FORUM

delle Camere di Commercio dell'Adriatico e dello Ionio of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce Gospodarskih Komora Jadransko-jonskog područja

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14th Edition of AIC Forum

Corfu (Greece), 10th-12th lune 2014



in collaboration with Corfu Chamber of Commerce



under the High Patronage of the European Parliament



Plenary session, Corfu, Greece













The 14th Edition of the AIC Forum took place in Greece, on the island of Corfu on the 10th-11th-12th of June 2014. The Event was organized in collaboration with the Corfu Chamber of Commerce and obtained, in addition to the European Institutions' patronage granted by the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, the High Patronage of the European Parliament which has regarded the Initiative as a valuable tool to strengthen cooperation and socio-economic development among the countries of the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion. This year the Edition was devoted to the following topic: "The Adriatic Ionian Macroregion: the role of Chambers of Commerce in the new economic scenario". The location, that well matches the

undergoing EU Greek Presidency, and the topic of the Event highlight the high commitment that the AIC Forum is placing towards the macroregional process, in view of the upcoming Italian Presidency in the second half of 2014 when the Action Plan and the EUSAIR Strategy documents will be approved by the European Council. Two hundred delegates were present at this year Edition: representatives of the European institutions (DG Regio and DG Enterprise and Industry), national bodies of the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Area (National Contact Points and representatives from different Ministries) including the Permanent Secretary of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII), network of Universities UNIADRION as well as representatives from (follows at pag. 2)

Adriatic Ionian **Macroregion**

Launch of the Action Plan

NEWSLETTER



The 17th June 2014 the EU Commission launched the new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion with the publication of the Communication 357 and of the Action Plan along with the Supportive Analytical Document. The documents are result of a long-lasting process of public consultation carried out by the stakeholders in the Area that saw its start after the publication of the Discussion Paper (August 2013) and ended at the Athens Conference (February 2014) when the advantageous collection of suggestions for drawing of the Action Plan raised. The documents aim at bringing to the citizens attention, the advantages of a more tight cooperation in: promoting the maritime economy, taking care of marine environment, refining on infrastructures and sustainable sources of energy and promotion of sustainable tourism. The purpose is to offer to candidate and potential candidates countries, the opportunity to collaborate with the Member States, contributing to the integration of the Western Balkans in the EU. The documents will be presented at the EU Council and then in October 2014, during the EU Italian Presidency, the approval of the Action Plan by the EU leaders is expected. Starting from January 2015, a concrete implementation of the Macroregion will be appreciated. During the consultation on the EUSAIR Strategy a strong contribution to the matter expressing clear positions and operating through different modes of consultation in different contexts was provided by the AIC Forum. This involvement is mentioned in the Action Plan in regard to the pillar on Sustainable Tourism connected to trade and business opportunities. It is the result of a fruitful work and input for going further towards concrete projects proposed in the Action Plan.

the business community and international partnership networks such as ASCAME and Insuleur. Also the strategic participation of the Baltic and Danube Macroregions' representatives who presented best practices and ongoing projects in their respective areas of strategy implementation, turned out to be an interesting starting point. Not least, the coordinators of managing authorities who are in charge of the new Adriatic Ionian Transnational Programme 2014 gave useful insights on the European and national funding system, relevant both to the four pillars of the EUSAIR Strategy and in general to the Adriatic Ionian issues.

Plenary Session 10th June 2014

Welcoming addresses

The meeting opened on the 10thof June with welcome addresses of local authorities, coordinated by Mr. Andrea Stocchiero, Vice President of CeSPI (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale) and also author of the recent study "The EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region and the Italian foreign policy" (CeSPI e ISTRID – Istituto Ricerche Studi Informazioni Difesa). The speakers were: Mr. Rodolfo Giampieri, AIC Forum President, Mr. George P. Chondrogiannis, Corfu Chamber of Commerce President and Mr. Spiridon Spirou, Ionian Region President, Also Mr. Spyridon Andriotis - Nicolas, Port Authority of Corfu Chairman, Ms. Anastasi Papasali, Ionian University Rector and Mr. George Benetos, INSULEUR network representative welcomed the participants.

