



Posidonia 2016 on track to be biggest edition ever

Anticipation is already beginning to build for what will undoubtedly be one of the major events - *the* major one in many people's books – of next year's shipping calendar: Posidonia 2016, taking place at the Metropolitan Expo venue in Athens from June 6-10.

The biennial Posidonia exhibition and conference, plus the surrounding fortnight of sporting and social events, has long occupied a unique position in the psyche and consciousness of the Greek shipping community, which remains the world's largest by some considerable distance despite the country's present financial woes.

Posidonia's mystique undoubtedly stems from its ability to seamlessly combine Greece's rich maritime heritage and tradition with the modern way of conducting global business.

The event's special aura is evidenced by the way it has successfully navigated its way between three different venues and

settings in the space of a decade. Forced to leave its original home in the iconic but ageing Piraeus Port Authority building on the Piraeus waterfront, it moved to a temporary mega-tent structure at the site of the old Athens International Airport before settling in 2012 at its current state-of-the-art Athens Metropolitan Expo, conveniently located a short distance from Greece's Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport.

If that's not a chameleon-like ability to successfully adapt to the demands of the times and the changing circumstances, then what is?



sparked Greece's debt crisis is likely to enter a seventh year in January.

But like a true warrior straight out of the pages of Greek mythology, Posidonia is set to emerge unscathed and more upbeat than ever, as exhibitors are queuing up to reserve space for the next year's event, already pointing to the need to open up a bigger floor area than previously planned.

In fact, the event's organisers are predicting that Posidonia's 2016 edition will be the biggest and most diverse in the event's five-decade-long history.

By early autumn 2015, some 30 newcomers from across the diverse spectrum of the industry had booked space. These included manufacturers of ballast water technologies, shipbuilding equipment, industrial computers & automation, marine spare parts and marine safety videos, logistics providers, plastic piping systems and filters.

And that changing backdrop could hardly be any harsher economically, for shipping or for Greece, as the ongoing global slowdown that





Led by the traditional Far Eastern powerhouses of China, Japan and South Korea, a solid number of countries have confirmed their participation at Posidonia 2016 with National Pavilions.

Among the less expected is the Luxembourg Maritime Cluster (LMC) which will participate in Posidonia for the first time, keen to network with the international shipping audience which Posidonia traditionally attracts.

Indeed, LMC's participation underlines the importance of the shipping industry to the welfare of all aspects of the global economy. More than 10 airlines and travel agents have confirmed their participation, highlighting the

volume of business seamen's travel creates for the airline industry.

Posidonia's longstanding reputation within the maritime world owes much to the strength of the Greek shipowning community. Shipowners - or rather the 'Greek shipping miracle' (see separate story) they have created - are the prime reason world shipping converges on Athens every two years.

And if the official tally of the last Posidonia is anything to go by, then both international and Greek shipowners - the latter led by official body the Union of Greek Shipowners (UGS) - will be very busy touring the exhibition floor and meeting

exhibitors, among a total visitor count of over 30,000 people from 96 countries.

There will certainly be no shortage of business to be done on the exhibition floor. As UGS president Theodore Veniamis recently put it: 'The Greek-owned fleet continues to be the leader of a global



Theodore Veniamis

industry, driving the development of advanced technologies and sustainable shipping services.

'Combining innovation with traditional maritime knowhow and the legendary entrepreneurship of its owners, the fleet is diversifying as never before across all sectors,' he continued. 'Shipping is a highly interconnected industry, each player relying on trusted partners to play their part. Those partnerships are celebrated at every Posidonia, with the Greek owners engaging in lively discussions, productive businesses and fruitful gatherings with their international friends.'

'The Union of Greek Shipowners and the entire Greek shipping community look forward to welcoming the global shipping industry to Posidonia 2016.'

Turning down an invitation like that from a man who represents a collective buying power measured in billions of dollars annually is likely to be costly. Greek shipowners currently rank first among the top contractors of newbuildings, responsible for 7.27% of all identified orders, of 41.42m dwt, leading Singapore, China and Japan.

Greek owners also lead by some way in the key sectors of tankers, with over 14.2% of the orderbook, and bulk carriers, with a 14.6% share.



