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FACILITYPOINT

EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region Newcomers Kit

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1 INTRODUCTION

Dear newcomer,

welcome to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region hereinafter referred to as EUSAIR. In line with the Application Form, Version 4.0 of EUSAIR Facility Point project - Supporting the EUSAIR Governance for Improved Cooperation”, which is co-funded by the European Union through the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme 2021-2027, one of the activities anticipated is Capacity Building (Activity 3.2). Capacity building will take different forms and will focus on practical and specific topics related to the work of EUSAIR. One of the tasks of the Capacity Building is a basic understanding of EUSAIR for newcomers, namely those who have recently become part of EUSAIR governance structures such as Governing Board, Thematic Steering Group, Youth Council, Facility Point, EUSAIR StEP or SP4EUSAIR Project Staff. It can be also used as white paper for journalists and experts working as external contractors for the previous mentioned projects.

Therefore, if you are new to the field, this newcomers kit is especially designed to support you and your organization providing essential information and resources to help you effectively contribute to EUSAIR objectives.

2 ABOUT THE EUSAIR

A 'Macroregional strategy' is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States EU-candidate and third countries located in the same geographical area which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. Four EU macro-regional strategies, covering several policies, have been adopted so far: The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in 2009; The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in 2010; The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in 2014 (EUSAIR) and The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) in 2015.

Guiding principles - Macro-regional strategies are guided by three basic rules:

- No new EU funds, according to the 2013 Common Provisions Regulation, a macro-regional strategy means an 'integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be or not be supported by the European structural and investment funds among others,
- No additional EU structures,
- No new EU legislation.

The idea is to better align existing funds and policies at EU, national and regional level and to rely on existing bodies for implementation.

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), was established in 2014 with objective to promote effective multilevel and cross-sectoral cooperation for an economically prosperous, socially inclusive, well connected, more integrated, green and liveable Adriatic-Ionian Region. Among ten participating countries there are four EU Member countries Croatia, Greece, Italy (only corresponding regions) and Slovenia as well as five EU candidate countries namely, Albania, Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and one third country, San Marino (Illustrated in Figure 1).

The EUSAIR promotes economic growth and prosperity in the Region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. It also aims at protecting the sea, coastal and inland environment and ecosystems. Moreover, from the start one of the objectives of the Strategy was to support EU candidate countries in their accession process, which in recent years is gaining even higher relevance.



Figure 1: A map of participating countries

The governance architecture involves various actors, including the Governing Board, National Coordinators, the Presidency and TRIO Presidency, Pillar Coordinators, Thematic Steering Groups, Youth Council, EUSAIR Governance Point¹ (EGP) and the European Commission. In addition to the political level, consisting of Ministers for EU Funds and/ or Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ten participating countries taking strategic decisions at the EUSAIR Annual forums' ministerial meetings, the EUSAIR architecture involves two more levels: the coordinating level and operational level. The Governing Board, the National Coordinators, the Pillar Coordinators, the European Commission, the Presidency and TRIO have the coordinative role in the Strategy. The operational level is represented by Thematic Steering Groups. The EUSAIR Governance Point has supporting role to Strategy's governance bodies. EUSAIR Youth Council is an independent body in an advisory capacity/consultative role. The Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) helps to implement the Strategy by facilitating and supporting actions of the participating countries.

¹ EGP consists of 3 projects co-financed by Interreg IPA ADRION 2021-2027: EUSAIR FACILITY POINT, SP4EUSAIR and StEP-EUSAIR.

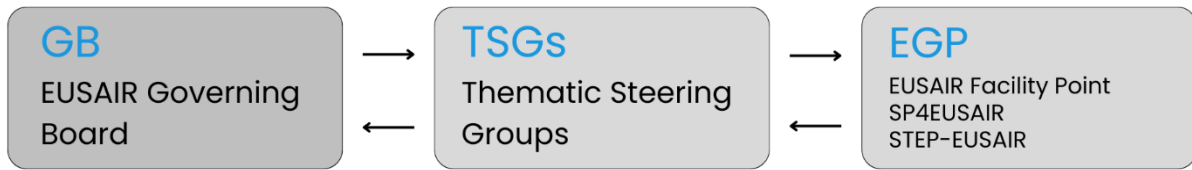


Figure 2: EUSAIR Governance and management architecture

The EUSAIR is built on five thematic pillars namely, Blue Sustainable Economy, Connecting the Region, Environmental Quality, Sustainable Tourism and Improved Social Cohesion. For each of the Topics identified under the five Pillars, the EUSAIR will mobilise and align existing EU and national funding instruments and provide operational support.

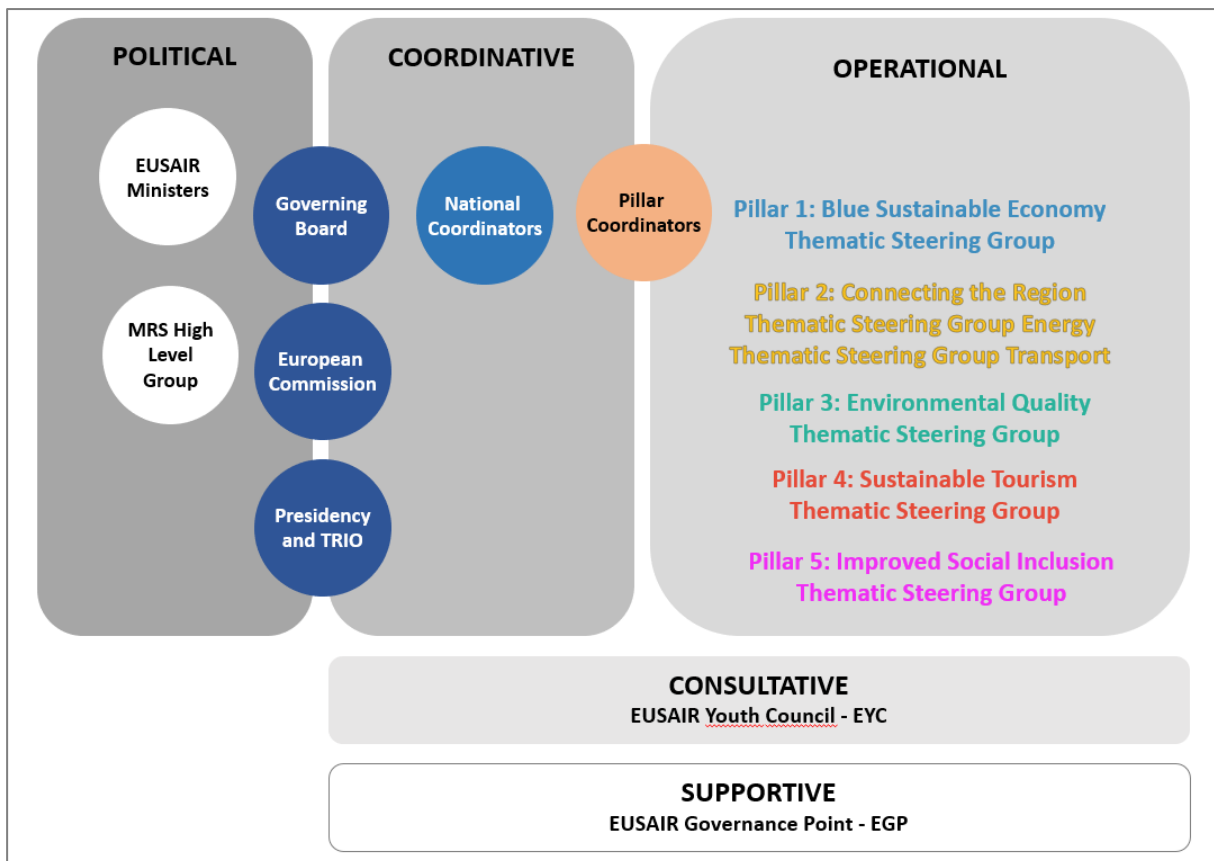


Figure 3: EUSAIR governance architecture chart

Source: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region Governance Architecture Paper, Autumn 2024

2.1 Pillars and Topics

The Strategy is founded on five thematic priorities/Pillars representing key challenges as well as key opportunities in the region. For each Pillar, specific Topics and Actions have been identified by the participating countries in the **EUSAIR Action Plan**, taking into account the needs, urgency of the issue

and the added value of joint actions taken in order to solve the existing challenges or build upon the future opportunities. The Action Plan represents the main implementation document/agreement of the Strategy. Initially it was adopted in 2014 and revised in years from 2022-2024. The revised Action Plan is under adoption process and will be adopted in 2025.

The Pillars are currently coordinated by the following participating countries:

1. Pillar 1– Blue sustainable economy: Greece, Montenegro,
2. Pillar 2 – Connecting the region: Italy, Serbia, North Macedonia,
3. Pillar 3 – Environmental quality: Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
4. Pillar 4 – Sustainable tourism: Croatia, Albania,
5. Pillar 5 – Improved social cohesion: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Action Plan incorporates the following features:

- **Pillars** address the core challenges and opportunities identified as being of central importance for the Adriatic-Ionian Region. They are at the core of the Strategy and are essential to the success of its work, and how it is communicated.
- **Topics** under each Pillar represent the main areas in which the macroregional strategy brings added value. For each Topic, the Action Plan presents the issue and indicates what specific contribution it will bring.
- **Actions** under each Topic are the interventions which the Strategy governance structures and stakeholders plan to carry out to address the set objectives and targets. These include e.g. new approaches, increased coordination in policy making, policy reviews, support to a process already underway, and networking initiatives. The Thematic Steering Groups assisted by the EUSAIR Governance Point will translate the actions into concrete project development processes and together with stakeholders bring added value to the region.

