

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

4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality  
09-10 March 2016, Bologna, Italy

### MINUTES/OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

**Venue:** Sala Poggioli, Emilia-Romagna Region premises: viale della Fiera, 8 Bologna (Italy)

**Chairs** Pillar 3 coordinators Mr. Mitja Bricelj (SI) and Mr Senad Oprašić (BiH)

**Participants:** see [Annex I](#)

#### Day 1 (March the 9<sup>th</sup>)

Seven out of eight Countries (all except Albania) were represented at the meeting, either through their designated TSG-3 members or through their representatives.

**Item 1a:** Senad Oprašić (BiH) opened the session and the country hosting the 4<sup>th</sup> TSG-3 meeting welcomed participants. Prior to its adoption, the agenda was re-structured as follows: the Commission (DG REGIO) proposed to replace **Item 3** with a speech by a representative of ADRION Programme Joint Secretariat (Mrs Barbara Di Piazza) aimed at clarifying the mechanisms of projects selection, considering Item 3 premature because very few contributions to the discussion on project ideas were gathered from the countries before the meeting; by request of IT **new Item 3** was postponed to day 2 as the first item.

**Item 1b:** some of the TSG members (HR, IT) highlighted the gaps in the circulation of working documents (minutes, agendas, etc) in preparation of the meetings. DG REGIO underlined the importance of the use of the **intranet** in order to circulate working documents. All the TSG members were invited to require the credentials and make use of the intranet. IT commented the **minutes** as follows: there is a contradiction between the description of Item 5 (Decision on specific criteria for projects under the four priority actions) that expresses the common position of TSG members on not having specific criteria, considered counterproductive and the operational conclusions where it is stated that the TSG agrees to adopt them. IT reiterated that no mention about specific criteria can be found in the Action Plan, just a vague reference in the RoP, thus putting in doubt their being compulsory and/or useful. The TSG agreed to modify the minutes by putting “at this stage binding specific criteria are not considered necessary”.

**Item 1c:** Mitja Bricelj (SI) summarised the main outcomes on **cross-cutting issues**: 1) **MSP**: contacts were taken with Pillar 1 coordinators and DG MARE. Pillar 1 showed interest and good will in opening the dialogue and cooperation on MSP. There are still open doubts on how to involve the fisheries sector, but there is agreement on developing the MSP topic jointly. Pillar 3 coordinators were invited to next TSG1 meeting. There was a proposal to organise a focus on MSP at the EUSAIR Annual Forum (hereby Forum); 2) **Cross-pillar projects**: the matrix prepared by TSG3 (IT) crossing the 4 Pillars targets was very useful to open the dialogue on how to tackle and coordinate cross-cutting actions and projects; the matrix was welcomed as a model to follow. DG REGIO highlighted the importance of TSG3 members participation to the **Forum** to keep playing this role of “driving force” in the inter-Pillar issues; she also reported the need to re-open the discussion on **specific criteria** and to agree on a list of them for Pillar 3, necessary in order make Pillar 3 priorities more concrete and focused in the dialogue with the Managing Authorities of the funding Programmes during the Forum. TSG members were required to comment the letter sent by the Commissioners Cretu and Vella.

IT objected that the list of specific criteria proposed was not circulated in time for due comments/integrations, and that the letter from Commissioners was not circulated at all. HR put forward some reservations on TSG procedures: 1) lacks/gaps in the circulation of documents before the meetings, jeopardizing a fruitful discussion; 2) disagreement on taking decisions “on the table”, especially on issues that concern different sectors; 3) doubts on the significance of selecting projects when the rules of the whole process are not clear; 4) doubts on the time perspective of the list of priorities of Pillar 3 (short term, six months?); 5) doubts on the actual usefulness of specific criteria in facilitating access to funds.

**Item 2:** Senad Oprašić (BiH) recapped list of priorities of Pillar 3 and list of general criteria and opened the discussion to define **specific criteria** (level 2). IT highlighted the necessity to: 1) find a “*fil rouge*” to give them coherence, 2) avoid wordings that could put restraints/limitation on the projects eligibility: they should be formulated in order to be “guiding principles” that strengthen the project significance instead; 3) define and attach a clear methodology on how they should be applied. DG MARE and ENV agree on the “guiding” nature of the principles. RS and ME highlighted that in non-Member States legislation and rules are different, thus causing possible defences on criteria impact and significance. DG REGIO proposed to use the list of guiding principles proposed by IT as a base for the discussion, and then to circulate the list for written approval within the month. On IT request, it was agreed to approve the list within the TSG and to circulate it only if reservations are put forward, to be resolved within March the 21<sup>st</sup>. IT underlined the importance of creating positive feedbacks among the 3 macroregional strategies. Bricelj agreed, proposing an event to be linked to the celebration of Mediterranean Coast Day 2016 (25 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, SI) that enhances concrete synergies. DG ENV proposed to add a column in the template for project ideas in which highlight the links with Pillar 3 priorities and another for links with guiding principles. HR reported the necessity to further clarify the process of projects selection. A list of guiding principle was agreed upon, and circulated in order to resolve the reservations from GR and IT. About **thematically-focused criteria** (level 3) IT proposed to eliminate them.

