

**ADRION project proposal “Folk heroes within the Adriatic-Ionian cultural heritage”:  
one tourist and cultural itinerary through the Adriatic and the Ionian regions.**

To promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage as growth asset in the Adriatic-Ionian area: this is one of the Interreg Cooperation Programme ADRION specific objectives to which the University Ca' Foscari of Venice – Department of Humanities – together with seven Project partners and eleven Associated partners decided to contribute with an unreleased project proposal.

The suggested action, entitled "*Folk Heroes within the Adriatic-Ionian cultural heritage*" and identified by the (deliberately provocative) acronym BANDIT\_ROUTES, has been duly submitted to the ADRION managing authority by the 1<sup>st</sup> Call deadline (25 March 2016).

We should emphasize that the purpose of the initiative is anything but academic, or better: not only academic. Actually, in keeping with the aims of this European program, the projects is looking forward to turn the historical and cultural heritage made up of legendary figures (smugglers, pirates, “fair” outlaws, risen to the rank of popular heroes and appearing blurred in the mist of the centuries, but which are well rooted in the positive imaginary of local communities), into economic opportunities (development of niche tourism, creative industries in the multimedia field, publishing, etc.) which means new business and job opportunities especially for young people.

The project, when selected and funded, involves regions of the eight countries included in Adrion Programme, i.e. four EU Members (Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece) and four pre-accession countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia).

In fact, the partnership encompasses: the University Ca' Foscari of Venice (Lead partner), the University of Ljubljana, the University of Pula, the Croatian Institute for Development and International Relations in Zagreb, the Development Agency of Una-Sana Canton in Bihac, the Albanian Agency for Coastal Development in Tirana, the Institute IRRIS for research, development and strategies of society, culture and environment in Koper; the municipality of Tignale (Brescia, Italy), bearer of local authorities good practice.

Alongside these entities, a qualified group of Associated partners will help and support the action: they are bodies which, while not dealing directly with the project budget, will give their contribution of experiences and suggestions, benefitting of enhancement for their territory (SMEs, tourism agencies, creative industries) or of educational, cultural and social relapses in favour of their focus groups. Among them, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Planning of Serbia in Belgrade; the University of Montenegro in Podgorica; the Greek Travel Agency Boreas in Thessaloniki; the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Regional Archives in Koper; the Martin Krpan Institute in Postojna; the Slovenian Nature Park in Strunjan. Returning to Italy, partnership includes also the University of Messina (Sicily), the Museum of Rural Life in Santarcangelo di Romagna (Emilia Region), the “Cabinet of Reading” in Este (Padua), and - last but not least - the municipality of Orgiano (Vicenza): highly symbolic location for its brought historical inspiration, according to some, of Manzoni's story “I Promessi Sposi”.

Therefore, a wide and diversified team representing many regions, sites, testimonies, stories, myths, monuments: places such already recognized as UNESCO heritage or, in other cases, deserving its nomination. All that is BANDIT\_ROUTES, a virtual itinerary between tales and legends along the two Adriatic and Ionian coasts, able to attract international attention, new research and investments: one unreleased tourist niche solution enabling the most respectful ways of environment preservation.