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EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region**European Parliament resolution of 28 October 2015 on an EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region (2014/2214(INI))**

(2017/C 355/04)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (COM(2014)0357) and the accompanying action plan and supportive analytical document,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 ⁽¹⁾ (hereinafter ‘the CPR’),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 23 October 2014 on the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region,
- having regard to the report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies (COM(2013)0468) and the relevant Council conclusions of 22 October 2013,
- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 11 September 2014 on the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (COM(2014)0357) and the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region: research, development and innovation in SMEs (exploratory opinion requested by the Italian Presidency of the EU),
- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 21 January 2014 on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) (exploratory opinion),
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 26 June 2014 on the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region,
- having regard to the own-initiative opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 11 October 2011 entitled ‘Territorial cooperation in the Mediterranean through the Adriatic and Ionian macroregion’,
- having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2012 on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas’ (COM(2012)0713),

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 259.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 349 E, 29.11.2013, p. 1.

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- having regard to the Commission report concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies (COM(2014)0284),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 26 January 2011 entitled 'Regional policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020' (COM(2011)0017),
 - having regard to Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment,
 - having regard to Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment,
 - having regard to Council Decision 2005/370/EC of 17 February 2005 on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Community, of the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention),
 - having regard to the Ancona Declaration, adopted at the Conference on Development and Security in the Adriatic and Ionian of 19-20 May 2000,
 - having regard to the Founding Conference of the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion held in Pula on 30 June 2006, and to the Declaration on launching the initiative for creating the Adriatic Strategy adopted at the Assembly of the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion held in Split on 22 October 2009,
 - having regard to the study by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies (Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies) of January 2015 entitled 'New Role of Macro-Regions in European Territorial Cooperation',
 - having regard to the study by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies (Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies) of June 2015 entitled 'Adriatic and Ionian region: Socio-Economic Analysis and Assessment of Transport and Energy Links',
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Fisheries (A8-0279/2015),
- A. whereas the macro-regional strategies represent a new model of multilevel governance in which the involvement of stakeholders representing the EU, national, regional and local levels, including economic and social partners and civil society organisations, as well as the complementarity between different policies and programmes are essential for successful implementation and achievement of the goals; whereas regional and local authorities play an important role in the promotion of democracy, decentralisation and greater local and regional autonomy;
- B. whereas the previous Baltic Sea and Danube strategies have brought tangible benefits for the regions involved, confirmed the success of EU cooperation mechanisms and provided useful experience for developing new macro-regional strategies;
- C. whereas the interest shown by regions in this modern form of regional cooperation and the accompanying governance model is on the rise; whereas this has especially been the case recently as regards mountain regions such as the Carpathians and the Alps, where natural barriers mean that specific regional policies need to be pursued;

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- D. whereas a macro-regional strategy as an integrated framework relating to Member States and non-EU countries in the same geographical area and endorsed by the European Council, is an EU strategy;
- E. whereas there are large socio-economic differences between the countries involved in this strategy, especially between EU Member States and non-Member States;
- F. whereas the increased interest of countries in the Adriatic and Ionian Region in cooperation and defining joint actions to respond to the challenges by using potential throughout the region, and their continuous effort to achieve synergy, has led to the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR);
- G. whereas the macro-regional strategies may be seen as a tool of European integration and increased territorial cohesion based on voluntary cooperation among Member States and neighbouring countries in addressing common challenges; whereas the EUSAIR is a new form of regional cooperation which may assist participating candidate and potential candidate countries on their path towards the EU, and an important component of the broader Mediterranean policy of the EU as expressed through the Union for the Mediterranean; whereas the EUSAIR, as part of the EU regional policy, is a tool for promoting economic and social cohesion, with the principal objectives of reducing disparities between regions, promoting real convergence and encouraging growth and employment;
- H. whereas the Adriatic Sea, due to its semi-enclosed nature is especially vulnerable to pollution and has unusual hydrographic features such as the fact that the depth and coastline vary considerably between the north and south of the region; whereas fish stocks are shared among all the coastal countries, which puts regeneration of the stocks under sustained pressure; whereas measures within the future framework regulation on technical measures in the reformed CFP should be devised on a regional basis and tailor-made to the specificities of this area and its marine resources and fisheries;

