



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

Annual Activity Programme 2023

Adriatic Ionian Euroregion

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The Annual Activity Programme is a document that provides information about the activities that the association plans to carry out in 2023, describing at the same time the internal organisation of the Euroregion.

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

- EUSAIR and the AI-NURECC PLUS;
- Actions in synergy with the Committee of the Regions;
- Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance;
- European Territorial Cooperation: Potential role of the Association;
- Ongoing projects;
- Projects under evaluation.

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

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

1st Section

EUSAIR, Cooperation Initiatives and Projects

1. EUSAIR AND THE AI-NURECC PLUS

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), endorsed by the European Council in October 2014, is fourth Macro-Regional Strategies in Europe together with EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009), 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 is now involved in all EUSAIR governance structures, with a coordination role in Pillar 2 - Connecting the Region, sharing this role with Italy and Serbia. The participation of North Macedonia reinforces the political dimension of the Strategy and strengthens regional cooperation also in connection with the enlargement of the EU to Western Balkan countries.

In February 2022, the EUSAIR family has been expanded also to San Marino as the 10th participating country in the Adriatic - Ionian macro-regional strategy.

In 2023, the AIE will be strongly committed to participate in the implementation of the strategy by contributing with own initiatives (such as AI-NURECC PLUS), as well as by participating in the relevant cooperation programmes active in the area (Interreg Italy-Croatia and Adrion Programmes in particular). 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.

The AIE intends to actively participate and contribute to the 2023 Annual Forum of the Strategy that is supposed to be organised in Sarajevo (Bosnia Herzegovina) in May 2023. The event will give visibility to the EUSAIR and it will be the occasion to reflect on the progress made since the previous Forum held in Tirana (Albania) in May 2022.

In 2023, 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;
- Contributing to the strategy through the AI-NURECC PLUS Initiative, by organising high level events on different topics in collaboration with the other project partners;
- Contributing to the EUSAIR implementation process by means of the AI-NURECC PLUS with studies, communication/networking activities and thematic events;
- Promoting, through AI-NURECC PLUS, some EUSAIR cross-pillar topics, such as "Research and Innovation", "SMEs development" and "Skills development";
- Promoting the involvement and youth associations as strategic target of the Strategy and key to the sustainable development of the Macro-region, by taking the leading role in animating the Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Forum (AIYOF), which, promoted under the AI-NURECC Initiative, sees the active participation of young people and youth organisations from all EUSAIR

countries and was the platform to establish the Adriatic Ionian Youth Network (AIYN) and support the creation of a EUSAIR Youth Council;

- Enhancing the collaboration with other networks and Fora of the area (such as the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, the Forum of AI-Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of AI-Cities and the Association of AI-Universities, the Association of European Border Regions, to share common initiatives and projects;
- Enabling synergies with all the EUSAIR TSGs as well as the EUSAIR Facility Point, involving the participation of EUSAIR representatives in the key events of the association and vice-versa;
- Sharing materials and results with EUSAIR TSGs and EUSAIR Facility Point, such as conclusions of the seminars, policy messages, policy recommendations, etc.;
- Monitoring ETC Programmes and Projects (such Interreg Italy-Croatia, Interreg EURO MED, Interreg IPA South Adriatic, Interreg Central Europe) 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 Bosnia Herzegovina and Stakeholder Platform;
- Actively participating in the European Week of Regions and Cities 2023.

2. ACTIONS IN SYNERGY WITH THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

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

In 2023, the Euroregion will continue to follow the CoR activities, since local and regional authorities that are member of the Association can benefit of this opportunity as a way of increasing their knowledge of EU affairs.

One of the priorities of the AIE will be to reinforce local democracy in the Western Balkans through the CoR Working Group on the Western Balkans, which was created in 2006. The group covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and three Joint Consultative Committees, which operate on a parity basis with local and regional authorities, from Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. These bodies have discussed many issues of mutual interest, among others, the rule of law and the good governance, topics that have a particular importance in the context of the EU accession negotiations. Nikola Dobroslavić, 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 Dobroslavić drew up an opinion on “Local Democracy in the Western Balkans”, focusing on the phenomenon of “local state capture”, which is seen as one of the main impediments to the effective rule of law, good governance and development of local democracy in the Western Balkans.

