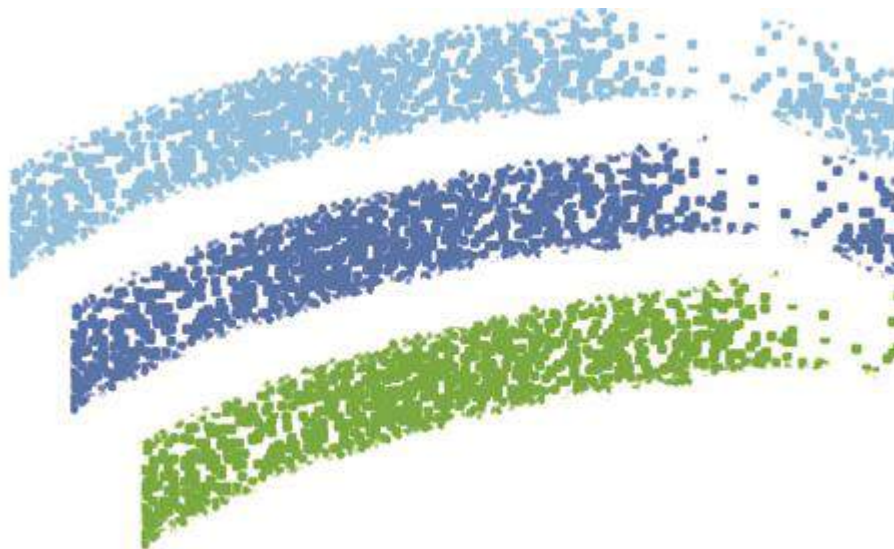




Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion

ANNUAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMME FOR 2018



1st SECTION. “EUSAIR INITIATIVES AND EUROPEAN PROJECTS”

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

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, endorsed in October 2014 by the European Council, is the third EU Macro-Regional Strategy after the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009) and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (2011). On account of the number of potential and candidate participating countries this format of cooperation can be a great opportunity for the development of the region.

The Macro-Regional Strategy continue to make an invaluable and innovative contribution to cross-border, cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation in Europe, the potential of which has not yet been sufficiently explored, with a view to boosting connectivity and consolidating the economic ties and knowledge transfer between regions and countries; however, as a result of the process of agreeing on joint actions at multi-level and multi-country/regional level, access to EU funds for the Strategy projects remains a challenge.

All's 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. Many people also stress 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. Furthermore, there are concerns persistent problems as regards the lack of effective linkage between the availability of resources, governance and ownership, which are preventing EUSAIR's objectives from being fully achieved;

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. The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion participated 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).

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): “Blue growth”, “Connecting the region (transport and energy networks)”, “Environmental quality”

and “Sustainable tourism” 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.

Also in 2018 it is essential that AIE continues to follow the EUSAIR meetings and participate in the tables of Thematic Steering Groups (TSG) respectively regarding all 4 pillars, 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 2018:

- 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;
- strengthen the relations with the European Parliament for the EUSAIR issues;
- providing the competent authorities with support and tailored measures to implement the Strategy;
- to urge the Commission's efforts to find solutions for the mobilisation of financial resources for migration-related activities, including cooperation with third countries;
- Insist, in particular, on projects for transport connections in the region;
- 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 (Italy-Croatia, Interreg MED, IPA Italy Montenegro Albania) to analyse how these Programmes are interlinked with the EUSAIR;
- explore possible future projects and initiatives on macro-regional area;
- follow the work and try to ensure cooperation with the Managing Authority for the implementation of the strategy;
- active participation to the 3rd EUSAIR Annual Forum that will be held on 24-25 May 2018 in Catania, Italy;
- active participation to the 16th European Week of Regions and Cities that will take place on 8-11 October 2018 in Brussels, to discuss EU Cohesion Policy;
- active contribution and collaboration with the Interregional group "Adriatic-Ionian" of the Committee of the Regions.

2. AI-NURECC INITIATIVE

In the framework of the 15th European Week of Regions and Cities - organised at the European Parliament on October 2017 - was launched the initiative AI-NURECC (the network that unites the more important players of the Adriatic Ionian Area consist of chambers of commerce, cities, universities, peripheral maritime regions and the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion) which aims to promote dialogue and governance through knowledge and skills matured by the networks throughout the years.

