

## The Nicosia Initiative in Friuli Venezia Giulia

*The experience of Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region with the Nicosia initiative, the mechanism created by the European Committee of the Regions to help cities in Libya.*



### Introduction

Since 2015, the European Committee of the Regions has developed a close political and, increasingly, a very concrete relationship with Libyan cities. The relationship has the double aim of helping to improve public services in Libya and of helping Libyan cities to enter the international community. The cooperation is a response to the political turmoil and insecurity that Libya has been experiencing since 2011, which has eroded municipal services in Libya, kept Libyan cities isolated internationally, and transformed the country into a major transit route for irregular migrants.

At the request of Libyan cities, the Committee of the Regions has been mobilising partnerships for Libya's local authorities since January 2016. The CoR is matching the requests of Libyan cities with offers of expertise from EU cities and regions. The purpose is to improve the lives of ordinary Libyans, by helping municipalities provide better services in areas ranging from primary health care to waste management. The initiative is also a contribution – through city diplomacy – to the stabilisation of Libya at a point where political turmoil and insecurity have led to the freezing of cooperation with Libyans.

This is a bottom-up process – known among participants as the 'Nicosia Initiative' – that responds to the needs of one of the EU's closest and most fragile neighbours. The CoR's involvement reflects the assembly's belief that city diplomacy and peer-to-peer diplomacy need to be activated to address

major, long-term international challenges. Moreover this involvement keeps pace with the EU's global strategy and follows the conviction that the EU should think globally and act locally.

### Nicosia initiative in Friuli Venezia Giulia

The Regional Legislative Assembly of Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region adhered - first among the Italian regions - to the Nicosia Initiative in order to take part in a concrete development cooperation initiative, accepting the request of Libyan Mayors, involved in the reconstruction process of their territory with a bottom-up approach, in the belief that local authorities are the subjects that best represent the needs and interests of their territory. Local and regional authorities in fact are able to spread the value of democracy and at the same time promote the sustainable development of local communities.

In the context of the Initiative, the request submitted to the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region concerned training in fishing cooperatives.

The most important aspect of the event is that politicians and technical experts from the cities of Tobruk, Benghazi, Sirte, Tripoli, have come to the region to join a common path in order to:

- kick off a process of stabilization of the country;
- create employment among young Libyans;
- develop trade relations with the European Union;
- secure the coasts.

The idea of creating flourishing productive activities in the Libyan coasts leads to a greater control of the coasts themselves, hopefully preventing migratory flows. Creating employment means always subtracting young people from crime.



Trieste, 13 June 2017. In the images of this page, the conference at the Regional Council headquarters with members of the Libyan delegation.



During the event, which took place from 13th to 15th of June in Trieste at the Regional Legislative Assembly and in the coastal cities of Duino Aurisina, Marano Lagunare and Grado. Meetings were held with representatives of fishing cooperatives and tours of shellfishing and aquaculture farms in the valleys of the Gulf of Trieste were organised.

During the tours an illustration of monitoring activities in the fishing sector was made by the Coast Guard and the Regional Health and Veterinary Authorities. Experts from the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS) and from the regional Agency for environmental protection (ARPA) have illustrated some scientific and legal aspects of the fishing sector.

During the visits to fishing companies, the delegation drew attention to the aspects related to the marketing of fishery products; then they visited the Fish Market of Marano Lagunare where a fish auction took place; later on the Delegation met the representatives of the local Cooperatives and visited the harbour facilities and discussed about harbour operations and dredges.

During the final meeting at the Regional Legislative Assembly, there the legislation on cooperatives was illustrated and an explanation of supporting instruments for fishing cooperatives was given, with particular attention to shipbuilding and harbour facilities. Then there was an exchange of experiences: the Libyan delegation has described the situation of the ports in Libya.

From these meetings, new regional projects will be launched, involving the regional Chambers of Commerce and the Italian-Libyan Chamber of Commerce, both interested in promoting synergies between regional companies and new actors in Libya.

The broader goal is to equip fishing vessels for practical training, to start on-going certification of fishery products, to transfer technologies and know-how, to build first tier maintenance facilities in Libya. These interventions pave the way for public and private investment.

For Friuli Venezia Giulia, in fact, Libya represents an opportunity for development of new trade links not only in the fishing sector, but also in shipbuilding and infrastructure sectors: Considerable interest in the initiative has been demonstrated by regional fishing companies, that are available to start training in fishing sector for young Libyans, hosting the same young people in their own farms and to start training courses on fish processing and labeling processes in accordance with EU standards.

The National Institute of Oceanography and Geophysics Experimental OGS in Trieste also attended at the Initiative, by promoting the new summer school and the new fisheries master, under the 5 + 5 Blue Growth Initiative, to which today Young Libyans participate.

