**EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region**

**Governance Architecture Paper**

**2nd Draft**



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# Background

In the ten years of its existence, the EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) has provided a unique platform of cooperation for joint planning of processes, projects, and activities for the sustainable and harmonious development of the entire region[[1]](#footnote-2). Due to its geography on the EU external border and the participation of candidate countries and, later, San Marino, the EUSAIR has focused more and more on supporting the EU enlargement process.

The governance of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian (EUSAIR) plays a strategic role for the implementation of its actions and the achievements of its objectives, targets and overall goals. EUSAIR participating countries and key stakeholders have made great efforts to build and ensure an effective and efficient governance for the EUSAIR at all levels.

However, a number of challenges within the EUSAIR governance, and consequently within the implementation of the EUSAIR, still provides room for improvement: strong ownership and commitment of members in EUSAIR governance bodies, sufficient resources, high staff fluctuation, shortcomings in concrete implementation and follow-up of the agreed actions etc. Some of the recommendations of the EUSAIR Evaluation report suggest stronger incentives to tie in with national planning documents, standardization of the TSGs working methodologies, to support them in delivering results, ensuringsmoother implementation and stronger political backing of the TSGs and their members from their home institutions[[2]](#footnote-3). Also, *the Report From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies*[[3]](#footnote-4), apart from acknowledging a well-functioning EUSAIR governance system, identifies the above mentioned and other areas for further improvement of the EUSAIR, which aim at simplifying the interplay among EUSAIR key implementers and providing a clarification of their roles.The EUSAIR seeks to make best use of what is available in the Region (funds, knowledge, capacities, skills, etc.), which means that all stakeholders must take on their part of the responsibility and be more aware about its potential. At this point, governance should clarify what is essential for the success of Strategy’s joint approach, including stronger responsibility of all EUSAIR participating countries and stakeholders, as part of the multilevel governance scheme.

It appears that improvements are especially required in the field of a stronger political leadership and commitment, effective decision-making and greater clarity in the organisation of work.

The main goals of this paper are to:

* improve coordination and cooperation in view of further enhancing the commitment to the Strategy and its effective implementation;
* adapt the implementation of the Strategy to the new revised Action Plan and to the increase in number of participating countries;
* support the development of the necessary administrative capacity to ensure that political commitment translates into effective implementation and real actions which affect and benefit territories of each EUSAIR participating country

It is important to capacitate key implementers (National Coordinators, Pillar Coordinators, Thematic Steering Group members, EUSAIR Governance Point, future EUSAIR Youth Council, etc.) and relevant stakeholders as well as to increase the Strategy ownership of the relevant line ministries on the national level. Such recognition also improves mobilisation of regions, cities, agencies and institutions like universities, private businesses and civil society, encouraging them to network, cooperate and participate in the implementation and development of the Strategy, also by increasing the ownership aspect.

# EUSAIR governance architecture

This chapter defines the roles and responsibilities of the National Coordinators, the TRIO Presidency, the EUSAIR Presidency, the Pillar Coordinators, the Thematic Steering Groups, the Working Groups, the European Commission, EUSAIR Governance Point (EGP)and the EUSAIR Youth Council in implementing the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.



Figure 1: EUSAIR GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE CHART

In addition to the political level, this architecture involves two more levels: the coordinating level represented by the Governing Board, National Coordinators, Presidency and TRIO, the European Commission and the implementation level represented by Thematic Steering Groups and EUSAIR Governance Point.

## The political level

EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting and Adriatic and Ionian Council provides political orientation and guidance to the Strategy in the Ministerial Declaration and raises political profile of the Strategy. The main purpose of such a ministerial meeting, convening ministers from all 10 Adriatic and Ionian Region countries is to give strategic guidance and secure political commitment both at national and macro-regional level. The incumbent Presidency of EUSAIR and Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) is in charge of drafting of the ministerial declaration and its consolidation between the participating countries and the EC. The adopted ministerial declaration is to have an impact on the objectives to be reached and the way the related public (sector) policy is being implemented in the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

The EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting and Adriatic and Ionian Council is organised by the incumbent EUSAIR and AII Presidency back to back EUSAIR Annual Forum and supported by Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Secretariat and EUSAIR Facility Point. EUSAIR participating countries are represented at the meeting by ministers or high level delegates from foreign affairs ministers or national authorities responsible for the coordination of EU funds.