General considerations

1. Welcomes the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the accompanying action plan; believes it is a vital step in the development of this part of Europe; stresses that the EUSAIR has been created to add value to interventions, whether by the EU, national or regional authorities or private sectors, in a way that significantly strengthens the functioning of the macro-region; highlights the strategy's prospects for candidate and potential candidate countries in the region; underlines the importance of the strategy being based on the principles of integration, coordination, cooperation and partnership; reiterates the importance of the 'three NOs' principle of no new legislation, no new institutions, no new funding, as macro-regions are frameworks for cooperation initiatives, building on synergies resulting from the articulation of different EU policy instruments, including the ESI Funds;
2. Welcomes the efforts undertaken by all interested stakeholders in setting up an institutional architecture for the implementation of the EUSAIR within the existing institutional framework; encourages all national, regional and local stakeholders to take full ownership of the implementation of the projects covered by this macro-regional strategy; stresses the importance of strengthening the institutional capacity and efficiency of public administrations and public services and securing, in each participating country, sufficient resources and competent administrative personnel expressly dedicated to implementing the EUSAIR;
3. Stresses the need for a place-based approach as regards the cooperation activities and highlights the added value of the multi-level governance model which needs to address the lack of administrative capacity and can be used to pool resources in the macro-region; insists, in this regard, that there is a need to include the local and regional authorities in the political managing bodies and in the operational, technical and implementing bodies of the strategy while maintaining the Commission's role in the coordination process; stresses that community-led local development (CLLD) can mobilise and involve local actors in the decision-making process and help strengthen the ownership of projects at citizens' level;

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4. Stresses the importance of a transparent process for adoption, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, as well as of openness and inclusiveness towards civil society and all relevant stakeholders; emphasises that communication and awareness-raising across all pillars are essential for the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process and for building public support; encourages the Member States to ensure the strategy has adequate visibility nationally, regionally and locally, to develop appropriate communication with regard to the strategy's goals and results, and to promote coordination and exchanges of best practice with other existing and future macro-regional strategies;

5. Highlights the need for non-EU countries to harmonise their legislation with specific sectoral *acquis* related to the strategy in order to ensure fulfilment of the EU goals and their regular, legal and timely implementation based on EU standards and legislation; encourages all the participating countries to establish think tanks and organise regular meetings to exchange best practices to secure this procedure and make it more efficient;

6. Notes that, due to the steep fall in private investment across the countries in the region, coupled with fiscal consolidation and limited investment capacity in the public sector, problems may arise in financing projects under the strategy; calls on the participating countries to maintain a high degree of ownership, commitment and leadership necessary to successfully carry out the strategy;

7. Welcomes the fact that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for 2014-2020, and in particular the Adriatic Ionian Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 (ADRION), provide significant potential resources and a wide range of tools and technical options for the strategy; supports the fact that other funds and instruments relevant to the strategy pillars are available, in particular the Horizon 2020 and Erasmus Plus programmes in respect of all pillars, the Connecting Europe Facility in respect of Pillar II, the LIFE programme in respect of Pillar III, as well as in respect of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the COSME and Creative Europe programmes for SMEs in respect of Pillar IV, as well as the INNOVFON programme for innovation funding; encourages cooperation, in order to create a synergy of available funds, between the monitoring committees of the territorial cooperation programmes which cover the region, the EUSAIR governing board and the ESIF managing authorities; stresses that the strategy should enable a more efficient and effective use of existing instruments and funds;

8. Calls on the European Commission and national, regional and local bodies which are responsible for the preparation, management and implementation of ESIF programmes to stress the importance of macro-regional projects and actions;

9. Stresses the importance of defining, at macro-regional level, the implementation structure and coordination mechanisms in order to facilitate cooperation including joint planning, alignment of funding opportunities and a bottom-up approach; underlines the need to align the national and regional operational programmes with the goals of the strategy, including, where possible, the incorporation of EUSAIR into the programmes; considers it necessary to coordinate and harmonise initiatives, proposals and projects which concern the Adriatic-Ionian Region;

10. Encourages the Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the participating countries to fully exploit the possibilities available under the newly established European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) to finance projects in the region which would create added value, promote sustainable development and economic and social cohesion, spur growth and increase employment at the macro-regional level and contribute to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy; in this context, encourages the provision of 'bonus points' to macro-regional projects in the project selection phase due to their inherent transnational nature;

