



IPCSA

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Community Systems
Association

Women Leading the Way

Port Community Systems and Single Window



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The International Port Community Systems Association (IPCSA) is a strong supporter of equality in the workplace. IPCSA's members, representing Port Community Systems (PCS) and Single Window (SW) operators, have demonstrated that women can lead the way in the electronic exchange of information and trade facilitation.

The International Maritime Organization has designated 18 May as International Day for Women in Maritime – to be celebrated every year.

IPCSA is marking International Day for Women in Maritime 2022 with a 'Women Leading the Way – PCS and SW' webinar. In association with the webinar, we have asked a dozen women representing our members about their experiences, ambitions and reflections on a career in maritime. Here is their story.

Introduction: Inga Mortona, General Manager, IPCSA



When we embarked on research and planning for our 'Women Leading the Way' seminar and for this publication, there was no shortage of professional, smart women to call on for their input. We are proud to say that there are many, many successful and enthusiastic women throughout the global IPCSA family.

Having said that, while we are proud to use the occasion of International Day for Women in Maritime to highlight some of our IPCSA professionals and their successful careers, we feel strongly that the main message should not be that they happen to be female, but rather that they are doing a wonderful, professional job and enjoying rewarding careers in the endlessly interesting sector of Port Community Systems, Single Windows, electronic exchange of information and trade facilitation.

In my view, the whole polarity of 'men versus women' runs the risk of downgrading women. First and foremost, we are talking about talented professionals who care passionately about their work and the industry they serve.

This is not about defending or promoting women. Our professionals have nothing to prove! What they would like, however, is to encourage more women to join them in this challenging and exciting industry.

What do people know about the maritime industry?

How many people outside our industry know anything about shipping, ports and maritime activities? That's a constant challenge across the industry as it seeks to recruit and retain talented people. For those already working in the industry, it can also be a struggle explaining to their friends and family what they do!



“I had a vague idea about ports, ships, clippers sailing to China for tea – more romantic and historic tales than anything real,” said Evelyn Eggers, business development director at DAKOSY, Germany. “As I was born in Hamburg, the port and waterborne activities had always been part of life. And when I discovered during my time at university that there was a specific lecture about the seaport industry, I attended out of curiosity.”

However, she said, the ‘real enchantment’ happened by chance. “I was working as a freelance consultant when I was asked by DAKOSY to write a concept about digitalising hinterland transport.”

Her colleague, Anne Ebeling, team leader at DAKOSY, said: “Before I became part of the industry, I only knew it from my education. It makes you marvel at the dimensions alone and what is possible. From the outside, it looks like a precisely working Swiss watch. Now I can say that it really works like a precise Swiss watch – and behind this are hardworking and clever minds.”

Federica Montaresi is head of special projects, innovation and institutional relations at the Port Authority of the Eastern Ligurian Sea. “I’m a civil engineer and transport specialist. I approached the port and maritime sector in my first job after my degree and immediately loved this sector,” she said. She was aware of the sector because of her studies, but added: “After more than 15 years, I can say that I have good experience – but it’s true that this sector is continuously changing and this is the best challenge and opportunity to learn something new every day!”

Mona Swoboda, programme manager at the Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP), Organization of American States (OAS), joined the industry through a ‘happy coincidence’, as did many of her female colleagues, she said. “It was not necessarily

because I had an awareness or understanding of the career opportunities in the sector or an interest in pursuing it. My background is in international cooperation and, through a professional development opportunity at the OAS, I learned about the CIP. I was instantly intrigued by the CIP's work and mission when I was offered to join the CIP team.

“Knowing what I know now, after almost a decade in the industry, I truly had no knowledge about the sector. I had no direct access to the industry and little awareness of the immense impact the maritime sector has on global socio-economic development and our daily lives.”

Monique van der Linde, director port solutions at Portbase, in Rotterdam, also said she started working in the industry by coincidence. She had gained an insight into the shipping industry through an early university assignment, a research project on customer satisfaction at a shipping company, and she knew some theory on logistics and supply chains – “mostly basic knowledge that I gathered throughout my studies”.

“Although the graduation project of my first study was at a shipping company, I continued studying for three more years at the university before I started my career,” she said. “Not knowing where to start, I entered an employment agency to look for a job. This was supposed to be a temporary job for a few months – but more than 20 years later, I am still passionate about working in the PCS environment.”

