



# PORT COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

## SURGING DEMAND

Interview with Richard Morton, Secretary General, International Port Community System Association (IPCSA)



Port Community Systems (PCS) are in high demand. This was one of the key talking points of a recent Port Technology International Webinar which explored how to provide real-time, digital information with PCS.

The events of 2020 and the ongoing pandemic have been an eyeopener for ports and the need for the electronic distribution of data is more imperative now than it has ever been.

In an effort to give ports the best tools to integrate PCS into their operations IP-CSA, which launched in 2011 as the European Port Community Systems Association (EPCSA), provides its members with practical information, activities, projects, advice and guidance.

Following the webinar Richard Morton, Secretary General, IPCSA, described some of the association's key aims, latest developments and issues it is dealing with today.

### UNIQUE APPROACH

This mission of IPCSA is to act in the common interest of IPCSA members to influence public policy at the international level, in order to promote the electronic exchange of information to enable seamless and efficient trade logistics processes.

Since its inauguration in 2011 under the name EPCSA the now international association, IPCSA, has gained Non-Governmental Organization with Consultative Status at the United Nations and the International Maritime Organization.

"The success of the association is down to its members and their commitment to supporting the wider community with the electronic exchange of information and as IPCSA we consider that we have to adapt and change constantly as an association in order to effectively represent our members at national, regional and international level," Morton explained.

"We always consider that in order to stay the same, you have to change. We maintain that philosophy through activities, and it

allows us the flexibility to be adaptable to change needs," he said.

The association itself tries to stay away from political statements and focusses on the exchange of information between its members.

Morton said that unlike many other associations IPCSA considers the whole community. "As our members are community organisations and as such, we have to consider not just our direct members but their users as part of this 'Community of Communities'."

"As an association we look towards the whole process flow of information in the supply chain from Exporter to importer and all the transport operators in between. Thus, we have to act neutrally in our activities to ensure that the association and consequently our members are considered neutral and trusted third parties."

### IMPORTANCE IN INITIATIVES

As already noted, IPCSA focuses on activities and initiatives. Morton explained, "We split this into different themes which cover our own IPCSA initiatives which we under-

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take for the benefit of our members or those initiatives, which may also be, related to policy developments, standards and other themes which are considered of interest or value to IPCSA members.”

#### *IPCSA Initiatives*

- PROTECT: The Port Message Design Group was integrated into IPCSA in January 2020 and aims to take this beyond the European participants to more of the IPCSA members outside Europe.
- Currently involved in multiple United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) projects including updating dangerous goods message IFTDG and IMO Mapping.
- IPCSA Bill of Lading Initiative: Led by Israel Ports to develop a Proof of Concept and text blockchain technology in the exchange of Bills of Lading between all parties.
- Network of Trusted Networks: Port of Port and Cross Border enabling platform simplifying Cross Border Agreements and fee negotiations, whilst using standard API IPCSA develops for its members to exchange data.

- PCS for small and medium sized ports: Guidance for small and medium sized ports, and how they should firstly consider and then how to develop a PCS.
- PCS Development: Supporting ports, funding authorities and other organisations in “How to Develop PCS” and sharing international experience.

IPCSA is also involved in other international initiatives such supporting and leading on the development of different standards with the UN/CEFACT.

In addition, IPCSA is actively taking part in the EU Expert groups for the implementation of the European Maritime Single Window Environment (EMSWe), including taking part in discussions on interfaces, data elements and the creation of new EU wide databases.

Finally, with customs a critical element of many of the IPCSA members activities the group is working on EU Union Customs Code (UCC) implementation including ICS2, Single Window and transit is vital as they form part of the logistics flow of information thus we actively participate in many EU Customs meetings.

#### **NETWORK OF TRUSTED NETWORKS**

On 1 July 2020 IPCSA launched its Network of Trusted Networks (NoTN) with the purpose of providing predictability, visibility and certainty within the supply chain.

The NoTN is a new, secure port-to-port and cross-border data exchange solution. At the time of launch, IPCSA noted that when it comes to providing this kind of cross-border solution, others have tried to deliver such a concept – but the key stumbling block has always been trust.

The priority for the NoTN is to respond to the requirement of consumers and logistics companies for real-time, end-to-end information on their shipments.

The launch consisted of commitment from 16 members covering 73 seaports and nine airports to share and exchange data through the IPCSA NoTN.

July and August have seen the on-boarding of these members and the first APIs have been finalised, these include for real-time Portcall information and real-time shipment information and status.

“PCS and Single Window operators are in a unique position that enables them to have real-time data and share that, within the bounds of commercial confidentiality with other interested parties,” Morton said.

“Collaboration between PCS is a fundamental requirement if transparency throughout the whole supply chain is to be successfully achieved.”

Morton noted that the industry faces several challenges as it moves towards its demanding digital age.

“Collaboration, there is lots of talk and very little of it is true. Too much theory and not enough practice. Everyone talks about collaboration, but true collaboration comes with trust and time,” he said.

On standards and harmonisation, he said that standards organisations need to truly work closer together and agree harmonisation of standards in order to provide choice to the trade.

Finally, he noted that neutrality is crucial for the supply chain data exchanges to work and it is important that those sharing data know what the data is being shared for and with whom, and that that data is not then commercialised for other reasons without explicit agreement.



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