Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of Peace and Conflict

THE EU STRATEGY FOR ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION IN LIGHT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Vasileios MIGKOS

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2018

THE EU STRATEGY FOR ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION IN LIGHT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Vasileios MIGKOS

Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of Peace and Conflict

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2018

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

The jury finds that VASILEIOS MIGKOS has on the date of 17 SEPTEMBER 2018 successfully passed the defense examination and approves his Master's Thesis titled "EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region in Light of Regional Cooperation for Peace and Development".

Doç. Dr. Burak Bilgehan ÖZPEK (Jury President)

Doç. Dr. Murat ÖNSOY (Main Adviser)

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Esengül AYAZ AVAN

I agree that the signatures above belong to the faculty members listed.

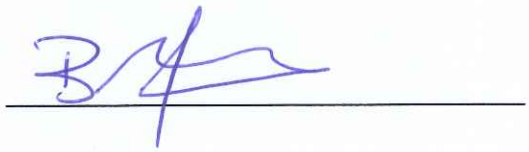
Graduate School Director

DECLARATION

I promise that my thesis is completely my own work and that I have provided a source for every quotation and citation. I give permission for paper and digital copies of my thesis to be kept in Hacettepe University's Graduate School of Social Sciences' archives under the conditions indicated below:

- [x] My thesis can be accessed in full from any location.
- [ ] My thesis can only be accessed from Hacettepe University premises.
- [ ] I do not want my thesis/report to be accessed until ..... year(s) later. After this amount of time if I have not applied to an extension of time, my thesis can be accessed in full from any location.

17 September 2018



VASILEIOS MIGKOS

YAYIMLAMA VE FİKRİ MÜLKİYET HAKLARI BEYANI

Enstitü tarafından onaylanan lisansüstü tezimin/raporumun tamamını veya herhangi bir kısmını, basılı (kâğıt) ve elektronik formatta arşivleme ve aşağıda verilen koşullarla kullanıma açma iznini Hacettepe Üniversitesine verdiğimi bildiririm. Bu izinle Üniversiteye verilen kullanım hakları dışındaki tüm fikri mülkiyet haklarım bende kalacak, tezimin tamamının ya da bir bölümünün gelecekteki çalışmalarda (makale, kitap, lisans ve patent vb.) kullanım hakları bana ait olacaktır.

Tezin kendi orijinal çalışmam olduğunu, başkalarının haklarını ihlal etmediğimi ve tezimin tek yetkili sahibi olduğumu beyan ve taahhüt ederim. Tezimde yer alan telif hakkı bulunan ve sahiplerinden yazılı izin alınarak kullanılması zorunlu metinlerin yazılı izin alınarak kullandığımı ve istenildiğinde suretlerini Üniversiteye teslim etmeyi taahhüt ederim.

☑ **Tezimin/Raporumun tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılabilir ve bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınabilir.**
(Bu seçenekle teziniz arama motorlarında indekslenebilecek, daha sonra tezinizin erişim statüsünün değiştirilmesini talep etseniz ve kütüphane bu talebinizi yerine getirse bile, teziniz arama motorlarının önbelleklerinde kalmaya devam edebilecektir)

○ **Tezimin/Raporumun .....tarihine kadar erişime açılmasını ve fotokopi alınmasını (İç Kapak, Özet, İçindekiler ve Kaynakça hariç) istemiyorum.**
(Bu sürenin sonunda uzatma için başvuruda bulunmadığım takdirde, tezimin/raporumun tamamı her yerden erişime açılabilir, kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınabilir)

○ **Tezimin/Raporumun.....tarihine kadar erişime açılmasını istemiyorum ancak kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisinin alınmasını onaylıyorum.**

○ **Serbest Seçenek/Yazarın Seçimi**

17 / 03 / 2018

(İmza)

VASILEIOS MIGKOS

Öğrencinin Adı SOYADI

ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Doç.Dr. Murat ÖNSOY** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

Vasileios Mijkos

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

My thesis` supervisor Associate Prof. Dr Murat Önsoy for his constructive guidance and support. I have been fortunate enough to work under the supervision of a patient and resourceful scholar. Also, Dr Bugay Turhan for his valuable support.

My classmates and Program`s Professors with whom I had a wonderful 2-semesters period in Şile, İstanbul during the Program’s courses.

My parents who supported and encouraged me during my studies in Turkey and my efforts to conclude my thesis.

ABSTRACT

MIGKOS, Vasileios. *"The EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region in Light of Regional Cooperation for Peace and Development"* Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2018.

The Treaty of Lisbon (2009) highlighted the importance of territorial cohesion for European Union`s (EU) integration process. Within this process, the macro-regions play a key role as an alternative option to the mainstream integration tools. They are groupings of adjacent countries or regions of countries which share a common natural landmark and act together to improve the conditions of their respective area. They don`t require the involvement of all EU member states but only those that share a given region. In these groupings may also participate countries which are neighbouring to the EU but are not EU members. The goal of the members of a macro-region is to respond jointly to common regional challenges.

The EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), concerns all the Adriatic and Ionian coastal countries, plus Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. This thesis investigates what is the contribution of EUSAIR in regional peace and development. At the same time, it explores its goals and implementation, in terms of sustainability, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Subsequently this thesis examines the problems and the challenges that EUSAIR might face and how those could be addressed through the policies that the strategy applies in the region.

The thesis' findings prove that EUSAIR is not only possible but also a necessity for the region, as it promotes territorial cohesion through interregional, cross-border and transnational cooperation even among countries which until recently have been fighting against each other. The strategy seeks to improve multi-level, multi-sector and international cooperation on issues of common concern, such as water quality, fisheries, transport, culture, tourism etc. Inevitably, it confronts with the chronic problems and perils of the region such as territorial and sea-border disputes, nationalism and structural administrative difficulties.

Key Words:

Adriatic Ionian Initiative, Macro-region, Macro-regional Strategy, Peace and Development, Regional Cooperation, Territorial Cohesion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL……..i
DECLARATION……ii
YAYIMLAMA VE FİKRİ MÜLKİYET HAKLARI BEYANI.....iii
ETİK BEYAN.....iv
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS……v
ABSTRACT……vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS……ix

PREABMLE……...1

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION…….……..…….....4
1.1 Brief Flashback on EU Integration History…….…..4
1.2 Thesis` Theoretical Framework and Literature Review...……...6
1.3 Thesis` Contribution and Methodology……..…...16

CHAPTER 2: THE EVOLUTION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION……19
2.1 The European Integration Theoretical Background……...19
2.2 EU Integration Challenges…….……24
2.3 Introduction to the EU`s Territorial Policies…….28
2.4 Regional Economic Integration……36

CHAPTER 3: EU MACRO-REGIONS AND MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES……41
3.1 EU Macro-regional Strategies and Macro-regions.....42

CHAPTER 4: THE HISTORY, STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC – IONIAN REGION (EUSAIR)…..…..51
4.1 Historical Background……51
4.2 Objectives, Scopes, Pillars and Fields of Action of EUSAIR....58
4.3 Instruments, Stakeholders, Partnerships and Networks of the EUSAIR…….……..…65

CHAPTER 5: EUSAIR`s CONTRIBUTION IN REGIONAL PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD……...72

5.1 Fostering Interstate, Interregional and Inter-Sectoral Cooperation……..73

5.2 EUSAIR`s Contribution in Regional Development……..77

5.3 Deepening Cooperation and Sense of Common Belonging.....81

5.4 Risks and Challenges.....85

5.5 The International Players.....87

5.6 Regional International Relations …..……..……..92

5.7 Practical Issues and Technicalities ..……..…..…….....95

CONCLUSIVE EPILOGUE…….100

REFERENCES……..112

APPENDIX 1 – Originality Report……115

APPENDIX 2 – Ethics Commission Waiver Report Form…….116

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC Forum – Adriatic Ionian Chambers of Commerce Forum

AII – Adriatic Ionian Initiative

AII-PS – Adriatic Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Benelux – Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg

BSAP – Baltic Sea Action Plan

BSR – Baltic Sea Region

BSAC – Baltic Sea Advisory Council

BSEC – Black Sea Economic Cooperation

CAAC – Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities

CEFTA – Central European Free Trade Agreement

CEI – Central European Initiative

CFP – Common Fishery Policy

CoR – Committee of the Regions

CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

CSCE – Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

DCP – Danube Cooperation Process

DG REGIO – Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy

ECSC – European Coal and Steel Community

EEC – European Economic Community

EEZ – Exclusive Economic Zone

ENP – European Neighborhood Policy

ENPI – European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

ESEC – Economic Security

ESF – European Social Fund

ETQ – European Tourism Quality

EU – European Union

EULEX - European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo

EUFOR – European Union Force

EUSAR – EU Strategy for the Alpine Regions

EUSAIR – EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region

EUSBSR - EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

EUSDR – EU Strategy for the Danube Region

FAIC – Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

GDP – Gross Domectic Product

GFCM – General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

GNP – Gross National Product

HELCOM – Helsinki Commission of Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

HSEC – Human Security

ICZM – Integrated Coastal Zone Management

IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

MERCOSUR – Mercado Común del Sur

MSP – Marine Spatial Planning

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCP – National Contact Points

ND – Northern Dimension

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NIS – Naftna Industrija Srbije

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OPRC – Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

RACMED – Regional Advisory Council for the Mediterranean

RCC – Regional Cooperation Council

REI – Regional Economic Integration

RSP – Regional Security Policy

SAR – Synthetic Aperture Radar

SEC – Security

SECI – Southeast European Cooperative Initiative

SEECP – South East European Cooperation Process

SMEs – Small and Medium Enterprises

SFR Yugoslavia – Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

TAP – Trans Adriatic Pipeline

UN – United Nations

UNCLOS – United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UniAdrion – University of Adriatic Ionian Seas

USA – United States of America

WG – Working Groups

Preamble

[1]

Multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance with a focus on region-based policies has been suggested as a sustainable model for the construction of a stronger European Union in times of the economic crisis. This type of governance engages actors from various levels (supranational, national and subnational) in the process of planning and implementing European Union (EU) policies. It acts as a platform for productive communication and interaction among the participants with the aim to promote and assist the implementation of joint strategic plans and policies. The public are also invited to get involved, interact and contribute in this process, resulting gradually to the empowerment of a common and active EU citizenship.[2] Such policies focus not only on the international sphere but also on the national and the regional. The so called "region-based policies" are more flexible and pragmatic as they are meant to address issues from a regional point of view. Such issues might be affecting a region which is shared by many adjacent countries. Region-based policies overcome national and administrative borders to ensure a harmonized and unified cross-border management of cross-border issues. They follow the norms of differentiated integration as they allow different regions of the EU to follow different, individualized and tailored pace towards EU integration. In

[1] Map of EUSAIR countries/regions, EUSAIR website: https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/
[2] Tani A., Stocchiero A., Bona M. (Dec. 2015): "The EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region one year later: the fatigues of the process" pg 4

that sense, the region-based policies are holistic as they can cover the matters of people living in a region no matter where the national and administrative borders lie and thus they deepen regionalism.

In terms of International Relations, regionalism is defined as the sense of common belonging and common purpose, shared among the population residing within a defined geographical region which might be shared by various neighboring countries. Regionalism presupposes the joint planning and implementation of collaborative projects which express the sense of common belonging to a region and require collective action of those living this region[3]. There are various policy tools which are used to develop such projects and deepen regionalism within the EU. Such a tool are the strategies for the EU macro-regions. In terms of geography, "macro-region" refers to a large territorial unit or subsystem including areas from several neighboring countries. In terms of administration, the macro-region lies between the state and the international level[4].

For the sake of deepening European integration and developing constructive and harmonious relations with its neighboring countries, the EU has adopted a number of Macro-regional Strategies which resulted to the creation of macro-regions. The ambition is to accelerate the pace of a more balanced and realistic "europeanization" within the continent. During the last two decades, the EU has concluded the creation of three Macro-regions: i) The Baltic Sea Macro-region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland) which was developed as a result of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)[5], ii) the Danube Macro-region (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia) which originates from the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)[6], and iii) the Adriatic-Ionian Seas macro-region (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina) which is the result of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)[7]. The Alpine Macro-region (Austria, France, Germany, Italy,

[3] Farazmand Ali, Pinkowski Jack (2006): "Handbook of Globalization, Governance and Public Administration" pg 211.
[4] Soderbaum Frederik (September 2004): "Exploring the Links between Micro-regionalism and Macro-regionalism" pg 1
[5] European Commission Action Plan SWD(2017) 118 final (20 March 2017): European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
[6] European Commission Action Plan SEC(2010) 1489 (2010): European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
[7] European Commission Action Plan SWD(2014) 190 final (17 June 2014): European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland) is expected to be the action field for the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSAR)[8].

EUSAIR, as all EU`s Macro-regional Strategies, is an aspect of differentiated integration in the Adriatic – Ionian region. It acts as a platform for territorial cooperation among the actors of the region who come from different policy levels. This thesis provides an analysis of its theoretical background, including the history of EU integration, to assist the reader understand how this new model of regional governance relates to the EU`s cohesion policy. Furthermore, it explores EUSAIR`s operational and structural aspects to measure its contribution in regional peace and development. It consists of five chapters: The first chapter introduces the reader to the history of EU integration, sets the thesis` theoretical background and conducts a literature review and describes what is the contribution this thesis aspires to make and how. The second chapter presents the general theoretical framework of EU integration, with a focus on EU territorial policies. The third chapter introduces the reader to EU Macro-regional Strategies, while the fourth chapter narrows further to the Adriatic Ionian Initiative and the historical background, objectives, pillars, institutional structure and instruments of the EUSAIR. The fifth chapter comprises a conclusive presentation of EUSAIR`s contribution to regional peace and development taking also a look at the problems and challenges that EUSAIR faced, still faces or might face in the future and suggests possible ways of addressing them.

Overall, the reader of this thesis is provided with a panorama of EU integration history and theories and is able to understand what EUSAIR is and how it works. By understanding this, there can be made the connection of EUSAIR to the theory of differentiated integration and the theories of peace and development. Exploring EUSAIR`s deliverables allows the thesis to conduct an evaluation of its contribution (present and future/potential) in regional peace and development. Given the limited relevant literature, EUSAIR is a topic still unexplored and that increases the added-value of this thesis which, apart from its measurable results of research, can be also a useful guide for someone who gets to know EUSAIR from the very scratch.

[8] European Commission Action Plan SWD(2015) 146 final (28 July 2015): European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF FLASHBACK ON EU INTEGRATION

Since its very foundation, the idea of creating a Union in Europe was based on economic integration, a process of reducing barriers on transactions between the member states. For this reason, the member states agreed that there should be reached the point where decisions would be taken at the European rather than at the national level, in order to gradually achieve the single market, an area where the movement of goods, persons and capitals is free and the same rules apply for all the participating member states.[9] To develop a safe and harmonious environment of economic interaction, the member states would inevitably have to adopt common policies sectors such as fight against crime and terrorism and environmental protection and to institutionalise international trade and policy making mechanisms. The economic integration was then expected to accelerate and deepen political integration within the continent, eliminate international antagonisms and prevent future wars.

What was then called as "spillover effect"[10] (integration in one sector subsequently fosters integration in other sectors) motivated the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). According to the theory of neo-functionalism, the cooperation of the member states in the sector of coal and steel would play a vital role as these were the two fundamental raw materials for industry, namely the war industries of the European states. Starting from this crucial economic sector, the spillover effect was expected to increase cooperation in other economic (economic spillover) and political sectors (political spillover). For this reason, the European Economic Community (EEC), which succeeded the ECSC and was precedent to the European Union (EU), was a purely economic entity, focusing on interstate cooperation. Since then, the continent made big steps from a state-centric status towards a multi-state Union. The EU was established by the Maastricht Treaty with

[9] Daley, C. & Sonny, A. (2015): Timeline of European Integration, factsheet pg 3, CIVITAS Institute for the study of civil society

[10] Lindberg, L. (1963), "The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration" (Stanford UP), excerpt in Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni (2006), Debates on European Integration (Palgrave Macmillan), pg.117-133.

the aim to deepen further the economic cooperation and foster a political union among the member states. It is the result of an integration process based on the regionalism approach.

The attempts for interstate cooperation in Europe commenced immediately after World War II (WWII), when Europe found itself in between the two super-powers which were competing one another (USA and USSR) in their attempt to increase their power and influence on the European continent. To secure its independence and autonomy, Europe`s stronger states saw the need to cooperate and take all the proper measures to avoid a new inter - European war. The US supported the idea of a union among the western European states which would allow them to better confront the Soviets. Economic cooperation was meant to eliminate the antagonism between previously opponent states and turn them into close partners. France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg, overcame their enmities and initiated a cooperation in the sectors of coal and steel, the materials which constituted the basis of industrial production, including weapons` production. This coal and steel union would allow those countries to control each other`s` war industries and was considered as an important step towards pan-European peace. In 1951, the aforementioned states signed the Treaty of Paris which established the ECSC. The goal of this Treaty was to unify the management of steel and coal resources by the participating member states. Seen within a wider context, the ECSC was the result of an increasing international interdependency that emerged across the globe in the aftermath of WWII.

Through the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the contracted states established the “European Atomic Energy Community” (Euratom) and the “European Economic Community (EEC)”, aiming to strengthen the cooperation in the fields of energy and economy. The 60`s was a period of prosperity for Europe. The EEC states jointly controlled the food production to ensure sufficiency and they abstained from charging custom duties when trading among each other. In the 70`s occurs the first enlargement of the Community which focused on regional funding for the creation of jobs and infrastructure and also on environmental protection through the introduction of the principle “the polluter pays.” Further enlarged during the 80`s, the Community adopted the Single European Act to surmount the problems within the free trade-zone through a coherent 6-year programme which led to the “Single Market” during the 90`s. The same period, the Europeans sought ways to boost cooperation in environmental protection, security and defence matters and signed the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam. In parallel, the Schengen treaty established freedom of travel among the EU members states. In 2000`s the EU

adopted the Lisbon treaty to deepen cooperation among its member states, making use of territorial cooperation and regional development as fundamental tools to overcome the disparities across the continent. Nowadays the EU attaches major importance to the goals of territorial cohesion, local development and subsidiarity principle.

1.2 THESIS` THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2012, before the general assembly of the Committee of the Regions, Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Regional Policy stated that “an integrated approach, with coordination of actions across policy areas will achieve better results than individual initiatives. Where groups of countries and regions choose to come together to achieve common goals, this will also strengthen EU cohesion.” The definition for EU macro-regions that lies under the territorial approach, opened the path for the theoretical – scientific definition of EU macro-regions.

The European Union is responsible for promoting territorial cooperation and enhancing cross-border synergies aiming to transnational integration. The crisis of 2009 has been a critical point for European integration as well. It initiated the discussions for alternative options of European integration. It now looks like the European integration as we knew it, has come to an end. It gives its place to a differentiated integration model which allows the process to continue, even if there are disintegrative moments such as the Dutch referendum on the Treaty establishing the European Constitution. After all, what is needed in any case is deeper integration within the EU and enhanced cooperation and convergence with its external neighbors. This is the only way that the EU can move forward.

Despite its long-time experience, the EU is facing major integration challenges which have been intensified after its enlargements and namely after the economic crisis emerged. The decision – making process has become more complicated and problematic as the EU itself has become more heterogenous, comprising of member states which face a huge variety of problems and enjoy extremely different paces of development and growth. Moravcsik strongly supports the idea that the enlargement process has challenged EU`s integration and slowed down the democratic process within the EU.

EU regional policy, either known as cohesion policy, is as old as the Treaty of Rome where there was the first mention to the term and since then it developed into EU`s fundamental policy pillar. The implementation of regional policy has three aspects that are equally important, interdependent and interacting with each other: economic, social and territorial cohesion. The economic and social cohesion focus on all regions and cities within the EU. They seek to increase business competitiveness providing particular support to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), support the development of green economies in the regions, create jobs, boost economic growth and sustainable development, provide people with better services and improve the quality of life within the EU.

The Lisbon Treaty and the Europe 2020 agenda introduced the territorial cohesion which as of 2013 has become an integral part of the EU`s cohesion policy. The goal of territorial cohesion is to capitalize on the advantages and potentials of European territories so they can best contribute to a sustainable and balanced development of the EU. At the same time, it attempts to address the issue of concentration given that cities have both positive and negative aspects: they make a major contribution in innovation and productivity but also in the pollution and social exclusion. To eliminate the phenomenon of concentration it is important that the connectivity among European territories is improved so that people can live wherever they want, with access to public services, efficient transport, reliable energy networks and broadband internet throughout the territory. For this reason, there is a focus on strengthening and widening the linkages between rural and urban areas. In parallel, the territorial cohesion presupposes enhanced cooperation among the European territories to address issues that are not restricted by the administrative borders, such as climate change and traffic congestion. For this purpose, the EU has been systematically promoting new forms of cooperation among its states and regions, one of which are the EU Macro-regional Strategies[11]. These cooperative forms are in alignment with the provisions of the “Europe 2020 Strategy”.

“Europe2020” was launched in 2010 as a ten-year strategy to address issues related to employment, research and development, climate/energy, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction within the EU. It seeks to achieve its goals through a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth[12]. The “Europe 2020 Strategy”

[11] Commission of the European Communities (2008): “Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion – Turning territorial diversity into strength” pg 3 - 8
[12] European Commission (2010): “EUROPE 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, COM(2010) 2020 pg 8

can have specific positive outcomes only if regions get actively involved in its implementation and participate as equal players in a multilevel governance model. The role of regions as cells of a balanced development within the EU in the frames of an enhanced territorial cooperation towards the achievement of common European goals, is widely recognized. The examples of Italy and Greece, which recently widened the administrative autonomy of their self-governed regions through constitutional and legislative reformations, highlight the important role that regions are expected to play in European integration. The EU seeks for ways to support each of its regions to reach their full potential, taking advantage of their productivity capacity and special features that will increase their competitiveness and attractiveness.

Multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance with a focus on region-based policies has been suggested as a sustainable model for the construction of a stronger European Union in times of the economic crisis. This type of governance engages actors from various levels (supranational, national and subnational) in the process of planning and implementing European Union (EU) policies. It acts as a platform for productive communication and interaction among the participants with the aim to promote and assist the implementation of joint strategic plans and policies. The public are also invited to get involved, interact and contribute in this process, resulting gradually to the empowerment of a common and active EU citizenship.[13] Such policies focus not only on the international sphere but also on the national and the regional. The so called “region-based policies” are more flexible and pragmatic as they are meant to address issues from a regional point of view. Such issues might be affecting a region which is shared by many adjacent countries. Region-based policies overcome national and administrative borders to ensure a harmonized and unified cross-border management of cross-border issues. They follow the norms of differentiated integration as they allow different regions of the EU to follow different, individualized and tailored pace towards EU integration. In that sense, the region-based policies are holistic as they can cover the matters of people living in a region no matter where the national and administrative borders lie and thus they deepen regionalism.

The Lisbon Treaty outspokenly declared that it is very important for the EU to reassure the territorial cohesion among all the regions of Europe and to promote the subsidiarity principle[14]. It is a pragmatic and region-based approach of how to

[13] Tani A., Stocchiero A. (Dec. 2015): “The EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region one year later: the fatigues of the process”
[14] Lisbon Treaty, Art. 3, 5

manage territories and the human activities taking place there. Europe is seen as a sum of regions which need to cooperate to face common challenges such as pollution, management of natural resources, safety of transportation networks and cross-border criminal activity. For this purpose, €351,8 billion out of the total EU's budget for the period 2014-2020, will be invested by the cohesion policy in Europe's member states, regions and cities. This amount is equal to 32,5 % of the overall EU budget for the same period, which shows the importance that the EU attaches on its regional development[15]. Moreover, the investments made for the fulfilment of regional policy goals are also addressed to other EU policy objectives such as education, employment, energy, environment, single market, research and innovation and assist EU regions to meet the goals set by the EU2020 Strategy.

As cohesion policy seeks to decrease inequalities and deepen democracy and legitimacy within the EU, it needs to ensure that local and regional actors are involved in a multi-level governance and a bottom-up approach of policy making. Taking this under consideration, the EU has attributed major importance to territorial cooperation to achieve “more growth and jobs for all regions and cities of the European Union". Within this framework, cities and regions are encouraged to collaborate and share knowledge by participating in joint programmes, projects and networks. The European territorial cooperation has three dimensions: cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation[16].

Cross-border Cooperation concerns regions that may lie within and outside EU borders. It encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, joint management of natural resources, improvement of connectivity between urban and rural areas, expansion of transportation and communication networks, joint use of infrastructure, administrative cooperation and capacity building, employment, community interaction, cultural and social affairs. Cross-border action is border region-tailored and based on “analysis and response” strategies. Transnational Cooperation refers to coordinated strategic responses of greater European regions that surround national landmarks such as sea basins (e.g. Adriatic and Ionian) or mountain ranges (e.g. Alpine) to joint challenges like national disasters management, transport and communication networks, international entrepreneurship and innovation, urban development and others, with a special focus to remote and island areas. Through Interregional Cooperation the local and regional actors from across Europe collaborate and exchange experiences in order

[15] European Commission website: “European Social Fund – Open Days, 13th European Week of Regions and Cities” (http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=68&langId=el&eventId=162)
[16] Interreg website: https://www.interreg.gr/en/european-territorial-cooperation.html

to contribute to the EU's strategies on growth, jobs and sustainable development. By linking regions of different levels of advancement in a number of policy fields such as innovation, demographic change, energy supply and climate change, interregional cooperation aims at reducing disparities across the EU[17].

To support the implementation of its regional policy and achieve fulfilment of its goals, the EU makes use of the European Structural and Investment Funds. The Structural Funds comprise the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, aiming to support the economic and social restructure of the EU by reducing the gaps among the EU regions in various sectors such as the infrastructure and employment. The Investment Funds comprise the Cohesion Fund which invests in transport networks and environmental projects, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development which invests in the increase of the resilience, innovation and climate-friendliness of agriculture in rural areas and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund which promotes sustainable fisheries and aquaculture across the EU. Parallelly there is the EU Solidarity Fund which supports operations in disaster-stricken regions providing the capacity for rapid, efficient and flexible response in case of natural disasters[18].

Regional policy touches every political level of the EU: from the Commission and the EU Parliament to the national, regional and local authorities of the member-states. EU cohesion policy aims to support and promote isomeric development among EU member-states and regions. The national, regional and local entities cooperate together for the implementation of the goals of cohesion policy framework which will be operational for 7 years (the current period refers to the years 2014-2020). Following the norms of regionalism, the biggest part of EU`s cohesion policy funds concerns the less developed European countries and regions in order to support them to catch up the integration pace and reduce the economic, social and territorial disparities within the EU[19].

