

**17th meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for
Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality
under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
23 - 24 November 2022**

DRAFT MINUTES

Venue: Courtyard by Marriott, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Chairs: Pillar 3 coordinator Senad Oprašić (BiH)

Participants: Members of the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group 3 (TSG 3), representatives of EUSAIR Facility Point Lead Partner (GODC), Representatives of European Commission, Project partners Municipality of Izola (SI), project and external experts previously announced (Annex 1).

Seven countries (SI, BiH, GR, NMK, MNG, SRB, CRO) out of ten were represented in person at the meeting, and Italy was present on-line. Albania and San Marino were missing. The Chairs verified the presence of the members and confirmed that a quorum was reached.

The participants were welcomed by Pillar 3 Co-coordinator Senad Oprašić (BiH) that excused Mitja Bricelj (SI) who could not attend the meeting.

The Coordinator welcomed the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency team who gave some welcoming words before the start of the Agenda.

Item 1: The Agenda was presented by Chair Senad Oprašić. Two points were added to Agenda Item 12 – AoB – the presentation of PSSA project by Italian members, and a point to discuss the changing of the TSG3 RoP.

All standing members agreed on the proposed additions to the agenda and the agenda was adopted.

Conclusions under Item 1:

C.1. The Agenda was presented by Chair Senad Oprašić (BiH) and adopted.

Item 2: The Minutes of the 16th TSG3 meeting (Online, March 2022) were presented by Chair Senad Oprašić. The minutes were previously supplemented by Italian and Greek members, all the changes were included in the presented document. The changes were adopted and the minutes were approved (Annex 2).

Conclusions under Item 2:

C.2 The Minutes of the 16th TSG3 meeting (online, 22 March 2022) were approved.

Item 3: Chair Senad Oprašić, shared the key messages of the Technical Pillar Coordinators meeting (PC meeting) on 5 October in Sarajevo, BiH, at which the Pillar coordinators reported about the work done within TSG 3 (Annex 3): mainly the involvement of TSG3 at the events at the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week 2022 organized by Slovenia, the conclusion of the TSG3 Pillar Session at 7th EUSAIR Forum, *Cross-MRS Meeting on fostering Synergies across MRS contribution to Biodiversity* in November 2022 and other events they participated at. The Chair also shared the main conclusions of the Pillar Coordinators technical meeting. Croatian TSG3 member, shared two points in the name of Priority Area 6 coordinator from DANUBE strategy that in future we should communicate and cooperate more between the MRS thematic coordinators and PA networks particularly to use potential to contribute to 30-10 protection and restoration targets throughout well establish networks of PA (e.g.DANUBEPARKS, ALPARCS, MedPAN, Carpathian Network of Protected Areas – CNPA) and that we should find way to involve youth in future activities and process. On this point Chair informed the members of 3 workshops planned by BiH Presidency in regards to TSG3 Activities, that have also been included in the Activity Plan, presented later under point 8 of the Agenda.

Conclusions under Item 3:

C.3 Members were informed about the activities of TSG3 and the recap of Technical meeting of the EUSAIR Pillar coordination meeting on 5 October 2022.

Item 4: A recap of the Governing Board, 5-6 October 2022 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was presented by Ines Grenc (GODC, FP LP). FP LP reported on the outcomes of the Governing Board meeting. The GB members acknowledged the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their presidency Programme. Regarding the inclusion of youth in our strategy, it was agreed that the participating countries provide comments and inputs on the draft Concept Note on EUSAIR Youth Consultation and that the Task Force for Youth Consultation will be established for further work on the issue. There was no consensus to include Cyprus in the EUSAIR therefore the request was denied. About the revision of the EUSAIR Action Plan A letter from EC on procedure for Strategy revision is expected. In the meantime, the work on the revision of Strategy's Action Plan continues. National Coordinators will form some kind of working group for this purpose (representatives of Albania and Serbia lacking), whereas the thematic consultation starts at the occasion of the autumn TSG meetings, see more under point 11 of this Agenda. Governing Board members also took note about state of play: of embedding process in all EUSAIR participating countries, about the latest activities of Thematic Steering Groups, All and Facility Point. Presented were as well the latest developments regarding ADRION Programme and EUSAIR Governance Support 2021-2027. In the future there will be 3 projects to support the Strategy. The participating countries were asked to appoint/confirm the Project Partners for the new EUSAIR Facility Point 2021-2027 project also by the end of November. They gave a recap on EUSAIR Communication Academy which was very successful. FP LP reminded us that more on the revision process of EUSAIR. Furthermore, FP LP invited the THG3 member to the Capacity building events for Monitoring and Evaluation that will be held on 15 and 16 December in Ljubljana Slovenia.

