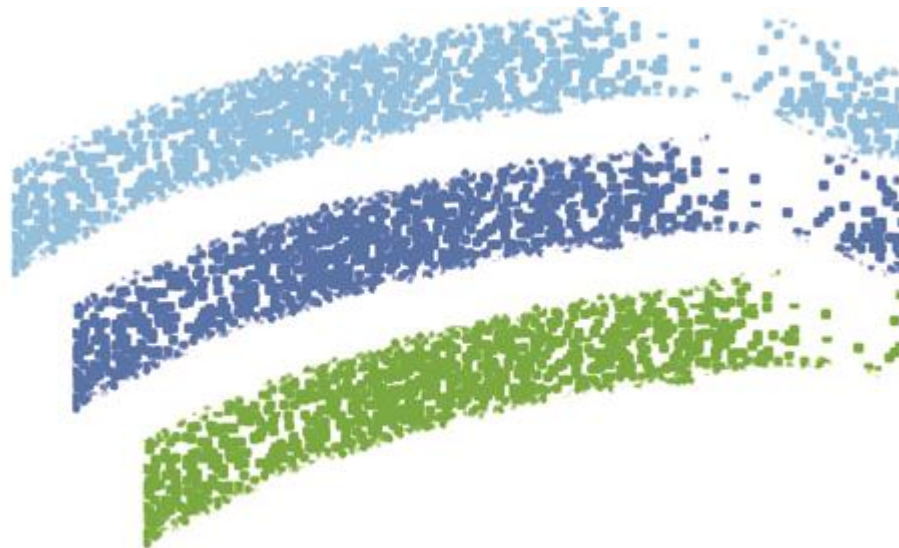




# Adriatic Ionian Euroregion

## ANNUAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

### 2017



*[EN] The document has been approved by the AIE General Assembly on 27/03/2017 in Dubrovnik.*

## Activity Programme 2017

### 1. EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION (EUSAIR)

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in 2014. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission, together with the Adriatic-Ionian Region countries, regional/local authorities and stakeholders, in order to address common challenges together. The Strategy aims at creating synergies and fostering coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. The EUSAIR has a limited focus on areas of mutual interest with high relevance for the Adriatic-Ionian countries. It is built on four thematic pillars: Blue growth, Connecting the region (transport and energy networks), Environmental quality and Sustainable tourism. The EUSAIR covers eight countries: four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and four non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia).

On 12 and 13 May 2016, more than 600 participants attended in Dubrovnik (Croatia) the 1st Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), jointly organised by the European Commission and the Government of Croatia. One year and a half after the launch of this EU macro-regional strategy, the Forum gathered together the representatives of the national, regional and local administrations of the eight participating countries, as well as a wide range of stakeholders (academia, business sector, civil society) to discuss the progress so far and define the way forward.

In the quality of Governor of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County and President of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, President Nikola Dobroslavić opens the EUSAIR forum in Dubrovnik with a opening speech and pointed out the key role that EUSAIR plays for a real integration and the promotion of the competitiveness in the macro regional territory underling the potential to increase competitiveness and connectivity in the region and its integration.

It is essential that AIE continues to follow the EUSAIR meetings and participate in the tables of Thematic Steering Groups (TSG) respectively regarding the "Blue Growth" (pillar 1), "Connecting the region: transport and energy networks" (pillar 2), the "Environmental Quality" (pillar 3) and the "Sustainable Tourism" (pillar 4), and monitor the work progress of the Governing Board, which includes the members of the eight States participating in the regional strategy and the representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament, in order to continue to provide our contribution to the implementation of the pillars.

As far as the EUSAIR, the following activities will be pursued by the Euroregion in 2017:

- Develop a model for an active participation to the 2nd Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) that it will take place in Ioannina (Greece) on 11-12 May 2017. The event will reflect on the progress and achievements since the 1st Forum held in Dubrovnik in May 2016 and contribute to define the way forward in the implementation of the Strategy. The forum is a great networking

opportunity for stakeholders (European Commission and Institutions, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers responsible for EU Funds, line Ministers, national, regional and local administrations, the business sector, academia, the civil society and the general public) gather to discuss concrete suggestions, views and ideas on how to better achieve EUSAIR Strategy objectives.

