

Minutes

SEMINAR on Skills Development and Training Action to Promote Access to EU Programmes/Funds Focused on Industrial Transi- tion and Entrepreneurial Discovery within the Smart Specialisation Strategies

Monday 6 May 2019, Budva (Montenegro)

In the opening session, Ms Eleni MARIANOI, Secretary General of the CPMR, AI-NURECC Coordinator, reminded participants of the CPMR's long-standing involvement not only in the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy but also in all strategies, which are dealing with the European sea basins' strategies and macro-regional strategies. In fact, the CPMR has developed its structure in response to the challenges of the sea basins of Europe. She continued by presenting the developments and activities achieved so far within the AI-NURECC Initiative, which is funded by the European Commission's DG REGIO. The CPMR's seminar in Budva on Skills Development and Training Action aims to promote access to EU Programmes and Funds focused on industrial transition and entrepreneurial discovery within Smart Specialisation Strategies, which placed the youth at the core.

Ms Marianou stressed the importance of the work between the associations of Regions, Cities, Chambers of Commerce and Universities. The relationship jointly established aims to effectively work with existing organisations in the area, on various fields, including in particular skills, entrepreneurial and youth. She underlined that the skills are dynamic area where CPMR can effectively pass on the expertise. A number of skills and training activities has been already carried out since the beginning of the AI-NURECC Initiative, such as the series of events held in Tirana (Albania) on 20-21 November 2018, organised with the support of the Tirana County Council, CPMR Member, focusing on technology, innovation and youth. She underlined that the work carried out targets the young and future generations, by teaching youth practically how to use and implement EU projects, how to work together and how to take stock of the information. Moreover, a seminar was held in Belgrade in December 2018, focusing on connectivity, energy transition and networks. It also dealt with practicality on the preparation of the projects that makes sure that all generations have the appropriate tools and bring the expertise home. Bringing the existing forces to work together in these filed is important so that young people, thanks to events such as this, learn and return home with the necessary knowledge and the ability to do it all by themselves.

Mr Jean-Pierre HALKIN, Head of Unit Macro-Regions, Transnational/Interregional Cooperation, IPA, Enlargement, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission welcomed the initiative that is growing from an administrative perspective. He pointed out that the entrepreneurship issue targets young people that are at the heart of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region to promote jobs and growth but also inclusion of young people in society.

Mr Halkin gave an overview of the role of macro-regional strategies which aim to address challenges in EU and non-EU Member States, in particular by stressing the importance of the intensity of cooperation and especially starting from the lowest to the highest level between multi-level stakeholders.

He explained that there are two dimensions to be considered when speaking about macro-regional strategies: the way we address challenges that go beyond the borders of EU and non-EU Member States. It is exactly the latter aspect that emerges in EUSAIR, which covers 4 Member States and 4 countries that are not Member States. The second dimension is the establishment of good cooperation between all stakeholders, which is an objective in itself pursued by DG REGIO and the EU. He referred to the historical context of the beginning of cooperation projects whose objective was to develop trust and cooperation after the Second World War so that such a tragedy would never happen again. It is important to remember that developing a concept of cooperation has to be multi-level and bottom-up, that is the ultimate aim, starting from the lowest level, so that the citizens can be reached, up to the governmental level and ending with the intergovernmental level. He acknowledged that developing the bottom-up approach, which is so important, remains a difficult challenge.

He also added that it was important to consider the intensity of cooperation, of which he defined 5 levels, while specifying that the stakeholders are seeking to reach level 5:

Level 0: when we don't know what others are doing;

Level 1: whatever we do, don't harm what others are doing;

Level 2: active extension of information;

Level 3: coordination of activities;

Level 4: pooling resources to achieve the goal;

Level 5: the ultimate level, plan the design to achieve the objective.

The European Union supports shared management, whereas here, with the AI-NURECC Initiative, direct management has been chosen for quick implementation, while relying on the existing network, which it considers to be a "living force".

In addition, there is the concept of connecting actors from specific sectors: cities are important to allow all levels to participate, and both the private sector and chambers of commerce create jobs, growth and innovation, he acknowledged. As for the public sector, he stated that it creates policies. Including universities and their expertise, especially in innovation, means bringing young people into the strategy.

The AI-NURECC Initiative acts as a tool of EUSAIR and aims to connect people working in specific sectors (research, innovation, digitisation and sustainable tourism) and to help all actors at several levels - the "driving force" - such as cities, regions, universities, Chambers of Commerce and civil society to work together while connecting them to EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs).

Mr Halkin is of the opinion that the geographical scope of EUSAIR should be reviewed, allowing one county, which is the Republic of North Macedonia, to be part of the strategy. The Council of the EU has invited Member States to consider this request.

The current challenges remain in targeting the ever increasing effectiveness of financial resources at a time when financial allocations for the next programming period are decreasing; integrating the Republic of North Macedonia as the 9th EUSAIR Member State and maintaining the transnational programmes that definitely support the implementation of the macro-regional strategies.



He listed the reasons for the proposed cuts in the EU budget and indicated the new challenges facing the EU. That is why it is essential that there should be better cooperation in order to use the resources available and promote it in the operational programmes. In the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) proposals, it was also announced that there is a willingness to connect Cohesion Policy to the European Semester.

