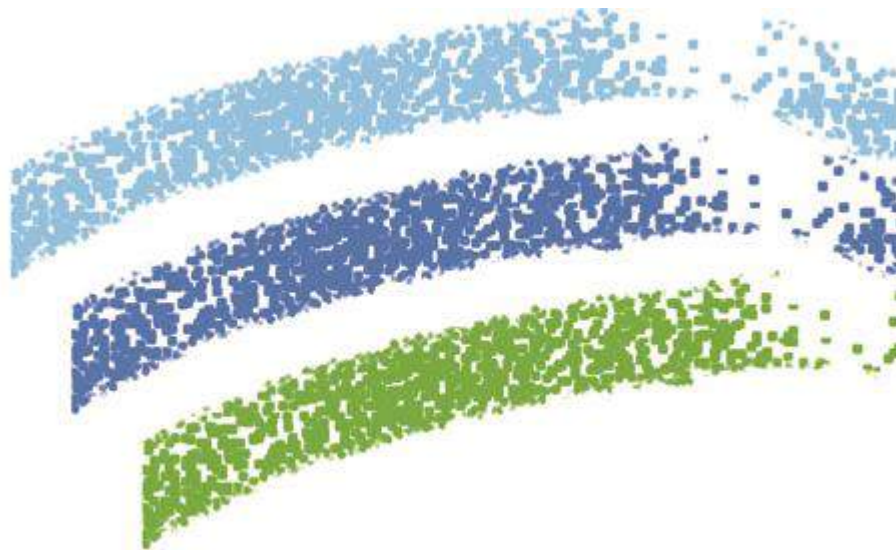




EUROREGIONE ADRIATICO IONICA
JADRANSKO JONSKA EUROREGIJA
ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION
EURO RAJONI ADRIATIKO JONIAN
ΕΥΡΩΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ ΑΔΡΙΑΤΙΚΗΣ ΙΟΝΙΟΥ

ADRIATIC-IONIAN EUROREGION ACTIVITY REPORT

2017



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1. STATUTORY MEETINGS

1.1 XIV General Assembly of AIE, Dubrovnik, 27th March 2017

The XIV AIE General Assembly was held in Dubrovnik on 27th March 2017, hosted by Dubrovnik Neretva County. Nikola DOBROSLAVIC, AIE President and President of Dubrovnik Neretva County, opened the General Assembly remarking his great satisfaction for the results achieved in 2016 by the Euroregion.



During the Assembly the activities and the financial plan for 2017 were discussed and approved, as well as the events scheduled for 2017. Regarding this last point, the Secretary General underlined the importance to activate the thematic commissions overcoming the organizational and financial shortages occurred

in the past. During the Assembly the amount of 1000 € as 2017 membership fee was unanimously approved by the Assembly.

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



approved by the Assembly. The Assembly approved also the membership request received by West Herzegovina County (BiH). The association counts now 29 Members.

The Assembly also approved unanimously the request received by the University Consortium CURSA to join the Euroregion as "interested partner".

The Secretary General illustrated to the participants that in the last year some target calls on capitalisation has been opened by ETC programmes of the area. The Euroregion has received several partnership proposals from other organisations to join in EU projects. 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. Mr. Dobroslavic agreed to

develop new European projects but he also stressed the importance of co-financing aspect. Euroregion should have own funds as contribution for co-financing the projects. 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 and he hoped a more extensively involvement of the small regions in ETC programmes of the area.

During the Assembly the latest updates of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region were discussed, as well as the Smart Islands Declaration, a smart initiative proposed by the island of Corcula.

In the framework of the XIV General Assembly of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, the Dubrovnik-Neretva County hosted also the International Conference *“The role of regions in proposing priority projects for EU strategy for Adriatic Ionian Region”*.

1.2 Executive Committee, Brussels, 12th July 2017

On 12th July 2017, the Executive Committee of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion met in Brussels, at the headquarters of the Molise Region. The President of AIE and the Members of Executive Committee discussed about new membership applications, activities of the thematic commissions, next events, ETC projects, organization of the Secretariat and joint initiatives with other networks.