The High Level Group (HLG) on macro-regional strategies (MRS) advises the European Commission (EC) on the coordination and monitoring of macro-regional strategies and presents a valuable platform of sharing reflections on the strategic advancement of macroregional cooperation.

## EUSAIR Governing Board (GB)

The Governing Board (GB) is the core strategic decision-making body of the Strategy. Decisions are made by National Coordinators with consensus. It provides strategic guidance and support to the work of the Thematic Steering Groups in charge of implementation with respect to management and implementation of the EUSAIR and its Action Plan. To this end, representatives from the participating countries are duly empowered by their respective Governments. The GB is a guardian of the proper functioning of the EUSAIR governance.

Standing members with decision-making right:

* National Coordinators: each participating country is represented by two delegates, one from the ministry of foreign affairs, the other from the national authorities responsible for the coordination of EU funds (in EU candidate countries: offices of National IPA Coordinators)

Standing members without decision-making right:

* Pillar Coordinators (Thematic Steering Groups Coordinators)
* Commission services (DG REGIO, DG MARE and DG NEAR). Other DGs will be invited as appropriate, especially those thematically relating to the Pillars.
* The permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
* A representative of the Committee of the Region's Adriatic-Ionian Interregional Group
* A representative of the European Economic and Social Committee
* A representative of the European Parliament
* The Managing Authority of the IPA ADRION programme
* Representatives of the EUSAIR Governance Point
* EUSAIR Youth Council representative

The GB can consider inviting other participants, as appropriate, with respect to the Rules of Procedure.

The GB will be presided by the country holding the pro tempore Presidency of the EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region. At least two GB meetings in the Presidency year shall be organised by the Presidency with support of the EUSAIR Facility Point.

National Coordinators as representatives of the participating countries in the GB adopt Rules of Procedure for the GB meetings and endorse accordingly the Rules of Procedure of the Thematic Steering Groups.

## EUSAIR National Coordinators (NCs)

The NCs are the official representatives of the national level and have a decision-making role in the Governing Board. They also have a strategic coordination function of the Strategy within their country.

NCs are appointed, and recalled, in written form by their government/respective institution. Each participating country has to officially nominate two NCs - one from the foreign affairs ministry and one from the national authority responsible for the EU funds - and their deputies, respectively. They constantly keep the incumbent EUSAIR Presidency with Facility Point and the European Commission updated as soon as changes occur.

As the participating countries are governing the EUSAIR and they are the sole owners of the Strategy, the key role of NCs, with support of the EGP upon request, is to encourage, coordinate, guide and monitor active participation of their country in the implementation of the EUSAIR including all 5 Pillars (considering Thematic Steering Group meetings, etc.), and to liaise with the appointed country representatives in the Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) from the national line ministries and other relevant organisations seeking to motivate relevant responsible authorities to consider and implement the EUSAIR in their policy field.

They monitor the progress of the Strategy at macro-regional/national level and provide strategic steering of the Strategy’s progress by identifying national and transnational needs and proposing common solutions, bearing in mind the particularities of each participating country.

NCs also promote the EUSAIR and its visibility and pursue continuous dialogue with relevant macro-regional/national/regional/local stakeholders of key developments and ongoing initiatives, aiming also at facilitating the involvement of relevant stakeholders.

NCs encourage the mutual exchange with relevant programmes operating in the Region (in particular, their managing authorities) also in the framework of networks of managing authoritiess and financial instruments, aiming at better alignment of policies, resources and funding at national and macro-regional level.

