

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT **B**

STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

Agriculture and Rural Development

Culture and Education

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Regional Development

Transport and Tourism

NEW ROLE OF MACRO-REGIONS IN EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

ANNEX - PART II





DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT B: STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**New role of macro-regions in
European Territorial Cooperation**

ANNEX

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DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT B: STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

New role of macro-regions in European Territorial Cooperation

ANNEX

Abstract

This study provides a critical analysis of the future role of macro-regions in the implementation of European Territorial Cooperation. On the basis of a literature review and case studies, the study offers an assessment of potential benefits in the development of new macro-regional strategies as well as the most common risks and difficulties in their implementation. Recommendations are derived to inform the position of the European Parliament on how it can efficiently support the creation and implementation of new macro-regional strategies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	Adriatic Ionian Council
AII	Adriatic Ionian Initiative
ARLEM	Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly
ASCAME	Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry
BDF	Baltic Development Forum
BIF	Baltic Institute of Finland
BSAP	Baltic Sea Action Plan
BSR	Baltic Sea Region
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat
CDCR	Council of Danube Cities and Regions
CEI	Central European Initiative
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
DCP	Danube Cooperation Process
DG	Directorate General
DTC	Danube Tourist Commission
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EGTC	European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
EIB	European Investment Bank
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument
EP	European Parliament
EPRC	European Policies Research Centre
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESI	European Structural and Investment
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region
EUSALP	European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
EUSDR	European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HA	Horizontal Action
HAL	Horizontal Action Leader
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission
HLG	High Level Group
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IMC	Inter-Mediterranean Commission
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession
Lab Group	Laboratory Group
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MLG	Multi-Level Governance
MRS	Macro-regional Strategies
NCP	National Contact Point
NEFCO	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIB	Nordic Investment Bank
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Priority Area
PAC	Priority Area Coordinator
PC	Programming Committee
SECI	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SEE	South East Europe
SG	Steering Group
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TEN-T	Trans European Network of Transport
UBC	Union of Baltic Cities
VASAB	Vision And Strategies Around the Baltic Sea

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NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR MACRO-REGIONAL COOPERATION

Definitions		<p>“Macro-regional strategy’ means an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the ESI Funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member states and third countries located in the same geographical area which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion”.</p> <p>“Sea basin strategy’ means a structured framework of cooperation in relation to a given geographical area, developed by Union institutions, Member states, their regions and where appropriate third countries sharing a sea basin; a sea basin strategy takes into account the geographic, climatic, economic and political specificities of the sea basin.”</p>
Partnership agreements		<p>“Each programme shall include arrangements to ensure effective, efficient and coordinated implementation of the ESI Funds and actions to achieve a reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries”.</p>
Provisions for ESF funds	Preparation	<p>“Where Member states and regions participate in macro- regional strategies or sea basin strategies, the relevant programme, in accordance with the needs of the programme area as identified by the Member State, shall set out the contribution of the planned interventions to those strategies”.</p>
	Programming	<p>“Taking into account its content and objectives, an OP shall describe the integrated approach to territorial development, having regard to the Partnership Agreement, and showing how that OP contributes to the accomplishment of its objectives and expected results, specifying, where appropriate, the following (...) where Member States and regions participate in macro- regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the Member State, the contribution of the planned interventions under the programme to such strategies.”</p>
	Implementation reports	<p>“The annual implementation reports submitted in 2017 and 2019 may, depending on the content and objectives of OPs, set out information and assess the following (...) where appropriate, the contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies”.</p>
Addressing territorial challenges		<p>“An assessment of the cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional or cross-border coordination challenges, particularly in the context of macro-regional and sea-basin strategies”.</p>

NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR MACRO-REGIONAL COOPERATION (continued)

