



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

*Chairmanship
of the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative*

ROUND TABLE
EDUCATION AND INTER-UNIVERSITY COOPERATION

REGULAR SESSION OF THE CONVENTION
ATHENS, GREECE
15 MAY 2002

**REPORT ON THE FACTS AND THE PROCEEDINGS
DURING THE CURRENT MANDATE OF THE GREEK PRESIDENCY**

As the Greek Presidency of the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative comes to its end, it is necessary to review the overall progress achieved in the framework of the Round Table “Education and Inter-university Cooperation”.

I will try to approach this review by relating the results to the objectives set by the Greek Presidency.

The major objectives of our Presidency were to provide an efficient organisational structure to our Round Table and a clear framework of principles, rules and internal procedures for the activities of the Round Table.

Clarifying the identity of the Round Table

However, what we had first of all to do was to clarify the identity and the characteristics of the Round Table. We had to surpass the initial, complicated and rather confused content of the Round Table and to proceed to a clear description and a sharp outline of it.

I believe that we have already made a significant step to that direction, by considering “education” as the thematic content of the Round Table, focusing thus our activities on it, while considering at the same time “inter-university cooperation” as the means to reach our objectives. On the other hand, we have further concluded that “inter-university cooperation” may also serve as a means to support the other Round

Tables of the Initiative to realise their own objectives, but in any case it is up to them to take the initiative for such cooperation.

According to the above thoughts, we all have agreed that our Round Table should be considered as the only way for the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative to invest on education, training and manpower development in the area through the necessary synergies. But, furthermore, education should be considered as a crucial means to improving cohesion in the area.

The principles

I believe that the above form a satisfactory conceptual framework for our Round Table. A framework, which is complemented by the principles which should rule the activities of the Round Table. I refer to the set of principles agreed in the Corfu meeting, last September, resulting to five major necessities for our Round Table:

- To secure and strengthen the cohesion of the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative.
- To improve the conditions for the active involvement of all the countries – partners, so that they gain full benefit of the cooperation.
- To ensure for the equality in partnership.
- To promote the effectiveness and the efficiency of our cooperation.
- To assure for the relevance, the consistency and the continuity of our actions.

We are convinced that the clarification of the identity of our Round Table and the establishment of the aforementioned framework of principles is a significant contribution of the Greek Presidency to the overall improvement of the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative.

Organisational structure

Apart of the above, more or less, conceptual issues, a second important contribution of the Greek Presidency is the one related to the establishment of the organisational structure of the Round Table. The dual structure, approved in the Corfu Meeting, last September, consisting of the Convention and of the Steering Committee of the Round Table, seems to provide an efficient and effective means for steering and coordinating our cooperation and our actions, as well as for improving our strategies and setting or revising our priorities.

Action plan

The establishment of a concrete action plan was the fourth important issue for the Greek Presidency. Of course, establishing an action plan requires three preconditions.

- To specify the thematic priorities to which these actions should refer.
- To specify the rules and the procedures for planning and realising these actions.
- To assure for the financial support of these actions.

Specifying the thematic priorities

Specifying the thematic priorities was a difficult affair, since a large number of priorities had been proposed in the past and this could not help in setting the necessary focus for the future activities.

The Steering Committee decided therefore to restrict the thematic priorities, at least for the planned activities, to only four:

- Curriculum development for primary and secondary education in the fields of the history and the culture of the area. This thematic priority aims a) at strengthening the cohesion of the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative by promoting the mutual understanding among our young people on the basis of our historical and cultural background and b) at promoting closer relations in the area through rewriting its history on the basis of peace and not on the basis of war, as a source of friendship and not as a source of hate.
- Cultural issues concerning the field of humanities, aiming at reinforcing common cultural roots in the area.
- Quality assurance in higher education institutions (information, exchange of expertise and good practices, training seminars, joint institutional review projects, benchmarking projects etc.). The aim of this thematic priority is to raise the quality of higher education institutions in relevance with the current European standards.
- Integrated curricula in higher education through the establishment of a common credit transfer system allowing for the mutual recognition of credits. The aim of this thematic priority is to promote the idea of student mobility and to serve as a first step towards improving the objective of the Bologna Process concerning the establishment of joint programmes leading to joint or common or double degrees.

Specifying the rules and the procedures

The Steering Committee also specified the rules and the procedures for planning and realising these actions, giving them the form of a concrete Call for Proposals, the approval of which could be decided during the current regular session of the Convention based on the justified recommendations of the Steering Committee.

In the process of the above Call, two proposals were submitted, one from the Department of Computer Engineering and Informatics of the University of Patras, Greece, with partners from Italy and Albania, and another one from the Department

of Literature of the University of Patras, Greece, in cooperation with the University of Bologna, Italy, the University of Nis, Serbia, and the University of Tirana, Albania.

There was evidence for two more proposals to be submitted by Universities of Serbia and Croatia, but no official submission ever occurred.

The issue of financial resources

The Greek Presidency had the aspect that it would make no sense for the Steering Committee to convene in order to assess these two proposals. But, at the same time, the Greek Presidency has to admit that the overall procedure regarding the current Call for Proposals brings forward the major perhaps problem in the realisation of any action plans may be decided in the framework of our Round Table. Evidently, it is the problem of financial resources.

Unfortunately, the Greek Presidency did not manage to elaborate successfully on the issue of financial supporting the activities of the Round Table. The Steering Committee has already stressed on this necessity, emphasising that the financial support is a “sine qua non” for the Adriatic – Ionian Initiative to survive and grow up.

It is obvious that the possible sources should be sought either from the national authorities or from the European Commission. The efforts of the Greek Presidency remained without results for the time being. But, recalling the Conclusions of the first meeting of the Steering Committee, it seems that the proper time for discussing the entire problem of financial resources will be the next regular session of the Council of Ministers in May 2002.

About the UniAdrion Network

Before finalising this report of the Greek Presidency on the facts and the proceedings during its mandate, I want to refer to the growth and the evolution of the UniAdrion Network, which has already shown a significant action during this academic year. Of course, the corresponding work and its prospects will be outlined by the representatives of UniAdrion in the second item of the agenda. We believe, however, that the Greek Presidency offered a significant contribution in clarifying the relations between the Round Table and the UniAdrion Network.

Concluding remarks

Finalising this report, the Greek Presidency wants to express its acknowledgements to all the members of the Steering Committee, as well as to all the national representatives and other experts who have participated in the two sessions of the Convention of our Round Table, for their active involvement and positive attitude.

At the same time, we want to express our best wishes to the coming Italian Presidency, with the hope that our Presidency has constructed a background which will prove to be helpful in the efforts of our Italian colleagues.

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