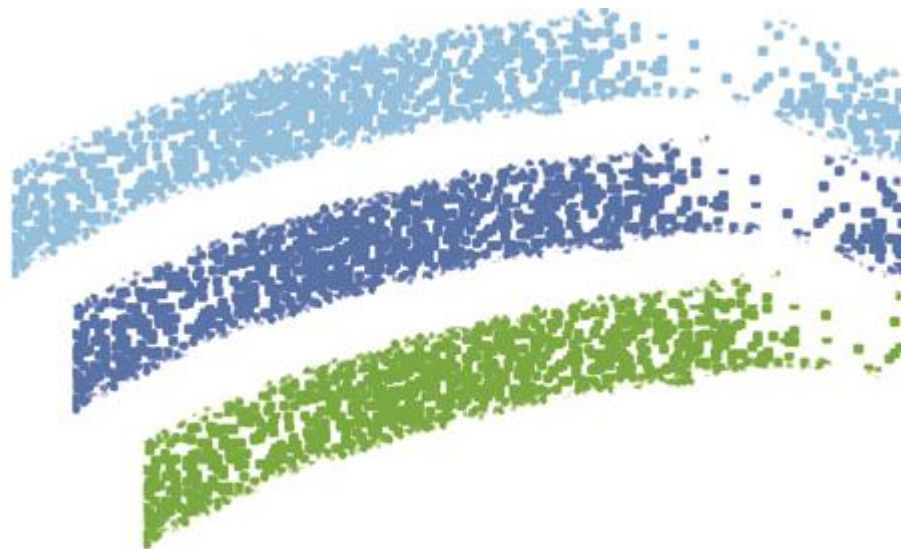


EUROREGIONE ADRIATICO IONICA  
JADRANSKO JONSKA EUROREGIJA  
ADRIATIC IONIAN EUROREGION  
EURO RAJONI ADRIATIKO JONIAN  
ΕΥΡΩΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ ΑΔΡΙΑΤΙΚΗΣ ΙΟΝΙΟΥ

# Adriatic Ionian Euroregion

## ACTIVITY REPORT 2020



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

### STATUTORY MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

#### 1. Executive Committee, - August 2020

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented us from carrying out our statutory activities in person and forced us to reschedule all events. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, for the first time since the foundation of the Association in 2006, the event took place in accordance with the written procedure provided for in Article 22 of the Statute.

With letter dated on 31/07/2020 (ref. n. 30), the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion has launched a written procedure of the Executive Committee aimed at sharing and approving the following documents: Financial Statement 2019, Activity Report 2019, Financial Plan 2020, Activity Programme 2020, the Communication Action Plan, Proposal for a Social Media Strategy and the Proposal for the Annual Membership fee 2020. 10 calendar days were then allocated to the members of the Executive Committee for any kind of reflection, suggestion or modification of the documents.

After having examined the documentation as requested by the procedure, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Molise Region have sent feedbacks to the AIE Secretariat. Both Member Regions approved the documents with no substantial comments. Since no other comments have been received in August, the written procedure is concluded and the documents are considered approved by the Executive Committee, as formalised by letter dated on 01/09/2020 (ref. no. 31).

