15TH EDITION OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
DURRES, 11TH – 13TH MAY2015
SUMMARY REPORT OF THEMATIC WORKGROUPS

WORKGROUP ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This year, once again, the Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship has had a generous turnout: 40 women entrepreneurs and other professionals from the entire Adriatic and Ionian Area.
Following the speakers' presentations focused on the topic "*Clusters and networking in women entrepreneurship. Best practices and new opportunities in the new Adriatic Ionian Region context"* and a long and fruitful debate, which hence brought about a common desire to raise awareness and recognition regarding women entrepreneurs, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- The Italian city of Udine was chosen as the next venue for the 9th Congress on Women's entrepreneurship.
- The exchange of experiences on clusters for each country has established the need and the importance of working with local civil society in order to increase further the idea of Clustering. The development of clusters is hindered by significant difficulties, due to bureaucratic and administrative obstacles; unfortunately this perception is even more evident among women owned enterprises.
- The need for mutual projects has been frequently addressed, hence the Workgroups suggestion that the Forum supports the next cluster project within the Adriatic and Ionian Area among women entrepreneurs. The workgroup has shown that women entrepreneurs lack the knowhow, education and best practices. The project will be prepared and presented at the next 9th Congress of Women entrepreneurs in Udine next October.
- The support to women owned enterprises will be guaranteed by the Workgroup and by the Chambers of Commerce network, which can give professional support to women's entrepreneurship (such as training, B2B meetings etc…) also in collaboration with the other associations of the Chamber of Commerce System for instance Ascame and Eurochambres.
- The exchange of know-how in methodology of collection and analysis of quarterly data on women owned enterprises will be carried out between Italian Unioncamere and the Countries where the constant and reliable monitoring doesn't even exist. Effectively, specific development activities can only be planned through reliable and truthful sources.

WORKGROUP ON FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

The Workgroup on Fisheries and Aquaculture has focused on "*Clusters as efficient tools for competitiveness' reinforcement of fishing and aquaculture sector*" along with the plenary session and, especially, with the activities of the 1st Pillar of the EUSAIR Action Plan "Blue growth", that is focused on fisheries and cluster development.
The Pillar specifically states the most important aspects of this sector which concern improvement of the institutional competences and strengthening of scientific research, innovation and clustering of branding capacity. Based on these inputs and following the experts' reports five detailed conclusions have been drawn:

1. Given the heterogeneity of cluster policies from country to country, it is necessary to outline a policy for optimal clustering, especially in the regional level. For this purpose, in order to understand the common interests of the enterprises, the Workgroup proposes to organize a public initiative by involving partners, who would benefit from the exchange of expert advice where there are gaps in specific skills.

2. Improvement of cluster management (where it exists) in order to provide quality services to the enterprises involved and to increase their innovative capacity.
3. Creation of cluster activities at regional level to overcome the lack of specialized infrastructures in ports not suitable for the fisheries sector (in Albania and Montenegro) and, with this in mind, the preparation of project proposals to be financed by the European funds.
4. Dissemination of specific information on European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EAFF) to non-EU countries in particular with reference to the FLAG (fisheries, local action groups) which manage the funds of the fourth pillar of the EMFF. The Workgroup suggests the preparation of project proposals concerning the exchange of experience and best practices on the FLAG functioning in Italy and Greece to other countries of the Adriatic Ionian Area.
5. Planning and development of projects related to the cultivation of shells in aquaculture, that is an important segment of the fisheries sector in the Adriatic and Ionian Area. Moreover the creation of mapping of the areas where it is possible to cultivate different aquatic organisms, that are safe for human health and, at the same time, have self-sufficiency production.

WORKGROUP ON AGRICULTURE

"Rural development and sustainable agriculture" has been the working theme of the Agriculture Workgroup; in particular it has been characterized by a specific in-depth analysis on the biological agriculture as it is considered a trade niche in the Adriatic and Ionian Area. As a result of a fruitful debate, two main conclusions have been expressed:

1. The increase in quality of products through the organization of training courses and workshops on the production of quality products common to the countries in the Adriatic and Ionian Region, such as olive oil, wine and others…
2. Given the complexity of the agricultural sector and its importance in Adriatic Ionian Area, the Workgroup is intended to organize an international scientific conference on clusters in agriculture, especially on biological products of the Area that have comparative advantages in cultivation. The event "3 Fora of the Area" (AIC Forum, Forum of the City and Uniadrion) will involve the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, the Government of the 8 Countries and the Chamber of Commerce System. The aim is to promote agriculture in the Region through the exchange of know-how and transfer of knowledge and ideas. Concrete results and project ideas related to the clusters on biological products as well as the networking opportunity with the operators within the sector are expected for this initiative.

WORKGROUP ON TRANSPORTS

The Workgroup on Transports this year was formed by numerous presentations mainly from Albania, Italy and Greece, and it was focused on the theme "Maritime Traffics among the ports of the Adriatic and Ionian Region"
Following the analysis based on the participants' reports concerning the current situation of passengers, goods and containers maritime traffic as well as the cruise sector in the economic crisis context, several facts were discussed and some conclusive considerations were drawn.

