

**16th meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for
Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality
under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
22 March 2022**

MINUTES

Venue: online on GoToMeeting

Chairs: Pillar 3 coordinators: Mitja Bricelj (SI) and Senad Oprašić (BiH)

Participants: Members of the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group 3 (TSG 3), representatives of EUSAIR Facility Point Lead Partner (GODC), Representatives of European Commission, Project partners Municipality of Izola (SI) (Annex 1) and external experts previously announced.

Five countries (SI, BiH, IT, GR, SM,) out of ten were represented at the meeting. Albania, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro were missing. The Chairs verified the presence of the members and confirmed that a quorum was reached.

The participants were welcomed by both Pillar 3 co-coordinators Mitja Bricelj (SI), and Senad Oprašić (BiH).

The Coordinators welcomed the newcomers to the EUSAIR Strategy, members of San Marino that also gave some welcoming words.

Item 1: The Agenda was presented by Chair Senad Oprašić (BiH). As the members raised no objections, the Agenda was adopted.

Italy stressed the importance of sharing the relevant supporting documents for each agenda item, even for the merely informative ones. In order to make TSG3 Standing members more aware of the topics and allow them to bring their contribution to the discussion.

Conclusions under Item 1:

C.1. The Agenda was presented by Chair Senad Oprašić (BiH) and adopted.

Item 2: The Minutes of the 15th TSG3 meeting (Online, October 2021) were presented by Chair Senad Oprašić (BiH). The minutes were previously supplemented by Italian and Greek members, all the changes were included in the presented document. The changes were adopted and the minutes were approved (Annex 2).

Conclusions under Item 2:

C.2 The Minutes of the 15th TSG3 meeting (online, October 26, 2021) were approved.

Item 3: Co-chair Mitja Bricelj (SI) shared the key messages of the Technical Pillar Coordinators meeting (PC meeting), at which the Pillar coordinators reported about the work done within TSG 3 (Annex 3): mainly the involvement of TSG3 at the events at the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week 2021 organized by Slovenia & North Macedonia and the TSG3 and TSG1 workshop - *What can EUSAIR do to Enable Blue and Green Sustainable Growth in the Adriatic Ionian Region: MSP in EUSAIR state of the art*, 9 November 2021. They also reported about the state of the art of the new activities connected to the already agreed TSG3 Flagships mainly the engagement of external expert preparing the strategic project PET HAB ECO, innovation activities, promotion activities, submission and approval of the projects at the relevant EU Calls, communication activities and the work ahead. Some of the presented points were the object of further presentation in later points of the agenda. Italian members asked if there is a possibility to develop a cross-pillar project based on the results of ICZM/MSP, which coordinator confirmed and said that further discussion will be held under Item 9.

Conclusions under Item 3:

C.3 Members acknowledged the achievements of TSG3 and the Technical meeting of the EUSAIR Pillar coordination meeting on March 2, 2022.

Item 4: A recap of the Governing Board, 2-3 March 2022 (online) was presented by Staša Mesec (FP LP). FP LP reported on the outcomes of the Governing Board meeting. Main topics on the meeting were the implementation of Albanian Programme. 7th EUSAIR Forum will be held in May 2022 in Tirana Pillar 3 session is foreseen for 17th May, the Programme shall be shared soon. The embedding process is progressing, there was a discussion on how to form the network of Managing Authorities. EUSAIR Evaluation has been presented and a discussion on the Roadmap for the revision of the EUSAIR Action Plan took place. For that soon a meeting with Pillar Coordinators is planned to discuss the possible approaches how to tackle the revision within the TSGs. FP LP is working on the improvements of the initially proposed Roadmap. After that, a second version of the Roadmap shall be shared with the NCs. FP LP asked TGS 3 to call additional AD HOC meeting for that reason when needed (in April or May). Regarding EUSAIR's future governance support no consensus has been reached so far. Ms Mesec also announced that Facility Point project has been extended till August 2023. There was also a discussion on establishing the EUSAIR youth council and all EUSAIR participating countries agreed on establishing one for the EUSAIR region as well. As for the Cyprus proposal to join the Strategy, the discussion will be held at the next GB meeting. FP LP also informed that for the Cross-Pillar project ideas that did not proceed through the EUSAIR Facility Point Plus project, a solution is being searched on how to support their development through the EUSAIR Facility Point.

Conclusions under Item 4:

C.4 Members acknowledged the achievements of the Governing Board held in 2-3 March 2022.