In terms of International Relations, regionalism is defined as the sense of common belonging and common purpose, shared among the population residing within a defined geographical region which might be shared by various neighboring countries. Regionalism presupposes the joint planning and implementation of collaborative projects which express the sense of common belonging to a region

[17] Interreg website: https://www.interreg.gr/en/european-territorial-cooperation.html
[18] European Commission (2014): "Regional policy – Making Europe`s regions and cities more competitive, fostering growth and creating jobs" pg 6
[19] European Commission (2014): An introduction to EU Cohesion Policy 2014 – 2020, pg 2

and require collective action of those living this region[20]. There are various policy tools which are used to develop such projects and deepen regionalism within the EU. Such a tool are the strategies for the EU macro-regions. In terms of geography, "macro-region" refers to a large territorial unit or subsystem including areas from several neighboring countries. In terms of administration, the macro-region lies between the state and the international level[21].

Regionalism constitutes one of EU`s foreign policy pillars and calls for the establishment of a network of international relations based on a region-to-region platform alongside with the traditional relations which were developed on a purely state(s)-to-state(s) platform. This new trend, commonly known as "interregionalism," was inserted by the Treaty of Maastricht which highlighted the importance that the EU should pay on matters of trade, aid, development, security and regional integration. Since then, the EU has developed relations and partnerships not only with states, but also with regional organizations, operational mechanisms and regional grouping countries, namely in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Interregionalism can be perceived as "a process of widening and deepening political, economic and societal interactions between international regions."[22] Since regions interact with regions in the frame of interregional cooperation, the more integrated and coherent are the counterparts, the more effective will be this cooperation. For the EU, it is a handy tool to establish productive relations with regions which might exceed beyond its borders. The goal is to achieve better levels of integration within the EU and increase the pace of convergence of potential EU members.

With the aim to promote this convergence, the EU provides financial support to candidate and potential candidate countries through its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The funds of IPA are addressed into five fields of action: transition assistance and institution building, cross-border cooperation, regional development, human resources development and rural development. Cooperation taking place within IPA framework can be between EU member states and candidate/potential candidate countries or between candidate and potential candidate themselves. Moreover, IPA beneficiary countries can participate in

[20] Farazmand Ali, Pinkowski Jack (2006): "Handbook of Globalization, Governance and Public Administration" pg 211.
[21] Soderbaum F. (September 2004): "Exploring the Links between Micro-regionalism and Macro-regionalism" pg 1
[22] Roloff, R. (2006): "Interregionalism and International Relations" pg 18

transnational cooperation programmes that are supported by EU`s structural funds (e.g. South East Europe and MED Programmes)[23].

For the sake of deepening European integration and/or developing constructive and harmonious relations with its neighboring countries, the EU has adopted a number of Macro-regional Strategies which resulted to the creation of macro-regions, with the ambition to accelerate the pace of a more balanced and realistic "europeanization" within the continent. The goal is to bring local, regional, national and EU actors together to cooperate and address jointly common regional challenges e.g. environmental protection, natural disasters, fisheries, tourism, connectivity etc. During the last two decades, the EU has concluded the creation of three Macro-regions: i) The Baltic Sea Macro-region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland) which was developed as a result of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)[24], ii) the Danube Macro-region (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia) which originates from the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)[25], and iii) the Adriatic-Ionian Seas macro-region (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina) which is the result of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)[26]. The Alpine Macro-region (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland) is expected to be the implementation field for the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSAR)[27]. All the aforementioned Strategies constitute aspects of EU`s regional policy.

From all the EU Macro-regional Strategies, EUSAIR is of particular interest as it bears a unique combination of two characteristics. It applies to regions of Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina. That means it concerns namely the Western Balkans, a postwar region. Moreover, half of its participating countries are EU members (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia), while the rest of them are either candidate or potential candidates (Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina). Given these two points, it should be observed that EUSAIR has two, equally important dimensions: the internal and the external. Its internal dimension refers to deepening EU integration

[23] Interreg website: https://www.interreg.gr/en/european-territorial-cooperation.html
[24] European Commission Action Plan SWD(2017) 118 final (20 March 2017): European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
[25] European Commission Action Plan SEC(2010) 1489 (2010): European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
[26] European Commission Action Plan SWD(2014) 190 final (17 June 2014): European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
[27] European Commission Action Plan SWD(2015) 146 final (28 July 2015): European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region

as the implementation of EUSAIR will assist the candidate and potential candidate countries to better adjust their policies and practices to the EU standards. They will have the chance to interact and cooperate with countries that are already EU members and gain from their experience and technical knowledge. Thus they get better prepared to follow the EU integration pace as soon as they are granted an EU membership. At the same time, the EU receives valuable inputs from the regions and can adjust its regional policy accordingly. The external dimension refers to the fact that through EUSAIR, the EU builds stronger and more harmonious relations with its neighboring non-member states based on close cooperation and stabilization of peace.

The EUSAIR bears features from all three categories of territorial cooperation. To the extent that it concerns regions located on either side of EU`s internal or external borders, surrounding the sea basin of Adriatic and Ionian acting as a network for exchanging knowledge and decreasing disparities among the various participants, it is a form of transnational synergy based on cross-border collaboration aiming to achieve interregional interaction for development and peace in this versatile and fragile region. Peace is perceived as the absence of violence, a definition firstly provided by Johan Galtung. Starting from this point, regional peace could be defined as the vast region of social orders where violence is absent. Violence is present when the people of the region feel that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations. Simply put, when people feel they don`t have or they are deprived of having what they believe they could or should have[28]. For example, a minority living in a Balkan country feeling that it is not granted the rights it should be enjoying as a minority. Violence can have various forms with the most prominent being the physical violence, when humans are hurt somatically. However, the constraints on people`s movements and on their well-being can also be considered as a type of physical violence, for example when there is no or limited access to transportation or other public services, or the case of keeping large segments of a population at the same place with mobility being the monopoly of the selected few[29]. Such cases of violence are significantly complicated and potentially dangerous. They are neither obvious nor easily measurable and detectable as they are built into the structure, establishing and

[28] Galtung, J. (1969): “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6 No. 3 (1969), pg 167 - 191
[29] Galtung, J. (1969): “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6 No. 3 (1969), pg 167 - 191

persevering conditions of inequalities and injustice. That's why they have been named and categorized as structural violence.

Following the above analysis and getting back to the starting point, meaning the definition of peace, there should be made a distinction between positive and negative peace, based on the aforementioned distinction between physical and structural violence. Negative peace exists when there is absence of physical violence but there is presence of structural violence. That means that tension is subdued and can break out at any time physical violence. On the other hand, positive peace is achieved when neither physical nor structural violence exist. This presupposes an environment of safety, stability, human security, justice, equality and rule of law. EU`s regional policy, including EUSAIR, targets on the establishment and deepening of positive peace[30].

The EU itself has been setup to establish peace and cooperation for development in an environment of freedom, security and justice and these are the channels leading towards development. Within an economic and monetary union, it seeks to achieve a sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and environmental protection, to promote scientific and technological progress, to enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries with respect to its rich cultural and linguistic diversity. It has been aimed as a socially and economically liberal entity with a focus on ensuring human dignity and freedom, democracy, equality and non-discrimination, rule of law and protection of human rights. Given all the above, the EUSAIR, as one of the major tools for the materialization of EU`s overall goals and principles in the sensitive Adriatic – Ionian region, constitutes an interesting field for researching its contribution in regional peace and development. Since EUSAIR, as every other EU Macro-regional Strategy, constitute important aspects of EU`s regional policy, this case study analysis can be also useful for the measurement of what is the overall contribution of EU`s regional policy in peace and development in Adriatic – Ionian region.

The plans for the adoption of more Macro-regional Strategies across the European continent are hoped to bring a snowball effect and upgrade EU`s integration process in a differentiated manner. The EU macro-regions are expected to act as cells of balanced development across the EU, not same, but balanced. Whether this attempt will strengthen or weaken the EU integration is another matter for

[30] Galtung, J. (1969): "Violence, Peace and Peace Research" Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6 No. 3 (1969), pg 167 - 191

academic investigation. However, it should be noted that the EU Macro-regional Strategies constitute a representing example of differentiated integration and multi-level governance. For this reason, their paradigms can be a useful research tool to explore whether differentiated integration is beneficial for the EU or it deteriorates the situation resulting to a multi-speed, multi-levelled and imbalanced EU full of inequalities.

As it has been mentioned already, the scientific literature on Adriatic – Ionian Macro-regional Strategy is almost non-existing. This thesis has mostly focused its research on EU opinions, reports, decisions and other relevant official documents, integration theory books, official EU websites and data/statistics reports and analyses. The academic material that has been used comprises mostly EU integration-related writings.

Among the EU`s attempts to address these issues through differentiated integration models, Macro-regional Strategies play major role. This integration model does not require the participation of all the EU member states in the integration projects, but allows groupings and synergies of states and/or regions. The member states have thus the ability to implement European policies at their own speed. Despite the fact that differentiated integration was already mentioned in the Treaty of Rome, it is only the last 15 years that the EU makes use of it. De Neve argues that differentiated integration naturally results from the fact that the EU has become too big and heterogenic.

Although already old, Macro-regional Strategies are not widely examined by academic literature. Policy documents, communications, reports, news articles, announcements and decisions remain far the biggest source of information on the planning and realization of Macro-regional Strategies. Samecki`s discussion paper was the first attempt to explore this unknown topic. Koller highlights that the multi-level governance approach and the positioning of the Strategies between the national and the supranational level gives them a special role in EU`s integration process. Adriatic – Ionian Macro-regional Strategy is quite new (2014) and has thus very little ad hoc literature to support it. Research on this specific Strategy was namely based on policy documents, communications and reports. Worth to mention however, that it was also researched and approached through the general principles which apply for all Macro-regional Strategies in general.

1.3 THESIS` CONTROBUTION AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis attempts to highlight the importance of EUSAIR`s contribution in peace and development of the Adriatic and Ionian regions by conducting a policy-based approach. To do so, it focuses on the structure, the key players, the benefits and the challenges that are related to the implementation of the EUSAIR. The introduction part provided an overview of the thesis`s theoretical framework with an emphasis on EU integration, territorial cooperation and peace theory narrowing it down to the interrelation between them and regional peace and development within the framework of EUSAIR. The analysis of the history, the structure and the objectives of the EUSAIR that follows, helps the reader to understand how this Strategy operates and what it seeks to achieve.

The uniqueness of EUSAIR makes it a very interesting case study. The fact that Adriatic – Ionian Macro-region includes a post-war region and countries which are both members and non-members of the EU makes it important to conduct an in-depth analysis of its nature and goals as it is expected to play a major role in regional peace and development. Highlighting EUSAIR`s contribution in regional peace and development allows to conduct an in-depth analysis about the problems that this strategy faces or might face and to explore its potentials with regards to strengthening regional peace and boosting regional development. Designed to develop in a complicated and volatile geographical framework, the EUSAIR is of particular interest.

With regards to the topic and the way it is analyzed and researched in this thesis, the latter can be framed as a policy-focused descriptive study. EU integration theory and policies comprise the theoretical platform based on which is examined EUSAIR`s contribution in peace and development. EU macro-regions, is a field which has not yet been much explored, as it is quite new, let alone the EUSAIR which counts only four years of life. Dealing with a rather new issue complicates the process of finding data given also the very limited secondary literature so the research had to adjust to this fact. The use of analogy, meaning the exploration of case studies which bear similarities with the one that this dissertation focuses on, allows to extract some conclusions and make some estimations thus answering the thesis` central question using the basic principles and paradigms that exist among topics which have already been well researched. The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region was only launched in 2014 while the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the first EU Macro-regional Strategy was launched in 2009.

EUSAIR appeared as a very promising tool for deepening cohesion through territorial cooperation based on differentiated integration. As it is expected to make a major contribution in peace and development of the region of Adriatic and Ionian seas it is important to conduct an academic research on this topic. The importance of researching the topic is increased as the academic community has done little work so far to measure and analyze EUSAIR. This thesis aspires to be one of the first research papers by making a composition of EU integration and peace theories together with the policies and practical aspects of EUSAIR. As the overall economic, social and political situation in EU and the Balkans seems to have reached a critical edge, this thesis will attempt to evaluate EUSAIR`s role in this extremely volatile environment.

This thesis also conducts a literature analysis and ad hoc case study analyses. To the extent necessary, it approaches the topic through a comparative case studies analysis given that the overall principles and theoretical framework apply for all the existing EU macroregional strategies. For this reason, the Baltic Sea and Danube Macro-regional Strategies and the general theoretical background of Macro-regions can help to explain and evaluate EUSAIR`s design, implementation and future prospects. The literature research mostly focused on texts regarding the general Macro-regional Strategies theory. The case analysis was mostly based on reports, opinions, decisions and other relevant official documents that provide specific data for the Adriatic Ionian Macro-regional Strategy. For the needs of the research were used both qualitative and quantitative data concerning mainly the Adriatic Ionian Macro-regional Strategy.

All four strategies were inaugurated at different time points. The Danube and Baltic Sea Macro-regional Strategies being the oldest, are used as a guide to examine the initial phase of planning of the Adriatic Ionian Macro-regional Strategy and the results achieved so far. In an evaluation report of the European Commission in 2013 regarding the first two strategies, it was stated that every new strategy needs to have an added value. This means that every new strategy needs to take under consideration the good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of its precedent strategies. Adriatic Ionian strategy is, by definition, an interesting case to research as it is the only one developed so far that involves both EU and non-EU countries.

In this regard, this thesis attributes quite many lines to Adriatic Ionian Initiative which was developed before the EUSAIR in the same region. EUSAIR is unique as it focuses on South Eastern Europe, a region which presents numerous

geopolitical, social, cultural, political and economic challenges. It is thus important to measure the Strategy`s contribution in peace and development of a region which seems to be still far from stability. This fact answers also the question why there was a need for an Adriatic-Ionian Macro-regional Strategy which is substantial part of the thesis` research. To explore whether and why there was a need for an Adriatic-Ionian Macro-regional Strategy presupposes a mapping of the actors who called for it and those who have been implementing the strategy, the governance and the structure the Strategy has. This mapping is completed with the actors that were finally involved in the strategy and a research on the overall geographical and geopolitical context of the Adriatic-Ionian region. Conclusively, the thesis records the goals and outcomes the strategy is hoped to achieve. To sum up, the thesis aims to explore the necessity of the Adriatic Ionian Macro-regional Strategy, the actors involved and the governance model, the goals it aims to achieve, the geopolitical and other special features of the region, the risks and suggestions for improvement of the Strategy and thus to look into its contribution in regional peace and development.

CHAPTER 2:

THE EVOLUTION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The economic crisis has brought tremendous changes in the economic, political and social status of the EU countries. This new reality has majorly affected the process of integration. This chapter will explore into the history of European integration up until the situation as of nowadays. Starting from its very foundation, the EU integration went through many and various procedures to realize that its unity is now at stake, maybe more than ever before. Differentiated integration has been added to the traditional theories of EU integration, based on which the EU will try to achieve a new balance. A multi-speed and multi-level integration which seeks to ensure economic stability and security, to bridge the gaps between the more and less advanced regions and to achieve a sustainable development with respect to the unique feature and needs of its regions.

2.1 THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

History of the EU starts with the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC), or 'Common Market', among six member-states – Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. These countries created a new way of coming together to manage joint interests, focusing essentially on economic integration. The first enlargement took place when Denmark, Ireland and the UK joined the EEC in 1973. Towards the end of that decade, the European Parliament increased its influence in EEC affairs and in 1979 all citizens could, for the first time, elect its members directly. In 1981, Greece joined EEC, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. In 1987 the Single European Act was signed, establishing the principle of the free-flow of trade across EEC borders and thus creating the 'Single Market'.

The vision behind EEC (and later EU) was the integration of the continent and its gradual unification. This project concerns all the countries which are, directly or indirectly, related with the EU. The European integration mainly refers to the harmonization of economic, political, social and legal status of the involved states

and also to the industrial and cultural integration. The notion of a European Union was first conceived back in 1923 and the “Pan Europa Manifesto”. After decades of conflicts and two World Wars, the integration among the European states was about to make its first steps under the shape of the “European Coal and Steel Community”.

At that time, Europe was leaving behind a long era of conflicts and bloody wars and initiated long discussions and theoretical analyses about what should be done to ensure peace in the continent. European Union federalists advocated strongly for the creation of the “United States of Europe.” They believed that the realist state system of individual nation states would maintain the nationalistic politics which drowned the continent into two world wars. However, neo-functionalism suggested a different approach of European integration which had to be closer but without forcing its process too far or too quickly and show respect to the independence of nation states. Jean Monnet supported that if the sovereign states could integrate specific sectors in which they can apply common policy, this would initiate a “spillover” effect that would be diffused into more policy sectors. Jean Monnet`s theory affected the Schuman Declaration of 1950[31]. Based on this approach, it was decided that the member states should focus on Coal and Steel production policy. The joint management of coal and steel resources, the two substantial raw materials used by war industries and the integration of the relevant policy sectors would prevent the eruption of new wars. Schuman believed that this would be the first step for the integration of adjacent policy sectors such as taxation, trade and wages. It was also expected that the European institutions would eventually take over more and more authorities from national and political systems (Geddes 2004: 50).

A characteristic example of such a “spill-over effect” is the Internal Market Programme which was first applied in 1985. It eliminated the tariff barriers which prevented the free trade of goods among the member states. Freedom of goods` trade subsequently led to the elimination of national laws which discriminated against imports from other EEC countries. This freedom was later expanded to include people, services and capital. In another example, from the end of 1980s, a number of nation states around Germany aligned their monetary policies with the Deutschmark and the Bundesbank and created an Optimal Currency Area (Verdun 2004: 87). This initiative paved the way for the creation of the Economic and

[31] European Union Website: The Schuman Declaration – 9 May 1950

Monetary Union (EMU) between 1992 and 2002. European integration made further steps forward with the adoption of a single market (1990), the introduction of the euro currency (1999) and the domination of a single monetary policy. The neo-functionalists make use of the aforementioned examples to explain how the spill-over effect that gradually led to the adoption of euro currency within a period of less than twenty years.

Already in the 1920s, the federalists reported that the European nations, exhausted by the recent fratricidal war, comprised a physical entity which could become a significant world power if it acquired a federal constitution. After the second devastating world war for the supremacy of a European nation on the other, Altiero Spinelli observed that nation-states had lost their raison d'être since they could no longer ensure the political and economic security of their citizens. Instead, they should be driven into a federation, which was already named "European Union". The federalists focused on the desired results of European integration but they missed to find ways to foster solidarity and cooperation between eternal enemy nations in the continent. They shared a bright vision but did not foresee the means to implement it (Díez Medrano, 2003).

The functionalists, such as Mitrany (1966), rightly stressed that international organizations are not ends in themselves, but they are means to address priorities dictated by human needs and should therefore adjust their functions to the needs of each seasonal. Their aim is to create a truly international network (global) functional bodies. They disregarded that peace and welfare functions could provide a regional organization like the European Economic Community (Geddes, 2004).

Closer to the European reality is the theory of transactionalism (or communication theory) which defines international integration as “achieving community spirit, institutions and practices strong enough to ensure the expectations of peoples' peaceful mutation within a territory." Experience showed that first there should be setup an institutional framework based on which would take place informal transactions. This would deepen the community spirit which is necessary for a successful European integration (Carrasco & Peinado, 2014).

The neo-functionalist theorists, like Monnet, rejected the federal idealism and took down the "functionality" of Mitrany to the level of only some neighboring states. The famous declaration of Robert Schuman was clear on the steps that European integration should take: “Europe ... will be built with specific embodiments, which will establish a de facto solidarity. "Integration is meant to be a process where the

value added by the establishment of common institutions would cause positive chain reactions among political and economic leaders, affect the behavior of other social groups and would be docked between the various nations. The neo-functionalist logic is based on spill-over effect or multiplicative power. This means that economic integration strengthens solidarity between the participating nations and increases the need for installing additional supranational institutions. At the economic level, the creation of a customs` union pushes for the development of a common market and monetary union. As the close economic integration requires supranational institutional legitimacy, the political integration follows the economic integration (Rosamon 2000).

Some aspects of the neofunctionalist theory such as the weakening of the notion of nation states, led to the development of intergovernmentalism, as if the successful operational experience of the Community method could be disproved by ideological theories on the primacy of intergovernmental cooperation. Indeed, the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam may jeopardize national sovereignty by moving the focus from the "low politics field" (ie the economy) to the "high political sphere" (i.e. foreign and security policy) however, it is another step towards integration (Geddes, 2004). Although neo-functionalist theory lies closer to the reality of European integration, particularly by focusing on the diffusion effects, some critics rightly pointed out some flaws of neo-functionalist meditation. Stressing the government at various levels (multilevel governance) of the EC / EU (European, national, regional, etc.)

Here follows a comparison of the abovementioned theories[32]:

Integration theory	Comments
Multi-level Governance	Newest among integration theories. Dispersion of authority across multiple levels of political governance. Authority and sovereignty in Europe has moved away from national governments both to supranational and subnational levels.
Neo-functionalism	Spill-over effect: cooperation in specific economic policy sectors leads

[32] Civitas Research Centre (UK): “Overview of theories of European Integration” http://www.civitas.org.uk/eu-facts/eu-overview/theories-of-european-integration/

	to greater economic and political integration.
Federalization	Member states have managed to have a high level of integration. Unification of Europe should be concluded fast.
Intergovernmentalism	Nation state has a key role in European integration.

On 3 April 2014, the Committee of the Regions officially adopted the Multi-level Governance by issuing a “Charter for Multi-level Governance”. This Charter is addressed to the public authorities of all levels of governance and asks them to “stand for a multilevel-governance Europe based on coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity, proportionality and partnership, taking the form of operational and institutional cooperation in the drawing up and implementation of the European Union’s policies" (George, 2001). Macro-regional Strategies seek to achieve integration through the coordination and harmonization of policies among actors that lie at the same level and also to increase interaction among different policy levels.

The European integration consists of three horizontally parallel levels which are gradually realized and substantialize the process of European unification. The first level refers to the numerical increase of the member states. The second is the constant raising of the number and quality of goals and thus the continuous transition from lower stages of integration to the higher ones. The third level concerns the development and implementation of the common policies which express the visionary goal of European integration (George, 2001). Within this framework, the interaction among the states relates to the cooperation among institutional structures which belong at the same level (e.g. the municipalities or the regions). This interaction allows better coordination and improves the effectiveness of the applied public policies.

Moreover, European integration goes through two stages in a serial row, the economic convergence and the political union. To promote integration through its treaties, the EU established common institutional instruments to develop common policies alongside with taking steps towards the economic and monetary unification (e.g. customs` union, common market and finally, common currency adoption

single currency). These policies pursue common goals and defend the mutual European interests. Such a multinational integration has been expected to decrease the risk of conflicts and would establish an environment of peace and development. European integration policies aim to increase (by trade within the borders of EMU) the European GDP, foster the competition amongst the countries (especially the members of EMU) and achieve decrease of prices. The national governments interfere less and less with the financial market and ensure better balance between social considerations and individual incentives that maximize economic welfare. Finally, integration policies seek to increase the economic interaction both within and outside the EU borders through imports, exports and investments with a focus on innovation and environmental sustainability. An economic growth which is expected to push the prices and inflation down (Thompson, 2001).

The overall process of European integration is multinational as a number of states come together with the aim to build a union. The multinational integration should be distinguished from regional integration that is pursued through the Macro-regional Strategies. The term “regional integration” refers to the process of integration among states placed at a specific and defined region (e.g. the Adriatic – Ionian basin) or regions (belonging to one or shared by more countries) around a prominent geographical reference point (e.g. Adriatic and Ionian seas).

2.2 EU INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

A series of political shifts which occurred across several European countries during the last 15 years highlighted the fact that EU integration has significantly decelerated if not stepped back. There is dire need for new, innovative policies. The first sign of this “European integration crisis” was the rejection of the proposed Constitutional Treaty of the EU in 2005. It was rejected by citizens of two founding member states of the European Community: France and Netherlands. Nevertheless, this rejection was overcome through the Treaty of Lisbon and the subsequent reforms that followed in order to allow the EU to move forward. This incident of the modern European history highlighted that the citizens of the EU countries bear strong objections against some of the choices of their political elites. Several other incidents such as the increase of the power of far-right wing parties and eurosceptics in a number of countries, confirmed that EU`s cohesion policy

has still many challenges to address before it promotes further the integration of its member states and their societies. (Bache and Flinders, 2004).

For several reasons, the sense of ownership, common belonging and common identity which are substantial elements for the EU integration were not empowered adequately. Such an empowerment relies on common cultural tradition and common geographical belonging. The notion of this European identity was undermined by several factors. As it was shown in the "Wage and Income Inequality in the EU" study for the EMPL Committee conducted by the Directorate General for Internal Policies (2015), the most important is that the EU policies did not manage to reduce substantially the high rates of unemployment and eliminate inequalities and imbalances among the European social classes, regions and countries.

These inequalities and imbalances became even more obvious after the economic crisis emerged. The countries of the European South (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) proved to be much weaker than the Northern economies. According to Eurostat, the national debt in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal in relation to their gross domestic product (GDP) in the 4th quarter 2016 has been 179% 132,6% 99,4% and 130,4% while the same indicators in Germany, Sweden, Netherlands and Denmark were 63,8%, 41,6%, 62,3% and 37,8%[33].

The economic crisis has been a critical turn-point for the EU integration procedure and affected the public opinion. According to the results of a poll conducted by Pew Research Centre and published on May 2012 under the title "European Unity on the Rocks", Germans are the only ones within the EU believing in majority that their country was helped by the European integration (59% of them were in favor). On contrary, the Greeks and the Italians seemed to be the least favorable to the integration process (18% and 22% respectively) believing that this process has actually hurt them[34].

To its turn, the status of EU`s public opinion, transformed accordingly the political discourse across the EU. There has been a dramatic increase of the power of anti-European parties during the last two decades. UK, Greece, Austria, Italy, Holland are only some of the examples showing that the increase of anti-European powers puts at stake the very heart of the EU structure. Ideally, the integration process can eliminate xenophobic sentiments, nationalistic extremism and racism and increase tolerance and solidarity enhancing the sense of common identity and common

[33] Eurostat Website: General Government Gross Debt – Annual Data Table
[34] Pewglobal Website: "European Unity on the Rocks, Greeks and German at Polar Opposites"

belonging and prerequires convergence. On the opposite, when integration is not efficient enough or moves too fast without being preceded by convergence, it cannot address socioeconomic imbalances and increases skeptical sentiment.

There is an increase of the number of people within the Union that become more and more reluctant to the idea of EU integration and more and more unwilling to consent to a greater transfer of national sovereignty to the European institutions. Furthermore, there are constantly growing voices demanding the withdrawal of their countries from the Union and the recovery of their sovereignty as it happened in the case of the UK. This was the first time the Union faced the exit of a member state.

