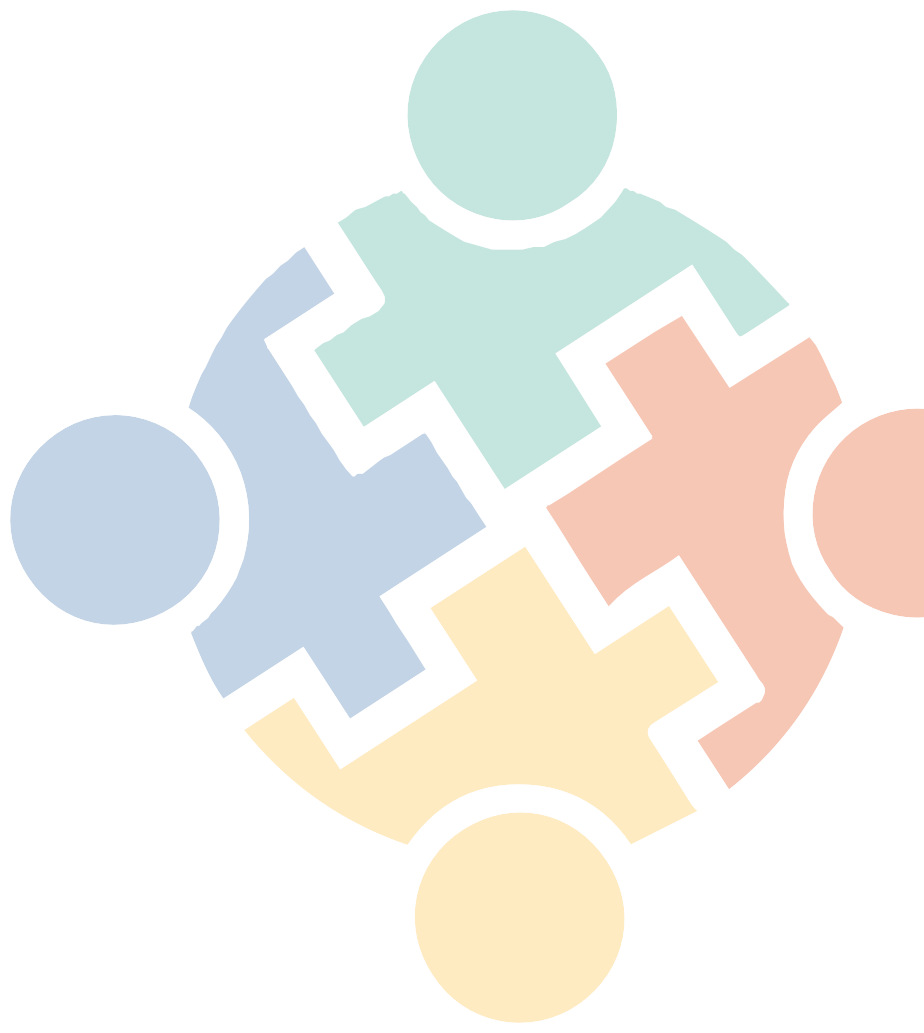


**FACILITATING STRATEGIC PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCIAL DIALOGUE**

**Background paper Work Package T.2 – focused on**

**FACILITATING STRATEGIC PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

**July 2019, V.3.**



<http://www.adriatic-ionian.eu>

EUSAIR Facility Point project partners: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania; Directorate for European Integration of Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia; Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation (EYSSA), National Coordination Authority of the NSRF, Ministry of Economy and Development; Marche Region – Industry, Handicraft, Cooperation and Internationalization; Government of Montenegro, European Integration Office; Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia; Municipality of Izola.

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EUSAIR FACILITY POINT Project Partners: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (Slovenia) | Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Republic of Albania |

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

Evaluation (EYSSA), National Coordination Authority of the NSRF, Ministry of Economy and Development (Greece) | Marche Region - Integrated Planning, International

Activities, Trade, Cooperation (Italy) | Ministry of European Affairs (Montenegro) | Ministry of European Integration Government of the Republic of Serbia | Municipality of Izola (Slovenia)

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# Annex 1

**PROJECT IDEA DRAFT TEMPLATE**

**The aim of the project template is to gather the agreement about the project ideas of each TSG to be further developed to become bankable project. The template and the evaluation list ensure the Audit trail. The template must be filled by the applicant with the support of EUSAIR Facility Point Project Partner from the Member State. The evaluation list must be filled by TSG members in order to come up with their decision. If the project idea reaches the threshold of 75 points it will be further developed.**

