

We are determined to grow and restore Greece as the No. 1 ship repair hub in the Mediterranean



An interview with **Andreas Fotinakis**,
Managing Director of DK Fotinakis Ltd.

A recent IOBE study indicates that the investment per employee ratio in the Greek manufacturing sector – a key indicator for evaluating enterprises' productivity and competitiveness – remains significantly below the EU27 average. In the absence of state subsidies, how can Greek marine equipment companies enhance their productivity and competitiveness?

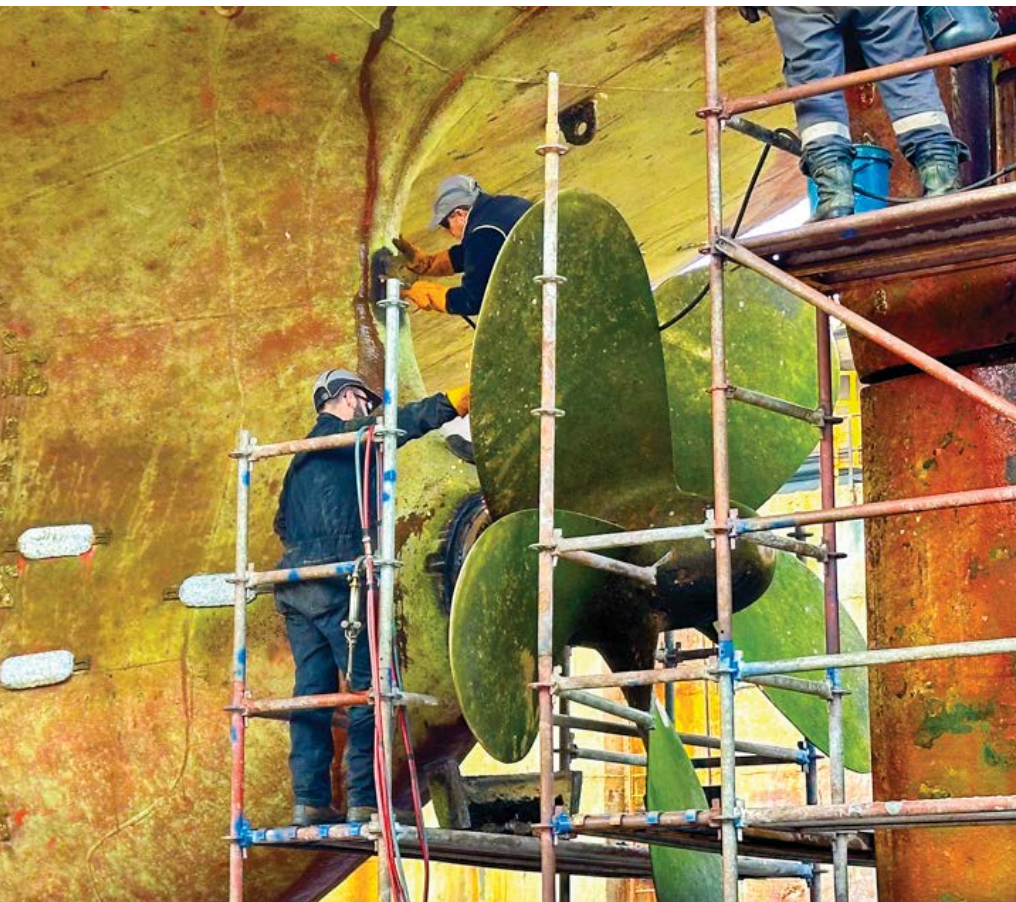
The Greek manufacturing sector faces challenges due to lower investment per employee compared to the EU average. However, the sector's productivity and competitiveness can be improved through automation, digitalisation, and workforce specialisation, combined with targeted state support.

Greek ship repair workers are highly skilled and globally recognised for their expertise. To maintain this competitive edge, companies must invest in specialised training, ensuring that experience is passed down and continuously refined. Training will not only help preserve craftsmanship but also enhance productivity by equipping workers with advanced skills and techniques.

