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**REPORT**

**“THE ADRIATIC EUROREGION/  
EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES”**

by

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## Introduction

For centuries the area surrounding the Adriatic Sea has been an area with a common history, common traditions and cultural heritage. It has been an area of contact between various nations and civilizations, with a sea that both divided and connected those who lived on its coastlines. All the great European civilizations – Roman, Slavic and Germanic – have come into contact here; this is a place, which connects Central Europe with the Mediterranean. A rich cultural and historical heritage which testifies the presence of Ancient Greek Civilization, the Roman Empire, the Venetian Republic, the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire... as well as the presence of Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic religious traditions. For centuries the Adriatic Sea and the South-Eastern Europe was an area of common living but also an area of wars, hostility and territorial aspirations.

Administratively and politically, one side of the Adriatic is taken up by present-day Italy, an “old EU member” with some of its northern regions so well developed economically that they themselves have become “global players” in economic terms. On the eastern coast we find Slovenia, a new member of the EU, Croatia, which has begun negotiations in 2005 and expects to become a Member of the EU before the end of the decade and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania, each with their own EU-integration process dynamic and varying degrees of economic development. It was a great challenge to create an association of territorial units characterized by different economic, demographic and political degree of development especially in a context of European integration.

The initiative of setting up an Adriatic Euroregion has been launched by the Congress of Local and Regional *Authorities (CLRAE)* of the Council of Europe with the support of the Region of Istria (Croatia) and the Region Molise (Italy) and has received growing international, national, regional and local support. A series of international conferences, held in a number of countries in the Adriatic area, have, in their final declarations, expressed a widely shared desire to ensure proper support for the new initiative, generally seen as a tool for co-operation and a means of paving the way for the South-East European countries to accede in the European Union.

## Adriatic Euroregion

### General information



The founding Assembly of the Adriatic Euroregion was held the 30 of June 2006 in Pula, the biggest city of the Istria Region and the headquarter of the Adriatic Euroregion. The basic form of association in the Adriatic Euro-Region is cooperation between regions, or territorial and administrative units which are one level below the state level. The Adriatic Euroregion has the quality of nonprofit legal entity in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Croatia. The Adriatic Euroregion – is the organization that unifies 26 regional and local governments from 7 countries: Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and Greece. At the same time it represents the institutional basis for the identification and resolution of important common issues. It represents an important tool to create a dialogue of understanding and cooperation between the various states, regions, cities and citizens who will decide on their most important problems together. This model of cooperation unite trans-national, cross-border and interregional cooperation in accordance with the large number of examples of such cooperation throughout Europe. President of the Adriatic Euroregion is Ivan Jakovčić, President of the Region of Istria in Croatia. Vice-president is Michele Iorio, President of the Region of Molise in Italy. Members of the Adriatic Euroregion are:

- Region of Puglia (ITA)
- Region of Molise (ITA)
- Region of Abruzzo (ITA)
- Region of Marche (ITA)
- Region of Emilia –Romagna (ITA)
- Region of Veneto (ITA)
- The Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (ITA)
- Municipality of Izola (SLO)
- Municipality of Kotor (MN)
- Municipality of Tivat (MN)
- Hercegovacko-neretvanska County, (BiH)
- County of Istria (CRO)
- Primorsko-goranska County CRO)
- Ličko-senjska County (CRO)
- County of Zadar (CRO)
- Šibensko-kninska County (CRO)
- Splitsko-dalmatinska County CRO)
- Dubrovačko-neretvanska County (CRO)
- Qarkut Fier (ALB)
- Qarkut Vlore (ALB)
- Qarkut Durres (ALB)
- Qarkut Lezhe (ALB)
- Qarkut Shkoder (ALB)
- Qarkut Tirana (ALB)
- Prefecture Corfu (GR)
- Prefecture Thesprotia (GR)

### ***Main goals***

The main goals of future activities are:

- creating an area of peace, stability and cooperation,
- protecting cultural heritage,
- protecting the environment,
- promoting sustainable economic development especially in tourism, fishing and agriculture,
- dealing with transport and infrastructural issues

- creating a common framework for the better absorption and appropriate use of European funds in concert with common needs with the end goal being support for all of the Adriatic states to enter into the European Union.

These are surely goals which are in agreement with the goals of modern Europe, a Europe of common values, cooperation between states and between regions, overcoming borders which instead of dividing must now tie states, regions and citizens; a Europe where citizens, goods, knowledge and capital move freely; a Europe which yearns for territorial cohesion a Europe of sustainable economic development according to environmental protection criteria, and finally a Europe which will achieve prosperity for all its citizens.

### ***Statutory provisions***

Title, legal status and official languages - The AE works under the title: Euroregione Adriatica Jadranska euroregija, Jadranska Evroregija, Euro Rajoni Adriatik. The head office of the AE is in Pula. Flanaticka 29, the Republic of Croatia. The AE has the quality of nonprofit legal entity in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Croatia. Official languages of entities of the AE are languages of the AE member countries. Standing Orders relating to its work shall regulate working languages of bodies of the AE.