In this respect, the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Regulation is greatly simplified for faster implementation, recognises external borders, and has transnational programmes to support the implementation of the strategies.

The conclusions of the European Commission's report on the implementation of the strategies should be oriented towards a call on countries to allocate adequate resources, with more alignment with available resources.

The expectations of the Commission in the AI-NURECC context are to continue contributing to the bottom-up governance of the macro-regional strategy, to help all actors to move forward at this "level 5 of governance coordination" by first identifying objectives, planning resources and planning activities as the earliest stage, to build confidence and to facilitate North Macedonia's accession and finally make sure that the strategy is widely applied.

Mr Halkin concluded by adding that the European Commission expressed its full support to AI-NURECC activities and reassured participants that it remains committed to this process.

Mr Vučić ĆETKOVIĆ, Advisor to the Deputy Chief Negotiator/National IPA Coordinator and EUSAIR Deputy Coordinator for EU Funds, in the European Integration Office to Montenegro, stressed that the AI-NURECC activities contribute and provide added value in the implementation of the EUSAIR and create synergies that are of great importance for the participating countries in the entire region. He stated that the EUSAIR serves as one of the mechanisms to drive the EU enlargement and integration process. According to Mr Ćetković, the EUSAIR offers the opportunities for all countries involved to equally align to EU policies and standards in order to protect the region and to further develop the area.

Mr Ćetković reminded participants that the EUSAIR represents the unique type of approach which is the macro-regional approach that helps to bring people together. The macro-regional activities are significantly contributing to the implementation of Cohesion Policy and reducing the social and economic disparities in Europe and in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. The activities in the framework of Smart Specialisation Strategies are crucial for the identification of strategic areas for intervention and wider active involvement of all stakeholders, in which Montenegro is a reliable partner. He added that participation in activities related to smart specialisations enable the EUSAIR countries to identify and develop their own competitive advantages. Today's event represents a great opportunity to introduce various stakeholders to the platform especially for those not very familiar with this approach. Finally, he stressed that the Montenegrin EUSAIR Presidency and its institutions will continue to be involved these activities.

At the first session on "The European framework of the Smart Specialisation Strategies and the Industrial Transition and Entrepreneurial Discovery", **Dr Petra KARANIKIĆ, Head of Technology Transfer Office, Assistant Professor, Department of Biotechnology, University of Rijeka (Croatia)**, referred to Croatia's Smart Specialisation Strategy and [presented](#) the implementation of R&I activities in the S3 context from the perspective of the University of Rijeka's Technology Transfer Office.

Dr Konstantinos GIOTOPOULOS, EU Projects Department, Achaia Chamber's Development Entity (Greece), [presented](#) the opportunities and challenges of industrial transition and entrepreneurial



discovery as seen from the Achaia Chamber's viewpoint, the legislative and financial conditions to enhance this procedure and their contribution to promoting capitalisation and scaling up of successful cooperation initiatives.

Dr Ales GNAMUS, Project Leader, Smart EU Macro-Regions/S3P-NEAR/S3P-Blue Growth, Territorial Development Unit, Innovation & Growth, Joint Research Centre, European Commission, shared with participants how the Thematic S3 Partnerships and Platforms (TSSPs) support Research & Innovation in the EUSAIR. In his [presentation](#), Dr Gnamus explained how Thematic S3 Platforms support interregional cooperation in new growth areas, aiming to build an investment pipeline of bankable projects; help regions establish links between business and research communities and provide tailored advice; and help regions develop shared infrastructure such as testing facilities, pilot plants, etc. He also referred to their role in interregional and macroregional cooperation and cited examples of existing thematic platforms that could be of interest to the region.

Professor Yorgos J. STEPHANEDES, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Patras (Greece) [presented](#) the role of SMEs in Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) and their contribution to the economy. Professor Stephanedes referred to the existing barriers for SME development in the CCIs and closed his intervention with the BlueCulture Project, which contributes to Blue Growth and to Topic 1 of Priority Sustainable Tourism (EUSAIR Pillar IV) by enhancing quality in supply of tourism products and services and by increasing the competitive advantage of the EUSAIR macro-region.

In the second session on “Industrial Transition and Entrepreneurial Discovery focused on Pillars I and IV of the EUSAIR” **Mr Matic BATIČ, Researcher, Institute for Historical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper, Slovenia)**, [presented](#) their centre's aim that is to provide transfer of knowledge between scientific research and economic development of the region; underlined the RIS3 contribution to increase the innovative potential of CCI and contribute to creating innovation, particularly in the field of creative industries, and creating new (knowledge-based) jobs, by attracting various stakeholders into the creative process; and shared examples of their involvement in projects.

Dr Gregory YOVANOF, Managing Director at STRATEGIS Maritime Centre of Excellence, STRATEGIS Maritime ICT Cluster (Greece), [presented](#) the viewpoint of maritime clusters and digital innovation hubs regarding blue growth. Dr Yovanof referred to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and underlined the contribution of marine clusters and digital innovation hubs to fostering a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The seminar ended with the [presentation](#) of the **Montenegrin IT Cluster**, Member of the Balkan, Black Sea and Baltic ICT Clusters Network.