Galyna Roizina, CEO of PPL 33-35 Ltd in Ukraine, graduated from university as a software engineer and her first job was in the IT department at Odessa Commercial Sea Port, where she worked as a software engineer, business analyst and head of department. Thirteen years later, in 2013, she became involved in the PCS in Ukraine. “Now I am the CEO of PPL 33-35, a key provider of trade facilitation services and Single Window solutions in Ukraine.”



A family living in a port city usually has one or more members working with a direct or indirect to the port, said Muriel Folliot-Olivier, who is general secretary, legal affairs manager and executive board member at Soget in Le Havre. “This was my

case. Naturally, one grows up in this known environment and therefore takes an interest in it. The logistics professions have a dynamic and attractive image when you are interested in them.”

Surely Nirit Brookmayer, system analyst at Israel Port Company, is not the only person to have joined the industry ‘by mistake’! She said she knew nothing about the maritime and shipping sector before bringing her skills to IPCS. She loves her job thanks to the diverse range of customers – from ship agents and transport companies to exporters – and the diversity of the projects she is involved in.



At the start of her career, Rajni Patwardhan had a brief stint with Torm Shipping, which introduced her to the world of maritime and seafaring. She then plunged into IT marketing, and 17 years later is head of marketing at Kale Logistics Solutions in India.

“When I moved to the maritime IT industry, it was the beginning of the IT revolution,” she said. “Kale Logistics Solutions is the pioneer in designing next-generation Single Window systems.

There was immense scope from the marketing side to create markets, drive adoption and then sustain it – so this prospect highly attracted me.”

There’s a lot to love about being a modern marketer, said Rajni. “Our profession is getting more creative and more technical at the same time. Driven by data more than ever, we are making the subject of marketing more objective and goal-based. The cool part of my job is doing something new every day. We meet meaning, emotion and results that matter with creative marketing.”

The variety of tasks, being able to work virtually, having a forward-thinking, supportive company that realises employees are its greatest asset, working collaboratively with people for successful outcomes and appreciation of the employee – these are some of factors that attracted Fatima Abdelkarim Alburaimi to DP World, where she is technical programme engineer. “I had only a very basic knowledge of import and export in this sector before joining,” she said. What does she love about her job? “The place where I work belongs to a very large industry and there is a lot to explore and learn.”

Telling the story to family and friends

Now that these professionals are well established in their careers, do their friends and family have any idea about the industry or what they do?

“Not really – it’s a very niche sector I work in, IT maritime logistics,” said Rajni Patwardhan. “But that does not stop me from discussing what I do every day with my teenage daughter. She really finds it fascinating and challenging. During the pandemic, when I was working from home for nearly two years, my family became more familiar with my role; they were passive listeners to my meetings, brainstorming sessions and reviews!”

Muriel Folliot-Olivier said only those family and friends who work in the maritime sector understand what Soget does. “The others don’t really understand and remember two words – computer and port!”

Monique van der Linde agreed: “If you asked them, most of them would probably answer ‘something with management and IT in the Port of Rotterdam’. However, close friends and my partner for example, they do have a good idea of what my job entails. They experienced this from close by, especially while working at home during the lockdown in the past two years. In addition, I like to discuss work with my best friend who I studied with and who has had similar jobs in another industry – she understands quite a lot of what I am doing. In general, I have noticed that people around me find the port and maritime industry huge and impressive.”



Mona Swoboda noted that her family and friends do have an idea about her work – “because I talk about it a lot”. She said: “Whenever I share about my work, I can tell that people become interested and fascinated by the port and maritime activities and how they impact their daily lives.”

For herself, she said: “I love how diverse and multifaced the port and maritime industry is, and that it directly impacts and connects us all across the globe. As programme manager at the CIP-OAS, I love assisting our Member States in their port modernisation efforts and am honoured to join them in their unwavering commitment to making the industry more efficient, sustainable, secure and inclusive.”



Federica Montaresi said she liked to talk with her family and friends about her job, projects and business travel – “because every time I have a new story to tell with a great enthusiasm”.

Perhaps the message is getting across – Evelyn Eggers said it helps that more and more small videos (scribbles and explanatory videos) are being published. “Recently more local TV channels, as well as daily newspapers, have discovered our exciting work at DAKOSY and keep on publishing and producing small features explaining it to the world – more in a how-to-explain-the-world-to-a-kid version, but we take what we can get!”

