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Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns

Brief explanation about the organization:

The Adriatic sea region is the ideal political, economic and cultural junction between East and West, North and South of the world. The Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities & Towns was born in 1999 with the "Charter of Ancona", which provides criteria to establish and develop a commitment of Local Administrations for the sustainable development of the Adriatic region. The Forum is an instrument of decentralized and cross border cooperation, conceived after the experiences of solidarity that followed the recent Balkan conflicts. It encourages and supports the administrative interaction between cities on the two sides of the Adriatic region, promoting the dissemination of best practices in governance and environmental protection, moving towards a common scenario (a community "climax") in which sustainability is an administrative innovation tool and a market factor.

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1. Description of the Problem and Action

In 1999 (after the experiences of solidarity that followed the recent Balkan conflicts) the City of Ancona promoted the establishment of the "Adriatic Mayors Forum", a voluntary network, to develop a permanent and coordinated commitment of the Local Autonomies and their Associations for the growth of the Adriatic Community. The following meetings of the Forum (held in Split, Bari and Igoumenitsa) brought to a change of name (Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns) and to the definition of a new scenario, assuming the Adriatic Sea as an "inner sea" (and not as a border or a separation line), that can bring in a short time to a real Euroregion. Today the Forum has 44 member cities from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Italia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia-Montenegro.

Aap2020 (Adriatic action plan 2020) aims to the implementation and coordination of sustainability policies at local level in the Adriatic Sea region. In our region (as all over in the world) the local level of administration is characterized by conflicting trends: on one side, we can assume as definitive the awareness of the basic role played by environmental resources in development. On the other side, we can see only random sustainability policies without coordination, limited in time and space, frequently confined to "defence" and "conservation" of resources, without management tools. Aap2020 acts for a necessary evolution in local government, and the raising of a "local community culture" with european standards of life and administration.

The methodological framework of the operation provides parallel actions in the public and private sectors. Each sector makes use of specific tools for the definition and the implementation of local sustainable policies, i.e the two sets LSD (for the public sector) and SIM (for the private sector). The two actions obviously interact and are the pillars of the

operation. In both sectors the actions are supported by the web platform Adriatic on-line, which plays the double role of SIT-GIS and of communication tool "inside" and "outside" the project (diffusion of results etc.). The two levels of activity will be definitively integrated by means of a process of sustainable governance (both at local and global-Adriatic level), following the standardized methodologies of LA21. Final results will be formalized in a program (Aap2020), which reports common strategies and actions to implement before the year 2020.

2. Impact of Implemented Action

Most of the activities included in the operation are relational activities, oriented to strengthen (both in quantitative and qualitative sense) the contacts between the local governments (and the respective citizens) of all sides of Adriatic sea region. This aim is pursued by means of massive training and transferring of know-how activities and, above all, through the implementation of procedural, communication and marketing tools. In order to this mission, the outputs expected by the project are:

- an integrated web platform, with territorial and administrative data banks and utilities, to manage every kind (more or less evolved) of communication request, from the simple necessity of access to public services, to the transfer of data for urban management, through all sorts of marketing message;
- new common procedures for analysis and evaluation of local systems and orientation of local sustainability policies. The procedures will provide the following documents: - a specific data bank for the diffusion of Adriatic sustainable good practices (goods and services); - a structured and operative network for cooperation between economic operators (enterprises, no-profit organizations, etc.); - the Adriatic Action Plan 2020, a document elaborated with a shared governance process by private and public actors, containing projects and actions for Adriatic cities. These products, procedures and structures bring us to the definition of a common space and language, improving better administrative and commercial relationships between Adriatic partners and EU, that is the basic condition for the start up of a process of economic and social integration. In the following years we can expect progressive improvements of environmental and quality-of-life standards, towards an Adriatic sustainable way of life.