NCs and TSG representatives are in a systematic two-way exchange between the national and the EUSAIR level in the multi-level governance system, including the nominations of TSG members and the general exchange with/involvement of TSG members at national level, taking into consideration the particularities of each participating country.

Apart from Governing Board meetings NCs from all countries meet at least twice per year at the Technical NC meetings. Additionally, joint meeting between NCs and Pillar Coordinators can be organised upon necessity. The meetings are organised and presided by the country holding the rotating EUSAIR Presidency, with the support of the TRIO Presidency and the EUSAIR Facility Point, in cooperation with the EC, and by invitation of the EUSAIR Youth Council.  ~~Rules of Procedures will be adopted by National Coordinators for the meetings between National Coordinators and Pillar Coordinators, while Rules of Procedure are not needed for Technical NC meetings due to their informal nature.~~

For the purpose of more operational work on specific topics or EUSAIR processes, GB can decide to establish specific NC Task Forces. Mandate and nominations are defined as needed and on case-by case basis.

Important role is delegated to EUSAIR key implementers regarding the horizontal and the cross-cutting topics. Proper Working Groups or Task Forces will be agreed at the GB and set up with concrete tasks, i.e. monitoring the level that the horizontal priorities are embodied in the Pillars and reporting.

*NCs functions include among other:*

* Acting as interface between the operational level (Thematic Steering Groups) and the political/ministerial level;
* Coordinating, keeping an overview and encouraging active participation of their country in the implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan;
* Contributing to effective, efficient and impactful implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan on all levels;
* Informing and involving the line ministries, as appropriate;
* Convening and preparing meetings with line ministries, as appropriate;
* Adopting possible revision proposals of the Strategy (Communication)and/or the Action Plan;
* Issuing strategic guidelines to the Thematic Steering Groups and ensuring linkages between them, following up the implementation of these guidelines;
* Providing a common general template for the Rules of Procedure governing the thematic Steering Groups and adopting the relevant Rules of Procedure;
* Facilitating linkages between Pillars (together with TSGs);
* Approving the EUSAIR Youth Council members and encouraging meaningful contribution of the Youth Council to the Strategy;
* ~~Reporting (via EUSAIR Presidency) to the EU-27 High Level Group on MRS and the EUSAIR;~~
* Providing support and guidelines for the orientation of the EUSAIR Annual Forum as proposed by the EUSAIR Presidency (e.g. setting the agenda);
* Raising awareness on EUSAIR, its priorities and added value as well as on the Adriatic and Ionian Region within relevant ministries, among relevant stakeholders and the broader public;
* Guiding and adopting communication, information and publicity about the Strategy in order to enhance the Strategy visibility;
* Ensuring coordination with existing cooperation organisations in the Adriatic and Ionian region, as appropriate;
* Guiding and adopting a monitoring and evaluation framework;
* Guiding the development and functioning of EUSAIR MA networks to demonstrate added value of the Strategy ;
* Informing the other NCs of nominations in EUSAIR governance bodies;
* Providing guidance to the EGP (taking into account the specific requirements of the IPA ADRION Programme);
* Being the guardian of the proper functioning of the governance of the EUSAIR.
* Any non-compliance with the principles laid down in this document, affecting the proper functioning of the Strategy, shall be discussed by the NCs.

## The TRIO Presidency

For securing coherence, ensuring strategic stability and greater continuity of the work between EUSAIR Presidency cycles, regular coordination between the incumbent Presidency, the former and the subsequent Presidencies is proactively pursued.

The TRIO Presidency has a clear supportive role for the incumbent EUSAIR Presidency. Regular exchange on strategic and coordinative issues must be secured and TRIO meetings are held back-to-back with Governing Board meetings, NC meetings and joint NC and PC meetings.