* 1. **Template for the development of the project idea*(filled in by applicant)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project idea title** | Empowering MPAs across the Adriatic-Ionian region |
| **Acronym** | EMAAIR |
| **Please list which awareness raising events with relevant stakeholders were organised for identification and presentation of the project idea** | Throughout the past ten years, SEEP have directly engaged with various stakeholders – including the local communities (especially fisherman, and those involved with different activities at the sea), non-governmental organizations dedicated to MPAs and conservation and governmental bodies, including the very good coopreation with National agency for protected areas in Albania, and other countries. Furthermore, the SEEP is was leading the development of the first MPA in Albania (Karaburun-Sazan) and is part of the steering committee. Besides, SEEP partnered with centers directly involved with MedPAN. |
| **Please indicate if the project idea was published on the Stakeholder platform** | ------ |
| **Please indicate which information/awareness activities were carried out using different online channels/formats and list which channels/formats were used** | **--------** |
| **Please indicate at which TSG meeting the project idea was agreed** | **---------** |
| **Potential lead beneficiary (e.g. different sectors, public administration, research institution, business sector, NGOs** | SEEP (Social Education and Environmental Protection)  Boulevard Ismail Qemali, Vlorë, Albania  [www.seep.al](http://www.seep.al) [s.ribaj@seep.al](mailto:s.ribaj@seep.al) [info@seep.al](mailto:info@seep.al) |
| **Potential project beneficiaries** (e.g. different sectors, public administration, research institution, business sector, NGOs, other)[[1]](#footnote-1)  **Important!** Involvement of Private sector/partner must be duly justified and preferably selected by public selection. The public selection is obligatory when the private partners are not eligible for partnership in the determinate calls. | Obtained results and proposed actions will directly benefit local communities, public administration (in terms of sustainable development), research institutions (through capacity building, cross-border research cooperation and networking), NGOs (through inclusion in monitoring, encouraging citizen science and education). Business sectors within the blue growth, small-scale and commercial fisheries are important beneficiaries of the proposed project. Tourism will be significantly advanced through the advancement of the environment and expansion of the tourist offer.  Furthermore, existing marine governance considering MPAs will be significantly improved, and harmonization of the protection acts within the EU acquisitions will be supported and empowered. In addition, many endangered species and habitats of importance that are not currently adequately protected are among the beneficiaries |
| **References needed by the partnership** (e.g. research in the field of Blue Growth, projects or other relevant activities) (optional) |  |
| **General objective** | The general goal of the project is to implement better management and monitoring of MPAs including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection, empower sustainable development of the fisheries and blue growth, conduct capacity building and networking in the research communities and raise the awareness on marine pollution (microplastics, oil spills, etc). |
| **Work plan and activities of the project idea** | The project consists of 4 WPs defined to deliver best possible results, as follow:  **WP 1 (Research and networking)**   * Develop multidisciplinary cross-border research teams and conduct massive networking among the researchers to empower join papers. * Identify gaps in MPAs knowledge, including biodiversity, key habitats and breeding grounds for target species, MPAs and species monitoring and economic resources opportunities. * Conduct extensive field studies (research diving and ROV) to identify and map key habitats, litter, microplastics and other hazards. * Mapping of existing MPAs, and other marine areas that represent potential MPAs, with emphasis on priority areas of protection. * Assessments of the status of MPAs in the field, determination of priority habitats for protection and predictions of the situation in the future. * Conduct extensive fishery analysis to understand the catch rates, bycatch composition, frequency of threatened species and survival rates. * Research the biomarkers (such as melanomacrophages) to understand animals response to the environmental pressures through case studies. * Research the effects of pollution (primarily microplastics), war waste, shipwrecks, oil spills, acidification on disease development in target species.   **WP 2 (Conservation, management and sustainable development)**   * Ensure MPAs conservationfor the purpose of establishment economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection. * Develop and propose unique regional species-specific long-term in-situ conservation measures for target threatened species. * Develop amendments to the national Red list for target species. * Enhance the survival rates among the by-catch, especially for threatened species in the shelves and upper slopes of IA region. * Ban destructive (using dynamites) fisheries. * Empower sustainable fisheries. * Establish monitoring of landed species through international cooperation.   **WP 3 (Mitigation of pollution)**   * Develop specific measures against land-based pollution, pollution due to oil spils, pollution due to discharges from ships and pollution due to transboundary movements of hazardous waters. * Decrease pollution, especially microplastics, through public involvement. * Reduce transboundary pollution by reaching agreements and practices towards sustainable waste management * Mitigate the effects of habitat loss and pollution on disease development.   **WP 4 (Education and raising awareness)**   * Development of educational tools, new methodologies and ID guides for scientists, students and other stakeholders. * Cross-border capacity building for academics and research, including both graduate and undergraduate students through interactive workshops. * Stakeholder education and engagement. * Empowering and encouraging citizen science to support species monitoring and data collecting. * Raising the awareness and wider public education through extensive media campaigns. * Project promotion |
