



JOINT DECLARATION OF THE 3 FORA

on the Preservation and Promotion of the Mediterranean Diet in the Adriatic and Ionian Region:

Well-being, Sustainability and Culture

In the year 2024 (TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FOUR) on the 14th of May

- **the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce**, with headquarters in Ancona, Largo XXIV 1, tax ID 93096320424, represented by its President Mr. Gino Sabatini, domiciled for the purpose at the Marche Chamber of Commerce.

- **the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities**, with headquarters in Ancona, Largo XXIV 1, tax ID 91036220746, represented by its member of the Executive Board, Mr. Ivica Puljak, domiciled for the purpose at the Municipality of Split.

- **UNIADRION, Association of the Universities of the Adriatic and Ionian Region**, with registered office in Ancona, Piazza Roma 22, tax ID 93138730424, represented by its Vice President, Professor Jenny Pagge, domiciled for the purpose at the University of Ioannina.

Foreword

The concept of Mediterranean Diet is not restricted to just a set of products and eating habits, but has a much broader meaning. It is a lifestyle that is profoundly oriented towards health, environmental sustainability and emphasising its cultural and social roots. Over the millennia, Mediterranean peoples have developed eating practices that are intimately tied to the land they inhabit. While there are variations and idiosyncrasies across different Mediterranean regions, there is a shared trend towards a healthy and conservative eating model based on local products originating from the Mediterranean coasts, of which the Adriatic and Ionian seas are among the most important basins.

Much more than just nutritional values, the Mediterranean Diet comprises a set of skills, knowledge, practices and traditions that extend from the land to the table. This rich cultural heritage has been handed down from generation to generation since ancient times and includes intangible heritage treasured by the entire Adriatic-Ionian Region.

In recent times, these values and traditions have come under enormous pressure from increasingly globalised value chains and access to cheap and low-quality food sources.

The traditional Mediterranean diet can, however, be a driver for sustainable and inclusive social and economic development in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. A better shared knowledge of the entire Mediterranean traditional food value chain - from farm to table - among consumers will help promote the interests of producers, retailers, local restaurants and the civil society, with a positive impact on the health of end-users. It will also ensure the legacy of this valuable cultural capital, resulting in a win-win scenario for the Mediterranean regions.

Whereas:

- (1) EU Macro-Regional Strategies are inter-governmental initiatives launched by EU Participating countries and third Countries in order to jointly address common challenges and seize shared opportunities in a specific geographical area by defining shared and long-term goals.
- (2) On May 19, 2000, in Ancona, during the Conference on Development and Security in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, and Italy adopted the first "Ancona Declaration" for the establishment of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All), as a tool to promote economic and political stability and the European integration process of the countries bordering the Ionian and Adriatic Seas; and with the role of driving force for common policies in the Ionian Adriatic basin;
- (3) Since June 2008, a Permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative has been operating in Ancona, by decision of the Governments of the 8 All Participating countries;

- (4) On May 5, 2010, in Ancona, the Foreign Ministers of the 8 Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Participating countries signed the second "Ancona Declaration", which acknowledged the EU recognition of a macro-regional Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian basin;
- (5) The European Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was launched by the European Council on November 18, 2014, during the Italian EU Council Presidency, with the mission of connecting people and institutions, with a multi-level, bottom-up approach, in order to increase the shared awareness of cooperation, face challenges and seize opportunities for the development of a harmonised, integrated, sustainable and stronger Adriatic-Ionian Region.
- (6) The Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities, the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce and the UniAdriion Association, called the Fora of Civil Society, were established in 1999, 2000 and 2001 respectively, are based in the City of Ancona and represent 43 Cities, 40 Chambers of Commerce and 54 Universities and, in the scope of their institutional authority, they jointly work to promote the opportunities offered by the EUSAIR Strategy in the Adriatic-Ionian Area as a tool for growth and development with a view to international cooperation, while developing a coordinated project capacity in line with European Union guidelines.
- (7) The three Fora are mentioned in the official documents of the EUSAIR Strategy as the reference stakeholders for the development of the Area and they are mentioned in all the annual Declarations signed during the Adriatic and Ionian/EUSAIR Council Ministerial Meeting, since the role of civil society is considered useful to achieve tangible results in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, without which the EUSAIR would lose its value.
- (8) On November 17, 2010, UNESCO declared the Mediterranean Diet an Intangible Cultural Heritage and defined it as 'a set of skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols and traditions concerning crops, harvesting, fishing, animal husbandry, conservation, processing, cooking, and particularly the sharing and consumption of food. (...) As a unique lifestyle determined by the Mediterranean climate and region, the Mediterranean Diet also appears in cultural spaces, festivals and celebrations associated with it. These spaces and events act as containers for gestures of mutual

