

***FUTURE EUROPEAN MARKETS.
THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN MACRO-REGION AND INTERMODAL
INFRASTRUCTURE.
UNPRECEDENTED PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN
EMILIA-ROMAGNA.***

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In the coming decades, European markets will undoubtedly undergo radical changes, mostly as a result of the intermodal infrastructure that will form a powerful backbone for connections in Europe, both strengthening existing routes and establishing new connections.

The EU's Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) infrastructure policy, launched in October 2013 and financed by a tripling of funding for transportation infrastructure in the 2014-2020 budget, has in fact taken a very dynamic shape. It is made up of nine "core network corridors": the Baltic-Adriatic corridor; the North Sea-Baltic corridor (from Finland to Belgium); the Mediterranean corridor (from the Iberian peninsula to Ukraine, passing through the Po River Valley); the Orient/East-Med corridor (from Southern Germany to South-East Europe); the Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor (from Finland to Malta, passing through Italy); the Rhine-Alpine corridor (from Rotterdam to Genoa and Milan); the Atlantic corridor (from the Western Iberian Peninsula to Le Havre and Rouen); the North Sea-Mediterranean corridor (from Ireland to Marseilles); and finally the Rhine-Danube corridor (from Strasbourg to Košice and Ukraine).

To launch this ambitious project, crucial for the integration of the continent, the European Parliament approved a funding package of almost 30 million Euros, almost triple the funds currently put towards the project. This sum is considered sufficiently robust to get the project started while simultaneously attracting further capital in order to reach the amount necessary to complete the project, estimated to be 250 million Euros.

Given the structural coherence of the network of intermodal communications and connections that lies ahead, great transformations are to be expected – in the economic, social, and cultural realm – as a result of the construction of these means of communication. This will have particular implications for those European regions which have, in recent decades (or in some cases, for centuries), been excluded from important exchanges and the aforementioned economic, social, benefits. However thanks to the enlargement of the EU to the East to include new members, intense processes of integration could now become possible, resulting in significant benefits for these once-overlooked countries.

Italy in particular could improve its position in the geopolitical realm in many ways, if it is able to seize this opportunity, consistently and determinedly following a strategy to insert itself into the European fabric. It is enough to simply reread the list of the nine core network corridors above to realize that at least four of them involve Italy directly, cutting it from West to East as well as from North to South, sweeping the Po River Valley and the entirety of both the Adriatic and

Mediterranean Seas. Italy and its entire port system is at the center of these Routes. This presents unprecedented opportunities for development in Emilia-Romagna, especially in the Port of Ravenna, parts of Romagna (in the Southeast of the region), Bologna, and Ferrara, thanks to the intersection of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor with the Mediterranean corridor (which connects to the crucial Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor, the largest of the nine defined by TEN-T).

In Emilia-Romagna, old, pre-existing territorial divisions and relations – historical remnants of the crisis and dissolution of the grand empires between 1800 and 1900, the World Wars, and the Cold War - are now on the cusp of momentous changes. However, the entire Mediterranean basin is poised for improvement, given that five of the core network corridors rely directly on the Adriatic Sea. In many cases, these corridors revive and revitalize trade routes that, in both modern and Medieval times, were extremely prevalent and successful.

These revitalized trade routes will create direct contact between the Baltic Sea Region and the potential Adriatic-Ionian Region, two “macro-regions” defined by the EU. Among these routes is the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, which will – in connecting to the North Sea-Baltic Sea corridor – will for the most part follow the “Amber Road,” connecting Helsinki with Bologna and Ravenna via Tallinn, Kaunas, Warsaw, Brno, Bratislava, and Graz. A second branch will connect Trieste to the corridor, with a third beginning in Graz and running to Koper. In fact, a new axis of rail, roadway, and ultra-wideband connections between Northeastern and Southeastern Europe is soon to be established; this will confer great benefits on the entire Adriatic, but especially on the Upper Adriatic Sea, from Rimini to Istria. Far from its twentieth-century reputation as a “closed sea,” a dynamic future awaits the Adriatic Basin, an area which will quickly find itself in the position to connect the Eastern Mediterranean with Baltic and Russian markets. Such a significant change in the trade network makes it easy to imagine the resultant prospects for market growth and administrative reform. These prospects are particularly significant for Italy, taking into account the possibility that Romagna (with the port of Ravenna) and Bologna (as a railway hub) will become the most important terminals of this corridor.

