

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AS A KEY ASPECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN LAKES

Walking and cycling tourism are two sectors that are facing a great development and can represent the future, in particular for very delicate locations from an environmental point of view, such as lakes.

This is the result of the meeting held today in Iseo within the ENSEMBLE project (Europe as a Nation for Sustainability, Equality, Mobility, Better Life and Environment), promoted by the international network "nEUlakes", chaired by **Riccardo Venchiarutti**, known for its commitment to promoting the tourist, economic, social, cultural and environmental development of European lakes.

The tourism sector is affected by macroeconomic data, as explained by Professor Roberto Savona (University of Brescia), who highlighted how the global economic panorama is conditioned by issues relating to money, raw materials, but above all by relative instability caused by ongoing global conflicts.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact. It changed trends and stimulated outdoor tourism - already growing in the Nordic countries since the 2000s - and phenomena such as cycle tourism, which in France alone has recorded an increase of +40% after the pandemic.

In this context, the importance of infrastructure, such as cycle paths, but also of services for cycle tourists becomes evident, considering that this category spends 25% more than traditional tourists. **Nicolas Mercat**, mayor of the French municipality Le Bourget-du-Lac and president of the "Vélo et Territoire" Association, explained that 75% of people choose a destination if there is a cycle path.

Cycling tourism is an already consolidated reality in Northern Europe as recalled by **Tea Laitimo**, Head of International Affairs at the Municipality of Imatra, in Finland, on the shores of Lake Saimaa.

On the other hand, **José Luis Labrador Vioque**, Mayor of Manzanares El Real (Spain) is concentrating the municipality's activities on the topic of free climbing. "La Pedriza", part of the Sierra de Guadarrama mountain range, represents one of the most important destinations in Europe for this discipline.

Norbert Kofler, CEO of Outdooractive Italy, one of the most popular Italian trekking communities, highlighted the growing importance of longer paths.

Sustainable tourism necessarily also involves attention to the environment, as explained by **Monika Ravnik**, deputy mayor of the Municipality of Bohinj, Slovenia, who underlines the importance of enhancing parks and natural areas, also for local communities.