Conclusions under Item 4:

C.4 Members were informed about the recap of the Governing Board meeting held in 5-6 October 2022.

Item 5: Lea Nuhić from Bosnia and Herzegovina EUSAIR presidency team, presented the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency programme. The 8th EUSAIR Forum will be held in May 2023. The calendar of the presidency was discussed with the BiH TSG members and is a living document and they already started with some activities and events that were planned, including the Governing Board meeting, Trio presidency, meeting on Gender equality in EUSAIR and a workshop between Croatian and BiH ministries, that was held in Sarajevo regarding the introduction of new Social pillar in EUSAIR. They briefly presented the three Workshops aiming at TSG3 and the state of the art of the Grant that will ensure the beginning of the organisation of the 8th EUSAIR Forum in Sarajevo.

Item 5.1: Chair Senad Oprašić presented the themes of the past TSG3 Pillar Sessions at EUSAIR Forums and opened the discussion about possible topics for the next Pillar session at the 8th EUSAIR Forum in Sarajevo. Clelia Falovo, Italian TSG3 member, requested to include their presentation of CAMP Otranto project during the TSG3 time slot at the Forum. Members agreed, and they agreed that all the members should send a proposal of the theme for the Forum by February 2023 in order to adopt the theme at the next TSG3 meeting in March 2023. Nadine Lakhali, EC, recommended the members include a new thematic for the Pillar session and not the ones that were already presented. Following this, one of the ideas proposed was a theme about Climate Change Adaptation.

Conclusions under Item 5:

C.5 The members were informed about the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency programme, including the activities and the 8th EUSAIR Forum.

C.6 Members agreed to send the proposals for the TSG3 Pillar session topics at the 8th EUSAIR Forum by end of February 2023.

Item 6. Facility Point PP, Municipality of Izola, presented the state of the art of the project ideas proposed as part of TSG3 flagship implementation. They presented the evaluation process of the 2 project proposals, S.H.A.R.K. and EMAAIR that will be, as proposed by evaluators, further developed as one singular project as their activities correspond (Annex 4). They also presented the Roadmap of the activities of all the projects and flagships and their State of art. The roadmap will be shared on the intranet as the members requested (Annex 5). One of the activities is also the development of the TSG3 –TSG1 Interpillar project proposal that was presented by Martina Bocci in the following point.

Item 6.1 Martina Bocci, external expert of Municipality of Izola, presented the state of the art of the development of the TSG3 –TSG1 Inter-pillar project proposal ON MSP&ICZM: *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* (Annex 6). The aim of the presentation was to discuss the project concept and identify activities to be included in the proposal that should be prepared by February 2023. She presented the outcomes of the Workshop in Izola (22 September 2022, TSG3 Workshop during Mediterranean Coast and MRS Week 2022) where the project was presented for the first time. The concept is to work on a Interpillar ICZM/MSP project as

back-bone on which the Sister projects focused on specific objectives and pilot cases can be build. This projects should correspond with the implementation through different funding programs, based on the topic and the geographic scope. Some of the possible sister project topics are: Decision Support Tools for MSP and ICZM, MSP to support aquaculture development, Address climate change mitigation and adaption through MSP and coastal plans, Expand and strengthen biodiversity protection in the AIR, Capacity Building, etc. External Expert urged the members to suggest their proposals on how to enrich the project idea. Croatian TSG3 member, proposed to include a topic in regards to strengthening the biodiversity protection measures by applying fisheries measures in Natura 2000/MPA sites outside of the territorial waters within the regional context¹.

Conclusions under Item 6:

C.7 Members were informed about State of Art (SoA) of the TSG3 Project development.

C.8 The members were informed about the development of the TSG3/TSG1 Inter-pillar project proposal and the presentation was already sent via email (on 23 November) as requested.

Item 7: The new project *proposal Security and Safety of Blue and Green Infrastructure as a key factor of sustainability of the blue and green Corridors regarding Climate changes* was presented by guests Demir and Mensur Ferhatović (Annex 7). The project aims to directly indicate the impact of the Climate changes on to Blue and Green Infrastructure in order to prevent and reduce negative impact and to ensure Safety and Security of Blue and Green Infrastructure as a key factor of sustainability of the Blue and Green Corridors, through the use of existing and the collection of missing knowledge, cross-border cooperation, building capacity and awareness raising. Through its activities it will actively promote the European Green Deal by contributing to development and implementation of policies and research on fresh air, clean water, biodiversity, healthy soil, extensive research and innovation, green infrastructure and transparency. Moreover, research done through the project will provide a better understanding of the climate change impact on the region which will be essential to further implement the European Climate Convention and mitigate the effects of climate change. The TSG3 members expressed some concerns regarding the objectives of the project. Some measures and activities that were presented, namely the influence of the earthquakes on climate change, are to be further explained. Also they expressed some concerns about financing the project after it's development. The members agreed the project and the Annex 1 should be corrected and presented again before the evaluation.