Cooperation activities	Coordination & Complementarity	<p>"Member States shall, where appropriate, ensure that the objectives of macro-regional and sea-basin strategies form part of the overall strategic planning, in Partnership Agreements, in accordance with Article 15(2) of this Regulation, and in programmes in the regions and Member States concerned in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Fund-specific rules. Member States shall seek also to ensure that where macro-regional and sea basin strategies have been put in place, the ESI Funds support their implementation in accordance with Article 15(2) of this Regulation and the relevant provisions of the Fund-specific rules and in line with the needs of the programme area identified by the Member States. To ensure efficient implementation there shall also be coordination with other Union-funded instruments and other relevant instruments".</p>
	Cross-border, transnational, inter-regional cooperation under ERDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In accordance with point (a)(ii) of Article 15(2) of this Regulation and the relevant provisions of the Fund-specific rules Member States shall seek to ensure successful mobilisation of Union funding for macro-regional and sea- basin strategies in line with the needs of the programme area identified by the Member States. Ensuring successful mobilisation may be done, among other actions, by prioritising operations deriving from macro-regional and sea-basin strategies by organising specific calls for them or giving priority to these operations in the selection process through identification of operations which can be jointly financed from different programmes. – Member States shall consider making use of relevant transnational programmes as frameworks to support the range of policies and funds needed to implement macro-regional and sea-basin strategies. – Member States shall promote, where appropriate, the use of ESI Funds in the context of MRS, for the creation of European transport corridors, including supporting modernisation of customs, the prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters, water management at river basin level, green infrastructure, integrated maritime cooperation across borders and sectors, Research and Innovation (R&I) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) networks and management of shared marine resources in the sea basin and protection of marine biodiversity."

Source: Author, based on: EU Regulation No. 1303/2013– Common Provision Regulation (CPR)

A.1 European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)¹

A.1.1 Introduction

The EUSBSR was the first macro-regional strategy to be adopted and implemented, and therefore appears as a forerunner and source of inspiration in the European context. However, the Strategy did not emerge ex-nihilo. It is primarily an attempt to combine and coordinate the efforts of numerous pre-existing Baltic initiatives in view of improving their efficiency and in doing so to make better use of public money spent on various types of Baltic Sea cooperations.

Creating such an “umbrella” for existing activities presupposes that a consensus around key objectives and methods is promoted. It also implies that initiatives and measures pertaining the strategy pre-existed its elaboration. Many of these have been explicitly identified as components of the Strategy, e.g. by being labelled as “Flagship projects”. Irrespective of this “labelling”, their continued implementation may to a greater or lesser extent be influenced by the Strategy.

This study of the EUSBSR therefore approaches the Strategy’s “governance” from two different perspectives:

- On the one hand, there is an internal governance of the Strategy setup, i.e. a selection of actors involved in the policy-making, coordination and implementation activities and a series of principles for their interactions;
- On the other hand, the governance of the processes leading to change in the BSR Region based on the strategic choices and objectives of the EUSBSR is an open system of interactions, in which strategic decision of all actors, including institutions, public and private bodies and NGOs, are of relevance.

In its adoption and implementation, the EUSBSR has sought to bring into coherence these two dimensions of Baltic Sea Region governance. This is a dynamic process, adapting to changing framework conditions as well as to evolving approaches to cooperation and coordination among the Region’s actors. Just as the policy-making sphere evolved, e.g. with the adoption of the EU2020 strategy in 2010, the economic and social context changed rapidly as the effects of the economic crisis unfolded.

The strategy went through an elaboration and adoption phase, mainly between 2007 and 2009, with adjustments of the objectives system in 2012 (further described section A.3.2.4). As it primarily federated existing initiatives, and to some extent amplified their activities and increased their visibility, the implementation phase can primarily be analysed in terms of governance efficiency.

The Baltic Sea Region is in this respect different from some other areas where macro-regional strategies have been adopted or are being envisaged. While the EUSBSR has obviously inspired other macro-regional initiatives, the possibility of experience and good practice transfer must be considered critically on a case-by-case basis.

¹ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Erik Gløersen, Maria Toptsidou, Kai Böhme (Spatial Foresight).