11. Points out that there are no specific funds assigned just for the implementation of macro-regional strategies and that strong political will, partnership and coordination among the countries is a precondition for success; calls therefore on the countries in the region to bundle funds (ESI Funds, IPA, EFSI) as well as contributions from national sources under the EIB as a financial and investment platform for supporting the financing of projects contributing to the fulfilment of the goals of the strategy; calls for the creation of a transparent and publicly available project pipeline for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, which would make current and potential investment needs and projects visible so that investors are encouraged to invest in these projects;

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12. Urges stakeholders to exchange best practices, draw on experience gained and identify the bottlenecks in the implementation of other EU macro-regional strategies and to increase cooperation with their counterparts, such as those from the Baltic Sea, Danube Basin and Alpine macro-regions;

13. Calls on the Commission to eliminate administrative and non-financial obstacles which often dissuade investors from investing in such projects;

14. Considers it necessary to find ways to involve countries not included in the strategy and which are geographically and economically close to the region, at least on an individual and specific project basis; highlights in this context the importance of cross-border and trans-national cooperation under cohesion policy and invites the Member States and regions concerned to make use of the existing best practices in this area;

15. Recalls the major impact of the economic crisis on the region and stresses the need for regular assessment of strategies designed to achieve economic recovery; points out that the countries in the region are at different levels of development and have different needs; calls on the Commission to underline the importance of creating the conditions for reducing socio-economic differences between the countries; supports reforms in less developed countries and encourages the exchange of knowledge, experience and practices in this context;

16. Points out that it is necessary to encourage, renew and deepen cultural, scientific and educational cooperation, including by increasing the scope for academic mobility of students and university staff; stresses that science and innovation are a prerequisite for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth; emphasises the interdependence of scientific and cultural cooperation with the growth of economic dynamics and the level of diversity and sustainability of tourism within the region;

17. Welcomes the European Parliament's representation in the governing bodies of the EUSAIR; calls on the Commission to analyse the joint efforts of the countries in the region (EU Member States and third countries) and the effective participation of local and regional authorities in achieving the strategy's objectives;

18. Refers to precedents established in the context of other EU macro-regional strategies and calls for support to be given, within the framework of pilot projects and preparatory actions, to different types of actions ranging from studies to seed money for the preparation of projects under different priority areas;

19. Considers it imperative that, in the implementation phase of the strategy, its general principles, and in particular matters relating to environmental protection and the enhancement of natural resources, should be taken into due consideration in all four pillars, also in order to take a holistic approach to the complex and varied challenges of the macro-region;

20. Emphasises that particular attention should be given to areas referred to in Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, such as islands, mountainous and rural regions, with the aim of identifying and exploiting their specific potential, especially in the tourism sector, whilst respecting the areas for action and priorities identified in this report; calls, moreover, on the Commission to propose a European Year of Islands and Mountains;

21. Considers it necessary to find ways for the participating countries to involve other important pillars that could create development benefits for the area, such as agriculture on account of specific geo-climatic conditions, bio-diversity and the potential to create synergic coordinated effects and further growth; recommends close cooperation and coordination among inland areas, the coastal area and the islands to achieve synergies between clean energy projects and healthy food production;

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22. Draws attention to the importance of adequate reporting and evaluation of the implementation of the strategy; calls, in this context, on the participating countries, together with the Commission, to gather reliable baseline data and establish concrete targets for each pillar which would be evaluated on a yearly basis and made publicly available;
23. Calls for a comprehensive and integrated European approach to migration; emphasises that the region faces serious migration challenges and deplors all the tragedies in the Mediterranean; urges that in tackling these challenges a significant shift in asylum policies in terms of solidarity among Member States is essential; highlights the need to look at the overall strategy on cooperation with third countries; regrets the insufficient cooperation among EU Member States with regard to migratory challenges; encourages the exchange of good practices in receiving migrants and calls, as a matter of urgency, for special attention to be paid to the social and humanitarian issues affecting the region, with a view to a possible redefinition of the EUSAIR priorities in the future;
24. Expects new impetus to be given to the strengthening of peace and security in South East Europe;
25. Calls on countries to exchange best practices in the area of respect for minority rights in order to apply the highest standards, given that this is a particularly sensitive area regarding linguistic issues;
26. Stresses that, within the various stages of implementation, public and private economic players, members of society and the various components of organised civil society must be provided with appropriate training through a specific programme including organisational and technical support;
27. Calls on the Commission to present a report on the implementation of EUSAIR to Parliament and the Council every two years, in order to assess its functioning and its added value in terms of growth and jobs, reducing disparities and sustainable development;
28. Encourages specific measures to promote the social dimension; stresses the importance of incorporating priorities and measures which seek to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities and prevent all kinds of discrimination;

