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THE EUSAIR STRATEGY CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT THE REGIONS

Representing the only Association of Regions and Local Authorities present, Annika Annerby Jansson, President of the CPMR and of the Regional Council, Region Skåne (SE) was a speaker at the Stakeholder Conference on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region that took place in Athens on 6-7 February 2014. During this conference, presenting the results of the recent consultation, the CPMR congratulated the European Commission and the Greek Presidency - both organisers of the event - and called for the completion of the EUSAIR strategy and action plan during this year's Mediterranean Presidencies of the EU.

Antonis Samaras, Prime Minister of Greece, Johannes Hahn and Maria Damanaki, Commissioners for Regional Policy and Maritime Affairs, Evangelos Venizelos and Kostis Hatzidakis, Greek Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Development and Competitiveness, as well as political representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of all Adriatic-Ionian Member States participated in the discussions.

Bringing her experience from the Baltic area, the President of the Regional Council, Region Skåne warned that *"only by involving regional and local authorities in the preparation and implementation will the EUSAIR strategy become an action,"* because *"the 'very intergovernmental way' of running the strategy in the Baltic has shown its drawbacks"*. *"EUSAIR is a key opportunity to prepare potential EU Member States for their entry into the EU, which, as CPMR, we hope will happen as soon as possible,"* stated the CPMR President in her speech during the Plenary Session on *"the State of Play and Future Prospects"*.

"There is a gap between the citizens and the EU institutions, but today there is an opportunity to deal with this distance by shaping this strategy," stated **Apostolos Katsifaras**, Regional Governor of Western Greece, Vice-President of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission and of the Adriatic-Ionian Intergroup of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), referring to the launch of the EUSAIR. President Katsifaras also called for a school of administration for the Adriatic and Ionian Regions, modelled after the French ENA, in order to create a young and dynamic new generation capable of fostering cooperation in this area.

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region will cover eight countries: four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and four non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia). The CPMR is firmly committed to continuing its involvement in the implementation of the Strategy.

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