

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COUNTRIES
PARTICIPATING IN THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION
ON A GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, SET UP IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Brussels, 18 November 2014

We, Representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia*

CELEBRATING the endorsement, by the EU General Affairs Council of 29 September 2014, and by the European Council of 23-24 October 2014, of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

UNDERLINING that the Strategy is an innovative instrument of cooperation between EU and non-EU countries, territories and people of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, also with the political aim of assisting participating candidate and potential candidate countries on their path towards the EU;

COMMITTED to move without delay to the implementation phase of the Strategy, in partnership with the European Commission, as indicated by the European Council;

STRESSING the EU Commission Communication of 20 May 2014 and the Council conclusions of 21 October 2014 on the governance of macro-regional strategies, which recall that the delivery of results of macro-regional strategies relies on an effective governance model and efficient procedures for the implementation, fully respecting the institutional architecture of the participating countries, as well as the specificities and competences of their administrative structures;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Council conclusions of 29 September 2014 on the EUSAIR call upon the Member States participating in the Strategy to set up, by the end of 2014, in partnership with the European Commission and the non-EU countries, an effective multilevel governance system and effective procedures for the timely implementation of the Strategy; ACKNOWLEDGING that governance involves three levels: (i) political leadership and ownership, (ii) coordination and (iii) implementation and that these levels are interrelated, in particular political leadership and ownership being a pre-requisite for effective coordination and implementation;

UNDERLINING that governance is a shared process which describes how and by whom a macro-regional strategy is implemented and that implementation of the Strategy therefore relies on a collective effort on the part of the participating countries, the European Commission and the other European Institutions, as appropriate;

AGREEING accordingly that, for the EUSAIR to bring clear impact and deliver practical results, a multi-level governance and management system based on strong political leadership and decision making as well as clarity in the organization of work is required;

TAKING NOTE of the coincidental timing of the launch of the EUSAIR and the start of the 2014-2020 EU programming period, STRESS the need to ensure a prompt setting of the EUSAIR governance and management system in order to secure the required alignment and synergies between the two processes;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the work done by the EUSAIR National Contacts Points - henceforth be to be renamed “National Coordinators” so as to better reflect their role with regards to the Strategy - and the Commission for devising a streamlined architecture for the governance and management of the EUSAIR, aligned with the general recommendations issued by the Council for the governance of macro-regional strategies, yet taking into account the contextual conditions specific to the Adriatic and Ionian Region;

AGREE with the outline of the EUSAIR governance and management architecture as devised in the paper “Towards a streamline governance and management architecture for the EUSAIR” attached to this Statement, and ENCOURAGE all parties to consider tailoring it further, as appropriate, to implementation requirements as they emerge and taking into account the dynamic nature of the Strategy;

COMMIT to:

- favour all necessary actions at respective national level – fully respecting the institutional architecture of each country and the specificities and competences of the administrative structures – aimed at the appointment and empowerment of the relevant key implementers (National Coordinators, Pillar Coordinators, members of the Thematic Steering Groups) in order to ensure a prompt set up, in partnership with the European Commission, of the devised governance and management architecture, in particular the EUSAIR Governing Board and Thematic Steering Groups;

- reinforce the political leadership and ownership of EUSAIR, translating it into institutional and administrative support in order to ensure effective delivery of the Strategy;
- encourage the involvement of relevant national/regional/local stakeholders as well as civil society in all steps of the Strategy's implementation;
- earnestly encourage the respective national and regional authorities responsible for the management of EU funds to ensure the embedding, where appropriate and subject to the territorial needs, of the EUSAIR into the programmes for the 2014-2020 financial cycle and the mobilisation of the relevant EU funds and of other national/regional/local available resources to support the implementation of the Strategy and the achievement of its objectives.

