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**2nd EUSAIR Revision Working Group Meeting**

**24th February 2023, Athens**

**DRAFT Operational conclusions**

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| **Item 2 - Overview of the** **Action Plan revision process**  |
|  | * Revision Working Group cannot take decisions, these are in the hands of the EUSAIR Governing Board. If there will be substantial changes of the Action Plan or the Strategy, political commitment is needed, therefore the **ministerial level** needs to be considered in the Action Plan revision process and reflected in the respective Ministerial Declaration(s).
* **Sufficient time needs to be planned** for the Action Plan revision. The quality should not suffer over the timing, but the time dimension is also important.
* At the 19th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting (15.-16.3.2023) the **possible new Social Pillar** can be discussed and strategic guidance can be provided to the experts.
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| **Item 3 - Proposal on the EUSAIR Action Plan structure**  |
| **Action Plan as a “rolling document”** | * Operationally the **Action Plan revisions should be aligned with the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) programming.**
* A **common time horizon** for targets of all Topics needs to be set. The time horizon of the targets should be aligned with EU policies, Multiannual Financial Framework (considering also n+2) and Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. Targets should be therefore planned for mid-term future of 2030 and long-term future of 2050.

**The Action Plan needs to be flexible.** TSGs will periodically review and revise the planned Actions based on regular monitoring and evaluation of Pillars/Topics, EC reports on Macro-regional Strategies and observed macro-regional trends in the fields covered by Pillars/Topics. Existing Actions could be revised or even new Actions added. Modifications of the Actions need to be approved by the Governing Board and could be made outside the Action Plan revision cycle and without a modification of the EC Staff Working Document or Communication. The process on how modifications to Actions should be made needs to be planned and described in the revised Action Plan. Changes in the Topics and Pillars require a Revision of the Action Plan EC Staff Working Document. In that case a consolidated input document agreed and approved by the EUSAIR GB will be submitted to the European Commission. |
| **Purpose of the Action Plan** | * In all descriptions provided in the Action Plan and related methodologies the used term(s) key implementers/key implementing bodies should be changed to appropriate EUSAIR governance structures to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.
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| **Moving the focus from Pillars to Topics** | * Based on the feedback received Pillars, Topics and Actions should remain. Pillars representing a rather general level should be more briefly described, while **more focus in the Action Plan should be put on describing the Topics**.
* There were no objections to the proposed[[1]](#footnote-2) structure of describing the Pillars in the Action Plan.
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| **Chapters to define Topics** | * Change in the first sentence of the **definition**: *TOPICS represent the main areas where through its regional/ macro regional approach the macro-regional strategy ~~can contribute to improvements~~* *brings added value.*
* **Support to the EU enlargement process** is one of the main focuses of the EUSAIR, therefore reference to enlargement needs to be made in descriptions of the challenges and specific objectives of each Topic.
* In the specific objectives **qualitative targets** should be defined however, there is no need to strike out the definition of **quantitative targets**. The specific objectives should therefore describe *what change key implementers aspire to achieve through EUSAIR in the region regarding the challenges of the Topic, setting also the main qualitative targets.* *Quantitative targets should be set whenever possible.*
* The chapters to describe Topics should have the following order to better follow the intervention logic: Main challenges/opportunities, Policy framework, Specific objectives, Key stakeholders.
* The number of **specific objectives** for each Topic should not exceed 3.
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| **Chapters to define Actions** | * **Actions need to be agreed in TSGs and approved by the Governing Board**.
* The **criteria for identification of Actions** should not be described in the Action Plan, they should be part of the methodology to be used by the TSGs and Governing Board to define Actions. This methodology should be an annex to the Action Plan and should serve as a guideline for TSGs to follow. In the Action Plan itself it should only be mentioned that such methodology is described in the Annex to the Action Plan. If there are any further comments to the provided criteria they should be sent to the Revision Working Group and Facility Point Lead Partner alongside any possible comments to these Operational Conclusions.
* The following criterion should be skipped: *Actions should be realistic and credible. Projects should be feasible (technically and financially) and there should be overall agreement between countries, stakeholders and the Commission of their worth. In particular, the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of a project should be established and a realistic source of funding should be identified. Confirming the consistency of a project with the Action Plan does not per se guarantee funding.*
* The **number of Actions** (3 to 5) should be provided in the methodology as indicative.
* Actions need to be aligned with specific objectives set in the respective Topic.
* A clear **indicator system** shall be developed to set realistic targets and monitoring basis.
* **ESIF indicators combined with IPA indicators should be used as inspiration for the TSGs and experts to develop indicators that have a monitoring base.**
* **Only output and result indicators should be used**, not impact indicators. The word “impact” should be used, but not as “impact indicators”.
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| **Revision of EUSAIR Governance** | * The document from November 2014 describing the EUSAIR governance “Towards a streamlined governance and management architecture for the EUSAIR” should be revised.
* The proposal to start with the process of revision of the document “Towards a streamlined governance and management architecture for the EUSAIR” should be put on the Agenda of the 19th EUSAIR Governing Board.
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| **Item 4 - Discussion on possible new pillars/topics and possible Strategy revision** |
| **Thematic proposals from TSGs and Pillar Coordinators[[2]](#footnote-3)** | **Pillar 1*** Implementation of this Pillar is not coherent with the idea in which this Pillar was intended. A much stronger integration of the horizontal topic of research and innovation for the enhancement of economic development would be needed.
* It is up to the Pillar 1 TSG to come up with the proposal how to address the issues described in the paper Thematic proposals from TSGs and Pillar Coordinators. This proposal could also be linked with the revision of the paper “Towards a streamlined governance and management architecture for the EUSAIR”.

