

## **EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION**

### **Summary Report on the on-line public consultation**

The Commission organized a general on-line public consultation on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in the period 25 October 2013 – 17 January 2014. The aim of the consultation was to gather ideas about the future actions and projects in the Adriatic and Ionian Region which could benefit from a macro-regional cooperation approach.

#### **Main results:**

- Approximately 100 authorities, institutions or individuals responded to the consultation and presented their views.
- The profile of respondents is varied: academic/research institutions, private persons, public authorities, private enterprises, civil society, international organisation and other.
- The responses come mainly from Italy and Greece. There were also replies from outside the Adriatic and Ionian Region, e.g. Belgium, United Kingdom, Hungary, France, Canada.
- The main identified administrative and governance challenges in the region are:
  - ✓ Differences in the economic and social development of the participating countries;
  - ✓ Poor coordination between regional and national levels;
  - ✓ A top-down approach by national administration vs social society;
  - ✓ Differentiate access to the EU funds;
  - ✓ Cultural, historical and linguistic barriers;
  - ✓ Lack of administrative capacity and of adequate human resources.
- Possible financing sources indicated by the respondents are the following: EU funds; European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Investment Fund (EIF) financial instruments (to be tailored for the Strategy); private funding; Public Private Partnership Investments.
- The main constraints with regard to financing: Stakeholders are not well informed about the available funds in the region; High administrative and regulatory burdens.
- The added value of the Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, according to the respondents, focuses on the following key points:
  - ✓ Synergies and the integrated character of cooperation among countries of the Region;
  - ✓ Networking and the exchange of ideas and best practices;
  - ✓ Development of a shared identity;
  - ✓ Capacity to invest in research and innovation;
  - ✓ New opportunities for growth and jobs;
  - ✓ Raise awareness of the region and bring attention to the Western Balkans;
  - ✓ Improvement of fisheries programmes and environmental quality;
  - ✓ Mobilisation of the existing financial instruments of public and private sector
  - ✓ Facilitate EU integration of the Western Balkan countries
- With regard to governance, there is an overall agreement that stronger coordination among countries is needed. Different proposals were indicated (e.g. Permanent secretariat, e-governance structure, etc.)

- There is an overall agreement that the four priorities identified by the participating countries and the European Commission ('Blue Growth', 'Connecting the region', 'Environmental Quality', 'Sustainable Tourism') are indeed the main ones.
- Regarding the 'Blue Growth', in respondents` opinion, a creation of maritime clusters and research should gain the most attention, while human capital is also considered highly important. Further topics on which the Strategy should focus are blue biotechnologies, aquaculture and fisheries.
- Regarding the 'Connecting the region', the main focus points that the respondents identified are the waterways, air, road and rail systems and, the increased use of renewable and clean energies, and energy efficiency.
- Regarding 'Environmental Quality', the survey participants indicated the marine environment, biodiversity, the quality of water, air and soils as the main topics.
- Regarding 'Sustainable Tourism', the respondents spotted as most important the Adriatic-Ionian region identity and natural and cultural heritage.