



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

Annual Activity Programme 2025

Adriatic Ionian Euroregion

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The Annual Activity Programme is a document that provides information about the activities that the association plans to carry out in 2025, describing at the same time the internal organisation of the Euroregion.

The document is divided into 2 main sections. The 1st SECTION is dedicated to the current and next activities in the framework of EUSAIR, EU projects and other cooperation initiatives. This part includes the following subsections:

- EUSAIR and the continuous commitment to contribute to its processes;
- Actions in synergy with the Committee of the Regions;
- Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance;
- European Territorial Cooperation: Potential role of the Association;
- Ongoing projects;
- Projects under evaluation.

The 2nd SECTION is dedicated to the Association's internal organisation and it is divided into the following subsections:

- Membership;
- Statute and Statutory meetings;
- Thematic Working Groups;
- Secretariat;
- Communication;
- Traineeships and Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY).

1st Section

EUSAIR, Cooperation Initiatives and Projects

1. EUSAIR AND THE CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT TO CONTRIBUTE TO ITS PROCESSES

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), endorsed by the European Council in October 2014, is the fourth Macro-Regional Strategy in Europe together with EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR, 2009), the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR, 2011) and EU-Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP, 2015).

Considering the number of potential and candidate countries that participate in the Strategy, enhancing cooperation can be a great opportunity for the development of the region. In the EUSAIR, EU Member States and non-EU countries cooperate on an equal footing, thus contributing to mutual learning and planning of common actions. In its beginning phase, the EUSAIR covered eight countries: four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and four non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia). North Macedonia became the ninth participating country of EUSAIR in April 2020. The inclusion follows the historical *Prespa Agreement* between Greece and North Macedonia and the approval by the Council and the Commission. North Macedonia is now involved in all EUSAIR governance structures, with a coordination role in Pillar 2 - Connecting the Region, sharing this role with Italy and Serbia. The participation of North Macedonia reinforces the political dimension of the Strategy and strengthens regional cooperation also in connection with the enlargement of the EU to Western Balkan countries.

In February 2022, the EUSAIR family has been expanded to include San Marino as the tenth participating country, as part of the negotiations for the country's accession in the European Union. San Marino's participation in the EUSAIR is an important preparatory step to identify and grow the professional skills and investments necessary to meet the obligations of a future association agreement with the EU. It also is allowing the country to promote technical and political cooperation with EU Member States as well as other candidate and potential candidate countries.

In 2025, the AIE will be strongly committed to participate in the implementation of the Strategy by participating in the relevant cooperation programmes active in the area (Interreg Italy-Croatia and IPA Adrion in particular via the Promont project) and expanding its outreach to the international dimension, through the participation in the DEAR Programme (Gear UP! Project). Also, the AIE will implement projects financed through EU action grants in the field of Cohesion Policy (SMART Youth), thus reinforcing cooperation with DG REGIO, Unit D.1 Macro-regions, Transnational/Interregional/External Cooperation, Enlargement.

The AIE intends to participate, for the fourth year in a row, to the EUSAIR Annual Forum 2025 that will close the Hellenic Presidency. The Forum is supposed to be organised in Ioannina (Greece) in May 2025. In 2025, the AIE will work to reinforce cooperation with the Hellenic Ministry of Economy and Finance, EUSAIR Coordinator, to closely monitor the progress of the EUSAIR Youth Council and to advocate a more active role of youth in the Strategy as well as to promote the Adriatic Ionian Youth Network (AIYN). Through its commitment related to macroregional strategies, the AIE intends to actively participate to the emerging debate about the future of Cohesion Policy and European Territorial Cooperation. In 2024, the AIE has actively contributed in the Interreg post-27 Consultations, a unique opportunity for regional and local stakeholders to influence national positions and those of the European institutions before the actual start of the legislative process.

Also, the AIE will seize the participation to EUSAIR processes to monitor and support EU Enlargement for the Western Balkans, thus fostering democratic cooperation and interconnection, fair transition, development and prosperity of neighboring regions.

Based on its experience with the EUSAIR and, in parallel, on its long-lasting contribution to territorial cooperation initiatives in the Mediterranean area, the AIE will keep contributing to the discussions on

the development of a Mediterranean macro-regional strategy, as explicitly promoted by the European Parliament in a report dated 2010.

