

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

**AII CHAIRMANSHIP / EUSAIR PRESIDENCY**  
**OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**  
**(1 JUNE 2022 - 31 MAY 2023)**

**PROGRAMME**

Bosnia and Herzegovina formally took over the one-year Chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) on 1 June 2022. The Chairmanship was previously held by Albania and will be passed on to Croatia in June 2023.

It comes 22 years after the Ancona Declaration, adopted with the view to enhance regional cooperation as an instrument for fostering peace, democracy, human rights, security, political and economic development in the Adriatic-Ionian region, towards creating the most solid basis for progress in the European integration process of the Western Balkans.

Bosnia and Herzegovina assumes the Chairmanship in difficult time for Europe and the World. Almost 6.5 million people have died so far from the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak and there is an unprecedented unprovoked aggression going on since February 24 on European soil. Russian invasion on Ukraine has already taken lives of many innocent civilians and the crisis in economy is imminent with oil, energy and food prices sky rocketing.

As stated in Tirana Declaration 2022, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders must be respected and illegal and unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation condemned.

During its Chairmanship in Office of AII/EUSAIR, Bosnia and Herzegovina will contribute to fulfilling of the key objectives of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, building upon achievements of previous Chairmanships. However, accelerating the EU integration process for the entire Western Balkans in the contexts of the changed geopolitical climate will be in focus of all programe activities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers speeding-up of the **European integration process** as its top priority during its Chairmanship in Office.

In order to avoid the spread of enlargement fatigue, disbelief and loss of EU credibility within the WB Region, EU enlargement process must be revived. The promise of the EU perspective was given to the people and countries in the Region during the Thessaloniki almost 20 years ago. It is our obligation and responsibility to make every possible effort and save the process from becoming the multigenerational one. It is one of the main reasons why our young generations are leaving the region.

Therefore, **Youth** will continue to be in focus of Bosnia-Herzegovina's Chairmanship priorities. Young generation could make decisive steps toward the completion of the reconciliation processes in the Western Balkan region.

Exchange of students' visits and other programs will bring societies closer together and enhance better understanding of each other. As already underlined, only defined EU enlargement path that is not overburden with countless preconditions is a guarantee for slowing down the brain drain and easing its long-term negative effects.

As one of the important issues strongly connected with the enlargement priority is planning to give more clarity regarding the participation of IPA countries in implementation of the EUSAIR as indicated below:

- Stronger engagement of the DG NEAR and related EU Delegations in the implementation of the EUSAIR;
- overcoming obstacles to enhance the process of embedding of EUSAIR flagship actions in IPA planning and programming processes.
- Contribute to diminish the existing disproportion related to available EU funds for the EU MSs and non-EU MSs ("no new funds" rule pertinent to all EU macro-regional strategies (MRS)). Progress related to the implementation of Article 12 of Tirana Declaration is necessary.

Another priority for us will be **tourism and culture**: Bosnia and Hercegovina's Chairmanship will continue previous efforts in promoting the region as a major tourist destination due to its enormous natural and cultural treasury. Tourism sector is severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic is losing its global grip, we need to develop innovative products and services to facilitate the tourism sector's recovery in a sustainable manner. It includes Green tourism

as an inspiration for new tourist destinations, influence of social networks on the creation of tourist brands etc. The Adriatic-Ionian Region is one of the most interesting tourist destinations on our continent. Seven out of 30 most visited regions in Europe are in this area. It is rich in cultural heritage; it contains 15% of all European attractions. Hence, special events dedicated to tourism will be organized during BiH chairmanship.

**Environmental protection** will also be high on our agenda. European Green Deal, Green agenda for Western Balkans (modified due to the consequences of the war in Ukraine and current high energy prices), circular economy with Zero Waste Management will be in focus. New ways to develop green energy, as well as independent regional energy supply sources must be explored and sustained. Green energy transition in the Western Balkan region is a very difficult task to be performed without decisive EU assistance.

Another priority area is **Connectivity** within the Region, with the particular focus on energy and transport networks.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will work on strengthening cooperation between the EU MRS since five countries from the EUSAIR participate in the implementation of the EUSDR as well.

Appreciating the role of the All-PS, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to actively cooperate with, and relying on their support will organise a numerous Round Tables and other events in accordance with the Program.

Planning and holding events and conferences will continue to be performed in close cooperation with partners from participating countries of the EUSAIR.

Besides that, we are planning to organise special events in cooperation with the Adrion and MED programmes and Facility Point Lead Partner bearing in mind that eight countries participate in both, the EUSAIR and MED.

Together with the Lead Partner FP and the DG Regio our Chairmanship will do its best to contribute to the process of the revision of the Action Plan of the EUSAIR. Therefore, Bosnia and Herzegovina will also organise activities that go beyond current EUSAIR thematic priorities, like sustainable rural development and promotion of social themes. Special event on gender equality, as a cross-cutting topic, including the promotion of the economic and social rights and empowering girls and women's voice is planned.

After facing harsh consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, strong rebound in a range of activities to implement SDG UN Agenda 2030 is expected. Bosnia and Herzegovina will spare no effort to contribute with specific activities and proposals that may attract important stakeholders to work in synergy and bring the regional contribution to this very important Agenda. An event where the All member states will have the opportunity to exchange best practices and lessons learnt from the first seven years of the Agenda 2030 implementation period will be organized as well.

Regarding this matter and beyond, cooperation with other regional organizations, especially with CEI is of great importance and we will aim to bring new impetus to it.