

MarTech LNG Workshop in Karlshamn

Natural gas is the future – Commersen Newspaper, Peter Enckell

Natural gas is being implemented as a future fuel for shipping. It is a more environmentally friendly option than the current available petroleum products. Prerequisites for the increased use of natural gas were discussed at a symposium in Karlshamn as a part of the MarTech LNG project (an EU financed project).

Trying to replace one type of fuel to another is not done in jiffy. Huge investments are required in ports to handle the natural gas. Seven ports in the Southern Baltic Sea region have already said that they plan to start investing; Aarhus, Copenhagen / Malmö, Helsingborg, Stockholm, Turku, Helsinki and Tallinn with several other ports are considering options.

Investing on a half-billion Euro is required if we are to cope with the handling, but there are other, cheaper option tells port manager in Klaipeda. We focus on a mobile device, a vessel that is fully equipped to handle it.

The problem is the high economic threshold. However, natural gas is much more efficient than for example the oil-based LPG and very effective and above all cleaner than the oil.

"It's completely insane to burn oil in engines", for example, says port manager Javier Blanquer from the port of Valencia, Spain - For the rest of the Mediterranean's biggest port. He is an engineer and believes that natural gas is a natural fuel, pending the final most perfect fuel - electricity.

"It'll probably take up to 100 years before we get there", he predicts.

But in the projects part financed (called Martech LNG www.golng.eu) via the EU much more than planning of facilities. There is a great demand for training in ports, such as creating value in Karlshamn, says Lawrence Henesey who works at Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH) with just ports facilities and logistics.

A running question throughout the conference on the East Pier was how to get started with working partnerships between ports and authorities. This particular issue was devoted entirely to Mr. Emil Arolski on ports and their performances. Mr. Arolski comes from the Baltic Ports Organisation - BPO in Gdansk / Gdynia and has a great responsibility in his project. He works with over 40+ ports in the Baltic region, with a focus on the environment and safety issues, which are areas that are central to the whole project.

Today, there are ferries between Finland and Sweden powered entirely by natural gas (VikingGrace). They are not a large number of ships (approximately 1% of the world fleet). The current situation suggests that in about six years there will be a demand for 1000s LNG powered vessels and in another decade later, five times as many.

When the goal is reached, we will see much cleaner seas and a substantially improved air quality in the Baltic Sea countries.