Pillar 1: BLUE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Main topics according to EUSAIR Action Plan

- ✓ **TOPIC – BLUE AND GREEN TECHNOLOGIES**
- ✓ **TOPIC – FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**
- ✓ **TOPIC – MARITIME AND MARINE GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES**

Pillar 1 focuses on three Topics:

1.1. To strengthen **blue and green technologies**, by promoting synergies and networking of regional relevant and useful research, development and innovation activities as well as supporting initiatives and cooperation between regional innovation ecosystems, initiatives and smart specialisation strategies;

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- developing a more sustainable, resilient and competitive fishery industry in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, including a regional fisheries information system; and
- developing a more sustainable, resilient and competitive aquaculture sector in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, including both aquaculture at sea and at land, and growing volumes of Adriatic-Ionian aquaculture products on the market.
- Better fisheries management measures, sustainable exploitation of fish stocks, improvement of data collection and fish stock assessment, harmonisation with EU regulations & international organisations.
- Sustainable growth of a more efficient and circular aquaculture production, capitalising on innovation, digitalisation, and knowledge sharing.
- Support and encourage the adoption of sustainable sourcing standards for aquaculture and fisheries stocks through the use of standards such as the Marine Stewardship Council, Seafood Watch for Aquaculture and others.

1.2. To strengthen **fisheries and aquaculture**, through networking policy practices, business practices, research findings and other important assets (in maritime and lake environments) in the Adriatic-Ionian Region

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at

- improving the quality of public services and improving governance mechanisms for international cooperation and strengthening institutional capacities in a wide range of sectors (e.g. fishery policy, maritime spatial planning, integrated coastal management);
- improving the evidence base for policy and decision-making by sharing data and knowledge among public bodies and strengthening their capacities to seize opportunities or react to challenges which can be detected earlier if data and information is shared and analysed across countries; and
- improving the state of the maritime and marine environments through an increased uptake of digital technological tools and skills in maritime and territorial spatial planning which help to improve governance and planning processes.
- Developing supply chains and skills in fisheries and aquaculture by using large-scale partnerships for offshore renewable energy under the Pact for Skills

1.3. Supporting maritime and marine governance and services, to make better use of the skills that are available and equip people with new skills (including soft skills) that are needed.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at

- increasing safety and security of port operations and resilience of infrastructure, through a vessel traffic monitoring and information system and investments in ports to increase safety, security and ports' capacity and interconnectivity;
- improving the effectiveness of port infrastructure and equipment, hence the competitiveness of maritime transport services, through the interoperability of IT systems and solutions in ports including the development and/or improvement of Port Community System; and
- greening ports and maritime transport and increasing the number of certified ports (ISO 14001, Port Environmental Review System and Eco-Management and Audit Scheme).
- removing roadblocks to project investments, focusing on the enabling factors for the creation and development of regional enterprises along the free and regulated European market principles;

Pillar 2: CONNECTING THE REGION

Main topics according to EUSAIR Action Plan

- ✓ TOPIC – MARITIME TRANSPORT
- ✓ TOPIC – MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY
- ✓ TOPIC – URBAN NODES
- ✓ TOPIC – ENERGY NETWORKS
- ✓ TOPIC – DECARBONISING ENERGY SYSTEMS

The specific objectives of Pillar 2 are:

2.1. Maritime transport: to strengthen safety and security of port operations and develop a competitive macroregional interconnected port system;

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at

- increasing safety and security of port operations and resilience of infrastructure, through a vessel traffic monitoring and information system and investments in ports to increase safety, security and ports' capacity and interconnectivity;
- improving the effectiveness of port infrastructure and equipment, hence the competitiveness of maritime transport services, through the interoperability of IT systems and solutions in ports including the development and/or improvement of Port Community System; and
- greening ports and maritime transport and increasing the number of certified ports (ISO 14001, Port Environmental Review System and Eco-Management and Audit Scheme).
- removing roadblocks to project investments, focusing on the enabling factors for the creation and development of regional enterprises along the free and regulated European market principles;

2.2. Multimodal connectivity: to develop reliable multimodal and intermodal connections with the hinterland, both for freight and passengers;

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- new investment projects in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure to improve multimodal connections;
- interoperable rail infrastructure and services among countries of the Adriatic-Ionian Region to increase the rail connections between cities in the Western Balkans;
- increased rail transport capacity and quality through a reduction of missing links and bottlenecks and upgraded rail network of the region to TEN-T standards; and
- increased road safety of rail and road networks.

2.3. Urban nodes: to support the integration of urban nodes and regional transport systems into a greener TEN-T network;

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- the adoption of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) for all urban nodes in the region to actively promote sustainable mobility solutions, and sustainable logistics measures.
- integrated public transport services solutions (including also fare structure) for the largest urban nodes, covering their functional urban areas, to increase the modal share of public transport;
- a better coverage of bike lanes and networks (more km of cycling lanes) in all urban areas, connecting the cities with their commuting areas and measures to promote cycling, to increase bike modal share.

2.4. Energy networks: to achieve a well-interconnected and well-functioning internal energy market supporting the three energy policy objectives of the EU, i.e. confronting climate change, enhancing security of supply and competitiveness;

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- Developing integrated power networks and markets towards a green Adriatic-Ionian Region;
- Fostering energy market integration, energy competitiveness and security of energy supply of the Adriatic-Ionian Region.
- Removing roadblocks to project investments, focusing on the enabling factors for creation and development of regional enterprises along the free and regulated European market principles.

2.5. Decarbonising energy systems: to confront the challenges of the energy transition towards decarbonised and resilient energy systems, while promoting renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix across the Adriatic-Ionian Region;
- improving and enhancing energy efficiency of the economies of the Adriatic-Ionian Region, through better energy use and management and thus reducing the energy intensity, in terms of the energy required for GDP unit;
- introducing and deploying hydrogen in the energy mix while increasing cooperation on advanced energy technologies in the Adriatic-Ionian Region;
- promoting better cohesion through the development of energy communities in the Adriatic-Ionian Region;
- ensuring affordable energy supply by fighting energy poverty and protecting energy consumers.

Pillar 3: ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

✓ TOPIC – MARINE AND COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

✓ TOPIC – TRANSNATIONAL TERRESTRIAL HABITATS AND BIODIVERSITY

3.1. When it comes to **marine and coastal environment** the strategy objective of this topic is to strengthen the collaboration in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in improving the marine and coastal environment as well as 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 required. Efforts are needed to capitalise on existing networks, platforms and 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

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 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.

3.2. With respect to **transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity** 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.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- reducing 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;
- 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.

Pillar 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Main topics according to EUSAIR Action Plan

- ✓ **TOPIC – FACILITATING DIGITAL AND GREEN TRANSITION OF THE TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OFFER**
- ✓ **TOPIC – PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND MANAGEMENT**
- ✓ **TOPIC - GREENING OF TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

4.1. When it comes to **facilitating digital and green transition of the tourism and cultural heritage offer**, the objective of is to develop favourable framework conditions and facilitate digital and green transition with the aim to diversify and strengthen the tourism offer in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. This covers the promotion of collaborative governance of tourism destinations, improved exchanges and knowledge on statistics and indicators for tourism, and the promotion of digital and green objectives in tourism strategies. Particular efforts are needed to capitalise on existing networks, platforms and also on results from EU-funded projects, especially ADRIION. In the long-run, the Adriatic-Ionian Region could become a global leader in sustainable tourism, considering it is already one of the most extensively developed touristic microregions in the world.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at

- establishing macroregional networks and routes, to promote collaboration of tourism destinations and with other innovative stakeholders at local, regional and national level, and lead to tourism services and products based on cross-border collaboration;
- supporting countries in progressing towards improved tourism data systems, that are in line with European data systems and include sustainability indicators;
- helping tourism stakeholders to develop new capacities to integrate green and digital transition in tourism strategies.

4.2. Preparing for the future: knowledge, skills and management - this Topic addresses knowledge gaps on sustainable destination management and green and digital skills in tourism in the Adriatic-

Ionian Region. The objective is to raise awareness on the opportunities of the twin transition and to develop, support and promote effective dissemination, sharing and learning on green and digital skills among all tourism stakeholders, especially Destination Management Organisations, tourism business associations/cluster and SMEs.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at

- increasing the level of knowledge and capacities about sustainable and smart destination management among tourism SMEs and tourism stakeholders;
- a wide adaptation of education models and skills in tourism to the new tourism trends and tourists needs including people with access needs, in particular to the digital and green transition, e.g. through corresponding courses at universities/training centres and the development/updating of national guidelines on training/education in the tourism sector.

4.3. The objective for **greening tourism products and services** is to integrate environmental sustainability throughout all tourism operations and development processes in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. This approach involves supporting the preservation of the region's natural and cultural landscapes while promoting sustainable practices across member states. To achieve this, a collaborative framework that includes government bodies, private sector entities, NGOs, and local communities is essential. This collaboration will help develop sustainable infrastructure, implement environmental education programs, promote reliable ecolabels such as the use of the Natura 2000 logo on goods and services the EU Ecolabel and environmental management schemes such as the EMAS and establish unified sustainability standards. Moreover, building resilience and adaptability to environmental challenges is a key focus. The region aims to develop tourism strategies that enhance the sector's ability to cope with climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, ensuring that tourism growth contributes positively to environmental and cultural resilience.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- Promoting Ecotourism, Agritourism and Fishing Tourism.
- Promoting Rural Tourism.
- Promoting the Mediterranean Diet and local Origin Products.
- Supporting cultural preservation and enhancement, recognizing and capitalizing on the Mediterranean Diet and local, organic and origin products as essential components of the region's cultural heritage and identity. This recognition serves not only as a celebration of the region's rich historical fabric but also as a crucial element in attracting culturally-minded tourists
- Fostering sustainable economic growth, the initiative aims to stimulate economic development and diversification in rural areas. This is achieved by promoting products of origin and organic production, which are intrinsically linked to sustainable tourism practices. These efforts are designed to enhance the economic viability of rural communities and reduce the economic disparities between rural and urban areas
- Fostering practices that enhance soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, ensuring that tourism and agricultural activities contribute positively to the environmental health of the region. In terms of environmental sustainability, the focus must be on supporting the sustainable management of natural and agricultural resources.

PILLAR 5: IMPROVED SOCIAL COHESION

Improved social cohesion is the new, 5th pillar in the EUSAIR. By establishing the 5th Pillar the Strategy corresponds more strongly with the fourth policy objective of the EU Cohesion Policy: "a more social and inclusive Europe". The EUSAIR is a cooperation framework to foster economic, social and territorial cohesion in the area. Moreover, it will allow the participating countries to work more closely on labour market and social related issues and improve social cohesion across the borders.

