

Greek cities host flurry of events

The Athens-Piraeus area is a natural magnet for events connected with shipping.

Last week was no exception, with one day boasting at least three opportunities for the community to learn and mingle.

Bremer Landesbank analyst Folker Hellmeyer gave a presentation at the Piraeus Marine Club to a gathering of around 40, including shipowners Nikos Paraschis and Totis Vernicos of Ancora Investment Trust, Pete and Mike Scufalos of Union Commercial, Evi Hajidaki of Derna Carriers, George Gyftakis of Mediterranean Maritime, to mention just a few.

The Yacht Club of Greece was the venue for Wista Hellas and guests to get their teeth into the subject of "Shipping and Environmental Protection", which kept delegates in their seats long beyond the planned break for cocktails and snacks, as the subject clearly was one that many feel strongly about.

Spotted for the second time in the day were Evi Hajidaki and George Gyftakis, while Helmepe chairman Nicky Pappadakis was on hand for the event.

Both International Maritime Organisation (IMO) secretary-general Efthimios Mitropoulos and Greek shipping minister George Voulgarakis sent messages to the gathering.

Moving uptown to central Athens, Gard held its now traditional evening for Greek clients and friends at the Hotel Grande Bretagne.

Guests, including Achilleas Stergiou, managing director of Metrostar, Pete Scufalos doing his evening stint, John Platsidakis of Anangel, Ted Petropoulos of Petrofin and Petrobulk, as well as a whole slew of lawyers and brokers, mingled and chatted before hearing Gard chief executive officer Claes Isacson lay out the club's figures and policies.

As of October, Greek shipowners accounted for 11% of both Gard's 108 million gross tonne portfolio and its \$217m gross premium.

The news that Gard has kept its general premium increase to 10% the lowest so far announced by any of the International Group clubs gave shipowners and executives alike a good appetite for the sit-down dinner that followed.

By Gillian Whittaker, Athens

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