Anne Ebeling said that for friends and family, what she does is often simply ‘magic’. “The profile of my job is very diverse. When we talk about how I spend my day, I experience a mixture of amazement and appreciation for the work we do and how important it is.”

She loves working with different people, companies and cultures, she said.

“Especially nowadays, it feels like the world is moving closer together. It no longer matters whether your colleague is in the office next door or on the other side of the globe. That fascinates me. There are challenges in the job every day – you have to think creatively and find tailor-made solutions and that doesn’t happen in every job.”

Natalie Bell, IT product lead, Customs Europe at Kuhne + Nagel said: “My family and friends know superficially what I do. They know less about the industry itself because I work in a very specialised field. IT and Customs – not everyone’s favourite subjects!”

She said it was the size and internationality of Kuhne + Nagel that persuaded her to apply for her job. “I didn’t know much about the industry when I started – but since I’m from Hamburg, I knew about the importance of the port for the city and our fellow citizens. I like the colourful mix of people and disciplines I work with. From old-established exponents to young agile developers, everything is there and it is exciting to bring both worlds together and to design joint projects.”

Special talents?

We asked our professionals whether women bring particular skills or qualities to the PCS, SW and wider maritime sector, and how we could encourage more to pursue a career in the industry. Opinions varied.

Anne Ebeling said: “I see my female colleagues as having a special talent for managing things, dealing with people, bringing everyone together and inspiring consensus and a common solution. I appreciate their empathy and what they give to the team, the clients and the partners. They are incredible determined and ambitious but without forgetting the ‘we’. By the way, my male colleagues would also like to see more mixed teams – only with the right mix do we bring out the best ‘we’.”

She imagined that a male-dominated industry puts off a lot of people at first, or women might be afraid that the environment is too rough. “Unfortunately, even at school or before, there is a misconception that science or technology is only for boys. We have to start early to eliminate this misconception, but at the same time female role models are incredibly important. Unfortunately, the visibility of women is still too low.”



Nirit Brookmayer said women were held back by “the stigma that this is a male branch”, while lack of awareness is also an issue, with too little exposure to the field in the mainstream (non-specialist) media.

“I don’t believe that women and men have different abilities,” said Natalie Bell. “However, I believe that the skills that are perceived as positive in the industry are more likely to be displayed by men than by women – because women are made to feel that it is not appropriate for them to display them. Dominance and egoism are unfortunately still traits that lead to success.”

We should not hire more women because they are women, but we should put more emphasis on other skills and characteristics when hiring staff and choosing managers, she said.

We risk missing out on 50% of the entire talent pool if we don't make our industry attractive to women, said Rajni Patwardhan. "As an industry, we are going through a severe crisis due to the shortage of talent. Women can bring in balance as they are good with analytics, logic and data. Men and women see things differently and bring unique ideas to the table. This enables better problem solving, which can boost performance at the business unit level."

Lack of awareness of the host of opportunities is a key issue, she added. "At the grass root level, from schools, IT technology as career for women is seldom discussed. By celebrating female leaders in the maritime industry, it will hopefully encourage more girls to pursue their interests and careers within it, thus increasing the hiring pool diversity."

Mentoring is another key when encouraging women into new industries, she added. "I believe mentoring is one of the top strategies to help close the gender gap in business leadership. Mentoring is not a one-way street – it benefits mentors as well as mentees. Mentors can improve their leadership skills, while they are giving back by helping women adjust and thrive in their careers and personal lives."

Galyna Roizina said recruiting the right people doesn't depend on gender. "It depends on education, personal skills and abilities. For example, a lot of women are good at business analysis and these skills are very useful in the implementation of PCS/Single Windows."

She didn't think that anything is holding back women. "It depends more on their wishes. Not all women want to work – they prefer to spend their time with their family and children. But if a woman wants, there are a lot of opportunities to combine her career and her family."

Women are as diverse as the industry itself, said Mona Swoboda. "There is growing evidence of a link between gender balance and a business's performance," she pointed out. "OECD analyses of the correlation between the participation of women in decision-making processes and economic development have found that an increase in leadership positions held by women across sectors results in significantly faster and more sustainably growing economies with higher levels of industrialisation."

“When we understand equality as a catalyst for competitiveness, the integration and empowerment of women is no longer only a matter of women’s rights but instead becomes a necessity to maximise our industries’ performance.”

