

Lloyd's List

Greek shipowner numbers in decline

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| by [Vessels are bigger but tonnage and numbers have decreased, writes Nigel Lowry](#)

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Petrofin Research's annual analysis of Greek shipping has found the number of Greece-based shipmanagement companies — usually seen as a reliable indication of the number of different shipowning groups — has fallen by a hefty 6% from 2004 to 2005, declining to below 700 for the first time in memory.



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It was the largest year-on-year fall for six years but, although there was a marginal increase in the number of players last year, it appears to confirm an established downward trend.

Back in 1998, when the Petrofin consultancy began its yearly surveys, there were 926 Greek shipmanagement entities but a quarter of this total has now been wiped out.

According to Ted Petropoulos-headed Petrofin, the main reason for the most recent consolidation was “the high values of vessels attracting vessel sales by primarily the small shipping companies which effectively leave the industry.

“Clearly, the figures this year point to the fact that the demand for vessels has led owners to sell for very high prices or buy vessels to trade at very high rates,” the company commented.

“This has been an agonising dilemma in Piraeus: sell or de? Both actions have been of such lucrative nature that the decision for either has been a matter involving impressively large amounts of money.”

Unsurprisingly, the largest drop was in the number of one or two-ship operations, but such companies still “overwhelmingly dominated” Greek shipping, representing 288 out of the total 690 companies this year, the study said.

But the number of larger fleets — of more than 15 vessels — also shrank from 127 to 114, the figures showed.

Overall, however, the number of companies operating vessels of more than 10,000 dwt decreased only marginally from 429 to 420.

Petrofin also found that the Greek owned and Greek based fleet declined in both tonnage terms and number of vessels over the last year, although the average size of ship increased.

Trumpeting its research as the “most accurate snapshot” of Greek shipping due to a number of factors including curtailing the number of newbuildings included up to d through 2006, Petrofin also presented a less flattering age profile of the fleet than some studies.

The survey claimed that the average age of Greek controlled vessels of more than 10,000 dwt had been trimmed from 19.6 to 19.4 years.

“Given the massive Greek newbuilding orders, the small improvement in age does come as a disappointment, with the notable exception of tankers,” Petrofin said.

However, it explained the age profile was heavily influenced by “many grossly overage vessels... showing that Greeks are still holding on to their older vessels, and the good market has assisted them to do so.”

In spite of what the survey called “the quality revolution in Greek shipping”, it noted there were still many overaged fleets, belonging mainly to small companies. These included 15 companies running fleets of an average vessel age of 38 years, although the total tonnage represented — 1.6m dwt — was only a tiny fraction of the industry.

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