



**THESSALONIKI
IN ITS MODERN MARITIME ROLE
AS A KEY PLAYER IN THE
INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION CHAIN**

-TIF 2018-

USA HONORED COUNTRY

TALKS&EVENTS

HARNESSING THE POWER OF INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

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The shipping industry is the most extrovert sector of the Greek economy, with earnings from shipping activities that represent approximately 6.5%.

According to industry studies in the EU, every 1 million Euro contributed by the shipping industry to GDP generates 1.6 million in other maritime clusters and each direct job generates 2.8 in other sectors of the EU economy.

This very contribution strengthens competition between countries-cities to attract global maritime activity and to support the establishment of strong maritime clusters.

Thessaloniki's maritime cluster records 118 companies with 16 business categories:

- 57 brokerage firms (brokers)
- 24 ship management companies
- 12 shipping equipment companies

To understand the size of the existing Thessaloniki maritime cluster, I oppose the following comparing numbers to the Piraeus cluster, which includes 3.391 companies and 28 categories of business activities:

- 998 ship management companies,
- 612 marine equipment companies and
- 245 shipping agents

It is crucial to emphasize that the core of each shipping cluster is the users of the shipping services themselves, namely shipping companies.

The fundamental preconditions for creating a successful maritime cluster are:

1. Availability of basic services such as legal, insurance, financial and freight forwarding services,
2. Availability of strains, whether land or seafarers
3. Access to professional services
4. Geographical location
5. Overall business environment is the most important factor for its further development.

The cluster's operational effectiveness and efficiency will be the significant outcome of the well established synergies. In other words, the collaborating companies will gain significant benefits, while competition will lead enterprises to make innovations and improvements, thus producing added value. However, the existence of fair competition is an important factor in the maintenance, smooth operation and development of a cluster.

The Key growth pillars that can support the creation of a successful maritime cluster in Thessaloniki are:

- Reinforcement and establishment of high academic level maritime studies
- Stable and favourable fiscal framework
- Access to financing, and
- Improvement of the regulatory environment

We have to intensify our efforts to make shipping and naval education the leading choice among the

professional preferences of the new generation. The establishment of an International Maritime University is required more than ever in order to cultivate the marine culture and knowledge to young people in Greece and keep the position of the leading country of Shipping and Seamen.

It is necessary to apply a holistic approach in order to do the obvious and logical in the first maritime nation in the world; the maritime cluster will gain an enviable position and create thousands of highly skilled jobs.

Establishing a stable and business-friendly, internationally-oriented legal and tax environment will facilitate the establishment and operation of a shipping business in Greece. In practice, this requires the creation of incentives to attract.

Indicatively, I would like to point out that competing cities / states such as Singapore and Dubai, in order to attract relocation of shipping companies they provide

incentives focusing on providing a stable and secure tax framework and performing high-quality services free of bureaucracy.

Emphasis should be given on upgrading infrastructure, port connectivity and digitization of port operations (smart port / smart city). In particular, priority should be given to the rail link between Thessaloniki and Europe in order to establish it as a major air hub, to exploit the Shipbuilding Zone and revitalize the regional shipbuilding zones and to integrate the transport and storage sectors between key pillars of the country's strategic development plan for the coming decade; an interesting best practice implemented by Dubai in the 2007-2015 program and by analogy would turn Thessaloniki into a gateway to South-eastern and Central Europe.

In conclusion, the development of the maritime cluster in Thessaloniki can bring multiplier benefits to the economy of the city and more generally to Central

Macedonia, with a significant impact on attracting investment, to increasing employment not only in the port but throughout the supply chain; a strategic plan that will lead to the growth of Gross Domestic Product.

The port of Thessaloniki is the powerful tool of the city, of the country and its businesses. It is the tool through which we can hope for the development of the region and take the lead in Greek exports and become even more competitive with a modern port that will provide high quality services consistently with the traditions and with competitive loading and unloading charges.

However, we must also address new big players in the transport sector so that the port of Thessaloniki becomes a hub of transport lines that transfer products from the East to Europe.

Thessaloniki port has the potential to become the port of assembly, refinement, standardization and, above all, European-based certification, of -not restrictively Chinese products directed to Europe, although we know that China has already chosen Piraeus as its base of Cosco.

Even if a small refinement base is created in the Port of Thessaloniki, in addition to the positive effects it will have a significant impact on the port itself and its financial results; it will have multiplier benefits for the city, the economy, the market and the whole society.

Thessaloniki has one of the most beautiful marine fronts and is blessed with the potentiality to join the tourist map not only as a city break destination but also as a city that promotes safety and environmental protection as a key priority across the range of port operations.

— Thank you —

Dimitrios Mattheou