#### 2. XVII General Assembly of AIE – 16 December 2020



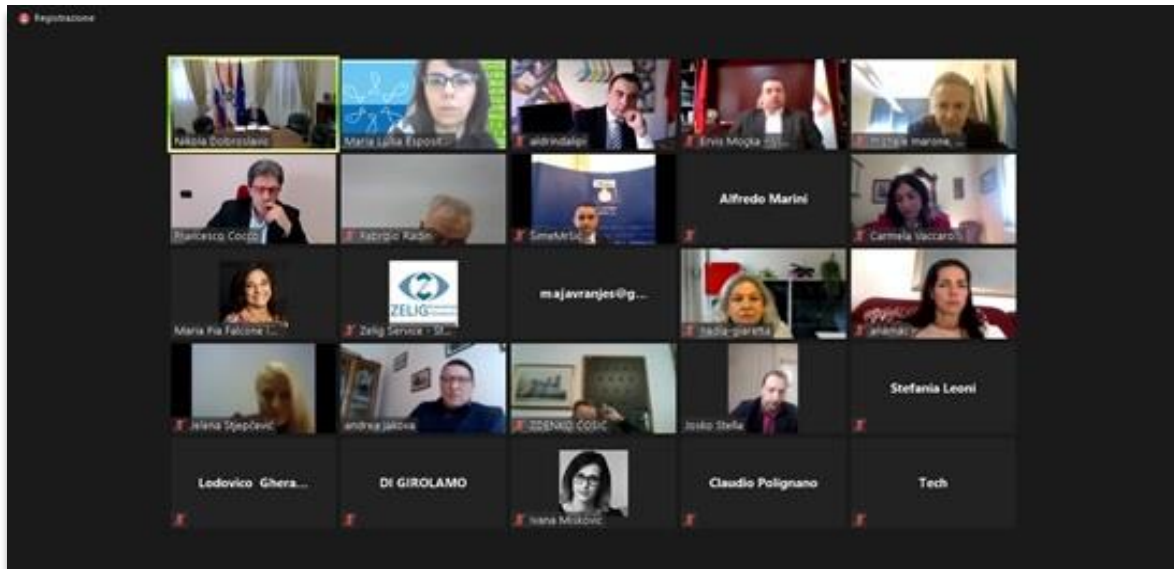
Due to the Covid-19 crisis, for the first time since the founding of the Association in 2006, the XVII Annual General Assembly of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion took place on-line on 16 December 2020. President Nikola Dobroslavic, Vice Presidents Aldrin Dalipi and Marco Marsilio as well as the Secretary General Francesco Cocco guided the Assembly towards a fruitful meeting.

The Assembly was focused on statutory issues and approved the annual budget and the financial reports for the year 2019, as well as the activity report 2019. The Annual Activity Programme 2020 and the Financial Plan 2020 were also adopted and the annual membership fee was reconfirmed in the same

amount. The Secretary General presented his report on the activities of the Secretariat, and illustrated the projects presented and implemented during the year by the IEA.

The Secretariat made Members aware of the calendar of activities for the next year as well as the status of the EU projects implemented by the association. The Presidents and representatives of the Member Regions and Cities took part in the celebration of the many successful activities carried out in 2020.

The occasion was useful to share experiences and information as well as to set the agenda for an ambitious future of the Association.



It is important both for the Association, which represents regional and local stakeholders of the Adriatic-Ionian region at European, transnational and international level, and for each individual member to seize the opportunities that are offered by the new European regional policy and in the context of territorial cooperation and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

The General Assembly renewed its commitment to further stimulate and facilitate the integrated development of the Western Balkan territories and their accession to the EU.

The key actions that the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion intends to implement include increased promotion of sustainable tourism, connectivity and infrastructure, and green growth. Furthermore, taking stock of the experiences and results achieved in the last years, the Association will continue to create networking opportunities between young people and youth organisations in the Adriatic Ionian region and will make a greater effort in communicating its actions.

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

### European Projects

#### 1. Overview

The Euroregion continued the project activities that it has been carrying out for several years, though with some important contextual changes. The new cohesion policy will provide additional development tools for the territories of the Association and opportunities for renewing the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, and the Euroregion will continue to follow these developments.

In this context, the Euroregion, one of whose main objectives is to approximate and accelerate the process of European integration, intends to give new initiatives and impetus to its own participation in the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregional Strategy, to contribute to the resumption of relations with the European Parliament, to relaunch the activities of the Adriatic-Ionian Intergroup within the Adriatic Ionian Intergroup. Ionian-Adriatic Intergroup within the Committee of the Regions with the renewal of the Delegation and the Intergroups.

#### 2. Participation of AIE Secretariat in EU project events

In 2020, the Secretariat was actively involved in the organisation, participation and communication of several events, which represent an important moment of the projects as they are excellent opportunities for the partners to exchange information on the development of the project, to present their outputs or results, to discuss issues and ideas and to plan future project activities.

The role of the Euroregion, as a transnational actor and a key institutional stakeholder of the EUSAIR Strategy, focused in particular on communication, networking and dissemination of results.

#### Sustainable Tourism

**Length:** from 1st November 2019 to 30th June 2022

**Programme:** Interreg MED

**Role of the Euroregion:** Project Partner

**Topic:** Maritime and Coastal Sustainable Tourism

**Coordinated by** Diputació de Barcelona (Spain) Latin

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

**In a nutshell:** Sustainable Tourism project aims to enhance the development of a sustainable and responsible coastal and maritime tourism in the Med area. In particular, the project will support the

mainstreaming of the INTERREG MED modular projects results of axis 3.1 (sustainable tourism) by communication, transferring & community building, and capitalisation activities.

