



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
CHAIRMANSHIP OF SLOVENIA

***MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS  
OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
Wednesday, June 27, 2012***

***Agreed Minutes***

The first meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) under the Slovenian Chairmanship, was held on June 26<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Ljubljana. The meeting was chaired by Min. Mitja Močnik of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, with the assistance of the All Permanent Secretariat.

**1. Adoption of the Agenda**

The Chairman introduced the agenda that was adopted with no objection.

**2. Presentation of the Priorities of the Slovenian Chairmanship and Calendar of Events**

The **Chairmanship** distributed the programme of the activities and the calendar to the delegates and stressed that the Round Tables will address topics related to environmental protection, pollution, prevention of accidents at sea, cultural heritage, underwater archaeology, sea water management and fire protection. Other topics as well as other events will be added – if necessary – during the year of the Slovenian Chairmanship.

As agreed in principle during the meeting of the Presidents of the Parliaments in Belgrade, on April 26, the parliamentary dimension will be further strengthened, possibly through the establishment of national delegations to the All, in order to increase the awareness of the members of the Parliaments on the process of establishment of the Macro-Region and on the intergovernmental work of All.

The Chairman concluded his presentation by saying that the programme might be modified or integrated, in particular adding activities related to Small and Medium Enterprises, should it be the case.

He finally congratulated Montenegro for the important goal achieved in getting a date for starting accession talks, defined as a crucial step of Podgorica in the path towards EU integration.

**Italy** congratulated Slovenia for its commitment aimed at a successful Chairmanship and stressed the political link between the “ EU Strategy for an Adriatic and Ionian Region “ and the All, which represents a significant intergovernmental anchorage. Keeping the peculiar character of the “Strategy” and of “All” the activity of the All should capitalize the above link, in particular by organizing its round tables in line with the priorities of the future EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

Italy also informed about the “Workshop on Maritime Affairs in the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region” held in Trieste (12-13 June) where the key actors of the competent Authorities for Environment, Maritime Security, Transport and Tourism from Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Representatives of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, were involved and discussed concrete policies and projects in the framework of the future Macro-Region.

Italy also suggested that the Presidency may extend the programme of the Roundtables to topics such as sustainable tourism, which provides already existing good examples of cooperation, such as the offer package ADRION of the Adriatic Ionian Forum of Chambers of Commerce.

As far as the parliamentary dimension is concerned, the Italian delegate referred to the information received by the Secretary General of All regarding a letter which should be soon sent by the President of the Italian Parliament to his Slovenian colleague, favourable to the establishment of delegations to the All as it is already the case of CEI. Any decision will be taken by the Speakers of Parliaments themselves and, after any such decisions, the All Senior Officials will act accordingly.

Subsequently **Greece** took the floor and, referring to the first event of the Slovenian calendar on the Macro-Region organized by the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, stressed that it should be born in mind that the future Macro-region will be founded on 4 pillars: therefore, it would be important to include topics such as SMEs and Tourism. He added that Senior Officials of the All and contact points for the Macro-Region should always be mutually informed (when they are not the same persons) of the work going on in the two different activities. The Permanent Secretariat will have to play a role of link in this respect.

**Montenegro** expressed thanks to the Chairmanship for the congratulations and informed that talks with the EU would start on Friday 29 June on chapters 23 and 24. He added that the fact that Slovenia - a member of the EU - takes over the All Chairmanship in a period when the Council should mandate the Commission to start working on the Action plan for the Strategy, is beneficial.

**3. Programme of the Activities of the All Permanent Secretariat under joint responsibility of the Chairman in Office and the Secretary General**

Illustrating the Programme of Activities (already handed out to the delegates), the **Secretary General** reiterated that the All-PS is the technical body of the All and has its main role in assisting the Chairmanship.

Apart from its traditional secretarial activities, the All-PS will assist the Chairmanship in all its needs related to the documents, and in the contacts with the three Adriatic Ionian fora having their seat in Ancona.

As for the Macro-Regional Strategy, the All-PS is participating to the “contact points” meetings in Brussels with the DG MARE “assisting the presidency” as stated by the Belgrade Declaration.

**Greece** stressed the role of the All-PS for providing institutional memory, and also for being the daily link with the three Fora of civil society. The role of these Fora should be enhanced and they could be included in our meetings with the EU Commission, in order to show how the different layers of governance (States, Cities, Chambers of Commerce, Universities and Regions) work together for a sustainable development in the Adriatic Ionian basin.

**Italy** reminded that the Belgrade Declaration mentions the role of the All-PS in assisting the Presidency during the meetings of the “contact points” for the “EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region” at DG MARE at the European Commission, and that the Secretariat could have an important role in linking the two levels (All and Macro-Region). At this regard, Italy reminded that the main responsibility for the “Strategy” is up to the Governments and their Representatives.

Considering the inclusive character of the macro-regional strategy, Italy invited Montenegro and Albania to participate more actively to the “contact points” meeting in Bruxelles and took note with satisfaction of the fact that the Albanian Senior Official informed that the next such meeting should be attended by a Representative of the competent Albanian Ministry.