This problem is rooted in the economic inequalities and the imbalanced development among the several social classes and the European regions. These inequalities increased the sentiment of injustice, especially among the residents of the poorer regions of the continent, the vast majority of them being in the South of Europe. They seem to feel excluded and strangers to the whole process of EU integration as they realize that the biggest part of the capitals and development measures are concentrated in the North while the South struggles to follow the EU integration pace. Those who gain direct benefits from integration are the warmer supporters of integration. The more people are benefited by integration, the bigger the support will be. This means that integration within EU must reach as many as possible in an as much balanced as possible way (Bache and Flinders, 2004).

The EU is often blamed for the fact that the evaluation of its governmental policies was mainly based on procedural criteria rather than actual results. Peoples of Europe developed the feeling that EU and its policies is something distant, dehumanized and technocratic, far from their real, daily problems. This underestimation of the importance of EU policies loosened the tights between national governments and the European governance system. Many national governments across the EU proved to be inconsistent to their obligations towards the Union and the Eurozone, either because of unwillingness to adjust to or inability to incorporate EU policies in their daily governance. On the other hand, people from some countries could not easily allocate the reason why there has been a growing gap between their national and the average EU pace. Even the European experts could not make out whether it was EU`s or national governments` fault. This economic division within the EU became deeper during the crisis. It also caused a crisis of identity and increased the otherness stereotype within the Union,

the “hegemons of the North” vs the “corrupted lazy people” of the South (Giddings and Drewry, 2004).

This two-speed Europe phenomenon highlighted the need for deeper and more balanced integration of the EU countries. As it was obvious that the desired homogenous integration could not be achieved, initiated the discussions around a fair but differentiated integration process. This term is used to describe various forms of European cooperation in which not all member states participate. It also generates different rights and duties among the member states. Differentiated integration can have the form of enhanced cooperation as it was introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam and can be also found in the Treaty of the EU (Art. 20) and the treaty of the functioning of the European Union (Art. 326-334). The articles provide that a group of at least nine members can decide to move further forward their integration on specific areas of policy given that the European Council has taken a relevant qualified majority decision. As the focus of EU cohesion policies has significantly moved to the regional level, differentiated integration might also cover the cases of governments, institutions and other stakeholders who cooperate towards the achievement of enhanced economic, social and environmental development within an interstate region. The European Council in its conclusions of June 2014, noted that when the Treaty of the EU (Art. 1) talks about deepening the Union among European peoples it doesn`t mean that excludes different routes to integration[35].

This could be achieved through a well-designed and implemented interregional cooperation which will result to balanced regional development across all European regions. As it requires closer cooperation and transfer of know-how and technical/economic experience between the several regions, the regional cohesion process will do a major contribution towards the decrease or the elimination of the disparities among the regions which lie within or next to the borders of the EU (Bache and Flinders, 2004). At the same time, the empowerment of citizens` identification with the EU and deepening of “we-ness” would be an adequate response to the challenges that the EU`s unity is facing. Apart from the adoption of inclusive and balanced policies, the advancement of European integration requires that its citizens are actively involved in the EU`s decision-making process.

[35] Advisory Council on International Affairs (October 2015): “ Differentiated Integration, Different Routes to EU Cooperation,” pg 6-8

2.3 INTRODUCTION TO EU'S TERRITORIAL POLICIES

In its Article 174, the Lisbon Treaty states that "the EU will promote its harmonious development by strengthening its economic, social and territorial cohesion". It will focus especially on the development of the least favored regions such as islandic, cross-border and mountainous, aiming to reduce the development disparities between them and other regions. In order to achieve this goal, the EU seeks for ways to make use of the special features and assets of each region and address their development challenges.

European regions present a wide diversity in terms of geographic specificities that directly affect their economic development. EU needed to implement suitable policies to deal with the issues that many regions have in common, such as insularity, remoteness, demography and coastal situation. This mainly refers to the fact that, among the regions, different types of geomorphological and environmental characteristics create different types of regional activity and generate different economic footprint. For this reason, EU territorial policies had to be planned and implemented in a way that they take advantage of the special territorial features and promote integrated solutions through multi-level governance and multi-fund approach. EU cohesion policy attempts to take advantage of historical, cultural, natural and social capital diversities across European regions and make use of them to allow each region to reach its potentials.[36]

The geographic specificities lie among the factors that majorly affect the performance of European regions. These differences are reflected in the percentages of GDP per head and employment indicators. Islandic regions present lower GDP percentages than the EU average while mountain regions have lower employment indicators than the European average. Variations of population figures are also present as there are regions suffering from depopulation. On the other hand, due to their touristic profile, some islands, coastal areas and mountain resorts are visited by vast number of tourists and inhabited by amenity migrants which results to major challenges when it comes to real estate management and protection of the environment.

Other common issues are observed in a number of mountainous, insular or sparsely populated areas. One of them is the low level of productivity due to the small sizes of farms and artisanal methods of fisheries. At the same time, such

[36] ESPON Policy Brief (March 2017): Shaping new policies in specific types of territories in Europe: islands, mountains, sparsely populated and coastal regions"

regions are quite often characterized by rich biodiversity and high exposure to climate change consequences. On the other hand, biodiversity is also a territorial asset which enhances the touristic profile of these regions and offers big amount of resources of high quality. Another issue has to do with the connectivity. Apart from mainstream transportation needs, many of these areas fully depend on the imports of fundamental goods, such as potable water, energy supplies, machinery etc. Given their geomorphology it is often hard to maintain uninterrupted the supply chain.

Figure 1: GDP per head (2013), EU28 average: 100%

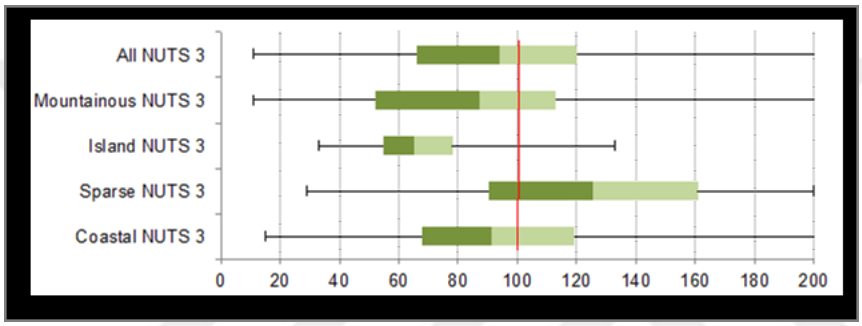
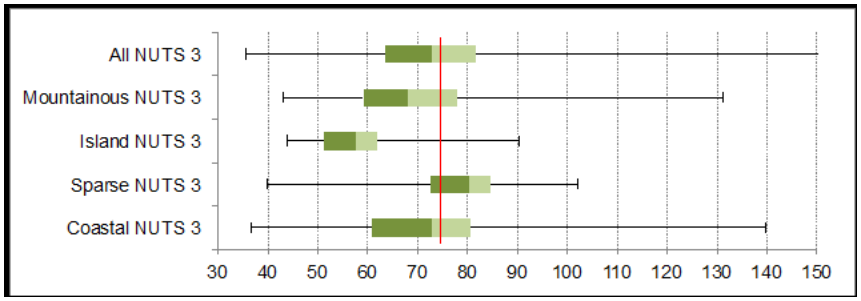
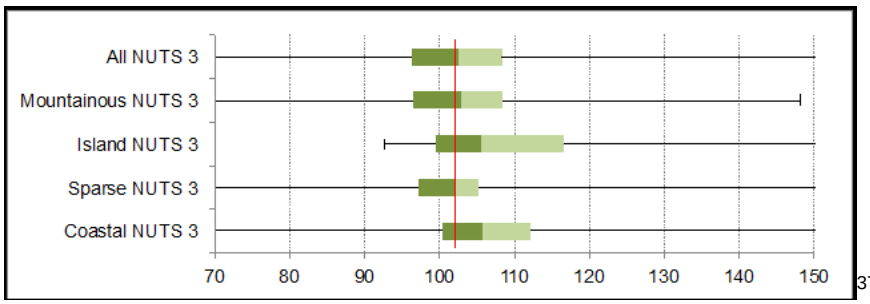


Figure 2: Employed persons in relation to working age population* (20 to 64- year olds, 2014), EU28 average: 74.1%



* Employed persons at place of work divided by working age population at place of residence.

Figure 3: Population change (2001-2015), EU28+4 average: +2.3%



[37]

The idea of promoting cohesion finds itself among the very first political priorities of the EU. However, the role of convergence is less obvious. Given that the most important disparities within a given community are of economic nature as they undermine the sense of common identity and community-belonging, convergence is lies among the most important goals of the EU. The key for the transition to a more participatory model of transnational cooperation and supranational governance is the European regional policy that allows a fair distribution of the benefits of European policies across the several regions of the continent.

During the recent past and certainly before the Lisbon Treaty was signed, the EU integration was permeated by two political pillars: The Common Policies and the Community Policies. The first ones replaced basic elements of the national policies in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and external trade, while the second ones were just supplementary and supportive to the national policies. As soon as the Lisbon Treaty was signed however, this distinction was left behind. Moreover, the Treaty of the functioning of the EU speaks about policies and activities of the Union which are Common Policies to their substance. Even the distinction between EU policies and activities is of no importance anymore. Through these policies and activities, the Union promotes the deepening of its integration (George, 2001).

Thus, the Union`s integration relies on Common Policies which are designed and implemented by the common European institutional instruments following the community method in a way that they serve common interests. Among these interests is the development of peaceful relations between the EU countries and its neighbors the convergence with the EU acquis as many of them are candidate or potential candidate members and the deepening of EU integration and the gradual improvement of the wellbeing of EU`s peoples. To ensure that the results of its Common Policies are delivered in a balanced manner, the EU makes use of

[37] ESPON Policy Brief (March 2017): Shaping new policies in specific types of territories in Europe: islands, mountains, sparsely populated and coastal regions"

its regional policy tools. That means that the EU makes use of a region-based approach to produce policies which are tailored in a manner that they will serve the real regional needs based on the socioeconomic profile of each of its regions. More specifically, the focused support that the Union provides for the development of its poorer regions lies within the general goal of a balanced and sustainable development within the EU (Geddes, 2004). The EU regional policy acts as a platform for investments within the EU and is an expression of solidarity among the EU states, aiming to eliminate the gaps between the levels of wellbeing and prosperity of EU`s regions. It should be noted that in terms of economic integration several groups of business interests have the right to express their opinions, demands, objections and observations and thus to contribute in the decision-making process and the evolution of integration levels (Geddes, 2004).

The actions and initiatives for the economy are undoubtedly of significant importance and so is the fact that EU integration cannot be really accomplished without adopting realistic policies that serve the interests of the peoples of the member states. Such policies may seek to achieve regional and social cohesion. The regional cohesion requires the transfer of capitals from the richer to the poorer regions of Europe and further beyond, their balanced distribution among the different social classes. At this point, the regional cohesion is linked with the social cohesion which aims to achieve balanced socio-economic development throughout the EU. Both the social and regional cohesion are conceptual aspects of the cohesion policy of the EU and they are equally essential for its integration as they reduce structural disparities between its regions and member states through a variety of operations financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund.

Based on the relevant European treaties which established and promote European convergence, integration and cohesion, the EU supports joint management of programmes and projects which strengthen mutual trust and understanding and enhance cooperation. The goals of regional cooperation lie among the aspects of territorial cooperation. They were defined by two articles of the “Single Act” and were maintained under different names in the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, Lisbon and in the “Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”. Detachments are given in the appendix (Díez Medrano, 2003). In the frames of its regional policy, the EU promotes cooperation between regions and countries on four different platforms: European Territorial Cooperation, Macro-regional

Strategies, International Cooperation, European Week of Cities and Regions ("Open Days") event and the RegioNetwork 2020 online cooperation platform[38].

To deepen and improve this cooperation, the EU seeks to tackle with the several barriers set by the national borders namely administrative, legal and physical, on an attempt to bring its countries, regions, nations and economies closer. In order to address the common challenges and exploit untapped potential, the EU widely promotes and supports territorial cooperation among European and non - European states. The European Territorial Cooperation, widely known as "Interreg", is one of the two goals that cohesion policy seeks to achieve. It works as a platform for the national, regional and local actors of different member states to undertake joint initiatives, conduct policy exchanges and proceed in joint actions. The ultimate goal of territorial cooperation is to promote the development of the EU as a whole in a balanced manner both at territorial and socioeconomic level. It may have three aspects: cross-border cooperation (Interreg A), transnational or interstate cooperation (Interreg B) and Interregional cooperation (Interreg C)[39].

The European cross-border cooperation supports cooperation between NUTS III regions of at least two different member states[40]. It refers only to the regions which lie near or next to the borders. It provides formulas for the management of common challenges faced by a number of regions and assists them to take advantage of their untapped growth potentials. As it promotes and ameliorates the cooperation process among these regions, the cross-border cooperation also contributes in the overall balanced development of the EU. It provides a variety of joint strategic goals and initiatives including the support of entrepreneurship and innovation, with a focus on SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises). A wide range of joint economic, social, educational, scientific, cultural and administrative activities are designed and implemented at the cross-border level: support the networking of universities and research institutions, promote tourism, develop the joint use of infrastructure and administrative cooperative networks cross-border trade, expand the links between urban and rural areas, improve the joint management of natural resources and the access to transport and communication networks, foster

[38] European Commission Website, Regional Policy – Inforegio: "Cooperation between regions and countries"

[39] European Commission Website, Regional Policy – Inforegio: "Interreg, European Territotial Co-operation"

[40] Eurostat Website: At the beginning of the 1970s, Eurostat set up the NUTS classification as a single, coherent system for dividing up the EU's territory in order to produce regional statistics for the Community. For around thirty years, implementation and updating of the NUTS classification was managed under a series of "gentlemen's agreements" between the Member States and Eurostat. Work on the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003, to give NUTS a legal status started in spring 2000. This was adopted in May 2003 and entered into force in July 2003.

employment and equal opportunities at work, strengthen the cultural and social cohesion. The aim of such initiative is not only to increase trade but to bring the member states and its citizens closer through a harmonious and intense economic interaction, therefore to ensure political stability and peace, while at the same time to work on the cohesion of the EU (Anastasiou, 2007). Not only the member states but also (potential) candidates participate in these joint programs. Thus, the cooperation among both sides of the EU borders is strengthened on sectors such as "communication corridors, flood management, international business and research linkages, and the development of more viable and sustainable markets."[41] There are currently 70 cross-border programmes running, among them are the PEACE program[42] the TACIS[43] and the PHARE[44].

The transnational cooperation also promotes regional development through the joint management of common challenges. It concerns big areas within the EU which comprise of regions shared by several countries EU countries. Its programmes and projects cover a big variety of thematic fields such as innovation, environment, accessibility, telecommunications, urban development, flooding management, transports, international business and research bounds, rural development etc. The EU countries are expected to come up with commonly agreed priorities and jointly coordinated strategic responses to issues related to the aforementioned thematic fields. This allows the EU to obtain an economic dynamic not only within its borders at the multinational, and (inter)regional levels, but also in the field of global trade and its interaction with other global powers. (Echengreen & Boltho, 2008).

The interregional cooperation derives from territorial cooperation and lies within the frames of EU cohesion policy. It works as a platform of cooperation among

[41] Interreg B – Transnational cooperation website: ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/el/policy/cooperation/European-territorial/trans-national/

[42] European Parliament Website: The purpose of the EU PEACE programme is to support peace and reconciliation and to promote economic and social progress in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The PEACE programme has been implemented as a cross-border cooperation programme (in the context of European Territorial Cooperation – ETC), between Ireland and the UK and has two main aims: cohesion between communities involved in the conflict in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland and economic and social stability.

[43] European Commission Press Release Database: TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia) is the European Community's particular effort to support the ongoing process of economic reform and development in the 11 states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine) of the CIS and Georgia.

[44] European Parliament website: The term "PHARE" - Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy - initially described as the international efforts to provide economic support to the emerging Polish and Hungarian democracies - is the EU's main financial instrument for accession of the Central and Eastern European countries. It was launched as a specific EC programme, initiated by Council Regulation No. 3906/89. Its funding is used to channel technical, economic and infrastructural expertise and assistance to recipient states. The aim is to help these countries achieve market economies based on free enterprise and private initiative.

regions of the EU member states, plus Norway and Switzerland. Its programs (e.g. INTERACT III[45], ESPON[46], URBACT[47]) aim to modernize the economies of the participating regions through the exchange of good practices, know-how and experience. Several stakeholders such as local authorities and actors are involved in a number of cooperative initiatives such as territorial planning observatories, establishment of or support for city networks and strategic urban development. Interregional cooperation is a way to surmount the gaps and barriers set by national borders within Europe. The thesaurus of knowledge that is jointly shared among the regions, allows the EU to develop and improve its strategies on growth, employment and sustainable development so as to reduce the disparities between the less developed regions and the more advanced ones. The great advantage of this type of cooperation is that the less advanced member states and regions have access to the valuable knowledge and experience contributed by the more advanced ones on a big variety of policy sectors such as climate and demographic change, energy supply and innovation.

Interregional cooperation can also have the form of bilateral or multilateral cooperation among countries which don't share common borders, no matter if they are member states or (potential) member states. This is achieved through their participation in euro-regions or large cooperation areas such as the Atlantic Arc, the Baltic Sea, the Danube areas, the Adriatic Ionian and the Alpine. In these geographic groupings, the regions share common concerns and challenges, often related to environmental protection, transportation and economic development. The Assembly of European Regions[48] acts as the coordination instrument that provides all the necessary support so to allow the various regions to develop their

[45] INTERACT Operation Programme 2014-2020: INTERACT III is a cooperation programme of the European Territorial Cooperation goal, part of the interregional cooperation component (as per point (c) of Article 2(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal, henceforth referred to as ETC Regulation) and it is set up to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by promoting exchange of experience concerning the identification, transfer and dissemination of good practices and innovative approaches in relation to implementation of territorial cooperation programmes and actions concerning territorial cooperation and to the use of EGTCs. INTERACT III is a programme co-financed by the ERDF and it shall cover the entire territory of the Union, Norway and Switzerland. The selection of thematic objectives is limited to one in case of INTERACT III, in order to maximise the impact of cohesion policy across the Union

[46] ESPON website: The ESPON EGTC is a European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation. ESPON started in 2002 and have continued since then building a pan-European knowledge base related to territorial dynamics.

[47] URBACT website: URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. It assists some 550 cities and 7.000 active local stakeholders in some 29 countries to develop new and sustainable solutions integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions, to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is jointly financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund) and the Member States.

[48] Assembly of European Regions website: www.aer.eu

joint actions through regional cooperative networks (Goergen, 2013). It has promoted a variety of partnership programmes such as INTERREG IV, URBACT II, European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON), INTERACT II (Goergen, 2013).

The EU uses various other policy instruments to promote cooperation, peace and development among its members and external countries which can either be candidates or potential candidates or even third countries, such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)[49], The European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)[50] and the Northern Dimension[51]. Overall, the EU cohesion policy, including territorial cooperation with all its aspects (interregional, transnational and cross-border) seeks to ensure stability and security and to cultivate and deepen the notion of the EU citizenship. The decrease or elimination of the socioeconomic disparities and the development of the sense of common belonging among the European peoples intends to decrease or eliminate the risk of conflicts and instability within the EU and to establish an environment of peace and balanced prosperity far from antagonisms. Put simply, EU seeks for more integration and to do so, it needs to achieve better regional integration.

The "regional integration is the process of overcoming barriers that divide neighbouring countries, by common accord, and of jointly managing shared resources and assets. Essentially, it is a process by which groups of countries liberalise trade, creating a common market for goods, people, capital and services. The European Union advocates regional integration as an effective means of achieving prosperity, peace and security".[52] This definition highlights how strong is the bond between regional integration on one hand and peace and security on the other. The risk of conflicts at international, regional and even domestic level is highly reduced when high levels of cooperation and integration have been achieved. Peace building in a post-conflict area is also highly assisted by cooperative initiatives at the regional level.

[49] European Commission website: European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations www.ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/overview_en
[50] EUR-Lex Access to European Union law website: www.eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ar17101
[51] European External Action Service website: Northern Dimension www.eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/northern-dimension_en
[52] https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/economic-growth/regional-integration_en

2.4 REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

No matter if security refers to human or economic issues, it can be a challenge with regional characteristics rather than national (e.g. human trafficking and smuggling). Since a region can be an international entity (a region including sub-regions from several neighboring countries), these regional security issues are at the same time international, requiring joint initiatives and internationally coordinated actions.[53] An emphasis should be given to the links between the regional economic integration (REI) on the one hand and security (SEC), economic security (ESEC) and regional security policy (RSP) on the other.

Economic openness and international economic interaction has both opponents and proponents. Mercantilists claim that international economic interaction reproduces conflicts as it includes strong competition over the access to resources, the distribution of the gains-from-trade, and/or over trade imbalances. According to their approach, the international economic interaction makes the states to competitively pursue their national interests at the cost of other states, in a protectionist manner. The classical liberal economists share the opinion that free economic interaction diffuses the wealth and gradually leads towards a balanced trade system, where the richer states can provide financial support to the poorer states, which, on its turn, contributes to peace, stability and development but also increases the potential for the economic prosperity of the weaker countries.[54] They accept that due to the development of trade relations and to the greater flows of capital in the frames of REI, the levels of interdependence get higher and consequently the “trust” among the economic parties deepens. As a result, the parties act jointly to ensure safer access to strategic resources while, at the same time, the threat of trade embargoes dramatically reduces. On the other hand, the greater is the increase of the interdependence, the bigger is the cost of a possible war and, subsequently, the political pressures against war increase as well. Conclusively, the international economic interaction presupposes and implies peace and security. There can be no such interaction when a conflict exists or the post-conflict trauma is still open. Thus, peace and security allows further economic interaction and further economic interaction establishes a more stable environment of peace and security (Lombaerde, 2005).

Moreover, REI is considered to reduce the probability of conflict at the strategic policy level too. It makes negotiations and peaceful resolution of disputes the first

[53] De Lombaerde Philippe (2005): “Regional Integration and Peace”
[54] Khorto, J.P. (2014): “What theory of International Political Economy do you Find most Convincing and Why?” Copenhagen Business School

option for conflict resolution as the regional trade agreements increase the cost of a conflict or war. Moreover, the establishment of supranational institutions to agree on and implement common rules, favors the exchange of information on military capabilities and strengthens trust among political leaders. It favors commitment in peaceful resolution of interstate disputes[55]. The convergence of economic interests which is result of deepening regional integration, solidifies a joint political background with intense interaction. Within the frames of a Macro-regional Strategy this political background becomes multidimensional, covering different policy areas. This economic, environmental, developmental and infrastructural interaction among the countries involved significantly reduces the probability of conflict and opens channels for negotiations and productive communications.

It is important to shed light on the relation between REI and regional security and peace. In several international integration projects such as EEC (1957), ECSC (1951), MERCOSUR (1991) and ASEAN (1967), regional security appeared not only as an outcome of regional economic integration, but also as its main political objective. On its turn, a joint REI policy increases the levels of regional security. Such an example are the Macro-regional Strategies which dictate that the fiscal and other policies are taken not only for the particular member states but for the wider environment of EU or its Regions widely known as macro-regions (Hill, 2010). Macro-regional policies require coordination for development and peace. Such coordination requires mutual understanding and trust. Thus, the Macro-regional Strategies promote and secure peace (Jahn, 1998).

Trade reduces the probability of conflict between countries but the causality is limited. Nevertheless, “it is also true that trade issues can lead to conflict and that trade instruments can be used for political purposes (e.g. US embargo on Cuba, management of Iraq’s oil revenues, etc.)” (De Lombaerde, 2005). This probability dramatically reduces when it comes to the macro-regions, because of the deep interaction and the solid communicational background in the frames of the competent Macro-regional Strategies. Moreover, the deepening of democracy, the improvement of environment and transportation infrastructures and the joint promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship across the members of a macro-region has its own positive effect on regional economic life and thus reduces the probability of conflict and increase human security levels.

[55] Vincent Vicard (2008): “Trade, conflicts and political integration: explaining the heterogeneity of regional trade agreements” Documents de travail du Centre d’Economie de la Sorbonne 2008.22 - ISSN: 1955-611X. 2008, pg 5

Human security includes many aspects, one of which is Economic Security. National economic security and individual economic security are in a constant interaction. During the recent decades, EU policies set as their priority the individual economic security and the protection of “economic rights” such as the right to work, the right to free establishment etc.

When it comes to the macro-level (countries, communities and societies), the wider and deeper the regional economic integration is, the more it leads to interdependence and reduction of self-sufficiency. This makes the need for joint action for security at all aspects even more dire. However, there are “sensitive” aspects of economic security, such as food security. There have been many and strong objections against further integration and openness claiming that they put food security at risk. Macro-regional Strategies give a unique opportunity to improve and secure food quality through coordinated initiatives in the direction of environmental protection and abolishment of pollution setting the same high standards of production, standardization and trading of food products. Moreover, regional economic integration ensures unobstructed access to resources of strategic importance, secures the cleanness of raw materials and thus increases the quality of goods, leading to the conclusion that: Macro-regional Strategies as a facet of Regional Economic Integration, contribute to the maximum extent for the establishment of Economic Security which is a fundamental substance for sustainable peace. To sum up, ESEC is a core element of the EU integration. The deeper the regional integration is, the more stable is the economic security. Moreover, the deeper the regional integration, the bigger is the number of challenges which the involved counterparts are called to address jointly in order to prevent potential risks for the economic security. Such risks should be addressed through regional security policies.

Many economic indicators show that Regional Security Policies should be above National Security Policies (NSP) because the latter proved inadequate in the modern globalized and deeply interactive economic environment. This fact is more intense in case of countries that share a common region, as it happens with macro-regions. The international interaction concerning the transports, tourism, environment and food security and quality requires that the NSP of a country should be in accordance with those of its neighboring countries, otherwise they will probably have no result or, better say, not an effective and sustainable result. For example, it would be impossible for Greece to deal with trafficking and smuggling without international synergies within the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The same applies for the other countries in the region as well since phenomena such as crime

and pollution spread their webs beyond borders. REI promotes the development and functioning of regional institutions, supports the processes of decision making, and empowers the linkages among policies. All these conditions are substantial for the establishment of sustainable Regional Economic Integration. However, national security issues should be examined separately from regional security issues as there is a grey zone that exists between them, where spillover effects occur (Hill, 2010).

To sum up, among other things, the EU policy aims on creating an environment of stability where the regions can cooperate for the sake of its members` prosperity. ESEC and RSP operate so to ensure security in different levels, such as economic security and regional security respectively. The economic rationales for RSP together with the objectives of NSP dictate that there should be common sharing of know-how and beneficial setting of collective rules for a number of issues such as environment, transportation, fisheries, food etc. Common agreements should be reached and mutual steps should be taken towards the fulfillment of the goals of these policies. EU members are also urged to prevent and resolve conflicts, to jointly struggle against external threats and promote a joint regional political front towards the implementation of a common external (extra-regional) policy[56].

