

## Francesca Torriani, chairwoman, Flange Gaskets Division, European Sealing Association (ESA)



As chairwoman of the Flange Gaskets Division of the ESA and a senior engineer and quality manager at General Packing Italy, Francesca Torriani balances technical expertise with a deep commitment to progress, both technological and societal, in the sealing sector.

From her earliest days, Torriani was captivated by science. "I've always been passionate about science and, more specifically, I've been fascinated by understanding how things work," she says. "Not just the mechanics of machines, but also the physical phenomena we experience in everyday life. That natural curiosity, combined with the fact that engineering offers the opportunity to solve complex problems and contribute to the advancement of applied sciences, is what really drew me to this profession."

At General Packing Italy, Torriani plays a key role in ensuring optimal sealing performance across a wide range of oil and gas applications. Her work is rooted in quality management, cross-department collaboration, and a focus on customer satisfaction. In parallel, her leadership role at the ESA sees her advocating for industry-wide harmonization of standards and greater awareness of the strategic importance of sealing technologies.

Recent work has concerned two closely related challenges facing the sealing industry – proposed bans on PFAS substances and the increasing emphasis on emissions reduction. Speaking about the PFAS bans, Torriani says, "At present, there are several critical applications where achieving the highest levels of sealability is only possible using PFAS-based materials. This potential restriction therefore presents both a technical and strategic challenge that we, as an industry, must address."

Torriani's journey is about more than engineering innovation – it's also about inclusion. "I would strongly encourage young women to pursue a career in engineering," Torriani says. "It's a field that presents many challenges but also offers tremendous satisfaction." She highlights the dynamic, multidisciplinary nature of the work and the sense of purpose it provides. "You get to collaborate with diverse teams and contribute to impactful projects across various sectors."

Torriani is also candid about the obstacles women face. "There is certainly still a great deal of work to be done to close the gender gap in the industry," she notes. While some countries are making significant progress, others still lag behind. "We shouldn't fear change. We should embrace it as an opportunity for growth and inclusiveness."

She believes that meaningful change requires structural solutions including equal pay, corporate childcare, and flexible work hours. "Such steps can make a real difference in creating a more inclusive and balanced working environment," she says. Her own company – General Packing Italy – has taken action, recently reducing the standard work week from 40 to 36 hours without cutting pay. "It's about supporting employees in managing family responsibilities. That kind of initiative makes a real difference," she adds.

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**"We need to make sure we're passing down our expertise to the next generation. This is crucial."**

Kara Hurtig, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants (interview page 8)