The state of art and future perspectives: the priorities of Chambers of Commerce

The plenary session's reports got started, providing a well detailed acknowledgment about the progress of the EUSAIR Strategy and of the 2014-2020 EU programming period. Ms. Joanna Mouliou spoke on behalf of the European Commission - DG REGIO. She outlined the general principles of the EUSAIR Strategy by carrying out

a historical excursus, starting from the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion setting up, to the Athens stakeholders Conference and its achievements. The speech focused on the pillars laid down by the Strategy, the challenges and opportunities of the Area and the next steps required for the fulfilment of the Strategy, starting from the January 2015. The next speech, held by the Greek National Contact Point Mr. Vassilios Tselios focused on the EUSIAR Strategy under the Greek EU Presidency. Ms. Silvia Grandi, representative of the Managing Authority of the new Adriatic Ionian 2014-2020 Transnational Programme, supported a very pragmatic and technical report with an overview on the new programs and calls for the countries of the Macroregion. It was then the turn of Mr. George Assonitis, representative of the Union of the Hellenic Chambers of Commerce and of Mr. Fabio Pizzino on behalf of Unioncamere (Italy). They both discussed about the respective economic situation of their countries within the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion. Furthermore, Mr. Pizzino brought to the plenary attention the AIC Forum "Position Paper" drawn up during the final stage of the EUSAIR consultation in close collaboration with the Italian Chambers of Commerce system.

Other macroregional experiences

Significant contributions were made by the representatives of the two already existing Macroaregions: the Baltic Sea and the Danube River. Mr. Jan Wedemeier, on behalf of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Region, presented the Area's features, with a focus on the Strategy's pillars that seem to be aligned with the EUSAIR ones. Being this true especially for those pillars which focus on the connectivity of the region and the preservation of the environment and the marine ecosystem. Mr. Wedemeier subsequently illustrated the practical example of the KEO Study, which analyses the status quo of one region that is part of the wider Baltic Macroregion. The KEO Study is a best practice and it could be raised again also in the Adriatic Ionian Area not only for its usefulness but also because it is carried out by the KEO Chamber of Commerce situated in the region of the Oder and the Elde rivers which cross the three countries of the Area. During the speech held by Ms. Dragica Karajić, the attention was

drawn towards the Danube Region clusters' efficiency and the importance that the Croatian Government is giving to the Macroregion. It has been consequently reported how the Croatian Government has aligned its actions to the priorities set by the EU Danube Strategy. What both the speakers have highly recommended, is to place more importance on a careful and strategic analysis before the development and implementation of activities.

Networking: possible collaborations with the other stakeholders of the Area

The last part of the plenary session has seen the participation of the Area's networks, whose commitment was essential for the fruitful collaboration provided during the macroregional process. The Ambassador Fabio Pigliapoco, on behalf of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. attended with Prof. Fausto Pugnaloni, Secretary General of the Uniadrion University along with the Councellor of the Ancona municipality, Ms. Ida Simonella who represented the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities. She has presented the "Youth Games", the first important initiative aimed at youngsters and "branded" by the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion. The "Youth Games" took place in Ancona, from the last 6th to 8th of June and saw the participation of more than 1000 young people between their fifteen and sixteen, coming from the all 8 countries of the Area. This event is the evident proof of how a civil society can achieve great results for the benefit of its citizens. To conclude, Mr. Feargus Roche, Coordinator of the ASCAME network Project department, presented the network and its activities whose bond with the AIC Forum dates back to 2008 when the Memorandum of Understanding has been signed. One of the most relevant activities is the MEDDIET project focused on the Mediterranean diet, lately recognized as part of the UNESCO intangible heritages. The MEDDIET project was also at the centre of this year's AIC Forum Workgroup on Agriculture where on the day after the plenary session the first "International Capitalization Meeting" was held.