Item 5: Facility point External expert for TSG3 communication, Gorazd Mauri, presented the communication activities of which primary goal is to raise awareness and exposing endeavours of the

Environmental Quality pillar within different **audiences** (Annex 4). They started in September 2021 and are using several different approaches towards key target audiences, using social media, mass media press releases, editorial content articles, white papers, etc. So far they prepared 7 press releases, 2 press conferences and assisted with at the third, 3 white papers for media briefing, 1 structured interview and few social media posts. They have 81 placements in almost all EUSAIR countries except Greece and San Marino, which is only a part of EUSAIR since 2022. The topics of prepared content is linked to the work of TSG3 so they covered articles about NAMIRS project, Eco Innovations, success of activities of TSG3 at COP 22 – Barcelona convention, LIFE NOAH project that is based on TSG3 macro-regional strategic project 3MPS, and covering the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week and TSG3 member's meeting. The communication officer appealed to members to share the prepared content with their media representatives and also asked them if they could connect him with them as to spread the outreach of the prepared content. FP LP invited the TSG 3 members and their colleagues working at PR offices at their institutions to join EUSAIR Communication Academy. Its goal is to spread the voice of the strategy also with the support of the governmental communicators.

Conclusions under Item 5:

C.5 Members acknowledged the achievements of the communication activities.

Item 6: Prof. Mitja Grbec, Prof. Tullio Scovazzi and Prof. Ilaria Tani presented the *Analysis of legal basis for the Establishment and Further Development of Marine Protected Areas in EUSAIR with Particular Emphasis on Transboundary Marine Protected Areas* (Annex 5). The key EU commitments in the field of nature protection are provided by the 2030 Biodiversity strategy. The European Union Member States are responsible for designating potential areas to be under protection, either by expanding or completing the NATURA 2000 Network or under national protection schemes (marine protected areas), including eventual (transboundary) marine protected areas established in accordance with the provisions of regional seas conventions (i.e., the Barcelona Convention and UNCLOS). In the document the Analysis focuses on legal framework for establishment and development of the MPAs and presents the suggestion strategies to achieve the goals set by the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. It consists of 5 strategies, namely:

- Expanding and completing the NATURA 2000 - Emerald Network or through the establishment of marine protected areas under national protection schemes.
- Establishing marine protected areas, including transboundary, in accordance with the provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and UNCLOS.
- Establishing other sectoral other effective area-based conservation measures applicable to parts of Adriatic and Ionian Seas (FRAs, marine protected areas for cetaceans, underwater cultural heritage sites, etc.).
- Establishing a PSSA applicable to the entire Adriatic Sea, including the whole Otranto Channel area.
- Effectively managing, defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitor them appropriately.

Conclusions under Item 6:

C.6 Members acknowledged the presented Analysis and will read it thoroughly after it will be published on the EUSAIR Intranet.¹

¹ The Analysis has been uploaded on the Intranet one day after the TSG3 meeting, on 22. march 2022.

Item 7: Staša Mesec (FP LP) and Giuseppe Di Paola (EC, DG REGIO) presented the provisional format of the 7th EUSAIR Forum that will take place in Tirana, Albania from 16-18th May 2022. They presented the mayor thematic of the FORUM and its Agenda. The TSG3 session will be held on Tuesday 17th of May. Mitja Bricelj (SI) presented the proposed title of the TSG3 Pillar session to be: **Biodiversity/Marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction**. The members agreed and they agreed to propose the relevant Pillar speakers until 6th of April 2022.

Conclusions under Item 7:

C.7 The agreed title of the TSG3 Pillar Session at the 7th EUSAIR Forum in Tirana will be: Biodiversity /Marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction.

C.8 The members agreed to propose relevant speakers for TSG3 Pillar Session at 7th EUSAIR Forum until 6th of April, 2022.

Item 8: The external expert for Innovation for Pillar 3, engaged by the FP PP Municipality of Izola, Jana Hojnik and Mitja Ruzzier, presented the results of the Innovation analysis focused on Environmental quality (Annex 6). Firstly, they presented the project's review and identification and found 98 projects that pertain to Environmental quality. Then they presented the best practices that included 5 companies – 1 from Croatia, 1 From Greece, 2 from Slovenia and 1 from Italy based on Countries' suggestions. Based on their research study presents some proposal to stimulate eco-innovation and circular economy. The main point taken was that we have to shift consumer values and that we need to remember that there is not a one-size fits-all solution over the wide scope of challenges associated to their faster and wider implementation, but the approach should be incremental, systematic, coordinated, and inclusive, to engage all relevant stakeholders, if we want it to be effective. After the previous TSG3 Meeting (15th Meeting in October 2021) Italian members proposed 2 companies but sadly the external experts and Facility Point members were not able to reach them to conduct the interview for the study. Consequently, Italian TSG3 members did not agree with the inclusion the Italian company Northern Light - nlcomp that was proposed by the external experts through internet research. Italy also underlined that when it is asked to Member States to give their contributions in order to develop a study, then what comes from the governance should be respected and can't be substituted autonomously by the Facility Point through internet research. Furthermore, Italy claimed that, since the previous communication occurred, it should have been involved in this decision before the meeting. Therefore, the Italian members asked that the presented Italian company (nlcomp) be removed from the study.