Modern REI initiatives, usually promote the development of supra-national institutions. Provided that these institutions make no discounts in quality, they generate trust and they constitute mechanisms for better cooperation and coordination. Macro-regional Strategies, being one of the REI tools, seek to operate their decision-making process through regional consensus. They promote the establishment of supranational institutions at different levels and modalities. However, that might make their intervention slow and ineffective. Another emerging issue is the possible lack of coordination among the activities of the economic and political organizations of the region. However, it is logical that gradually the regional institutions, under the economic pressure, will converge and rationalize their action to meet the demands of the regional institutional framework required especially for the smooth operation of a macro-region[57].

Macro-regional Strategies constitute a form of territorial cooperation, bringing together European and non-European countries, member and potential member states which belong to a defined geographical area and provide them with tools to take equalization measures through joint socioeconomic steps. Although only 8,2%

[56] De Lombaerde Philippe (2005): “Regional Integration and Peace”
[57] De Lombaerde Philippe (2005): “Regional Integration and Peace”

of the distributed Structural Funds are provided to the strategies, they still are a great potential for the development of cooperative networks, sharing experience, good practices and know-how and the cultivation of a cooperative culture in general. Because of the support they get from the highest EU political levels, the Macro-regional Strategies can be a response to the gaps of territorial policy and thus offer a great support to the programs and projects of territorial cooperation. They provide the EU and the national authorities with the ability to directly support the cooperative projects and to conduct strategic monitoring and evaluation of their results. This gives them the ability to enhance the impact these projects have. Potentially, both the EU and the states involved in the strategies can improve the functioning and increase the effectiveness of their territorial cooperation, making use of synergies and funding opportunities together with other programs at the local, regional, national and sectoral level[58].

EU integration as the world has known it since its very foundation needs to respond to the new challenges set by international economic and political instability. To do so it has to adjust to the reality that economic crisis has brought to surface. Neither all the EU countries, nor the EU regions have reached the same levels of economic and social development. EU is actually a mosaic of many different entities each one of which bears its own advantages and struggles with its own challenges. As this was understood by the Commission, a new model of differentiated integration within the EU was brought forward. Regions should be encouraged to work more independently, intensify their interaction and collaboration surmounting national and administrative borders and come up with joint solutions to joint challenges. This would allow them to integrate in a manner that fits best to their real needs and potentials, without struggling to catch up the more advanced regions of the EU or without being delayed by the less advanced ones. In this framework, EU Macro-regional Strategies are expected to play a crucial role.

[58] Blais Elise, INTERACT Point Vienna and Liepa Baiba (winter 2011/2012): INTERACT Point Turk "What are macro-regions all about?"

CHAPTER 3: EU MACRO-REGIONS AND MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

The idea behind macro-regions was to bring closer countries which share cultural, economic and geographic elements in order to cooperate and find joint solutions for common challenges. Such efforts, such as the Adriatic – Ionian Macro-region, result to different integration projects among different clusters of states. Their goal, is to enhance cooperation, deepen integration, cultivate the sense of ownership and regional identity and establish an overall environment of development and peace. This thesis examines what is specifically the contribution, if any, of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic – Ionian macro-region in development and peace of the region surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. In order to further proceed with an estimation of EUSAIR`s contribution in regional peace and development it is important to understand the nature, the structure and the goals of the EU Macro-regional Strategies. As it has been already mentioned, the EU so far has inaugurated its Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region comprised by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, its Strategy for the Danube Region comprised by Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Moldavia, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, its Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region comprised by Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Greece, Albania and its Strategy for the Alpine Region comprised by Austria, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland.

In 2009, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was the first to be developed and was considered as a pilot project. After that, the European Council supported the development of the Danube Macro-region. It was then obvious that the EU considered the Macro-regional Strategies to be of major importance for its territorial cohesion, integration and development. With the agreement of the European Parliament, another two Strategies were adopted, one for Adriatic - Ionian region and one for the Alpine region. According to Schymik, the EU is planning to develop and implement five more Macro-regional Strategies in total[59]:

[59] Schymik, Carsten (September 2011): “Blueprint for a Macro-Region. EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea and Danube Regions” SWP Research Paper, pg 27

Name of the Strategy	EU Member States	Non-EU Member States
Mediterranean	Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Great Britain (Gibraltar), Croatia	Morocco, Mauretania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Monaco
Black Sea	Bulgaria, Romania	Turkey, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine
Atlantic Arc	Portugal, Spain, France, Great Britain, Ireland	
North Sea	France, Great Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark	Norway
North Atlantic	Great Britain, Sweden, Ireland, Finland	Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland

3.1 EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND MACRO-REGIONS

All the EU Macro-regional Strategies present commonalities with regards to their features, the environmental and other challenges they seek to address and the overall development they seek to achieve on a cooperative basis. However, the number of the countries that participate in each Strategy changes, same as do the numbers of the participating countries which are EU members and those which are not. The case of Adriatic Ionian Strategy is an interesting case as the number of the EU members (Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia) is equal to the number of the non-EU states (Serbia, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro). Given that

all four non-EU states are potential EU members, the Strategy falls within the European Enlargement Policy Area[60].

Since the implementation of four Strategies has already started within the EU, it is observed that the EU`s macro-regional policies are aspects of the differentiated integration which is increasingly promoted as the new model of EU governance.[61] As such, the Adriatic Ionian strategy tries to accelerate the pace of integration for its four EU members and the pace of convergence for its four non-EU members. The current study, aims to highlight the social, economic and territorial impact that the Strategy has or seeks to achieve on a region which presents a series of challenges.

“A macro-region, was already defined by Hill (2010), as a wider region which encompasses communities and regions from different countries which have common or complementary assets, face common challenges and share common objectives. EU macro-regions are usually defined by geographic characteristics such as a sea basin, a river basin and a mountain chain” (Da Lombaerde, 2005). The frontiers of a macro-region are not always strictly defined. On the other hand, any given territory might belong to more than one macro-regions (e.g. Slovenia is both part of Adriatic Ionian and Alpine Macro-regions).

The Macro-regional Strategies are jointly agreed strategies among the states on how to address common challenges identified within a macro-region they share. These challenges can only (or more efficiently/effectively) be addressed through regional cooperation (e.g. environmental protection and improvement of connectivity). They also provide the space for enhanced cooperation on issues of mutual interest (e.g. tourism, research, innovation, or capacity building). Macro-regional Strategies give the opportunity to the participating states – regions to commonly address challenges that they would not be able to do it on their own. These challenges are so wide and multi-faceted, that require joint intervention and cooperation. In the frames of a macro-regional strategy, the joint projects and actions financed by a variety of sources are the tools provided to address the common needs and challenges. For example, the joint initiatives for the reduction of sea pollution can involve a variety of stakeholders from public and/or private sectors: environmental organizations, environment and transport ministries,

[60] European Union website: Enlargement www.europa.eu/european -union/topics/enlargement_en
[61] Cugusi, Battistina (January 2013): “ Macro-regional dynamics in the Mediterranean area(s). The case of the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region. CESPI and EU Border Regions Working Paper No 6, pg 13

tourism stakeholders etc. Stakeholders from local, regional and national levels come together in order to act jointly towards the resolution of problems and the achievement of the common objectives in the frames of the macro-regional strategy. These strategies do not create any new political or administrative institutions. Each participant contributes its own respective competencies, resources and interests. For the implementation of the strategy, the participants use the already existing policies, institutions and funds (Blais, 2012).

In that sense, the Macro-regional Strategies respond adequately to the call made by the white paper that the Commission of the European Communities issued in 2001 aiming to set a framework for the reform of European governance. The aim of this paper was to give general directions to the European states about how to adopt a more open and more inclusive model of governance. This model, apart from widening the circle of the stakeholders that should get involved in the national policies, it also aims to increase the reliability and the responsibility of the political system as a whole and increase the feeling of ownership among the peoples of the European countries. The achievement of these goals presupposes that all the other institutions, the central governments, the regional and local authorities and the civil society will do their best to make their contributions for a better European governance. Given that the EU is mostly an intergovernmental entity, the European national governments should secure the transition into a more inclusive model of governance or, better say, to a more multi-level-governance model. They should make steps towards a greater involvement of more stakeholders in the processes of designing and implementing national policies in compliance with the regional, interregional and interstate policies[62].

The regions and countries within a macro-region benefit from strengthened cooperation and achieve further cohesion at three levels: economic, social and territorial[63]. Economic cohesion is about narrowing disparities in output and development[64]. Social cohesion is the substance which keeps a society integrated. It could be defined as “the belief held by citizens of a given nation-state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other” (Larsen 2013)[65]. It attributes great importance to elimination of poverty and social exclusion and the

[62] Commission of the European Communities (25 July 2001): “European Governance: A White Paper”, Brussels
[63] Interact, “Macro-regional Strategy – Sea Basin Strategy. What is What?”, pg 11
[64] European Policies Research Centre (2010): The Objective of Economic and Social Cohesion in the Economic Policies of Member States, pg 27
[65] LARSEN, C.A. (2013): “Social cohesion: Definition, measurement and developments”

creation of employment opportunities[66]. Finally, territorial cohesion, focuses on regional economic development in a balanced and sustainable manner through the coordination of policies which affect a given territory, namely spatial planning[67].

In the Commission's Communication on the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region of June 10, 2009, is defined the macro-regional strategy as "an integrated framework that allows the European Union and Member States to identify needs and allocate available resources thus enabling the Baltic Sea Region to enjoy a sustainable environment and optimal economic and social development" (Hill, 2010). In simpler words, an EU macro-regional strategy allows the EU, the participating countries and regions to coordinate the existing structures and funds, address them into concrete regional projects and thus implement EU policies and enhance integration, cohesion and convergence. Moreover, joint planning and actions lead to a more effective and harmonized deployment of the resources available.

The EU Macro-regional Strategies add value to the actions and initiatives of the EU, the national and regional authorities, the private sectors and the civil society actors. The integrated framework of the strategies strengthens the coordination capacity of the macro-regional stakeholders. Moreover, cooperation among a small number of countries and regions towards resolving common issues contributes in better cohesion at the EU level. It is very likely that joint action might bring far better results than individual initiatives. The number and type of the objectives of a given macro-regional strategy vary, depending on the needs of the regions concerned. The EU Macro-regional Strategies do not rely on any additional funding, new laws or new institutions, but rather on a more focused use of the already existing institutions, funds and legislation in an efficient way. The goal is to pull benefits from a variety of sources, including economies of scale and support from community cohesion programs. All the financial resources that are available might be coming from the EU, the national or the regional funds.

In this respect, one of the challenges is to find ways to make better use of the existing resources, legislation and structures, to the benefit of the whole region. There are two kinds of resources required for the development of a macro-regional strategy: the ones needed for its planning and implementation and the ones needed for the implementation of its projects, initiatives and actions. In other words, there are resources covering the administrative costs (such as running the

[66] European Policies Research Centre (2010): The Objective of Economic and Social Cohesion in the Economic Policies of Member States, pg 27
[67] Commission of the European Communities (25 July 2001): "European Governance: A White Paper", Brussels

institutions, payroll, meetings arrangements etc) and resources covering the operational costs (organization of events, advertisments etc).

Quite often, the reasons for the adoption of a macro-regional strategy may not be obvious. There are cases, however, when a group of regions is convinced that a joint, integrated strategy would be the best tool to address the challenges and meet the demands posed by the global marketplace competition and at the same time not to make any discounts at social and environmental standards. This innovative way of integrated action gives them also the chance to get a wide number of sectors involved and to achieve specialization, cooperation and greater efficiencies (for example through networking)[68].

The form of the strategies evolves the spirit of integration and facilitation because it requires the involvement of all relevant policy areas and at the same time facilitates – without imposing – ways of better addressing these policies. The need to response to the challenges of increasing globalization through synergies and reduction of overlaps and costs, motivated the European Council to support outspokenly the macro-regional initiatives. For this purpose, the Council established a political framework for the support provided to such initiatives and their evolution into strategic macro-regional cooperation. The essential political feature of a European Union macro-regional strategy is that it constitutes a shared political will that is expressed by all the EU`s member states. The assessment of the ambitions, objectives and targets of each European Union macro-regional strategy will be conducted over the years through a close European monitoring system.

Since the initiation of the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in 2009, the EU showed a growing interest in Macro-regional Strategies and cooperation among wider European regions. After that point, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy has been engaged in this new approach to tackle cross-regional problems. The EU's Baltic and Danube Macro-regional Strategies, involving more than 20 countries both within and outside the EU, have been pioneer cooperative regional groupings in the continent. Behind the adoption of the Macro-regional Strategies lies the ambition that, as neo-functionalist theories have supported, the harmonized practices and the joint policies and initiatives which are supported in the frames of such a strategy will initiate new series of collaboration in several policy sectors among the states. This spill-over effect will gradually bring a number of neighboring countries closer and will affect positively their relations at the socio-

[68] European Commission Website (2009): "Macro-regional Strategies in the European Union"

economic as well as at the political level. In order to ensure its beneficial outcomes, the process for the adoption of a strategy has to be as inclusive as possible and comes as the result of extensive discussions among various actors.

The states that wish to adopt a macro-regional strategy initiate multilateral discussions and assess the need for the adoption of such a strategy. The purpose of these discussions is for the participating countries to reach a consensus with regards to the characteristics, the content and the goals of the strategy and the steps needed to be taken until its final approval. As soon as they reach this consensus, the proposed strategy is inserted among the topics of the European Council`s agenda. The Commission undertakes the task to promote the strategy, namely through broad consultations with relevant stakeholders and prepares a Communication accompanied by an Action Plan regarding the implementation of the strategy. After the Action Plan is endorsed by the European Council, the implementation begins. Parallelly takes place the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy`s projects and their results. These tasks are carried by the Commission which ensures the overall monitoring of the process and follows up with its results. Moreover, the Commission is in charge of editing and publishing all the necessary supportive documentation, such as the Communication and Action Plan. It is also responsible for the coordination of all the stakeholders and actors involved in the project[69].

In September 2000 took place the Millennium Summit where the world leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration aiming to establish an environment of global cooperation to fulfil the strategic goals that were set in the Declaration. These goals, named as “Millennium Development Goals,” included inter alia the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, reduction of child mortality, combat of diseases and the amelioration of environmental sustainability[70]. Hunger, poverty and diseases are closely related with the low environmental quality and climate change. The Macro-regional Strategies, to the extent that they take action against environmental deterioration, are also closely related and directly affecting the outcome of the global struggle to reach the “Millennium Development Goals” (Giddings and Drewry, 2004).

The anti-pollution measures taken in the frames of the Macro-regional Strategies gradually lead to a clearer environment. This is achieved through sustainable forest

[69] Rusconi Marco Riccardo (24 November 2011): “The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region”, pg. 8 Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for the Country Promotion

[70] United Nations website: “55/2 United Nations Millennium Declaration www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm

management programs, protection of biological diversity, rational and balanced energy use, reduction of carbon dioxide emissions and well controlled use of solid fuels while maintaining clear waters both at sea and inlands. These goals identify with the Millennium Development Goals. A big advantage of Macro-regional Strategies, when compared with mainstream EU integration policies, is that they apply both within and around EU borders, even in regions of countries that are not members of the EU. These countries, such as Western Balkans, may be in greater need of such policies because their level of development is still low.

Given all the above, one might observe that an EU macro-regional strategy lies close to the spirit of the UN Millennium Declaration more than any other type of EU`s regional policy. It opens the path for substantial integration among the countries which are already members of the EU, increases the cohesion within the Union and gives the ability to the potential candidate countries to accelerate their pace towards their accession. It offers them the chance to meet the demands of the EU acquis through adjusting their national policies to the requirements of a regional policy in compliance to the standards set by the EU. At the same time, these strategies are not restricted by the limits of intergovernmentalism which is the dominant governance model within the EU but, moreover, they promote the multi-level governance with the involvement of several stakeholders from public and private sectors and the civil society.

Both “European Structural Policy” and “Europe2020 Strategy” seek to reduce the disparities between the European regions and countries through convergence, leading to greater cohesion. This will be achieved through fostering smart growth of an economy based on knowledge and innovation. It refers both to the sustainable growth of a more resource - efficient, greener and more competitive economy and to the inclusive growth of a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. In light of the above, the EU Macro-regional Strategies not only identify with the UN Millennium Declaration`s goals, but they are also in absolute alignment with the European Structural Policy[71] and Europe2020 Strategy[72].

To achieve their goals and be flexible, effective and cost worthy, the EU Macro-regional Strategies are regulated by certain principles. There are three basic principles for the creation of Macro-regional Strategies, the so-called “three NOs”.

[71] Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (Germany) website: “EU Cohesion and Structural Policy www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Artikel/Europe/eu-cohesion-and-structural-policy.html
[72] European Commission (3 March 2010): “Communication on Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” COM(2010) 2020

The first one is the “no new institutions”: The strategies have their own governance structure as the European Commission is not in position to do direct management of them due to the insufficiency of resources and lack of knowledge on local issues. This is a role that belongs to the Priority Areas Coordinators. They are expertise units that support the actions, initiatives and projects implemented in the frames of a strategy, monitor their progress and report the results to the European Commission. The coordinators are already existing national and regional stakeholders (namely regional authorities, municipalities etc) and there are no new institutions established for the strategy. The governance model relies exclusively on the already existing institutions and organizations of the regions of the participating countries and takes advantage of their know-how and valuable experience. (Elise, 2012).

The second principle is the “no new legislation”: The Macro-regional Strategies operate on the basis of “Communications” issued by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council, accompanied by relevant action plans. It is up to the member states to decide whether they will implement the strategies or not. There have not been issued any regulations with mandatory content. The “no new legislation” principle however, implies and requires from the participating members to link and coordinate their existing policies and also to help different sectors improve their cooperation (Elise, 2012).

The third principle is the “no new funding”: the establishment of the EU Macro-regional Strategies bears no provision for the establishment of new funding mechanisms. This means that the participating regions and countries implement joint initiatives and projects using funds from already existing sources. These sources come from all levels: EU (Structural and Cohesion Funds, rural development funds, maritime and fisheries funding, external action sources and environmental funds), international financial institutions, national, regional and/or local, public and/or private (banks), NGOs and many more. They are addressed to a great variety of policy themes and territories. For this reason, all the participants need to conduct a careful evaluation and use the existing funds in a more structured and efficient manner.

The “no new funding” principle is in accordance with the Alignment of Funding, which “calls for a joint overview of priorities and optimization of funding by means of pooling resources at the time that decisions for the project funding are on the table.” It requires further cooperation and effective coordination between all programs and funding instruments, regardless if they come from European Union,

national, regional or local space[73]. Since the Macro-regional Strategies use existing sources to fund their prioritized actions and Flagship projects[74], it is of utmost importance to raise awareness among those who can have access to these sources. This should be done in a way that will enable the funding programs and institutions of each region to pursue the goals of the Strategy and subscribe to projects' financing. It is also important that the funding programs reflect the objectives of the strategy and that a proactive approach is adopted so as to ensure funds for the implementation of the strategy.

Another important aspect are the linkages and complementarities between the different funding mechanisms: each decision for funding should be seen as a piece of the puzzle which comprises of a number of funding decisions that jointly contribute to the realization of the priorities of the strategy. This increases the added value of the individual funding decisions and reduces the risk of duplication, overlapping or gaps. Great importance should be also attributed to the money that is spent to cover operational costs for technicalities related to the strategy, namely the Priority Area Coordinators and Flagship Project Leaders (e.g. hiring additional coordinators, project preparation, travelling and meeting expenses). The implementation of the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region highlighted that the technicalities are at the expense of many Priority Areas and Flagship Projects in terms of time and resources consuming and may reduce the amount of the operational activities which are carried out. The Commission could therefore consider the possibility of creating a Trust Fund for each macro-regional strategy in collaboration with the European Investment Bank in order to manage such costs and resources more sustainably (Elise, 2012).

Overall, the EU seeks to bridge its integration gaps which intensively came to surface right after the economic crisis erupted. It attempts to address a number of relevant issues by encouraging enhanced cooperation among states that share common regions and by sharing common regions, they also share common challenges. This cooperation takes place within the EU Macro-regional Strategies without inserting new institutions, legislation or funding, but it rather seeks to achieve better coordination within the existing regional, national and EU framework. EUSAIR is called to play such a role in the Adriatic – Ionian region, which is of particular interest as it includes the Western Balkans, a very sensitive and extremely volatile region.

[73] Commission of the European Communities: "European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region" pg 2
[74] www.ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/fet-flagships

CHAPTER 4: THE HISTORY, STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION (EUSAIR)

4.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After the Eastern Block collapsed, the Balkan area suffered from the political and ideological crisis that followed, the bloody dismantling of Yugoslavia and the costly transition to a free-market economy. Decades later, the Balkan area still suffers from economic, political and sociological pathogenies, not to leave out the hatred that is deeply rooted among the various ethnic, religious and cultural groups residing in the region. High rates of crime, corruption, unemployment and poverty persist. The European Union, in an attempt to gradually bring the Balkan countries closer to the EU acquis and help the region to recover, adopted the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe"[75]. During the EU Summit held in Tampere, Finland on October 1999, the Italian government presented the "Adriatic-Ionian Initiative" (AII) within the frames of the Stability Pact. This Initiative, strongly supported by Greece, was also encouraged warmly by the European Union. The initiative focused on an Adriatic Ionian macro-region that would include Greece, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, aiming "at bringing a new impetus for co-operation and investment to the benefit of all involved."[76] It was seen as a great chance for the aforementioned countries to act jointly to address some of the chronic issues of the Balkan region through mutual cooperation and coordination. The EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region aims to consolidate the already extensive cooperation among the participating countries, which exists thanks to European cooperation programs and other regional collaborative initiatives, such as the AII.

It is important to see why there was a need for an EU Strategy for the Adriatic – Ionian basin. The countries of the region share common historical, economic and cultural features but also common problems and challenges. Its geomorphology

[75] European Commission website: "European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations – Stability Pact for South – Eastern Europe www.ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/stability-pact_en
[76] Adriatic Ionian Initiative website: "About" www.aii-ps.org/about

makes cooperation among the countries that share the Adriatic-Ionian basin a necessity. Indeed, the Adriatic and Ionian seas, are actually one continuous water channel which connects the surrounding countries with the Mediterranean Sea. Given the structure of the landscape, it is impossible for the countries of the region to address issues related to fisheries, water management, pollution etc without joint efforts. Moreover, it is expected that international and interregional cooperation in such low politics issues, will lead the way for cooperation in high politics issues too in the future. This is of vital importance given that some of the participating countries were at war against each other in the very recent past. Lastly, it will assist the non-EU countries to adapt to the European standards and will facilitate their accession into the EU family.

During the "Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas", held in Ancona on 19th/20th May 2000, the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia signed the "Ancona Declaration" in the presence of the European Commission. Serbia and Montenegro joined the initiative in 2002 and as of today both of these independent states participate in the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII) which counts eight member-states.

As it was stated in the Declaration, "strengthening regional cooperation helps to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration"[77]. The Declaration set the goals of the AII. The AII embodies the idea of securing regional peace through a genuine dialogue and mutual cooperation among the various parties involved such as civil society, economic and political stakeholders and private sector. Through this cooperation the parties jointly can identify and define their common interests and challenges and take action "in all sectors for issues related with security, economics, trade, scientific and technological research and development, environment conservation, and, finally, preservation of cultural heritage and values, which are plentiful in this region". AII focuses mainly on tourism, culture and interuniversity cooperation, fight against organized crime, cooperation among SMEs, transport and maritime cooperation, environmental protection with a focus on protection against fire and sea pollution and encourages inter-parliamentary cooperation and cross-border co-operation for the joint management of the issues related with the abovementioned sectors[78]. It also stimulates the participating countries to exchange opinions and knowledge, to develop closer collaboration with the EU and

[77] University of Macerata website: www.diue.unimc.it/news/the_ancona_declaration.pdf
[78] Adriatic Ionian Initiative website: Parliamentary Dimension

regional initiatives, to strengthen regional peace and security, and solidify regional stability (Machačová and Dall, 2007).

For many years the Ancona Declaration was in a state of inertia. That period of time was needed to nominate the institutions and instruments which would develop its operational aspects. For the first time, in 2012, the Adriatic Ionian Initiative co-financed small but important projects. The content of the financial program "Regional Cooperation Program" was extracted from the "AII" funding documents. Its goal was to implement the provisions of the Protocols of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative regarding SMEs, Tourism and Rural Development. The evaluation of the project proposals which were submitted was concluded in November 2012 through a "Statement on the Regional Cooperation Program" issued by the Committee of Senior Officials of the "AII"[79].

The operational structure of AII consists of the Permanent Secretariat (AII-PS), the Committee of Senior Officials and the Adriatic Ionian Council. On June 2008 an "AII Permanent Secretariat" was established in Ancona, with the assistance of "Regione Marche[80]. Its main purpose is "to ensure continuity from one Presidency to the next, foster the Initiative's project-oriented approach and gather member country proposals[81]". The executive body of the Adriatic & Ionian Initiative is the Committee of Senior Officials. Within its context, the national coordinators meet at least three times per year. The AII Council of Ministers is the decision-making body of the Adriatic & Ionian Initiative. The participating Ministers of Foreign Affairs meet once every year with an agenda that has been prepared at Senior Officials meetings. The Adriatic Ionian Initiative Council adopts Declarations endorsing the work done during each annual presidency and setting objectives and strategies for the future[82]. The chairmanship of AII rotates among the member countries on an annual basis according to alphabetical order, and turnover generally takes place between May and June[83].

Other stakeholders involved in the Adriatic Ionian Initiative are the "Committee of the Regions Adriatic Ionian Interregional Group", "DG Regio" and "DG Mare". The Adriatic Ionian Interregional Group`s mission is to provide support to the European Commission – DG Regio and DG Mare as well as to the National Contact Points

[79] Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce: "Adriatic Ionian Macroregion: launch of the EUSAIR Strategy" Newsletter 1/2015 www.forumaic.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Newsletter01_2015_en.pdf
[80] http://www.regione.marche.it/
[81] Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: "The Adriatic Ionian Initiative»
[82] Adriatic & Ionian Initiative website: "Adriatic & Ionian Council (AIC)
[83] Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: International Organisations – AII (Adriatic and Ionian Initiative)»

of the eight participating countries of the Adriatic Ionian region for the development and implementation of the EU strategy in the region and to draft an action plan, taking into account the proposals submitted by Regional and Local Authorities[84].

The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative interacts with other regional organizations and initiatives that operate in South Eastern Europe: the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Danube Cooperation Process (DCP). Italian presidency showed strong engagement towards a close collaboration of the AII with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) based on common interests in the coastal and maritime environment. An AII-CBSS workshop was held in Ancona to identify the technicalities of a possible cooperation in the fields of sustainable development and civil society dialogue. On May 2010, the AII Presidency and the CBSS Presidency came together at the AII XI Meeting in Ancona and explored the possibility of exchanging experiences and officials among their Permanent Secretariats. It is very important that the Italian Presidency in 2010 encouraged a closer cooperation with CBSS aiming to exploit the Baltic Council's technical experience that could be useful for setting-up the Ionian-Adriatic macroregional strategy[85].