Another important appointment highlighted by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative is the Adriatic and Mediterranean Festival. The Opening session of the eighth Edition of the Festival was held the 17th of June 2014 in Sarajevo. It is a high quality cultural event thanks to involvement of artists and intellectuals from the whole Area and it is a sign of cultural and social integration awareness: a feeling of unity among different countries whose cultures have somehow melted in the centuries. This year the Bosnia and Herzegovina does not only host the Adriatic and Mediterranean Festival but takes charge of the IAI Presidency. This Edition, in particular, has been completley devoted to the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion. Meetings, shows, gigs and concerts leave space for comparisons among countries. After the Opening session, the Ambassadors Ivan Orlić and Fabio Pigliapoco (Adriatic Ionian Initiative General Secretary) presided the meeting of the Senior Officials Committee. The newly constituted Presidency has presented the annual activities' programme and the priorities tightly connected to the European Strategy objectives targeted for the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion (EUSAIR) and aligned with the macroregional path that will see its Action Plan adopted definitely in autumn 2014.

Workgroups IIth June 2014

To stick to the AIC Forum tradition, as in the last Edition, the second day was entirely devoted to the thematic Workgroups, all of them coherent with the four pillars of the EUSAIR Strategy. Therefore, the Workgroups have concentrated their efforts on the Action Plan priorities included in the "Suggested Actions" (part of the "Summary Report" laid down during the Athens Conference).

The Workgroup on Agriculture

was characterized by a specific in-depth analysis about one of potentially main issues of the forthcoming Adriatic Ionian Macroregion: the Mediterranean diet. Thanks to the MEDDIET Project, funded by the ENPI CBC MED Programme and coordinated by Unioncamere and to a numerous participations of the Project Partnership bodies, the Mediterranean diet experts, called for this occasion from the Adriatic and Ionian Countries (in particular there were

participants from Italy, Greece, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania), the Mediterranean diet topic was deeply discussed.

The aim was the comparison among the participants about the Mediterranean diet by examining in depth of some tools for raising of awareness on the Mediterranean diet promoted by the MEDDIET Project: MEDDIET Guidelines for School, MEDDIET Guidelines for Local Authorities, Mediterranean Diet Quality Label for restaurants owners, and on the other hand by highlighting of peculiarities of each Macroregions' Country, even considering their best practices and their master actions on this topic.

Many issues emerged from the speeches, strongly linked to quality, to healthiness and to European and international laws compliance of agricultural and food products, as indispensable requirements not only for consumers' health and wealth, but also as their indispensable requisite for a stronger competitiveness on international market. Always concerning the MEDDIET project, an important commitment document the "MEDDIET Declaration" was signed by the Presidents of the AIC Forum Chambers of Commerce coming from different countries of the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion which attended the Event in Corfu, together with some Project Partners, as for example the Messinian Chamber of Commerce and the Cultural Foundation "The Routes of the Olive Tree", but also with other Organizations as the Croatian Medical Association and Vitaminoteka Nutrition Consulting (Croatia).

This document, that can be signed also later during the MEDDIET Project residual time, represents a first and important moment of shared and concrete commitment to act together in the future about this topic, important for all of us but mostly for future generations.





Signing of Meddiet Declaration



From the **Workgroup on fisheries and aquaculture** an important conclusion was highlighted: the need to achieve more involvement from stakeholders through the creation of clusters related to both the field of fisheries and marine culture and other related sectors.

It seems necessary to move towards project management activities that promote and enhance the cluster-designing process, regarding it as a competitive booster tool.

This decision find itself coherent with the trend of many of the countries of the Adriatic Ionian Region: some of the countries are already divided in propulsive clusters, some others are just starting their cluster experience.

The Workgroup, having taken into account the recent European Directive on maritime spatial planning (Communication n. 2013/133 dated 12.03.2013), succeeded in pointing out how integrated management of the coastal zones stands as the starting point to avoid conflicts, possible overlapping and irregular activities. Not only sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in clean water offer the opportunity to produce organic food, they would also make the brand gain momentum, being it well-known and trustworthy so to enrich the tourist offer in the entire Area. Major challenges are still: safety and health of fish and marine life, as well as safety in terms of sustainable production.

A common struggle is to be directed to a clear set of project management activities that will define objectives and roles of each accountable country, regarding in particular programmes for the safety and health of fish and marine life. As a result, different types of fishing have to be distinguished. Beside the fact that fishing is always regarded as a commercial activity, it is not to be forgotten how the different way of fishing resembles the lifestyle and culture.