Its objective is to set up a general framework of collaboration to facilitate the creation of synergies among modular projects, to enhance its visibility and to support the institutional uptaking of their outputs and results, mainly in the field of tourism policies and cohesion policies.

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM's Kick-off Meeting

The renewed Sustainable Tourism Project and its community of Modular Projects gathered for its "Kick-off Meeting" in Salou (Tarragona - Spain) on 3 and 4 March 2020. The EAI General Secretariat participated in the meeting as a project partner.



The event was an opportunity to:

- To welcome new projects to the Community and to start building connections with closed projects through community-building activities.
- To identify transferring practices put in place by modular projects to feed the discussions at MED Programme level.
- To get knowledge about the capitalization action plan of the Community and to engage modular projects in mainstreaming activities that will be carried-out in the upcoming months.

The event was addressed to representatives of Modular projects, representatives of PANORAMED and Strategic projects, associated partners of the Sustainable Tourism Community as well as local and regional tourism stakeholders.

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM's webinar: "Tourism in the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and COVID-19 crisis: measures and opportunities towards sustainability"

On 16 December 2020, an online webinar was organized by the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion as side event of the XVII General Assembly and in collaboration with MED Sustainable Tourism Community with the aim to explore the measures taken at different levels (such as EU level, macroregional level and territorial cooperation level) to mitigate the effect of the Covid19 crisis on Tourism and to help the sector and its recovery phase.

The event gave, at the same time, an overview of some good examples of alternative tourism models developed by Interreg projects with a particular focus on the sustainability of tourism.

The webinar “Tourism in the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and COVID-19 crisis: measures and opportunities towards sustainability” was address mainly to the member authorities of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion but it was also attended by different key actors and stakeholders of the Mediterranean area.



In his introduction to the thematic webinar, IEA President Nikola Dobrosalvic highlighted how the Next Generation EU and Recovery Plan can take the post-pandemic renaissance of European tourism seriously, with the hope that within a few years a fully socially, economically and environmentally sustainable tourism sector will be achieved in Europe.

During the workshop, many thematic experts illustrated key good practices of alternative tourism models developed by Interreg MED projects and provided the Members of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion with a platform of lively discussion and reflection on the topic of sustainability in tourism.

The first panel was a good occasion to present the future of sustainable tourism in the Next Generation EU. It came up that tourism is considered by the European Commission as a one of the most important sector to recover and relaunch the European economy on a more sustainable and resilient basis.

The last panel of the webinar saw the contribution of different representatives of some Interreg projects, who have presented good practices of alternative tourism models developed in cooperation with other Mediterranean partners. The panel was the occasion to present some sustainable tourism tools and strategies, giving at the same time the opportunity to ETC projects, such as the projects of the MED Sustainable Tourism Community, to present the results achieved so far.



The CATALOGUE OF OUTPUTS, as a unique document that gathers different experiences and outcomes of the MED Community, was introduced by the AIE Secretariat, with the purpose of raising awareness of the 38 tools/outputs from 15 projects in 200 Mediterranean destinations. The selection of outputs was made on the basis of better promoting common integrated actions that could boost the sustainable and responsible development of coastal and maritime tourism in the Mediterranean region.

<b>PRO-ADAS</b> <b>Promotion of Active Digital Ageing Skills</b>
<p><b>Length:</b> from 1/10/2018 to 30/09/2020</p> <p><b>Programme:</b> Erasmus+</p> <p><b>Role of the Euroregion:</b> Project Partner</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Active Digital Ageing Skills.</p> <p><b>Coordinated by:</b> European University Cyprus</p> <p><b>More at:</b> <a href="http://proadas.eu/">http://proadas.eu/</a></p> <p><b>In a nutshell:</b> ProADAS, acronym of “promotion of Active Digital Ageing Skills”, is a 24 months Erasmus+ project involving 7 partner organisations across 6 European countries. The project aims at tackling the gap between the ageing population and digital literacy and addresses the high necessity for digital key competences. The project has designed and created a number of innovative methods and supporting open educational digital tools tailored to the characteristics and needs of European elderly.</p>

### **PROADAS PROJECT MEETING IN BRUSSELS, 24-25 FEBRUARY 2020, 24 and 25 February 2020**

The IEA Secretariat, as a partner of the ProADAS project (funded by the Erasmus+ Programme), participated in the coordination meeting held in Brussels on 24-25 February 2020, during which the partners discussed about the intellectual products (IO) that will be developed by the project (such as "proADAS Mobile application", "proADAS Book"), agreed on the final conference as well as dissemination actions and local Multiplier events.

