



IMOGENder Network



Best Practices and Resources to support the Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Maritime Industry



**2025
FIRST EDITION**

**PREPARED BY
IMOGENder NETWORK**

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FOREWARD

01 | FOREWARD

A truly diverse and inclusive maritime industry will shape the sector for future generations – widening the talent pool, driving innovation, enhancing decision-making and building trust. Progress has been made in dismantling barriers to women's advancement across the different areas of work in the maritime world, from deck to boardroom, from ocean scientist to maritime administrator.

However, the numbers remain stark. Latest data on women employment in maritime indicate that female representation is still disproportionately low, with women accounting for 19% of the workforce of national maritime authorities in International Maritime Organization (IMO) Member States and 16% of the private sector workforce (excluding seafarers). Women represent a tiny fraction of the seagoing workforce, underscoring the urgent need for continued action.

This Best Practices Guide for Women in Maritime has been compiled and curated by the IMOGENder Equality Network to equip maritime employers with practical tools to recruit, retain, and support women. It sends a clear message: women are valued, and inclusive workplaces are essential.

Policies matter. I encourage all employers in maritime to utilise this guide to implement – and to share – best practices and solutions to achieve equality goals.



ARSENIO DOMINGUEZ

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME ORGANIZATION

The poor representation of women in the maritime sector is well recognized. Throughout my years of involvement with the IMOGENder Network, I often found myself in discussions about the numerous barriers and challenges that women in the maritime sector face – from seemingly obvious issues like lack of appropriate PPE tailored to a woman’s body, to the more challenging issues around retention of women on board ships, harassment, and perceptions of the roles women could fill.

What was rarely discussed, however, were the practical solutions: how do we address the systemic issues within the maritime sector to create a more welcome environment for women to pursue careers that will not only create a more diverse and inclusive industry, but can also help address the shortage of seafarers.

This became the focus of a workshop hosted by Canada in 2024: specifically, exploring programs and policies to address these challenges, and how to encourage various actors across the sector to take the first step. Through these discussions, we began to hear about companies who had already taken action, and we believed that sharing those experiences with the broader industry could help pave the way for others to learn from and build upon.

This Best Practices & Resources Guide for the Recruitment and Retention of Women in Maritime is intended to be a repository of these actions. It is hoped that not only will these case studies help inspire and guide others in finding ways to make the maritime sector more diverse and inclusive, but also provide reassurance to women considering a profession in maritime that progress is indeed being made, and resources are in fact available. To our contributors: thank you. To our readers: we hope you find your inspiration in these pages.



MICHELLE SANDERS

**FORMER ALTERNATE
PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF
CANADA TO THE
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME
ORGANIZATION**

INTRODUCTION



The maritime industry is a crucial sector in facilitating and enabling global trade, innovation, and economic development. Historically, the sector has been male dominated, with an estimated only 2% of women making up the workforce at sea. While progress has been made in recent years, women continue to face significant challenges, including difficulties to entry, career progression, and equitable representation. More work is needed to attract women into the sector and to support and empower those working in the industry.

To help address some of these challenges and enable greater dissemination of the positive initiatives that are already being implemented within the sector, this guide is intended to bring together the best practices and resources specifically for employers in the maritime sector to improve the recruitment and retention of women in the maritime industry.

IMO GENDER NETWORK



The IMOGENder Network is made up of representatives and interested stakeholders at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) that focuses on promoting gender equality within the maritime sector. This network aims to create a more inclusive environment by supporting the advancement and empowerment of women in maritime professions.

IMOGENder's flagship programmes include, 'Women on Board Mentor Programme', 'Best Practices and Resource Guide' to support the Recruitment & Retention of Women in the Maritime Industry,' and 'Open House Workshops' all of which are designed to create tangible pathways towards change. Additionally, IMOGENder Network supports school visits to the IMO and fosters connections with industry stakeholders. Dive into our current explorations.

THE CHALLENGE



Women continue to encounter significant challenges, in pursuing careers in the maritime sector, including barriers to entry, career advancement, and fair representation. More efforts are essential to attract women to the sector and support those already working within it.

