

Towards an EUSAIR Mediterranean Diet Innovation Network and Ecosystem

MEDDIET Working Group Meeting – Interactive Policy Workshop

Draft workshop rationale and agenda _ updated 01-10

Date	16 October 2026
Location	Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona - Room B1 (Piazzale Martelli Raffaele, 8)
Format	Interactive policy workshop combining short inspiration talks, lightning pitches and three facilitated World Café rounds, followed by plenary feedback, a networking lunch and an afternoon study visit.

Workshop rationale

The MEDDIET Flagship is a cross-pillar EUSAIR initiative that promotes the Mediterranean Diet not only as a nutritional model, but as an integrated driver of sustainable food systems, health, biodiversity, cultural heritage, tourism, innovation and territorial development. The Working Group Meeting will support the transition from this shared strategic vision towards more operational forms of cooperation across the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

In particular, the meeting will explore **the potential development of a macro-regional Mediterranean Diet Innovation Network and Ecosystem**. The meeting builds on the EUSAIR-S3 workshop held in Izola in September 2026, where the EUSAIR operating logic for innovation cooperation was introduced and tested. The Ancona workshop takes the next step by applying this approach to a specific cross-pillar field – the Mediterranean Diet – and exploring how macro-regional priorities and regional Smart Specialisation capabilities can be translated into concrete opportunities for innovation cooperation.

The workshop will use the Mediterranean Diet as a practical **opportunity space** in which to identify thematic relatedness between EUSAIR priorities and regional S3 capabilities, connect relevant innovation ecosystems and actors, and explore realistic **collaborative innovation pathways**. Particular attention will be given to opportunities at the intersection of agri-food, tourism, health, biodiversity, cultural heritage and territorial development.

The Network would connect the relevant actors, while the wider Ecosystem would bring together Smart Specialisation priorities, research and higher education, businesses, public authorities, territorial partnerships and proven local practices.

The meeting is designed as an interactive policy workshop rather than a traditional conference. Its aim is not to formally establish a new network, but to identify cooperation signals and opportunity areas, assess the actors, capabilities and demand needed to make them viable, and define realistic follow-up actions. Short inspiration talks will establish a common framework, lightning pitches will present concrete and transferable experiences, and participants will work in multidisciplinary groups through three facilitated World Café rounds. The results will then be shared in plenary to identify shared priorities and selected opportunities that could be further developed through the EUSAIR-S3 cooperation pathway.

Workshop objectives

- Frame the Mediterranean Diet as an integrated driver of sustainable food systems, health, biodiversity, cultural heritage, tourism, innovation and territorial development.
- Identify **thematic relatedness** between MEDDIET/EUSAIR priorities and regional S3 priorities, capabilities and innovation ecosystems.
- Move from broad thematic alignment towards a limited number of **realistic cooperation opportunities**, considering relevant actors, demand/user communities, existing capacities and potential for cross-border replication and scaling.
- Explore how selected opportunities could progress through **collaborative innovation pathways** (from early cooperation and project preparation towards demonstration, scaling and financing).
- Define initial priorities for governance, knowledge transfer, skills development and long-term macro-regional cooperation.

Expected outcomes

1. An initial map of **MEDDIET-related cooperation signals and opportunity areas** emerging from the intersection of EUSAIR priorities and regional S3 capabilities.
2. A limited number of **promising collaborative innovation opportunities** for further exploration, including relevant ecosystem actors, capabilities and potential users/demand.
3. A preliminary set of criteria for selecting potential pilot nodes and transferable practices.
4. A concise set of shared priorities and realistic follow-up actions for the operational development of the MEDDIET Flagship.

