



TEDEN SREDOZEMSKÉ OBALE IN MAKROREGIONALNIH STRATEGIJ

Izola, Slovenija
18. – 22. september 2023

MEDITERRANEAN COAST AND MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES WEEK

Izola, Slovenia
18 – 22 September 2023

PRESS RELEASE

"Stronger Collaboration for a Better Future"

The opening of the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Strategies Week themed "Stronger Collaboration for a Better Future," was held on 19th September 2023 in Izola, in the presence of the Slovenian Minister for Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, Mr. Uroš Brežan and other distinguished guests. This event represents a prime example of best practices and has become a European tradition. In the latest report on the implementation of macro-regional strategies, the European Commission also highlighted its significance. The Municipality of Izola organized it with the support of the JZP Izola in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign and the European Affairs, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development, the European Commission, and other partners.

Mayor of the Municipality of Izola, Milan Bogatič, extended a warm welcome to the guests, emphasizing Izola's strong international presence and its efforts to secure European Union (EU) funding, as evidenced by the recent allocation of EU funds for the first phase of the Podestat Palace renovation. He also highlighted the importance of future projects for the coastal area between Izola and Koper, marking the beginning of a green corridor from the Soča River to the Island of Crete, as well as the successful implementation of the protocols of the Barcelona Convention in practice.

Minister Uroš Brežan, as the guest of honor, underscored the importance of preserving a healthy sea for a secure future in the Adriatic-Ionian and other regions. Pressures on the coast and marine environment are increasing, posing threats to both the environment and human health. "We need to move from sectoral water management to comprehensive management from the source to the sea," he emphasized. It is expected that other countries will follow the trend of relocating gray infrastructure away from the coast, converting it into green spaces, and returning areas to people and nature. He also emphasized that the EU should be tackling climate change on macro-regional level, through implementation of all four macro-regional strategies (EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region - EUSAIR, EU Strategy for the Danube Region - EUSDR, EU Strategy for the Alpine Region - EUSALP and EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region - EUSBSR) which are implemented on national level through local, regional and interregional cooperation. Minister Brežan concluded by stating that expanding the network of protected areas in the Adriatic is essential for ecological and food security, particularly for Slovenia, and this can be achieved through proactive collaboration among individuals, institutions, and countries with a bottom-up approach. The annual Mediterranean Coast Week fosters such collaboration. Minister Brežan also unveiled the comprehensive graphic identity for the upcoming [Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention](#), which will take place from December 4th to 8th in Hotel Bernardin in Portorož in Slovenia. This graphic

identity underscores the commitment to preserving nature, water, seas, and forests, featuring elements of fish, Posidonia seaweed, as well as green and blue corridors—an essential way for the Contracting Parties to emphasize the importance of marine ecosystem preservation.

The Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Strategies Week is increasingly recognized as a central meeting point for sharing experiences among the four above mentioned European macro-regional strategies, as stated by Mr. Marko Koprivc, State Secretary at the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development. He emphasized that the adherence to the guidelines of strategies represents European added value. He also highlighted additional challenges beyond those at the EU level in the Adriatic-Ionian region such as socio-economic aspects, EU membership, brain drain and migration. He added that EUSAIR successfully addresses these challenges with the support of the Interreg Adrion Facility Point project, where the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development of Slovenia is the lead partner. Mr. Koprivc expressed satisfaction that the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development has once again been entrusted with the leading role in the EUSAIR Facility Point project for the next 4 years. He also awarded the first and third place for the best journalism reporting on EUSAIR to Miha Dobrašin, a journalist from Croatia's HINA, and the second place to Dino Subašić, a journalist from Slovenia's national television.

"This year's theme, 'Stronger Collaboration for a Better Future,' is of exceptional significance in light of current international relations. European citizens are increasingly realizing the importance of macro-regional strategies in times of crisis," said Dr. Sławomir Tokarski, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy at the European Commission. He also emphasized that macro-regional strategies represent a bridge between the regional and EU level, are contributing to the digital and green transition in the EU and, as such, represent European added value. The European Commission is always pleased to participate in successful local initiatives like Izola, which are, as such, contributing to regional, interregional, macro-regional and EU development.

Mag. Anžej Frangeš, Acting Director-General for European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Union, emphasized Slovenia's unique position as the only country participating in three EU macro-regional strategies with its entire territory. He announced that the 12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region will take place on October 24 and 25 at Brdo pri Kranju, marking the conclusion of Slovenia's presidency in this region. In 2024, Slovenia will assume the presidency of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region. Mr. Frangeš highlighted the importance of Slovenia's EUSAIR Secretariat, Facility Point, which facilitates collaboration with other countries in the EUSAIR region and European institutions.

Throughout the week, 14 events will offer a diverse program covering topics related to the sea, circular economy, and cooperation among the four macro regions: Alpine, Baltic, Adriatic-Ionian, and Danube. Slovenia's participation in three of the four strategies makes it the ideal place for stakeholders to convene. Most events will take place at the Manzioli Palace, with some on Kristan Square. Over 300 participants from 20 European countries will gather in Izola during the week. Registration for the opening event exceeded 100 participants, prompting the organizational committee to close registration in early September. From September 19 to October 7, 2023, Manzioli Palace will host a unique exhibition of captivating photographs of marine organisms from the Slovenian sea. Following the Mediterranean Coast Week, the

exhibition will travel to schools in Slovenian Istria as part of the Blue School project, aiming to promote biodiversity and knowledge of our sea.

[More about the Programme for the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Strategies Week 2023.](#)

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