The general aim of the project was to promote ‘active ageing’ and to provide European seniors with the essential digital skills to become as independent and autonomous as possible, by taking part in social, cultural and recreational activities.

### **ONLINE PROADAS WORKSHOP FOR PROMOTING PROJECT’S OUTCOMES, 17 July 2020**

Within the framework of the proADAS initiative, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (AIE) organised an online workshop through an Electronic Platform on 17 July 2020.





The online workshop shared and disseminated the intellectual results of the project (the preliminary research paper, the handbook, the e-learning courses available via the proADAS platform). During the event, the coordinators collected feedback and opinions from the participants, which will be collected in a final publication.

### PROADAS PROJECT: FINAL ON-LINE CONFERENCE ON SKILLS FOR ACTIVE AGEING, 23 September 2020

The European University of Cyprus, as coordinator of the European programme ProADAS (Promotion of Active Aging Skills), in cooperation with the programme partners organised an online conference on 23 September 2020.

The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, as a partner of ProADAS, contributed to the final event with a presentation by the Secretariat, presented some results obtained by the consortium during the implementation of the project that allow to have a range of digital tools at the service of active aging, crucial nowadays to increase the quality of life of the elderly and support them in acquiring key competences that facilitate social inclusion.



During the final conference, issues related to active ageing in the countries participating in the European ProADAS Programme were presented. Taking into account the new trends and developments in the field of health as well as the needs of the elderly, issues concerning both mental, social and physical health and well-being of the elderly with the aim of their active participation in society were presented and discussed.

The conference was attended by all partners and 80 people, involving participants from the field of health and elderly care such as health workers, nurses, doctors, psychologists, social workers, students of humanities and health sciences, adult educators as well as people over 60+ years.

The conference presented all project results that include:

- Review and Research Paper on existing good practices in the field of adult digital education
- Handbook targeting to professionals, social workers, senior citizens' counsellors, adult educators and trainers, NGOs and civil society organisations, third age universities and second chance schools, and offering providing guidelines on how to train older adults, as well as how to support trainers in enhancing the social and cultural capital of senior citizens

- Five e-learning modules aimed at enhancing seniors' and caregivers' knowledge of the main issues that can compromise seniors' quality of life: frailty, falls Prevention, nutrition, mental health and disease, cardiovascular health and disease.
- ICT tools such as the project's website, including an online Learning Platform where all researches and modules are available as open resources, and a corresponding mobile application freely available on google play:
- an e-book including a detailed presentation of the deliverables and results achieved during the two years of the project's implementation as well as scientific articles related to the topic of the project and some useful ICT tools and applications which are available online and open to the broader public.
- Overall, the implementation of the project was very successful in all partner countries, and hundreds of professionals and senior citizens were involved.

### E-CITIJENS

#### “Civil Protection Emergency DSS based on CITizen Journalism to ENhance Safety of Adriatic Basin”

**Length:** 01.01.2019 – 30.06.2022

**Programme:** INTERREG Italy Croatia CBC Programme 2014 – 2020

**Role of the Euroregion:** Project Partner

**Coordinated by:** Molise Region

**More at:** <https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/e-citijens>

**In a nutshell:** E-CITIJENS aims at increasing the safety of the Croatian and Italian Adriatic basin from natural and man-made disasters by improving emergency prevention and management measures and instruments. It pursues the above target through cross-border cooperation to: (i) reinforce the Civil Protection (including Coast Guard) chain of command in both countries with Crossborder Functional Centers equipped with an advanced and efficient decision support system to more efficiently monitor risks, manage emergencies and co-ordinate the involved forces during emergency interventions; (ii) keep open a real-time update channel on risk occurrences by collecting and using citizens information voluntarily provided via Social Media (citizen journalism) to report hazardous situations and events and signal their progress. The above objective will be sought by promoting cross border policies that can harmonize and improve both countries' risk management current legislations and their overall efficiency.