| **Expected results/outcomes** | According to defined gaps, project will deliver new knowledge to impower MPAs, including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection, MPAs management, impower cross-border cooperation, reducte marine pollution, and ultimately to improve marine environments and touristic offers in the Adriatic-Ionian region which is accordant to EUSAIR pillars and flagships- ''Promoting sustainability, diversification and competitiveness in the fisherie and aquaculture sectors through education, research & development, administrative and technological actions, including promotion of initiatives od marketing standards and healthy nutrition habits'' and ''Fostering quadruple helix in the fields of marine technologies and blue biotehnologies for advancing innovation, bussines development and bussines adaptation in blue bioeconomy'' and ''Promoting sustainability, diversification and competitiveness in the fisherie and aquaculture sectors through education, research & development, administrative and technological actions, including promotion of initiatives od marketing standards and healthy nutrition habits'' within Pillar 1, ''The Adriatic-Ionian Multi-Modal Corridors'' within Pillar 2 and ''Promotion of sustainable growth of the Adriatic Ionian Region by implementing ICZM and MSP to contribute to Barcelona Convention'' and ''Development and implementation of the Adriatic-Ionian sub/regional oil spill contigency Plan'', and flagship ‘’Development and implementation of the Adriatic-Ionian sub/regional oil spill contingency Plan’’ within Pillar 3. |
| **Relevance to the following priority actions from the EUSAIR ACTION PLAN for Pillar:** | ***To what extent does the project contribute to the implementation of at least 1 of the following priorities? (description)*** |
| **Pillar 1 BLUE GROWTH**  **Topic 1.1** Blue technologies  **Topic 1.2**. Fisheries and aquaculture  **Topic 1.3.** Maritime and marine governance and services | This project will have an active impact on the implementation of the Pillar 1 through overencompassing research on pollution, waste management, natural resources and their potential and biodevirsty which will directly benefit maximizing sustainable economic growth and, business creation based on blue technologies, brain circulation, networking capacity and access to seed and venture capital.  More specifically, through planned activities of mapping, researching, connecting and exchangin experiences, the project will provide and document knowledge that will be used in advancing *flagship of innovation, bussines development and bussines adaptation in blue bioeconomy.* Implementation of the project will lead to job creation, produce high quality scientific work that will be used to inform policy makers, accelarate the transposition of the EU *acquis* to applicant countries while fortyfing its implementation to member states, and increase potential of sustainable development of the region in lines with the European Green Deal.  The project will also promote the second pillar of *promoting sustainability, diversification and competitiveness in the fisherie and aquaculture sectors through education, research & development, administrative and technological actions, including promotion of initiatives od marketing standards and healthy nutrition habits.* Research-nature of the project will have high impact on gathering and processing information that is, at the moment, quite scarce in the region. Therefore, it is crucal to obtain scientific data that will feed the implementation of the EU policies. Activities that will stem from research will actively promote and apply Biodiversity Strategy, Marine Strategy Directive and Common Fisheries Policies as its core guidance.  Ultimately, potential approaches to mitigating climate change will also be addressed, while emphasizing the role marine litter and pollution have in this common global threat. Therefore, the project will seek to expand MPAs, suggest and elaborate sustainable maritime governance and services. |
| **Pillar 2 CONNECTING THE REGION**  **Topic 2.1.** Maritime transport  **Topic 2.2.** Intermodal connections to the hinterland  **Topic 2.3.** Energy networks | One of the main issues affecting maritime areas is litter destroying marine environment and biodiversity. Marine litter accumulated through years of mismanagement, excessive unregulated human activities, poor wastewater management, shipping, and fishing policies amongst other reasons. This project will directly address the issue of waste management through the Pillar 2 by delving into research on pollution, litter, current state of the waste management, opportunities for green transformation and their achievining.  As such, this project will aim to propose solutions on sustainable waste management, which includes connecting and linking the waste producers with acceptable waste management facilities. The region suffeers greatly from lack of these facilities, therefore, it is important to provide research on the effects of pollution, specifically marine one, which will contribute to understanding of how to resolve these issues in the participating countries while implementing EU standards and policies. In order to collect litter, it will be necessary to look into transport options and provide research and data on these segments as well. In order to implement the EU Green Deal, the project will seek to find the most sustainable and profitable solutions on these matters.  Potential future investement in sustainable marine transport and new facilities will result in creation of new jobs. Apart from development of waste management, research done on the regional routes and areas will be useful in promotion of sustainable tourism and overall regional transport as well. |
