



## **ADRIATIC-IONIAN INITIATIVE - THE WAY AHEAD**

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**REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO ADRIATIC-IONIAN INITIATIVE PRESIDENCY  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

### **Proposal of the Presidency**

## **ADRIATIC-IONIAN INITIATIVE - THE WAY AHEAD**

### INTRODUCTION

The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative is one of the newest initiatives in the region of South East Europe and the Adriatic. It has been functioning as a successful cooperation forum on various topics since its establishment at the Conference on Development and Security of the Adriatic-Ionian region held on 19-20 May 2000 in Ancona, Italy. Members of the AII are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Serbia and Montenegro. Main objective of AII activities is the achievement of political and economic stability in the region through cooperation in solving specific problems, sustainable economic development promotion, environment protection and cultural heritage exchange.

Now, four years after its establishment, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative is facing new challenges and opportunities, which call for a transformation of its institutions and functions.

### THE AII INSTITUTIONS

If the basic document of the Initiative - the Ancona Declaration, which was signed by the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states, is taken into consideration, it could be seen that the main body of the AII is the Council of the AII, which consists of foreign ministers of the Member States and a representative of the European Union. The AII does not have any other regular body with specific rules of procedure or competencies. Therefore, the meetings of Senior Officials and the meetings of the Round Tables are convened in a rather loose and flexible way, thus allowing the Member State that is presiding over the one-year presidency to be completely responsible for the way in which the mentioned meetings are organised. This flexibility allows for change of schedule of meetings, combination of various Round Tables and even the composition of the representatives at the Tables.

The Committee of Senior Officials meets twice or three times a year, depending on the needs or the rhythm set by the Presidency, while the Round Tables meet at least twice a year. This timeframe structure allows for a very loose and discontinued way of functioning and leaves a lot of grey areas of inefficiency and interrupted work continuity.

Furthermore, apart from change of the senior officials/coordinators responsible for guiding and directing the Initiative for one-year term, there is also the alteration of the chairmen of the Round Tables which change every year in the period May-June depending on the country which assumes the Presidency. This fact creates a lot of problems and difficulties for the continuation of the already started projects, programmes or plans which are to last more than one year or have to be transferred to the next Presidency.

### AREAS OF AII COOPERATION

The main focus of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative has been directed toward the projects and programmes connected with maritime cooperation in various fields: maritime transport, ecology and sustainable development of the two seas and the coastal areas, tourism, culture and heritage in the coastal areas etc. Therefore, if we disregard the cooperation in the field of small and medium enterprises, organised crime and education (which are also, in a way, indirectly connected through the two seas), the main impact of the Initiative stays within a specific field of marine cooperation.

Except this kind of cooperation among the Member States, the work of the AII should also be aiming at a more efficient approach of the Member States to the EU, since three members of AII -

aiming at a more efficient approach of the Member States to the EU, since three members of AII - Greece, Italy and Slovenia - are members of the EU. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro are all perspective candidates for the EU accession and the AII could play a great and a more significant role in helping these four countries in achieving this task. However, this approach would require a more institutionalised, stable and persistent system of collaboration with a more developed scheme of bodies: round tables, working groups and a liaison office or a secretariat.

#### A POSSIBLE WAY AHEAD

If the actual functioning and performance of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative structures and bodies can be assessed, it could be presumed that a change of structural functioning of the Initiative's bodies can produce more positive results in strengthening and deepening this regional forum of cooperation among the seven Adriatic-Ionian countries.

In order to achieve this, it would be necessary to create a liaison office/small secretariat and to nominate permanent chairmen of the six Round Tables.

A liaison office/small secretariat (LO/SS) of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative - should provide for a more consistent and continued stream of activities among the Member States and should serve as the primary point of contact within the Initiative for interaction with AII partners, international organisations and nongovernmental organisations. Furthermore, LO/SS should take responsibility of the AII records and files.

LO/SS should coordinate and cooperate closely with the Presidency in providing the necessary conditions for successful development of the Initiative. It should also be responsible for the administrative support to the Presidency and should coordinate the meetings of the AIC, Committee of Senior Officials and Round Tables and other similar activities as directed by the Presidency.

A possible way of establishing an LO/SS consists of several important phases:

One of the Member States should agree to host and support the LO/SS by providing the necessary premises, facilities and infrastructure. The question of funds, which is extremely important for the initial setting up of the LO/SS and its future functioning, should also be discussed in the preparatory phase.

Appropriate office space and conference facilities should be made available by the host country while the cost of support equipment (such as telephone system, computer networks, facsimile machines and standard office equipment) as well as running costs could be borne by common or separate donations of the Member States. The Presidency should provide information and plans for all administrative and technical equipment and support required in the preparatory phase.

Decisions concerning the personnel should also be made very early in order to assess possible costs and functions. Having in mind that the LO/SS should be a small and efficient unit, the personnel should consist of two up to three persons: a seconded executive secretary or head of liaison office, an administrative assistant and possibly a deputy executive secretary or head of liaison office. The last fact depends on the real needs of the LO/SS and the willingness of a Member State to provide salary to a deputy which itself would second.

After all the preparations have been made, the Adriatic-Ionian Council would take into consideration already drafted Terms of Reference (TOR) for the LO/SS and give its approval. The TOR should act as a living document and may become adjusted or altered by formal review of the Committee of Senior Officials.

Finally, when the personnel have been nominated and the organisational structure set up, the LO/SS should consolidate its function as the regional centre for the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. It should play an increasing role in the coordination, preparation and completion of the AII activities, meetings and projects. This becomes especially important for the region and for its thorough and successful European integration processes.

Permanent chairmen of the six Round Tables - the idea of nominating permanent chairmen of the six Round Tables of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative comes from the fact that there is a yearly

alteration of the chairmen depending on the country that assumes the Presidency. This, as already stated, leads to difficulties in the continuation of the already started projects.

For that reason a possibility of nominating permanent chairmen should be discussed. One of suggestions could be to give each of the seven Member States possibility to nominate one chairman. Although this would ask for the increase in the number of Round Tables from six to seven, it could be e.g. done by separating tourism from small and medium enterprises that at present make one Round Table. In this way the continuity of the work of Round Tables - or working groups as they should be renamed - would be preserved and a much more efficient way of cooperation would be established.

#### CONCLUSION

Changing structural and institutional way of how the Initiative functions could lead to more efficient and productive results in the cooperation of the seven Member States of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. The Presidency, therefore, strongly encourages the exchange of opinions, as well as further discussions and contributions on a possibility to create a liaison office/small secretariat and to nominate permanent chairmen of the six Round Tables, which are essential for generating a new impetus for the cooperation efforts in the Adriatic-Ionian basin.