Revised EUSAIR Action Plan

(Pillar 3 indicators, from 9 April 2024)

# Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality

The Adriatic-Ionian Region contains a number of unique ecosystems. Pillar 3 builds on past period 2020 – 2023 when flagships were designed and approved and are recognising the vital eco system services important for the sustainable development. The preservation of these is essential to Europe's natural heritage and requires joint action and cross sectoral cooperation (Pillar 3 matrix approved by EUSAIR Governing Board in 2018) from the countries concerned. Several countries of the region are home to shared eco-regions stretching across borders. These eco-regions include the Illyrian deciduous forests, and the Dinaric Mountains and the Pannonian mixed forests. Overall, the Adriatic-Ionian Region has a rich biodiversity in comparison to the average European region, with many species. All countries of the macroregion provide habitats for Europe’s large carnivores, including the wolf, the Eurasian lynx and the brown bear. These species require large habitats to sustain viable populations, and cooperation is therefore needed on joint management and on ensuring that infrastructure investments will not result in significant fragmentation of important landscape features.

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are vital for marine environment conservation and are part of broader environmental law measures. The EU's focuses on the legal framework for creating and managing new protected areas. Under the Birds and Habitats Directives, EU member states must designate areas to protect endangered species and habitats. The NATURA 2000 network is a significant global network for safeguarding nature in the EU.

However, there are gaps in protecting marine elements like certain fish species, invertebrates, and offshore habitats under the current directives. The EU Commission opts for a practical approach, emphasizing Natura 2000's broad coverage.

The Habitats Directive also influenced the Bern Convention, which laid the groundwork for the EU's Nature directives. But their implementation varies due to different legal systems.

The EU introduced the "EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030" in response to the European Green Deal. It aims to create a comprehensive Trans-European Nature Network, legally protecting at least 30% of land and sea, with one-third under strict protection. This was endorsed by the EU Council of Ministers in October 2020.

The Adriatic-Ionian Region is increasingly vulnerable due to human expansion and climate change effects, including rising sea levels, erosion, marine encroachment, saltwater infiltration, water shortages, droughts, and biodiversity loss. There's escalating strain on coastal zones and their communities at both national and cross-border scales. Climate change amplifies these vulnerabilities and risks. Maintaining healthy ecosystems is crucial for human health, water, food, energy, climate, and biological safety. Such ecosystems are pivotal for sustainable growth and are at the heart of a sustainable blue economy.

The marine realm, a vast canvas of wonder and enigma, faces mounting challenges from human actions. The intricate marine life balance is jeopardized by numerous human-induced factors. Maritime transport, especially, has a significant footprint on the marine environment. The Adriatic and Ionian Seas are major conduits for worldwide maritime activities. While ships enable global commerce as they navigate these seas, they unintentionally affect marine habitats.

High-traffic maritime pathways, particularly in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, are accident hotspots, posing threats of mishaps, oil discharges, and marine life disruptions. Recognizing these dangers, national bodies are proactively devising strategies to lessen maritime traffic's adverse effects, especially in high-risk areas.

Overfishing is another major issue. Historically viewed as an inexhaustible resource, recent data indicates the seas are not limitless. Fishing, vital for coastal populations and the global food network, has consequences. Overharvesting marine resources disrupts marine food chains. Accidental catches of non-targeted species compound the issue, often resulting in dwindling numbers of marine mammals, birds, and other unintended catch species.

Pollution from terrestrial sources is a significant marine challenge. Coastal zones, teeming with human activities, often discharge contaminants into the seas. These pollutants, from farm runoff to industrial emissions, can harm marine organisms. Effective waste handling, especially along coastlines, is crucial, underscoring the importance of holistic approaches to address this problem.

Finally, invasive foreign species pose a threat to marine environments. These species, when introduced to unfamiliar territories, can dominate, prey on, or introduce illnesses to indigenous species, often causing major ecosystem shifts. Some marine conservation zones have acknowledged this risk, allowing regulated removals to oversee and limit invasive species numbers. It's our shared duty to ensure future generations inherit vibrant seas, not barren waters.

Climate change, along with other natural and anthropic processes, severely affect much of the Adriatic-Ionian Region, especially natural habitats and biodiversity. This is one of the regions in Europe most heavily affected by increases in temperature, droughts and water scarcity. Estimations suggest temperature may increase by 1.7 to 4.0°C, and even exceeding 5.0°C by the end of the century, depending on the global effort in greenhouse gasses emission reduction (see Green Agenda for the West Balkans 2021-2030).

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 the winters in the area. The low number of undisturbed wetlands on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, lack of hunting ban areas and hunting rules which are not in line with EU legislation, (as well as low enforcement of the rules in place) result in vulnerable, threatened or endangered migratory bird species being killed. This has impacts for the entire EU, as efforts to protect species breeding risk are being undone if protection is not ensured during migration.

This Pillar sets out to strengthen the collaboration in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in improving the marine and costal environment and transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity, by further strengthening the development and use of common platforms for data exchange and joint monitoring, supporting the implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), also at cross-border and transnational level, strengthening the exchange of experience, and the development of innovative solutions in the region. Actions will ensure that the results of existing cooperation efforts are disseminated and capitalised.

The EUSAIR aims to address environmental issues faced by the macroregion will contribute to implementing the EU environmental Acquis, particularly the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, Maritime Spatial Planning, EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Nitrates Directive, Waste Framework Directive, Birds and Habitats Directives, Common Fisheries Policy, EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries as well the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy. EUSAIR is important subregional approach to enhance and complement regional activities (Barcelona convention)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Reference should be made to the fact Adriatic sub-regional cooperation has been in the past, even outside the Barcelona Convention (institutional) framework, particularly accentuated in the field of protection and preservation of the marine environment. This had been, however, prior to 1990, particularly due to the isolationistic policy of Albania, understood as a de facto cooperation between Italy and the former Yugoslavia. The two States took active part in the existing Mediterranean cooperative arrangements which included, beside the Barcelona system, also the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), in the field of fisheries, and the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM), in the field of marine scientific research, while specific sub-regional forms of cooperation were primarily aimed at supplementing those already existing at the regional (Mediterranean) level.