In October 2021, the CoR Plenary Assembly voted and approved the opinion on “Local Democracy Challenges in the Western Balkans”, presented by Nikola Dobroslavić as a rapporteur. The Opinion provides policy recommendations to avoid local state capture and fighting the negative phenomena hindering Western Balkan countries in their process of EU accession.

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

In 2023, the AIE is planning to disseminate and present to different stakeholders the Opinion on a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean. The promotion will be done in coordination with the Med Coop Alliance members. The Secretariat will advocate the full support of the AIE for an effective implementation of both opinions and related policy recommendations as prepared by President Dobroslavić.

In 2021-22, the AIE Secretariat established a dialogue with the Young Elected Politicians (YEP) network, promoted by the CoR. Representatives of the YEP Community and YEP Programme Team were involved in some EU project activities. In 2023, the AIE Secretariat intends to deepen knowledge and collaboration with YEP as a way to:

- focus on the role of young elected politicians from AIE Members and their active role in EU politics;
- offer Members' young elected politicians the opportunity to speak to EU regions and municipalities and EU institutions, such as the CoR;
- - promote the exchange of best practices and knowledge of EU opportunities;

3. MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION ALLIANCE (MCA)

In 2023, 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 Latino. The MCA reflects about the future of cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, towards a joint long-term strategy for the sustainable and integrated territorial development of the basin.

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

The MED Cooperation Alliance represents a unique instance of cooperation and coordination of networks. Basically, it is a network of networks in the MED area with a broad range of partners and a

multi-level organization. This cooperation tool has a strong political relevance for the Association, since the AIE is the only partner representing the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region.

In 2023, the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance will meet periodically to recall its commitment to an active multi-level governance in the Mediterranean basin. Together with the other signatory partners, the AIE will try to:

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

4. EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION: POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

The ADRION orientation paper recommends the use of existing cooperation initiatives, such as the

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

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

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

In 2023, the AIE will follow two governance projects co-financed by the Interreg Euro-med Programme focused on two specific missions such as Sustainable Tourism and Innovation. AIE will collaborate with the other members of the Med Cooperation Alliance for following the other missions covered by the governance projects of the Interreg Euro-Med programme.

5. ONGOING EUROPEAN PROJECTS

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

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

In 2023, the Euroregion will participate in four projects. Three of them fall within the framework of Interreg programmes. One project is co-financed by EC - DG REGIO.

Project	EU Programme	Role of the AIE	Website
Community4Tourism	Interreg EUROMED, 1 st call Governance Project / Thematic Community. Topic: Sustainable Tourism	Full Project Partner	Soon available
Dialogue4Innovation	Interreg EUROMED, 1st call Governance Project / Institutional Dialogue Project. Topic: Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy	Full Project Partner	Soon available
TECHERA	Italy Croatia CBC Programme – Cluster Call	Full Project Partner	https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/techera
AI-NURECC PLUS	EC DG REGIO	Full Project Partner	https://cpmr.org/policy-work/cohesion/ai-nurecc-plus/

Other projects of the Association (such as Sustainable Tourism) end the activities in the last months of 2022 but, from a financial perspective, will close in 2023 with the final reimbursements of the implementation costs.

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

The following pages provides an overview of each Cooperation Project, including some details about the activities to be planned and performed in 2023. For more information and to learn more about the results achieved, the AIE website has an ad-hoc section at this [link](#).

STC

Title and Acronym: Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism Community - STC

Key words: Governance and Sustainable tourism in the Med area

Programme: Interreg Euro MED 2021-2027

Type of project: Governance / Thematic Community Project

Starting date: January 2023

Project Duration: 80 Months

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

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

Lead partner: Diputació de Barcelona (Spain)

Partners: University of Thessaly (Greece), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (Croatia), NECSTouR (Belgium), UNIMED (Italy), Plan Bleu (France), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (France), University of Tirana (Albania).

Description: The project aims to contribute to the EU territorial cooperation and its transnational dimension through the specific objectives included in the Interreg Euro-MED Programme and, concretely, the main goals of the Mission 4, related to the Enhancement of the Sustainable Tourism in the MED Area and the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society. This project is based upon the main objective of improving a better governance of cooperation, both policy governance and multi-sectoral, multi-level and transnational territorial governance, with a strong focus on environment and climate, promoting a smarter and greener Mediterranean, which is in line with the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and the Territorial Agenda 2030. The project is built upon the outputs of the Interreg MED 14/20 Sustainable Tourism and BleuTourMed Projects but reinforces its objectives to current new challenges.