Main topics according to the ESUAIR Action Plan:

- ✓ **TOPIC – YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**
- ✓ **TOPIC – PROMOTING SKILLS ACQUISITION FOR FUTURE LABOUR MARKETS**
- ✓ **TOPIC - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET**
- ✓ **TOPIC - SOCIAL INNOVATIONS**

5.1. Youth engagement and employment refers to empowerment of young generations, by increasing their capacity to actively participate in the social and economic life.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- creating a stronger link with EU policies;
- amplifying the voice of young people in public policymaking as actors of change and including young people and youth representatives in the decision-making process, e.g. through setting up an EUSAIR Youth Council;
- including youth representatives in the development and implementation of the Strategy to make it more inclusive; and
- promoting activities aiming at increased youth employability, focusing on skills, apprenticeships/traineeships and matching with employers/sectors in demand for workers.

5.2. The aim of the topic Promoting skills acquisition for future labour markets is to promote life-long learning opportunities and access to the labour market for the Adriatic-Ionian population.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under this Topic aim at:

- Supporting policy harmonisation in macro-region with emphasis on implementation of EU skills frameworks and initiatives;
- Modernisation of school, higher education, VET and adult education curricula in line with the labour market needs; and
- Skills development for future labour markets.

5.3. Equal opportunities in the labour market are the topic that is going to address current issues such as gender inequality and discrimination, gender pay gaps, irregular work, precariousness, labour exploitation.

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under the Topic of Equal opportunities in the labour market aim at:

- Supporting people in the Adriatic-Ionian Region to overcome and prevent gender discrimination at work and labour exploitation, and to build gender equality and decent work, in line with the principles and targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- Promoting equal opportunities in the labour market and thus reduce the gender gaps and discrimination in terms of employment and payment; and
- Better protecting labour rights and conditions of the local population, and thereby increase the employment rate and reduce gender related poverty.

5.4. The aim of topic **Social Innovations** is to promote pressing as for example active and healthy ageing as a response to a trend of ageing population in the region

Specific objectives of the Topic

The activities under the Topic of Social Innovations aim at:

- Promoting existing solutions for social innovations and social economy.
- Strengthening the capacities of decision-makers and transfer of knowledge in the field of social innovations.
- Increasing the visibility of the social economy sector as attractive employer by combining economic, sustainable and social goals
- Promoting an active, strategic approach to the field of social innovation/social economy.
- Providing professional support in training and education to vulnerable groups.
- Information campaigns on the funding possibilities from EU and national level.
- Promoting age friendly and inclusive environments for all age groups.
- Enhancing life-long learning and knowledge-interaction for all generations.

The implementation of the Action Plan is a shared responsibility across all levels—country, regional, and local/municipal—in each participating nation. The governance system ensures coordination, monitoring, and execution.

3 THE GOVERNANCE ROLES WITHIN THE EUSAIR

The governance architecture involves various actors, including the Governing Board, National Coordinators, the Presidency and TRIO Presidency, Pillar Coordinators, Thematic Steering Groups, Youth Council, EUSAIR Governance Point² (EGP) and the European Commission.

3.1 The strategic coordination role

THE EUSAIR GOVERNING BOARD (GB)

The Governing Board (GB) coordinates the work of the EUSAIR. The GB represents the highest political and decision level of the strategy.

The EUSAIR Governing Board (GB) serves as the **core strategic decision-making body**, ensuring proper functioning of governance. Standing members GB are National Coordinators, Pillar Coordinators, Commission services, All Secretariat, representatives from the Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, European Parliament, IPA ADRION programme Managing Authority, EUSAIR Governance Point, and a EUSAIR Youth Council representative.

Decisions are made by National Coordinators with consensus, **providing guidance to Thematic Steering Groups for implementation.**

The Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region presides over GB meetings, with at least two meetings per presidency year. National Coordinators adopt and update Rules of Procedure for GB meetings, endorsing the Rules of Procedure for Thematic Steering Groups. The GB may invite other participants as appropriate, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.

The GB is chaired by the country chairing pro tempore the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and the EUSAIR, supported by the Commission (Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, DG REGIO) in keeping with its leading role of strategic coordinator of the Strategy. The Chair may cooperate with the previous and forthcoming Chairmanships.

The meeting takes place with the support from the EUSAIR Governance Point (EGP). It's crucial for continuous reaffirmation of political commitment and ownership for successful implementation.

THE EUSAIR NATIONAL COORDINATORS (NCs)

The EUSAIR National Coordinators (NCs) are representing their countries in the GB. Appointed by their governments or respective institutions, each participating country nominates two NCs—one working at the foreign affairs ministry and one from the national authority overseeing EU funds.

Their responsibilities encompass strategic coordination, monitoring progress, promoting visibility, and facilitating dialogue with stakeholders. They also approve EUSAIR Youth Council members and report to the EU-27 High-Level Group on Macro-Regional Strategies. Furthermore, NCs are responsible for raising awareness about EUSAIR's priorities, guiding communication efforts, coordinating with existing

² EGP consists of 3 project co-financed by Interreg IPA ADRION 2021-2027: EUSAIR FACILITY POINT, SP4EUSAIR and StEP-EUSAIR.

organizations in the Adriatic and Ionian region, developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and overseeing the functioning of EUSAIR Managing Authority networks. They inform other NCs of nominations in EUSAIR governance bodies, provide guidance to the EUSAIR Governance Point, and ensure compliance with governance principles.

The EUSAIR National Coordinators (NCs) also oversee the strategic coordination and implementation of EUSAIR within their country. NCs have several key responsibilities, including coordinating the active participation of national stakeholders in EUSAIR's five Pillars, monitoring the Strategy's progress in the country, and fostering alignment with national and EU policies. They liaise with Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) to ensure relevant authorities implement EUSAIR's objectives and maintain communication with local, regional, and macro-regional stakeholders.

Additionally, NCs promote EUSAIR's visibility, manage communications, and guide the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks. They also organize technical NCs meetings, support EUSAIR's Annual Forum, approve the EUSAIR Youth Council members and ensure that EUSAIR governance functions effectively across all levels.

THE EUSAIR PRESIDENCY

Pursuing a rotation principle, **the EUSAIR Presidency** is taken over by an EUSAIR participating country for a one-year period, namely from June 1st till May 31st of the following year. The EUSAIR Presidency rotates annually among participating countries in predefined order, of alternating between the EU member state and the EU candidate country. The Presidency coordinates National Coordinators (NCs) and Pillar Coordinators (PCs), hosting the EUSAIR Annual Forum and ministerial meeting.

The Presidency order until 2028 is the following:

Year	Country
2024/2025	Greece
2025/2026	North Macedonia
2026/2027	Italy
2027/2028	Montenegro

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)

The overall role **of the European Commission (EC)** is to strategically advise and coordinate macro-regional strategies, including the EUSAIR, providing added value to EU policies and instruments. DG REGIO leads strategic coordination, advising on policy prioritization and promoting alignment with EU-funded programs. It fosters dialogue and involvement of stakeholders within the region and across macro-regional strategies, facilitating information exchange and learning. DG REGIO reports to EU institutions on EUSAIR progress and results, publishing biennial reports. The EC participates in EUSAIR institutional meetings, offering advisory and supportive roles. Collaboration with DG NEAR and line DGs aims to align IPA programming with EUSAIR and support EU enlargement.

PILLAR COORDINATORS (PCs)

Pillar Coordinators (PCs) oversee Thematic Steering Groups, typically shared by coordinators from different participating countries³. They ensure effective implementation of Action Plan activities, agreeing on Roadmaps, monitoring progress, and liaising with project promoters and funding sources. PCs play a vital role in Strategy implementation, identifying key action areas, coordinating initiatives, and facilitating communication among TSGs, Governing Board, and National Coordinators. They lead proposal preparation for Action Plan revisions, ensuring equal participation and transparency among participating countries. PCs, supported by the Facility Point project, organize at least two TSG meetings yearly, informing members in advance for active involvement. Additionally, they address horizontal and cross-cutting topics outlined in the Action Plan, ensuring TSG involvement in related working groups for comprehensive implementation.

3.2 The operational role

Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) are pivotal in driving the implementation of the Action Plan within their respective Pillars. These groups work closely together, sharing methodologies and procedures to ensure coordinated efforts. TSGs are tasked with proposing and consolidating priorities and actions under their Pillar, collaborating with participating countries, stakeholders, and the European Commission (EC).

TSGs operate in partnership with National Coordinators and stakeholders, supported by the European Governance Point (EGP), to implement the Action Plan across all governance levels: macro-regional, national, regional, and local. This involves policy coordination, consolidation processes, and operational implementation through the engagement of relevant managing authorities and stakeholder networks. In the process of engaging with the stakeholders the main to be used is foreseen through the Stakeholder Engagement Platform sustained by project StEP, described in section 3.4.2. of the present document.

Members of TSGs work with responsible authorities at appropriate levels (national, regional, local) and collaborate with other TSGs to achieve synergies and complementarities. The Action Plan is a 'rolling document,' meaning it requires continuous attention and adaptation. The Governing Board, National Coordinators, and TSGs must be vigilant and ready to adopt necessary actions. With EGP's assistance, TSGs will adopt suitable approaches for Action implementation, adding value to the region in collaboration with stakeholders and implementing the Flagship projects. Support to strategic implementation is part of SP4EUSAIR project, described in section 5.3 of the present document.

3.3 Consultative role

The EUSAIR Youth Council (EYC) aims to engage youth aged 18-29 as part of EUSAIR governance. Originating from the Tirana Declaration, it was established in October 2024 and consists of 20

³ <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/contacts/pillar-coordinators/#aic-blue>

members, 2 per country, following the principles of balanced representation. EUSAIR Youth Council is an **independent advisory body** representing the perspective of youth from the Adriatic-Ionian region. Youth Council interacts with the EUSAIR Governing Board (GB) and the Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) in a **consultative role**.

