



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC



ALL CHAIRMANSHIP OF
THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC
JUNE 2024 – MAY 2025

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE

9 October 2024

BRUSSELS (Belgium)

FINAL MINUTES

The first meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials under the All Chairmanship of the Hellenic Republic was held in Brussels on 9 October 2024. The CSO was chaired by the All provisional Senior Official at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic (Directorate for Economic Relations), Ms. **Evangelia Tseliou**, with the assistance of the All Secretary General, **Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta**.

Before kicking off the works of the CSO, Ms. **Tseliou** welcomed the participants, underlining how Greece intends to continue the previous good practices of past Chairmanships with a special focus on the protection of natural and cultural landscape, on youth as the ultimate driver for sustainable development and on the enhancement of connectivity as a valuable tool in bringing people closer. The Chair also stressed that Greece attributes particular importance to the role of civil society and Fora (Chambers, Cities and Universities) as an integral part of All Round Tables and Conferences and thanked the Permanent Secretariat for the constant support. The Chair gave the floor to Secretary General **Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta** for his opening remarks. **Ambassador Castellaneta** took the floor to extend a warm welcome to all Senior Officials and the European Commission, stressing the work done by the Greek Chairmanship, as already demonstrated by the Kick-off Conference held in Corfu on October 1st, which the Secretary General attended. **Amb. Castellaneta** underlined how the Permanent Secretariat will continue to be pivotal in its traditional connecting role between Governments, regional actors and civil society Fora and networks. The All Permanent Secretariat will also support the rotating All/EUSAIR Chairmanship in all its activities during the year and constantly and proactively work for the inclusion of stakeholders in the macroregional process, further stressing its role of “Advocate of Civil Society”. **Amb. Castellaneta** further emphasized the partnership with the CIHEAM Bari, aimed at strengthening the cooperation with this intergovernmental organization in a project-oriented manner.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. **Tseliou** took note that the Agenda of the meeting was acceptable to all participants with no exception.

2. Priorities of the Hellenic Chairmanship

The **Chair** shared with All Senior Officials the Programme for the Greek Chairmanship and summarized the key priorities touching upon the points highlighted in the Programme (see enclosed program).

The **Chair** remarked the main priority of the Hellenic Chairmanship:

- *Sustainability of Landscape, Historical Monuments & Life along the Coastline and the Hinterland.* All All countries share a common interest in the preservation and protection of the Adriatic-Ionian coastal and inland environment. In this respect, developing special interest tourism, such as Eco Tourism and Fishing Tourism, forms an important driving force for the economy of the All macro-region. As cultural heritage sites bordering the coastline or found underwater are often adversely affected by erosion, climate change and mass cultural tourism, protection against shore erosion, safeguard of the cultural heritage as well as damage prevention and sustainability support is deemed to be of great value for All countries.
- *Youth as Pillar of the Present and Driver for the Future.* As the brain drain and demographic problems have become a more prominent issue within the All macro-region, cooperation and horizontal actions may supplement relevant European and national policies. Brain Regain and fostering Startups/Incubators & Ecosystems, particularly in regions away from large urban centers, can enhance social cohesion, welfare and inclusive economic growth. Involving key stakeholders from the spheres of academia and entrepreneurship and promoting the interconnection between tertiary education and the business community can significantly contribute to implementation of these priorities.
- *Mitigating Marine Pollution & Protecting Natural Environment.* As protection of biodiversity and preservation of marine ecosystems contribute to the sustainable development of the All macro-region, Greece pledges to encourage further cooperation in this field, especially given the importance of sustainable fishing and fish farming for the preservation of the marine environment. Furthermore, promotion of renewable or low-carbon imprint fuels and deployment of alternative fuels by ships can contribute to the decarbonization of maritime transport. Optimization of passenger and freight transport reduces road congestion and improves access to peripheral and island regions; hence, amelioration of the entire marine and land transport and the logistic chain throughout the All region is highly valued.
- *Promotion of Connectivity as a Vital EU Enlargement Tool.* The promotion of connectivity within the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region is a vital EU enlargement tool. The Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) are bound to improve transportation infrastructure and foster economic development and trade integration. By enhancing connectivity, the

All can bridge existing infrastructure gaps and promote smoother movement of goods and people across the region. Port-rail interconnections can address logistical bottlenecks, in conformity with EU objectives for environmental protection and deployment of efficient transport networks. Competitiveness and investment attraction are strengthened through All macro-region alignment with EU standards and infrastructure. This multi-modal connectivity is a strategic priority for the Greek Chairmanship of the All.

The **program and priorities** were welcomed by all Senior Officials.

3. Calendar of All upcoming events

While presenting the calendar of the events (see enclosed calendar of events), **Ms. Tseliou** informed that:

- The 5th Conference of Applied Ichthyology, Oceanography & Aquatic Environment “HydroMediT 2024” took place in Levos Island by the Ministry of Rural Development & Food.
- On 9-10 of November 2024 in Kastoria the Chairmanship plans to organize a Roundtable to raise awareness on issues related to the impact of the environment on monuments, in cooperation with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

Croatia thanked the Permanent Secretariat for the support provided to the Croatian Presidency and she welcomed the programme and priorities. Croatia reminded Senior Officials the work done during the past Presidency on youth with the organization of a two days conference in Croatia. She also informed participants that the EUSAIR Youth Council is about to be settle and the first working meeting will be held by the end of November.

Italy presented himself as the newly appointed All Senior Official and EUSAIR National Coordinator (Thomas Botzios) and remarked the commitment towards the Adriatic and Ionian region. Italy stands ready to further cooperate with the All Permanent Secretariat and participating countries.

