



Work in the port sector is still very gendered. According to an Unctad port performance scorecard [1] women's participation rate in ports at global level is only 18%. Their participation in port's operations and services departments is even lower at 16%.

At an industrial level, port industry as well as maritime, financial markets, computer games, construction, design, forestry remain some of the main male-dominated [2].

The exclusion of women in this sector is marked both in operational and administrative work in companies and in the port's governance and leadership roles.

At the basis of the exclusion of women from the port environment there is a dense network of stereotypes and social beliefs that identify gender roles, and they attribute women opposite characteristics to the male ideal type.

Despite technological innovation processes have changed the organization, methods and cycles of work in ports, with a significant drop in the demand for physical strength, women are still considered not suitable for this job. Cultural stereotypes and prejudices have, in fact, connotated the profile of the port worker. In some ways it has made it difficult for women to join this sector. The story goes that the first dock workers or "dockers" were men with a strong physique capable of lifting and handling very heavy goods piece by piece "by hand" [3].

For decades, technological innovation processes have changed the organization, methods and cycles of work in ports, with a significant drop in the demand for physical strength. This has been replaced by the necessity to skillfully drive handling vehicles and for precision in carrying out operations at the speed dictated by the machine being used.

The new scenario makes ports fully accessible to women who desire to work there. Nevertheless, there are still very few of them, both in the global context and in the Italian one, where not all ports are fortunate enough to have them.

Furthermore, the green transition of ports requires new job profiles and skilled professionals in areas like environmental management, digitalization and sustainable logistic that represent a great opportunity also for women.

Several studies highlight that the most outstanding barrier for women to access and stay working in ports as well as in maritime sector was culture [4].

To face stereotypes and help women work participation, different interesting program were arising at international level to empowered women in the port and maritime sector.

Gender equality, SDG5, is one of the 17 goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development United Nations.

Within the port sector, the European Federation of Transport Workers is very committed to gender equality in the European social dialogue. ETF is also a signatory to the European Platform for Change, the UE initiative that aims to build a gender balanced transport sector by improving women's employment in those sectors. The platform was signed also to the European Shipowner Association (ECSA).

Also, UNCTAD opened a new Program called "TrainforTrade" [5] to increase women's participation in leadership role in ports. The management program is focus on gender gap reduction by empowering more woman in ports. According to UNCTAD in 2001 the women were the 35% of this trainee.

In the port sector UNCTAD's Port Performance Scorecard shows that rolling five-year average of women in management and administrative roles in ports increased by 4% to 42% in 2020. This is a sign that, very slowly something is moving on and that training play a very important role in women empowerment in this sector.

The European Commission launched in November 2017 the platform Women in Transport – EU Platform for change, with the objective to strengthen women's employment and equal opportunities for women and men in the transport sector.

Under this UE-Platform ESPO, conscious of the need to step up the presence of women in European ports proposed to register the number of women participating in ESPO's own meetings, reporting every year the results on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

At local level, the Municipality of Livorno under my coordination as City Councilor for Port and Port City Integration developed a project to improve women participation in the port and maritime sector.

“Women in the port and maritime sector, why not” is the project developed and promoted by the Municipality of Livorno, in collaboration with RETE (International Association for the Collaboration between Port and Cities), the University of Pisa and the Institute for Research and Innovation and Services for Development of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR-Iriss).

Under this slogan, the work carried out by women in the port sector will be at the center of a vast project launched by the Municipality of Livorno in cooperation with many stakeholders from the port and maritime sectors.

The aim of the project is, first of all to bring attention on women in the port and maritime sector by promoting the knowledge of their work in both sector to a wide public. Secondly the project aims to promote and facilitate a constructive debate among stakeholder to improve women’s work participation in the port and maritime sector. Finally, the purpose is to represent work in the port and maritime sector as a job opportunity for women.

The project developed different activities, range from the interviews with women workers in the port of Livorno to the photographic exhibition focused on female port and maritime workers.

Women are not just underrepresented in the port and maritime sector, but they are invisible in their work. Starting from this, the project intended to represent the female workers in the port and maritime sector starting by their voice. The voice of the women was told through thematic videos in which female workers talk about their job [6]. A photographic exhibition captures the female workers in different phases of their work in the port and on board, showing women ship captain, women crane operators, drivers of large vehicles, lashing and unlashng to a huge public.



