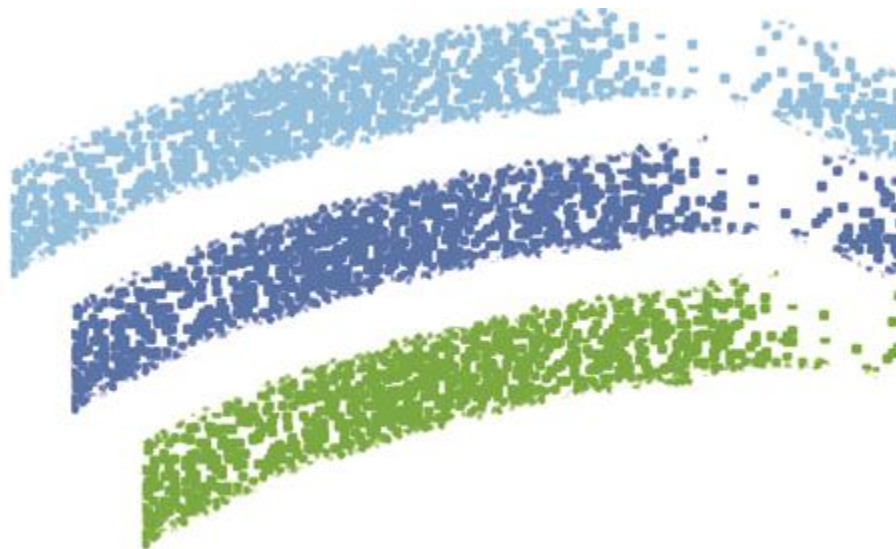




## Adriatic Ionian Euroregion

# ANNUAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMME 2021



This Annual Activity Programme is a working document prepared for the XVII AIE General Assembly (16 December 2020). It provides updated information about the activities that the association will carry out

in 2021, such as the EU cooperation projects and initiatives, describing at the same time the internal organisation of the Euroregion.

For clarity, this 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 7 subsections:

- EUSAIR and the AI-NURECC PLUS;
- Relaunch the “EUSAIR FRIENDS” Initiative;
- Actions in synergy with the Committee of the Regions;
- Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance;
- European Territorial Cooperation: Potential role of the Association and added value for the Programmes.
- Ongoing projects;
- Projects under evaluation;

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

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

## 1<sup>st</sup> Section

### EUSAIR, Cooperation Initiatives and Projects

#### 1. EUSAIR AND THE AI-NURECC PLUS INITIATIVE

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

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 will be 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 will reinforce the political dimension of the Strategy and strengthen regional cooperation also in connection with the enlargement of the EU to Western Balkan countries. The Representatives of the Governments of the nine countries have accepted during the Forum in Budva (Montenegro), the request put forward by the Government of the Republic of San Marino to become participating country of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and remained opened to consider possible forms of participation of the Republic of San Marino in the EUSAIR.

In 2021, the AIE is strongly committed to participate in the implementation of the strategy contributing with its own initiatives, as well as participating in the relevant cooperation programmes that are active in the area. The AIE intends to keep contributing to debating on the possible application or extension of macro-regional approaches and instruments to the whole Mediterranean area.

In the first half of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EUSAIR meetings under the Serbian Chairmanship took place via videoconference. Also, the EUSAIR Governing Board held an online meeting aimed at exchanging views and initiatives on how to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis. In May, during the on-line meeting of Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of Slovenia presented the programme of the Slovenian EUSAIR Presidency, which it formally took over on 1st June 2020.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum event of the Strategy, that was supposed to be organised in Belgrade (Serbia) in May 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The event was supposed to give visibility to the EUSAIR and to reflect on the progress made since the 4<sup>th</sup> Forum held in Budva (Montenegro) the year before.

In 2021, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion will continue to support the EUSAIR process, by concentrating its effort in:

- Actively participating in the implementation of the Strategy with reference to the four EUSAIR pillars;
- Enhancing regional and local authorities' appropriation of the EUSAIR main objectives and opportunities;
- Capitalising the results of the AI-NURECC Initiative through the continuation of the project (AI-NURECC PLUS);
- Contributing to the EUSAIR implementation process by means of the AI-NURECC PLUS with studies, communication/networking activities and events;

