PRELIMINARY MARKET CONSULTATION

Artt. 77 e 78, Dlgs. 36/2023

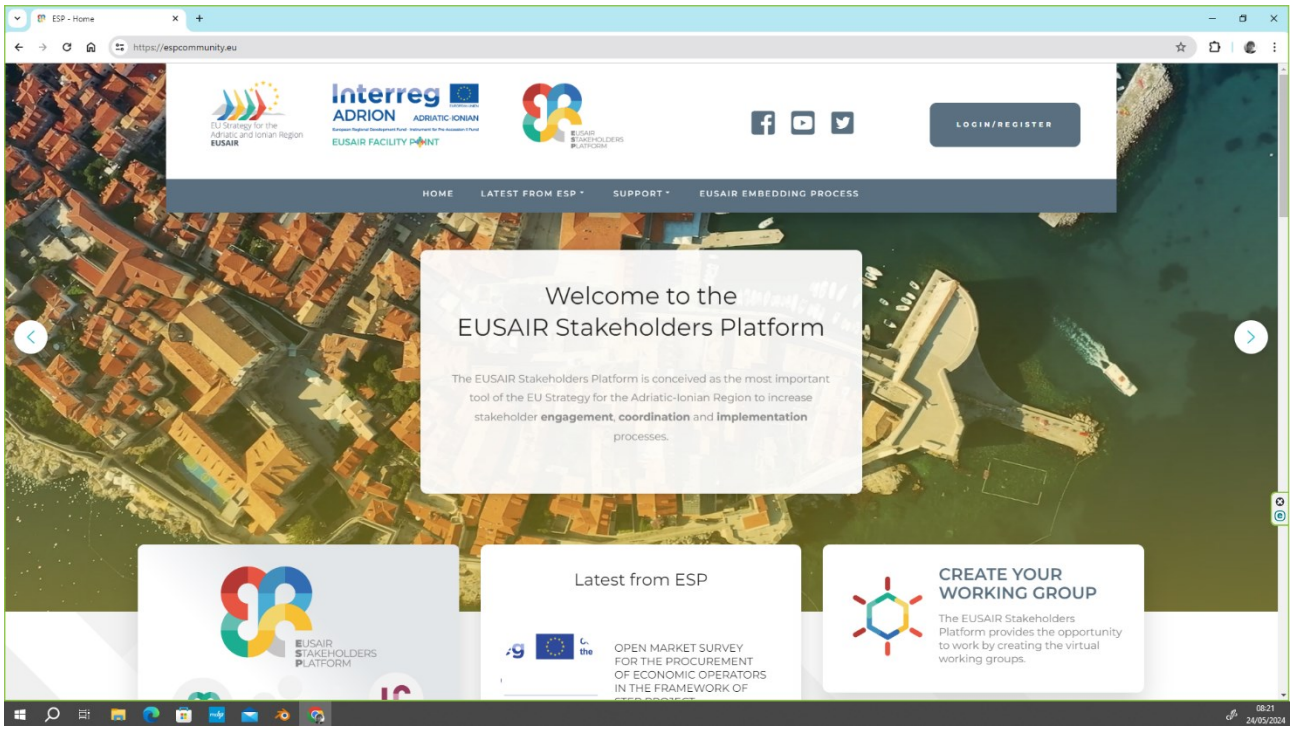
SUBJECT: gathering information for the precise definition of service requirements for the implementation of the StEP platform (ESP platform upgrade).

TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

1. THE EXISTING ESP PLATFORM

Marche Region, through the new StEP project, financed by the Interreg IPA ADRION 2021-2027 Territorial Cooperation Programme, must proceed to update and further develop in terms of technology and content, the current ESP Platform (https://espcommunity.eu/) implemented, promoted and used in the 2014-2020 programming period for the involvement of stakeholders in the EUSAIR Strategy (https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EUSAIR-SWD-2020.pdf).