The Executive Committee was also attended by the representative of the West Herzegovina Canton, Mr. Zdenko Cosic, the Prime Minister of the Canton, as the last General Assembly, held in Dubrovnik on March 27th, accepted the request for membership received by West Herzegovina



Canton. Mr. Cosic welcomes the participants presenting the Canton (located in a strategic location among Zagreb and the Adriatic sea) and the Institution.

The Executive Committee examined also the request received from Calabria Region. The formal acceptance was postponed to the next Assembly where the acceptance of Calabria Region as full member of the association will be discussed.

During the meeting the Secretary General stressed the importance to relaunch the activities of the thematic commissions because it is a crucial activity of the Euroregion. He stimulated the Presidents of the Thematic Commissions to restart the thematic work, adding the Euroregion needs these thematic contributions especially now during this important year for Europe and for the cohesion policy. He stresses the importance to schedule these meetings as well as it very important to schedule the other statutory meetings like the assembly and the executive committee and he

pointed out the availability of Kotor to host one of these events in next autumn.

The Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, as president for the Commission for Transport and Infrastructure, declared his willingness to organize the next meeting of the Transport and Infrastructure Commission and Puglia Region the AIE commission on tourism and culture.

The President added that also the works of the other commissions is fundamental, so he encouraged all members to organise themselves to start committees work. He recognised that it is not an easy



task because there are some costs to cover but he hopes that some European and ETC projects will also serve to this purpose. In this regard the Secretary General clarified that a possible solution to overcome this problem could be to increase the presence of the Euroregion in support of its members and

thematic commissions also taking advantage of European projects.

The Secretary General introduced the AI-NURECC (Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chamber of Commerce and Cities) which is an initiative stimulated by Mr. Ivan Jackovic, member of the European Parliament and first president of the Adriatic Euroregion, and jointly elaborated by the most important networks in the EUSAIR area, as representatives of Adriatic-Ionian Regions, Cities, Universities and Chambers of Commerce. The networks are the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), the Forum of the Adriatic-Ionian Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of the Adriatic-Ionian Cities, UniADRION (the network of Adriatic-Ionian Universities). These networks have elaborated a proposal for an effective implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy and Action Plan asking to the DG REGIO of European Commission to finance the initiative using a specific fund of the European Parliament specifically allocated for EUSAIR, the AI-NURECC's activities should be fully financed from European Institution with the purpose to develop a couple of pilot projects on EUSAIR topics.

The Secretary General presented "Panoramed", the first project launched by Interreg MED that gathers regional and national Governments of the program countries for the next 5 years and it is endowed with 9 million euro funding. The aim of Panoramed is to collect scientific evidences from all the Interreg MED-funded projects and from other institutions working for Mediterranean development to design more informed policies and strategic joint planning. He proposed to candidate the Euroregion as one of the network interested in the implementation of this project. He suggested to write to the programme authorities, specifically to the Croatian National Contact Point, introducing the Euroregion and asking to involve the organisation in the project activities, as relevant network interested in the governance of the Mediterranean.

The Secretary General highlighted that AIE is working for consolidate the structure and the organisation of the secretariat because, so far, most of the activities performed by the association were guaranteed and conducted by some professionals and collaborators on a voluntary basis. The request to improve the organisation of the secretariat with a professional staff was come up from some inputs raised at the last Assembly in Dubrovnik from the Presidents Dobroslavic, Dalipi, D'Alfonso and Herzeg. Francesco Cocco introduced the report about the organization of the AIE Secretariat (according to the art. 6 of the internal regulation of the general secretariat) and pointed out that the AIE statute allows a secretariat that it should be more structured in order to consolidate its role. The Secretary General pointed out the four collaborators are currently working with him in Campobasso at the Secretariat.



They are all experts in EU projects and they were involved in the candidatures of at least 15 EU projects submitted during this year by the Euroregion. Hopefully, the funds generated from the participation in European projects will allow the Euroregion to cover the expenditures for having a more organised secretariat since the amount of 1000 Euro, as annual membership fee, cannot be sufficient in term of budget for having a secretariat composed by an adequate number of workers.

Mr. Dobroslavic, agreed with Mr. Cocco, pointed out Euroregion cannot implement the projects only with the support of unpaid volunteers and should assess the possibilities on how to use the financial resources of the project for staff cost. The Executive Committee approved unanimously the Report on the organization of the general secretariat presented by the Secretary General.