- Promoting, through AI-NURECC PLUS, some EUSAIR cross-pillar topics, such as “Research and Innovation”, “SMEs development” and “Skills development”;
- Promoting the involvement of young people and youth associations in the Strategy, believing that the new generations should be a strategic target group for the sustainable development of the Macro-region;
- Enhancing the collaboration with other networks and Fora of the area (such as Forum of AI-Chambers of Commerce, Forum of AI-Cities and the Association of AI-Universities) to share common initiatives and projects;
- Enabling synergies with all the EUSAIR TSGs, involving the participation of EUSAIR representatives in the key events of the association and vice-versa;
- Sharing materials and results with EUSAIR TSGs, such as conclusions of the seminars, policy messages, policy recommendations, etc.;
- Relaunching the “EUSAIR FRIENDS” initiative in collaboration with the European Parliament;
- Finding possible synergies with the Adriatic and Ionian Interregional Group of the Committee of the Regions (CoR);
- Insisting, in particular, on the development of projects in the transport and connectivity sectors;
- Monitoring ETC Programmes and Projects (such Italy-Croatia, Interreg MED, IPA Italy Montenegro Albania) 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 Slovenia and Stakeholder Platform;
- Actively participating in the European Week of Regions and Cities 2021.

## 2. RELAUNCH THE “EUSAIR FRIENDS” INITIATIVE

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, represented by President Nikola Dobroslavic and Secretary General Francesco Cocco, took part in the event “Delivering EUSAIR’S Implementation” hosted by the MEP Ivan Jakovic 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 “FRIENDS OF EUSAIR”, a group composed by seventeen MEPs from different political groups and Member States. The group was constituted with the purpose to follow the state of play of the EUSAIR.

The idea of the informal group could be relaunched by the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion in 2021, involving new Members of the EU Parliament (elected under the new EU legislature), that could be interested in building prosperity in the Macro-region and in achieving the EUSAIR goals. This initiative could be conducted in the framework of AI-NURECC PLUS and in synergy with the other networks involved in the

project.

### 3. 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.

The Euroregion is one of the main observers in the CoR Adriatic and Ionian Interregional Group, which was set up in 2013 with the purpose to represent the opinions of regional and local authorities of the area. This group is a platform that facilitates the exchange of views, ideas and practices among CoR members, representatives of European institutions, macroregional networks (such as AIE and Adriatic Ionian Fora) and national authorities of the countries involved in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. In 2021, the Euroregion will continue creating synergies with the CoR, having in mind that local and regional authorities that are member of the Association can benefit of this opportunity as a way of increasing their say in EU affairs. The AIE will work to consolidate its status as observer providing inputs and opinions to the interregional group especially on European Territorial Cooperation issues, as well as the EUSAIR implementation. In 2021, the AI-NURECC PLUS initiative will support this goal, since some activities of the project will be performed in coordination with the Adriatic and Ionian Interregional Group.

Another priority for AIE will be to reinforce local democracy in the Western Balkans through the Working Group on the Western Balkans.

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is deeply engaged in stimulating an effective cooperation with the Western Balkans, primarily through the CoR Working Group on the Western Balkans (created in 2006 and covering: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) and three Joint Consultative Committees, which operate on a parity basis with local and regional authorities from respective Balkan countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). These bodies have discussed many issues of mutual interest, such as the rule of law and the good governance. Both topics 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 Dobrosalvic draw up an opinion on the “Local Democracy in the Western Balkans”, focused on the phenomenon of “local state capture“, which is 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 the rapporteur Nikola Dobroslavic, President of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and Prefect of Dubrovnik-Neretva County. 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.

In this context, the Secretariat will advocate the full support of the AIE to the effective implementation of the policy recommendations of the opinion on “Local Democracy in the Western Balkans”, in order to promote the democracy and the effective use of the rule of law in the area.

#### 4. MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION ALLIANCE

In 2021, 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, Med Cities and Arco Latin. 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.

On 24 November 2020, the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance meets to recall its commitment to active multi-level governance towards a renewed Mediterranean Strategy +25. In the framework of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the Med Coop Alliance held an online conference-debate with Mediterranean institutional, political and territorial key stakeholders to support multi-level governance for transnational cooperation in the basin. The partners reaffirmed their willingness to make a political commitment that will allow them to continue to develop their collaboration efficiently throughout the Mediterranean basin. In particular, in view of the environmental and global health challenges affecting all territories, it is essential to propose governance tools that promote increased cooperation both within the Alliance and with other key players for a better integration of the basin. The President of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, intervened in the institutional panel recalling how the AIE is positioned through its different activities at the heart of the MED area, especially with cooperation projects. He gave some examples of initiatives of the association linked to the 2030 Agenda, (such as AI-NURECC and other ETC projects). He also underlined that, through the MedCoopAlliance, some synergies with other initiatives and macro-regional strategies, such as EUSAIR, are possible for reinforcing the multilevel governance of the area.