Adriatic Ionian Initiative also builds on other forums and networks which are based in the region, such as: the "Association Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns" which focuses on sharing a common administrative model in order to achieve a better balanced administrative development[86]; the "Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce", which deals with mutual socio-economic issues and the protection of resources[87]; the "UniAdrion network of universities", which aims to establish a permanent link between universities and research centers in the Adriatic and Ionian region to create joint multimedia products[88]; the "Adriatic and Ionian Euro-region", which brings together institutions, usually at the immediate subnational level, on both sides of the Adriatic Sea to discuss and align their planning priorities[89]. The AII Permanent Secretariat holds meetings with these

[84] European Commission website (2013): "Contribution of the Committee of the Regions Adriatic Ionian Interregional Group to the Stakeholders Consultation on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region"
[85] Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
[86] http://www.faic.eu/index_en.asp
[87] http://www.forumaic.org/
[88] http://www.uniadrion.net/
[89] http://www.adriaticionianeuroregion.eu/

organizations and forums on a regular basis and seeks for their feedback on planned and/or implemented regional projects.

For the development of a macro-regional strategy in the region, AII enjoyed support not only from national and regional sources but also from the Committee of the Regions ("Spacca Report") and the Council of Europe ("Adriatic Euroregio"). The debate on the development of the strategy was accompanied by practical initiatives that included proposals submitted by the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) set up an Adriatic-Ionian strategy task force in October 2012.

In November 2012, the Commission presented a "Communication on a Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas" (COM(2012) 713 final) defining the maritime sector as the first priority of the EU macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region. It was noted that the strategy would also cover issues that are not necessarily directly related to the sea. This Communication set a framework towards a coherent maritime strategy that would upgrade the blue economy, ensuring a healthy marine environment in the region, advancing the safety and security level of the regional maritime space and conducting fishery activities with responsibility. On 19 November 2012 Commissioner Hahn and the ministers of foreign affairs of the participating countries discussed the possible outline of the strategy and agreed that apart from the maritime issues, the new strategy would also focus on a limited number of key priorities: transport, environment, tourism and capacity-building.

With its decision in December 2012, the European Council defined the status of the Adriatic Ionian macro-region and set a formal process in motion, which would lead to the adoption of the new strategy and the respective action plan. European Commission`s DG Regio was assigned to lead the process in collaboration with the European Commission services. The decision indicated the parameters that should be taken into account for the communication and documentation of the strategy and its action plan. The Commission was urged by the European Council to build on the previous experience gained from the implementation of the Danube and Baltic Sea Macro-regional Strategies in order to proceed with the introduction of the new one for the Adriatic and Ionian Region before the end of 2014 and to also incorporate the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas[90].

[90] EUR-Lex – Access to European Union Law website: "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas"

Accordingly, the Committee of the Regions' Adriatic-Ionian Interregional Group was set on 30 January 2013[91]. Its mission was: to support the European Commission and the National Contact Points (NCP) in developing the Adriatic-Ionian strategy before the end of 2014 and in drafting its respective action plan, taking into account the proposals and suggestions made by regional and local authorities; to promote a common identity for the Adriatic and Ionian region which will ensure that the region's full potential is reached through collective action; to make the region more visible at national, European and international levels by highlighting its unique features; to create synergies with the existing Baltic and Danube strategies (partly through their respective interregional groups in the Committee of the Regions) and in particular with the Danube Strategy, as recommended by the European Council Conclusions of 14 December 2012[92].

On 9 August 2013, the European Commission published the EUSAIR discussion paper on an EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), where its key priorities are organized into four thematic pillars: Innovative blue (maritime and marine) growth; connectivity of the region; preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment; increase of regional attractiveness. Moreover, it provides two cross-cutting pillars: research, innovation and small-and-medium-size enterprise (SME) development; Capacity-building.[93] For each pillar of the EUSAIR there is one working group that works for the materialization of the goals of the pillar. All four groups worked together for the planning of EUSAIR action plan. They are coordinated by an EU Member State in association with a non-EU country of the region, a role that rotates among all the participating countries of the EUSAIR.

EUSAIR – Working Groups

Pillar	WG Coordinators
Driving innovative maritime and marine growth	Greece, together with Montenegro
Connecting the region	Italy, together with Serbia

(COM/2012/0713final*/) www.eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1403163422847&uri=CELEX:52012DC0713

[91] Committee of the Regions (19 February 2014): “Working Document of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region”

[92] Committee of the Regions website: Interregional group “Adriatic – Ionian”

[93] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): “Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 5

Preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment	Slovenia, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina
Increasing regional attractiveness	Croatia, together with Albania[94]

The period September - December 2013 there was held a consultation among the EUSAIR`s stakeholders on the Discussion Paper (European Commission, August 2013) and the content of the future action plan of the strategy. An online consultation, accessible by all competent actors, including civil society, was conducted by the end of January 2014. The aim was to tap into the ideas of the relevant stakeholders and to ensure that the strategy adopts a realistic approach with pragmatic objectives and appropriate responses to the real needs of the people living in the region. The results were presented at the EUSAIR conference that was held in Athens on 6-7 February 2014 where the stakeholders had the chance to contribute with further feedback. Following the results of the extensive consultations, the strategy was adopted through a Communication of the Commission {COM(2014) 357 final)}. It was accompanied by an Action Plan {SWD(2014) 190 final)}, with a view to be adopted by the European Commission during the first Semester of 2014. The Communication and the Action Plan were submitted to the Council of the European Union for endorsement in the second half of 2014. At the end of June 2014, the European Commission presented EUSAIR`s action plan to the General Affairs Council of the Council of the EU. The European Council endorsed the strategy in autumn 2014 and its implementation started.

In the European Council Conclusions of 24 October 2014 (EUCO 169/14), the Head of State and Government of the 28 member states of the European Union adopted the "EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region" asking from "all relevant actors to implement it without delay, as it was outlined in the Council conclusions of 29 September 2014". As stressed by the Council Conclusions of 29 September 2014, the new strategy benefits from: the long experience of the intergovernmental Adriatic Ionian Initiative which fostered cooperation at the level of civil society (Chambers of Commerce, Cities, Universities); the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas adopted in November 2012; the coincidence with the EU programming period 2014-2020; the lessons learned from the existing Macro-

[94] Adriatic Ionian Initiative website: “The Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion”

regional Strategies[95]. The European Council invited the Commission to report regularly on the progress made "towards the achievement of targets, relevant milestones and possible development of the Strategy and its Action Plan, by the end of 2016 in the first instance."

4.2 OBJECTIVES, SCOPES, PILLARS AND FIELDS OF ACTION OF EUSAIR

The Adriatic Ionian macro-region strategy is meant to play the role of a platform where the participating states can undertake common initiatives and find concerted solutions to address common problems, varying from fighting against organized crime to the need for protection of the natural environment of the Adriatic-Ionian Sea. Through the preservation of the environmental and cultural diversity of the region, the fight against crime, the amelioration of transportation and other joint efforts, the strategy seeks to increase the attractiveness of the region. The strategy focuses on issues of (macro) regional mutual interest. In the priorities of its Action Plan are included shared aspirations with a view to sustainable solutions to common challenges. It builds on the previous experience of the strategies for the Baltic and the Danube regions and consolidates the existing cooperation platforms among the countries of the region[96].

The need for cooperation and joint synergies across this region is important as only four of the partner countries are EU members (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia) while the rest are not (Albania, Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia). The strategy can make an important contribution towards the fulfillment of the EU`s admission criteria for the non-EU member states. It gives them the chance to build on the experience and good practices of the EU member states and to have a close cooperation in scientific and technical matters.

Despite their differences, including their physical size and socio-economic features, there has always been an intense interdependence and interaction among the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian region at all levels: social, economic, cultural and political. As a consequence, from this interaction emerge common issues that need to (can only) be addressed through joint action. Their cooperation

[95] General Affairs Council meeting, conclusions (29 September 2014): “Council Conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)” pg 3
[96] European Commission website, Regional Policy: The European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

can be more flexible and more pragmatic when it is realized not only at the international level but also at the regional. The EU strategy for the Adriatic Ionian macro-region, same as the Adriatic Ionian Initiative, provides the opportunity for the sub-regions in the area to collaborate and seek for pragmatic solutions to address their real needs.

Adriatic Ionian Initiative`s activities cover several fields of action, which are divided into five round tables: Blue growth/maritime cooperation, transports and energy connectivity, environmental and civil protection, sustainable tourism and culture and inter-university cooperation97. In the same line, the Adriatic Ionian macro-region strategy`s fields of action are divided into four thematic pillars. These pillars describe the overall goals and sub-goals of the strategy and they are further divided into fields and sub-fields of action: Driving Innovative Blue Growth; Connecting the Region; Preservation, Protection and Improvement of the Quality of the Environment; Increase of Regional Attractiveness. Given that the strategy concerns a sea basin, its pillars seek to take advantage of all the benefits of the marine and maritime features of the region and address mostly sea-related issues always in light of regional peace and development.

The first thematic pillar is “Driving Innovative Blue (maritime and marine) Growth.” Traditionally, the coastal countries develop strong economic bonds with the sea. including marine tourism activities. Through activities which lie within the field of “blue economy” such as fisheries, marine and maritime services, including tourism, the strategy aims to promote sustainable economic growth as well as to increase the employment rates and the opportunities for business creation. The specific challenges/objectives of this pillar can be further categorized into two parts.

The first part refers to the systemization of the production and consumption of seafood in a resource-efficient manner. Such systemization prerequisites that the consumers of the region are properly informed about the (mainly seafood) products they consume, there is a sustainable management of fisheries and that aquaculture, including economic management of sea-related activities, is well linked with other economic sectors. A common market intelligence, consumer awareness and relevant services (e.g. seafood traceability and quality certification systems) provided across the region will ensure that the fisheries and the aquaculture services and products of the region are marketed with transparency, in compliance with the national legislative framework of each country. To their turn,

[97] Adriatic Ionian Initiative website: “Fields of Activity”

the national legislative frameworks must comply with the relevant regulations and directives of the EU (e.g. through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance[98]).

Sustainability of fisheries presupposes that they are managed in a reasonable manner. This, for example, can be achieved through multiannual plans or the establishment of Marine Protected Areas. According to World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Marine Protected Areas are defined as "areas designated and effectively managed to protect marine ecosystems, processes, habitats, and species, which can contribute to the restoration and replenishment of resources for social, economic, and cultural enrichment."[99] Such models result to the increase of the marine resources and thus the profitability of fisheries and aquaculture activities will also increase without jeopardizing their sustainability. The establishment of a network for sharing data and information among the participating countries will upgrade their capacity to monitor and control fishery related activities and will establish a culture of cooperation towards saving resources.

Finally, the sustainable and profitable management of aquaculture, marine and maritime sectors requires that they are linked up with other economic activities. This can be achieved with through a number of initiatives such as the multilateral framework of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)[100] which is a regional intergovernmental instrument for the management of fisheries in Mediterranean area, established under the provisions of Article XIV of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations[101]. It is one of the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations that FAO has supported around the globe. They are formed by coastal countries or countries that have particular interests in fisheries, with the active support and involvement of the EU[102]. GFCM`s provisions and decisions are binding for the participating states and regulate a number of aspects of fisheries` management. FAO has also under its auspice and provides funds for numerous regional projects, such as Adriamed and Eastmed. Adriamed in particular, is a scientific cooperation to support responsible fisheries in the Adriatic Sea. It is a FAO`s project, funded by Ministries of Italy and Croatia,

[98] Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council: "Establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II)"
[99] WWF website: "The Case for MPAs" www.wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/how_we_work/our_global_goals/oceans/solutions/protection/protected_areas/
[100] Global Council of the Mediterranean website: "About GFCM" http://www.gfcm.org/about/
[101] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: "About GFCM" http://www.fao.org/gfcm/background/about/en/
[102] European Commission website (Fisheries): "Regional Fisheries Management Organization" https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/rfmo_en

as well as the Commission[103]. Such projects might refer to connecting aquaculture activities with other mainstream economic activities which in case of Adriatic Ionian macro-region is of utter importance. Of valuable assistance for a holistic approach to maritime and spatial planning (MSP) in the region is the Adriatic Ionian Planning (ADRIPLAN), which "aims to deliver a commonly-agreed approach to cross-border MSP in the Adriatic-Ionian region, considered as a whole and more specifically through two Focus Areas (Northern Adriatic Sea; Southern Adriatic / Northern Ionian Sea)."[104]

The second part concerns boosting blue research, innovation and skills. The development of suitable technological platforms will facilitate interregional collaboration amongst the public, and private sector, the scientific community and operators in the field of aquaculture. Overall, they will provide support to actors who develop activities relevant to research and innovation in blue bio-technologies, fisheries, aquaculture, biosecurity and blue energy. These technological platforms will enable sharing of knowledge and research results and will facilitate the states to diffuse the obligations which are defined by the Common Fishery Policy into fishery methods and gears. Such a "blue development" preconditions the sustainable management of fisheries` stock of the region in close collaboration with FAO and GFCM initiatives, as well as with the Regional Advisory Council for the Mediterranean (RACMED/CCR). It is a regional organization that comprises of fisheries` stakeholders. Its role is to give the European Commission access to the knowledge and experience of the stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of fisheries` management measures[105]. Additionally, the "blue development" will be supported by a systematic mapping of the condition of the ecosystems that host the fisheries and also by professional collaborative networks which will be established through transparent and meritocratic criteria[106].

The second pillar is "Connecting the Region." The Adriatic-Ionian (AdrIonian) basin, is a crossroad for commercial, civilian and energy loads` transport routes from/to Europe. Such a big sea traffic, requires the transport policies which will ensure that AdrIonian transport networks don`t put the regional environment at risk. The social and commercial life of the region, both in land and sea, majorly depends

[103] ADRIAMED website: "About us" http://www.faoadriamed.org/html/adriamed_project.html
[104] ADRIPLAN website: "Summary" http://adriplan.eu/index.php/project/summary
[105] ADRIPLAN website: "Regional Advisory Council for the Mediterranean (RACMED/CCR)" www.adriplan.eu/index.php/consortium/115-consortium/partners/observers/292-regional-advisory-council-for-the-mediterranean-racmed-ccr
[106] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): "Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 5

on these transport networks and they play a vital role in the perseverance of the viability of remote places, islandic or inland. This pillar`s policies intend to eliminate regional gaps and barriers in key transport and energy infrastructures. They promote a model of governance that will reduce the remoteness of inland and rural communities, will enrich the sea corridors, will increase the interoperability of transport modes and will empower the development of transport networks which will respect the environment. Gradually, the sustainability and competitiveness of AdrIonian transport networks, namely of the AdrIonian Sea Motorway which connects Europe with the Mediterranean Sea, are expected to increase. The region`s connectivity will be improved in terms of both quality and capacity[107].

Given the importance of the transport networks for the region, the EUSAIR needs to promote the combined use of transport means on the air, sea and mainland, coasts and inland, both within and across the national borders of countries of the region. Better connectivity among the region`s ports, airports, bus stations, motorways and cycling paths, apart from making transportations faster and of better quality, will also increase economic interaction among southern, central and eastern regions of Europe. As islands, inlands and remote areas will acquire better access to transport and energy services, connectivity will result to further economic development of the region and the Adriatic and Ionian seas will play the most important role in this. For all the above, it is important that the strategy encourages the establishment of collaboration mechanisms between the regional maritime bodies and the EU for the exchange of information regarding maritime traffic improving the regional transportation security. Towards this direction, the strategy must cultivate the culture of compliance in flag and port state control, liability and insurance of shipping, accident investigation and port security with means of modern technology[108]. Combined use of transport means will ensure a more harmonized and sustainable development of the region.

The third pillar refers to “Preservation, Protection and Improvement of the Quality of the Environment.” This pillar focuses on a series of cross-sector joint initiatives for the protection of the biodiversity of the ecosystems and of human health, promotion of sustainable management of natural resources and overall improvement of the quality of the environment. It seeks to address environmental

[107] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): “Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 6

[108] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): “Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 6

issues related to eutrophication, management of waste and marine litter, efficient and eco-friendly transport systems and the use of renewable energy sources. The environmental management of the region needs to comply with the Ecosystem Approach of the Barcelona Convention[109]. It is a convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, signed by all Mediterranean countries in 1976[110]. The Ecosystem Approach is the main principle of Mediterranean Action Plan`s Programme of Work and refers to "a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. It is based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies focused on levels of biological organization which encompass the essential processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment, and recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems".[111] The Mediterranean Action Plan is a United Nations Environment Programme`s document and contains guidelines for integrated management of coastal and marine areas with special reference to the Mediterranean basin[112]. All policies developed and implemented in the framework are undertaken under the auspices of United Nations Environment Programme/Barcelona Convention, with the ultimate objective of achieving the Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast[113]. Same applies in the case of the Commission`s Marine Directive of which Article 3 defines GES as "the environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive".[114] In light of this approach, the AdrIonian macro-regional strategy has the ambition to facilitate the compliance of regional policies with the aforementioned international texts, the resolution of conflicts between local and

[109] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): "Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 8
[110] European Commission website: "Environment – Sea Conventions" https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7096/Consolidated_BC95_Eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[111] Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations website: "Biodiversity – Ecosystem Approach" http://www.fao.org/biodiversity/cross-sectoral-issues/ecosystem-approach/en/
[112] United Nations Environment Programme (1994): "Guidelines for Integrated Management of Coastal and Marine Areas with Special Reference to the Mediterranean Basin" https://pap-thecoastcentre.org/pdfs/ICAMguidelines.pdf
[113] UNEP(DEPI)/MED Decision IG 17/6: Implementation of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities that may affect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, Annex V, pg 179-180 file:///C:/Users/Snowblind/Desktop/08ig17_10_annex5_17_06_eng.pdf
[114] EUR-Lex – Access to European Law website: "DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)" pg 6-7 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008L0056&from=EN

national or supranational approaches and the improvement of interregional mechanisms for the prevention of and response to marine pollution incidents.

The fourth pillar concerns policies that seek to achieve an “Increase of Regional Attractiveness”. To do so, it takes a holistic, balanced and sustainable development which will transform the region into a highly qualified and competitive touristic product. Improvement of tourist services, preservation and promotion of its cultural heritage and strategic promotion of a common regional brand name, highlighting the uniqueness of the region are the key actions of this pillar. To achieve this goal, the strategy needs to align with the EU tourism policy[115].

For the materialization of the goals of this pillar, there need to be initiatives that promote tourism activities and services based on local products and culture and increase their quality, safety and security. Ideally, seasonality of the touristic demand will be replaced by all-season tourism. Development of creative entrepreneurship will focus on enhancing the value and recognition of the cultural and natural heritage of the region. The sea tourism should connect with other types of economic activity, especially with the ones of the inlands. An effective administrative coordination among private and public entities for the joint governance of tourism sector will act as a regulative umbrella that will ensure quality standards and will provide support to common action. Finally, "Research, Innovation and SMEs Development", together with "Capacity Building" will play their own role for the development of regional competitiveness[116].

Such a capacity building will take the form of platforms for collaboration amongst the scientific community, public authorities and businesses on thematic tourism issues. The interaction between academic and professional stakeholders of the region will boost research and creativity in tourism and cultural sectors and will establish a transparent framework for the assessment of qualifications/skills of tourism professionals. Cultural interaction across the region will be also fostered through jointly organized promotional initiatives such as festivals, information campaigns, exhibitions and other activities. Moreover, intergovernmental and

[115] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): “Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 9

[116] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): “Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 9, 10

intersectoral collaboration is expected make extended use of e-techonology, in order to skip bureaucracy and distance related barriers[117].

4.3 INSTRUMENTS, STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

EUSAIR takes advantage of the instruments and partnerships of Adriatic Ionian Initiative, namely the Adriatic Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat (AII-PS) and the Adriatic Ionian Council. The AII-PS, is based in Ancona, Italy and initiated its operations in June 2008. It is the administrative and operational instrument of AII that promotes interregional cooperation through the implementation of joint regional projects. It also undertakes the coordination of the Forum of the Adriatic & Ionian Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of the Adriatic & Ionian Cities and Towns and the UniAdrion. Given its primary focus on coordination of the AII activities and provision of all relevant official documentation, the AII-PS fulfills all the tasks assigned to it by the Adriatic Ionian Council. The latter comprises of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the participating countries. It is a decision-making body the agenda of which is prepared by the Council of Senior Officials. The Chairmanship of the Council rotates in an alphabetical order every May/June[118]. Through AII, the Adriatic Ionian macro-regional strategy interacts with preexisting regional entities such as the Regional Cooperation Council[119], the Central European Initiative[120], the South-East European Cooperation Process[121], the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative[122], the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre[123] and the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation

[117] European Commission, Directorates General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and for Regional and urban Policy (August 2013): “Discussion-Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), pg 10
[118] Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions – Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission website (19 May 2009): The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII)
[119] The Regional Cooperation Council website: https://www.rcc.int/
[120] The Central European Initiative website: http://www.cei.int/
[121] Regional Cooperation Council website: “South-East European Cooperation Process https://www.rcc.int/pages/111/south-east-european-cooperation-process--seecp
[122] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia & Herzegovina website: “Southeast European Cooperative Initiative http://www.mvp.gov.ba/vanjska_politika_bih/multilateralni_odnosi/regionalne_inicijative/inicijativa_za_saradnju_u_jugoistocnoj_evropi/default.aspx?id=156
[123] Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre website http://www.selec.org/

in South-East Europe[124]. Furthermore, there are a number of institutions, partnerships and instruments interacting with the strategy directly.

The “Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy” (DG Regio) is a body of 700 professionals from all over the European Union “who understand the diverse challenges faced by the Member States and their regions, using their wide range of expertise to target investments that foster growth and create jobs.” It aims to operate as an information platform within the Commission, providing policy-making subjects with regional data and intelligence. In order to assess needs, finance investments and evaluate the results from a long-term EU perspective, the DG Regio members work closely with the EU member – states in an attempt to ensure that the money is well spent. As part of the Commission's commitment to transparency, on a regular basis, the Directors-General publish information on meetings held with organizations or self-employed individuals[125].

The “Adriatic - Ionian Euro-Region” refers to an association of 25 territories for transnational and inter-regional cooperation. It was established in 2006 and concerns regional and local authorities of the 8 participating countries. The thematic of its function refers to the management of fisheries, tourism, transports, culture, infrastructure and environmental issues. Its governance structure includes the Chairman, the Assembly and the Ad hoc Commissions[126].

The “Assembly of European Regions (AER)” was established in 1985. It is an independent European network of regional authorities representing regions from 35 European countries and 15 interregional organizations. AER functions as a forum for interregional co-operation and a lobbyist for regional interests on the European stage: it played a key role in the creation of Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as the advisory body to the Council of Europe and of the Committee of the Regions as the advisory body to the European Union. A body of regional high representatives and several high-level politicians constitutes the Executive Board and Bureau of AER which draw AER’s policies. Through its action, AER seeks to establish the principle of subsidiarity as the guiding principle underpinning policy making in Europe, to promote regional interests vis-à-vis European and national policy-makers, to embody and reflect the regional dimension in Europe and make it more visible on the European continent and,

[124] Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South-East Europe website: http://rspcsee.org/en/pages/read/
[125] European Commission (24 January 2014): “Regio Management Plan 2014,” pg 6 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/management-plan-2014-dg-regio_january2014_en.pdf
[126] Adriatic Ionian Euroregion website (6 May 2016): “The Largest Network of Regional and Local Authorities in the Adriatic and Ionian Area”

finally, to ensure that regions remain a driving force for political, economic and social development with a view of accomplishing a multi-layer Europe. AER advocates for solidarity between all the regions of Europe, while urging fairness as a source of cohesion between member regions and promoting equal opportunities for all[127].

AER acts as representative of the regions, at the European and international level, providing political advocacy for their interests. Its structure includes four committees. Committee A "Institutional Matters" deals with matters of European policy such as better EU governance and the role of the regions or the perspectives for a European constitution. Committee B "Social cohesion and the public sector" works for the reinforcement of the regional health policies in Europe, supporting projects and organizing congresses and conferences. Committee C "Regional policy, regional planning, infrastructures, environment and tourism" works in the fields of sustained development, common agricultural policy (CAP), common transport policy and environmental protection. Its work is aimed at securing the economic, social and territorial cohesion on regional policy and at acknowledging the regions as equal partners in future cohesion policy. Committee D "Culture, education & training, youth, media & information technology and sport" works on interregional cultural cooperation and interaction which can serve as an engine for east-west rapprochement[128].

The “Association of European Border Regions” is the voice of the European border and cross-border regions. It communicates the needs, the problems, the challenges and the common interests of the European border regions on their behalf. This representation takes place beyond major political entities, such as international parliaments, bodies, authorities and institutions. Moreover, the Association promotes collaboration and experience exchange among the regions, to assist them address jointly the diverse problems they are facing. Its organizational structure comprises of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Secretary General who is in constant contact with the National Contact Points. In the frames of the Association, several fora are organized with the participation of representatives from both the European and the national levels, where a variety of topics is covered such as cross-border rural development, health, external borders, universities and innovation, spatial planning etc[129].

---

[127] Assembly of European Regions website: “About” https://aer.eu/aer-largest-independent-network-regions-wider-europe/
[128] Assembly of European Regions website: “AER Statute” https://aer.eu/aer-statute/
[129] Association of European Borders Regions website: “Profile, Aims and Tasks”

The “Congress of Local and Regional Authorities” of the Council of Europe is a pan-European political assembly consisting of 636 members who are representatives of regional and local authorities). Its goal is to upgrade regional governance by promoting policies which foster local and regional democracy and empower the role of self-government bodies. Of utmost importance for the Congress is the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. In addition, the Congress supports the development of the “Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe” (NALAS)[130] which, to its turn, supports the creation of Euro-regions, such as the Adriatic-Ionian, involving local authorities from European Union member and non-member states[131]. Both entities work to deepen multi-level governance within Europe, ensuring that local authorities will play a substantial role in that. The member states of the Council of Europe committed through the European Charter of Local Self-Government to safeguard and reinforce their domestic local self-government authorities as catalysts of policy-making processes[132].

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) brings together the national associations of local and regional governments from 42 European countries and represents, through them, all levels of territories - local, intermediate and regional. It aims to safeguard peace and democracy across Europe based on increased representation of local self-government and respect for the principle of subsidiarity and active citizenship. It works to influence European policy and legislation in all areas that have an impact on municipalities and regions and to provide a forum for debate between local and regional authorities via their national representative associations. CEMR is also the European section of the world organisation “United Cities and Local Governments” (UCLG), where it represents the European local and regional governments[133].