*The photographic exhibition “Il Porto delle Donne” dedicated to women’s work in ports and the maritime sector. In the picture Barbara Bonciani (center), the Mayor of Livorno Luca Salvetti (right) and the Honorable Laura Boldrini (left) that hosted in February 2024 the exhibition at the Chamber of Deputies in Rome. (© Chamber of Deputies, Rome).*

In the city of Livorno, the artist Nian carried out a Murals dedicated to female port workers and the Italian comic actor Paolo Ruffini created clips in order to use irony to deconstruct stereotypes in the port sector. Finally, a local and international conference focused on women empowerment in the port and maritime sector was held in Livorno on 17th and 18th May 2023. The aim of the conference in which ESPO, FEPORT and ETF took part was to facilitate a constructive debate among stakeholder to improve women’s work participation in the port and maritime sector. The international conference promotes a dialogue between stakeholder to support women’s participation in the port and maritime sector.

The project developed by the Municipality of Livorno highlighted how there are still obstacles that do not allow women to enter in the port and maritime sector. Many of these are at cultural side and concern the persistence of stereotypes that connotated the profile of port and maritime workers. At the same time, there is a lack of knowledge about the effects that the evolution of technologies has brought to these sectors, making them equally accessible to men and women.

The lack of knowledge about female workers in the port and maritime sector, joined with a portrayal of port and maritime work as suitable only for men discourage the young women from submitting their cv and on the other hands it pushes companies to hire only men.

That means that the lack of visibility of women workers in those sectors facilitates the maintenance of obsolete stereotypes that characterize port and maritime works suitable only for men. In order to facilitate the access of women in the port and maritime sector it is necessary to implement quantitative and qualitative data assessment and represent port and maritime jobs as employee opportunities for women.

All those initiatives and initiatives are very important to reduce gender segregation in the port and maritime sector, but we have to do some other efforts in order to attract more female to port and maritime jobs and achieve an equal treatment between women and men. Indeed, women in the maritime and port sector are not just underrepresented but they are also invisible in their work.

*Women in the port and maritime sector. (© Elena Cappanera).*





In this number of PORTUS, the REPORT section “Women in Ports” collects several articles that highlight the role played by women in the port sector and the importance to achieve greater inclusion of women in port and maritime industry.

The issue starts with the interview of Teófila MARTÍNEZ SAIZ, President of RETE and President of the Cadiz Bay Port Authority.

The thematic section opens with Isabelle RYCKBOST - Secretary General of the European Sea Ports Organization (ESPO), Lamia KERDJOUDJ - Secretary General of the Federation of European Private Port Companies and Terminals (FEPORT) and Berardina TOMMASI - Policy Officer in the Dockers Section of the Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF). The Secretary General of the ESPO, Isabelle RYCKBOST, underlines the importance of women in developing transport policy in Europe. Considering facts and figures, maritime and ports are doing better than land transport and women are better represented in all

politically related port functions, including at the level of ESPO. Nevertheless, to benefit from a broader talent pool, which of course cannot be limited to men only, we need to increase the share of women working in ports in Europe. To improve gender balanced workforce, it is important to work on the mentality of the workforce in the port, share experiences between ports and obtain some more disaggregated data on the share of women in different function and profession.

Lamia KERDJOUDJ highlights the importance of encouraging women to pursue careers in ports. The green transition in European ports is driving the emergence of new jobs, the creation of new profile. In this framework it is important for port companies and terminal improve diversity in the workforce, attracting talent, breaking down barriers and stereotypes, paving the way for future generations.

The values of gender parity have long been central to the endeavors of the European Transport Workers' Federation as Berardina TOMMASI explained in her article. ETF has always ensured the inclusion of women's voice. Thanks to the campaign "Making the Transport Sector Fit for Women to Work in" over 3,000 women were interviewed and the survey reveals that women transport workers still encounter cultural barriers and discrimination in their work in the port sector. These barriers create a working environment that fails to attract women to the transport professions, fails to support women in doing their jobs well and fails to retain them in the sector. However, women workers supported by the union movement are stirring the waters in ports and around the world, challenging stereotypes and driving positive change in the maritime and port industry.

