

**Priorities for the Sustainability of Maritime  
and Coastal Passenger Transport in Europe**

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## Preface

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Central European Initiative

The Central European Initiative (CEI) is the oldest and largest inter-governmental regional forum in Central Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. It was founded in 1989 – the day after the fall of the Berlin wall – by four countries (Italy, Austria, Hungary and former Yugoslavia) and now counts 17 Member States.<sup>1</sup> It aims at promoting European integration and sustainable growth in various areas through its strong support to regional cooperation as its main development tool.

Among the numerous CEI areas of intervention, particular attention has always been paid to strengthening the transport networks. By guaranteeing a better mobility of persons and goods in the CEI areas we not only contribute to promoting integration among peoples but also to supporting and stimulating economic and social development.

The CEI-Executive Secretariat implements its mission by using various tools, including – since 2004 – projects co-financed by the European Territorial Cooperation policies.

The strategic project Interreg Italy-Croatia MIMOSA (Maritime and Multimodal Sustainable Passenger transport solutions and services), founded on a solid partnership composed of regional adminis-

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Belarus (suspended as of March 2022), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine.

trations responsible for planning passenger transport services, port authorities, public transport operators, universities and research institutes, agencies, local and national authorities, aims to tackle four challenges: understanding the complex dynamics of passenger transport demand between Italy and Croatia, characterised by a strong prevalence of private mobility; identifying the bottlenecks that limit the development of multimodal solutions for passenger transport; promoting innovative sustainable mobility services and solutions; improving cross-border cooperation on passenger mobility issues, supporting the strengthening of institutional dialogue between the stakeholders of the area with positive impacts on the Adriatic-Ionian area.

The strong prevalence of private mobility in the area is not only due to the limited offer of alternative and efficient transport services but also a consequence of citizens behaviour that has to be better understood, working on raising awareness among users regarding the impact of mobility choices. This is combined with the commitment of project partners to promote new transport services and, more generally, better accessibility to sustainable mobility solutions in the cross-border area such as the smart card realised by the Istrian Development Agency, which guarantees - with a single ticket - full access to public transport and various other sustainable mobility services in the Region; the realisation of a bike centre in the Dubrovnik Neretva County dedicated to cycle tourists; the installation of multimedia info points and other facilities for comfort and information for passengers in the ports of Sibenik and Ancona, as well as the activation of new bike sharing services in the municipalities of Cervia and Rovinj.

However, the analysis of the dynamics of cross-border mobility could not but involve the analysis and promotion of maritime and coastal passenger transport, including the development of improved maritime connections between Italy and Croatia.

In this context, MIMOSA has effectively contributed to the improvement of present and future connectivity between Italy and Croatia. This, thanks to the launch - by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region - of the experimental public transport maritime summer service Lignano-Grado, which is interconnected with the sea lines activated towards Trieste and the Istrian coasts. It guarantees the availability of more sustainable transport solutions, with positive impacts on the environment in terms of emission reduction.

And with regard to the issue of emission reduction and mitigation of the environmental impacts of passenger transport, two further initiatives which have been developed as part of the MIMOSA Project deserve mentioning: the analysis of carbon footprint of the various transport solutions on specific cross-border routes, where the strong competitiveness of maritime connections has clearly emerged, and the feasibility study for a new maritime connection between the Abruzzo region and Croatia, with LNG-powered ferries.

The set of initiatives carried out within the MIMOSA Project and the results achieved represent an important knowledge heritage, available for stakeholders in the area to continue promoting sustainable and innovative multimodal and maritime transport solutions, supporting on the one hand, the reduction of the use of private vehicles, on the other, a lower environmental impact of passenger transport services.

The wide cooperation network activated within the project will, therefore, be able to generate positive effects in the coming years, guaranteeing not only the continuation of the launched initiatives but also the capitalisation of the results and their possible integration within the sectoral policies at a regional, national and cross-border level. This would also guarantee long-lasting improvements and a positive impact in the European integration process.