STC integrates the 4 Programme's specific objectives, as tourism has shown to be a transversal issue in the MED area, involving all kinds of stakeholders, agents and territories. STC will address its activities to pursue the consolidation of a competitive innovation ecosystem, to support a circular economy, to promote climate change adaptation, and to enhance nature and biodiversity. As a result of its activities, STC will come up with jointly developed solutions and promote cooperation across borders.

Both the project and the partnership are set up taking into consideration the necessary transnational dimension for the success of the programme's mission and project's objectives. This approach will be maintained and ensured along the lifecycle of the project, as the partners will act as territorial antennas to ensure coverage of all the MED area and to maintain a smooth dialogue with all the territories, main actors and stakeholders, and keep an eye on its main needs and challenges.

Website: *available from January 2023*

Main activities to be performed from 2023:

- Start-up of the project;
- Contribution to the organisation of project Kick-of-Meeting in Marseille (January);
- Coordinate the Work Package Transfer;
- Acting as Antenna for the Adriatic Ionian area;
- Encourage the transfer of practices and results developed by the MED projects to other actors and territories of the association

- Facilitate the exploitation, sharing and reuse of knowledge, experiences and project results by other Euro-MED projects.
- Encourage the mainstreaming of policies and strategies on tourism in AIE territories.

GoMED!

Title and Acronym: Transformative innovation governance for Mediterranean sustainable development - GoMED!

Topic: Governance and Innovation in the Med area

Programme: Interreg Euro MED 2021-2027

Type of project: Governance / Institutional Dialogue Project

Starting date: January 2023

Project Duration: 80 Months

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

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

Lead partner: Emilia Romagna Region (Italy)

Partners: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds (Croatia), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (Croatia), Waste Agency of Catalonia (Spain), Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain), Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Open Space Ltd. (Bulgaria), ADEME – Agency for Ecological Transition (France), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (France),

Description: The GoMED! Project is contributing to a better governance and to a more innovative and sustainable economy in the Mediterranean, engaging with a large network of organisations from public sector, business, research and civil society. Capacity building is one of the pillars of the Project, since it is key to increase the capacity of policy makers and stakeholders to address the Sustainable Development Goals more effectively. By working with territorial actors through Transformative innovation policy labs (TIPL), the project will promote the diffusion of more systemic and integrated approaches, which are necessary to tackle the urgent challenges of the ecological transition. The Project will contribute to improve the long-lasting conditions for a permanent institutional and social dialogue in the Mediterranean, bridging the transnational dimension with local solutions and increasing coordination, policy coherence and alignment of actions for an innovative sustainable economy. Jointly with the Mission thematic community, GoMED! will offer a platform to mobilise Mediterranean stakeholders to foster more open, inclusive and effective governance, increasing the visibility and relevance of the Mediterranean instances at the European and international levels. To amplify its impact, the Project will support MED challenge-driven multi-actor alliances. To meet its objectives, the GoMED! Institutional Dialogue Project will build on the outcomes of the Interreg Euro-Med thematic

projects, narrowing the gap with the policy priorities – at local, regional, national, Mediterranean and European level – and promoting their integration in structural policies and practices.

Website: *available from January 2023*

Main activities to be performed in 2023:

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

TECHERA

Title and Acronym: A new technology era in the Adriatic Sea – Big data sharing and analytics for a circular sea economy – TECHERA

Topic: Blue economy

Programme: Interreg Italy Croatia CBC Programme

Call: Cluster call

Project Duration: from 01.04.2022 to 30.06.2023

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

AIE Budget: 80.000 Euro - EU co-financing: 85% of the total budget

Lead partner: Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna

Partners: ASSAM (Italy), Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (Croatia), Municipality of Ravenna (Italy), OGS – Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale (Italy), Veneto Agricoltura (Italy), Zadar County (Croatia), Ministry of Agriculture (Croatia).

Description: A sustainable Blue Growth may be undermined by the unavailability of scientific and socio-economic observations related to the status of marine environment. The TECHERA project will tackle this problem by promoting the adoption of emerging technologies such as big-data sharing and analytics to increase the smart specialization of companies operating in the blue economy, and to attract the interest of young people in smart and blue careers.

