

**Action Plan revision:**

**Initial policy paper**

**for thematic consultation in Pillar 3**

November 2022

http://www.adriatic-ionian.eu

EUSAIR FACILITY POINT Project Partners: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (Slovenia) | State Agency for Strategic Planning and Aid Coordination (Albania) |

Directorate for European Integration of Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina | Ministry of Tourism and Sport of the Republic of Croatia | Special Service for Strategy, Planning and

Evaluation (EYSSA), National Coordination Authority of the NSRF, Ministry of Development and Investments (Greece) | Marche Region - Innovation and International Cooperation Unit (Italy) |

Ministry of European Affairs ( Montenegro) | Ministry of European Integration Government of the Republic of Serbia | Municipality of Izola (Slovenia)

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**PILLAR 3 – ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

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 towards 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**[[1]](#footnote-1) 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[[2]](#footnote-2).

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** | **The marine environment** | **/** | **The marine and coastal environment** |
| Objectives | * To ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment by 2020 in line with the relevant EU acquis and the ecosystem

approach of the Barcelona Convention.* To contribute to the goal of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the loss of

biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, andrestore them in so far as feasible, by addressing threats to marine and terrestrial biodiversity.* To improve waste management by reducing waste flows to the sea and, to reduce nutrient flows and other pollutants to the rivers and the sea.
 | * **PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF THE AI REGION BY IMPLEMENTING ICZM AND MSP ALSO TO CONTRIBUTE CRF ON ICZM OF BARCELONA CONVENTION AND THE MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREA** Flagship overall goals that will have strong impact on macro-regional level: - promote sustainable development and facilitate adoption of coastal and maritime spatial plans (MSP Directive, ICZM Protocol) by defining gaps in marine and coastal knowledge, - identify conflicts and propose sustainable options for action, - help the management of natural, social, economic and spatial assets in A-I region, - serve as indicators of the Good Environmental Status of marine waters of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_*** **DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ADRIATIC-IONIAN SUB/REGIONAL OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN**

The overall goal of the preparation of a A-I Sub-regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan is to establish, within the framework of the OPRC Convention and of the Prevention and Emergency Protocol to the Barcelona Convention, a mechanism for mutual assistance, under which the competent national Authorities of Adriatic and Ionian Countries will co-operate in order to co-ordinate and integrate their activities related to prevention and response to marine pollution incidents affecting or likely to affect the territorial sea, coasts and related interests of one or more of these countries, or to incidents surpassing the available response capacity of each of these countries alone taking also into account the provisions of the Offshore Protocol of the Barcelona Convention and of the EU Directive 2013/30/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on safety of offshore oil and gas operations. The added value is the high impact on macro-regional level. | * To ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment in line with post-2020 biodiversity targets, the relevant EU acquis, the ecosystem

approach of the Barcelona Convention and looking towards the 2030 targets in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015).* To address threats to marine biodiversity and contribute to the aim of EU Biodiversity Strategy that Europe's biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet, the climate and economy, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
* To improve solid and water waste management to reduce waste flows to the sea and nutrient flows and other pollutants to the rivers and the sea.
 |
| Challenges/opportunities | * There is a lack of habitat maps covering the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.
* Overfishing, habitat degradation and incidental catches pose serious threats to marine biodiversity. Monitoring and enforcement are insufficient.
* Aquaculture is a rapidly growing industry which is not regulated in all countries so as to ensure sustainability.
* Uncontrolled and illegal coastal development often leads to destruction of habitats.
* Invasive alien species from aquaculture and ballast water discharge also threaten ecosystem functions, and illegal collection of sponges, corals and bivalves are further cause for concern.
* Coverage in terms of offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) beyond 12 nautical miles is the lowest of all EU marine regions, while existing MPAs are often not adequately managed.

\_\_\_\_* Intense maritime transport activities and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation result in oil spills, including large scale pollution events, and noise pollution.
* Insufficient waste water treatment in several participant countries leads to pollution from rivers, exacerbated by use of nitrates on agricultural lands. Pollution is also caused by ecologically-unsound aquaculture practices.
* Marine litter stemming both from land-based sources, lost and discarded fishing gear and recreational activities poses a serious problem.
 | * **PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF THE AI REGION BY IMPLEMENTING ICZM AND MSP ALSO TO CONTRIBUTE CRF ON ICZM OF BARCELONA CONVENTION AND THE MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREA** There is the need to extend the MSP/ICZM to all AI macro-region to help strengthen and develop sustainable growth (economy and tourism), decrease pollution, protect unique biodiversity and increase quality of life)

