

PILLAR 4: Sustainable Tourism



Sustainable Tourism
EUSAIR

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT FOR YEAR 2021

Prepared by Pillar Coordinators, supported by the relevant EUSAIR Facility Point Project Partner, and approved by TSG 4 members on 15th 02.2022 through written procedure

Background:

As provided in the TSG Rules of Procedure (Point 8), every year, by end-February, Pillar Coordinators shall submit to the Governing Board an Annual Progress Report for the pillar concerned covering the preceding year (1st January-31st December).

The Annual Progress Report, jointly prepared by Pillar Coordinators, with the support of the relevant EUSAIR Facility Point Project Partner, is approved by the respective TSG prior to transmission to the Governing Board.

The Governing Board will be called to take note of the aforementioned reports, and, on that basis, to establish an Annual Progress Report for the EUSAIR as a whole, to be presented to the EU-28 High Level Group on macro-regional strategies and to the EUSAIR political/ministerial level.

General remarks:

The following table of content and the template itself show the sections that should be completed (none of them should be left blank or deleted from the report). If necessary and justified, additional (sub) sections could be added.

The report shall not exceed a maximum number of **5 pages** (*Arial 12 or equivalent*).

Additionally, please note the following:

- The information should be well-structured within each of the sections and should be synthetic and to the point, addressing the content and not aiming for quantity.
- Do not include information which could be found elsewhere, e.g. minutes of the meetings or list of TSG members.
- The language should be direct and clear. Using acronyms, jargon or internal technicalities is not recommended.
- Refer to factual information, and be as concrete as possible. Vague and general comments (e.g. "the situation is progressing favourably and quite rapidly") without justification should be avoided.
- Any other important information (monitoring reports etc) should be added as annexes.

TSG PROCESS (GOVERNANCE)

TSG governance process is defined by the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and its Action Plan as key documents to implement sustainable development in the macro-region. Four Pillars that address the core challenges and opportunities for the macro-region are defined by the Action

Plan. All pillars are co-chaired by EU and non-EU countries. According to this, Republic of Croatia and Republic of Albania are co-chairs of the Pillar 4 – Sustainable Tourism.

Since November 2020 a new co-chair for TSG4 for Albania, Mrs. Rovena Mocka, has been appointed. At the 12th TSG4 meeting representatives of the new EUSAIR member country- North Macedonia were welcomed.

Following the setting-up process of TSG4, all countries nominated their representatives in TSG4, and the Rules of Procedures of TSG4 were adopted in 2015. Most countries have also appointed their deputy representatives, and representatives of the national ministries of culture in line with their chosen priorities.

TSG4 organized three online meetings in 2021: 14th ad hoc meeting (16th February 2021), 15th meeting (20th April 2021, and 16th meeting (5th October 2021). At the 14th and 15th meetings, eight of the nine countries of the EUSAIR TSG4 were present, while Serbia was excused. At the 16th meeting, also eight of the nine countries were present, excluding Montenegro.

14th TSG4 online meeting was also attended by Facility Point Lead Partner, Croatian MA, FP Croatia Communication experts; ESP technical support

15th TSG4 online meeting was also attended by the European Commission (DG REGIO), Facility Point Lead Partner, ADRION, FP Croatia Communication experts; contracted experts for Strategic Project development and Monitoring and Evaluation, CoE – EICR, representative of EUROMONITOR and EC expert for macro-region COVID19 Declaration, as well as EuroAccess expert ESP technical support, while PC from Albania was excused

16th TSG4 online meeting was also attended by the European Commission (DG REGIO), Facility Point Lead Partner, FP Croatia Communication and Innovation experts; contracted experts for Strategic Project development and Monitoring and Evaluation, ESP technical support, as well as representatives of the council of Europe, EUSDR and EUSALP

1) TSG4 - meetings:

In the TSG4 meetings, the following key issues were discussed, in order to ensure an efficient implementation of EUSAIR and its Action Plan.

