

## EUSAIR POPRI youth 2024

### General information

POPRI is an entrepreneurial learning and competition process for young people with a clear vision, innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit. After 20 years of Primorski tehnološki park activities, this annual event has developed into an entrepreneurial brand/movement that also takes place internationally and is recognized by national and international authorities, including the European Commission.

### Background

The vision of young people from 10 EUSAIR (EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region) countries meeting at the **EUSAIR POPRI youth** competition and presenting their BEST BUSINESS IDEAS became a reality during the **6th EUSAIR Forum** on 11-12 May 2021. The event entitled “Along the coast of the shared sea”, was organised with the support of the European Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, SPIRIT Slovenia - Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalisation, Foreign Investment and Technology and numerous SMEs and start-ups.

During the **7th EUSAIR Forum**, which took place on 16 and 17 May 2022 in Tirana, Albania, young people met for the second time. The event was organised jointly with the local economic development agency Auleda Vlore, Albania, and with the support of the European Commission and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Republic of Albania. Albania's Presidency of EUSAIR from June 2021 to May 2022 has provided additional support to the process and implementation of the recommendations of the Young People's Manifesto (October 2020) and the Izola Declaration (11 May 2021). High representatives of EUSAIR countries have adopted the Tirana Declaration.

The **8th EUSAIR Forum** was organised in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 23 to 25 May 2023 and provided a great opportunity for young people to meet for the third time. The event was prepared together with the ICBL Innovation Centre Banja Luka and with the support of the European Commission and the state institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina provided additional impetus to engage and support young participants in EUSAIR by hosting the EUSAIR POPRI youth events during the EUSAIR Forum in Sarajevo from 23 to 25 May 2023, which focused on the issue of brain drain. On this occasion, the Sarajevo Declaration (24 May 2023) was adopted, recommending the continued

support of the Young POPRI network and encouraging each of the future Presidencies to continue to do so.

In May 2024, **the 9th EUSAIR Forum** will take place in Croatia and the 2024 EUSAIR POPRI Youth Events led by PTP and ZICER will take place there with the support of the Croatian EUSAIR Presidency, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development of the Republic of Slovenia and the Facility Point project. With its support, the Croatian Presidency will reaffirm its commitment to supporting and involving young people in the work and activities of the Adriatic-Ionian region.

### Why focus on youth?

Young people face a number of obstacles to starting a business and becoming self-employed. These include a lack of role models for entrepreneurship (e.g. parents and teachers may have no experience of entrepreneurship), a lack of experience in the labour market, a lack of entrepreneurial skills, low savings and security, and small professional networks.

**EUSAIR POPRI youth is an effective response to the global challenge of inclusive and innovative society and an example of good practise of socially responsible activities in the field of youth entrepreneurship skills development.**

Our societies are facing profound transformations and uncertain situations and challenges and will continue to do so in the future. The consequences of COVID-19 are still being felt, there are current challenges related to climate change, the use of energy resources, unstable situations related to wars and others... These are challenges that need to be tackled together and in generational cooperation. Young people need opportunities and support to build their capacities and actively participate in social and economic life. Through sharing knowledge, innovative ideas and experiences POPRI creates opportunities for all of us, paving the way to inclusive and innovative economy and ensuring increased employability.

EUSAIR POPRI youth brings together young representatives from 10 EUSAIR countries to present strong messages on youth activation as well as solutions for consideration to the decision-makers who meet and cooperate within EUSAIR.

## Why EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region? Simply because...

The challenges facing youth in the Adriatic-Ionian region may vary, but common issues include high unemployment rates, limited education and employment opportunities and the need for sustainable development. In addition, there may be concerns related to social and economic inequality, political instability and access to resources. It is important to address these challenges to ensure a better future for youth in the region. Youth engagement can be crucial for positive change in the region. Young people often bring new perspectives, innovative ideas and energy to tackle pressing issues. Active participation in initiatives and projects can help to find solutions. **Collaboration between youth and various stakeholders, including governments, business support organisations, schools, businesses and SMEs, can lead to more comprehensive and sustainable approaches.**

Macro-regional co-operation provides a well-functioning governance system that is active on three levels simultaneously (policy/coordination/implementation). Entrepreneurial learning and events can play an important role in EUSAIR, especially in the social pillar, by **promoting economic empowerment, community development and social innovation.**

Entrepreneurship can create **employment opportunities and combat unemployment in the community. This in turn contributes to the general well-being and stability of society and counteracts brain drain.**

**Entrepreneurial learning** provides individuals with **valuable skills** such as critical thinking, **problem solving and the ability to adapt to new situations and changes.** These skills not only benefit individuals in their entrepreneurial endeavours, but also improve their ability to make a meaningful contribution to society. EUSAIR POPRI youth also helps to connect the school system with the labour market.

