

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

### Operational conclusions of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Thematic Steering Group (TSG) for Pillar 4- Sustainable Tourism

**4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019, Podgorica, Montenegro**

<b>Venue:</b>	Hotel “Podgorica”, Podgorica, Montenegro
<b>Chairs:</b>	<p><b>Ms Blanka Belošević</b>, Head of Department for International Cooperation, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia</p> <p><b>Ms Evisi Kopliku</b>, Director at Integration, Coordination, Agreements and Assistance Directory, Ministry of Tourism and Environment of the Republic of Albania- <b>absent</b></p>
<b>Participants:</b>	EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group (TSG 4) members: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy - Sicily and Puglia Region, Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia; from Albania the thematic expert and no standing member; representative of Commission services and invited guests: EC, deputy NC Montenegro, FP LP, Council of Europe (CoE), AI-NURECC, PANORAMED, RCC, and via Skype: OIS AIR, AI-NURREC, M&E TSG4 expert

#### **Item 1. Registration of participants**

**Item 2(a, b) Welcome by the hosting country** - At the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group for Pillar 4 – Sustainable Tourism, 7 out of 8 TSG4 member countries were present through TSG4 standing members, and Albania (represented only by the thematic expert, no standing member).

The meeting was also attended by the representatives of European Commission, the Deputy of the Montenegrin EUSAIR National Coordinator and by invited guests: Council of Europe, Facility Point Lead Partner (Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy of the Republic of Slovenia), Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), AI-NURREC (via Skype), PANORAMED and OIS AIR representative (via Skype), TSG4 Monitoring and Evaluation Expert (via Skype). After the welcoming words by the hosting country, the Agenda was subsequently adopted.

#### **Item 3. Functioning of TSGs**

**Item 3. a. Recap of decisions taken, state of play** - Recapitulation has been done of decisions taken at last TSG4 meeting and state of play of implementing the Operational Conclusions of 9<sup>th</sup> TSG4 meeting, presented by Croatian Pillar coordinator. Pillar Coordinator apologized for the absence of the coordinator from Albania, on behalf of which only thematic expert was present. Pillar Coordinator repeatedly shared a concern about further activities regarding the Executive Summary as discussed at previous meetings, expecting proposals of individual TSG4 members on further priorities chosen.

*9<sup>th</sup> TSG4 meeting Operational conclusions have been approved. Albania is expected to be represented by the standing member in person on next meetings. North Macedonia will be invited as the guest to the next TSG4 meeting*

#### **Item 3.b. Annual Reporting**

TSG4 submitted its Annual Report in due time and it is uploaded on the EUSAIR intranet. All countries have participated actively with their contributions.

**Item 3.c. Report from the Pillar Coordinators and GB meeting** – Operational conclusions of the 9<sup>th</sup> GB meeting were presented

**Item 3.d. Labelling projects** - Members were invited to discuss the labelling process on national level, not only with their ministries, but also with their national coordinators and monitoring committee members of these programmes. Questionnaire has been distributed and the feedback provided by only two countries stressing that it was rather difficult for country members to deal with this task, as it requires specific competences, extra working hours, expertise - know-how and additional working force to coordinate different authorities.

Further proposals from TSG4 members are expected for the labelling process

**Item 4 (a, b, c, d, e, f): Cooperation with other initiatives and institutions** -Cooperation and activities stimulating synergy with other initiatives and institutions were presented: CoE Routes4U, Blue Med, AI-NURREC, OIS AIR, RCC and PANORAMED.

The **BLUEMED initiative** is still opened for cooperation with the 4<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Pillar. Proposals are expected for joint EUSAIR P4 – BLUEMED actions on two topics of diversified tourism offer and sustainable tourism. Regarding diversification of tourism offer synergies can be promoted between tourism and other productive activities (e.g. fishing tourism, marine mammals watching, aquaculture and tourism). Proposals are expected from TSG4 member for BLUEMED main topics in next ten days.