In 2025, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will continue to support the EUSAIR process, by focusing on:

- Actively participating in the implementation of the Strategy with reference to the four EUSAIR pillars, cross-pillars and horizontal issues, to enhance regional and local authorities' appropriation of the EUSAIR main objectives and opportunities;
- Contributing to the Strategy through EU-funded projects, especially by focusing on youth engagement (Gear UP! and SMART Youth projects) as strategic to the sustainable development of the Macro-region, by animating the Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Forum (AIYOF), which, promoted under the AI-NURECC PLUS Initiative, saw the AIE as co-organiser of youth related events in three EUSAIR Annual Fora (Tirana 2022, Sarajevo 2023, Šibenik 2024) and was a platform to launch and consolidate the establishment Adriatic Ionian Youth Network (AIYN);
- Contributing to the Strategy also through the IPA Adrion Promont project, focusing on Adriatic Ionian rural areas and the protection of biodiversity in mountain areas and thus contributing to Pillar 3 "Environmental protection" as well as to the implementation of TSG3's flagships on the establishment of blue and green corridor to ensure species' safety and security, particularly in the face of climate change;
- Enhancing the collaboration with other networks and Fora of the area (such as the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, the Forum of AI-Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of AI-Cities and the Association of AI-Universities, the Association of European Border Regions), to share common initiatives and projects;
- Reinforcing cooperation with the EUSAIR political structures and in particular with the line Ministries in the persons of the National Coordinators, and through them with Presidencies;
- Enabling synergies with all the Pillar Coordinators, the EUSAIR TSGs as well as the EUSAIR Facility Point, involving the participation of EUSAIR representatives in the key events of the Association;
- Sharing materials and results with the Pillar Coordinators, the EUSAIR TSGs and EUSAIR Facility Point, such as conclusions of the seminars, policy messages, policy recommendations, etc.;
- Monitoring ETC Programmes and Projects (such Interreg Italy-Croatia, Interreg EURO MED, Interreg IPA South Adriatic, Interreg Central Europe, Interreg ADRION) analysing how these Programmes are interlinked with the EUSAIR for a better coordination and use of related financial opportunities;
- Actively participating in EUSAIR Annual Forum in Greece and Stakeholder Platform;
- Actively participating in the European Week of Regions and Cities 2025.

2. ACTIONS IN SYNERGY WITH THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion has always followed the political activities of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) as the most important advisory body representing EU local and regional authorities and having a formal say in the EU law-making process.

In 2025, the Euroregion will continue to follow the CoR activities, since local and regional authorities that are member of the Association can benefit from this opportunity as a way of increasing their knowledge of EU affairs.

One of the priorities of the AIE will be to reinforce local democracy in the Western Balkans through the CoR Working Group on the Western Balkans, as created in 2006. The group covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and three Joint Consultative Committees, which operate on a parity basis with local and regional authorities, from Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. These bodies have discussed many issues of mutual interest, among others, the rule of law and the good governance, topics that have a particular importance in the context of the EU accession negotiations. Nikola Dobrosravić, Prefect of Dubrovnik-Neretva County and President of Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, is the Chair of the CoR Working Group for the Western Balkans. In 2020, as chair of the Group and full CoR member, President Dobrosravić drew up an opinion on “Local Democracy in the Western Balkans”, focusing on the phenomenon of “local state capture”, which is seen as one of the main impediments to the effective rule of law, good governance and development of local democracy in the Western Balkans. In October 2021, the CoR Plenary Assembly voted and approved the Opinion on “Local Democracy Challenges in the Western Balkans”, presented by Nikola Dobrosravić as a rapporteur. The Opinion provides policy recommendations to avoid local state capture and fighting the negative phenomena hindering Western Balkan countries in their process of EU accession.

Furthermore in 2022, Nikola Dobrosravić, as full CoR member, prepared the Opinion “Towards a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean”. The opinion was approved by the 151st CoR Plenary Session held in October 2022. The AIE Secretariat contributed to provide inputs during the drafting phase of the opinion, in collaboration with all the members of the Med Coop Alliance.

Lastly, in 2023 the AIE monitored the initiative “Becoming friend of the Mediterranean Macro region” as an opportunity for our Association to create bridges with institutions and key actors of the Mediterranean area and support the creation of a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean.

In 2025, the AIE is planning to disseminate and present the Opinion to different stakeholders. The promotion will be done in coordination with the Med Coop Alliance members. The Secretariat will advocate the full support of the AIE for an effective implementation of both opinions and related policy recommendations as prepared by President Dobrosravić.

3. MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION ALLIANCE (MCA)

In 2025, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will continue to contribute to the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance (MCA), a declaration signed by the Association in 2019, together with the CPMR - Intermediterranean Commission, the Euro-Région Pyrénées-Méditerranée, and Med Cities. The MCA reflects about the future of cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, towards a joint long-term strategy for the sustainable and integrated territorial development of the basin.

The declaration calls networks active in the Euro-Mediterranean region to redouble their efforts towards better integrated Macro-regional strategies and stronger cooperation instruments, in order to build a common, more cohesive and co-owned Euro-Mediterranean region.

The MED Cooperation Alliance represents a unique instance of cooperation and coordination of networks. Basically, it is a network of networks in the MED area with a broad range of partners and a multi-level organization. This cooperation tool has a strong political relevance for the Association, since the AIE is the only partner representing the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region.

In 2025, the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance will meet periodically to recall its commitment to an active multi-level governance in the Mediterranean basin. Together with the other signatory partners, the AIE will try to:

- Keep a constant coordination among partners of the initiative with at least one coordination meeting per month, as done so far since 2019;
- Disseminate and present to different stakeholders the CoR opinion “Towards a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean”;
- Enhance the recognizability of the MCA, increasing its role in cooperation dynamics in the Mediterranean;
- Find synergies with the Union for Mediterranean (UfM), in order to be a stable partner of this important organisation, offering contribution to UfM events;
- Reinforce the capacity of dissemination and diffusion of key messages of the Alliance toward relevant stakeholders;
- Increase the potential capacity of the Alliance to be a strong sub-state Mediterranean voice and to lobby on the European agendas and programmes;

In 2025, the AIE will follow-up the implementation of two governance projects co-financed by the Interreg Euro-med Programme focused on two specific missions such as Sustainable Tourism and Innovation. AIE will collaborate with the other members of the Med Cooperation Alliance for following the other missions covered by the governance projects of the Interreg Euro-Med programme.

4. EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION: POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion was mentioned in 2019-2020 as an example of existing cross-border organisations in the following papers:

1. Orientation paper “Cross-Border Cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian Area”;
2. Orientation Paper Transnational Cooperation Programme Adriatic-Ionian (ADRION) 2021-2027;
3. Cross-Border Orientation Paper for IPA CBC cooperation programmes with participation of Italian regions, Albania and Montenegro;

In the Orientation paper “Cross-Border Cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian Area”, under chapter 3 Governance – Paragraph 3.3. “INTERREG Governance”, the AIE is listed as example of cross-border organisation and already constituted entity with the legitimacy (established by public authorities), the experience (existing for years) and the expertise (through the past work and staff) for being involved in the governance process of the future CBC programmes of the area.

Therefore, the European Commission recognises the potential role that the Euroregion (and other similar organisations) can play in Programme implementation, in particular by managing Small Projects Fund or by managing Strategic Projects, as sole beneficiary.

The ADRION orientation paper recommends the use of existing cooperation initiatives, such as the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, in all the Programme functional area. The paper proposes to involve this type of organisations, that go beyond administrative boundaries, in the consultation process of the Programme and in mainstreaming the Interreg projects results in the cooperation area.

Also, in the Orientation Paper for IPA CBC cooperation programmes, the European Commission makes explicit references to specific organisations, such as the Euroregions: *Cooperation with Cross-border bodies could be enhanced. They can play a key role in deepening cooperation both through Interreg (e.g. by managing a Small Projects Fund) and beyond any funding mechanism. Where appropriate, the cooperation programme could provide financial and/or technical support to the Inter-Governmental Commissions and their respective working groups and, build on the legitimacy, experience, and expertise of International, Inter-regional and Transnational Initiatives as any other cooperation programmes [...] Design the actions based on functional areas - which will depend on the issue at stake – rather than on the administrative scale defining the programme area. Authorities are encouraged to use the different available tools to support functional areas such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation - EGTC -, Euroregions, Community Led Local Development, natural parks, and to cooperate with the relevant macro-regional key stakeholders, where appropriate.*

The three orientations papers show that in the current EU programming period 2021-2027 the AIE could play an active role as key player in the governance projects of some ETC programmes of the cooperation area.

The added value of stakeholders' engagement is also increasingly recognised and implemented at macroregional level. While macroregional strategies are governed at national and supranational level, their actual implementation occurs at the regional and local levels. Subnational stakeholders, civil society and private actors are key contributors in identifying priorities and developing innovative projects to implement EUSAIR objectives at territorial level. In this framework, the collaboration with the AIE has become very intense, especially in the last couple of years and with particular reference to youth engagement in the strategy. From 2022, as beneficiary of EU-funded projects, the AIE co-organised youth events in the context of the EUSAIR Annual Fora.

