



FINAL REPORT - IED Conference 30.08.2021

## The EU Green Deal – Decisive for the economy, jobs and the EU's Soft Power

The IED organized this international Conference in the City of Venice, on 30 August 2021, which offered the most eloquent context for examining environmental issues: humanity is confronted with the impact of Climate Change, and Venice is an icon of a community, a History, a cultural Heritage of worldwide interest to be protected and brought to life. Mitigation and adaptation, the strategic objectives of the international climate community, can be measured in Venice where they represent concrete challenges. The Conference was attended by 50 participants and was simultaneously broadcasted live on the IED Website.

The event was opened by a written message on behalf of Mr. **Mario Draghi**, Prime Minister of Italy, which stressed the fact that the conference takes place during Italy's Presidency of G20. Last year, the Italian government adopted a series of measures meant to promote sustainable tourism and to support the Italian companies in this costly transition. As all the eyes of the world are on Venice, he believes it can serve as a model for other cities, as Italy seeks to promote a greater environmental awareness and to preserve the cultural heritage, as a way to exercise soft power.

In his intervention, Mr. **Giovanni Bazoli**, Chairman of Fondazione Giorgio Cini, mentioned the fact that UNESCO was the first to prepare a report in 1968 on Venice, based on the problem of the high waters in 1966, stressing the need to coordinate various disciplines to solve the conflict between the problem of natural environment and human made environment, technological development and the safeguard of historical heritage. Yet the current event is not the only one dedicated to the sustainable development of Venice, as in November 2016 took place the International Conference on *Sustainability of local commons with a global value: the case of Venice and its lagoon*.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the day, culture is the first and most effective tool of soft power and it is essential to have the utmost commitment to research and innovation.

Mr. **Luigi Brugnaro**, Mayor of Venice, sent his greetings to the organizers and participants in his capacity as host, since the topic of the conference is of utmost importance. He underlined the importance of being committed to the creation of a sustainable future capable of providing valid growth opportunities for the future generations. The City of Venice has regained a central role in the world when Venice hosted a G20 reunion, and is looking towards a sustainable future, as it becomes a cleaner city, with a strong programme of waste management.

In his video intervention, Mr. **David Sassoli**, President of the European Parliament, underlined the fact that the green transition can strengthen Europe's economy, industrial competitiveness and improve the quality of life of people. The European Parliament is at the forefront of the efforts to combat biodiversity loss as there is no time to lose.

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<sup>1</sup> See more at <https://www.cini.it/en/events/international-conference-sustainability-of-local-commons-with-global-value-venice-and-its-lagoon>



The EU Green Deal is an opportunity for employment, since circular economy will be able to create 700 000 jobs in Europe by 2030, and thus compensate for the job losses suffered in the transition. The Environmental challenge is a soft power challenge for everyone, but especially for Europe. It is even more important for the EU to lead by example, to implement the right policies, and it must allocate adequate resources for this hefty challenge. The EU should support a sustainable development model.

In order to consolidate its role at the international level, the EU should also use diplomacy, international cooperation, and, in this context, multilateralism is key to overcome environmental challenges. Leadership is strengthened with the tools of soft power, cultural diplomacy and cooperation. The G20 and the G7 have a role to play, and the COP26 in November represents an important turning point.

On the path toward a climate neutral Europe and more just for all the context is key, as it is needed to take into account different local situations. That is why Europe should support actions coming from all levels, such as bottom-up initiatives coming from the citizens, and local and regional authorities. The European Parliament fully supports the Covenant of Mayors, because cities play a central role in the transition towards a green, inclusive and sustainable future.

**Mr. Francesco Rutelli**, President of IED, mentioned that Venice wants to be the world capital of sustainability because it is the city most threatened by climate change which, due to the rising of the seas, may lead to the end of Venice and to an environmental disaster. “Fit for 55”, a target set by the European Commission, intends to reduce emissions by 55% in just nine years. The main question arising is if it is an achievable goal or would it be perceived as something punitive.