- **14th TSG4 meeting:** Ad Hoc meeting was held to provide feedback on new mono pillar strategic flagship project ideas. Audit Trails with Annex 1 templates for new mono-pillar project ideas were adopted, accordingly mono-pillar strategic project ideas proposed by Slovenia and Croatia were approved - ProDestAIR MIQS and Living the Sea 0.4, making with AIR Cultural Routes and CruiseAIR all together four new strategic project ideas approved to be developed. Greece withdrew STPDEU project idea. Two new members of the Greek TSG4 were introduced and warmly welcomed.
- **15th TSG4 meeting:**

The Albanian coordinator was excused. The report on the 14th TSG4 meeting's conclusions and implementation were approved. A short report on the GB meeting in February and March was given, as well as the information on the informal meeting of the Pillar coordinators. TSG4 members provided proposals for Serbian and Slovenian EUSAIR Forum topics, and the panel agendas were completed with their proposals. Report was also given on TSG4 Session organized and completed January 28th, within the 5th EUSAIR Forum realized online by Serbia. Report was given on administrative and organizational support provided also for 6th EUSAIR Forum TSG4 Session. DG Regio reported on activities and events, stressing actions facilitating the enlargement process, pointing out complementarities between the EUSAIR Action Plan and the enlargement process of EUSAIR. DG REGIO external expert explained the state of play of impacts of the pandemic and initiatives connected to that. Euromonitor representative presented the state of play and the effects of COVID 19 on European Travel as well as Sustainable Tourism Index results and positioning of EUSAIR countries. EuroAccess Macro-Regions Tool for detecting most adequate calls for projects in the future funding period was presented. Development of Cultural routes in EUSAIR was presented by CoE. TSG4 Monitoring and Evaluation expert (IRMO), Communication expert (AL Donia) and new contracted Innovation expert (IRMO) all reported on their activities. TSG4 members were invited to send proposals for the second Issue paper topic. Report was given on the embedding process on national level. Greece presented to TSG4 members a new cross pillar (P3) project idea "Network of Smart Sustainable Ecotourism Destinations" positively received by Pillar 3. TSG4 members were informed on Slovenian presidency events and activities, and invited to join.

- **16th TSG4 meeting:**

The Albanian coordinator was excused. Final report was given on the strategic project idea development of "Integrated sustainable management of tourism destinations in AIR" (DES_AIR). TSG4 members were informed that the procurement procedure for the last four project ideas was completed. TSG4 members were informed that four mono-pillar project concepts development started

TSG4 M&E, communication and innovation external experts reported on their activities and documents produced and available on web. Two additional themes for TSG4 Issue papers were proposed and accepted: wellness tourism and gastronomy tourism.

Information was given on cooperation with EC, Council of Europe Cultural Routes and other initiatives/institutions through the presentations of activities; In line with MRS cooperation in knowledge exchange, the representatives of EUSDR and EUSALP presented their activities. EUSALP strategy proved to be mainly focused on development and fostering nature based, health promoting tourism. EUSDR reported focus on cultural tourism and cultural routes.

Continuous cooperation with the Council of Europe supported certification of two new cross-macroregional cultural routes: Iron Age Danube Route and Cyril-Methodius Cultural Route in 2021. Slovenia reported on their past Presidency activities: Albanian presidency reported on planned activities.

TSG4 members were invited to give proposals for the TSG4 session at the 7th EUSAIR Annual Forum to be organized by Albania in 2022.

Puglia region reported on their support to embedding of the proposed Pillar 4 flagship project ideas in their relevant programming documents at a meeting in September organised together with all the Italian regional offices in Bruxelles where they deepened the theme of embedding in relation to macro regional strategies. Slovenia reported that in the process of programming they have put sustainable cultural tourism in proposals of cross border cooperation programs and transnational programs. Greece proposed two topics for issue papers: wellness tourism and gastronomy tourism. also Greece cross-pillar project idea proposed on the 15th TSG4 meeting has been approved by all MS, but FPLP on behalf of FPP management, reported that all cross-pillar projects are on hold since the tenderer was not selected under public procurement procedure. FPLP also informed about the initiative by Italy regarding the network of managing authorities of cross-border and transnational programmes.