Feedback reveals that women struggle to access available knowledge and resources, and the absence of supportive programs and policies leads to an unequal environment that is hard to navigate. Additionally, industry stakeholders and governments often take an individualistic approach, lacking awareness of others' initiatives.

To address this gap and promote the positive efforts underway, this Guide aims to consolidate best practices and resources for employers in the maritime sector, enhancing the recruitment and retention of women across the industry.

OUR OBJECTIVES

06 | BACKGROUND

EMPOWERMENT

Establishing a repository of best practices and resources serves as a powerful tool for promoting gender equality in the maritime industry. It provides a framework for organizations to implement policies that support women. By standardizing these practices, the industry can create a more equitable work environment where women are valued and respected.



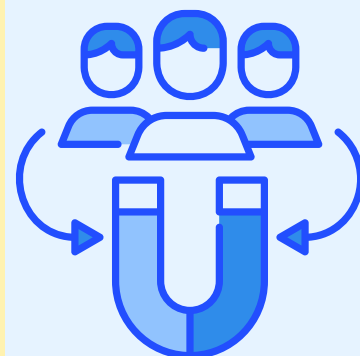
IMPROVE INDUSTRY STANDARDS

The maritime industry benefits from diverse perspectives and approaches. By curating best practices and resources for women, the industry can improve overall standards, leading to more innovative solutions and sustainable practices.



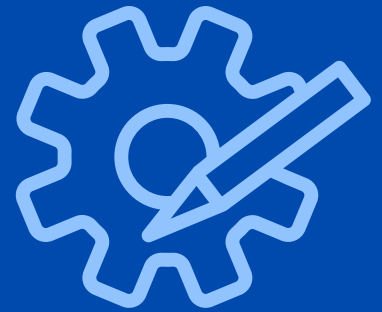
ATTRACTING AND RETRAINING TALENT

The availability of targeted resources and a clear commitment to best practices make the maritime industry more attractive to women. This not only helps in recruiting top talent but also in retaining it. Women are more likely to remain in the industry if they feel supported, valued, and have access to resources that address their specific needs.



We hope you find this information useful and that it inspires more employers to adopt similar practices to help close the gender gap and make the maritime industry more inclusive.

METHODOLOGY



Conduct Survey



Stakeholders in the industry were requested to fill out a survey via the IMOGENder Network website and form.

Data Collection



Data was collected and curated. IMOGENder representatives reached out if further information was required.

Publish Survey



Findings are published on the website showcasing positive practices and case studies to the public.

Call for Contributions

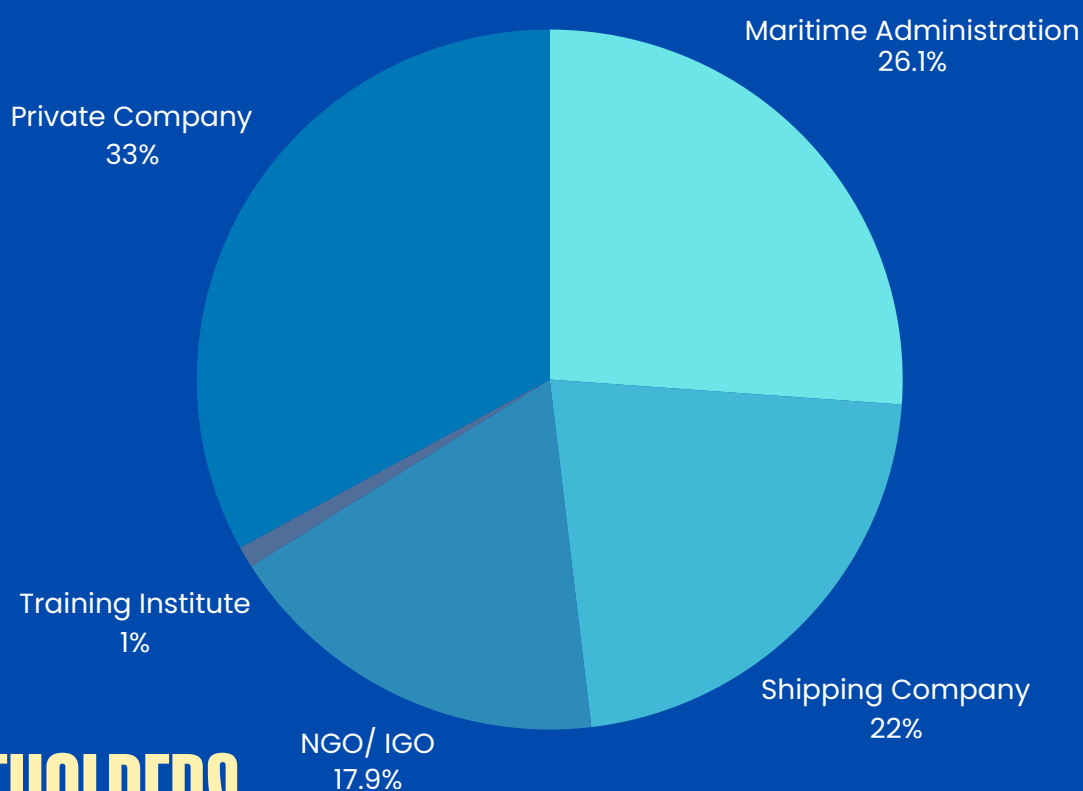
There is an open call for additional best practices to be curated for the next installment of the guide. This guide is intended to be an ever-green resource to reflect new initiatives across the sector.

