

Blue Horizons: Maritime Leadership and Vision



In this issue: **Cihan ERGENÇ** offers guiding advice for the younger generation, **Fatih AKKURT** showcases a technical stance on global operations, and we explore the 10-year growth story of the ESKO family under the leadership of **Ali KURAY**.

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Cihan ERGENÇ

Chairman of the Board, Turkish Shipowners' Association

1. We know you for your active leadership in the sector; however, once the professional pace and presidential responsibilities conclude, who is Cihan Ergenç at his core? Do you have any interests or hobbies that motivate you, relax you, or that you would call "my true passion"?

To be honest, my primary hobby is still working, learning, and self-improvement. I do not perceive this as a conventional "workload," but rather as a natural part of life. For me, producing, creating value, achieving goals, and driving progress is not a choice; it is a way of life.

That being said, I take care not to view life solely through the lens of business. Connecting with people, staying in touch, spending time with my family, and gathering with friends are exceptionally precious to me. These moments provide both mental recuperation and enrich my perspective.

No matter how busy I am, I dedicate at least one hour every day to personal development. I utilize this time to improve myself in professional, economic, social, or cultural terms. I believe that an individual's investment in education and themselves directly reflects on every task they undertake in the long run.

Another significant area of motivation for me is corporate social responsibility projects and contributing to my birthplace. Within the scope of a project we initiated in my village in the Black Sea region, we provide annual training and information on fruit cultivation, along with sapling support. We are active in many similar initiatives, ranging from education and sports to various social projects. Being able to touch people's lives, even in a small way, is deeply meaningful to me.

Yet, ultimately, my true passion remains nature and the sea.

2. In maritime, sometimes a single moment is worth years of effort. Could you share with us a memory that remains fresh in your mind, one that makes you say, "I am glad I chose this challenging path"?

I perform the maritime profession with great passion; I truly enjoy the work I do. Upon my return from abroad in the late 1980s, I researched several sectors, and maritime eventually prevailed.

We were initially looking into purchasing vessels between 6,000 and 15,000 DWT. Once my determination became clear, my late father called for me in 1990. He asked, "Is pursuing the maritime profession your final decision?" I said yes; "Do you take full responsibility?" I said yes. He then said: "Then go to the deep sea, either drown in the ocean or learn; look for a vessel with a minimum of 25,000 DWT and let's acquire it". Aligned with that vision, we did exactly that and acquired our first 26,000 DWT vessel, Balaban, marking the beginning of our maritime adventure. Today, I say: "I'm glad we did".



3. Despite all the challenges and the intense pace of the sector, what is the primary source of motivation that allows you to start each day with the same energy?

At the core of my motivation lies a sense of responsibility. Maritime might be perceived as a merely commercial activity from the outside; however, it is actually a field that forms the backbone of the global economy and possesses significant strategic depth. When you operate with this awareness, the meaning of the work you do naturally expands.

We encounter new problems, developments, and opportunities every single day. This dynamism is, in fact, the greatest source of motivation. Because this sector does not tolerate stagnation; it constantly compels you to learn, think, and produce.

Furthermore, the interest and energy of our young colleagues also motivate me. Seeing them strive to carve out a place for themselves in this field reminds us that we must produce more and leave behind a more robust structure. Ultimately, for me, motivation is not something external; it is an internal power nourished by the meaning and responsibility of the work I perform—in essence, it is about achieving goals.

4. What would be your most fundamental advice to young colleagues who are at the very beginning of their maritime journey to serve as a guide on this challenging route?

Maritime is a journey that demands patience and continuity. Therefore, my most important advice would be for them to act with a long-term perspective rather than short-term expectations. Permanent success in this sector is built over time through accumulated knowledge, experience, "know-how," and character.

Secondly, I believe they should not limit themselves solely to technical knowledge or a single aspect of maritime. Today's maritime industry is no longer just about ship management; it is directly linked to finance, energy, environmental policies, and geopolitical developments. Consequently, individuals who can think multidimensionally and read the world will stand out.

Another crucial matter is the ability to adapt to change. The sector is currently undergoing a rapid transformation process.

