



11th Adriatic Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting

Skopje Declaration

19 May 2026

We, the Representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia and Slovenia, meeting in Skopje, with the participation of the **European Commission**, in the framework of the Adriatic-Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting and 11th Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR):

[Preamble]

GUIDED by the Ancona Declaration of 20 May 2000 and its basic principles, and **RECALLING** the principles expressed in the subsequent Adriatic and Ionian Council (AIC) declarations and in the joint AIC/EUSAIR Ministerial Declarations;

RECALLING the Conclusions of the EU General Affairs Council of 29 September 2014 and those of the European Council of 23-24 October 2014 which endorsed the EUSAIR, on the basis of the Commission's Communication of 17 June 2014 and subsequent addendum (COM(2020) 132) adopted by the Commission on 2 April 2020, including North Macedonia in the EUSAIR, and the addendum (COM(2022) 44) adopted by the Commission on 14 February 2022, including San Marino in the EUSAIR; **ALSO RECALLING** the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the revised Action Plan of the EU Macro-Regional Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region adopted on 7 May 2025 (COM(2025) 191);

ACKNOWLEDGING that the long-term experience of cooperation among Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) Governments and the cooperation within the EUSAIR contributes to the stability, security, prosperity and development of the area;

REAFFIRMING our commitment to strengthening the role of the AII/EUSAIR to address the challenges arising from the current international environment respecting international law, the UN Charter, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law shared by all AII/EUSAIR participating countries;

RECALLING the 2003 European Council in Thessaloniki, which laid the foundations for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, as consistently reaffirmed in subsequent AII/EUSAIR Declarations, and **UNDERLINING** that tangible progress on the path towards EU membership depends on sustained and credible reform efforts;

WELCOMING the upcoming EU–Western Balkans Summit in Tivat on 5 June, following the Summit held in Brussels on 17 December 2025, which reconfirmed the European Union’s strategic partnership with the Western Balkans, i.e. participating countries from the EUSAIR, and its unequivocal commitment to their EU membership perspective, highlighting the renewed momentum in the accession process and the shared commitment to deepen cooperation, uphold European values and advance reforms, and **RECOGNISING** that enlargement remains a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity;

RECOGNISING the EU Council Conclusions adopted on 16 September 2025, which reaffirm the important role of EU macro-regional strategies in strengthening cooperation, resilience, territorial cohesion and policy coordination across Europe; and **UNDERLINING** their value in fostering multi-level coordination among Member States and candidate countries to tackle common challenges; **EMPHASISING** the need for continued political engagement and embedding of macro-regional priorities into EU funding and policy frameworks.

[International developments]

EXPRESS concern about the increasingly complex and volatile geo-strategic environment facing Europe and the wider international community, marked by Russia’s continued war of aggression against Ukraine, the escalating tensions and instability in the Middle East, including recent developments involving Iran and the risk of a broader regional escalation, and other emerging security challenges, including acts that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, thereby posing serious risks to European and global security;

EXPRESS serious concern over the recent developments involving Iran and the growing tensions in the Middle East; **CALL ON** all parties to exercise maximum restraint, protect civilians, refrain from actions that could lead to further escalation, and uphold international law, including the principles of the United Nations Charter, with a view to preserving regional peace, security and stability;

[Ukraine-Russia]

REITERATE the condemnation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine which constitutes a grave violation of international law, against the foundations of international security and stability; and **REAFFIRM** our unwavering support to Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as well as to its recovery, modernisation and reconstruction and **EMPHASIZING** the importance of dialogue and efforts that contribute to peace and stability across the wider region; and **CALL FOR** a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Ukraine and the Russian Federation based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law;

SUPPORT ongoing diplomatic efforts and recent discussions with Ukraine, with the contribution of European countries, as an important step towards achieving a swift end to Russia’s war of aggression and advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine, while ensuring that all relevant humanitarian issues are addressed;

[Middle East, incl. Gaza Strip]

EMPHASISE that maintaining trade routes open is vitally important for international trade and energy security; **SUPPORT** all diplomatic efforts to ensure and institutionalize the free passage through critical waterways worldwide;

CALL UPON all parties fulfil their commitments, respect the ceasefire, and engage constructively to implement phase two of President Trump's 20 Point Peace Plan and UN Resolution 2803 (2025) paving the way for a sustainable ceasefire and ensuring safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access and the effective distribution of assistance throughout Gaza;

