



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
MINISTRY FOR EUROPE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS



## PROGRAMME

### **AII CHAIRMANSHIP / EUSAIR PRESIDENCY OF ALBANIA (1 June 2021- 31 May 2022)**

Albania is a founding member of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) and after the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Ancona Declaration (May 2000), starting on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, Albania formally took over the one-year Chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Albania assumed the Chairmanship when the Pandemic is still among us. The COVID 19 pandemic posed us all with an unprecedented crisis that defined, in some extent, our way of working, thinking and acting. It certainly affected the previous Presidencies, but it showed more clearly how necessary it is to work together in facing the growing challenges. Albania's incentives and actions will aim at deepening the cooperation within the AII/EUSAIR community to find joint solutions and to address adequately the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, facilitating and supporting a sustainable recovery.

The Albanian foreign policy has enshrined the regional cooperation and integration as a constant and undisputed priority of its diplomatic and political actions. We consider AII and EUSAIR as two strong symbiotic instrumental mechanisms that nurture the regional cooperation and economic integration and equally promote the European integration of Western Balkans.

In the capacity of the Chairmanship in Office of AII/EUSAIR, Albania will build on the best practice and lessons learned from previous Chairmanships. During the tenure of AII Chairmanship, as an Adriatic and Ionian country, Albania will remain dedicated to the acknowledgment and rediscovering of unifying values that two shores have crafted and cherished for centuries.

The EU enlargement for the countries of the Western Balkans constitutes a strategic investment in peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe. An inclusive regional cooperation, within the Adriatic and Ionian (AI) region and beyond is a fundamental factor "to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration", as it is stated at the Ancona Declaration.

Albania will continue to support the embedding process in the frame of the new financial perspective 2021-2027. We consider that the alignment of EU programmes to EUSAIR priorities is a 'win-win' approach. As stated in the Izola Declaration, the Governing Board will closely monitor and assess the outcomes of the embedding process.

Optimisation of the Government Support shall also be at the spotlight of Albanian Chairmanship. We emphasize the need for future continuous government support in all EUSAIR participating countries in the next ADRION Transnational Cooperation Programme 2021-2027.

In addition, Albania is committed to start a constructive consultation and discussion on the revision of the EUSAIR. Special attention will be devoted to the enlargement of the initiative, by the engagement of the new participating country, i.e. San Marino, in all EUSAIR activities until it achieves full-fledged membership.

Albanian C-i-O/ Presidency will focus on the following priorities:

- 1. Youth and all-inclusiveness:** The Albanian Presidency aims to strengthen youth cooperation in the AI region by seeking long-term and inclusive solutions, reminding that the youth is a key driver of regional cooperation, reconciliation and peacebuilding. Brain drain and labour migration have been lowering the potential and narrowing the perspective of the Western Balkans. The close interplay of youth exchanges between WB countries of AII/EU countries will promote and strengthen youth cooperation. An all-inclusiveness approach, encompassing the stockholders, social and non-governmental actors, media and business community of AI region and beyond will be a solid ground for a successful Chairmanship.

Tirana will be the European Youth Capital for 2022, which coincide with Albanian Chairmanship and will enhance the synergies for championing the young people with regard to European values.

- 2. European Integration and Green Agenda:** By supporting regional cooperation and network, our aim is to promote WB countries in their path toward EU integration, believing that EU should maintain its geostrategic focus on the Western Balkans. WB states have shown their improvement, and the cooperation between WB countries and EU countries will once again manifest the progress made towards this path. Good relations between the states must be concretized in the level of citizens. Promoting dialogue within the AII/EUSAIR is the best indicator for contributing in WB-EU dialogue.

Blue Growth, Green Agenda for Western Balkans and European Green Deal are innovative instruments that twist their objectives and actions towards modern, climate neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economies. In this line, the Albanian Presidency will deepen the efforts made so far to promote innovative maritime and marine growth in the AI region. This will lead to sustainable economic development and job creation as well as busting the business opportunities. The “whole-of-economy” and “whole-of-society” approach is crucial for a successful Blue Growth agenda.

- 3. Tourism and Culture:** The Albanian Presidency will deepen the efforts made so far to promote the cultural-tourist attractions of the AI region and promoting the region as a major tourist destination. We aim to develop a comprehensive package of tourism that goes beyond the classic tourism of visiting sea and mountain areas or archeological sites, adding the gastronomic and medical tourism.

Albania will support an enduring engagement and constructive commitments of all AII/EUSAIR stockholders for working together towards a sustainable, responsible and diversified tourism, recalling that the AI region is one of outstanding natural beauty and rich cultural, historic and archaeological heritage.

In order to keep the momentum on improving the environmental quality in AI region, the Albanian Presidency will call for the development of a sustainable tourism in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments.

- 4. Connectivity.** *First*, digitalization. Underlining the achievements and results of the Digital Agenda and exploring the opportunities for building partnerships with the private sector, the Albanian Presidency aims to promote further the digital transformation. The economies of the Western Balkans share the same ambitions and goals in the field of digital transformation, closely linked to the principles and best practices of the EU Digital Single Market. *Second*, transport and infrastructure. The Albanian Presidency considers the transport and infrastructure as the main areas for economic stability and development of the AI region. We intend to continue the progress made by previous Presidencies regarding the liaison of AII member countries in these specific areas. In field of transport, it is essential to improve Intermodal connections through by development of nodes and hubs combining maritime, rail, road, air and inland waterways. In addition, it is essential to improve the competitiveness of the Adriatic and Ionian seaports and to build the relevant infrastructure, which would improve the connection between the coastal areas. We will place special emphasis on blue and green infrastructure.