Last but not least, Interreg Programmes have reformed the bottom-up approach, enabling the active participation of stakeholders through Calls for small scale projects, providing small institutions the opportunity to engage in wider decision-making processes. In 2025, the AIE intends to capitalise on the forthcoming calls.

5. ONGOING EUROPEAN PROJECTS

In accordance with AIE Presidency and Assembly directives, the Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion is implementing different EU projects, which have a strategic financial and political importance for the Association and its Members. Thanks to cooperation projects, the Euroregion collaborated with several EU organisations, such as other Mediterranean and Adriatic Ionian networks of local and regional authorities, thematic networks, universities, research centres and institutes, NGOs, national, regional and local authorities.

The associated regions can benefit from these projects through the participation of the AIE, which constantly promotes the projects' results among its Members. To this end, the Secretariat provides support to its associates to build partnerships, by circulating "partners searches" among Members and external partners in relation to different calls, programmes and opportunities.

In 2025, the Euroregion will participate in four projects. Two of them fall within the framework of Interreg programmes, one is part of the European Commission's international programme DEAR and one project is co-financed by EC - DG REGIO and sees the Euroregion as only beneficiary.

Project	EU Programme	Role of the AIE	Website
Community4Tourism	Interreg EUROMED, 1 st call Governance Project / Thematic Community. Topic: Sustainable Tourism	Full Project Partner	https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-euro-med.eu/
Dialogue4Innovation	Interreg EUROMED, 1st call Governance Project / Institutional Dialogue Project. Topic: Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy	Full Project Partner	https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/

Gear UP!	EU Dear Programme Topic: Promotion of Global Citizens Education through the engagement of Local and Regional Authorities and youth NGOs as Third Parties	Full Project Partner	https://dearprogramme.eu/project/gear-up/
Promont	IPA Adrion, 1st Call for Proposals Topic: To promote biodiversity in Adriatic-Ionian mountain areas	Full Project Partner	https://www.adriaticionianeuroregion.eu/category/promont/
SMART Youth	EC – DG REGIO, Call ERDF-TA-2024-YOUTH4COOP Topic: Shaping the future of Cohesion Policy through youth engagement	Mono-beneficiary	Soon
Dialogue4Nature	Interreg Euro-Med, 1st call for Governance Projects Topic: Protecting, restoring and valorising the natural resources of the Euro-Mediterranean area	Associated Partner	https://natural-heritage.interreg-euro-med.eu/

The activities related to the EU projects implementation will be based on the sound management of the association, respecting the prudential principle to preserve the original financial assets.

The following pages provides an overview of each Cooperation Project, including some details about the activities to be planned and performed in 2025. For more information and to learn more about the results achieved, the AIE website has an ad-hoc section at this [link](#).

Community4Tourism

Title and Acronym: Community4Tourism

Key words: Governance and Sustainable tourism in the Med area

Programme: Interreg Euro MED 2021-2027

Type of project: Governance / Thematic Community Project

Starting date: January 2023

Project Duration: 80 Months

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

AIE Budget: 561.445,00 Euro - EU co-financing: 80% of the total budget

Lead partner: Barcelona Provincial Council – DIBA (Spain)

Partners: University of Thessaly (Greece), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (AIE, Croatia), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CRPM, France), European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR, Belgium), Universities Network for intercultural dialogue and international cooperation (UNIMED, Italy), Plan Bleu (France), University of Tirana (Albania).

Description: Community4Tourism is a Thematic Community Project that falls under the Mission “Enhancing Sustainable Tourism” of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme. It is a €5 million, seven-year project that aims to contribute to the EU Territorial Cooperation and its transnational dimension through the objectives included in the Programme and the main goals of Mission 4, related to the Enhancement of Sustainable Tourism in the MED Area and the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society. The project is based upon the main objective of improving a better governance of cooperation, both policy governance and multi-sectoral, multi-level and transnational territorial governance, with a strong focus on environment and climate, promoting a smarter and greener Mediterranean, which is in line with the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and the Territorial Agenda 2030. The project is built upon the outputs of the Interreg MED 2014/2020 Sustainable Tourism and BleuTourMed Projects but reinforces its objectives to current new challenges. Community4Tourism integrates the 4 Programme’s specific objectives, as tourism has shown to be a transversal issue in the MED area, involving all kinds of stakeholders, agents and territories. It will address its activities to pursue the consolidation of a competitive innovation ecosystem, support a circular economy, promote climate change adaptation, and enhance nature and biodiversity. As a result of its activities, it will come up with jointly developed solutions and promote cooperation across borders. The project ensures also the necessary synergies with the Dialogue4Tourism, the other governance project of the tourism mission, and other Euro-MED initiatives and stakeholders to ensure the capitalisation of the project results in other territories, improve multi-level governance and contribute to supporting macro-regional and sea basin strategies in the basin.