The four main existing forums for sub-regional cooperation within the Adriatic and Ionian may be accordingly summarized as follows:

1. additional sub-regional cooperation within the institutional framework of the Barcelona Convention and its protocols;
2. cooperation within the Joint Commission for the Protection of the Adriatic Sea (Trilateral Commission – between Croatia, Italy and Slovenia) based on the 1974 Belgrade Agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia; becoming Quadrilateral Commission with the entrance of Montenegro to the Agreement;
3. cooperation within the framework of the intergovernmental Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII);
4. cooperation within the framework of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian macro region (EUSAIR).

Reference should be made to the fact that enhanced sub-regional cooperation requires also cooperation among various cooperative networks, as for example the Trilateral Commission and AII or, nowadays an even more outstanding example, cooperation and coordinated action between the AII, EUSAIR and the Trilateral Commission.

The Actions included in Pillar 3 represent a selection considered by the Thematic Steering Group. Additional ideas for Actions under this Pillar are available in annex 6.2.

## Topic 3.1 – Marine and coastal environment

**Global objectives.** Mitigation of/and adaptation to climate change might be possible by conserving and sustainably using the ocean and marine resources for sustainable development (SDG 14). Ensuring good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environments in line with post-2020 biodiversity targets of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the relevant EU Acquis, the ecosystem approach roadmap of the Barcelona Convention and looking towards the 2030 targets in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (specially the 30x30 target). This also includes also addressing threats to marine biodiversity and ensuring safety and security of green and blue corridors. And to contribute to the aim of the EU Biodiversity Strategy that Europe's biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, climate, and the planet, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change.

**EUSAIR objectives.** Therefore, the objective of this Topic is to strengthen the collaboration in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in improving the marine and costal environment and biodiversity and ecosystem services. This includes a range of different issues where joint or harmonised efforts to analysing risks, mapping, monitoring, awareness raising and action are needed. Particular efforts are needed to capitalise on existing networks, platforms and also on results from EU-funded projects, especially in the context of the Interreg Programme ADRION. This Topic is also to be seen in the context of strengthening circular economy activities in the region.

**Specific objectives of the Topic**

In light of the above objectives, challenges and opportunities, the activities under this Topic aim at

* improving biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, through better monitoring and management of the coastal and marine biodiversity and better coordination in the fields of maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management;
* reducing in the amount of microplastics, oil spills and other pollutants in seawater, leading to improved water quality and reduced risks to human health and marine life;
* reducing the introduction and spread of non-native species and pollutants into the sea;
* adapt to new natural and biodiversity reality due the climate changes issue;
* increase work on blue and green corridors to achieve good environmental status, and ensure safety and security management on that regard.

### EUSAIR specificities opportunities & challenges

Linked to the above objectives, the Adriatic-Ionian Region faces a number of specific challenges and opportunities which the revised Action Plan aims to address.

Opportunities:

* The Adriatic-Ionian Region contains a number of unique marine and inland ecosystems, including karstic regions and tectonic lakes.
* The Adriatic and Ionian Region is characterized by rich marine and coastal biodiversity. The Adriatic Sea hosts nearly half of the recorded Mediterranean marine species and several marine protected areas.

Challenges:

* Measures/interventions to adapt to climate change are insufficient, in particular considering that the Mediterranean has been identified as a hotspot by the IPCC.
* Adverse impact of fishing, extraction and other human activities, especially on sensitive species and seabed habitats.
* There is a need to broaden and improve the coverage of habitat maps of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, marine and maritime monitoring, and cross-border data exchange.
* Aquaculture is a rapidly growing industry which is not regulated in all countries so as to ensure sustainability.
* Excessive, uncontrolled and illegal coastal development often leads to destruction of habitats and to the loss of the natural capacity of coastal territories to adapt to changes (resilience).
* Increasing numbers of invasive alien species in farming activities where regulatory frameworks are lacking and ballast water discharge can pose a threat to the ecosystem.
* 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 sometimes not adequately managed. There is also an insufficient integration between marine conservation and marine spatial planning processes.
* 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 and sea-based sources, such as lost and discarded fishing gear and recreational activities poses a serious problem. There is insufficient marine and riverine litter monitoring.
* Microplastic pollution in seawater threatens human health and ecosystems with unknown impacts.
* The increasing number of offshore wind turbines and solar farms (floating or fixed) presents a new challenge in terms of spatial planning and the marine environment.
* Recognize environmental and climate changes risks to be able to implement Preventive actions on adaptation to climate change, and prevent other environmental disasters.

### Relevant policy frameworks

This Topic connects to a range of global, EU, and national policies related to sustainable blue economy, green transition, research and innovation, circular economy, zero pollution and many other fields.

Relevant global policies include:

* Convention on the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution (Barcelona Convention) [Document 21976A0216(01)] and its Protocols
* The Paris Protocol – A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020 [COM/2015/081 final]
* UN Convention Biological Diversity and its Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
* UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
* UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
* UN Resolution on Single-Use Plastics
* The UN Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals

Relevant EU policies include:

* 8th Environment Action Programme
* A Farm to Fork Strategy [COM(2020) 381 final]
* A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040 [COM(2021) 345 final]
* Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 [COM(2020) 380 final]
* Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
* The Common Fisheries Policy [Regulation (EU) no. 1380/2013 of 11 December 2013]
* EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries
* Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals [Document 21979A0623(01)]
* Directive as regards reducing the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags [(EU) 2015/720]
* Directive on establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning [2014/89/EU]
* Directive on Nitrates [91/676/EEC]
* Directive on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships [(EU) 2019/883]
* Directive on quality of water intended for human consumption [(EU) 2020/2184]
* Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora [92/43/EEC]
* Directive on the conservation of wild birds [2009/147/EC]
* Directive on Urban Waste Water Treatment [(EU) 91/271/EEC]
* Directive on Waste Framework [(EU) 2008/98/EC]
* EU Action Plan: Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil [COM(2021) 400 final]
* European Alien Species Information Network (EASIN)
* European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy [SWD(2018) 16 final]
* Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change [COM(2021) 82 final]
* Green Infrastructure — Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital [COM/2013/0249 final]
* Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans [SWD(2020) 223 final]
* Integrated Costal Zone Management (ICZM) [(EU) 2002/413/CE]
* Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) [Directive 2008/56/EC]
* Recovery and Resilience Facility [Document 02021R0241-20230301]
* Regulation as regards introducing new environmental economic accounts modules (Natural capital accounting) [(EU) No 691/2011]
* Regulation on Invasive Alien Species [(EU) 1143/2014]
* The European Green Deal [COM (2019) 640 final]
* Water Framework Directive (WFD) [Directive 2000/60/EC]
* New approach for a Sustainable Blue Economy in the EU [COM/2021/240 final]
* Council conclusions on a sustainable blue economy acknowledging blue corridors [Council conclusions, May 2021, 9153/21]

