

## **Conference**

### **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: FOSTERING NEW SYNERGIES IN THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN MACRO-REGION**

Organised in the context of the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina of  
the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and the  
EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

**Bosnia and Herzegovina, 12-14 October 2022**

## **Concept Note**

## Background

The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) was established at the Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) on 19th/20th May 2000 and attended by the Heads of States and Governments of Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia. It was agreed that strengthening regional cooperation helps to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. From the very moment of its institution the goal of facilitating the enlargement of the EU in the Western Balkans was clear. The Initiative was later extended by several countries: Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and San Marino, so that today, the All counts ten member states.

Given the increased interdependence among States connected to the globalization processes and the need to provide common solution to common problems affecting the Adriatic region ask for concerted cooperation not only among regional Countries but also among regional initiatives.

Many years after its establishment the geopolitical environment has deeply changed. Particularly among the All Participating Countries, Slovenia in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 entered the EU while the other Adriatic-Ionian East side coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), even if with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilization and Association Process framework, as a prelude to a future EU membership. Notwithstanding these changes, the reasons which had grounded the establishment of All still persist, and they have even become stronger across time.

In 2014 the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was adopted by European Commission and endorsed by the European. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission and the Adriatic-Ionian Region countries and stakeholders, which agreed to work together on the areas of common interest for the benefit of each country and the whole region. The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region is one of the four EU macro-regional strategies.

The general objective of the EUSAIR is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. With EU members and non EU countries the strategy was aimed to contribute to the further integration of the Western Balkans.

The participating countries of the EUSAIR agreed on areas of mutual interest with high relevance for the Adriatic-Ionian countries, being it common challenges or opportunities. The countries are aiming to create synergies and foster coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in the four thematic areas/ pillars of the Strategy. However, the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and its Action Plan has no any reference to gender equality and empowerment of woman, as a horizontal or cross-cutting element.

Within the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) it was agreed to organize Conference starting from the point that All initiatives and EUSAIR activates should be in line with the principle of equality between men and women and to demonstrate how this principle are applied in its implementation.

## **Objectives of the Conference**

The objective of the Conference on Women's economic empowerment: is to engage in a reflection process on fostering new synergies in the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region. The Conference will provide a platform for the exchange of experiences, know-how and networking among participants. The Conference will focus on connecting the region in order to strengthen perspective of gender equality and equal opportunities in economic empowerment in All region.

This unique event deals with the following issues:

- Perspective of gender equality and equal opportunities in economic empowerment: experience and best practice from the Adriatic and Ionian region
- Supporting and financing women's economic empowerment: experiences, lessons learnt and the way ahead towards innovative approaches (including gender responsive budgeting and statistics/a way of systemic approach to gender mainstreaming)
- Connecting the Region: Regional coordination of gender institutional mechanisms and opportunities for cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region
- Role of youth and civil society in economic empowerment of women.

The conference is a great opportunity to sharing best practices, increase knowledge and understanding of need to include principles of gender equality in sustainable economic empowerment and establishing links and common interests for the region.

## **Targeted Participants**

Participants will include state actors from member states governments (relevant ministries in the area of economy, work and employment, social issues), representatives of the All structures (Forum of the Adriatic Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Permanent Secretariat, Civil Society), EU representatives, members of Regional Gender Coordination Board, International organizations supporting women's economic empowerment, Civil society and youth.

## **Location**

The Conference will be held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hotel Terme Ilidža, Sarajevo.