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Attachment:

EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region - Towards a streamlined governance and management architecture for the EUSAIR - Working Paper devised by the EUSAIR National Coordinators, in partnership with the Commission

* Slovenia expresses its procedural reservation

EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

Towards a streamlined governance and management architecture for the EUSAIR

**Working Paper devised by the EUSAIR National Coordinators in partnership with the
Commission**

1. PURPOSE

Council Conclusions on the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), adopted by the General Affairs Council on 29 September 2014, call upon the Member States, in partnership with the Commission and the non-EU countries, to set up, by the end of 2014, an effective multi-level governance system. This includes effective procedures for the implementation of the Strategy, fully respecting the institutional architecture of the participating countries and the specificities and competences of their administrative structures, in order to ensure a timely start of the Strategy. The Commission Report on governance of macro-regional strategies¹ and the related Council Conclusions, adopted on 21 October, furthermore refer to three interrelated levels of governance, namely (i) political leadership and ownership, (ii) coordination and (iii) implementation.

The present Working Paper addresses these requirements by outlining a framework within which governance and management of the EUSAIR can take place. It is to be endorsed at the launch event for the EUSAIR on 18 November 2014 by the eight Ministers of Foreign Affairs involved, in the presence of the Commission. This endorsement will convey status and authority to the functions to be performed through the proposed governance architecture and to its members, thereby paving the way for a swift implementation of the Strategy.

The present paper builds on this, while underlining that there can be no 'one-size-fit-all' governance and management model. Specific contextual conditions need to be taken into account. Accordingly, the paper does not aim at providing a detailed, exhaustive description of the functions and tasks to be performed within the proposed architecture. It emphasises the key functions to be performed and the key objectives to be pursued at the different levels, leaving it to the participating countries, in partnership with the Commission, to decide how this can best be achieved. It aims to provide sufficient clarity and certainty for implementation of the Strategy without unnecessary hurdles.

2. PURPOSE OF EUSAIR GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ARCHITECTURE

In addition to the political level, this architecture involves two main levels: the coordinating level represented by a Governing Board and the implementation level represented by thematic Steering Groups.

2.1. EUSAIR Governing Board (GB)

¹ COM (2014) 284 of 20 May 2014

The Governing Board (GB) coordinates the work of the Thematic Steering Groups in charge of implementation through strategic guidance with respect to management and implementation of the EUSAIR and its Action Plan. To this end, representatives from the participating countries should be duly empowered by their respective Governments.

GB's functions should include:

- Acting as interface between the operational/managerial level (Thematic Steering Groups) and the political/ministerial level
- Convening and preparing meetings at ministerial level, as appropriate
- Proposing possible revisions of the Strategy and/or the Action Plan
- Issuing strategic guidelines to the Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) and ensuring linkages between them
- Issuing guidelines on information and publicity about the Strategy
- Reporting to the EU-28 High Level Group on macro-regional strategies
- Elaborating further, and reviewing as appropriate, on the six broad criteria, included in the Action Plan (AP), for selecting actions/projects as potential candidates for inclusion in the AP
- Providing a general template for Rules of Procedures governing the thematic Steering Groups
- Providing orientations and guidelines for the annual EUSAIR Forum (e.g. setting the Agenda)
- Ensuring coordination with existing regional cooperation organisations, as appropriate
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework

The GB should adopt its Rules of Procedures.

Participants:

- National representatives: each participating country is represented by two delegates, one from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs², the other from the national authorities responsible for the coordination EU funds (in non-EU countries: National IPA Coordinators)
- Pillar Coordinators
- Commission services (DG REGIO, DG MARE and DG NEAR). Other DGs will be invited as appropriate, especially those relating to the pillars.
- The permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
- A representative of the Committee of the Region's Adriatic-Ionian Interregional Group
- A representative of the European Economic and Social Committee

² Some countries may use an equivalent ministry

- The Managing Authority of the ADRION programme and the authority responsible for the EUSAIR Facility Point under that programme

The GB can consider inviting other participants, as appropriate.

The GB will be co-chaired by the country chairing pro tempore the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and by the Commission (DG REGIO).

