

Friday 27th February 2026 – 9:00 / 16:30

Marconi room,
towards the Central Adriatic Sea Port Authority, **Ancona Italy**

Ports at the core of a Adriatic-Ionian Region: cooperation and competitiveness towards the sustainable transition

One-day event to deepen the themes of sustainable transition and financial viability of ports, including port operations, and to launch a constructive dialogue for a common path among stakeholders.

The **Marche Region**, in cooperation with the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (**EUSAIR**), is organizing a working day in Ancona, at the Central Adriatic Sea Port Authority, aimed at **exploring and enhancing the central role of cooperation among ports in the energy transition** of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region.

The event is structured around **two distinct moments of in depth analysis**, thus evaluating some of the main challenges that stakeholders in the transport system are called upon to address in the context of an increasingly stringent transition toward sustainable development models:

- during the **morning session**, with the participation of representatives of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), **the implications arising from the recognition of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area (ECA)** will be examined;
- the **afternoon session** will instead focus on the **role of ports as strategic hubs supporting the energy transition**, from the perspective of representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The event is not intended as a standalone initiative, but rather as **the starting point of a structured dialogue** with representatives of ports and sector operators, aimed at **defining a common strategy** capable of reconciling environmental sustainability, economic competitiveness, and the efficiency of the transport system, while strengthening the role of the macro-region as a key driver for the entire Mediterranean basin.

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9:30 – 13:30 (Session I)

For a more sustainable Adriatic Sea: collaboration between ports and concrete actions

Starting in May 2025, the **Mediterranean Sea** has been officially designated as an “**Emission Control Area – ECA,**” with specific reference to and focus on the concentration and emission of sulfur oxides (SOx), which represent one of the main causes of water acidification and largely derive from emissions produced by fuels used in maritime transport. This decision, mandated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in application of the MARPOL Convention, requires the use of fuels with a limited sulfur content (i.e., not exceeding 0.10% by weight) or, alternatively, the adoption of equivalent technologies capable of reducing such emissions.

This **represents a demanding yet essential step for one of the busiest maritime basins in the world**, aimed at delivering significant environmental benefits, particularly in coastal and port areas, by reducing air pollution and the social costs associated with public health.

However, a new constraint **entails significant operational and economic implications for the transport system**: fleet adaptation, increased fuel costs, investments in technologies such as shore-side electricity (cold ironing) at berth, scrubbers on ships, the use of LNG or alternative fuels in general, and—consequently—the need to ensure the availability (and accessibility) of such technologies and fuels in ports.

In this context, there is a risk that the constraint may be perceived solely as a cost rather than as **a lever for innovation and modernization of the entire system**. For this reason, **the key** to transforming the imposition of the ECA into an opportunity most likely **lies in comprehensive dialogue and collaboration among local stakeholders**, including port authorities, shipowners, logistics operators, energy suppliers, local and national institutions, the research community, and local communities. Indeed, only through **a shared vision** is it possible to coordinate the necessary investments, promote economies of scale, develop adequate infrastructure, encourage intermodality, and **accelerate the transition toward more efficient and sustainable technological solutions**.

The event, which **represents an initial step in launching this dialogue**, aims to create a **concrete forum for discussion** among the involved stakeholders to analyze the implications of the ECA within the Adriatic–Ionian macro-region and **to build**—during Italy’s presidency of EUSAIR— **a common strategy** capable of reconciling environmental sustainability, economic competitiveness, and the efficiency of the transport system, while strengthening the role of this area as a strategic and innovative logistics corridor that can serve as a driver and example for the entire Mediterranean.

The **ultimate objective** of this dialogue will be to reach a **voluntary agreement**—whose content will result from this discussion—that system stakeholders may sign **as evidence of their joint commitment to supporting this transition**.

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Agenda

Language: English (simultaneous translation IT/EN provided)