The AI-Nurecc Initiative - 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) - 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. In order to support the project's activities, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will have to organize the following events:

- Youth Action Info day, in Campobasso (planned date: April 2018);
- Forum of Adriatic Ionian Youth Organizations, in Bosnia Herzegovina (Planned date: June 2018).

3. EUROPEAN PROJECTS & FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

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 source of funding and new activities to the association.

In the year 2017 the Euroregion was involved, as project partner, in two EU projects: Bleutourmed_C3 (financed by Interreg Med Programme) and CREATE (Erasmus+ Programme), that will aim to reducing geographic disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes across EU regions, by developing a toolkit for local policy makers for more efficient adult education.

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).

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 (co-financed by the programme under the Priority Axis Blue innovation) that will aim 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. The operative phase will start in January 2018.

During 2017 the Secretariat of the Euroregion has also submitted several other proposals on the following EU programmes: H2020, Erasmus+, Interreg Italy-Croatia CBC Programme 2014-2020, MED, COSME, Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme etc.

2nd Section “ INTERNAL ORGANISATION”

1. THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION

Euroregion continue to implement the membership of association seeking the involvement and the accession of new territories. In the last years, the Euroregion has accepted requests of new membership by local and regional authorities. In the last General Assembly held in Dubrovnik, with great pleasure, we recorded the entrance of 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 and in these last days the request for membership from the Municipality of Budva (Montenegro) has also been received. 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 EUSAIR macro regional strategy, the Euroregion should seek also to also enlarge its geographical coverage in the Ionian area.

2. THE WORK OF THE THEMATIC COMMISSIONS

Support the work of the Thematic Commissions of the Euroregion represent a primary goal for the association. The latest statutory meetings stressed the importance to relaunch the activities of the thematic commissions because it is a crucial activity of the Euroregion. The Presidents of the Thematic Commissions were pushed for to restart the thematic work and to schedule their meetings, since the Euroregion needs these thematic contributions especially now, an important time for Europe and cohesion policy. The representative of Puglia Region (for the Commission on Tourism and

Culture) and the representative from Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (for the Commission for Transport and Infrastructure) declared their willingness to organize the next meeting of the respective thematic commissions.

Any members can ask to organise not only a statutory meeting but also an event for the thematic commissions. Also international events, already planned by members, can become an useful tool to multiply the opportunities to convene the Thematic 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. The Secretariat will help the AIE members who want to organise and host the thematic committees in their territory in 2018.

The Thematic Commissions should meet at least 1 times per year in view of developing common strategies on the issues assigned to them, but often the difficulty of organizing the thematic commissions is due to financial shortage, therefore the Euroregion welcomes the opportunity to use financial resource allocated by European and ETC projects, to which many regions of AIE work, to cover meeting costs for organising the AIE thematic commissions.

3. SECRETARIAT OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION

Over recent years, rigorous adjustments in our structure have been required. 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. COMMUNICATION AND WEB SITE

Led by the Secretary General, the Secretariat manages the day to day running of the Association, implements AIE's work plan and provides a wide variety of services to the Association members, Executive Committee and Chair. These include managing internal and external communications, network and institutional communications, stakeholder relations including the AIE website.

The Secretariat has updated the website making it more interesting and graphically more appropriate. The entry of new contents has been fully completed. 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. All the events organized by our network have had great resonance.

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. also in 2018 the secretariat will continue to implement the association's website with constantly updated contents.

5. BRUSSELS OFFICE AND MOBILITY

Over the years, the activities carried out by our Liaison Office in Brussels has been increasingly numerous. The events organised there, such as the General Assemblies, Executive Committees and statutory meetings, as well as the participation in conferences, workshops and in the Open Days, helped to raise awareness of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and involved significant further progress in building a strong European dimension.

The Brussels office has an important role for both the relations that we were able to consolidate with the European Institutions and for the exchange of experiences that we were able to have with the other regions of the EU. As Brussels is location to the most important institutional interlocutors, such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, this year's activities should be strengthened in order to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by this city. Positive are also the results of the work carried by many young interns from different regions of our countries, who have joined our Brussels office, bringing experience and added value. Also in 2018 we will seek to promote internships and apprenticeships that, between Brussels and our territories, can guarantee us quality and professionalism especially in the field of European policies and planning.