A.1.2 The making and organisational setup of the macro-regional strategy

A.1.2.1 Process leading to the adoption of a European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The European Parliament played a role at the early stages of development of an integrated policy for the Baltic Sea Region. In November 2005, a Baltic Strategy Working Group consisting of 7 MEPs² submitted a document entitled "Europe's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region" to the Presidents of the EC and the European Parliament as well as to the Presidency of the Council. This first report highlighted four policy fields requiring policy measures at the level of the Baltic Sea Region. These were environment, economic development, culture and education and security. Subsequently, the "Report on a Baltic Sea Strategy for the Northern Dimension" was prepared by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament in October 2006. This report called for a comprehensive approach to Baltic Sea challenges in the context of the EU. It puts the emphasis on using integrated development in the Baltic Sea Region as a lever to achieve the objectives of the Northern Dimension policy. The report argues that a more integrated and prosperous Baltic Sea Region would help addressing the regional development challenges of northern Europe in interaction with the Arctic and Sub-Arctic neighbours of the EU and in particular with Russia. Two policy axes are described: first, growth and economic development should be enhanced by creating a better connected Baltic Sea Region and branding it as an attractive and prosperous part of Europe. Second, the major environmental concerns of the Baltic Sea need to address. On the basis of this report, the Parliament adopted a resolution "urging the Commission to come up with a proposal for an EU Baltic Sea Strategy in order to reinforce the internal pillar of the Northern Dimension"³.

This process gained momentum when the European Council called upon the Commission "to present an EUSBSR" in 2007. This was the result of an initiative of the Swedish government, and led to the launch of a strategy-development process led by DG REGIO. It also included a particularly ambitious inter-service exchanges at within the EC, as over 20 Directorates General (DGs) were involved. These inter-service exchanges continue within the framework of an Inter-Service Working Group which meets several times a year⁴.

The EC drafted a scoping document, on the basis of which an extensive consultation process involving Member States, regions and NGOs was organised. This process included two stakeholder conferences, four round tables, one youth conference and an on-line consultation. The contributions included inputs from the 8 Baltic Sea Region EU Member States and the 3 non-EU Member States (Belarus, Norway and Russia), 31 regional and local authorities, 48 inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, 19 representatives from the private sectors (out of which 2 experts or researchers) and 3 individuals.

The scoping document included four proposed objectives for the strategy, which later became the four "pillars" of the Action Plan adopted in 2009. It also asked the stakeholders whether the Strategy could be implemented without the creation of any new body or institution. Based on stakeholder inputs received, the EC concluded that there was a wide agreement not to create any new institution for the Strategy and that the stakeholders agreed on the four

² Christopher Beazley, Michael Gahler, Satu Hassi, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Girts Valdis Kristovskis, Henrik Lax and Alexander Stubb.

³ European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs 2006.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/baltic/contact_en.cfm

proposed objectives. The identification of PAs under each objective or pillar was inspired by the results of the consultation.

However, commentators note that some stakeholder proposals were ignored, e.g. calls to ensure that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Fisheries Policy would contribute to solving the environmental and resource management-related challenges of the Baltic Sea⁵.

The resulting strategy was endorsed by the European Council in October 2009. This strategy and its accompanying Action Plan differ significantly from the European Parliament's resolution of 2006. While the European Parliament resolution advocated a Baltic strategy coupled with the Northern Dimension, emphasizing the importance of Baltic cooperation and integration for EU external relations, the EC communication and Action Plan focus on identifying concrete issues that require coordinated transnational measures. The Northern Dimension is referred to as a possible instrument to establish a "constructive cooperation with (the EU's) external partners in the region, and in particular Russia"⁶.

Furthermore, while the European Parliament called "for an own EU budget line for the Baltic Sea Strategy, possibly under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument", the EC considered that the strategy should be based on a coordination of existing instruments⁷. It considers that "the key problem in the region is not a lack of existing initiatives or governance structures" but "rather the failure of largely fragmented existing governance structures to provide a sufficiently robust framework in which the priority issues of the BSR can be addressed in an integrated manner, which addresses potential policy conflicts and trade-offs between sectors"⁸. The EC communication on the Strategy's recommendations in terms of "practical implementation" therefore only briefly refers to the need to mobilize funding from the Structural Funds, as well as from Member States own resources and from international and regional financial institutions⁹. The CoR' opinion on the Strategy published in April 2010 regrets that the Communication does not contain proposals on how the work of the Commission should be organised in view of achieving the strategy, and fears that insufficient resources will be allocated to the implementation of the strategy within the Commission¹⁰. The EESC also supports the idea of strengthening the Commission unit in charge of the implementation of the strategy¹¹.

