



# 3<sup>RD</sup> FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC CATANIA 24-25 MAY 2018 AND IONIAN REGION



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## PRESS RELEASE

### Conclusion of the Catania Forum on the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-Region – The Presidency now passes to Montenegro

The final Forum of the Italian Presidency of the EUSAIR macro-regional Strategy (European Union Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region) was held in Catania on 24 and 25 May 2018.

The Forum followed the Interministerial Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the eight Countries involved in the EUSAIR Strategy and in the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) – namely, Italy, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia, as EU Member States; and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia as Candidate Countries, respectively.

Upon conclusion of the Interministerial Meeting, the Catania Declaration was adopted in a very cooperative and harmonious climate, now setting up the EUSAIR membership process for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Declaration recommends strong interregional coordination for identification of the Macro-Region's priorities and related funding instruments, and lays down Countries' mutual engagements, *inter alia* to include the EUSAIR priorities in their respective national documents for strategic programming of EU Structural Funds (Member States) and IPA (Candidate Countries) for the 2021-2027 programming period.

The Forum was also partaken by representatives from Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (in charge of the EUSAIR governance), the European Commission, the Sicilian Region, the Municipality of Catania, relevant international financial institutions, six hundred stakeholders from the abovementioned eight Countries, and twenty entrepreneurs from China.

The EUSAIR macro-regional Strategy plays a remarkable political role for the Countries involved and the EU itself, providing a boost both to the process of EU integration of the Balkan Area and promoting better use of Community and national funds.

The Forum provided the ideal context to identify development and growth opportunities within the four pillars of the common strategy (sea sustainability, transport and energy networks (Italy is the Panel Leader), environmental quality and sustainable tourism), and to define six new cooperation areas.

The closing ceremony of the third EUSAIR Forum handed over the Presidency to Montenegro.