# EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region

2014/2214(INI) - 28/10/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 560 votes to 60 with 39 abstentions, a resolution on an EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region (EUSAIR).

Members welcomed the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the accompanying action plan. This strategy had been created to add value to interventions, whether by the EU, national or regional authorities or private sectors, in a way that significantly strengthened the functioning of the macro-region.

Parliament highlighted the strategy's prospects for candidate and potential candidate countries in the region and underlined the importance of the strategy being based on the **principles of integration, coordination, cooperation and partnership,** whilst reiterating the importance of the "three NOs" principle of no new legislation, no new institutions, no new funding. It welcomed the European Parliament's representation in the governing bodies of the EUSAIR.

The resolution encouraged all national, regional and local stakeholders to take full ownership of the implementation of the projects covered by this macro-regional strategy. It stressed the need for:

- a **place-based approach** as regards the cooperation activities;
- the inclusion of the local and regional authorities in the political managing bodies and in the operational, technical and implementing bodies of the strategy;
- a **transparent** process for adoption, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, as well as of openness and inclusiveness towards civil society and all relevant stakeholders.

Pointing out that there were no specific funds assigned just for the implementation of macro-regional strategies, Members called on the countries in the region to bundle funds (ESI Funds, IPA, EFSI) as well as contributions from national sources under the EIB as a **financial and investment platform** for supporting the financing of projects contributing to the fulfilment of the goals of the strategy.

Parliament made a series of recommendations which focused on the following:

**(1) Blue growth**: the region's unique geographical position and specific coastline structure, together with its rich marine biodiversity, hold **immense potential for the creation of 'blue' jobs**, **blue technologies, fisheries and aquaculture**, and better maritime and marine governance and services.

Members advocated, *inter alia*:

- the creation of new jobs and economic development, and especially jobs for women and **young people** in coastal and island countries;
- a policy to coordinate and harmonise the strategy's goals, as well as common projects, in line with the **values, principles and objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy**;
- promoting the various sectors of blue growth in their **training programmes**;
- clustering and **cooperation between public and private enterprises, universities, research institutes** and other relevant stakeholders in the marine and maritime sectors;
- stronger cooperation in **marine and maritime research** among researchers, and among Member States and regions involved in the EUSAIR strategy,
- the creation of **a joint quality label** for high-quality seafood products from the region in order to increase their competitiveness;

- the protection and **preservation of fish stocks** and marine ecosystems, to be a paramount objective of the strategy;
- support for **shipbuilding,** including the leisure boat sector, focusing on its modernisation and specialisation in order to create jobs
- strong **support for manufacturing areas, twinning and cooperation** between areas in different parts of the macro-region;
- the involvement of fisheries and fishery workers in projects such as those relating to cultural and heritage tourism.

**(2) Connecting the region**: better transport and energy connections among the participating countries as well as between them and their other neighbours are compelling needs. Parliament also stressed the importance of:

- establishing **sustainable transport** links which reduce journey times, transport and logistic costs and externalities as well as major strategic works related to the interchange between sea and land;
- underlining the importance of connecting maritime transport routes and ports with other parts of Europe; Parliament called on the participating countries to focus their efforts on implementing projects that are covered by the current TEN-T network and other interventions for its proposed extension to South-Eastern Europe/the Eastern Adriatic coast;
- optimizing the capacity of the existing infrastructure network, improving their maritime, rail and air transport infrastructure, to develop motorways of the sea in the macro-region,
- developing a **high-speed railway infrastructure** that will interconnect the macro-region;
- implementing major projects to develop intermodal links on the islands;
- developing capable of reducing the carbon footprint, increasing energy efficiency and guaranteeing the energy security of the macro-region and **energy infrastructure** beyond.
- ensure joint planning and investment in energy infrastructure for both the production and transport of electricity and gas in the macro-region.

**(3) Environmental quality**: recalling that the Adriatic Sea is home to nearly half (49%) of all recorded Mediterranean marine species, Members called for joint efforts in taking all possible measures, such as the use of clean fuels for maritime transport and logistics, in order to preserve the biodiversity of the marine environment.

Parliament pointed out the need to **tackle responsibly historical and trans-border pollution** and to clean up the sites affected by the industrial contamination of soil, water and air, and, where applicable, by pollution resulting from military conflicts. It called for the establishment of a **regional centre for disaster preparedness** together with a joint contingency plan for oil spills and large-scale pollution events, in order to create an early warning system to prevent natural disasters and those caused by industrial, transport and other activities.

**(4) Sustainable and competitive tourism**: Parliament underlined the crucial importance of tourism for the European economy and the need to develop new approaches to help offset seasonality. It urged more support for the financing of tourism projects from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). It recommended:

- the urgent improvement of **cross-border road connections** in order to enhance the competitiveness of tourism;
- the promotion of **sustainable and more balanced tourist flows** in various locations;
- encouraging Member States to promote **sustainable mobility** solutions in the tourism sector, thus improving the quality of tourist services and enhancing its range;

the development of a **diversified tourism offer** including thematic tourist parks and routes, and cultural, rural, health, medical, nautical, eno-gastronomic, conference and sport tourism, including cycling, golf, diving, hiking, skiing, mountaineering and outdoor sports, in order to promote tourism throughout the year.