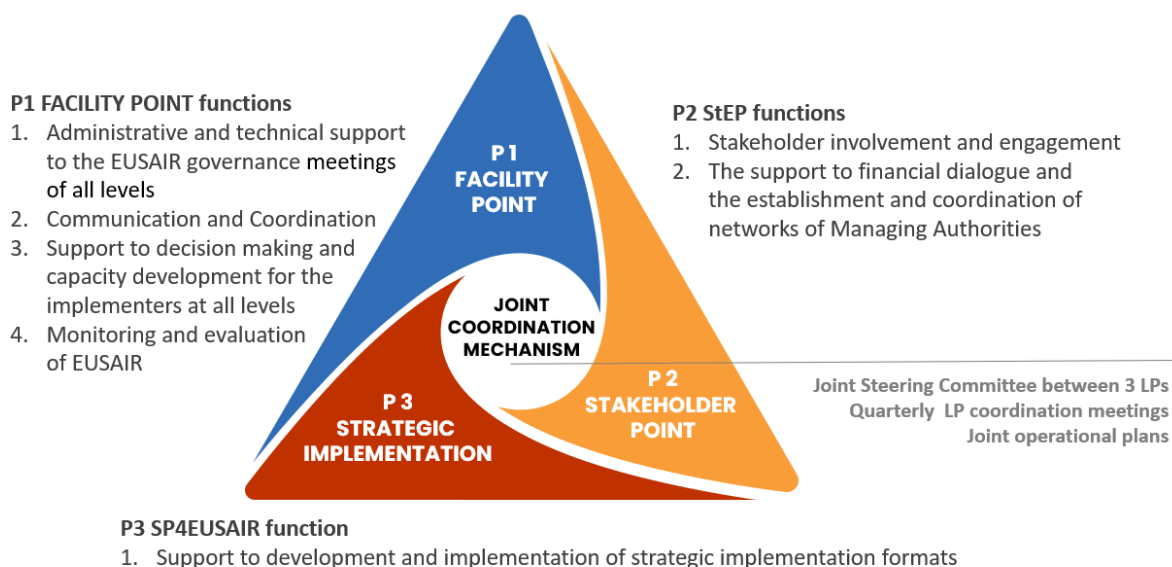
The Council will work in line with their Rules of Procedure.

3.4 Supportive role

EUSAIR Governance Point consists of three projects providing technical and content related assistance to the implementation of the EUSAIR Action Plan, including support to the Governing Board, National Coordinators, Thematic Steering Groups and Pillar Coordinators, and facilitate macro-regional (cross-pillar) actions, embedding and capacity building for EUSAIR stakeholders and key implementers:

1. EUSAIR Facility Point - Supporting the EUSAIR governance for improved cooperation
2. EUSAIR StEP - EUSAIR STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT POINT
3. SP4EUSAIR - EUSAIR Strategic Implementation Project – Support to Development and Implementation of Strategic Implementation Formats.

The functions of the EUSAIR Governance Point projects identified by the EUSAIR Governing Board are as follows:



3.4.1 EUSAIR Facility Point Project

The EUSAIR Facility Point project (EUSAIR FP), strategically crafted with insights from the 2016-2023 implementation phase, confirms and strengthens its purposes. The project extends its support to the EUSAIR macro-regional governance structures, weaving an extensive network of institutions (project partners) across all 10 participating countries. The overall project objective is to facilitate the

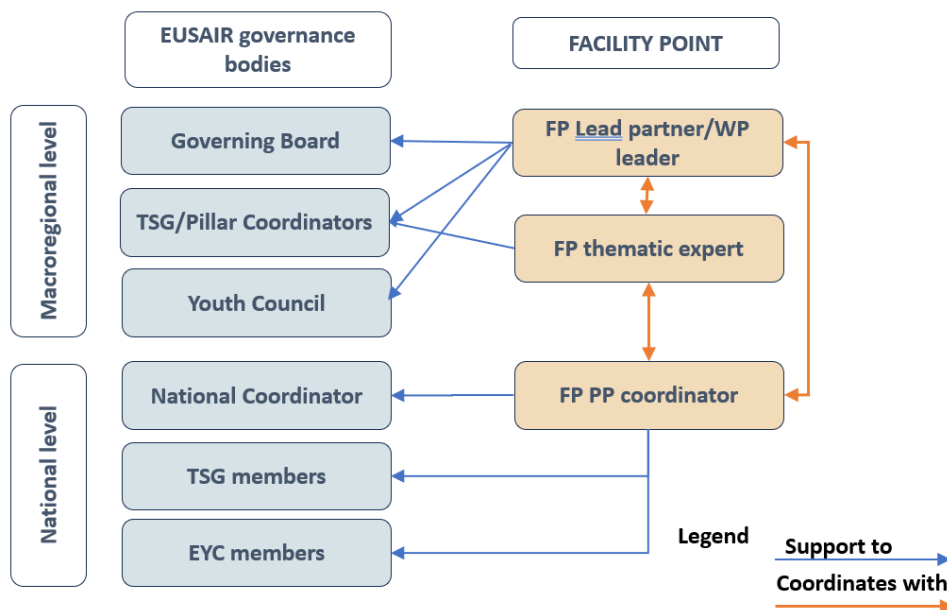
coordination, communication and implementation of EUSAIR by enhancing the institutional capacity of EUSAIR governance structures, fostering crosspillar cooperation, increasing the visibility of EUSAIR and by monitoring and evaluating the progress of implementation of joint priorities.

Specifically, the project will:

- Support **effective and efficient functioning of EUSAIR governance** structures.
- Support smooth implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan through **harmonised and effective internal procedures and communication**, effective cross-pillar coordination, **increased visibility of EUSAIR** through communication with stakeholders, and cross-macroregional cooperation.
- Provide EUSAIR governance structures with tools for **evidence-based decision-making and build internal institutional capacities**.
- **Monitor and evaluate** the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan and recommend possible changes in their implementation.

EUSAIR FACILITY POINT SUPPORT TO NATIONAL LEVEL AND PILLARS

Relationships between EUSAIR governance bodies and Facility Point



Project budget is **7,8 MEUR** out of which **6,3 MEUR** are Interreg funds from IPA ADRION 2021-2027 programme.

3.4.2 StEP PROJECT – EUSAIR Stakeholders Engagement Point

The **StEP** project is the 2nd project which supports the EUSAIR implementation. The projects supports EUSAIR implementation by:

- Updating and enhancing the **EUSAIR Stakeholder Platform (ESP)** as a virtual data insight and analytics tool that accelerates data-driven decision making in different topics and gathers information to create long-term sustainable value.
- Developing the **involvement and engagement of key stakeholders** at national and transnational levels.
- Supporting **financial dialogue and embedding** of the integration of EUSAIR within the Mainstream ERDF programs and the Territorial Cooperation Programmes.
- Supporting the **full integration of EUSAIR into the IPA III programming framework**.

Project budget is **2,1 MEUR** out of which **1,7 MEUR** are Interreg funds from IPA ADRION 2021-2027 programme.

EUSAIR stakeholder platform

The EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform has been designed for stakeholders to get informed on the most relevant EUSAIR themes and enjoy an interactive way of e-learning by offering online courses service open to all relevant stakeholders of the Adriatic-Ionian region.

The Platform is addressed both to key implementers of the EUSAIR governance and to local, national and transnational stakeholders by:

- providing virtual infrastructure for mobilising, engaging and interacting with the EUSAIR stakeholders to broaden the sense of ownership of the Strategy/Action Plan and to strengthen its democratic legitimacy,
- serving as an awareness raising and networking online tool and complements other implementation WPs,
- enabling the TSGs to engage in on-going consultation with non-state actors regarding the implementation of the Action Plan, Strategy long-term priorities, project idea generation, etc.
- providing cost-effective collaboration options for the governance structures (e.g. conference calls, collective skypeing).
- enabling online access to different resources, information, databases and tools/applications, an interactive e-learning course service open to all relevant stakeholders of the Adriatic-Ionian region.
- giving the opportunity to Platform stakeholders, project beneficiaries and interested public to interact and cooperate with EUSAIR key implementers on issues concerning the Adriatic-Ionian Region, actively facilitating this dialogue.

[Here](#) you can see the video about the Learning Channel dedicated to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

3.4.3 SP4EUSAIR project – Support to Development and Implementation of Strategic Implementation Formats

SP4EUSAIR is the 3rd project supporting the EUSAIR implementation. The overall objective of SP4EUSAIR is the **facilitation and enhancement of strategic project development** to support the cooperation and governance of the Adriatic and Ionian region, improving EUSAIR implementation and greater policy impact. At its core, SP4EUSAIR strives to establish a high-quality and efficient organizational and methodological framework. This framework will be instrumental in selecting key strategic ideas based on existing EUSAIR flagships and in developing the necessary structure for the implementation formats. The project's scope extends to facilitating the preparation of project proposals for each strategic implementation format, accompanied by a meticulous mapping process. Furthermore, SP4EUSAIR will empower the capitalization and performance assessment of the project proposals' development process, ensuring a robust and effective trajectory toward the overarching goals of EUSAIR.

Project budget is **2,08 MEUR** out of which **1,7 MEUR** are Interreg funds from IPA ADRION 2021-2027 programme.

4 ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The EUSAIR Action Plan (AP) is implemented through several different methods from decision making level to operational level, that ensure macro-regional priorities and objectives are integrated into key European policies, programs, and projects.

The main methods of implementation are:

- **Policy coordination through the development of policy guidelines:** This involves aligning national, regional, and European policies to ensure that the macro-regional priorities of EUSAIR are in line with other strategic frameworks and legislative initiatives. This ensures that macro-regional initiatives are not carried out in isolation but are part of broader political and developmental strategies.
- **Embedding – integrating macro-regional priorities into EU funding programmes:** One of the key methods for implementing the AP is the integration of EUSAIR priorities into existing European funding programs, such as cohesion programs, research and innovation programs (e.g., Horizon Europe), and other relevant initiatives. This allows macro-regional priorities to be achieved through existing financial channels and resources.
- **Project labelling – identifying priority projects:** An important part of the implementation of the AP is the labelling of priority projects that align with the goals and priorities of EUSAIR. This means that projects supporting EUSAIR's objectives are recognized and labelled as key, increasing their visibility and making it easier for them to access funding.
- **Strategic projects:** Strategic projects are key to the realization of the Action Plan, as they provide concrete and actionable examples that support the broader macro-regional goals. These projects are developed as "model projects," serving as guidelines for other stakeholders and helping them design and implement their own initiatives aligned with EUSAIR priorities.