There is a lack of awareness about the fact that the maritime industry is modern and fast-paced and rich in opportunities, she said. “Additionally, there are still significant barriers that prevent women from accessing the industry equally and many of those barriers are due to prevailing gender biases.”

Rather than see more initiatives, Mona said she would like there to be greater visibility of the many excellent initiatives that already exist, such as the IMO Gender Programme ‘Training-Visibility-Recognition’, the CIP-OAS Technical Advisory Group on Gender Equality, the CIP-OAS Outstanding Women in Maritime Award and the webinars, podcasts, publications and workshops run by organisations such as WISTA, Red MAMLa, WiMAC, PortMujer and others.



We must stop stigmatising, said Muriel Folliot-Olivier. “There is no difference between the skills of a woman and that of a man. The leaders of the two environments, PCS and maritime sector, do not have the same mentalities and certainly because there is still at the present time a difference in generation – the PCS jobs are very young.”

The maritime sector is still ‘macho’, she added. “Fortunately, mentalities are changing. Many recruiters consider a man or a woman simply as a candidate. Then there is the question of equal treatment – it is not yet won.”

Women are talented and have very different skill sets that can be used in the maritime sector, said Fatima Abdelkarim Alburaimi. “However, the marketing of the industry is lacking, so a lot of people may not have any in-depth knowledge of maritime.”

Federica Montaseri emphasised that soft skills are necessary in order to manage a PCS or any type of digital project. “For these reasons, I am convinced that women can bring an added value in this sector, and we must promote our jobs amongst young people to attract them.”

For women, the hardest part is being recognised in their role at work “and sometimes we do our best in losing self-confidence,” she said. “Nevertheless, we have to be focused on our skills, knowledge, approach and motivation.”

The digital and energy transition is going to be more and more important in the shipping and maritime sector, she noted, and this would lead to more women being employed in the industry. “In the meantime, it’s changing the workplace conditions after the Covid situation and this could be an opportunity for women in order to have much more flexibility at work, improving the work-life balance.”



Monique van der Linde emphasised the variety of challenges and opportunities encountered in her job. “It is never boring and we always have to keep thinking ahead about what’s coming next, anticipating new technologies and business models in the industry. Next to this, I like to be in close contact with our customers, to serve them and to know first-hand what their needs are. What I also enjoy is coaching young people and teams and seeing them learn, grow and be successful.”

Regardless of the sector, women bring particular skills, qualities and abilities to the workplace, she said. “For example, I believe that women’s soft skills are very valuable in a more and more digital world where there is still a strong need for human connection. However, I would like to say that I also strongly believe in diversity in teams and organisations, that is a healthy mix of gender and personalities.”

Monique said she would like to see more companies facilitating traineeships in the maritime sector. “In Rotterdam, I have had good experiences with contracting young women for a traineeship with our company. What I have seen throughout the traineeship is that they become more and more enthusiastic about the sector and aware of the scale and variety of career opportunities.”

Women have the ability to multitask and are generally not afraid to ask questions that do not have obvious answers, said Evelyn Eggers. “Beyond that, we need to make the industry more open and welcoming not only to women, through family-

friendly working policies. And is it really necessary to mention equal pay and equal opportunities for career advancement?”

Promoting awareness at schools and colleges and with careers advisers would definitely help, she added. “DAKOSY has a programme which starts at school, co-financing lectures at university and a work-study programme which gave us the opportunity to recruit a pool of very bright young women – and men.”

Raising awareness

All our professionals were agreed that we need to raise awareness of the industry and get a stronger message to schools, colleges and careers advisers; that there was a need to inspire more girls while still at school; that role models must be available and tangible; and that meetings, webinars, etc., would be helpful.

As Fatima Abdelkarim Alburaimi said, we need to promote the maritime professions, onboard and onshore, to young women and show them how a career in maritime can be both rewarding and exciting.

The interviewees also considered workplace conditions and family friendly/flexible working to be important, although not only for women.



“These concepts definitely help – they help men and women,” said Anne Ebeling. “Both can and should take care of the same issues at home/with children. Women are not the only ones who benefit from such concepts and we must never forget that. We have to get rid of the idea that it is always the woman who has to take care of the children. It starts in the head.”

By introducing family-friendly/flexible working, equal pay and career advancements, we actually support everybody, said Evelyn Eggers.

And finally: if a young woman asked why she should consider the industry, what would be the message?