#### Day 2 (March the 10<sup>th</sup>)

**Item 3 “new”:** Mrs Barbara Di Piazza made a presentation on the procedure for project selection applied by ADRIION Programme on the current 1<sup>st</sup> call (see [Annex II](#)), in which the contributions of projects to EUSAIR is considered only as a plus, not as a requirement. Mr Lodovico Gherardi (ADRIION MA) highlighted the importance of the cooperation between ADRIION MA and all the 4 TSGs in order to design the 2<sup>nd</sup> call as EUSAIR-targeted: there is the need to raise the Programme Monitoring Committee awareness on the relevance of EUSAIR Action Plan implementation and promote a targeted call. MRS Di Piazza specified that the main core for the call formulation will remain the respect of the Cooperation Programme (and ETC in general) objectives and indicators, therefore the compliance with EUSAIR shall concern other aspects. Bricelj reported that the GB expects proposals from the TSGs on how to ensure the linkages between Programmes and EUSAIR implementation, thus the TSG cooperation with ADRIION MA is much more important. IT proposes that Emilia-Romagna standing member (Ms Sedioli) can have the mandate by TSG3 to be the official “link” with ADRIION MA in order to begin a cooperation aimed at elaborating a proposal on how to best target the 2<sup>nd</sup> call, verify the compliance with Pillar 3 priorities and the possible synergies between Pillar 3 guiding principles and ADRIION selection criteria.

**Item 4:** TSG members agreed on the impossibility to discuss the Forum agenda considering that it was not circulated in advance.

**Item 5:** DG MARE introduced the MSP Directive, the European MSP Platform and the Help Desk of East Mediterranean (hereby Help Desk). Mr Emiliano Ramieri made a presentation on the Platform and its services. IT expressed some informal consideration on MSP Directive: from the political point of view 1) the ICZM was excluded from the final version of the Directive: it only contains a vague reference to the land/sea interface and the wording has been changed in Integrated Coastal Management: this means that in the EU legislation ICZM is not considered, if not in the 2002 Recommendation, and 2) in Italy it's seen as a booster for economic activities (the ratification has been taken in charge by Ministry for Infrastructures and Transport and by Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries) so Environment will not be among MSP competent authorities; from the technical point of view, 3) there's an open debate on the appropriate geographical scale of maritime spatial plans and 4) uncertainties on the appropriate tools/instruments to be used (e.g. the SEA). IT suggests that EUSAIR can be the opportunity to give the right dimension and weight to environment in the MSP process, also by strengthening TSG3 position as a guide in tackling inter-Pillar issues: proposal to elaborate a common TSG3 position on how to address MSP and ICZM in view of the Forum, and to open a close collaboration with Pillar 1 in coordinating the parallel session on MSP. IT proposes to formulate a short list of questions to be discussed among panelists and public in cooperation with the Help Desk.

**Item 6:** Oprašić (BiH) reiterates the necessity of support (both economic and human resources) in order to cope with Pillar 3 coordination task. Bricelj (SI) agrees and underlines the importance and urgency of the strategic project to be developed under ADRION. The TSG agrees on IT proposal to rethink the procedures for exchanging and circulating working documents in order to improve the efficiency of meetings. DG REGIO informs about the meeting in Sarajevo (April the 15<sup>th</sup>) "Promoting the EU macro-regional strategies in the Western Balkans". Bricelj (SI) recalls the Coast Day 2016 celebration (Slovenia, 25<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September)

**Item 7: Operational conclusions and next steps:**

- Pillar coordinators and Commission representatives will tackle the communication problems
- Pillar coordinators will strengthen communication with national focal points
- The discussed list of guiding principles shall be circulated in order to lift reservations within March the 21<sup>st</sup>
- All TSG3 members are expected to participate to the Forum, so an official invitation shall be provided
- A short list of questions on MSP to be addressed during the parallel session of the Forum shall be circulated for approval and sharing with Pillar 1
- The official request for the cooperation between Ms Sedioli and ADRION MA shall be sent by Coordinators
- GR proposes to host the next TSG3 meeting (November 2016)
- Pillar coordinators will send a short questionnaire to be filled in by all TSG3 members: the aim is to elaborate the annual report on TSG progresses for GB.