| **Pillar 3 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**  **Topic 3.1.** The marine environment  **1.a.** Threat to coastal and marine biodiversity;  **1.b**. Pollution of the sea;  **Topic 3.2** Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity | With a scientifically based multidisciplinary approach, with a systematic approach to policy making (in accordance with EU laws) the project is directly related to the Pillar 3: ‘’ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY’’. By filling in the gaps in knowledge and proposing the effective results to improve the MPAs management, including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, species protection, pollution reduction, project addresses the challenge/strategic importance within the flagship: ‘’*Promotion of sustainable growth of the Adriatic-Ionian Region by implementing ICZM and MSP to contribute CRF on ICZM of Barcelona Convention and the monitoring management of MPAs’’.* Such actions are directly related tothe flagship overall goal: *‘’Promote sustainable development and facilitate adoption of coastal and maritime spatial plans (MSP Directive and ICZM Protocol) by defining the gaps in maritime/coastal knowledge’’.*  Better management of MPAs goes in the direction of protecting sensitive habitats and endangered species. On the other hand, better management that goes in the direction of sustainable management has huge benefits both at the national and regional level when it comes to the economic situation. These project goals are directly following flagship overall goal: ‘’*Help the management of natural, social, economic and spatial assets in Adriatic-Ionian region’’*  Project actions also apply to assessing the current situation, prediction of the future situation of the MPAs, risk management, risk prevention and decreasing marine pollution(marine litter and microplastics).  When it comes to the flagship ‘*’Development and implementation of the Adriatic-Ionian sub/regional oil spill contingency Plan*’’, theproject research will also go in the direction of pollution mitigation (microplastics, acidification, shipwrecks and others). When it comes to oil pollution, special emphasis will be placed on risk assessment, implementation of best regulatory practices and upgrading to a joint contingency planto improve the capability of reaction at possible accidents and better prevention of risks for possible accidents, which is in line with the European Union plan to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 55% by 2030 (Fit for 55). In addition, one of the main actions will be intensified awareness-raising actions, capacity building, communication to interested stake holders and decision makers to reduce the use of fossil fuels, which will make a significant contribution to reducing pollution and the impact of climate change. |
| **Pillar 4. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**  **Topic 4.1.** Diversified tourism offer (products and services)  **Topic 4.2.** Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation andquality) | Better management is moving towards strengthening MPAs which includes economic resources. The countries of the Mediterranean-Ionian region are characterized by enormous natural wealth, cultural and historical heritage and rich tradition. This leaves a lot of room for tourism development, which is unfortunately in this region due to poor management at a very low level.The project actions will work towards better management of MPAs, which aims at sustainable use of resources and development of sustainable tourism, which is in accordance with the flagship ‘’*Development of the network of sustainable tourism business and clusters green mapping for the Adriatic-Ionian region – Supporting development and market access for responsible tourism destination and Micro/SME operations EUSAIR reg*’’, within the pillar 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM. MPAs are the perfect place to diversify current tourism offer through SCUBA diving, underwater photography, exploration, scientific tourism, and other.  Within the project it is planned to train professional staff in this activity (organize diving courses, etc), which in cooperation with local communities can lead to the creation of new jobs. In this way, such a sustainable and responsible tourism is ensured that will further empower citizen science to collect data in the coastal marine environments, clean the solid waste (through clean-up activities) and monitor the state of the ecosystems in the coastal areas, which address the overall goal: ‘’*Support to the development and promotion od quality-assessed Micro & SME tourism operations and destinations in the EURSAIR’’*  In accordance with this, other types of tourism related to the coast will be encouraged, and they include cultural and historical heritage, traditional gastronomic offers, acquaintance with autochthonous customs and various other offers that represent a large area of ​​interest for many tourists. |
| **Relation to other pillars of the EUSAIR** | ***Is the project relevant for other EUSAIR Pillars? If yes, to what extent does it contribute to their objectives? (description)*** |
| **Pillar 1 BLUE GROWTH**  Topics:  1.1. Blue technologies  1.2. Fisheries and aquaculture  1.3. Maritime and marine governance and services  **Pillar 2 CONNECTING THE REGION**  Topics:  2.1. Maritime transport  2.2. Intermodal connections to the hinterland  2.3. Energy networks  **Pillar 3 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**  Topic 3.1. The marine environment  1.a. Threat to coastal and marine biodiversity;  1.b. Pollution of the sea;  Topic 3.2 Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity  **Pillar 4. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**  Topics:  4.1. Diversified tourism offer (products and services)  4.2. Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation and quality) | ***The applicant, with the support of EUSAIR Facility Point Project Partner, could define specific quantitative and qualitative indicators (technical indicators) to assess, in a harmonized and objective manner, how the project idea contribute to the pillar/topic.***  **Pillar 1: BLUE GROWTH**  As already mentioned, this project will have an active impact on the implementation of the Pillar 1 through over encompassing research on pollution, waste management, natural resources and their potential and biodiversity which will directly benefit *maximizing sustainable economic growth and, business creation based on blue technologies, brain circulation, networking capacity and access to seed and venture capital.*  Strong involvement of international researchers will result in great cooperation of academia, research centres and NGOs, but also include government officials and civil society. The project will fortify connections amongst all of the actors mentioned above, and culture exchange of international experiences. These will result in various publications that will be used to inform policy makers and provide substantial contribution to the scientific community.  