In the MCA framework, 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;
- Enhance the recognizability of the MCA, increasing its role in cooperation dynamics in the Mediterranean;
- Find synergies with 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 toward relevant stakeholders;
- Provide a coordinating tool for programmes, macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, with regards to the Territorial Cooperation;
- Increase the potential capacity of the Alliance to be a strong sub-state Mediterranean voice and to lobby on the European agendas and programmes;

## 5. EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION: POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION AND ADDED VALUE FOR THE PROGRAMMES.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion was mentioned in 2019-20 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 the 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 these type of organisations, that go beyond administrative boundaries, in the consultation process of the Programme and in mainstreaming the Interreg projects results of the Programme 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 next programming period the AIE should be:

- More active in the governance process of the ETC programmes of the area;
- Being a coordination tool for some ETC programmes of the area, for instance implementing a strategic and/or small project as sole beneficiary;
- Increase the capacity of the Association to be a strong voice and to lobby on the ETC programmes.

In 2021, the AIE will follow the evolution of the Commission's proposal for post-2020 European Territorial Cooperation programmes and the definition processes of all the Interreg programmes of its cooperation area, trying to contribute to the consultative processes and to participate in related working groups.

## 6. 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. Especially in the last five years, thanks to EU 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. All ongoing European Territorial Cooperation projects in which the AIE participates, as full or associated partner, directly involve also some AIE Member Regions as well as other Macro-regional, Mediterranean and European key players.

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 its Members



and external partners in relation to different calls, programmes and opportunities.

In 2021, the Euroregion will participate in 7 projects. 5 of them fall within the framework of Interreg programmes (two as full partner and three as associated partner). Two projects will be financed by EC DG Regio.

Project	EU Programme	Role of the AIE	Website
Sustainable Tourism Community	Interreg MED, 2n call for Horizontal projects	Full Project Partner	<a href="https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-med.eu/">https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-med.eu/</a>
Biodiversity Protection Community	Interreg MED, 2nd call for Horizontal projects	Associated Partner	<a href="https://biodiversity-protection.interreg-med.eu/">https://biodiversity-protection.interreg-med.eu/</a>
Blue Growth Community	Interreg MED, 2nd call for Horizontal projects	Associated Partner	<a href="https://interreg-med.eu/thematics/blue-growth/">https://interreg-med.eu/thematics/blue-growth/</a>
Renewable Energy Community	Interreg MED, 2nd call for Horizontal projects	Associated Partner	<a href="https://renewable-energies.interreg-med.eu/">https://renewable-energies.interreg-med.eu/</a>
E-CITIJENS	Interreg Italy Croatia, 1 <sup>st</sup> call for standard projects	Full Project Partner	<a href="https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/e-citijens">https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/e-citijens</a>
AI-NURECC+	EC DG REGIO	Full Project Partner	<i>Soon available</i>
YOUTH4COESION	EC DG REGIO	Beneficiary	<i>Soon available</i>

Two ERASMUS+ projects of the Association (SWEEP and ProADAS) end in the last months of 2020 but, from a financial perspective, they will close in 2021 with the final reimbursements of the implementation costs.

The activities related to the EU projects implementation are 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 2021. For more information and to learn more about the results achieved, the AIE website has an ad-hoc section at this [link](#).

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMUNITY

**Title and Acronym:** Sustainable Tourism Community – STC

**Key words:** Sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in the Med area

**Programme:** Interreg MED 2014-2020

**Type of project:** Horizontal project

**Starting date:** 01/11/2019 - **Ending date:** 30/06/2022

**Role of the Euroregion:** Project Partner

**AIE Budget:** 283.045,00 Euro - EU co-financing: 85% of the total budget

**Lead partner:** Diputació de Barcelona (Spain)

**Partners:** Latin Arc (Spain), UNIMED (Italy), University of Thessaly (Greece), NECSTouR (Belgium), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (Croatia), Plan Bleu (France), RDA Green Karst (Slovenia)

**Description:** Built on a transnational partnership with strong knowledge and experience on integrated coastal management and sustainable tourism policies, Sustainable Tourism project aims at supporting and ensuring synergies between the modular and strategic projects selected by the MED Programme under the SO3.1. The objective is to create a cluster of projects able to jointly enhance solutions for tourism and the protection of natural and cultural resources in the MED area through a coherent strategy of Community Building, Communication and Capitalisation.

The project STC supports the MED Sustainable Tourism Community, which gathers 22 territorial cooperation projects and 300 organisations active in 12 European-Mediterranean coastal areas, all joining forces to make tourism a real driver for an inclusive and sustainable growth.

STC develops monitoring and community building activities aiming at collecting the main results of the Modular Projects (MPs) as well as at stimulating the co-ownership of data and results. The project is also working for ensuring the capitalisation and the transferring of Modular and Strategic project results.

The Euroregion is involved mainly in capitalisation and transferring activities, especially targeting the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region.