## E-CITIJENS WEB MEETING HELD TO DISCUSS HOW TO ADAPT TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

On 29 May 2020, amid the Covid-19 crisis, the E-CITIJENS Consortium met online to discuss how the project could help face the pandemic and possible future crises of the same kind.



The “Civil Protection Emergency DSS based on CITIzen Journalism to ENhance Safety of Adriatic Basin” (E-CITIJENS) project is implemented and financed under the 2014-2020 Italy-Croatia Cross Border Cooperation Programme with the objective of increasing safety and emergency management of anthropic and natural risks (fires, earthquakes, landslides, floods) in the Adriatic area by means of cross-border cooperation. One of the specific goals of the project is to make Italian and Croatian citizens aware of their role of “active sensors” of emergencies when reporting critical events through the social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc).

The E-CITIJENS Partners discussed how to include health risks in the EDSS Platform, an ICT infrastructure that collects emergency data from social media and from institutional sources in order to support the decision-making during crises. Together with floods, forest fires and earthquakes, a health-related risk taxonomy will hence be included in the semantics of the EDSS platform as extracted from social media messages and institutional sources.



The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted how critical the link between social media and collaborative technologies is. Using social media, citizens can provide Civil Protection with timely, geographic-based information. This information can be used by decision-makers to better prepare for emergency management, response planning as well as field resources deployment. In turn, Civil Protection gets to monitor public interaction while providing updated and accurate information to citizens. The new undertaking will also be reflected in the external communication through the project’s social media profiles and website as well as through an ad hoc Awareness Raising Campaign that the Consortium will implement shortly.

## E-CITIJENS CITIZENS AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN TAKES ANOTHER STEP FORWARD

The first E-CITIJENS online Work Café organised by the Veneto Region Civil Protection Department within the framework of the E-CITIJENS Citizens Awareness Campaign project was successfully held on Tuesday 24 November 2020.

The event saw the participation of different specialists, including Civil Protection personnel, IT specialists



and emergency management experts, who discussed the role and effectiveness of social media based technological tools to collect information on critical events and natural risks and compared good practices from similar regional projects with a view to helping the fine-tuning of the E-CITIJENS EDSS platform.

The specialists highlighted the possibility to integrate the platform with data collected under other regional projects or by the local weather radar infrastructure as well as to include other categories of risks (e.g. snow in the plains, icy fog) in the alert management of the E-CITIJENS platform. Consensus was found as attains the importance of empowering citizens into providing “objective” reports in order to facilitate Civil Protection bodies in the management

of significant data. Also, participants agreed upon the need to focus communication on the importance of referring to official sources/channels of information, even in the context of small civil protection emergencies.

The project is developing and implementing an IT platform that will allow to collect reports provided by citizens through the social media thereby rapidly providing information useful to an optimal management of occurring calamitous events.

The project also takes into account the broader framework of cross-border cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has profoundly changed the management of health-related risks worldwide, highlighting the relevance of social media and collaborative technologies. Information provided through the social media, together with that derived from other measurement tools present on the territory, can be used by those responsible for emergency management to better decide the organisation, planning and distribution of resources as needed.

## E-CITIJENS 2ND PROJECT AND STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The E-CITIJENS 2nd Project and Steering Committee Meeting was held online on Friday 11 December between 9:30 and 13:00. Partners reviewed project progress and discussed the activities to be carried out in the future.

The Consortium is engaged with the creation of a cross-border Emergency Decision Support System (EDSS) based on different sources of information, including citizens’ text messages provided via social media channels. The system’s hardware and software specifications are in their way to be defined by

the scientific partners of the project, University of Bologna and University of Split. In particular, the two universities are creating an emergency taxonomy including keywords and tags classified into four specific risk categories: earthquakes, floods, forest fires and, following the Covid-19 crisis, health-related issues. The terminology will be adapted and translated to each project language (Italian and Croatian) and for a wider, cross-border dissemination in English as well.



