



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
November 22, 2012
Ancona, Seat of the Chamber of Commerce***

Agreed Minutes

The second meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) under Slovenian Chairmanship, was held on November 22nd, 2012 in Ancona. 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. Information by the Presidency on future planned activities

The **Chairman** reminded that an updated calendar of the activities of the Slovenian Presidency had been circulated some days before although not finalized. Further meetings on SMEs Cooperation and on Tourism will, in fact, be added to it.

A meeting on inter-University cooperation will also be organized by the University of Primorska, that has announced its decision to take over the Presidency of UniAdrion (see item 3).

It has been confirmed that the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments will take place in February, and contacts concerning the possible composition of delegations to the All are in place.

Italy suggested that a date for next Adriatic Ionian Council be arranged as soon as possible in order to plan the agenda of Ministers in due time and to avoid overlappings with other Ministerial Meetings of regional cooperation initiatives such as SEECF.

3. Assessment on the development of Regional Cooperation and the future Adriatic Ionian Macro Region (AIMR) by the representatives of the Adriatic Ionian Fora

Adriatic Ionian Forum of Chambers of Commerce

After welcoming the Senior Officials to the seat of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce, President Giampieri (Vice President of the AIC Forum) reminded the constant involvement in transborder cooperation of the Forum representing 38 members, about 100 million inhabitants, 1 million enterprises and trade exchange of about 31 billion euro.

The aim of the AIC Forum is to be a credible supranational association, able to lead to the harmonization of market rules, taking into account peculiarities of each country. The idea is to build a common system of governance which would help the process of establishment of the AIMR which is one of the main goals of the Forum as stated also in the Final Declaration of Brindisi of June 2012.

The contribution by the AIC Forum will be to develop internationalisation of enterprises through a set of activities such as be-to-be meetings between entrepreneurs of the two shores of our seas.

UniAdrion

Rector Pacetti informed Senior Officials that Prof. Dragan Marusic, Rector of the University of Primorska, accepted to take over the Presidency of UniAdrion following the new rule of the Statute of the network, which connects its Presidency to the rotating Chairmanship of the All. He also informed that the "Università Politecnica delle Marche" is financing five PhDs for candidates coming from All Universities (Belgrade, Tirana, Sarajevo) for an amount of 250.000€. Furthermore, a first level Master's degree in "Instruments and Methodologies for Cultural Heritage Conservation and Valorisation" has been organized with the cooperation of the Universities of Urbino, Rome, Mostar, Sarajevo, Tirana and Novi Sad.

Concerning the AIMR, UniAdrion intends to follow the example of the Baltic (BONUS – Baltic Organizations' Network for Funding Science) and create a Joint Research Programme carried on by All Universities and Research Centers.

Adriatic Ionian Forum of Cities and Towns

The Secretary General of the Forum, Mr. Brisighelli, informed about the latest activities of the Forum, reminding that its sectors of cooperation are environment, culture, transport and youth policies. He expressed satisfaction for the extremely good cooperation among the three Fora and the All Permanent Secretariat.

The Forum of Cities and Towns intends to bring its experience to the process of realization of the AIMR. In this respect, it has created a Forum of the Youth of the Adriatic and Ionian cities and towns that the Plenary Session of last year approved in a document expressing its commitment for the full support to the AIMR. The 2012 Forum of Cities and Towns will take place in Pescara on 28-30 November.

The **Chair** expressed gratitude to the Fora and stated that, representing the civil society, their place is at the core of the future AIMR.

Greece stated that the contribution of the Fora to the CSO meeting was significant, particularly in view of the approval of the EU Strategy for the AIMR and proposed that a prize, for students presenting an essay on the matter, be organized by UniAdrion in cooperation with other Fora and the AII-PS.

Italy proposed that the Fora of civil society should be regularly included in All activities and meetings, particularly in view of the AIMR. These networks represent in fact a unique asset that other Regional Cooperation Initiatives do not have in such a structured way. Every CSO meeting should therefore foresee the participation of Fora in order to share information about programmes, projects and activities. Italy also proposed that final documents of each Forum include a mention of their commitment for the AIMR, as it happened for the Annual Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce in Brindisi on the 8th of June, 2012.

The **Senior Officials** agreed on this proposal.

4. The “Regional Cooperation Programme” (RCP): official Statement by the CSO

The **Secretary General** summarized the procedure that brought to the selection of the projects to be co-financed under the RCP 2012 and highlighted the central role of the Senior Officials.

After the quality evaluation, made by the representatives of the governments, the AII-PS, has gathered the results in a Ranking List.

According to the Ranking List 9 projects will receive the All contribution for a total amount of 204.069,90€ that will be disbursed by the AII-PS. The overall budget of the 9 projects approved will amount to 504.674,90€.

Each applicant has requested to the AII-PS a contribution that goes from 10.000 to 25.000€ guaranteeing at least the 50% of the budget by their own resources.

Up to 50% of the co-funding contribution can be anticipated upon request by the applicant.

Of the approved projects, 3 are under priority 1.2 (Tourism), 1 under priority 1.3 (Rural Development) and 5 under priority 2 (*Supporting the elaboration and launching of a EU Strategy for the establishment of an Adriatic and Ionian Macro-region*)

All 8 All countries participate at least in 3 of the nine project proposal approved.

After the presentation by the Secretary General, the **Chair** asked the Senior Officials to approve the “CSO Statement on RCP” previously circulated by email.

Delegates expressed satisfaction for the transparency and inclusiveness of the RCP procedure carried out by the AII-PS and for the quality of the projects that will be co-financed. The Statement was approved by consensus.

Greece suggested to acknowledge the EU Commission with the important result achieved through the RCP 2012.

Bosnia & Herzegovina underlined the importance of having respected the principle of inclusiveness which will give further impetus to RCP projects.

