

**Action Plan revision:**

**Draft Initial policy paper**

**for thematic consultation in TSG 1**

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**PILLAR 1 – SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY[[1]](#footnote-1)**

This document was developed by the EUSAIR Facility Point Lead Partner in cooperation with external experts **as a starting point** for thematic consultation on EUSAIR Action Plan revision in TSGs and with relevant policy owners in the EUSAIR countries. It is accompanied by a questionnaire to collect their feedback.

The document is not meant as a complete description or exhaustive list of elements, its aim is to steer the thematic discussion using the same format and methodology in all 4 pillars, to build on the existing work done through embedding and propose suggestions for actions reflecting the EU policies, trends and initiatives that support the macro-regional, multi-level, cross-sectoral and policy-to-project approach.

Further details on the revision process and methodology are described in the Background document with the Roadmap on the EUSAIR Action Plan revision v3.

**How to read the document**

The content is presented in a table form, the **columns representing the different stages in the Action Plan revision**:

* the first column summarises the relevant **content of the Action Plan 2014**,
* the second presents the **input from the Flagships document**[[2]](#footnote-2) and
* the third represents the **suggested updates** based on the content of flagships, existing EUSAIR relevant thematic reports and documents as well as recent EU policies, trends and initiatives[[3]](#footnote-3).

Consequently, the elements in the Updates column can seem generic, yet the aim is to further adapt and customize them to the Adriatic-Ionian reality through the TSG discussions.

The **rows in the table present the suggested categories of the revised Action Plan** to be specified for each Topic in the Pillar. These categories were selected based on the structure of other MRS Action Plans. They follow the logic of implementation-oriented approach and will help TSG in shaping the Actions. Topics in EUSAIR become more similar to Priority Areas, Policy Areas of other MRS and are better defined, especially as regards the Actions. The actual categories will be agreed by the National Coordinators.

At this point, the suggested Actions are not very detailed, as they will be further developed by the TSGs in future meetings/exchanges.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Topics | Action Plan 2014 | Flagships | Updates |
| **Topic 1** | **Blue technologies** | **FOSTERING QUADRUPLE HELIX TIES IN THE FIELDS OF MARINE TECHNOLOGIES AND BLUE BIO-TECHNOLOGIES FOR ADVANCING INNOVATION, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS ADAPTATION IN BLUE BIO-ECONOMY** | **Marine technologies and blue biotechnologies**  |
| Objective | To promote research, innovation and business opportunities in blue economy sectors, by facilitating the brain circulation between research and business communities and increasing their networking and clustering capacity. | Strengthening quadruple helix ties in the field of blue technologies in the region through: * Stronger RDI and cooperation among SMEs and between SMEs, large enterprises and research centres operating in the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion
* Increased networking between researchers, SMEs and clusters
* Increased joint research papers and number of researchers exchanged within the macro-region
* Internationalization of SMEs in the region
* Easier access to finance and promotion of the creation of start-ups
 | To promote research, innovation and business opportunities in marine technologies and blue ~~economy sectors~~ biotechnology, by strengthening quadruple helix ties in the region. ~~facilitating the brain circulation between research and business communities and increasing their networking and clustering capacity.~~ |
| Challenges/opportunities | * Short on clustering
* Better cooperation between research centres and the public and private sector
* weak involvement of stakeholders and QH interrelation
* shipbuilding, the boating industry and logistics, risk losing competitive leverage
* marine technologies or blue bio-technologies not yet developed to their full potential
* brain circulation between research and business communities
* capacity to network and cooperate increased
* access to seed and venture capital to be improved
 | Maximizing sustainable economic growth and employment as well as business creation based on blue technologies, “brain circulation”, networking capacity and access to seed and venture capital. Strategic goals served: * Development of skilled human capital on Blue Technologies
* Creation of new jobs in the field of Blue Growth
* Know how transfer between EU and IPA countries
* Cooperation between research and public and private sectors, as well as users, to develop innovative products and services and technology transfer
* Compliance/adaptation of non-EU countries with EU Acquis
* Remove barriers to trade and investments
 | * Increasing disparities in innovation performance between EU and non-EU countries[[4]](#footnote-4).
* Capitalising on EUSAIR regions, which are EU

