

Conclusions of the 10th Mediterranean and macro-regional strategies week 2025

Izola, 15 – 17 September 2025

The 10th Mediterranean Coast and MRS Week in Izola brought together speakers, participants, and colleagues from all four EU MRS to reflect on shared challenges and opportunities. The event reaffirmed the importance of transnational cooperation and demonstrated how macro-regional strategies deliver tangible results for regions and their citizens. We extend our sincere gratitude to all participants for their dedication, energy, and contributions to this year's Mediterranean and Macro-Regional Strategies Week in Izola.

The conclusions presented here are the result of joint cooperation and provide valuable guidelines for the future. Together, we have strengthened and deepened our partnerships, exchanged forward-looking solutions, and built new bridges across borders, sectors, and communities. This embodies the true essence of macro-regions: working collectively as interconnected regions, united by the shared goal of creating opportunities and achieving results that no single country could accomplish alone.

This were the main takeaways:

Cohesion policy post-2027

Discussions underlined the importance of closer alignment with macro-regional priorities:

- Stronger integration of Cohesion Policy and Interreg programmes with macro-regional objectives can enhance the impact of EU investments, especially by involving candidate and third countries.
- Cooperation remains a driver of new business opportunities and innovation.
- Ongoing negotiations on the EU's next MFF must recognise macro-regional cooperation as a cornerstone for building a stronger, safer, and more cohesive Europe.

The Contribution of MRS to EU Enlargement

The debates highlighted the added value of MRS in supporting the enlargement process and candidate countries' gradual integration:

- MRS complement national efforts by offering platforms for candidate countries and Member States to collaborate on shared priorities, fostering trust and accelerating alignment with the EU acquis.
- Integrating macro-regional priorities into national policies avoids fragmentation, increases synergies, and maximises the impact of EU funds.
- Active participation of stakeholders from candidate countries in cross-border projects builds capacity, prepares them for membership, and creates durable networks.
- Macro-regional cooperation accelerates reforms in critical areas such as environment and connectivity.

- Visibility remains a challenge: strategies must better communicate their tangible results to the public.

Climate Resilience: From Source to Sea

The climate-focused session presented best practices from the Danube Basin, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. Participants stressed:

- The importance of synergies between regional conventions and MRS, with notable contributions from EUSAIR.
- Advances in flood mitigation and protection, alongside concrete proposals for wetlands, salt pans, and other vulnerable environments.
- Incorporation of findings from the EU and UN Ocean Conference in Nice (2024).

Ecological Connectivity

Establishing ecological corridors across preserved natural areas was identified as strategically vital. Their integration into conservation and spatial planning policies is essential for addressing environmental challenges at both national and macro-regional levels.

Smart Era: smart community led projects for smart rural transformation

Smart community-led projects are not only introducing new digital tools and technologies into rural areas; more importantly, they are fostering participatory approaches to governance. This approach is territorial, practical, and integrative, helping to improve both the quality of life for citizens and the framework for entrepreneurship.

Blue Bioeconomy Forum

The Adriatic–Ionian region’s blue bioeconomy sector requires practical, region-wide support. Key outcomes include:

- Agreement on the need for a shared acceleration service to address dispersed capacities, slow permitting, and fragmented financing.
- Proposal of a “starter pack” to provide idea checks, testing access, and basic financing guidance, inspired by Baltic best practices.
- Commitment to immediate follow-ups, with clearly defined roles and timelines, to advance an initial service and explore location-neutral funding options.

GROWTH4BLUE

GROWTH4BLUE project of IPA ADRION Programme participated with a session on the Mediterranean Coast and MRS Week 2025: Stronger cooperation for better future, setting the stage for strengthening cooperation and building the Transnational Blue Economy Network. The Lead Partner, Region of Western Greece, coordinated a panel of distinguished speakers from the project countries, that showcased the importance of skills, research and education, markets’ needs and challenges as well as technologically innovative opportunities that shape the future of blue economy in Adriatic Ionian Region. This diversity of perspectives is exactly what makes cooperation across the Adriatic and Ionian region so powerful, building a sustainable and prosperous blue future.

Youth Perspectives – Policy Suggestions

Young participants, coming from all 4 MRS, underlined the importance of unlocking Europe's entrepreneurial potential:

1. **Access to Funding** – Early-stage financing instruments should be tailored to young entrepreneurs, enabling growth without loss of company control.
2. **Credibility & Networks** – Programmes must help youth connect with mentors, decision-makers, and international ecosystems to strengthen their credibility and opportunities.
3. **Infrastructure for Innovation** – Testing labs, co-working spaces, and accelerators should be accessible earlier in the innovation journey to accelerate scaling.
4. Europe's future depends on its capacity to empower its young entrepreneurs. Macro-regional and EU strategies must adapt to provide smarter funding instruments, stronger innovation ecosystems, and meaningful cross-border opportunities. By acting now, Europe can remain united, ambitious, competitive, and socially responsible—with its young people at the forefront of shaping a resilient future.



EU Strategy for the
Adriatic and Ionian Region
EUSAIR

TEDEN SREDOZEMSKÉ OBALE IN MAKROREGIONALNIH STRATEGIJ

Izola, Slovenija
15. – 17. september 2025

MEDITERRANEAN COAST AND MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES WEEK

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