The **ROUTES4U CoE** activities have been presented correspondent to EUSAIR priorities: diversification of tourism product and sustainable and responsible tourism management, linked equally to TSG4 priorities fostering regional development, and cultural cooperation through cultural routes.

**Roman Heritage Route** feasibility study was presented as a potential for future joint project of EUSAIR countries. An important note was given that if an agreement is found to create a cultural route, this will take an average of 2-5 years. Accordingly, it was concluded that the ppt and draft study would be circulated, together with questions on the interest to be involved as a member. (a questionnaire will be sent to identify interest in participation). TSG members will consult internally about their interest and commitment in being involved in the project to create a Cultural Route. Routes4U will organize first stakeholders meeting. Routes4U will assist in the preparation of a proposal for COSME.

**Olive Tree Route** state of play was presented. After the meeting of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement (10-11 April 2019), Routes4U will provide the Cultural Route with a final list of recommendations to be addressed.

It was concluded that a questionnaire on heritage sites and elements will be circulated to all TSG-members, to be answered within 2 weeks. Greek colleagues will liaise with the Route in the near future to see how the recommendations of the evaluation report can be addressed, e.g. through setting up regular meetings and through providing assistance on the internationalization of the route (English-speaking and more connected in the Macro-region). Routes4U and Greek TSG4 members will discuss if a strong Greek partner of the Olive Tree Routes could be found to second the headquarters in Kalamata.

**AI-NURECC project**, presented by CPMR reported on already executed and future activities promoting related policies, projects, opportunities in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. AI-NURREC will send a one-page document explaining the potential S3 platform for creative industries in next two weeks.

**RCC:** Reported on activities and projects in progress including Illyricum trail, Crossroads of civilizations, and other. RCC will send their presentation and propose their model of cooperation with TSG4 in 2 weeks' time.

**OIS AIR** presented the progress report on the establishment and development of the Open Innovation System of the Adriatic-Ionian Region including the possibilities of smart and creative upgrade of cultural tourism. As possible priorities culture destination management, creative industries and digital transformation were stressed. OIS AIR project presentation will be sent to all, and questions of interested parties are expected in next two weeks' time.

**PANORAMED** project presentation stressed the main goal of strategic projects oriented toward coastal and maritime tourism and maritime surveillance. With the total allocation of 13 M € four strategic projects are to be approved, out of that two for coastal maritime tourism topic (2.5 to 3 M €). PANORAMED will send their presentation and details on Info Day (access to financing) to be distributed to the TSG4 members.

#### **Item 5. a. Plan of work/activities for 2019, Part I**

EUSAIR activities of the member countries were discussed. Greece informed TSG4 members on the planned event on topic of financing, where Horizon will be present, Blue Med and Cosme, and a workshop on topic of National priorities in sustainable tourism. TSG4 members are invited to consult their national project partner to find out if there are some activities and inform us, and to review once again executive summary, choose a priority theme and send proposals for future activities.

**Item 5.b. The cross cutting actions** – discussion was led on the topics of SMEs development, research and innovation, capacity building, decision on planning actions.

FP LP informed on capacity building events planned this year on national and macro-regional level, two foreseen per each country, but for Italy and Greece four. The first one on national level was organized a week before in Belgrade. Countries are invited to go through the modules, discuss it and choose activities and give the feedback for TSG4.

The European Commission asked for a more dynamic undertaking of the crosscutting issues of the EUSAIR. TSG4 members are invited to reflect on the way to address the cross cutting issues of SMEs development. DG Growth, with new deputy head appointed, is also opened for closer cooperation, as well as JRC. It has been concluded that it is very important to have DG Growth too as part of TSG4 activities.

#### **Item 6.a. Plan of work/activities for 2019, Part II**

##### **Proposals for TSG 4 strategic projects: mono pillar and cross pillar projects**

Pillar coordinator reported on respectable number of strategic projects that were proposed and approved in the former period. Among them, three cross pillar projects Managing Tourism Flows in Protected Areas, STETAI, and Blue Culture and mono pillar Green-mapping project.

