

Anna Donati, Italy



“Women still have many spaces to conquer and let them [these spaces] become their own areas of development in the field of mobility and services, more than in other sectors.”

Source: <https://finanza.lastampa.it>

Anna Donati’s professional background

- Coordinator of the Mobility Group within the Kyoto Club Organization
- Spokesperson for the Alleanza per la Mobilità Dolce Association
- Part of the governance of the Italian Touring Club;
- Member in the Managing Board of Sipotrà;
- Leader of the Scientific Committee of Rete Mobilità Nuova;
- Active collaboration in the National Observatory on Sharing Mobility;
- Collaborator with Legambiente and WWF Italy.

Anna Donati’s story

A look at the biography page of Anna Donati on [her site](#) immediately reveals her significant involvement in the transport domain and shows how lucky we are in gaining her input to the TInnGO project.

The list of her current professional involvements is extensive. Her engagement in the transport domain is also demonstrated through her roles at the political and municipality level: Councillor for Mobility and Infrastructure in Napoli from 2011 to 2013; General Director of the Agency for Sustainable Mobility in Campania (an Italian region), in 2009-2010; Councillor for Mobility in Bologna from 1993 to 1995; Board member of the Italian National Railway company from 1998 to 2001 (the first woman in this role). She was elected to the Italian Parliament in 1987, and worked in the Transport Commission of the Chamber of Deputies,

which she led in 2006-2008 (the first ever woman).

Her passion for ecology and the growing environmental impact in the sector pushed her to follow and deepen the theme of transport, with the need to innovate and change direction. These elements have determined her political, associative action, which has turned into a job with different roles and tasks.

Anna’s contribution to the smart mobility and transport framework in Italy show her as a woman genuinely interested and expert on the topic. She provided us with concrete examples of successful programmes in the domain of smart transport and mobility, which she implemented or promoted.

Indeed, she recalled that, when she was a councillor for mobility in the city of Bologna in the early 90s, they set up the SIRIO telematic control system of the gates, a technological system of control and management in traffic and transport, a great innovation for those times. In her experience as Councillor of National Railways and also as a Parliamentarian, she dedicated particular effort to the development and growth of services for commuters, urban, metropolitan and regional transport, which are progressively improving quality, quantity, and use. Moreover, she was part of a working group that prepared the contents of the first decree of the Minister for the Environment on Mobility Management and Sharing Mobility (around the year 1998). Her vision for the role of gender (and women) in transport and smart mobility, has matured through such long experience in the field. She stated that *“in general, there is still an imbalance in the politics and institutions of the transport sector towards the male gender. But compared to 30 years ago, when I started dealing with these issues, the situation has definitely improved.”* She observed that, now *“there are women with responsibilities among the Councillors, on the Boards of Directors, among the experts, in the field of innovations, in the logistics companies, in the competent parliamentary committees, among the teachers of the related subjects, in the direction of public and private companies, among the students of engineering, architecture and scientific subjects in the sector”*. The presence of a female Minister of Transport and Infrastructure since 2019 (the first-ever in Italy) is an excellent example of the increased female presence in the domain.

Anna commented on some of the difficulties she had encountered as a woman in the professional transport domain. She stated they were mainly due to:

“being a woman, a historical feminist of the 70s, with a robust environmental criticism of the current transport system based on the all-road model for goods and passengers, in a world dominated by the male gender in ministries, businesses, design.”

The main challenge Anna had faced while working in a male-dominated environment, lay in being a *single* young woman in a males' world, as the transport domain is. However, she admitted having felt great support from the environmental world, greens, associations, councillors, experts, and male politicians that have shared their commitment and point of view with her since the 90s. This support helped her never feel alone in public. Besides, she cited a university professor (a woman) who taught her a lot and with whom she carried out many activities, studies, environmental impact assessments, alternative proposals and networking with cities and territories.

