**PILLAR 5: Improved Social Cohesion**

**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT FOR YEAR 2023**

Prepared by the Croatian Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy as the Pillar Coordinator

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| ***Background:***  Considering the special status of Pillar 5 and the fact that the adoption of the EUSAIR Action Plan is pending this Report was made by Croatian Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social policy (MLPSFSP) as the Pillar 5 coordinator.  ***General remarks:***  The following table of content and the template itself show the sections that should be completed (none of them should be left blank or deleted from the report). If necessary and justified, additional (sub) sections could be added.  The report shall not exceed a maximum number of **5 pages (*Arial 12 or equivalent*).**  Additionally, please note the following:   * The information should be well-structured within each of the sections and should be synthetic and to the point, addressing the content and not aiming for quantity. * Do not include information which could be found elsewhere, e.g. minutes of the meetings or list of TSG members. * The language should be direct and clear. Using acronyms, jargon or internal technicalities is not recommended. * Refer to factual information and be as concrete as possible. Vague and general comments (e.g. "the situation is progressing favourably and quite rapidly") without justification should be avoided. * Any other important information (monitoring reports etc.) should be added as annexes. |

**TSG PROCESS (GOVERNANCE)**

TSG governance process is defined by the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and its Action Plan as key documents to implement sustainable development in the macro-region.

During the process of revising the Strategy Action Plan an idea of establishing a new pillar dedicated to social issues was introduced, and in 2022. The Republic of Croatia officially announced that initiative.

Croatian Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (MLPSFSP) took over the initiative in TSG5 activities in 2023., since TSG5 was not formally established, but respectively considering the opinions of the members of macroregion and their bodies competent for Pillar 5 issues. Even though not officially established, TSG5 members actively participated in the changes to the Strategy and Action Plan as well as in the establishment of the Youth Council.

At the 8th EUSAIR Annual Forum in Sarajevo, on May 24, the Sarajevo Declaration was adopted at the ministerial meeting, in which the agreement on the establishment of the Social Pillar as the 5th Pillar of EUSAIR was welcomed.

Agreement on establishing Pillar 5 was achieved at the GB meeting in October 2023. and TSG5 members were appointed during that year but official actions of the TSG5 will start after adoption of the new Action Plan.

In later drafts of the Action Plan, the name of Pillar 5 was changed to the ultimate title - Improved Social Cohesion.

With the introduction of the Pillar 5, the Strategy corresponds more strongly with the fourth policy objective of the Eu Cohesion Policy: "a more social and inclusive Europe".

1. WORKSHOP - Sarajevo, March 2023.

* During Bosnia and Herzegovina's EUSAIR Presidency, workshop was held in Sarajevo (March 2023) on introducing the new, Pillar 5. This was the second workshop on the subject, while the first was held in November 2022. The workshop was moderated by representatives of the Croatian MLPSFSP – the Managing Authority for ESF+ and was attended by representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Italy, Serbia, North Macedonia and Croatia.
* The invitation was addressed to all members of the macroregion and referred to experts in the fields of employment, education and social policy
* The participants welcomed the idea of the possible introduction of Social Pillar in the EUSAIR, adding that further joint work is needed for agreement on the common topics of mutual interest.
* Participating countries reached a common understanding that the introduction of the Social Pillar in EUSAIR would be an additional incentive to achieving the goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (EPSRAP) in both EU Member and non-Member States, which is of great importance especially for the states in the pre-accession process.
* Actions and Activities were suggested by participants as objectives for further elaboration and discussion. With the emphasis that further detailed discussion is needed, the following is proposed in three levels of relevance: 1. Youth employment, 2. Social inclusion of vulnerable groups (such as Roma, migrants, refugees), Fight against their discrimination, Active aging, Child Guarantee and 3. Social economy and social innovation

1. ACTION PLAN REVISION

* In cooperation with national coordinators, the EUSAIR Governing Board and the European Commission, a chapter proposal was made for Pillar 5
* The preparation of the proposal was coordinated by the Croatian MLPSFSP, and members of the TSG who were officially nominated from macroregion members
* According to the Action Plan draft, the topics of the Pillar 5 are: Youth Engagement and Employment, Promoting Skills Acquisition for Future Labor Markets, Decent Work and Gender Equality and Social Innovations
* The draft of the revised Action Plan was sent to the European Commission (DG REGIO) for its opinion and the adoption of the Action Plan is expected by the end of 2024.

1. ANNUAL FORUM – Sarajevo 2023.

* On the Annual forum in Sarajevo the event Social Pillar in the EUSAIR was held in the organization of Croatian MLPSFSP
* The result of two previously held workshops (November 2022. and March 2023.) and potential actions and activities for Pillar 5 were presented in the form of panel discussion
* Croatian minister of labour Mr Piletić gave introductory speech and supported introduction of the social pillar into EUSAIR

1. GB MEETING

* Croatian MLPSFSP attended the GB meeting in October 2023. where the work on the draft Action Plan for the Pillar 5 was presented.
* At the meeting, the status of Croatian MLPSFSP as the temporary Pillar Coordinator was confirmed, until the official adoption of the changes to the Strategy and Action Plan was confirmed

1. YOUTH TASK FORCE

* As one of the relevant stakeholders, members of TSG5 participated in meetings and made suggestions in the process of establishing the EUSAIR Youth Council.

**MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS**

* Agreement on establishing of Pillar 5 – Improved Social Cohesion
* Draft of chapter for Pillar 5 in new Action Plan

**MAIN ISSUES/CHALLENGES ENCOUNTRED**

* Administrative incapacity
* Prolongation in adoption of the new Action Plan

**THE WORK AHEAD**

In 2024. TSG5 will focus on:

* Organization of first official TSG5 meeting – adoption of the Rules of procedure and planning future activities
* Contribution to the 9th Annual Forum in Šibenik 2024.
* Organization of the first informal TSG5 meeting on Annual Forum in Šibenik
* Determination of Flagship projects for Pillar 5
* Establishing cooperation among TSG5 members and with other Pillars

**ANNEX 1**

**ATTENDANCE AT TSG 5 MEETINGS IN REPORTING YEAR 2023 – N/A**

**ANNEX 2**

**MACRO-REGIONAL PROJECT/MEASURES**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project/measure title** | **Main activities**  *Short description of the project/measure, what are the objectives, added value for the EUSAIR, envisioned period…* | **Mono / *Cross Pillar project -****Indicate, if The strategic project has a mono or cross pillar approach, indicate the relevant pillar(s)* | **Status**  *Describe the status of the project/measure (e.g. project idea/concept, mature project ready for implementation, project under implementation or completed, etc.)* | **Involvement of EUSAIR countries** | **(Targeted) funding sources** |
| n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
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**ANNEX3**

**PILLAR / TSG EVENTS AT NATIONAL OR MACRO-REGIONAL LEVEL IN THE REPORTING PERIOD**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Event / County / National or Macro-regional** | **Short description** | **Participants *(what kind of participants)*** | **Main outputs** |
| n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
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