RESPONDERS

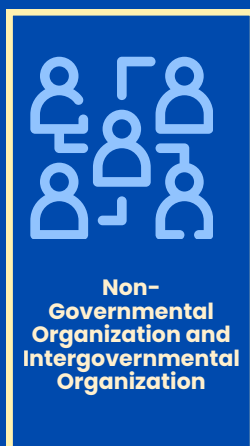
08 | METHODOLOGY

Organisations that have engaged with the Best Practice Resource Guide.

75 Responders **25** Countries



STAKEHOLDERS



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each case study highlights an initiative, program or policy implemented by the responding organization. The icons at the top of each case study represent the focus area that the initiative seeks to address, with some initiatives covering multiple focus areas. The 8 focus areas are:



Hiring Practices to Support Gender Diversity



Mentorship or Sponsorship Programs



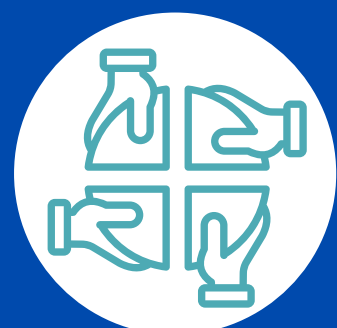
Onboarding and Training Tailored to Women



Career Progression and Promotion Opportunities



Equitable Pay and Benefits



Anti-harassment and Inclusivity Measure

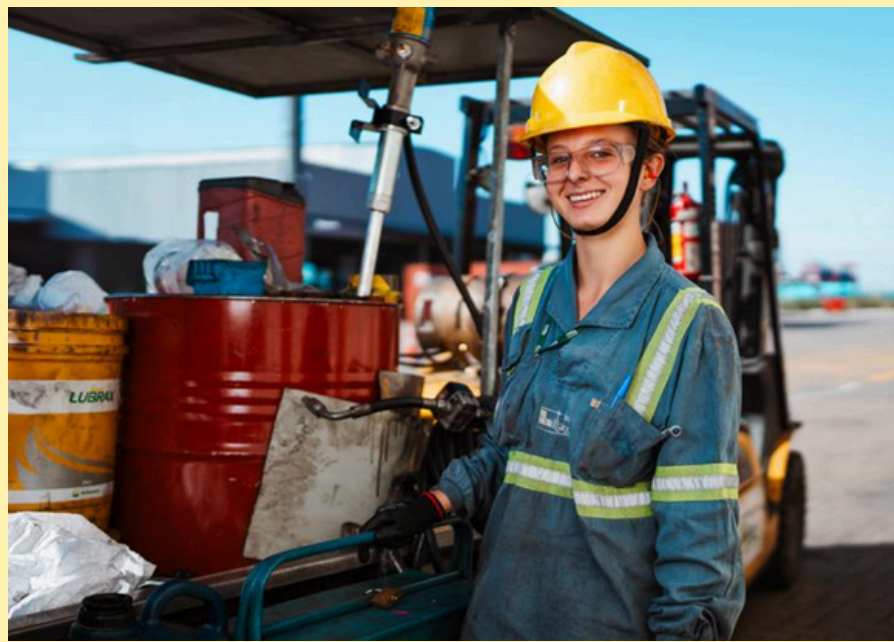


Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies
(e.g. flexible hours, maternity/paternity leave)