Posidonia 2014 official opening



As of end-October, Naftiliaki's Greek Shipping Review, reported 463 ships of 46.7m dwt were on order - including bulk carriers, tankers, LPG and LNG carriers, container ships, offshore supply ships, drillships and ro-ro's - with some 99 Greek companies awaiting new ships.

Of these, a total of around 118 ships had been ordered since the beginning of 2015, Naftiliaki continued. Value of the orders ran to just over \$5.6bn, with energy-carrying ships leading the way with 70 tankers and 15 gas carriers.

In general, Greek orders have been placed in all three top shipbuilding countries - China, Japan, and South Korea. Indeed, projects have involved innovative ships, designed and built in close cooperation between individual Greek owners, equipment designers and shipyards. At the same time, owners have been working with the same partners in developing retrofit answers to today's environmental and fuel efficiency demands.

While global trade will continue to be active, thanks in part to the entrepreneurial spirit and foresight of the Greek shipowners,

business is expected to be brisk for the local Athens economy around and during Posidonia 2016 time with an anticipated €50m (\$57m) coming to the country from



accommodation and transportation of exhibitors and visitors in Athens for the exhibition, stand construction and customs clearance and the myriad of sideline events associated with it, let alone from the event itself.

Moreover, such a high prestige event promotes Greece and its capital, Athens, as an ideal destination for major international trade events, contributing to the future development of the MICE [meetings,

incentives, conferences, and exhibitions] sector in the region.

It's also important to point out that Posidonia has become much more than an exhibition, since following its move to the new exhibition centre it has built up an impressive programme of conference and seminars. In 2016, Posidonia is again expected to host some 40 events, including conferences, product launches, technical presentations, press conferences and more.

The Tradewinds Shipowners Forum will again launch the conference programme on Tuesday June 7. Other confirmed events include seminars and press conferences by DNV GL, RINA, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO), Jotun Hellas, Gottlieb International Group, Argo Navis Marine Consulting and Technomep, amongst others.

To meet the growing demand, the Posidonia organisers have set up a third seminar room, sponsored by UKHO. Several universities have already signed up for Posidonia, and the University of Strathclyde and ALBA Graduate Business School have announced they will organise workshops.



Posidonia business is not confined to the exhibition venue or the perimeter of the wider area but extends all over Athens with the rich repertoire of social and sporting events that traditionally adorn Posidonia Week.

Foremost are The Posidonia Games, a series of sporting events run for shipping executives. Already eager participants are limbering up in anticipation of the industry's own 'mini Olympics' taking place next June, where a total of over 2,000 sportsmen and women from the maritime world are expected to compete for the coveted Posidonia trophies.

The Posidonia Cup sailing regatta is the oldest sporting event of the exhibition and is also the first to take place on Friday, June 3 in Faliron Bay over courses used in the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. Some 50 boats compete for Posidonia Cup prizes in four categories: Performance, Standard, Traditional Boats and IRC. Winners will be presented with the impressive awards during the reception taking place on Friday evening.



Sunday June 5 will see the start of the Posidonia Golf Tournament, a more recent addition to the event's sporting programme that will take place for the third time at the Athens Golf Club. Its traditional sponsors are two of Greece's leading shipping companies, Thenamaris and Costamare.

The Posidonia Shipsoccer Tournament, sponsored by Swift Marine, will kick off on the afternoon of Sunday June 5 - much to the delight of all shipping professionals who are also football players or fans,



taking place as it does in the famous Karaiskaki stadium, home of Piraeus' own Champions League side Olympiakos.

Now in its 5th edition, the 5x5 soccer competition has established itself as a firm favourite with shipping companies, and as a result the organisers have decided to increase the size of the tournament

in 2016 in order to accommodate as many teams as possible.

The 2016 Posidonia sees the addition of a new sporting event: the first Posidonia Running Event. This event will turn the streets of Piraeus into a giant athletics track on Saturday June 4.

Open to members of the shipping community and public, this new event will have a special significance in taking runners around the city of Piraeus, the traditional home of Greek shipping, thereby underlining its

continued importance for shipping.

In the words of a veteran journalist who hasn't missed a Posidonia Exhibition in the last 20 years: 'Posidonia power is something you have to experience to believe'.