- Actively participate in the implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy, strengthening the role of regional and local governments in the promotion and implementation of the EUSAIR, in line with all four pillars
- Insist, in particular, on projects for transport connections in the region:
  - North and South Europe with the Adriatic - Ionian corridor (highway Trieste - Kalamata), the inclusion of this corridor in the TEN-T corridors of the European Union
  - North and South Europe with rail corridor Ravenna – Brindisi, the inclusion of this corridor in the TEN-T corridors of the European Union
  - Overseas ship connections, air connections, sea-plane connections with the continuation to the corridor (VC) and corridor (VB).
- Follow the work and try to ensure cooperation with the Managing Authority for the implementation of the strategy.
- Coordination and collaboration with other European networks, such as CPMP (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions), to foster the work on Macro regional strategy;
- Monitoring ETC Programmes and Projects (Adriatic, Italy-Croatia, Interreg MED, IPA Italy Montenegro Albania) to analyze how these Programmes are interlinked with the EUSAIR.
- Explore possible future projects and initiatives on macro-regional area.
- Develop a political reflection and initiatives related to migrations in macro-regional area.
- Active contribution and collaboration with the Interregional group "Adriatic-Ionian" of the Committee of the Regions;
- Strengthen the relations with the European Parliament for the EUSAIR issues.

## **2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION AND COOPERATION WITH GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

In the last two years, the Euroregion formally has accepted requests of new membership by local and regional authorities. For instance, in 2015 AIE has recorded as 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> members of the association, the entrance of the Municipality of Herceg Novi and the Old Royal Capital Cetinje. In 2017, the Euroregion will continue to implement the membership of the association seeking the involvement and the accession of new territories.

In addition, as a result of the evolution of European programming and EUSAIR macro regional zone, the Euroregion should seek to further strengthen cooperation between the members.

On this regards, the following activities should be pursued by the Euroregion:

- Working actively on the expansion of the membership of Adriatic Ionian Euroregion especially in the Ionian area;
- Encouraging the activities of existing members to play an active role in the work of the Euroregion association and fulfilling their obligations toward the association.
- Encouraging the cooperation with other entities and networks in the Adriatic Ionian region (such as Chambers of Commerce, Universities, other stakeholders, etc.)
- Strengthening the cooperation with the Member States of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative;
- Strengthening the cooperation with other European networks in the Mediterranean area (such as CPRM, Arcolatino, etc.).
- Introducing and presenting the AIE to the Governments of the Adriatic and Ionian, as done in 2016 when the President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (Republic of Croatia) has received in Zagreb a delegation of the Euroregion represented by President and vice presidents on the occasion of AIE 10th anniversary.

### **3. THEMATIC COMMISSIONS**

As one of the essential point of the work programme, there is a strong need to better support the work of the Thematic Commissions of the Euroregion which represent a key point for the association.

In the recent years, the financial resources of some cooperation projects, such as AdriGov and Adrieurop, were used to organise the AIE commissions. The available financial resources gave the opportunity to convene each AIE Commissions at least 1 times per year and to develop common strategies on their respective topics and to express the views on common initiatives and project proposals.

Although financial recourses allocated for the Thematic Committees are limited, it will be very important in 2017 to insist in the work of the Thematic Commissions in order to find new common priorities and solutions to specific challenges. The report of each commissions will be an useful tool for preparing thematic dossiers and to present some priorities to the relevant national and European institutions.

The Secretariat will help in 2017 the AIE members who want to organise and host the thematic committees in their territory in 2017. Furthermore the Euroregion welcomes the opportunity to use financial resource of cooperation projects, implemented by AIE members, to cover meeting costs for organising the AIE thematic committees. Also international events, already planned by Members, can become an useful tool to multiply the opportunities to convene the Commissions. A good strategy would be to combine these events planned by AIE members in their respective territories with the thematic sessions of the Euroregion.

