

## **21st Meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for Pillar 2 TSG2 - Transport**

### **Under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**

**29<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

### **MINUTES AND OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS**

The 21st TSG2 meeting was convened to be held in hybrid form, in presence in Trieste and online via EUSAIR Stakeholder Platform.

The meeting was chaired by the Coordinators of Pillar 2-Transport: in presence Mr. Pierluigi Coppola (Italy, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport), and remotely Mr. Jovica Rakic (Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure), Ms. Jasminka Kirkova (North Macedonia, Ministry of Transport).

Participants included:

- Thematic Steering Group 2 (TSG2) Transport Standing Members;
- Representative of EU Commission Service- DG REGIO: Ms. Helena Sundblad Schaefer (in presence)
- Representative of Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region: Ms. Rossana Precali (in presence)
- EUSAIR Governance Support Projects Lead Partners
  - o Facility Point Project: Eva Kos (remotely)
  - o SteP: Michele Giovenali (in presence), Anna Torelli (remotely)
  - o SP4EUSAIR: Lovre Karamarko, Alen Matic, Miso Jurcevic, Marko Mimica (in presence); Darko Cukuranovic (remotely)
- Representatives of the Greek Presidency: Ms. Mathilde Konstantopoulou, Ms. Sofia Pournara (remotely)
- Representatives of the IPA ADRION Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat: Ms. Lucia Calliari (remotely)
- Youth Council member: Alessandro Bosco (in presence)
- Supporting Staff for Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region (Informest): Ms. Lia Gover, Ms. Giorgia Polli (in presence)

The complete list of participants is attached to the minutes.

## **1. Welcome and introduction**

Pillar Coordinators welcome the online attendants and introduces the topics of the meeting.

Representatives of 7 out of 10 EUSAIR Countries attend the meeting: Italy, Slovenia, San Marino and Croatia in presence; Serbia, North Macedonia and Greece remotely.

## **2. Approval of the Draft Agenda**

The draft agenda is formally approved.

### 3. Adoption of the Minutes and Operational Conclusions of the 20th TSG2 Transport Networks Sub-Group Meeting of 26 April 2024

Pillar Coordinators recall that a draft version of the minutes and operational conclusions of the 20th TSG2 on Transport meeting held online on 26 April 2024, was shared with the TSG2 standing members prior to this meeting, and no comments have been received.

**The Minutes and Operational Conclusions of the 20th TSG2 Transport Meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2024 are formally adopted.**

### 4. Communications

#### a) Update on the 23rd EUSAIR Governing Board Meeting, 10 October 2024

Pillar Coordinators report on the last Governing Board (GB) meeting held in Brussels on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024, highlighting the following topics:

- **Action Plan:** the revised Action Plan including shortened text and some changes, was received by EUSAIR GB on 9 September after the interservice consultation of the EU Commission. The introduced changes do not significantly affect the chapters on transport topics, whilst are more relevant for Pillar 2-Energy, e.g. the titles of the former Topics 2.4 “Energy Networks” and 2.5 “Green Energy” had been changed, and Pillar 1- Blu Economy in relation to offshore wind power plants issues.
- **Governance Architecture Paper:** the Governance Architecture Paper was finalized with some amendments. Being strictly interconnected with the Action Plan, the formal approval of the document will be tied to the endorsement of the Action Plan.
- **EUSAIR Youth Council:** the EUSAIR Youth Council (EYC) was formally established, and the 1st meeting was held in Dubrovnik on 21-23 November 2024. Pillar 2 Coordinators for Energy and Transport from Italy, having attended the meeting, share with the TSG standing members concerns about the overall organization and remark for future, notably the importance of providing the EYC members, **prior to the meetings, with** adequate information and documentation, and clear definition of roles and methodologies. The Facility Point Lead Partner representative clarifies that during Dubrovnik’s meeting a session including interaction with PCs was foreseen, and further in-depth discussion will be ensured during the next meetings.

## **b) Report by the ADRION Managing Authority**

Ms Lucia Calliari, representing the IPA ADRION Managing Authority, reports on the projects granted by the IPA Adrion Programme and their alignment with the Pillar 2-Transport flagships. An overview is given of the 67 projects approved within the 1<sup>st</sup> call for proposals and the related budget allocations, mainly under the Specific Objective S.O. 2.4., urban mobility (7 projects granted) and maritime transport (6 projects granted).

