



REPUBLIC of CROATIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS



ADRIATIC AND IONIAN
INITIATIVE
CHAIRMANSHIP OF CROATIA



EU Strategy
for the Adriatic
and Ionian Region
EUSAIR

1st FORUM of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting

Dubrovnik Declaration

12 May 2016

We, the Representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, meeting in Dubrovnik with the participation of the **European Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy** in the framework of the 1st Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region:

GUIDED by the Ancona Declaration of 20 May 2000 and its basic principles, as well as by the principles expressed by the consecutive AIC declarations from 2001 to 2015;

REFERRING to the Commission's Communication of 17 June 2014 concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR);

RECALLING the Conclusions of the EU General Affairs Council of 29 September 2014 and those of the European Council of 23-24 October 2014 which endorsed the EUSAIR, followed by the launch conference of 18 November 2014 as a first step toward the implementation of the Strategy;

CONFIDENT that the implementation of the EUSAIR with the support of the activities carried out in the framework of its governance structures and the AII, its intergovernmental anchorage, will promote sustainable economic and social prosperity in the Region;

AWARE that stability and growth fostered by the EUSAIR, while maintaining the EU feature of the Strategy, can contribute to the EU integration of the Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries in the Adriatic and Ionian Region;

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1. **WELCOME** the decision adopted in Zagreb in October 2015 by the Committee of Senior Officials of the AII and welcomed by the EUSAIR Governing Board to convene single "double hat" Adriatic-Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial meetings to be held, generally, in the framework of the EUSAIR Fora;
2. **RECALL** the principle of SOLIDARITY on which the EU is based and:
 - a) **EXPRESS** their deep concern on the ongoing refugees and migration crisis unfolding in the Region, which requires appropriate responses at all levels;
 - b) **INVITE** the EUSAIR Governing Board to outline concrete avenues of action for how the EUSAIR - in keeping with its general objective of promoting sustainable economic and social prosperity in the Region - can help strengthen the resilience of participating Countries in coping with the refugees and migration crisis, and report to the EUSAIR Ministerial level. In doing so, National Coordinators will duly liaise with the competent administrations in their respective Countries;
 - c) **ENCOURAGE** all EU-financed national, regional, territorial cooperation and pre-accession programmes in the participating Countries to consider, where necessary and justified, how they can address the refugee and migration challenges within the framework of existing programme priorities and objectives. In this context, **INVITE the** ADRIION Transnational Cooperation Programme to provide support to specific action(s) in order to help Participating Countries to address the refugee and migration crisis and **RECOMMEND** a possible rebalancing of resources of the Programme.
3. **COMMEND** the progress made by the participating Countries, in cooperation and with the support of the Commission, in setting up the EUSAIR governance structures and **COMMIT** to swiftly and effectively address the remaining shortcomings, in particular by ensuring that:
 - a) representatives of participating Countries' administrations in the Governing Board and the Thematic Steering Groups are duly mandated and empowered to take decisions. Their regular attendance and effective participation in relevant meetings and works should be ensured;
 - b) financial, administrative and technical resources, including dedicated staff as appropriate, should be made available to Pillar Coordinators and Thematic Steering Groups members from their respective national or regional administrations, in order to allow them to effectively fulfil their duties;
 - c) sub-national (regional, local) government levels should be duly involved in the implementation of the Strategy to reflect the multi-level governance approach, fully respecting the institutional architecture of the participating

Countries and in line with the General Affairs Council Conclusions of 21 October 2014 on the “Governance of Macroregional Strategies”;