Schematic Draft agenda

Time	Session	Focus
08:30-09:00	Registration	Arrival and participant registration
09:00-09:45	Institutional opening	Welcome by the host institutions, the Italian EUSAIR Presidency and EUSAIR governance representatives
09:45-10:30	Inspiration talks	Three concise perspectives addressing why the Network is needed, how S3 can structure it and how knowledge can be translated into cooperation
10:30-11:00	Evidence from the field	Five short pitches presenting transferable building blocks and concrete territorial evidence
11:00-11:15	Coffee break	Networking
11:15-12:45	Interactive cross-pillar dialogue	Three facilitated rounds on territorial vision, S3 ecosystems and governance and capacities
12:45-13:30	Plenary feedback and conclusions	Synthesis of priorities, potential pilot nodes and proposed follow-up actions and agreement on key messages and immediate next steps for the MEDDIET Flagship
13:30-14:30	Networking lunch	Informal exchange among participants
Afternoon	Study visit	Territorial experience related to Mediterranean Diet, local food systems and sustainable tourism - destination and format TBC

09:00 – 09:45 | Institutional Opening

Welcome by the host institutions, the Italian EUSAIR Presidency, and EUSAIR governance representatives.

Moderator: Eleonora Tramannoni, Secretary General of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce

- **Giacomo Bugaro**, Regional Minister for Economic Development, European Policies, the Special Economic Zone, Ports, the Airport and the Intermodal Terminal, Marche Region
- **Francesco Martelli**, DPCoe, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italian EUSAIR Presidency
- **Joze Tomaš**, President, Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
- **Gino Sabatini**, President of the Marche Chamber of Commerce, Vice-President of Forum AIC
- **Enrico Quagliarini**, Rector, Marche Polytechnic University
- **Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta**, Secretary General, Adriatic Ionian Initiative
- **Gilles Kittel**, DG REGIO, European Commission

09:45 – 10:30 | Inspiration Talks: Setting the Scene

Three concise, TED-style perspectives designed to establish a common framework for the day. These talks will address why a Mediterranean Diet Innovation Network is needed, how Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) can structure it, and how academic knowledge translates into territorial cooperation.

Moderator: Nataša Bušić, Senior Advisor of Croatian Chamber of Economy - Split County Chamber (Member of Forum AIC)

Inspiration Theme-Talk 1 The Mediterranean Diet as an Integrated Framework for Sustainable Regional Development

- **Biagio Di Terlizzi, Director CIHEAM Bari**
The Mediterranean Diet beyond nutrition: an integrated scientific and strategic framework connecting sustainable food systems, health, biodiversity, culture, tourism and territorial development.
- **Sergio Moretti, Commercial Director, Cooperativa Gino Girolomoni – representing IFOAM Organics Europe**
How organic and agroecological production can translate this vision into practice, supporting biodiversity, resilient local value chains and territorial development

Inspiration Theme-Talk 2 Connecting Agrifood Tourism and Innovation through Smart Specialisation

- **Jurij Kobal, Smart Specialisation expert from the EUSAIR Facility Point - online**
How EUSAIR countries and regions can identify shared or complementary Smart Specialisation priority areas related to agrifood, tourism and innovation, connect the corresponding capabilities and actors, and translate them into concrete opportunities for macro-regional cooperation, pilot actions and investment.

Inspiration Theme-Talk 3 From Multidisciplinary Knowledge to Territorial Innovation and Capacity Building

- **Prof. Luigi Ledda, Full Professor of Agronomy, Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, Marche Polytechnic University**

How multidisciplinary knowledge can be organised within UNIVPM and connected with businesses, producers, public authorities and local communities. The contribution will address applied research, technology transfer, the role of facilities such as the University Farm and the conditions needed to turn academic knowledge into innovation and capacity for the territory

10:30 – 11:00 | Evidence from the Field (Lightning Pitches)

To ground the upcoming strategic dialogue in reality, four rapid pitches (4-5 minutes each) will showcase concrete, tested models. Instead of standard project presentations, speakers will highlight specific solutions, the actors involved, and elements that could be replicated or scaled across borders.

From Regional Food Culture to Integrated Rural Development: Lessons from FLAVOR

- **Arianna Blasi, Marche Region, FLAVOR Project Partner**

A policy-oriented example of using regional food culture to strengthen rural development, local value chains, sustainability, well-being and community identity.