2) TSG4 – round tables /seminars/ thematic events:

- **At 5th EUSAIR Forum** realized online by Serbia, **TSG4 Thematic Session was organized** January 28th with full administrative and organizational support, addressing the proposed specific Pillar related topic *“New trends in sustainable tourism - What does the modern tourist want?”*. TSG4 member countries took part through selected speakers, presentations of good practices and results shared.
- **At 6th EUSAIR Forum** realized online by Slovenia, **TSG4 Thematic Session was organized** on May 12th, TSG4 members participated in organisation with full administrative and organizational support, specific Pillar related themes were presented and discussed under the topic *“From Crisis to recovery through transnational tourism projects”*, speakers selected and results shared.
- **EUSAIR Stakeholders Conference hybrid from Rovinj was organized November 25th**. Conference aim was to raise awareness and encourage better visibility of the priorities and objectives of the EUSAIR strategy among stakeholders especially in the field of sustainable tourism and culture. It was intended to involve stakeholders in active participation in EUSAIR, with their valuable experiences and other contributions, encouraging partnerships for future project activities. The first session introduced the topic of sustainable management of cultural routes in EUSAIR in cooperation with CoE, the second session realised in cooperation with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) continued with discussions on over-tourism and recovery in the light of trends and perspectives, and the implications for all sectors. The third session in cooperation with EC, HOTREC and ECTAA, The European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations, concluded with the topic of the revision of the EUSAIR Action Plan, encouraging innovation and sustainability in all EUSAIR pillar sectors in a post-pandemic Europe. Conference attended by 150 participants, with 22 speakers, is available at <https://youtu.be/VmmiZqfkGu4> .

3) TSG4 also contributed to the:

- **2nd EUMRS Week Workshop** “Support of macro-regional strategies to the COVID-19 recovery”, with flagship project ideas presented online, March 1st;
- **MEET EUSAIR event** – flagship project ideas presented, online, April 15th;
- **ITA-HR CBC Workshop**: flagship project ideas presented, April 15th; embedding and cooperation possibilities for flagships prepared, August 18th, and assistance in presentation of flagships provided, online, October 21st;
- **HU-HR CBC Stakeholder workshop**, TSG4 flagship priorities explained online, Hungary-Croatia Interreg Programme 2021-2027, online, April 9th;
- **Conference** “Restarting of Touristic Sector in the Adriatic Area”, **IT-HR Interreg Remember Conference**, flagship project ideas presented (CRUISEAIR, DES_AIR), online, July 19th ;
- **10th Annual Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** “Resilient and sustainable Cultural Routes - innovating out of the crisis” presentation of TSG4 flagship project ideas (cultural routes), online, October 1st;
- **MRS Cooperation with EUSDR** - TSG4 flagship priorities on cultural routes presented at:
 - **Interreg Workshop** (Mobility Action, Danube’s Archaeological landscapes, AMZ) on creating cultural routes, September 20th/21st;
 - **Interreg Workshop**, Training School, iNEAL WG 4 on valorisation of Neanderthal heritage through the creation of cultural routes, September 29th;
- **EUSDR PA3 meeting** – EUSAIR TSG4 Actions, project ideas, stakeholders related to Culture and Tourism presented, December 14th.
- **ARHKONTUR Final International Conference**, with participation of the Council of Europe and UNWTO, presentation of EUSAIR TSG4 flagship priorities at Libertas International University, January 20th 2021.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Main priorities actions