Bosnia and Herzegovina thanked the Permanent Secretariat for the organization of the meeting and welcomed the political and thematic priorities of the Greek Chairmanship, underlining also the continuity with past presidencies, including the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Slovenia took the floor to present herself, the new National Coordinators of the three macroregional strategies in which Slovenia is participating. She welcomed the priorities and expressed appreciation that youth is at the center of the Greek priorities.

Serbia welcomed the priorities of the Hellenic Chairmanship, commended the Permanent Secretariat for its support and appreciated the priority devoted to the EU enlargement and integration, looking forward for future cooperation.

North Macedonia welcomed the new members and congratulate Ms. Pansegrau Hadrović for her new role as Head of Department for European macroregions and new National Coordinator for macro-regional strategies of Croatia. North Macedonia expressed its support to the priorities listed by the Chairmanship, especially youth which is one of the key issues for the Western Balkans countries. She further reminded participants that North Macedonia will take over the Chairmanship of All/EUSAIR next year and thanked the Permanent Secretariat for the support.

The **European Commission** welcomed the priorities, putting a spotlight on demographic and on initiatives regarding population, which is also at the centre of DG REGIO work and the future cohesion policy. He also stressed the importance of youth, cultural heritage, sustainable tourism and enlargement for the future of the region. He praised the cooperation and collaboration with the Permanent Secretariat and all the countries involved.

The **Chair** thanked all the participants and Senior Officials for the support given to the Chairmanship and expressed appreciation to the Permanent Secretariat for the efficiency and for providing assistance and every kind of support.

4. Program of the All Permanent Secretariat

The **Secretary General** expressed gratitude to the Hellenic Chairmanship for a very comprehensive and forward-looking Programme and Calendar of events. Amb. Castellaneta presented the Programme of the All-PS activities, stressing that the All-PS will work in close coordination with the Chairmanship giving it all needed assistance on secretarial activities and on the organization of All events and meetings, with a particular focus on Round Tables, which are a crucial element for the involvement of civil society and stakeholders in regional cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. The All-PS will be very active in cooperating with the Adriatic and Ionian Fora (Chambers of Commerce, Universities, Cities) and other networks involving them in Round Tables and connecting them with the EUSAIR work. The All-PS is also committed to support the Parliamentary Dimension for the organization of the XIX Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments.

Amb. Castellaneta asked for the approval of the Program of the All-PS, which was circulated in advance to Senior Officials.

Senior Officials approved the All-PS Program unanimously.

5. Report on the events organized with the support of the All Permanent Secretariat:

I. Adriatic-Mediterranean Festival (Ancona, August 26- 29, 2024)

II. All Internships Programme - Call for Cross-Border Mobilities For Young Students from Universities Associated with UniAdrion

The **Chair** gave the floor to Amb. Pigliapoco, Head of the Permanent Secretariat in order to be updated on the most recent events organized by the All Permanent Secretariat.

Amb. Pigliapoco recalled the 19th edition of the Adriatic Mediterranean Festival - the traditional late summer festival gathering in Ancona musicians, writers and artists coming from all over the Adriatic-Ionian Region and the Mediterranean – which took place in Ancona from 26 to 29 of August 2024, organised with the support of the All Permanent Secretariat. This year's edition was dedicated to the country that holds the current All Chairmanship, Greece. Among the various events that recalled the history, literature and music of the country, a meeting awarded the Adriatic Mediterranean Price to Matteo Nucci, an Italian writer specialized in the Greek classics.

Amb. Pigliapoco also brought to the attention of Senior Officials, that as for the All internship programme, named Western Balkanship, organized in cooperation with the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce and UniAdrion, the Call for Cross-Border Mobilities for Young Students is still open until the end of the year. The programme, promoting student mobility in the Adriatic-Ionian Region and supporting the circulation of ideas and skills, gives students the opportunity to spend a few months in a company abroad. Amb. Pigliapoco informed participants that so far 8 internships have been assigned.

Amb. Pigliapoco also informed Senior Officials that the Permanent Secretariat was approached by the Greek Parliament which intends to resume the Parliamentary dimension of the All. The exact date and topic of the meeting is yet to be decided but there is the willingness to organize the XIX conference of the Speakers of All Parliaments.

6. Memorandum of Understanding with the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies – Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM Bari)

All **Secretary General** informed Senior Officials that on September 24th in Bari (Italy) a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All-PS) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) Bari establishing a collaboration aimed at strengthening dialogue and cohesion, with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. This partnership will also help to support the definition of joint strategies and projects, the exchange of experts between the two Organizations, as well as the promotion of seminars and meetings on topics of mutual interest. He further informed participants that the two organizations are already drafting a project that aims to support the institutions of the countries in the area through initiatives to diversify local economic systems, digitalization and

technological innovations, with particular attention to products and services related to green tourism. Senior Officials be updated throughout the whole process.

7. Any Other Business

The **Chair** gave the floor to **Amb. Pigliapoco** in order to inform participants on the outcomes of the 18th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations.

Amb. Pigliapoco recalled that the 18th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations was hosted by the Central European Initiative in Trieste on 17 September 2024 and witnessed the presence of high-level representatives from the Secretariats of regional organizations, such as the Adriatic Ionian Initiative, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Regional Cooperation Council. Special guests were also the European Commission, the Regional School of Public Administration, and the Regional Anti-corruption Initiative.

The agenda included a comprehensive exchange of views on best practices and possible collaborative actions in areas of mutual interest, particularly those aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and European Union cooperation. A special focus was put on good governance, given the need for strong institutions to implement the UN 2030 Agenda and establish closer links with the EU. The key takeaway of the meeting emphasized the importance of speeding-up the enlargement process and that regional cooperation is crucial for European integration, sustainable development, and shared prosperity across sectors such as governance, connectivity, finance, and people-to-people networks.

The Regional Cooperation Council offered to host next year's meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.