5 EMBEDDING PROCESS

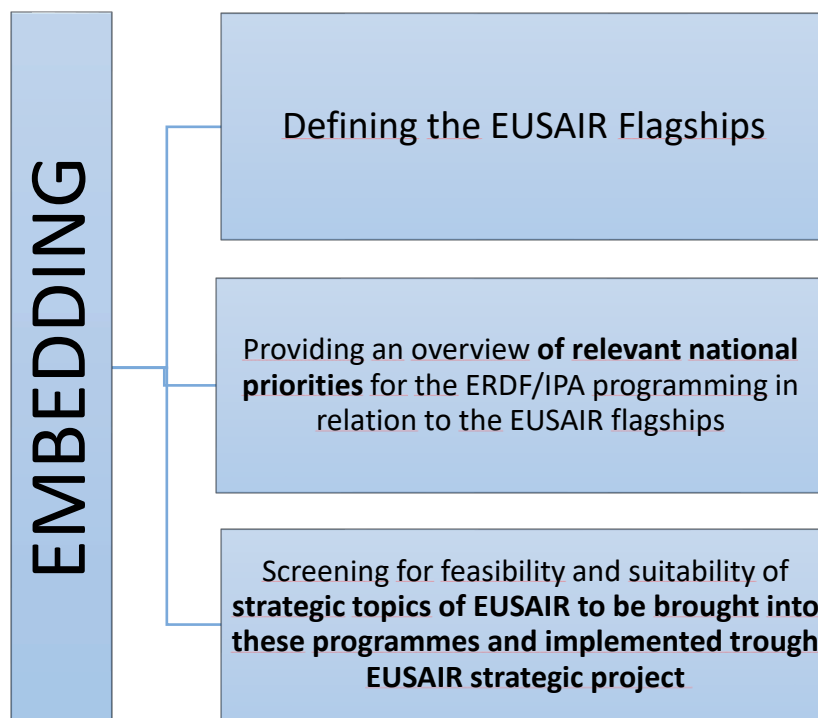
Embedding is a dynamic and continuous process aimed at maximizing the impact of programmes through enhanced cooperation, coordination, and alignment with the objectives of the Macro-Regional Strategies (MRS). It goes beyond simply integrating MRS priorities during the programming phase; embedding involves incorporating these priorities throughout the entire lifecycle of the programme—into implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and capitalization. This ensures that MRS objectives are fully integrated into all stages, leading to more effective and impactful outcomes.

By embedding MRS priorities, beneficiaries of EU funds are better equipped to achieve their strategic goals while also contributing to the broader objectives of the MRS, including the implementation of Flagship initiatives. As the priorities of Cohesion policy national and regional programmes are largely aligned with those of EUSAIR, these programmes have the potential to work in synergy with EUSAIR to drive mutual benefits, both for the Strategy and the programmes themselves.

There has been progress made in EUSAIR—such as the launch of ACTION LAB initiatives with Interreg programmes in the 2014-2020 MFF period, which are continued also in the current period. Transnational Interreg IPA ADRION programme (2021-2027) is 100% aligned with EUSAIR, both in terms of territory it covers and in specific objectives it follows. In the programme of several Interreg are present the Specific selection criteria (e.g. bonus points) for project proposals contributing to the MRS. However, there is still considerable room for improvement. Moving forward, we aim to integrate MRS objectives more fully into the operational activities of EU programmes, like:

- Include MRS key implementers in programmes' monitoring committees
- Earmarking (allocate) a budget, i.e. a certain percentage of their funds for MRS
- Labelling of projects having MRS impact
- Incorporation of MRS objectives in the form of shortlisted topics into Partnership Agreements and operational programmes
- Implementation of synchronised calls (several calls announced in parallel in several countries, each partner country applying own rules and funding but where focus and activities to be supported, timing and duration of projects are similar for all countries)
- Implementation of activities contributing to MRS objectives outside of a Member State, including outside the EU, provided the operation contributes to the objective of a particular programme and the MRS
- National synergy-capitalisation calls to support the results of transnational cooperation projects and the MRS
- Seed Money Facility to fund the projects with strategic importance to the MRS
- Programmes' systematic monitoring of projects' contribution to MRS.

This approach ensures that MRS priorities are not treated as a one-time integration during the planning phase, but as an ongoing commitment to fostering cooperation, learning, and sustainable impact throughout the lifecycle of the programmes.



EUSAIR FLAGSHIP

It is necessary to differentiate the terms flagship and flagship projects. Flagship is a high-priority initiative within a macro-regional strategy that addresses key challenges and opportunities, delivering significant added value to the region.

A Flagship Project refers to a prominent, high-profile initiative transformed into project that address key challenges and opportunities that serves as a leading example or showcase of strategy capabilities and aspirations. Synonym of the Flagship can be seen as “Umbrella project“, which can be have cross sector contexts or developed dynamic long-term planning documents that provides a conceptual layout to guide future development of strategic projects, which implements the Flagships. Flagships are often characterized by their scale, significance, and potential impact, and they typically aim to demonstrate innovation, set industry standards, or highlight strategic goals. They are proactively approved by the TSGs and EUSAIR Governing Board and promoted to community and stakeholders – which can freely decide to develop them further into projects.

Flagship projects are designed in a way to support and demonstrate the progress of the Strategy, and may serve as pilot examples for desired action in an EUSAIR Pillar. They correspond to a shared need for action across participating countries and are linked to top EU priorities the participating countries are in the process of implementing. As such, the flagship projects aim at supporting participating countries in achieving resilience and growth, by enhancing reforms and outstanding cooperation of all countries on a particular challenge.

MANAGING AUTHORITIES

Authorities responsible for management of EU funds by implementing an operational programme. It acts as an interface between the European Commission and the participating states and regions and ensures compliance of the programme with Community regulations and policies. Every programme has also the monitoring committee, which supervises the overall implementation of the programme. Only the monitoring committee is entitled to make decisions on the programme, managing authorities implement these decisions.

In EUSAIR four types of EU funded programmes are most relevant for its implementation:

- **Interreg programmes** (cross-border, transnational, interregional), they have international monitoring committee and are implemented by managing authority hosted by one of the countries in the programme and by international joint secretariat (JS) responsible for day-to-day management. Since these programmes are international, synergies and cooperation with macroregional strategies is easier to establish, but they are not focusing on large investments and have limited funds. For EUSAIR among most relevant is Interreg IPA ADRION Programme completely aligned with EUSAIR's territory and objectives.
- **Nationally and regionally managed programmes** are country-specific or region-specific programmes in EU Member States funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund+ (ESF+), or Cohesion Fund. They are managed and implemented by national or regional managing authorities. Are more investment oriented and have large funds. EUSAIR priorities were integrated in all relevant national and regional operational programmes.
- **Centrally managed programmes** - these are EU funding programmes implemented directly by the European Commission, an executive agency, or through delegated bodies. Unlike Cohesion Policy funds, they do not rely on national Managing Authorities but are accessible through competitive calls at EU level. Among most relevant for EUSAIR are Horizon Europe, Single Market Programme (COSME), Connecting EUROPE Facility (CEF), LIFE Programme... They are not aligned specifically with EUSAIR.
- **Programmes under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)** dedicated to EU candidate countries and potential candidates aiming to prepare them for managing EU funds post-accession. Implemented by DG ENEST with national authorities (National IPA Coordinating institutions – NIPAC) and aligned with Cohesion Policy principles. They are not aligned specifically with EUSAIR.

MANAGING AUTHORITIES NETWORK

The Network of Managing Authorities (MAs) in the MRS constitutes a platform to facilitate the exchange and the coordination between the MAs in located in the Adriatic and Ionian region, advancing embedding process and Flagships in the projects co-financed by EU funds. The MA network in EUSAIR is still working progress, it has not yet been set up.

Participating in networking activities with managing authorities, NIPACs, and EU funding entities to promote Strategy embedding. TSG members are 'expert drivers' of day-to-day implementation, providing advice and assistance in the process of embedding. They are representatives of national and regional governments, appointed from key ministries or authorities in relevant fields. Their work is

transnational, inter-sectoral, and inter-institutional, aiming for effective embedding into national contexts.

5.1 EUSAIR Strategic Implementation Formats

The implementation format serves as a comprehensive framework in EUSAIR that terminologically encompasses various projects and initiatives. These formats include strategic projects (mono-pillar or cross-pillar), action plans, and master plans designed and developed by the TSGs to achieve its strategic goals or other types of formats that could potentially be developed in future besides the identified ones (e.g. policy-action processes/initiatives, inter-sectorial and inter-institutional initiatives, collaboration platforms, etc.).

EUSAIR STRATEGIC PROJECT

The EUSAIR strategic project has a primary goal to implement the Flagship project by defining the set of tasks which must be completed in order to arrive at a particular goal or outcome foreseen in the Flagship. The strategic macro- regional project can be broken down in Work Packages – group of activities which needs to be done to achieve the macro-regional objectives set in the Action Plan and Flagship projects. Strategic macro-regional project has to have the defined budget, the partnership typology, involvement of at least 6 EUSAIR countries, defined stakeholders and deliverables. In some Pillars of EUSAIR, upon request of the TSG members, further activities and strategic thinking could be done during defining of the Macro-regional strategic project. In this case, there is a possibility to define an Action plan or a masterplan as macroregional strategic project. The two mentioned tools have been very useful in the Pillars where the EU strategies are not yet commonly implemented in EU candidate countries.

ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan includes a detailed list of tasks that you need to complete before designing a project or setting the its objectives.

MASTERPLAN

The masterplan is a dynamic long-term planning document that provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development in the particular field. Master planning is about making the connection between different underfunding of needed actions or projects in the particular filed, cultural environments and settings, which are not thoroughly defined by the EUSAIR action plan nor the flagship. A master plan includes analysis, recommendations and proposals for the Macro-regional strategic project development.