EC and Facility Point project (as support to Presidency) are invited to participate in the TRIO Presidency meetings. Other EGP projects may be invited, if appropriate, based on the functions they are in charge of. Information on TRIO meetings and their conclusions are presented at the GB..

The incumbent EUSAIR Presidency, after consultation within the TRIO Presidency, prepares all major meetings and documents.

The TRIO Presidency (via incumbent Presidency) represents the GB vis-à-vis the European political level (e.g. addressing jointly agreed letters on behalf of the GB to the European Parliament, etc.). TRIO Presidencies also represent EUSAIR at the MRS 4 TRIO Presidency meetings and High Level Group.

## The EUSAIR Presidency

Pursuing a rotation principle, the EUSAIR Presidency is taken over by an EUSAIR participating country for a one-year period.

**Sequence of EUSAIR Presidency (and AII Chairmanship)**

An EU Member State (MS) and San Marino alternate with an EU candidate country, so that there will not be a TRIO Presidency consisted exclusively by EU MS or candidate countries. However, any accession that is completed in the next 10 years period will not affect the ranking of the Presidencies.

The EU MS or the candidate countries can exchange between them the periods/years of their presidencies, given that the rotation between EU MS and candidate countries will not be affected (for example: North Macedonia which will hold the Presidency 2025-26 cannot be followed by Montenegro in 2026-2027).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Period** | **Country** |
| 2024-2025 | Greece |
| 2025-2026 | North Macedonia |
| 2026-2027 | Italy |
| 2027-2028 | Montenegro |
| 2028-2029 | Slovenia |
| 2029-2030 | Albania |
| 2030-2031 | San Marino  |
| 2031-2032 | Serbia  |
| 2032-2033 | Croatia  |
| 2033-2034 | Bosnia & Herzegovina |
| 2034-2035 | Greece |

In case the incumbent Presidency is, due to force majeure, unable to perform its duties and tasks as the Presidency, it will immediately, but no later than 10 working days, inform the TRIO Presidency

(past and future Presidencies) and EUSAIR Facility Point about the situation and ask the remaining TRIO Presidency members to inform GB of the situation, initiate a GB written procedure to temporarily take over the Presidency duties and tasks and agree to act together in agreement.

The incumbent EUSAIR Presidency proactively performs the coordination among NCs and PCs, supported by the Facility Point and in cooperation with the EC and facilitates decision-making and cooperation. Each EUSAIR Presidency should closely collaborate with the EUSAIR Youth Council (EYC), e.g. by inviting the EYC to EUSAIR Presidency-related events, giving the EYC an active role in such events, collecting EYC inputs on EUSAIR Presidency papers/declarations and actively involving the EYC in the EUSAIR Annual Forum.

The incumbent EUSAIR Presidency is in charge of hosting the EUSAIR Annual Forum, back-to-back with the EUSAIR ministerial meeting where a ministerial declaration is to be adopted.

Based on previous experience, each EUSAIR Presidency shall prepare, together with the EGP projects as appropriate to their functions, a work plan on how to improve the implementation of the EUSAIR. Depending on its programmatic focus, this goal should be included in the agenda of at least one of the GB meetings. This plan shall be duly coordinated and with the EUSAIR communication strategy to ensure coherence of messaging while engaging with the public.

The EUSAIR Presidency’s priorities shall also ensure a good level of continuity from the past Presidencies as well as a response to the emerging challenges also securing the involvement of the future EUSAIR Presidencies (TRIO Presidency).

Each EUSAIR Presidency is invited to organise Annual Conferences of Parliamentarians of the Adriatic and Ionian Region during its term, to increase the outreach of the EUSAIR on the level of Parliaments /National assemblies.

Since the EUSAIR Presidency overlaps with the AII Presidency, and the AII aims at supporting the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region, the AII Presidency programme will provide specific insights on selected EUSAIR Presidency topics, promoting the know-how exchange among AII members on specific topics through the AII Round Tables. The AII Permanent Secretariat will support the AII-EUSAIR Presidency to implement them.

