



Youth4Cohesion

Webinar on “A more connected EU”

6 December 2021

Working language: English

REPORT

The fourth Y4C webinar on a “more Connected EU” was held on 6 December from 16:45 to 18:30. The event explored connectivity as a strategic resource for the sustainable economic growth of the EUSAIR area. A macroregional perspective was given by illustrating how the EUSAIR is supporting energy connectivity through Pillar 2 “Connecting the Region”. Also, an overview of the Connectivity Agenda for Western Balkans was provided, especially with reference to an extended access to TEN-Ts and core networks, as an update of EU is promoting extended access of Western Balkan countries in the European transport networks. Implementation of EU policies at territorial level was covered by tackling the topic of sustainable coastal infrastructures in the Adriatic Ionian Region through the Italian experience with the promotion of an Adriatic Ionian cycle route as part of an EUSAIR Flagship and how the Friuli Venezia Giulia is working to embed this action in ESIF programming documents. Regional experiences with sustainable connectivity were also addressed as a challenge and a socio-economic driver for maritime and inland tourism in Italy and Albania, as explained by regional private and public stakeholders.

The event was attended by European coordinators, projects managers and young people representing youth organisations in 10 countries of the Adriatic Ionian area, pre-selected through an open Call for Expression of Interest.

[16:45-17:00 Registration of participants](#)

[17:00-17:50 Promoting a more sustainable and innovative connectivity in the Adriatic Ionian region](#)

Introduction by Ms Maria Luisa Esposito, EU Project Officer, Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion

The first session of the event presented the topic of promoting a more sustainable and innovative connectivity in the Adriatic Ionian region. Connectivity in the Western Balkan region through the extension of EU networks was also covered by the main regional stakeholder.

- *Connectivity in the Adriatic Ionian area. How the EUSAIR is helping territories in developing interconnected, sustainable and integrated mobility, Mr. Sergio GARRIBBA, Italian Ministry of Economic Development, Coordinator of EUSAIR Pillar 2 “Connecting the Region”*

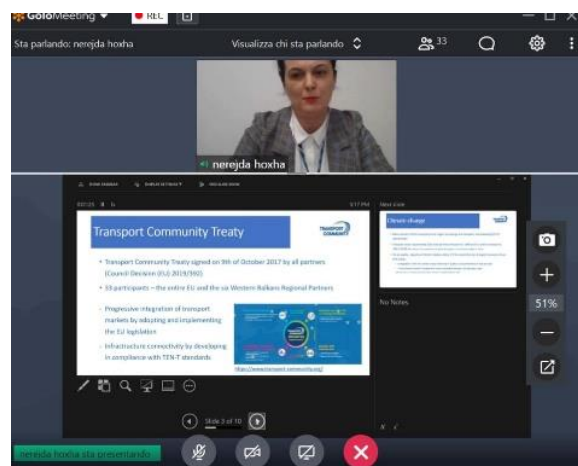
Professor Garribba presented the role of connectivity in the Adriatic Ionian area and how the EUSAIR is helping territories in developing cross-border co-operation in the transport and energy sectors. Mr. Garribba explained what the core macro-regional and European transport and energy axes are, in the framework of the Trans-European Networks for transport (TEN-T) and energy (TEN-E). Professor Garribba highlighted how transnational

cooperation can help in overcoming the bottlenecks deriving from fragmented transport and energy markets as well as in promoting an integrated connectivity that is meant to contribute to security of energy supply, economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability in the region. Energy efficiency, electrification by using renewable energies, innovation (low-carbon fuels and hydrogen), as part of the European Green Deal, are the main solutions to drive the decarbonization process forward in Europe and in the Adriatic Ionian area.



- *Towards a more sustainable connectivity in the Western Balkan region through the extension of EU networks, Ms. Nerejda HOXHA, Coordinator - Road Infrastructure and Policy, Transport Community*

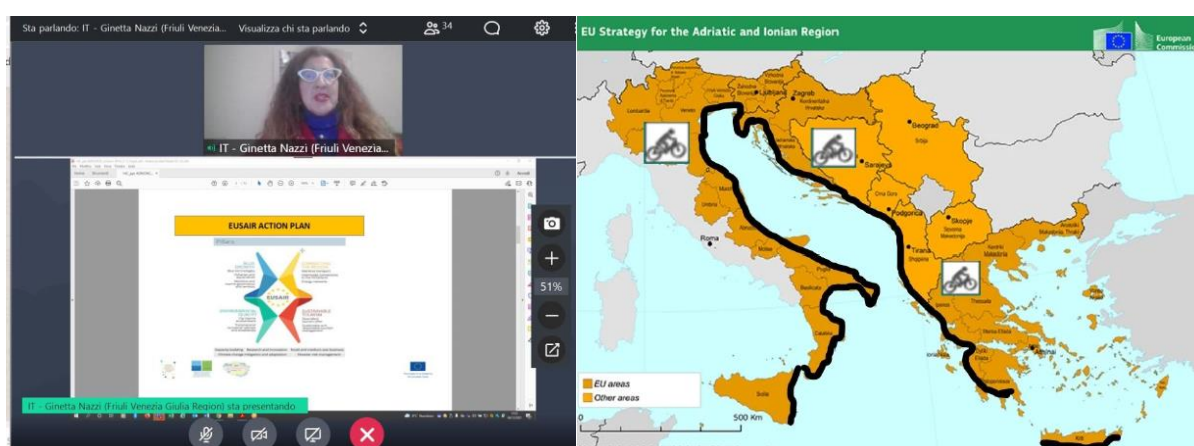
Ms. Hoxha presented the [Transport Community Treaty](#) that, signed on 2017, involves 33 participants (EU Member States and 6 Western Balkan countries). The Treaty was ... and entails a progressive integration of transport markets by adopting and implementing the EU legislation and the promotion of infrastructure connectivity in the Western Balkans by developing in compliance with TEN-T standards. The idea is to make transports in the Western Balkans cleaner, safer, smarter, greener, resilient, competitive, and sustainable. Ms. Hoxha also illustrated the steps that took to the *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in the Western Balkans* in 2021, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) deriving from the transport sector in Western Balkan region. To this end, the Secretariat of the Transport Community works towards adjusting goals, milestones, and actions of the EU to the realities in the Western Balkans region, while providing the region with a roadmap for decarbonisation and digitalisation of its transport sector.



