 

***11th Meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for Pillar 1 – Blue Growth
under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
15 July 2020, GoToMeeting***

***DRAFT MINUTES***

**Item 1 – Welcome**

Welcoming remarks were delivered by Pillar Coordinator, Ms. Sofia Loukmidou, and she confirmed that most of the countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia) are represented to the meeting. Pillar Coordinators convened the TSG meeting to inform the participants about the progress made on several issues concerning the Pillar and to continue with the procedure of project development. Ms. Loukmidou expressed her disappointment that the planned conference in Crete was cancelled due to the CoVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Nadine Lakhal (DG REGIO) and Klaudia Feurle (DG REGIO) were also present and Ms Lakhal informed the participants that Ms Feurle will take over as the DG REGIO desk officer for EUSAIR Thematic Pillar 1 (as it was announced to the Governing Board in February in Brussels) and expressed her hope that the TSG1 will continue in the trajectory in the future because Pillar 1 can contribute a lot to the EU Green Deal and to the “Farm to Fork” Strategy and has an opportunity to deliver great results.

Ms. Eleni Hatziyanni (DG MARE) was introduced as a new member of DG MARE. Ms Hatziyanni will work along with Christos Theophilou for the moment and later she will continue by taking over the file of EUSAIR Pillar 1: Blue Growth.

Ms. Mathilde Konstantopoulou (Facility Point Gr Partner) introduced two new staff members of the Facility Point GR, Ms. Katerina Stergiopoulou and Ms. Lina Xanthopoulou (part of consulting consortium “REMACO- AMBIO” that was appointed on June 1st to support Facility Point Gr Partner). Ms. Konstantopoulou affirmed that the primary duty of the FP is to support Pillar 1: Blue Growth and informed the participants that the Facility Point GR will need the support of the TSG1 members regarding issues of communication and dissemination with the ultimate goal is increase the visibility of Pillar 1: Blue Growth.

**Item 2 - Adoption of the Agenda**

The draft Agenda was adopted unanimously with a minor change from Pillar Coordinator concerning the order of presentation of items 3 and 4 and with an addition proposed by Facility Point GR Partner regarding the issue of a preliminary time - schedule for the next semester, including the next TSG meeting and other TSG1 activities, under the restrictions of COVID-19. Two AOB points were added (Potential Pillar 1 actions supported by FP; Cross Pillar projects under development).

**Item 3 - Formal adoption of the Minutes/Operational Conclusions of the 10th TSG1 Meeting (Tivat, 14-15.11.2019)**Minutes of the 10th TSG1 Meeting (Tivat, 14-15.11.2019) were adopted unanimously with the adjustment proposed by Italy regarding the “Tartature” project.

**Item 4 - Outcome of the extraordinary 12th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting**

Ms. Slavica Pavlović (Pillar Coordinator) briefly informed participants on the outcomes of the extraordinary 12th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting held on June 10th. The meeting was the first under the Slovenian EUSAIR presidency for 2020-2021 (as of June 1st 2020) and the first that North Macedonia participated as a full EUSAIR member. Green Connectivity and a reaffirmed support for the accession of Western Balkan countries in the EU were underlined as the main priorities of the Slovenian Presidency’s program for 2020-2021.

The flagships of the four EUSAIR Pillars were presented and adopted by the National Coordinators at the 12th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting; even though there was discussion regarding the eligibility of some proposed flagship actions.
Ms. Olga Abram (Facility Point Lead Partner) informed the participants that the Belgrade Declaration was adopted on June 18th and it is uploaded on the EUSAIR web-site[[1]](#footnote-1) as of June 19th.
The next Governing Board meeting will be on September 17th and it will be preceded by the meeting for Pillar Coordinators which will be held on September 16th. Both will be virtual. Ms. Abram informed the participants that the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Strategies Week 2020in Slovenia 14th – 25th September will be held virtually and more information will be made available on the EUSAIR web-site.

 Pillar coordinator informed the participants that the Belgrade Declaration will be send to all TSG members after the meeting.