To preserve traditions, fisheries policies should not jeopardize these assets, being these policies able to ensure sustainable fisheries at the same time..

It is in the course of the Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship

that a series of collected available data on women entrepreneurship funding allocated to the countries of the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion were presented. The data show a number of substantial reductions, not to say financial aid programs write-offs.

The Workgroup highlighted the need of encouraging all the Adriatic and Ionian

Chambers of Commerce to identify the ad-hoc priorities of a women enterprises, along with the major issues consequently involved (being them: access to credit, training, technological innovation). Also, the importance of taking immediate actions with a concrete planning to be aligned with the mentioned priorities was stated, always taking into consideration the set of European programs (2014-2020) available for the Macroregion.

The Workgroup has laid the foundations for a concrete support to women entrepreneurship and its issues, particularly in the planning documents devoted to the Macroregional Strategy, throughout the whole period (the upcoming seven years) in which new financial tools will be finally at the Macroregions' disposal. It was decided also that the Congress on Women Entrepreneurship, so far organized annually, will be held every two years. During the Congress the activity of monitoring of statistical data, as a ground on which future projects are to be designed, will continue. The Workgroup regard as essential, to extend the Strategy for development of women entrepreneurship in the countries where it does not exist yet.

Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship



During the **Workgroup on Transports** the Adriatic and Ionian maritime traffics were analysed, concerning the constant decrease of passengers number (over a million less than in 2004, in various connection between Italy and Greece). This depends on economic crisis and in part on strong competition of low cost flights. Even goods traffic has been subjected to a stop in last five years, with exception of containers, a segment in which all the most important ports are growing.

However, the excessive fragmentation of this traffic among many ports (7 ports handle 2.5 million TEUS, much less than that of a single large port in Northern Europe) is a strong limit to a further leap in the growth and ability to attract global players.

The Adriatic Ionian Macroregion is expected to deal with the aforementioned issue, tackling it in a more innovative and ingenious way, so to look with favour at a streamlining and specializing activity on ports. Also, the Macroregion should place even more emphasis on policies supporting "multi-modality", given that currently routes on tires are still more competitive than those with a lower environmental impact.

The cruise traffic is a growing sector that can cover many ports in the Area, even some that are considered to be minor, and produce economic impact on their hinterlands to be evaluated carefully. However, the trend in place for some years combines an increase in a number of passengers and a reduction of moorings thanks to the use of larger vessels. In the next years many ports could find themselves with the internal infrastructure not adequate to receive these ships. The Workgroup highlights the necessity to get facilitated within the Macroregion also the "ad hoc interventions".

In this year's Edition merged the

Workgroups on tourism and the Workgroup on envi-

ronment in order to act in line with the indications emerged during the EU-SAIR Conference held in Athens when the EUSAIR Strategy referents discussed about the 4th EUSAIR pillar. They have all agreed upon welcoming the European Commission's proposal and changed then the name (being this previously "Increasing regional attractiveness") in "Sustainable Tourism", to state the synergy between tourism and social and environmental sustainability. To come back to the reason of a joint Workgroup, it is decisive to remember that the brand under the name ADRION should place itself as tool to fulfil a coordinated branding policy within the Macroregion, always concerned about sustainability. Also, ADRION is expected to be always aligned with the European regulations, especially with the most relevant ones, such as: "The EU Strategy for promoting coastal and maritime tourism (Communication n. 86/2014)". The Macroregion is well-known for being heterogeneous, with its different types of tourism and settings. It is therefore necessary to carry out a wise set of project management activities by taking into consideration all these varieties, to come up with tourist destinations that address the common macroregional culture. The short-term commitment is to define and propose shared projects to be displayed in a

European context and to put together all the necessary skills to bring out the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion as a single tourist destination, conveyable through the brand Adrion. More strength, along with a long-lived identity should be given to the whole Adriatic Ionian community from a tourist and cultural standpoint. With the new EU funds programming on the way and the recognition of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion, this year is considered to be a fruitful starting point.