The current outline of the platform is detailed below:



EXISTING FUNCTIONS

- ***Personal Dashboard****: section showing the registered user's personal profile, the groups he/she has decided to join, the EUSAIR Pillars and the topics of interest.*
- ***Searching Channel****: section containing projects, reports Pillars-related documents.*
- ***Sharing Channel****: virtual community of the Platform where registered users can post content, ideas, events and create virtual working groups (closed or open, depending on the content to be posted).*
- ***Tools Channel****: interactive tools that can be used to request assistance from the Platform Manager in the creation of online and in-person events, simple and/or complex, webinars, the administration of questionnaires and the preparation of newsletters.*
- ***Learning Channel****: channel of e-learning courses developed on the main themes highlighted by the EUSAIR Pillars.*

Starting from the previous ESP platform, the new platform will have to be the result of a major evolution of the functionalities, usability and attractiveness of the applications present in the previous one and represented above, to which will have to be added other applications, relations, interoperability, models and online services funded by the new StEP project. (see § 1.7)

The new Platform will have to manage all the content and services offered by organising them with respect to the 5 Pillars of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy EUSAIR:

- **Pillar 1 – Blue Growth**
- **Pillar 2 – Connectivity (Transport and Energy Networks subgroups)**
- **Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality**
- **Pillar 4 – Sustainable Tourism**
- **Pillar 5 – Social Cohesion** (new Pillar established with 2021-2027 programming period)

In detail, the outputs that, according to the StEP project, are expected from the update of the previous platform:

1.1. User management and profiling

A user registration system should be foreseen with verification and request for authorisation for a given profile (therefore, different profiles should be foreseen depending on the category the user belongs to, e.g. Platform Manager, Managing Authority of EU Programmes, Policy Makers, Businesses, Civil Society, Third Sector, International Bodies, etc.). The different profile will allow the user to be associated with different permissions regarding the visibility of content and access to the various services offered by the Platform, such as:

- administrators: they will be able to manage users and will have complete visibility of the

platform and will decide which functionalities can be used either at user profile level or customised for individual users;

- - key implementers/editors: they will have complete visibility of the platform but will not have user management;
- - stakeholders/users: they will have reduced visibility depending on how content is shared.

1.2. Live cooperation environment for different stakeholders

The User Co-operation Environment should provide a private space with enhanced cybersecurity systems in which to facilitate and host all conversations (in small or large groups), share ideas and projects. Different areas and channels should be provided, based on topics (pillars, items, interests, etc.), with different levels of access identified in the previous point.

The Environment should allow real-time verbal conversations (**synchronous and asynchronous video conferencing systems**) between the different stakeholder groups. A hypothetical solution could be to provide a dedicated web chat system (**advanced chat functionality**), with real-time notification (**interest group level notifications**) and instantaneous discussion aimed at facilitating the relationship between users, e.g. at workshops and seminars (**online presentation functionality with the possibility of registration and subsequent content sharing**) and cooperation on writing, editing and sharing documents and comments (**collaborative writing functionality**) through working groups clustered according to user profiles, integrated with live reaction, polls also instant (**survey management with reporting**), management and organisation of virtual events and online contests/hackathons (**contest management**). Many of these functionalities are already present, in whole or in part, in many online chatting platforms such as Zoom meeting, Teams, Swapcard and similar. Preferably based on open source, the idea is to develop one that is fully integrated into the new ESP platform and that is able to store the data collected once pseudonymised (computer data, once 'anonymised', do not meet the criteria to qualify as personal data and are therefore not subject to the same restrictions on the processing of personal data as under considerandum 26 and Art. 4(5) of GDPR EU/2016/679).

1.3. Multilingual automatic transcription and translation

The new platform should also be equipped with a special application for real time translation (e.g. simultaneous translation system developed through the A.I.) that returns in written language (subtitles) the translated language used by the speaker. The return languages are the languages spoken in the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region (Italian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Albanian, Greek) in addition to English, the vehicular language of the Strategy, while those of the speaker should be all the national languages of the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region, as well as of the EU member countries, in addition to English (**e.g. integration of the transcription and**

automatic multilingual translation, from and into the user language, of the text contents in PDF format as well as audio/video in real time and off-line).

