trend will not only persist but accelerate.

Despite the progress, full parity still remains distant. In 2025 in the startup ecosystem the percentage of female founders was approximately 13% - 15%. About 25% of recently created startups in Europe have at least one woman on the founding team, while in the high-technology (Deep Tech) sector, women make up 14% of all founders. Female-led teams also face a significant funding gap having received approx. 2.3% of total Venture Capital (VC) funding in 2024. Finally, in 2025, women led only about 11% of Fortune 500 companies.

2 Geopolitical developments are reshaping the maritime landscape faster than ever.

Rerouting around conflict zones and longer voyages, security

threats, increased fuel consumption and emissions, tariffs, sanctions, higher operational expenses, increased insurance premiums.

Right now, with everything going on, shipping companies are focused on cutting costs, boosting efficiency, and making smarter decisions with real data. In times like these, innovation is a survival strategy. At Oriani, we see all this geopolitical chaos not as an obstacle but as proof that our role is really important. We must stay alert and be flexible to help shipping companies navigate and stay ahead in a world that's anything but predictable.

As for Health4Crew, our start up, that offers data driven maritime telemedicine support services, we plan for uncertainty by investing in the one thing that never changes and that is the human need for health and safety. Rapidly shifting alliances and geopolitical tensions definitely add layers of complexity to our long-term planning, but they also highlight why our services are essential. The more volatile the world becomes, the more vulnerable the human element becomes. At Health4Crew, we plan by building a business model that is modular and adaptable enough to support both crew and the ashore personnel.

By reducing dependency on physical medical interventions or location-specific infrastructure, we help shipowners and managers maintain crew wellbeing, minimise costly deviations and ensure operational continuity even when traditional routes or alliances shift unexpectedly.



By continuously monitoring global trends and regulations, by building flexible partnerships across regions and use data to offer proactive and preventative healthcare support, we are able to plan with greater agility and turn potential disruptions into opportunities to deliver even stronger support to our clients.

This also means shorter planning cycles, scenario-based decision making and closer collaboration with partners and clients to anticipate change early.

In Health4Crew, our ability to adapt quickly is our competitive advantage that safeguards the crew's need for health and safety.

3 I've always been drawn to the cutting edge. My journey started in the mid-90s at a pioneering tech firm, where I saw firsthand how digital transforma-

tion could reshape the way businesses connect with their clients.

That experience taught me a lesson that still guides me today, to listen closely to what people actually need and build the solution around them.

Today, as a co-founder of Oriani Hellas, we focus on delivering digital tools that provide real ROI for the shipping industry.

The same passion drove me to co-found Health4Crew, where we're tackling something deeply important and that is to provide reliable, data-driven telemedicine and preventative care for seafarers, especially when the world gets unpredictable.

What excites me most is turning complex challenges into opportunities, always with a focus on people and real-world impact.

ALEXIA SAVRAMI

Owner & President, SAVRAMIS FROZEN SEA FOOD

In today's world, it is becoming increasingly common for women to lead not only small businesses but also major global corporations. This rise is not merely a social trend—it is the result of the evolution and maturation of both the market and society itself. Modern business conditions demand flexibility, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and resilience—qualities that women cultivate deeply throughout their professional journeys and the multiple roles they are often called upon to manage. Meanwhile, stereotypes have been challenged, opportunities have expanded, and women themselves have stopped waiting for "permission" to lead. They claim their space with knowledge, consistency, and meritocracy.

In the fields of shipping and international trade—traditionally male-dominated sectors—the female presence has introduced a more holistic approach to risk management, a greater emphasis on sustainability, and a culture of collaboration that strengthens long-term stability. Regarding global developments, today you don't plan based on certainties—you plan based on scenarios. In the fro-

zen seafood sector, where I have been active for over thirty years, we depend on international markets, logistics, currency fluctuations, geopolitical shifts, and the availability of raw materials. Volatility is a daily challenge.

Our strategy is based on the diversification of partnerships and markets, proactive planning, the cultivation of strong international relationships of trust, and, above all, swift yet calculated decision-making. Experience offers foresight; however, it is flexibility that ensures viability. In today's market, it is not the strongest that survives, but the most adaptable. My personal professional path is inextricably linked to an enterprise with over three decades of presence, having earned a VIP position in the Greek, European, and global frozen seafood markets. From my first steps in a demanding and fiercely competitive industry, I learned that success is not built on numbers alone, but primarily on relationships of trust, consistency, and professional ethics. There have been challenges, crises, and upheavals. Yet, every difficulty served as an opportunity for growth. I was never afraid to take risks, but I always did so with strategic thinking

and a clear vision. To me, entrepreneurship is not just about profitability—it is a responsibility toward our partners, our employees, the market, and the new generation of women who aspire to lead.