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

#### **Main activities performed in 2020:**

- Start-up of the project;
- Contribution to the organisation of project Kick-of-Meeting;
- Participation in the Kick-of-Meeting held in Salou Spain, March 2020;
- Participation in two community project events (on-site and on-line);
- Represent the Association in several on line thematic events
- Definition of the Capitalisation and transferring plan;
- Definition of the Antenna Action Plan for the Adriatic Ionian area;
- Organisation the webinar “Tourism in the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and COVID-19 crisis: measures and opportunities towards sustainability” on 16/12/2020

#### **Main activities to be performed in 2021:**

- Mapping of targets and policies in the tourism sector for the respective Antenna Action Plan;
- Setting up the Antenna Action Plan for the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion;
- Implementation of the capitalisation strategic plan in the territories of the Antenna;
- Scheduling regional and national debates in the Adriatic Ionian area in 2020 and 2021;
- Preparation of Transferring workshops in Adriatic Ionian area in 2021.

---

### **BIODIVERSITY MED PROJECT COMMUNITY**

---

#### **Title and Acronym: Biodiversity Protection Community**

**Key words:** Protected areas management, biodiversity, conservation, protection, community, knowledge platform, data, science policy interface, natural resources, environment, ecosystems, networking.

**Programme:** Interreg MED 2014-2020 – Second call Horizontal Project

**Type of project:** Horizontal project

**Starting date:** 01/11/2019 - **Ending date:** 30/06/2022

**Role of the Euroregion:** Associated partner

**Lead Partner:** European Topic Centre - University of Malaga (Spain)

**Partners:** MEDCITIES (Spain), IMC – CPMR - Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (Spain), Plan Bleu for The Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (France), Latte Creative (Italy), Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism (Montenegro), Marine institute (Croatia)

**Description:** The project is the continuation of PANACeA. It aims at assisting relevant Mediterranean stakeholders, ensuring synergies and increasing the visibility and impacts of their projects' results towards common identified strategic targets.

**The MED Community:** Bringing together key public and private players, this Mediterranean community of nature conservation actors is mainstreaming management efforts for environmental sustainability and increasing the impact of biodiversity protection projects towards common identified strategic targets. The PANACeA project (its predecessor initiative was implemented from 2016 to 2019) has now become the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community project (2019-2022), to move forward networking and management efforts inside and outside protected areas (PAs), and thereby enhance nature conservation and management in the region.

With this in mind, the partners of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection project and of the 15 engaged projects, including those finalized in 2019, are looking at ways to strengthen networking and linkages among community institutions. The three Working Groups established between 2016-2019 will continue to promote joint collaborative work, through capacity building opportunities, as to empower project partners and interested actors with effective biodiversity protection and management tools, put the Mediterranean Ecosystem-based Declaration into practice in partnership, and raise awareness on Mediterranean biodiversity knowledge and the challenges ahead.

The local adoption of tools and approaches at regional and national level, particularly concerning governance mechanisms through collaboration among public and private sectors across the whole Mediterranean, will be encouraged with a view to effectively contribute to more feasible post-2020 targets concerning biodiversity protection in the Mediterranean.

**Website:** <https://biodiversity-protection.interreg-med.eu/>

**Main activities to perform by AIE as associated partner:**

- Attend and be actively involved in the community building events such as workshops, webinars, conferences, e.g. the Mediterranean Biodiversity protection and transboundary challenges - Webinar on 26 June 2020;
- Participate in the collaborative platform of the project;
- Promote the dissemination of best practices among AIE members;

---

**BLUE GROWTH MED PROJECT COMMUNITY**

---

**Title and Acronym:** Blue Growth Community – Capitalization & Communication project for Blue Economy Innovation in the Mediterranean

**Key words:** Blue Growth

**Programme:** Interreg MED 2014-2020 – Second call Horizontal Project

**Type of project:** Horizontal project

**Starting date:** 01/11/2019 - **Ending date:** 30/06/2022

**Role of the Euroregion:** Associated partner

**Partners:** National Inter-University Consortium for Marine Sciences – CoNISMa [IT] (Lead Partner), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions - Intermediterranean Commission CPMR-IMC [FR], Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry – ASCAME [ES], University of Montenegro – Institute for marine biology [ME], National Technical University of Athens – School of Naval Architecture & Marine Engineering – NTUA [EL], Plan Bleu [FR]

**Description:** The project proposes concrete activities to build a real community of modular projects, dealing with Blue Growth. This innovative community aims to allow the reinforcement of the cross-cutting and integrated approach between modular projects and transnational key stakeholders, which is a sine qua non condition to support Mediterranean clusters in their transnational activities. Moreover, its role is to enhance the dissemination and transferability of the modular projects' results in order to ensure a wider and deeper impact towards external multilevel stakeholders, contributing to the sustainable socio-economic development of the Mediterranean area through innovative investments in the Blue economy. The project will also aim at ensuring a close communication and coordination of Axis 4 “platform project” of the Programme. The project intends to have an impact not only at projects and programme scales, but also beyond, at Member States level.