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region intends to follow the initiative by launching new cooperation projects with the involvement of European institutional actors, including the European Commission, ALDA (European Association of

Local Democracy Agencies), Ministerial Authorities, that are interested in developing International relations with Libya.

Friuli Venezia Giulia Region is ready to carry out a permanent technical table for setting up and formalizing a wide-ranging action plan.



San Giorgio di Nogaro and Marano Lagunare, 14 June 2017. Visits to the fishing cooperatives and meeting at the town hall of Marano.



## Participants

Mr. Franco Iacop: President of the Legislative Assembly of Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, coordinator of the Italian Conference of the Regional Legislative Assemblies and member of the European Committee of the Regions

Mr. Gianni Torrenti: Regional Minister of Culture, sport and solidarity

Mr. Paride Cargnelutti: Vice-President of the Legislative Assembly of Friuli Venezia Giulia

Mr. Franco Codega: Regional councilor, President of Committee VI responsible for education, vocational training, Universities, scientific and technological research, youth policies, development cooperation and immigration policies

Mr. Alessio Gratton: Regional councilor, President of Committee II, responsible for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Trade and Markets, Employment, Labor and Cooperation

Mr. Emiliano Edera: Regional councilor, Member of the Bureau of the Legislative Assembly of Friuli Venezia Giulia

Mr. Stefano Sotgia: Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Libya

Mr. Gianfranco Damiano: President of the Italian-Libyan Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Diego Borme: OGS Institute

Mr. Nicola Bettoso: ARPA FVG

Dr. Manlio Palei: Director of Public Veterinary Service, Regional Department of Health and Social Policies

Rear Admiral Pietro Verna: Head, Sea Fisheries Department of the Italian Coast Guard Headquarters

Captain Luca Sancilio: Maritime Director of the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and Harbour Master of Trieste

Mr. Mounir Ghribi: Responsible for international cooperation, OGS Institute

MR. Walter De Walderstein: Coop. CO.GIU.MAR.

Mr. Aurelio Zentilin: Coop. ALMAR.

Mr. Stefano Kutin: Expert ECOSCREEN S.c.a.r.l.

Mr. Fabrizio Regeni: Coop. San Vito

Mr. Antonio Paoletti: President of VG Commerce Chamber

Mr. Pierluigi Medeot: General Director of VG Commerce Chamber

Ms. Patrizia Bison: Udine Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Flavia Verginella: Director Grado Cooperative

Mr. Augusto Viola: General Director of the Regional Legislative Assembly

Ms. Dora Lo Giudice: Legislative area of Regional Legislative Assembly, organizer of the event in FVG

## Libyan delegation

Mr. Najem Faraj: Representative of Benghazi Municipality

Mr. Abdelraouf Beitelmal: Mayor of Tripoli

Mr. Ibrahim Arebi: Member of the Tripoli Local Council

Mr. Abdullah Quwayder: Toubruk expert

Mr. Mohamed Fadel Gubran: Tripoli expert

Mr. Alameen Alzadimah: Fishery Mid Regional Coast Expert

Mr. Hesham Gdara: General Authority for Marine Wealth

Mr. Elhadi Eltorjani: General Authority for Marine Wealth

Mr. Zohirr Abushnaf: Crown Agent

Mr. Fathi Suleman: Adviser to the Council of Sirte

Ms. Benedetto Oddo: Adviser on partnership building UE

## Main institutions and partners involved in the organisation of the meeting

The European Committee of the Regions is a consultative body within the European Union, representing the interests of municipalities and regions. With the Nicosia initiative, the Committee of the Regions aims at strengthening Libyan municipalities through networking, exchange and effective cooperation with their European counterparts. Numerous training sessions were organised for Libyan

municipalities in cooperation with European cities and regions on topics such as water or waste management, financial management or management of health care centres.

The Regional Legislative Assembly of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region co-organises the meeting and plays a key role in providing valuable expertise in fishing sector and in the constitution and support of cooperatives.

The Delegation of the European Union to Libya plays a similar role to an Embassy representing the EU as a whole. The Head of Delegation (Ambassador) is the official representative of the EU in Libya. By engaging with political actors, the media, academics, business circles, civil society and citizens, the EUD promotes a stronger partnership between the EU and Libya. The EUD financially contributes to the organisation of this meeting.

Crown Agents are implementing partners managing the Public Administration Facility II for Libya and accomplishing organisational and logistical tasks related to this meeting.

Venezia Giulia Chamber of Commerce and Udine Chamber of Commerce are implementing commercial links between Italian enterprises and Libyan actors.

## Multimedia



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