In reality, there are different points of this discussion that must be taken into account (all of which concern the international development of Romagna and Bologna) in considering the scope of the anticipated changes.

In particular, these considerations include:

1. The interaction between the Mediterranean corridor, the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, the North Sea-Baltic Sea corridor, and the Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor (which will enter Italy via the Brenner corridor)
2. The development of ports and railways, as well as facilitating access to energy sources
3. The cultural implications of the ultra-wideband connection between the Baltic Sea Region and the Adriatic-Ionian Region, inasmuch as the connection will also serve (according to studies already initiated by the Council of Europe) as a “cultural corridor.” This technological-cultural connection will provide significant opportunities for tourism and intercultural collaboration.

4. The development of a multi-level governance system (EU, individual states, macro-regions, and local and regional public administration) which would call for significant institutional and administrative reforms and adjustments in order to make the transnational governance of macro-regions (such as the Baltic Sea Region and the Adriatic-Ionian Region) and corridors possible
5. Russia's 2012 entry into the WTO

These considerations and their interactions with one another exert an undeniable impact on all of Europe; this is especially relevant considering the possibility of prolonging (or even aggravating) recent tensions with Russia over the crisis in Ukraine. In any case, the new communication network currently under construction will aid in the consolidation of European integration processes, enhancing the flow and exchange of both goods and cultures. This reveals the critical dynamics of Europe's unprecedented potential for improvement in many areas, including economic development, societal cohesion and development, intercultural collaboration, tourism, and multi-level governance. These potential improvements anticipate the consolidation of an inclusive, innovative, and safe European society. All recent EU indicators have encouraged this goal in light of objectives for 2020 set forth by EU institutions.

It is essential for Italy to gear up to achieve these objectives, which are both attractive and extremely challenging. Area experts will have to make a concerted effort to help ensure that the productive and administrative sectors of Romagna prepare themselves properly for a transformation that could benefit them considerably in coming decades; this will necessitate providing economic actors and public administrators alike with adequate financial means, information, and analysis with regard to shifts in the market or notable social changes.

The changes that are soon to impact the dynamic and interrelated Eastern Mediterranean, Northern Europe, and Eastern Europe markets will have great significance for development in Italy and especially in Emilia-Romagna. The provinces of Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena, and Rimini are bound to experience great returns in the tourism sector, thanks to the possibilities the region offers for recreational tourism, cultural tourism, business and political visits, curative tourism (in the hot springs), natural tourism, as well as religious tourism and pilgrimages.

According to rough calculations, the development of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor as the primary connection between the Baltic and the Mediterranean would reduce shipping times by four days, compared to the current route through Rotterdam. It is therefore essential to consider the outcomes that the construction of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor could trigger. The scope of these outcomes would extend beyond the still-to-be-built Adriatic-Ionian Region, stretching the boundaries of the region's influence and offering the opportunity to incorporate all of its strategic potential (economic, cultural, commercial, industrial, etc.). This potential, in concert with the current push for European integration could very well lead to the restoration of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic to the significance they held in International trade prior to the discovery of America and the fall of the Habsburg Empire.

This is not an exaggeration. In fact, this corridor would allow for the connection of the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Finland, the markets of Northern Europe, and Russia via the Suez Canal, through the Upper Adriatic and the ports of Ravenna and Trieste or the rail hub of Bologna, and then further north along the Baltic-Adriatic corridor. These developments are especially significant given Russia's recent entry into the World Trade Organization.

Even in light of tensions in Moscow over the conflict in Ukraine, globalization appears to have progressed to the point where it will not permit devastating fractures such as happened in the past (hopefully, we can also avoid more catastrophic developments). In reality, in the aftermath of the Cold War and the subsequent Eastward enlargement of the EU, geopolitics and geoeconomics of the broader Europe have the potential to radically change inter-European relations.

