



PRESS RELEASE

d'Amico Group and the Royal Institution of Naval Architects celebrate excellence in naval engineering with the "Student Naval Architect Award"

In its XVIII edition, the award was presented to Enrico Sakaj, a recent graduate of the University of Genoa, for his thesis on the optimisation of marine propellers.

02 October 2026 - The **Royal Institution of Naval Architects** - a global membership body for naval architects, maritime engineers and associated professionals founded in London in 1860 - in collaboration with **d'Amico Group**, presented at Villa Cambiaso the **RINA-d'Amico Student Naval Architect Award**. Now in its XVIII edition, the award was presented to Enrico Sakaj, who recently graduated with a Master's degree in Naval Engineering from the University of Genoa.

The **"Student Naval Architect Award"** is conferred by the **Royal Institution of Naval Architects** to more than 30 universities worldwide, including the historic **University of Genoa**, selected for its **time-honoured tradition and collaboration with the naval industry**.

Enrico Sakaj received the award for his thesis, entitled **"Development of a Lifting-Surface Model Integrated with Parametric Optimisation for the Analysis and Design of Marine Propellers"**, carried out under the supervision of Professor Diego Villa. The study develops a numerical lifting-surface model to estimate the main propulsive performance parameters of a marine propeller, integrating it with a parametric optimisation procedure designed to identify the most suitable configurations for specific design requirements, including the maximisation of propulsive efficiency while complying with design constraints.

The tool developed as part of the thesis was also used to design the **propeller of Elettra**, the vessel with which students from the University of Genoa competed in the **Monaco Energy Boat Challenge 2026**, finishing second. Sakaj served as Head of the team, coordinating a group of four students and overseeing the vessel's propulsion design, from blade sizing and cavitation analysis to 3D modelling, CFD analysis and propeller-electric motor matching.

The award ceremony was held at historic **Villa Cambiaso**, historic noble residence of the Municipality of Genoa and home to the University of Genoa's Polytechnic School. The event was attended by **Professor Michele Viviani**, *Director of the Department of Naval, Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunications Engineering (DITEN) at the University of Genoa*, **Professor Paola Gualeni**, *Deputy Dean of the Polytechnic School at UNIGE and Chair of the course of studies in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering*; **Eva Petrova**, *Director of Marketing & Communications* and Eng. **Maurizio d'Amico**, *Past-President and Council Member both of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects*; and a delegation from d'Amico Group comprising **Cesare d'Amico**, *Chief Executive Officer of d'Amico Società di Navigazione S.p.A.*, and Eng. **Cesare D'Api**, *Technical Director*.

During the event, Eng. **Cesare D'Api** outlined the key points of his presentation, **"Cost-Effective Hydrodynamic Solutions, High Fleet-Wide Impact"**, focusing on the role of energy efficiency in the decarbonisation of



maritime transport. Against a backdrop of uncertainty surrounding the large-scale availability of alternative fuels and the timing of their adoption, the presentation highlighted how practical and replicable hydrodynamic solutions can deliver immediate benefits. While the impact on a single vessel may appear limited, applying such solutions across an entire fleet can generate a significant cumulative effect, equivalent – on a *tank-to-wake* basis – to introducing several equivalent zero-emission vessels.

“It is a pleasure to take part once again in this ceremony, which provides an important opportunity to strengthen the ties between the Royal Institution of Naval Architects, d’Amico Group and the University of Genoa. It is the Institution’s privilege to facilitate innovation globally through shared expertise. Our commendations and congratulations go to Enrico Sakaj on this achievement and the quality of work presented. The Institution is committed to championing the art and science of naval architecture by providing free membership to students globally. Our new initiatives such as the mentoring scheme and recorded events - which can now be watched on-demand at the time and place of your convenience - enable us to further support emerging talent and universities around the world,” said **Paul Jobson, CEO of Royal Institution of Naval Architects.**

“The RINA-d’Amico Student Naval Architect Award provides an important opportunity to bring academia and the shipping industry closer together, highlighting ideas, skills and projects that can contribute to the development of the sector. We are pleased to support this initiative together with the Royal Institution of Naval Architects and the University of Genoa, reaffirming our commitment to the next generation of naval engineers. We congratulate Enrico Sakaj on this important achievement,” said **Cesare d’Amico, Chief Executive Officer of d’Amico Società di Navigazione.**

d’Amico Group Profile

d’Amico Società di Navigazione S.p.A. is the holding company of a global leading group in naval shipping, active in the dry cargo and tankers sectors and in the provision of services that are instrumental to naval activities. The d’Amico Group has a long and historical family entrepreneurial tradition dating back to 1936, developing its position on the global market over the years, with offices in the most important merchant shipping ports.

The d’Amico Group is committed to being at the forefront of supporting training projects, cooperating with education and academic institutions. Education and professional development of its human resources, who are constantly encouraged towards professional growth, are among the most important values for the d’Amico Group. Furthermore, through funding various educational projects at various levels, the company assists students in accessing opportunities to begin a successful career and pursue their chosen field.

Royal Institution of Naval Architects Profile

Founded in 1860 in London to “advance the art and science of ship design” today the Royal Institution of Naval Architects is a world renowned and highly respected global membership body and learned society whose members are involved at all levels in the design, construction, maintenance and operation of all marine vessels and structures. The Institution has members in over 140 countries, and is widely represented in industry, universities and colleges, and maritime organisations worldwide.

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