

The Livorno “Public Debate”

In March 2015 the Tuscan Region approved the New Master Plan Regulatory Plan of the port of Livorno, a strategic plan that combines the reorganization of the existing functions of the port with the implementation of new valuable works.

These projects were the main theme of the first Tuscan Regional Public Debate, called the “Port Debate”, concerning the development and the upgrading of the port of Livorno.

The Public Debate is mandatory in Tuscany, since 2013, and it’s required for public works of a certain cost. These projects involve the environment and the landscape, as well as social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

The two subjects on the agenda for the Public Debate held in Livorno were:

The feasibility study for the first construction of the European Platform, an expansion at sea of the port of Livorno to be built in stages, which when complete will virtually double the size of the operative area.

The Master Plan for the area of the Maritime Station, a fundamental focus for cruise and ferry traffic that is closely linked to Livorno’s historical center.

The Public Debate was co-funded by the Tuscan Regional Government through the Regional Authority for the guarantee and promotion of Participation and the Port Network Authority of the North Tyrrhenian Sea, the institution that has commissioned the works.

It has been organized and coordinated by the manager for Public Debate, Mrs. Sophie Guillan, chosen by the Regional Authority through a public recruitment procedure.

The preliminary stage started immediately after the approval of the Port Master Plan; it defined the characteristics of the project to be discussed, made important documents available and it prepared an informative dossier.

The public phase, the heart of the Debate, took place between April and June 2016.

There was a widespread dissemination of the information material throughout the area and a communication strategy was launched through daily newspapers, radio, television as well as the setting up of information points in Tuscany.

The launch meeting was used to present the steps in the process and the details of the designs by the Port Authority’s technical staff. The local population was invited to round tables to discuss the opportunities and any possible concerns arising from the plans, as well as any aspects they wished to further investigate in future meetings.

The initial round table covered the first phase of the European Platform, outlining its technical, economic and financial aspects.

The participants then discussed in several thematic working groups, identifying features to investigate further and proposals for the project's possible improvement.

The subject of the second round table was the masterplan for the Maritime Station. The working groups had the purpose to underline both negative and positive points of the project, to list the aspects that required further investigation and the issues to submit to an expert team.

The third round table dealt with the environmental, social and economic aspects of these two projects that will bring about the port's transformation. Experts explained the environmental studies carried out for the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the PRP of the project. It was possible then to establish direct lines of communication between the participants, consultants and institutional representatives on selected subjects for subsequent debate.

Guided tours of the port area were engaged in tandem with the three round tables. The tours enabled the public to achieve an increased awareness of the areas and functions of the port.

Two stakeholder workshops were also arranged; one for the local and the other for regional stakeholders.

The Debate process ended with the closing meeting that summarized the contents that came out of the meetings and gave room to the collective consideration of both institutions and participants.

The entire process was guided by a Steering Committee, chaired by a Debate Officer, along with members from Tuscan Region, Provincial Government of Livorno, Livorno Municipality, Port Network Authority of North Tyrrhenian Sea and Regional Authority for the guarantee and promotion of Participation.

The Port Network Authority hosted the Public Debate at the Port Center in Livorno's Old Fortress, a teaching and exhibition location dedicated to sharing information and knowledge on the town's port.

Over 350 people took part in the debate, with a third of these joining three or more meetings; while more than 200 people went on organized tours in the port area.

Information and communication was made available through a dedicated website, www.dibattitoinporto.it, which is still on line, the regional government's platform Opentoscana that collects all the events taking place in Tuscany and a dedicated Facebook page.

A Technical staff and representatives from Port Authority participated in all the meetings of the Public Debate and took on board the concerns and questions of citizens and stakeholders and, wherever possible, they answered in real time. All the concerns were summarized in about 250 questions with written answers. All the material is available on the site dibattitoinporto.it in the FAQ section.

The site has also been used to store 18 stakeholder notebooks, these are written contributions made by Public entities, associations or individual citizens who wish to share their thoughts publically.

In the concluding phase of the Public Debate the Chairperson drafted a final report, with the contents and results, highlighting the arguments presented, the main controversies, the points to be further investigate and final proposals for both projects.

The main requests that came out of the debate concerned:
the port development approach to be more integrated and not in competitions with the other ports.

The guarantees that the project will be completed to schedule and on enviromental monitoring

The assurance or the Ensuring that the benefits of the project will be distributed not only in the port but also in a wider area.

The adoption of a system of governance that fosters greater integration between the port, the city and the wide area.

The undertaking to provide a constant flow of information and involvement by decision makers on their future deliberations.

In November 2016, 90 days before the publication of the final report, the Port Network Authority announced the proponent's answers, in which it argued its choices.

The European Platform project was confirmed, taking on board the majority of requests for the governance of the subsequent phases of planning and construction.

Regarding the plan for the Maritime Station, the Livorno Port Authority considered it possible to modify certain features of the Master Plan, in light of the results of the Public Debate and the requests of the Livorno Local Council.

The Port Network Authority also committed to:

To give increased visibility to information on its development projects and consequent impact.

To broadcast the results of the Public Debate to the companies involved in the implementation of the project for the port development

To carry out further investigation on the environmental issues identified.

As far as governance is concerned, the Port Net Authority undertakes to promote the National Coordination Conference for Port Net Authorities at national level, and the Agreement Table for the Plan for the complex crisis area of Livorno to wide area scale.

Upon the proposal of the chairperson for the Public Debate, an institutional, environmental and social observatory will be set up to check that the project's directives are respected and guarantee that the environmental monitoring program is conducted properly during and after the works.

Finally there will be a local coordination committee that, amongst other things, will arrange the annual monitoring meeting and will be responsible for the ongoing communication of the various institutions involved and may promote regular specific update meetings as well as theme-based processes.

To sum up, the Public Debate has proven to be a two-way path with which the Port Network Authority has tried to convey as much information as possible to participants and benefitted from important feedback about the concerns and problems raised by citizens.

During the round tables, real problems, connected to the implementation of the Port Master Plan, were dealt with. The results obtained from these meetings will form the bases for the future choices of the institutions involved.