



Associazione Esposizioni e Fiere Italiane
Italian Exhibition & Trade Fair Association

Press

EXHIBITIONS, MAURIZIO DANESE NEW PRESIDENT OF AEFI, THE ASSOCIATION OF REFERENCE FOR EXHIBITION DISTRICTS IGNORED BY THE GOVERNMENT, SYSTEM AT RISK OF GAME OVER

Danese: «With the Covid emergency, the exhibitions system and its satellite activities are at real risk. The government now recognises our role as an industrial policy tool for the nation. The institutions must take concrete action to relaunch and not lose out to foreign competitors». Pietro Piccinetti nominated as the new AEFI vice-president

Bologna, 21 July 2020 – Maurizio Danese is the new president of AEFI, the Italian Exhibition and Trade Fair Association that brings together 40 national exhibition districts, responsible for the organisation of more than 1000 exhibitions and events on average each year. The vote was taken today during the AEFI General Meeting, which took place at BolognaFiere.

An entrepreneur in the food service sector, AEFI vice-president since 2018 and president of Veronafiere Spa since 2015, Maurizio Danese, 57, succeeds Giovanni Laezza with a term that will run until 2022.

The AEFI shareholders' meeting also saw the nomination of a new vice-president, Pietro Piccinetti (sole director of Fiera Roma) who joins Antonio Bruzzone (general manager of BolognaFiere) and Lorenzo Cagnoni (president of IEG-Italian Exhibition Group), already confirmed as vice-presidents.

AEFI has represented the Italian exhibition system since 1983, promoting and supporting its development. A strategic sector for Italy, it is able to generate 60 billion Euro of business each year with the involvement of 200,000 firms and more than 20 million professional operators from Italy and abroad.

*«I thank all the members for their confidence and my predecessor for the work carried out during this serious and unexpected critical period – comments **Maurizio Danese**. The Covid-19 emergency has hit the exhibition sector hard, with almost 90% of events scheduled for 2020 either postponed or cancelled, with damage and an estimated overall reduction in turnover of well over 60%. We should also not forget the satellite activities of connected supply chains, like that of fittings, where we estimate losses of up to 80%, or that of hotels. Now, more than ever, we need a new programmatic and strategic paradigm that sees AEFI action centred around promoting a strong alliance between exhibition operators and that also expedites system mergers. Only in this way can we measure up to our foreign competitors, while maintaining the territoriality and specificities of our historic exhibitions».*

Exhibitions are one of the most powerful and effective industrial policy tools the country has as its disposal, with almost 50% of exportation a direct or indirect result of this sector. For more than 75% of Italian SMEs,

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exhibitions represent the only international visibility platform for business, able to guarantee participating companies up to ten times the return on their investment.

*«Until now, the government has not listened to us but it needs to acknowledge that exhibition activity cannot be compared to shows or festivals, as we have unfortunately seen in certain Prime Ministerial Decrees and the Relaunch Decree – continues **Danese**. As AEFI, we resolutely reaffirm the industrial matrix of our activity. We therefore ask the institutions for concrete, incisive action that goes beyond setting up a generic support fund, of which there is currently no sign in governmental provisions, or financing the participation of our firms in overseas exhibitions organised by our direct competitors».*

*«Without a strategy and real support at national level, the risk is that our exhibition system will lose weight in Europe and on emerging Made in Italy markets, concludes the **new AEFI president**. We remain convinced that we can really help drive recovery, once the emergency is over. With this aim, Italian exhibitions have used the lockdown period to invest resources in the creation of new and increasingly safe formats that are tailor-made and can integrate the physical experience with the digital world. In recent months, we have kept our engines running and we now wait for the government to provide a fixed date and the allocation of adequate financial aid for the recovery of our sector».*

In looking back at his term of office, a period during which AEFI entered the national Control Room for international Italy and was among the signers of the Pact for Export, outgoing president Giovanni Laezza thanks the executive board, the commissions and general secretary Loredana Sarti for their continuous support in the sharing of decisions, interventions and strategic guidelines.

*«The eighteen months I've spent at AEFI have been particularly intense, and lately I've been kept busy in talks with the government, ministries and competent institutions, informing them as to the damage sustained by the exhibitions and the sector's value, both for firms and for the relaunch of our economy – underlines **Giovanni Laezza**. Among the many proposals drafted to support the sector in light of the serious impact of the crisis, we have focused particularly on a protocol for a totally safe relaunch, on the request for a fixed reopening date that is valid nationwide, and on the creation of a structural fund for the reimbursement of expenses and lost earnings owing to the lack of exhibition activity since late February, a proposal that, despite also being supported by the combined action of the governors of Emilia Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto, has not influenced government decisions. As of now, our requests remain unheard. I leave my successor with a huge task and hope that he can succeed where I did not».*

[AEFI - Italian Exhibition and Trade Fair Association](#), a private non-profit Association, was established in 1983 with the goal of generating synergies between the most important Italian exhibition districts. It currently includes 40 members, which organise over 1000 events a year across an overall exhibition area of 4.2 million square metres. Nearly all international and national trade fairs which take place each year in Italy are held in AEFI-member exhibition districts.



AEFI is a privileged partner for operators and institutions alike, and its role is to support members through the development of activities and programmes in the sphere of training, marketing, promotion and research, as well as to provide services for trade fairs through the activities of its Committees: Exhibition Hub Technical Committee, Legal-Administrative Committee, Internationalisation Committee and Trade Fairs Network Committee. On the internationalisation front, AEFI supports members thanks to agreements with strategic markets. To date, partnerships have been agreed with Iran, Taiwan, Lebanon, India, Thailand, South Africa and Poland, with AmCham, the American Chamber of Commerce in Italy, with CENTREX, the International Exhibition Statistics Union and with EUPIC-EU Project Innovation Center. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with SACE and SIMEST.

AEFI has promoted the foundation of ISFCert, the Certification Institute for Exhibition Industry Statistics which, through rigorous methodologies, enables Italian organisers to present and recognise standardised data, in the name of transparency and reliability. AEFI represents Italian trade fairs in UFI - Union of International Fairs.

<https://www.aefi.it/en/>

For further information

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