Complementary with aspects like climate change adaptation, risks prevention, public participation, open decision-making process of territorial planning, risk management, protection of sensitive biodiversity in the A-I region, improving water quality, decreasing marine pollution (marine litter, micro plastic). This is also of national level relevance since not all EUSAIR countries have MSP and ICZM neither an approach of monitoring and management of protected areas. – F3-------* **DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ADRIATIC-IONIAN SUB/REGIONAL OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN**

There is the need to extend the oil spill contingency plan for Northern Adriatic to other AI countries – F1 | * Climate Change adaptation, with the Mediterranean identified as a hotspot by the IPCC
* There is a lack of habitat maps covering the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.
* Overfishing, habitat degradation and incidental catches pose serious threats to marine biodiversity. Monitoring and enforcement are insufficient.
* Aquaculture is a rapidly growing industry which is not regulated in all countries so as to ensure sustainability.
* Uncontrolled and illegal coastal development often leads to destruction of habitats.
* Increasing number of invasive alien species from aquaculture and ballast water discharge threaten ecosystem functions.
* Coverage in terms of offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) beyond 12 nautical miles is the lowest of all EU marine regions, while existing MPAs are often not adequately managed.

\_\_\_\_* Intense maritime transport activities and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation result in oil spills, including large scale pollution events, and noise pollution.
* Insufficient waste water treatment in several participant countries leads to pollution from rivers, exacerbated by use of nitrates on agricultural lands. Pollution is also caused by ecologically-unsound aquaculture practices and excessive use of chemical and pharmaceutical products.
* Marine litter stemming both from land-based sources, lost and discarded fishing gear and recreational activities poses a serious problem.
* Microplastic pollution in seawater threatens human health with unknown impacts
* The recent trends for offshore wind turbines and solar farms (floating or fixed) will present a new challenge in terms of spatial planning and the marine environment.
 |
| Policy Framework | / | / | * United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
* Paris Agreement on Climate Change
* The Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its amendments
* The Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) and its MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY 2022-2027
* EU Green Deal
* Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
* Framework for Maritime Spatial Planning (Directive 2014/89/EU)
* Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Directive 2008/56/EC) and Commission Decision on Good Environmental Status ((EU) 2017/848)
* EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (COM(2020) 380 final)
* Birds (Directive 2009/147/EC) and Habitats Directives (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)
* EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure
* Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on invasive alien species (the IAS Regulation)
* EU Regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species
* Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
* Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
* A Farm to Fork Strategy (COM/2020/381 final)
* EU Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC)
* Nitrates Directive (Council Directive 91/676/EEC)
* Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC), its amendments and related Commission Decisions
* Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC) and its amendments by Commission Decisions
* EU Action Plan: Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil (COM(2021) 400 final)
* Directive on single use plastics (Directive (EU) 2019/904)

