

**Action Plan revision**

**Methodology to guide TSGs in drafting contents of the Action Plan**

V2, 13 April 2023

* 1. Introduction

This document was prepared based on discussions taking place in the EUSAIR Action Plan Revision Working Group to guide Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) in their development of contents of the revised Action Plan.

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| This methodology guides the TSGs towards drafting **a focused, streamlined and implementation oriented Action Plan**. In practice this means to set up limited number of feasible common targets with timeline, milestones, key implementers, and focus on actions that lead to their achievement. With the help of this document the same steps in drafting the Action Plan content will be followed in all TSGs, reaching a harmonized end result. In this way the EUSAIR Action Plan will serve as a solid base to governance structures and stakeholders for its effective implementation for the benefit of the Adriatic-Ionian region. |

Through this methodology the link between the policy (strategy) and implementation will be established. The descriptions that will be provided in the Pillars and Topics set the policy objectives to address the challenges in the region. The action part of the Action Plan describes in which way this will be achieved through concrete Actions. In the Actions TSGs define which activities will be implemented by the EUSAIR governance structures in cooperation with the stakeholders to achieve the targets set in the Topics.

## Chapters to define the Pillars

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| The revised Action Plan will remain to be structured around **Pillars, Topics and Actions**. Pillars as a very general level should be more briefly described, while **more focus in the Action Plan should be put on describing the Topics**.  |

**General objective -** defines the **main target, the main change** the EUSAIR implementers would like to achieve in the **Adriatic-Ionian territory** **until 2030** through the Action Plan **in the thematic area** of the Pillar.

**Main characteristic** (2-3 sentences) - of the Adriatic-Ionian Region in the thematic area of the Pillar.

**Main challenge(s) to be addressed** (2-3 sentences) – what are the main challenges (indicatively maximum 3) in the Adriatic-Ionian Region as regards the thematic area of the Pillar.

**Main approach** (2-3 sentences) – in what way the Strategy intends to address the main challenge to achieve the set target/change.

## Chapters to define Topics

#### DEFINITION

TOPICS represent the main areas where through its regional/ macro-regional approach the macro-regional strategy brings added value. For each Topic, the Action Plan will present the issue and indicate what particular contribution it will bring. Each Topic has to be considered with other policy fields. The Strategy encourages a horizontal approach highlighting interdependence between its Pillars. In practice this means that Topics/Actions planned in one Pillar should not contradict with the Topics/Actions of the other Pillar, rather complementary and synergetic effects should be sought for the benefit of the territory.

#### CHAPTERS

**Main challenges/opportunities –** what are the main challenges/opportunities **in the Adriatic-Ionian Region (AIR)** to be **addressed by the EUSAIR** and what **main approach** should be taken (reference to the Actions described in the next chapter).

**Policy framework** – there seems to be an agreement as regards the inclusion of policies, initiatives, and reference to EU Cohesion Policy provisions (policy objectives, specific policy objectives) and EU Enlargement provisions as main reference framework, while taking into account other relevant EU policies.

**Specific objectives** – what change key implementers aspire to achieve through EUSAIR in the Adriatic-Ionian region regarding the challenges of the Topic, setting also the main qualitative targets. Quantitative targets should be set whenever possible. The limitation of the number of specific objectives to be planned for each Topic (up to 3) is indicative, yet the guidance is obligatory to follow, its scope is to keep the Strategy and its implementation strongly focused and operational.

**Key stakeholders** to be engaged in the implementation.

**Support to the EU enlargement process** is one of the main focuses of the EUSAIR, therefore reference to EU enlargement needs to be made in descriptions of the challenges and specific objectives of each Topic.

#### TIME HORIZON

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| **There should be a common time horizon for targets of all Topics 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.** |

## Chapters to define Actions

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| There should be a clear definition of Actions and a clear commitment by the EUSAIR governance bodies to support their implementation – **no indicative, only agreed Actions. Actions need to be agreed in TSGs and approved by the Governing Board.** |

#### DEFINITION

ACTION is the intervention which EUSAIR governance structures and stakeholders carry out in order to address the set objectives and targets. It can be a new approach, an increased coordination in policy making, policy review, support to a process already engaged, a networking initiative, etc. An action may not necessarily require financing. All actions should be understood without prejudice to existing EU competences and requirements of the EU acquis.

#### CRITERIA

For the identification of actions to be included in the AP, the criteria taken into account by the TSGs should be the following:

* Actions should address identified challenges, meeting well-substantiated needs and be widely supported. They should be realistic, concrete and feasible. The need for the action or project concerned should have been clearly expressed by countries, regions and stakeholders or Commission’s services. The proposals have been thoroughly discussed with these partners since their support is crucial during the implementation phase. Which policies the actions should reinforce is listed under each Topic. Who takes responsibility for the implementation of the action and its financing, where relevant, should be clearly identified.
* Their scope or impact should be transnational, if not macro-regional. Most actions and projects having an impact at the macro-regional scale will involve several countries who wish to cooperate and coordinate their efforts. If, however, a national/regional project has a direct impact on (i.e. is for the benefit of) the macro-region (e.g. the construction of a waste water treatment plant that improves the water quality of rivers or extension of a port to buttress a macro-regional transport networks), it could also be included.
* For each action outputs and results shall be planned in as far as possible. In the description of the actions it is recommended not to only list the planned activities but also what is the goal of these activities, the outcome, output of these activities. This will help the TSGs to be concrete and to have a clear understanding of what they would like to achieve through a certain activity.
* For each Action one or more output or result indicators which could be monitored over time should be articulated. Consideration should be given to the data which will need to be gathered in order to monitor the delivery of outputs and results (including definition of the baseline situation). To contribute to this end, an inventory of data already available, including their quality, should be established. The ESIF indicators, and the methodology and dataset supporting them, should be the source of inspiration for the definition of the EUSAIR indicators, whenever possible.
* Actions and projects spanning national boundaries with a view to implementing the Strategy should furthermore complement each other.
* Actions are planned to contribute to the set objectives/targets (of the Topic) through activities described under each Action. The format of the activities to be implemented under each action is decided to best suit the needs of the action. Activities under an Action can be – but are not limited to – flagships, projects (single or grouped in clusters), processes, networks or platforms.
* Actions should pay attention to the cross-cutting topics of Capacity Building and Research and Innovation identified in the 2014 Communication[[1]](#footnote-2), as well as an additionally identified cross-cutting topic of Enlargement.
* They should be coherent and mutually supportive. While mainly relating to one particular pillar, each Action or project must take fully into account possible impacts on Actions and projects carried out under other pillars. Actions and projects undertaken under the different pillars must thus be compatible with each other and create win-win solutions. For example, transport projects or energy efficiency initiatives should not jeopardise achievement of environmental targets, such as air quality, and should preferably contribute to achieving such targets.
* Introduction of “project chains” and “project to policy loop” concepts[[2]](#footnote-3), whereas ‘project chain’ is a process where several operations (projects) are interlinked within one priority, policy, pillar, action of the MRS. This is how the flagships should work, it should not be just one project that shall realise a certain flagship, there might be a number of projects-operations (some cross-border, some only national) through which the flagship will be implemented. Also successful projects are capitalised in further projects that might spread the initial activities to a different territory or focus on another group of stakeholders or generate further investments in the same territory or focus on one or several aspects of the original project etc.

‘Project– to policy loop’ is a process where a link between a macro-regional process carried out through projects and policy implementation or development is ensured. In this context flagship projects can initiate policy discussion/change as well as be an outcome of it. This is another logic behind the flagships and strategic projects. Flagships gather all possible stakeholders in a long-term process of co-creation of both policy and action. Flagships can be a result of a bottom up or a top-down approach, where protagonists in the bottom-up approach are the stakeholders and protagonists of the top-down approach are the EUSAIR governance structures.

#### NUMBER OF ACTIONS

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| **The limitation of the number of Actions (3 to 5) is indicative, but TSGs should duly justify, why they propose to add further actions.** |

#### OUTPUTS, RESULTS, INDICATORS

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| **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”.

Already at the time of the development of the Action Plan and planning of the Actions TSGs should define and agree on the indicators to monitor the implementation of the planned Actions. The indicator targets should not be confused with the targets that are defined for each Topic. The targets in the Topics set the level of the change the EUSAIR implementers aspire to achieve in the territory through the combined effect of the implemented actions, however the indicator targets are more concrete and are set to monitor the achievement of outputs and results of a single Action.

**Some examples:**

From EUSDR: Achieve a notable improvement of the fairway conditions and shore side infrastructure along the Danube and its navigable tributaries, confirmed by the waterway users by means of an annual user survey.

To comment on the EUSDR example, it actually includes the result (improvement of the fairway conditions and shore side infrastructure) and measurement method (annual survey among waterway users) as well as the target (notable improvement). In this case the target is not quantitative but qualitative.

The indicators planned under the actions measure if the outputs and results planned in the Action Plan were realized by the EUSAIR governance structures and stakeholders and to what extent. For example, if a TSG agrees to encourage the establishment of an AIR network of some sort, the indicator would be the number of networks established. Or if an EUSAIR example is taken, the number of AIR Transport Masterplans developed could be another indicator, obviously the target would be 1, but for the next period the indicator could be the number of AIR Transport Masterplans updated. Also a number of flagships or projects developed could be another example of an indicator. Another example, large infrastructure projects are not decided on the level of EUSAIR, EUSAIR can only encourage their inclusion in the future investment plans (EU, WBG). In this case the result would be the number of infrastructure projects included in the investment plans.

EUSAIR is ready for qualitative indicators, but quantitative indicators could be planned as well.

#### CHAPTERS

**Title of the action**

**Description of activities** - following the agreed criteria listed above.

**Indicators**

The indicators should be described in a table form:

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| Indicator title | Value Baseline/year | Target/deadline | Data source |

**List of the flagships and strategic projects** under implementation, to build on the work done, and enhance the results achieved. Only financed projects.

There will be a dedicated page at the website per Pillar/Sub-Group where developments in the Pillar/Topic would be communicated. For example, new flagships under implementation or new strategic projects developed in order to provide an up-to-date status in each Pillar/Sub-Group.

## Horisontal/cross-cutting topics

A specific chapter dedicated to the horizontal/cross-cutting topics should be added to the Action Plan, where for each Pillar/Topic there will 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.

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





1. Communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region COM(2014) 357 final [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. How do macro-regional strategies deliver: workflows, processes and approaches (Interact 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)