Conclusions under Item 7:

C.9 The members had some comments about the new project proposal Security and Safety of Blue and Green Infrastructure as a key factor of sustainability of the blue and green Corridors regarding Climate change that should be included. Annex 1 should be amended before being evaluated by the members.

Item 8: Facility Point PP, Municipality of Izola presented the proposed Activity Plan for TSG3 for the year 2023 (Annex 8). In inside there are included all the future events/meetings that are planned. It includes three workshops that will be organised within BiH presidency programme, yearly TSG3

¹ <https://europe.oceana.org/reports/was-article-11-cfp-doomed-fail/>

meetings, Workshop at the Mediterranean Coast and MRS Week and Pillar session at 8th EUSAIR Forum. FP PP reminded the members that this is a living document and that it will be uploaded on the Intranet for them to update when relevant, to which the members agreed. Nadine Lahkal, EC, invited the members to cooperate at the 4th MRS Week that will be held in April 2023 and the members agreed to include this event in the Activity Plan in order not to overlap with other planned events. Croatian members informed other members that they are planning to have an event on workshops regarding Fishers and Nature Protection and cooperation with LIFE programme but for now they still do not have the defined date. Member agreed to include both proposals in the Activity Plan.

Conclusions under Item 8:

C.10 Members were informed about the future activities of the TSG3 in 2023, they included some new proposals and agreed to update the document when relevant

Item 9: The FP PP external expert Nastja Poherc from MK Projekt, presented the state of the art of the EUSAIR TSG3 Monitoring and Evaluation in 2022 (Annex 9). The M&E activities were discussed between countries under the coordination of LKN Analysis from Greece (company in charge of coordination). This led to a harmonization of the outputs (Knowledge base for all Pillars, SWOTs, Annual monitoring reports, indicators). For Pillar 3 they identified the indicators by Pillar topics that are those of the EUSAIR Action plan, the indicators are up-to-date, reflecting the choices made in the Flagship projects. Other than this another 26 additional indicators were identified for Pillar 3. They also identified common indicators for all 4 Pillars. The M&E activities also foresaw the preparation of the SWOT analysis, 1 general and 7 sub-topic related. The findings are included in the yearly reports from pillars that are combined in one common report. External expert also presented the activities related to the Capacity Building mainly the need to build capacity of key actors in terms of understanding the trends and challenges in Pillar specific areas and identify potentials and steps for improved coordination of the policies and measures. It is important to identify trends and challenges in Pillar specific areas and (in line with the new Policies for the new Programming period 2021-27) build on the potentials and steps for improved coordination of the policies and measures. In the past year's new members joined the EUSAIR family (North Macedonia, San Marino) and changes are needed.

Conclusions under Item 9:

C.11 The members were informed about the activities and SoA of Monitoring and evaluation for TSG3.

Item 10: The Revision of the Action Plan was presented by FP LP External expert (EE), Anuška Štoka (Annex 10). She presented the process of the EUSAIR Action plan revision, the Initial policy paper and

the accompanying questionnaire and how they are intended to be used². The members had the opportunity to ask questions and give comments to the Initial policy paper and address some questions concerning Action Plan structure and governance, based on their own experience. Senad Oprašić reminded the presenters that they should include also national strategies in their Initial policy papers and asked the presenters about the role of the coordination team in drafting the coordination mechanism and to better explain what is the role of the TSG members, what is expected from them. The same question, regarding the involvement of TSG members, was raised by Italian members. The EE explained that they included policies that act as “umbrella policies” but nevertheless the harmonisation between Action Plan and national, regional and other policies is needed. The TSG member’s role is to check the prepared documents and give the feedback by 16th of December 2022. Croatian members pointed out that the climate change and environment aspect are a common challenge for all the pillars and asked if, during the revision, there will be an impact assessment on Action Plan processing impact of the measures on nature and environment. This question is based on the ‘no significant harm’ principle in the new EU policies. EE explained that this is partly inserted in the activities related to MSP as there is an interaction between different activities and protection of the environment, it is also inserted (partially) in proposed measures that go in harmonisation of sea and land based activities. Chair proposed some activities to be included in the new Action Plan namely: circular economy, climate change adaptation in the coast and hinterland, fresh water, micro plastics, ballast water management, sea pollution and river pollution to the sea, chemical waste. Both Croatian and BiH members agreed that there is a need to further involve stakeholders and citizens in the revision and they asked if they can propose a way how to involve stakeholders in the process. BiH also proposed to include the cold chain strategy (alternatives to cooling systems). The Greek members asked on the timetable after the submission of the proposals and answers to the questionnaire (on 16th December). The FP LP explained that some of the topics proposed (e.g. circular economy) were purposely excluded from the activities as the National Coordinators wished to decide which new pillar/topics (if any) will be added, but she encouraged to continue the work on circular economy, as it was done in until now under different points in Action Plan. Pillar coordinators with the help of FP LP shall gather the completed questionnaires including suggestions summarised by TSG members from meetings/workshops with their country’s policy owners. FP LP will combine results of thematic consultation from TSGs and from country position papers received from National Coordinators and prepare proposals on main Action Plan structure, governance and possible changes to thematic elements (pillars and topics) to be discussed with Revision Working Group and afterwards with National Coordinators. In February 2023 there will be a meeting at which the National coordinators will decide what additional pillars/topics (if any) should the strategy have, on the structure of the AP and possible governance implications. In the spring TSG members will have the task to detail the AP and reach the agreement which actions they want in the Action Plan. FP LP recommended the members that when filling in the questionnaire the members should think about the macroregional impact. The environmental impact assessments are not foreseen for the macro-regional strategies and their action plans, since they are to be implemented