- recognition and respect, hospitality, neighbourliness, friendliness, intergenerational communication and intercultural dialogue. They are opportunities to share the present and shape the future. In doing so, these communities rebuild their sense of identity, belonging and continuity, enabling them to recognise this as an essential component of their common and shared intangible cultural heritage'.
- (9) There is a strong need to promote and safeguard the Mediterranean Diet in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, as defined by UNESCO, involving new generations, citizens and market players in order to ensure that traditional food production and consumption patterns are not eroded by globalisation.
- (10) The Mediterranean Diet is not only a cultural but also an environmentally sustainable model with a significantly reduced environmental footprint. Adopting it can make a significant contribution to increasing the sustainability of food production and consumption systems, on top of its well-known public health benefits (see FAO 2012; Sáez-Almendros et al. 2013).
- (11) The food system has been given a central place in the European Green Deal, a package of initiatives designed to facilitate the European Union's green transition and achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The Green Deal includes the European Commission's 'Farm to Fork' strategy, which sets out various goals and actions for a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system.
- (12) UNESCO, in 2003, and the Council of Europe, in 2006, acknowledged the European Cultural Itinerary 'Olive Tree Routes' for its contribution to the development of the Mediterranean civilisation as a whole, with a view to promoting sustainable development in the olive-growing regions of the Mediterranean. This itinerary is considered one of the European Cultural Routes of interest in the European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
- (13) The Slow Food movement, founded in 1986 and now present in all the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian Region, is committed to promoting the right to pleasure and to good, clean and fair food for everyone, as part of the quest for prosperity and happiness for present and future humanity and for the entire living world. Since the drafting of the Slow Food Manifesto in 1987, they have worked to give food its due worth, while

practising and spreading respect for those who produce it in harmony with the environment and ecosystems, thanks to the knowledge preserved by regions and local traditions.

- (14) Besides its proven health and environmental benefits, the Mediterranean Diet represents an under-exploited business opportunity that would contribute positively to sustainable and inclusive social and economic development, trade and investment, and jobs creation throughout the Mediterranean.

The undersigned Associations and their member Institutions agree and stipulate the following:

To undertake to jointly promote and safeguard the richness of the Mediterranean Diet through an integrated and collaborative approach. This pledge translates into a concrete action for the *promotion of a sustainable food model that respects the environment and health and aims to:*

- I. Acknowledge and accept the values of the Mediterranean Diet in accordance with the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage recognition, as a tool for development, stability and solidarity for the peoples of the Mediterranean area.
- II. Acknowledge the Mediterranean Diet as a food model that is closely tied to the culture and traditions of Adriatic and Ionian communities and to actively preserve and promote the practices, rituals and symbols representing this cultural heritage, while also fostering their transmission through the generations and their respect in the Region's civil society. This includes the promotion of cultural events, food festivals and educational programmes, training and capacity building actions that celebrate the richness and diversity of the Mediterranean Diet.
- III. Acknowledge the private sector's key role in promoting and supporting the Mediterranean Diet, actively work with producers, retailers, caterers and other stakeholders to ensure the quality and authenticity of Mediterranean products and to promote them in the market. This includes the creation of partnerships with private actors, the promotion of quality standards for Mediterranean products and working with the tourism sector to promote the Mediterranean Diet as a tourist attraction, also

embracing "silver tourism", i.e. tourist offers for over-65 people to promote people's wellbeing based on a balanced and healthy diet.

- IV. Acknowledge the need for a cooperative and multilateral approach to effectively promote the Mediterranean Diet, work together through the Fora networks to exchange knowledge, share best practices and promote joint initiatives that promote and disseminate the principles of the Mediterranean Diet. This includes the organisation of joint conferences and seminars and the promotion of European and cross-border cooperation projects.
- V. Acknowledge the health benefits associated with the Mediterranean Diet, promote its adoption among the people of the Adriatic-Ionian community, including young and over-65 people. Promote nutrition education by encouraging healthy eating habits and supporting scientific research to learn more about the links between nutrition and health. This includes the promotion of health awareness campaigns, studies, collaboration with universities and research centres and the publication of scientific reports, collaboration with medical institutions to integrate the Mediterranean Diet into public health policies.
- VI. Aware of the importance of biodiversity and environmental preservation, support food production and consumption systems that respect the natural balances of the Mediterranean region. Promote sustainable agriculture, the consumption of local and seasonal products, and the reduction of production processes' environmental impact. This includes encouraging sustainable farming practices, promoting farmers' markets for local products and raising awareness about responsible consumption.


Done in three copies, in Split, on 14th May 2024

For Forum AIC:

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