Principle of equal territorial representation - The AE guarantees all its members equal geographic representation within its bodies. With this objective, entities of the AE equally represent the west, east, north, and south part of the Adriatic.

Acquisition of membership status - The AE members can be regular or honorary members. Regular member of the AE can be any unit of territorial self-government on the Adriatic Sea which passes the act on joining the AE membership, usually based on the criteria of representation of the first level below state level. Honorary members are State Governments, The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Committee of Regions. Any unit of territorial self-government on the Adriatic Sea can be an observer, based on the criteria of representation of the first level below the state level that did not pass the act on joining the AE membership. Supporting institutions are units advocating active collaboration in the realization of objectives of the AE. Observers and supporting institutions do not have membership status. Observers and supporting institutions can participate in the work of the Assembly of the AE without the right of voting.

Bodies of the AE are:

- The Assembly
- The President
- The Executive Board
- The Supervisory Board
- The Executive Board

The members of the Executive Board are composed by a balanced presence of representative's from both sides of the Adriatic. The Executive Board holds regular sessions at least once in six months and every time in a different member state. Decisions of the Executive Board shall be in effect provided the presence of the majority of its members. The Supervisory Board supervises the implementation of acts adopted by the bodies of the AE and the regularity of material and financial business activities.

Decision-making - As a rule, the Assembly makes decisions by unanimous vote of present members, except in cases when this Statute or Standing Orders relating to its work prescribe a different majority.

Permanent Commissions - Constituting, competence, the procedure of appointment and the duration of the mandate of members of commissions and their members shall be defined by the decree of the AE Assembly.

Funds - For reaching goals defined in Article 1. of the Statute, the AE secures funds from the following sources: - membership fee of each member, in the manner defined by the Assembly; international and other funds intended for financing projects and other activities; grants, donations, and other contributions; other.

### ***Working Commissions***

In line with its main goals and activities, the association has taken a decision during the second Assembly meeting, held in Ancona the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006, on the establishment of six permanent commissions. The commissions are the following: Commission for fishing, a Commission for culture and tourism, a Commission for environmental issues, a Commission for infrastructure and transport, a Commission for economic affairs, and a Commission for welfare. Every Adriatic Euroregion member has the right to be represented in each of the Commissions with at least one member.

### ***Project ideas***

The project ideas are the result of the technical coordination and the harmonious work between the Commission's members; moreover, they represent the common needs of the Adriatic regions and are aimed at solving issues which may affect all the members. The project results should have integral effect for the Adriatic as a whole.

For instance, if talking about tourism and culture the ambition is to create a common tourist-brand which will be able to compete in the world market, the studies showed that in EU Member States there are about 20 UNESCO monuments which through this kind of collaboration could be additionally valorized. Through common marketing initiatives it will become much easier for Member States to be present in the globalize economy. The same principle can be applied for a common transport and maritime infrastructure policy, keeping in mind that the Adriatic is the closest sea for the receipt of Asian transport good and for their distribution in the Central Europe. Through the Euroregion, all the institutions dealing with the preservation and protection of the Adriatic area will come together. There is also a wish for the creation of a joint fisheries policy which will regulate the non sustained fishing of maritime creatures.

So far, more than thirty project idea is developed most of them candidate for the call for proposal on IPA Adriatic CBC European program.

### ***Adri.Eur.O.P.***

The first concrete example of collaboration between the members of the Adriatic Euroregion was a joint project called ADRIEUROPE (Adriatic Euroregion Operational Programme), successfully candidate on the INTERREG IIIA initiative – for Adriatic cross-border cooperation. The total amount of the project was 1.200.000,00 EUR. The project Adri.Eur.O.P. aimed to offer operational support (in technical-administrative terms) to the political process for the establishment of an institutional body of the Adriatic Euroregion (AE), created in order to promote sustainable development in territories of the Adriatic regions. The goal of the project was to realize the activities necessary for the start-up of the Adriatic Euroregion in the short term.

The main activities, which were integrated and implemented by all partners, could be outlined as follows:

- Support the work coordination between the cross-border bodies involved in the AE project
- Relationships with international European bodies and institutions
- Establishment of technical-administrative service structures
- Start up of the Adriatic Euroregion through organizational and structural processes in the initial phases
- Assessment of the *in itinere* situation regarding the AE sectors of interest
- Strategic design and new Governance on which to realize the EA structure
- Creation of a communications and information strategy
- Realize a true Partnership in the Area

### ***Adriatic strategy***

Pursuant to Article 16 of the Statute of the Adriatic Euroregion, the Adriatic Euroregion Assembly at the session held on 22 October 2009, made the Declaration on launching the initiative for creating the Adriatic Strategy. The Adriatic Euroregion Assembly determines the need to create the Adriatic Strategy for the purpose of defining a coherent regional development policy of this area, reducing the existing social and economic differences and realizing the possibilities of development in different member regions. Furthermore, despite the fact that the diversity of the Adriatic region from natural, geographical, social, economic and political aspects represents a great asset, these advantages have still not been successfully exploited nor appropriately managed because of the different socio-economic circumstances in which the countries of the Adriatic developed.