- **DES_AIR strategic mono-pillar strategic project concept development** has been completed, including the research and final reports;
- **Two new strategic project ideas identified: ProDestAIR and Living the Sea 4.0** and project ideas proposals prepared, audit trail procedures prepared and approved;
- **4 final strategic project ideas adopted** - AIR Cultural Routes, CRUISE AIR, and ProDestAIR, Living the Sea) with **ToR and procurement process prepared**;
- **Procurement procedure completed and experts selected** for these last 4 mono-pillar project concepts development with **contracts signed**;
- **Cultural Routes**: cooperation continued with the Council of Europe with the participation of CoE-EICR representative at TSG4 meetings and participation of thematic expert at the 10th Annual Advisory CoE Forum, October 1st and

other CoE events. Continuous cooperation with the Council of Europe provided **certification of two new cross-macroregional cultural routes**: Iron Age Danube Route and Cyril-Methodius Cultural Route in 2021;

- **Monitoring and evaluation WP T.3** - TSG4 Pillar specific **M&E external expert** prepared Knowledge Base Study relevant for Pillar 4 „Sustainable Tourism“ (two reports completed, collected sources of information) and established the EUSAIR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2 monitoring reports completed) and data delivered to the WP3 LP; EUSAIR M&E Capacity Building organized on national level, November 4th – 5th;
- **External innovation expert** completed the 2nd report with good practice examples and recommendations;
- **Cooperation with ESP**- assistance to ESP in selection of topics to be presented at ESP „EUSAIR Tourism statistics“ Infographic topics for TSG4 proposed;
- **EUSAIR Stakeholder Conference** ”Re-routing Tourism Aiming at Sustainable Green Macro-region”, organized by TSG4 EUSAIR, in cooperation with EC, UNWTO, and Council of Europe EICR in Rovinj (hybrid) November 2021
- **EUSAIR-EUSDR cooperation** on Cultural Routes knowledge exchange , Interreg international workshop - Danube’s Archaeological E-Landscapes, with AIR Cultural Routes and CulTourAir flagship projects presentation, September 20th & 29th;

Actions undertaken with regard to communication. Both internally between the TSGs members, and externally- and to visibility, participation at:

1. **EUSAIR Pillar Coordinators and Governing Board** meetings, virtual, 11th February and 18th October – participation with the information on previous and future work in TSG4, presenting plan of activities;
2. **ADRION** bilateral meeting TSG4 flagship strategic project ideas presented, February 5th;
3. **ESPON TEVI2050** project within EUSAIR Steering Committee: participation at online meetings May 19th , July 15th, and November 2nd, administrative support with data provision
4. **AI-NURECC PLUS** High level launch online event, participation, July 2nd.
5. **PANORAMED** dialogues, online meetings July 6th introductory and November 23rd presentation of TSG4 flagship project ideas
6. **UNWTO**- active participation in TSG4 thematic events – EUSAIR Stakeholder Conference November 25th ;
7. **INTERACT ACTION LABS** – participation in the meeting July 6th, October 1st, and presentation of flagship project ideas on November 29th/30th;
8. **EUSDR SG Meeting PA3**, flagship project ideas presented, 14th December 2021

Visibility at events:

1. **TSG4 Communication**: 46 stories and articles prepared and published in different public media and social networks, participation at 3 TV shows from May to October 2021; press conference with a study trip for journalists

organized, September 27th, and a campaign related to EUSAIR Croatia prepared for December 2021.

2. **ARHKONTUR Final International Conference**, with the participation of the Council of Europe and UNWTO, presentation of EUSAIR TSG4 priorities at Libertas International University, January 20th
3. **2nd EUMRS Week online workshop** “Support of macro-regional strategies to the COVID-19 recovery”, flagship projects presented, March 1st;
4. **Youth related communication activities**, presentation of TSG4 priorities at Maribor University – online event COE cultural routes for EUSAIR, April 7th;
5. **Danube Limes MED Project International Conference**, youth related communication, flagships presented online at the Kern University, March 24th;
6. **MEET EUSAIR online event** – flagship projects presented, April 15th;
7. **10th Annual Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** “Resilient and sustainable Cultural Routes - innovating out of the crisis” EUSAIR cultural routes priorities presented online, October 1st;