EUSAIR POPRI youth bring together participants from 10 EUSAIR countries and **foster a sense of community and identification.** This engagement can lead to collaborative initiatives, shared resources and a stronger social fabric.

Young entrepreneurs often **seek innovative solutions to societal problems** and the business ideas of the young participants in the EUSAIR POPRI Youth Project also demonstrate responsible social behaviour that reflects and responds to the specific needs of the community, leading to positive social change and prosperity.

Entrepreneurial learning environments can **promote diversity and inclusion** by giving people from different backgrounds, including those from rural areas, the opportunity to participate and flourish. This inclusivity can contribute to a more socially just society.

Successful young entrepreneurs can serve as **role models** and inspire others in the community to pursue their goals and aspirations. This can help build a culture of ambition and resilience. By integrating entrepreneurial learning and events into the social pillar, communities can harness the potential of entrepreneurship to create **positive social change and sustainable development**.

**EUSAIR POPRI youth is therefore a concrete tool and mechanism that equips young people with innovative and entrepreneurial thinking** and delivers results and brings institutions from the EUSAIR countries closer in cooperation. It is also **a flagship** as it involves business support organisations, schools, start-up communities and especially young people from across the EUSAIR area.

EUSAIR POPRI youth is a project open for collaboration with the members of the Youth Council, who could act as contact persons and promoters of the Strategy and have the role of improving the visibility of the strategy.

## Institutions involved

The territory is given special attention and care. Therefore, Primorski tehnološki park has established a network of technology parks/incubators/schools/business community from 10 EUSAIR countries, as they are the voice of the territory – their role is crucial in the preparation phase of the event (selection of national teams) and communication with Primorski tehnološki park (application process only through them).

EUSAIR POPRI youth 2024 is organised by Primorski tehnološki park, Slovenia, together with ZICER – Zagreb Innovation Centre (Croatia) and in close cooperation with technology parks, incubators and schools of EUSAIR countries, namely Local Economic Development Agency Auleda Vlore (Albania), ICBL – Innovation Centre Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Science & Technology Park of Crete (STEP-C) (Greece), CONFCOOPERATIVE FVG (Italy), Studentski Biznis Centar Univerziteta Donja Gorica (Montenegro), CKM – Center for Knowledge Management (North Macedonia), Republic of San Marino Innovation Institute (San Marino) and Business Incubator Novi Sad (Serbia).

The **EUSAIR Innovative Entrepreneurial HUB** network is already helping to provide better job opportunities for young people by working directly with businesses. New skills and knowledge, as well as the creation of their own businesses, are increasing job opportunities.

## Shortly about the competition

### 2 days event of “serious business and pleasure”

**Day 1: Meeting and open discussion** with a prominent business figure.

**Day 2:** Macroregional competition of 2 categories of students who present their entrepreneurial ideas in a 5-minute pitch in front of the jury (+ 5 minutes for questions and answers); winners of both categories will be announced and the best business ideas will be presented during the **EUSAIR Forum Award Ceremony**.

The EUSAIR POPRI youth events are included in the EUSAIR Forum programme in cooperation with the presiding country.

## Participants

The event “young entrepreneurs EUSAIR” aims to host up to 20 young teams, divided into 2 categories:

- 1) high-school students (14-18) and
- 2) university students (18 - 29 years).

Each EUSAIR country is represented by one team of high-school students (led by mentor/teacher) and one team of university students. There are 2 teams per country, 20 teams altogether. Each team is composed by max 5 team members, of which 2 of them will make a short presentation-pitch and will travel.

### **From national to macro-regional competition (step-by-step approach):**

The ideal situation would be for the MRS competition to follow a national selection process of the best entrepreneurial team. **Any national practise that already takes place in 10 EUSAIR countries** (entrepreneurial event/competition, summer school, after-school activity) **is suitable as a selection procedure.**

**For 2024, it is the fourth edition of the process**, which has become a tradition and takes place every year as part of the EUSAIR Forum. The POPRI process is also a mechanism for creating synergies with other macro-regional strategies.