TSG4 Italy reported on new cross pillar project concept proposal prepared by two relevant pillars TSG2 (transport) and TSG4, and was sent to TSG4 members prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> TSG meeting.

It has been decided that the written procedure will be urgently launched, immediately after the meeting, for the approval of the cross-pillar project idea “ADRIONCYCLETOUR”.

Concept idea stems from one of our labelled projects (i.e. the Adriatic Tourist Cycle Route) which would be extended to include crossing objectives and topics of Pillar 4. “Sustainable Tourism”.

ADRIONCYCLETOUR is aimed at:

- establishing and developing a cycling route running along the coast of the entire Adriatic and Ionian basin from Italy to Greece (coastal network) across the Countries which belong to the Adriatic and Ionian Region including its main cycle connections to the hinterland areas of all the eight EUSAIR countries (inland network).

- developing an innovative and attractive transnational tourism product on this ADRIATIC-IONIAN Cycle Route and its main cycle connections to the inland areas.

The ADRIATIC-IONIAN Cycle Route has been conceived as infrastructure, integrated with the public transport systems (mainly railways, bus, sea), for cycle tourism and for a sustainable urban and inter-urban mobility.

The project concept summary will be sent to TSG4 members to decide whether it is acceptable for project development through FP+. Members should send their written approval, at the latest by 8 April, h 12 c.o.b in order to allow its submission by the deadline of 10th April, as fixed by the FP+. Absence of reaction will be taken as silent approval.

Proposals for TSG 4 strategic mono pillar project of “Education for integrated sustainable management of destinations - ISMD” was also presented. General objective of the project being smart specialization of destinations of EUSAIR, for high quality diversification of tourism offer, sustainable destinations, distinctive and competitive. Specifically oriented to human capital development through targeted education and LLL trainings and Master’s program, building capacity of DMOs as sustainable and integrated destinations, and building capacity of all stakeholders for innovative products.

Project concept proposal on Education for Integrated Sustainable Tourism Management will be sent to TSG4 members: TSG4 members are invited send their approval.

**6. b Article 6 Catania declaration** – PC reported on the results of the national discussions on joint proposals received 2021-2027 EC, proposals were received on two topics:

- Sustainable valorisation, preservation and promotion of natural and cultural assets as growth assets in the Adriatic-Ionian area for tourism purposes.
- Development of sustainable and thematic routes (with additional emphasis on routes based on Adriatic-Ionian cultural and natural heritage).

Catania Declarations priorities proposals of TSG4 members are to be sent latest by April 14<sup>th</sup> in line with the Catania Position Paper in the template to EUSAIR position paper. After the proposal of all TSGs, National Coordinators (NCs) will consider and agree on proposed list, after prior consultation with national (relevant) authorities in their countries. NCs will agree on the proposal by the end of May 2019.

**Item 6.c. New proposals by TSG 4 members** - TSG4 members are invited to propose further strategic project concept proposals

**Item7. (a, d, e) EUSAIR Facility Point FPLP** reported on topics of facilitating project development, building capacities for monitoring an evaluation, stakeholder platform and communication issues. Since

the project is in the process of being reopened, issues regarding costs and financing can be taken into consideration through this process.

“**Modus Operandi**” a document to guide key implementers and Facility Point through the process issued by the FP LP was explained in detail.

TSG4 members were invited to work on communication, propose capacity-building activities, prepare issue paper, and work further on the annual activity plan as a living document with already 94 activities planned for the year.

**Short info on Facility Point Plus** report was given by FP LP commenting the process of project ideas selection and prepared up-dated Guidance note (March 2019, Version 3.0), the admissibility and eligibility criteria, stressing the quality of project proposals. Five project ideas have been submitted so far. With their further development will be created positive synergies and contribution to specific crosscutting objectives.

Drafting of the comprehensive Annual Progress Report as regards to 2018 should be completed by April 19<sup>th</sup> and prepared for Budva Ministerial meeting.

