



The Golden Ages most famous Danish painter, professor C.W. Eckersberg, has painted this motive in 1830 with four boats and pilots in Dragør port. The painting can be seen in Dragør Museum.

The history of marine pilotages in Denmark

The history of the marine pilots and pilotages in Denmark is unique - that be in a Danish, European and international perspective. Therefore, a short English version is included in the Danish version of The history of the Marine Pilots in Denmark on the website.

Denmark is a country with 5.8 million inhabitants, 65 commercial ports and 8,750 km of coastline and has a central location between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. All ships must navigate through one of the two transit waters - the Sound or the Great Belt - to get to and from the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.

Shipping in transit in the two waters has always been high. Therefore, the Danish Kingdom introduced a toll in 1429, called the Øresund (The Sound) toll, which lasted until 1857 and was the Danish King's golden vein, because the toll went to the King's own "treasure chest". The toll was abandoned at an international congress in Copenhagen, where Denmark received compensation in return, which corresponded to 12 years' income from the Sound toll.

However, not all countries paid the compensation provided for in a treaty. So when Brazil's President Lula da Silva visited Denmark in 2007, Denmark's Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen symbolically forgave Brazil's debt, which in 2007 amounted to 10 million US dollars. The amount tells about the Sound toll's economic consequence for the ships, because 1.8 million ships passed through the Sound and the Great Belt between 1497 and 1857, all of which paid the Sound toll.



Upon its abolition in 1857, Denmark undertook to have marine pilots in appropriate places as well as moderate and same tariffs for all ships - Danish and foreign ships. Therefore, several pilotage organizations saw the light of the day. Some were profitable and some not as the need for marine pilots was very different in Danish waters and in Danish ports. Therefore, the state introduced an equalization scheme, which ensured the existence of the unprofitable pilotages.

The organization of the Danish pilotages system became reassessed of the government in the 1970s, so the government decided in 1979, that the then 30 private pilotages in a few years should be replaced by a state-owned pilot company, which was named DanPilot.

Due to the EU's liberalization and competition regulation, the government decided in 2006 that DanPilot should be exposed to competition on the regional segment – i.e. pilotage to and from Danish ports.

In 2014, it was decided that from 2016, Danish and foreign pilots in the EU could obtain a permit to carry out transit pilotage – i.e. through the Danish Straits. But DanPilot still has over 90 percent of the regional pilotage and transit pilotage in Denmark and performs 20.000 pilotages a year from 20 boats and pilot stations with 180 pilots and 100 boatmen.

All pilots are managed by DanPilot's pilot dispatch. Therefore, all pilotage take place around the clock every day with a notice of four hours to and from Danish ports and 18 hours notice to transit pilots from/to Skagen and to/from Bornholm - either through the Sound or the Great Belt - and it requires several pilot changes along the way due to EU working/rest time regulations.

Dragør Lodseri was Denmark's longest operational private pilotage from 1684 to 1984 and piloted ex. the Danish navy in the Swedish-Danish war in 1677, in the Nordic war in 1710 and in the gun-boat war against the English navy in 1807-1814 caused by the English navy robbing the Danish navy after the bombardement of Copenhagen in 1807 during the Napoleonic Wars. This war caused Denmark to go bankrupt in 1813.

The English version of the two pilot organizations is written by the Danish Pilot Museum's support association. The story gives foreigners interested in marine pilotage an impression of Denmark's 300 years old private pilotage company Dragør Lodseri (1684-1984) and now of the stateowned pilotage company DanPilot. The whole story can be found in Danish on danmarkslodshistorie.dk



A MAERSK tanker and a DanPilot pilot boat between Denmark and Sweden. Photo: Birger Mølle-søe

DanPilot have made 5 Pilotage preplanning guides, which can be found on danpilot.dk. On the same webside can also be found DanPilot's professional footprint guide - Part 6 - about DanPilot.

