



**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS  
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY  
AND DEVELOPMENT



**ADRIATIC AND IONIAN  
INITIATIVE**

CHAIRMANSHIP OF GREECE



**EU Strategy  
for the Adriatic  
and Ionian Region  
EUSAIR**

## Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting

### **Ioannina Declaration**

11 May 2017

**We, the Representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia**, meeting in Ioannina, Greece, with the participation of a representative of the **European Commission**, in the framework of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR):

GUIDED by the Ancona Declaration of 20 May 2000 and its basic principles, as well as by the principles expressed by the consecutive Adriatic and Ionian Council (AIC) declarations from 2001 to 2015 and by the joint AIC/EUSAIR Ministerial Declaration of 2016;

RECALLING the Conclusions of the EU General Affairs Council (GAC) of 29 September 2014 and those of the European Council of 23-24 October 2014 which endorsed the EUSAIR, on the basis of the Commission's Communication of 17 June 2014 and ACKNOWLEDGING that the experience of more than a decade of the AII intergovernmental cooperation has benefitted the Strategy (as mentioned in the aforesaid GAC Conclusions);

IN LINE with the decision adopted in Zagreb in October 2015 by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), welcomed by the EUSAIR Governing Board, to convene a single common Ministerial meeting of the AIC/EUSAIR to be held, generally, in the framework of the EUSAIR Fora;

WELCOMING the submission by the Commission on 16 December 2016 of a single report on the implementation of all four macro-regional strategies, and RECALLING the Conclusions of the EU GAC (Cohesion Policy) of 25 April 2017 on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies;

RECALLING the Malta Declaration of 20 April 2017 on Blue Growth;

CONVINCED that the multilevel governance system applied to the EUSAIR, the actions and projects deemed to contribute to the Strategy's and its four Pillars' objectives, as well as regional cooperation within the AII, will have a positive impact on the process of EU integration of candidate and potential candidate Countries participating in the EUSAIR;

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1. **RECOGNIZE** the progress achieved and the continuous support provided by the EUSAIR governance structure towards the implementation of the Strategy and the identification of projects contributing to its objectives;
2. **NOTE** that all four macro-regional strategies face common and individual challenges and that EUSAIR, although having shown significant progress, can still be further developed, notably regarding implementation, governance, result-orientation, funding, communication and cooperation; In this context the participating countries **ENGAGE**:
  - a) to maintain a strong political commitment, increase the sense of ownership of involved line ministries and strengthen the empowerment of the Strategy's key implementers (National and Pillar Coordinators, members of Thematic Steering Groups (TSG));
  - b) to build the necessary administrative capacity, including availability of adequate resources to support Strategy's key implementers, to ensure that political commitment translates into effective implementation;
  - c) to involve subnational government levels and mobilise regions cities, agencies, institutions such as universities, private sector and civil society towards the implementation and development of the Strategy.
3. **APPRECIATE** the tasks and responsibilities of the EUSAIR Facility Point strategic project taking into account 8 national project partners and the lead partner to support the EUSAIR governance structures in implementation of the Strategy, and **PROVIDE** support to its further activities in order to ensure the continuous progress of the Strategy's implementation;
4. **URGE** relevant national and regional administrations, in the context of the ADRIAN Transnational Programme, to do everything in their power to expedite full operation of the strategic project "EUSAIR Facility Point";
5. **CALL** on the participating countries and regions in view of facilitating informed political decision-making and of making tangible progress, to set, where relevant, realistic targets and develop, in cooperation with the Commission, appropriate indicators, which allow for better monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Strategy's impact;
6. **REAFFIRM** the commitment of the participating countries to ensure that ESIF and IPA funds, the latter in cooperation with the Commission, and other Region-wide and national/regional funds available, are in the best possible way aligned with the priorities of the Strategy and concretely contribute to the achievements of its objectives; **CALL** on the Commission to ensure, where appropriate, that directly managed EU programmes take due account of the Strategy, notably by designing calls and actions so as to support the implementation of the EUSAIR;
7. **ENCOURAGE** continuation and deepening of the dialogue initiated between the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programme authorities and EUSAIR key implementers, and **INVITE** EUSAIR National Coordinators to

facilitate similar dialogue meetings, with the support of the Commission in the four Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Countries;