2. EUSAIR INITIATIVES AND CONFERENCES

2.1 Conference on the role of regions in proposing priority projects for EU strategy for Adriatic Ionian Region

In the framework of the XIV General Assembly of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, the Dubrovnik-Neretva County hosted the International Conference *“The role of regions in proposing priority projects for EU strategy for Adriatic Ionian Region”*.

The aim of the conference was to bring some conclusions on the effectiveness of EUSAIR strategies and projects.



All the speakers of the conference agreed that the strategy is a good opportunity for the development of the Adriatic Ionian area, although some of them were not satisfied with the EUSAIR implementation due to a lack of concrete projects and results.

The speakers underlined also the lack of coordination between Member States and European Commission, underlining that regional local governments, chambers of commerce and universities are not sufficiently involved in the EUSAIR implementation. President Dobroslavić presented the conclusions reached in the framework of the conference emphasizing the projects necessary to connect the macro-region: The Adriatic-Ionian highway from southern Greece to Trieste, which will connect the east coast of macro-region; the Fast railway Ravenna – Brindisi which will assure better connection on the west coast of macro-region, the Modern road, maritime and air connections in the direction west – east will bring together and connect the mainland across the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas, the energy connection with the Adriatic – Ionic pipeline, the fibre optic network for high speed communication. Dobroslavić pointed out that the realization of these projects should require the active involvement of the European Commission involving also the EU investment funds as well as the European Fund for Strategic Investment.



2.2 Second EUSAIR Forum

On the 11th-12th of May 2017 took place in Ioannina (Greece) the 2nd Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), jointly organised by the European Commission and the Hellenic Republic with the support of the EUSAIR Facility Point. As interested stakeholder the



Euroregion was invited by the EC.

The event meditated on the progress and achievements since the 1st Forum held in Dubrovnik in May 2016 and contributed to define the way forward in the implementation of the Strategy.

The event focused on all 4 pillars of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR):

- I. “Blue growth”,
- II. “Connecting the region (transport and energy networks)“,
- III. “Environmental quality“ and
- IV. “Sustainable tourism”.

The speakers of the conference were: foreign ministers, national authorities, responsible for managing EU funds of the EUSAIR countries, as well as representatives from the EU institutions.

The event provided a great opportunity to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders from the European Commission, the Region, including national, regional and local administrations, the business sector, the academia and the civil society. Raising awareness on the Strategy and increasing its visibility was been among the main goals of the conference.

The Euroregion participates in event as interested stakeholder in common actions and projects and to reach relevant partners. In addition to meeting other SMEs, they had the opportunity to meet with Academia, research institutes, Chambers of Commerce, and other important stakeholders. The session was also provided an option to meet with stakeholders from the European Commission and the Region (national administrations representatives).

2.3 Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Chamber of Commerce and Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion took part in the 17th Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chamber of Commerce (AIC) and 18th Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities which took place from 7 to 9 June 2017 in Chieti and Pescara (Italy).



To better coordinate their activities, the two fora organised a joint statutory event in Abruzzo with a specific focus on the Governance of EUSAIR. In this edition, through a deepening of the role of Governance and transnational networks, the plenary

session "Bridging to the Future" focused on some issues relevant to the 8 countries of the Adriatic Ionian area that at the same time, they represent European prerogatives: cultural heritage and tourism, innovation and digitalisation of businesses and public administration. The Euroregion was represented by the Secretary General Francesco Cocco in the round table *“Which governance model to relaunch the territories in a macro regional perspective?”*. He pushed for greater cooperation and

synergy between the various networks involved in the area in subject and compliance with the commitments taken with since the Strategy came into force. He stressed the importance of the networks in the governance process of EUSAIR, he will also presented the innovative governance approach of MED programme based on horizontal project, community of projects and Axis 4, as well as BleuTourMed_C3, the Horizontal Project, built to create a MED thematic community on Sustainable Tourism.

2.4 European Week of Regions and Cities, Conference for better transport connectivity, Brussels, 9-12 October 2017



The European Week of Regions and Cities was one of the biggest event on EU regional and urban policy. Thousands of stakeholders and experts joined together in Brussels to discuss EU Cohesion Policy. It was a moment of both looking back and looking forward, whilst tackling the challenges that the EU regional and urban policy should be addressing over the coming years. More than five thousand representatives from the local authorities, experts and actors in the European Union's regional policy participated at the 15th European Week of Regions and Cities.