The EUSBSR has therefore been designed based on an assessment of a rich and multifaceted pre-existing multinational governance landscape. This landscape includes well-established cooperation bodies for national authorities in and around the Baltic Sea such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council, the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Assembly. In addition to these assemblies and fora, a number of organisations provide concrete inputs and contributions to the strategy. The following examples illustrate the nature and significance of these contributions:

- The strategy integrates the Helsinki Commission's Baltic Sea Action Plan, an ambitious programme adopted in 2007 by all countries with a Baltic Sea coastline to restore the good ecological status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021;

⁵ Schymik and Krumrey 2009.

⁶ European Commission 2009b.

⁷ Bengtsson 2009.

⁸ European Commission 2009a.

⁹ European Commission 2009b.

¹⁰ Committee of the Regions 2010.

¹¹ European Economic and Social Committee 2010.

- The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) functions as a HAL (further described below) for Maritime Spatial Planning. Similarly, VASAB ("Vision And Strategies Around the Baltic Sea") functions as HAL for Spatial Planning;
- The Baltic Development Forum, which was founded in the late 1990s, offers an established platform for discussions on economic strategies involving politicians, but also business, academia and media. It is a non-profit, independent organisation;
- Organisations such as the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), the Nordic Environmental Development fund (NMF), the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) and the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) can be mobilized to obtain financing for EUSBSR projects in addition to pan-European organisations such as the EIB;
- The Union of the Baltic Cities is a leading organisation of cities and local authorities gathering almost 100 cities in the Baltic Sea Region has participated actively in the EUSBSR elaboration. The UBC member cities cooperate on a wide range of political, social, economic, cultural and environmental issues, promotes the ex-change of know-how and experiences between the cities through seminars, courses and publications;
- The Euroregion Baltic (ERB) was established in February 1998 and is a cooperation structure in the south-east of the Baltic Sea Region, consisting of eight regions of Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. As the first Euroregion to have formally included a partner from the Russian Federation it prepared cooperation, it contributed to facilitate exchanges across the BSR.

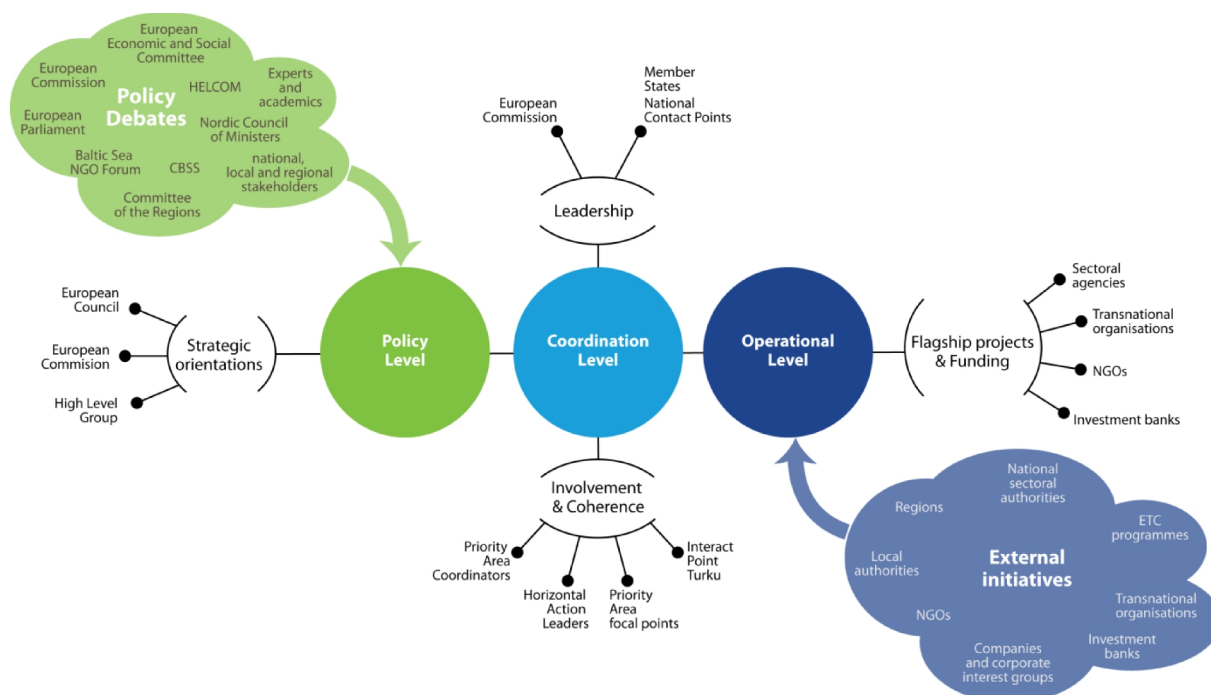
The involvement of these organisations is further described below (see section "Involvement in strategy implementation").

