

For two days (May 15 and 16) Naples will be the capital of the world of alternative fuels for maritime, heavy land, rail and aerospace transport

The crucial role of LNG in the energy transition

The forthcoming Small Scale LNG Use Euro-Mediterranean Conference & Expo is set to highlight the growing use and environmental advantages of liquefied natural gas, which is already recognized as the best alternative fuel currently available in plentiful supply. The planned replacement of liquefied fossil gas with renewable (biological and synthetic) liquefied gas will soon allow all the different means of transport to comply with international and national limits on emissions.

Press Release | Naples, 14 May 2019 | The current use of small scale LNG, the potential of this fuel, and future plans for it will all be topics discussed the Small Scale LNG Use Euro-Mediterranean Conference & Expo, which is taking place in Naples on May 15 and 16. Organised by Mirumir, this will be the fifth time this event has been held. Sponsored by Edison, Snam, Higas and other leading industry players, it will be attended by private companies, government authorities and national and international sector experts. In particular, the participation, on May 16, of Davide Crippa, Italian Undersecretary for Economic Development, can be taken as confirmation of the level of interest in LNG already shown by the Italian institutions, through the national integrated energy and climate plan and the guidelines on energy consumption in ports.

The transport system is at the centre of European and national policies geared at reducing the emissions responsible for air pollution and climate change. According to the European Environment Agency, transport is responsible for more than 30% of climate-changing emissions, 71% of which are generated by road transport (19% by heavy goods vehicles, 9% by light goods vehicles, 43% by cars), and 14% by shipping. In this setting, it is rapidly becoming clear that the use of liquefied natural gas in maritime transport (by both light and heavy vessels) is indispensable for reducing climate-changing emissions and emissions harmful to health. Furthermore, in addition to the risks associated with climate-changing emissions, it is necessary to consider the impact, on health, of other pollutants produced by traditional forms of transport: particulate matter and sulfur and nitrogen oxide are the main ones. Again according to the European Environment Agency, these pollutants were the cause of 422,000 deaths in Europe and over 60,000 in Italy in 2015. Now, in the wake of the economic crisis that began in 2008, the volume of transport is on the increase.

Natural gas is already the least polluting fuel for heavy sea and land transport, the comparison being with electricity generated from oil and coal. Albeit with small differences in emissions between ships and trucks, LNG as a whole reduces sulfur oxide and particulate matter levels by 99%, nitrogen oxide levels by over 60%, and CO₂ levels by 15-20%.

As already indicated at the 2017 conference, the main new development of recent years has been the introduction of renewable LNG, produced using organic waste, livestock waste, agricultural waste and sewage sludge. Its environmental impact is zero, as indeed is that of the other new development that will be discussed in depth at this year's conference, namely the production of synthetic LNG, which is obtained by mixing hydrogen and CO₂ (which, as a result, is removed from the environment) using the excess electricity produced from renewable solar and wind sources.

Other important highlights of this year's conference will be the presentation — and this is a first for a meeting devoted to the direct use of LNG — of its application in space launchers, making it possible to re-use launchers' stages, and in rail transport, in those situations where electrification is uneconomical and diesel fuel is used instead. Equally important is the use of small scale LNG in the widespread production of electricity, both to supply non-LNG ships stationed in ports, and to allow rapid recharging of cars in service stations.

Renewable and synthetic LNG and their application in an ever-growing number of new sectors, including isolated industries and networks, are together driving scientific research and technological development, favouring the emergence of new businesses and activities that are creating new openings for skilled labour and the export of new manufactured goods. All this is confirmed by the remarkable growth shown by this sector over the past two years: planned investments have increased six-fold, from 300 million to 1.8 billion euros.

Another sign of the interest that this event has generated in the production world is the planned participation, at this year's Naples conference, of leading names from the world of industry, both in Italy and in the Mediterranean area, such as Edison, Snam, Gas and Heat, Higas, as well as DNV-GL, Ecospray, Emerson, Iveco, Liquigas, Olt, Polargas, Siad, Tecnogas, Vanzetti and Wartsila; the lectures of Avenir, whose bunker vessels will be used to supply ships and depots in the Mediterranean, and Carnival, which was the first operator to order LNG cruise ships, are both eagerly awaited, as is that of Avio, an Italian company that is a leading name in the field of medium-sized satellite launchers.

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ConferenzaGNL is an independent initiative by Mirumir for the promotion of the LNG sector