

EU: Foti and Tajani Launch the Italian Presidency of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy

The Minister for European Affairs, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and Cohesion Policies, **Tommaso Foti**, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, **Antonio Tajani**, officially launched the Italian Presidency of the **EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)** at the headquarters of Unioncamere in Rome.

The event marked the official start of Italy's Presidency of the Strategy (1 June 2026 – 30 May 2027), with a mandate focused on revitalising regional cooperation, strengthening infrastructure and energy connectivity, developing the blue economy, and supporting the European integration of the Western Balkans. EUSAIR is playing an increasingly central role in light of geopolitical developments and the ongoing EU enlargement process.

This was the key message conveyed by Minister for European Affairs, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and Cohesion Policies, **Tommaso Foti**, who identified the accession of the Western Balkan countries as one of the European Union's strategic priorities. He stressed that countries that have invested significantly in the European integration process over recent years should see their commitment recognised.

Among the issues highlighted were the *right to remain*, climate change, the protection of the rule of law, and demographic challenges.

In conclusion, Minister Foti identified the digital transformation, the energy transition, and the strengthening of transport infrastructure as key strategic factors for the future of the Adriatic-Ionian area, reaffirming its central role in Europe's development and cooperation agenda.

Minister **Antonio Tajani** reaffirmed that the integration of the Western Balkans into the European family remains a priority, recalling the important role of EUSAIR in this process, alongside Italy's engagement in forums such as the **Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII)** and the **Central European Initiative (CEI)**.

He also confirmed his support for projects such as **IMEC**, **Corridor VIII**, **Corridor X**, and the **Trieste–Ljubljana–Zagreb–Belgrade railway line**—key initiatives for diversifying trade routes and integrating energy markets. He further highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation among the Upper Adriatic ports of **Trieste**, **Koper** and **Rijeka**, which remains a priority of the Italian Presidency.

The **EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**, launched by the European Union in 2014, is one of the EU's four macro-regional strategies, alongside those for the Alps, the Danube Region and the Baltic Sea Region. These strategies

promote the coordinated use of EU and national funding and resources to foster sustainable development and stronger cooperation across the regions concerned.

The proceedings, moderated by **Annamaria Esposito**, Deputy Editor-in-Chief for Foreign Affairs at Rai News 24, also featured an intervention by **Raffaele Fitto**, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Cohesion and Reforms, and **Giuseppe Tripoli**, Secretary General of Unioncamere. Contributions were also delivered by the key Italian regions supporting the EUSAIR Strategy—**Friuli Venezia Giulia** and **Marche**—as well as representatives of the participating countries: **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia and Slovenia**.

