## REPORT ON PARALLEL SESSIONS 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Smart approach for a sustainable and attractive region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date, time</td>
<td>13 May 2016, 09:00h-10:45h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Chair(s), panellists, rapporteur(s) | Chair: Dr Andrea Mairate, Head of Competence Centre, Macroregions and European Territorial Cooperation, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)  
Panel 1: **EU policy framework and financial resources**  
Moderator: Blanka Belosevich, Head of Department for international cooperation, Ministry of Tourism, Croatia  
Panellists:  
- Joanna Mouliou, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission;  
- Donatella Soria, Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), European Commission;  
- Miroslav Veskovic, International, Interinstitutional and Stakeholder Relations, Joint Research Center, European Commission;  
- Maria Spyraki, Member of the European Parliament, REGI Committee;  
- Sonia Popa, Director General of Tourism Development-Ministry of Economy of Albania  
Panel 2: **Stakeholders and transnational project experiences**  
Moderator: Francesco Di Cesare, Chairman Risposte turismo  
Panellists:  
- Marija Rajaković, Head of Sector for Competitiveness, Ministry of Economy, Croatia;  
- Roberto Perrocchio, Chairman, ICOMIA Marinas Group and Assomarinas;  
- Andrea Novakovic, CEO from the City of Dubrovnik, Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian cities;  
- Johannes Volkmar, International Projects, Tourismusverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern;  
- Pierre Frustier, tourism expert, Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe;  
- Konstantinos Nikoloutsos, President of the Chamber of Commerce of Ilia (Greece) and member of AIC Forum  
Rapporteur: Cinzia De Marzo, Legal advisor and expert on European Sustainable tourism |
**Summary of the two panel discussions**

The session was divided into two panels, focusing on:

1) improving knowledge about EU funding instruments for sustainable tourism initiatives and projects and discussing their best use;

2) fostering cooperation and exchange of experience through concrete "best practice" presentations.

The panel sessions were chaired by Dr Andrea Mairete who stressed the relevance of tourism for the economy of European countries and in particular in this macro-region. Tourism in Europe accounts for 5% of the direct EU GDP and workforce (i.e. about 9.7 million jobs and involves 1.8 million businesses, in particular SMEs). When indirect impacts are included, this figure rises to 10% of GDP and 12% of employment. Only Croatia last year received 61.7% of its GDP from tourism receipts. He also pointed out that the future work for this macro-regional pillar should focus on how to overcome the main challenges in the Region such as: seasonality and youth employment. He pointed out the interesting approach of cultural routes as a sustainable way to develop common value and to taste the local atmosphere, and this should be further explored in the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region. He also mentioned as a priority the need to support and develop businesses in tourism sector through simpler financing conditions. "Sustainable tourism should be viewed as an integrated way to create linkages with other activities and all ESIF Thematic Objectives".

**Key messages/conclusions/lessons learnt:**

1. **How to capitalise on the use of EU funding for the EUSAIR:** Increasing synergies and complementarities between the ESI funds and other funds managed by the Commission, such as COSME, Horizon 2020, Erasmus plus, as well as IPA funds for the non-EU countries, is essential. Using concrete instruments such as the Smart Specialization Strategies- S3 platform with technological and innovative approach (aligning topics, priorities at national and regional level for boosting collaboration and facilitating regional benchmarking). This is a new way of thinking, based on the excellence present in the territory. We need to move fast and to work together, while being flexible due to the specificity of each participating country;

2. **How to foster transnational cooperation with a broader approach** (create synergies and cooperation between EUSAIR with the other macro-regional strategies), developing common projects based on the cultural heritage (example for cultural routes), nautical tourism (marinas are growing), in order to tackle seasonality, improve the quality of tourist services and promote the diversification of the tourist product/offer with a macro regional dimension;

3. **Better governance**, with a bottom up approach, involving more the business economy, SME, non-profit organization, academia and fostering partnership with the local authorities. **Improve the issue of information and better communication** among the stakeholders. **Learning from other existing models** in place, including from previous EU macro regional strategies in the Baltic Sea and the Danube. Need to invest more in skills and training in the field of tourism, including the capacity to manage sustainable tourism performance at destination level, also taking into account accessibility.

**Next steps/recommendations:**

1. **Territorial potential at macro regional level, which needs to be further exploited: challenges and strengths**
   - Better use of the existing EU funds and programmes, in order to find suitable combinations of funding (including ESIF, direct managed funds, IPA, Juncker plan);
   - Better use of the EUSAIR stakeholder platform to facilitate the exchange of information inside each Thematic Steering Group 'TSG' (one per pillar), as well as among the Thematic
Steering Groups of the four pillars. The stakeholder platform will also be used for bringing closer the private sector to the EUSAIR key implementers;
- Mapping the smart specialisation strategies within EUSAIR, in order to support regions and people (civil society) to carry out the ownership of the macro regional strategy. This will help foster cooperation and partnerships at regional and interregional level, with a bottom up approach, and to reach the best process following the value chain of innovation (sectorial specialization, based on research, use of ICT and technical analysis);
- In the nautical tourism sub-sector, to capitalize on the experience of existing networks and links among marinas, in order to boost similar activities for the boating industry in the Adriatic and Ionian area;
- Identification of strategic projects coming from the eight EUSAIR countries, to be collected by the TSG of Pillar 4 (sustainable tourism) and to be recognised (labelled) as EUSAIR relevant under the macro regional framework, in particular for the four IPA countries¹.

(2) Critical issues (governance, operational level and political commitment), which has to be tackled: weaknesses and gaps
- Weak cooperation in the management of sustainable tourism within the region;
- Need to explore complementarities and start discussing synergies at institutional/administrative level. Explore complementarities and synergies with the private sector;
- Reinforce the network between cities (i.e the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities);
- Perform common promotion of destinations;
- Enhance skills and education in various tourism jobs. This is particularly relevant for EUSAIR because the economic activity of this macro-region is strongly based on the tourism sector and therefore the staff in tourism services should acquire a high specialised professional profile. This will enable the region to tackle seasonality, as well as, to reduce poverty and social exclusion;
- In the nautical tourism, need to invest in ICT (especially wi-fi connection), equipment, training and quality of services;
- To establish easier access to finance, in particular for SMEs by creating incentives for investors. Need for moving fast and for simplifying the SMEs funding process;
- Need for a coordinated discussion and structured exchanges of know-how among the region/countries, also including SMEs, academy, NGO, etc.

Overview
More than 300 participants attended parallel session 3. The audience consisted of public and private stakeholders (national and regional administrations, business angels, chambers of commerce, universities, municipalities, development agencies, Forum of AICC, etc) from the eight EUSAIR participating countries². The Q&A sessions were evaluated as being satisfactory and interactive.

¹ Albania (pillar coordinator), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia
² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.