The Strategy has to establish the development objectives and define the instruments aimed at building and strengthening the development potential in the Adriatic area. Furthermore, it should propose the setting up of a coherent framework of the regional development policy in the Adriatic area, as well as the establishment of the necessary legal and institutional framework. This initiative strongly supports the principle of partnership and consultation process when developing the Adriatic Strategy, taking into account that it has to be a result of intensive discussions and consultations between the factors from the Adriatic area at the local and regional level as well as at the institutional level of the European Union, national governments and other multilateral organizations operating in the Adriatic area. It is extremely important to achieve a consensus based on partnership of participants in the Strategy creating process.

The basic strategic goals that will be elaborated in detail in the Adriatic strategy are the following:

- Integrated approach to, planning and management of land and sea area, to environmental protection, use of natural resources and sustainable development of the Adriatic area,
- Strengthening the institutional, cultural, economic and transport connections in the Adriatic area,
- Establishing a framework for a coordinated and effective cooperation in the Adriatic area in the preparation and implementation of projects financed by the European Union funds,
- Strengthening competitiveness based on knowledge, high technology and innovations through a systematical development of human resources,
- Vocational trainings on European matters for local and regional public officials from the Eastern Adriatic territories.

The Adriatic Euroregion Assembly launches the initiative for creating the Adriatic Strategy based on its Statute adopted in Pula on 30 June 2006, which prescribes the power of the Assembly to determine the basic elements of the Adriatic Euroregion operational policy, to

launch initiatives, to consider the issues significant for its operation. It should be pointed out that the launch of this initiative has also been based on the positive experiences arising from the preparation process for launching the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and especially on the Communication of the European Commission intended for the European Parliament, Council of Ministers, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, dated 10 June 2009. With the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 the area along the Danube becomes extremely important in the political, economic, social and cultural sense, and the European Commission supports the cooperation of all countries, especially European Union Member States, in the design of the European Danube Strategy, modeled on the Strategy for the Baltic region and the concept of macro - regional strategy. The mentioned concept highlights the macro - regional strategy as an effective approach to development opportunities of wider regions, which includes the territory of different countries or their parts thereof related to common characteristics and development opportunities. Therefore, the initiative in question is being referred to the mentioned institutions of the European Union, national governments and other multilateral organizations active in the Adriatic in order to create a quality strategic document according to the European legislation, within the procedure intended for adopting such strategic documents in the European Union.

The main purpose of the Adriatic strategy is to create conditions for economic and social cohesion in the Adriatic area, by defining strategic objectives and development priorities. To achieve the goals established it is necessary a clear identification of needs, harmonization of the development priorities, and develop ideas and propose projects to justify such investment of funds in certain areas. With this Declaration the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are invited to support the initiative, and, within their jurisdiction, to start the realization of the Adriatic Strategy based on positive experience gained in the process of the realization of the Baltic Strategy, an initiative to make the strategy of the Danube and other similar initiatives. Very important is the support of national governments and multilateral organizations active in the Adriatic area to the proposed initiatives in creating the Adriatic Strategy, and their engagement in the process of its adoption. The above procedure of creating the Adriatic Strategy is a great challenge to all subjects that will be involved in its drafting, but also an opportunity to achieve a qualitative step forward through the activation of development potential in order to ensure better life for all inhabitants of the Adriatic region.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Future initiatives & final remarks***

We may conclude that the Adriatic Euroregion has already justified its reasons for establishment in this initial phase, namely;

- AE has become a well-known and unique institution in the Adriatic area in line with the contemporary societal and political requirements;
- The dialogue between regional and local political actors on both sea banks of the Adriatic, in seven different states, has been fostered;
- AE has developed into an inevitable political instrument for the rethinking of the Adriatic future;
- AE represents the institutional background for the identification and solution of shared problems;
- AE has acquired an institutional form, legal identity, the organizational structure and has accomplished in the foundation of its organs;
- Two offices have been opened in Pula and Brussels, the Secretariat is successfully running, the basic funds for its operation have been obtained and its modus operandi has been well accepted.

These points represented the preconditions for the continuation of the future activities, which are focusing on the following:

- Further empowerment of the financial, organizational and staff capabilities;
- Further presentation and promotion of the activities of the Adriatic Euroregion in front of the EU institutions and other international bodies;
- Further strengthening of mutual dialogue and cooperation between the member regions;
- Continuation with the work of the thematic Commissions and the additional creation of concrete projects with integral impact;
- Detect further financing possibilities for the implementation of joint ideas
- Cooperation with other euro regional initiatives on the seas ;
- Further support initiative for the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic
- Creating a new EGTC on Adriatic.

Thanks to the its members but also thanks to the Council of Europe, Adriatic Euroregion is a new model of cooperation on the Adriatic and instrument for faster integration of the South Eastern European states into a common Europe. Adriatic Euroregion has become a successful example of a modern regional European political infrastructure – a model that could be implemented on other European maritime area.