Up to now pivotal moments:

- existence of a cooperation Memorandum of Understanding among Ministries of Tourism of the Adriatic Ionian countries, entered into force in November 2010;
- inclusion of the ADRION brand in the European Communication n. 713 del 30.11.2012;
- presence of the upgraded Regulations of use intended to a safe and correct use of the brand ADRION;
- launch of the online marketing tools to be shared with the network of tour operators and travel agencies from the Area (web wholesaler and smart phone' apps) in order to promote the Adriatic and Ionian tourism.

A strong engagement is expected from all the Chambers of Commerce that are members of the AIC Forum, in order to achieve a widespread dissemination of the brand ADRION throughout the Area, along with the involvement of tour operators and local institutions. During the Workgroup on tourism and environment, a discussion about macroregional partnerships also took place. Partnerships are intended to better promote ADRION projects, so to take advantage of the very first calls, to be launched within the new EU Territorial Cooperation programs for the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion.





Workgroup on Tourism



Workgroup on EU project management, International court and closing session

12th June 2014

On the third and last day of the Edition, both the Workgroup on EU Project Management and the International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area occurred.

The Workgroup on EU Project Management has focused on the need of the Chambers of Commerce under the AIC Forum to strengthen the commitments towards the EU programming, taking into consideration the renovated political context represented by the Macroregion.

The new Macroregion establishment concurs with the 2014-2020 European programming period and the new Cross-border cooperation programme (in particular the bilateral Italy-Croatia, the three-sided Italy-Montenegro-Albania and the new Adriatic Ionian Transnational Programme).

It has been then reported the need to plan a set of shared activities, coherent with the actions suggested as fore grounded actions within the new EUSAIR Action Plan. In this regard, experts involved in the Workgroup strongly advised their respective political delegation to invest in qualified human resources to be employed in the EU programming activities and to activate a prompt coordinated set of synchronized actions.

Ámong various activities to carry out in the next months:

- a coordinate lobby action at Regions and Ministries of the Macroregion so to shed light to the Chambers of Commerce engagement in dealing with the topics that are important for the SMEs, according to the EUSAIR Action Plan;
- the possibility to set up officially a conjoint lobby, considering the AIC Forum leadership within the period of EUSAIR consultations;
- implementation of a set of matrices that facilitate the scheduling and projecting activities of the Workgroup

in order to highlight the needs of each AIC Forum Chamber of Commerce:

- a) areas of interest/priority topics highlighting the previous experience in those specific fields;
- b) main EU eligible funds;
- c) projects "on the stocks" ready to be shared and presented under a next identified calls;
- d) staff (internal officers and consultants) available for the EU projects and international relations sector;
- e) survey on presence or absence of the EEN Network and of other relations between Chambers and international networks (Eurochambres, ASCAME, etc...);
- f) indication of a "key regions"/"lead partner" that means of local areas/ strategic institutions which could drive new projects, considering the proven ability of management and strategic role in the context/field of expertise. These stated actions are a set of duties that the Workgroup acquired in order to foster the quality of the AIC Forum and its associated Chambers projects. At a macroregional level, programming should be synchronized, grounded on three essential conditions: "mainstreaming" - the acquisition by local, national and the UE politics and regulations of best practices experienced at a single pilot project level, "evaluation"the importance of taking into consideration the impact of interventions of territorial cooperation forecasting therefore the indicators (not only result but also impact) that could be verified in impartial way, "transfer and exploitation" - capacity to non-repeat similar projects in the same areas of interventions and to transfer and exploit in best way results obtained from successful projects already financed from the UE funds with an eye on follow-up and continuous growth of the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion.

All the topics that were strongly highlighted during the Workgroup are

important so that the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area do not miss this extraordinary occasion to play an important role in the new 2014-2020 EU programming period unlike it happened in the previous one referred to the 2007-2013 period.

The International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area has renewed its willingness to work towards training pathways aimed at increasing the conciliation and arbitration culture in those countries with an attitude which is less keen to the deployment of alternative justice, giving reward to the already implemented best practices in the Macroregion.

Another objective is to spread the knowledge of the alternative dispute resolution tools for international commercial transactions, the institutions of mediation and arbitration. The counterparts which have signed a transnational contract or those under negotiation, need to be assisted while drafting the clauses and agreements in order to have access to a conciliation or arbitration proceedings.