When asked about difficulties related to gender barriers and stereotypes during her professional development, she cited problems associated with the recognition of her role (as a councillor in itself is very complex, even more so for a woman) and also for the remuneration of some activities she carried out. Anna admitted that *“sometimes I did not believe in my means and potential, not applying for roles, projects and positions of responsibility, because I was convinced that I did not have the qualities and the adequate curriculum.”*

Anna provided some useful tips regarding the personal attributes that enable a woman to perform at a high standard in a profession, and, more specifically, in the transport domain. Anna depicted the *“ability to innovate, not burdened by the weight of the inertial choices of the past that had shown their limit”* as a professional advantage for women. At the same time, women could look at the problem with new eyes and identify innovative solutions (and this could happen for both young women and young men).

However, she declared being confident about the fact that *“women still have many spaces to conquer and let them [these spaces] become their own areas of development in the field of mobility and services, more than in other sectors.”* Anna also gave us stimulating feedback on her experience in climbing the career ladder, where she had not found particular difficulties except those around the willingness to innovate. We can gain a useful tip from the strategy she adopted, namely to *“reinvent myself several times as responsibilities, roles and projects [changed]: it has been a great effort to remain within the decision-making and political processes, maintaining innovation and the personal role.”*

We asked her about measures seen as necessary to develop gender smart mobility and possible proposals through which the EU policies and businesses understand and promote gender-related requirements in entrepreneurship, she highlighted that it is essential to promote investigation on mobility, the city, and gender imbalance in services and accessibility. In more detail, Anna said that dedicated projects and experiments are needed, together with specific financing for the European level "Gender Balance Smart Mobility". European projects in each category should always have an accurate check on the effects on the "Gender Mobility Divide" with measurable and progressive objectives to pursue. Regarding 'official' documents, such as White Papers, reports, and strategies for the mobility of the future of the EU, she stated that *“they should devote specific and visible attention to how to overcome the gender imbalance in mobility. For example, starting from the Guidelines for Sustainable Mobility Plans at the European level for Cities.”*

Anna also shared her thoughts about scientific research, innovation, training, and universities, which, she said, must take care of specific projects, masters, and professional courses.

She had suggestions also for companies: *“it is important to start from a survey on employees, on the effects of gender imbalance in mobility, in intermediate and top positions, in management systems and auxiliary services, in remuneration for work. Then prepare organizational, managerial and service innovations to overcome the gender gap”.*

At the same time, she stated that public institutions *“should promote dedicated projects and decide economic and fiscal advantages for those who are oriented (companies and public and private associations) towards gender equality (in a concrete and measured way)”.*

“The space to be occupied [in this sector] is endless and there is a need for commitment, creativity, intelligence and competence of women.”

While moving more to the personal domain, the key factors that Anna assessed as being the roots of her professional success in a male-dominated sector, like transport, focused on determination and personal responsibility in carrying out “different” points of view and new ideas that need both the medium and long term assessment. Another important aspect is the need to constantly study the phenomena, data, alternatives, solutions, and experiences of other countries in particular in Europe.

Using her 40 years experience, passion and environmental commitment, she cited a further necessary element, namely a capacity for institutional and political relationships (style, respect for the opponent, collaboration, willingness to confront), accentuating defeats, relegations, and personal blows as part of the path. She also provided sound motivational advice for women who wish to be successful in

the domain of transport and smart mobility. She highlighted that, as this is a sector in significant evolution, with new technologies on the way, new services need to be imagined and organized, with very complex environmental and social challenges. So, as she said *“the space to be occupied is endless and there is a need for the commitment, creativity, intelligence and competence of women.”*

We are very grateful for Anna’s contribution to our project and activities, and we would like to end this report with a citation she provided from Albert Einstein: *“You cannot solve a problem with the same mentality that generated it.”* We think this could be an excellent suggestion for this innovative sector and for the women who would like to improve it through their personal contribution and vision.



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