Ms. Calliari informs that the next call is expected to be launched on Spring 2025 and anticipates that the indicative actions in the field of transport will be funded with a budget of about 3.7 million-euro. The topics will include: freight transport; accessibility of peripheral regions; development of rail-sea transport; and innovative planning tools/solutions for forecasting future demand for public transport.

## **c) Update by the EC on relevant EU policies and programmes**

Ms. Helena Sundblad Schaefer from DG Regio, stresses the importance of in presence meetings with the purpose of stimulating the debate among participating Countries and supporting the Commission to achieve the strategic goals in relation to green deal, digital transition and long term vision for the rural areas, also in view of the accession of the candidate Countries, i.e. a key topic for the newly established Commission.

The recent election of the new Commissioner is recalled, as well as the timeline for the new Multiannual Framework budget for the next 7 years, within which the following strategic priorities will be introduced:

- Defense
- Security
- Migration
- Enlargement

Ms. Sundblad Schaefer also reports on a new modus operandi in the use of funds, which is more based on results and outputs than on progress expenditure.

## **d) Revised EUSAIR Action Plan and Communication from the European Commission to European Institutions**

A new interservice consultation will be held after the Commission will be fully established, before the formal adoption of the EUSAIR Action Plan. However, it is a share decision of the GB that the current version of the Action Plan will be the basis for the implementation of the Strategy and for the work of the Pillars from now on.

## e) Presentation of the Priorities of the Greek EUSAIR Presidency

The representative from the Greek EUSAIR Presidency presents the Program of the Greek EUSAIR Presidency, pointing out 5 main priorities :

- The process of accession to EU for the Western Balkans;
- The cohesion policy post 2027;
- The blue economy and new skills;
- The green transition to contrast climate change, including environmental quality and protection.

## 5. EUSAIR Governance Point and Governance Support Projects

### Project no. 1 – EUSAIR Facility Point

EUSAIR Facility Point Project Lead Partner, reports on the implementation of the Facility Point (FP) project in coordination with the other Governance Projects (STEP and SP4EUSAIR). In the last months, FP project has dealt with:

- the administrative and technical support given to EUSAIR governance structures and meetings,
- the establishment of the Youth Council,
- the works of the EUSAIR Presidency,
- the support for the revision of the Action Plan and of the Governance Architecture Paper.

Pillar Coordinators ask to the Facility Point Lead Partner Representative a note on the capacity building activities which are planned and functional for TSG2 members as well as a clarification on the common framework for monitoring and evaluation.

The Facility Point representative confirms that a common monitoring system will be prepared, and representative of the Greek Presidency clarifies that the terms of reference have been prepared but some issues are still pending in consideration of the Action Plan's revision. It is expected that the Terms of Reference will be circulated seeking for approval by the Governing Board via written procedure

### Project no. 2 – EUSAIR Stakeholders Point (StEP)

About the progresses of the StEP project's, the Stakeholder Platform is going to be updated with the support of external experts; a public procurement tender is expected to be launched by the end of the year.

Pillar Coordinator recalls the need for the stakeholder platform to be a reference data repository for the Stakeholders in the AI Region including, for instance, updated information and statistic data about road and maritime traffic flows and on-going projects. Moreover, the integration of the EUSAIR Multimodal Transport Model into the ESP could be supportive for engaging with regional stakeholders within the upgrade of the Master Plan of Transport.

StEP representative confirms that all requests have been included in the supporting documents of the on-going tender.

### **Project no. 3 – EUSAIR Strategic Implementation (SP4EUSAIR)**

SP4EUSAIR representative reports on the in depth interviews with PCs carried out during summer 2024, that have underlined some critical issues in relation to transitioning from conceptual ideas to fully developed project proposals, as well as a lack in suitable funding and selection criteria.

Specific needs for Pillar 2 on transport were identified in:

- Updating the Master Plan , in view of the new TEN-T regulation; this involves collecting new data on transport mobility and current projects as well as updating each volume of the Master Plan to reflect developments from 2017 to 2024 and to adapt to the changing EU strategic policies;
- Engaging with local authorities in transport sector, notably port authorities, railway operators, etc. in order to received updated data and information about transport developments in the Region (e.g., traffic flow, network data, project development );
- Supporting and sharing EUSAIR vision with national bodies, the EC, and the WBIF, in the attempt to collaboratively promote innovative, sustainable and inclusive mobility projects and action (e.g. rail interoperability, road safety, ...) and bridge up the accessibility gaps in the Adriatic-Ionian region

SP4EUSAIR will also support TSG2-Transport on capacity building with workshop, which are meant to be held in presence in late 2024/ early 2025 and are expected to be centred on specific issues related to Pillar 2 on Transport (i.e new skills and jobs addressing green and digital transition). The main goal of these workshops is to enable the conditions for identifying key strategic ideas and sources of financing for future strategic implementation formats. A tailor- made methodology is set accordingly to Pillar’s needs identified.

