

*PROGRAMME
of the Slovenian Presidency
of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region
1 June 2020 – 31 May 2021*

Ljubljana, 1 June 2020

Slovenia assumes the Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (**EUSAIR**) in an exceptional period of new opportunities following the COVID-19 epidemic, which was a challenging time for Europe and the entire world. It seemed as if life had stopped, but cooperation quickly found a way back by using web-based tools.

Slovenian Presidency puts **green connectivity** at the forefront by introducing it to all the relevant activities of the Region in order to improve the quality of life in the coastal areas and the hinterland. Slovenia calls for taking joint action by bearing in mind the ecosystem services of the sea, the coast and the entire Adriatic and Ionian Region. Green post COVID-19 recovery is also our shared aim.

Western Balkans and the **continuation of the EU enlargement process** are also an important priority of Slovenian Presidency. Opening the accession negotiations for Albania and North Macedonia will be one of the milestones, which will further strengthen cohesion within the Region.

Special attention is given to the **EUSAIR governance structure**, representing a unique platform for achieving common goals as well as for the implementation of the Green Agenda for Western Balkans.

All the efforts shall take effect only if Adriatic and Ionian countries and regions join forces with the European Commission in providing the needed **financial resources** to ensure prosperity in the Region. This is why **embedding** the agreed macro-regional activities of strategic relevance in the framework of the 2021-2027 European Cohesion and IPA programmes is of the utmost importance. The latter shall also be at the spot light of Slovenian Presidency.

Calendar of main events:

- **27 May 2020, videoconference:** Ministerial meeting of the EUSAIR and the Adriatic and Ionian Council session; assuming the Presidency from the Republic of Serbia.
- **10 June 2020, videoconference:** extraordinary Governing Board Meeting (due to COVID-19 taking place by using web-based tools) mainly focusing on the decision on EUSAIR flagships to be defined within the ESI and IPA funds for the period 2021-2027.

- **14 – 25 September 2020, Slovenian Coast:** Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week (below **MRS week**, trailer available at: <https://bit.ly/2TLYtQG>) is a traditional event and the first annual European event of this kind. Thus far, MRS week has proven to be opportunity to exchange experience and coordinate plans within the Macro-Regional Strategies as well as other similar forms of cooperation. The opportunities enabled by MRS week are available to all macro-regional activities.
- **16 September 2020, Slovenian Coast (MRS week):** joint meeting of the Trio Presidencies of all four Macro-Regional Strategies.
- **17 September 2020, Slovenian Coast (MRS week):** meeting of the EUSAIR Governing Board.
- **February 2021, Brussels:** meeting of the EUSAIR Governing Board in the framework of the EU Macro-Regional Strategies Week.
- **10 – 12 May 2021, Slovenia:** EUSAIR Annual Forum and Ministerial meeting rounding up the Slovenian Presidency. The event will offer an opportunity to present the achievements of the past year.

In addition to the above-listed main events, several other thematic events are planned to take place in the frame of Slovenian Presidency, namely:

- **September 2020:** roundtable at the Young Bled Strategic Forum dedicated to macro-regional cooperation of youth.
- **During the Presidency 20-21:** from 12 to 15 meetings of Thematic Steering Groups.
- **September 2020 (MRS week):** meeting of smart specialisation promoters and key EUSAIR stakeholders with the aim of establishing the smart specialisation network within the Adriatic-Ionian Region as well as potentially in the wider context.

The programme of the Slovenian Presidency was prepared in cooperation with all the key stakeholders and on the basis of good practices and rich past work experiences. The Republic of Serbia has currently rounded up its successful Presidency in spite of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and deserves every recognition for its achievements. Due to the still-present threat of COVID-19 in the Region, some of the planned events might be modified or re-scheduled.

The Slovenian Presidency of EUSAIR shall take place simultaneously and in coordination with the Chairmanship of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. Both associations shall continue with their coordinated activities to assure a swift recovery and further development towards common prosperity of the Region.

Slovenia considers its Presidency of the EUSAIR to be an introduction to its Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2021. Many topics of both presidencies overlap, with green recovery and Western Balkans remaining the core priorities.

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