There is a number of entities that were inaugurated and started their operation in the frames of Adriatic Ionian Initiative, even before the strategy was officially adopted. The “UNIADRION Academic Network” is a network of 36 Universities of the eight countries that participate in AdrIonian strategy. It was established in 2001 aiming to create permanent links among Universities and R&D centres to boost

[130] Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe website: “About” http://www.nalas.eu/AboutUs#About-NALAS
[131] Council of Europe website: “The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the guarantor of local and regional democracy in Europe” https://rm.coe.int/168071a20d
[132] Council of Europe website: “European Charter of Local Self-Government” https://rm.coe.int/168007a088
[133] Council of European Municipalities and Regions website: “Introducing CEMR” http://www.ccre.org/en/article/introducing_cemr

joint research programmes and knowledge exchange. Its main instrument is the UniAdrion Secretariat, based in the University of Bologna[134]. The “Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce” is an association of 38 Chambers of Commerce of AII countries, created in 2001 in the framework of AII, based in Ancona. Its goals are to promote economic development in the region, to enhance relations between Chambers of Commerce and to promote legal and administrative cooperation[135]. The “Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns” is the association of cities and municipalities of Adriatic-Ionian region and was created in 1999. There are 30 participating cities from Italy, 5 from Albania, 1 from Bosnia, 6 from Croatia, 5 from Greece, 2 from Slovenia and 1 from Montenegro. It aims at deepening economic integration, securing environmental sustainability and protecting social cohesion. It is governed by the President and Vice President, the Directive Committee and the Secretary General[136]. Finally, the “International Court of Arbitration of the Adriatic and Ionian Area”, which deals with problems emerging from the differentiations between the legal systems of the participating countries and enforces the harmonized application of common rules and ethics in regional trade and international relations in the region[137].

The “Committee of the Regions” (CoR) is an advisory body which consists of 353 members (and as many alternate members) from all 28 EU countries. It represents local and regional authorities in the European Union. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the European Commission is obliged to consult with local and regional authorities and their associations across the EU for every new law that affects the EU local and regional policies. This consultation has to take place during the pre-legislative phase. In this process, the CoR represents the local and regional authorities. Within the CoR there are six commissions to consider different policy areas and prepare the opinions to be debated in CoR`s plenary sessions: territorial cohesion; economic and social policy; education, youth and research; environment, climate change and energy; citizenship, governance, institutional and external affairs; natural resources. The CoR`s commissions also prepare official resolutions on topical political issues which are submitted for adoption and verification to CoR`s plenary sessions[138].

[134] Italian Presidency of the Adriatic Ionian-Initiative, Round Table on Education and Inter-university Cooperation: “Building the European Higher Education Area - A further step forward” pg 1, 2
[135] Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce website
[136] Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns website: “Organization”
[137] Charter of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce: Article 10
[138] European Committee of the Regions website: “About the CoR”

The “Committee of the Regions Adriatic Ionian Interregional Group”, ensures that the strategy will stick to bottom-up policy approach and will present extensive multilevel governance activity. The Group together with the EUSAIR`s National Contact Points and the Adriatic Ionian Initiative, was involved in the process of drafting the EUSAIR “discussion paper” of 9 August 2013. It was also actively involved in supporting and organizing the stakeholders’ consultation meetings of EUSAIR`s thematic pillars and the two cross-cutting axis working groups. Its role was to ensure that EUSAIR`s action plan would include pragmatic needs and priorities contributed by all different levels of strategy’s stakeholders as well as from the existing Adriatic Ionian forums and networks of the region. At all meetings and consultations that were organized, the Group assured the exchanges of ideas and contacts with EU institutions, European Commission and the European Parliament for the adoption of joint activities concerning the Adriatic Ionian region. The Group also welcomed proposals coming from the members of European Parliament, related with the budget line for the Adriatic Ionian Region, as accompanying measures of the first Mediterranean macro-region and encouraged the European Parliament to adopt a budget line for the Adriatic Ionian Region as it did for the Baltic and Danube Macro-regions[139].

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together some 160 Regions from 25 States from the European Union and beyond. As a think tank and a lobby for the regions, it advocates for a more balanced development of the European territory, taking advantage of its extensive network of contacts within the EU institutions and national governments. It focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and blue growth, accessibility, European governance, energy and climate change, neighborhood and development[140].

The CPMR – Balkan & Black Sea Regional Commission promotes dialogue and cooperation at local and regional levels in the wider Balkan and Black Sea area. In light of EU`s enlargement, it supports the integration of these areas and the improvement of their relations with the EU. It links programmes and strategies implemented by the EU with activities developed by other networks and institutions in the region, like the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It encourages the member regions to implement transnational cooperation projects. Through political and technical meetings taking place within the

[139] European Committee of the Regions website, CoR Activities: “Interregional group Adriatic-Ionian”
[140] Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions website: “Who We Are”

organisation, its members have the chance to exchange views and good practices and enrich their regional strategies[141].

The EUSAIR is expected to act as an interregional, interinstitutional and intergovernmental entity that will embrace all the aforementioned initiatives. It builds on the experience, the projects and the instruments of the above entities in order to support joint actions in the fields where its goals coincide with the goals of these entities. The strategy will play a coordinative role to bring all regional actors together and ensure that EU, national and regional policies will work to the benefit of the region in terms of boosting blue growth, enhancing environmental protection, ensure safety and quality in transportation and increase attractiveness of the region. The actors listed above, will assist the strategy to implement its multi-level governance approach, focusing especially in the involvement of local and regional authorities in EU, national and regional policy making. Subsequently, this approach will activate the civil society, private and public sector and will make an important contribution towards the development of the sense of common belonging, eliminating the probability of conflicts and helping to stabilize peace and development across the region. This contribution will be further analysed in the following chapter.

[141] CPMR – Balkan & Black Sea Regional Commission website:

CHAPTER 5: EUSAIR`s CONTRIBUTION IN REGIONAL PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

The economic crisis, the refugee crisis, the increase of Euroscepticism among the politicians and the EU peoples and the differentiations in external policies of EU member states put the unity of the EU at stake, while the goals of European integration are profoundly questioned. The Greek debt crisis and the Brexit verified that EU`s cohesion policy has still a long and hard way to walk. It is evident that not all European member states had followed the same pace with regards to their development and integration. The example of Greece has been characteristic, highlighting the inability of some of EU countries to achieve the desired results of the EU integration process at the economic and the social level. Despite this situation, the EU member states still need to cooperate in order to face common challenges and move further towards integration. Especially when it comes to the protection of the environment, fight against crime and tourism, the need for such a cooperation lies both within and beyond the EU borders.

This situation initiated the discussions on the need for the EU to find alternatives which would give the member states the chance to follow different types and/or paces of integration, resulting to a model of differentiated integration. One of the tools that the EU uses to achieve the goals of this model are the Macro-regional Strategies. Different groupings of countries act collectively to address various regional issues. Such synergies allow them to deepen their integration and adjust it to the specific needs and features of a given region. In light of their political and operational nature, the macro-regions have two equally important dimensions, the internal and the external.

Internally, as it has already been mentioned, macro-regions enable the EU countries to overcome their imbalances regarding integration and development and come together to face common challenges. Through macro-regions, the groupings of countries integrate selectively, focusing on matters of common interest on the pace they wish or they can. Such cooperation might take place within the EU borders enhancing also the overall EU integration. However, there are issues and challenges, namely environmental, that require cooperation between EU member states and countries that are outside but adjacent to the EU borders. The strategies act as platforms that may bring EU member states together

with neighbouring, non-EU member states and promote cross-border cooperation towards joint solutions. This is the external dimension of the macro-regions, as they might concern countries that are external to the EU.

Internal dimension is of quite importance but external dimension is of utmost importance. As the macro-regions constitute groupings of countries that may not be part of the EU, their contribution to regional peace and development is important as they are in position to overcome the EU and national borders. Through this process, the EU and non-EU member states that participate in a macro-region, they exchange knowledge, benefit from each other`s good practices and experiences, share data, meet, discuss and come up with joint solutions. They assist each other, avoid conflicts, deepen their trust and consolidate the concept of solidarity and common belonging. In the long term, macro-regions make a major contribution to regional peace and development. This prerequires that the governance and resources of the macro-region are managed in a way that will allow the strategy to develop its full potential.

5.1 FOSTERING INTERSTATE, INTERREGIONAL AND INTER-SECTORAL COOPERATION

The Macro-regional Strategies, including Adriatic Ionian, resulted to many synergies and collaborative actions among their members in several sectors such as environment, trade, education and culture. Dubois et al. (2009) suggests that the macro - regional strategies can help the states to block cannibalistic competition between regions, and rather foster competition on the basis of complementarities. For example, in the case of fisheries management, a hard and uncontrolled competition among the neighbouring countries could lead to the desertification of the marine and submarine region. This, consequently, would lead to bigger economic (and maybe further) regional conflicts and decrease. Moreover, the Macro-regional Strategies bridge European Neighbourhood Policies with territorial development policies enhancing the collaboration between institutions and governments within and outside the EU and overcoming the obstacles set by EU’s external borders to the flow of goods, services, capital and persons. (Dubois et al. 2009). Overall, the Macro-regional Strategies contribute to a better integration

of the countries involved, as well as to the development of joint approaches which are more efficient than independent actions undertaken by single countries.

They require high levels of cross-sector coordination as they promote the cooperation among stakeholders that belong to a variety of policy sectors from EU, national and regional levels. In the frames of the strategies, these sectors cooperate to define the challenges that need to be addressed by the macro-region. Moreover, they are assisted to come up with a suitable and solution-oriented plan through joint regional initiatives. The strategies give the chance to all competent stakeholders to meet and contribute with ideas on how to develop the macro-region outside their usual institutional context. Apart from high levels of cross-sector coordination, the Macro-regional Strategies also require efficient multi-level coordination. The issues they deal with are identified through a “bottom-up” process of extended consultations where national representatives and stakeholders of all levels and all sectors are involved. This process seeks to identify ways to address regional challenges and how to adjust the strategy to the real regional needs and features.

The Adriatic – Ionian macro-region is intended to be a space of cooperation, peace and development. It can help the participating states to overcome their disputes on how to exploit natural sources that are related to the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. This can be achieved through peaceful means, namely through dialogue and interaction among several policy sectors. The dialogue contributes in the development and good implementation of the strategy and increases mutual understanding among the participating countries while it allows regional and local authorities to develop their own joint policies and projects.

The Macro-regional Strategies are project oriented and use existing funding channels, namely a big number of sectoral instruments, to finance the macro-regional projects. The macro-regional action plans are examples of using different financing sources which contribute to a better coordination and alignment of funding. The funding for the flagship projects of Macro-regional Strategies might be coming from various EU sector policies as well as from non-EU sources. Such resources might be drawn from the European Structural and Investment Fund and the Instrument for the Pre-accession Assistance for 2014-2020. Apart from funding, they also provide a wide range of tools and technical options. Moreover, there are other funds and instruments which are more focused to projects and are relevant to the pillars of EUSAIR, such as Horizon 2020, Connecting Europe Facility, LIFE programme and COSME programme. Finally, the strategy can make

use of other means such as Western Balkan Investment Framework, the European Investment Bank and other international financial institutions to acquire sufficient funding for regional projects. Complementarily, the strategy may seek for ways to attract private funding as well[142].

Macro-regional Strategies attribute quite an importance to the role of national and regional stakeholders. The national stakeholders are the implementing partners of Macro-regional Strategies, undertaking responsibilities as coordinators of priority areas. The regional stakeholders take action through concrete projects that concern all three policy levels: the national, the macro-regional and the EU policy approaches (Böhme, 2013). Thus, the EUSAIR can improve the implementation of EU policies through flagship projects, as for example the EU chemicals regulation REACH (1907/2006/EC), European Transport Networks (TEN-T), the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EG) etc.

Overall, the Macro-regional Strategies increase the coordination capacity among several policy levels. They act as a response to priority areas which cannot be regulated by EU-wide policies but they require regional transnational cooperation. These priority areas are commonly defined by the national ministerial authorities at the meetings of transnational monitoring and steering committees and enjoy the support of the European General Affairs Council. Through the cross – sector and multi-level cooperation and coordination the EUSAIR bridges the EU with national states and, most importantly, with the AdrIonian Euroregion.

Through EUSAIR, the participating states and regions can cooperate and surmount the barriers between the EU and third countries at the working level. It is a great added-value especially for the non-EU countries which have the chance to adopt EU policies before their accession in the EU. They can achieve convergence and will get better prepared to meet EU standards as they will have implemented quite a wide range of EU policies through their synergies with EU countries in the frames of EUSAIR. The balanced development and coordinated implementation of joint policies that takes place in the frames of EUSAIR, ameliorate the national and regional/local governance structures.

The flow of information regarding data, good practices and know-how within AdrIonian Macro-region is of utmost importance. This flow refers to the exchanges

[142] European Commission (17 June 2014): “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, concerning the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region” pg 11

between the EU, the national authorities, the regional authorities and the local stakeholders. This way the strategy remains flexible, realistic, updated and adaptable to the specific regional needs. It enables the local policy levels to meet and learn from the EU and the EU to meet and learn from the local policy levels. Gradually, the EU becomes more “citizen-friendly,” both for its citizens and for those living outside and next to its borders. Through their respective local authorities and civil society entities, the people get actively involved in the macro-regional process and deepen their sense of common belonging to a region, no matter what are their nationalities or the geographical borders they belong to. In the long term, they increase their commonalities and shared goals and overcome their disputes, rivalries and competitions for the sake of a strong and prosperous macro-region, their own macro-region.

As every macro-regional strategy, the EUSAIR can enrich EU and national policies with local and regional insight. The consultations, the conferences and the summits are some examples of the channels that are used to materialize the bottom-up approach of policy making within a macro-region. They provide the local actors and stakeholders the chance to communicate their concerns and recommendations to the national and EU levels and contribute with ideas and solutions. A number of macro-regional flagship projects in AdrIonian Euro-region focus on EU policies, aiming to improve their planning and implementation. As for the national policies, the various flagship projects constitute a pool of information. The processes of their planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, provide useful experience that improves the development and implementation of both national and EU policies in the countries and regions involved. Furthermore, the coordinated co-function of national and regional sectors within the macro-regional framework, allows the states which are involved, to consider a transnational approach to cooperation and to appreciate the fact that their local/regional stakeholders gain valuable experience.

However, there is always space for improvements. New additions to the existing legislation or international agreements would facilitate the stakeholders to adjust on the findings and the experience that has been gained through the implementation of several projects. Emphasis should be given to the development of systems related to safety and security (collection of hard data, conduction of interviews, etc.). The management organizations could benefit a lot from comprehensive seminars and workshops held during the projects, with a special focus on discussions and communications about risk model. Such discussion should be conducted with the participation of all the related actors.

5.2 EUSAIR`S CONTRIBUTION IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since Adriatic-Ionian macro-region`s point of reference is the basin of Adriatic and Ionian seas, there should be an in-depth examination of the perspectives that the strategy offers in terms of water cooperation and how this cooperation affects the international correlations in the region. International community tries to transform committed obligations into concrete actions in the field of water resources, to the benefit of people, of the ecosystems and the biosphere as a unified total. Common understanding of the challenges and the benefits of cooperation among the stakeholders who are involved in water management, cultivates mutual respect, empathy and trust among them and contributes in establishing and stabilizing a peaceful and secure environment for a sustainable economic growth.

The multilevel and inclusive approach of issues related with the management of water resources engages a big variety of Adrlonian stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia.[143] The extensive consultations on issues related with water management and active citizenship, are stimulated by awareness campaigns and broaden the participation of active citizens in the decision-making processes. They also foster good governance, cultivate accountability and transparency and stimulate cooperative action and strong political commitment. This collaborative spirit will help to diffuse benefits in various sectors, including collaborative water management. “The vital nature of freshwater is a powerful incentive for cooperation and dialogue, compelling stakeholders to reconcile even the most divergent views”.[144] Societies and nations should unite rather than divide around water. Global history showed that the nations around the world have developed the ability to share the benefits of a common sea basin, a river, or a lake. However, there have been many instances of disputes and wars among nations for the control of water basins e.g. Mediterranean Sea. The key issue in this collaboration is the development of mutual rules of good behavior to handle disputes peacefully and to undertake actions and initiatives which will cultivate mutual trust and cooperative spirit. “At the global scale, the effective and mutually beneficial solution to water

[143] United Nations website: “International Decade for Action WATER FOR LIFE 2005-2015
[144] United Nations website: “International Decade for Action WATER FOR LIFE 2005-2015

resources-related problems, underlies peace, security and stability for the nations involved."[145]

Apart from peace, water can boost growth and development. The sanitation services and the water supply are only two of the countless examples of the utility of water. Sufficient quantity combined with a high quality of water improves the average health status of the people living in a region. Water is also vital for the increase of productivity of land, the development of agriculture, labor and other inputs. The fulfillment of the abovementioned goals reduces the costs of providing the necessary health care to people who would otherwise suffer from diseases related with low quality of water and bad sanitation.

The ties among countries and regions within the Adriatic-Ionian area have been traditionally strong. They grew stronger after all Balkan countries entered the EU accession process. This context was the basis for the formal request that was submitted by Adriatic and Ionian countries to the European Commission, seeking for support for an Adriatic and Ionian macro-region. The goal was to establish Adriatic Ionian macro-region which would operate as a network involving various European, national, regional and local stakeholders, different policies and finance programs and focusing on several challenges and priorities identified and shared by the partner members in South-East Europe. It is a significant factor for reconciliation and common steps towards development between countries on the east and west of the Adriatic and Ionian seas. Through this process, the two shores of Adriatic and Ionian seas will recognise and rediscover the commonalities and values that they have been sharing for centuries. It is important that this process takes place is a region which has faced lot of hardships in the recent past, including the fall of communism and the bloody dismantling of Yugoslavia. Cooperation through macro-region allows the countries that lie outside the EU to speed up the process of joining the EU.

Apart from pillar-related issues, one of the most important arguments in favor of a strong EU involvement in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy is the spill-over effects that it is expected to have on the EU integration process. The non-EU countries of the region are invited to cooperate and move step by step with EU members, coordinate their functional framework and undertake joint initiatives with them. Through this cooperation they have the chance to exchange valuable know-how and to gradually adjust their policies to the EU standards. The adoption of the strategy and the implementation of its action plan are expected to generate social,

[145] United Nations website: "International Decade for Action WATER FOR LIFE 2005-2015

economic and environmental impacts, which will vary, depending on which pillar they belong to[146].

When it comes to the first pillar, the strategy is expected to improve the gross added-value of seafood business, to conserve stocks and habitats and increase employment. As for the second pillar, the strategy will bring further social and economic impact through the improvement of interregional connectivity and increase competitiveness, trade movements and investment flows of businesses. Maritime safety and security will also have an environmental impact, reducing pollution and risks of disasters. In light of the third pillar, it is expected that the water quality will improve, protection of biodiversity will be more effective and litter in the region will be reduced. Finally, tourism businesses and local economies will enjoy the positive economic and social impact of the fourth pillar which aims to increase the attractiveness of the area. The level of employment in the area is again expected to increase, especially in coastal areas where tourism represents one of the most promising activities in the Macro-region[147]. Economic and environmental growth will reduce social and international imbalances and will eliminate the risk of disputes and conflicts.

For the realization of its goals, the strategy makes extended use of the ADRION programme. It invests in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia for the development of innovation, protection and promotion of cultural and natural heritage, capacity building and establishment of sustainable mobility networks for transportation. It acts as a policy driver and governance innovator for the participating states and identifies with the strategy both geographically and in terms of their goals. On May 2017, its monitoring committee approved, under condition, the first 35 projects which would be funded through ADRION. The final approval will be granted to the projects that will be approved through additional checks and fulfil the requirements for the improvement of ADRION Programme. Its funds for the period 2014 – 2020 will be 92.2 million euros. Additionally, the programme provides support to the governance of the EUSAIR via a strategic project named "EUSAIR Facility Point" (Euro 9.8 million ERDF+IPA), which is implemented via eight partners from the participating countries[148].

[146] EUNETMAR (March 2014):“Analysis to support the elaboration of the Adriatic and Ionian maritime Action Plan,” CONTRACT NUMBER MARE/2012/07 - REF. NO 2, pg 74
[147] EUNETMAR (March 2014): “Analysis to support the elaboration of the Adriatic and Ionian maritime Action Plan” pg 11 - 53
[148] Interreg ADRION website

Since the regional attractiveness and connectivity will increase, it is obvious that the flows of people from Adriatic – Ionian countries visiting other Adriatic – Ionian countries will increase too. Either through business or tourism, peoples of the region will interact more with each other. This will help them to discover their cultural commonalities and it will empower their sense of common belonging to the region. It will also help to eliminate stereotypes, hatred, otherness, nationalism and xenophobia, that are so widely spread across Balkan region. The so called "other", will be now seen as a neighbor living in the same basin, sharing common concerns, cultural traditions and problems and as one that can contribute in joint action.

Every year, the Adriatic Sea Forum, publishes its "Adriatic Sea tourism reports" with an annual analysis and description of maritime tourism in the Adriatic Sea. They contain both quantitative and qualitative data on the three sectors of maritime tourism in the Adriatic Sea: cruise, ferry, sail and yachting tourism. Through a comparison between the reports for the years 2014 and 2016, it was shown that: Croatia increased its cruise movements in the Adriatic Sea from 1.159.304 (2014) to 1.376.532 (2016). Greece, from 676.209 (2014) to 757.282 (2016). Montenegro, from 309.322 (2014) to 543.892 (2016). Slovenia, from 60.499 (2014) to 79.562 (2016). Italy was the only one among the Adriatic countries which had a decrease, from 2.446.775 (2014) to 2.260.364 (2016). As for the ferry movements, Greece enjoyed an increase from 4.058.443 (2014) to 4.586.337 (2016), Albania from 1.000.000 (2014) to 1.288.988 (2016), Slovenia from 11.154 (2014) to 14.040 (2016) while the rest of the Adriatic countries met a decrease: Italy from 3.091.195 (2014) to 2.824.858 (2016), Croatia from 9.052.546 (2014) to 8.872.444 (2016) and Montenegro from 42.494 (2014) to 35.925 (2016)[149].

All the aforementioned findings are quite impressive and very promising, given the economic disparities of the region, which have been further deepened due to the economic crisis. The report for 2016 closes with a mention to the advantages of the region, extracted from the feedback that was received by professional stakeholders who are endowed with experience and a vision for economic development. Among those advantages, the most recurrent that were cited were the beauty of the region and its historical dimension, the climatological conditions, high levels of personal security and the good quality of the infrastructures and services of ports and marinas in different areas of the region[150].

[149] Adriatic Sea Forum (2016, 2017): "Adriatic Sea Tourism Report, Executive Summary" pg 2
[150] Adriatic Sea Forum (2016, 2017): "Adriatic Sea Tourism Report, Executive Summary" pg 4

There has been a lot of saying that the EU is an entity distant and cumbersome because of the big number (28) of member-states and its bureaucracy. The Macro-regional Strategies are expected to bring the EU policies closer to the member states and the potential candidate states at the national, regional and local level. As they are inclusive and cooperative platforms for joint management of regional challenges they involve a variety of stakeholders and policy sectors that work beyond their national or regional borders and provide feedback towards the EU levels of policy, through the broad consultations, workshops and projects. This means that the EU can adjust its regulations and directives to the national, regional and local needs and thus to facilitate the EU members to adopt the EU policies.[151] This fact is of major importance for the Adriatic Ionian region where there are also countries which have expressed their will to join the EU. The latter, has the chance to make its policies more attractive, feasible and sustainable and thus facilitate the accession of these countries.

5.3 Deepening Cooperation and Sense of Common Belonging

Openness, dialogue and cooperation is the model that the strategy wants to ensure for the policy making process in the region. One of the tools it the EUSAIR uses to achieve this goal, are the online consultations as a channel for an open dialogue with stakeholders and grassroots and brings the strategy and the EU closer to the civil society. The period September - December 2013 took place an extensive consultation on the content of the strategy`s action plan among representatives and stakeholders of the Adriatic - Ionian countries. It was a chance for all the interested parties such as individuals, public organizations, enterprises, civil society, administrative officials etc. to express their opinions, ideas and observations and thus to actively contribute in the planning of the strategy. For each pillar of the strategy were organized focused events and separate consultations. The following list is a record of all public events that took place at the preparatory level.

- Online consultation: all contributions were sent via an online questionnaire until January 2014.
- Seminar "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region: The regions get involved" (Corfu, 18-19 November 2013).

[151] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, theCouncil, the European Economic and Social Committee and th Committee of the Regions “Concerning the Governance of Macro-regional Strategies” Brussels, 20.5.2014, COM(2014) 284 final).

- Online consultation through questionnaires disseminated at national level (deadline 10 November 2013) through competent national and regional institutions and at intergovernmental level (other countries of EUSAIR) through the EUSAIR National Contact Points (deadline: 15 November 2013).
- Conference "Connecting the Adriatic and Ionian Region - Challenges and Goals towards a successful EUSAIR Plan of Action", Ancona, 14 October 2013.

During the conference which took place in Athens on 6-7 February 2014, were presented the results of the precedent consultations as well as of the consultation conducted by DG REGIO, IH upon a request of the European Council. Based on the results of the public consultations, on 18 June 2014 the Commission launched officially “a new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in the form of a Communication and an Action Plan, to help its 70 million residents to reap the benefit of closer cooperation in different policy areas such as promoting the maritime economy, preserving the marine environment, completing transport and energy links and boosting sustainable tourism”[152]. The EUSAIR started being implemented before the end of that year, based on the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (Communication)[153] which was adopted by the Commission on 30 November 2012 and was then incorporated into EUSAIR. Through the public consultations the strategy engaged stakeholders from all levels, both grassroots and civil society, administration and economic – business factors since its very beginning.

The bottom-up and multi-level governance approach provides a clear picture of the territorial needs and challenges per region and helps in identifying ad hoc solutions which are commonly agreed with the local stakeholders. It is important to maintain widely open the communication channels between the EU institutions, the regional and local authorities and, finally, the civil society. In the case of AdrIonian macro-region, EU institutions, namely the Commission and the European Council, are the highest governance levels. Through the bottom-up and multi-level governance they have the chance to interact with the middle and lowest levels of governance, namely the national, regional and local stakeholders and obtain a thorough insight of the regional needs and challenges. This will bring them in a better position to address the regional needs and challenges, gaining from the valuable experience

[152] Committee of the Regions website: “All aboard for a new Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region: The Commission brings countries closer together” www.cor.europa.eu/en/news/regional/Pages/new-eu-strategy-adriatic-ionian-region.aspx

[153] European Commission website: “Communication – A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas
www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/communications/2012/communication-a-maritime-strategy-for-the-adriatic-and-ionian-seas

and opinions contributed by the regional and local authorities, the civil society and individuals. The latter are given the chance to get actively involved and contribute in the planning and implementation of the strategy. They also get access to adequate information on the EUSAIR initiatives, get aware of EU`s vision for the region and promote the idea of a common identity.