fastest growing innovation performers[[5]](#footnote-5).* Lagging regions underrepresented in competitive programmes such as Horizon.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Collaboration of lagging regions with more developed regions can improve and facilitate knowledge transfer, technological upgrading and entrepreneurship[[7]](#footnote-7).
 |
| Policy framework | / | / | New approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable FutureCircular Economy Action PlanEuropean Cluster PartnershipsSmart Specialisation StrategyGreen Agenda for the Western Balkans Action PlanEuropean Research Area Digitising European Industry and Digital Innovation Hubs |
| Actions | * R&D&I platforms on green sea mobility, deep sea resources, biosecurity and bio-technologies
* Macro-regional cluster development
* Researchers mobility
* Improving access to finance and promoting start-ups
 | Indicative types of actions to be eligible for funding under MFF 2021-2027: 1. Encouragement & creation of clustering, especially of quadruple helix.
2. Research on blue technologies & prioritisation of its adoption by SMEs in the Macroregion
3. Promotion of blue skills
4. Reinforcement of networking, knowledge sharing & creation of databanks
5. Enhancement of competitiveness and sustainability of relevant local and European industry sectors through utilization of marine bio-discoveries
6. Allowing development of novel eco-friendly end products that serve circular economy
7. Development of solutions to decarbonize fishing fleets
8. One-stop-shops’ operation for SMEs support
 | See below |
| Action 1 |  |  | **Building AIR innovation ecosystem in marine technologies and blue biotechnologies (link to all flagship points)** * Building AIR Innovation communities (EIT) (increasing participation in EU competitive programmes, possibilities for innovation up-scalling, better match of innovative sustainable services and products with demand…)
* Interregional RIS cooperation (Thematic partnerships, I3 match-making partnerships, mapping RIS matching potentials, cooperation between regional RIS platforms…)
* Building value chains (value chain mapping, needs/gaps identification, networking, match-making opportunities)
 |
| Action 2 |  |  | **AIR blue (bio)technologies research and science networks (link to flagship points 2-4)*** cooperation of science and research policies to create a common research and innovation area
* promotion of researchers’ mobility,
* initiatives for sharing research infrastructure for common projects i.e. shared (bio)technology testing facilities …
 |
| Action 3 |  |  | **Digital innovation and rollout** (not just linked to blue technologies – to be moved somewhere else?)* Development (in countries/regions where they do not yet exist and mutual learning and exchange leading to better service in countries/regions where they already exist) & cooperation between digital innovation hubs– DIH network of national/regional hubs functioning as a junction of research/academia, industry, policy actors and civil society.
 |
| **Topic 2** | **Fisheries and aquaculture** | **PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY, DIVERSIFICATION AND COMPETITIVENESS IN THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTORS THROUGH EDUCATION, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE, TECHNOLOGICAL AND MARKETING ACTIONS, INCLUDING THE PROMOTION OF INITIATIVES ON MARKETING STANDARDS AND HEALTHY NUTRITIONAL HABITS** | **Fisheries and aquaculture** |
| Objective | **Fisheries** The Strategy aims at long-term sustainable and responsible fisheries so that fishing activities can continue to provide income for coastal communities. For this, the followingpoints are of particular importance:* + Effective implementation of the principles of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
	+ Market intelligence and services
	+ Sustainable fishery management
	+ Control, monitoring and surveillance

Further: * Building capacity to comply with the EU acquis on fisheries is essential for long-term sustainability.
* Better cooperation across the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin should trigger a virtuous process of increasing the competitiveness of the coastal communities depending on fisheries and of widening stakeholders’ involvement. The benefits of combining fisheries with tourism activity (Pillar 4) should be exploited.
* Cooperation on scientific issues and fisheries management already takes place within the multilateral framework of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and FAO regional projects (ADRIAMED and EASTMED). Building on this experience, further scientific cooperation between the Region's countries could be promoted to link scientific research to the needs of fisheries and aquaculture.

**Aquaculture:** * Potential for increasing capacity,
* Sustainable and profitable aquaculture
* Development of new sites needs proper space and planning, in coordination with other activities (including co-location).
 | Strengthening **fisheries** in the region through: * Better management and sustainable exploitation of fish stocks. Improvement of data collection and fish stock assessment. Harmonization with EU regulations & international organizations.
* Compliance & implementation of measures to combat illegal, unreported, unregulated fisheries and elimination of destructive fishing practices.
* Utilization of Unwanted and Unavoidable catches and discards.
* Plans to improve professional skills of fishermen.

