

**WORKGROUP ON TOURISM***FINAL DOCUMENTS**Durres, 12 May 2015****Introduction***

The inspiration of the Forum's Workgroup on Tourism a few years ago to create a common brand for tourist products and services has become one of the linchpins in the European Strategy EUSAIR. A look should also be taken at the interrelation between the EUSAIR Strategy and "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism" (Communication no. 86 of 20.02.2014), both currently being implemented.

The official mention of ADRION in the Action Plan of the European Commission, published on 17.6.2014, in fact, allows the AIC Forum to promote the needs to identify a strategy for a unified brand.

Moreover, the European Commission supports the initiative by the Forum, especially with a view to reinforcing a thematic secretariat (City, University and Chamber of Commerce) and the Forum is one of the key players among the stakeholders in the Strategy.

For this reason, the AIC Forum, as the owner of the brand, has updated the way ADRION is used to extend the brand's tourism value to everything that recalls and evokes the common historical and cultural identity of the area.

This introduction provides the Workgroup on Tourism with a solid base on which to build proposals in line with the actions indicated in the Fourth Pillar "Sustainable Tourism" of the Action Plan, briefly outlined below for the sake of completeness.

**Actions indicated in the Fourth Pillar of EUSAIR:****diversified tourism offer (products and services)**

- *brand-building of the Adriatic-Ionian tourist products and services*
- *initiative to improve quality for sustainable tourism offer (\*)<sup>1</sup>*
- *diversification of the cruise and nautical sectors and enhancement of the yachting sector*
- *sustainable tourism R&D platform on new products and services*
- *sustainable and thematic tourist routes (\*)*
- *fostering Adriatic-Ionian cultural heritage*
- *improving accessibility for Adriatic-Ionian tourism products and services*
- *upgrade of Adriatic-Ionian tourism products*

**Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation and quality)**

- *network of sustainable tourism businesses and clusters*
- *facilitating access to funds for new innovative tourism start-ups*
- *promoting the Region in world markets*

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<sup>1</sup> Actions for which the chamber system is envisaged and mentioned

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- *extending the tourist season to all year-round*
- *training in vocational and entrepreneurial skills in tourism (\*)*
- *Adriatic-Ionian cooperation for facilitating tourist circulation*
- *Adriatic-Ionian charter for more sustainable and responsible tourism (\*)*

*In order to put the Action Plan into effect, the Workgroup on Tourism has identified some activities in line with some of the above-mentioned Actions.*

*In particular:*

**For the EUSAIR Action:**

**brand-building of the Adriatic-Ionian tourist products and services**

In addition to updating the regulations on the use of ADRION, the Workgroup on Tourism proposes implementing the following actions in this process.

***Proposals:***

tools for promoting common identity of the Adriatic region:

- Identification and development of an Adriatic-Ionian 'basket of destinations and products' that can be associated in a unique manner with the Region;
- campaigns promoting the Region so as to attract visitors from other continents and from both established and emerging markets;
- continuous implementation of two web sites created in co-financed projects: the *Adriatic Innovative Factory* project (lead partner, Chamber of Commerce of Ancona, co-financed by the Marche Region) and the project to create a "*digital multilanguage web wholesaler*" as an innovative tool for promotional marketing activities (lead partner AIC Forum, co-financed by the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative).

**For the EUSAIR action:**

**initiative to improve quality for sustainable tourism offer**

To fully implement both the EUSAIR Strategy and the regional programming 2014/2020, the AIC Forum has identified three priorities: **quality, sustainability, accessibility**.

The aim is to stimulate accommodation, facilities, operators and destinations on:

- sustainability, as a quality factor for the system of regional tourism offers, taking into consideration the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, applied to National Parks and Protected Areas;
- accessibility as a key factor for quality hospitality in tourist destinations.

***Proposals:***

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- qualify the accommodation and receptive facilities by disseminating a specific quality brand along the lines of “*Ospitalità Italiana*” (Italian Hospitality) curated by the Italian chamber system, to be extended to the operators of the macro-regions by creating a set of shared rules and criteria which are the same for all stakeholders and which reinforce the ADRION brand as a quality brand for the area.
- identify a Tourist Observatory for monitoring the target market so as to establish strategic long-term responses, encompassing the entire region, by sharing methods for data and information collection and which implements a customer satisfaction analysis to get a better understanding of needs through a uniform questionnaire for all stakeholders. Moreover, it is also important to understand the gap in the tourism system of the different countries, again through the use of shared tools (methodologies and questionnaires). Lastly, to include a set of common indicators starting with the indicators that are already in place.

