

Expression for interest of strategic projects – Priority Axis 4

Assessment grid

Project 537

FACILITY POINT

Summary of the project proposal (as from section A.2 of the application form)

The Facility Point (FP) enters a new period of support to the EUSAIR governance structures with an extended partnership forming a network of institutions from all EUSAIR participating countries. In line with the Priority 4 of the Interreg IPA ADRION programme, the FP covers four functions:

- Administrative and technical support to the EUSAIR governance meetings at all levels
- Communication and Coordination
- Support to decision making and capacity development of the implementers at their levels
- Monitoring and evaluation of EUSAIR.

The overall project objective is to facilitate the coordination, communication and implementation of EUSAIR by enhancing the institutional capacity of EUSAIR governance structures, fostering crosspillar cooperation, increasing the visibility of EUSAIR and by monitoring and evaluating the progress of implementation of joint priorities.

Specifically, the project will:

- Support effective and efficient functioning of EUSAIR governance structures.

Support smooth implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan through harmonised and effective internal procedures and communication, effective cross-pillar coordination, increased visibility of EUSAIR through communication with stakeholders, and cross-macroregional cooperation.

- Provide EUSAIR governance structures with tools for evidence-based decision-making and build internal institutional capacities.
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan and recommend possible changes in their implementation.

The intended change the Facility Point aspires to achieve:

- Strengthened institutional capacity of the EUSAIR governance structures and stakeholders for multi-level and cross-sector governance and cooperation across borders in the Adriatic Ionian region.
- Increased ownership, recognised added value and enhanced visibility of the EUSAIR.

The project main outputs:

- Facility Point network comprises 11 public institutions from national, regional and local level from 10 EUSAIR participating countries providing effective and quality administrative, operational and content support to the EUSAIR governance structures.
- Functional EUSAIR governance structures. The FP facilitates effective functioning of the EUSAIR Governing Board, Thematic Steering Groups and the Youth Council.
- EUSAIR macro regional exchange and cooperation. The Facility Point partners bring together macro-region's stakeholders to exchange on policies and practices related to the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, and to foster macro-regional cooperation and innovation.
- EUSAIR Communication actions are produced to foster effective collaboration of the EUSAIR governance structures with different EUSAIR target groups and to improve external communication on the EUSAIR achievements.
- FACILITY POINT capacity building comprises a range of capacity building actions to strengthen the capacity of key implementers for informed decision-making.
- EUSAIR monitoring and evaluation system supports the EUSAIR governance structures in monitoring of the Strategy implementation and serves as a tool for collecting lessons learned for steering future implementation.

The proposed project was designed considering key results, experience and lessons learned from the implementation of the Facility Point strategic project in the period 2016-2023 as well as recent developments related to the implementation of the EUSAIR and its Action Plan. Transnational cooperation is at the essence of macro-regional strategies. The EUSAIR participating countries are most diverse in terms of socioeconomic development, religious, cultural, political and other aspects. They gather EU Member States, EU candidate countries and one third country. Facilitating enlargement became one of top priority topics. The basic approach to address the four functions assigned to the FP is on establishing a sound network of partners operating in all EUSAIR participating countries to enable close and effective support to key members of the governing structures in respective countries and at macro-regional level. The project capitalizes on solutions from 2016-2023 period, such as the monitoring and evaluation system, the EUSAIR website and EUSAIR social media channels, as well as the relevant accumulated knowledge, which will be upgraded in accordance with newly emerging needs and opportunities.

The FP is extended to two more countries, one new Pillar and one new structure - Youth Council. More emphasis is put on the knowledge management, strategic decision-making support, capacity building and country level communication. EUSAIR Contact Points network for country stakeholders will be formed. More efforts are devoted to coordination and efficient cooperation, also in view of achieving synergies among the three governance support projects.