By targeting, mapping and addressing the challenges discovered through research, the project will allow for easier and transparent change in political and law framework of the participating countries, as the data will be used to address issues in regards to access to finance a promotion of creation of start-up companies on Blue Growth. This will also impact the growth of sustainable blue economy, which is one of the benefitors of the EU Circular Economy action plan, and provide highly objective scientific data valuable in transformed and improved marine governance.  **Pillar 2: CONNECTING THE REGION**  In order to properly address issues caused by marine litter and pollution, the project will provide invaluable scientific data in forms of various publications. By doing so, this project will directly address the issue of waste management through the Pillar 2 by delving into research on pollution, litter, current state of the waste management, opportunities for green transformation and their achievining.  Withouth the research, it will be impossible to propose solutions on sustainable waste management, which includes connecting and linking the waste producers with acceptable waste management facilities. With the active participation of the international team, this project will directly contribute *to create a seamless, harmonised and competitive transport system*by fostering exchange of knowledge, experiences and working together on sustainable solutions which will  The region suffeers greatly from lack of these facilities, therefore, it is important to provide research on the effects of pollution, specifically marine one, which will contribute to understanding of how to resolve these issues in the participating countries while implementing EU standards and policies. In order to collect litter, it will be necessary to look into transport options and provide research and data on these segments as well. In order to implement the EU Green Deal, the project will seek to find the most sustainable and profitable solutions on these matters. These solutions and knowledge will inform future policies and help defining Natura 2000 and marine protected areas on parts of the region where it has not been done yet.  **Pillar 3: ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**  As previously pointed out, gathering information and new knowledge are one of the main tools in achieving the management and sustainable development of MPAs. Such actions are directly relatedto the flagship ‘*’Promotion of sustainable growth of the Adriatic-Ionian Region by implementing ICZM and MSP to contribute CRF on ICZM of Barcelona Convention and the monitoring management of MPAs*'', within the Pillar 3:. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY.  The best indicator of project success for this part of the project activities will be habitat and population status of target species and areas, as we plan to continue detail monitoring on long term basis. These indicator also follow actions includingthe connection of theMPAs, international cooperation and acquiring new knowledge, following flagship overall goal: ‘*’Help the management of natural, social, economic and spatial assets in Adriatic-Ionian region’’.*Such actions are also directly related tothe flagship overall goal: *‘’Promote sustainable development and facilitate adoption of coastal and maritime spatial plans (MSP Directive and ICZM Protocol) by defining the gaps in maritime/coastal knowledge’’.*  Pointing out the problem of pollution and the lack of concrete action when it comes to mitigation and preventing future pollution (especially oil pollution), are directly connected to the flagship overall goal: ''*Development and implementation of the Adriatic-Ionian sub/regional oil spill contigency Plan''.* Monitoring the success of these actions is best reflected in the number of meetings held on the mentioned topic, agreements reached, draft documents made in accordance with EU agreements, showing the readiness of countries to contribute to the Fit for 55 plan and the like.As one of the main actions related to this flagship and the implementation of actions related to raising awareness, one of the indicators of success is the number of trainings held, capacity building, meetings and stakeholder trainings.  Marine Protected Areas involve the protective management of natural areas according to pre-defined management objectives, including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection.This approach has multiple benefits, both for the environment and the socio-economic situation, which is the main principle of sustainable development.These project goals are directly following flagship overall goal: ‘’*Help the management of natural, social, economic and spatial assets in Adriatic-Ionian region’’.*The success of the actions of this part of the project refers to the amount of research on the current state of MPAs, the number of draft management plan documents, linking MPAs between countries, the number of areas not currently subject to protection, to which priority is given species and others.  **Pillar 4. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**  In line with sustainable development, one of the main items of sustainable management of MPAs is economic development. The MPAs of the Mediterranean-Ionian region have huge potential for tourism development. Awareness raising, better management and use of natural resources in the direction of sustainable tourism is just one of the main actions of the project. In this way, in addition to material gains, better management and awareness-raising on the protection of MPAs is achieved.  The project actions will work in accordance with the flagship ‘’*Development of the network of sustainable tourism business and clusters green mapping for the Adriatic-Ionian region – Supporting development and market access for responsible tourism destination and Micro/SME operations EUSAIR reg*’’, within the Pillar 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  Measuring the success of such project actions refers to the number of meetings held, the number of businesses started, the number of new tourists, the number of trained staff, the number of trainings held, the number of connections created and exchanged experiences and the like. Since the project actions go in the direction of sustainable tourism, which also refers to the development of scientific and ecological tourism, measuring performance also refers to the amount of collected waste, the amount of collected data, the number of written scientific papers, the number of trainings and others.  