**Item 5 - Introduction of the Pillar 1 Expert**

The new Pillar 1 Thematic Expert, Mr. Christos Kontos, made a brief presentation about the role and tasks of the thematic expert, his professional experience and specialization on aquaculture and fisheries, marine spatial planning and other issues related to “Blue Growth”.
Ms. Sofia Loukmidou (Pillar Coordinator) noted that new thematic expert’s support will be essential for the project development under the recently adopted Pillar 1 Flagships.

**Item 6 - WP3: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

Ms. Victoria Chorafa (M&E Expert) made a short presentation regarding the state of play of WP3: Monitoring and Evaluation of EUSAIR. Ms. Chorafa informed the participants that a brief presentation about the “Pillar 1 Knowledge Base" will be prepared and circulated to the TSG members by the end of July 2020 and that all tasks for the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be completed by August 2020. The 2nd Annual Pillar 1 Monitoring Report will be delivered on July 30th, 2020 and the 2nd Synthetic EUSAIR Monitoring Report is scheduled to be delivered in November 2020. Regarding the Capacity Building events, Ms. Chorafa reminded the TSG that the 1st macro-regional event took place in Athens in November 2019 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic there is uncertainty regarding the organization of the national capacity-building events.

Mr. Michalis Nikitaridis (M&E Expert) concluded the presentation underlining the fact that all M&E projects regarding Pillar 1 are moving forward according to schedule; however, all M&E synthetic projects have presented problems because of the lack of expert engagement from Pillar 2 and Pillar 4. The Expert underlined the necessity of the contribution of the other Pillars.

Ms. Loukmidou (Pillar Coordinator) reminded the participants that the M&E experts are waiting for their contributions regarding the 2nd annual monitoring report.

Facility Point Lead Partner informed the participants regarding the state of play for M&E Pillar Experts. Pillar 4 was expected to have signed a contract with the experts in June and Pillar 2 is expected to finalize the public procurement procedure in autumn or at the latest at the end of the year.

Facility Point GR Partner expressed their frustration regarding the delays in procedures of Pillar 2 and Pillar 4 M&E expert engagement.

**Item 7 - Agreement on a Pillar related study which will be carried out by the Monitoring and Evaluation Expert**

Mr. George Triantaphylidis(M&E Expert) made a brief presentation regarding the Pillar 1 related study topic proposal with title “Facilitating and fostering the design and implementation of EUSAIR flagship actions and projects in the Adriatic – Ionian macro-region” (acronym: Ideal EUSAIR). The presentation included the aim of the study, the methodology, the main tasks and the expected deliverables. Ms. Nirvana Kapitan Butkovic (HR) expressed her agreement regarding the study topic proposal and underlined the importance of completing the study as soon as possible taking into consideration that the next programming period is nearing.

Ms. Flavia Zuccon (IT) expressed her agreement regarding the study topic proposal and informed the participants that the Veneto Region is willing to support the mapping and research on “Blue Economy” actors.

Mr. Christos Theophilou (DG MARE) reminded the participants that DG MARE had prepared a short list of blue biotechnology experts and suggested that it is forwarded to the M&E Experts. Mr. Theophilou recommended the Cyprus Marine Institute as a hub for finding experts on various sectors of “Blue Growth”.

Ms. Slavica Pavlović (Pillar Coordinator) expressed her positive opinion about the study topic proposal and she proposed that a timeline is prepared for the study.

Ms. Eleni Hatziyanni (DG MARE) suggested that the Mediterranean level clusters (i.e. “Pole Mer”) as well as the Interreg MED project “Mistral” can provide helpful information about Blue Growth Clustering.

Ms. Nadine Lakhal (DG REGIO) underlined the importance of the study’s completion by October in order to be in time for the next programming period.

Mr. George Triantaphylidis(M&E Expert) informed the participants that the focus groups that are required to take place as part of the study, can be organized by mid October and asked for the support of the Facility Point Partner in organizing them.

TSG1 agreed on a Pillar 1 related study with the theme “Facilitating and fostering the design and implementation of EUSAIR flagship actions and projects in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region” (Acronym: Ideal EUSAIR) which will be carried out by the “Monitoring and Evaluation Expert”.