Digitalization, artificial intelligence, dizzying technological advancements, the green transition, and new regulations are rewriting the rules of the game. Young people who correctly interpret this change and position themselves accordingly will be the leaders of the future. And perhaps most importantly: they must love what they do and strive to be part of a generation with a high level of knowledge. Because maritime is a profession that can only be truly performed if it is loved.

5. What is the most fundamental change you have observed recently in the technical and operational processes of the Turkish maritime sector, and where do you foresee this change leading the sector in the future?

I believe the most fundamental change recently is the reshaping of the sector along two main axes: digitalization and the green transition.

Nowadays, it is not just about how vessels operate, but how much more efficiently, sustainably, and integrated they function. Topics such as carbon emissions, alternative fuels, and energy efficiency have taken center stage in the industry. This transformation is no longer a choice; it is a necessity.

On the other hand, digitalization makes operational processes more transparent, faster, and more efficient. Real-time, data-driven decision-making mechanisms are becoming one of the most critical elements of competitive advantage.

From Türkiye's perspective, this process carries a dual meaning. If we interpret this transformation correctly and adapt in a timely manner, we can achieve a much stronger position in the global maritime value chain. Otherwise, we may face the risk of losing our competitiveness.

Therefore, the upcoming period will not only be a time for adaptation but also for strategic positioning. However, most importantly, there must be an "educational mobilization"; in this sector, knowledge and experience are more vital than anything else.

Fatih AKKURT (Technical Manager)

1. We have been closely following your deep-rooted experience and contributions to the industry. To help our readers get to know you better, could you tell us in your own words how Fatih Akkurt's path crossed with maritime and share your career journey leading up to today?

My journey in the maritime industry began with my education at the Istanbul Technical University Maritime Faculty, specifically in the department of Marine Engineering. Following my graduation in 2004, I began my career as a watchkeeping engineer aboard chemical tankers. My initial years working at sea served as an invaluable school for me in terms of marine machinery operation, maintenance processes, and maritime operational management.

Later, I expanded my sea-going experience by serving on dry cargo vessels and obtained my Oceangoing Second Engineer certificate of competency in 2008. During the same period, I transitioned to the energy sector, taking on roles in mechanical management at Aksa Energy's power plants in Mardin and Manisa. Throughout this process, I played an active role in projects such as the operation of large-scale power generation facilities and the establishment of planned maintenance systems (PMS).

In 2016, I began working on Powership projects within Karadeniz Holding. I took part in facility management and fuel conversion projects for energy ships and power plant projects in Iraq and Indonesia. These projects represented one of the most educational periods of my career in terms of international operational management, field engineering, and large-scale conversion projects.

Since 2022, I have been serving as the Technical Manager at Erkport Port Management. I am responsible for the technical management, maintenance planning, and ensuring compliance with international maritime standards for our company's Ro-Ro vessels. I believe that the diverse experience I have gained across maritime, energy, and project management



provides a significant perspective to the work I do today.

2. After all these years of experience, what is the core element that keeps your passion for this profession fresh and inspires you every new day?

The maritime industry is a highly dynamic field that requires continuous learning. In fact, the most important factor that keeps my interest in this profession alive is this constant need for self-improvement. Areas such as ship technologies, fuel systems, environmental regulations, and operations management are evolving and advancing every single year.

Solving a different technical problem in each new project, making an operational process more efficient, or improving a vessel's performance still gives me the same excitement I felt on my first day. Additionally, the global nature of the maritime sector is incredibly inspiring. Working across different countries, various operating conditions, and diverse cultures adds a unique value to the profession.

Furthermore, being able to contribute to the development of young engineers and passing on our experiences to the next generation is a distinct source of motivation for me.

3. Your career has certainly been marked by demanding operations. Looking back at the fast-paced nature of your work, is there a particular moment that stands out-one that truly reaffirmed your passion for this industry?

I have experienced many demanding processes across different countries and varying operational conditions throughout my career. Especially during the periods I worked on Powership projects, the installation of large-scale power plants and fuel conversion projects were both intense and technically challenging. While I was stationed in Indonesia, I played an active role in a project involving the conversion of a fuel-oil-powered energy production facility to a natural gas system.