Other

CASE STUDIES

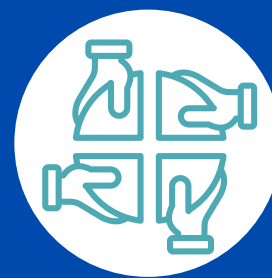


INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

Diversity and Inclusion Guidance for Pilotage



Hiring Practices to Support Gender Diversity



Anti-harassment and Inclusivity Measure

Overview

IMPA developed its Diversity and Inclusion Guidance for Pilotage to promote inclusivity and address the stark gender imbalance in the maritime sector. This resource offers practical advice and best practices to support member organisations in fostering gender diversity by encouraging the participation of women in pilotage. The Guidance is aligned with the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, an international treaty that promotes equality, non-discrimination, and fair treatment for all maritime workers, and works to advance the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality.

Program Goals

- Inspire and facilitate the integration of D&I principles in recruitment processes globally.
- Provide a step-by-step approach for developing a D&I Strategy that aligns with the overall objectives of member organisations, including the establishment of measurable goals and targets.
- Outline proactive efforts in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, fostering an inclusive workplace culture, providing training on unconscious bias and cultural awareness, and establishing effective channels for reporting and addressing discrimination.



Program Successes & Impact

In just two years, the guidance has led to measurable, inspiring progress:

- Female maritime pilots attended IMPA conferences for the first time.
- Female pilots spoke at major industry events – making history.
- Visibility of women in pilotage significantly increased.
- Stakeholders began challenging outdated perceptions.
- IMPA's Advisory Board welcomed its first female representative.
- A dedicated section in our magazine now showcases pilots' pioneering and inspiring stories.
- Industry initiatives like Maritime SheEO Marine Pilots were established.
- Pilotage became visible to a broader audience, inspiring younger generations.
- Female pilots leading their national associations.
- D&I is now a standing topic in pilotage programmes at global conferences.



COMPANHIA BRASILEIRA DE OFFSHORE (CBO)



Mentorship or Sponsorship Programs



Onboarding and Training Tailored to Women



Career Progression and Promotion Opportunities

Home Office First Initiative

Overview

The Home Office First Initiative aims to provide a more welcoming and flexible environment for women and mothers, in addition to rights guaranteed by Brazilian law.

Program Goals

To create an environment that strengthens a more inclusive and humane organizational culture where the needs of women and mothers are prioritized and respected.



Flexible Work Environment

The Home Office First Initiative aims to provide a more welcoming and flexible environment for women and mothers, in addition to rights guaranteed by Brazilian law.

Compliance Committee

A body that ensures confidentiality and protection of the identity of whistleblowers, ensuring that reports of inappropriate conduct are handled with discretion and taken seriously, creating a safe space for everyone.

Affinity Group – Women and Mothers

As part of CBO's diversity committee ("For All Committee"), the Affinity Group serves as a space for mutual support where participants share experiences and contribute to the development of the needs of women and mothers.

Structural Initiatives:

Pregnant maritime employees immediately start performing land-based activities connected to their training.

CBO also practices gender equal hiring of trainees and promotion opportunities, and the creation of diverse shortlists for recruitment processes.

Program Successes & Impact

In 2019, CBO had 21 female employees, representing 2.49% of the total maritime workforce. In 2021, it grew to 58 women (4.56%), and by March 2025, 115 female employees, representing 8.66% of the workforce. The number of women in leadership positions at sea have increased from three (1%) in 2018 to 16 (5%) today.

PORTO ITAPOÁ



**Career Progression
and Promotion
Opportunities**



**Onboarding and
Training Tailored to
Women**



**Gender-Sensitive Workplace
Policies
(e.g. flexible hours,
maternity/paternity leave)**

Overview

Porto Itapoá has launched several initiatives to celebrate the exceptional work of women in the industry and to share best practices on recruiting, retaining, and protecting women in the maritime sector.