LABELLED PROJECTS

Labelled projects are identified ex-ante by the TSG and programme authorities as having visible added value for both the strategy and the relevant ESIF/IPA programme. While these projects are pre-identified for their strategic importance, it is important to note that once they are submitted for a specific call for proposals, they undergo the same administrative check and evaluation process as all other project proposals. The labelled project plays a significant role in shaping and setting the stage for future flagships, building on and capitalizing the progressive activities.

5.2 EUSAIR Flagships and strategic implementation formats per Pillar

Pillar 1: Blue Sustainable Economy

EUSAIR Flagships 2021 - 2027

<p>Fostering quadruple helix ties in the fields of marine technologies and blue bio-technologies for advancing innovation, business development and business adaptation in blue bio-economy</p>  <p>01</p>	<p>Promoting sustainability, diversification and competitiveness in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors through education, research & development, administrative, technological and marketing actions, including the promotion of initiatives on marketing standards and healthy nutritional habits</p>  <p>02</p>	<p>Bolstering capacity building and efficient coordination of planning and local development activities for improving marine and maritime governance and blue growth services</p>  <p>03</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FishTourAIR - Fishing tourism and Ichthyotourism diversification activities in the Adriatic-Ionian Region ▲ BLUECULTURE - Development of Macro-regional Cluster on BlueCulture Technologies and creation of International Competence Center - Collaboration between Pillar 1 & 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AimFrish - Evaluating freshness and authenticity with real-time non-destructive methods to increase the value added of Adriatic-Ionian macroregion produced fish ● EURYNOME - The Effects of anthropogenic pressures and climate change in the nutritional and commercial value of two small pelagic fish species of importance to ADRION region fisheries: Biodiversity and energy flow from the Ecosystem to the final product ▲ WAI-TP: WATERBORNE - Adriatic-Ionian Technology Platform - Collaboration between Pillar 1 & 2 (Transport subgroup) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SeaSusPack - Sustainable packaging of fish and seafood based on marine bioresources ● AMOS - Developing a cost – effective observatory system, tailored to the needs of Aquacultures with remote access, real-time data and forecast capabilities ▲ CROSS-PILLAR Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) & Maritime Spatial Planning (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 - Collaboration between Pillar 1 & 3

Pillar 2: CONNECTING THE REGION

EUSAIR Flagships 2021 - 2027



Figure 5: Flagships of Pillar 2

Pillar 3: ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

EUSAIR Flagships 2021 - 2027

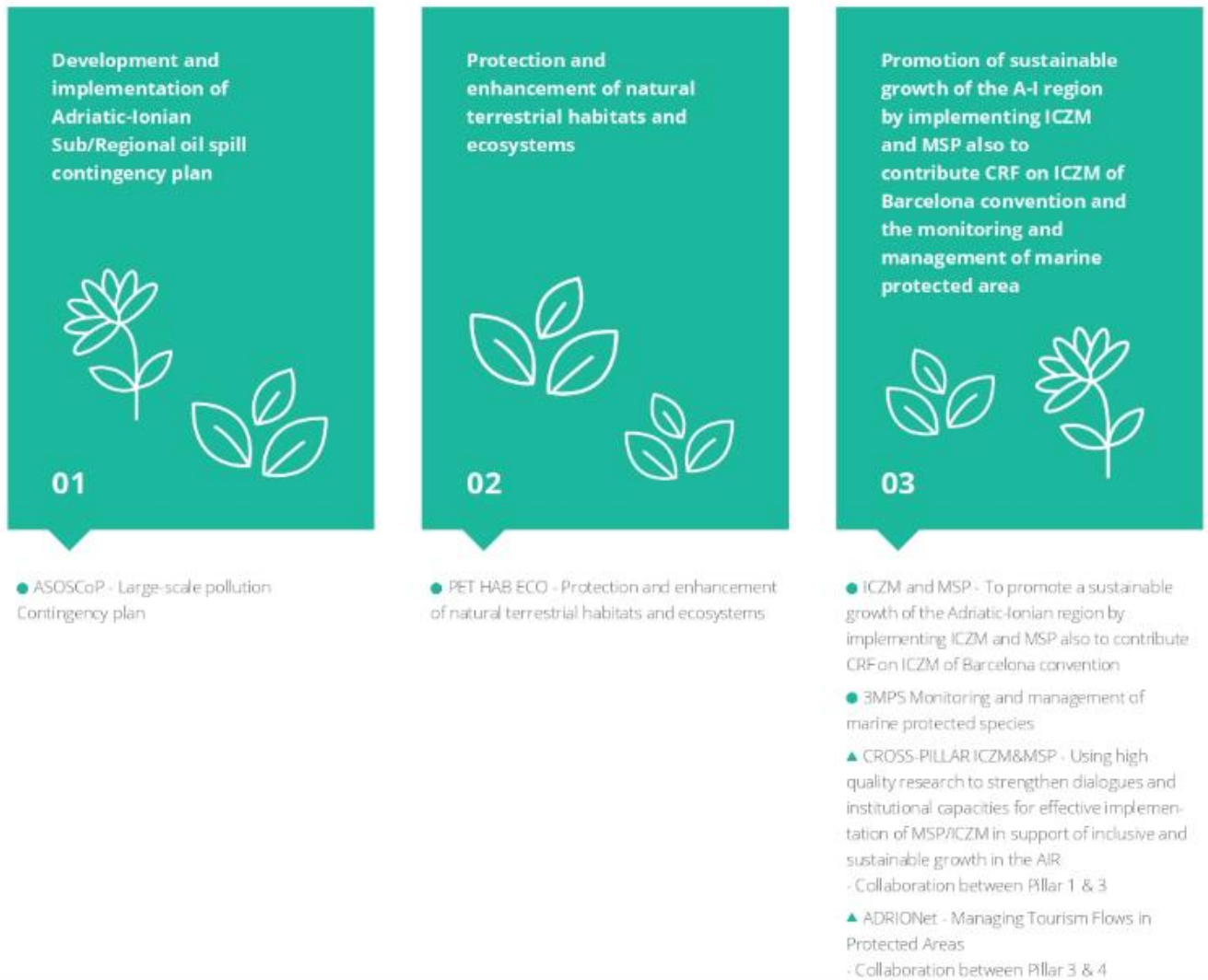


Figure 6: Flagships of Pillar 3

Pillar 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

EUSAIR Flagships 2021 - 2027

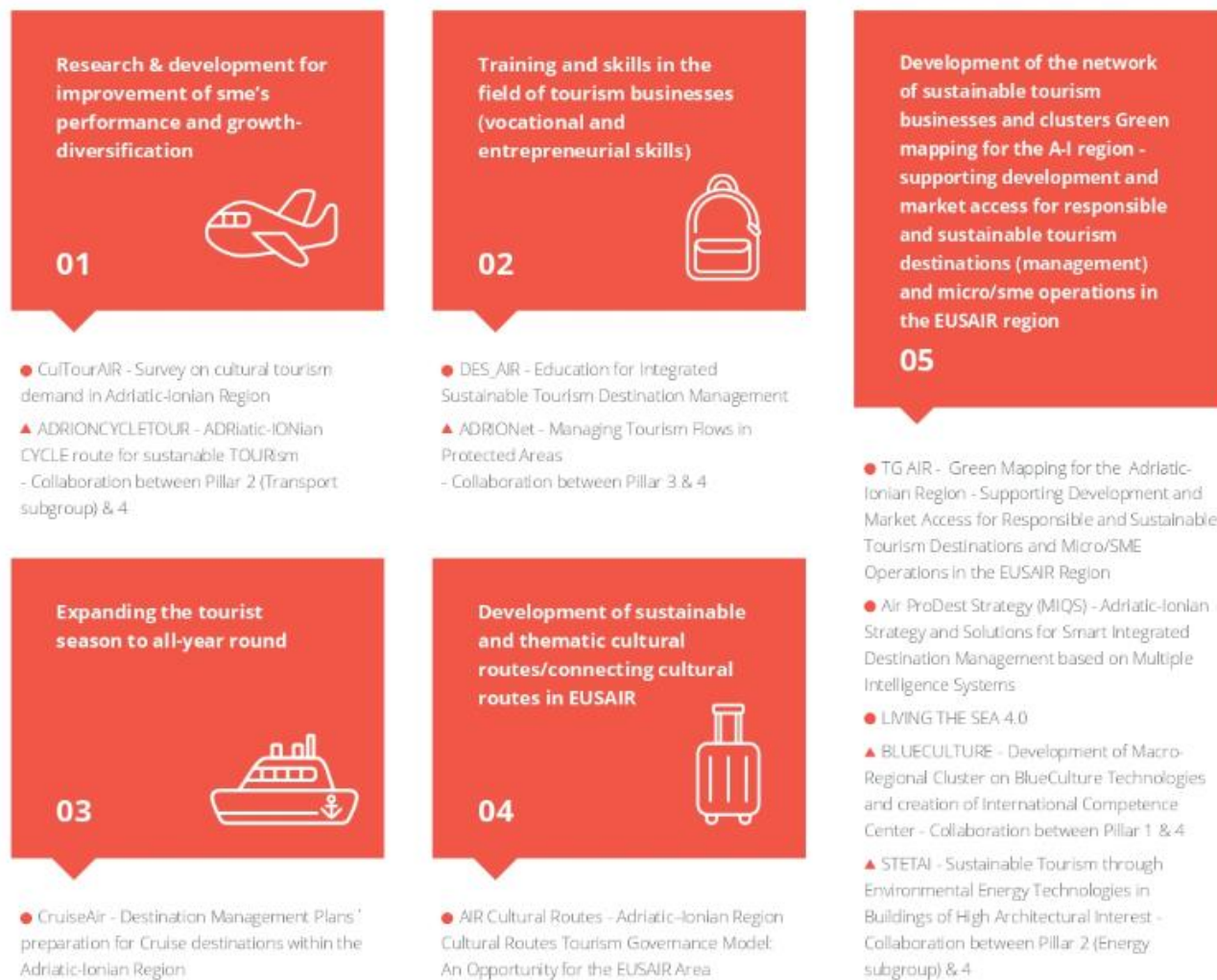


Figure 7: Flagships of Pillar 4

The target group for financial dialogues within the EUSAIR strategy includes managing and programming authorities, financial institutions, and potential project promoters from various sectors and levels. The task of Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) is mapping funding resources and facilitating dialogue with Managing Authorities and financial institutions. The EUSAIR Facility Point project allocates funds to support TSGs in organizing financial dialogues, including covering event costs and providing support from external experts. The process includes mapping funding sources, developing supporting documents for financial dialogue, and conducting financial dialogue exchanges with relevant EU programmes and funding institutions. This involves presenting strategic projects and discussing possible programme alignment. Each TSG is supported in conducting at least one financial dialogue.