REITERATE our steadfast commitment to international law and to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Such a solution envisages the peaceful coexistence of two independent, sovereign and democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and internationally recognised borders;

EXPRESS grave concern over the ongoing hostilities in Lebanon, where the humanitarian situation is deteriorating rapidly, with over one million people displaced; **CALL** on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, uphold international humanitarian law, and engage in sustained diplomatic efforts toward a lasting cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians;

[Enlargement and EU Integration Process]

UNDERLINE that the acceleration of the European Union enlargement process must remain a strategic priority and a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Adriatic Ionian region and Europe; **EMPHASISE** the importance of a credible, predictable and merit-based process, based on tangible reform progress and the fulfilment of established criteria by each candidate country; and **CALL ON** EU Member States to maintain their continued focus on the accession process of the candidate countries;

ACKNOWLEDGE the momentum achieved in the ongoing EU accession negotiations and encourage the continuation of this positive dynamic;

WELCOME the progress made by EU candidate countries in 2025-2026 as assessed by the European Commission Enlargement Package; **HIGHLIGHT** the steadfast commitment of the non-EU AII/EUSAIR participating countries to the European perspective and **LOOK FORWARD** to more opportunities to advance on their accession path include through further gradual integration measures, by leveraging existing tools, in particular the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans ; **EMPHASISE** that cooperation within the framework of the AII/EUSAIR can further facilitate EU candidate countries' paths towards EU integration;

CALL ON EU member states to deliver on the accession process of the candidate countries, providing them a clear and predictable path to EU membership;

WELCOME the European Commission's initiative to include the Western Balkans in the 'Roam-Like-At-Home' (RLAH) framework, and **ENCOURAGE** the acceleration of this process with a view to its swift implementation at the earliest possible stage;

ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE the sustained progress made by All/EUSAIR participating countries engaged in an EU association process, notably the Republic of San Marino, where the finalization of the Association Agreement and ongoing steps towards its approval and ratification demonstrate a strengthened partnership, which will enable full integration in the EU Single Market;

[Regional Cooperation]

CONFIRM the All/EUSAIR as a strategic framework fostering cooperation addressing shared regional objectives which remains closely aligned with the EU priorities reflected within EU Multiannual Financial Frameworks; **RECOGNISE** that All/EUSAIR represents a valuable regional platform for dialogue, and visibility, bringing together EU member states and EU candidate countries on equal footing;

ENCOURAGE candidate countries to further strengthen their engagement in the implementation of EU reforms and to make full use of the macro-regional framework recognising its strong alignment with key reform priorities and its potential to support their effective implementation, ensuring that planned investments are considered in a broader regional context, thereby maximising their impact through synergies and cross-border spill-over effects and contributing to more coherent and effective reform efforts, supported by enhanced administrative capacities, and exchange of best practices;

EMPHASIZE that the All/EUSAIR can also serve as a forum for discussion to highlight the potential for the region arising from the latest developments in trade, digital, and energy connections between Europe and the Asian sub-continent, underpinned by strategic energy corridors such as the Vertical Gas Corridor, as well as broader connectivity initiatives, notably the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). In this context, **ENCOURAGE** synergies with the Central European Initiative and the Three Seas Initiative;

WELCOME the signed Memoranda of Understanding under the Green Lane Initiative between the WB and neighboring EU Member States, and **ENCOURAGE** their prompt and effective implementation, with a view to further enhancing connectivity and mobility across the Adriatic-Ionian region;

ACKNOWLEDGE the issue of professional truck drivers in the context of implementation of the Entry/Exit System as a challenge affecting the entire Adriatic-Ionian region, and **CALL FOR** a prompt and mutually beneficial solution to be found in the common interest of both the European Union and the Western Balkans, i.e. participating countries from the EUSAIR;

[EUSAIR]

TAKE NOTE WITH APPRECIATION of the 5th Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies adopted by the European Economic and Social Committee on 3 December 2025, which highlights the strategic role of macro-regional strategies in generating multi-level coordination and synergies among policies, programmes and stakeholders, and **RECOGNISE**, in particular, the results achieved by EUSAIR, which introduces a fifth social pillar and places a stronger emphasis on EU enlargement, place-based approach, the economy, and digitalisation, thereby strengthening resilience and partnerships in the Adriatic-Ionian region; **EMPHASISE** the need to further strengthen multilevel governance and ensure the systematic integration of macro-regional priorities into the