The decision-making and implementation frameworks set up for the EUSBSR must be understood in light of this pre-existing Baltic governance landscape. The objective is to encourage a convergence between existing organisations with regards to the strategic objectives they pursue, and a better coordination of their initiatives and measures.

A.1.2.2 EUSBSR decision-making and implementation frameworks

As shown in **Figure A.1**, the EUSBSR has a three-tiered governance system, distinguishing between policy, coordination and operational measures. NCPs appointed by each Member State play a major role coordinating and supporting EUSBSR design and implementation, and encouraging stakeholder involvement. Their role is further described below.

INTERACT Turku positioned itself in the implementation of the EUSBSR on its own initiative soon after the adoption of the strategy in 2009.

Figure A.1: The Governance System of the EUSBSR

Source: Spatial Foresight GmbH, partly adapted from EUSBSR website: <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/governance>

Overall coordination

Member states

The eight Member States belonging to the Baltic Sea Region are involved at all levels of the strategy. Each Member States is expected to:

- Ensure that the political commitment to the EUSBSR is upheld by all relevant sectoral authorities and appropriate reference is made to the strategy in all relevant fora;
- Include the EUSBSR on the agenda of the European Council when appropriate;
- Ensure that the Strategy is respected in national and regional strategic planning, as well as in existing policies and programmes;
- Support the implementation and work of the NCPs in the national coordination of the of the Strategy as well as the PACs and thematic HALs;
- Appoint a NCP, and ensure that it has the competence and resources needed to carry out the tasks assigned to it.

National Contact Points

The NCPs are high-level officials Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹² of each Member State involved in the Baltic Sea macro-regional strategy. Finland appoints a "Baltic Sea ambassador", which acts as a NCP and as representative of Finland in the HLG (see below). Sweden also appoints an "ambassador for Oceans, Seas and Fresh Water", a position sorting under the Ministry of Environment but held by diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹² Except for Sweden, where the NCP belongs to chancellery of the Minister of EU affairs, sorting under the Prime Minister's office.

The appointment of such “thematic” ambassadors started in 2007, with specific reference to exchanges and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region¹³. However, the ambassador for Oceans, Seas and Fresh Water is neither NCP nor HLG representative.

The first task of NCPs is to contribute to widen and deepen the political and operational commitment to the strategy in each country. Regular exchanges between NCPs also contribute to the transnational coherence of the strategy and to exchanges of good practice.

Concretely, this implies that each NCP:

- Provides information about the EUSBSR to relevant institutions, organisations and communities within their respective country;
- Consults with national institutions on the EUSBSR;
- Encourages a dialogue between national institutions and relevant programmes and financial instruments and national stakeholders in view of achieving an alignment of resources;
- Facilitates the involvement of national institutions and relevant stakeholders, encouraging them to network with actors from other parts of the BSR and to initiate operational actions;
- Formulates and communicates national positions on the EUSBSR and Action Plan;
- Supports PACs and HALs in the implementation of the Strategy;
- Monitors implementation activities of the EUSBSR.

