Research Purpose and Relevance of EUSAIR as a Case Study

My name is Marco D'Attoma, and I am a PhD candidate at the University of Agder (Norway). My research project focuses on the governance dynamics of EU macro-regional strategies, with particular attention to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR). The present study is part of my second research article, in which EUSAIR is used as a case study to analyse how recent EU policy priorities affect stakeholder dynamics within macro-regional frameworks.

The European Union has increasingly prioritised the green and digital transition as a core strategic objective, promoting a comprehensive transformation of economic systems, infrastructures, and governance practices. This shift requires alignment across multiple policy domains and levels of government, including transnational cooperation frameworks such as macro-regional strategies.

Macro-regional strategies (MRS), including EUSAIR, provide an important platform for cooperation among EU Member States and non-EU countries. However, they operate under the principle of "no new funds, no new institutions, and no new legislation", which means that they rely on coordination, stakeholder engagement, and voluntary alignment rather than formal authority. This makes them particularly relevant for understanding how major EU priorities—such as the green and digital transition—are translated into practice in complex governance environments.

The main objective of this research is to analyse how the so-called "Twin Transition" (green and digital) influences the mobilisation of stakeholders (public and private) within a macro-regional governance context. In particular, the study examines how new EU priorities affect patterns of participation, the emergence of new actors, and the formation of networks and collaborations across sectors and levels.

EUSAIR represents a highly relevant case study for this purpose. As a transnational governance framework involving countries with diverse institutional capacities and development levels, it provides a unique setting to observe how stakeholders respond to evolving EU priorities. Moreover, its governance structure—based on coordination and dialogue rather than formal authority—makes it possible to analyse how policy change occurs through interaction, negotiation, and mobilisation.

For the purposes of this research, I would therefore be particularly interested in understanding how the implementation of the Twin Transition influences the work of the macro-regional strategy, both at the decision-making level and in the development and implementation of projects.