



GROWTH IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE URUGUAYAN MARITIME SECTOR

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Growth in women's participation in the Uruguayan maritime sector

In recent years, the role of women in the maritime sector has become increasingly relevant. We are looking for spaces for participation, where we can contribute our knowledge and skills, places where we can be heard, where our work is recognized. Sometimes these opportunities arise within the companies themselves, other times it is through our active participation in civil associations.

I am referring both to those associations whose purpose is to promote the participation of women in the sector, as well as those that seek other purposes, where women also hold management positions, promote projects, make decisions and contribute value. We are becoming more and more involved in areas of discussion and places where, in addition to demonstrating our knowledge and capabilities, we have the possibility to contribute. At the end of the day, that is what we are interested in: to be taken into account, to be valued for our work and our knowledge, but always focusing on the value we can bring to the maritime industry.

In my recent experience, both in law associations and in my participation in WISTA (Women in Trading & Shipping Association), I have found time and again that all the professionals who actively participate seek to have their work valued, both financially and in terms of leadership positions, but always insofar as their work provides value, and equivalent to the value they are able to provide. It is not a bid among women to occupy spaces simply because they are women. Most of the women I know are brilliant professionals, with a deep knowledge of the maritime business, who have demonstrated their ability to adapt and excel in an environment traditionally managed by men. Women who are convinced that both men and women must work together, to bring different but equally important visions.

There are some associations and/or groups that have made great strides in this. Others still have a long way to go, but they are all in this transition.

In this opportunity I would like to highlight all those women who have worked behind Presidents and Directors of Associations, something that was normal in the past, but that in many cases still happens. Women that nobody sees, but who are responsible for ensuring that the work is done, that commitments are fulfilled.

As I said, there are organizations that have taken this step, some of them many years ago, others for less time. I cannot fail to mention some examples of Uruguayan women who have overcome the system and reached positions that had only been occupied by male presence. Examples such as Mónica Ageitos, first woman president of the Navigation Center; Valeria Sorrenti, first woman Commander of a Navy Ship; Silvina Berreta, first woman Merchant Captain. Women who are mothers, who have families to take care of, but who have managed to break barriers and position themselves as leaders.

There is a lot of work to be done. We are still in a sector where it is not natural to involve women in certain discussions. Where our ability to work in certain positions is questioned. But there are also many men who have broken out of that mold, especially the younger generations. They understand that the tasks at home are shared and that the presence of both at work is equally important. Men who, at the end of the day, are so confident in themselves and their intellectual abilities that they are not afraid of a woman leading the team and in fact celebrate it. Men who

are not afraid of maternity leave because they do not doubt that, despite the circumstances, it is always best to choose the best person for the job.

In Uruguay, I would like to highlight the presence of women in two organizations of which I am a member and of which I am a board member. First, the old and beloved Uruguayan Maritime Law Association. Although some people still question it, the reality is that in the last ten years there have been six female presidents, and for many years the Board of Directors has had half of its members being women. They are trained professionals who work to stimulate study and improve maritime legislation and who have represented and represent a well-known, prestigious and respected association, with almost 40 years of experience. Although there is always room for improvement, we cannot deny that women have been part of, worked for and represented the association for a long time, something that does not happen in all countries.

And the second organization that has gained strength is WISTA (Women's International Shipping & Trading Association). In our case, WISTA Uruguay (of which I have the honor of being secretary) started with 5 members and today has almost 50. WISTA International is a global organization that connects more than 4300 women in executive and decision-making positions around the world, from all sectors within the maritime industry. It is an organization that not only seeks to connect women with each other for networking purposes, but also works to showcase their place and the value they bring to the industry.

There is still much to do. I invite you to continue building together a maritime sector where work, capacity and preparation are rewarded and valued above any other criteria.

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