### Indicative key stakeholders

The implementation of this Topic needs to draw on the engagement of a wide range of players, including:

* Regional and National Environmental Protection Agencies
* Authorities in charge of Protected Areas Management (local, regional, subregional level)
* Local and regional authorities
* Local and regional authorities in charge of environment, biodiversity and nature protection
* Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAS)
* Non-governmental organisations in the field of environment, biodiversity and nature protection
* Regional Fisheries Management Organizations
* Regional Sea Conventions
* Research institutes and scientific organisations
* Universities and educational institutions
* International Development and Cooperation
* Environmental and Agricultural Associations
* NGOs and Non-profit Organizations
* Fisheries and Marine Management
* Relevant EU and other funds managing authorities.

### Support to horizontal and cross cutting topics

Activities under this Topic contribute actively to the horizontal and cross-cutting topics of the revised Action Plan.

**Horizontal topics:**

* **Enlargement.** In the context of the EUSAIR Action Plan's "Marine and Coastal Environment" topic, the activity under the "Enlargement" horizontal topic focuses on collaborative efforts with EU candidate countries to enhance marine ecosystem protection. This collaboration aims to harmonize marine conservation policies and practices across the region, aligning with Chapter 27: Environment of the EU acquis. Key areas of focus include marine biodiversity conservation, pollution control, and sustainable fisheries management. The expected result of this activity is to **strengthen regional cooperation in marine conservation and achieve harmonized policies across the EU member states and Republic of San Marino and candidate countries**. The progress will be measured by the number of **joint initiatives undertaken** and **the degree of policy alignment achieved**, as indicated by various alignment indicators. Key stakeholders in this initiative include environmental ministries and agencies from both EU member states and Republic of San Marino and candidate countries, cross-border conservation initiatives, biodiversity research organizations, as well as policy makers and legal experts specializing in environmental conservation. Their collaboration is crucial in achieving the goals of enhanced marine ecosystem protection and policy harmonization in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
* **Capacity building.** Under the "Capacity Building" horizontal topic in the EUSAIR Action Plan, an activity has been designed to enhance the capabilities of local communities, authorities, and stakeholders in managing marine and coastal environments sustainably. This involves comprehensive training programs, workshops, and seminars covering marine biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries management, pollution control, and coastal ecosystem protection. These educational initiatives aim to empower local actors with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective environmental stewardship. Aligned with Chapter 27: Environment of the EU acquis, this capacity-building activity seeks to significantly improve local and regional capacities in sustainable marine and coastal ecosystem management. The progress and effectiveness of this initiative will be measured by the number of training programs conducted and the observed improvements in management practices. Key stakeholders in this initiative include local conservation groups, environmental NGOs, educational and research institutions specializing in biodiversity, community leaders, and local government units. Their involvement is crucial for achieving the desired improvement in sustainable management of marine and coastal areas.
* **Innovation and research.** Under the "Innovation and Research" horizontal topic in the EUSAIR Action Plan, there is a dedicated activity focused on promoting innovation and research to address marine and coastal environmental challenges. This involves the development of advanced technologies and methods for controlling marine pollution, with a particular emphasis on oil spill detection, plastic waste management, and sustainable fisheries. This activity aligns with Chapter 27: Environment of the EU acquis, which encourages innovative approaches to environmental conservation. The expected results include the development and implementation of cutting-edge technologies and practices that will significantly improve marine conservation efforts and enhance pollution control. The success of this initiative will be measured by the number of research projects initiated and their successful implementation. Key stakeholders in this venture include technology companies specializing in environmental monitoring and pollution control, academic researchers in marine sciences and environmental engineering, and various public and private sector stakeholders in maritime industries. Their collaboration and expertise are vital for achieving breakthroughs in marine and coastal environmental protection.

This Topic, as well as related Actions are strictly connected with green transition challenges and needs as they face environment degradation and contribute to strengthen climate action.

**Cross-cutting topics**:

* **Circular economy.** In the realm of Circular Economy, particularly under the Marine and Coastal Environment, a pivotal activity involves the enhancement of recycling initiatives coupled with a concerted effort to reduce waste in coastal regions. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the Environment chapter of the acquis, emphasizing Waste Management and the principles of the Circular Economy. The primary goal of this activity is to effectuate a noticeable decrease in marine pollution, concurrently driving an upsurge in recycling rates within coastal communities. The success of this endeavor will be quantitatively assessed through key metrics, primarily focusing on the percentage reduction of coastal waste and a marked improvement in recycling rates. The implementation and effectiveness of this initiative hinge on the collaborative efforts of a diverse set of stakeholders, including local governments, environmental NGOs, waste management companies, and the coastal communities themselves. This integrated approach not only addresses the immediate environmental concerns but also fosters a sustainable model for marine and coastal conservation.
* **Green rural development.** In the framework of Green Rural Development within the Marine and Coastal Environment, an essential activity focuses on supporting sustainable agricultural practices in coastal rural areas, aimed at minimizing runoff and pollution. This activity is closely linked with the chapters of the acquis concerning Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as Water Quality. The expected outcomes of this initiative are multifaceted, including a significant reduction in agricultural runoff, enhancement of water quality, and consequent improvement in the health of marine ecosystems. The progress and effectiveness of this initiative will be monitored through specific measurements, particularly the reduction in pollutants found in agricultural runoff and the overall improvements in water quality metrics. The realization of these goals requires the active participation and collaboration of various stakeholders, such as farmers, agricultural cooperatives, water management authorities, and environmental NGOs. By aligning these efforts, the initiative not only aims to mitigate environmental impact but also to ensure the sustainability and resilience of coastal rural communities.
* **Digitalization.** For Digitalization in the Marine and Coastal Environment, a key activity involves the development of community-based applications and platforms dedicated to coastal conservation and awareness. This initiative aligns with the Digital Agenda and Civic Participation chapters of the acquis, emphasizing the role of technology in civic engagement. The expected results from this undertaking include enhanced public engagement in coastal conservation efforts and more effective dissemination of information related to coastal environmental issues. The success of these digital tools will be measured through user engagement metrics and their effectiveness in raising awareness and promoting conservation efforts. The realization of this project depends on a collaborative effort involving IT developers, local communities, educational institutions, and conservation groups, all working together to leverage digital technology for environmental education and community-based conservation initiatives.