“I would recommend joining an interesting and dynamic industry with lots of players in the logistics process.” Nirit Brookmayer.



“We make sure that the world as you know it keeps turning – day after day and despite all obstacles. Do you want to be part of it?” Anne Ebeling.

“It doesn’t matter what industry you work in as long as you enjoy your job and have the support of management and the whole company to do your job the way you do it best.”

Natalie Bell.

“IT is the undisputable future and the maritime industry, like others, will thrive on it. The industry is gearing up to change itself to be more inclusive and gender diversified. Kale is promoting women in the workforce in a big way, with flexible working hours, work-from-home options, on-job training, merit-based recognition, work-life balance and encouraging women to join the company after sabbaticals. Today nearly 40% of our workforce are women and they are contributing significantly. Their career paths are well defined and are mentored to take up leadership positions.” Rajni Patwardhan.

“I have been in this industry for more than 20 years. And I like my job very much. I have a family and two sons. So, it is possible to be good in your career, to like your job, even after many years, and to have a good family. It depends only on you.” Galyna Roizina.

“Because the industry needs her! And I would also tell her that the industry is incredibly diverse and multifaceted and can provide a lifelong career that is exciting, ever-changing, challenging and extremely rewarding.” Mona Swoboda.

“It is an excellent industry to never get bored and an infinite source of learning, offering a large choice of different jobs, where each person according to their tastes and skills can achieve a good career.” Muriel Folliot-Olivier.

“I would like to say to her that she will never regret this choice. Even if she were to change jobs in the future, she will take advantage of the experience gained in this sector.” Federica Montaseri.

“I would say that she would not want to miss the opportunity to contribute to creating smart and sustainable ports. In addition, I would invite her to my company and

discuss what opportunities we have that match her qualities and ambitions!” Monique van der Linde.

A Maritime Journalist’s Perspective

By Felicity Landon

Chronologically, I was a journalist first – the maritime bit came later, and I am so glad that it did! After training as a news journalist and working as a reporter, feature writer and sub-editor on a daily newspaper, I decided to go freelance. Chance intervened. Lloyd’s List offered me the opportunity to work on the sub-editors’ desk, editing and laying out the copy for the next day’s paper (in the days when it was still printed on paper!).



I learned quickly and, as so many people have said to me – once you work in the maritime industry, it’s pretty much impossible to get it out of your system. Ports, shipping and logistics, and all things connected, have been my passion ever since.

It is a tremendous privilege to work in such a dynamic, exciting and important sector. I write for a range of maritime publications and organisations. There is never a shortage of topics to report on and there are always enthusiastic and thoughtful people to interview. Of course, nearly all conversations are dominated by two themes – digitalisation and decarbonisation.

I am particularly proud to contribute to the Mission to Seafarers’ “The Sea” magazine, which takes time to consider the challenges and issues that affect the lives of the seafarers from around the world, on whose hard work and dedication we are all dependent.

As an aside, I am forever explaining to friends and family the crucial role of our industry in serving the day-to-day needs of us all. Those who work in maritime sometimes despair at the way others take it for granted that the things they need or want to buy are available, on the supermarket shelf or online. How on earth do they think those items are transported around the world?!

Contributors

Anne Ebeling – Team leader at DAKOSY, Germany

Evelyn Eggers – Evelyn Eggers, business development director at DAKOSY, Germany

Fatima Alburaimi – Technical Program Engineer, DT World, Dubai, UAE

Federica Montaresi – Head of special projects, innovation and institutional relations at the Port Authority of the Eastern Ligurian Sea, Italy

Felicity Landon – Freelance maritime journalist

Galyna Roizina – CEO of PPL 33-35 Ltd, Ukraine

Inga Morton – General Manager, IPCSA

Mona Swoboda – Program manager at the Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP), Organization of American States (OAS)

Monique van der Linde – Director port solutions at Portbase, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Muriel Folliot-Olivier – General secretary, legal affairs manager and executive board member, Soget, Le Havre, France

Natalie Bell – IT product lead, Customs Europe at Kuhne + Nagel, Germany

Nirit Brookmayer – System analyst at Israel Port Company, Israel

Rajni Patwardhan – Head of marketing, Kale Logistics Solutions, India

For further information

Contact: Inga Morton, General Manager, IPCSA



Inga.morton@ipcsa.international

+371 29273218

www.ipcsa.international

<https://notn.ipcsa.international>