Blue growth

29. Stresses that the region's unique geographical position and specific coastline structure, together with its rich marine biodiversity, hold immense potential for the creation of 'blue' jobs and for innovative and sustainable economic development and growth, including blue technologies, fisheries and aquaculture, and better maritime and marine governance and services;
30. Advocates the blue economy as a solution to the economic crisis, since it stimulates the creation of new jobs and economic development, and especially jobs for women and young people in coastal and island countries; believes that the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region cannot be pursued without factoring in the concept of the blue economy, which links the economic sectors relating to seas and oceans, aquaculture, maritime and river transport and tourism to environmental protection;
31. Calls on the Commission and the states involved in the strategy to provide incentives that attract young people to the field of fisheries and aquaculture in the Adriatic and Ionian region and encourage them to undertake such activities;
32. Calls for policy coordination and harmonisation of the strategy's goals, as well as common projects, in line with the values, principles and objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy; encourages, furthermore, support for the development of a sustainable fisheries sector and the production of traditional and healthy food; calls for the establishment of Fisheries Local Action Groups, which could represent a natural tool for diversifying fisheries; highlights the fact that sustainable and profitable fisheries and aquaculture require strengthened stakeholder involvement in the overall management, as well as improved and diversified fisheries activities;

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33. Takes the view that blue growth comprises highly diverse sectors and businesses and for this reason its development requires highly skilled labour in all those sectors; calls on Member States involved in EUSAIR to promote the various sectors of blue growth in their training programmes, taking into account lifelong-learning systems and training for employees; points out the complexity of the activities, sectors and disciplines of the socio-economic systems involved in blue growth, and therefore considers it extremely important that Member States involved in the EUSAIR strategy adopt labour market policies in order to increase the capacity to adapt to change, innovation and multidisciplinary, adapt the training of human capital and increase the female participation rate;

34. Stresses the importance of a greater and real interconnection between the EU 2020 strategy and the three pillars (especially the blue growth pillar) of the EUSAIR strategy based on the European Commission Action Plan; considers the Action Plan as one of the outputs of the strategy approach identifying the concrete priorities for the macro-region; points out that, on the basis of this, each action or project is selected by an extensive bottom-up consultation process involving a range of stakeholders from the Adriatic-Ionian Region representing national, regional and local authorities, social partners, but also the private sector, the social economy, academia and civil society;

35. Encourages clustering and cooperation between public and private enterprises, universities, research institutes and other relevant stakeholders in the marine and maritime sectors with the aim of stimulating innovation and benefiting fully from synergies; considers that actions under the blue growth pillar should build on the national and regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation in order to secure more efficient and effective investments; calls on the countries and regions to participate in the Commission's S3 Platform to benefit from assistance in the development, implementation and review of smart specialisation strategies; considers it necessary, in this context, to give SMEs better access to credit and to improve the existing business networks (clusters) through an internationalisation process, in order to create new quality and sustainable jobs;

36. Supports the creation of a joint quality label for high-quality seafood products from the region in order to increase their competitiveness;

37. Stresses the importance of social dialogue and of the involvement of civil society representatives in capacity-building activities alongside the public authorities; considers that this could be achieved by setting up a permanent platform at macro-regional level and at regional level in each Member State to represent the social and economic partners, in line with what has already been done for universities, chambers of commerce and cities;

38. Stresses the importance of marine and maritime research and of stronger cooperation in these sectors among researchers, and among Member States and regions involved in the EUSAIR strategy, in order to overcome the existing gap between these Member States and to boost the competitiveness of coastal areas and the creation of quality and sustainable local jobs;

39. Notes with concern the rate of fish stock depletion in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas as a result of overfishing, along with illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), and other significant risks to all marine life; stresses that fisheries are one of the key components in the economies of the coastal areas and islands; deems it necessary, therefore, to consider the protection and preservation of fish stocks and marine ecosystems, in line with the principle of the maximum sustainable yield included in the common fisheries policy, to be a paramount objective of the strategy; underlines the need, in the transitional period, to support adjustment to fishing limits through subsidies for the purchase of equipment via the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); calls for decisive action in the form of aligning third-country fisheries legislation with EU legislation, data sharing, joint monitoring platforms and multiannual fisheries management plans, and for consideration of how to develop a sustainable aquaculture sector with its great potential for being powered by renewable energy sources;