**Item 7.b.** Stakeholders platform: was presented to TSG4 members with main goals to involve non-state actors (civil society, academia, NGOs, private companies).

Link and video are to be sent to TSG4 members, since the Internet connection was weak. Stakeholder platform is expected to be presented in each EUSAIR country in order to define and give instructions on further activities of TSG4 members: the key issues around which groups have to be created, the documents to be shared within each group, the kind of surveys to dispense, and events to be published or organized. The reference point for each pillar is expected to be defined as well.

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**Item 7.c. Monitoring and Evaluation of the EUSAIR** - The M&E TSG Expert selected/engaged? in September 2018, presented the results - highlights of his research, with the Inventory of existing situation and resources.

Italy will provide further needed data. Further development of research will follow in coordination with M&E lead expert partner. A new call will have to be issued for TSG4 M&E to satisfy further tasks defined by the M&E expert coordinator.

Greece reported on the workshop in Athens (21.-22.3.2019) which provided the scope and objectives of the “Monitoring and Evaluation of the EUSAIR” project. Monitoring tasks, descriptions, deliverables and duties of M&E experts were defined.

The M&E coordinator will soon contact M&E Pillar experts in order to deliver studies and findings to enable fine-tuning and further cooperation.

**Item 8. ADRION Programme** – because of the weak Internet Skype connection failed the presentation and ADRION Programme promised to send their presentation after the meeting.

**Item 9. Montenegrin Chairmanship** - Montenegro gave a brief overview of the proceeding at the 4<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR forum, to be held in Budva in May.

TSG4 panel is planned for the Forum with the topic “Skills gaps and weaknesses of the tourism labour market- how to match skills to sector's need”

**9.a 4<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Forum**, Budva (Montenegro), 6-8 May 2019 – It has been reported that program is still being worked on with proposals for moderators and panellists discussed. Side event by CoE Routes4U has been proposed. Financing has been discussed.

Official written proposal by CoE Routes4U will be sent, and the decision will be expected as soon as possible.

**9. b Information on the MNE Chairmanship** - Montenegro reported on the progress concerning the programme and events related to the TSG 4. Invitations to ministers have already been sent.

Background paper for Ministerial meeting has to be prepared and sent to all TSG4 members.

**Item 10. Information on interesting tourism/culture related events** –TSG 4 members were asked to send their news on their future interesting tourism/culture related events and other pertinent developments relevant for the work of TSG 4.

## **Item 11. Conclusions and the next TSG 4 meeting**

### **Item 11.a who will attend the event in MNE and what should be the aspect of tourism within the 4th EUSAIR Forum**

All participants were invited to attend the event in Montenegro and to support actively tourism related actions within the 4<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Forum.

### **Item 11.b Next TSG 4 meeting proposals and decision**

Next 11<sup>th</sup> TSG4 meeting will be held in Puglia, Bari

Candidature for the 12<sup>th</sup> TSG4 meeting will be sent by Greece

**Item 11. c. Draft conclusions of the 10<sup>th</sup> TSG 4 meeting** were stated by PC and agreed upon. The timeline was agreed for the shortlist of conclusions, prior to the full text of Operational conclusions and the Minutes.

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## **OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS (SUMMARY)**

### **Functioning of TSGs**

- Countries need to send their representatives to TSG4 meetings and participate actively.
- North Macedonia will be invited as the guest to the next TSG4 meeting
- It has been concluded that it is very important to have DG Growth present as part of TSG4 activities.
- TSG4 members are invited to review executive summary, choose a theme and send proposals for future activities **by April 20<sup>th</sup>**.

