

# A generation of shipping socialists say ‘dugnad’

**Norwegian industry knows where to find its enthusiasm, innovation and optimism**



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**D**UGNAD. It is a peculiarly Norwegian word and it has a quintessentially Norwegian definition that has perhaps helped me understand some of the country’s psyche.

By strict definition it is a voluntary contribution to an activity or purpose and perhaps represents one the reasons for the success of YoungShip, an association for young people working in the country’s shipping industry, that has succeeded in getting the support from shipowners. Suppliers in Norway keen to “do their thing” and support a network that strives to give back innovation and energy.

Scandinavians, in general, I have found in the years I have been here, can be both welcoming and frosty, but one thing that they are always ready to do, is to yield to those that are doing something for the general good.

While the concept of dugnad evolved from small communities of people that helped each other build barns, prepare fields and get the fishing boats out to sea. In modern day parlance, I would describe it as a sort of socialism for capitalists, especially when looking at Norway, and perhaps a little of it could be sprinkled about a bit further afield.

Norway is a country of contradictions, with its high taxes, yet strangely happy population, many of whom tell me they are quite content to pay said taxes as they get so much back in return. It



Facing the challenges ahead: YoungShip members enjoy a spot of networking.

also has its strong environmental drive while making itself very rich off other countries’ desire to buy its oil, gas and offshore competence.

I am not suggesting the tax system be emulated, more the compelling need to be part of something that is targeting the general good of a community, or in this case an industry.

The YoungShip network was established to give those that have stepped into the industry the support they need to stay with it. Members range from recent graduates to vice-presidents of corporations.

The only criteria being an age limit of 35 when you join, although when that age is reached one can remain a member. However, there is a feeling that lifestyle changes, such as families and other commitments, mean there is less time to spend on networking.

YoungShip Norway feels it is part of the country’s shipping cluster, rather than on its

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**Birgit Liodden,  
Youngships chairwoman**

periphery, and feels welcome enough to drive innovation up the management chain and to prepare the country’s shipping industry for the challenges ahead. It does not see itself as hammering on a door, trying to get a message across or drive a political opinion.

It is a network where everyone pays, everyone takes ownership and everyone gets out of it what they need – hence the dugnad feeling about it.

YoungShip is a way of bridging the gap between the parent generation and the younger ones, and gives a channel to generate and stimulate, says chairwoman Birgit Liodden.

In this way, the younger generation can give the Norwegian shipping industry what all industries need, the enthusiastic drive from newcomers that will create innovation and change.

Ms Liodden feels YoungShip is an integral part of Norway’s shipping and maritime community, welcome to participate in the discussions and debates and therefore its members are willing to assume a real role in shaping the country’s maritime future.

The network is, listening to her and other young people in Norway, not a wish, a dream or a frothy youthful enthusiasm they have, but a real belief they can be part of solving the challenges, whatever they are. As an example, Ms

Liodden holds a board position on the Oslo Maritime Network, alongside shipowners Felix Tschudi and Morits Skaugen. She talks about responsibilities, preparation, and triggering creativity and innovation. “We are not just sitting here, we are getting a grip of our maritime future.”

The Norwegian shipping industry is not as dusty and conservative as some. The owners are certainly willing to push forward with change, either through their listed entities, such as Fredriksen, Wilhelmsen and Odfjell, or through their private companies, such as Tschudi and Grieg are doing.

YoungShip Norway is also stepping up the ante. There are other networks for young shipping professionals around the world and some will be using this summer’s Norshipping in Oslo to get together, network, socialise and plot the future of the global shipping industry. YoungShip Norway now has enough clout that it arranges the Norshipping closing party on the final night.

Oddly enough some of the other networks, such as in the UK and Singapore, were started by expatriate Norwegians, but whereas they primarily focus on networking and learning, the Norwegian group is getting strategic and pushing ideas for the direction of Norwegian shipping.

“We have to make the environment focus profitable, making it more expensive to pollute than to take environmental action,” says Mr Liodden about the topmost challenge facing the industry.

Are Norwegian elders still stuck in the mud, refusing to face change? No, she says, here they are willing to embrace the changes and accept new ideas. The result is the younger generation is more proud of its involvement and more willing to remain and participate constructively, she adds.

That is why there is Dugnad – everyone puts something in, and gets something out. ■