## Pillar Coordinators (PC)

Pillar Coordinators (PC) coordinate the work of the respective Thematic Steering Groups. Usually, for every Thematic Steering Group the Pillar coordination is shared between at least two coordinators, whenever feasible coming from two participating countries, one from an EU member state and one from a candidate country and San Marino.

Pillar Coordinators ensure an effective implementation of the actions and activities included in the Action Plan under each Pillar. This involves securing agreement on the Roadmap of Actions of the Pillars, including the timetable and the list of indicators for monitoring and evaluating progresses achieved, and ensuring close contacts between project promoters, programmes and funding sources. Regular reporting on annual basis is foreseen, including biennial reporting to EC. The Pillar coordination and monitoring activities will be supported by technical assistance provided by the Facility Point project. This work is transnational, inter-sectoral and inter-institutional.

**Pillars’ Leadership**: The PCs represent very important and vital component of the Strategy. PCs and the TSG members represent the expertise in the respective sector and drive forward the overall process, identifying key areas for action and adopting the most suitable approaches to implement Actions. Having the overview of the sector and in accordance with the Action Plan they have to identify key processes leading to fulfilment of the Strategy’s goals through different activities and through selecting how to best implement solutions, including potential use of proper funds

The PCs represent the TSG and therefore they must ensure proper involvement and inclusion of all TSG participants. They are key facilitators of the Strategy and serve as a liaison between their TSGs, Governing Board and National Coordinators as well as stakeholders by offering a platform for exchanging and coordinating initiatives, policy processes and information/communication. They work – with the proper governance support - on the implementation of related Pillar Actions, in close contact with the EC and relevant EU agencies, relevant stakeholders at different territorial levels (international, European, national, regional, local) and of different background (inter-governmental, non-governmental, experts, academia, multipliers, civil society, financial instruments etc.). Based on evidence, they lead the preparation of proposals for revisions of the Action Plan, ensuring full inclusion and participation of all TSG members. They ensure proper follow up on agreed strategic guidelines provided to the Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) by the GB and NCs.

The PCs are obliged to ensure equal relevance, ownership, involvement and treatment towards all participating countries in the decision-making and operation of TSGs as well as transparency in the coordination and the leadership of the Pillar.

Pillar Coordinators, with the support of Facility Point project, shall organize at least 2 TSG meetings per Presidency year. The PCs shall inform the TSG members well in advance about the meetings and allow ample time for the preparation for the active involvement at the meeting.

The horizontal and cross-cutting topics as defined in the Action Plan (Enlargement, Green Rural Development etc) and in accordance with the identified need for their stronger address, must be taken into account in the implementation of the Pillars. To this end, appropriate involvement of TSGs’ in horizontal working groups should be ensured.

## The Thematic Steering Groups (TSG)

Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) drive the Action Plan implementation work under their respective Pillars. Generally, there is one Thematic Steering Group formed per Pillar. For now, only in the case of Pillar 2, there are two TSGs subgroups existing, Transport and Energy TSG respectively, which work in close coordination while sharing methodologies and procedures.

TSGs are in charge of proposing and consolidating (among participating countries, stakeholders and EC) the priorities and Actions under their Pillar in the Action Plan. In cooperation with the National Coordinators, stakeholders and supported by the EGP, they are also in charge of Action Plan implementation, on all governance levels (macro-regional, national, regional and local). This is done through policy coordination and consolidation processes followed by operational implementation achieved by engagement of relevant managing authorities and stakeholder partnerships/networks.

Members of Thematic Steering Groups in cooperation with the National Coordinators cooperate with responsible authorities (including managing authorities and NIPACs) at the appropriate level (national, regional, local, etc). They also cooperate with members of other Thematic Steering Groups on the operational level to achieve synergies and complementarities.