Finally, SP4EUSAIR representative presents the profiles of the thematic experts in the transport field that have been already engaged:

- maritime transport, environmental quality and safety

- smart port technology
- road safety and infrastructure
- sustainable urban mobility
- aviation
- rail multimodal connectivity
- intermodal and logistics chain

The cv's of the experts will be shared with the TSG standing members. The SP4EUSAIR Lead project partner confirm that additional experts could be engaged in case different expertise were needed

Pillar Coordinators, at the end of the session, summarize the potential contributions from the 3 Governance Support projects as follows:

**FACILITY POINT PROJECT:**

- technical assistance for the updating of the Master Plan;
- methodology for monitoring and evaluation;
- expert for the communication strategy and capacity building program to be defined (on this regard, a note by the LP of the Facility Point will be provided);

**STEP:**

- development of the EUSAIR stakeholder platform as a repository to update data on transport and for the embedding of the EUSAIR Multimodal Transport Model, as a service for stakeholders in the Region;
- supporting the financial dialogue with relevant institutions in order to identify financial resources and/or facilities for developing project ideas into bankable projects;

**SP4EUSAIR:**

- experts for development of specific strategic ideas and studies;
- support for the organisation of workshops and capacity building events on specific topics related to transport (e.g. rail interoperability, road safety, ...).

Pillar Coordinator thank the projects representatives for the comprehensive presentations about the progress and achievements across the three projects. Going forward, Pillar Coordinators kindly request that Lead Partners focus more on TSG2-related issues during future TSG meetings.

## 6. Proposals for Strategic Studies and Projects

Pillar Coordinators recalls the new EU Regulation 2024/1679 updating the TEN-T establishing the new European Transport Corridor (ETC) Western Balkans/Eastern Mediterranean (WBEM). Mr Carlo Zijno (Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport) attended the 1st Workshop on the Corridor, and reports that there is a similar approach between the workplan of the WBEM Corridor and the Programme of work of the EUSAIR Pillar 2-Transport.

Pillar Coordinators agree with the need to create synergies between the workplan for WBEM corridors and the EUSAIR Master Plan of Transport. Specifically, some specific sections and routes (of the former Corridor X and Corridor VIII) could be identified as strategic priorities for the AI Region; in this respect, an event on rail interoperability along the Corridors could be organized with the support of the three FP supporting projects.

In addition, other strategic studies and initiatives to be carried out in the coming years could be identified within the Pillar 2 topics of maritime transport and urban nodes, specifically on the following issues:

- the impacts of digital and technological transition on the emerging skills and new profiles needed in the ports of the AI Regions (to be possibly developed in collaboration with EUSAIR Pillar 5 (Social Pillar));
- the impact in the Port of the AI Region of the IMO regulation about the newly established Emission Control Area (ECA) in the Mediterranean Sea;
- Integration of mobility services in the cities of the AI Region.

## 7. EUSAIR TSG2 on Transport. Draft Programme of Work for the Year 2025

Pillar Coordinators present the main events foreseen in the Workplan for Year 2025, including:

- **the two TSG2 meetings** to be held **on April 2025 in Rome and on November 2025** (venue tbc);
- a **roundtable** - proposed by the Greek Presidency - on the first weeks of March 2025 in Athens on the “Challenges and Opportunities in the Western Balkans” (possibly to be organised jointly with Pillar 2-Energy).
- a **conference** on the development of passenger rail links and interoperability along the ETC Western- Balkans Eastern Mediterranean (WBEM) routes”, to be held on April 2025 in Rome;
- the participation in the **10<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Forum**, to be held in Crete on 6 May 2025;



- a **conference** on emerging skills and new professions for smart and green ports (possible to be organised as a cross-pillar event with Pillar 5).

## 8. Annual Progress Report of Year 2024

Pillar Coordinators present the Annual Progress Report of the Year 2024 for approval by TSG members. They also seek authorization to finalize the document, incorporating minor adjustments to reflect the latest events of 2024.