### Who are young participants of EUSAIR POPRI youth?

These are young participants who share values, are ambitious and willing to work and achieve results. This means that they are responsible citizens who are looking for answers to society's challenges. Over the years that we have worked with them, they have presented business models and ideas that have been sustainable and have contributed to both digitalisation and the well-being of citizens and society as such.

EUSAIR POPRI youth is led by Primorska Technology Park in Slovenia, but always in close cooperation with technology parks, incubators, schools and companies from all EUSAIR countries, working hand in hand and on an equal footing, bringing together EU and non-EU countries.

### KNOWLEDGE and experience gained by the participants in POPRI:

- Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, including "soft skills", that are aligned with current market needs;
- Learning and working on each individual and gaining experience in team dynamics;
- Creating innovative individuals who are able to adapt to change quickly and effectively; these are the individuals that employers are looking for / employable labour force;
- Individuals who are responsible / see problems and seek answers to current challenges, contribute to the common good;
- Young people who are able to create their own jobs and jobs for others; with their active approach they influence trends such as brain drain / stay at home and contribute to the development of their country.

### REASONS why POPRI is a successful learning process:

- ❖ It puts young people, their knowledge and their needs at the centre;
- ❖ Together with experts and mentors, we teach relevant skills that are needed in the learning process and in life in general;

- ❖ It includes a strong network of technology parks covering the entire Adriatic-Ionian region; each technology park brings knowledge and skills that are shared by the partner institutions; but all speak the same language;
- ❖ The event is organised at a high professional level and with the support of experts and mentors from the field of business start-ups;
- ❖ The process is led by a lead partner who has many years of experience in leading such processes that lead to the acquisition of knowledge and skills / the methodology is therefore proven and effective;
- ❖ All partners involved are keen to work internationally and there is a strong spirit of partnership between them;
- ❖ The network of technology parks acts as a regional EUSAIR Technology HUB;
- ❖ The process and the event have no political undertones as all technology parks, schools and companies work together on an equal footing; therefore, the network truly reflects the macro-regional spirit and values as we strive for the same goal of growth, prosperity and wellbeing for all in the Adriatic-Ionian region.

## The course of competition

After the selection of 2 national teams in countries, business ideas shall be sent to Primorski tehnološki park via e-platform (by technology parks/incubators/schools of EUSAIR countries).

The application is open from 22 April till 6 May 2024 (12:00 CET).

By 6 May 2024 ppt presentation shall be sent as well.



The information about passing the eligibility criteria will be delivered a day after the submission of the application form and business plan (6 May 2024).



An international jury will be set up to review written applications in advance, prior to the competition. Business models will be sent to the members of the jury (6 May 2024).



On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the event (15 May 2024) there will be a gathering with well-known entrepreneur.



On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the event (16 May 2024) national teams will present their business ideas in front of the jury (5 minutes pitch + 5 minutes for questions and answers).

The winners will be announced during the Award Ceremony at the EUSAIR Forum.

## Basic information about EUSAIR youth event plans:

<p><b>Participants at the event</b></p>	<p>At the EUSAIR entrepreneurial event high-school students (14-18) and university students (18-29) are invited due to language skills (English pitch presentation and Q&amp;A).</p> <p>Each country is represented by one team of high-school students (led by mentor/teacher) and one team of university students. There will be 2 teams per country, 20 teams altogether. Each team is represented by max 5 students of which 2 young representatives make a pitch and travel.</p> <p>Participating teams will send their applications and requested documents in advance by using special <b>on-line platform</b> prepared by Primorski tehnološki park.</p>
<p><b>Process of participation in Slovenia – as a case</b></p> <p><i>Do it according to already established practice in your country!</i> 😊</p>	<p>The Slovenian national competition is just one example of good practices in learning entrepreneurship and selecting teams for an international competition.</p> <p>We suggest to use those activities that are already taking place in your country in the area of entrepreneurial learning of youth.</p> <p><b>Use your practice and activities in order to select 2 teams for the EUSAIR youth contest.</b></p>
<p><b>Timing</b></p>	<p>EUSAIR event of young entrepreneurs is to be organized as a side event to EUSAIR Forum that will take place <b>on 15-16 May 2024, Šibenik, Croatia.</b></p>
<p><b>EUSAIR youth events</b></p>	<p>2 days events:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting with an eminent personal from business area /a unique and stimulating experience for young people/</li> <li>2. Presentation of the entrepreneurial ideas in 5 minutes pitch;</li> <li>3. Award ceremony at the EUSAIR Forum – winners will be announced and presented.</li> </ol>