

AI-NURECC PLUS FIRST EVENTS

(Online, 26 October 2021)

REPORTS

Final Version



SAVE THE DATE 26 | OCT | 2021
ONLINE EVENT
REGISTRATION LINK AND AGENDA SOON!

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON
CIRCULAR ECONOMY & ADRIATIC IONIAN Youth Organisations FORUM²

powered by the Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Community

From more info:
Webpage Newsletter @AI-NURECC_PLUS Community

The events are organised by the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion in the framework of the AI-NURECC PLUS.
Join us to learn how EUSAIR stakeholders are promoting the transition to a Circular Economy in the Adriatic Ionian area!
Back-to-Back with the Conference, Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations will gather to discuss the role of youth in facilitating the change!

The action AI-NURECC PLUS has received funding from the European Union

The Secretariat of the [Adriatic Ionian Euroregion \(AIE\)](#) organised the first AI-NURREC PLUS EVENT, the *High-Level Conference on Circular Economy*, which took place on October 26th, focused on the challenges and priorities of an efficient transition to a more innovative, sustainable and inclusive development in the Adriatic Ionian area, as addressed by EUSAIR policy-makers, stakeholders and implementers. Along with the Conference, the AIE organised the second *Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Forum (AIYOF2)*, a platform for youth to meet EUSAIR Stakeholders). The AIYOF2 involved young participants from the 9 EUSAIR countries in representation Adriatic Ionian youth organisations of different type, size and scope, with a view to the widest inclusion and participation possible. The Forum was an occasion to network and to learn about forthcoming opportunities promoted by the AI-NURECC PLUS and intervening EUSAIR stakeholders.

The events involved overall more than 120 participants and a variety of actors: representatives of local, regional and national authorities, universities, chambers of commerce, non-governmental associations as well as sectoral experts, young professionals and university students.

Link to the [presentations](#).



Report on the High-Level Conference on Circular Economy

The *High-Level Conference on Circular Economy* was moderated by Mr. **Francesco COCCO**, AIE Secretary General. The event was opened by Mr. **Guido CASTELLI**, Regional Minister of Marche Region (Italy) and representative of CRPM, AI-NURECC PLUS Coordinator, who introduced the AI-NURECC PLUS as a platform for cooperation and recovery in the post-pandemic Adriatic Ionian Region. Mr. Castelli recognised how hard the climate change is affecting the economy of the area, and in particular [Western Balkans](#), and stressed the pivotal role of circular economy in achieving an efficient transition to a more innovative, sustainable and inclusive growth. Mr. Castelli also underlined that one of the missions of the AI-NURECC PLUS will be to promote youth participation in decision-making processes.

Mr. **Mitja BRICELJ**, *Coordinator of the EUSAIR Pillar 3 “Environmental Quality”* (Slovenia) reported on the results attained in the region with regard to a concrete contribution to the EU’s Green Deal. Under the [Slovenian Presidency](#), the EUSAIR improved biodiversity and ecosystems by promoting green and blue corridors as well as green infrastructures. Among other things, Mr. Bricelj underlined how, through interpillar synergies and a very pragmatic and integrated approach, the Strategy secured water-food-climate safety for a better life style of local communities and youth, also in terms of cooperation between the inland areas and the Adriatic Ionian coastal areas.

The next speaker was Ms. **Phoebe KOUNDOURI**, Professor of Economic Theory and Policy at the *Athens University of Economics and Business* (Greece). Prof. Koundouri pointed out how a systemic interdisciplinary approach is essential to efficiently and effectively support the transition from a linear to a circular economy, and that this transition should take into account all related dimensions, from climate neutrality to adaptation and mitigation, from sustainable economic growth to clean tech leadership and social inclusion). She also underlined the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in innovation and technology, also in support to smart specialisation strategies (S3) and regional innovation programmes.