Policy Level

European Council and Council of the European Union

After having adopted the Strategy in 2009, the Council of the EU (in its General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) configuration) has subsequently endorsed the revisions of the EUSBSR. It has also made recommendations on the governance on the Strategy, e.g. by mentioning “the need to strengthen the roles of NCPs in national coordination as well as PACs and HALs in thematic and transnational implementation”¹⁴. In terms of content, the Council of the EU encourages a closer alignment of the strategy “with the Integrated Maritime Policy and the Europe 2020 Strategy”. Moreover, the Council suggested that NCPs should be appointed¹⁵.

European Commission

The EC’s Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio), has been the linchpin, facilitator and main promoter of the EUSBSR since 2009. The governance model of the Strategy is inspired by the Community method. This implies that the Commission takes the initiative to policy discussions, which are then endorsed either by the European Council or by the Council of the EU its General Affairs configuration.

¹³ <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/9340/a/85467>

¹⁴ Council of the European Union 2011.

¹⁵ Council of the European Union 2009.

The Commission is also responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities, as illustrated by the impact assessment¹⁶ and the reports on the added value of the EUSBSR and of EC¹⁷. It furthermore organises an annual Baltic forum. DG Regio also participates and supports the role of the Steering Committees of the PAs, by supporting projects and overlooking the general progress. However, the Commission does not assume responsibility for the implementation on the ground, which is defined as the responsibility of national, regional and local actors, in cooperation with established transnational bodies.

Currently, the EC, mainly through DG Regio:

- Ensures the strategic coordination of elaboration and revision of the EUSBSR;
- Facilitates the implementation of the EUSBSR in cooperation with the Member States, which may either be the NCPs, line ministries, bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments, PACs and or HALs by closely aligning the EU, the national and regional policies and strategies with the EUSBSR, by supporting the alignment of programmes or financial instruments with the EUSBSR objectives, by identifying and addressing obstacles to the effective implementation of the EUSBSR, by ensuring disseminating information, best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the EUSBSR and by ensuring the adequate internal capacity in order to undertake the implementation of the EUSBSR;
- Takes the EUSBSR into account when relevant policy initiatives and programmes planning is concerned;
- Promotes and facilitates the involvement of stakeholders of the entire macro-region and supports them in the EUSBSR implementation;
- Encourages dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders from other interested Baltic Sea Region States;
- Consults on a regular basis the Member States, inter alia through the NCPs;
- Is responsible for evaluating and reporting on the progress in the implementation of the Strategy and on the results that have been achieved so far, while whenever appropriate it is in dialogue with the PACs, the HALs and the NCPs for any further review and update of the EUSBSR and its Action Plan;
- Submits amendments to the strategy to the Council or respectively from the HLG on the proposed amendments.

In addition the EC organises an Annual Forum for the Strategy and launches meetings to promote dialogue and discussions around the implementation of the EUSBSR.

High Level Group

The HLG – comprised of senior civil servants from each EU Member State (EU 27) and representatives of the CoR, the EIB and the Nordic Investment Bank – is among the most important structures in the implementation of EUSBSR. The members of the HLG are appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Prime Minister's Office of each country and follow the respective national procedure for civil servant appointments.

¹⁶ European Commission 2009a.

¹⁷ European Commission 2013.

It is part of the government representation and the procedure differs from country to country. In most cases, it is a representation by units with interest and experience on European issues. Its tasks may be summarised as follows:

The HLG:

- Gives advice to the EC on the EUSBSR objectives, development and implementation;
- Provides opinions and comments on the review and updates on the EUSBSR and the Action Plan;
- Proposes actions that could be taken both by the EC and the Member States in order to strengthen the implementation of the EUSBSR;
- Proposes actions that may contribute to the implementation of the Council Conclusion on the review of the EUSBSR, that may identify and address obstacles to the effective implementation of the EUSBSR;
- Proposes actions so as to promote the macro-regional approach in developing new policies and in aligning of programmes and financial instruments.