40. Recalls that commercially exploited fish and shellfish should be within safe biological limits in order to achieve good environmental status and to safeguard the long-term sustainability of the fishing industry;

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41. Calls on the Commission to register recreational fishing catch volumes, to regulate this activity and to make both recreational and professional fishing activities subject to MSY objectives;
42. Urges comprehensive research on fish stocks, especially of endangered species, and their biological interconnection, given that the lack of exact data would make evaluations unclear and unreliable; urges the preservation of natural spawning;
43. Calls for projects seeking to assess the impact of indirect fishing (ghost nets, mussel cultivation meshes) and by-catches of protected species to be evaluated and promoted, it being estimated that, in the Adriatic alone, over 40 000 sea turtles are caught accidentally; takes the view that environmental studies and studies on means of alleviating the problem (such as turtle excluder devices) are urgently necessary;
44. Urges strong support for shipbuilding, including the leisure boat sector, focusing on its modernisation and specialisation in order to create jobs and adapt to the requirements of sustainable and competitive growth that is in line with blue technologies;
45. Calls for strong support for manufacturing areas, twinning and cooperation between areas in different parts of the macro-region; encourages the exchange of good practices involving the most significant experiences in the sector and those of other regions which seek to take the same approach in order to promote the establishment of manufacturing areas;
46. Underlines the importance of supporting and fostering recreational sport and family fishing together with integrated policies for fishing and tourism (fishing and fish tourism, mariculture), especially on the islands, in order to preserve the local cultural traditions and maritime lifestyles of islanders and small coastal sites; encourages sustainable, small-scale and traditional fishing and aquaculture, coupled with a diversified culinary offer and the promotion of local fish markets, as the best way to ensure sustainability and provide stronger support to coastal tourist activities;
47. Calls on the Commission to support and promote the involvement of fisheries and fishery workers in projects such as those relating to cultural and heritage tourism, encompassing fisheries and the rediscovery of seafaring activities and traditional fishing grounds and occupations;
48. Underlines the importance of the social economy and of female entrepreneurship for achieving the blue growth pillar and calls on the Member States involved in the EUSAIR strategy to encourage and support the participation of women in all the relevant sectors; recalls the fundamental role of small and micro enterprises in the regions and territories concerned and asks the Member States involved in EUSAIR to implement active policies for promoting such forms of economic activity;
49. Supports measures to reduce the hydrogeological risk and the risk of coastal erosion;
50. Stresses the importance of research and calls for strong support for marine and maritime districts;
51. Stresses that the development of aquaculture and mariculture can play an important role not only in the recovery of species diversity but also in the economic growth of the Adriatic and Ionian region;
52. Calls on the Commission to intensify the exchange of good practices such as the sustainability of projects developed by the Coastal Action Groups;

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Connecting the region

53. Notes that better transport and energy connections among the participating countries as well as between them and their other neighbours, including maritime transport, intermodal connections to the hinterland and energy networks, are compelling needs for the macro-region and a precondition for its economic and social development; underlines the lack of connection between the two coasts on the Adriatic and the network infrastructure gap existing in the Adriatic-Ionian area;

54. Calls for incentives to be provided for the establishment of sustainable transport links which reduce journey times, transport and logistic costs and externalities; calls for major strategic works related to the interchange between sea and land in order to create opportunities for intermodal transport between countries, contribute to cohesion, enhance the overall network and reduce road congestion and thus CO₂ emissions; draws attention to the need to improve the maritime and port dimension of cabotage, of motorways of the sea and of cruises between the two shores of the Adriatic, both on the north-south and transversal east-west routes; points out the need for greater coordination to prevent maritime traffic congestion and to improve its management and control;

55. Encourages the use of the regulation on the monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions from maritime transport (Regulation (EU) 2015/757) for innovation and establishment of sustainable maritime transport in the macro-region by using alternative marine propulsion engines and fuels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency in the transport sector;

56. Underlines the importance of connecting maritime transport routes and ports with other parts of Europe and the relevance of interconnections with TEN-T corridors; calls on the participating countries to focus their efforts on implementing projects that are covered by the current TEN-T network and other interventions for its proposed extension to South-Eastern Europe/the Eastern Adriatic coast, and which are able to close the network gap existing in the Adriatic-Ionian area; invites the countries involved therefore to identify priority infrastructure projects of regional and European added value and suggests that attention be paid *inter alia* to:

- (i) completing the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, including the extension of the entire Ionian-Adriatic dorsal,
- (ii) the North-South extension of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor,
- (iii) the establishment of an Alpine-Western Balkans rail freight corridor,
- (iv) a better connection between the Iberian peninsula, central Italy and the Western Balkans,
- (v) implementing a road connection in the Balkan area between the port system and inside countries, as well as an interconnection with the Rhine-Danube corridor,
- (vi) improving port facilities for better connections between the two coasts on the Adriatic, and the preparation of a joint strategy by the managing boards of the North Adriatic ports for the more comprehensive supply of import goods to Central Europe;

57. Calls for the capacity of the existing infrastructure network to be optimised, with particular reference to the existing road and rail links in the macro-region, including 'last-mile' links; stresses the need to finalise the Adriatic-Ionian highway as soon as possible, which will give a boost to the economic and social development of the macro-region; recalls the importance of the new corridors that integrate highways, railways and other infrastructures on both sides of the Adriatic-Ionian area; points out the need for greater coordination to prevent maritime traffic congestion and to improve its management and control;

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58. Calls for the development of a high-speed railway infrastructure that will interconnect the macro-region and allow better connection with and within the EU; highlights the importance of improving the railway connectivity of the Adriatic and Ionian region, as well as between the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic/Ionian coasts;

59. Calls for the participating countries to improve their maritime, rail and air transport infrastructure, to develop motorways of the sea in the macro-region, combining intermodal transport means, especially for connecting the hinterland, and to improve transport logistics, putting the most advanced technologies to the best possible use and always ensuring a high level of safety and environmental sustainability; calls also on the participating countries to assess the possibilities to improve connectivity with e-mobility instruments which could facilitate an international electronic ticketing service;

60. Underlines the lack of effective connection with the islands; urges the Commission and the Member States to facilitate better connections by exploring new coordinated and value-added options, optimising the use of freight and passenger routes and involving private and public stakeholders, in order to increase the quality of life, stop depopulation and make it possible to exploit socioeconomic opportunities in these areas; underlines the need to improve the islands' internal communications and transport infrastructure for sustainable inland mobility; stresses also the need to ensure adequate healthcare and educational programmes for island populations throughout the year;

61. Calls for the implementation of major projects to develop intermodal links on the islands, and in particular wishes to see strong support for enhancing strategically important airports, in terms both of infrastructure and of new routes to other regions in the macro-region;

62. Urges the participating countries to continue their efforts to diversify energy supply sources, a process which will not only improve the energy security of the macro-region but will also increase competition and combat energy poverty, which will have important benefits for the economic and social development of the region; emphasises the need for thorough assessments of the environmental impact of interventions in the energy sector; underlines the importance of the common planning for investment in the development of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and missing gas pipeline networks in the macro-region, thereby helping to achieve enhanced independence and energy security; encourages, furthermore, measures to increase energy and resource efficiency, thus also contributing to competitiveness;

63. Encourages the development of energy infrastructure capable of reducing the carbon footprint, increasing energy efficiency and guaranteeing the energy security of the macro-region and beyond; highlights furthermore the importance of developing and promoting the concept of Smart Cities in order to provide added value to the current overall energy infrastructure of the macro-region;

64. Recognises the high potential of underused renewable energy sources in the macro-region; calls for the exploitation of available renewable sources such as solar, wind, tidal (when technically feasible) and wave energy within the energy production mix; underlines the sustainability and competitiveness of potential hydropower plants in all participating countries; calls on the participating countries to contribute to the setting-up of a well-functioning and interconnected gas and electricity market in the macro-region that will ensure equal access to cheap and affordable energy; stresses the importance of strengthening cross-border energy interconnections underpinning investment in the energy sector as a key precondition for integration into the EU's energy network, as well as the removal of barriers to cross-border investment in the energy sector;

65. Supports joint planning and investment in energy infrastructure for both the production and transport of electricity and gas in the macro-region, in accordance with the TEN-E network, implementing the concrete projects mentioned in the list of Projects of Energy Community Interest (PECIs);

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66. Expresses concern at the renewed impulse given to the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas offshore and on land, which could expose the macro-region to the risk of disasters with very serious consequences for the environment, economy, including the fisheries sector, and public health; stresses that any such activity must be in line with the Union's climate and renewable energy rules and guidelines; emphasises that the Adriatic is a closed, shallow sea, which lacks the capacity to disperse pollutants and has a flourishing tourist trade on both its shores, and that the macro-region's growth should first depend on tourism and on economic activities linked to its specific environmental features and ecosystems; underlines the need for consistent implementation of EU legislation and international conventions on environmental sustainability and the safety of maritime activities; calls for the full implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) and of the Safety of Offshore Oil and Gas Operations Directive (2013/30/EU);