The proposal is approved. The document will be delivered to the Governing Board prior to the GB meeting on February 2025.

## 9. Closure of the Meeting

### a) Any other issues of interest

No other issues of interest are raised.

### b) Date of next Meeting

The next meeting is proposed to be in Rome on April 2025, back-to-back to the conference on the development of the rail sections along the Western- Balkans Eastern Mediterranean Corridor.

## 10. EUSAIR Pillar 2 Meeting (Joint Session of TSG2 on Transport and TSG2 on Energy)

Pillar Coordinators shared decisions agreed during the thematic sessions of the two groups. Furthermore, they underlined a few points of common concern:

- the importance of meeting in presence to foster dialogue among TSG members
- the possibility to organize joint events and cross-pillar initiatives between Pillar 2 and Pillar 5 on emerging skills and new professions related to green and digital transition;
- the urgency to engage thematic expertise in the framework of EUSAIR Governance Projects;
- the need for joint strategies between the 2 TSGs to address issues on climate change;
- a common effort on searching for private and other financial resources is required to implement the Strategy, project proposals and investments
- the need to strengthen the role of Pillar Coordinators in EUSAIR's Governance.

## OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

1- Following the recommendation of the EU Commission, TSG standing members agree on the importance of, and commit themselves to, having meetings in presence, with the aim of stimulating the debate among participating Countries and supporting the achievements of strategic goals in relation to green deal, digital transition and long term vision for the rural areas, also in view of the accession of the candidate Countries;

2- The information about the on-going public procurement by the **EUSAIR Facility Point** IT project partner (Regione Friuli Venezia-Giulia) about the engagement of the thematic Expert for updating of the EUSAIR Master Plan on Transport is well received. The definition of the ToR for the engagement of a thematic expert for monitoring and evaluation by EUSAIR Facility Point Serbian project partner will be finalized once the overall methodology for “Monitoring and Evaluation of the EUSAIR” will be delivered.

3- The Facility Project Lead PP will prepare a note about the **capacity building activities** plan in order for the TSG to develop ToR for the engagement of the expert for Communication and Capacity Building (to be carried out by the FP North Macedonia PP).

4- The information about the on-going public procurement by the **STEP project** is well received. TSG standing members acknowledge that the support by STEP project will include:

- the upgrade of the Stakeholder Platform in order to function as a repository for the stakeholders in the Region for transport (supply and demand) data and on-going projects (infrastructure, interreg, etc.);
- the upgrade of the Stakeholder Platform to include the EUSAIR Multimodal Transport Model (EMTM);
- the support for facilitating the dialogue with the financial institutions

5- The information about the developments of the **SP4EUSAIR project** is well received, notably the engagement of 7 experts in the field of transport that will be able to support strategic ideas and/or the development of feasibility studies of projects in the AI Region. The cv's of the experts will be shared with the TSG standing members.

6- The **programme of work for the Year 2025** is approved; it will tentatively include:

- the two TSG2 meetings to be held on April 2025 in Rome and on November 2025 (venue tbc);

- a **roundtable** - proposed by the Greek Presidency - on the first weeks of March 2025 in Athens on the “Challenges and Opportunities in the Western Balkans” (possibly to be organised jointly with Pillar 2-Energy).
- a **conference** on the development of passenger rail links and interoperability along the ETC Western- Balkans Eastern Mediterranean (WBEM) routes”, to be held on April 2025 in Rome;
- the participation in the **10<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Forum**, to be held in Crete on 6 May 2025;
- a **conference** on emerging skills and new professions for smart and green ports (possible to be organised as a cross-pillar event with Pillar 5).

7- The **Annual Progress Report 2024** is approved; TSG members authorize Pillar Coordinators to finalize the document with the minor changes related to the outcomes of the participation in the last events of the Year 2024.

8- The next TSG meeting will take place in person in Rome on April 2025. The Pillar Coordinator will explore the possibility of organizing a back-to-back conference on passenger rail transport and rail interoperability along the ETC Western Balkans–Eastern Mediterranean (WBEM) routes.

## ANNEXES

1. List of participants to the 21<sup>st</sup> TSG2 Meeting;
2. 21<sup>st</sup> TSG2 on Transport Agenda and its Annexes;
3. Presentation from EUSAIR Governance Support Projects
4. Presentation from the Managing Authority
5. Presentation from the Greek Presidency