Strengthening **aquaculture** in the region through: * Increase of aquaculture production. Improvement of productivity, quality, environmental sustainability and diversification in aquaculture. Introduction of new species, use of alternative raw materials for feed production, new farming technologies, use of advanced processing technologies and innovative actions on traceability.
* Improvement of the image and competitiveness of farmed products including the promotion of initiatives on marketing standards and healthy nutritional habits
* Acquisition and improvement of professional skills.
 | Strengthening **fisheries** in the region through: * Better management and sustainable exploitation of fish stocks. Improvement of data collection and fish stock assessment. Harmonization with EU regulations & international organizations. More efficient and sustainable fishing fleets and gear.
* Compliance & implementation of measures to combat illegal, unreported, unregulated fisheries and elimination of destructive fishing practices.
* Utilization of Unwanted and Unavoidable catches and discards.
* Improvement of professional skills of fishermen.

Strengthening **aquaculture** in the region through: * Increase of aquaculture production. Improvement of productivity, quality, environmental sustainability and diversification in aquaculture.
* Introduction of new species, use of alternative raw materials for feed production, new farming technologies, use of advanced processing technologies and innovative actions on traceability.
* Improvement of the image and competitiveness of farmed products including the promotion of initiatives on marketing standards and healthy nutritional habits
* Acquisition and improvement of professional skills.
 |
| Challenges/opportunities | **Fisheries:** The fishery sector faces variouschallenges linked to global competitiveness and market forces, as well as to environmental objectives concerning the conservation of fish stocks. * Many stocks are shared and overexploited.
* The culture of compliance, and the monitoring, control and surveillance capacity are still weak in many Adriatic-Ionian countries.
* Risk of depletion of marine resources is a recognised issue.

**Aquaculture:**The development of a strong, high-quality aquaculture sector that is economically sustainable and environmentally-friendly, contributes to job creation and to supply ofhealthy food products, respecting the EU and international rules. However, a number of barriers prevent aquaculture in the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin from developing its fullpotential: * lack of a clear and harmonised policy with respect to access to space and licensing;
* industry fragmentation;
* limited access to seed capital or loans for innovation;
* time-consuming administrative procedures and red tape.

Respecting subsidiarity, the Common Fisheries Policy reform proposes to promote aquaculture through a coordinated approach, based on non-binding strategic guidelines and common priorities and exchange of best practices through the open method ofcoordination. | Better cooperation across the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin should trigger a virtuous process of increasing the competitiveness of the coastal communities. Strategic goals served: * Creation of new jobs, the harmonization of standards as well as the compliance of non-EU countries with EU Acquis are of strategic importance.
* Combining fisheries with tourism activities (Pillar 4) should be exploited and further developed.
 | * Adriatic-Ionian Seas suffer from overfishing. In the Mediterranean the proportion of overfished stocks decreased from 88 % in 2014 to 75 % in 2018[[8]](#footnote-8), which shows results from joined efforts as well as the need for such efforts to continue. The situation of many stocks remains critical as in 2018 more than 80 % of scientifically assessed stocks are exploited above maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, according to the STECF. As a result of countries efforts and GFCM a first Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA) was established in 2017 in Adriatic Sea and an EU driven multiannual plan covering certain pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea is under negotiation.
* There is a need to improve fishing fleets and gear efficiency and sustainability.
* There is still a problem of data collection and missing data concerning the fish stock assessment. The culture of compliance, and the monitoring, control and surveillance capacity have to be improved in many Adriatic-Ionian countries.
* There is need to address socio-economic challenges related to increasing fishing quotas and reduction of overfishing also through combining fishing activities with tourism.
* As experiences from other sea basins demonstrate, the economic performance of the primary fishery production increases as fish stocks recover. In that regard and with growing demand and market prices, the Adriatic-Ionian basin has economic potential.
* On the other hand, aquaculture production continues to grow, making the overall sustainability of the sector even more important.
* The compliance of non-EU countries with EU Acquis is of strategic importance.

From increasing human pressures on the marine environment to the global impact of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the region faces a critical turning point.[[9]](#footnote-9) |
| Policy framework | / | / | * Common Fisheries Policy and revised fisheries control system
* GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea
* Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture
* EU Water Framework Directive
* Marine Strategy Directive
* EU Nitrates Directive (Council Directive 91/676/EEC)
* EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030
* Farm to fork Strategy
 |
| Actions |  | Type of actions to be eligible for funding under MFF 2021-2027 for **Fisheries**: 1. Development of a strategy for small scale fisheries.
2. Scientific cooperation on fisheries management
3. EU compliance and common standards and practices.
4. Developing skills.
5. Creation of a network for monitoring and predicting the distribution of alien species in the Adriatic-Ionian region and potential ways of exploitation.
6. Restoration actions to enhance habitat features (e.g. artificial reefs) in areas that have been degraded or replaced by maritime infrastructures and in-situ monitoring of their efficiency.