Coordination Level

Priority Area Coordinators

The PACs are responsible for the coordination of the necessary actions for the PAs, which aim at the better implementation of the EUSBSR. Within the EUSBSR governance system there are 17 PAs and for each Priority Area at least two PACs from two different EU Baltic Sea macro-regional strategy Member States have been appointed. The PACs are representatives of national or regional administrations and institutions, and play an important role in the implementation of the EUSBSR.

The appointment of PACs is the outcome of negotiations among the different Member States. Member States show their interest on relevant PAs, and after following mainly a “first serve first take” procedure PAs are divided between the Member States. One attempts to ensure a balanced representation of the different countries. However, some Member States are more involved in the EUSBSR than others, and this tends to be reflected in their share of PACs. For some PAs, Steering Committees or networking structures are established, allowing representatives from all Member States to follow coordination activities. The role of Steering Committees is regarded as very important, as they convey the results and overlook the progress of a Priority Area. Usually they consist of around 25-35 participants coming mainly from national authorities of the Baltic Sea related to a priority, but also representatives from DG Regio.

In the main, PACs facilitate the involvement of the stakeholders and their cooperation for the whole macro-region. Their tasks include:

- Implementing and following up of a Priority Area with regard to the defined targets and indicators;
- Reviewing the relevance of the Priority Area as it is described in the Action Plan and proposal of updates or amendments;
- Facilitating policy discussions in the Region;

- Developing and implementing actions and the flagship projects;
- Conveying relevant results and recommendations of on-going and completed flagship projects to the policy level;
- Ensuring the communication and the visibility of the Priority Area;
- Maintaining the dialogue with the bodies in charge of implementation of programmes and the financial instruments on alignment of funding for implementation of the Priority Area and the flagship projects;
- Liaising and cooperating with other PACs and HALs to ensure coherence between the operational levels and avoid the duplication of actions;
- Monitoring and reporting progress within the Priority Area.

The Danish Maritime Authority (Priority Area Ship and Priority Area Safe), the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Priority Area Hazards), the Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy (Priority Area Energy), The Ministry of Transport and Communications of Lithuania (Priority Area Transport) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany (Priority Area Bio) are some examples of PACs.

Horizontal Action Leaders

The PAs are seen as sectoral structures, though the Horizontal Actions as cross-sectoral, i.e. are seen mostly as a “working method” which can influence other actions. The Horizontal Actions intend to support territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea, by:

- The alignment of available funding and of policies to the priorities and actions of the EU Strategy;
- The cooperation on the transposition of EU Directives;
- The development of integrated maritime governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Strengthen multi-level governance, place-based planning and sustainable development.

For each Horizontal Action, there are HALs appointed, who are responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Horizontal Action. In total there are 5 Horizontal Actions. These Horizontal Actions are coordinated by at least two HALs. The procedure of their appointment is relatively similar to the one of the PACs. HALs such as HELCOM and VASAB, responsible for the Horizontal Action have a direct relation to maritime issues in the Baltic Sea Region¹⁸.

The tasks of the HAL are manifold and do not differ substantially from those of the PACs described above. HALs:

- Implement and follow up the Horizontal Action towards targets and indicators;
- Regularly review the relevance of the Horizontal Action as defined in the Action Plan and propose any necessary updates;

¹⁸ During the previous Action Plan, DG Mare was Horizontal Action Leader for (a) developing integrated maritime governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region, (b) defining and implementing the Baltic Sea basin component of the EMODNET (European Maritime Observation Data Network), and (c) supporting the fishery areas' sustainable development.

- Facilitate the policy discussions regarding the Horizontal Action concerned and the development and implementation of it;
- Ensure the communication and the visibility of the Horizontal Action;
- Convey relevant results and recommendations of the Horizontal Action on the policy level;
- Maintain dialogue with bodies in charge of implementation of the programmes on the funding alignment for the implementation of Horizontal Actions;
- Liaise and cooperate with PACs in order to ensure coherence between the different coordination levels;
- Monitor and report the progress of the Horizontal Action.