2.2. Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs)

The EUSAIR Communication identifies four interdependent pillars of strategic importance: Blue Growth - Pillar 1; Connecting the Region (transport and energy networks) Pillar 2; Environmental quality - Pillar 3; Sustainable tourism - Pillar 4. It is proposed to set up one thematic Steering Group per pillar. However, special arrangements will be set under Pillar 2 (transport and energy).

The TSGs will be chaired for an initial period of up to 3 years by a tandem of countries, on a rotating basis, starting with those that acted as coordinators for the pillar of their choice during the consultation process, namely: Greece and Montenegro for Pillar 1, Italy and Serbia for Pillar 2, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina for Pillar 3, and Croatia and Albania for Pillar 4. These arrangements may be reconsidered in due course by the Governing Board, as appropriate.

TSGs' functions should include:

- Developing specific criteria for selecting actions/projects within each pillar on the basis of the six broad criteria included in the Action Plan (AP) as further developed/complemented by the Governing Board, as appropriate.
- Identifying actions/projects to be included in the AP, ensuring that they comply with the pillars' objectives, including with regard to cross-cutting and horizontal aspects
- Identifying relevant funding sources for the actions/projects selected and facilitating and following up implementation of actions/projects, including monitoring and evaluation
- Ensuring linkages with the other thematic Steering Groups
- Liaising with Managing Authorities/NIPACs³ of EU programmes in EU and non-EU countries
- Liaising with: the relevant EU programmes managed directly by the Commission; the IFIs; the regional cooperation organisations, etc.
- Convening and preparing meetings of relevant line ministers
- Submitting to the GB policy proposals and recommendations re. revisions of the AP
- Reporting to the GB

Each TSG is to adopt its Rules of Procedures on the basis of the template provided by the GB.

³ National IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) Coordinators

Each country is to ensure that the necessary internal consultations are completed prior to TSG meetings so that the position adopted by its representatives in the TSG reflects a compromise acceptable to all key actors, within the country, that are concerned by the issues discussed.

Participants:

- Chairs. Each TSG will be chaired by two Pillar Coordinators following the scheme presented above. These Coordinators will be designated by the respective countries from their most competent national/regional administrations. Coordinators shall *i.a.* ensure the necessary interaction with the other TSGs.
- Members. In each TSG: Representatives from the relevant administrations within the participating countries. Sub-national (regional) representatives should participate, as appropriate, according to each country's institutional structure.
- The Commission, including relevant line DGs
- Regional cooperation organisations, as appropriate
- Representatives of International Financial Institutions, as appropriate

The Pillar Coordinators can consider inviting other participants

3. **ROLE OF THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN (ADRION) TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME**

Operational and administrative support is of utmost importance for an effective and efficient performance of the functions attributed to the GB and the TSGs. Accordingly, the ADRION programme shall support governance and implementation of the EUSAIR. To this end, the ADRION programme shall include a Priority Axis "Supporting the governance of the EUSAIR" which envisions a specific Action "Operational support to the key EUSAIR governance actors and stakeholders in their respective role". This Action – which will be implemented through a "EUSAIR Facility Point" to be established in the Slovenian administration – may include activities, such as:

- Providing day-to-day operational and logistic support to the GB and TSGs
- Assisting the TSGs in 'match making' activities, bringing together project promoters and financiers
- Providing assistance in developing project concepts (seed money, pilot actions, preparatory actions, etc.)
- Supporting preparation of macro-regional actions/projects, in coordination with the TSGs
- Supporting the TSGs in monitoring, reporting and evaluation
- Facilitating the development and functioning of a stakeholders platform
- Facilitating visibility through promotion of an Adriatic Ionian profile, as well as awareness-raising, including management of a EUSAIR website and the staging of events (incl. the annual EUSAIR Forum)

- Assisting the GB in the preparation of the annual EUSAIR Forum
- Supporting the building of the knowledge base, including collection of reliable and comparable data for establishing sound baselines and developing relevant, evidence-based result indicators and plausible targets
- Facilitating dialogue with bodies in charge of the implementation of programmes/financial instruments regarding how best to mobilise funding for actions under the different pillars