Program Goals

- Educational and therapeutic resources to support pregnant employees and employees' spouses
- Certification Programs for women
- Apprenticeship Programs for women



“Mamãe Coruja”

Established in 2018, this program is designed to support pregnant employees and employees’ spouses. This full-day activity is held every six months at Porto Itapoá featuring healthy meals, lectures by Porto Itapoá’s medical doctor and nurse on health insurance, a psychologist on psychomotor development in children, and a dentist on infant oral hygiene, first aid and emergency training, and gift bags with infant hygiene products. Porto Itapoá’s Health Centre conducts prenatal care for employees and their family members and proactively shares information on the “Mamãe Coruja” program.

“Mulheres Portuárias”

Established in 2012, this program aims to develop professional certification opportunities for women in roles traditionally dominated by men, including Truck Driving and Equipment Operator positions.

Apprenticeship Programs

Porto Itapoá fully sponsors training courses for all apprentices in mechanical and electrical maintenance positions, and actively encourages female enrolment.



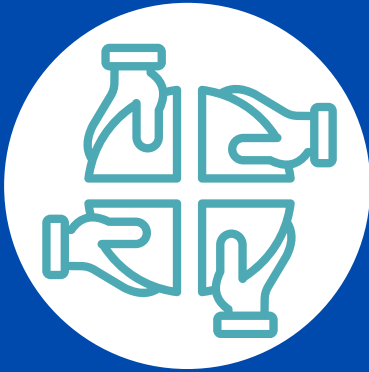
Program Successes & Impact

- In 2024, 50% of Porto Itapoá’s budget for the “Truck Driver’s License Subsidy Program” was allocated to women, directly supporting the entry of women into roles requiring certification.
- From 2023 to 2025, Porto Itapoá saw a 206% increase in the number of women in Equipment Operator positions, while women in Port Assistant positions grew by 226.3%.
- In May 2025, 18 new apprentices were hired to undertake mechanical and electrical maintenance work, 55.5% of which were women. Porto Itapoá maintains an average of 45.5% of women represented in apprenticeship programs.

SAGRES OPERAÇÕES PORTUÁRIAS

17 | CASE STUDIES

Policy for the Inclusion of Women in Sagres Operations



**Anti-harassment
and Inclusivity
Measure**



**Hiring Practices to
Support Gender
Diversity**



**Onboarding and
Training Tailored to
Women**

Overview

In 2022, the Sagres Board of Directors, together with HR, established a target of increasing the number of women in the company's workforce by 5% per year. The Policy for the Inclusion of Women in Sagres Operations was published to outline how this would be achieved.



Sensitization & Awareness Raising

- Meeting organized by HR and the Committee on Diversity & Inclusion to raise awareness and sensitize managers
- Lectures organized on issues related to women's rights
- Awareness blitz across the organization on respect for women

Integration into the workplace and ongoing support

- **Acolher Program:** Targeted program to ensure effective integration into the company and the workplace
- **45-day Feedback:** Conversation held 45-days after hire between employee and leadership
- **Daycare assistance up to 2yrs of age:** Important especially for women who work night shifts; ensures job opportunities are not limited

Hiring Practices

- Greater inclusion of female resumes with an operational profile
- Mandatory participation of at least one woman per selection process
- Justification required by the manager in case of rejection of female candidates

Training Program

- Machine operator training program specific for women

Campaign Against Violence

- Promotional campaign within the organization.

Program Successes & Impact

- **When Program was launched in 2022, it was focused on positions that turned out not to be well-suited for women. Once they changed the focus, they are now seeing much greater success with their efforts.**
- **Continue to monitor progress and see improvements in the role of women in their company.**

BRASIL PORT LOGISTICA OFFSHORE ESTALEIRO NAVAL LTDA



**Onboarding and
Training Tailored to
Women**



**Career Progression
and Promotion
Opportunities**

“Somos por Elas”

“Somos por Elas”

Overview

Somos por Elas is an initiative to promote the inclusion and training of women in operational areas that are traditionally dominated by men.

Program Goals

To integrate and ensure gender equality in the port environment by providing participants with opportunities for professional growth to strengthen their presence in the industry.



