

WORKGROUP ON CONNECTING THE REGION

FINAL DOCUMENT

Split, 17th October

2018

1. Introduction

The table of transports seems to be expanding. This year it hosted over 50 people and 15 presentations were made. The workgroup was divided in 2 panels: one on the Adriatic and Ionian Corridors (road, rail and air traffic) and a second one on the Cruise Sector, following the first AI NURECC event that was organized in Olympia on June about “Cruise sector in the EUSAIR Area: challenges and future perspectives”.

2. Strategic outlines

As far as the Adriatic Ionian Corridors are concerned, the importance of national sovereignty was underlined but it was made clear that it should not interfere with the cross border cooperation. The EU is still financing projects on the transport sector.

The projects should be of both national and European importance and according to an EU specialist, there are 3 priorities for the future projects 2021-2027:

1. Interconnection between hinterland and the main ports
2. Cross border connection
3. Water corridors.

It is indicative of the high importance of the transport pillar for the Macroregion that EU is giving more funds for the creation of the new infrastructure, a practice not common for all pillars.

It was pointed out that there is still lack of good cross border connection and one proposal was that new air connections - new flights should be scheduled for the filling of the gaps.

During the first part of the workgroup the participants had the chance to learn about railway projects on the Adriatic Ionian Corridor, new highways, the ports in the SEETO and EUSAIR region and many more very interesting details. It has also been underlined that the EU is interested in a bigger macroregional project for each pillar of the EUSAIR strategy and this will lead to smaller national interconnected projects and this shows the tendencies of the EU and sets the relevant policies, politics and priorities for the future.

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As for the second part of the workgroup, it focused on the cruise sector, its impact on the local economies, potential additions to the cruise map and the Maritime Traffic in the Adriatic and Ionian region as a result of the first AI-NURECC event that was held in Olympia on June 27th.

In 2017 traffic in the Adriatic and Ionian area increased both in freight and passengers

- Freight traffic reached 207 million tons (plus 1,4% compared to 2016)
- Container movement continues to increase and has reached for the first time the volume of 3 million TEUs
- Passengers' movement after a long period of decrease is slowly recovering

And the only segment with a negative trend is the cruise sector.

It seems that cruise may have reached a critical point, that could be defined using a CRUISE CARRYING CAPACITY approach. There is constant need for bigger cruise ships that not all ports have the necessary infrastructure for.

Seasonality is also very important as there are cruise ports busting for 6 months and then there is a huge slow down.

Another aspect of the cruise sector was mentioned for the first time and that is the relation and interdependence between cruise and the hinterland. The cruise sector is mainly creating profits for the cruise agencies but also host cities and the hinterlands should start taking advantage of it. In order for the passengers to stay on the land there must be an organized effort to offer recreational, archaeological and other interesting proposals for them and there are huge opportunities for the local economies to gain from the cruise sector.

There was a presentation made on the port of Patras as a new possible cruise port as it has a number of important advantages as well as a presentation of the port of Dubrovnik which is a primary cruise port already. There was also an interesting analysis on the cruise value chain of tourism in Split.

3. Conclusions

A project proposal that derived from the table was the promotion of a common brand for the macroregion of the Adriatic and Ionian Region starting with the cruise sector. A common brand could create a connectivity bond among our ports that should become a high standard alternative or addition to the already top cruise ports that have been absorbing the benefits of the cruise sector for ages. Participants are aware that past



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experiences of a common brand in the AI area haven't been easy to manage, then the focus should be only on cruise sector.

4. Action agreed

The workgroup activities have to proceed constantly in order to strengthen the results of the 1st AI-NURECC event: the aim is the definition of a model of business for a type model of cruise host town. Next step will be the diffusion of a short questionnaire about the economic, social and environmental effects of cruise traffic on AI host ports.