EU's main programmes, particularly in view of the post-2027 framework; **WELCOME** the 2025 revised EUSAIR Action Plan, which operationalises the fifth pillar and strengthens alignment with the EU enlargement process and the green and digital transitions;

REITERATE the importance of systematically embedding EUSAIR priorities into existing and future EU and national funding instruments, in particular within the framework of EU Cohesion Policy, including Interreg programmes, IPA III, the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, the Western Balkans Investment Framework, the future National and Regional Partnership Plans and Global Europe, in line with the Council Conclusions adopted in 2025 on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies; **CALL FOR** closer engagement of the European Commission in supporting the effective implementation of EUSAIR priorities and for their continued integration into EU programmes under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034; **ENCOURAGE** all EUSAIR stakeholders to actively contribute strategic inputs for stronger and meaningful integration of macro-regional integration into the design of post-2027 EU funding mechanisms; **PROMOTE** synergies between EUSAIR and key EU initiatives, including the European Green Deal, the Digital Agenda and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans;

RECOGNISE the importance of promoting enhanced cooperation among EU macro-regional strategies, notably with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, particularly in supporting the EU enlargement process; and **INVITE** the governance bodies of the EU macro-regional strategies to take concrete steps towards strengthened coordination, mutual learning and joint initiatives; **EMPHASISE** that institutional cooperation, policy coherence and the exchange of best practices among macro-regional strategies are essential for effective regional governance and for advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

REAFFIRM the significance of establishing stable and functioning networks of EUSAIR managing authorities for EU cohesion programmes as soon as possible, as well as networks of National IPA Coordinators, in order to facilitate better alignment of funding instruments for improvement of investments' macro-regional impact, secure better support the funding of EUSAIR objectives. **SUPPORT** further exploration, in view of the new MFF 2028–2034, of how macro-regional strategies can serve as a platform for coordinated responses to newly recognised shared priorities, while addressing the need for their stronger recognition and uptake in the programming and implementation of EU funding; **SUPPORT** of delving deeper in to the possibilities to support EUSAIR objectives through various EU funded programmes and mechanisms in particular in the light of the embedding process within the new MFF 2028-2034; **SUPPORT** all the capacity building activities implemented to strengthen the management of the funds;

RECOGNISE the EUSAIR importance for further aligning local and regional actions with European policies and priorities, particularly through place-based and/or place-sensitive approaches and platforms and flagship projects based on participatory planning; **ENCOURAGE** stronger involvement of local and regional authorities, civil society and academia in the implementation of EUSAIR priorities;

UNDERLINE the importance of synchronised actions in the Adriatic and Ionian Region, carried out in close cooperation with EUSAIR stakeholders, the European Commission and other potential players, to improve the efficiency of identifying and implementing projects that support sustainable economic and social development in the macro-region;

ACKNOWLEDGE the importance of the support to the EUSAIR by Interreg IPA ADRION programme; **APPRECIATE** the achievements of the Interreg IPA ADRION in embedding and implementing EUSAIR objectives through the funded projects. **CALL** upon Interreg IPA ADRION and other EU cohesion policy programmes operating in the Adriatic and Ionian region to embed the EUSAIR flagships and priorities within the new MFF 2028-2034, making particular use of key events such as the EUSAIR Forum, the Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days (Brussels), and the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week (Izola);

[All Political and Coordination role]

REAFFIRM the role of the All as the “political anchorage” to the EUSAIR, reflecting on the complementarity between them, and **COMMEND** the Permanent Secretariat on its efforts aimed at maintaining efficient links with the EUSAIR pillars as well as civil society, while also enhancing political coordination among participating countries and EU institutions to further support the implementation of the Strategy;

APPRECIATE the traditional All connecting role between Governments, regional actors and civil society fora and their networks as a key element for the implementation of the EUSAIR, in line with the subsidiarity principle;

WELCOME the successful celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Ancona Declaration on 27 June 2025 in Ancona, marking a significant milestone in the history of Adriatic-Ionian cooperation and underlining the Initiative’s enduring contribution to regional stability, sustainable development and European integration; **CONGRATULATE** the organisers and participants for this important achievement and **EMPHASISE** the continued relevance of the All/EUSAIR framework in addressing contemporary challenges and advancing the agenda for cooperation and enlargement;

