



'A sea of opportunities' – why Imola chose a maritime career

Imola Szanto has chosen a different career path than most women her age: oil tankers, icebreakers, Arctic expeditions, and maritime law. As winner of last year's Claes Isacson Scholarship, she can't wait to see what's next.

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It was June last year when Gard reached out to the 27-year-old student from Sweden to let her know that she was one of the [2020 winners of the Claes Isacson Scholarship](#). Awarded annually, the [Claes Isacson Scholarship](#) aims to help young students finance an education at university level and to start a career within shipping or marine insurance.

‘Knowledge and expertise are vital parts of the Gard group, and supporting this scholarship is tangible evidence of our commitment to the education and training of the next generation of talent,’ said Gard CEO, Rolf Thore Roppestad.

Important phone call

Imola could hardly believe it when she first received the news.

‘I was studying at my kitchen table at home when I received the phone call. I remember thinking for a moment that they might have called the wrong person – everything sounded too good to be true,’ she recalls. ‘Once I realized I was indeed one of the winners I immediately called my parents and all of my friends who did not even know about my application, so there was quite a bit of excited rambling on my behalf.’

«I would love to see more women in maritime»

Since then, Imola has completed her Master of Law studies at [Stockholm University](#), and now only has a few courses left before she graduates from the [Kalmar Maritime Academy](#), where she says studies are going ‘better than expected in the midst of a pandemic’.

A man’s world?

From prior internships, Imola also has experience from serving onboard different types of vessels, from icebreakers and oil tankers to Arctic expedition vessels - all still quite male dominated environments. How has it been for a young woman to enter the industry?

‘‘Sometimes it has been challenging finding your way in what is often seen as a very “masculine” environment. However, I would say my time at sea has given me unforgettable experiences and it has absolutely been worth it. It has taught me a lot about myself and strengthened me in so many ways. I would love to see more young women pursuing a maritime career in the future.’

Use your passion

She says her hopes for the future are to keep learning about the industry, and specifically marine insurance. 'I am only at the very beginning of my career and right now everything feels new and exciting. But as I learn more, I get the feeling that this excitement and curiosity will continue to stay with me for a long time,' she adds.

Any tips to others who are considering applying for the Claes Isacson Scholarship?

'First of all, I highly recommend anyone who is interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry to apply. If you have a passion for the industry and want to become a part of it, make sure to reflect those ambitions in your personal letter. The maritime world is such a fun and interesting place and there are so many career options. The Claes Isacson Scholarship can help you find your route and explore these possibilities, as it has done for me.'

To learn more about the Claes Isacson Scholarship and how to apply, [visit our Scholarship information page](#).

Imola Szanto onboard M/S Nordlink. Photo: Private.

Imola Szanto standing under the propeller of M/S Peter Pan at a shipyard in Gdynia, Poland. 'The maritime world is such a fun and interesting place and there are so many career options,' she tells Gard. Photo: Private