- *Improving mobility in the Adriatic Ionian area through sustainable infrastructures. The Adriatic-Ionian Cycle Route, Ms. Ginetta NAZZI, International relations and European programming service, Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (IT)*

Ms. Nazzi illustrated how the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region is improving mobility in the Adriatic Ionian area through sustainable infrastructures, as part of the [EUSAIR Adriatic-Ionian multi-modal corridors Flagship](#), which addresses the challenge/need of macro-regional relevance to develop an interconnected and integrated transportation system in the Adriatic-Ionian region. Ms. Nazzi presented the [Adriatic-Ionian Cycle Route](#), a cycling route running along the coast of the entire Adriatic and Ionian basin from Italy (all the involved Regions) to Greece and across the EUSAIR concerned coastal countries (coastal network). The route also includes cycle connections to the hinterland areas of the nine EUSAIR countries (inland network).

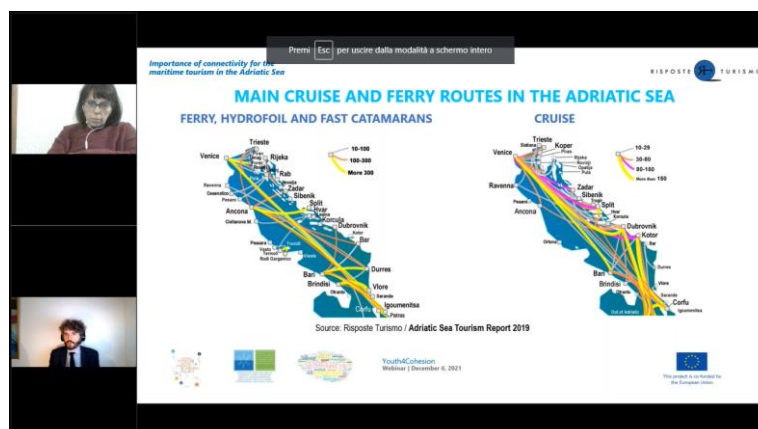
Ms. Nazzi explained that the Friuli Venezia Giulia is addressing the challenge of embedding the implementation of the flagship into the 2021-2027 IPA/ESIF programming documents.



17:50-18:20 Connectivity and maritime and inland tourism

- *The importance of connectivity for maritime tourism in the Adriatic area, Mr. Anthony LA SALANDRA, Director of Risposte Turismo (IT)*

The second part of the webinar focused on Sustainable connectivity as a socio-economic driver for maritime tourism and development of tourism destinations, in both maritime and inland areas. Mr. La Salandra explained current challenges and opportunities for maritime and coastal tourism in the Adriatic area and how connectivity is implied as well as the many players involved. Mr. La Salandra also made reference to the INTERREG Italy-Croatia [FRAMESPORT](#) project, aimed at turning small ports into proactive drivers of socio-economic development of coastal and hinterland areas, while improving the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes, through multimodality.



- *Management of the coastal area and the sea. A challenge to sustainable tourism in Lezha Region, Port of Shengjin, Ms Linda MAÇI, Director Program Development, Investment & Foreign Relations Department at Regional Council of Lezha (AL)*

The management of coastal areas and the sea as a challenge and crucial asset in the protection and development of sustainable tourism in Lezha Region and as linked to the Port of Shengjin was illustrated by Ms. Maçi, who underlined that investing in connectivity implies to tackle many technological, safety, security, environmental challenges. Efficient and sustainable transport connections would create attractiveness, both for direct investments and for tourism, hence jobs and prosperity. Better use of intermodal transport would also reduce the costs of delivering goods in the region of Lezha and in Albania as well. Being at the intersection with EU corridors and participating in IPA projects. will help speed up this process.



- **Live Poll**

After the two sessions, a live poll was launched to collect participants opinions through the following questions:

- 1) Do you have any knowledge of EU-funded infrastructures around your area?
- 2) What does connectivity mean to you?
- 3) How do you think infrastructures and mobility can be more sustainable and accessible?

Young people resulted scarcely informed about EU-funded infrastructures, except for the Austria Alpe Adria Cycle Route.

When asked what connectivity means to them, replies were a bit more informative, as respondents highlighted the link between infrastructure and communication and how these two are crucial to everyone's life and work. Connectivity was also seen as fundamental in creating linkages between development drivers and actors as well as for devising sustainable development strategies. Some respondent also mentioned the freedom of movement and the Schengen treaty.

As far as sustainability of connectivity, respondents agreed on the need to include young people in decision-making processes and in cooperation in this filed at a macroregional level.