3. Stakeholder Participation

The two levels of action (public and private) will be definitively integrated by mean of a process of sustainable governance, both at local and global-Adriatic level, following the standardized methodologies of Local Agenda 21 process as defined in European handbooks, that is to say with a plenary session, some thematic groups conducted by facilitators, etc. The forum is composed by stakeholders coming from all the partner cities, both from public (also political representatives) and private sectors, but it's also opened to the contribution of other Adriatic (but not partner) cities. It acquires documentation, analysis, proposals and suggestions directly from the local forums opened in cities partners. During the project's period, the forum meets three times, in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. The final meeting is hosted on a ferry-boat, shipping between all the partner cities, and stopping for leg-meetings in each city (at least one for Adriatic country), with the goal to enlarge the participation and the possible contribution to local stakeholders. In the period among one meeting and the next one the forum activity is supported by a virtual forum utility included in the SEA web platform, and an operative secretariat is opened with the AapAgency, so that it could be assured at full time the possibility to interact with the forum. Final results will be formalized in a program (Aap, Adriatic action plan), which contains common strategies, objectives, actions and commitments to implement before the year 2020. The Adriatic action plan will be directly transferred to all partner cities for its integration in each local program or strategy, but it will be also diffused to all Adriatic and Ionian cities, as well as to the upper levels of governments (provinces, regions, etc. until national governments) to facilitate the growing up of more levels of partnerships and to enlarge its implementation. The implementation of Aap will be monitored, also in the years following the end of the project, by the AapAgency, with the target to have an up-dating every five years.

4. Sustainability

The operation is fully concentrated in the pursuit of common and definite procedures for implementation of sustainable policies at local level. Assuming the Sixth Environment Action

Programme of the European Community 2001-2010 and the Implementation Plan recently adopted at the WSSD (Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development) as basic guidelines for action also at local level, the project will address two main topics: 1. The necessity to integrate the sustainable policies and all their steps (reporting, sharing and decision making) in the administrative procedures of public bodies at any level. The sustainability evaluation and the following actions can't survive as "best examples", but must be an essential component of the public way of life of all communities. To implement sustainability the public administrations cannot rely only on financial basis, they need to integrate environmental and social dimension in their decision making processes. Many technical tools are available for this target, and Aap2020 works for their integration on a technical, administrative and spatial basis. 2. The necessity to have a close cooperation between public bodies and private operators to create the conditions for a sustainable way of life at local level. Sustainability will not be an automatic market's choice, but without the market sustainability will be not effective and diffused. The project works to create means and situation of relationship and exchange of sustainable goods and services, with the direct involvement of private actors and the support of local governments.

5. Commitment

The main decisional level of Aap2020 is reserved to the Adriatic21 forum, acting as strategic co-ordination level, and also as the final target of achievements of actions. The forum is composed by stakeholders from Adriatic area, and acquires inputs also from local A21 forums of single partners. It has to provide strategic guidelines for the project, and approves reports of the activities. The "operative engine" of the project is given by the Steering Committee (SC), composed by one deputy from each Country involved. The SC meets 3 times a year in the seat of Aap2020, hosted in the lead partner city, with the following tasks: - Co-ordination of projected actions, with definition and allowance of tasks and resources for each partner, as well as of steps and timetable of activities; - Monitoring and evaluation of the intermediate and final impacts and results of the projects. The SC has at its disposal two operative tools:

- An Expert Group (EG), responsible for the technical management, composed by personnel from partners cities. The EG (sub-divided in two specific levels, for application of LSD and SIM sets), draws operative guidelines for actions included in components 3 e 4, verifies their applications and results, and provides any kind of technical support needed by different levels of co-ordination. The EG gathers every 3 months, in different cities.
- The AapAgency, responsible for the logistic and administrative management: co-ordination procedures among different partners, partnerships contracts, support to the implementation of single actions, etc. The AdriaticAgency is located in the lead partner city, and it's a full time structure, dedicated to the implementation of Aap2020. After the project, it acquires its results, with the aim to ensure their duration and enforcement.

6. Originality and Innovative Ideas

The LSD (Local Sustainable Development) set includes 3 tools: (1) environmental and social Reporting, (2) Environmental Management Systems (Emas-Iso), (3) Integrated Sustainability Accounting (new approach by Aap2020). Each local authority, starting from the tools already implemented, completes in progress its own set, using the same methodologies and integrating its Local Information and Management Systems. The SIM (Sustainable Innovation Market) set includes tools and actions: (4) a Good Practices Data Bank for Adriatic sea region, to promote new partnerships and exchanges of know-how and sustainable technologies, addressed both to profit and social economy. (5) public events for the diffusion and commercialization of sustainable goods and services (exhibitions and workshops between producers and consumers, for specific products, etc.) (6) the creation of a network of Adriatic Enterprises for SIM, for the development of a marketing and commercial Adriatic system, through the implementation of common services for enterprises.