

ADRIATIC-IONIAN INITIATIVE (AII)
and
EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION (EUSAIR)

AII PRESIDENCY/ EUSAIR CHAIRMANSHIP
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

(1 JUNE 2019 - 31 MAY 2020)

PROGRAM

More than 19 years since the adoption of the Ancona Declaration (May 2000), the implementation of which has hitherto significantly contributed to the strengthening of cooperation and progress in the Adriatic and Ionian region as a whole, and more particularly to the launching of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, it is clear that both the Initiative and the Strategy have been working very closely, and in that way contributing to political, economic, social and other forms of connectivity within the Region, and between the Region and the EU.

The Republic of Serbia formally assumed the year-long Presidency of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) and the Chairmanship of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) from Montenegro on 1 June 2019.

In order to ensure full coordination within the country for the duration of the Presidency, as well as to provide a continuous exchange of views and assure cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has renewed the Working Group for the Cooperation with the European Union in the Adriatic and Ionian Region (established in 2014) which comprises 22 members from different line ministries of the Serbian Government.

Cognisant of the fact that the Republic of Serbia is the sole participant of both the AII and EUSAIR without direct access to the sea (until the Republic of North Macedonia becomes a fully-fledged participant of EUSAIR through the currently ongoing process), the core of its Presidency/Chairmanship will focus on the topic of connectivity between the coastal areas and the hinterland of our macro-region, and vice-versa.

Aware that our Region is a functional area defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Sea basins, broad cooperation within it plays a key role in strengthening geographical continuity and connectivity in Europe. In addition, the EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region should be utilised to enhance the cooperation among coastal and hinterland areas and communities to the benefit of all participating countries when it comes to all themes/pillars of EUSAIR.

The Republic of Serbia will continue its activities aimed at developing regional cooperation and, in particular, at strengthening AII as a regional structure, relying, certainly, on the already agreed and commenced activities. It is, therefore, necessary to focus the future joint activities on several key priorities such as: infrastructure connectivity, promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and creative industries, sustainable tourism and youth exchange (like, for example, the establishment of the AII Youth Chamber Orchestra, etc.). For the purpose of implementing the above-mentioned priorities, the inclusion of economic and financial segments in the Presidency/Chairmanship priorities are deemed a practical necessity, and sustained efforts will be invested to implement them in practice.

In that context, special focus will be placed on the cooperation between chambers of commerce and industry aimed, primarily, at improving economic connectivity, increasing employment and reducing labour emigration.

Guided by shared European standards, the continuation of the dialogue with the civil sector will be accentuated, as well as the follow-up to the already commenced activities in AII's traditional areas of focus, such as cultural cooperation and creative industries, protection of the environment, strengthening of sustainable tourism potentials, cooperation in the fields of science and education, cooperation in combating illegal activities, as well fostering blue growth.

In its capacity as Presidency/Chairmanship-in-Office, Serbia will focus on organizing activities related to cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region as well as on the activities that are a part of the EUSAIR mandate.

In line with the Budva Declaration (May 2019), special attention will be devoted to the engagement of the new participating country, i.e. the Republic of North Macedonia in all EUSAIR activities until it achieves fully-fledged membership, as well as to the strengthening of cooperation with the Republic of San Marino as the new participating country in the AII context.

In addition, also in conformity with the Budva Declaration, Serbia will invest efforts to achieve a continuous relationship between the Cohesion Policy and IPA funds, and identified EUSAIR priorities through the implementation of the "Position Paper" adopted by the Governing Board, on the basis of paragraph 6 of the Catania Declaration (2018). In this context, national authorities responsible for EU funds (ESIF and IPA) will work on finalizing the inclusion of agreed macro-regional priorities in Partnership Agreements (where relevant) and the IPA programming framework (in cooperation with DG NEAR).

During its Presidency/Chairmanship-in-Office, the Republic of Serbia will host at least one AII Presidency/EUSAIR Chairmanship Trio Meeting, with a view to achieving continued activities of AII and EUSAIR, as well as synergies between these activities.

Furthermore, Serbia will aspire to remain a constructive factor in the process of prevention but also in rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction, following the devastating floods that have hit the Republic of Serbia and some parts of the Region, as well as the wildfires that occasionally engulf the Region. Activities would be connected to Pillar 3 in particular.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Labour migrants" are defined as those who move for the purpose of employment. Fully aware that emigration from one country to another in our Region marked a substantial increase, this topic deserves serious discussion and identification of the best recommendations for all our participating countries.

During this period, the Republic of Serbia will rely on the valuable professional support by the AII Permanent Secretariat in Ancona. Serbia stands ready to collaborate with all relevant bodies and institutions in the participating countries in order to jointly achieve synergy effects in our mutual activities.

The Republic of Serbia remains open to all suggestions and proposals with regard to new projects in the interest of strengthening mutual cooperation and deriving concrete benefits for our Region and its inhabitants. In that context, the enclosed Calendar of Events may be subject to some, mutually agreed modifications.