This project was a highly complex process, both in terms of engineering and operations management. There were many factors at play, such as the coordination of different teams, difficult field conditions, and immense time pressure.

The moment the project was successfully completed, the system was commissioned, and production began without a hitch was truly unforgettable. Seeing the results of such a massive teamwork effort and watching a system we contributed to come to life created a profound sense of professional fulfillment.

4.As a professional who closely follows industry trends, how do you view the trajectory of Turkish maritime? In your opinion, what will be the most significant opportunities or shifts awaiting companies in the upcoming period?

The Turkish maritime industry has demonstrated significant progress in recent years, both in terms of technical capacity

and human capital. We are observing Turkish companies becoming increasingly prominent on an international scale, particularly in vessel management, port operations, and technical management.

In the coming period, environmental regulations and the energy transition will be among the industry's most critical priorities. Subjects such as alternative fuels, energy efficiency, decarbonization, and digitalization are becoming the defining factors in ship management.

At this juncture, the technical expertise and operational problem-solving capabilities of Turkish companies represent a major advantage. I believe that with the right investments, highly-skilled human resources, and technological adaptation, Turkish maritime will reach an even stronger position in the years ahead.

5. We would like to touch upon our solution partnership with ESKO Marine. In your opinion, what is the greatest convenience that the services you receive and the processes we carry out together provide for your company's daily operations and goals?

In the maritime industry, the continuity and reliability of operations are of paramount importance. Selecting the right technical equipment, ensuring its timely procurement, and receiving dependable technical support play a critical role in the healthy execution of operations.

One of the most significant advantages of our collaboration with ESKO Marine is their responsive communication and solution-oriented approach. The timely and accurate provision of technical equipment or services required during operations contributes significantly to the uninterrupted continuity of our vessel operations.

Furthermore, their sectoral experience and technical knowledge sharing are among the elements that make this partnership so valuable. I believe that such solution partnerships enhance efficiency in ship management and effectively reduce operational risks.

Ashraf BAYOUMI/Chalkis Shipyards (CEO)

1. Could you briefly describe Chalkis Shipyards for our readers? What are the primary advantages and key services you offer to the maritime industry?

Chalkis Shipyards is among Greece's most distinguished ship repair facilities, strategically located in the heart of the Eastern Mediterranean shipping routes. With a long-standing tradition in marine engineering and ship repair, the yard has built a reputation for technical reliability, operational flexibility and strong customer focus.

Our core activities include dry-docking, afloat repairs, structural steel works, mechanical and piping installations, electrical repairs, blasting and coating, as well as specialized retrofit and conversion projects. We serve a wide range of vessels including bulk carriers, tankers, general cargo vessels, yachts and passenger ships.

What differentiates Chalkis Shipyards is our ability to combine high-quality workmanship, competitive pricing and efficient turnaround times, supported by an experienced workforce and a strong network of specialized partners. Equally important is our location, which allows shipowners trading in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions to carry out repairs with minimal deviation and operational disruption.

Our philosophy is simple: deliver reliable technical solutions while building long-term partnerships with shipowners and managers who value efficiency, transparency and performance.

2. How did your path cross with ESKO Marine? What were the deciding factors in choosing us as your representative/partner in the Turkish market?

Türkiye is one of the most dynamic and technically advanced maritime markets in the region, and strengthening our presence there has been a strategic priority for Chalkis Shipyards.

Our cooperation with ESKO Marine developed from a shared understanding of the market and a common commitment to providing shipowners with reliable repair solutions. From the very beginning, we recognized in ESKO Marine a partner with deep industry knowledge, strong relationships within the Turkish shipping community and a clear understanding of the technical expectations of ship managers and superintendents.

What ultimately led to the partnership was the alignment of our values — professionalism, transparency and a strong focus on customer service. In our industry, it is essential to have a representative who can effectively connect the shipowner, the technical team, and the yard. ESKO Marine has consistently demonstrated that capability.



3. Looking back from the beginning, how has the collaboration with ESKO Marine developed over time, and how would you describe our operational synergy?