1.4. Artificial Intelligence-based applications

The new platform should be equipped with functionalities and services developed through predictive intelligence, capable of processing new content and data starting from existing and stored content and data, once 'pseudonymised' in the databases feeding the StEP platform (new ESP platform). The objective would be to obtain advanced search functionalities, and navigator support (**chatbot mode**), indexing and synthesis of audio and video content of events related to the macro-region.

1.5. Enhancing e-learning functionality

According to the StEP project, the new ESP platform should be enhanced in terms of e-learning services through synchronous and **asynchronous training modules with webinars, live workshops, MOOC[1], Smart learning Pills, gamification** and new courses, SCORM[2] compliant or equivalent (please note that the Data Base Management System currently used is MySQL). The E-Learning platform should have the task of strengthening the capacities of the recipients of the service to access a wide range of topics related to the EUSAIR pillars and flagships, according to the competence development plan acknowledged in the 21-27 Strategy governance project, led by Slovenia and in the coordination mechanism called EUSAIR Governance Point (EGP) established among the 3 projects planned for the Governance of EUSAIR (funded by the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme 2021-2027)[3].

1.6. Data knowledge management

The new ESP platform should be equipped with data knowledge management tools for better and wider stakeholder engagement by combining narrative, data and images (**building stories/presentations through data, images, audio and video**). Data will be collected from different sources (**importing/linking from data sources external to the platform, e.g. uploading data files from local, linking to web services, linking project databases, interoperability between databases, etc.**) and assembled, organised and produced, by means of artificial intelligence applications to create new content in the form of webdocs and infographics (**construction of interactive dashboards**). Through its intelligent applications, the StEP platform

1 Massively Open Online Course

[2] Shareable Content Object Reference Model

[3] The EUSAIR Strategy is supported by the following three governance projects: Project No. 1 'Facility Point' led by Slovenia; Project No. 2 'StEP' led by Marche Region; Project No. 3 'SP4EUSAIR' led by Croatia.

should allow for increased analysis of meaningful data on a geographical basis (**geoportal functionality**). To enhance the possible outcomes of its intelligent services, the use of the platform as a repository of data related to all strategic implementation formats of the macro-region should be increased. For this, a space should be foreseen within it to collect digital data organised by content, stakeholder type and EUSAIR pillars (**sharing among stakeholder groups, tagging, integration with social networks and manual/automatic categorisation through AI**).

The new Platform should also foresee a section dedicated to the development of information and content related to the most relevant projects (the concept of relevance would be defined according to financial parameters, objectives and/or partners involved, etc., as specified by the analysis prompt) financed by an EU Programme operating in one of the territories of the Adriatic-Ionian Macro Region, in order to inform the stakeholders of the main results of EUSAIR, as well as of the **key messages** that EUSAIR disseminates publicly. The new database should include not only the database already present in the ESP platform, with the projects that had an impact in the Adriatic-Ionian region in the period 2014-2020 financed by the ETC/EU/IPA funds (**management of projects present in the ESP platform**), but it should also allow the interoperability with the databases of the IT-information systems used by the Managing Authorities of the various EU programmes (**reactivating the Managing Authorities network**). This is in order to ditect new projects financed by other EU funding sources (**analysis of new projects**), such as Regional Programmes or other National Programmes. The result would be to provide Managing Authorities with new tools for analysing programming impacts, such as infographics, fact sheets or other innovative applications (**data analysis functions**), which would highlight the set of projects that are most in line with the EUSAIR objectives and priorities for each Pillar (**through AI functions for automatic project analysis**). Finally, in relation to the EUSAIR thematic priorities, a continuous review of funding opportunities for new projects (**funding opportunity management**) that are most in line with the EUSAIR strategy and an alert service on new public notices for project funding should be developed within the new platform. The alert system should make it possible to inform stakeholders interested in new funding opportunities (**alert tool with AI functions for automatic correlation of projects vs. opportunities**).

1.7. Integration with applications, models and platforms implemented in previous programming and to be introduced in current programming.