Meanwhile the technical partners (Molise Region, project coordinator, Veneto Region and EuRelations EEIG) are developing a platform that, through a mathematical model, will collect and match these data with institutionally sourced ones, and that will later be tested and assessed through pilot activities coordinated by the Veneto Region. Afterwards, the Split and Dalmatia County will coordinate the release of the EDSS Platform and will make sure to transfer the related knowledge to stakeholders via capacity building actions. The goal of these actions will be to elaborate a cross-border Emergency Services Regulatory Framework and develop both an Adoption Plan of the EDSS Platform and related legislation. Along with technical and scientific undertakings, the Consortium is also developing a Citizenship Awareness Campaign, coordinated by the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and implemented in collaboration with a working group involving the Split-Dalmatia County, the Veneto Region, the Municipality of Pescara and the Agency for Rural Development of Zadar County (AGGRA).

The Campaign aims at activating selected subgroups of population as “active sensors” of emergencies and improving their knowledge of risks with a view to influencing their attitudes and behaviour during hazardous occurrences. The Campaign will thus stimulate the participation of Italian and Croatian citizens in risk prevention, monitoring and crisis management, using the information that they make public through the social media (citizen journalism). The Campaign foresees the organization of Work Cafés and Info Days as well as Pilot Deployments across the territories involved in the project.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Section

## EUSAIR Initiatives and Conferences

### 1. TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN AIE'S MEMBERS, DUBROVNIK-NERETVA COUNTY AND TIRANA REGION, PROMOTED BY PRESIDENT DOBROSLAVIĆ AND VICE-PRESIDENT DALIPI

On 24 January 2020, AIE's President Nikola Dobroslavić, also President of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County, received an official visit by AIE's Vice-President Aldrin Dalipi, in his quality of President of the Tirana Region (Albania). The joint meeting was focused on past and future cooperation between the Dubrovnik-Neretva County and the Tirana Region.

President Dobroslavic referred about the position of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County and the whole of Croatia on the opening of EU membership negotiations with Albania. The presidents also discussed about road connectivity, emphasizing that connecting the countries on the Adriatic-Ionian highway remains a priority and that the program is to build a high-speed rail on the Italian coast of the Adriatic Sea and on the eastern side of our coast, connecting with the Adriatic-Ionian highway.

Discussions also covered other common challenges including ways to improve coastal waste management and the measures that both Croatia and Albania have taken in order to meet and keep up with European environmental standards, as well as crisis management with reference to the devastating earthquake that hit Albania last November and how it was dealt with by Albanian authorities. Administrative capacity building was also touched as a topic of cooperation.

President Dobroslavić expressed his readiness to assist the Albanian regions in meeting the requirements for EU membership in this field. The presidents agreed on organising study visits where a delegation from the Tirana Region could spend a period in Dubrovnik in order to learn at first-hand about how counties, cities and municipalities.

### 2. NORTH MACEDONIA IS NOW INCLUDED INTO EUSAIR STRATEGY

On 2nd April 2020 the map of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR) has changed to include North Macedonia as the 9th participating country.



This is a particularly relevant event for the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region, as it fosters the joint reinforced cooperation in the Western Balkans, extends relevant EU policies to the region, while promoting better neighbourly relations.

North Macedonia is now called to participate in the EUSAIR on a level playing field. The country seated as guest at EUSAIR table since the 9th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting in Brussels, held on 20-21 February 2019, when it informed about the intention to become a full member of EUSAIR.

North Macedonia will participate to EUSAIR governance structures, coordinating Pillar 2 “Connecting the Region”, together with Italy and Serbia. This will allow the country to become better acquainted with the mechanisms and structures of the EUSAIR and the related roles and responsibilities.



By means of cooperation and coordination, North Macedonia will also deepen its experience with EU policies and with planning national and EU financing aimed at the implementation of the EUSAIR Action Plan, also by involving the sub-national layer of government, in a multi-level governance perspective. The Adriatic Ionian Euroregion is eager to cooperate more closely with North Macedonia in building a stronger, more integrated and sustainable Adriatic and Ionian Macro-region.

### 3. VIRTUAL 3rd COTER COMMISSION MEETING: INNOVATIVE EU BUDGET AND RECOVERY PACKAGE PROPOSED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, AN AMBITIOUS PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE UNION

The virtual 3rd meeting of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget took place on 28 May 2020 at the European Committee of the Regions.

Members discussed the following issues:

- Using the European Structural and Investment Funds in the regions to address the COVID-19 crisis;
- Implications for the new MFF and the current cohesion policy (extension of programmes) and the next cohesion policy 2021-2027 (with Marc Lemaître, Director-General, DG REGIO, European Commission);
- Renewed Cohesion Alliance declaration.