The revised Action Plan is a ‘rolling document’, which implies that the Governing Board, National Coordinators and Thematic Steering Groups should remain attentive and adopt adequate actions if there is a need for adaptation. The Thematic Steering Groups assisted by the EGPwill adopt the most suitable approaches to implement Actions and together with stakeholders bring added value to the region.

Based on results of monitoring and evaluation, EC reports and observed trends in the region, the Thematic Steering Groups may propose to the GB readjustments of existing Actions or even new Actions to the Action Plan.

The GB adopts a general common template of TSG Rules of Procedures. Each TSG can propose possible particularities, depending on the nature of a Pillar, provided that there are issues where common practice has to be ensured, such as decision making procedures etc. These rules are adopted by the GB.

*TSG functions include among other:*

* Making appropriate efforts to contribute to the implementation of the in the Action Plan formulated Pillars priorities, objectives, actions, activities and indicator targets;
* Identifying Actions/activities/projects to be included in the Action Plan, ensuring that they comply with the Pillars’ objectives and needs, including cross-cutting and horizontal aspects, and ensuring their implementation and follow up. In this, possible funding source(s) should be identified as well. ;
* Preparing, monitoring and updating when necessary the Roadmap of Actions of the Pillars (e.g. detailing commonly agreed milestones, setting their deadlines, linking with related projects, tracking status of achievement etc.) where applicable and based on the Pillars needs;
* Following on agreed strategic guidelines provided to the Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs) by the GB and NCs.
* Identifying and engaging with relevant stakeholders on all governance levels, promoting Pillars’ objectives and encouraging their active participation in the implementation of Actions;
* Ensuring linkages with the other Thematic Steering Groups whenever appropriate and based on the Pillars needs;
* Liaising with responsible (managing and/or programming) authorities/ National IPA Coordinators and contact points of EU programmes in EU and accession countries whenever appropriate and based on the Pillars needs;
* With the support of the EC, liaising with relevant EU programmes managed directly by the Commission, international financial institutions, regional cooperation organisations, etc. whenever appropriate and based on the Pillars needs;
* Submitting to the GB policy proposals and recommendations for revisions of the Action Plan;
* Support the reporting and evaluation of the Strategy – they identify progress in Actions and achievement of indicator targets;
* PCs and TSG members participate in networking activities with managing authorities, NIPACs and EU funding entities to promote embedding of the Strategy;
* **TSGs shall duly take into consideration proposals of the stakeholders, submitted by the Pillar Representatives.**

TSGs are the decision-making and executive bodies at Pillars’ level regarding objectives, formats and emphases of cooperation and future developments. TSGs members are ‘the expert drivers of the day-to-day implementation’, who decide on the joint work and who provide advice and assistance.

The TSG members are representatives of the national and regional governments of the participating countries. TSG members should come from key ministries or authorities in the relevant field. The work of the TSGs is both transnational, inter-sectorial, inter-institutional and aiming at an effective embedding into the various national contexts.

TSGs members thus have a dual function: on the one hand, they ensure the transfer of EUSAIR topics from the Pillars to the national level/line ministries and, on the other hand, they bring national topics from the line ministries to the EUSAIR level regarding the needs of the Pillars.

TSGs members are appointed and recalled in written form by their government, represented by the respective NC and should have the mandate and the sufficient capability and resources to fulfil their tasks for the Strategy (e.g. to express national positions, to take decisions and to vote in a TSG meeting). TSG members should also have a good knowledge and awareness of their assigned tasks, especially those of their dual function as described above. NCs shall ensure that TSG members are aware of their role and in the same way this shall be communicated by Pillar Coordinators to TSG members.

The NCs are to inform the Pillar Coordinators in written about the nominations of new TSG members and to keep the EGP projects informed.

In addition to the standing members, limited number of representatives of key stakeholders (local authorities, non-ministerial/governmental and other stakeholders, MAs etc) may also attend the TSG meetings when deemed necessary as observers accompanying the nominated representative, upon invitation of the latter and with the approval of the TSG coordinator..