Finally, the commitment addresses the promotion of international cooperation, with the aim of creating synergies able to produce some concrete proposals for the EU projects designing at an international and community level and to set up partnerships on international alternative dispute resolution topics.

After the meeting of the AIC Forum Bodies, the Board of Auditors, the Board of Governors and the Assembly, the Closing Session of the 14th Edition began with a reading of the Workgroups' final documents and a thanksgiving speech by the President Giampieri for all the participants and for the Corfu Chamber of Commerce mentioning its warm welcome.

Corfu





For further information on European Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region please visit the **European Commission DG - Regio** website.

Contact the AIC Forum

Secretariat of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce

c/o Ancona Chamber of Commerce Piazza XXIV Maggio, I 60124 Ancona

Ph. +39 071 5898249 +39 071 5898266 Fax +39 071 5898255 segreteria.forum@an.camcom.it www.forumaic.org

Brussels Office: Avenue Marnix, 30 1040 Bruxelles

member of:





Workgroup on EU Project Management

For information and details on Forum's projects plese contact:

Workgroup on EU Project Management

Ph. 0039 071 5898355 Fax 0039 071 5898255

Secretariat: progettieuropei@an.camcom.it



ITALY:

ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY FOCUS ON MACROREGIONS



On the 1st of July officially started the Italian Presidency of the EU Council. An agreement at the Council on the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion should be possible as early as October, the Italian Presidency has pledged. In its priorities for the next six months it is planning to devote much of its work to the guestion of the macro-regional strategies. On Rome's wish list, therefore, is the approval, this autumn, of the Communication, the Action Plan and Supportive Analytical Document presented by the European Commission in June on the Macroregional Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian basin. The Italian Presidency is also planning to hold an event during its term in office to launch this Strategy, once the Council has given its green

Italy also has a stake in the macro-regional strategy currently being prepared for the Alps, a macroregion which brings together Germany, France, Austria, Slovenia and Lichtenstein. For this reason, Rome also hopes to make progress on preparations for an Action Plan on this subject, and to organise a final conference by the end of the year. In general, the Presidency will ensure that the macro-regional strategies are properly taken into account when it comes to dividing up the European regional development funding available for the period 2014-2020. It will also make every effort to push forward the assessment of the cohesion policy for 2007-2013 and the launch of the programmes under this policy for 2014-2020. The Italian Presidency also plans to move forward talks on an urban

agenda (Commission communication

MONTENEGRO:

anticipated in mid July).

MORE RESULTS NEEDED ON THE GROUND

Luxembourg, 24/06/2014 – The representatives of the European Union and Montenegro met in Luxembourg to advance the accession negotiations at the Accession Conference and to review progress in the overall bilate-

ral relations in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Council. Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle represented the European Commission at both meetings. At the Accession Conference three more negotiating chapters were opened: Chapter 4 - free movement of capital; Chapter 31 - foreign, security & defence policy and Chapter 32 - financial control. This has brought the total of chapters opened so far to 12, with two provisionally closed. He stressed that this good progress in completing different stages, in opening and closing chapters, needs to be accompanied by real progress on the ground, especially regarding the rule of law that cannot be limited to the adoption of plans and strategies. With these examples, Štefan Füle managed, during his speech, to affirm the progress of negotiations, as the

ALBANIA:

on citizenship.

COUNCIL GRANTS CANDIDATE STATUS

urgent need for a subsequent feedback

Brussels, 24/06/2014 - The General Affairs Council decided to grant Albania the EU accession candidate status, considering the analysis conducted by the Council on the ongoing progress of the country. Albania, which applied for candidate status back in April 2009, is now encouraged to adopt the necessary reforms to set the negotiating phase. While Albania has been rewarded for its efforts, the EU ministers nevertheless called for a great deal of purposeful

The EU ministers thus agreed on very precise criteria. Albania will have to "act decisively on all of the recommendations in the Commission's report and intensify its efforts to ensure a sustained, comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the key priorities". The Council particularly mentions reform of the public administration and the judiciary, the fight against organized crime and corruption, the protection of human rights and anti-discrimination policies and implementation of property rights.

The EU ministers called on Albania to strengthen its support for quickly reducing migratory pressure on the EU.