AIE president, Nikola Dobroslavic, as President of Dubrovnik-Neretva County and CoR Rapporteur on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MMF) participated at the virtual meeting on the 3rd COTER

commission. He welcomed the ambition shown by the European Commission with its revised proposal for a 2021 – 2027 EU budget and Recovery Plan, presented last week to the European Parliament. In particular, the President welcomed the innovative and bold approach which foresees the European Commission raising €750 billion to be reinvested mostly through grants via EU policies such as Cohesion Policy and reinforcing key EU Programmes.

#### 4. COR ASSEMBLY VOTES ON DOBROSLAVIC'S OPINION "LOCAL DEMOCRACY CHALLENGES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS"

The members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) met in Brussels for their 140th Plenary Session on 12, 13 and 14 October 2020, during which several debates and policy discussions took place, including the one on the annual local and regional barometer and the one on resilience.

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Along with political debates, the Plenary Assembly discussed and voted on several opinions and, among them, on Monday 12 October 2020, the one on "Local Democracy Challenges in the Western Balkans", drafted and 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 this negative phenomena hindering Western Balkan countries in their

process of EU accession.

#### 5. EUROPEAN WEEK OF REGIONS AND CITIES 2020

Organised annually by the European Commission and the EU Committee of the Regions, the 2020 edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities took place from 12-15 October in Brussels, Belgium. The European Week of Regions and Cities is an annual event during which cities and regions showcase their capacity to create growth and jobs, implement European Union cohesion policy, and prove the importance of the local and regional level for good European governance.

The main themes of this 18th edition were:

- Green Europe
- Cohesion and cooperation (including also the celebration of 30 years of Interreg!)
- Empowering citizens

EURegionsWeek offered many opportunities to actively contribute to the event and the agenda through different types of activities, such as EU Regions Talks, Q&A Sessions with experts, Workshops; Participatory labs or Exhibition Stands.





Once more this year EURegionsWeek was an excellent opportunity to highlight project results, promote good practice, or share inspiration and experiences with peers from other regions. It was also a great chance to explore synergies with other projects working on similar issues.

During the 18th edition, the 30th anniversary of Interreg was also celebrated. Cooperation projects were featured in the EURegionsWeek programme and results and lessons learned were promoted.

The General Secretariat of the Euroregion followed with particular interest some of the events scheduled during the week

## 6. THE AIE SECRETARIAT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AEBR ANNUAL EVENTS, ALONG WITH ITS IVY VOLUNTEERS

From 4 to 6 November 2020, the Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion participated in the AEBR Annual Events. The events include the AEBR Cross-Border School (4th of November 2020) and AEBR Annual Conference (5th and 6th of November 2020).



The AEBR, acronym of Association of European Border Regions, is among other things the coordinating organisation of the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) Initiative, to which the AIE has adhered as of this year. The initiative was launched in 2017 by the European Commission in the framework of the European Solidarity Corps. It supports organisations that implement cross-border, transnational and inter-regional programs and projects in welcoming young volunteers (citizens aged between 18 and 30 years old). The AIE has always emphasised the role of youth and the benefit of a more active and meaningful participation of young people in democratic life. In the last 10 years, in collaboration with its members and stakeholders, it has provided something like 40 young people with internship positions and involved youth and youth organisations in cooperation activities.

Between 2018 and 2019, the Association has made quite an effort in designing and implementing projects focused on youth skills development, participation and cooperation. The Interreg Italy-

Croatia BLUE KEP project developed and implemented an international exchange programme between 12 Italian and Croatian nautical and technical secondary schools, directly involving 38 students and their teachers in a 45-days long mobility. The programme also saw the participation of more than 20 Italian and Croatian companies of the blue sector, which offered hands-on training opportunities to all involved students.

