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# XIV General Assembly

*Dubrovnik (Croatia), 27th March 2017*

*Hotel Hilton Imperial Dubrovnik*

## Minute

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The 14th General Assembly of the Adriatic Euroregion Ionian was held in Dubrovnik on March 27, 2017 at the Hotel Hilton Imperial Dubrovnik starting at 11:30.

The session was chaired by the President Nikola Dobroslavic that opened the assembly welcoming all the participants and members of the Euroregion.

Ms. Carmela Vaccaro is the Secretary in charge for drafting the minute.

President Dobroslavic proposed the following agenda:

1. Approval of the budget, year 2016;
2. Approval of the activity & financial plan and calendar of events of year 2017;
3. Definition of the annual membership fee for the year 2017;
4. Proposal of the internal regulation of the General Secretariat;
5. Approval of the internal guide for missions of employees and volunteers of the General Secretariat;
6. Request of CURSA Consortium to become an interested partner of the Euroregion;
7. Discussion on the state of the art of ETC programmes. Analysis and evaluation of the opportunity to participate in European projects;
8. Discussion on EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, latest update;
9. Discussion on Smart Islands Declaration
10. Any other business.

### Point 1

Before discussing the first point of the Agenda, President Dobroslavic introduced the main activities performed in 2016 by the Euroregion, illustrating the main events such as, Presidency Bureau meetings, Executive committees, the First EUSAIR Forum, the 10th Anniversary of the Euroregion, the meeting in Zagreb with the President of the Republic of Croatia and all the conferences and workshops. He underlined the importance of increasing the number of AIE meetings. He also expressed his satisfaction for the results achieved by the Euroregion. He pointed out that thematic commissions have not convened very often due to organizational and financial shortages.

Mr. Andrea Jakova, Regional Council of Shkodër, asked to include in the Activity Report 2016 also the conference "Women Commitment for Sustainable Partnership in the perspective of EUSAIR development" held in Shkodër on 10 March 2016 attended by several AIE regions as well as the Managing authority of the IPA Adriatic CBC Programme.

Mr. Dobroslavic passed the floor to Mr. Francesco Cocco, Secretary General. He introduced the topic of year 2016 budget. He stated that it is a very simple budget, the incomes are mainly membership fees and funding coming from CLAVET project, while the expenditures can be attributed to the daily management of the association, website and staff missions.

The President asked to AIE members to vote and to approve the budget for year 2016 as proposed.

The budget was unanimously approved by the Assembly.

## **Point 2**

Second point of the Agenda, President Dobroslavic pass the floor to Mr. Cocco that presented the main points of the Annual Programme and financial plan for the year 2017. He underlined the importance to activate the thematic commissions overcoming the organizational and financial shortages occurred in the past.

The secretary general reports that:

- Thanks to funds generated by EU projects, the AIE can find extra financial recourse to support the activity of the association;
- Primorje Gorski Kotar County has expressed its interest to convene the Thematic Commission on Transport and Infrastructure in 2017
- Kotor Municipality is available to host an AIE statutory meeting in 2017.
- The AIE website is now renewed;
- The AIE has hosted several young professional in the Brussels office, increasing the number of the hosted trainees.

Mr. Cocco explained the opportunities of AIE direct participation in some projects in the framework of Interreg MED Programme, as well as other ETC projects. These project could be very useful for the activities of the Euroregion. He stressed the importance of paying membership fees and he specified that in the folder members can find the financial plan with a specific budget line for BleuTourMed project.

President Dobroslavic proposed to proceed with the vote on activity & financial plan 2017;

These documents were unanimously approved by the Assembly.

## **Point 3**

President Dobroslavic proposed to confirm the amount of the annual membership fee in € 1000.

Mr. Andrea Jakova from Regional Council of Shkodër took the floor asking to increase the amount of the annual membership fee with the purpose to provide more financial resources to the association.

The Secretary General confirmed the need to respect the payment of the membership fees adding that the Euroregion does not have a secretariat with staff directly employed by association but it will be soon necessary to have a secretariat with professionals directly working for the association. For this reason, it will be important to have appropriate and sufficient financial resources. The Secretary General agreed with President Dobroslavic to confirm 1000 € as amount of the membership fee for 2017. He was confident that

in the upcoming months the Euroregion will award some European projects, bringing extra financial resources.