## Pillars’ sub-groups

Pillar Coordinators are in charge of setting up appropriate operational working structures, best suited to implement the actions, to agree on a work programme between the stakeholders involved and to trace progress achieved. For these tasks, Pillars’ sub-groups can be installed, such as working groups, task forces or advisory bodies around sub-themes.

Upon necessity Governing Board could also establish Cross-Pillar working groups specially to encourage operational implementation and monitoring of horizontal and cross-cutting topics.

## The European Commission (EC)

The overall role of the Commission is that of a strategic adviser, i.e. to play a key role in providing strategic coordination of the macro-regional strategies where its involvement brings a clear added value. EC also plays a leading role in the strategic coordination of the Strategy and promotes that it is taken in due account in all relevant EU policies and instruments; the EC has an essential role in all four EU macro-regional strategies through the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policy (DG REGIO), and upon invitation other DGs. EC strategically supports the implementation of the EUSAIR in cooperation with the participating countries, Council and European Parliament. With its institutional background, it helps transferring best practices of the functioning of MRSs and gives a possibility to promote alignment between MRSs and EU funded programmes. DG REGIO is also a key adviser when it comes to prioritising policies and strategic frameworks.

DG REGIO actively pursues strategic coordination at policy level (Council, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, other EC DGs, NCs) and seeks to better interlink and align the Strategy with programmes during programming and implementation (i.e. EU, national, regional, centrally managed funding instruments). DG REGIO actively promotes the embedding of the EUSAIR both at the strategic document level (e.g. Partnership Agreements, Operational Programmes etc.) and at operational level (for instance through practical advice and good examples). This is done, inter alia, by promoting continuous dialogue between EC actors (DG REGIO/NEAR state desk officers, desk officers from other DGs) and programme bodies (managing/programming authorities, Joint Secretariats, intermediate bodies).

Furthermore, DG REGIO promotes and facilitates the dialogue and involvement of stakeholders within the Adriatic and Ionian Region, within the EU (other DGs, programmes, platforms, and other stakeholders) and across macro-regional strategies – in thematic or procedural terms. This also comprises the exchange of information, good practices, lessons learned and solutions perceived for triggering learning effects and for contributing to the streamlining of processes.

As it is the case for all MRS, DG REGIO is in charge of reporting to the other EU institutions (Council, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee) on the progress made in implementing the EUSAIR and the results achieved; including facilitating the bridging with relevant activities at EU-level, like e.g. by ESPON’s MRS monitoring, etc.

For that purpose, every two years the EC publishes a report on the implementation of EU MRS to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, based on contributions given by the Strategies’ key implementers (the first was published in 2016).

The EC participates in the equal strategic partnership in the EUSAIR GB and other institutional meetings. the Governing Board, NC, PC and – as far as feasible - TSG meetings in its advisory and supportive role and supports participation / involvement of DGs in the TSGs’ work.

To establish a stronger alignment of IPA programming framework and any future IPA strategic planning document with EUSAIR and ensure relevant role of the EUSAIR in the support to EU enlargement process, cooperation with DG NEAR and line DGs needs to be improved. Participation of DG NEAR will be sought through the EUSAIR network of NIPACs and IPA Interreg managing authorities. At the occasion of EUSAIR Annual Forum meeting dedicated to strategic planning and monitoring of the success of EUSAIR in support to EU enlargement will be organised among National Coordinators and representatives of DG REGIO and DG NEAR.

## EUSAIR governance support

The EUSAIR Facility Point Strategic Project for the 2014-2020 has been conceived as an instrument to promote and facilitate the implementation of the EUSAIR

After 2023 the EUSAIR governance support structure was renamed into EUSAIR Governance Point and 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.

