



WOMEN IN BLUE ECONOMY - PERSPECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS

R Bakalova

*Department "Operation and Management of Maritime Transport", Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy
73, Vasil Drumev street, Varna 9002, Bulgaria*

ABSTRACT

The present report sets out the results of a study conducted by a team from Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy, which identifies key challenges faced by women employed in the maritime industry. The global spread of the idea of a "blue economy" gives a new impulse to reconsider the policies in Bulgaria, as well as the ways to develop and support the professional orientation of women in the maritime sector.

KEYWORDS: *Blue Economy, Women Seafarers, Educational And Qualification, Perspectives*

1. INTRODUCTION

The results are based on an analysis of interviews conducted and on a document study of Bulgaria's legal framework as of 2023, as well as a study of the available support policies addressing the challenges faced by women oriented to making their careers in the maritime industry. This report is one of the first made on the territory of Bulgaria, whose work results aim to explore how it can collectively happen so that the career at sea is more diverse, encompassing and attractive to a wide range of representatives of the fairer sex.

The national statistics in Bulgaria does not take into account the number of women employed in the maritime industry, nor are there any data regarding their financial status and sustainability, but despite this, there is an increased number of women who graduate from maritime specialties and seek realization in this direction. Since the maritime profession is seen as a "male profession", the actual number of women employed in the industry is relatively low, because the challenges faced by women are greater and are related to having a lot of qualities and skills through which to succeed in gaining trust among male colleagues. It is the will and persistence, in addition to the motivation and desire to develop in the maritime industry, that are among the key factors for successful realisation in the structures of the maritime industry.

Nikola Vaptsarov Naval academy is the most preferred educational and qualification institution among ladies employed in the maritime (and not only) industry in Bulgaria [1].

Table 1: Students admitted at the Naval Academy for the period 2018 – 2022, divided by gender, specialties and form of study

PT – Part Time education
FT – Full Time education

	2018			2019			2020		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
Ship electrical engineering	51	51	0	46	45	1	48	37	1
Bachelor - PT*	12	12	0	10	10	0	10	10	0
Bachelor -FT	32	32	0	36	35	1	36	25	1
Master (MA) - PT	7	7	0				2	2	0
Marine Engineering	149	147	2	138	138	0	116	113	3
Bachelor - -PT	13	13	0	15	15	0	16	16	0
Bachelor - FT	126	125	1	113	113	0	89	86	3
Master (MA)- PT	10	9	1	10	10	0	11	11	0
Navigation	304	285	19	319	304	15	246	230	16
Bachelor - -PT	20	19	1	21	18	3	20	19	1
Bachelor - FT	268	252	16	274	263	11	209	194	15
Master (MA)- PT	16	14	2	24	23	1	17	17	0
Total	504	483	21	503	487	16	410	380	20



	2021			2022		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
Ship electrical engineering	41	39	2	23	22	1
Bachelor - PT*	7	6	1	4	3	1
Bachelor -FT	25	25	0	18	18	0
Master (MA) - PT	9	8	1	1	1	0
Marine engineering	78	78	0	84	84	0
Bachelor - -PT	16	16	0	8	8	0
Bachelor - FT	55	55		57	57	0
Master (MA) - PT	7	7	0	19	19	0
Navigation	256	238	18	239	222	17
Bachelor - -PT	16	13	3	16	16	0
Bachelor - FT	223	209	14	198	182	16
Master (MA)- PT	17	16	1	25	24	1
Total	375	355	20	346	328	18

2. PROBLEM

During the observed period at the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy there has been an increase in the number of newly admitted students, including ladies. Despite the huge number of young ladies admitted to the Naval Academy, they expect professional realisation in the maritime industry ashore, with the most desirable by the "sea" girls speciality being that of Water Transport Management. Other most frequently preferred specialties for study are the specialties - Logistics, Operation of water transport, Port Management. The reasons for this are rooted in the context and the situation in the country. In Bulgaria, there are policies for gender equality and encouraging women to join male-dominated professions.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable trend towards an increase in women's interest in specialties such as Information and Communication Technology and also Cyber Security, as information and data security become of paramount importance in all walks of life, including business, government, healthcare, education, etc., and in addition, the speciality of career opportunities in cyber security do not require physical strength or other masculine qualities, making this professional field accessible to women.

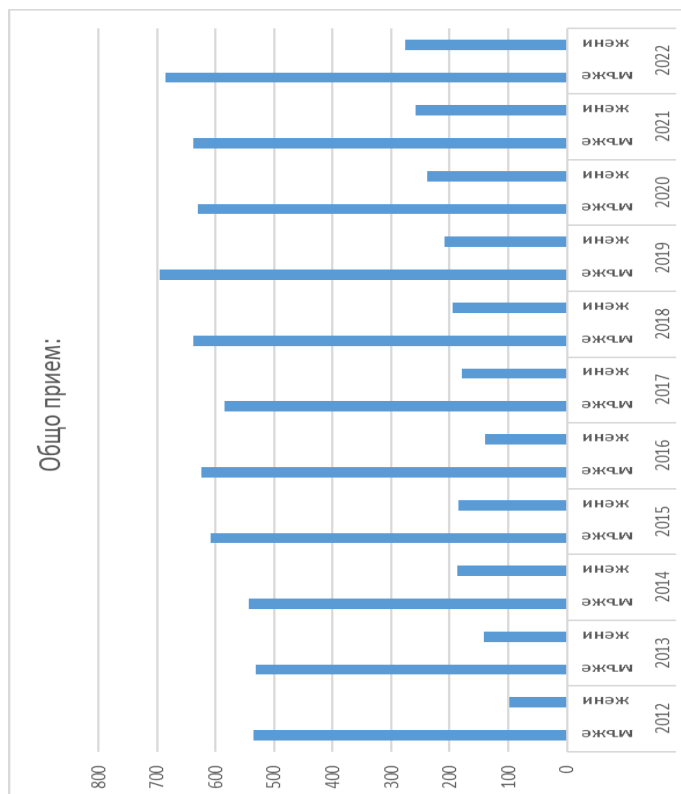


Figure 1: Students admitted at VVMU for the period 2012 – 2022, distributed by gender мен/мъже, women/жени