Conclusions under Item 8:

C.9 Members acknowledged the results of the Study. The Italian best practice company nlcomp will be excluded from the Study like the Italian members requested. Afterwards, the final version of the study will be uploaded on the Intranet.

Item 9: Facility Point PP, Municipality of Izola, presented the state of the art of 4 already agreed TSG3 macro regional strategic projects (Annex 7 and 8), the roadmap and actions done so far. The presentation included the information that the project NAMIRS is the first EUSAIR Flagship project that received funding from EU funds. The project was prepared based on ASOSCoP flagship with the help of CEI, Italy that is also the lead partner. FP PP Invited the members to join the press conference that will be held on 31.03.2022. The project LIFE NOAH was submitted to the LIFE call in November

2021 and is the second project, based on TSG3 Flagships, to be presented to the call for funding; the base of the project is flagship 3MPS. FP PP also presented the option to further develop a Cross-Pillar project that combines Pillar 3 and 1, i.e. the project idea concerning MSP/ICZM (Using high quality Research to strengthen Dialogue and institutional Capacities for effective implementation of MSP/ICZM in support of inclusive and sustainable growth in the AIR) that was agreed upon as part of FP+. The coordinators proposed that the project is developed as part of TSG3, the decision regarding this will be taken by written procedure to which the members agreed.

Conclusions under Item 9:

C.10 Members agreed that the development of Cross-Pillar project MSP/ICZM, using high quality Research to strengthen Dialogue and institutional Capacities for effective implementation of MSP/ICZM in support of inclusive and sustainable growth in the AIR under TSG3 will be decided by written procedure.

Item 10: Facility Point PP, Municipality of Izola, presented the state of the art of the project ideas proposed as part of TSG3 flagship implementation. (Annex 9). The FP PP presented the steps that need to be taken in order to agree on the project proposals. FP PP reminded the partners that 3 project ideas proposals, agreed on the 13th and 14th EUSAIR Meeting, received evaluation by 4 members. As others did not give any reply their silence was taken as silent agreement. The 3 project proposals are now viable to be developed in Annex 2 taking into consideration the evaluators comments. FP PP reminded the TSG£ members that there is 1 project proposal, presented at the 15th EUSAIR Meeting, awaiting their evaluation (NEATNESS). So far no countries gave their evaluation feedback. The members agreed to evaluate the project ideas proposals by end of April 2022. Also 2 new project proposals were presented later at the meeting (see Item 11).

Conclusions under Item 10:

C.11 Members agreed to extend the evaluation of NEATNESS project idea until the end of April 2022.

Item 11.1: External experts presented the new project proposals. Project S.H.A.R.K. - *Towards the reduction of marine pollution, long-term in-situ conservation of threatened species and improving the marine environments in the Adriatic-Ionian region*, was presented by Andrej A. Gajić. The project aims to directly prevent and reduce the ecological impact on the coast, develop and extend contingency plans, protect the highly threatened fish species, empower sustainable development of the fisheries and blue growth, conduct capacity building and networking in the research communities and raise the awareness on marine litter prevention (especially for microplastics).

Item 11.2: Project EMAAIR - *Empowering MPAs across the Adriatic-Ionian region*, was presented by Margareta Rončević from Albania. The general goal of the project is to implement better management and monitoring of MPAs including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection, empower sustainable development of the fisheries and blue growth, conduct capacity building and networking in the research communities and raise the awareness on marine pollution (microplastics, oil spills, etc).

Conclusions under Item 11:

C.12 Members were presented a new project idea and agreed that the evaluation process can begin.

Item 12: Pillar Coordinator Mitja Bricelj and Senad Oprašić presented the work done in the cooperation and synergies with other pillars, MRS and other inter-regional processes (Annex 10) They presented their involvement and results from the Barcelona Convention event COP 22 where participants applauded the synergies between EUSAIR TSG3 and Barcelona Convention. They also implied that at this moment is crucial also to have synergies with other MRS, such as ALPINE and DANUBE, which we as TSG3 are strengthening with the work at green and blue corridors and working hand in hand with Sava river basin Commission.

Item 13: Under AOB:

- FP PP, Municipality of Izola, reminded the members to evaluate the sent Annual report 2021 as the written procedure will end on 24th of March.