8. **COMMEND** the EUSAIR Governing Board for the work carried out, in line with the Dubrovnik Declaration, in outlining concrete avenues of action for helping strengthen the resilience of EUSAIR participating countries in coping with the continuing refugee and migration crisis, and **RECOGNISE** that this crisis puts to the test the very notions of collective responsibility and solidarity as well as the core values underpinning the Strategy;
9. **WELCOME** the two strategic orientations proposed in this respect by the Governing Board, and in particular:
  - a) with regard to the proposed actions to be carried out right away under the existing EUSAIR action plan, **AGREE** on focusing initially on strengthening governance mechanisms relative to migration and refugees, and **INVITE** the participating countries to set up the proposed collaborative platform via which the countries in the Region - be they arrival or transit countries - can better coordinate their response to the crisis and learn from each other;
  - b) **CONSIDER** that a shift of emphasis and an expansion of the action plan should be considered in the future with a view to integrating into the labour market also people having been granted asylum status, persons in need of international protection, as well as legal migrants; to this aim, **INVITE** the Governing Board to consider and propose accordingly to the EUSAIR Ministerial level;
10. **WELCOME** the proposal by Slovenia for the initiative “Social Impact Migrants Investing” in social enterprises as further developed during the regional conference “Scaling up social economy enterprises in South East Europe” (24/25 April 2017, Slovenia) already involving Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and the Central Europe Initiative, and **ENCOURAGE** further exploring its feasibility for implementation;
11. **CALL** on the ADRION Transnational Cooperation Programme to ensure support to the implementation of EUSAIR projects, and to provide support to specific actions helping participating countries to address the refugee and migration issues as requested in the 2016 Dubrovnik Declaration;
12. **INVITE** the Commission to examine the possibility to increase and rebalance European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and IPA resources of the ADRION Programme;
13. **RECOGNISE** the significant potential of the Blue Economy and, consequently, **REAFFIRM** their commitment to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, by promoting sustainable growth and jobs through research, innovation and business opportunities in the blue economy;
14. **CALL** upon the participating countries to enhance cooperation and share experience on various issues related to maritime safety, in order to reduce risks

of maritime accidents, marine pollution from ships and the loss of human life at sea in the shared sea basin;

15. **UNDERLINE** the importance of transport connections, both for freight and passengers, and as such **REAFFIRM** their commitment to enhancing transport interconnections with the completion of the Trieste-Patras Adriatic-Ionian Motorway, and enhancing port and inter-modality infrastructures, as a priority for development of the Region, in particular for tourism and freight/passenger traffic, provided its environmental impacts are carefully considered;
16. **INVITE** all participating countries to further develop cross border hinterland connection projects in the transport sector, as well as to develop cross border interconnection projects in the energy sector, in order to enhance connectivity between all EUSAIR participating countries;
17. **STRESS** the importance of developing an efficient network of transnational infrastructures to provide strongly interconnected energy resources available in the region, and **SUPPORT** enhanced energy supply security to boost the development of an integrated Adriatic-Ionian macroregion;
18. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the importance of ports for the promotion of passenger and freight transport in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, the facilitation of tourist traffic and cruise shipping - on the basis of sustainable transport plans, endorsement of blue growth and the blue economy, the connection of the Region with the rest of the EU and third countries, the creation of jobs and strengthening of employment, the expansion of economic opportunities and prosperity, and, in this regard, **SUPPORT** projects aiming at the connection between ports, improved port capacity and port services, innovation in the port sector and sustainable operation and development of ports;
19. **INVITE** all participating countries to further develop their cooperation in the field of preservation of cultural heritage, joint artistic projects and networking of researchers and experts in the field of culture and cultural policies, between all EUSAIR participating countries;
20. **STRESS** the importance of policy coherence for sustainable development, and **INVITE** the countries to ensure inter-linkages and consistency between the different policy sectors and the Sustainable Development Goals according to the 2030 Agenda;
21. **INVITE** all relevant institutions, to promptly ensure full operation of the EUSAIR "Stakeholders' Platform" which promotes the involvement of stakeholders and the civil society organisations in the EUSAIR implementation ;
22. **AKNOWLEDGE** the importance of contacts among the secretariats of regional organisations and initiatives in order to exchange information on activities and best practices; **CONSIDER** that coordination with other macro-regional strategies is essential to the aim of facilitating contacts and synergies, exchanging experiences and know-how and ensuring speedier responses and greater visibility;