BRASIL PORT LOGISTICA OFFSHORE ESTALEIRO NAVAL LTDA

“Somos por Elas”

New Technical Training Programs

Women are encouraged to take part in forklift operator training, an area traditionally dominated by men.

Behavioural Training

As part of the new technical training program, some candidates needed further development in proactivity and engagement. Based on these lessons, improvements were established for future editions of the program, including behavioral training, psychological assessments during the selection process, and monthly meetings with Human Resources for follow-up and support.

Improved Communication Strategies

Reinforced internal and external communications to develop and enhance engagement and acceptance of the program through activities such as internal marketing campaigns, social media promotion, and team awareness initiatives.

Program Successes & Impact

Lessons from the first program (training as forklift operator) demonstrated the capability and feasibility of having women as forklift operators. It also identified challenges faced by women in this sector leading to constant improvement of the program and a significant step forward for female inclusion at Brasil Port and its port sector.

ALL ABOARD ALLIANCE



**Anti-harassment
and Inclusivity
Measure**



**Gender-Sensitive Workplace
Policies
(e.g. flexible hours,
maternity/paternity leave)**

Overview

Made up of 35 member companies, the Alliance aims to significantly improve diversity, equity, and inclusion across the maritime industry through high-level engagement of senior executives in a high-level community of action.



**We are a member of the
All Aboard Alliance**

Program Goals

- Diversifying maritime leadership.
- Improving diversity at sea.

ALL ABOARD ALLIANCE

Diversity@Sea Workstream

Aims to explore how to make a career at sea more diverse, inclusive, and attractive to a broader pool of talent. It includes initiatives that focus on safer and more welcoming work conditions at sea, preventing sexual misconduct, and improving pregnancy and family leave policies.

Diversifying Maritime Leadership Workstream

Seeks to expand the diversity of leaders in the maritime sector.

Program Successes & Impact

Through the Diversity@Sea Workstream, the **Key Pain Points for Women at Sea report** – the first output from this stream – outlines and raises awareness of major challenges experienced by women at sea and identifies adequate and sustainable solutions. The 15 pain points fall into four categories: difficulty of succeeding professionally, challenging social relations onboard, systemic employment challenges, and physical conditions onboard. The full report can be found here: [Lessons from the first program](#).

Following the report, a pilot phase was launched where more than 400 seafarers on 12 participating vessels with higher than-average numbers of women onboard. Participants answered regular surveys on the impact of the implemented measures from the 15 Key Pain Points for Women at Sea report. Based on the results, the Global Maritime Forum and the companies involved developed a set of nine practical, research-backed guidelines ranging from establishing clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour to the availability of paid parental leave. The full report can be found here: [Lessons from the first program](#).

FRANCE MARITIME ADMINISTRATION



Mentorship or Sponsorship Programs



Onboarding and Training Tailored to Women



Career Progression and Promotion Opportunities



Anti-harassment and Inclusivity Measure

Overview

The maritime sector in France (industry and government) has launched several initiatives to celebrate the exceptional work of women in the industry and share best practices on recruiting, retaining, and protecting women in seafaring professions.

Program Goals

1. Celebrate the accomplishments of women
2. Develop effective recruitment and retention strategies for women
3. Prevent gender-based harassment and violence

Good practices for professional equality between men and women

“Good practices for professional equality between men and women: the Cluster Maritime Français” in partnership with WISTA France, has created 8 sheets on: Pay, Recruitment, Promotion, Career management, Training, Work-life balance, Working conditions and Communication. The aim of these materials is to raise awareness among managers and their teams of these issues and to encourage them to adopt these practices in their own companies or establishments. This initiative was the subject of a French submission at TC 71. <https://www.cluster-maritime.fr/la-filiere-maritime/les-enjeux-maritimes/egalite-professionnelle-hommes-femmes/>



Les étoiles de mer

A series of podcast by WISTA France, each podcast is the portrait of an exceptional woman in the maritime sector (chief officer, chief of forward and shipping of Paris' region, the President of WISTA France, etc.). The podcast was created for the 20 years of WISTA France, it is a way to put women in maritime in the spotlight and also inspire girls to follow their paths (especially given the popularity of podcasts among the younger generation)

<https://www.wista.fr/podcasts/>

La mer se décline au féminin

This travelling exhibition by "La Touline" (an association that helps people choose their career path and to support anyone wishing to enter the seafaring professions) presents 17 portraits of women in the maritime sector. The exhibition usually travels to schools in order to inspire students, and especially girls, to consider the maritime sector as a career path.