Website: <https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-euro-med.eu/>

Main activities to be performed in 2025:

- Contribution to the organisation of the annual event;
- Coordination of the Work Package Transfer;
- Acting as Antenna for the Adriatic Ionian area;
- Encourage the transfer of practices and results developed by the MED projects to other actors and territories of the association
- Facilitate the exploitation, sharing and reuse of knowledge, experiences and project results by other Euro-MED projects.
- Encourage the mainstreaming of policies and strategies on tourism in AIE territories.

Dialogue4Innovation

Title and Acronym: Dialogue4Innovation

Topic: Governance and Innovation in the Med area

Programme: Interreg Euro MED 2021-2027

Type of project: Governance / Institutional Dialogue Project

Starting date: January 2023

Project Duration: 80 Months

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

AIE Budget: 179.544,00 Euro - EU co-financing: 80% of the total budget

Lead partner: Emilia Romagna Region (Italy)

Partners: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds (Croatia), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (Croatia), ARC-MedWaves (Spain), Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain), Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), ADEME – Agency for Ecological Transition (France), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (France), Technopolis Group (Portugal).

Description: Dialogue4Innovation is the Institutional Dialogue project funded by Interreg Euro-MED Programme and coordinated by Emilia Romagna Region. The seven-year project has a budget of around 4 million euro and falls under the programme's [Mission "Innovative Sustainable Economy"](#). The project aims to support mission-oriented innovation policy and the creation of long-lasting conditions for a permanent dialogue on innovation in the Mediterranean. Dialogue4Innovation will work to increase the coordination, coherence and alignment of policies and actions for innovative sustainable economy at the basin scale. Capacity building is one of the pillars of the project, which will develop tools to increase the capacity of policy makers and stakeholders to address the Sustainable Development Goals more effectively. By working with territorial actors through *Transformative Innovation Policy Labs*, the project will promote the diffusion of more systemic and integrated approaches, which are necessary to tackle the urgent challenges of the ecological transition. Dialogue4Innovation will contribute to improve the long-lasting conditions for a permanent institutional and social dialogue in the Mediterranean, bridging the transnational dimension with local solutions. It will become a reference platform for Mediterranean innovation ecosystem stakeholders aimed at fostering an open, inclusive, and effective governance, increasing the visibility and relevance of the Mediterranean instances at the European and international levels. To amplify its impact, the project will support Mediterranean challenge-driven multi-actor alliances. To meet its objectives, it will build on the outcomes of the Interreg Euro-MED thematic projects, narrowing the gap with the policy priorities (at local, regional, national, Mediterranean & European level) and promoting their integration in structural policies and practices.

Website: <https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/>

Main activities to be performed in 2025:

- Contribution to the organisation of events;
- Acting as Antenna for the Adriatic Ionian area;
- Encourage the transfer of practices and results developed by the MED projects to other actors and territories of the association
- Facilitate the exploitation, sharing and reuse of knowledge, experiences and project results by other Euro-MED projects.
- Encourage the mainstreaming of policies and strategies on Innovation in AIE territories.
- Setting up the Transformative Innovation Policy Labs in AIE territory

Gear UP!

Title and Acronym: Global citizenship Education Actions to stRenghten yoUth engagement through local support to LAs and CSOs, to accelerate Progress towards sustainable development – Gear UP!

Topic: Global Citizenship Education

Programme: EU Dear Programme

Call: EuropeAid/173998/DH/ACT/Multi

Project Duration: 42 Months from 01/01/2024 to 30/06/2027

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

AIE Budget: 234.504,54 Euro - EU co-financing: 90% of the total budget

Lead partner: Marche Region (Italy)

Partners: Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation – LAPAS (Latvia); Eine Welt Netzwerk Thüringen – EWNT (Germany); Adriatic Ionian Euroregion – AIE (Croatia); Zaragoza City Council – ZCC (Spain); Czech Forum for Development Cooperation – FoRS (Czech Republic); Région Hauts-de-France – HDF (France); Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid – HAND (Hungary); Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity – CROSOL (Croatia); City of Zagreb (Croatia); CONCORD Italia – CONIT (Italy).