In the previous programming period, two Master Plans were developed for Pillar 2 ‘Transport and Energy networks’. These two documents provide the current status and improvement scenarios envisaged in the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion for transport and energy networks. Within the framework of the Transport Masterplan, a multimodal simulation model of the transport system of the Adriatic and Ionian region was developed, called EMTM (EUSAIR Multimodal Transport Model). This is a simulation model that, starting from data on the transport infrastructures and

services available in the macro-region, makes it possible to estimate their performance and level of service (e.g. time and cost of movement of goods and people) and to forecast their evolution as a function of the demand for mobility on the various modes of transport (road and rail). The model uses a database containing information on the transport infrastructures present in the impact area, collected by the States participating in the Strategy (existing and planned infrastructures), and data on the origin-destination matrices of the demand for the movement of persons and goods. The StEP platform should allow the interface with the simulation software that implements the model (such as PTV-Visum or other software with the same characteristics), through a management and analysis module of input and output data on a geographical basis (**geoportal functionality**).

For the service to be effective, it would have to guarantee a constant and efficient update of the (georeferenced) data feeding the model, so as to allow the simulation of future analysis scenarios (predictive intelligence of possible scenarios). The databases from which the intelligent product would originate could include, but are not limited to:

- transport infrastructure (road, rail, port and airport);
- mobility services (passenger and freight) in the macro-regional strategy area;
- Origin-Destination Matrices of Mobility Demand;
- traffic flows (passengers and goods) on the main road and rail routes and intermodality at major ports and airports;
- data on ongoing and planned infrastructure projects.

In order to keep the new platform updated and to foster involvement and interaction between the Macro-Region's stakeholders, it would be an asset to create continuous data interoperability with the following actors:

- European Commission – DG MOVE;
- Coordinators of European Transport Corridors of Interest to the Macro-Region (e.g. Baltic-Adriatic or WestrnBalkans-Eastern Mediterranean);
- Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community;
- Ministries of Infrastructure and Transport of the individual states participating in the EUSAIR Strategy;
- Transport infrastructure managers (roads and motorways, railways, ports and airports);
- Rail, air and maritime services operators;
- Public authorities overseeing the management of ports and airports;
- Universities and other research institutes in the field of Transport.

1.8. Setting up and animating the financial dialogue in the EUSAIR area

Finally, the new platform should be equipped with a dedicated public information section on the possible financial instruments at the service of different EUSAIR priority actions (Strategic or Flagship Projects as well as the revised Strategy Action Plan) in order to foster the greatest possible transparency and publicity on the public financing of such projects/initiatives. Through the section it should also be possible to activate a financial match-making service based on the EUSAIR priorities, in which the financing needs of projects with a strong EUSAIR value and the possibilities offered by the various funds/financial programmes can be matched (**information on financial instruments to be integrated in the database in order to facilitate match-making and financial dialogue**).

2. INFORMATION ON THE MARCHE REGION COMPUTER STANDARDS

All the technological-informatics solutions that will be suggested must take into account the common technical and technological requirements of the Marche Region and published on the institutional website:

https://www.regione.marche.it/Regione-Utile/Agenda-Digitale/Standard-di-riferimento-per-la-realizzazione-di-sistemi-informativi-e-telematici-della-Giunta-regionale

Reference should be made to the following documents:

- **Enabling technological infrastructures of the Marche Region** including the following annexes:
  - **Reference standards for software development**
  - **Mcloud**

3. BUDGET AND TIMEFRAME FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW UPGRADED PLATFORM

The technological-informatics solutions that will be suggested shall take into account that the maximum amount foreseen by the StEP project for the acquisition of services for the implementation of the StEP platform (ESP platform upgrade), the related technical maintenance, training and support activities, and the platform animation activities is equal to euro 408,702.00 (VAT included). It is estimated that for the upgrade of the new platform that is the subject of this consultation (thus excluding the technical maintenance, training and support activities and the platform animation activities) it is possible to foresee the allocation of resources amounting to euro 300,000.00 (VAT included).

The duration of the StEP project is 52 months starting from 01/10/2023, with the conclusion of the project foreseen on 31/12/2027 unless an extension of up to a maximum of 24 months is granted by the IPA ADRION 2021-2027 Programme, which finances the project, upon achievement of required performance targets. Therefore, the time frame within which the required services are to be provided

can be estimated at 33 months from the date of signing the contract, which is expected within the first half of next year, to the date of completion of the project, unless the project is extended as described above.