By referring to the [European Landscape Convention](#), Mr. **Giovanni DI STASI**, *Former President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities at the Council of Europe*, explained how the sustainable and circular use of natural resources can greatly contribute to a higher effectiveness of the measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes. To this end, local and regional authorities could capitalise on participatory processes already in place (e.g. [Community-Led Local Development](#)) and hence on the active involvement of stakeholders, including young people as key actors in boosting the necessary innovations.



The following session focused on the challenges specific to Western Balkans and on the experiences of Italian policy makers in managing the transition to a circular economy model. It also tackled how Western Balkan non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are engaging with EU policy in this particular field. The session was aimed at providing stakeholders an occasion to network and discuss the role of evidence-based policy co-creation as well as participatory processes.

The session was opened by Ms. **Mila Ocalir KRIVOKAPIC**, *Western Balkans developer at the EIT Climate-KIC RIS*, who presented the [Cross-KIC on Circular Economy](#), an initiative of the European Institute of Technology (EIT) aimed at increasing the uptake of circular economy principles in the Western Balkans by enhancing local actors' capacities and fostering knowledge-sharing. The EIT Climate-KIC carried out a system and policy mapping of current Western Balkan ecosystems, together with local partners, to have a clear picture of what these ecosystems look like and where, how and who is involved in value chains. Based on the results, evidence-based policy co-design for circular economy was structured and will act as stakeholders' engagement plan to facilitate a sustained process of implementation actions in the region.

The Italian national and regional experiences were taken to the floor by two following speakers. Ms. **Cecilia CELLAI**, *Director of Sustainable Development Sector at Tecnostruttura delle Regioni per il FSE* (Technical Assistant to Italian Regions for the European Social Fund) illustrated how Tecnostruttura coordinates the Italian regions in monitoring the progress towards a circular economy through training, skills development and job creation under the European Social Fund. Ms. Cellai presented several strategic documents that will lead structural reforms and related investments in Italy in the next few years, as integrated in the 2021-2027 programming period. After her, Ms. **Elena SICO**, *Director of the Agriculture Department at Abruzzo Region*, provided an overview of regional policies as linked to the [National Strategic Framework for a Circular Economy](#). As part of the regional rural development strategy, the Abruzzo region has undertaken participatory processes involving in particular Local Action Groups (LAGs) and aimed at co-designing renewable energy and agroforestry biomass production policies. By participating in the INTERREG Europe [BIO4ECO](#) project, the region delivered an Action Plan consisting of financial measures in support of the bioenergy sector, a better organisation of the wood energy supply chains and an information campaign addressed to citizens and stakeholders.

The session was then enriched by the participation of two NGOs, the *Association "Shkoder Lake"* (Albania) as represented by its Deputy President, Prof. **Vito Antonio STIGLIANI**, and [Eko-svest](#) Center for Environmental Research and Information (North Macedonia), as represented by Ms. **Nevena SMILEVSKA**, Project Coordinator. Prof. Stigliani explained the goals and objectives of the association that revolve around the



creation of a cross-border Biodistrict in the Shkoder Lake area and the related participatory planning process that involve public authorities in Kotor and Shkoder, universities and companies across the Albanian-Montenegrin border. Prof. Stigliani explained the steps that took to the constitution of the association, which was formally endorsed in November 2019 when its promoters signed the “Declaration of Campobasso” as a result of their participation in the [AI-NURECC seminar](#) on multilevel governance, EU policies and local development. From 2019, many institutional meetings have taken place, leading to the elaboration of the bylaws of the association. Notwithstanding the many drivers for the creation of a Biodistrict, implying considerations of its environmental, socio-economic and political advantages, the role of policy-makers is still critical to remove regulatory, bureaucratic and structural barriers.

Ms. Smilevska presented her association, established in 2002 in Skopje with the aim to research and act towards the improvement of environmental protection policies, in partnership with public institutions. The association has implemented over 40 projects in North Macedonia and in the Western Balkan region, working intensively towards raising civic awareness through informative campaigns and the promotion of wide public consultations with civil society organisations. Following the Sofia Summit of 10 November 2020, Western Balkans are revising the legal framework to absorb the Green Agenda as promoted by the EU, mainly with reference to waste management. As Ms. Smilevska pointed out, however, it is still unclear how circular economy will be tackled.