**Website:** <https://blue-growth.interreg-med.eu/>

**Main activities to perform by AIE as associated partner:**

- Support the project in the dissemination of events;
- Transfer project results;
- Capitalise and mainstream project activities.

---

#### RENEWABLE ENERGY MED PROJECT COMMUNITY

---

**Title and Acronym:** Renewable Energy Med Project Community

**Key words:** Renewable energy

**Programme:** Interreg MED 2014-2020 – Second call Horizontal Project

**Type of project:** Horizontal project

**Starting date:** 01/11/2019 - **Ending date:** 30/06/2022

**Role of the Euroregion:** Associated partner

**Partners:** Scientific Research Centre Bistra Ptuj (SL), Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (ES), Environment Park (IT), Regea (CR), Arco Latino (ES), Aegean (GR)

**Description:** The Interreg MED Renewable Energy Community is configured by six modular projects focused on the promotion of renewable energies in the Mediterranean Area, with special attention to rural and islands areas. The Mediterranean Region is one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change and requires effective and coordinated prevention actions to adapt our territories into a resilient pathway. The Renewable Energy Community sets the basis of its second generation on the capitalisation of the Ecosystemic Transition Units in MED Region, as an alternative solution for energy transition with an ecosystemic approach, with the aim of promoting an effective integration of energy into territorial planning and bring out new opportunities for local development. The multi-level coordination model is proposed to be developed, enhancing the coordination between all stakeholders.

**Website:** <https://renewable-energies.interreg-med.eu/>

**Main activities to perform by AIE as associated partner:**

- Support the project in the dissemination of event;
- Transfer project results;
- Capitalise and mainstream project activities.

---

### E-CITIJENS

---

**Title and Acronym:** E-CITIJENS - Civil Protection Emergency DSS based on CITIzen Journalism to ENhance Safety of Adriatic Basin

**Key words:** Civil protection, safety and resilience

**Programme:** Interreg Italy Croatia – Standard Project

**Starting date:** 01/01/2019 - **Ending date:** 30/06/2022

**Role of the Euroregion:** Project Partner

**AIE Budget:** 210.000,00 - EU co-financing: 85% of total budget

**Partners:** Molise Region as LP, Split Dalmatia County, Veneto Region, Split University, EEIG EURelations, Bologna University, Pescara Municipality, Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, Zadar County Rural Development Agency, Istria Region.

**Description:** E-CITIJENS aims at increasing the safety of the Croatian and Italian Adriatic basin from natural and man-made disaster by improving monitoring and emergency management measures and by harnessing the characteristics of the social media to significantly enhance Civil Protection's capacity in reducing disaster risk.

It pursues the above goal through cross-border cooperation among Civil Protection organisations from both countries. The specific objectives of the project are to:

- make available to the Civil Protection chain of command an advanced and efficient decision support system for a more efficient observation/ prediction of risks and management of emergencies. The system is based on a semantically enriched web platform, integrating information from both institutional sources and the social media

- increase the level of involvement of the population by including citizens into a participatory process of data gathering, thus stimulating their role of “active sensors” of emergencies, while informing them about safe and resilient behaviours
- harmonise the current Civil Protection Regulatory System and legislation in the cross-border area by comparing national systems so to identify similarities and differences, critical issues to be dealt with as well as by developing common technology-based operational models.

**Main Responsibility of the Euroregion:** The Euroregion is responsible of Communication, as WP2 leader, and it will be committed in transposing the good practices developed by the project, in order to strengthen the knowledge and capacities of its Members.

**Website:** [www.italy-croatia.eu/web/e-citijens](http://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/e-citijens)

**Main activities:**

- Comparative study on Civil protection in Italy and Croatia;
- Animation of web, social media and all communication channels;
- Digital Activities and media relations: Newsletters and press releases;
- Awareness Campaign;
- Organisation of the final Cross-Border Conference;
- Attendance of online internal meeting via web;
- Preparation and submission of periodic activity and financial progress reports.