### **Annual Reporting:**

- TSGs Annual Progress Report for TSG4 2018 has been finalized in time, presented, and accepted by TSG4 members

### **Labelling projects**

- Further proposals from TSG4 members are expected for the labelling process **by April 20<sup>th</sup>**

### **Cooperation with other initiatives**

**BLUE MED** Proposals are expected for BLUE MED main topics **by April 20<sup>th</sup>**

**RCC** will send their presentation and propose their model of cooperation with TSG4 **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**PANORAMED** will send their presentation and details on Info Day (access to financing) to be distributed to the TSG4 members **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**OIS AIR** project presentation will be sent to all, and questions of interested parties are expected **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**AI-NURREC** will send a one-page document explaining the potential S3 platform for creative industries in next two weeks **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Routes4U:**

**Olive Tree Route** - A questionnaire on heritage sites and elements will be circulated to all TSG-members, to be answered **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**. Greek colleagues will liaise with the Route in the near future to see how the recommendations of the evaluation report can be addressed, e.g. through setting up regular meetings and through providing assistance on the internationalization of the route (English-speaking and more connected in the Macro-region). Routes4U and Greek TSG4 members will discuss if a strong Greek partner of the Olive Tree Routes could be found to second the headquarters in Kalamata.

**Roman Heritage Route** – presentation and draft study will be circulated **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**, together with questions on the interest to be involved as a member (a questionnaire will be sent to identify interest in participation). TSG members will consult internally about their interest and commitment in being involved in the project to create a Cultural Route **8<sup>th</sup> May 2019**. Routes4U will organize first stakeholders meeting. Routes4U will assist in the preparation of a proposal for COSME.

#### **Plan of work/activities**

- Project concept proposal AdrionCycleTour to be sent immediately to all TSG4 members for urgent approval in order to allow its submission by the deadline of **10<sup>th</sup> April**, as fixed by the FP+. Absence of reaction will be taken as silent approval
- TSG4 members are invited to consult their national project partner to find out if there are some activities and inform about it, and also to review once again executive summary, choose a priority theme and send proposals for future activities latest by **April 20<sup>th</sup>**
- Project concept proposal on Education for Integrated Sustainable Tourism Management will be sent to TSG4 members for approval by **April 25<sup>th</sup>**. TSG4 members are invited send their approval by **8<sup>th</sup> May 2019**. The project concept will be afterwards further developed with the support of the EUSAIR Facility Point (WP T.2).
- TSG4 members are invited to propose further strategic project concept proposals

#### **The cross cutting actions**

- Countries are invited to go through the modules presented in Capacity Building Programme, discuss it and choose activities and give the feedback for capacity building events to TSG4 **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**.

#### **EUSAIR Facility Point**

- **Catania Declarations** priorities will be defined and sent by TSG4 latest by **April 14<sup>th</sup>**
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Italy is still expected to send further data **by June 2019**. Further development of research will follow in coordination with M&E lead expert partner. A new call will have to be issued for TSG4 M&E to satisfy further tasks defined by the M&E expert coordinator.
- **Stakeholder platform** - Link and video are to be sent to TSG4 members **by April 24<sup>th</sup>**. Stakeholder platform is expected to be presented in each EUSAIR country in order to define and

give instructions on further activities of TSG4 members: TSG4 members should define key topics and documents to be shared. The reference point for each pillar is expected to be defined.

### **Information on interesting tourism/culture related events**

- TSG 4 members were asked to send their news on their future interesting tourism/culture related events and other pertinent developments relevant for the work of TSG 4 **by April 24<sup>th</sup>** .

### **Montenegrin Chairmanship and 4<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Forum**

- TSG4 panel is planned for the Forum with the topic “Skills gaps and weaknesses of the tourism labour market- how to match skills to sector’s need”
- Official written proposal for the side event by CoE Routes4U will be sent to organizers as soon as possible, and the decision will be expected **as soon as possible**
- TSG4 members are invited to secure their active presence at the 4<sup>th</sup> EUSAIR Forum
- Background paper for Ministerial meeting has to be prepared and sent to all TSG4 members **till April 20<sup>th</sup>**

### **Next TSG 4 meeting proposals and decision**

- Next 11<sup>th</sup> TSG4 meeting will be held in Puglia
- Candidature for the 12<sup>th</sup> TSG4 meeting will be sent by Greece