Three main axes around which common actions for **Aquaculture** can be developed: 1. Administration: includes legal framework, licensing procedures and monitoring of the activity. Data is available from previous projects together with monitoring tools that are under development (e.g. TAPAS project)
2. Technology: Methodological and technical issues related to farming. Nutrition, ichthyopathology and treatment are of high priority and exchange of information is vital.
3. Marketing (including Trade): refers to quality of the final product, promotion of the industry, market research etc, including the promotion of initiatives on marketing standards and healthy nutritional habits. Trade: refers to facilitation of trade of fisheries and aquaculture products including seafood processing products, traceability, certification, harmonization of legislation.
 | See below |
| Action 1 | / | / | **Sustainable and resilient fisheries (including F2 1-6)*** Support for harmonisation of integrated management and monitoring efforts to comply with regional GFCM schemes and EU acquis (including scientific cooperation) addressing sustainability, vessel and equipment compliance, alien species management and illegal practices.
* AI inter-branch organisation bringing together fish producers, processors and marketers to improve the coordination of marketing activities and to develop measures of interest for the whole sector. Encouragement for creation of producer organisations and associations of producer organisations on national/regional level.
* AI small-scale fisheries strategy to encourage networking of fishing associations; development of cooperatives; foster efficient value chains; implement capacity building in sustainability, new technology and practices as well as funding opportunities; explore and improve possibilities for joint marketing, logistics and infrastructure.
 |
| Action 2 |  |  | **Sustainable and resilient aquaculture (including F2 7-9)*** Cooperation on enabling legal and administrative frameworks, which includes licencing procedures, monitoring of the activity, data exchange, harmonisation efforts.
* Networking and clustering initiatives so as to further unlock innovation potential, improve knowledge exchange, introduce innovative practices and technology (up-scaling) to the sector to improve sustainability, efficiency, competitiveness, including the introduction of additional species and purposes (pharmacy, cosmetics)marketing and logistics efficiency
* Promotion of certification as a sustainability driver, building awareness on production and consumption side, improving marketing activities and cooperate on introduction into legal framework.
 |
| **Topic 3** | **Maritime and marine governance and services** | **BOLSTERING CAPACITY BUILDING AND EFFICIENT COORDINATION OF PLANNING AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR IMPROVING MARINE AND MARITIME GOVERNANCE AND BLUE GROWTH SERVICES** | **Maritime and marine governance and services** |
| Objectives | Cooperation on various services – notably those linked to the capacity building in the public sector and better coordination of planning activities – is needed for preparing the ground for better marine and maritime governance and services. In a wide range of fields coordination of activities would improve use of existing resources. Focus should be on bringing together national or regional activities under one roof, e.g. via joint planning efforts. | The Adriatic and Ionian Region needs to make better use of the skills that are available, equip people with new skills (including soft skills) that are needed: * Enabling the growth of a sustainable blue economy and fostering prosperous coastal communities.
* Improved Governance of maritime space.
* Improved Skills and career development in blue economy and strengthening of networks of academics, training organisations and professional organisations of maritime sectors in the macroregion.
 | * Improved Governance of maritime space.
* Improved Skills and career development in blue economy and strengthening of networks of academics, training organisations and professional organisations of maritime sectors in the macroregion.
 |
| Challenges/opportunities | The Adriatic-Ionian Region displays considerable imbalances and currently undergoes significant political transformation. This makes bridging political divides particularly important, as well as improving institutional capacity and management mechanisms transcending national boundaries. Mutual trust among neighbouring countries is crucial.Although accession and prospective accession to the EU has improved the situation, new systems take time to be put in place. They require change in mind sets, raised awareness, confidence-building among public and private stakeholders and improvement of skills.There are also considerable imbalances both as regards the access to funding as well as administrative capacities and cooperation experience. These imbalances affect the capacity to respond jointly. | Competition for maritime space – for renewable energy equipment, aquaculture and other uses – has highlighted the need to manage our waters more coherently. The Strategic goals served are: * Improved maritime and marine governance and services,
* Creation of new jobs,
* Harmonization of standards,
* Overcome of barriers and obstacles,
* Compliance/adaptation of non-EU countries with EU Acquis.
 | Fishing, aquaculture, shipping, renewable energy, nature conservation and other uses compete for maritime space. The maritime spatial plans were developed to reduce conflicts and create synergies between different activities. The coherence of MSP implementation across borders is needed, even though MSP is not a priority in accession negotiation of WB.[[10]](#footnote-10)Many blue economy sectors have difficulties finding suitably skilled employees, which hampers their growth.[[11]](#footnote-11)  |
| Policy framework | **/** | **/** | Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planningIntegrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol and Common Regional Framework for ICZMTerritorial agenda 2030 of the European Union: A future for all placesEuropean Education AreaEuropean Research Area |
| Actions |  |  |  |
| Action 1 | **Governance of maritime space**Proper joint governance of the maritime space provides an important framework for a sustainable and transparent use of maritime and marine resources. This will include supporting the implementation of the new Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning (through coordinated planning) and may imply adopting clearer legal frameworks for exploiting deep-sea water and marine mineral resources. | **F3.1 Governance of maritime space for a sustainable and transparent use of maritime and marine resources.** This will include: * supporting the implementation of the new Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning
* adopting clearer legal frameworks for development of Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZAs), marine protected areas (MPAs), exploiting deep-sea water and marine mineral resources.
 | **Governance of maritime space for a sustainable and transparent use of maritime and marine resources*** cooperation in implementation of adopted Maritime Spatial Plans to achieve coherent practices across borders
* promotion of MSP principles in accession countries
* cooperation in adopting clearer legal frameworks for development of Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZAs), marine protected areas (MPAs), exploiting deep-sea water and marine mineral resources
 |
| Action 2 | **Institutional capacity to harmonise standards and regulations** This action aims at improving the quality of public services and improving governance mechanisms for international cooperation. In a wide range of sectors (e.g. fishery policy, maritime spatial planning, integrated coastal management), the development of common understandings and harmonised standards and regulations as well as sharing of best practices are needed. This requires institutional capacity of the involved public bodies and stakeholders. |  | Already part of other activities, but in a more specific and focused way. Since this topic did not find its way into the flagships, we propose to skip it from the revised AP. |
| Action 3 | **Data and knowledge sharing** This action aims at improving the evidence base for policy and decision-making in the Region. Sharing data and knowledge among public bodies in the Region can increase the efficiency of the public administration (e.g. by avoiding duplication of monitoring or data collection efforts) and increase their capacity to seize opportunities or react to challenges which can be detected earlier if data and information is shared and analysed across countries. |  | Already part of other activities, but in a more specific and focused way. Since this topic did not find its way into the flagships, we propose to skip it from the revised AP. |
| Action 4 | **Maritime skills** Working in the maritime sectors requires skills and increasingly specialised professional profiles and expertise. This actions aims at improving the levels of skills in the Region, e.g. by strengthening networks of academics, training organisations and professional organizations in the maritime sector. | **F3.2 Maritime professional skills:** * improve the levels of skills and expertise for the working manpower in maritime sector.
 | **Promotion of blue skills**• Network of training/education centres/institutes to cooperate in development/sharing of blue skills programmes* Continuous re-evaluation of competences to meet new skills demands, including digital skills