Project initial total eligible budget (in EUR)	<i>Out of which INTERREG</i>
7.872.900	6.336.750,00

Partners involved:

Project partner No	Partner name	Abbreviation	Total Interreg budget	Total budget	Participating Country
1	Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development	MCRD	1.444.001,25	1.698.825,00	SI
2	State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination	SASPAC	347.735,00	409.100,00	AL
3	Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina	DEI	245.097,50	288.350,00	BA
4	Ministry of Tourism and Sport of the Republic of Croatia	MINTS	683.485,00	804.100,00	HR
5	Ministry of Economy and Finance	EYSSAE	825.775,00	971.500,00	EL
6	Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region	FVG Region	621.010,00	730.600,00	IT
7	Ministry of European Affairs	MEA	687.140,00	808.400,00	ME
8	Secretariat for European Affairs	SEA	363.757,50	427.950,00	MK
9	Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia	MEI	446.292,50	525.050,00	RS
10	Municipality of Izola	OI	672.456,25	791.125,00	SI
11	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of San Marino Department of Foreign Affairs	DIP AAEE SM	0,00	417.900,00	SM
			1.118.250,00	1.698.825,00	

Overview of the overall final score:

Operational criteria	Minimum score: 30/50	Attributed scores
	TOTAL	32/50

Quality assessment grid

Operational criteria

		Workplan	Attributed score
Work plan	1a Max 5 points	<p>Is the overall approach suitable to obtain the planned outputs and results?</p> <p>How effective are the proposed measures to support the EUSAIR governance structures (Governing Board, the Thematic Steering Groups) and they ensure the implementation of the European Green Deal?</p> <p>Are the coordination mechanisms with other two projects supporting EUSAIR Governance efficient to ensure the necessary support and is overlapping functions avoided?</p>	
		<p>+The proposed project intends to implement some of the activities defined by EUSAIR Governing Board as relevant for its functioning and support.</p> <p>+The approach adopted by the project is fairly suitable to obtain the planned outputs and results.</p> <p>+The proposed measures fairly intend to support the EUSAIR governance structures based on the experience of the previous programming period - Governing Board, Thematic Steering Group, National Coordinators etc. - including the setting in place of the Youth Council.</p> <p>+Coordination mechanism is fairly described, and its regular implementation seems ensuring the absence of future overlapping. However, the absence of overlapping activities should be confirmed with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity 2.4 of project No 1 Facility Point (cross-macro-regional cooperation) regarding the exchange knowledge, transfer of good practice and enabling of peer learning and activity 1.5 of the project No 3 (“<i>exchange of knowledge of the best practices within and outside MRS will support capacity building for PPs and TSGs in the development of implementation formats</i>”). ○ Activity 3.1 and 3.2 of project No 1 Facility Point regarding the engagement of pillar thematic experts aimed at observing the situation and trends of the MR and activity of project3 WP 3 aimed at involving and engage EUSAIR stakeholders, which includes, among other, the inclusion of new flagships (action 3.3). 	3