Italy was also satisfied with the outcome of the RCP financed by Italian Government. However, the Italian delegate underlined that the EU Commission was clear on the fact that in the future perspective, projects should be sustainable and should have a broader macroregional approach. This means that micro projects should be avoided in future and that a future project activity should be more targeted and clearly express a macro-regional method. Upon agreement of the Member States, All has the opportunity to further focus its existing activity to the preparation of the Macro-region, for example facilitating meetings in specific sectors among the partners of the future AIMR. All could encourage cooperation in the sector of “Capacity Building” in administration; we should think how to use intergovernmental activities in this field. This could be an issue to be undertaken in next CSO meeting.

Serbia agreed on the fact that “Capacity Building” is a very crucial sector to develop and that could be very useful for the implementation of projects of the future AIMR. Concerning the RCP, Serbia reminded that the most important part is to come, with the implementation and monitoring of the approved projects.

5. Report by the Presidency of the latest events related to the EU Strategy for the AIMR

The **Chair** gave a short outline of the “Third Stakeholders’ Workshop on Maritime Affairs” held in Portoroz on 17-18 September. The meeting organized by DG MARE in cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of Environment was the last of a set of three stakeholders meetings (before the Zagreb meeting of December 6, presenting the Communication by the Commission) with the aim of gathering information, by the Stakeholders of each country, on ongoing common activities in the Adriatic Ionian area, and proposals for the future AIMR. The meeting was organized in parallel sessions corresponding to the priorities of the Adriatic Ionian Maritime Strategy:

1. Blue Growth
 - A) Tourism and Research & Innovation in Maritime Sectors
 - B) Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)
2. Competitive And Sustainable Transport And A Safer And More Secure Marine Space
3. Healthier Marine Environment and Sustainable Fishery.

6. Information on the meeting of the eight Foreign Ministers of All with Commissioner Hahn (19 November)

The Chair gave the floor to the **Italian representative** who attended the meeting in Brussels.

He informed that the meeting had a very positive outcome. Full cohesion and commitment were expressed by all Ministers, not only in principles, but also on technical aspects concerning funding for the elaboration of the Macro-Region. Minutes of the meeting will be sent to the Ministers by Commissioner.

Commissioner Hahn presented five questions to each Minister concerning different aspects of the AIMR, and the answers proved to be very convincing demonstrating full commitment in achieving the mandate in next Council.

It was agreed that the Maritime Strategy is only a first step of the wider Macro Region Strategy and that an effort by EU members of the AII would be crucial in order to have a mention of the AIMR in next EU Financial Framework 2014-2020.

The Italian delegate made also clear that Italy's priority is to support the AIMR. Other initiatives (such as the Alpine Macro Region), have not yet started the EU procedure.

Amb. Orlic from **Bosnia & Herzegovina**, also present in Brussels, confirmed the climate of commitment and cohesion. He reminded also that it was agreed not to enlarge the Adriatic Ionian Macro Region to other countries because of the diversity of interests and priorities.

Lobbying in order to increase awareness on the advantages of the AIMR will be very important, since some EU member Countries are still skeptical and believe that new macro-regions could increase bureaucracy and expenditures.

Greece noted that the questions made by Hahn were characterized by a negative approach since some EU countries do not support the creation of new Macro-Regions (UK, Belgium and others).

Notwithstanding these assumptions, thanks to the spirit of unity and the answers of the 8 Ministers, Mr. Hahn was convinced that it is not only possible but also appropriate to go ahead with the AIMR.

The **Chair** concluded that the meeting was very positive and our countries should continue to work together in order to raise awareness on the importance of establishing the AIMR, particularly through a convincing political lobbying towards those EU Countries still not aware of the advantages that the AIMR would bring to the whole EU.

7. Update on the Parliamentary Dimension of the AII

The **Chair** informed that letters of invitation, for next AII Conference of the Speakers to be held in Brdo next February, will be sent soon. Cooperation among Parliaments is extremely important for the AII. Members of the Parliaments (MPs) can have a strong influence in pushing our proposals towards the right direction. The Slovenian Parliament intends to organize a working meeting before the Conference of the Speakers involving the

All-PS, in order to analyse the proposal by the Italian Parliament to create All parliamentary delegations. Senior Officials gave mandate to the Secretary General to be present to this meeting.

Greece informed that the MFA received a proposal requesting its opinion on the establishment of parliamentary delegations to the All. Athens thinks that such a decision would be detrimental to the All for the following reasons:

- It would be a further burden to the light structure of the All;
- MPs often take initiatives without consulting with governments (see BSEC case);
- Flexibility will be lost;
- New Rules of Procedures should be written creating more bureaucracy

Italy informed that the proposal did come from the Italian Parliament, in line with the Italian system. As per All procedure, a decision on this matter could only be taken by the Conference of the Presidents of the Parliaments.

Italy follows with interest the developments of this proposal and is ready to support, in line with All procedure, decisions taken by the Conference of the Speakers of Parliaments. It requests the Permanent Secretariat to keep the CSO fully informed step by step, also because the developments on this matter are significant for the All's role in the perspective of the "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region".

The **Chair** is of the opinion that the work of Parliaments is crucial, particularly in relation with the AIMR. The Slovenian Presidency will follow these developments very closely and will reassure the All MPs that the CSO will assist their endeavours in favour of All activities.

8. Any Other Business

Under any other business, the All-PS presented a letter signed by the President of Region Marche, Gian Mario Spacca, to the Senior Officials with the proposal of possible cooperation in the field of "Pediatric Congenital Heart Disease".

The letter was handed to Senior Officials who, if deemed worth, will forward it to their health Administrations to facilitate possible contacts with the "Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria Ospedali Riuniti di Ancona" proposing the project.