• Development of programmes for maritime up-skilling or re-skilling* Building on existing networks (i.e. UniAdrion, Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce) for student-, apprentice-, internship exchange programmes in maritime-related topics
 |
| Action 5 | **Citizen and business awareness and involvement**This action aims at promoting citizen and business awareness regarding blue economy, new technologies, fisheries and aquaculture. | **F3.3 Research platforms and F3.4 Trans-regional cooperation between community-led local development (CLLD) strategies for actions:** * to combat marine litter pollution,
* development of fishtourism and ichthyotourism,
* Creation of start-ups and local employment and promotion of partnership working
 |  **Sustainable and prosperous communities?** Encouragement of networking and exchange between local communities in planning and implementation of best practices leading towards more sustainable and prosperous communities (i.e. combat marine litter pollution, development of fishtourism and ichthyotourism, start-ups and local employment and promotion of partnership working) * Trans-regional cooperation between community-led local development (CLLD) strategies for actions
 |

**Prepared by EUSAIR Facility Point Lead Partner:**





1. New approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future (EC COM(2021) 240 final) in line with Green Deal suggests to move forward from Blue Growth to Sustainable Blue Economy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. EUSAIR FLAGSHIPS 2021-2027, adopted on 12th Extraordinary EUSAIR Governing Board meeting on 10 June 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The indicative list of sources can be found in the Background document with the Roadmap towards the EUSAIR Action Plan revision v3 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Interregional Cooperation and Smart Specialisation: a Lagging Regions Perspective, JRC 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Directive 2008/56/EC) {SWD(2020) 60 final} - {SWD(2020) 61 final} - {SWD(2020) 62 final} [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This list is drawn from the GFCM 2030 Strategy and from Blue Economy Report 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) facilitating the enlargement process of Western Balkans. Final Report. 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The blue economy. Overview and EU policy framework. European Parliament. 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)