



The Italian Port Days Experience: A new challenge, a new frontier

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Port festivals have been one of the main initiatives for ports to bring citizens closer to their activities. They usually include group visits, concerts, art shows or conferences. They build on the maritime culture and “wow” effect of the port territory, particularly when visitors stand close to big ships or cranes, or heritage. Port open days usually take place locally, celebrating the anniversary of the port authority. But what if it was a national event? This is exactly what happens in the Italian Port Days, already in its second edition. In this article, Tiziana Murgia from Assoport, explains their motivations and challenges to organize this event and the combined efforts from many stakeholders.



Tiziana Murgia, Communication Executive, Assoport

The Project developed by the Italian Port Network Authorities has the main scope of informing and educating as many people as possible as to how ports actually work. The idea of opening all ports during the same period with a unique logo and slogan means coordination and united intents. Considering the high-level attention on ports due to the negative impact of port externalities the relations with local communities has become one of the main issues that port managers have to be able to face as best as possible. Italian Port Days is a project on which the Italian Port Network Authorities have invested their time and money to work on a National port-city integration policy. The project was developed in May in 2019 and October 2020. During these days, ports developed various initiatives and events that were carried out at the same time. During 2020, a specific website: <http://italianportdays.it/it/home> was created where initiatives were published. Many of these initiatives were online and digital due to the pandemic.

there were visits and seminars or concerts or street art exhibitions. In the future, Italian Port Days, which has a Registered Trademark with its slogan “Opening Port Life and Culture to People” will continue to be held throughout Italian ports.

Italian Port Days was implemented by each port individually according to available budget and therefore the initiative gave every port the possibility to realize what was adequate and possible for them. Larger ports that had held previous initiatives had already gathered funds from sponsors and stakeholders or part of the events was directly held by other stakeholders. The ports that for the first time held events, had the possibility to learn from colleagues and a real Italian Port Days network was created. Italian Port Network Authorities decided to participate due to the necessity to reach out to local communities, that has become one of the main priorities for ports, together with the main environmental aspects like quality of air, noise, energy consumption. Climate change and other environment impacts have made people more aware of the need to take care of the planet. The impact of ships has always been seen as something very serious and lately there have been many complaints in this regard. Ports have had to take care of giving correct information to communities to avoid that this large economic and employment centre be damaged by incorrect information.

The relationship between ports and people is essential to guarantee the license to operate. This is something that all those working in the field know very well. It is part of diverse codes of practice, articles and texts which face the port-city relationship topic. This means going further than the urban planning and waterfront aspects which are only a part of the issue. For this reason, it is necessary to look at the human factor and develop relations giving clear and transparent information to people. To do so, ports must be willing to open up their doors, gates or barriers and welcome people inside their boundaries. Innovation and technology have also created occupation and professional revolution which has its effects also in ports. For this reason, managing port bodies must be able to have good relations with communities and supply information on how to develop new professionals where possible. Italian Port Days – “Opening Port Life and Culture to People” has given Italian ports the possibility to work together and develop new initiatives that reach out to local communities, to schools, universities and authorities.

The National initiative Italian Port Days obtained the advocacy of the Italian National Coast Guard thanks to the value given to the project. Many Coast Guard and Harbour Masters’ offices worked in close cooperation with the ports to develop the events and visits within ports. Italian Port Days has given ports the possibility to be transparent with their local communities, with people and authorities, enhancing relations. The information given to people has empowered them and this means that in the future they will drive changes. Italian ports are 99% within urban areas and most ports are in old cities. There is need to discuss, to find agreements and to work together to make ports grow as best as possible. There are many challenges that Port Network Authorities must manage in this changing world and Italian Port Days is one step towards facing this challenge together. In 2020, Italian Port Days was included in #EMDInMyCountry launched by the DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission with the entire Italian Agenda as part of the EU one.

Over the last years senior management has come closer to the port-city relationship issue thanks to work carried out by the European and National port association and considering the changes that are happening in ports around the world. Senior Management of ports has put together this initiative informing and cooperating with private companies and port operators also with the representing associations. These private participants were involved in the project and invited to events as speakers. To get people into the port areas all terminals and companies were active also in supplying information as well as sponsoring events or distributing small tokens and gifts that regard port activities.

Reaching out to communities is essential for an industry like ports that is something that is noticed mainly for its negative impact in operations. For this reason, creating an initiative that embraces an entire country of ports that simultaneously open to their territories and to the people living around ports is unique and improves societal integration. The results gathered by the ports part of port network authorities has been very positive and other bodies, associations and stakeholders have showed interest for further editions and therefore the project has been effective in getting the message through. The societal function must be taken seriously and therefore “spot” events on ports, waterfronts or traffic cannot be considered as really effective in building port-city relations in the long-term. This project has had very positive feedback and numerous requests for a 2021 edition

with even more initiatives. The idea of opening ports together has made the concept of ports opening to communities stronger as it is now on the National agenda as one of the necessary functions to be carried out in ports. With this original project, many people who had never come into contact with port areas, port operations or port education have now seen directly what happens in ports and how port activities are vital for local and national economy.

Other information/press coverage and presentations/videos are also available at:

<http://www.assoporti.it/media/4429/assoporti-ipd-2019-v000.pdf> and social media of Assoporti in [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) , and on our [Youtube channel](#).

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