4. **INVITE** the ADRION Transnational Program to ensure full support to the implementation of the Strategy and **URGE** the strategic project in support of the EUSAIR governance structures (the so called "EUSAIR Facility Point") to become operational at the agreed time;
5. **REITERATE** their willingness to enhance regional cooperation, also through timely identification and promotion of well prepared and suitable projects, particularly in the areas interrelating with the EUSAIR priorities;
6. **EMPHASISE** the importance of and the need for coordinated action in the Adriatic and Ionian Region, in close cooperation with the European Commission, aimed at a more efficient identification and implementation of projects focusing on economic and social development in the framework of EUSAIR. **RECOGNISE**, in that context, that several regional organizations, initiatives and processes, have as their ultimate goal the accelerated integration of a well-connected and developed Western Balkans into the European Union, including the “Berlin Process” which should be further inclusive. In this regard the application of the Regional Cooperation Council’s South-Eastern Europe 2020 Strategy could produce a significant positive impact on the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
7. **CALL** on the governance structures of the Strategy, during the implementation of the EUSAIR Action Plan, to take into account all activities undertaken by the participating Countries, towards identifying projects of common interest that improve regional cooperation in general and, more specifically, regional interconnectivity, connecting young people, advancing the economic development and strengthening the involvement of civil society institutions;
8. **CALL** on responsible national and regional authorities to ensure that ESIF and IPA programs, as well as all other Region-wide available EU and national/regional funds, are in the best possible way aligned with the priorities of the Strategy and concretely contribute to the achievement of its objectives; **INVITE** the Commission to promote the coordination of EU funds and instruments, notably those directly managed by its services, with the aim to contribute to the implementation of the Strategy;
9. **HIGHLIGHT** the need to raise awareness on the EUSAIR among national, transnational, regional and local stakeholders as well as civil society, the academia and the business community, for them to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Strategy;
10. **ENCOURAGE** the EUSAIR governance structures to actively involve all stakeholders from the Adriatic and Ionian Region, including national Parliaments and civil society as a whole, in the implementation of the Strategy; to this end, the forthcoming stakeholder platform to be set up in the context of the "EUSAIR

Facility Point" can facilitate sustained dialogue between EUSAIR governance structures and stakeholders and civil society at large;

11. **ENCOURAGE** the AII Permanent Secretariat to aim at an ever closer cooperation with the Adriatic and Ionian Fora of civil societies, convinced that the role of civil society is vital for the EUSAIR in order to deliver tangible and beneficial results;
12. **RECALL** - as it has been acknowledged by the General Affairs Council of 29 September 2014 - that the experience of more than a decade of the AII intergovernmental cooperation benefits the Strategy and **STRESS** that many strong links between participating Countries and spin-off regional cooperation between Cities, Chambers of Commerce, Universities and National Parliaments have been created thanks to this longstanding intergovernmental cooperation;
13. **INVITE** EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups to quickly move towards the identification of initiatives and projects with a macro-regional dimension; **ENCOURAGE** Thematic Steering Groups and national/regional authorities responsible for EU programmes, including IPA programmes, to closely cooperate for the implementation of actions and projects which would contribute to achieving the objectives of the Strategy and, **INVITE** the Commission and the "EUSAIR Facility Point" to facilitate the coordination between Thematic Steering Groups and these authorities;
14. **EXPRESS** sincere appreciation to the European Commission for its committed and continuous support during the EUSAIR preparation and implementation phases and, **INVITE** the Commission to continue playing a leading role in the strategic coordination of the Strategy, where its involvement brings a clear added value, in partnership with the participating Countries and in line with the Conclusions of the General Affairs Council of 29 September 2014; **REITERATE** the important role that the EUSAIR implementation continues to play in accelerating the EU integration process of the Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries participating in the EUSAIR;
15. **COMMEND** Croatia for its efforts in bringing the AII to a higher level of cooperation by implementing the overhaul of AII Round Tables - endorsed by the XVIII Meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian Council of 13 May 2015 - which transformed Round Tables into an auxiliary tool at the disposal of the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups;
16. **WELCOME** the Conference of the Speakers of Parliaments chaired by the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, which took place in Split on 15 and 16 April 2016; **APPRECIATE** the importance of the debate on the contribution of the AII participating Countries to the comprehensive European response to the refugee and migration crisis; **TAKE NOTE** of the Joint Statement adopted at the end of the meeting and **COMMEND** the creation of a network of parliamentary High Level Officials aimed at fostering a growing involvement of Parliaments in AII and EUSAIR activities;

17. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the importance of contacts among the Secretariats of Regional Organizations and Initiatives in order to exchange information on activities and best practices and also in relation with other macro-regional strategies;
18. **INVITE** incoming AII Presidencies and EUSAIR co-chairs to further work on the interlinks between the AII Council and the EUSAIR, fully recognizing the AII's role of intergovernmental anchorage of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
19. **RECOGNISE** with satisfaction the approval by the CSO of the Annual Report of activities of the Permanent Secretariat of the AII;
20. **COMMEND** Croatia for its valuable contribution to the Initiative throughout the period of its Chairmanship and to the EUSAIR during its co-chairmanship with the EU Commission, and **THANK** the Government of Croatia, the Dubrovnik Neretva County and the City of Dubrovnik for the excellent organization and hospitality offered on the occasion of the 1st EUSAIR Forum in Dubrovnik and the Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial meeting;
21. **ENTRUST** the incoming AII and EUSAIR Chairmanship from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017 to Greece, wishing them to effectively lead the AII and the EUSAIR into a period of beneficial and positive outcomes for all Countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Region.