---

## YOUTH4COHESION

---

**Title:** YOUTH4COHESION

**Key words:** Youth people engagement, cohesion policy

**Call for proposals:** 2020CE16BAT012 - Support for citizen engagement in the implementation of cohesion policy – by European Commission – DG REGIO

**Starting date:** 01/01/2021 - **Ending date:** 31/12/2021

**Role of the Euroregion:** Beneficiary (no other partners are involved)

**Total Budget:** 29.392,00 Euro - EU co-financing: 85% of total budget

**Description:** YOUTH4COHESION project is based on actions to contributing to improve the involvement of the young people in having an active role on cohesion policies. Young people from the countries that are the member of the AIE will be involved: Italy, Croatia, Greece, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania, through the set-up of a permanent network that will be lasted also after the conclusion of the project, the main protagonist from the countries above mentioned (young people aged from 18 to 35) will have the possibility to share their knowledge, opinion, starting online discussion, following the training course, getting the final certificate of cohesion builders. The activity will start with an on desk analysis taking in account the main results of the already existing initiatives made from the DG Regio in collaboration with the programme financed with the ESI funds: Cohesion Alliance; video- competition; “did you know” campaign; photo exhibitions; RegioStars award; Interreg Volunteer Youth and European Solidarity Corps. The main findings will be a map of the territories that less tackled the young people and after choosing 10 per each country they will be invited to join the project activities. The 60 participants will participate in the online activities (a presentation session; 5 policy objectives sessions:

Smarter Europe; Greener Europe; more Connected Europe; a more Social Europe; Europe closer to citizens with declination in the origin territories); a final project session. A project web site, social media pages and a you tube channel will be set up and with collection of main working documents, interviews, contributions produced during the project life.

**Main Responsibility of the Euroregion:** The Euroregion is responsible for the whole implementation of the initiative. All the activities will be implemented in 2021

**Website:** soon available on AIE website.

---

#### AI-NURECC+

---

**Title:** Adriatic Ionian Network Of Universities, Regions, Chambers Of Commerce And Cities Initiative Plus

**Co-founder:** DG-REGIO - European Commission

**Status on December 2020:** Under negotiation with EC DG REGIO

**Topic:** Capacity Building and EUSAIR - Sub-topics: Sustainable Tourism, Circular Economy, Creative Industries, Youth participation in EUSAIR

**Starting date:** 2021 - **Ending date:** to be defined

**Role of the Euroregion:** Project Partner

**AIE Budget:** 250.000,00 € (to be confirmed)

**Partner:** Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions – CPMR, Adriatic and Ionian Euroregion, Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Forum of the Cities of Adriatic and Ionian, Forum of the Universities of Adriatic and Ionian – UniAdriatic

**Description:** AI-NURECC PLUS, as a preparatory action, will capitalise on the results of the AI-NURECC Initiative and aim to enhance Regional and Local Authorities' appropriation of the EUSAIR main objectives and opportunities, by promoting an efficient participatory and bottom-up approach. It is expected to promote the EUSAIR cross-pillar topics: "Research and Innovation" and "SMEs Development" and "Skills Development" and, therefore, to support entrepreneurship, transnational clusters and digital innovation hubs activities for the EUSAIR. AI-NURECC PLUS also aims at encouraging multi-actor networking and collaboration among representatives of the private and public sector and civil society to foster coordination among EU, national, regional, and local policies to develop Circular Economy. Through their participation in the AI-NURECC PLUS activities (e.g. events) all potential beneficiaries will learn, among other things, how to improve the setting up of projects in cooperation with their partners from other countries, not only for the programmes focusing on the EUSAIR area but a wider range of EU programmes. It will, therefore, serve as an incubator for further synergies and collaborations.

In this context, the specific topics covered by AI-NURECC PLUS will be: Sustainable Tourism, Cultural and Creative Industries and Circular Economy. Special attention will be paid to Youth as a strategic target group for the sustainable development of the EUSAIR area, also through initiatives addressed to sport, integration and social inclusion, tools that are expected to further encourage community cohesion and solidarity in the area.

## 7. PROJECTS UNDER EVALUATION

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 2021, the majority of Interreg Programmes in which the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion used to participate as partner or associated partner will not launch any other new call for proposals. However, the AIE Secretariat has and will obviously continue looking for further funding opportunities through the submission of projects in the framework of other Programmes.

All the projects listed in the following tables will be evaluated by the respective Programmes in the beginning of 2021. If project will be admitted for funding, the project will start in 2021.

This said, the Association will have to carefully ponder its management and financial capacities in relation to both already running projects and future opportunities. The AIE is also strongly committed to provide its Members with the necessary technical support to build partnerships, especially where the Association is not directly eligible as full partner.

The following tables summarise the projects under evaluation.

<b>Cooperation, Innovation and Bioeconomy for a sustainable development in the Adriatic area</b>	
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Call of proposal</b>
Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo- AICS)- Multiannual financial allocation 2019	Promozione dei Partenariati Territoriali e implementazione territoriale dell'Agenda 2030
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Role of the Euroregion and main activities</b>
Cooperation in Agriculture and Bio-economy among Italy, Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina	Project Partner
<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>AIE Budget</b>
Municipality of Nardò (Italy)	87.600,00 €
<b>Abstract</b>	The project aims to contribute to the improvement and innovation of planning and decision-making processes in environmental and land use matters through new forms of territorial governance in agriculture. Target regions are Shkoder Region (Albania) and Herzegovina Neretva Canton (Bosnia Herzegovina).
<b>Status</b>	Submitted in June 2020. Project is under final evaluation which is expected in late 2020.