The session was closed by Mr. **William NEALE**, *Adviser on Circular Economy at DG Environment* (European Commission), who presented the [second Circular Economy Action Plan](#). Mr. Neale illustrated how the new [Sustainable Products Initiative](#) that will be adopted by the European Commission early next year will revolve on a new legislative approach based on economic incentives. The new directive will expand the eco-design directive (focusing on the energy sector) to all sorts of sectors (textiles, furniture, electrics, food etc.), will revise the consumer law to include legislative proposals on green claims and greenwashing, and will tackle information transparency through the introduction of a digital product passport obligation, implying scannable identifiers and data requirements.

These and other topics were food of thoughts for the preparations of the next AI-NURECC PLUS High-Level Conference on Circular Economy that the Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will be organising next year. As Mr. Neale pointed out, circular economy started to be defined as an EU policy area only 10 years ago. The transition to a circular and carbon-neutral economy is very much linked to the governance capacities of policy-makers and their effectiveness in updating regulation, allocate funds efficiently and develop information systems. It will be very interesting to follow the progress of these steps as well as to monitor how Adriatic Ionian countries will be managing the change also by means of cross-border cooperation.

Report on the second Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisation Forum

ADRIATIC IONIAN Youth Organisations FORUM²

powered by
the Adriatic Ionian Youth
Organisations Community



Based on the results of its [first edition](#), the **AIYOF2** was organised into two sessions. Based on the AI-NURECC PLUS goal of establishing a dialogue with macroregional stakeholders, the first session gathered the main EUSAIR youth-focusing organisations as well as EUSDR representatives. The session focused on the role of youth in territorial cooperation and in macroregional decision-making. Participating organisations illustrated the opportunities available to young people as well. A "Networking and debate" session saw the active contribution of youth organisations from Sweden, Albania, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Their representatives actively discussed the topic of circular economy as linked to the role of young people in supporting the uptake of its principles across the region. The event was moderated by Ms. **Maria Luisa ESPOSITO**, EU Project Officer at the Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion.

The first session of the **AIYOF2** was opened by **Ms. Astrid AULNETTE**, *Information and Communication Officer at DG REGIO* (European Commission), who presented the many EU initiatives that support youth involvement in macroregional strategies and Interreg programmes. She presented in particular the background, implementation activities and results of the actions that brought to the elaboration of the [Manifesto for Young People by Young People to Shape the European Cooperation Policy](#). Moreover, she illustrated the many initiatives that will be organised in 2022, under the Commission's coordination, as part of the [European Year of Youth](#). These will include Tirana European Youth Capital, Youth4Regions, Youth4Coop Summit, to name a few.

Ms. **Maja HANDJISKA-TRENDAFILOVA**, *Head of Programme Department at the Regional Cooperation Council – RCC* (Bosnia Herzegovina) presented the [WB Youth Lab Project](#), a EU-funded three-years project that was kicked-off in January 2020 with the goal of creating a longer-term structured dialogue between youth organisations and national administrations, and jointly devising youth-centred policy planning, development and implementation. To this end, the project has been developing a co-creation process called *Youth Policy Lab Methodology* allowing Western Balkan youth to work together with decision-makers to issues such as employment, entrepreneurship, education etc.

The session was enriched by the participation of by **Ms. Claudia SINGER**, *Coordinator of EUSDR PA10 Institutional Capacity and Cooperation*, who presented how the 14 Danube countries have been promoting youth cooperation and engagement of youth as a strategic objective for the sustainable development of the Danube region. Ms. Singer presented the [Guidance Paper for Youth Participation](#), and the several youth



participation initiatives, including the Danube Youth Platform for Education, the Youth Participation Days, the Integration of Youth Organisations in the Strategy's Working Groups and networks, the Danube Youth Council and the Danube Youth Network and, last but not least, the recently held [Youth.DanubeSalon](#).



