

# FIVE MINUTES

WITH

GINA PANAYIOTOU

**You have recently joined Michael Kyprianou & Co LLC as Head of Shipping. What do you hope to accomplish?**

Our vision is to create a shipping department that understands the industry's needs, embraces its pulse and appreciates its importance. Dominating 90% of world trade, shipping is so much more than ships; it's about people, the environment, the sea. My background in the shipowning/management sector has taught me how magnificent yet vital this industry is. Our shipping department has thus been tailored to serve the core industry as a legal 'compass to success'!

**What types of legal services does the firm provide to its shipping-related clients?**

With overwhelming new regulations and technological evolution at the forefront, we want to ensure that, during this "reconstruction" period for the industry, our clients enjoy a smooth sail. Our services range from ship finance, flag registrations, tonnage tax planning, vessel sale and purchase, international transactions and sanctions to what I refer to as a 'new era' of services, which include green financing and smart solutions, as well as compliance management. We advise our shipping clients on GDPR, environmental regulations, cyber-resilience, media handling in crisis, maritime CSR, etc. Additionally, we provide services to the cruising, superyacht, offshore and ports/terminals sectors.

**How do you view the current state of shipping industry and how do you expect it to develop this year?**

Shipping is undergoing a seismic change. 2018 was marked by the inauguration of a fully autonomous ferry voyage while 2019



*Head of Shipping  
Michael Kyprianou  
& Co. LLC*

looks equally promising, striking the final countdown towards the IMO 2020 compliance deadline. Never before has the industry had to deal with such diverse and multiple challenges and this will be quite a defining year. We will certainly see even greater advancements in technology and digital efficiencies, while reactions to IMO 2020 will have a great impact on how the market develops. We will most probably be seeing decreased vessel supply and capacity, leading subsequently to higher freight rates and consumers being burdened with the cost. This is, without doubt, the most disruptive era that the industry has seen so far.

**What are the main challenges the shipping industry is currently facing?**

In the words of Intercargo Chairman, John Platsidakis, "Are we managing ships or are we managing regulations?" I concur. Ballast water management, sulphur cap regulations and a long list which foresees additions in the near future, with no clear direction and practical implementation plan – this is indeed

the greatest challenge currently confronting the industry. There is confusion about which compliance option is most cost-effective, which the most sustainable, how to absorb compliance costs, etc. Shipping is a commercially orientated industry. It is, and should be, focused on operating vessels, making the world go round. Instead, it is struggling to keep up with unclear regulations in order to remain competitive. This is exactly the basis of the vision for our shipping department! Legal counsel within the industry should be facilitating operators and stakeholders in tackling concerns and dealing effectively with them. After all, regulations are a legal matter. We have a duty to the industry to provide stakeholders not simply with legal opinions but with practical solutions, working together in defining and developing a sustainable future.

**To what extent do you think the Deputy Ministry of Shipping has had a positive effect on Cyprus-based shipping companies and the international promotion of the local industry?**

It is, without doubt, a competitive advantage, which has added value and built even greater integrity for Cyprus as a maritime nation. Local companies feel that they have secured an even stronger voice, while it enhances our further developments as an international maritime centre. Ms. Pilides and various associations are doing exceptional work in further promoting our cluster. The IMO Secretary General, Kitack Lim, stated while addressing the 2018 AGM of the Cyprus Shipping Chamber that he considers Cyprus a great success story in shipping internationally and a major player in the maritime world. It is thus evident that the establishment of the Deputy Ministry of Shipping is a great additional asset.