Products of previous projects will be interconnected into study examples that will promote sharing of experience, and provide evidence of potentials and benefits of integration and complementary of approaches. Operational and knowledge gaps will be identified as well.

To achieve a consistent, meaningful, and successful communication, TECHERA will identify relevant stakeholders for thematic area 1, involving also other Standard and Strategic IT-HR projects operating in the same domain, and adopt different approaches (frontal lectures, participatory discussion, gaming) targeting the transferability of results in the Programme Area and beyond.

Finally, TECHERA will propose potential inputs for the next programming period in order to contribute to the definition of a strategy for digitization and to the identification of key innovations to improve the competitiveness in the blue economy.

Website: <https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/techera>

Main activities to be performed in 2023:

- Acting as coordination of the project communication (WP Communication);
- Contribution to online and offline events, promotional campaigns, media relations, and digital and web-based activities;
- Exchange and exploitation of projects' results;
- Organisation of the final event.

AI-NURECC PLUS

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

Co-founder: DG-REGIO - European Commission

Co-financed by: EC DG REGIO

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

AIE Budget: 250.005,50 Euro

Role of the Euroregion: Project Partner

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 the Adriatic and Ionian, Forum of the Universities of Adriatic and Ionian – UniAdrion

Description: The Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chambers of Commerce and Cities Initiative PLUS (AI-NURECC PLUS) is a preparatory action financed by DG REGIO that will capitalise on the results of the AI-NURECC Initiative, ended in December 2019. This project is coordinated by the CPMR in partnership with four stakeholders from the area: the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (AIE), the

Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities (FAIC), the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce (FORUM AIC), and the Association of Universities of the Adriatic Ionian area (UniAdrion).

The AI-NURECC PLUS partners have joined their efforts to support the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Sea Region (EUSAIR) implementation, ensuring deep and broad territorial coverage while enhancing Regional and Local Authorities' appropriation of the EUSAIR main objectives and opportunities in the EUSAIR cross-pillar topics: "Research and Innovation", "SMEs Development", and "Skills Development". AI-NURECC PLUS will therefore support entrepreneurship, transnational clusters, and digital innovation hubs activities for the EUSAIR.

Special attention will be paid to Youth, also through initiatives addressed to sport, integration and social inclusion, tools that are expected to further encourage community sustainable development, cohesion and solidarity in the area. AI-NURECC PLUS also aims at encouraging multi-actor networking and collaboration among representatives of the private and public sectors and civil society to foster coordination among EU, national, regional, and local policies to develop Circular Economy.

In this context, AI-NURECC PLUS will operate in the following fields: Sustainable Tourism, Cultural and Creative Industries, and Circular Economy.

AI-NURECC PLUS activities will also contribute to the implementation of the Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems (CCRE-S3) thematic area's objectives in the EUSAIR area. CCRE-S3 is an AI-NURECC deliverable and the first thematic area with a specific focus on a Macro-Regional Strategy.

Website: <https://www.adriaticionianeuroregion.eu/projects/ai-nurecc-plus-initiative/>

Main activities to be performed in 2023:

- Organisation of high-level events in EUSAIR area in collaboration with the other partners;
- Animate the Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Forum.

6. 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 2023, the majority of Interreg Programmes in which the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion used to participate as partner or associated partner will launch new call for proposals. The AIE Secretariat will continue to monitor the funding opportunities for AIE members and for the association itself. The Secretariat will be committed to build partnerships by involving AIE members, especially when the Association will not be in the position to participate as full partner.

The following tables summarise the projects under evaluation in 2023.

SHELF LIFE Improving the access to supporting services for local agrifood business	
Programme	Call of proposal
Interreg Central Europe	1st call
Topic	Role of the Euroregion and main activities
Strengthening innovation capacities in agrifood business	Project Partner
Lead Partner	AIE Budget
DELTA 2000 Consortium (Italy)	139.600,00 Euro
Abstract	SHELF LIFE will implement a common methodology to engage SMEs producing 4 types of high-value food.
Status	Submitted in June 2022. Project is under final evaluation which is expected in 2023.