Associates Partners: BUD9 – Budapest Capital City IX District, DIBA – Province of Barcelona, DPZ – Province of Zaragoza, RCM – Riga City Municipality, RER – Emilia Romagna Region, TR – Thuringia Region.

Description: Gear UP! aims to accelerate Progress towards sustainable development by promoting and enabling the active engagement of EU citizens, especially young people, in development issues and addressing global challenges at local and global levels.

Through the proposal, small and medium sized regionally and/or locally operating Local Authority and Civil Society Organizations (LAs/CSOs), which face financial and administrative difficulties applying for EU funds, will be supported by sub-granting, capacity building and networking activities. The financed

organisations in each involved territory will tackle one (or more) project's main issues such as Sustainable Development (SD), gender, SGDs, in relation to active citizenship.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- To support initiatives of Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations in 8 EU countries through financial support instruments, to raise awareness and critical understanding of global agenda on development and “global/local” interdependencies, and to empower them to take part in participatory processes and in local decision making;
- To strengthen skills, competences, exchange processes and resources of LAs and CSOs concerning GCE, through capacity building and networking activities, on regional and European level;
- To increase awareness and sensitivity towards Sustainable Development and global challenges among young people aged 15-30 living in the 8 EU involved territories, through their involvement in DEAR actions promoted by LAs and CSOs;
- To increase knowledge and awareness on gender and non-discrimination field, as a key concern among policy makers, associations, networks and young people in 8 EU countries, strengthening partnerships for the advancement of gender equality and intersectional approach and ensuring a balanced application in the implemented activities in terms of practices and policies.

The action will develop in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Czech Republic, Latvia, Croatia and Hungary with a focus on IPA Countries, through previously established co-operation and networking of co-applicants. In particular, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and CROSOL, that have an ongoing partnership with various CSO and LA networks active in Western Balkans, they will facilitate capacity building and sub-granting process in North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

Website: <https://dearprogramme.eu/project/gear-up/>

Main activities to be performed in 2025:

- Launch of financial supporting instruments for Third Parties' Actions (TPAs), evaluation and contracting;
- Implement capacity building and networking activities addressed to LAs and CSOs interested in receiving financial support;
- Organise European Networking event in Sarajevo (early March);
- Organise two Regional Networking events, one in Albania and one in Bosnia Herzegovina;

Promont

Title and Acronym: Protection and regeneration of mountains - Promont

Topic: Environment and Nature Protection, Tourism in rural areas

Programme: IPA Adrion

Call: First call for proposals

Project Duration: 36 months, from 02.09.2024 to 02.09.2027

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

AIE Budget: 205.580,00 € EU co-financing 80% of total budget

Lead partner: Pieriki Anaptixiaki (Greece)

Partners: GAL Baldo Lessinia (Italy), GAL Baldo Lessinia (Slovenia), Regional Centre for Development and Cooperation (Albania), Municipality of Neum (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Tourist Organisation Andrijevica (Montenegro), Special Account for Research Funds of International Hellenic University (Greece), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (Croatia)

Associated Partners: Municipality of Berat (Albania), Federparchi Europarc Italia (Italy), Ferrara di Monte Baldo (Italy), Municipality of Dion-Olympou (Greece).

Description: PROMONT project focuses on Adriatic rural areas with mountain relief, characterised by unique biodiversity threatened by the unregulated overexploitation of resources, by the unsustainable economic activities and by the seasonal mass-tourism that have led to pollution and overall loss of biodiversity. The overall objective is to protect and preserve the fragile and rich ecosystems of the Adriatic Ionian mountains by promoting actions for environmental regeneration involving and empowering local communities and stakeholders. The project wants to foster a positive change of mindset about the human presence and its relation with mountain biodiversity: biodiversity and local communities will benefit from the success of the actions implemented by PROMONT, in the short and in the long term.

Website: *Coming soon*

Main activities to be performed in 2025:

- Coordination of WP3 on the capitalisation of results;
- Participation in project meetings foreseen in Thessaloniki in April 2026;
- Organisation of an event to be held in 2026.