Over time, our collaboration with ESKO Marine has grown into a strong and highly effective partnership. What started as a market representation relationship has evolved into a close operational cooperation that enables us to respond quickly and efficiently to the needs of Turkish shipowners and technical managers.

Through continuous communication and joint coordination, we have developed a smooth workflow for project evaluation, technical planning and repair execution. This allows us to offer clients clear proposals, reliable timelines and practical technical solutions — all of which are crucial in the ship-repair industry.

The synergy between our teams is built on mutual trust, responsiveness and a shared commitment to delivering successful repair projects. Ultimately, this partnership enhances the value we provide to shipowners by ensuring that their vessels receive efficient service, high-quality workmanship and professional project management.

4. What were your initial expectations from the Turkish maritime sector? How do you evaluate the current performance and the impact of our partnership in this market?

From the very beginning, we viewed the Turkish maritime sector as a highly important and sophisticated shipping market. Turkish shipowners and technical managers are widely recognized for their strong operational discipline, technical expertise and focus on cost-efficient solutions.

Our goal was to build long-term relationships with reputable operators who appreciate reliable repair solutions and transparent cooperation.

Thanks to our partnership with ESKO Marine, we have significantly strengthened our presence and visibility within this market. This collaboration has allowed us to engage directly with key decision makers and demonstrate the capabilities of Chalkis Shipyards to a wider segment of the Turkish fleet.

We are very pleased with the progress achieved so far, and we believe that the Turkish market will remain a key pillar of our international customer base in the years ahead.



5. Are there any upcoming facility upgrades, new investments, or exciting developments at Chalkis Shipyards that the industry should look forward to in the near future?

At Chalkis Shipyards we are currently implementing a number of strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening both our operational capacity and our sustainability framework, in line with the evolving expectations of the global maritime industry.

From a management systems perspective, the shipyard operates under a comprehensive certified framework that includes **ISO 9001:2015** for Quality Management, **ISO 45001:2018** for Occupational Health & Safety, **ISO 14001:2015** for Environmental Management, and **ISO/IEC 27001:2022** for Information Security Management. These certifications reflect our commitment to maintaining internationally recognized standards across quality, safety, environmental responsibility and data security.

A particularly important recent milestone has been our progress in environmental transparency and emissions monitoring. Chalkis Shipyards became the first shipyard in Greece to submit a verified Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report and obtain a

Verification Statement for its Carbon Footprint Report from Bureau Veritas. The emissions inventory was developed in accordance with ISO 14064-1:2018, while the verification process was carried out under ISO 14064-3:2019, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of our reported emissions data.

This initiative represents a key step in our long-term strategy to monitor, manage and progressively reduce greenhouse gas emissions across ship repair operations, while supporting our clients' ESG and decarbonization objectives.

At the same time, we are undertaking a major infrastructure investment with the addition of a new Panamax-size floating dock, which is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2026. This expansion will significantly enhance our repair capacity, allowing us to accommodate larger vessels and deliver greater operational flexibility and faster turnaround times for our clients.

Together, these developments reinforce our vision of positioning Chalkis Shipyards as a modern, environmentally responsible and technically capable repair hub in the Eastern Mediterranean, providing shipowners and technical managers with reliable, compliant and future-ready ship repair solutions.



Chalkis Shipyards

50 Years of Excellence in Ship Repair and Innovation

Strategically located in Aulis, Central Greece, near the port of Chalkida, **Chalkis Shipyards** has established itself as a premier destination for *ship repair, maintenance, and modernization* in the Mediterranean. Since its foundation in 1971, the shipyard has built a reputation for high-quality service, backed by over five decades of expertise and a commitment to international safety standards.



Key facility highlights include:

- **Floating Dock 1 (Avlis):** This dock features a lifting capacity of 15,000 tons and an overall length of 195.00m. It is equipped with two cranes and can accommodate vessels up to 58,000 DWT.
- **Floating Dock 2 (Vathi):** Offering a lifting capacity of 7,500 tons, this dock measures 151.00m in length. It is designed to accommodate vessels up to 14,000 DWT and includes two dedicated cranes.
- **Extensive Berthing:** Over 1,200 meters of berthing space available for various ship types.
- **Specialized Workshops:** The yard features fully equipped mechanical, piping, electrical, carpentry, and plate shops to provide comprehensive in-house solutions.