The development of new and support for existing tourist offers also applies to ‘’*Support to the development and promotion od quality-assessed Micro & SME tourism operations and destinationsin the EURSAIR’’.*Such actions, which include the exchange of knowledge, the use of best practices, international cooperation and others, are considered an extremely important step in the development of the tourist offer. Given this, monitoring the success of these actions is of high importance and relates to the number of meetings, the number of practices adopted, the development of cross-border meetings and possible joint tourist offers. |
| **Macro-regional impact**  **(Up to 64 points)** | The European integration process of majority of the participant countries commenced with the SAP agreements. By signing and ratifying the SAP, Western Balkan countries agreed on gradual transposition of the EU *acquis*. As such, relationship between the Western Balkan countries and the EU rests on this document. By applying regional projects as this one, in which both member states and applicant countries are included, the process of Europeanization is fortified in each participant country. Not only does it provide experience to applicant countries in preparation and execution of the EU funded projects, but it also strengthens their interstate connection to member states and other countries within the region. Furthermore, it allows them faster and better transposition of the EU*acquis*, in pre-negotiation and negotiation process. To define, the project targets participation of Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.  One of the key priorities of the European Union, indoctrinated in the European Green Deal and Circular Economy Plan, are oceans governance and management. One of the vast riches of the marine environment is that they drive our weather systems, produce the oxygen, provide us with food and energy, and are home to some of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet. As a global political actor and a part of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the EU is committed to strategical planning and implementation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which is regulated through the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. MPAs are regulated zones in which protection directives are set. A great number of existing sites serves the purpose of protecting single vulnerable biodiversity features. Nevertheless, these sites are too small to sustain ecosystem resilience and, as such, they do not fully deliver ecosystem services. Accordingly, the EU must work on implementation of larger MPAs both within its borders, but also aid the process of protection in the countries that are striving to become part of the EU. MPAs have the full potential to become part of European Union’s Natura 2000 network of protected areas, which connects land and water environments of protection. In order for the implementation of more MPAs to be successful, it is necessary to provide extensive research and actions in the region that will encompass biodiversity, pollution, asses current state of the environment and propose future sustainable solutions. With the[new Circular Economy Action Plan](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf), the Commission addressed unintentional releases of microplastics “by developing labelling, standardisation, certification and regulatory measures.”The project will benefit this cause by providing research and scientific knowledge needed to understand risks and presence of micro and macro pollution in the environment.  Prevention of litter entering the environment is the key prerequisite to success in combating marine litter. The EU introduced Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment that “promotes circular approaches that give priority to sustainable and non-toxic re-usable products and re-use systems rather than to single-use products, aiming first and foremost to reduce the quantity of waste generated”. Employment of a strong and informed legal framework is necessary to address the negative impact of plastic pollution on health, economy and the environment. Research will tackle shipments of waste for reuse and recycling in the EU and illegal waste shipments as well. Therefore, the research of this project will be highly beneficial for these purposes as well.  Managing and defining new MPAs will great benefit the local population of the region as well. As these areas are characterised by high level of environmental protection, but include the needs of the local population, the impact will contribute to improvement of the quality of life and economic activities. However, it is not enough for the research to define MPAs, but also to propose steps which will ensure the future best outcomes for biodiversity and people as well. Therefore, through the project,a better understanding of interconnection of the marine systems will be provided, alongside improved capture of biodiversity which will feed future policy managements and conservation benefits. For example, promotion of the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism will be executed byaddressing “the needs of the natural and cultural environment and the development and competitiveness of destinations and businesses requires an integrated and holistic policy approach where all stakeholders share the same objectives.”.  