



BRUSSELS DECLARATION

of the XV Adriatic and Ionian Council
Brussels, 27 May 2013

We, the representatives of the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia,

GUIDED by the Ancona Declaration of 20 May 2000 and the declarations of the Adriatic and Ionian Councils between 2001 and 2012;

RECALLING the basic principles guiding the European Union integration process, including regional cooperation;

CONFIRMING that the future of South East Europe lies within the European Union and that the activities carried out by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative are aimed at boosting the integration process of its non-EU members;

WELCOMING the significant progress achieved in this context by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative non-EU Member States, particularly by Croatia, which successfully met all EU requirements and will become the 28th EU Member State on 1 July 2013;

- 1. REAFFIRM** agreement and full commitment of all eight governments in pursuing the common aim of creating an EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR);
- 2. WELCOME** with satisfaction the European Council Conclusions of 13 and 14 December 2012 which look forward "to the presentation by the Commission of a new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region before the end of 2014";
- 3. UNDERLINE** the significance of the meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative foreign ministers with the European Commissioner for Regional Policies, in Brussels on 19 November 2012;
- 4. WELCOME** the adoption of the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas of 30 November 2012;
- 5. TAKE NOTE** of the establishment of the Adriatic and Ionian Interregional Group at the Committee of the Regions, which will pave the way for a broader engagement and role of local/regional communities in this process;

6. **RECALL** the importance of consultations between the stakeholders interested in an EUSAIR organized by different Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Participating States in cooperation with the European Commission during the Slovenian Chairmanship, such as the Workshops on Maritime Affairs in the Adriatic and Ionian Region held in Athens on 14 February, Trieste on 13 June, Portorož on 17 September, and Zagreb on 6 December 2012;
7. **THANK** the European Commission for its valuable support in the development of a comprehensive EUSAIR and its Plan of Action (PoA) to be finalized by the end of 2014;
8. **REITERATE** our full commitment to continue and strengthen cooperation with the European Commission in all activities concerning the preparation of the EUSAIR in order for the Strategy to fully reflect the interests of all Participating States;
9. **ASSESS** positively the results of the meeting of the National Contact Points of the Baltic, Danube and Adriatic-Ionian macroregions which took place in Bucharest on 17 April;
10. **INVITE** the Participating States to pursue an active role by engaging all necessary stakeholders, including private sector and civil society, in the elaboration of the Plan of Action, and by ensuring appropriate coordination at the national levels between the technical content of the PoA and the territorial development policy contents, with particular regard to the Cohesion Policy 2014–2020 programming;
11. **RECALL** the wish expressed by AII civil societies that a proposal aiming at including a relevant program directly supporting the EUSAIR be inserted in the draft proposal for programs of trans national cooperation for the period 2014-2020 as it is the case for the Baltic (EUSBSR) and Danube (EUSDR) EU regional strategies;
12. **WELCOME** the strengthened cooperation between the Initiative's Permanent Secretariat and the secretariats of civil society forums of the Adriatic and Ionian region (e.g. the Forum of Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of Cities and Towns and the UniAdriatic), endorsed last February by the National Contact Points (NCPs) for the EUSAIR and the European Commission, which will result in a flexible integrated Secretariat, capable of transmitting to the governments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Participating States the proposals and contributions of civil societies;
13. **REAFFIRM** our conviction that intergovernmental cooperation remains essential in ensuring enhanced regional cooperation and in supporting stability, development and democracy in the region;
14. **COMMEND** the Slovenian Government for the efforts to further reinforce, during its Chairmanship, the intergovernmental dimension of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative through meetings and roundtables on different fields of cooperation (e.g. roundtables on the prevention of and fight against forest fires, university and cultural heritage cooperation), and to ensure coherence between Initiative's activities and the preparation of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
15. **UNDERLINE** the importance of intergovernmental cooperation as a driving force to regional economic integration and development in the Adriatic and Ionian area with regard to pipeline projects, as the most recent examples of which we recall the signature in Athens on the 13th of February 2013, of the Intergovernmental

Agreement between Albania, Italy and Greece on the construction and operation of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project and the signature in Tirana on the 23rd of May 2013, of the Memorandum of Understanding between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro for the support and cooperation in the realization of the project of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline Project (TAP) and the Ionian Adriatic Pipeline Project (IAP) as well as other economic projects of regional importance.

16. **WELCOME** the launch of nine transnational cooperation projects co-funded by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative through its Regional Cooperation Programme and thank Italian Government for its donation, the Permanent Secretariat and the Initiative's Permanent Secretariat Foundation for the just management of the financing programme from the call for proposals to the delivery of funds;
17. **UNDERLINE** the great value of cooperation among the members of AII Parliaments and **WELCOME** their decision - agreed at the XI Conference in Brdo Pri Kranju - to establish a new model of parliamentary cooperation in order to contribute efficiently and support the progress of the EUSAIR as well as their wish to establish closer contacts with the AII Permanent Secretariat;
18. **STRESS** the benefits of regular contacts with other organizations and initiatives operating in our region for the exchange of information about activities and best practices, and for encouraging such cooperation, also taking into account the added value of the EUSAIR in terms of optimization of the EU, national as well as regional interventions and activities;
19. **TAKE NOTE** with great satisfaction of the CSO's approval of the Annual Report on activities of the Initiative's Permanent Secretariat;
20. **THANK** Slovenia for its valuable engagement within the framework of the Initiative during its Chairmanship and for the organization of the XV Adriatic and Ionian Council in Brussels;
21. **ENTRUST** and **ENCOURAGE** Albania with the next Chairmanship from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014, wishing her success in a crucial period for the future of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative and the preparation of the EUSAIR.