<https://www.latouline.com/la-mer-au-feminin/>

All hands on deck against harassment and bullying

This amazing campaign (fully translated to English) is a very useful toolkit in a situation of harassment or bullying. It contains three types of situations : how to react when you are a victim/witness/employer; and quick links to find out about your rights, how to file a complaint and, most importantly, contact points. The campaign also contains posters, brochures, guides, charters, and a variety of resources. For further reference: [All hands on deck against harassment and bullying](#)

Les elles de l'océan

This open day has been created by the association "Elles bougent" (whose aim is to increase gender diversity in companies in the industrial and technological sectors) and partners with a variety of actors in the maritime sector to allow girls from middle school and high school to visit their workplace and hopefully get inspired and empowered by it. The girls visit factories, ports, naval bases and ships and learn about professions in the maritime world. In total, over 500 people have participated in this national event.

<https://www.ellesbougent.com/agenda/grands-evenements/les-elles-de-ocean-2025-32/>

Program Successes & Impact

At the 5th "Elles de l'océan" in 2023, 27 companies partnered with L'association Elles Bougent or CMF to introduce and share with more than 1,000 middle school, high school and university students' information about seafaring professions to women and girls. In 2021, results from the CMF survey revealed that women represented 21.4% of the workforce of 44 key maritime companies and that representation is growing.

BELGIUM'S FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT, DIRECTOR GENERAL SHIPPING



Hiring Practices to Support Gender Diversity



Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies
(e.g. flexible hours, maternity/paternity leave)

Overview

Belgium's Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport and the Belgian federal government more generally have implemented various programs and policies to enhance gender equality within the organization.

Program Goals

- Career progression and promotion opportunities,
- Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies (e.g. flexible hours, maternity/paternity leave),
- Anti-harassment and inclusivity measure,
- Equitable pay and benefits.



BELGIUM'S FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT, DIRECTOR GENERAL SHIPPING

Key components of Belgium's approach:

1. No distinction is made between men and women for hiring wages

These are fixed based on degree and years of work experience.

2. Established an Institute for the Equality of Women and : (<https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/en>)

3. Federal Strategy

There is a federal strategy to improve the equality between men and women. Since 2019, there has been a gender mainstreaming coordinator, who reports to the federal parliament, who is responsible for the integration of gender dimension in management plans, implementation of gender indicators, collecting gender statistics, and integration of gender dimension in procedures for public procurement.

4. Special Risk Assessment

Special risk assessment opportunities are available in case of pregnancy (e.g. adjusted work).

5. Maternity Leave

Maternity leave (15 weeks) and paternity leave (including for co-parent) (20 days) are available. 7 weeks of adoption leave (gradually increased to 11 weeks by 2027).

6. Accommodating Policies

Within the Administration breaks are provided to accommodate breastfeeding with specific rooms to accommodate breastfeeding.

7. Diversity and Inclusion Declaration

Declaration signed by President and Directors General of Administration on diversity and inclusion.

INTERNATIONAL OIL POLLUTION COMPENSATION FUNDS (IOPC FUND)