YOUR-EU



Programme	Call of proposal
ERASMUS+ / EACEA	European Youth Together 2020
Topic	Role of the Euroregion
Collaboration among youth association, EU citizenship,	Project partner
Lead Partner	AIE Budget
Tamat NGO (Italy)	104.000,00 €
Abstract	The project aims to reinforce the collaboration of youth organisations in Europe, also after the experience not yet concluded of the pandemic Covid-19
Status	Project will be submitted by the end of July 2020

I-CAN EUth-CAN	
Programme	Call of proposal
Erasmus+	Call 2020, Round 2, KA3- Support for policy reform - KA347 - Dialogue between young people and policy makers
Topic	Role of the Euroregion
Identify civic skills of young people	Project partner
Lead partner	AIE Budget
Fondazione Giovanni Paolo II per lo Sport (Italy)	23.520,00 €
Abstract	The project main objective is to increase the structured dialogue between youth and public bodies at local and regional level, by tapping into the motivations of both youth and decision-makers in engaging in such process and by creating suitable participatory paths. The project involves young people and decision-makers from Italy, Croatia and Albania and will make them work together to understand volunteerism as a tool for overcoming the barriers to the creation of intercultural and inclusive societies.
Status	Submitted in June 2020. The project is under evaluation which is expected in late 2020 or 2021. If selected, the project will start in 2021.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Section

### INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION

#### 1. MEMBERSHIP

In the recent years, the Euroregion has accepted requests of new membership by local and regional authorities especially from Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and Italy. The association counts 33 Members and it is the largest network of regional and local authorities in the area.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion should be opened to new associates from the macro-regional area to cover the entire geographical area of the Ionian Sea, by involving, for instance, the Ionian Greek regions.

In order to improve its impact and be more efficient in involving the membership, the AIE will:

- Consolidate the relationship with all members, reinforcing in particular the interactions with associates who have participated less in the networking activities;
- Reach out new potential members in the Ionian area;
- Keep the relationships with regional and local authorities of IPA countries (Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina);
- Develop specific partnerships for EU projects in the framework of EU programmes.

One of the primary objectives of the AIE Secretariat will be to recover some annual fees not yet paid by some Members of the Association.

#### 2. STATUTORY MEETINGS AND STATUTE

The plan is to convene the Elective Assembly in June 2021, postponing the election of the bodies of the association that should have taken place in 2020, hoping that the coronavirus crisis will allow to arrange the meeting in presence. The AIE Secretariat, together with the Presidency, will be in charge to propose the date and locations of the Elective Assembly which will also celebrate the 15 years of the association. The event will be an opportunity to reflect about the progress done since then and so far, and to gather new proposals for the future of the Organisation.

The 2021 Assembly will explore the opportunity to present some amendments to the Statute of the Association. The proposal of reforming the statute will be prepared by the Secretariat with the objective of:

- Giving more operational autonomy to the Secretariat, as well as more responsibility in the daily management and implementation of EU projects;
- Reforming the Thematic Commissions, mainly by setting up a new model for the thematic works of the Association based on more flexible structures such as Thematic Working Groups in place of the Thematic Commissions. Such Working Groups are expected to help the Association

achieve its thematic goals in a concrete and effective way;

- Setting up a different system for the financial audit of the Association, replacing the Supervisory Board with an external and independent auditor.

### 3. THEMATIC COMMISSIONS

The importance of relaunching the activities of the seven AIE Thematic Commissions was stressed as a crucial goal of the Association in all statutory meetings held in the recent years. The Presidents of the Thematic Commissions were called to restart the activities of their respective commissions and to schedule meetings, at least once a year, for developing common strategies on the following seven topics: Productive Activities; Environmental Protection; Transport and Infrastructure; Fisheries; Tourism and Culture; Institutional Affairs; Social Affairs.

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 the above-mentioned topics, the result of this awareness-raising action was not satisfactory, since the Commissions have *de facto* not worked in the last four years.

In this context, it is quite appropriate that the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion reformed its internal Commissions and thoroughly examined how topics that are strategic and important for the Association (e.g. Transport, Sustainable Tourism, Blue growth, Environment, Circular Economy, Youth Policies, etc.) can be dealt with more efficiently, more flexibly, and openly as to involve Members in the Association's life.