The promotion of common regional identity will enhance cooperation and deepen trust. Through this cooperation and joint action will be highlighted the region's potential making it more visible at interregional, national and European levels. The synergies among the regional and local authorities will deepen the sense of common belonging. The cooperation with European institutions will enhance the European identity. Belonging to a common region, trying to cover the same needs, address common challenges and solve problems requires joint initiatives and actions beyond the barriers set by the national borders. In the same framework also take place synergies with pre-existing EU Macro-regional Strategies, something that was anyway recommended by the European Council Conclusions of 14 December 2012[154]. During this continuous cooperative process there might emerge different approaches, conflicts of interests and policy differentiations that could decelerate the operation of the strategy, or, even worse, to put its implementation at risk.

To be assisted to conduct alternative dispute resolution during their steps towards the full implementation of the strategy, the participating stakeholders will have at their disposal the International Court of Adriatic and Ionian Area which was set up by the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce. It is an international arbitration court that guarantees the peaceful resolution of the conflicts and the settlement of the disputes which may emerge among the involved actors of the region[155]. Conciliation and arbitration are flexible and quick procedures of conflict resolution and as such they are particularly suitable to settle disputes between business players who come from legal systems based on different principles, enabling them to settle their controversies rapidly.

The International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area offers qualified conciliation, arbitration, adjudication and expert consulting services to enable a swift and straightforward resolution of disputes between traders from different countries in

[154] European Council (14 December 2012): "EUROPEAN COUCIL 13/14 DECEMBER 2012 COCLUSIONS"
[155] Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce website: "International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area" www.forumaic.org/corte-internazionale-delladriatico-e-dello-ionio/?lang=en

the Adriatic-Ionian basin, modelled on the specific needs of the wider region[156]". The Court is staffed by specialized consultants from all the participating countries and each of them has its own representative within the Court, consisting of arbitrators, adjudicators, mediators and several other experts and administrative clerks. The rules for the Court`s governance rely on the principles of article 10 of the Forum's By-laws. Its goal is to secure a fair and impartial approach of the incoming cases without making any discounts to the rapidity of the whole process and promotes the dialogue between the opposing sides. A number of ethics-related rules, adopted as "Code of Conduct" ensure "the neutrality, impartiality, competence, discipline and independence of those asked to resolve disputes or provide consulting services." [157]

Since the beginning of its operation, the Court focused on cultivating an overall culture of conciliation and arbitration through an ongoing communication campaign. Its services are addressed to international traders. The information of this campaign is available in three languages: Italian, Serbo-Croat and English. It presents the Court and how it works. The general aim of the Court and its Rules is to link the two shores of Adriatic by bringing together all the traders of the region. It promotes peaceful international relations and a regulated system of regional trade by providing its assistance in resolving any misunderstandings that might emerge among the Adriatic commercial parties. Any controversy between the parties has to be submitted to the Adriatic and Ionian International Court for conciliation and is settled according to the conciliation norms of the procedural Regulation adopted by the same Court. The parties have explicitly declared to accept the Regulation which is considered an integral part of this the Court`s operation[158]. To sum up, the Court acts as a legal platform for alternative dispute resolution aiming to prevent and settle disputes that might emerge from the economic interaction of several actors across the region in the frames of EUSAIR.

[156] AIC FORUM, "The International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area: resolving international disputes through conciliation and arbitration", Document presented at the round table on small and medium sized enterprises of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative on 26-27 November 2009, pg.1
[157] AIC FORUM, "The International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area: resolving international disputes through conciliation and arbitration", Document presented at the round table on small and medium sized enterprises of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative on 26-27 November 2009, pg.1
[158] Camera di Commercio Ancona, "Regulations AdrIon Trademark" pg. 10,11

5.4 PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The end of war in the Western Balkans, did not add up to a long-term stability in the region. The regional political elites proved to be incapable and/or unwilling to resolve their disputes peacefully and ensure stability and security for their region. The geopolitical instability of the Balkans is routed far back in history. For more than a millennium, numerous incursions, conquests and migrations created a unique and heterogonous mixture of cultures and ethnic groups of different languages and religions in the region. As the Adriatic – Ionian macro-region lies in South Eastern Europe, it overlaps partly with the Mediterranean, Central Europe and Pannonian regions. It is a geopolitical cross road and that may explain the delay of the European integration process in the region.

Not only are the recent wars, the conflicts and the subsequent financial and political crises which lowered the region`s standards. It is also the lack of identity, vision and decisive leadership from the side of the EU. The latter was unable to provide clear European integration perspectives to the Balkan states and support their reconstruction through adequate and transparent funding. Moreover, the perception that West has treated unequally and unjustly different Balkan players, is dominant among the locals. This happened, for example, in the case of Serbs and Albanians. Serbia was treated as the main, if not the only, responsible for the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s[159].

The damage that the war caused to the economies of the countries in the region increased the disparities between its most and least prosperous parties, intensified differentials in GNP per capita and augmented unemployment. Inevitably, this situation grew illegal trafficking and organized crime which is a result of close cooperation between regional mafia structures beyond the ethnic divides. Balkans are part of a route linking Afghanistan to Europe through Iran and Turkey, as it constitutes the shortest distance to European consumer markets. Starting from Iran to Turkey, the route then diverges into a southern branch through Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Albania, Italy, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina[160]. Such security issues got threatening for the member-states. After the end of cold war and loosening of border controls, the

[159] Institutul Ovidiu Sincai (October 2006): “Debalkanizing the Balkans, a Strategy for a Sustainable Peace”, pg. 8
[160] European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2008): “Monitoring the Supply of Heroin to Europe” pg 9

networks of organized crime penetrated in the political and social spheres, affecting not only the domestic political life, but also the regional status of balance-of-power. Systemic corruption obtained solid foundations in the region. The Albanian, Italian, Russian and Turkish/Kurdish mafia are highly active in the area, majorly due to structural weaknesses of the states of the region.

Social, political and economic instability, maintained the religious stereotypes and historical myths that were magnified and dramatized by modern media and became propaganda tools in the hands of ruthless politicians. The traumatic history of the region has been used as a powerful tool to manipulate the masses through nationalist, religious and xenophobic slogans. This made the process of post-war reconciliation impossible[161]. Despite it is more than 20 years that the war has ended, animosity is still present and expressed with every single chance.

Islamic extremism, as a phenomenon imported mainly from Middle-Eastern countries, penetrated and developed in the region because of its religious composition and the bad economic situation. In most of the Balkan countries where the majority of the population are Christians, there are also large Muslim minorities while in Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia where the majority are Muslims, there are also large Christian minorities. Both ethnically and culturally, the Western Balkans constitute a unique part of Europe. Muslims are the 40% of the region's population while the rest are Christians. Big Muslim minorities live in Montenegro (20–35%) as well as in Bulgaria and Greece while both Greece and Italy have big numbers of Muslim immigrants and refugees living within their territories[162].

Until quite recently, the religious groups repeatedly confronted each other in wars and conflicts. Islamic extremism took advantage of these conflicts to penetrate in Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia. The wars in Iraq and Syria reactivated several extremist cycles in Balkans too. The Islamic extremism obtained a clear geopolitical dimension in the Balkans, affecting the international relations and the stability of the region. Moreover, the Islamic extremism was gradually connected with religious terrorism, organized crime and smuggling of weapons and drugs. At the same time, right wing extremism and xenophobia increased significantly in countries where the majority are Christians such as Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy[163].

---

[161] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy (2013): "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration"
[162] Arbatova, N. (2004, September). European Security and International Terrorism: the Balkan Connection, Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies", Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 361-78
[163] Arbatova, N. (2004, September). European Security and International Terrorism: the Balkan Connection, Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies", Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 361-78

Winston Churchill once observed that “the Balkans have the tendency to produce more history than they can consume”. “Moreover, the major international players have over the centuries exported to the Balkans more history than the local political market could absorb. This unstoppable importation of outside history makes the peoples of the Balkans mere objects rather than subjects of history and forces them in turn to complement that outsider generated history by their own mythology” (Grigor and Severin, 2007). Mythology is usually used as a type of substitution by those who are unable to produce more history. At the end, it works as a distorting fence for history production. Stereotypes, distorted narrations and otherness, keep the Balkans hostage of regional crises[164].

5.5 THE INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS

Traditionally, the Western Balkans comprise a zone where the balance of power among major extra-regional actors is tested. If EU cohesion decreased in the region, so would do EU`s influence while on the other hand, the role of external actors would increase. Although EU perceives the region as one of its domestic affairs, the Balkans have always been an arena for a series of conflicts and intensive interaction among several third players which makes the situation quite complicated and increases antagonisms. These players have historical, cultural, economic or political bonds with the countries of the region. However, their interests on the region are conflicting. This gathering of such multi-faceted international players with conflicting interests increases instability and the risk of conflicts, making EU`s political intervention in the region a necessity for peace and development.

In terms of EU`s interests in the region, the most challenging issue is Russia’s engagement. However, an overlapping occurs among the interests of the EU, Turkey and the USA as they all belong to the western sphere. China and Iran are also major regional players. The Balkans are geopolitically important because they are the cross-road between Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Caspian Sea. That’s why the international powers traditionally struggle to keep these pathways open and secure by imposing their own order aiming at regional domination. Local players were prompted and nourished by the

[164] Grigor N. Alex and Severin Adrian, ipg 1/2007, “Debalkanizing the Balkans, a Strategy for Sustainable Peace in Kosovo”, pg 124

outsiders with hatred for the neighbours. Division, ethnic and religious cleansing, violence and suspicion ruled and still rule the region.

Western Balkans alongside with Eastern Europe are, geopolitically, the most diverse parts of Europe due to ethnic/cultural mixture and EU's, Russia's, Iran's and Turkey's influence. The increasing Chinese involvement and large differences concerning locals' attitudes towards the USA and the EU play also an important role. The Albanians seem to be enthusiastic supporters of the EU accession. Bosniaks stand on a fragile balance between the EU and the Muslim sphere while the criticism towards the West is quite popular. The majority Serbian political elites same as the Serbian society – in Serbia and Republika Srpska in Bosnia –in favor of Slavic brother-state, Russia. China also meets a high level of sympathy among Serbs. They distinguish themselves as the most euro-sceptic nation of the region. In Serbia, the support for the accession to the EU has decreased recently to 40-45% and opposition exceeds 35% (Balcer and Surroi, 2013). This stance can be explicitly explained by Serbia's least positive approach towards Germany and the role it played in the region. Germany provided strong support Croats during the Yugoslavian war[165].

Although the economic crisis additionally increases the fatigue of EU`s enlargement, the process of accession never ceased. Between 2009 and 2010, the EU granted a visa-free travel to Albania`s, Bosnia`s, f.Y.R.O.M.`s, Montenegro`s and Serbia`s citizens. In December 2010, the EU approved the candidate status to Montenegro. In January 2012, Kosovo launched a dialogue on visa-free status with the EU and in March 2012 Serbia received the EU candidate status. At the same time, the EU recognized the progress of reforms in Montenegro and initiated the accession negotiations with Podgorica. In Autumn 2012, the European Commission recommended that the Council should grant Albania the status of the candidate country. At the same time, the Commission adopted a Communication on a Feasibility Study for a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo. In April 2013 the European Commission recommended the commencement of accession negotiations with Serbia and talks on the Association Agreement with Kosovo. Bosnia has not submitted an application for the candidate status yet. The Commission has dictated extensive reforms to Bosnia before it gets the right to submit an application for the candidate status. These reforms aim to harmonize the Bosnian constitution with the European Court

[165] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy (2013): "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration" pg. 15

of Human Rights ruling on ethnic discrimination and violations of the principle of equality before the law and the right to a fair trial.

However, the EU has not managed to resolve a number of issues in the region. Such is the issue of the status of Kosovo and its European perspective. Same happens with the reform of Bosnian political system. For example, the EU officially declares that Kosovo is on its way to join the Union. However, Kosovo's European perspective is under a big question mark, because it has not yet been recognized by five EU member states (Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Romania and Slovakia). Among the ex-Yugoslav countries, Serbia has the biggest economy, population and military power. The biggest Serbian minorities inhabit neighbouring states (in Bosnia around 30% of population, in Montenegro almost 30% of population, in Kosovo around 7% of population). Serbia is the main regional stakeholder (trade partner and investor at the abovementioned states) but at the same time, it has serious bilateral problems with its neighbouring countries. This fact is the most challenging and complicated issue for the Euro-Atlantic perspective of the region, mainly due to Serbia`s most ambivalent attitude towards the West. Croatia and Bosnia face important unresolved problems that could severely undermine the Croatian-Bosnian cooperation, such as the demarcation of borderlines or transit zone that cross the Bosnian city of Neum. On the other hand, the recent agreement between Zagreb and Sarajevo (February 2013) on Bosnia's access to Ploce seaport and management of the common border gives a hope that the bilateral problems can be solved. The Serbo-Croatian court lawsuits before the International Court of Justice concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide were filed from both sides in the years 2009 and 2010. However, the border disputes regarding the islands on the Danube River still exist. Moreover, the status of minorities and refugees in each country also causes friction in the Croatian-Serbian relations (Balcer and Surroi, 2013)[166].

Turkey is a partly Balkan state and regional power. It is considered a native stakeholder and is member of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Its contribution to the regional security and soft power dimension (education, development aid, etc) is very important. The Western Balkans is one of the priorities for the Turkish foreign

[166] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy (2013): "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration" pg. 31

policy. Turkey's accession to the EU reflects on the collaboration between Brussels and Ankara in Western Balkans. The region could be the most likely field for an EU - Turkey cooperation. Although Turkish influence is smaller than EU's, Turkey may significantly support or hamper the EU interests in the region, able to affect the enlargement process in certain Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo) where its influence is big. It shouldn't be overlooked that Turkey internationally plays the role of the main protector of Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo (e.g. lobbying for their international recognition or accession to the international organizations such as NATO and EU). Turkey is also an important trade partner for the countries of the region investing in projects related to key sectors such as the construction of airports and strategic highways and major donor of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) of the Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the region, especially in Bosnia Herzegovina[167]. Many students from the Western Balkans study at the Turkish universities. Western Balkan people in vast majorities, choose Turkey as their touristic destination. Turkey also contributes to the region's security and stabilization. Since the early 1990s, the Turkish Armed Forces and the police have been present in almost all EU, NATO and UN military and civilian missions in the Balkans such missions as EUFOR/ALTHEA, EULEX and KFOR in Kosovo. Turkey also contributes in capacity building and equipment of Western Balkan military and police forces to fight against organized crime and religious extremism.[168].

Western Balkans are high in the list of priorities of the Russian foreign policy. They are seen as a region which has not been fully "conquered" by the EU and NATO and where Russia's economic and political activity is intense. Western Balkans are also important for Russia because they consist a transit route for the South Stream, the main gas pipeline that connects Russia with the EU. Russia has definitely the strongest economic penetration in Republika Srpska in Bosnia and in Serbia, predominantly in the energy sector. In 2012, Russia was the second most important trade partner and financial supporter (public loans on favorable conditions) of Serbia. Russia has also a strong position in Montenegro's economy, particularly in tourism and real estate market. Russia's alliance with Serbia and Republika Srpska is based on its strong support to Serbian policy regarding the

[167] Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry – Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) website:
www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/turkey%27s_official_development_assistance_%28oda%29_increased_by_47_in_2014-20337
[168] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy (2013): "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration" pg 20

status of Kosovo and the constitutional setup of Bosnia (Balcer and Surroi, 2013). The tight bonds between Russia, Serbia and Montenegro are routed in common religion and Slavic origin. The ties between Serbian and Russian Orthodox Churches have traditionally been very strong same as the ties between the political and economic elites of the two countries. [169]

China's economic engagement in the region has increased considerably in the recent years and, most probably, this trend will continue within a wider regional context, namely across South and Central Europe. Generally, China sees both regions as geographical and geopolitical gates granting access to the EU markets. In the summit of Warsaw (April 2012), where China met with Central European states (including inter alia Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), Beijing decided to establish a 10 billion USD special credit line for the Chinese and the local businessmen who wish to initiate business in Western Balkans. China is particularly engaged in the energy sector (coal power plants, solar energy, hydropower) and infrastructure (highways, bridges) in Serbia and Republika Srpska (Balcer and Surroi, 2013). Together with the EU, Russia and US, China is in the first places of the Serbian official foreign policy interests. Belgrade declares that all these four international players are of equal importance for the Serbian foreign policy. China established a strategic partnership with Serbia in September 2009. The two countries support each other on issues such as the EU's declarations condemning human rights violations in Tibet and Xinjiang and Kosovo's independence[170].

Greece, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Italy are full members of NATO. Although Bosnia received its Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2010, the whole process got stuck. Serbia was never interested in joining NATO. After 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Western Balkans were removed from US foreign policy`s top priorities, but only temporarily. The US are particularly interested in f.Y.R.O.M.`s accession in NATO and they are the second most important donor of the ODA in the region (after the EU institutions). They have been actively involved in the case of Kosovo`s recognition. All the regional political elites recognise that the US is a key international player that cannot be challenged without consequences (Balcer and Surroi, 2013). Iran`s role in the regional geostrategy has been supplementary. For

[169] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration", Warsaw 2013, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy
[170] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration", Warsaw 2013, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy

the Iranian external policy, Bosnia and other Shias Muslim communities constitute a suitable geopolitical corridor for Iran to increase its influence in Balkans. Iran has massively invested in Bosnia both in human and financial resources.

5.6 Regional International Relations

Since 1996 and the end of war, peace in the region was imposed by NATO, UN, CSCE/OSCE, EEC/EU6 and several de facto international protectorates over its parts. However, the security situation in the Western Balkans is still at stake. Under the slim cover of tranquillity lie serious political and security problems: the presence of intolerance and lack of intention for compromise; nationalistic extremism and xenophobia; lack of democratic political culture; several varieties of non-military threats to regional security and stability (ill- governance, corruption, organized crime, illegal trafficking in arms, drugs, human beings etc.); unresolved political problems of interstate borders and minorities; the opposing interests of the big players in terms of international relations in the region; the conflicting interests of the regional and local actors. (Bebler, 2013)

So far, the regional initiatives and undertakings didn't lead to sustained political activity and they lacked support by and active involvement of the public, mass media and civil society. The Balkans' political elites proved to be reluctant or unable to reach agreements on conflict issues by mutual understanding and compromise, usually addressing to outside powers to solve their issues.

Gradually there was developed a web of ties among these states and also between them and a number of international organizations such as the "Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe", CEFTA, SECI, NATO's "Partnership for Peace", "South East Europe Initiative", "South East Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group" etc. The European Union promoted and supported regional integration in the Western Balkans by concluding several types of collaboration, stabilization and association agreements as it does nowadays with Adriatic Ionian macro-regional strategy. Such cooperative initiatives in the past relied mostly on external donors, were understaffed, poorly interconnected and uncoordinated. In addition, some of these initiatives have partly blocked one another. This happened with EU enlargement and the establishment of Schengen zone which undermined the pre-existing free trade and visa-free zones and in fact erected new interstate barriers in the region. There has also been a conceptual disharmony between the "Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe'' and the "Stabilization and Association Process" conducted by the European Union.

Despite the undeniable progress, there are still crucial issues in the Western Balkan countries concerning democracy, economy and the rule of law. Freedom and independence of media is still not ensured and most of the countries in the region remain politically polarized. This hardens the collaboration efforts as there is tension both among the countries and among different sectors which identify themselves with or are controlled by different political groups, often expressing rival sentiments for one another. Same with media, as they might not contribute effectively in spreading the idea of collaboration and, moreover, they might undermine such efforts. The global economic crisis deteriorated the overall social and political situation in the Balkans as foreign direct investments as well as foreign bank lending decreased significantly. That fact subsequently increased social gaps and political instability while the public debts and corruption remain quite high.[171]

The scale of ethnic and political differences in the region also puts the accomplishment of the Strategy`s goals at stake. All Balkan countries in Adriatic region are either ethnically diverse (Bosnia, Montenegro) or are home to large minorities (Serbia, Albania, Kosovo). Bosnia, is a very loose and complex federation composed of Republika Srpska (Serbian minority) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina comprising of ten cantons. Republika Srpska undermines state level institutions, openly advocating for its secession. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ruled by Croat and Bosniak parties is quite drown in a bureaucratic status, bearing 10 cantonal governments. Cooperation and coordination between such diverse parties might become even more complicated, slow and ineffective.

Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence, continuing an international campaign against its recognition while Albania is on the opposite side. The hatred between Serbs and Albanians never misses a chance to be openly expressed. Despite the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia in April 2013, the implementation of its provisions meet significant problems. On the other hand, Serbia is very supportive of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia in a way that undermines Bosnia's integrity and sovereignty. The border demarcation between Serbia and Bosnia remains unresolved, same as the legal status of the orthodox religious institutions in Montenegro. A great majority of Serbian people and politicians believe that recognition of the Montenegrin language as the official

[171] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration", Warsaw 2013, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy, pg 11

language of Montenegro undermines the position of Serbian language in this country.

Another important challenge for the strategy and regional development is the fact that the independent states which emerged after the dismantling of Yugoslavia never activated legally binding international agreements for the delimitation of their mutual maritime borders. Even in the cases of Greece and Albania which had initially reached an agreement for such delimitation, Albania finally stepped back and resigned from the agreement. Italy and Croatia have established a Territorial Sea of 12 Nm along their coasts. Slovenia's small coastline is entitled by the territorial sea. Slovenia has a dispute with Croatia for the small bay of Piran. Although Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 1999, signed a treaty on the maritime borders of Bosnian territorial sea, the ratification of the treaty has not yet been completed. Albania and Montenegro did not reach any agreement on the delimitation of their sea borders so their national jurisdiction is limited to their territorial waters. Greece and Albania signed the agreement in 2004 for the protection of their maritime borders allowing the two countries to further enhance their cooperation on the economic aspect. However, Albania is no longer recognizing it .

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 "entitles the coastal states to declare an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) up to the limit of 200nm. This gives the coastal states all the rights of continental shelf, plus the exclusive right to exploit the living resources within the EEZ". None of the Adriatic states has moved to a formal declaration of an EEZ until now.

In October 2003, Croatia was the first country that declared an 'Environmental and Fisheries Protection Zone' in the Adriatic Sea, based on the EEZ regime. However, Croatia faced intensive criticism from Italy and Slovenia. Extra pressure was also put by the EU institutions, including the European Commission. After this pressure, Croatia discontinued the application of the Zone to the EU countries on March 2008, until a solution within the EU standards could be reached.

In October 2005 and January 2006, with a unilateral internal legislative intervention, Slovenia proclaimed a maritime zone of sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Adriatic Sea and declared it as 'ecological' zone, a rather political claim, and not a marine-environmental or resource management measure based on international law. The proclaimed zone extends in parallel to the Croatian coast of western Istrian peninsula, although the continental shelf that Slovenia claims to have in that area is not a natural prolongation of its own land territory, but rather of

the land territory of Croatia in front of its western Istrian coast. No state except Croatia has publicly complained against the Slovenian violation of the Law of the Sea Convention. The Slovenian 'ecological zone', while a paper tiger only, remains formally in effect under its national legislation.

In February 2006, Italy set the legal framework for an "ecological protection zone" declaring its aim "to exercise its jurisdiction in the area of protection and conservation of the marine environment, including the archaeological and historic heritage, except fishing activities". Moreover, the decree of the President of Republic concerning the relevant Law is still pending. This is related to achieving a total sum of delimitation agreements with the states involved. In 2009, Greece and Albania signed an agreement defining the boundaries of their adjacent Exclusive Economic Zones. This agreement adopted the "middle line" principle which is in complete agreement with the provisions of the International Law of the Sea. The Albanian Supreme Court issued a verdict according to which the agreement was contradicting the Albanian Constitution`s provisions. The efforts to resolve this issue are ongoing.

Despite the aforementioned pending issues, it is still possible for EUSAIR to be implemented successfully. This presupposes that there is a strong political will of all involved parties to come together and cooperate in issues of common interest, leaving aside the international disputes and stereotypes. As the strategy mostly concerns low politics issues, it is expected that the problems in the international relations in the region will not be an obstacle for the strategy to move forward. Ideally, the implementation of the strategy will lead the path for the peaceful resolution of the disputes and will ease the differences.

The traumatic memory of the wars is a challenge that needs to be addressed to reach ethnic and religious reconciliation and achieve better collaboration. "According to opinion polls, all Western Balkan nations admit that during the wars their co-nationals committed certain crimes but they underestimate their own responsibility and they overestimate crimes of their former enemies. Certain politicians play an ethnic card and deny responsibility for war crimes committed by their own nation."[172]

5.7 Practical Issues and Technicalities

[172] Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration", Warsaw 2013, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy, pg 13

The biggest practical issues for the Adriatic – Ionian macro-regional strategy relate to its thematic pillars. As for the first pillar, “driving innovative maritime and marine growth,” the Adriatic and Ionian region needs to take full advantage of the benefits of collaborative action on maritime and marine issues. The countries of the region, instead of focusing on their several individual problems should rather focus on ways of collaboration to achieve higher levels of development of their maritime and marine potential and sustainable growth.

As for the second Pillar, “connecting the region,” the mountainous geomorphology of the region hardens the efforts to increase connectivity. This becomes even more challenging as the Adriatic and Ionian seas are crossed by vast numbers of passenger ships daily. At the same time, sea transfers of oil and gas loads are constantly increasing. Apart from the civil and commercial maritime traffic however, the EUSAIR needs to find ways to prevent the use of the sea and the inland corridors by criminal networks engaged in drugs and weapons smuggling, irregular migration and other illegal trafficking activities which put at risk peoples` lives and the safety of sea routes.

As for the third Pillar, “preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment,” within the next decade, Adriatic region come across major changes because of the upcoming new oil transfer routes. The Adriatic and Ionian seas are the cross-point of the sea routes of Russian and Caspian oil and gas transfers. The Adriatic is also an important oil transfer highway for vessels shipping from Mediterranean Sea through the Otranto channel to the northern ports of Trieste, Koper and Rijeka, which makes it “one of the busiest and at the same time one of the most endangered areas in the Mediterranean Sea”.[173] A significantly big number of tankers transfer oil in the region. The many ports and terminals in Ionian and Adriatic coasts increase importantly the maritime overload at the seas. At the same time, the depth of their waters allows the construction of ports which can be used by even the biggest ships. With the increase of maritime traffic and energy overloads, increases also the risk of pollution incidents.