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

1. EUSAIR Facility Point. This project will ensure the implementation of:
* Administrative and technical support to the EUSAIR governance meetings of all levels;
* Communication and Coordination;
* Support to decision making and capacity development of the implementers at their levels;
* Monitoring and evaluation of EUSAIR.
1. EUSAIR Stakeholders Point. This project will ensure the implementation of:
* Stakeholder involvement and engagement;
* The support to financial dialogue and the establishment and coordination of networks of Managing Authorities.
1. EUSAIR strategic implementation. This project will ensure the implementation of:
* Support to development and implementation of strategic implementation formats.

Lead partners of the EGP projects ensure transparent provision of macro-regional functions following macro-regional objectives, decisions agreed by EUSAIR governance bodies and common macro-regional interests. The Joint coordination mechanism will be established in the form of a Joint Steering Committee comprising the Lead Partners (LPs) of the EGP projects. Regular exchanges are planned quarterly. Within the mechanism, annual planning will be ensured with an annual work plan delivered and agreed by the LPs which will include all the horizontal functions. The three projects will agree on the methodology of operation of horizontal functions with corresponding guidelines.

## The EUSAIR Youth Council (EYC)

The EUSAIR has a strong commitment to addressing the need of the youth in the region, aligning closely with the objectives of the Strategy as a whole and the Social Pillar in particular.

Following the conclusions of the 17th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting (03/2022) and adoption of the Tirana Declaration, which recognises the need for stronger involvement of Youth in the EUSAIR the process to establish the EUSAIR Youth Council (EYC) started. The initial concept paper was drafted based on EUSAIR youth consultation results and discussions held in the EUSAIR Youth Consultation Task Force.

The EYC is in the process of being established and the concept paper (founding document) must be confirmed by the Governing Board before the Task Force is granted a mandate to continue with concrete actions.

EYC should be a platform for institutional involvement of young people (18-29 years) in all EUSAIR governance bodies to make ideas and viewpoints of young people heard and considered on a political and thematic level and to enable dynamic exchange and learning processes. Youth should have an active role in communicating, orienting and implementing EUSAIR.

As proposed by the Task Force the Rules of Procedure of the EYC will be prepared by the first EYC under the guidance of the Task Force and afterwards endorsed by the Governing Board. At this stage it is already foreseen that the EUSAIR Youth Council should be an independent body representing the perspective of Youth of the Adriatic and Ionian region interacting with the EUSAIR Governing Board and the Thematic Steering Groups with consultative status, operating for strengthening EUSAIR communication and contributing to implement EUSAIR priorities through activities and projects. The youth representatives are expected to voice opinions and recommendations regarding EUSAIR topics upon their choice and especially when dealing with youth-related themes.

# IPA ADRION

ADRION Programme, originating during the programming period 2014-2020 to support the implementation of the EUSAIR and its successor, Interreg IPA ADRION 2021-2027 programme, is considered as one of key partners for implementing EUSAIR objectives. The Programme was developed in a way to represent a significant part of potential financing source for the projects of EUSAIR interest.

Furthermore, IPA ADRION programme area is geographically fully aligned with EUSAIR area and Programme specific objectives as selected in 2022 match then with the original four EUSAIR Pillars, to which the fifth social pillar has recently been added.

IPA ADRION primarily supports the implementation of the EUSAIR and is aligned with the macro-regional flagships in specific objectives and proposed related types of actions.

At least 80% of the IPA ADRION budget, in accordance with art. 15.3 of Interreg Regulation, shall contribute to the objectives of the EUSAIR.

Permanent collaboration between Adrion and the EUSAIR is enhanced by membership of the Adrion Managing Authority in the EUSAIR Governing Board as well as the participation of the Programme at EUSAIR Annual Forum.

Additionally, through the Interreg Specific Objective ISO1, IPA ADRION shall further continue supporting the EUSAIR governance and implementation through three strategic projects in charge of implementing the functions identified by the EUSAIR Governing Board.

Draft prepared under the Croatian EUSAIR Presidency 2023

 January 2024

1. The Report From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies {COM(2022) 705 final} [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Evaluation of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments, Project 4, Athens, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)