67. Calls for the formulation of common European transport safety standards in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region;

68. Stresses the need to promote cross-border air services through the implementation of joint projects designed to secure and enhance links within the macro-region;

Environmental quality

69. Recalls the richness of the marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems of the participating countries; notes that the Adriatic Sea is home to nearly half (49 %) of all recorded Mediterranean marine species and is the most unusual subregion of the Mediterranean due to its shallowness, restricted flows, and the large influence of rivers; calls for joint efforts in taking all possible measures, such as the use of clean fuels for maritime transport and logistics, in order to preserve the biodiversity of the marine environment and the transnational terrestrial habitats as well as to prevent and reduce the pollution of the sea and other threats to coastal and marine biodiversity; stresses the importance of protecting endangered marine and terrestrial species, such as Mediterranean monk seals, olms, lynxes, griffon vultures and others, and calls on the participating countries to implement proportionate measures to fulfil this objective;

70. Calls for the exchange of best practices between participating countries in the field of managing the natural and cultural heritage, including Natura 2000 areas and UNESCO sites, with the intention of creating sustainable tourist attractions;

71. Urges all the participating countries to join forces in implementing maritime spatial planning, in accordance with Directive 2014/89/EU establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning, and integrated coastal management, involving various stakeholders (national, regional and local authorities, local population, research community, NGOs, etc.); considers that proper joint governance of the maritime space provides an important framework for the sustainable and transparent use of maritime and marine resources;

72. Highlights the importance of protecting and preserving the rivers and lakes in the Adriatic-Ionian basin;

73. Points out the need to tackle responsibly historical and trans-border pollution and to clean up the sites affected by the industrial contamination of soil, water and air, and, where applicable, by pollution resulting from military conflicts; supports all active measures for the reduction of the pollution of the sea from chemical and conventional weapons; supports the reduction, with a goal of elimination, of marine litter, in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, in particular regarding waste pollution in the Adriatic islands;

74. Is concerned about the damage caused by plastic waste at sea; calls on the Commission to support initiatives to collect and recycle this waste; stresses the importance of involving fishermen in the process;

75. Calls on countries to develop and implement comprehensive plans to reuse obsolete industrial and military sites; stresses that these sites not only pose a threat to the environment but also offer significant economic potential which is not being exploited;

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76. Calls for encouraging the relocation of industry from urban centres and coastal areas with the aim of improving the quality of life;

77. Insists that all existing tools be used in implementing the best waste management and wastewater treatment solutions in the region, in line with Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment in the EU Member States;

78. Draws attention to the various natural and man-made disasters that have hit the region in the last years; draws attention to the problem of deforestation and other climate change-related risks; stresses the need to apply in full the horizontal principles for natural disaster risk management and climate change adaptation with a view to implementing the action plan and the priorities of each pillar; encourages cooperation between the countries' hydrometeorological institutes in tackling extreme weather events, climate change consequences, and disaster risk management; recognises water, agriculture and tourism as the sectors most vulnerable to climate change, therefore encourages cooperation between national authorities in order to establish a framework and a support mechanism for the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures;

79. Underlines the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in particular in the marine transport sector;

80. Stresses that there is a problem with the geographic and seasonal disparities in accessibility to water reserves, with a marked shortage of water on the islands and in the coastal area during the summer when water demands become several times higher due to the arrival of a large number of tourists;

81. Urges the establishment of a regional centre for disaster preparedness together with a joint contingency plan for oil spills and large-scale pollution events, in order to create an early warning system to prevent natural disasters and those caused by industrial, transport and other activities, such as floods, fires and exploitation activities in the Adriatic; emphasises that the centre should be directly linked to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism; stresses the importance of preserving the ecosystem and the biodiversity of the region through better understanding and the exchange of best practices;

82. Calls on the non-EU countries to accelerate the implementation of the sectoral *acquis* (such as the Water Framework Directive) with a view to their future accession to the Union;

83. Urges the Member States to consult the competent authorities of neighbouring countries and local communities in the macro-region, particularly with regard to economic activities subject to Environmental Impact Assessments in accordance with Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment;