No journey is truly solitary. Behind every success, there is love, trust, and a person who believes in you even in the most demanding moments. For me, that person is my husband, Vasilis Savramis. He is my life partner, the calm force behind my decisions, and the person with whom I share not only a common vision but the same values. As an entrepreneur, he is distinguished by his strategic thinking, foresight, and composure during critical moments. He complements my perspective with realism and stability, while his experience and dedication daily enhance the momentum and evolution of our company. His presence is not merely supportive; it is creative and substantial, as we design the future together with shared responsibility and a common goal. We move forward together with faith, devotion, and respect—because true success is built first in the heart and then in the business.



GEORGIA ANTONAKI

President & Executive Director of the Hellenic American Chamber of Tourism

1The rise and consolidation of female leadership in the business world is the result of multiple interconnected factors. It is driven by:

- Struggles for equal rights in the workplace,

- Access to education, and specialized professional training, which created a new generation of skilled leaders

- Legislative and institutional changes, which provided women with greater visibility and access to leadership positions

- Shifts in leadership models, emphasizing collaboration, empathy, and holistic thinking—skills in which women often thrive.

Historical, social stereotypes—such as the perception that “a woman belongs at home,” or that leadership and business ability are inherently “male” traits—served for many years as barriers, limiting opportunities and creating unequal starting points. Yet, women who overcame these obstacles developed organizational, resilient, and emotionally intelligent skills that are critical in modern leadership.

Today, skepticism and residual stereotypes have not completely disappeared. When they do persist, the reasons are often cultural, experiential, or systemic rather than inherently tied to gender.

Differences in decision-making between men and women generally reflect different experiences and perspectives, not capabilities. Collaboration with women leaders, demonstrates that value does not depend on gender, and organizations that promote diversity, find that male–female partnerships are stronger and more creative.

Women in leadership prove that true value is measured not by gender, but by the ability to inspire, collaborate, unite, and lead with vision, emotional intelligence and determination.

2Geopolitical developments are indeed evolving rapidly, creating a more complex environment, however, they do not hinder my business planning. Philoxenia – hospitality, is an industry that has historically learned to adapt.

For me and the Organization I represent, the most constant factor remains the People and their timeless need to travel, explore new places, and connect with other people and cultures.

It is this deeply human desire that guides my decisions and strategy.

Today, we observe new forms of mobility: professionals working remotely, people relocating for long-term assignments, retirees choosing to spend part of the year in other countries, and a significant wave of Greeks from the U.S.A., second and third generation, seeking to discover their roots or reconnect with their origins in Greece. My goal is to support them in this journey by providing every possible institutional resource and designing authentic experiences, that bring them closer to the land and culture of their ancestors.

Yes, geopolitical conditions change, economies change, social norms change, but the human desire for experiences and travel to safe and accessible destinations remains constant. It is this fundamental need that guides my strategy and actions.

Every initiative I undertake reflects my core value: bringing people closer to Greece, mak-

ing this land accessible, warm, and welcoming to all.

Personally, entrepreneurship is not merely a business activity, it is the expression of a philosophy of life, grounded in values and best practices.

3I grew up in a small coastal village in my beloved homeland, Crete, at a time when the area was taking its first steps toward development.

My parents and uncles, pioneers with vision and initiative, ventured to create a traditional taverna along with the first «rooms to let”, breathing life into a place that until then had only a few houses and was mainly

used for seasonal agricultural activities.

In this environment, I learned from an early age the value of authentic, unpretentious hospitality, the kind that is rooted in simplicity, personal connection, and meaningful interaction with guests.

Over time, as visitor numbers grew, local hospitality developed dynamically, shaping my deep and lasting connection with the field. The small family guest rooms eventually evolved into an organized hotel operation, which I managed for several years.

My journey continued alongside cultural engagement, serving for a term on the Board of Directors of the Cretan Brotherhood of Piraeus and participating in its cultural activities for a total of ten years.

Since 2022, I have been leading the Hellenic American Chamber of Tourism, a non-profit organization founded in 1989 in California. Initially established as a primary source of news and information for tourism professionals in Greece and the U.S. The organization today is undergoing a transformation: adopting a new identity, a fresh vision, and a strong commitment to promoting Greek culture, spirit, and tourism experiences. My current role is a natural next step in my professional journey, building on the experience I have gained over the years in the organization. My goal is to connect and reconnect people with Greece, not merely as a tourist destination, but as an Idea, a spiritual and cultural Ideal, a humanistic vision, and a lived, experiential destination for life.





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