

**15th meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for
Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality
under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
26 October 2021**

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) and Project partners Municipality of Izola (SI) (Annex 1).

Seven countries (SI, MNE, BiH, IT, GR, SR, MKD) out of nine were represented at the meeting. Albania and Croatia 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).

Item 1: The Agenda was presented by Chair Mitja Bricelj (SI). As the members raised no objections, the Agenda was adopted.

Conclusions under Item 1:

C.1. The Agenda was presented by Chairs Mitja Bricelj (SI) and adopted.

Item 2: The Minutes of the 14th TSG3 meeting (Online, March 2021) were presented by Chair Mitja Bricelj (SI). Prior to the Meeting, Italian partners sent some amendments that did not affect the main conclusions. The changes were adopted and the minutes were approved (Annex 2).

Conclusions under Item 2:

C.2 The Minutes of the 14th TSG3 meeting (online, March 29, 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 6th EUSAIR Forum 11-12 May 2021 in Slovenia with the pillar Session, preparation of the *Handbook for Green Infrastructure and Spatial Planning* and the *Analysis of Marine (water) Protected Areas in EUSAIR and Proposals for Corrective Measures*, which will be upgraded with the TSG3 issue paper *Analysis of the Legal Basis for the Establishment and*

Further Development of Marine Protected Areas in the EUSAIR. Pillar coordinators also reported on the establishment of CAMP in Bosnia and Herzegovina and cooperation with MCSD – Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and work ahead, mainly the further involvement of youth and the forthcoming Workshop with TSG1 - *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 at the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Strategies Week 2021 organised by Slovenia & North Macedonia.

Conclusions under Item 3:

C.3 Members acknowledged the achievements of TSG3 and the Technical meeting of the EUSAIR Pillar coordination meeting on October 18, 2021, and agreed on the next steps of the TSG3, presented by the TSG3 coordinators.

Item 4: A recap of the Governing Board, 18-19 October 2021 (online) was presented by Ines Grenc (FP LP). The main points were:

1. The Albanian Presidency presented its Programme, Calendar and plans for the 7th EUSAIR Forum. It will be held in May 2022 in Tirana.
2. The embedding process is progressing (more or less successful), reporting on that will be continued at the next GB meeting.
3. Regarding EUSAIR's future governance support, meaning FP, there are 2 positions on the issue within the ADRION Task Force and no consensus has been reached so far. The final results of the ADRION Task Force are expected at the next GB meeting in February 2022.
4. The most concerning issue was the revision of the EUSAIR Action Plan, maybe even the revision of the Strategy will be done, but this was not yet confirmed. FP & EC & AL Presidency will prepare the 1st draft of the roadmap (who will do what and when). In this regard, all participants are invited to send suggestions and comments by the end of November in order to be able to prepare the document and have a clear picture at the next GB meeting.
5. It is expected that the evaluation will be concluded at that time as well. More precisely, evaluation is foreseen in January 2022. Of course, TSGs will be included in the revision process under the lead of Pillar Coordinators.
6. There was a discussion on establishing the EUSAIR youth council and all EUSAIR participating countries were urged to write whether they agree with it in principle and share their comments, ideas, and suggestions.
7. As for the Cyprus proposal to join the Strategy, the Albanian Presidency decided to postpone the final decision for the next GB meeting.

Conclusions under Item 4:

C.4 Members acknowledged the achievements of the Governing Board which take place on 18-19 October 2021.

Item 5: Co-chair Mitja Bricelj presented the key Messages of the TSG3 panel session at the 6th EUSAIR FORUM on 12 May 2021 in Slovenia (Annex 4). The title of the session was: *"Sustainable Use of Coastal & Marine Resources for a Healthy Future through Green and Smart Recovery"*. The chair also invited all to take a look at the video of the pillar session that is available on the EUSAIR Facility Point

YouTube channel (https://youtu.be/PfvoiYeQ6rc?list=PL_j_mf2Dg1dqnSqW8E8ITjxxscWvnqMwv) and to take a look at the results of the Slovenian presidency and 6th EUSAIR Forum that were summed up in the Final Report which is also available online - <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/2021/06/09/final-report-on-eusair-slovene-presidency-20-21/>.

Item 5.1: Ines Grenc (FP LP) gave a short presentation of the Albanian presidency programme and their 4 main priorities. TSG3 members agreed to hold a Pillar session at the 7th EUSAIR Forum, organised by Albania, and said that they will propose the ideas/theme and possible panellists for the pillar session.