In the framework of this European week, the Dubrovnik Neretva Region organised at the European parliament the conference titled *“Together with EU funds – for better transport connectivity”* on 10 October 2017.



The event focused on trans-European transport networks and cross-border transport connections with a panel discussion on *“Importance of Transport Connectivity in Supporting Regional Economic Development”*. The conference was attended by 100 participants from EU institutions, regional development agencies and representatives of European regions.

2.5 Committee of the Regions: “Frattura and Dobroslavic elected as Chair and Vice Chair of the Interregional Group “Adriatic Ionian”, Brussels, 11th October 2017

During the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the EU, President of the Adriatic

Ionian Euroregion, and President of Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Mr. Nikola Dobroslavić, was elected as the Vice-President of the Interregional Group for the "Adriatic-Ionian Region". Mr. Paolo di Laura Frattura, President of Molise Region, was elected as chair of the group.

The Adriatic-Ionian Interregional Group is a committee set up in January 2013 by the Committee of the Regions. The Group aims:

- to represent an Adriatic-Ionian opinion gathering platform, facilitating a broad exchange of views, ideas and practices between CoR members and representatives of European institutions and bodies, networks, Adriatic Ionian fora, EU and non-EU countries authorities of the eight States involved in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- to contribute as a key player in the multi-level governance to the shaping of the EUSAIR and of its Action Plan as well as to its follow-up and implementation to tackle common challenges effectively and to affirm the region's identity and full potential
- to create synergies with the existing strategies of the Baltic and of the Danube regions also through their CoR interregional groups

The President of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) Karl-Heinz Lambertz, in the plenary session delivered the first speech on the situation of the European Union from the point of view of regions and cities. The focus was given to the local and regional authorities challenges in areas such as



migration, employment and growth, climate change, social and territorial cohesion and the launch of the European Broadband platform.

During the plenary session President Frattura and President Dobroslavic reaffirmed the need to make as many efforts as possible for finding a coordination between European, national and local institutions with the purpose of enhancing the Adriatic Ionian Area. They recognised the importance of the work done by Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and Molise Region and the several efforts performed on the main institutional tables.



2.6 AI-NURECC INITIATIVE and event "Delivering EUSAIR'S Implementation", Brussels, 8th November 2017

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, represented by the President Dobroslavic and the Secretary General Francesco Cocco, took part in the event "Delivering EUSAIR'S Implementation" hosted by the

Member of the European Parliament and former President of the Euroregion, Ivan Jakovcic, on November the 8th at the European Parliament.



The event was an occasion to discuss the progress of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and to establish the informal group of the European Parliament named “Friends of EUSAIR”, a group a group which up today brings together 17 MEPs representing Member States of the Adriatic and Ionian Macro region who are supporters of the

Strategy and its Action Plan.

In the presence of European Commission and many other international representatives of the associations, working in the area of Adriatic-Ionian macro-region, MEP Jakovčić emphasized the need to accelerate the implementation of the action plan and political goals of EUSAIR. One of this accelerations will be the platform for promoting structured dialogue and more effective cooperation among key Adriatic-Ionian stakeholders, called the “The AI-NURECC Initiative”, which was presented by one of the speakers, Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of CPMR.

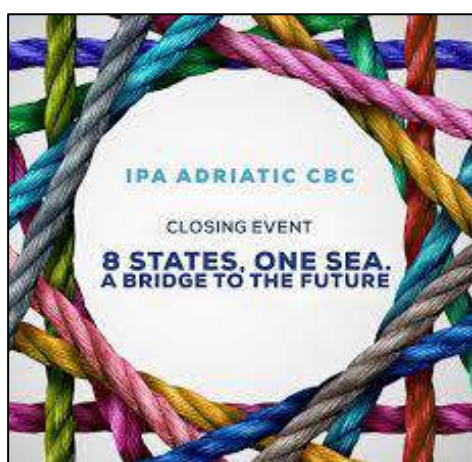


The initiative AI-NURECC was launched involving five major networks of the Adriatic and Ionian area: The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), the 3 Civil Society Forum (Forum of the Adriatic Ionian Chamber of Commerce, Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and UniAdriion). With the aim of promoting dialogue and governance through knowledge and skills matured throughout the years, the AI NURECC initiative will work in line with the EUSAIR Pillars, coordinating its efforts with the European Commission, with the Adriatic Ionian Initiative and the relevant Ministries of the countries in the area.