#### For the EUSAIR action:

##### Sustainable and thematic tourist routes

Participation in the VeroTouR project, coordinated by the Regione Veneto which ended in Istanbul in October 2014, contributed to the implementation of this action by initiating the promotion of a macro-regional route. Specifically, the development of the topic “Venetian trade routes” has great potential to become part of the “European Cultural Routes” programme of the Council of Europe.

#### *Proposals:*

- The AIC Forum, along with other partners, has undertaken to continue to work together towards this common objective, even after the project finishes. The topic “**Venetian trade routes**” is a transversal topic of great cultural and environmental significance in view of its potential to be a transnational, thematic tourism product;
- Development of actions to promote **thematic tourism** for which the entire area has much to offer: historical-cultural tourism, sports tourism, nautical tourism, rural tourism, food and wine tourism, business tourism;
- A joint advertising campaign in all the ports involved in cruise tourism in the m-region to develop common integrated tourism models and enhance the typical products in the cruise ship sector.

#### For the EUSAIR action:

##### Promoting the cultural heritage of the Adriatic-Ionian area

Globally, the so-called creative industries are one of the emerging drivers of the economy. The Chamber of Commerce of Ancona, the coordinator of the Workgroup on Tourism, is the lead partner in the “**Adriatic Innovative Factory**” project, co-financed by the Regione Marche within the framework of the “*Evolved Cultural District*” project, a strategic regional action promoted in line with the EU Directives. The ECD

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starts with the assumption that cultural heritage can be the foundation of innovation and can generate creative and cultural entrepreneurship.

#### **Proposals:**

- contribute towards raising awareness and supporting the important cultural offering of the area and excellence in business in this strategic area, by encouraging the **creation of start-ups** which enhance the cultural heritage of the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region.
- implement the “*Adriatic Innovative Factory*” project (ECD)
- implement the project for a “*network of ancient sites of entertainment in the Adriatic area*”
- create an open database of best practices in this area to disseminate the most innovative and creative ideas among enterprises.

#### **For the EUSAIR actions:**

- “Network of sustainable tourism businesses and clusters” and “promoting the Region in world markets”

The Workgroup on Tourism has worked hard over the years to involve SMEs in promoting the cultural and tourism heritage in the Adriatic area. Moreover, the potential of the digital economy highlights the need to turn to new technologies, such as promotional and marketing tools (Web wholesaler incoming cross-border tour operator), to promote the area globally.

#### **Proposals:**

- development of an increasing number of partnerships between the public system and the network of operators in the different countries involved, together with the creation of smartphone apps dedicated to promoting and marketing the tourism offering in various sectors;
- increase the use of ICT tools and social networks

#### **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The operational phase of the strategy will be implemented through specific Thematic Steering Groups (TSG) for each pillar. The TSGs have the task of identifying:

- *priority actions for each pillar*
- *criteria to use in selecting the best actions and projects*
- *possible sources of funds (EU and non-EU) in the countries involved.*

Based on the priorities, a plan of action will be set out in the second round of meetings of the TSGs, scheduled to take place in June 2015. The following priorities are, thus, identified:

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- ✓ acting in **synergy with reference regions and counties** to allow a system of governance in the strategic sector of sustainable tourism with the aim of gathering coordinated project proposals and achieving the best possible integration of programmes between:
  - *regional funds ROP EFRD 2014/2020*
  - *macro-regional perspective*
  - *priority of TSGs in each EUSAIR pillar*
- ✓ developing the ADRION brand, in light of its official recognition, using it not just as a means of indicating tourism, but as a true expression of the chain of supply, the product, the naturalistic and cultural heritage, an idea of innovative business, all closely connected to this area; subsequently, **creating a critical mass and taking a synergetic and integrated approach to disseminating the ADRION brand at all levels within the individual areas** (local institutions, trade associations, public entities, schools, tour operators, etc.) with joint promotional and planning activities in mind;
- ✓ enhancing the tourism offering based on three basic principles: accessibility, sustainability, quality;
- ✓ working towards an **integrated secretariat** together with universities and cities, in close collaboration with the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. This seems to be the most effective way of respecting the autonomy and individual proposals that each Forum will obviously maintain in the phase in which we all have to implement concrete planning actions;
- ✓ enhancing the cultural heritage which characterises the area by promoting the creation of creative start-ups and setting up new businesses in this strategic sector;
- ✓ reinforcing the **use of online tools** at all levels, especially in the **era of digital economy** with particular focus on the use of ICT tools to create both a real and digital link between new SMEs and destination markets;
- ✓ focusing on training activities, both in the tourism sector (as well as creative and cultural sectors) and in the environmental sector with regard to safeguarding the sea and coastlines.