Italy also informed that the All Fora are already working in view of the establishment of the Macro-Region, as it their documents and activity show. A very concrete and successful example are for instance the Final Declaration of the Annual Meeting of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce which took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June in Brindisi. He suggested that this Declaration and the activity of the All Fora be taken in due account by the Senior Officials and suggested that the Permanent Secretariat may inform via mail the Senior Officials when such significant documents are published in the All Internet Site ([www.ait-ps.org](http://www.ait-ps.org)).

#### **4. Information on the process for the approval of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro Region**

The **Chairman** informed about the status of the process for the approval of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region and delivered a document on the matter drafted by the Slovenian “contact point”.

Talks are continuing at the DG Mare for the drafting of the Maritime Strategy that will be part of the general Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region. The sea will be the core of the strategy and the activities will be divided in different priorities such as Environmental Protection, Fisheries, Energy, Disaster and safety at sea, Transports and hinterland connections, Cross-border crime and Tourism. The goal is to achieve economic and political stability in the entire region.

The Chairman confirmed that a workshop will be organized by Slovenia in September on the lines of those that already took place in Athens and Trieste.

**Greece** took the floor by announcing and circulating the answer of Commissioner Hahn to the letter sent by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Slovenia, Italy and Croatia to him and to other two Commissioners involved in the process. He stressed three points of the letter:

- It doesn't seem totally appropriate to say that the maritime strand is a “first step towards a wider macro-regional strategy” since the maritime strand is an integral part of the EU Strategy for the Macro-Region. We should make this clear to Commissioner Hahn;
- It is now sure that Commissioners understand that our goal is to obtain by the end of this year the EU Council mandate for the Commission to define the Strategy;
- The proposal of a joint meeting with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the four EU member countries, will be an important occasion to show our cohesion and the added value of a future Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region.

Members of our national Parliaments might have a crucial role in supporting this process: They could send a letter to sensitize their colleagues in the European Parliament.

The **Chairman** underlined the importance of the timing for the future steps towards the approval of the EU Strategy and suggested to involve also other Directorates, apart from DG MARE and DG REGIO, that may give support with different lines of financial resources.

**Italy** agreed that timing is very important and that it is essential to achieve by the end of this year the mandate by the European Council to the European Commission for the elaboration of the “Strategy”. In order to attain these goals, a political effort by all our Governments, showing that we are already identifying the lines of action (before proposing projects) will be needed. Commissioner Hahn will also have to be informed on how we will be able to involve stakeholders and to fulfil all requirements. to make sure that the “Strategy”'s implementation

will ensure a rational use of the existing EU and national funds, as no additional funds are foreseen for EU Macroregional Strategies as per EU Law and procedure.

**Serbia** took the floor by confirming its full support to the Strategy – although being a land-locked country - and affirming its readiness to give its concrete contribution to its realization. Even though for some exclusively maritime aspects Serbia will not be able to participate to activities, its contribution could be crucial on items such as environment protection, transports or SMEs.

## **5. Information of the Secretary General on the Regional Cooperation Programme**

The **Secretary General** informed the Senior Officials about the status of the Regional Cooperation Programme.

After the postponement of the deadline, the call for proposals of the RCP expired last June 18. The All-PS received 16 project applications. Partnerships are quite wide and every Country participates to two or more project proposals. The co-funding requests by the applicants are usually the maximum possible. The majority of applicants requires a contribution by the All of about 24 – 25 thousands €. Meaning that the average total size of each project proposed is of about 50.000€.

At this stage the All-PS is proceeding to the evaluation of the admissibility and eligibility criteria (“Formal Evaluation“). It will conclude this phase by mid-July and send all projects to the Senior Officials for the “Quality Evaluation“ to be completed by mid-September.

Senior Officials will have to fill the Evaluation Grid. The proposals under priority 2 (Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region) will be directly evaluated by themselves while for the proposals under priority 1 (Tourism and Rural Development) they could ask for the support of their national experts on the matter if they deem it necessary. The final national evaluation belongs however to the Senior Officials.

All filled evaluations will be sent by mid-September to the All Permanent Secretariat which will draft the ranking list resulting from the “Quality Evaluation“.

The projects will be co-financed according to the ranking list within the foreseen budget of the call.

**Greece** stressed the significance of the “Regional Cooperation Programme“ as an initiative promoting “transparency and inclusiveness“. The success of the RCP will be a message to the EU Commission and will show how we can effectively work on concrete projects.

Furthermore, Greece proposed that no country be excluded by the RCP: therefore, should one country not be in any partnership of the approved projects, the ranking will be adjusted in order to include all our 8 countries in at least one project.

**Italy** (as the Country financing the RCP) agreed on the principle of inclusiveness and widest possible membership of the projects and added that, in future, we should think on how part of the funding of the RCP can be effectively used to increase the visibility of the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region.

## **6. Any Other Business**

The Secretary General informed that the All-PS is organizing the visit of the Slovenian Ambassador in Italy to the Seat of the Permanent Secretariat. The Ambassador will have the opportunity to meet the representatives of the three civil society fora having seat in Ancona and other local authorities.