The 2021, General Assembly could open a discussion for reforming Art. 29 of the Statute, abolishing the Presidency of the Thematic Commission and setting up a new and more flexible model based on Thematic Working Groups. Also, the topics covered should be updated, since some of them are no longer relevant to the EUSAIR pillars and, in some case, to current European policies.

The proposal could be to create new and informal Thematic Working Groups that could be more operative in developing joint initiatives and performing common activities for the Euroregion. For instance, if Art. 29 of the statute will be amended, every AIE Member will be able to organise Thematic Working Group's meetings and/or events on different matters. International events, already planned by AIE Members, could be used to convene the new Thematic Working Groups as back-to-back events. A good strategy could be to take advantage of the events planned at local level, as well as scheduled project events, organised by the Association and by its Members. The Euroregion welcomes also the opportunity to use its financial resources allocated under European and ETC projects for setting up Thematic Working Groups, allowing the participation of interested AIE Members. The reform of Art. 29 of the Statute could also foresee a new role, the Thematic Coordinator, for each chosen topic. Some AIE

members could be appointed as Coordinators so to cover the different topics.

#### 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 and, in some case, by trainees and volunteers.

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, position papers and declarations.
- Facilitate the work of the AIE bodies in the organisation of at least two annual Statutory Meetings (Assembly and Executive Committee) and thematic project meetings;
- Lighten the administrative burden of the Secretariat, allowing it to devote greater time to substantial work.

In 2017, 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 mission trips of the Secretariat's staff and an Internal Guideline for the procurement of services and goods.

In 2021, 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 (as explained in the paragraph n. 6). The staff of the Secretariat will work mainly at the premises of the Secretariat in Campobasso, in tight collaboration with the Presidency. In 2020, if needed, the Secretariat will explore the possibility to open new job positions necessary for the implementation of European projects.

It is important to propose to the next General Assembly the possibility to reform the structure the Secretariat, evaluating the decision taken in last years by the AIE Executive Committee. The Executive Committee gave the mandate to the AIE Secretariat to make a proposal for reforming its structure in order to become more operational, autonomous in the daily-management and implementation of EU-projects, giving to this structure more responsibility and power of attorney.

In order to make a real reform of the Secretariat it is necessary to prepare an adequate proposal and some few amendments to the Statute. The Secretariat will work on these documents and will bring them to the attention of the next General Assembly.

## 5. COMMUNICATION

As already 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 2021, the Secretariat will keep improving the definition of the key messages, according to the goals of internal and external communication.

The Secretariat will continue to update the Association's website with fresh contents and news, giving visibility to the AIE activities, projects, events, as well as external events and news relevant to the Macro-region.

Regarding the social media channels, in 2021 the Euroregion will continue to animate the Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Association. Additional social media profiles will be created on Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. All the social media profiles will be customised according to the Association's visual identity and its messages. They will be managed by the Secretariat in order to provide adequate and coherent coverage of the Association's work. It is necessary also to prepare and release a quarterly Newsletter targeted to AIE Members and/or external stakeholders.

For this purpose, the Secretariat has drafted a Communication Action Plan and Social Media Strategy for:

- Defining how the Organisation will use the website, the social media and the Newsletters;
- Defining the communication purposes for reaching out to a widest audience;
- Making the Association more visible.

The draft proposal for a comprehensive Communication Action Plan and Social Media Strategy is enclosed to this document.

## 6. TRAINEESHIPS AND INTERREG VOLUNTEER YOUTH (IVY)

In the past years, the Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion has hosted 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 2021, the AIE will continue to promote internships in cooperation with AIE Members and Academic organisations.

Moreover, within the framework of two Interreg Projects (E-Citizens and Sustainable Tourism), for the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion joined the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) Initiative, which is part of the European Solidarity Corps Initiative of the European Commission. The Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) Initiative offers to young Europeans a chance to volunteer in cross-border, transnational or interregional programmes and organisations involved in European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) projects, such as the

AIE. IVY is coordinated by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional & Urban Policy. The objective of the initiative is to involve young Europeans in supporting, promoting and reporting the achievements related to projects and ETC programmes.

The AIE, is entitled to be a hosting organisation as project beneficiary. Within this framework, between Autumn 2020 and Winter 2021, it will host two young Europeans volunteers (aged 18-30- for a period of 2-6 months) in the office of the Secretariat, giving them the opportunity to learn more about Territorial Cooperation and the Interreg Projects implemented by the Association. The volunteers will receive financial support and a comprehensive insurance coverage from the IVY initiative. AIE is in the process to get the green line from the Programme under 2 projects. For one project (Sustainable Tourism), it has already got the approval from AEBR and the first volunteer has already started collaborating since September 2020.

More information about Interreg Volunteer Youth: [www.interregyouth.com](http://www.interregyouth.com)