Although decreasing, a great extent of energy is still resourced from fossil fuels. Directive on renewable energy sources continues to strengthen the legal framework through which renewable energy sources will be implemented. Clean energy program covers energy efficiency, renewable sources, management and regulating the electric energy market. As fossil fuels are not completely eradicated yet, and their use continues to be strongly present in countries like Albania or Montenegro, the project will explore the effects of these fuels including of the infrastructure needed for their accumulation, referring to the, for example, gas platforms that are located across the Adriatic-Ionian Region. Therefore, as the EU paves way for renewable and low-carbon gases to replace fossil fuel, the project directly promotes Regulation on safety of offshore oil and gas prospection, exploration and production activities through which the EU aims to “ensure a consistent use of best practices for major hazards control by oil and gas industry offshore operations potentially affecting Union waters or shores, “implement best regulatory practices in all European jurisdictions with offshore oil and gas activities, strengthen Union's preparedness and response capacity to deal with emergencies potentially affecting Union citizens, economy or environment andimprove and clarify existing Union liability and compensation provisions”.  For the project to have as great impact as possible, it is necessary to include the civil society as well. Activities that will raise awareness on the impact of the pollution will be organised as well. Organisations and participants will aim to include civil society as much as possible through the project activities, to provide knowledge, exchange experiences and concerns, but also to work on common solutions. This will also result in progressive change in mentality of the local and regional population, which will be better informed and understand the issues of pollution in the marine environment on a greater scale. Better understanding will allow for thoughtful response and future conservation efforts to be more sustainable. For example, actions can be planned for the World Clean-up Day or World Ocean Day, as was already done across the European Union.  Each participating country of the project is also a signatory of the Sofia Declaration and Green Agenda for the Western Balkan. Through the Green Agenda for the Western Balkan (GAWB), signing countries have committed to a number of actions like introducing carbon pricing instruments and market-based renewables support schemes, while simultaneously phasing out coal subsidies. In that sense, GAWB is a tool of transposition of the EU acquis on a regional level, as it is written in lines of the EU regulative and strategies for sustainable development and green transition. Moreover, through the GAWB, this green transition Is tailored to the regions needs in terms of economic and industry practices. Therefore, it is highly necessary for projects such as this one to be executed in order to provide great research and information that will be used to accelerate the integration proves of the region on local and regional levels. The project aims to prosper European integration process in the realm of green transition, sustainable development, education and research, innovation, and raising awareness and addressing the climate change. On a macro-regional level, it is important to start with these activities as soon as possible in order to prepare the applicant countries to become valuable and ready member states of the European Union, but also to fortify the Europeanization process of the member states. |
| **Compliance with six broad criteria (see below)**  **(Up to 6 points)** | ***To what extent does the project comply with the Broad Criteria of EUSAIR? (description – please seek guidance in the table clarifying the Broad Criteria)*** |
| **Broad Criteria** |  |
| Address priorities and well-substantiated needs expressed by countries, regions and stakeholders or Commission services and be widely supported. | Marine Protected Areas involve the protective management of natural areas according to pre-defined management objectives, including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection. This way of governance goes in the direction of sustainable development, which is of multiple importance for the countries of the Mediterranean-Ionian region, as well as the species and habitats that are part of the MPAs. Much of the sea and many species are under great pressure, and suffer from insufficient research.  This project aims to strengthen the management of MPAs, which will go towards the sustainable use of marine resources such as sustainable fishing, sustainable tourism and research. As it is known, the world is facing a huge problem due to the extinction of fish species, but also other organisms that are part of marine areas, due to excessive and inefficient fishing and the use of illegal fishing, and due to sea pollution. Such practices not only harm marine systems and species, but also socio-economic conditions in the countries of the Mediterranean-Ionian region. By promoting sustainable development, better management of MPAs, harmonization of national laws with EU laws on species protection, areas, better integration of countries, development of sustainable tourism and promotion of sustainable fishing, and extensive scientific research, capacity building, exchange of knowledge and skills, this project seeks to improve conditions within the Mediterranean-Ionian region. |
| Demonstrate a transnational, if not macro-regional, scope or impact | The Proposed project brings new knowledge and opportunities related to MPAs (including species, habitats but also socio-economic conditions), which will result in capacity building, fight against marine pollution, protection of sensitive species and habitats both nationally and regional level within the Mediterranean-Ionian region. |
| Be realistic and credible | Given the current situation in the partner countries in this project, which is related to poor management, the need for concrete actions is a priority. The project is based on scientific facts, transparency and mutual cooperation of stakeholders, the executive, the scientific community and practitioners. The results of the project are measurable, realistic and in line with EUSAIR principles. By studying previous practices, but also the experience of the project parnet by evaluating the work, the project will use best practices and study shortcomings in order to bring concrete and successful results. Project actions are based on concreteness and efficiency, following clearly defined goals. By exchanging and circulating knowledge, adopting and using new knowledge and better cooperation between the public, decision makers and the scientific community, project actions go in the right of mutual cooperation and achieving common goals. |