At the meeting there were also authorities representing the European Commission DG Regio, in the person of Lena Andresson-Pench (Director) and Jean-Pierre Halkin (Head Of Unit – Competence Centre Macro-regions and Territorial Co-operation) who underlined the importance of the AI_NURECC Initiative and have communicated the will of the Commission to support the project's activities.

2.7 Final event of the IPA ADRIATIC CBC PROGRAMME 2007-2013, L'Aquila, 4th December 2017

The final event of the 2007-2013 IPA Adriatic Cross-Border Cooperation Programme took place in L'Aquila (Italy) at the Auditorium of the Scuola Ispettori e Sovrintendenti della Guardia di Finanza on 4 December 2017 with the participation of Antonio Tajani, as President of the European Parliament.



The event was hosted and organized by Abruzzo Region as Managing Authority of the CBC Programme.

The purpose of the event was to share with the highest institutional representatives at national, international level and with the pre-accession countries not only the final outcomes of the implementation phases of the IPA Adriatic CBC Programme, which has been the most important European Territorial Cooperation Programme in the Adriatic region with an allocation amounting to

244,000,000 Euros, but also in the attempt to define a joint stand on the future of the European Cohesion Policy in the Adriatic-Ionian region.

The event saw the participation of the two Vice-presidents of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion: Aldrin Dalipi, President of Regional Council of Tirana and Luciano D'Alfonso, President of Abruzzo Region as well as the AIE Secretary General Francesco Cocco.

The technical address was provided by Paola Di Salvatore, as Managing Authority of the Programme. She presented the relevant steps and the impact of the CBC Programme and the complex process of pre-accession of the Balkan countries. She made an overview of the results achieved by implementing the first projects of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy Action



Plan, the adoption of measures and financial actions to prevent irregularities and fraud when using EU funds at the benefit of the EU budget. The Managing Authority underlined the need of a governance system to face the new challenges of the Adriatic-Ionian area.

3. EUROPEAN PROJECTS

3.1 Overview

The opportunities offered by European programme and the different EU projects implemented in the recent years have played a key role in enhancing relations between the two sides of the Adriatic. In the meantime the European projects bring additional financial recourse and new activities to the association.



In the year 2017 the Euroregion was involved, as project partner, in two EU projects: Bleutourmed_C3 (Interreg MED) and Create (Erasmus+ Programme). The Secretariat of the Euroregion has also applied with several other proposals on the following EU programme: H2020, Erasmus+, Interreg Italy-Croatia

CBC Programme 2014-2020, Interreg, MED, COSME, etc.

The Euroregion was also involved as associated partner in two MED projects “PANACeA” (Horizontal project of Axis 3.2 on Protected Areas) and “InnoBlueGrowth: Horizontal Communication & Capitalization project for Innovation in Blue Growth at Mediterranean level” (Modular project of Axis 1 on Blue Growth).

Another positive result was reached in 2017, the project BLUEKEP was approved for funding and the operative phase will start in January 2018.

3.2 Short descriptions of the ongoing EU projects

BleuTourMed_C3 Project “Maritime and Coastal Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean – Community building, Communication and Capitalisation”

Length: November 2016 – October 2019

Programme: Interreg MED

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

Topic: Maritime and Coastal Sustainable Tourism (Communication Capitalization and Community Building)

Coordinated by Latin Arc, Spain

More at: <https://interreg-med.eu/thematics/sustainable-tourism/>

In a nutshell

Built on a transnational partnership with strong knowledge and experience on integrated coastal management and sustainable tourism policies, BLETourMed aims at supporting and ensuring synergies between the modular projects selected under the SO3.1 with the objective of creating a cluster of projects able to enhance jointly solutions for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the Med area through a coherent strategy of Community Building, Communication & Capitalisation.

CREATE “Competitive Regions Employability of Adults through Education

Length: November 2017 – October 2019

Programme: Erasmus+ KA2 Adult Education

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

Topic: Support regions to invest better EU funds for Adult Education

Coordinated by Agentur für Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung (AEWB)

More at: www.projectcreate.eu

In a nutshell

The overall objective of CREATE (Competitive Regions Employability of Adults through Education) is to reduce geographic disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes across and within EU regions. CREATE’ will enhance policy formulation and promote evidence-based AE policy and practice, also by further aligning strategy, policy and funding of Adult Education.

