



## JADRANKA RADOVANIĆ

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Dear participants of the 12th Forum, it is an honour and pleasure to welcome you in such a great number and in company of so many qualified professionals at this year's forum. It is with great pleasure that I welcome truly significant and prominent exhibitors, our host, Mr.. Alfred Malcarnea, president of the Chamber of Commerce Brindisi, Mrs. Mercedes Bresso, president of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the European Union as well as all the representatives of European institutions, Mr.. Alessandro Barberis, President of Eurochambres, and I also announce Mr Gianni Pittella, Vice President of the European Parliament, via video conference.

11 years ago, when we established the Forum, stimulated by a need for us to jointly address common problems, we couldn't have imagined that we would in such a short time achieve so much, that our number will grow every year and three forum days will become too short for growingly comprehensive program.

Forum has since been recognized at a European level - namely, as an association of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce it became a member of Eurochambres, the umbrella association of European Chambers of Commerce gathering primarily national Chambers.

Numerous activities and concrete results emerged from the work of the Forum, let us only mention; six congresses of women entrepreneurs of the Adriatic-Ionian region, creating the "Adrion - Adriatic-Ionian countries" sign which through joint tourist packages promotes the Adriatic as well as the Ionian as a tourist destination, there is also the organization of courses for tasters of olive oil, where about 100 professional tasters have been trained, as well as many others.

This year's Forum has a very intense and rich program with the main motto and guideline being the role of Forum in creating the Adriatic Ionian macro region, and its implementation and formal recognition.

Therefore it is extremely important to us that, in this endeavour, we have the support of such important institutions, such as the European Parliament and the CoR. Since 2006 when Forum's work was first presented to the EU Commission it has repeatedly been presented to the EU institutions, and its representatives have diligently participated in the work of the Forum.

This proves that we are on the right path and that our efforts and activities have proceeded in the right direction.

And that is confirmed to us, in the language of numbers, by the commodity exchange between seven countries which was low in 2001, when we started with our work, and it grew during all the following years (for example the commodity exchange between Croatia and Italy has multiplied several times as well as the index of the commodity exchange between the Adriatic Ionian countries).

Our great advantage is that we built our work from the ground up, working from the field, and on to the institutions and the political dimension. On this path, working through theme work groups, we included economic professionals and scientific institutes, improving the common interests and promoting mutual progress.

I would like to thank once more all the participants from the European institutions, as well as those who have been following our work from the beginning , also those who joined us recently, and all who have believed in this project, as well as all the employees that have organised this event.

I wish you all success in your work, new, mutual and quality projects and that at the end of this event we all come a step closer on this path of formalisation of the Adriatic Ionian macro region.