At the same time, we must actively work to attract the new generation to the ship repair industry, providing them with the right incentives and career prospects to keep this valuable sector alive. Focusing on niche, high-value production will allow Greek firms to stand out from mass-production competitors.

Moreover, investing in CNC machining, robotic welding, and ERP systems can boost efficiency, reduce waste, and improve consistency. These technologies help workers focus on high-value tasks while optimising production costs. By integrating these technologies, companies can streamline operations, minimise errors, and accelerate turnaround times, all of which contribute to providing better service for shipowners and shipyards.

Finally, high taxation and social security contributions limit competitiveness. A more flexible tax framework and relief on employer costs would enable companies to invest further in innovation and offer more competitive pricing internationally. By combining workforce specialisation, automation, and state support, Greek



companies can boost productivity, preserve craftsmanship, and compete effectively in global markets.

Human resource management is a major challenge for shipbuilding and ship repair companies, as the shortage of skilled workers undermines the industry's competitiveness. How can these companies bridge the significant knowledge and skills gaps that persist within the current workforce?

The shortage of skilled workers in the ship repair industry is a direct result of two key factors: the long-term closure of Greek shipyards and the global shift toward office-based careers, which are often perceived as more stable and less physically demanding. These factors have created a widening gap between an ageing but highly skilled workforce and a lack of new talent entering the industry. However, with the revival of Greek shipyards and the growing demand for ship repair services, the industry now has a unique opportunity to rebuild its workforce. The key challenge is to inform and attract the younger generation, demon-

strating that ship repair is no longer just about manual labour but an evolving sector that combines engineering, automation, and high-value craftsmanship. Companies must actively work to change the public's perception of the industry by highlighting the opportunities it offers, including career stability and competitive salaries. Schools, technical institutes, and industry leaders must collaborate to promote apprenticeships and structured career paths that make ship repairs an attractive option.

At the same time, companies must take immediate action to close the knowledge and skills gaps that persist within the current workforce. This can be achieved through on-the-job training programmes and upskilling courses that allow younger workers to learn directly from experienced professionals before they retire. Investing in continuous learning and certification programmes will ensure that employees stay up to date with the latest technological advancements and industry requirements.

However, time is a critical factor. If action is not taken immediately, we risk

losing decades of accumulated expertise as experienced professionals retire. The transfer of knowledge must happen now, ensuring that new generations are ready to step in, innovate, and secure the industry's future.

Given the constraints on access to finance, how feasible is it for a company like DK Fotinakis Ltd. to invest in R&D?

Although investing in R&D is challenging due to financial constraints, the reopening of Greek shipyards and the green energy transition in shipping create significant opportunities. These developments open new markets for advanced repair techniques, eco-friendly technologies, and innovative marine equipment, making R&D not only necessary but also feasible.

By capitalising on these emerging trends and forming strategic collaborations, companies like DK Fotinakis can drive innovation while remaining competitive in a rapidly evolving industry.

What impact does the revival of Greek shipyards have on your business? How do you navigate the challenges posed by the limited capacity of shipyard infrastructure (docks, etc.)?

The revival of Greek shipyards presents a major opportunity for the ship repair industry, strengthening Greece's position as a key maritime hub. The reopening of Skaramangas Shipyards and Elefsis Shipyards allows us to dry dock vessels up to Suezmax size, significantly increasing our capacity to repair multiple vessels simultaneously. During the years when Greek shipyards were closed, a significant portion of our clientele turned to neighbouring Turkey in search of available repair facilities. Although dock space is not yet at the ideal level, the current situation is a major improvement compared to the past.

We are confident that, having successfully operated under difficult conditions for years, we can now take full advantage of these developments. We are grateful for this opportunity and determined to grow, improve our services, and restore Greece to its rightful place as the No. 1 ship repair hub in the Mediterranean.