### **4. COMMUNICATION AND WEB SITE**

The web site of the association has been renewed, updated and consolidated in 2016. Most of the AIE activities and events, as well as external events that affected the macro regional area, have been covered by the editorial staff of the Secretariat and published on website.

Also the project 4Pillars has developed and provided communication tools, such as newsletters on different thematic.

Euroregion should continue in 2017 on this path. The association should be able to circumscribe the work of the network, promoting at the same time the macroregional strategy.

The AIE will continue to consolidate the communication and dissemination activities and will try to upgrade the AIE website with different contents such as News, EUSAIR, ETC Programmes, EU Projects of the association, EU projects developed by AIE Members, etc.

## **5. EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICE, MOBILITY AND TRAINING**

As done in the recent years, the Euroregion will encourage to AIE members and their civil servants the opportunity to some administrative exchange of experiences, especially in the management of transnational projects financed by the Structural Funds and thematic programmes of the EU. It is very important to develop innovative practices and joint initiatives and to transfer them to the community of members.

In 2017, as performed in 2016 with the Traineeship Programme “Vado e Torno”, the Euroregion will host trainees (University students and young professionals in the field of European policies) for the Euroregion Office in Brussels.

## **6. BRUSSELS OFFICE**

Over the years, the activities carried out by the Brussels office have been important to consolidate strong relations with European Institutions and other European Regions and networks. The events organized in Brussels, such as statutory meetings, workshops, press conferences and Open Days, helped to promote the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion at EU level and to reinforce its role. In 2017, the activities of the Office should be strengthened, taking full advantage of the possibilities that the city can offer, especially in terms of relations with relevant institutions, such as European Parliament, European Commission and Committee of the Regions.

Positive are also the results of carried by some interns coming from different regions. Also in 2017 the Euroregion expect to host in Brussels some interns. The Euroregion should continue in this direction:

- Strengthen the presence in Brussels of the Euroregion;
- Supporting the organisation of the Open Days Annual Event;
- Strengthen the cooperation with EU institutions;

## **7. EUROPEAN PROJECTS & FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS OF 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD**

The opportunities offered by the ETC programmes, such as IPA Adriatic CBC Programme, and the different ETC projects implemented in the recent years have played a key role in enhancing relations between the two sides of the Adriatic.

The 2014-2020 programming period is now giving to AIE and its members a good opportunity to implement new cooperation projects. The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will play an active role in some ETC programmes like the cross-border programmes (Interreg Italy-Croatia, IPA Italy-Albania-Montenegro, Interreg Italy Greece), as well as the transnational cooperation programmes (Interreg Med, Interreg Adrion, Interreg Europe) and other EU direct programmes such as Erasmus+. The Euroregion has the ambitious to participate in direct way to these projects and to provide support to its members, providing them inputs for projects and in finding EU partners.

The European projects can bring additional financial recourse to the association, as did in 2016 by CLAVET project (Erasmus+). In 2017 the Euroregion will implement BLEUTOURMED already financed by Interreg Med Programme. The project will develop community building, capitalisation and communication activities for the Modular Projects selected by Med Programme under the priority Sustainable Tourism. The AIE Secretariat will ensure the implementation of this project aimed to capitalise the results produced by the modular projects also in the territories of the Euroregion.

Developing and submitting project proposals (especially in the frame of the above mentioned ETC Programmes) will be a key activity to be conducted in 2017 and eventual approved projects will guarantee extra financial resources for the ordinary activities of the Euroregion.

## **8. SECRETARIAT OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION**

The AIE will adopt in 2017 an Internal Regulations able to set out the way the Secretariat works in order to complement the rules already fixed in the Statutes. This internal regulation will be supplementary and subordinate to the Statutes.

the Euroregion will adopt also an Internal guide for the working missions of the Secretariat's staff.

As potential activity, the Euroregion will explore also the possibility to open job positions necessary to implement European projects already financed such as Bleutourmed.