

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was adopted and launched at an international conference in Brussels, on 18 November 2014, during the term of the previous European Commission, while Italy held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

EUSAIR Member States are the same as the All Participating Countries: R. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, R. Croatia, Hellenic Republic, R. Italy, R. Slovenia, R. Serbia and Montenegro. Membership is both based on the geographic principle – states that have access to the Adriatic or Ionian Sea, and on the principle of international law, like in the case of the Republic of Serbia, which is a member of this Initiative as the successor to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

The Republic of Serbia supports and actively contributes to the activities aimed at defining the Adriatic and Ionian Region as a macro-region and the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. The said corresponds with the EU's WB enlargement policy and the further assistance to the countries of the Western Balkans, with the aim of strengthening and stabilizing their overall democratic potential. The Republic of Serbia advocates the principle of inclusiveness, i.e. participation of all the members of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative in the Strategy's implementation process. Even though it is a land-locked country, the Republic of Serbia has both the political and economic interest to participate in the Strategy. Serbia highly appreciates the activities carried out so far by the EU Member States, with regard to the Strategy, in the framework of the All (Italy and Greece in particular), as well as the engagement of the European Commission, primarily on the part of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

The Republic of Serbia accepted the proposal put forward by Italy to be the Coordinator[1] of Pillar 2 – Connecting the Region, in tandem with Italy. Pillar 2 is unique in that it consists of two sub-areas: Transport and Energy, for reasons of its thematic complexity.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia approved the Decision on Establishing a **Working Group for Cooperation with the European Union in the Adriatic and Ionian Region**, at its meeting on 7 December 2014. The Working Group is tasked to propose measures, in coordination with the competent bodies of the public administration, while cooperating with the European Commission and other Member States of the Strategy on the implementation of EUSAIR, and to propose other measures relating to the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

The First Annual Forum on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region was held in Dubrovnik, between 11 and 13 May 2016, in the organization of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. The main aim of the Forum was to review the results achieved and the progress made in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, two years after its formal adoption in October 2014.

Through different programmes, the Forum brought together more than 450 participants from the Strategy's eight Participating Countries, representatives of the European Commission, international and regional organizations, monetary institutions, local and regional governance levels, institutions and networks involving science and research, education and university

communities, economic chambers and business representatives. In the context of the Forum, a joint meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian Council of Ministers (AIC) and ministers responsible for the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting) was held in the framework of the Croatian All Chairmanship-in-Office. The meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the AII, held on 11 May, when the wording of the Dubrovnik Declaration was harmonized. The Declaration hails the progress made by the Participating Countries, in cooperation with the European Commission and owing to its support, through the establishment of the EUSAIR governing structures. The need and the importance of coordinated action in the Adriatic and Ionian Region are underlined, with a view to a more efficient identification and implementation of projects aiming to encourage economic and social development.

The last EUSAIR Forum was held between 11 and 12 May 2017, in Ioannina, Hellenic Republic, in the context of this country's All Chairmanship-in-Office.

Web-presentation: www.adriatic-ionian.eu.

Mr. Pavle Jankovic, Head of the Regional Initiatives Department, MFA Sector for the European Union, is **Serbia's National Coordinator for EUSAIR**.

¹ Pillar 1 Coordinators: Greece and Montenegro, Pillar 3: R. Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pillar 4: R. Croatia and R. Albania