- In 2014 a decrease of goods traffic trend has been registered (a drop from 6.3% to 5.7%). Despite the fact that passengers and cruisers are the segment with the worst performance, the cruisers represent an important opportunity of growth for ports and for their tourism attractions and it is necessary keep developing this sector.
- Intermodality is always a primary element for the growth of ports and its relative region. In particular it is in the course of the Workgroup that the Port of Ancona was mentioned for its strategic position referring to the ferry traffic with the Balkans and Greece thanks especially to its intermodality for both freight and passengers. Moreover, it was underlined that the Port of Ancona is a strategic multipurpose port as it is in the Scandinavian Mediterranean corridor.

- In the Adriatic and Ionian Area there are growing ports which are still not making full use of their potential and need to realise and follow new tendencies and the economic reality. The Albanian ports are a vivid example. According to the Institute of Transport Albania is trying to improve ports infrastructures in order to reach the European standards required. The port of Durres, which is the main port of the Country with 78% traffic of goods (especially minerals and iron), is connected with the corridor 8 that from Bari (Italy) goes to Bulgaria on the Black sea.

Furthermore during the workgroup the participants had the chance to learn about the Adriatic Model of Sustainable Mobility in Health and Care Sector, a common health service project of 8 countries.

JOINT WORKGROUP ON TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT

Numerous participants in the joint Workgroup on Tourism and Environment have this year focused on the topic "*Networking for a cultural and sustainable tourism*".
Based on a careful analysis of the priority actions identified for the operational phase of the specific Thematic Steering Group (TSG), for each pillar, the Workgroup reached the following conclusions:

- to act in synergy with the regional and county authorities in order to allow a governance system in the strategic sector of sustainable tourism. This in order to identify coordinated project proposals and to achieve the maximum programmatic integration between regional funds ORP ERDF 2014/2020, the macroregional perspective and priorities of each pillar of the EUSAIR TSG.
- To develop the Adrion brand in terms of its official acknowledgment. Its configuration doesn't have to be an identifiable tourism tool, but it has to be considered as a veritable expressive element of a supply chain, a product, a natural and cultural heritage as well as an idea of innovative enterprise with a strong feeling of belonging to the Adriatic and Ionian Area. As a consequence of this, it is necessary to act in synergy in order to disclose the brand Adrion at every territorial level (local institutions, trade associations, government agencies, schools, tour operators, etc.) in view of promotional and joint planning initiatives.
- To enhance the tourism offer through three pillars: accessibility, sustainability and quality.
- To operate as an Adriatic and Ionian Integrated Secretariat together with the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Universities (Uniadrion) under the coordination of the Adriatic and Ionian initiative. This seems to be the most effective solution at the stage where all are called to implement concrete project actions, respecting the autonomy of each Forum.
- To value the cultural heritage of the Area by favouring the creation of start-up and training of new creative entrepreneurships in this strategic field.
- Strengthen the act in network at all levels, especially in the era of the digital economy by giving special importance to the use of ICT tools. This for the purpose to create both digital and real connections between SMEs and new target markets.
- Regarding the sea and coastline protection, the Workgroup aims to pay special attention in training activities both in the tourism (also creative and cultural) and environmental contexts.

WORKGROUP ON THE EU PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Group on EU project management, based on the commitment made during the Forum edition of 2014 in Corfu, which was also confirmed during the meeting held in Zagreb last March 13, considers appropriate to enable new tools to facilitate networking and building partnerships among members and non members of the Forum AIC.

For this purpose a geo-referenced platform will be created, within the official website of the Forum AIC, where a summary profile of each Chamber of Commerce will be included by describing the know-how and their experience regarding the European projects sector. It will be available on-line.

In order to predispose operational project proposals, to be developed and financed under the opportunities given by the European Programmes, the Group on EU Management recommends a review of the activities and functioning of the AIC Forum thematic Workgroups. The hope, therefore, is that both the Presidents and the Secretariats of the Workgroups will make further efforts in order to suggest project proposals to the Group.

A template form will be prepared and sent to the Secretariats representatives in order to simplify the collection of the operational and sustainable project ideas.
Moreover, the Group is agreed to start a joint action of lobbying through the Chamber of Commerce System in the new context of the macroregional governance.

The preparation of the document entitled "EUSAIR - Moving from consultation to actions - A selection of project proposals for the Adriatic and Ionian social and economic development and competitiveness - The AIC Forum contribution to the EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform" has been positively assessed. It is meant to be a summary document of coordination regarding the European project planning of the AIC Forum to be used in all relevant contexts where the presence of the Chamber of Commerce System will be required as part of the Stakeholders Platform of the EUSAIR Governance.

For this purpose a questionnaire will be sent to the members of the Group so that they will be able to identify their own priority topics and project proposals to be included in the document. More specifically these proposals should be elaborated and implemented according to the upcoming European Programme calls.

Hence the Group on the EU Project management considered worthwhile to concentrate the combined efforts in a few but significant project proposals to be implemented by the Chamber of Commerce System. This joint operational commitment is additional to the actions of coordination and planning which every associated Chamber of the AIC Forum may carry out autonomously over the years by optimizing the established relationships within the Group.

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