| Build on existing initiatives and have reached a fair degree of maturity | By mutual cooperation and use of existing resources and upgrading of EU practices and laws, and with common interests, the existing situation will be upgraded. By initiating new actions, existing initiatives must not be forgotten and the goals of various smaller projects, volunteer actions and small positive changes must be achieved. Such knowledge and practices with better connection and use of knowledge and skills are a powerful tool when it comes to achieving systemic changes as planned in this project. |
| Pay attention to cross-cutting aspects | Identified propsed priority topics are integrated throughout all stages of development and within all the WPs. |
| Be coherent and mutually supportive | The project includes mutual cooperation between the scientific community, decision makers, stakeholders and the general public. The project actions are aimed at joint cooperation, capacity building, use of existing resources and provision of common goods, which is defined by the goals and actions of the project. This systematic approach is aimed at mutual support and achieving common goals. |
| **Compliance with the Guiding Principles/Priorities of the respective Pillar**  **(Up to 30 points)**  Take into account the Guiding principles/Priorities of the Pillar within which the proposed project is developed | Empowering MPAs across the Adriatic-Ionian region is important for a number of reasons including economic resources, biodiversity conservation, and species protection. The project primarily aims to fill knowledge gaps when it comes to the state of MPAs. This step is crucial for understanding the facts and taking concrete actions, which will go in the direction of sustainable development, in accordance with EUSAIR Pillars (1-4). By using common capacities, and with the help of positive practices and examples of EU laws and agreements, Croatia, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro make this project a significant step when it comes to improving the state of MPAs.  MPAs as a source of natural wealth and resources represent a huge potential for the development of socio-economic conditions in the countries of the Mediterranean-Ionian region. However, this potential within the mentioned countries has not been used, but these resources are degraded due to poor management and lead to the extinction of species and habitat destruction. Unconscious fishing, a worrying amount of pollution from the oil industry, production and other forms of economic gain benefit only the individual, but when it comes to shared profits such practices do only enormous damage. By launching such a project, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Croatia and Greece show that they are aware of this problem and show great readiness to mitigate and solve them.  The consequences of poor management lead to the extinction of animal species and the destruction of habitats of international importance. However, this problem is not only a national problem but also has a regional and global impact. In addition, in the end, this problem has an impact on the health of the human population. Unpopular fishing practices involve catching huge fish reserves  ultimately they cannot be sold, leading to large quantities of food being thrown away every day. Unnecessary and unsustainable depletion of reserves in the future can lead to hunger problems. The alarming amount of pollution leads to the deteriorating health of fish populations and habitats, which can ultimately lead to the loss of species, but also to the deterioration of the health of human populations due to the consumption of poor quality food.  Through joint cooperation, exchange of knowledge, capacity building, launching sustainable tourism, encouraging small-scale fisheries, raising awareness of the harmful effects of fossil fuels, plastics and other pollutants, this project affects the strengthening of the Mediterranean-Ionian region. However, by showing positive practices, such a project based on joint cooperation will be able to serve other countries in the future as a positive example and a way to improve the situation in the region.  With a systematic approach, the project is based on scientific facts and filling in gaps in knowledge, harmonizes existing practices and laws with EU laws and uses best practices for sustainable use of existing resources. This approach has multiple meanings. In the first place, the strengthening of marine governance, fisheries and aquacultures, which is in line with Pillar 1 :BLUE GROWTH.  We are aware that the only way to strengthen the region is better coordination and coherence between countries. One of the biggest problems in the region is waste from various sources. By ensuring better connectivity and finding common ways of sustainable waste management, sustainable modes of transport and others, the project has a regional impact related to Pillar 2 CONNECTING THE REGION.  By gathering knowledge, improving national laws in line with EU law, sharing knowledge, capacity building and raising awareness of protected and endangered species, marine pollution and other threats, the project makes a significant contribution to Pillar 3 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY.  Ultimately, raising awareness about the use of sustainable tourism and the use of existing resources can make a huge contribution to the state of MPAs and socio-economic conditions in the Mediterranean-Ionian region, which is the principle of sustainable development. It is known that Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Greece and Croatia have huge potential when it comes to tourism development. Such potential, small businesses related to tourism, cultural and historical heritage, customs, sea and other resources need to be directed in a good way towards mutual benefits and sustainability, which is one of the main pillars of this project, and in accordance with Pillar 4. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM. |
| **Duration:**  **Expected** project start and completion date: (day/month/year) | THE PROJECT IS PROPOSED FOR UP TO FOUR YEARS |
| **Additional Information** |  |

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1. AF p. 55 T2 Facilitating strategic project development and financial dialogue – target groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)