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity 2.1 deliverable D.2.1.1 (ESP Cluster of data source for stakeholders and general public) of project No 2 and activity 3.1 deliverable D.3.1.(macro-regional knowledge database on EUSAIR processes, regularly updated). 	
	<p>1b</p> <p>Max 5 points</p>	<p>Are the work plan and timing of activities, deliverables and outputs realistic, consistent and transparent?</p> <p>Are the proposed financial and human resources appropriate to implement the project?</p> <p>Is the contribution of each project partner to the project clearly described?</p>	
		<p>+Overall, the proposed work plan and timing of activities seem realistic and able to comply with the requirements of the EUSAIR structure.</p> <p>+ Outputs are described in a detailed way.</p> <p>+The contribution of each project partner is clearly described both with regard to its contribution at project level and its engagement at national level.</p> <p>-With regard to the proposed activities, it seems that the planned definition of the evaluation plan, envisaged in the period 3, shall be delivered late according to the general guidelines provided by the EC and should be justified.</p> <p>± The difference between what envisaged in activity 2.2 (<i>preparing and implementing an internal communication strategy</i>) and in activity 2.1 (<i>Coordination of internal communication network</i>) is not fully clear.</p>	3
	<p>1c</p> <p>Max 5 points</p>	<p>Are project outputs and results that contribute to Programme indicators realistic, i.e.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is possible to achieve them with the chosen approach; 2. it is possible and realistic to achieve them with the proposed timeframe, budget and partners engagement <p>Does each work package envisage at least one project output?</p> <p>Are the quantified output indicators foreseen in the first three years of project implementation (end of 2026) at least 75% of the output indicators reported in the application form?</p>	
		<p>+ Each work package envisages at least one project output.</p> <p>-As far as output indicator RCO81 - Participations in joint actions across borders – its quantification does not seem having been based on the correct understanding of the definition provided in the EC fiche: the number of subscribers of a newsletter cannot be considered as a valuable contribution accountable for feeding the indicator, which expects, indeed, an active participation in the joint actions</p>	3

		(ref to output 2.1); similarly, involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation cannot be considered as a participation in joint actions across borders (ref to output 4.1). - ±Considering the overall quantification of output indicators, it is assumed that the target of at least 75% of the output indicators reported in the application form shall likely be reached.	
	1d Max 5 points	Are the respect of horizontal principles, including the DNSH principle clearly described and adequate measures ensured? Are compulsory ways of cooperation well mirrored in the proposed activities? Are ownership, durability and transferability properly described?	
		+The project proposal effectively contributes to the horizontal principles. + The project soundly addresses to all the three compulsory ways of cooperation; joint staffing has also been envisaged and adequately mirrored in the proposed activities. +Considering the support the project will give the macro-regional strategy, the strategy is the highest expression of durability and transferability of the envisaged activities.	4
Management	2a Max 5 points	Does the management approach show good potential to secure a sound project management, coordination, and risk mitigation? Is the proposed project management structure effective? Are the internal communication and the management structure appropriate to ensure smooth and effective co-operation within the partnership? How well the foreseen management structure is proportionate to the partnership, project size and needs and allow partners' involvement in decision-making? How will the involved partners ensure the management and implementation of EUSAIR at national level? How well will the countries that are not involved as PPs will benefit from the project results at national level?	
		+The project has been attributed a leading role with regard to the coordination of some activities acknowledged by the other two strategic projects. +The description of the proposed project management structure is very detailed highlighting the management and coordination inside the project and the representation outside it with the programme bodies. Emphasis is attributed to communication activities which are also coordinated at project level with the other 2 strategic projects. Communication at national level has been considered as well.	4

		<p>+The proposed management structure is considered as adequate with regard to the described tasks and number of subjects involved (project partners, projects etc).</p> <p>+Regular coordination activities with the other two strategic projects are envisaged.</p> <p>+ Coordination of work packages is fairly distributed between the project partners.</p>	
		Communication	Attributed score
Communication	3a Max 5 points	<p>Are communication activities planned in the work plan and are they relevant for achieving communication objectives?</p> <p>Are the communication activities and deliverables appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders?</p> <p>Will the target groups, the partners, and the stakeholders benefit from the co-operation?</p> <p>Is the Regulation requirement according to art. 36.4.e) of the Interreg Regulation of organizing a communication event at project partner level respected?</p>	
		<p>+ The project Facility Point envisages a dedicated WP to Communication. Coordination with the other 2 projects is primarily ensured by the joint communication strategy and its implementation, further supported by annual plans.</p> <p>+Proposed activities envisage the use of several tools and are considered as suitable to reach overall planned objectives. Moreover, what proposed is considered as appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders, further boosted by activities performed at national level and by the further overall contribution of the other 2 strategic projects.</p> <p>+ All target groups, stakeholders and project partners shall benefit from the cooperation.</p>	3
		Budget	Attributed score
Project budget	4a Max 5 points	<p>To which extent the presented budget is transparent and include sufficient details per partner in particular in the period 2023-2026?</p> <p>Is the choice of using simplified cost options (SCOs) appropriate and in line with the programme rules?</p>	
		+The budget is sufficiently transparent; the role of partners within the project proposal is fairly mirrored in the different allocation of financial resources.	3