The data shows the growing number of admitted students at the Naval Academy, the latter seeking to respond to the increased interest in maritime professions and the general increase in interest in life at sea. This trend is directly related to the growing attention of more and more people in active age to be interested in professions related to the sea and simultaneously aimed at environmental protection and sustainable development. The increase in the number of newly admitted students at Naval Academy can also be attributed to the increase in the quality of the education it offers, as the Academy has introduced new courses in the last ten years, improved the qualification of its teaching staff and provided better teaching and research resources.

Although too low, the absolute number of ladies studying the specialty of Navigation shows an increase for 2018 compared to 2017. The question revealing the reasons for this growth does not imply a single answer. The question is not supposed to be answered without considering the economic environment in the country, as well as the social factors affecting the increased interest, related to changing the culture and public opinion in terms of supporting women in reaching full equality between the sexes. This increase also continues in the next observed period, despite the low rates.

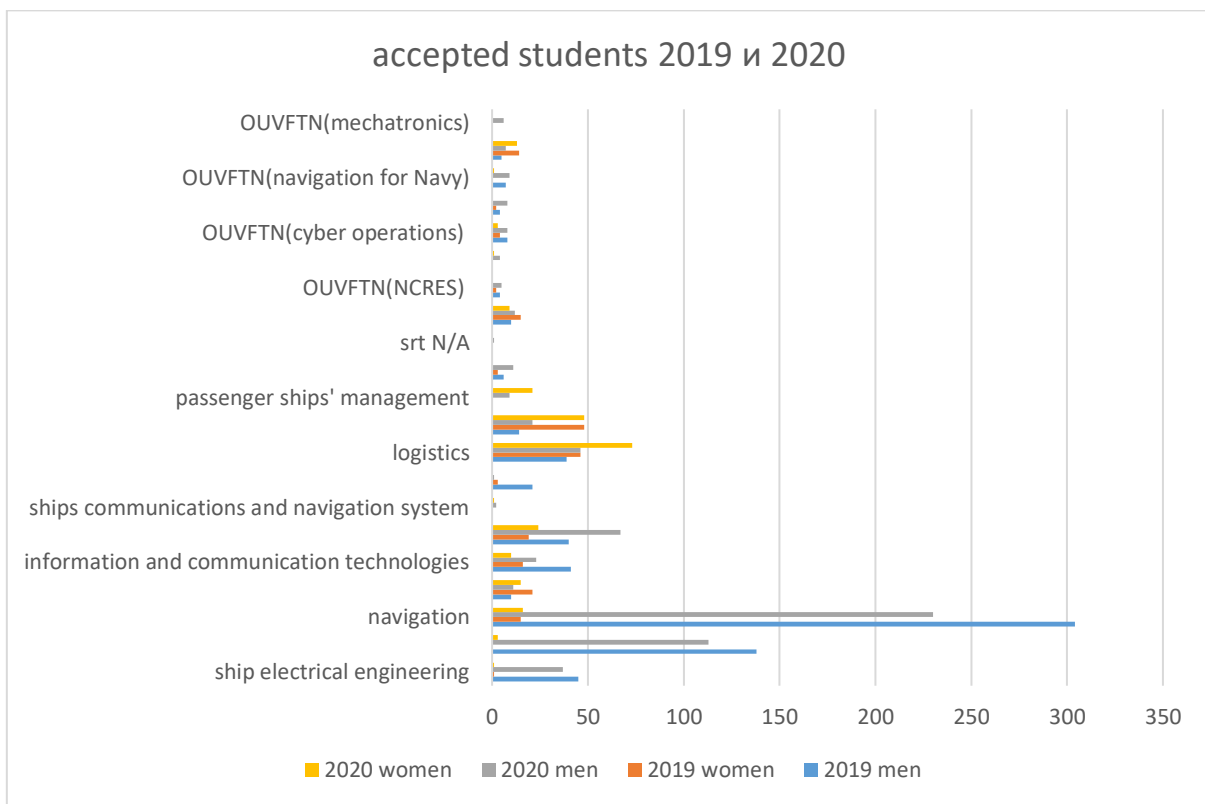


Figure 2 Students admitted at the Naval Academy for the period 2019-2020, distributed by gender and by speciality

The increased number of women studying Logistics during the observed period is clearly noticeable, as this field has a wide application in business and economy related to the management of the flows of goods, information and services from one place to another, thus optimizing processes and minimizing costs. The reason for the increased number of students preferring the Logistics speciality is the increase in the exchange in international trade, the globalization of the economy, and at the same time the development of e-commerce. In this international environment, more and more companies need logistics experts to manage the delivery of goods, and logistics is an industry that continues to develop and grow, offering a variety of career opportunities, including transportation, warehousing, shipping and supply chain management [2,3].

3. CONCLUSION

Specialties in the navigation spectrum, as well as in the engineering one, involve intense and physically demanding work requiring strength and endurance, qualities that men tend to possess to a greater extent than women. Therefore, the presence of ladies in these specialties is very limited compared to the male gender, but is increased with a continuing upward trend in the economically oriented maritime specialties.



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