**Mentorship or
Sponsorship
Programs**



**Hiring Practices to
Support Gender
Diversity**



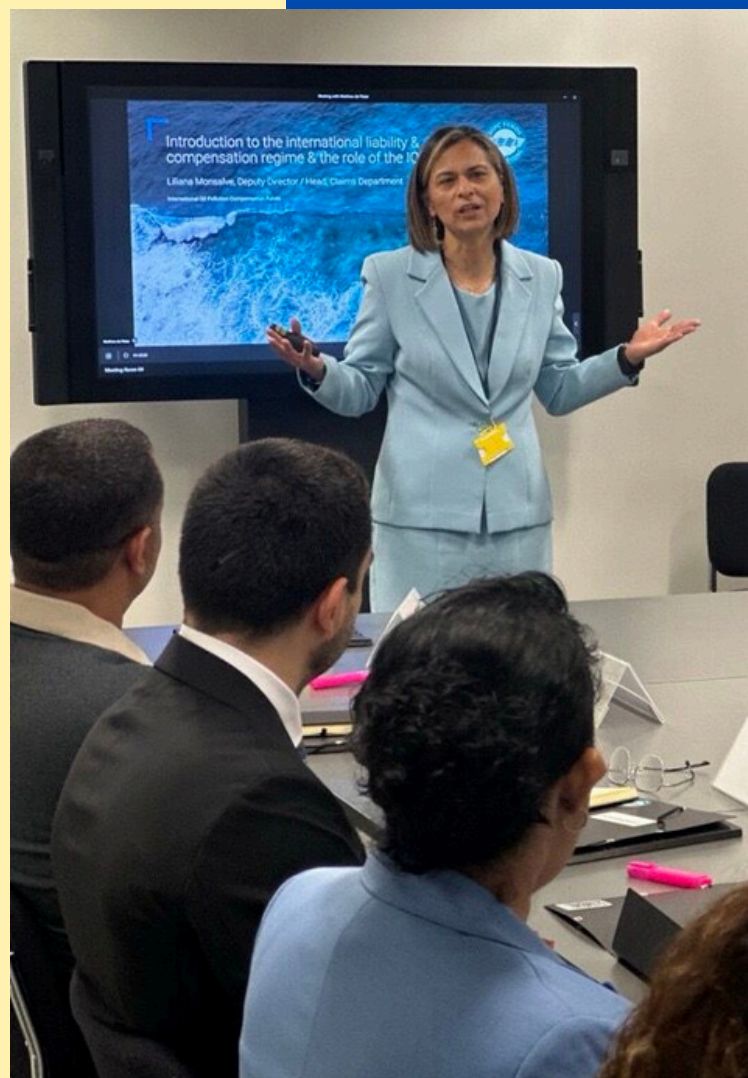
**Gender-Sensitive Workplace
Policies
(e.g. flexible hours,
maternity/paternity leave)**

Overview

Policies and programs have been established within the organization to promote the participation and retention of women at the IOPC Fund.

Key Program Components

- Implemented hiring practices to support gender diversity
- Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies (e.g. flexible hours, parental leave, part-time working, working from home, supporting breastfeeding staff)
- Equitable pay and benefits
- Annual report provides information about the roles occupied by women in the organization



Key Program Components (continued)

- Women are actively encouraged to apply for positions in bodies that advise the Director of the IOPC Funds such as the Audit Body and the Investment Advisory body.
- The IOPC Funds staff actively participate in the IMOGender Mentorship Program, the mentorship scheme developed by IMO for female students at the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) and the World Maritime University (WMU).

Program Successes & Impact

- **Women currently serve in key roles advising the Audit Body and the Director on investment matters.**
- **Women hold senior positions in the organization, including as Deputy Director.**
- **Under the mentorship scheme developed by IMO for female students of IMLI and WMU, IOPC Funds' Deputy Director and Head of Claims Department, Liliana Monsalve, and HNS Project Manager, Gillian Grant currently serve as mentors.**



HAS YOUR COMPANY TAKEN CONCRETE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN?

We would love to add your experience to this guide to help inspire other organizations! Access the template to submit information to the IMOGENder Network and we will be sure to follow-up.

Visit our website at: www.imogender.org under the 'Best Practice Resource Guide' Tab to fill out the survey. Or contact us directly at Imogendernetwork@gmail.com.



THANK YOU!

This Best Practice Resource Guide is the result of the generous time, talent, and dedication of many individuals who worked together to make it possible.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed their expertise, creativity, and effort throughout every stage of this project, from designing the survey and collecting data, to verifying information, conducting outreach, and shaping the final design.

Your commitment to excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement has not only strengthened this guide but also set a standard for best practices in our community.

A special thank you to those who devoted countless hours to:

- Survey Design and Development
- Data Collection and Verification
- Stakeholder Engagement and Information Gathering
- Editing, Formatting, and Layout Design
- Graphic Design and Visual Presentation

Your contributions have made this resource both informative and inspiring. With heartfelt appreciation, we acknowledge the following contributors and volunteers.

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