The salience of youth participation in decision-making processes was stressed by **Mr. Kreshnik LOKA**, *Head of Local Branch at the Regional Youth Cooperation Office – RYCO* (Albania). Mr. Loka presented RYCO's model of youth participation, which could be positively replicated by all main stakeholders working with youth, EUSAIR included. In order to meaningfully engage young people in its activities, the organisation has in fact included youth representatives in its Governing Board. Mr. Loka also shared three main RYCO programmes providing mobility, volunteering and entrepreneurship opportunities for Western Balkan youth: the Regional Exchange Scheme for High Schools ([Superschools](#)), the Regional Cross Border Volunteer Program ([ROUTE WB6](#)), and the Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurship ([RISE WB6](#)).

Mr. **Martín GUILLERMO-RAMÍREZ**, *Secretary General of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)* provided an overview of the Youth Volunteer Initiative ([IVY](#)), a pilot initiative promoted by the DG REGIO in the framework of the European Solidarity Corps and managed by AEBR. Since 2017, IVY offers financial support to young people (18 and 30 years old) to volunteer in cross-border, transnational or interregional Programmes (Interreg, IPA-CBC and ENI-CBC) and related projects. Through the IVY, young people really get to expand their knowledge and skills and to experience territorial cooperation. The IVY initiative is particularly interesting for Adriatic Ionian youth, as IPA countries are eligible.

Ms. **Aspasjana KERXHALLI**, *Representative of the Tirana Municipality*, and Ms. **Dafina PEÇI**, *Director of National Youth Congress (NYC) and Tirana EYC 2022 Lead Organization* (Albania) presented the Activ∞ (Activate) programme that is going to be officially launched next January 2022. The presentations were an occasion to shed light on how the EU supports cities in rethinking youth involvement aimed at shaping the social, economic, political and cultural life of their local community. The Activ∞ Youth programme will include thousands of events and by participating Albanian youth will have the chance of discussing pivotal issues such as the environment and health, to create an innovative economy and to embrace European values as well. The programme will be a unique occasion to increase youth trans-national exchanges in Tirana as well, as funds to youth projects, including cross-border ones, will be provided through open calls. Tirana will be the best context to organise the [AIYOF3](#), which will revolve around the topic of Creative and Cultural Industries and will take place in May 2022, back-to-back with the 7th EUSAIR Annual Forum under the Albanian Presidency.

In the second half of the Forum a "Networking and Debate Session" took place, moderated by Mr. **Alfredo MARINI**, *President of Giovani Federalisti Europei Termoli* (Italy), and Mr. **Milan STOJANOVIC**, *Regional Representative at the Western Balkan Alumni Association – WBAA* (Serbia) and ambassador of UN Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development. Both Mr. Marini and Mr. Stojanovic are actively engaged in the [Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Network \(AIYON\)](#) that the AIE is building since the beginning of the AI-NURECC Initiative. Mr. Marini was IVY Volunteer and is now junior Project Assistant at the AIE Secretariat, while Mr.

Stojanovic was hosted in the first AIYOF and since then has been involved as speaker in AIE's youth-related events.

The young people who participated in the discussion panel represented a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and a varied knowledge base, and were invited as representative of Adriatic Ionian youth organisations of different type, size and scope. University students, young professionals, young officials and representatives attended the event as well. The panellists were:

- **Gilda Hoxha** – [Sweden Alumni Network Western Balkans](#) (AL)
- **Jolta Kacani** – [Balance Center](#) (AL)
- **Stavros Papatzelos** – [Tinaslab](#) and [Kidoplanet](#) (EL)
- **Milena Pallotta** – Giovanichimere (IT)
- **Bojana Lalatovic** – RYCO and Young European Ambassador (ME)
- **Katika Nisavik** – [Forum MNE](#) (ME)
- **Tea Babic** and **Milo Popovic** – [NVO Glas](#) (ME)
- **Luka Tomkovic** – [Student Business Center](#) (ME)
- **Bojan Vojnov** – [Srbija moj dom](#) and Teaching Assistant at the University of Novi Sad (RS)



The discussion panel was an occasion to raise young participants' awareness about the **EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR)** as a context for a greater and more structured youth participation, as well as about the importance of circular economy for their future in the Adriatic Ionian region. Young people are the pioneers and catalysts of a circular economy and can be protagonists of the related changes in the way businesses, services and society are steered. Such changes can greatly improve their career prospects, while providing them the opportunity to impact on their communities, especially in the post-pandemic world.