		<p>±With the exception of the compulsory use related to administrative costs and the lump sum amount devoted to preparation one, use of SCOs by project partners is limited to two (PP6 – travel costs, and PP10 staff and travel costs).</p> <p>-Costs unit type should not include words (e.g.: lump sum) not intended within the meaning provided by EC Regulation.</p>	
	4b Max 5 points	To which extent resources planned by the project partners are adequate (in terms of quantity and quality) and reflects market prices?	
		+ The resources planned by the project partners are considered as adequate having regard to their engagement and role within the project. The provided level of details is the one requested in the Application Manual.	3
	4c Max 5 points	To which extent project budget is proportionate to the proposed work plan and project outputs? Is distribution of budget per period in line with workplan?	
		+The proposed budget is proportionate to the proposed work plan and outputs. ±With the exception of the first and last period whose forecast is lower, the budget allocation is evenly distributed around 12% of the total budget/period.	
	4d Max 5 points	Is the financial allocation per cost category in line with the programme rules? Are the partners' budgets coherent with their respective role in project activities for each Work Package?	
		+ Financial allocation is in line with the programme rules. Ca 62% of the total budget is allocated under budget line external experts, whereas staff costs amount to 27% of the total budget. +Partners' budget is coherent with their role in project activities.	3
TOTAL	Max 50 points		32

State Aid check

The project proposal is State Aid relevant	NO
List of State Aid relevant activities and involved project partner	

Anti-fraud checks:

Checks related to the project partner of North Macedonia is currently missing. Regarding the other partners, no problems have been detected.

Is the selected operations directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement within the scope of Article 258 TFEU?

NOT APPLICABLE

The project proposal is:

Approved	
Approved under conditions	X
Rejected	

Conditions for improvement

The project proposal answers the requirements approved by the EUSAIR Governing Board and considered as relevant for the sound implementation of the macro-regional strategy.

From a technical point of view, some requests for clarifications would be necessary to help the project in being smoothly implemented:

Conditions for improvement

- Clarify coordination and/or synergies with regard to the following and revise if necessary:
 - Activity 2.4 of project No 1 Facility Point (cross-macro-regional cooperation) regarding the exchange knowledge, transfer of good practice and enabling of peer learning and activity 1.5 of the project No 3 (“*exchange of knowledge of the best practices within and outside MRS will support capacity building for PPs and TSGs in the development of implementation formats*”);
 - Activity 3.1 and 3.2 of project No 1 1 Facility Point regarding the engagement of pillar thematic experts aimed at observing the situation and trends of the MR and activity of project3 WP 3

- aimed at involving and engage EUSAIR stakeholders, which includes, among other, the inclusion of new flagships (action 3.3).
- Activity 2.1 deliverable D.2.1.1 (ESP Cluster of data source for stakeholders and general public) of project No 2 and activity 3.1 deliverable D.3.1.(macro-regional knowledge database on EUSAIR processes, regularly updated).
 - Better explain the difference between what envisaged in activity 2.2 (*preparing and implementing an internal communication strategy*) and in activity 2.1 (*Coordination of internal communication network*).
 - Revise the quantification of the indicator RCO81 - Participations in joint actions across borders – in relation to output 2.1 and 4.1.
 - Amend the unit cost definition by deleting the word “lump sum”.

Project initial total eligible budget (in EUR)	Project revised eligible budget (in EUR)	<i>Out of which INTERREG</i>	Difference (in EUR and %)
7.872.900	7.872.900	6.336.750,00	0