23. **NOTE** with satisfaction that many strong links between participating countries and socioeconomic stakeholders have been created to spin-off regional cooperation between cities, chambers of commerce, universities and national parliaments, thanks to this longstanding intergovernmental cooperation;
24. **INVITE** incoming AII/EUSAIR Chairmanships to further work on the interlinks between the AII Council and EUSAIR Ministerial Meetings, fully recognising the AII's role of intergovernmental anchorage of the EUSAIR;
25. **APPRECIATE** the commitment to transform AII Round Tables into a new and updated tool to effectively connect AII and EUSAIR, in line with the conclusions of the AII CSO of 8 February 2017, and **GIVE** the relevant mandate to the AII Secretary General;
26. **ACKNOWLEDGE** with satisfaction the approval by the CSO of the Annual Report of activities of the Permanent Secretariat of the AII;
27. **COMMEND** the Hellenic Republic for the efforts made and the work carried out during its AII Chairmanship in promoting regional cooperation through the overhauled Round Tables and their input to the EUSAIR TSGs;
28. **THANK** the Italian national-regional and local authorities - sole financiers of the AII PS - for the funds they continue to allocate for the functioning of the AII Permanent Secretariat;
29. **ENCOURAGE** the EUSAIR governance structures and the AII 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, **CONVINCED** as they are, that the overhauled AII Round Tables will facilitate a sustained dialogue between EUSAIR governance structures and stakeholders and civil society at large;
30. **ENCOURAGE** the participating countries to strengthen the internal (national) coordination of the implementation process of the EUSAIR within the national administrations, through establishment of national EUSAIR coordination bodies or similar, with high-level representation from the countries' administrations;
31. **ENCOURAGE** the AII Permanent Secretariat to pursue an even closer cooperation with the Adriatic and Ionian Fora of civil societies, being certain that the role of civil society is vital for the EUSAIR in order to deliver tangible and beneficial results;
32. **WELCOME** the initiative of the Forum of Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of Cities and UniAdriion launched at the meeting of Olympia, Greece, on 19 and 20 October 2016, to join forces and work together, in coordination with the AII, in order to contribute to the prompt implementation of the EUSAIR;
33. **EXPRESS** appreciation to the European Commission for its decisive support, and **URGE** it to continue playing its irreplaceable leading role in strategic coordination of the Strategy and to ensure that the Strategy is taken into account

in relevant EU policy initiatives and programme planning, in line with the Conclusions of the GAC of 29 September 2014;

34. **INVITE** the Governing Board to examine, during the Italian co-Chairmanship, the setting up of a rotating advisory group (past and forthcoming chair countries,) to accompany the rotating Chair ;
35. **WELCOME** the Conference of the Speakers of Parliaments chaired by the Speaker of the Greek Parliament, which took place in Ioannina on 6-7 April 2017; **APPRECIATE** the importance of the debate focused on Blue Growth, **TAKE NOTE** of the Joint Statement adopted at the end of the meeting, and **COMMEND** the entry into operation of the network of parliamentary High Level Officials which is constantly updated by the AII Permanent Secretariat on EUSAIR and AII activities;
36. **COMMEND** the Hellenic Republic for its valuable contribution to the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and the EUSAIR throughout the period of its AII/EUSAIR Chairmanship, and **THANK** the Hellenic Government and the City of Ioannina for the excellent organisation and hospitality offered on the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> EUSAIR Forum and the AIC/EUSAIR Ministerial meeting;
37. **RECOGNISE** that there is a need to examine ways on how macro-regional strategies can be better embedded into EU policies in the post 2020 programming period, and **ENTRUST** the incoming AII/EUSAIR Chairmanship, from 1 June 2017 to 31 May 2018 to Italy, wishing them to use all instruments at their disposal to facilitate actions and projects for the implementation of the EUSAIR with the aim of leading all countries of the Region into a period of sustainable economic growth and prosperity.