Capitalize on existing EU initiatives :* EPPA (EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession)
* Natura 2000 Network
* Emerald network
* EIONET (European Environment Information and Observation Network)
* MAES (Mapping Europe’s Ecosystems)
 |
| Key international stakeholders | / | / | * EEA
* IUCN
* UNEP/MAP
* UNEP/CMS
* Medpan,
* Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE)
* Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change (CMCC)
* Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med)
* WWF Mediterranean (WWF Med) and WWF Adria
* Euronatur
 |
| **1.1 Sub-topic** | **Threat to coastal and marine biodiversity** |  |  |
| Actions |  |  |  |
| Action 1.1.1 | Increasing marine knowledge |  | **Coastal and marine biodiversity information network*** The use of European Environment Information and Observation Network (and focal points) to gather macro-regional information relevant for the implementation of Actions under subtopic 1.1 and subtopic 1.2.
* The use of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) to gather macro-regional information relevant for the implementation of Actions under subtopic 1.1 and subtopic 1.2.
 |
| Action 1.1.2 | Enhancing the network of marine protected areas |  | **Enhancing the network of marine protected areas*** Support for designation of new areas in coordination with the processes of designation of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (UNEP MAP); of Fisheries Restricted Areas under the GFCM, by completing marine NATURA 2000 network and by designating further protected areas to form a coherent and representative network of MPAs according to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
* Establishment of AIR marine protected areas network
* Cooperation and harmonisation of protected areas management planning
* Exchange of best practices among managing authorities of Marine protected areas
 |
| Action 1.1.3 | Exchanging best practices among MAs of Marine protected areas |  | Included in Action 1.2 |
| Action 1.1.4 | Implementing Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) | **F3 - PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF THE AI REGION BY IMPLEMENTING ICZM AND MSP ALSO TO CONTRIBUTE CRF ON ICZM OF BARCELONA CONVENTION AND THE MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS** (the extension of the MSP/ICZM to all AI macro-region will help strengthen and develop sustainable growth (economy and tourism), decrease pollution, protect unique biodiversity and increase quality of life), also known as “ICZM & MSP”This is also of national level relevance since not all EUSAIR countries have MSP and ICZM neither an approach of monitoring and management of protected areas. | **Promotion of sustainable growth of the AI region by implementing ICZM and MSP*** Support in drawing-up and implementation of coherent MSP/ICZM following the ecosystem approach, addressing land-sea interaction and adaptation to climate change as a tool to manage potential conflicts among various sectoral policies (preparation of guidelines on the application of ecosystem approach in transnationally coherent MSP for AIR, capacity building activities)
* Evaluation of implementation of ICZM and MSP on macro-regional level (application of ecosystem-based approach, identification of needs for better transboundary coherence, identification of areas needing transboundary harmonisation…)
* Share experiences in guiding sectoral development to minimize economic losses and the weakening of ecosystem services
* Exchange of best practice
 |
| Action 1.1.5 |  |  | **Cooperation in management of marine protected species*** Measures for monitoring and management of marine protected species
* Identification of hot spot marine biogenic formations that are excluded from Marine protected areas or are not adequately managed
* Improve data collection and sharing
* Evaluating the status of the selected marine protected species due to risks related to pollutants (e.g. marine litter, microplastics) and climate change
* Capacity building for relevant sectors
 |
| Action 1.1.6 |  |  | **AIR management of IAS*** Coordination of action plans to address the priority pathways in line with IAS Regulation
* List of IAS of transboundary concern
* Transboundary eradication plans
* Improve data collection and sharing
 |
| **Sub-topic 2** | **Pollution of the sea** |  |  |
| Action 1.2.1 | Implementing a life cycle approach to marine litter |  | **AIR cooperation in marine litter management** Best practice sharing, capacity building and coordination * Cooperation in assessment of the status, target setting, monitoring, reporting and implementation of measures related to marine litter and microlitter carried out in accordance with relevant MSFD provisions
* Cooperation in drawing up and implementation of Land-based Source (LBS) National Action Plans
* Definition of joint measures (e.g. clean-up programmes)
 |
| Action 1.2.2 | Supporting clean-up programs |  | Included in Action 1.2.1 |
| Action 1.2.3 | Drafting and implementation of a joint contingency plan | **F1 - Development and implementation of AI sub/regional oil spill contingency plan** (need of examination and **extension of the contingency plan** for Northern Adriatic to other AI countries, possible risks and future events or circumstances that could damage the AI macro-region environment can be prevented whether damage can be minimized), also known as “ASOCSoP”Cross-cutting aspects: Capacity building in EUSAIR area, including communication to interested stakeholders and decision makers. | **Development and implementation of AI sub/regional oil spill contingency plan** (ASOCSoP)* need of examination and extension of the contingency plan for Northern Adriatic to other AI countries,
* Risk assessment (possible risks and future events or circumstances that could damage the AI macro-region environment)
* Prevention measures
* Damage control measures
* Cross-cutting aspects: Capacity building in EUSAIR area, including communication to interested stakeholders and decision makers.
 |
| Action 1.2.4 | Identifying hotspots |  | Included in Actions 1.2.1 and 1.2.6 |
| Action 1.2.5 | Ensure prioritisation of investments to reflect the contribution to reducing pollution of the sea |  | Included in Actions 1.2.1 and 1.2.6 |
| Action 1.2.6 | Address diffuse sources (e.g. nitrates from agriculture) |  | **AIR cooperation in reduction of nutrients, chemicals and pharmaceuticals from diffuse and point sources on land**Support for development of suitable measures, practical solutions and policy recommendations for reduction of chemical and pharmaceutical substances.* Knowledge transfer and capacity building
* Testing of solutions and practical measures through cooperation in projects
* Policy recommendations from lessons learnt to relevant policy makers and other stakeholders.

Support to cross-sectoral activities and measures that reduce nutrient discharges to the Sea from diffused (agriculture) and point sources (urban areas, aquaculture):* develop innovative and nature-based solutions (nutrient trapping structures/methods)
* improve monitoring and the knowledge base of nutrient flows and load
* raise awareness among relevant stakeholders about best practices
 |
| Topics  | Action Plan 2014 | Flagships  | Updates |
| **Topic 2** | **Topic 2 – Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity** | / |  |
| Objective | To contribute to the goal of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, by addressing threats to marine and terrestrialbiodiversity. | **PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL TERRESTRIAL HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS**The flagship overall objective is to improve the resilience of large carnivores populations at transnational level in the face of environmental threats and risks. The activities to be undertaken are primarily related to conservation and restoration of large carnivore populations, public awareness activities to bring these unique species to the public’s attention and restoration of ecosystems in which they play a key role. protect the delicate habitats. | To address threats to terrestrial biodiversity and contribute to the aim of EU Biodiversity Strategy that Europe's biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet, the climate and economy, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.To protect and enhance natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems with particular attention to the ecological connectivity of blue and green corridors/infrastructure. |
| Challenges / opportunities | * The risks of climate change to biodiversity can be reduced by bolstering the general resilience of ecosystems, thereby increasing their ability to adapt to its effects.
* All countries of the macro-region provide habitats for Europe’s large carnivores. Cooperation is needed on joint management and on ensuring that infrastructure investments will not result in significant fragmentation of important landscape features.
* The Adriatic Flyway is one of the main routes for millions of migratory birds crossing the Mediterranean, with birds making a resting stop along the eastern Adriatic. A number