**Pillar 2 – Transport Sub-Group*** The title of the Topic Multimodal Connectivity is not consistent with the content of this Topic. Multimodal Connectivity implies the Topic is focusing only on the connections between different modes (intermodality), while in fact the Topic deals also with single modalities, for example the Adriatic-Ionian motorway. The title should be revised to better reflect its contents.

**Pillar 2 – Energy Networks*** Greece suggested to split the Topic of Green Energy between two Pillars, Energy Efficiency under Pillar 2 and Renewable Energy Sources under Pillar 3. This idea was not supported, the Topic should remain under Pillar 2.
* In view of the additional Topic of Green Energy the necessity to change the name of the Sub-Group to Energy was recognized also by the Revision Working Group.

**Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality*** The new Topic “Ballast water and other releases in the sea and water” overlaps with the Subtopic “Pollution of the sea”. TSG should come up with a reasonable solution.
* Maritime spatial planning is now covered by both Pillar 1 and Pillar 3. Even though it is a cross-pillar thematic, in the Action Plan it should be included under Pillar 3.

**Pillar 4 – Sustainable Tourism** - no specific guidance for now from the Revision Working Group. |
| **Proposals on new thematic elements based on country position papers[[3]](#footnote-4)** | **Cross-cutting issues/topics*** A specific chapter dedicated to the horizontal/cross-cutting topics should be added to the Action Plan, where for each Pillar/Topic there would be a clear description of what should be achieved in terms of horizontal/cross-cutting topics, what activities are needed, how to integrate them in the implementation of the actions and projects, who are the actors who have to be mobilized and how to measure the results achieved.
* Under criteria to define Actions guidance should be provided to TSGs that cross-cutting issues need to be considered in planning of actions.

**Social thematic*** “Report from the 1st workshop on the introduction of the social pillar in the EUSAIR” was sent from the Presidency to National Coordinators on 7th February 2023. The National Coordinators should comment the report until 7th of March 2023, then experts should provide answers to the questions and concerns raised in those comments.
* 2nd workshop will take place 29-30 March 2023 in Sarajevo and countries are requested to ensure their representatives are attending the workshop.

**Sustainable Rural Development*** The title should be changed to “Sustainable agriculture and green rural development”.
* There was no agreement to propose inclusion of this Pillar/Sub-Pillar or Topic in the revised Action Plan. Special workshops dedicated to this topic are scheduled and after them more elements can be shared with National Coordinators. The first such workshop will be organized in Mostar on 21st March 2023 with the title “Strengthening the promotion of innovative start-ups and job opportunities in rural areas of the EUSAIR countries”. Countries are requested to encourage their representatives to attend the workshop.

**EU Enlargement*** There is a strong support for EU enlargement to become the third cross-cutting topic alongside already existing ones capacity building and research & innovation. Greece requested to be added among those countries supporting Enlargement as a cross-cutting issue.
* As regards concrete EUSAIR activities related to EU enlargement Member States should think over what feasible resources/commitment they are willing to dedicate for this purpose and IPA countries should list their needs.

**Other topics** * No conclusions were made regarding all other proposed topics like circular economy, youth, digitalization etc.
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1. As described in the Action Plan structure proposal document, sent to Revision Working Group on 17.2.2023. The document is available here: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/download/draft-agenda-revision-working-group-24-2-2023-athens/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. A document containing thematic proposals from Pillar Coordinators and TSGs was sent to Revision Working Group members prior to the Athens meeting (17.2.2023). Document is available here: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/download/eusair_revision-wg_thematic-proposals_pcs/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. A document with the title “Proposals on new thematic elements based on country position papers” was sent prior to the Revision Working Group meeting in Athens (on 21.2.2023) and is available here: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/download/proposals-on-new-thematic-elements-based-on-country-position-papers/> Country position papers were sent October 2022 till end of January 2023 and can be found here: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/intranet/?cat=country-initial-policy-papers> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)