### Action 3.1.1 – Enhancing coastal and marine biodiversity

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| **Action 3.1.1** | Description of the Action |
| Name of the Action | **Enhancing marine and coastal biodiversity** |
| What are the envisaged activities? | * + Promotion of sustainable blue economy of the Adriatic-Ionian Region by implementing Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) including area-based conservation-management measures.
	+ Establishment and further development of coastal and marine biodiversity information networks and platforms for data and information exchange for all relevant players. This will be conducted in synergy with platforms already existing at Mediterranean level, in particular through the INFO/RAC of the Barcelona Convention.
	+ Defining priorities for new spatial protection of regional importance in contribution to global and EU targets for biodiversity including identifying joint approach on the conservation measures with neighbouring countries.
	+ research activities to fill in knowledge gaps on status of habitat types and species and identifying restoration activities for reaching good environmental status of marine ecosystems monitoring activities for migratory marine species, including monitoring of threats and pressures and activities to address them Promote the development of ecosystem services.
	+ Enhancing the network of marine protected areas.
	+ Cooperation in management of marine protected species and of invasive alien species (IAS). This may be done in cooperation with Action 3.1.3.
 |
| Which challenges and opportunities is this Action addressing? | * + Measures/interventions to adapt to climate change are insufficient, in particular considering that the Mediterranean has been identified as a hotspot by the IPCC.
	+ There is a lack of habitat maps coverage of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, marine and maritime monitoring and cross-border data exchange.
	+ Overfishing, where it occurs, habitat degradation, and incidental catches pose serious threats to marine biodiversity. Monitoring and enforcement, in some cases, are insufficient.
	+ 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 sometimes not adequately managed. There is also an insufficient integration between marine conservation and marine spatial planning processes.
	+ Excessive, uncontrolled and illegal coastal development often leads to destruction of habitats and to the loss of the natural capacity of coastal territories and ecosystems to adapt to changes (resilience).
	+ The increasing number of offshore wind turbines and solar farms (floating or fixed) represents a new challenge in terms of spatial planning and the marine environment.
 |
| What are the expected results/targets of the Action? | * + Improved biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
	+ Better management of the coastal and marine biodiversity and better coordination in the fields of maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management.
	+ Improved habitat maps, monitoring, and cross-border data exchange.
 |
| EUSAIR Flagships and strategic projects | Under Flagship 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 the following strategic projects were developed:**Monopillar strategic projects*** + **ICZM and MSP** - To promote a sustainable growth of the AI region by implementing ICZM and MSP also to contribute CRF on ICZM of Barcelona convention
	+ **3MPS** Monitoring and management of marine protected species

**Cross-Pillar strategic projects*** + **CROSSPILLAR ICZM&MSP** - Using high quality research to strengthen dialogues and institutional capacities for effective implementation of MSP/ICZM in support of inclusive and sustainable growth in the AIR (Pillar1&3)
 |
| Indicators | Indicator name | Common Indicator name and code, if relevant | Baseline value and year | Target value and year | Data source |
| How to measure the EUSAIR activities under this Action? | Number of trans-boundary cooperation events in the field of MSP | n.a. |  (2023) |  TBD | EU Countries: TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participations in joint training schemes  | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG 3  |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participation in joint actions across borders  | RCO81 Interreg: Participation in joint actions across borders | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG 3  |
| RI: Biological diversity is maintained or enhanced. The quality and occurrence of coastal and marine habitats and the distribution and abundance of coastal and marine species are in line with prevailing physiographic, hydrographic, geographic and climatic conditions |  |  |  | Annex I DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC and Decision IG.26/3 COP Barcelona Convention |

### Action 3.1.2 – Reduction of the pollution of the sea and inland waters

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| **Action 3.1.2** | Description of the Action |
| Name of the Action | **Reduction of the pollution of the sea and inland/transition waters** |
| What are the envisaged activities? | * + Cooperation on the assessment of the status, target setting, monitoring, reporting and implementation of measures related to marine litter and micro litter.
	+ Raise awareness about pollution deriving from maritime traffic and marine litter from ships.
	+ Support the implementation of Adriatic-Ionian sub/regional oil spill contingency plan (REMPEC).
	+ Support for development of suitable measures, practical solutions and policy recommendations for the reduction of chemical and pharmaceutical substances in agriculture/aquaculture practices.
	+ Sharing of best practices in the field of waste management, including marine litter.
 |
| Which challenges and opportunities is this Action addressing? | * + Marine litter stemming both from land and sea-based sources, such as lost and discarded fishing gear and recreational activities poses a serious problem. There is insufficient marine and riverine litter monitoring.
	+ Microplastic pollution in seawater threatens human and ecosystems health with unknown impacts.
	+ Intense maritime transport activities and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation result in oil spills, including large scale pollution events, and noise pollution.
 |
| What are the expected results/targets of the Action? | * + Joint measures, such as clean-up programmes, addressing marine litter stemming from land-based sources, lost and discarded fishing gear, and recreational activities.
	+ Reduction in the amount of microplastics and other pollutants in seawater, leading to improved water quality and reduced risks to human health and marine life.
	+ Activities supporting the implementation of the sub/regional oil spill contingency plan (REMPEC) for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
	+ Improved of monitoring and the knowledge base of nutrient flows and load, to enable better decision-making and more targeted interventions.
 |
| EUSAIR Flagships and strategic projects | Under flagship IMPLEMENTATION OF ADRIATIC-IONIAN SUB/REGIONAL OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN - **ASOSCoP** the following strategic projects were developed:**Monopillar strategic projects*** + **NAMIRS** – North Adriatic Maritime Incident Response System (Grant agreement for project under DG ECHO – Union Civil Protection Mechanism
	+ **NEATNESS** - cleaN thE AdriaTic aNd thE ionan sea from the plaSticS
 |
| Indicators | Indicator name | Common Indicator name and code, if relevant | Baseline value and year | Target value and year | Data source |
| How to measure the EUSAIR activities under this Action | OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participations in joint training schemes  | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes  | 0 (2023) | tbd(2030) | TSG 3  |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participation in joint actions across borders | RCO81 Interreg: Participation in joint actions across borders | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG 3 |
| OI: Number of events on pollution deriving from maritime traffic and marine litter from ships | Completion of joint training schemes (RCR81) | 0 (2023) | 3 (2023) TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| RI: Marine litter does not adversely affect the coastal and marine environment |  |  |  | Decision IG.26/3 COP Barcelona ConventionAnnex I DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC |
| RI: Concentrations of contaminants are at levels not giving rise to pollution effects |  |  |  | Decision IG.26/3 COP Barcelona ConventionAnnex I DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC |
| No. of dissemination events of the REMPEC contingency plan  | RCO83 Interreg: Strategies and action plans jointly developedRCR79 Interreg: Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations | 0 (2023) | TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
|  | RI: Human-induced eutrophication is minimised, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters |  | ? (2023) | Tbd (2030) | Decision IG.26/3 COP Barcelona ConventionAnnex I DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC |

### Action 3.1.3 – Reduced pollution through ballast water and other releases in the sea and water

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| **Action 3.1.3** | Description of the Action |
| Name of the Action | **Reduced environmental problems deriving from ballast water and other releases at sea from inland/transition waters** |
| What are the envisaged activities? | * + Raise awareness about environmental problems from ballast water and other releases at sea and inland/transition water.
	+ Promote the use of technical equipment on ships for cleaning ballast water.
	+ Support the introduction of ship tracking by discharge CISE system at the Maritime Administration.
 |
| Which challenges and opportunities is this Action addressing? | * + Increasing numbers of non indigenous species from farming activities where regulatory frameworks are lacking and ballast water discharge threaten ecosystems.
	+ Intense maritime transport activities and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation result in oil spills, including large scale pollution events, and noise pollution.
 |
| What are the expected results/targets of the Action? | * + Reduced introduction and spread of non-native species and pollutants into the sea.
	+ Better environmental status of the sea.
	+ Increase safety and security in the blue and green corridors to achieve good environmental governance.
 |
| EUSAIR Flagships and strategic projects | / |
| Indicators How to measure the EUSAIR activities under this Action? | Indicator name | Common Indicator name and code, if relevant | Baseline value and year | Target value and year | Data source |
|  | OI: Number of events for better environmental status of the sea | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) | TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: No. of dissemination events on the IMO Guidelines  | RCO83 Interreg: Strategies and action plans jointly developed | 0 (2023) | TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participations in joint training schemes  | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG3 |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the development of strategies and action plans | RCO83 Interreg: Strategies and action plans jointly developed | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG 3  |
| RI: Non-indigenous species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems. |  |  |  | Annex I DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC and Decision IG.26/3 COP Barcelona Convention |

## Topic 3.2 – Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity

**Global objective.** Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity is increasingly under threat, mainly due to human activities. Declining biodiversity and climate change effects are mutually reinforcing each other.

**EUSAIR objective.** Therefore, the objective of this Topic is to address threats to terrestrial biodiversity and contribute to the aim of EU Biodiversity Strategy, so 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. In the context of the Adriatic-Ionian Region the aim is to protect and enhance natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems with particular attention to the ecological connectivity of blue and green corridors/infrastructure.

**Flagship.** Pillar 3 approved the flagships “PET HAB ECO – Protection and enhancement of natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems”. The flagship’s overall objective is to improve the resilience of large carnivore 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. The flagship aims at strengthening the protection and enhancement of natural karstic terrestrial habitats and ecosystems, with particular attention to ecological connectivity of the blue and green corridors/infrastructure. Connecting the Adriatic-Ionian Region’s protected areas (including Natura 2000 areas and other networks) with tourism, in order to strengthen the region through joint management. Pillar 3 also works on interpillar projects, which have evolved from flagships and have been developed based on the Pillar 3 matrix. This matrix is not just a theoretical tool; it is being used in actual process, ensuring the efficiency and focus of Pillar 3 approaches.

**Specific objectives of the Topic**

In light of the above objectives, challenges and opportunities, the activities under this Topic aim at

* minimising conflicts between humans and large carnivores, among others through improving institutional capacities;
* rehabilitating and restoring sites and habitats for migratory water birds occurring within the Adriatic-Ionian Region, and developing harmonised research and monitoring methods; and
* improving the management of nature resources in protected areas and harmonisation of national and transnational policies on management, including more environmentally friendly farming practices, and better analysis and implementation of climate-related risk mitigation and adaptation measures.

### EUSAIR specificities opportunities & challenges

Linked to the above objectives, the Adriatic-Ionian Region faces a number of specific challenges and opportunities which the revised Action Plan aims to address.

Opportunities:

* The Adriatic-Ionian Region contains a number of unique ecosystems, including karstic including transbound underground water bodies and habitats and tectonic lakes.
* The Adriatic-Ionian Region provides habitats for Europe’s large carnivores, including the wolf, the Eurasian lynx and the brown bear.
* 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.

Challenges:

* Negative effects of human activities on transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity (e.g. land use intensification and fragmentation), i.e. long term viability of (large) carnivores’ populations is threatened by habitat fragmentation and destruction due to urbanisation, farming and linear infrastructure.
* Insufficient integral natural reserves and connections between protected areas in coastal, transitional environment and wetlands to preserve biodiversity.
* Increasing presence of non-indigenous invasive species also in coastal/terrestrial areas (not only animals, but also plants and other species are threatening the endemic ecosystems).
* Insufficient capacity of protected areas to manage natural resources and to harmonise national and transnational policies on management and conservation of large carnivores.
* Insufficient Adriatic-Ionian Region-wide scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring of transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.

### Relevant policy frameworks

This Topic connects to a range of global, EU, and national policies related to sustainable blue economy, green transition, research and innovation, circular economy, and many other fields.