HIGHLIGHT the informal meeting of the All Ministers of Foreign Affairs, chaired by the Foreign Minister of North Macedonia, Timcho Mucunski, as the current All Chairmanship, held on 22 September 2025 on the margins of the 80th United Nations General Assembly, taking stock of the developments and prospects of the European integration process of the non-EU All participating countries;

[Fora of Civil Society]

RECOGNISE the consolidated cooperation developed by the All with academia, local and regional authorities, business communities, NGOs and other civil society actors as a fundamental and strategic asset for effectively addressing complex regional challenges; and **ENCOURAGE** the further active participation of civil society, economic stakeholders and youth in the implementation and visibility of the Strategy;

APPRECIATE the continuous efforts of the Permanent Secretariat in strengthening cooperation with the Adriatic-Ionian Fora of Cities, Chambers of Commerce and Universities, and **ACKNOWLEDGE** the essential contribution of civil society in enhancing the impact and outreach of EUSAIR;

COMMEND the three Fora for fostering dialogue and organising inclusive initiatives that reinforce cooperation between civil society and institutions at local, regional, national and European level; **ACKNOWLEDGE** the role of the Adriatic-Ionian Chambers of Commerce in supporting Circular

Economy and Green Public Procurement initiatives; and **ENCOURAGE** their enhanced integration within the EUSAIR framework;

[Youth]

RECOGNISE that the future of the Adriatic-Ionian Region depends on its youth and that addressing brain drain, youth unemployment and demographic decline remains essential to ensuring long-term social and economic sustainability; **CALL FOR** targeted investments in education, skills development and labour market mobility in order to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and competitiveness across the Region; **COMMIT** to continue to support initiatives and projects that have proven instrumental in providing young people with entrepreneurial experiences and knowledge such as EUSAIR POPRI YOUTH making a significant contribution to the creation of quality employment opportunities, the overall development of society and the region, and offer an effective response to pressing challenges, including brain drain; **COMMEND** the efforts of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat in providing financial support for internships, scholarships and high school projects for the benefit of youth;

APPRECIATE the commitment and work of the EUSAIR Youth Council following its establishment; **CALL** for continued strong support of its work, **ENCOURAGE** further involvement and insights of the EUSAIR Youth Council to the governance and implementation of the EUSAIR; and **COMMIT** to continue to support initiatives and projects that have proven instrumental in providing young people with entrepreneurial experiences and knowledge, creating quality employment opportunities and offering an effective response to pressing challenges, including brain drain;

[Regional organisations]

UNDERLINE the importance of further strengthening All partnerships and cooperation with international and regional organisations and other macro-regional strategies in line with its strategic goals and core objectives;

ACKNOWLEDGE the importance of interaction among the Secretariats of regional organisations and among other Macro Regional and Sea Basin strategies in order to further support the sustainable economic and social development of the region, including through synergies and exchange experience, best practices and know-how;

[Parliaments]

EMPHASISE the fundamental role of National Parliaments and European parliament as direct representatives of the peoples in strengthening democratic governance, parliamentary diplomacy and regional cooperation; and **RECOGNISE** that the close cooperation between parliaments advances regional reforms and strengthens parliamentary democracy, advancing good governance and institutional development in the macro-region, while boosting the existing excellent neighbourly relations;

WELCOME the successful holding of the XX Conference of Presidents/Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, held in Skopje on 23–24 April 2026 under the All Chairmanship of North Macedonia, which addressed the promotion of peace and stability through parliamentary diplomacy and the strengthening of regional connectivity, including Corridors VIII and X; and **COMMEND** the

Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia for its commitment to further consolidating the parliamentary dimension of the Initiative;

[Final operative clauses]

ENDORSE the decision of the All Senior Officials to renew the mandate of Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta as Secretary General of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat for a further period of three years;

CONGRATULATE the Republic of North Macedonia on its successful chairmanship of the All and EUSAIR and on successfully delivering numerous achievements as outlined in the Annexes to this Declaration;

THANK North Macedonia for the excellent organisation and hospitality offered in Skopje on the occasion of the AIC/EUSAIR ministerial meeting and the 11th EUSAIR Forum;

ENTRUST the incoming All/EUSAIR Chairmanship from 1 June 2026 to 31 May 2027 to Italy, inviting it to use all instruments at its disposal with the aim of consolidating cooperation and leading the All/EUSAIR Region into a period of sustainable growth and prosperity.