- 09:00 *Participants registration and welcome coffee*
Moderates **Marco Ansaldo**, geopolitical analyst, President of maritime museum of Genova
- 09:30 *Welcome and institutional greetings*
Vincenzo Garofalo, President of the Central Adriatic Sea Port Authority
Vincenzo Vitale, Admiral Inspector (CP), Maritime Director of Marche region
Giacomo Bugaro, Concillor at Regione Marche with delegation to ports
Daniele Silvetti, Major of the city of Ancona
Gino Sabatini, President of the Chamber of Commerce of Marche Region
Michele Palma, Advisor of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers
Pierluigi Coppola, EUSAIR Pillar II Coordinator – Transport
Carlo Ciccioli, MEP, Member of Transport Commission of the EP
Giovanni Castellaneta, General Secretary of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
- 10:00 *Overview on the environmental regulations affecting the maritime sector in The Mediterranean*
ECA in the MED area: regulatory framework and rationale
Giuseppe Spera, Vice permanent representative towards IMO, IOPC FUNDS and IMSO.
Experiences of ECA framework in Baltic and North Sea region
Anita Mäkinen, Adjunct Professor, Chair for the IMO PPR subcommittee
Dick Brus, Advisor to IUCN the Netherlands
- 10:45 *Implementing regulations in a complex environment: the point of view of central authorities*
Jana Boric, Representative of Ministry of Croatia
Ivan Sammut, Head of office REMPEC
- 11:15 *High-level Roundtable: perspectives from stakeholders in building a shared path together.*
Moderates **Andrea Ballarin**, consultant of Regione Marche
Vincenzo Vitale, Admiral Inspector (CP), Maritime Director of Marche region
Fulvio Lino Di Blasio, Senior Advisor: Public Transport Infrastructure & Port Strategy, Renewable energies
Stefano Carbonara, Responsabile Eni Distretto Centro Settentrionale
Anna Lekka, COO WMG Sustainable innovation
Alberto Rossi, General Secretary Assoarmatori
Edoardo D'Andrea, Transport policy, Confitarma
- 12:30 *Wrap-up for a common solution: next steps for a new cooperation protocol for the Adriatic-Ionian Area*
Sergio Garribba, EUSAIR Pillar II Coordinator - Energy
- 12:45 *Conclusion*
Francesco Acquaroli, President of Marche Region
- *Light lunch*



14:00 – 16:30 (Session II)

Commercial ports as development hubs: between geopolitics, logistics, and the green transition

Within the framework of the new global challenges related to supply chain security, sustainable transition, and geopolitical competition for control of maritime routes, **commercial ports are emerging as strategic hubs for economic development, innovation, and international cooperation.**

From Trieste to Tangier, from Piraeus to Gioia Tauro, **free ports are reshaping trade routes and the geopolitical balance in the Mediterranean.** Italy, thanks to its strategic location and the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion Strategy (EUSAIR), has the opportunity to redefine its role as a logistical bridge between Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. **The Adriatic-Ionian region, with its medium- and large-sized ports, today represents a natural laboratory for rethinking the role of maritime infrastructure.**

The event **aims to foster interdisciplinary and political-strategic dialogue** between academics, experts, and decision-makers to **define a shared vision for the future of Italian and Mediterranean commercial ports**, leveraging experiences, best practices, and opportunities for public-private cooperation. The event's main objectives include:

- Analyse the **role of commercial ports** as drivers of economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability.
- **Promote the exchange between academic approaches**, strategic vision, and European transport and logistics policy.
- Explore the **opportunities offered by European funds 2021–2027.**
- Discuss the **geopolitical and industrial dimension of the Italian port system** in the Mediterranean and Adriatic context.

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Moderates

Marco Ansaldo, geopolitical analyst, President of maritime museum of Genova

14:00

Introduction

- On. **Carlo Ciccio**li, MEP, Member of Transport Commission of the EP

Speeches, 1st round

- Prof. **Francesco Cetta**, Professor of Medicine at Siena University, IASSP
- Prof. **Ivan Rizzi**, President IASSP
- Prof. **Francesco Corvaro**, Special Envoy for Climate Change of the Italian Government
- Dott. **Diego Gavagnin**, Senior advisor WSense SRL
- Prof. **Donato Iacobucci** Professor of applied economics UNIVPM
- Dott. **Gino Sabatini**, President of Marche Chamber of Commerce

Speeches, 2nd round

- Dott. **Pier Paolo Settembri**, Deputy head of cabinet of the European Commissioner for Transport
- Sen. **Simona Petrucci**, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Group for the Economy of the Sea
- Dott. **Vincenzo Garofalo**, President of the Central Adriatic Sea Port Authority
- Dott. **Roberto Petri**, President of ASSOPORTI
- Dott. **Umberto Trenta**, former EUSAIR consultant for Marche Region

16:30

*Delivery ceremony of a plaque in memory of Dr. **Marco Bellardi**, Director of Community Policies for the Marche Region and Senior Advisor to IAI, "Father of the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion"*