Within the Adriatic and Ionian coasts and its wider marine environment lies a big diversity of habitats and species. Especially the Adriatic Sea`s geomorphology is swallow and semi-closed which makes it more vulnerable to pollution from harmful

[173] Thana, Elson and Patuzi, Dorina (October 2013) : “Toward a Protected Maritime Environment of Adriatic Region”, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 4 No. 9, pg. 1

aquatic organisms or from maritime accidents. Whichever harm or loss of biodiversity, deprives people from valuable ecosystem goods and services and deteriorates the average level of the quality of the environment, raises health concerns and affects the quality of peoples` lives. Such a situation would make the region less attractive even in terms of touristic services and conditions. As more than 1/3 of the Mediterranean's continental water flows into the northern and central Adriatic and the Ionian Seas, the region is the main water artery of Mediterranean Sea. Eutrophication for example, is one of the main threats that can affect the whole region and, subsequently, the Mediterranean Sea[174]. Marine litter also constitutes significant risk for regional marine life. Several land-based activities produce such a mass of waste that cannot be absorbed by the ecosystem alone with the natural processes. Such land-based sources of waste are the industries, the household waste and releases from touristic facilities, run-off from waste dumps etc. Adriatic fish stocks, especially demersal species (benthic, bottom-dwelling) have been exposed to devastating overexploitation. The easy access to the profitable demersal resources, because also of the long, shallow, and enclosed geomorphologic nature of Adriatic Sea has contributed to their exhaustion[175].

As for the fourth Pillar, “sustainable tourism,” the region offers a unique climatological and geomorphological environment which makes tourism a significant and fast-growing segment for the regional economies, both in coastal areas and hinterlands. However, the region is still carrying the ghosts of its past. To a great extend the region is still perceived as a miserable, poor and perilous region. At the same time, the sentiments of otherness and hatred which are still dominant in the region, decrease the potential of joint efforts for the amelioration of the regional prestige. At the same time, there are no organized networks focused on the projection of the touristic advantages of the region as a whole.

In its Adriatic Sea Tourism Report for the year 2017, the Adriatic Sea Forum concluded by mentioning a number of outcomes regarding the tourism policies in the region, based on various viewpoints contributed by professional stakeholders. According to these contributions, the channels of dialogue and collaboration among the various governmental and administrative bodies of the region are

[174] Vidas, Davor, Mepiellan Centre (22 December 2010): “The Adriatic Sea Today: Unsolved Issues and Challenges”
[175] Fridtjof Nansens Institut (21 August 2008): “The World Ocean in Globalization: Challenges for Marine Regions”

limited. Moreover, the ports of the region need to improve their infrastructure and services while there is also a need for the environmental safeguards to be reinforced. The region still lies far from getting under a brand, logo or name which would promote the regional profile as this of a place which is worth to visit and discover its localities. This fact generates among some of the operators the perception that Adriatic region has only specific coastal places which are popular and worth to visit. Others, consider Adriatic to be a destination with many options, perceiving and appreciating the region as a whole, both coastal and inland, beyond national borders. All parts believe that Adriatic should enjoy projects which promote the whole region as a destination under one common identity. Finally, the report underlines that there is a shared lack of willingness for collaboration and synergies among the nations, regions and cities as there is also a spirit of internal competition which persists even when there is a need to apply a shared-commitment project. According to the report`s conclusion, the biggest gap lies at the leadership level as it seems that everyone is waiting for others to take the first step, to contribute with projects and, most importantly, with the vision to highlight the whole region as a place with uniqualities of extraordinary beauty[176].

A cross-cutting issue which constitutes a potential threat for the well-being of the countries in the region and for the efficiency of the strategy itself are the earthquakes. Researchers at the EU-funded SHARE project of the "European Facility for Earthquake Hazard and Risk" produced a map with the parts of Europe which are most likely to be hit by an earthquake[177]. There it is pictured that Adriatic Ionian macro-region consists of countries which include moderate hazard areas and, mostly, high hazard areas. For this reason, there is an urgent need for all countries of the region to implement seismic protection regulations and predictions. On the other hand, the participating countries and stakeholders should also consider the option of creating a collaborative Adriatic – Ionian network which will coordinate the efforts for a more effective seismic protection as well as for the immediate joint response to such natural disasters.

For sure, the Adriatic – Ionian region has a lot of issues to deal with. The chronic disputes among neighbouring countries preserve a tension which whenever could erupt as an open conflict which would lead to an open regional war through the domino effect with unpredictable consequences. Given the complication and

[176] Adriatic Sea Forum (2017): Adriatic Sea Tourism Report, pg 4
[177] Giardini, Woessner, Danciu, Swiss Seismological Service (August 2013): «European Seismic Hazard Map"

plurality of conflicting interests in the region, a Balkan war would immediately and inevitably involve a number of international players, dragging them into a massive disaster. This fact makes the process of peacebuilding and peacekeeping extremely complicated but, at the same time the need for peace and stability is dire. EUSAIR is the “soft power” for EU to influence the non-member states of the region and assist them build trust and commit to the European ideals. Moreover, cooperation in low politics issues (e.g. environment, fisheries, natural disasters etc) will increase interdependence and is quite likely that it will have a spill-over effect. Deepening of economic, political and cultural interaction may have positive side effects in issues of high politics which as of nowadays are detrimental for regional peace and development.

CONCLUSIVE EPILOGUE

Differentiated integration seems to be the last resort for the EU to overcome the current crisis and achieve a balanced and sustainable development by decreasing the gaps among its member states. EUSAIR, will not only assist the member states of Adriatic – Ionian region to achieve better cohesion through their cooperation and common steps towards development but it will also support the efforts of the candidate and potential candidate countries of the region to meet the criteria for their accession in the EU. It is a realistic approach which comes as a response to the fact that neither all EU member states have reached the same levels of integration/development, nor the (potential) candidate countries own the same level of eligibility for their accession. EUSAIR provides all of them with the opportunity to follow their own, differentiated pace of integration, based on their capacities, advantages, challenges and constraints.

Interregional cooperation in the form of the EUSAIR, has the potential to be a successful tool for international cooperation and integration of the Adriatic - Ionian region. Having tested its dynamics in Baltic Sea and Danube River macro-regions, EU focuses now to the very sensitive and diverse post - war region of Western Balkans. Despite the absence of war for more than a decade, often minor incidents show that Western Balkans` peace and stability are still in peril. This is the phenomenon of negative peace which is present and quite obvious in the region.[178] Although there is absence of direct violence, the root causes of this violence come from the past and an eruption of a new cycle (small or wider) of violence at any time seems quite likely to happen. Apart from the technical issues of the implementation of the strategy per se, the relevant stakeholders should also take under consideration first, that the post war hatred and traumas may harden its implementation and, second, that the strategy is a great chance to address these issues through cooperation, aiming to achieve peace and development.

For the EUSAIR to be successful the active engagement of actors from various levels is required. It is important that regional and local actors (e.g. Municipalities, Regional Administration, safety and security public institutions etc) are given the chance to participate in capacity building activities (e.g. trainings, seminars etc). Through these activities they will have the chance to know about the EUSAIR, its

[178] Galtung, J. (1996): “Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization”. Oslo: PRIO

operational nature, its structure and its objectives, they will learn how to take advantage of it, namely how to develop cooperative projects and apply for funding and, of course, they will get to meet with their regional neighbours, establish connections and initiate effective cooperation. Equally important for the EU is to simplify as much as possible the funding procedures, for example by unifying different funds into one, by providing analytical information and guidance through the relevant websites and by organising information and awareness campaigns which would be addressed to the local and regional actors.

Such campaigns should be also addressed to the people of the region. The active engagement of the peoples living in the region will empower the vision of the joint action and will diffuse it to the populations involved. It will increase the sense of common belonging, of sharing common problems and concerns with the neighbouring peoples and will cultivate solidarity. Informational campaigns, festivals, seminars and relevant material should be organized to ensure that every single person in the region knows about EUSAIR, its potentials and its benefits. Citizens should be given the chance to contribute with ideas and recommendations in the planning and the implementation of the several Adriatic - Ionian macro-regional projects. Active citizens who get involved in issues such as environmental protection, could realize that they care about their region as much as their neighbors do (EUNETMAR, 2014).

The 3 NOs principle (no new institutions, no new legislation and no new funding) allows a wide interaction among the local and national stakeholders and gives them the opportunity to act jointly being independent from biding EU rules, external funding and bureaucratic norms. The fact that Macro-regional Strategies operate with no additional funds and thus need to be financed by the EU, national or private funds, increases the need for a more coherent management of the existing policies, funds and structures. The fact that no additional funds are required for the strategy`s action plan indicates that the efficiency (i.e. value for money) of the funds that are already available would be enhanced if there is a proper matching of funds to the regional needs[179]. Countries should mobilize to find ways to exploit the existing funds at a full extent and to also seek for extra financial sources.

The strategy can develop its own dynamic, based on its own powers and willingness of its members. On the other hand, lack of a central institutionalized structure makes the strategy less visible, especially to the peoples of the states

[179] EUNETMAR (March 2014): “Analysis to support the elaboration of the Adriatic and Ionian Maritime Action Plan”

involved. Priority Area Coordinators should play this role and establish strong and transparent links between the strategy and the EU Commission. This will allow the EU institutions to conduct a more effective monitoring of the whole effort and to change valuable data and know-how with the national and regional/local authorities. When it comes to the Alignment of Funding, the strategy should establish a suitable framework that will allow exploitation of funds coming from the private sector (voluntarily or mandatorily). For example, a big tourism organization or enterprise would (and should) be particularly interested in the upgrade of the regional attractiveness and connectivity because this upgrade will subsequently bring more tourists in the area. Given that, it would be interested to support financially a project that would upgrade the regional attractiveness.

Special attention should be attributed to the regional security, given the special features of the Adriatic Ionian environment. Not in the sense of generating new police force or inaugurating a new police body, but in the sense of a better coordination among the already existing border police forces. There could be international police groups and networks, consisting of police staff from all the eight participating countries who already serve as national border police guards. This is the operational and structural model that is used by Frontex. The strategy should encourage such initiatives that would achieve better environmental surveillance, historical and cultural monuments protection, crime control and security of transport and energy structures.

It would be beneficial for the national authorities of the countries of the region to develop a network to exchange information with the local stakeholders so that both will be updated and will obtain better insight of regional issues. Same applies for the EU institutions which can also be part of this information network. The strategy will be a useful pool of information for the central governments who can adjust their national policies in the region to the mandate of the strategy and the pragmatic needs. Consultations, conferences, summits, informational campaigns and surveys should be widely used to keep a direct contact with the peoples and also in order for the EU, the national governments and the strategy itself to have the ability to monitor and follow-up on the results of its implementation. “EUSAIR can only be successful if the leadership of this multi-level governance process is shared with regional and local actors in line with the subsidiarity principle enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty”. [180]

[180] EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)" - Stakeholder consultation by Rapporteur Mr Gian Mario SPACCA (IT/ALDE – COTER), 19 March 2014

Within the frames of increasing the regional attractiveness, it is important for the strategy to also focus on historical, cultural and natural heritage monuments of the region which are, literally, countless. These monuments must be exhibited through a unified and well-organized network, which will be functioning not only at the national levels, but also at the macro-regional level. Indeed, the cultural and archaeological thesaurus that can be found in the region constitutes an insurmountable competitive advantage that should be exploited at the greatest extent. Supported by a well-organized and clearly defined transport network, the region can become a unified touristic attraction which will be widely known to the globe through exhibitions and extensive promotional campaigns.

The EUSAIR embodies the core idea of the peace approach which dictates that international crises cannot be resolved through violence but through genuine dialogue and mutual cooperation among the various peoples, stakeholders and sectors such as security, economics, trade, scientific and technological research and development, environment conservation, and, finally, preservation of cultural heritage and values. The management of the most serious issues in the Western Balkans would be best assured within the process of European integration. With active and well-coordinated roles played by key international organizations, the Western Balkans could eventually be transformed into a region of security, democracy, prosperity and peace (Machačová & Elke, 2007) J.

A Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian peoples could enable the grassroots to get actively involved in the development and implementation of the strategy, meet with each other and eliminate stereotypes and otherness. Constant consultation processes would allow the strategy to interact with people, associations and non-official or non-governmental institutions which can contribute fresh ideas and creative energy. This bottom-up policy approach will empower the strategy and will diffuse its positive results to the societies that are involved. Despite the problems, the Western Balkans` region is well-developed when compared with many other parts of the world. There is only a small percentage of people facing life-threatening poverty within the region. The level of education in the region is also high. These facts will probably prove to be very useful for the spread of the strategy’s visions.

The open dialogue between the authorities and stakeholders from the national, regional and local levels, will allow the EU to integrate its policies easier. The strategy can be an effective tool for raising awareness among all levels of regional governance about the need to plan and implement a model of inclusive, smart and sustainable economic growth. Through joint action within the strategy, each level

of governance realizes its own unique role that plays to introduce the necessary changes in the region. With the assistance of the Committee of the Regions, the strategy can mobilize regional and local authorities. In many EU countries, the local and regional authorities have extensive power in areas linked to the Europe 2020 Strategy such as education and training, entrepreneurship and innovation, transport, climate change, labor market and infrastructure. The Committee of the Regions has set up a Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and the European Commission provides an online networking platform to involve and enable local and regional authorities to contribute in achieving Europe 2020 goals. These platforms can be used to evaluate the progress and the results of EUSAIR as well.

The strategy should also encourage the harmonization of the legislation of the participating countries, focusing especially on human rights, environmental protection, freedom of press, democratization and transparency. This will be beneficial for two reasons: first, it will facilitate the effective implementation of the various strategy`s projects. Second, it will bring the non-EU countries, closer to EU membership, increasing the regional integration. It will also increase the reputation of the known-to-be-problematic states of the region, contributing to the increase of regional attractiveness. However, harmonization of the national legal systems of the region, especially for issues that require immediate response, such as maritime pollution, and drafting of common regulations, will help to eliminate long bureaucratic procedures and cross boarding responsibilities. The elimination of such barriers will simplify and enhance the integration process in the region, will assist the evolution of the strategy`s policies and will finally lead to more diplomatic clearances.

When it comes to the protection of the environment, the establishment of a common database with information related to environmental issues such as the spatial distribution of pollution and the readiness status of the equipment for its prevention along the coasts, is of great importance. It will allow all relevant stakeholders to improve the operational instruments that they use in order to cope with the challenges set by the environmental and technological risks in the region.

Safety in navigation is a parameter that ensures cleaner environment as it leads to less sea accidents and consequent pollution. For this reason, it is very important for all the coastal countries of the region to establish a platform that will allow them to exchange information related to the number and the type of the vessels crossing the region, the kind and quantity of goods they are carrying, their destination and their route. It is also important to develop an early warning system based on radar

monitoring which will enable the relevant macroregional actors to identify potential risks for the regional ecosystems and develop initiatives for coordinated interventions towards the resolution of such issues.

The legal provisions for all the aforementioned issues should be incorporated in the planning and implementation of the several agreements and joint projects of the Adriatic – Ionian macro-regional strategy. The need to protect the marine resources and the overall environmental status of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas presupposes that all available measures are taken, including the declaration of EEZ. International law and the regional international agreements and conventions can support this line of action.

Small and medium-sized enterprises from the Adriatic-Ionian countries have the chance to overcome obstacles set by linguistic, administrative, legal, social and cultural differences. Arbitration, conciliation, adjudication and consulting services can help towards this direction. Their services` quality can be improved with the help of the Forum of Chambers of Commerce. Their disputes can be peacefully resolved through the International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area as it enables the parties to resolve their disputes peacefully. The efficiency of the services is and must be guaranteed by specialized officials and consultants who are qualified, well trained, up-to-date and they communicate regularly with each other. The notion of sharing is vital for the success of the strategy as its structure and function relies on rules derived from common experience (AIG, FORUM, 2013).

An important regional economic issue is the one of the social economy. By nature, the social economy is socially sensitive, oriented to local innovation and entrepreneurship. It can serve the strategy's vision for a sustainable and competitive growth. The strategy should encourage the existing social economy actors to participate in the implementation the strategy's projects as well as to empower the start of new social economy business that will contribute in the strategy's effectiveness.

Equally important for the local economies are the international interactions. Given the complexity and the diversity of the international players who are involved in the region and the particularly sensitive relations between the regional states, the strategy needs to be inclusive. External players, such as stakeholders from Turkey and Russia could be invited as observers at the official meetings and conferences of the strategy. They could be given also the chance to contribute with their expertise and experience on region-related issues.

Moreover, the strategy should also encourage agreements among the countries on issues such as environmental security, transport safety and crime prevention. Same need stands for the struggle against the regional hatred and conflicts. There are numerous associations and institutions, governmental and non-governmental, working on peacebuilding and reconciliation. The strategy is a great chance to get all those stakeholders involved, in an organized joint process of establishing positive peace in the region. The strategy can collaborate with those stakeholders to diffuse its vision to the peoples of the region, cultivating the sense of common-belonging, active citizenship, empathy and solidarity. A Forum that would particularly focus on joint peacebuilding initiatives, always projecting the ongoing process of the strategy's implementation could be a major contribution. Given the nature of the conflicts in the past it is important there will be given space for interfaith dialogue (mainly between Christians and Muslims), peace media and youth exchange. This will help to overpass the ethnic and religious differences and to highlight the strong cultural commonalities among the peoples of the region.

The consolidation of the notion of an AdrIonian common identity and citizenship will open the path for a common European identity. The environmental challenges that are common in the region and need to be addressed jointly, beyond national borders, may introduce an eco-citizenship as the people of the region become aware of these commonalities. Civil society can help a lot to this direction, motivating the several national and local stakeholders to come together and act coordinatingly. Moreover, the strategy should never be deprived from the strong political backing that currently enjoys from the high political levels. So far, the local/regional stakeholders proved to be actively involved and deeply motivated. To prevent a decline of this enthusiasm, the European Commission should keep on motivating the participants and make the strategy even more inclusive, innovative, open and flexible.

Maintaining the suitable balance between European, national, regional and local regulation spheres, will allow the strategy to synthesize its goals and policies by respecting each country's specific peculiarities, unique characteristics and national policy plans their rights and obligations and also to stay aligned with the mandate set by European and international law and policies. The balance between international law, treaties and agreements on the one side, and the regional

agreements and regulations within the frames of the macro-region on the other side, will ensure long-term stability in mutual relations. [181]

The strategy is a great chance for the participating countries to recommence a sincere dialogue aiming at the final resolution of their international disputes. However, these disputes should not be an obstacle for the further implementation of the strategy. The vision of joint management of interregional issues such as regional security, transportation safety and environmental protection, should meet no limitations set by borders. For example, no matter how far is an EEZ extended, the risk of a marine pollution incident remains the same and it is important that it is tackled jointly. Such a need exists also for the common prevention or response to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods etc.

The Adriatic Ionian strategy should be more focused and less broad. As it was outlined above, one of its strengths is that it manages to activate stakeholders towards joint management of regional challenges and the establishment of regional development based on a macro-regional economic, social and environmental plan. What everyone expects from the macro-region is that, inter alia, it will give the chance to the member states of the EU which are also members of the macro-region, to reach the Europe 2020 goals easier, assisted by the policies` harmonization that takes place within the macro-region. Overall, the governance approach used for macro regional strategies shouldn`t insist on a general approach of policies and problems but should rather focus on actions with specific goals which on their turn will help the states to reach the Europe 2020 goals and achieve better integration both within their borders as well as within the EU after their accession.[182] In a sense, the narrow focus will make the strategy more flexible. Focus on special regional issues, will allow the strategy to estimate clearly the kind of the special regional features and to adjust its policies accordingly. The EU on the other hand, will have a clear picture of the regional problems and potentials and thus to act accordingly.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that “poverty is the worst form of violence”. Poverty is probably the worst case of structural violence because it usually causes violence, hatred and conflicts. Human history has proved that, the lower the economic level of a society is, the lower the educational level is and the higher the possibility for this society to breed racism, hatred, crime and nationalism. In other words,

[181] Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (17 June 2008): “Establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy, Official Journal of the European Union, L 164, pg. 19

[182] Böhme Kai, “Added Value of Macro-regional Strategies: A Governance Perspective” Luxembourg, Spatial Foresight Brief, 2013:3

wherever there is poverty, there can be no peace. Even if there is absence of direct violence, it is quite likely that it will erupt. The Adriatic – Ionian basin is a brilliant example of this phenomenon. The economic crisis in Italy and Greece resulted to the rise of right wing extremism, xenophobia and nationalism, strong political groups in Albania advocate the expansion of country's borders against neighbouring countries, Serbia seems trapped in the cyclone of Kosovo and the traumas that the Yugoslavian war caused, same as Croatia which, apart from its bad relations with Serbia, faces serious territorial disputes with Slovenia that led the last one to block the Croatian nomination for NATO and EU in the past[183]. The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-region is a unique chance for alliance building in the region. Countries which, until the very recent past, were fighting each other, now have the great chance to cooperate to face the common challenges, having the unique chance to deepen democracy, empathy and solidarity and improve their economic and social status together. They can cultivate and develop the sense of common belonging, cooperation and friendship which is the only way to achieve sustainable peace and development for the peoples of the region.

[183] Enri Hide (April 2014): "Islamic Extremism in the Balkans as a Geopolitical Instrument", Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol 5 No 6

References

- A Governance Perspective", pg. 15, Luxembourg, Spatial Foresight Brief 2013:3,
- AIC FORUM, "The International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area: Resolving International Disputes through Conciliation and Arbitration", Document presented at the round table on small and medium sized enterprises of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative on 26-27 November 2009
- Anastasiou, H. (2007). "The European Union as a peace-building system: Deconstructing nationalism in the era of globalization." Journal of International Peace Studies. 12, 2, pg 31 - 48.
- Bache, I. and Flinders, M. (Eds.) (2004). "Multi-level governance." pg 185 – 197, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Balcer Adam and Surroi Veton, "In search of a New Paradigm: the Western Balkans and the EU Integration", pg. 15, Warsaw 2013, demos EUROPA Centre for European Strategy
- Bebler, Anton, "How to deal with the Western Balkans", Thesis Kosova, nr. 1, 2013, pg 63 - 77
- Blais E. (2012) INTERACT Point Vienna and Liepa Baiba, INTERACT Point Turk "What are Macro-regions All About?" INTERACT, pg. 4, winter 2011/2012
- Böhme, K. (2013) "Added Value of Macro-regional Strategies: A Governance Perspective" pg 3 - 17
- Commission of the European Communities (2001), "European Governance: A White Paper", Brussels, pg 7 - 32
- De Lombaerde Philippe, **"**Regional Integration and Peace", Peace & Conflict Monitor, May 09, 2005 http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfm?id_article=268

- Díez Medrano, J. (2003) “Framing Europe: attitudes to European integration in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom” pg 21 – 30, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Echengreen, E. & Boltho, A. (2008) “The Economic impact of European Integration” Discussion Paper Series, Centre for Economic Policy Research pg 2 – 5, 39 - 42
- Elise, B. (2012) INTERACT Point Vienna and Liepa Baiba, INTERACT Point Turk “What are Macro-regions All About?” INTERACT, pg. 6, winter 2011/2012
- Hide, E. (2014) “Islamic Extremism in the Balkans as a Geopolitical Instrument”, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol 5 No 6 April 2014 pg 375 - 378
- EUNETMAR, (2014) “Analysis to support the elaboration of the Adriatic and Ionian Maritime Action Plan”, Contract Number MARE/2012/07 - REF. NO 2
- European Commission, “Regio Management Plan 2014” 24 January, 2014
- Geddes, A. (2004) “The European Union and British politics” Basingstoke: Palgrave
- George, S. (2001) “Politics in the European Union” Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Goergen, P. (2013) Secretary General of AER, “The Assembly of European Regions as a Provider of Innovative Practices in the Field of Interregional Cooperation: The example of the RUR@CT Programme” pg. 3
- Grigor N. Alex and Severin A. ipg 1/2007, “Peace Strategy for Kosovo”, pg 123 - 139
- Hill, S. (2010). “Europe’s promise: Why the European way is the best hope in an insecure age” Berkley, LA: University of California Press.
- Holden, M. (2003). “Stages of economic integration: From autarky to economic union” Parliamentary Research PRB 02-49E

- Mirus, R. & Ryiska, N. (2001) “Economic integration: Free trade areas vs Customs union. Western Center for Economic Research, Standing committee on Foreign affairs & international trade” pg 1 -12
- Machačová Jana, Dall Elke (2007) “Innovation Infrastructures in the Western Balkan Countries”, VERSION 1.3, July 2007 Last update: October 2007, Information Office of the Steering Platform
- Machačová, J. and Dall, E. (2007) “Innovation Infrastructures in the Western Balkan Counrties”, INFRMATION OFFICE OF THE STEERING PLATFORM ON RESEARCH FOR THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES, October 2007, pg. 10
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Concerning the Governance of Macro-regional Strategies” Brussels, 20.5.2014, COM(2014) 284 final
- Rusconi M. R. (2011) “The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region”, pg. 8, Brussels, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for the Country Promotion
- Thana, E and Patuzi, D (2013) “Toward a Protected Maritime Environment of Adriatic Region”, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 4 No. 9, October 2013, pg. 1
- Thompson, G. (Ed.) (2001). Governing the European Economy. London: Sage Publications pg 3-4
- Vidas, D. (2010) “The Adriatic Sea Today: Unsolved Issues and Challenges”, 22 December 2010, Mepiellan Centre http://www.mepielan-ebulletin.gr/default.aspx?pid=18&ArticleId=51

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THESIS/DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ....Peace Studies.....

Date: 15/10/2018

Thesis Title / Topic: ....The EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region in Light of Regional Cooperation for Peace and Development.....

According to the originality report obtained by myself/my thesis advisor by using the Turnitin plagiarism detection software and by applying the filtering options stated below on 18./09./18. for the total of ....128..... pages including the a) Title Page, b) Introduction, c) Main Chapters, and d) Conclusion sections of my thesis entitled as above, the similarity index of my thesis is ..10.. %.

Filtering options applied:

1. Approval and Decleration sections excluded
2. Bibliography/Works Cited excluded
3. Quotes excluded
4. Match size up to 5 words excluded

I declare that I have carefully read Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences Guidelines for Obtaining and Using Thesis Originality Reports; that according to the maximum similarity index values specified in the Guidelines, my thesis does not include any form of plagiarism; that in any future detection of possible infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility; and that all the information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

16/10/2018
Date and Signature

Name Surname: Vasileios Migkos
Student No: N12123803
Department: Peace Studies
Program: Peace and Conflict Studies
Status: ☒ Masters ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Associate Prof. Dr. Murat Arsev
(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ETHICS COMMISSION FORM FOR THESIS

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Peace Studies **DEPARTMENT**

Date: 15/10/2018

Thesis Title: The EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region in Light of Regional Cooperation for Peace and Development

My thesis work related to the title above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, interview, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board/Commission for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

16/10/2018
Date and Signature

Name Surname: Vasileios Migkos
Student No: N12123803
Department: Peace Studies
Program: Peace and
Status: ☒ MA ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Combined MA/ Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Approved

Associate Prof. Dr. Murat Önsoy
(Title, Name Surname, Signature)