Adapted from: Facilitating Strategic Project Development and Financial Dialogue, Background paper Work Package T.2 – focused on FACILITATING STRATEGIC PROJECT DEVELOPMENT, July 2023, Version 4.

5.3 EUSAIR and Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All)

Adriatic & Ionian Initiative (All)

Even though All is an independent entity, which is not part of EUSAIR Governance there is a special relation between EUSAIR and All. The Initiative had an important role in establishment of EUSAIR and is still relevant for strengthening political engagement and cooperation between Adriatic and Ionian countries. The All was established at the Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) on 19th/20th May 2000 and attended by the Heads of States and Governments of Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating Countries signed the "Ancona Declaration" in the presence of the President of the European Commission. As the Declaration states, strengthening regional cooperation helps to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. From the very moment of its institution the goal of facilitating the enlargement of the EU in the Western Balkans was clear.

Since the 2014 when the EUSAIR was introduced, as a consequence of All full commitment, the European Council gave mandate to the EU Commission to present a new "Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region" (EUSAIR). Following the approval of EUSAIR Strategy, and given the existence of the Adriatic Ionian Council - decision making body of the All, which gathers the foreign ministers of the eight member countries - it seemed logical to avoid duplication with the new-born EUSAIR political level, also represented by Foreign Ministers of the eight countries, as well as by the Ministers of EU policies and funds and the relevant European Commissioners for Regional policy and for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. From the first EUSAIR Forum (12-5-2016), the Adriatic Ionian Council and EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting take place at the same time, acting as the highest political level for both the All and the EUSAIR.

More about the other representative institutions in EUSAIR such as UniADRION, A-I Euroregion, AIC Forum can be found here: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/about-eusair/institutions-and-organisations/>

6 SPECIAL ROLE OF INTERREG IPA ADRION PROGRAMME

The IPA ADRION program, developed for the 2014-2020 period and continued as Interreg IPA ADRION 2021-2027, is a key partner for realizing EUSAIR objectives. Geographically aligned with EUSAIR, its budget largely contributes to EUSAIR goals, particularly through flagship projects. Adrion's Managing Authority collaborates closely with EUSAIR's Governing Board, ensuring alignment and coordination. The program's Interreg Specific Objective ISO1 supports EUSAIR governance and implementation through strategic projects identified by the EUSAIR Governing Board (EUSAIR Facility Point, StEP and SP4EUSAIR). This collaboration enhances the synergy between IPA ADRION and EUSAIR, facilitating the achievement of shared objectives in the Adriatic and Ionian region. Interreg IPA ADRION is not the only program that can contribute to the co-financing of projects that implement the EUSAIR Action Plan and flagship initiatives.

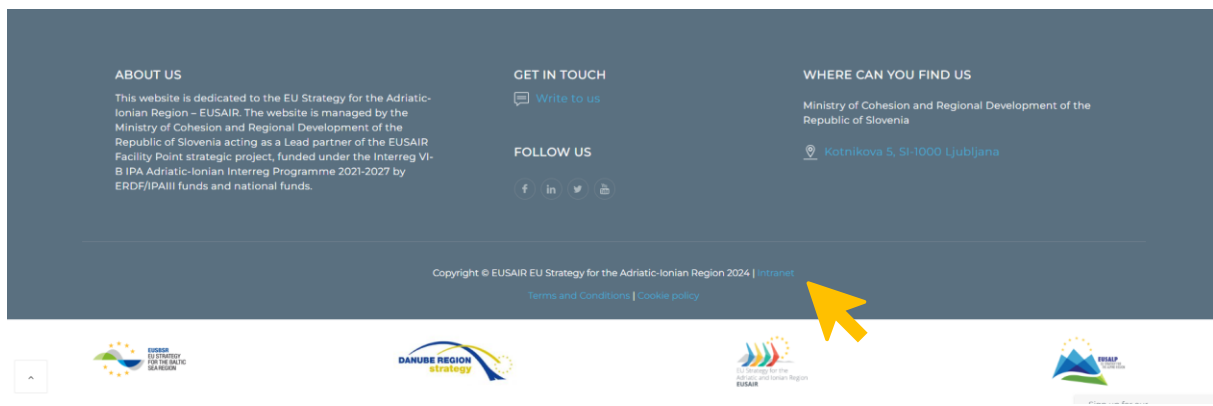
Through a network of managing authorities, the aim is to establish co-financing from other Interreg programmes, both cross-border and transnational. Among the cross-border programs, the

cooperation programs between Italy and Slovenia, as well as Italy and Croatia, are particularly active, already implementing some flagship initiatives through projects they co-finance.

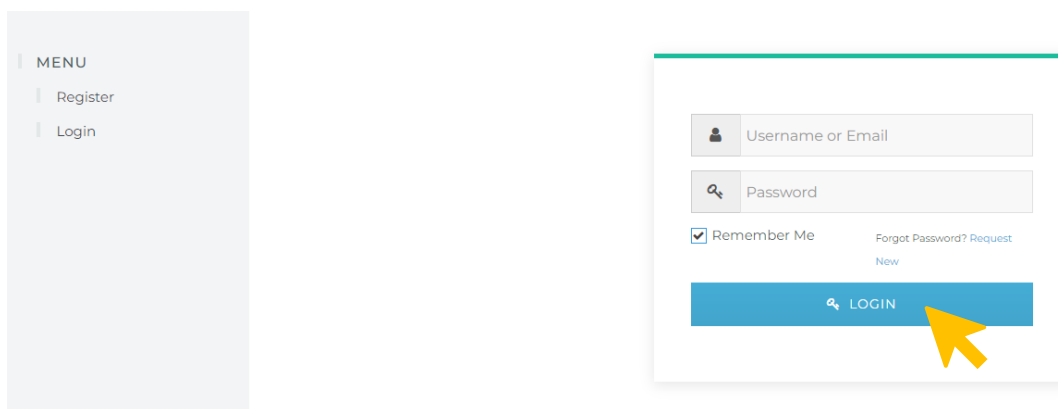
7 INTRANET

The intranet aims to improve efficiency, streamline processes, and enhance collaboration within the EUSAIR actors and structures, all while keeping sensitive information and documentation secure. In the intranet you can find all the relevant documentation for the meetings of the structure and projects mentioned in this document. Even though it is accessed through EUSAIR official website it is restricted to authorized users and is separate from the public website. It is managed by EUSAIR Facility Point who also provides access to intranet to all EUSAIR nominated members.

STEP 1: Open <http://www.adriatic-ionic.eu/> website and navigate to the bottom of the page as seen on the picture below:



STEP 2: As subscriber or limited editor, enter your Username (email) and password. Press login.



When logged in successfully, Intranet will open. As a **subscriber** you are allowed to read and download files, but you do NOT have the permission to upload files or create folders. You can access and use functionalities of the items according to the user rights granted to you.

Intranet has 5 menu items:

- a. All folders – here you can browse folders and download files

- b. Search files – here you can search through files
- c. Upload files – no access as a subscriber
- d. My files – no access as a subscriber
- e. Logout – Intranet logout

EUSAIR Facility Point Project Partners supporting National Coordinators and Pillar Coordinators also have the role of **Limited Editor**. As a limited editor you can access and use functionalities of the items according to the user rights granted to you. You have the access to edit the Pillar pages and you are allowed to read and download files, as well as upload files or create categories (folders).

8 FURTHER INFORMATION

In order to gain more in-depth knowledge about the EUSAIR, here is a reading list:

- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region Governance Architecture Paper, Summer 2024
- For a Prosperous and Integrated Adriatic and Ionian region, June 2014
<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/For-a-prosperous-and-integrated-Adriatic-and-Ionian-region.pdf>
- Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region:
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/adriatic-ionian_en
- YOUT COUNCIL CONCEPT PAPER:
<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/youth-in-eusair/eusair-youth-council-concept-paper/>
- CONSULTATION REPORT ON REVISION OF ACTION PLAN
<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/public-consultation-report-of-the-eusair-action-plan-revision/#next>

9 CONCLUSION

We hope this comprehensive guide has provided you with valuable insights and practical knowledge on how to effectively engage with the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). As a newcomer, you are now well on the way to become equipped with the foundational understanding of EUSAIR's goals, governance structures as well as operational mechanisms.

EUSAIR is a collaborative framework that brings together countries and stakeholders across the Adriatic and Ionian Region to address common challenges and seize shared opportunities. By focusing on five thematic Pillars—Blue Growth, Connecting the Region, Environmental Quality, Sustainable Tourism and Social Pillar —EUSAIR aims to foster economic growth, environmental sustainability as well as social prosperity. We encourage you to remain proactive and engaged within the EUSAIR community. Attend events, participate in discussions, and contribute your expertise to ongoing projects. Your involvement is vital to the collective success of the strategy and the sustainable development of the Adriatic and Ionian Region. Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, we can create a thriving, resilient, and interconnected region that benefits all its inhabitants. Welcome to the EUSAIR family, we look forward to your active participation and valuable contributions.

In accordance with the conclusions of the 3rd meeting of the EUSAIR Facility Point Project Steering Group, held on 9–10 July 2025 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, training for newcomers will be conducted twice a year: in May (in person, back-to-back with the EUSAIR Forum) and in November (online). Additional sessions may be organised upon prior request to address specific needs.