3.3. Participation of AIE Secretariat in EU project events

- *BleuTourMed’s kick-off meeting – Rome, 11th January 2017*
- *BleuTourMed’s Event: “Sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean region: a strategic driver for economic development that strengthens the resilience of the maritime and coastal ecosystems” – Marseille, 16-17 March 2017*
- *Interreg MED - 2° Community building event of MED Sustainable Tourism Community: “Making tourism more sustainable sharing methodologies for a joint action”, Athens, 4-5 October 2017*
- *PANACEA Project: “Brinding the science-practice-policy gaps in biodiversity protection, Barcelona, 23-25 October 2017*
- *Kick-off meeting of CREATE project (Erasmus+), Brussels, 9-10 November 2017*

3.4 New projects: BLUE KEP and AI-NURECC

In 2017, the Italy-Croatia CBC Programme Monitoring Committee approved 22 “Standard+” projects submitted in the framework of the 1st Calls for proposals. Several projects, proposed by the Italian and Croatian members of the Euroregion, have been selected for funding.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion has granted the project BLUE KEP that will be co-financed by the programme under the Priority Axis Blue innovation. The project has passed the final quality assessment and the Programme Monitoring Committee has approved the ranking lists during the meeting held in Split (Croatia) on the 26th and 27th October 2017.

BLUE KEP – BLUE Knowledge Exchange Program and integration of education systems in the cross border area will be led by the Italian partner Informest. The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will be mainly responsible for the communication and will ensure the outputs transferability in the AI area.

The topic of BLUE KEP is the Blue economy and its value chain (Nautical, shipbuilding, and maritime technologies). The project aims at enhancing the framework conditions for innovation in nautical and maritime sectors within the cooperation area, by strengthening integration of education systems in the cross-border area through the harmonization of the technical education systems.

This goal will be achieved through standardization of school curricula and methods for assessment and recognition of educational and professional knowledge of students. The project will produce cooperation agreements, teachers exchanges, student mobility and training programs that will not only provide students with valuable educational and professional experience, but they will also contribute to provide companies with future specialized labour force. In 2017 the project application of AI-NURECC has been submitted to the European Commission. The project will be admitted for funding in 2018. The implementation is expected in the first months of the year.

4. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

4.1 Membership of the association

In the last three years, the Euroregion has accepted requests of new membership by local and regional authorities. For instance, in 2015 AIE has recorded the entrance of the Municipality of Herceg Novi and the Old Royal Capital Cetinje. In 2017, the Euroregion has accepted in the association the West Herzegovina Canton that become the twenty-ninth members. In 2017 Regione Calabria (IT), Hercegbosanska Županija (BiH), Una Sana Canton (BiH) asked to join to Euroregion. Their requests will be assessed by the AIE Assembly in the first months of 2018 . The association is always interested in finding the involvement and the accession of new territories. As a

result of the evolution of European programming and EUSAIR macro regional strategy, the Euroregion should seek also to enlarge its geographical coverage in the Ionian area.

4.2 Secretariat

The AIE adopted 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 is supplementary and subordinate to the Statutes. The Euroregion has adopted also an Internal guide for the working missions of the Secretariat's staff as well as an internal purchase policy.

In the last year most of the AIE activities were guaranteed and conducted by some professionals, most of the time on a voluntary basis and without receiving permanent remunerations. The work performed by the Secretariat based in Campobasso was always supported by the experts of Dubrovnik Neretva County, their contributions were always being accurate and punctual.

In 2017 the Secretariat has explored the possibility to open job positions necessary to implement European projects already financed. So in the future the organisation of the Secretariat will be extended and improved according to needs of the work to be performed.

4.3 Communication and Website

The Secretariat has updated the website making it more interesting and graphically more appropriate. The entry of new contents has been fully completed. The website has now several specific section such as: Description, Members Map, Documents section, Event and news section, AIE Bodies, Library, Projects, Video and Image Gallery etc. Also periodic news has been published at least once every week on several topics such as EUSAIR, Policies, Projects, etc.