Moreover, it is important to realize that the Baltic-Adriatic corridor was conceived as a transport corridor as much as it was as an ultra-wideband information highway. In 2013, the European Commission investigated the impact of ultra-wideband on the economy and investment and found that access to ultra-wideband may promote an increase in GDP of up to 1.5%. In short, the new web of communications will trigger unimaginable changes in the economic sector, not only with respect to trade in goods and technologies, but also in the development of investment and - given the great attractiveness of the Adriatic-Ionian area - in cultural tourism. This connection and its repercussions will lead to a consequent increase in international cooperation and prioritize the creation of a multi-level governance structure on the regional scale. More specifically, these structures will have to focus on uniting first and foremost the most directly interested areas, those who have been considered to be crucial terminals in the corridor: Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena, Ferrara, and Bologna. Given the great significance of coming changes and fortifications of virtual connections, it is essential to make changes on the cultural as well as the institutional level.

In this context, exciting prospects are taking shape for Romagna, so long as it acts in cooperation with the region of Emilia-Romagna and the government to seize the strategic opportunity that currently presents itself. However, if the construction and realization of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor were to be postponed, undervalued, or, even worse, downsized in terms of the countries' development goals (if not outright abandoned), either Turkey (given the Russian ports in the northeast of the Black Sea) or the European Atlantic coast (the center of the current route from the Baltic to the Mediterranean) would be in the position to benefit from Russia's entry into the WTO. Providing further competition, Germany and Austria are making great strides toward South-East Europe, thanks to the establishment of the Danube Region, as well as to the existence of the Orient/East Med corridor, the North Sea-Baltic Sea Corridor, the Atlantic, and the active connection (via the Rhine) between Rotterdam and Konstanz.

Without significant effort on Italy's part, the Adriatic is likely to be largely cut off from trade with the rest of the European continent, further aggravating the situation (the result of the 2008 crisis) that already afflicts all of Italy's coastal regions. With this in mind, it is essential to prepare for a potentially drastic change in the organization of labor and political-administrative management, with as much regard to local culture as to the international implications of the aforementioned development goals. To delay now could only promote further delays, exacerbating the risk of

exclusion from critical communication networks. It is in moments of uncertainty and international financial crisis that it is essential to understand what the potential socioeconomic and political scenarios for the future are; this understanding is clearly necessary in order to prepare for adequate investment in the necessary changes and to withstand the competition between Northern and Southern Europe which would otherwise become overwhelming. The drawing together of the Baltic space and the Mediterranean/Adriatic region creates and supports a wide range of international connections and relations, some of which have origins in the Medieval era, but which are overwhelmingly relevant to today's processes of local and macro-regional modernization. Cooperation between the Italian regions of the northern Adriatic (rather than the perpetuation of unproductive oppositions and local ambitions) will be an invaluable factor for consolidating the role of Italy in the logistical model of the Mediterranean-Baltic region: otherwise, other countries could take advantage of the region. This has already happened, creating competition between the ports of Trieste and Koper; Deutsche Bahn decided to finance the reinforcement of rail connections to the Slovene port, which in turn aimed to lower the seabed of its harbor in order to open the port to even larger ships.

Despite these risks, the conditions are still ideal for the revitalization of the role of Italy with respect to the increases in trade, tourism, and cultural exchange: the complete network of the nine corridors explained above and the trade routes it prefigures, as well as the inherent potential of this infrastructure-building project for the Adriatic-Ionian Region create an environment that favors synergy and collaboration. This convergence of interests calls for a collaborative spirit that, especially in Italy, will necessitate a significant change of mentality and of *modus operandi*. Furthermore, given the rise of new global protagonists including India, China, Brazil, South Africa, Turkey, and Russia, the advantages of receiving and transmitting data and goods along the new path connecting Northeastern and Southeastern Europe are very evident.

Italy and the Adriatic-Ionian basin have been presented with an unprecedented and unique opportunity. To seize this opportunity will require a certain amount of courage, a new mode of cooperation, and a great deal of effort; however, to give up due to economic difficulties and/or local rivalries would do nothing but exacerbate the underdevelopment of an area that today is often considered to be one of the most dysfunctional areas in Europe.