The second part of this REPORT is dedicated at the articles from Italy, Spain and Northern Europe. In this framework, Luciano GUERRIERI - President of the North Tyrrhenian Sea Ports System Authority in Italy - has given its wholehearted commitment to fill up the gender gap in the port sector by adopting gender equality as a key area for defining Port Network sustainability strategy. He talked about gender gap, gender segregation in the logistics, maritime and port sector, as an important issue to face within the port context. Manuela INDACO - CEO of the historic family company "Angelo Perez & C" S.N.C. led by the father Cosimo, former President of the former Port Authority of Catania - describes her experience as a customs broker specializing in international logistics, with a focus on the challenges of the third millennium that the company has been facing: from digitalization and innovation processes, to the transformations and the latest events involving all sectors of ports, shipments and intermodality.

Loli DOLZ - Journalist and Director of Diario del Puerto Publicaciones in Valencia - analyzed the presence of women in logistics and transport industry in Spain that remains low and

uneven. It is also difficult to quantify the actual presence of women in port activities, because there is no institution that counts the access to logistics professionals by gender. Emma COBOS – Director of Innovation and Business Strategy at the Port of Barcelona in Spain – underlines the importance of attract more and more women in management positions, especially in the new sectors of sustainability, energy, transition and innovation. Mina AKHAVAN – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at the TU Delft – enhances the role of women in maritime industry, in which maritime industry is significantly male dominated, with women making up a very small percentage of the workforce. In this framework, Netherlands since the turn of the century, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity and inclusivity in port operations and management.

The third, but not last section of this REPORT, is dedicated to Latina America experience: two articles from Lima in Perú , the first written by Miriam Sara REPETTO (WISTA Perú) and the other by Mariela GUTARRA RAMOS et all. (APN – National Port Authority); the article from Chile is carried out by Lilian IRELAND ASTUDILLO et all. (Port Works, Ministry of Public Works); the last article from Santos in Brazil is written by Maria Cristina GONTIJO PERES VALDEZ SILVA (Santa Cecília University – UNISANTA and Santos Port Excellence Center – CENEP).

In the first article from Perú, Miriam Sara REPETTO underlines the role of women's Associations for the participation of women in the maritime, port and foreign trade and logistics sector. In the other Mariela GUTARRA RAMOS, Mónica ESTEBAN GONZALES, Marely HUATUCO TORIBIO focused on gender equality in Peruvian port management by analyzing challenges and opportunities.

Lilian IRELAND ASTUDILLO, Carola MARÍN RIVERO, Felipe GONZÁLEZ MAC-CONNELL, Boris OLGUÍN MORALES, Ricardo TRIGO PAVEZ explored the role of women in the fishing industry in Chile. This sector is very important representing the 32,7% of the Country's total catch. Female participation in fishing is increased with women that represent the 25% of register fisher.

The last article written by Maria Cristina GONTIJO PERES VALDEZ SILVA is focused on women participation in port and navigation sector in Brazil, with particular attention at the importance in the adoption of good ESG (environmental, social and governance) practices. The article explores, as a best practice, the presence of women in the National Waterway Sector Guide, based on a cooperation agreement signed between WISTA and ANTAQ, a Brazilian regulatory agency.



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**HEAD IMAGE** | *The Port of Livorno and women's work.* (© Elena Cappanera).



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## NOTES

- [1] Unctad port performance scorecard: demo: <https://pps.unctad.org/en/?mode=demo/>.  
[2] Eurostat, 2018.  
[3] Batini P., 1991; Dubbeld B., 2003; Davis S. at all 2000; Bonciani B., 2023.  
[4] Barreiro-Gen et al., 2021; Bonciani B., 2023; Thomas, 2006; Kitada, 2010.  
[5] <https://unctad.org/news/training-opens-new-horizons-women-ports/>.  
[6] [www.comune.livorno.it/porto-integrazione-citta-porto/porto-delle-donne/](http://www.comune.livorno.it/porto-integrazione-citta-porto/porto-delle-donne/).

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