MAIN ISSUES/CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

- COVID-19 related restrictions (failure to hold live meetings, EUSAIR Stakeholder Conference, All round tables, storytelling and other workshops)
- The absence of Albanian Pillar Coordinator
- Keeping deadlines

THE WORK AHEAD

In the year, 2022 TSG4 will mainly focus on:

- Implementation of recommendations and conclusions of TSG4, Governing Board and EUSAIR Forum;
- Organisation of two TSG4 meetings (17th in Greece & 18th in Croatia TBC) according to the Rules of Procedure with eventual organization of back-to-back All Round table on the topic of Tourism & Culture if pandemic conditions allow.
- Thematic ad hoc events - organisation of thematic and/or project oriented events/workshops (Financial dialogue, Students workshop);
- Further implementation of activities for development of Sustainable tourism in the Adriatic-Ionian region as continuation of the activities (two issue papers and a study);
- Further discussing actions/priorities that have macro-regional value in sustainable tourism at the next TSG4 meetings and presentation of the Issue Papers within one of the meetings;
- TSG4 workshops on national level will be held for further development of mono-pillar projects concepts under EUSAIR Facility Point project.
- Contribution to the 7th EUSAIR Forum organized by Albania in accordance to the Agenda of the Forum; TSG4 will actively participate at the 7th EUSAIR Forum with organisation of the panel in collaboration with the Albanian organisers.
- Further cooperation with CoE;
- Further cooperation with UNWTO;
- Cooperation with ESPON;

- Maintaining and improving cooperation among TSG4 members and between pillars to achieve the best output for all of them.

ANNEX 1

ATTENDANCE AT TSG 4 MEETINGS IN REPORTING YEAR 2021

Pillar 4. Sustainable Tourism	14 th TSG4 AD HOC meeting		15 th TSG4 meeting		16 th TSG4 meeting	
	Virtual (GoToMeeting)		Virtual (GoToMeeting)		Virtual (GoToMeeting)	
	Date: 16 th February		Date: 20 th April		Date: 5 th October	
EU Country	Tourism	Culture	Tourism	Culture	Tourism	Culture
CROATIA	4	1	7		3	
GREECE	4	1	3	3	3	1
ITALY	4	1	3	2	3	2
SLOVENIA	3	2	2	1	2	1
Non-EU Countries	Tourism	Culture	Tourism	Culture	Tourism	Culture
ALBANIA	2	1	3		3	
BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA	1	1	2		2	1
MONTENEGRO	1	1	2			
SERBIA			1			1
NORTH MACEDONIA	1		1	1		
TOTAL	20	8	24	7	16	6

ANNEX 2

MACRO-REGIONAL PROJECT/MEASURES

Project/measure title	Main activities <i>Short description of the project/measure, what are the objectives, added value for the EUSAIR, envisioned period...</i>	Mono / Cross Pillar project - <i>Indicate, if The strategic project has a mono or cross pillar approach, indicate the relevant pillar(s)</i>	Status <i>Describe the status of the project/measure (e.g. project idea/concept, mature project ready for implementation, project under implementation or completed, etc.)</i>	Involvement of EUSAIR countries	(Targeted) funding sources
Green mapping	<i>Strategic project concept aiming at mapping sustainable tourism businesses in EUSAIR region.</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>Audit Trail approved by TSG4 members, ToR prepared, experts selected, project idea development completed</i>	<i>All EUSAIR Countries invited to participate</i>	<i>1,598,470.00€</i>
CulTourAir	<i>Strategic project concept prepared with the aim of establishing the common methodology for the research and development of cultural tourism in EUSAIR countries</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>Audit Trail approved by TSG4 members, ToR prepared, experts selected, project idea development completed.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR Countries invited to participate</i>	<i>1,078.614,50€</i>
Des_Air	<i>Strategic project aims to develop new training and skills to strengthened EUSAIR countries competitiveness - increasing the quality of integrated sustainable destination management through development of LLL training programs and Masters' programmes.</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>The strategic project concept prepared. Audit Trail approved, ToR prepared, procurement procedure completed, external expert selected, project idea development completed.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR countries invited to participate</i>	<i>1,580,570.00€</i>
CruiseAIR	<i>Strategic project aims to provide sustainability of EUSAIR ports through the better management of cruise destinations, both seaside and continental ones (rivers, lakes), diversification of tourism product, activating creation of strategic and action plans for</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>The strategic project concept prepared. Audit Trail approved at 12th TSG4 meeting. ToR prepared, procurement procedure completed, external expert selected, Project idea under development.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR countries invited to participate</i>	<i>To be detected through project development</i>