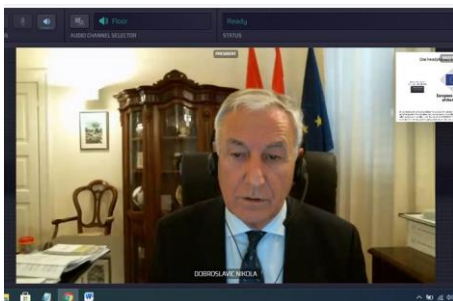


As part of the AI-NURECC Initiative's Youth Action, the AIE focused its attention on youth participation and cooperation in the context of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR). To this end, the Association organised the First Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations Forum (AIYOF) in Tirana on 19 November 2019. The Forum laid down the foundations for a deeper and more structured dialogue between youth and youth organisations and decision-makers of the area. Its results, which were synthesised in a study, will inspire the actions of the Association in the months and years ahead.

Thanks to the adhesion with the IVY, the AIE is involving two Italian young volunteers as Interreg Project Partners.

## 7. WORKING GROUP ON THE WESTERN BALKANS TO DISCUSS THE PROGRESS OF KOSOVO TOWARDS THE EU

5 November 2020, Mr. Nikola Dobroslavić, as President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR)'s Working Group (WG) on the Western Balkans, chaired a video conference to discuss the progress of Kosovo towards the EU and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at local and regional level.



This was the first meeting of the WG under the new term of office and it focused on Kosovo's accession path as well as on the socio-economic impact of and recovery from the Covid19 pandemic. The priorities of the group for the 2020-2025 period will be to promote and stimulate the acquisition of democratic and European values in the Western Balkans, namely the rule of law, good governance, respect of human

rights, democratic values, sustainable economy, environmental protection, the fight against climate change and so forth.

Dobroslavić pointed out that: The group is an instrument to assist Local and Regional Authorities of the Western Balkan countries in their implementation of the *acquis communautaire* and aims to strengthen the role of local and regional self-government in the process bringing these countries closer to the European Union. In particular, the WG covers relationships with Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania, while cooperation with Montenegro, Serbia and Northern Macedonia happens within the framework of Joint Consultative Committees.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Section

### MED COOP ALLIANCE

The Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance (MCA) is an initiative that groups together different networks of local and regional authorities and substate governments from around the basin. As a network of networks cooperating together, the MCA is an example of co-operation among different organizations representing several Mediterranean regional and local authorities with the purpose to promote the sustainable and integrated territorial development of the basin.

#### 1. MED COOP ALLIANCE: POST-PANDEMIC SCENARIO ACTIONS, A COMMON DECLARATION ON COHESION POLICY AND GREEN DEAL, 29 April 2020

The five members of the initiative (the Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, MedCities, the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion and Latin Arc) have virtually met in April 2020 to write a common declaration about how the Mediterranean alliance value and work nowadays projecting some ideas for the post-COVID19 scenario.

The members of the Alliance called on the European Union, and other state and multilateral actors, in the field of cooperation to allocate more resources and dedicate specific programs to support local and other substate governments, along with increasing their level of coordination.

Regarding the SARS.CoV-2 crisis, the Alliance declared that in a moment where some have unilateral temptations, the cooperation among actors is more needed than ever. It also states that the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals are still the right roadmaps to the new scenario.



The President of the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, Nikola Dobroslavic, offered and will continue to offer his support to the Statement of the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance (MCA): Cohesion policy and green deal, more valid than ever because he strongly believe that a better cooperation and sustainable development in the area is a necessary condition during and after the SARS.CoV-2 pandemic.

## 2. MEDCOOPALLIANCE FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BARCELONA PROCESS

In the framework of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the MedCoopAlliance held an online conference-debate with Mediterranean institutional, political and territorial key stakeholders to support multi-level governance for transnational cooperation in the basin

On Tuesday 24 November, the members of the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance met online to debate and call for action “towards a renovated regional strategy for the Mediterranean +25”. This meeting was meant as a contribution of multi-level governance actors to the celebrations of the 25th



anniversary of the Barcelona Process, with the support of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

During the first part of this meeting, the current members of the MedCoopAlliance – Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion, CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, MedCities, Arco Latino, Adriatic Ionian Euroregion – reaffirmed their willingness to make a political

commitment that will allow them to continue to develop their collaboration efficiently throughout the Mediterranean basin.

Mr. Nikola Dobroslavic, 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 second part, after examining the conclusions of the study carried out by the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya / Universitat Pompeu Fabra concerning the MedCoopAlliance, outlining its strengths, weaknesses but also its challenges and opportunities, the focus was on providing tangible medium and long-term responses to the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the sustainable recovery of the Mediterranean.