After explaining how their organisation's missions and priorities adhere to the circular economy principles, young participants explored the actions that can be undertaken to meaningfully contribute to a viable common innovative and sustainable future. As a conclusion, they pointed out how *creativity, education, innovation, information and campaigning, cooperation* and *networking* can be key to this process.

The discussion panel ended with a *live poll* aimed at collecting feedback and identify possible options for a greater engagement of young participants. Half of respondents said they would like to be involved in youth cooperation projects in order to co-create future actions, 30% opted for having direct access to funds, 10% said they would participate in training courses about the EUSAIR, its objectives and Action Plan, and 10% opted for being involved in engagement actions.

Results confirmed a wide interest in our proposal and will shape future actions.

Everyone was invited to join the [Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisation Network \(AIYON\)](#) through which the AI-NURECC PLUS and the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will keep track of all and will continue supporting young people in connecting across the region and engaging in decision-making processes. The network is open to all young people and youth organisations of the 9 [EUSAIR participating countries](#), who can submit their expression for interest by filling this [form](#).

As a conclusion of the [AIYOF3](#) Mr. **Stavros KALOGNOMOS**, *Executive Secretary of the Balkan & Black Sea Commission (CRPM)*, wrapped up the event, welcoming the active participation of youth organisations and underling once again the intention of the AI-NURECC PLUS to support the scaling up of their involvement at the macroregional level while providing cooperation opportunities to all interested parties. Forthcoming AI-NURECC PLUS actions will concentrate on three topics: *Circular Economy to Sustainable Tourism* as well as *Cultural and Creative Industries*.

Speaking of forthcoming opportunities, Ms. **Silvia MANGIALARDO**, *Head of International Relations Office Marche Polytechnic University (UniAdrion)* provided information about two initiatives that UniAdrion will be launching shortly: the *Summer School on Sustainable Tourism in the Adriatic Ionian Region* and the *Internship Fund supporting youth*. The Summer School will take place in Ancona (Italy) in September 2022 and will last two weeks, based on a selection that will be launched in May 2022. It will train up to 30 young people and young officers from the 9 EUSAIR countries to better understand the touristic potential of the Adriatic Ionian region and to develop alternative forms of tourism, including solutions to face big crises such as the one deriving from the Covid19 pandemic. The Internship Fund will be implemented by means of three separate calls addressed to young people who will receive financial support for being hosted by innovative and creative enterprises based in the EUSAIR countries, for up to 6 months. The goal of the Fund will be to encourage the creation of CCI start-ups in the fields of cultural heritage and stimulate private-public partnerships.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, there is a grid of participants and a logo for the 'BALKAN & BLACK SEA COMMISSION'. The main part of the slide is a presentation slide with the following content:

AI-NURECC PLUS
ADRIATIC IONIAN NETWORK OF UNIVERSITIES, RESEARCH CENTRES OF ACADEMY AND OTHER INSTITUTES

Summer School on Sustainable Tourism, Italy

The School will take place in Ancona (Italy) in September 2022

The Summer school on Sustainable Tourism in the Adriatic-Ionian Region will train young people and officers on the topic of sustainable tourism with the following **objectives**:

- helping them to **better understand the potential of the region** from a touristic point of view
- developing **new ideas for alternative forms of tourism** aimed at better exploiting the potential of the region
- training them on **possible solutions to overcome big crises**, like the unprecedented one caused by the Covid-19 pandemic

The School will close with the **Conference on Sustainable tourism** where the students' achievements will be shared with stakeholders and participants

@AI-NURECC-PLUS

The action AI-NURECC PLUS has received funding from the European Union