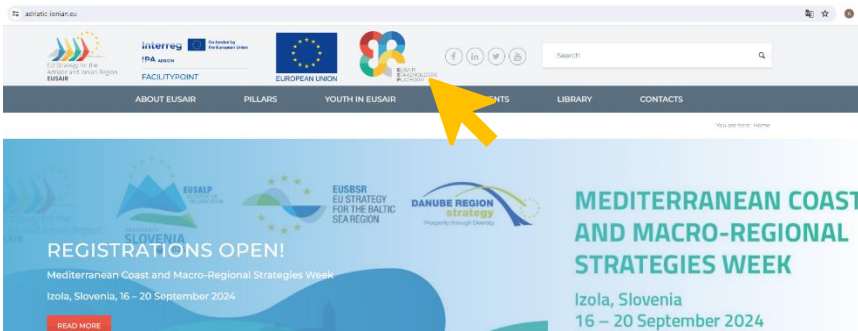
ANNEX 1: HOW TO ACCESS THE EUSAIR LEARNING CHANNEL

STEP 1:

Go to the website dedicated to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region available [here](#):

STEP 2:

Click on the icon for EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform:



STEP 3:

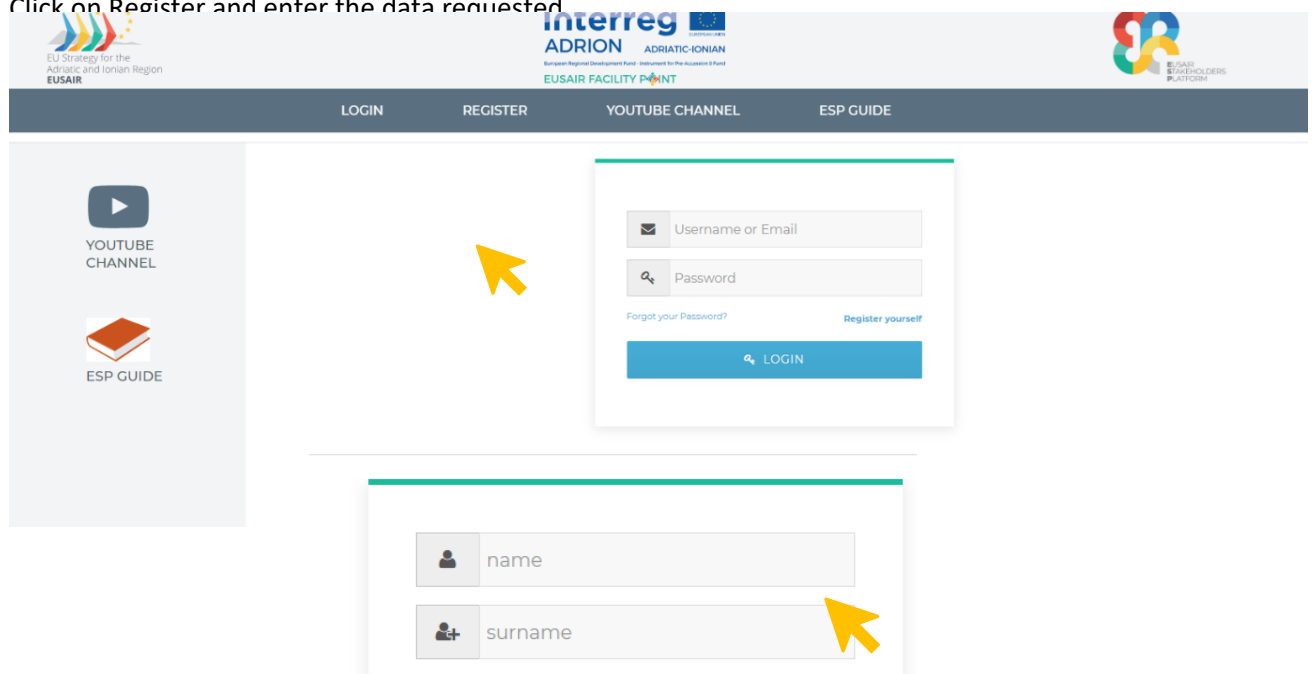
When you get on the website: <https://www.espcommunity.eu/>, click on “Learn all about EUSAIR”.



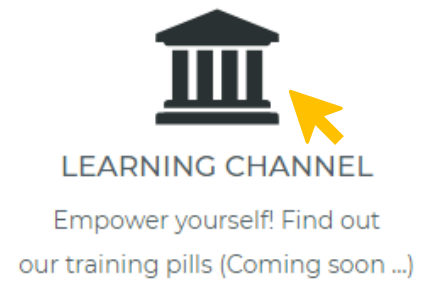
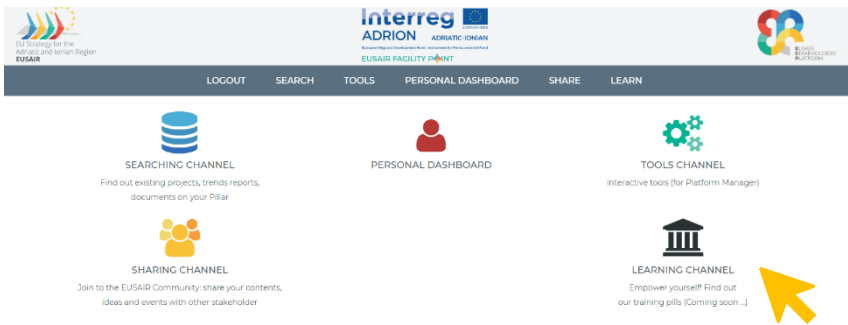
STEP 4:

Once you get to the website: <https://www.espcommunity.eu/services/suggest-your-learning-content>

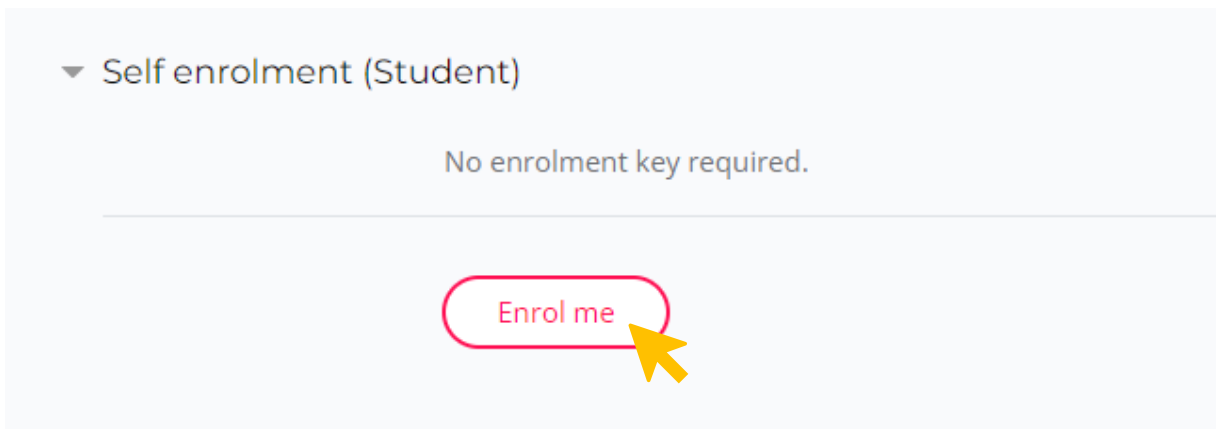
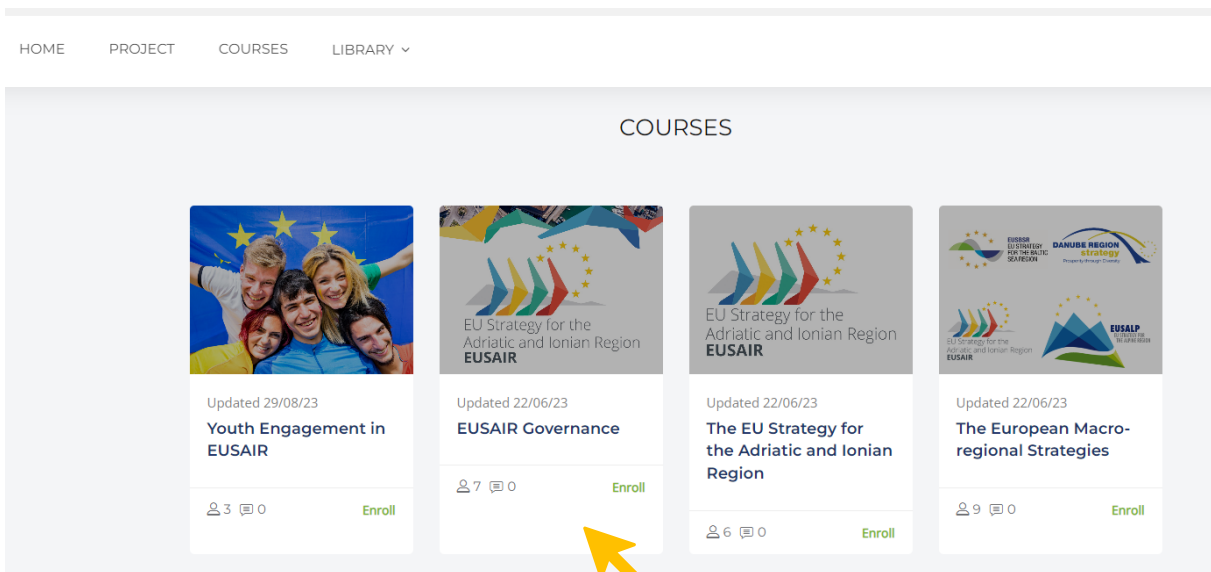
Click on Register and enter the data requested.



STEP 5: Click on “Learning channel”:



STEP 6: Choose a course of your interest by clicking on it and enrol.



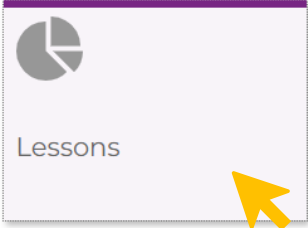
Once you have enrolled into the course click on “Lessons” and delve into the topic of your interest.

Course Content

Course start date: 22/06/23 Category: Facility Point

You are enrolled in the course. ✕

Overall progress % 0



Lessons

A light purple rectangular card with a pie chart icon in the top left corner. The word "Lessons" is written in a dark gray font below the icon. A yellow mouse cursor is pointing at the bottom right corner of the card.