**Item 8 - WP2: Project Development Pillar 1 – Blue Growth**

Ms. Sofia Loukmidou(Pillar Coordinator) reminded the participants that the **“FishTourAir”** project proposal, was already discussed during the 8th, 9th and 10th TSG1 meetings, the roundtable of Adriatic Ionian Initiative in Budva – end of 2018 and during the forum in Budva in May 2019. Mr. Christos Theophilou (DG MARE) briefly presented some comments that were made on the project proposal underlining the fact that the legal framework of each country concerning fish-tourism may present barriers or delays for the project development. The comments are incorporated to the final text of the project proposal that will be submitted to Facility Point GR partner.

 Ms. Loukmidou (Pillar Coordinator) initiated the project evaluation process.

Federico Rosset (IT) expressed some concerns about the limited macro-regional impact of the **“FishTourAir”** project in the EUSAIR countries that already have experience in fish-tourism and noted that the external expert that will be engaged for the further development of the project proposal should focus on strengthening the project’s macro-regional impact for all countries involved.

After convening, all participants agreed and evaluated the **“FishTourAir”** project with a final score of 76 points and agreed that the project will be submitted to the Facility Point GR Partner for further development.

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Ms. Loukmidou (Pillar Coordinator) informed the participants about a new project idea titled “Evaluating freshness and authenticity with real-time non-destructive methods to increase the value added of Adriatic Ionian macro-region produced fish” (Acronym: “**Aim-Frish**”). Ms. Loukmidou informed the TSG that the project idea template will be uploaded on the Stakeholders Platform and if the COVID-19 situation allows it will be presented to other events. Mr. Christos Kontos, made a brief presentation of the new project idea. Ms. Eleni Hatziyanni (DG MARE) posed related questions regarding the methodology and the existing initiatives that the project will build upon. Mr. Kontos (Pillar 1 Thematic Expert) informed the TSG that the questions will be forwarded to the Agricultural University of Athens (the institution that submitted the project idea) for further clarifications.
Ms. Loukmidou proposed the organization of an **online webinar** for the project idea to be presented in more detail and the Facility Point GR partner will be able to facilitate the organization of the virtual event.
Mr. George Triantaphylidis (M&E Expert) expressed his positive opinion regarding the project idea and suggested that the project can offer added-value to EUSAIR’s local fishermen. Mr. Mr. Christos Kontos (Pillar 1 Thematic Expert) informed the participants that the aquaculture industry is also interested in such projects.

Ms. Slavica Pavlović (Pillar Coordinator) expressed her positive opinion about the project idea and informed the participants that after further consultation with her colleagues on Food Safety will be able to express a more informed opinion.

**Item 9 – AOB**

TSG1 proposed the facilitation by FP of the tasks under the Pillar 1 related study (organization of focus groups) and the organization of a webinar in September for the presentation of the project idea AIM-FRISH and other project ideas potentially to be submitted in the near future. The project AIM-FRISH could be evaluated and agreed at the next TSG1 meeting (end September-beginning October).

Ms. Nadine Lakhal (DG REGIO) informed the participants about the Facility Point Plus meeting regarding the Terms of Reference for the procurement process for the engagement of experts to further develop the 6 cross-pillar project ideas. Ms. Lakhal informed the participants that the Facility Point Plus needs the support of the TSG members to develop the appropriate Terms of Reference for the expert engagement.

Mr. Christos Theophilou (DG MARE) briefly informed the participants about the “[CIRCE 2020](https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/CIRCE2020.html)” and related project ideas that can be useful for the development of project ideas under the EUSAIR Pillar 1: Blue Growth. Mr. George Triantaphylidis(M&E Expert) informed the participants of a similar on-going project in Greece, “[Axiopoio](http://www.vioaxiopoio.gr/)” (meaning “Utilizing”).

Ms. Slavica Pavlović (Pillar Coordinator) informed the participants that the next meeting will be organized after the next Governing Board meeting (September 17th) and the exact date will be communicated to the TSG.

Ms. Sofia Loukmidou announced her resignation as Pillar 1 Coordinator and thanked all the participants for their cooperation and support.

**Item 10 - End of Meeting**

The Pillar Coordinators thanked all participants for their presence and contribution during the meeting.

1. https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/2020/06/19/belgrade-declaration/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)