SMART Youth

Title: SMART YOUTH – Shaping Modern Approaches for Realistic Territorial Engagement Among Young Citizens

Co-founder: DG-REGIO - European Commission

Co-financed by: EC DG REGIO

Call: Youth4Cooperation: the future of cooperation – ERDF-TA-2024-YOUTH4COOP

Topic: Young people, Interreg post-27 Consultation, Future of Cohesion Policy, EU macro-regional strategies.

AIE Budget: 9,951 Euro, co-financing: 100%

Role of the Euroregion: Mono-beneficiary

Description: SMART Youth aims at actively involving young people in shaping the future of territorial cooperation & Cohesion Policy for the 2028-2034 programming period. SMART Youth is dedicated to understanding & integrating the perspectives, needs & innovative ideas of youth into the future European territorial cooperation. SMART Youth will employ a multifaceted methodology to engage more than 400 young individuals across the EU & IPA regions. To effectively involve young individuals, SMART Youth will leverage a blend of traditional & ground-breaking methodologies. Beyond online interviews, surveys, & dialogues, the project introduces the method of Youth Collaboration Hackathons. These hackathons will focus on solving real-world challenges, empowering participants to collaboratively develop solutions. A clear & dynamic communication strategy prepared with the direct involvement of the young participants, utilizing various social media platforms, will ensure extensive outreach. The strategy will feature a unique visual identity, precisely targeted messaging & content available in multiple EU languages to maximize engagement. The following tasks will be implemented: monitor, analyse & then improve with specific actions the communications activities that are in charge of the Managing Authorities of Programme that the young participants will choose. The analysis will focus on how they disseminate the opportunities offered by the Cohesion Policies how the whole process of selecting an operation will be communicated & how the compulsory communication activities stated in the subsidy contract will be implemented by the grant beneficiaries. The project will set up a task force of communication experts with a proactive contribution of young people acting as communication guardian with the aim to monitor, to support, to correct, to suggest new communication tips & to help the managing authorities & the final beneficiaries in better communicate the Cohesion Policy results.

Website: *Not available*

Main activities to be performed in 2025:

- Preparation and launch of an Open Call for Expression of Interest addressed to Managing Authorities of Interreg Programmes and Cohesion Funds;
- Preparation and launch of an Open Call to select the youth organizations as participants in the project;
- Set up of a SMART Youth Communication Task Force;

- Monitoring, analysis and improvement of the innovative communication activities for the selected Programmes

6. PROJECTS UNDER EVALUATION

In 2023, the majority of Interreg Programmes in which the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion used to participate as partner or associated partner launched new call for proposals. The AIE Secretariat monitored the funding opportunities for AIE members and for the association itself. The opportunities offered by European programmes and the EU projects implemented so far helped in enhancing the relations with members of the network. In the meantime, the European projects have enabled to find new activities for the Association with additional financial resource available.

In 2024, the Secretariat has applied as direct partner or in support of AIE members in the context of the call for proposals published by Interreg Euro-Med, Interreg Italy-Croatia and Interreg IPA South Adriatic). Specifically, the AIE has joined as associate partner in a project under the Interreg Euro-Med programme.

In 2024, the AIE decided to contribute to solving the societal challenges arising from the war in Ukraine. The Association applied for funding under the European Social Fund Plus - Social Innovation Plus Initiative (SI+).

Project	EU Programme	Full title	Role
PRIME MED	Interreg Euro-Med 4 th call	Prime MED	Associated Partner
SIMPLE	European Social Fund Plus - Social Innovation Plus Initiative (SI+)	Social Innovation Models to Promote Learning and Employability. Innovative Approaches to Mitigate the Societal Consequences of Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine within EU Countries	Partner

The final assessment of PRIME MED is expected in February 2025, once the selection by the Interreg Euro-Med Monitoring Committee will be completed. The final assessment of SIMPLE is expected in December 2024 / January 2025.

2nd Section

INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION

1. MEMBERSHIP

The association counts 33 members and it is the largest network of regional and local authorities in the AI-macroregional area. In recent years.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion should open the Association to new potential associates with the purpose to cover the entire geographical area, by involving, for instance, new members of the Ionian territory. In order to improve its impact and be more efficient in involving the membership, the AIE will:

- Reach out new potential members, especially in Ionian area;
- Increase the relationships with regional and local authorities of IPA countries (Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina);
- Consolidate the relationship with all members by reinforcing in particular the interactions with members that have participated less in the networking activities;
- Develop specific partnerships among members for joint projects in the framework of ETC and EU programmes;
- Involve AIE members in the project meeting of the Association;

The AIE Secretariat in 2025 will be to recover some annual fees not yet paid by some members.