Mr Rutelli remembered that in France the yellow vests started just as a response to opposition to a small fuel tax linked to climate measures, and the same mistake must not be repeated. He said that positive responses should be envisaged in terms of creating new production chains, new jobs, and not just giving a message that can be otherwise perceived as punitive by the population.

**Ms. Sarah El Haïry**, Minister of State for Youth and Engagement, attached to the Minister of National Education, Youth and Sport (France), mentioned that the European Agency of Environment is very clear on this subject, that if we do not collectively respect the goals set by the Paris Agreement, Venice will disappear under the waters, depriving the future generations of its beauty.

The EU can support the Paris Agreement as our goals are clear: reducing emissions, reducing the external energetic dependence, improving the wellbeing and the health of Europeans, creation of jobs and developing innovation. The *Fit for 55* package, presented on 14 July, is the most important one presented so far being a commitment for the planet and for the youth that is a motive of pride. France will invest in the coming months more than 30 billion euro for the green transition. She mentioned the need to work together, because we are all in this together, and we will make this planet great again.

**Mr. Simone Bemporad**, Group Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Assicurazioni Generali, mentioned in his intervention that the economic losses, due to natural catastrophes, from the first 6 months of this year are estimated at 64 billion euro. This has been happening for the last 10 years, and it's equivalent to the GDP of Spain. Work is needed for increasing the culture of insurance and risk prevention. The assets managed by the European insurance companies can be made available, through proper regulations and legislation, to the companies and initiatives that support the EU Green Deal. Today everybody is talking about the long term



effects of environmental challenges, but there are short term costs associated with the green transition and this is why we have the Just Transition Mechanism.

The insurance companies can play a role in investment in green transition, but also through their core activity, by selling protection and prevention insurance products. The insurance companies have created the Net Zero Alliance, open to anyone in the industry, which is aligned to the net zero by 2050 target. This means that the insurance companies are committed to offer packages that are promoting this goal, which we consider to be a valuable incentive and their contribution for supporting the green transition. Environmental sustainability cannot be detached from social sustainability and governance. It's important to be committed to raising culture and awareness in a largely under-insured world.

For Mr. **Marco Alverà**, CEO Snam, in order to overcome the challenges of green transition in Italy and in Europe, climate diplomacy, which is increasingly decisive also in a geopolitical key, can play an increasingly important role. An example of soft power is represented by hydrogen, which will allow Europe to exert its influence by assuming true climate leadership.

Ms. **Maria Cristina Piovesana**, Vice President for the Environment, Sustainability and Culture, Confindustria, stated that, in addition to principles, we also need rules and organizations, such as trade and health protection, which can favour the uniform behaviour of countries in terms of environment protection. These universal principles can be the platform of values on which we can find a new European identity, in order to avoid that the work and investment of the few is nullified by those that are less virtuous or even negligent, which gain a competitive advantage in a globalized economy.

This means finding a balance between economy, environment and employment, which can progress without dumping. Industry and environment, considered for a long time antithetical and in conflict with each other, can now become allies, because with industry we provide employment, research and culture, as well to promote sustainability. The EU needs to adopt measures to protect the industry, both SME and larger enterprises. We can promote the culture of sustainability through industry as an asset.

Mr. **Carlo Doglioni**, President of Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia (INGV) mentioned that Venice is a victim of climate change, with flooding due to global warming, and earthquakes due to tectonic activity. Italy has a significant problem in terms of energy and we need to use more renewable energy, such as geothermal energy, which is not always well understood, and it is often underestimated.

According to Mr. **Carlo Barbante**, Department of Environmental Sciences, Informatics and Statistics, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, we are now facing unprecedented concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere in the last 2 million years. Sea levels are rising, the surface of the Arctic and the glaciers are disappearing at an alarming speed. The impact of all these phenomena is the climate crisis, manifested through extreme heat, heavy rainfall, drought, fire weather and acidification of the ocean.

He stated that climate policies are needed in order to act in the climate crisis. It's a question of mitigation costs and the impact costs, where the dangerous threshold was set at 2°C. It is not too late, there are a lot of things that can be done. It's a global problem and we have to act globally. Actions must be taken now, because every year counts.

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