
PRESS RELEASE

'Passenger pollution' drives cruise operators to look elsewhere

"PASSENGER pollution" in some key destinations is throwing up opportunities for relatively unknown ports to tap into the burgeoning cruise market, delegates at a Port-Net cruise workshop were told.

"Cruise operators are looking for new destinations, due to 'passenger pollution' in some key destinations – thus there are market niches for 'unknown' ports, provided they can offer some excursion services, etc.," said Hans-Ulrich Wolff, representing the Port-Net project management team at Hamburg-based Uniconsult.

However, the delegates also concluded that cruise seems to be, at least for some ports in the north of Europe, not a very profitable business – its value is more in the glamour it brings to the port/city in which cruise ships call.

Europe is the fastest growing cruise destination in the world. Last year, 3.2 million Europeans chose a cruise holiday – a rise of 13% on 2005. Against this background of rapid expansion, the Port-Net best practice tour and workshop looked at different aspects of the cruise industry, taking in visits to the ports of Hamburg, Kiel and Genoa.

Topics raised during the workshop included:

- The ever-increasing size of cruise ships and the problems some ports face in terms of providing suitable berths that are long enough but also close to the city;
- Cruise operators looking for new destinations due to "passenger pollution" in some places;
- The cruise operators' success in finding new target groups – e.g. families – which is bringing down the average age of a cruise passenger;
- Britain as the largest passenger cruise market in Europe, with Germany coming up behind with a large potential still untapped;
- The trend towards shorter cruises, sometimes down to mini-cruises of only a few days.

Susanne Milberg of Hamburg Port Consulting spoke about the development of Hamburg's cruise market and discussed passenger forecasts, while Nadine Palatz of the Hamburg Cruise Center, discussed marketing the city/port as a cruise destination. The Port of Hamburg opened its second cruise terminal in April 2006, and is also investing in new facilities for 2009. Other speakers included Joachim Köhn, general manager of UNIKAI Hafenbetrieb, who gave a talk entitled "Glamour for the Port".

At Kiel, the leading German Baltic Sea port for passengers and cruise vessel turnrounds, the port's general manager and head of sales and marketing, Heinz Bachmann, and Ulf Jahnke, the port's corporate communications manager, discussed challenges and chances at the port, and delegates visited the port's new cruise terminal opened in April this year. Kai-Uwe Maross, senior manager port operations for AIDA Cruises, discussed what the cruise lines want from the ports.

At Genoa, the focus was on the latest IT developments in the cruise sector, and the latest trends in the cruise sector in the Mediterranean.

PORT-NET: notes for editors

Port-Net is an EU Interreg III C North Network project with 20 partners from 12 European countries and Russia. Its objective is to identify and tackle the main challenges faced by European ports in order to create better operational structures and capacities as well as to achieve the best possible regional integration of ports. These targets continue to be achieved through workshops, presentations, studies and best practice tours. Previous events have taken place in Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta the Netherlands and Poland.

Three components differentiate the activities by topics. The first component deals mainly with the application and further development of EU policies. Improvements in the multimodal transport structure and maritime cargo challenges are the subjects under discussion within the second component. The final component focuses on tourism and urban development from a port perspective.

The lead partner of Port-Net is the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, represented by the Hamburg Port Authority (HPA). A full list of partners can be founded at www.port-net.net. A democratic network structure guarantees equal involvement and a proper consideration of the interests of all partners. Project co-ordination is executed by UNICONSULT, a port and transport consultancy from Hamburg.

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