2. STATUTE AND STATUTORY MEETINGS

Regarding the statutory meetings, the plan is to convene the General Assembly in March/April 2025 in Brussels. The Presidency of AIE together with the Secretariat will be in charge to propose the location and the date as well as to involve high-level stakeholders such as the new EU Commissioners, MEPs and members of the CoR. The event will be organised in combination with thematic/project events relevant for the Association.

3. THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

The importance of relaunching the thematic activities of the Euroregion was stressed as a crucial goal of the Association in all statutory meetings held in recent years. Despite the efforts made by the AIE Presidency and the Secretariat, which have called for convening the Thematic Commissions and for the organisation of events linked to their topics, the result of this awareness-raising action was not satisfactory, since the Commissions have de facto remained inactive.

According to art. 28 of the new statute approved in 2022, the Thematic Commissions have been replaced with Thematic Working Groups with the purpose to be more operative in developing joint

initiatives and performing common activities of the Euroregion.

During the 19th General Assembly held online on 15 December 2023, the members of the Association were called to discuss the setting up of Thematic Working Groups and in particular to approve the establishment of a new Working Group on Youth as part of the statutory bodies of the Association and with the active participation of the Adriatic Ionian Youth Network (AIYN), as based on the excellent actions undertaken in the fields of youth engagement and the highly intensive cooperation between the AIE and the Adriatic Ionian young people and youth organisations involved under the AI-NURECC PLUS. In 2025, the AIE will have the chance to strengthen and capitalise the cooperation with youth through two projects: Gear UP! and SMART Youth.

4. SECRETARIAT

This paragraph describes the status of the organisation of the Secretariat as requested by the art. 7 of the Internal Regulation of the General Secretariat. The Secretariat is led and coordinated by the Secretary General, who is responsible for the functioning of the structure. The Secretary General is assisted by the internal staff, external consultants, Interreg volunteers and trainees.

Over recent years, some adjustments in the structure of the Secretariat have been done in order to:

- Improve the value of the network by ensuring the continuity of the work, activities, projects, preparation of reports and position papers.
- Facilitate the work of the AIE bodies in the organisation the annual Statutory Meetings (Assembly and Executive Committee) and project meetings;
- Lighten the administrative burden of the Secretariat, allowing it to devote greater time to substantial work.

In past years, the AIE adopted an Internal Regulations laying down indications on the organisation and functions of the Secretariat according to the rules already fixed in the AIE Statutes. This Internal Regulation is supplementary and subordinate to the Statutes. The Euroregion has adopted also an Internal Guideline for missions of the Secretariat's staff and an Internal Guideline for the procurement of services and goods.

In 2025, the activities of the Secretariat will be carried out by the Secretary General in collaboration with three units of internal staff and with the support of thematic experts under short-term remuneration contracts. The Secretariat will be supported by trainees and IVY volunteers. The staff of the Secretariat will work mainly at the premises of the Secretariat in Campobasso, in tight collaboration with the Presidency in Dubrovnik. The Brussels offices can ensure the activity in heart of the Europe Union.

In 2025, if needed, the Secretariat will explore the possibility to open new job positions necessary for the implementation of European projects.

5. COMMUNICATION

As done in the recent years, the Secretariat will manage the internal and external communication of the Association through networking and institutional communication conveyed via the AIE website and social media channels. In 2025, the Secretariat will keep improving the definition of the key messages, according to the goals of Communication Action Plan and Social Media Strategy.

The Secretariat will update the Association's website with new contents, giving visibility to the AIE activities, projects, events, as well as news and external events that are relevant with EUSAIR and cooperation area.

Regarding the social media channels, in 2025 the Euroregion will continue to animate Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube channels. All the social media profiles will be customised according to the Association's visual identity. The social media will be managed by the Secretariat in order to provide an adequate and coherent coverage of the Association's work.

For this purpose, the Secretariat will follow the already approved (2022) Communication Action Plan and Social Media Strategy, which clearly define the communication purposes and how to make the association more visible.

6. TRAINEESHIPS AND INTERREG VOLUNTEER YOUTH (IVY)

In the recent years, the Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euregion has hosted different young interns in Brussels and in Italy. The Internships were organised especially in collaboration with universities. The Secretariat team has always had positive results from sharing the daily work of the Association with motivated and talented interns, able to bring new ideas and added value to the Association.

In 2025, the AIE will continue to promote internships in cooperation with AIE Members, Academic organisations and Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY), managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).