² Note from FP LP about the documents sent in advance:

- The questionnaire is **not meant to be circulated** to the possible participants of the workshop or meeting organised to collect the country inputs.
- FP LP propose to share the Initial policy paper with participants, while **the questionnaire is to be used by the organiser to lead the discussion at the workshop/meeting using the prepared questions or their simplification.**
- The questionnaire should be **completed by the organiser at the end of the workshop/meeting** to summarise the information provided and agreed by the participants

through existing funding mechanisms, for which the EIAs are compulsory. The Chair suggested that TSG3 recommends to the GB to make a Strategic environmental assessment of the Action Plan, based on TSG3 matrix, before the approval of the Action Plan, to which members agreed. Members discussed about having an ad-hoc meeting to decide on the actions and further detail the action plan, (in line with decisions taken by NC in February 2023) and agreed to have a workshop organised for this purpose. The date and the modality of the workshop will be agreed later on.

Conclusions under Item 10:

C.11 The members discussed the topics of the Action plan revisions and made some proposals and comments. They agreed that the TSG3 recommends to the GB to make a Strategic environmental assessment of the Action Plan, based on TSG3 matrix, before the approval of the Action Plan.

C.12 Members agreed to have a workshop organised in Spring to agree on the actions and further details of the revised Action Plan relevant to TSG3.

Item 11: Under the item AOB there were two points added, Presentation of PSSA project by Italy and the discussion about the modality of the TSG3 meetings and changing of the RoP (Rules of Procedure).

11.1. The Italian members present the preparation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) draft proposal document between Italy, France, the Principality of Monaco and Spain. The members had no comments on the presentation.

11.2. The Chair opened the discussion on the modality of the TSG3 meeting and possible changing of the RoP. Italy, in recognizing that it would be preferable to hold meetings on site, expressed the point that it should be foreseen the possibility to have meetings in a hybrid form in case some Members face difficulties in being present in person. Indeed, this would contribute to the enhancement of the TSG3 activities, through a wider participation to its meetings and avoiding “last-minute failure” due to the absence of the quorum as occurred in the past. As a matter of fact, both in Heraklion (November 2016) and in Rome (March 2018) the TSG3 meeting could not take place due to lack of quorum, although in both occasions: 1) there had been the preliminary written confirmation by at least 5 Countries of their participation, so the meeting was confirmed for “secured quorum”; 2) the meeting had been fully organized by the hosting Country (provided venue, catering, on site visits); 3) the standing members had traveled and bore costs to reach the meeting. The Croatian members did not give the official position but their opinion was that the on-site meetings are more beneficial, but the option to have some ad-hoc meetings on-line should be opened. Greek member stated that she recognizes the need to have the on-site meeting especially when discussing difficult and complex matters, but the possibility to join online has to be an option if the reasons are well defined and explained (force major). The same opinion like Greek member was stated also by North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nadine Lakhali reminded the members that at the beginning of there was already the issue of countries not participating at the meetings and this could happen again if we are loose with the decisions as there may be some countries that will not have a valid reason to attend on-line, and that even though some places are harder to reach, having the meeting on-site is showing respect to hosting country and people. At that point of the meeting it was considered that there was no need to change RoPs The next TSG3 meeting will be held in spring, the date and the place will be agreed later on.

Conclusions under Item 11:

C.13 The members were informed by the Italian members about the PSSA proposal between Italy France, Monaco and Spain.

C.14 The discussion about the online and onsite meetings was held and members agreed that, on this point, there is no need to change RoPs.