Relevant global policies include:

* Convention on the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution (Barcelona Convention) [Document 21976A0216(01)]
* Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES CoP19]
* Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals [Document 21979A0623(01)]
* The Ramsar Convention
* UN Convention Biological Diversity and its Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
* UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
* UNESCO World Heritage Convention
* The Paris Agreement – A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020 [COM/2015/081 final]
* The UN Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals

Relevant EU policies include:

* A Farm to Fork Strategy [COM(2020) 381 final]
* A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040 [COM(2021) 345 final]
* Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
* Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 [COM(2020) 380 final]
* Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
* Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora [92/43/EEC]
* Directive on the conservation of wild birds [2009/147/EC]
* Green Infrastructure — Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital [COM/2013/0249 final]
* Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans [SWD(2020) 223 final]
* Regulation on Invasive Alien Species [(EU) 1143/2014]
* EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA)
* Regulation as regards introducing new environmental economic accounts modules (Natural capital accounting) [(EU) No 691/2011]
* Regulation on the European Environment Agency and the European Environment Information and Observation Network [(EC) No 401/2009]
* The European Green Deal [COM (2019) 640 final]

### Indicative key stakeholders

The implementation of this Topic needs to draw on the engagement of a wide range of players, including:

* Environmental and agricultural associations
* Regional and National Environmental Protection Agencies
* Authorities in charge of Protected Areas Management (local, regional, subregional level)
* Local and regional authorities in charge of protected areas and heritage sites
* Local and regional authorities
* Non-governmental organisations in the field of environment, biodiversity and nature protection
* Local and regional authorities in charge of environment, biodiversity and nature protection
* Local public and private energy communities
* Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAS)
* Non-governmental organisations in the field of environment, biodiversity and nature protection
* Research institutes and scientific organisations
* Universities and educational institutions
* Relevant EU and other funds managing authorities.

### Support to horizontal and cross cutting topics

Activities under this Topic contribute actively to the horizontal and cross-cutting topics of the revised Action Plan.

**Horizontal topics:**

* **Enlargement.** Under the "Enlargement" horizontal topic in the EUSAIR Action Plan, an initiative focusing on collaborative conservation efforts with EU members country and Republic of San Marino and candidate countries is being proposed. This activity involves the development and implementation of joint projects aimed at protecting and managing transboundary terrestrial habitats and biodiversity. Such projects will focus on endangered species and critical ecosystems. Aligned with Chapter 27: Environment of the EU acquis, this activity emphasizes nature protection and biodiversity conservation. The expected outcome is an enhanced conservation of biodiversity across national borders, focusing on shared terrestrial habitats. Success will be measured by the number of joint conservation projects initiated, improvements in biodiversity indices, and the degree of policy alignment between participating countries. Key stakeholders include environmental ministries and agencies from both EU member states and Republic of San Marino and candidate countries, cross-border conservation initiatives, biodiversity research organizations, as well as policymakers and legal experts in environmental conservation. Their collaboration is vital for the effective conservation of transboundary terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.
* **Capacity building.** Under the "Capacity Building" horizontal topic in the EUSAIR Action Plan, there's a key initiative to implement educational initiatives focused on terrestrial biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration. This activity encompasses training on effective biodiversity conservation strategies, habitat restoration techniques, sustainable land management, and species protection. Aligned with Chapter 27: Environment of the EU acquis, this activity specifically targets education and capacity building in biodiversity management. The expected result is the enhancement of knowledge and skills among stakeholders in biodiversity conservation. Success will be gauged through participant feedback and the number of habitats successfully restored. Key stakeholders in this initiative include local conservation groups, environmental NGOs, educational and research institutions focusing on biodiversity, as well as community leaders and local government units. Their involvement is crucial for fostering a deeper understanding and practical skills in biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration.
* **Innovation and research.** Under the "Innovation and Research" horizontal topic in the EUSAIR Action Plan, there is a significant focus on fostering innovative research projects dedicated to habitat conservation, species protection, and sustainable land use. This activity seeks to explore and develop new methods and strategies for terrestrial ecology and land management. Aligned with Chapter 27: Environment of the EU acquis, the activity emphasizes innovative approaches to land and species conservation. The expected result is the development and implementation of novel conservation strategies. The effectiveness of this initiative will be measured by the number of research projects undertaken and their successful implementations. Key stakeholders include research institutions specializing in terrestrial ecology, innovators and entrepreneurs in sustainable land use, and both public and private sector entities involved in land and resource management. Their collaboration and expertise are vital for driving innovation in conservation and sustainable land management practices.

This Topic, as well as related actions are strictly connected with green transition challenges and needs as they face environment degradation and contribute to strengthen climate action.

**Cross-cutting topics**:

* **Circular economy.** In the area of Circular Economy, particularly within the scope of Transnational Terrestrial Habitats and Biodiversity, a critical activity is the promotion of sustainable land use and waste reduction strategies. This initiative is closely aligned with the Environment chapter of the acquis, with a specific focus on waste management. The primary goal here is to achieve enhanced biodiversity conservation, coupled with a reduction in the ecological footprint across transnational terrestrial habitats. The success of this endeavour will be gauged through measurable outcomes, such as a noticeable decrease in waste production and tangible improvements in sustainable land use practices. This ambitious undertaking necessitates the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, local governments, the agricultural sector, and conservationists, all working together to foster a more sustainable and ecologically responsible approach to land use and waste management in these critical habitats.
* **Green rural development.** In the context of Green Rural Development concerning Transnational Terrestrial Habitats and Biodiversity, there is a significant emphasis on encouraging biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices in rural areas. This approach is in line with the Agriculture and Rural Development and Environment chapters of the acquis. The main objective of this activity is to enhance ecosystem services and conserve biodiversity within rural landscapes. To assess the impact of these practices, measurements will focus on the levels of biodiversity present in agricultural areas and the rate at which these biodiversity-friendly practices are adopted. Key stakeholders in this endeavour include farmers, agricultural cooperatives, environmental agencies, and the rural communities themselves. Their collaboration is crucial for achieving the desired improvements in ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas while maintaining their ecological balance.
* **Digitalization.** Under the theme of Digitalization in Transnational Terrestrial Habitats and Biodiversity, a key activity is the development of digital tools for the monitoring of biodiversity and habitat health. This initiative is aligned with the Digital Agenda and Environment chapters of the acquis, highlighting the integration of technology with environmental management. The expected outcome of this activity is to enhance the monitoring capabilities and facilitate data-driven decision-making for the conservation of habitat and biodiversity. The effectiveness of this approach will be measured by both the number and the efficacy of the digital monitoring tools deployed, as well as their impact on conservation policy and practices. A diverse group of stakeholders plays a crucial role in this initiative, including tech companies, research institutions, conservation NGOs, and policy makers. Their collaboration is essential in leveraging digital technology to improve conservation efforts and policy implementation, thereby contributing to the sustainable management and protection of terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.