Sustainable and competitive tourism

84. Underlines the crucial importance of tourism for the European economy and the development of social cohesion within the EU, especially for the Mediterranean countries and for the region as a whole; stresses the need to develop new approaches to help offset seasonality in line with the impact and sustainability of tourism on the environment; urges more support for the financing of tourism projects from the ESIF and other sources;

85. Urges the urgent improvement of cross-border road connections in order to enhance the competitiveness of tourism, given that poor connectivity causes traffic bottlenecks and long delays; underlines the need to improve, for tourism purposes, the existing air infrastructure and the maritime connection between the two coasts of the Adriatic;

86. Stresses the need to encourage the use of existing airports in the macro-region in order to avoid the excessive concentration of passengers in a few airport hubs and promote sustainable and more balanced tourist flows in various locations;

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87. Recognises the rich cultural and natural heritage (including cultural activities such as cinema, theatre and music) of the region as a strong asset, which the tourism sector builds upon; points out the large number of protected UNESCO sites and Natura 2000 areas in all participating countries; considers that, despite the significant contribution of this sector to the economy, the tourism potential is not being fully exploited, in particular owing to high seasonality and lacks in the areas of innovation, sustainability, transport infrastructure, the quality of the tourism offer, the skills of participating stakeholders and responsible tourism management; calls on the participating countries to adopt policies ensuring adequate connections and tourist facilities both during and outside the summer season so as to diversify tourist flows and ensure a constant tourist presence in every season; stresses the importance of combining tourism with the natural, cultural and artistic heritage;

88. Encourages Member States to promote sustainable mobility solutions in the tourism sector, thus improving the quality of tourist services and enhancing its range;

89. Recognises the importance of national and nature parks and of protected areas as the foundations for the future education of citizens in matters relating to environmental protection and combatting climate change;

90. Stresses that cooperation between countries is essential for the further development of tourism in the region; encourages the formulation of tourism strategies for the Adriatic Sea and for the Ionian Sea which are based on sustainability and enable the countries to benefit from synergies and to address common challenges at the macro-regional level; considers it necessary to work together to raise the profile of destinations in the Adriatic-Ionian region;

91. Urges the European Commission, the participating countries and the local and regional authorities to take measures that incentivise stakeholders to improve the tourism infrastructure;

92. Underlines the importance of supporting cultural and creative activities and in particular the development and integration of business activities in the fields of music, theatre, dance and films; calls for the organisation of festivals, conventions and cultural events that promote integration;

93. Draws attention to the need to allow SMEs easier access to support and finance as they are instrumental for the tourism sector; encourages stakeholders in the region to participate in the Enterprise Europe Network in order to share experience, network and find cross-border partners;

94. Stresses the importance of Smart Specialisation and Smart Communities projects involving the exploitation of existing innovation platforms, such as the creation of an Adriatic-Ionian area of creativity;

95. Supports the development of a diversified tourism offer including thematic tourist parks and routes, and cultural, rural, health, medical, nautical, enogastronomic, conference and sport tourism, including cycling, golf, diving, hiking, skiing, mountaineering and outdoor sports, in order to promote tourism throughout the year and to improve the competitiveness of tourist destinations, based on sustainability; supports the development of rural tourism in order to reduce the pressure on major tourism centres and the narrow coastal area and to help overcome seasonality; supports the expansion of tourist activities towards the hinterland with the creation of integrated tourism products which include the main attractions of the macro-region and those of its capitals;

96. Stresses the importance of coherence between tourism management and infrastructure and the need to improve the quality and diversity of services and opportunities, taking account of the specific characteristics of the region; stresses also the importance of promoting and preserving local and regional traditions;

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97. Stresses the importance of exploring alternative routes and business models and improving the linkage of cruise packages to local people and products, thus allowing unsustainable congestion to be tackled more effectively and better exploitation of the full potential, with more lasting economic benefits for local economies; recognises the importance of developing and branding macro-regional tourism routes, through the mapping and further promotion of existing routes;

98. Advocates exploitation of the most representative assets of the area for the purposes of tourism and the development of promotional and marketing programmes;

99. Stresses the need for genuine transport intermodality using an integrated network of services and intersections with a view to developing quality eco-tourism;

100. Calls for the drafting of an Adriatic-Ionian Charter containing criteria, principles and guidelines for the promotion of sustainable tourism through implementation of the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for the assessment of tourist destinations with a view to improving their sustainable development;

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101. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the EUSAIR participating countries (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia).
