

Cross-border eRegion Development: Rectors' Conference Perspectives

Historical and Organizational Framework

The Alps Adriatic Region

From the times of the myth of the Argonauts, a stream of cultures and peoples runs from Central Europe to the Mediterranean, crossing the Alps and reaching the Adriatic Sea. Enlightened emperors and visionary engineers in modern times laid the foundations of a cultural, socio-economic and communication area which in their view should complement the main NW to SE stream along the Danube, connecting it SW with the Mediterranean.

The fall of a millennial empire, two World Wars and a dramatic division of Europe could not destroy such a cultural koiné which firmly had developed along with economic growth. The Alps-Adriatic (AA) Working Community was founded in Venice on the 20th of November 1978. By signing the "Joint Declaration" the informal amicable relationships between the border regions were transformed into an organization with clearly defined tasks and aims. The members of the Working Community have come together at a hot spot of European integration, to the success of which the socio-cultural contacts in this area are of great importance.

The AA Community was certainly one of the oldest and certainly the pioneer across the major political and economic border in post-war Europe. Shared history and past experience serve to prove that future-oriented collaboration is vital in this part of our continent. Signing the "*Joint Declaration*" therefore was more than just a formal act to mark the birth of the Alps-Adriatic Working Community – it was an important step on the way to a future for Europe. By today the Alps-Adriatic territory covers a total area of more than 180.000 km² and is home to about 26 millions of people.

The Alps-Adriatic Working Community is beginning to reformulate its goals regarding plans for the EU 2014 – 2020 programme. At the latest Plenary Meeting it was in principle concluded that the Working Community must develop further in the direction of "*Macro-region Alps-Adriatic-Pannonia*".

The unanimously adopted Declaration states that "*We believe that the Working Community, as a significant partner for contact with the European Union, within development policies of the area encompassing its member states, may play a positive and constructive role in the development of Central and South-Eastern Europe*". According to this resolution, the Community strives to achieve a significant role in the development of macro-region, as a link between the Alpine, Adriatic and the Danube-basin areas. "*The main goal is to implement the strategy with the aim of maximum possible integration of different development policies, and through the variable geometry system.*" Following this, different partners can engage in various topics according to their interests. Moreover, in its expanded action area, the Community will support a faster rapprochement to the European Union of those countries which are still not its members.

Members of the Plenary Meeting have agreed to convene an international conference by summer of 2010, in order to efficiently support the process of further Working Community development "both in terms of topics and regarding geographical expansion".

Meanwhile, a growing body of initiatives has taken place focusing on the strategic area of the Mediterranean in general, and on the Adriatic-Ionian in particular, starting from the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP, “Barcelona Process”, 1995), up to the Union For the Mediterranean (UFM, Paris 2008), including the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) area. Several interuniversity networks and institutions started in parallel, like those of EMUNI, UniAdriatic and UniMed.

Needless to say that the AA Community is logically supposed to play the pivotal role in connecting such Mediterranean initiatives with the Danube initiative.

University actions in the region

In 1979 the Rectors' Conference of the Alps Adriatic Universities was founded. The Rectors' Conference of the Universities of the Alps Adriatic Region (hereafter «AARC») is constituted to promote dialogue among the higher educational institutions of the Alps Adriatic regions in the fields of education, scientific research and didactics. AARC is engaged in supporting collaboration of teachers and students in different academic fields. AARC cooperates with the requisite institutions of the European Union in scientific research and in the different cycles of higher educational training, including life-long learning.

After achieving a successful record of results in terms of regional interuniversity cooperation, the AARC started a process of redefining goals, tasks and strategies. In the latest plenary meeting on May 15 in Koper, the decision was unanimously taken that:

- **In view of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region the AARC supports setting of common collaboration platforms with the Danube Rectors Conference and the ALpe Adria Danube universities INitiative (ALADIN).**
- **The AARC establishes a permanent Secretariat**, in particular acting as a “strategic” Working Group for upgrading contacts and links with other organizations like the Danube Rectors Conference (DRC);
- **The AARC supports the proposal of the project idea on “*Identification of the Obstacles to Interuniversity Cooperation*” to the competent Authorities in charge of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.**
- **The AARC supports joining the MEDADRION initiative as a “network of networks” aimed at integrating the University actions of the AA Community, of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation area, of the Danube and the Adriatic-Ionian initiatives, like EMUNI, UniAdriatic and UniMed.**
- **Amber road ended in Aquileia, Silk road started in Venice: AA is in the center**
- **business-government-university-users cooperation**
 - business- university
 - government-university
 - university-users