Mr. Nevenko Herceg, as first minister of the Herzegovina Neretva Canton, agreed on the opportunity to have a structured secretariat with persons directly employed by the Euroregion and not only voluntary workers. He stressed the importance to pay the membership fees underlining how it is crucial for the association to invest resources and having employees totally dedicate to the Euroregion.

President Dobroslavic proposed to keep 1000 € as amount of the annual membership fee also for 2017.

The assembly vote and the amount of 1000 € as 2017 membership fee was unanimously approved by the Assembly.

#### **Points 4 and 5**

The Secretary general introduced the two internal documents: "Internal regulation of the general secretariat" and "Internal guide of missions for secretariat staff".

The purpose of the internal regulation is to set out the way the Secretariat of the AIE works in order to complement the rules already fixed in its statutes, as well as specific tasks of the secretariat and how it supports the Euroregion. The art. 6 of the statute foreseen the possibility of having a structured secretariat with professional workers. New financial resources coming from EU projects will allows a more structured secretariat.

Cocco added that the provision of the "Internal regulation of the general secretariat" will apply to missions by secretariat staff such as employees, volunteers and any member of the secretariat. The guides sets the rules for the working mission.

President Dobroslavic asked to vote for both documents. No amendments were proposed by the participants.

The two internal documents were unanimously approved by the Assembly.

#### **Points 6 and 7**

The President informed that the AIE has received a request from an University Consortium named CURSA to join the Euroregion becoming "interested partner". The President underlined that CURSA cannot acquire the status of member because it is not a regional authority. He passed the floor to the Secretary General in order to illustrate the point 6 as well as point 7.

Referring point 6, Mr. Cocco explained that CURSA cannot be a full (or honorary) member of the association because it is not an units of territorial self-government (according to the rules of AIE statute). But Cursa can be an interested partner of the Euroregion. Therefore he asked to the Assembly to take this decision.

Mr. Dobroslavic asked the vote on point 6.

Mr. Nevenko Herceg, the first minister of the Herzegovina Neretva Canton, suggested for the future to set a specific rule in the AIE statute recognising the status of interested partner.

The Secretary General added that the last comma of art. 22 of AIE statute provides that. "AIE can join alliances of associations, communities, networks and other forms of linking associations. The decision on it is adopted by the Assembly"

Mr. Dobroslavic, after reiterating that there is a concrete need to better clarify the figure of interested partner in the statute, invited the Assembly to vote on the request submitted by CURSA.

The assembly approved unanimously.

Referring point 7, the Secretary General illustrated to the participants that in the last years some target calls on capitalisation has been opened by ETC programmes of the area. These calls are for capitalise previous ETC projects and, for this reasons, the role of the networks, as well the work done by the Euroregion, should be enhanced. He reported that in the coming days, the Euroregion will probably receive some partnership proposals from other organisations. About the co-financing, he stressed the importance that Euroregion must pay attention on how to co-finance the projects, pointing out that it is necessary for the Association to have funds available ensuring at least a couple of professionals working on the projects. Furthermore the members can make available financial resources and/or staff to performed this activity for the secretariat. He reminded that in the past, Istria Region allocated significant funds and professionals to work on project activities.

Mr. Dobroslavic agreed to develop new European projects in the upcoming future. Although these funds are desirable, he stressed the importance of co-financing aspect. Euroregion should have own funds as contribution for co-financing the projects.

The Secretary General underlined the importance on getting involved in EU projects, pointing out that in case of projects granted by the association and financed under EU programmes, it could be necessary to evaluate if some AIE member can make available extra own human or financial resources for the implementation.

The President asked to the participants any comments or remarks.

Mr. Nevenko Herceg, the first minister of the Herzegovina Neretva Canton, strongly agreed with the last point raised by the Secretary General, pointing out that the ETC Programmes are very important also for HNC Canton and for the regional entities in Bosnia Herzegovina. These funds are often the only financial recourse for developing cooperation project in these territories. He complained that small regions are not so much involved in the governance of the ETC programmes, hoping that the managing authorities will meet in the future the priorities and the interest of the smallest regions. In the frame of ADRION Programme he complained that small regions of Bosnia Herzegovina are not involved in the governance of the programme because Bosnia Herzegovina is not an EU member. So he hoped a more extensively involvement of the small regions in ETC programmes of the area.

Mr. Andrea Jakova took the floor, he agreed with the President and the Secretary General, adding that the AIE Secretariat should know the programmes, as well as the priorities, the objectives of the programmes and how these programmes can be interested for its members.