Technical Capabilities

The shipyard is capable of managing complex engineering tasks, including:

- **Drydocking & Repairs:** From basic steelwork to advanced machinery overhauls.
- **Green Energy Solutions:** Leading the way in sustainable maritime practices with expert installation of scrubbers and new technology propulsion systems.
- **Innovation:** Currently investing in offshore wind technology, including the development of the FloatMast platform.

Capt. Ali KURAY (General Manager)

Could you tell us about your sectoral background and how your path crossed with ESKO Marine?

Rather than saying my path "crossed" with maritime, I can say that I have never truly been away from the sea throughout my life. For us, maritime is a family tradition, a profession, and a lifestyle all in one. During the years I was born, my father was actively working as a shipmaster; therefore, I received my initial maritime education, discipline, and professional etiquette under his guidance.

Later, I completed my education at the Higher Maritime School – Deck Department (ITU Maritime Faculty, Maritime Transportation and Management Engineering). Since 2009, I have been serving professionally in the Turkish maritime industry, both at sea and ashore, practicing my profession with a sense of pride and happiness that grows every day. Coming from such a family and being educated at such a deep-rooted institution has always multiplied my respect and love for my career.

*Meeting ESKO Marine was one of the most significant turning points of my life. In the last quarter of 2016, following the closure of Nemtaş Maritime where I was serving, I came to Istanbul at the invitation of a different company. During this visit, I had the opportunity to meet the esteemed founders of ESKO Marine, Mr. Erhan ESİNDUY and Mr. Adem KOCADAĞ. Founded in 2009, ESKO Marine was on the verge of a rapid ascent in the sector at that time. In my eyes, it was like a ship preparing for a challenging but long-term journey of success-one that had clarified its route and was finalizing its "sea readiness.". Even in those years, the company had taken significant steps in innovative fields such as **rotor sail technology, methanol fuel conversion, energy saving and management systems, and scrubber systems**, while establishing strong collaborations with the world's leading shipyards. Additionally, it was opening the door to a new era in Türkiye regarding **armed guard services**.*



Becoming a part of this vision was inevitable for me. After a second meeting with Mr. Erhan ESİNDUY and Mr. Adem KOCADAĞ, I decided against returning to sea and joined this family instead. Over time, this place became more than just a workplace; it became a home, a tradition, and a core value. I began this journey as an Assistant Operations Coordinator, and since 2025, I have been serving as the General Manager.

We are still at the beginning of the road. We have realized only a small fraction of the dreams we built ten years ago. We still have great goals ahead and many more successes to achieve.

Based on your own career journey, what would be your most important advice to everyone on our team?

Our team is incredibly valuable and strong. We began this journey as a core family of four, and today, we continue as a large team of 20 people. Naturally, we encounter challenges along the way. We operate in an industry where even the smallest mistake can lead to significant consequences.

*Because of this, thinking multidimensionally, generating multiple solutions, and closely following global trends and technology are essential parts of our work. However, I always tell my teammates this: **Here, everyone is the leader of their own department.***

If you come to work every morning with this sense of responsibility, you will realize that every task and every project you undertake actually provides the greatest contribution to yourself. When you move forward with this perspective, success becomes inevitable.

How would you summarize your role in ensuring all departments at ESKO work in harmony and in making the right decisions?

I have actively taken part in every department within ESKO Marine. Being personally involved in the processes of every product we represent, every service we offer, and every solution we develop has granted me invaluable experience.

Thanks to this hands-on background, I have a direct understanding of how a task should be performed, how much time it requires, and which critical points demand the most attention. Today, this experience provides a significant advantage when planning business processes alongside my teammates.

I would liken my role to a maestro conducting a highly competent, determined, and successful orchestra. However, our approach is less about "management" in the traditional sense and more about guidance, collective evaluation, and common logic. This is because we are a family, and every member of this family acts with a full awareness of their responsibilities.



Group of Companies



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