Connecting Cultural Routes, Local Communities and Sustainable Tourism: The AdriACTIVE Approach

- **Anna Introna, Puglia Region, Lead Partner of AdriACTIVE**

A cross-border model connecting cultural routes, local communities and digital tools to develop sustainable tourism experiences and enhance lesser-known Adriatic territories.

A Territorial Ecosystem in Practice The Medimurje Eco Region

- **Dijana Posavec, Director of Dr. Rudolf Steiner Centre**

A place-based example illustrating how a territorial ecosystem is organised, the actors it brings together, the benefits it generates and the elements that could be replicated across other EUSAIR territories.

A Transferable Model for Macro-regional Skills Cooperation Lessons from the EUSAIR Blue Skills Partnership

- **Theodora Koutsogaki, EUSAIR Pillar 1 Coordinator (TBC)**

A macro-regional skills partnership bringing together public authorities, businesses, education and training providers, universities and social partners, with a cooperation model that could be adapted to MEDDIET-related value chains.

11:00 – 11:15 | Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45 | Interactive Cross-Pillar Dialogue (World Café)

Participants will transition from listening to active policy design. Divided into pre-assigned, multidisciplinary groups, attendees will remain at their tables while thematic facilitators rotate every 30 minutes. This ensures every group tackles all three core themes, translating morning inputs into concrete priorities.

Theme 1 Common vision and territorial strengths

Facilitators: Daniela Guida, Project Design Officer and Gianluigi Cardone, Head of the Sustainable Agrifood Systems Thematic Unit, CIHEAM Bari

- How can the Mediterranean Diet contribute more effectively to sustainable regional development across the Adriatic-Ionian Region?
- Which territorial strengths, identities and proven experiences should form the common foundation of the MEDDIET Network?

Theme 2 Smart Specialisation ecosystems and potential network nodes

Facilitators: Eva Kos, EUSAIR Facility Point Coordinator and co-facilitator TBD

- Which S3 priorities, organisations and innovation ecosystems could become the first building blocks or pilot nodes of the MEDDIET Network?
- How can existing competence centres, partnerships, living labs, biodistricts, universities, Chambers of Commerce and business networks be connected across the macro-region?

Theme 3 Governance knowledge and capacities

Facilitators: Iva Čaleta Pleša, EUSAIR Pillar 4 Coordinator and Martina Klapan Štambuk, EUSAIR Pillar 5 Coordinator

- Which light and workable governance model could support the preparatory phase of the Network?
- Which skills, knowledge-transfer mechanisms and immediate actions are needed to move from dialogue to operational cooperation?

12:45–13:30 | Plenary Feedback, Financial Perspectives and Next Steps

Plenary Feedback

Presented by: Interactive Cross-Pillar Dialogue Facilitators

Concise feedback from the three thematic discussions, focusing on the main priorities, cooperation opportunities and proposed follow-up actions.

Exploring Potential Financing Pathways for MEDDIET Cooperation

Dr Julia Culver, Nomisma spa, Marche Region – StEP Technical Assistance Team

Initial perspectives on financial frameworks and instruments that could potentially support the development of the cooperation opportunities emerging from the workshop.

Conclusions and Ancona Recommendations

Representative, Marche Region

Closing remarks and identification of the key messages and immediate follow-up actions to be reflected in the Ancona Recommendations.

13:30 - 14:30 | Networking lunch

Afternoon study visit

The afternoon study visit, organized in cooperation with AMAP Marche – Agency for Innovation in the Agri-food and Fisheries Sector "Marche Agriculture Fishery, is planned at the UNIVPM University Teaching and Experimental Farm, weather permitting, as a practical follow-up to Inspiration Talk 3 on applied research, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and technology transfer. In case of adverse weather, the visit will take place at the laboratories of UNIVPM's Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences. The detailed programme will be available shortly.

Working language | English. Simultaneous English–Italian interpretation will be available during the plenary sessions. The interactive group sessions will be conducted in English.