



EMPA

I grew up in a city with a strong connection to the sea; in the time of my grandparents and uncles, their option was to go fishing for cod or to go to war; to escape the war, most chose fishing. Grandparents and uncles always told me stories about their time there and how hard life was on board at that time. I even visited some ships where they were on board. It was amazing to see how the people connected with each other, helping each other in the worst conditions but always keeping a smile on their faces. Sundays were spent on "Cod Fishermen's Avenue", looking at the cod fleet of the time and hearing stories; nowadays, this tradition still continues. So, time by time, sea life became part of my life.



My home, Ílhavo, is a city with traditions and connections to codfish fishing, preparation and processing of types of food. They allowed the residents to have a maritime experience on board the "Creoula", an old cod boat fishing that was incorporated into the Portuguese Navy in the 80s and has been a training ship since then.

I was 15 years old at the time, and with my father's and some friends' influence, we took the opportunity to take the voyage from Aveiro to Vigo. This sea training included everything we could expect from typical work on the vessels, so we had the chance to do the 4 hours on the bridge, in the engine room or on deck.



After this experience, I already knew what my direction would be.

I entered the Nautical School after completing secondary school, and at the end of the course, I chose fishing (it couldn't be anything else); I had the opportunity that the company that welcomed me "Pascoal e Filhos" was the only company with cod boats and that accepted women, even in other sectors of maritime vessels, I had colleagues who were rejected because they were girls.

I spent a few years on fishing vessels and then returned to nautical school to do my degree. At this point, the desire to create a family and enjoy more time with my family overtook me. I ended up studying again for Chief Engineer on a night course to get a place on land (they have more opportunities to get a job at shore) because seafarers have few opportunities on land, much less for women.



A few years later, I applied to be a Pilot in Sines. I had the opportunity to enter, spend more time with my family and at the same time be linked to the maritime area and, above all, to a practical area where we have contact with the sea, with seafarers and with the ships; it was a dream.

As a woman, finding opportunities in the maritime industry can be challenging. That's why having a solid support system of family and friends is crucial. They are the ones who truly help us navigate through the challenges. Still, whenever a door opens, we must take advantage of it. It is not because it is a men's job that we cannot do it, and all the seafarers I met at nautical school or now on board as a pilot are excellent professionals. We must work harder, believe in ourselves more and prove we are equal professionals as men. The "no's" and the gender should never stop a woman from pursuing her dreams or from shining in the professional world in what she loves to do most.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in Sines for making me feel like part of a family and for welcoming me so well; without a doubt, they helped me become the person and professional I am today.