Conclusions under Item 5:

C.5 Members acknowledged the achievements of the 6th EUSAIR Forum May 2021, Slovenia.

C.6 Members agreed to propose their ideas for the parallel pillar session at the next EUSAIR Forum that will be held in May 2022 in Albania.

Item 6: The external expert for Innovation for Pillar 3, engaged by the FP PP Municipality of Izola, presented the Innovation analysis focused on environmental quality - Topic 1 – The marine environment or Topic 2 – Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity (Annex 5). The analysis will be prepared in 2 phases: Review and identification of projects focused on pillar 3 and Identification of the best practices in the EUSAIR Countries. The best practice companies need to focus on eco-innovations or any other element of the circular economy. Innovation experts urged the TSG3 members to suggest one or two companies from their country, who will be willing to have a short interview with in order to prepare a best practice presentation in the analysis. So far only 3 companies were identified – 2 from Slovenia and 1 from Greece. The TSG3 members agreed to propose good eco-innovation practices from their country to the innovation experts.

Conclusions under Item 6:

C.7 Members will propose good eco-innovation practices to the external experts to finish the innovation study.

Item 7: Andrej Sovinc presented the *Analysis of Marine (water) Protected Areas in EUSAIR and Proposals for Corrective Measures* (Annex 6). The analysis focuses on compiling information on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the EUSAIR region, identifying areas where new MPAs or areas requiring special measures to conserve biodiversity could be established or existing areas could be extended, and providing recommendations and proposing the next step to expand the MPAs. Finalising, the *Analysis of MPAs* proposes the implementation of common framework action objectives within country responsibilities, the identification of potential areas for future protection in the region and by countries, and the assessment of strategic issues in the context of the protection and development of the region. The *Analysis* recognises the work done so far, especially the establishment of blue corridors as part of the no-take zone or limited impact zone in the EEZ. Greece underlines the commitment that any further action taken within EUSAIR region should be done in line with the International and EU Environmental acquis and the existing bilateral and trilateral agreements.

Conclusions under Item 7:

C.8 The TSG3 members took notice of the Analysis of Marine (water) Protected Areas in EUSAIR and the Proposals for Corrective Measures and the results in the development and activities of MPAs in TSG member countries.

Item 8: Facility Point PP, Municipality of Izola, presented the state of the art of the TSG3 flagship proposals. The FP PP presented the steps that need to be taken in order to agree on the flagship proposals prepared by the partner from the proposal of the project idea to the execution of the public procurement for engaging external experts. The Background paper explaining the procedure is available on EUSAIR Intranet. After the brief presentation, FP PP reminded the partners that there are already 3 flagship proposals, agreed on the 13th and 14th EUSAIR Meeting, awaiting their evaluation (Annex 7). So far only 3 countries (SI, SRB, GR) gave their evaluation feedback. The members agreed to evaluate the flagship proposals by November 15, 2021.

Conclusions under Item 8:

C.9 Members agreed to evaluate the Greek flagship proposals by November 15, 2021.

Item 9: Facility Point PP, Municipality of Izola, presented a new project idea : **NEATNESS** - clean the Adriatic and the Ionian sea from plasticS (Annex 8). It tackles the environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment, improving waste management by reducing waste flows to the sea and reducing the presence of waste already in the sea. Since NEATNESS has been presented as Italian proposal, Italian members raised some questions regarding the proposal of the flagship. They stressed that they were not aware of the project idea and that it is not an institutional proposal. They also underlined that, even when a project idea is proposed by a non-institutional body through the EUSAIR platform, multilevel governance has to be respected by sharing the proposal in advance with national and regional coordinators. FP PP explained that the idea can be proposed by anyone. TSG members can propose the upgrade of the flagship proposals through evaluation. The members took notice on the project proposal and asked for more information. They also agreed that after the process of evaluation under Item 8 is concluded, the process of evaluation of the NEATNESS proposal shall begin.

Conclusions under Item 9:

C.10 Members took notice of the new project idea - NEATNESS and agreed that the evaluation process will begin after the Evaluation of Greek proposals is concluded.

Item 10: Under AOB:

- Pillar coordinators invited once again the TSG3 members to propose the pillar session theme at the 7th EUSAIR Forum. They also invited the members to collaborate at the forthcoming Workshop with TSG1 - *What can EUSAIR do to enable the Blue and Green sustainable growth in the Adriatic Ionian region: MSP in EUSAIR state of the art*, 9 November 2021 at Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Strategies Week 2021 organised by Slovenia & North Macedonia.