	<i>sustainable tourism in AIR cruise destinations.</i>				
AIR Cultural Routes	<i>Strategic project aims to provide harmonized distribution of tourism flows through macro-regional territories using Cultural Routes as tool for the creation of innovative diversified tourism products. The challenge is to address regional connectivity of locally micro-managed routes.</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>The strategic project concept prepared. Audit Trail approved at 12th TSG4 meeting. ToR prepared, procurement procedure completed, external expert selected. Project idea under development.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR countries invited to participate</i>	<i>To be detected through project development</i>
AIR ProDest Strategy (MIQS)	<i>Strategic project aims to provide strategic approach to destination management planning, supporting smart, participative and agile destination management able to respond to dynamic challenges fast & cost-effectively</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>The strategic project concept prepared. Audit Trail approved. ToR prepared, procurement procedure completed, external expert selected. Project idea under development.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR countries invited to participate</i>	<i>To be detected through project development</i>
Living The Sea 4.0	<i>Strategic project idea aims to use digitalization for preservation of natural and cultural heritage as an important tool that will establish the foundation of new approach for managing the burden of coastal areas caused by touristic flows, climate changes, traffic pollution, and similar.</i>	<i>Pillar 4</i>	<i>The strategic project concept prepared. Audit Trail approved. ToR prepared, procurement procedure completed, external expert selected. Project idea under development.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR countries invited to participate</i>	<i>To be detected through project development</i>
STPDEU	<i>The main objective of the strategic project was to provide access for all to the seaside</i>	<i>Cross-pillar: Pillar 1 and Pillar 4</i>	<i>Project idea proposal withdrawn.</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>/</i>
Network of Smart Sustainable Ecotourism Destinations	<i>The main objective of this strategic project is to provide a cooperation possibility and support a network of Smart Sustainable Ecotourism Destinations</i>	<i>Cross-pillar: Pillar 3 and Pillar 4</i>	<i>The strategic project concept prepared. Audit Trail approved by TSG4 silent procedure.</i>	<i>All EUSAIR countries invited to participate</i>	<i>To be detected through project development</i>

ANNEX3

PILLAR / TSG EVENTS AT NATIONAL OR MACRO-REGIONAL LEVEL IN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Event / County / National or Macro-regional	Short description	Participants (<i>what kind of participants</i>)	Main outputs
EUSAIR Stakeholders Conference hybrid from Rovinj, November 25th	The aim of the conference was to raise awareness and encourage better visibility of the priorities and objectives of the EUSAIR strategy among stakeholders especially in the field of sustainable tourism and culture. It was intended to involve stakeholders in active participation in EUSAIR, with their experiences and other contributions, encouraging partnerships for future project activities.	TSG and MRS members and representatives, national and international, representatives of international institutions: UNWTO, EC, HOTREC - The umbrella Association of Hotels, Restaurants, Pubs and Cafes and similar establishments in Europe and ECTAA -The European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations, NCs, etc.	Awareness raising, exchange of knowledge and visibility achieved
Meetings on the national level Capacity building , Jezerčica, Croatia, 27 th September 2021	The aim of the workshop was strengthening institutional capacities in the field of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of strategic documents on the example of the European Strategy of the Adriatic-Ionian Region.	National TSG members, NCs, etc. representatives of all Managing Authorities operating in Croatia	Awareness raising, exchange of knowledge, and visibility achieved.