2nd Section

INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION

1. MEMBERSHIP

The association counts 33 members and it is the largest network of regional and local authorities in the AI-macroregional area. In recent years, the AIE has accepted the requests of new membership by local and regional authorities of Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and Italy.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion should open the association to new potential associates with the purpose to cover the entire geographical area, by involving, for instance, new members of the Ionian territory.

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

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

One of the primary objectives of the AIE Secretariat in 2023 will be to recover some annual fees not yet paid by some Members of the Association.

2. STATUTE AND STATUTORY MEETINGS

In 2022, the AIE Assembly has approved some amendments to the Statute of the Association with the objective to:

- Give more operational autonomy to the Secretariat, as well as more responsibility in the daily management and implementation of EU projects;
- Replace the Thematic Commissions with a new model of thematic working groups;
- Set up a different system for the financial audit of the Association, by replacing the Supervisory Board with an external and independent auditor.

Regarding the statutory meeting, the plan is to convene the Executive Committee in June 2023 and the General Assembly in autumn 2023. The AIE Secretariat, together with the Presidency, will be in charge to propose the locations and the dates of both statutory meetings. Ideally the events could be organised in combination with thematic/project events relevant for the association.

3. THEMATIC WORKIN GROUPS

The importance of relaunching the thematic activities of the Euroregion was stressed as a crucial goal of the Association in all statutory meetings held in recent years. Despite the efforts made by the AIE Presidency and the Secretariat, which have called for convening the Thematic Commissions and for the organisation of events linked to 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 6 years.

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

In 2023, the members of the association are called to set up and animate specific Thematic Working Groups by involving all the other members of the association. Members can propose the Secretariat to coordinate a specific thematic working group. After collecting such inputs from AIE Members, the General Assembly will be responsible to formalise the working groups and appoint the respective coordinators. The appointed Coordinators of the thematic working groups will have to guarantee these tasks: exchange and disseminate good practices, develop joint programs and projects, build partnerships, define political positions on the various thematic areas, plan common initiatives within their own thematic area, promote the preparation of studies and reports, organize trainings and capacity building activities.

In this context, it is quite appropriate that the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion should cover topics such as Transport, Sustainable Tourism, Blue growth, Environment, Green Economy, Youth Policies, etc.

The international events, already planned by the AIE Members, could be used to convene the Thematic Working Groups as back-to-back event. 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 granted under European and ETC projects for setting up Thematic Working Groups, allowing the participation of interested AIE Members.

4. SECRETARIAT

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

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

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

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

In 2023, the activities of the Secretariat will be carried out by the Secretary General in collaboration with three units of internal staff and with the support of thematic experts under short-term remuneration contracts.

The Secretariat will be supported by trainees and IVY volunteers. The staff of the Secretariat will work mainly at the premises of the Secretariat in Campobasso, in tight collaboration with the Presidency in Dubrovnik. The Brussels offices can ensure the activity in heart of the Europe Union.

In 2023, if needed, the Secretariat will explore the possibility to open new job positions necessary for the implementation of European projects.

5. COMMUNICATION

As done in the recent years, the Secretariat will manage the internal and external communication of the Association through networking and institutional communication conveyed via the AIE website and social media channels. In 2023, the Secretariat will keep improving the definition of the key messages, according to the goals of Communication Action Plan and Social Media Strategy.

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

Regarding the social media channels, in 2023 the Euroregion will continue to animate Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube channels. All the social media profiles will be customised according to the Association's visual identity. The social media will be managed by the Secretariat in order to provide an adequate and coherent coverage of the Association's work.

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

6. TRAINEESHIPS AND INTERREG VOLUNTEER YOUTH (IVY)

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

In 2023, the AIE will continue to promote internships in cooperation with AIE Members, Academic organisations and Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY), managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). In the framework of Interreg Projects, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion would like to continue the cooperation with the Initiative "Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY)", that offers young Europeans a chance to volunteer in cross-border, transnational or interregional programmes and organisations involved in European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) projects. The AIE has been a hosting organisation as project beneficiary in 2020-21 and also for the year 2023 the AIE would like to confirm the cooperation with this European Initiative by hosting in the office of the Secretariat (Brussels and Campobasso) at least 2 young Europeans volunteers (aged 18-30, for a period of 2-6 months), giving to the volunteers 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 programme.

More information about Interreg Volunteer Youth can be found at www.interregyouth.com