The Secretary General agreed with Jakova. Mr Cocco expressed the need to strengthen the collaboration with other European networks, such as CPMR. The Secretary General informed that the week before the Assembly, he has met in Brussels a representative of CPMR and the former president Jakovcic. During this meeting Mr. Jakovcic explained that the European Parliament has allocated around € 1.300.000 in 2017 for the implementation of some EUSAIR actions (especially for the non-Member states). Mr. Cocco suggested the idea to put together the Adriatic and Ionian networks (such as the Euroregion, the Forum of the Chambers

of commerce, the Forum of the Cities) and preparing a common idea for this funds. We should propose to the European Commission a call of proposals.

President Dobroslavic thanked all those who have participated in this discussion. He agreed with Mr. Cocco, as well as with the Prime Minister of HNC.

### **Point 8**

Mr. Dobroslavic underlined that the lack of coordination among stakeholders, as well as the poor level of involvement local authorities in the EUSAIR decision process, was the main conclusion of the conference held in the morning. President believed that local governments are not sufficiently involved in the actions of EUSAIR strategy. Therefore AIE should find solutions for a better coordination in the EUSAIR implementation and a more significant involvement of regional and local level, chambers of commerce and universities. He confirmed the need to: propose to the managing authority the possibility to have a financial support, to support the initiative of Mr. Jakovcic and to ask a these funds for the networks of the Adriatic ionain area. He concluded the speech informing that the Commissioner Cretu is not satisfied of the EUSAIR implementation. She thought that EUSAIR process is not going in the right direction and she will not participate in the second EUSAIR forum on May the 10<sup>th</sup> in Greece.

Although this criticism raised by the Commissioner, the Secretary General added that it is not acceptable that an EU Commissioner decide to not take part in the annual forum of the strategy. While she should do everything for the success of the strategy. On the other hand the regions should be more committed. He added that CPMR proposed a collaboration with AIE aimed to organise an EUSAIR event in combination with the Forum in Ioannina addressed to the Regions and local authorities.

Ms. Greta Bardeli, President of Regional Council of Shkoder, took the floor confirmed her commitment in the CPMR task force. She said that AIE have to be prepared for the EUSAIR forum.

Mr. Dobroslavic thanked all those who took part in this discussion, wishing wide participation in the Forum of Ioannina.

### **Point 9**

President Dobroslavic said that this is a smart initiative, proposed by the island of Corcula. He suggested to support the Smart Islands Declaration.

The Secretary General confirmed that it is an acceptable initiative and the contents of the declaration are coherent with AIE purposes.

The President asked to verify the formal step for accepting the initiative (If it is necessary to sign the declaration or it is sufficient an expression of interest).

### **Point 10**

President Dobroslavic informed the Assembly that Euroregion has received a request of membership from West Herzegovina County (BiH). The prime minister of the Canton was not able to attend the Assembly because he has an institutional meeting in Malta.

Mr. Nevenko Herceg, the first minister of the Herzegovina Neretva Canton, welcomed the participation of this new member. The organisation has all the competences typical assigned by Bosnia Hercegovina to the Cantons.

Mr. Dobroslavic asked to vote for accepting the membership of West Herzegovina County.

The new membership of West Herzegovina County was unanimously approved by the Assembly. The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion has participated by 29 Members. The signature of solemn declaration of membership to the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will follow soon.

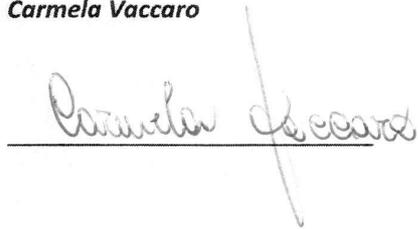
Muhamed Softić, , Advisor for Central Bosnia Canton, took the floor. He informed that Central Bosnia Canton is evaluating to join to Euroregion. The Canton will probably send a formal request very soon.

The President thanked everyone for the participation, wishing a fruitful year for the Euroregion.

The assembly closed at 13:10.

**Secretary of the meeting**

**Carmela Vaccaro**

Handwritten signature of Carmela Vaccaro in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.

**The President**

**Nikola Dobroslavic**

Handwritten signature of Nikola Dobroslavic in cursive script, written over a horizontal line. Below the signature is a circular official seal of the Jadransko Jonska Euroregion. The seal features a central emblem with a stylized landscape and water, surrounded by the text "JADRANSKO JONSKA EUROREGION" and "JADRANSKO JONSKA EUROREGION" in a circular border.