ANNEX I

Achievements of the EUSAIR Presidency of North Macedonia

The EUSAIR Presidency of North Macedonia for 2025-2026 organised a series of events with the aim of promoting Presidency's priorities and the EUSAIR Strategy as such.

The EUSAIR Presidency of North Macedonia likewise took part in number of other events, with an aim to raise the knowledge of its mandate, priorities and achievements during its term.

These achievements are listed below:

11 July 2025	Skillman Alliance Summit 2025	Ancona, IT
11-12 September 2025	REDETE25 - Researching Economic Development and Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies	Banja Luka, BA
15-18 September 2025	Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week 2025	Izola, SI
24-25 September 2025	Macro-regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days 2025	Brussels, BE
29-30 September 2025	Mediterranean Diet as a Tool for Sustainable Tourism and Local Development in EUSAIR Communities	Bari, IT
13-15 October 2025	European Week of Regions and Cities	Brussels, BE
17 October 2025	TSG 2 Transport meeting	Trieste, IT
21-22 October 2025	Governing Board meeting	Skopje, MK
6 November 2025	Joint NC meeting EUSDR - EUSAIR on Enlargement	Sarajevo, BiH
6 November 2025	TSG 3 meeting	Online
13-14 November 2025	TSG 4 meeting	Zagreb, HR (hybrid)
27 November 2025	TSG 2 Energy meeting	Trieste, IT (hybrid)
27 November 2025	TSG 5 meeting	Online
11-12 December 2025	Youth Council meeting	Skopje, MK
15 December 2025	Blue Skills Pact in EUSAIR Inauguration Day	online
16 December 2025	TSG 1 meeting	online
2026 Spring round of TSGs meetings	Regular TSGs meetings	
26 February 2026	TSG 1 meeting	Online
4-5 March 2026	Governing Board meeting	Ohrid, MK
19 March 2026	Enhancing cooperation in border regions	Resen, MK
24-25 March 2026	TSG 3 meeting B2B capacity building event	Skopje, MK
15-16 April 2025	TSG 4 meeting	Skopje, MK
20 April 2026	TSG 2 energy meeting	Online
21-22 April	TSG 5 meeting	Sarajevo, BiH
24 April 2026	TSG 2 Transport meeting	Online
18-20 May 2026	EUSAIR Annual Forum	Skopje, MK

ANNEX II

Achievements of All Chairmanship of North Macedonia

- ❖ The All Chairmanship of North Macedonia organized the following Round Tables and Conferences:
 - The Conference on the 25th Anniversary of the Ancona Declaration “New Horizons and Prospects for the European Union” organized by the Marche Region in cooperation with the All Permanent Secretariat on 27 June 2025 in Ancona (Italy);
 - The Round Table on “The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: Dialogue with the Western Balkans on Implementation and Regional Implications”, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in cooperation with the All Permanent Secretariat on 18 November 2025 in Skopje;
 - The Round Table on Inter-University cooperation “Strengthening Regional Partnerships” organised by UniAdrion in cooperation with the Permanent Secretariat and the University St. Clement Ohridski Bitola on 4 December 2025 in Bitola (North Macedonia);
- ❖ The I All Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meeting took place on October 21, 2025 in Skopje (North Macedonia), and the II All CSO took place in Ohrid (North Macedonia) on March 4, 2026;
- ❖ The All Permanent Secretariat organized, under the Chairmanship of North Macedonia the 19th ed. of the Adriatic Mediterranean Festival, 25-30 August in Ancona (Italy);
- ❖ The All Permanent Secretariat took part in the 19th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organisations, hosted by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat in Sarajevo on 4 December 2025. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views on strategic priorities and explore ways to enhance coordination and synergies across South-East Europe, with a particular focus on advancing smart, sustainable and resilient connectivity as a driver for inclusive economic development, stronger regional cooperation, and the European integration of the Western Balkans, in line with EU priorities;
- ❖ The 20th Conference of Presidents/Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative was organised on 23–24 April 2026 in Skopje (North Macedonia) by the Assembly of North Macedonia, focusing on the issues of strengthening peace and stability through parliamentary diplomacy, as well as enhancing regional connectivity, with particular attention to key transport corridors as drivers of integration and economic development. The speakers also adopted a Joint Conference Statement, outlining their views on future cooperation in the All region and reaffirming the role of parliaments as directly elected representatives of the people.