of bird species also spend winter in the area. The low number of undisturbed wetlands onthe eastern coast of the Adriatic, lack of hunting ban areas and hunting rules which arenot in line with EU legislation, (as well as low enforcement of the rules in place) result invulnerable, threatened or endangered migratory bird species being killed.  | **PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL TERRESTRIAL HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS**The flagship will try to establish protection and enhancement of natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems, with particular attention to the ecological connectivity of blue and green corridors/infrastructure. Connecting all EUSAIR countries’ protected areas including Natura 2000 areas and other networks with tourism will have strong impact on the AI region with their joint managements and research. | * There is a strong need to counteract negative effects of human activities through integrated environmental management approaches in biodiversity conservation, recovery and management, as well as ensuring ecological connectivity.
* Long term viability of large carnivores’ populations is threatened by habitat fragmentation and destruction due to urbanization, farming and linear infrastructure.
* The public image of LC and related poaching results from increasing conflicts between LC and humans (lack of natural pray, loss of habitats, disturbance, poor waste management, road kill etc)
* Need to harmonise national and transnational policies on management and conservation of large carnivores.
* There is a lack of scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring.
* Increasing pressures and land-use intensification resulting in habitat loss for migratory bird species (agriculture, water management, hydropower exploitation, gravel and sand exploitation, infrastructure/tourism/residential development etc.)
* Although countries in the region all reaffirmed their zero-tolerance approach to illegal bird killing in 2020, the implementation is lacking.
 |
| Policy Framework |  |  | * United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
* Paris Agreement on Climate Change
* The Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its amendments
* Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)
* Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
* EU Green Deal
* Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
* EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (COM(2020) 380 final)
* Birds (Directive 2009/147/EC) and Habitats Directives (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)
* EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure
* Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on invasive alien species (the IAS Regulation)
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* UNEP/CMS
* Medpan,
* WWF Mediterranean (WWF Med) and WWF Adria
* Euronatur
 |
| Actions |  |  |  |
| Action 2.1 | Development of joint management plans for cross-border habitats and ecosystems | **PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL TERRESTRIAL HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS**(with particular attention to the **ecological connectivity of blue and green corridors/infrastructure)**. (PET HAB ECO)The flagship aims to implement activities for establishing and developing Green corridors, which are essential in the AI region for:* improving quality of life;
* protecting natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems which represent coexistence of carnivores and humans in AI area.
 | **Joint population management for large carnivores and awareness rising activities, protecting the habitats and working towards quality of life and coexistence*** joint population management plans for LC. Coordinate and exchange information on management practices, policies and approaches across the region, including national and regional management plans, with the aim of achieving population-level objectives
* support for international networking and exchange of experience between key stakeholders and authorities
* capacity-building
* increased cross-border collaboration on monitoring such as standardised methods and protocols
* cross-sectoral cooperation (agriculture, spatial planning, hunting), stakeholder engagement and awareness raising for improvement of sectoral plans and practices and reduction of conflicts
* support to accession countries in aligning with EU Nature Aquis
 |
| Action 2.2 | Joint population level management plans for large carnivores and awareness-raising activities |
| Action 2.3 | Harmonisation and enforcement of national laws |
| Action 2.4 | Protection and restoration of coastal wetland areas and karst fields |  | **Conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats** (Support for implementation and enforcement of AEWA)* identify sites and habitats for migratory waterbirds occurring within their territory and encourage the protection, management, rehabilitation and restoration of these sites
* harmonization of research and monitoring methods
* improvement of the hunting legislation and its proper implementation
* capacity building
* Cross-sectoral cooperation (agriculture, hunting, spatial planning), stakeholder engagement and awareness raising for improvement of sectoral plans and practices
* Support to accession countries in aligning with EU Nature Aquis
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| Action 2.5 | Awareness rising activities on implementation and financial aspects of environmentally friendly farming practices |  | Included in Actions 1.2.6, 2.3 and 2.4 |

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





1. EUSAIR FLAGSHIPS 2021-2027, adopted on 12th Extraordinary EUSAIR Governing Board meeting on 10 June 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The indicative list of sources can be found in the Background document with the Roadmap towards the EUSAIR Action Plan revision v3 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)