### Action 3.2.1 – Joint population management for large carnivores

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action 3.2.1** | Description of the Action |
| Name of the Action | **Joint population management for large carnivores and awareness rising activities, protecting the habitats and working towards quality of life and coexistence[[2]](#footnote-2)** |
| What are the envisaged activities? | * + Joint mapping, monitoring and population management plans for large carnivores and non-indigenous invasive species.
	+ Increased cross-border collaboration on monitoring such as standardised methods and protocols.
	+ Support for international networking and exchange of experience between key stakeholders and authorities.
	+ Foster the coexistence of large carnivores and traditional agricultural activities, such us grazing.
	+ Capacity-building on population management for large carnivores, incl. cross-sectoral cooperation (agriculture, spatial planning, hunting), stakeholder engagement and awareness raising for improvement of sectoral plans and practices and reduction of conflicts.
	+ Rehabilitation of the key habitats of international importance and improve connections between protected areas.
	+ Better integration of the results and findings on population management for large carnivores in spatial planning and indicators measuring their implementation.
	+ Support to accession countries in aligning with EU Nature Acquis.
 |
| Which challenges and opportunities is this Action addressing? | * + Insufficient integral natural reserves and connections between protected areas in coastal, transitional environment and wetlands to preserve biodiversity.
	+ Insufficient capacities of protected areas for management of nature resources and to harmonise national and transnational policies on management and conservation of large carnivores.
	+ Insufficient Adriatic-Ionian Region-wide scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring of transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.
 |
| What are the expected results/targets of the Action? | * + Human – large carnivore conflicts properly addressed and substantially minimized in a timely manner (communities and institutional capacity building implemented, exchange and implementation of know-how, knowledge, best practices transfer is improved).
 |
| EUSAIR Flagships and strategic projects | / |
| Indicators How to measure the EUSAIR activities under this Action? | Indicator name | Common Indicator name and code, if relevant | Baseline value and year | Target value and year | Data source |
|  | OI: Number of cross-border projects for large carnivore conservation | RCO81 Interreg: Participation in joint actions across borders | 0 (2023) | TBD |  TSG 3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of public awareness raising events focused on large carnivores | RCO115 Interreg: Public events across borders jointly organised | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participation in joint actins across borders | RCO81 Interreg: Participation in joint actions across borders | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG 3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the development of strategies and action plans | RCO83 Interreg: Strategies and action plans jointly developedRCR79 Interreg: Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations |  | tbd (2030) | TSG3 |
| RI: Species show no deterioration in conservation trends and status |  |  |  | EU Biodiversity Strategy Dashboard |

### Action 3.2.2 – Conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action 3.2.2** | Description of the Action |
| Name of the Action | **Conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats: Support for implementation and enforcement of Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds (AEWA)** |
| What are the envisaged activities? | * + Identify sites and habitats for migratory waterbirds occurring within their territory and encourage the protection, management, rehabilitation and restoration of these sites.
	+ Capacity building on AEWA, incl. cross-sectoral cooperation (agriculture, hunting, spatial planning), stakeholder engagement and awareness raising for improvement of sectoral plans and practices.
	+ Harmonisation of AEWA research and monitoring methods in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
	+ Awareness raising for the need to improve hunting legislation and its proper implementation.
	+ Support to accession countries in aligning with EU Nature Acquis.
 |
| Which challenges and opportunities is this Action addressing? | * + Insufficient capacities of protected areas for management of nature resources and to harmonise national and transnational policies on management and conservation of waterbirds and their habitats.
	+ Insufficient Adriatic-Ionian Region-wide scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring of transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.
 |
| What are the expected results/targets of the Action? | * + Rehabilitated and restored sites and habitats for migratory water birds occurring within the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
	+ Harmonised of research and monitoring methods for AEWA in the Adriatic-Ionian Region and rehabilitation of key habitats of international importance.
	+ Rehabilitation of the key habitats of international importance.
	+ Improved management of nature resources in protected areas and harmonisation of national and transnational policies on management and conservation of large carnivores.
	+ Improved scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring of transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
 |
| EUSAIR Flagships and strategic projects | / |
| Indicators | Indicator name | Common Indicator name and code, if relevant | Baseline value and year | Target value and year | Data source |
| How to measure the EUSAIR activities under this Action? | OI: Number of surveys of migratory water bird populations | RCO81 Interreg: Participation in joint actions across borders | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of events for improvement of sectoral plans and practices and to improve hunting legislation | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participation in joint actions across borders | RCO81 Interreg: Participation in joint actions across borders | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG3  |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participations in joint training schemes  | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG3  |
| RI: Species show no deterioration in conservation trends and status |  |  |  | EU Biodiversity Strategy Dashboard |
| RI: No. of rehabilitated and restored sites of migratory water birds and their habitats | RCO83 Interreg: Strategies and action plans jointly developedRCR79 Interreg: Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |

### Action 3.2.3 – Improve interaction between anthropic and natural ecosystems and habitats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action 3.2.3** | Description of the Action |
| Name of the Action | **Improve interaction between anthropic and natural ecosystems and habitats** |
| What are the envisaged activities? | * + Awareness rising activities on implementation and financial aspects of environmentally friendly farming practices, with focus on the interaction between anthropic and natural ecosystems and habitats.
	+ Joint analysis on climate related risks and possible mitigation and adaptation measures (e.g. forest fires prevention, native forest restoration, campaigns to regenerate the tree cover, nurturing patches of forest and woodland in agricultural/urban landscapes).
	+ Promote the development of ecosystem services.
 |
| Which challenges and opportunities is this Action addressing? | * + Insufficient capacities of protected areas for management of nature resources and to harmonise national and transnational policies on management and conservation of large carnivores.
	+ Insufficient Adriatic-Ionian Region-wide scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring of transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.
 |
| What are the expected results/targets of the Action? | * + Increased adoption of environmentally friendly farming practices through awareness raising activities and financial support.
	+ Improved analysis and implementation of climate-related risk mitigation and adaptation measures, such as prevention of forest fires and native forest restoration.
	+ Promote the development of ecosystem services.
	+ Improved management of nature resources in protected areas and harmonisation of national and transnational policies on management and conservation of large carnivores.
	+ Improved scientific evidence and coordinated monitoring of transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
 |
| EUSAIR Flagships and strategic projects | Under flagship PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL TERRESTRIAL HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS - PET HAB ECO the following strategic projects were developed:**Monopillar strategic projects*** + **FOREST READAPT** - Renewal of the adaptation of coppice forests in a drastically changing environment
	+ **SEC-DIV-CONIFERS** - Secure diversity through a holistic approach for the most threatened Mediterranean conifer ecosystems: combining genetic, physiology, biodiversity indexes, germination and restoration
	+ **Bio-Shelters** - Botanical Gardens as Biodiversity Shelters and Nurseries
 |
| Indicators | Indicator name | Common Indicator name and code, if relevant | Baseline value and year | Target value and year | Data source |
| How to measure the EUSAIR activities under this Action? | OI: Number of project concepts addressing anthropic-natural habitat interaction | RCO116 Interreg: Jointly developed solutions | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of events on the importance of ecological connectivity and its ecosystem services | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the development of joint solutions | RCO116 Interreg: Jointly developed solutions | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG3  |
| OI: Number of activities supporting the implementation of global and EU targets for biodiversity through the participations in joint training schemes | RCO85 Interreg: Participations in joint training schemes | 0 (2023) | tbd (2030) | TSG3  |
| RI: Significant areas of degraded and carbon-rich ecosystems are restored. Habitats show no deterioration in conservation trends and status.  |  |  |  | EU Biodiversity Strategy Dashboard - Target 4 partially modified to fit into Action 3.2.3 |
| RI: Introduction of new best practice measures on prevention of forest fires and forest restoration | RCO116 Interreg: Jointly developed solutionsRCR104 Interreg: Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | 0 (2023) |  TBD | TSG3 questionnaire |

## Indicative list of relevant funding sources

Relevant EU Cohesion Policy objective: PO2 – A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management and PO 5 – A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives.

Relevant IPA Programming Framework window: all windows, specifically windows 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity and 5: Territorial and cross border cooperation.

The EUSAIR participating countries can utilize the following EU funding instruments 2021-27:

**Applicable to the EU member states**

* The ERDF (PO 2.4, PO 2.5, PO 2.6, PO 2.7, PO 5.2) and Cohesion Fund (PO 2.4, PO 2.5, PO 2.6, PO 2.7),
* sectoral and regional mainstream ERDF programmes including the relevant Policy Objective 2 and Priority Objective 5,
* the EMFF, (Priority 2: Article 22: Protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and Priority 3: Article 28: Maritime surveillance),
* the Recovery and Resilience Fund (EUSAIR flagships provide for concrete measures aimed at protecting the environment, which is indirectly addressed in RRF Flagships under "Power up" and "Recharge and refuel"),
* relevant ERDF Interreg programmes incorporating Policy Objective 2 (Sustainable region),
* The Green Deal (protection of biodiversity and ecosystems; reduction of air, water and soil pollution; ensuring the sustainability of our blue economy and fisheries sector).

**Applicable to EU member states in cooperation with EU candidate countries:**

* The Life Programme (Sub-programme: Nature and Biodiversity),
* Horizon Europe Programme (Cluster Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment. Intervention area: Biodiversity and natural resources),
* Digital Europe Programme (Digital technologies across the economy and society),
* Relevant ERDF-IPA Interreg programmes incorporating Policy Objective 2.

**Applicable to the EU candidate countries**

* IPA III thematic priorities:
* Applicable to mainstream IPA - Annex II of IPA III Regulation, Paragraph r) Protecting the environment and improving the quality of the environment, addressing environmental degradation and halting biodiversity loss, promoting the conservation and sustainable management of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and renewable natural resources, investing in air quality, water and waste management and sustainable chemical management, promoting resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production and supporting the transition to green and circular economies, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increasing resilience to climate change and promoting climate action governance and information and energy efficiency. IPA III shall promote policies to support the shift towards a resource-efficient, safe and sustainable low-carbon economy and strengthen disaster resilience as well as disaster prevention, preparedness and response.
* Applicable to IPA-IPA Interreg programmes - Annex III of IPA III Regulation, paragraph b) protecting the environment and promoting adaptation to climate change, the mitigation of climate change, and risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, coordinated maritime spatial planning, resource efficiency and circular economy, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon, green economy; improving air and water quality, including by enhancing alignment with European environmental standards, and waste and water management; promoting investment to address specific risks; ensuring disaster resilience and disaster prevention, preparedness and response; and promoting and enhancing international coordination of transboundary rivers.
* The Western Balkans Investment Framework, which have an investment priority among other also in environment and climate.
1. Barcelona convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean sea is composed by the following protocols:

the Protocol for the Prevention of the Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Barcelona, 1976);

the Protocol concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (Valletta, 2002; in force from 17 March 2004);

the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (Athens, 1980);

The Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (Barcelona, 1995);

The Protocol concerning Pollution resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf, the Seabed and its Subsoil (Madrid, 1994);

The Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Izmir, 1996) ;

The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (Madrid, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The initiative to establish a transnational platform for large carnivores in the area of the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos was launched at the beginning of 2021. The aim of the platform is to establish a long-term mechanism for the exchange of experiences and data management of large carnivores (Slovenia to Greece for bears and to Bulgaria for wolves and lynxes). This approach reflects models established in other regions, such as the Alpine Convention or the Carpathian Convention, in which there is already established cooperation on the topic of tourism, agriculture, transboundary management of large animals, etc.

In 2022, the continuation of activities is financed by the Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU) which runs the Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) to support projects aiming for environmental protection in the countries covered by the programme. The target regions of the programme are the states of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasian countries and Central Asia. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)