



## ADRIATIC IONIAN INITIATIVE/EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION ITALIAN CHAIRMANSHIP (1 JUNE 2017 - 31 MAY 2018)

### PROGRAMME

Since 2000, the dimension of regional cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian region has been acquiring growing momentum fostering positive dynamics in a progressively integrated region. This merging dynamics gave more visible results in 2000 launching the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and in 2014 establishing the EU Strategy of the Adriatic-Ionian Region. While different in their nature, both the Initiative and the Strategy work in parallel contributing to political, economic, and social cooperation and integration of the region; since 2016, a single common **Ministerial Meeting of the AI/EUSAIR Council** is held back to back within the yearly EUSAIR Forum which brings together all stakeholders and authorities in charge of implementing the Strategy.

The **Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AI)** lays the foundations of an integrated cooperation progressively extended to various levels and sectors. The Italian Government has consistently renewed its commitment through these years by funding and by providing full political support to AI activities and structures, laying the cornerstone of cooperation for the Adriatic-Ionian region Countries.

Originally founded with the aim of looking for innovative solutions to common issues affecting the Adriatic-Ionian region, over the past seventeen years, the AI has successfully extended its **inter-governmental forum** capacity to new dimensions. Nowadays, the AI provides concrete answers to the political and economic challenges posed to the Adriatic-Ionian region, and has evolved into a forum where Member Countries' Governments interact with civil society and local authorities representatives, developing more intensive dialogue and fostering a bottom-up approach in the definition of its policies and activities. The partnerships and networks developed by the AI – Forum of the Chambers of Commerce, Forum of the Cities and UniAdriion – account for AI added value in fostering dynamic and intensive regional cooperation.

**EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region (EUSAIR)** promotes the harmonization of rules and the integrated development of the economy, starting from four productive sectors: blue growth, connectivity (infrastructure and energy), environment and tourism.

~°~°~

In its **AI chair** capacity, Italy will continue to further strengthen **dialogue with civil society** through cooperation with the Adriatic-Ionian Fora (Cities, Chambers, Universities) as well as enhance inter-parliamentary cooperation. In particular, Italy will complete Round Tables alignment to EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups, establishing Round Tables role of “broker” of civil society instances within the Strategy; and strengthening **policy dialogue**

**and cooperation among All Member States, as well as between All and other regional cooperation fora**, such as the Central European Initiative.

To strengthen a more active role of the All in the field of the migration challenges, the All Permanent Secretariat will organize a meeting of the eight member countries' ombudsman with a focus on cross cutting issues, such as non-accompanied children crossing the borders of the Region.

-°-°-

Throughout the forthcoming term of the **EUSAIR Presidency**, Italy aims at achieving concrete progress within implementation of the **EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region**. The Italian Presidency of EUSAIR will primarily focus on the following five priorities:

- 1) Harnessing the Strategy with the instruments to pursue its objectives by:
  - a. Expanding the role of partner States and increase the support of the European Union .
  - b. Promoting policy and regulatory initiatives to level the field for non-EU member partner States.
  - c. Strengthening Executive Board governance of Thematic Steering Groups' work programmes.
  - d. Aligning and crossfitting the Strategy and macroregional, national, regional and territorial programmes and projects, and other macroregion strategies.
  - e. Further expanding TSG's work in steering the harmonization of rules and economic environments in the macroregion; opening participation into TSGs to the contribution of national, regional and territorial programmes and stakeholders.
  - f. Holding thematic regional events in order to channel national priorities into/from macroregional initiatives.
  - g. Ensuring full operation of the EUSAIR Facility Point strategic project (in line with the proposals outlined in the Conclusions issued by All/EUSAIR Ministerial Council Meeting of 11 May 2017) and effective contribution of National and TSG coordinators to the governance of the strategic projects.
- 2) Adopting strategic initiatives in the **interconnectivity sector** aimed at aligning ESIF and IPA funds to the transnational projects labeled within the Strategy.
- 3) Improving pooling capabilities of ESIF system of funding with other international/regional financial instruments. To this end the Italian Presidency envisages organising an international conference, open to IFIs active in the region, other funding institutions and relevant stakeholders, promoting EUSAIR opportunities and sponsoring projects carrying its Strategy label.

- 4) Ensuring the development of intra-pillar projects and initiatives, including strengthening EUSAIR capabilities in coping with the challenges deriving from the **migration and refugees** challenges in the Adriatic-Ionian region. A relevant priority of the Presidency lies in enhancing the creation of a specific platform in this domain and in enabling implementation of projects on reception and inclusion of migrants.
  
- 5) Further improving the EUSAIR's Governance fostering Strategy ownership by all Members, promoting the setting-up of a **rotating advisory group** composed of the previous, the current and the following Chair Countries.