Priority Area Focal Points and Horizontal Action Focal Points

Priority Area Focal Points and Horizontal Action Focal Points are appointed by the Member States. Mainly, they serve as link between the EUSBSR and the national level for all matters regarding the Priority Area and Horizontal Action for the Member States that are not responsible for a Priority Area or a Horizontal Action. For those Member States which are appointed for a Priority Area Coordination or a Horizontal Action, there is no Priority Focal Point or Horizontal Action Focal Point necessary. The tasks of the Focal Points for the Priority Area/Horizontal Action are summarised as follows, they:

- Participate in the national coordination regarding the Strategy;
- Provide authorities or the public with information on the Priority Area or the Horizontal Action;
- Identify relevant contact persons in their home country for the work of the Priority Area/Horizontal Action and the flagship projects;
- Assist the PACs and the HALs in order to ensure visibility and communication of the Priority Area Coordination and the Horizontal Action;
- Ensure that the decisions taken regarding the Priority Area Coordination and the Horizontal Action are well communicated to the stakeholders.

In addition, the Focal Points frequently liaise with the PACs and the HALs so as to contribute to a policy discussion, to attend relevant activities, such as Steering Committees, meetings and conferences etc., to ensure the relevance of the EU actions with areas that are not exclusively coordinated by the Member States, to provide information on relevant projects and activities and to convey positions to ensure that they are nationally consolidated among the authorities and the stakeholders. The actual work and influence varies between countries, but in most cases their actual role is rather limited as compared to the actors discussed above.

There has been an evaluation of PACs and HALs by the EC DG REGIO. Each PAC and Hal has been invited to an individual talk with the EC, addressing questions such as current state of initiatives within their PA and possible needs for support from the EC. The summary report with findings has been presented to the NCPs in September 2014. On the basis of this paper and ensuing discussions, the EC will elaborate positions on how best to pursue efforts within each PA/HA. In general, reviews show that the capacity of PACs and HALs to produce concrete results largely depends on the energy and efforts of individuals. Getting from strategy to policy remains very difficult, because of the large number of involved parties at different levels.

INTERACT Point Turku

INTERACT Point Turku supports the implementation of the EUSBSR by acting as a bridging organisation between PACs, HALs, and Structural Funds programmes. It has even set up a Lab Group set up for supporting the EUSBSR in 2009. The Lab Group was a discussion forum dealing with the EUSBSR. Involved wide range of actors: ETC programmes, NIB, EIB, ENPI, Obj 1 and 2 programmes, first discussions on the nature of the strategy, slowly developing ideas and proposals on how to embed the strategy in their own work. The Lab Group was very useful in the first phase of the EUSBSR. It was dissolved end of 2011, and its work was followed up by Task Forces.

INTERACT Turku continues to foster territorial cooperation within the Strategy by disseminating information, managing networks and facilitating interaction between the main actors. Among its recent initiatives one may mention events bringing together national Partnership Agreement coordinators and NCPs of the EUSBSR. These are actors with very diverse perspectives, as NCPs have an overarching political perspectives, while Partnership Agreement coordinators are in many countries focus on specific programmes and objectives. A dialogue between these different groups of stakeholders is all the more profitable.

Operational Level

The actions of the EUSBSR are implemented by means of flagship projects. Flagship projects demonstrate the progress of the EUSBSR and may serve as pilot examples for desired actions. They are frequently the result of a policy consultation within a Priority Area or Horizontal Action, represent the desire and ambition of a Priority Area/Horizontal Action and they may develop key solutions, new methodology or practices or new forms of cooperation, while it may also concern key investment of regional importance. Once the project is approved it is then listed in the Action Plan.

The flagship project:

- Can be a single project or a set of projects (a group) operating in the same field;
- Must have a high macro-regional impact, contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the EUSBSR, related to the implementation of one or more actions of the PA/HA;
- Is expected to have a clear transnational dimension;
- Be mature for implementation, i.e. can be implemented within a realistic timeframe, has a clear financial and activity plan, has established a partnership and has identified a flagship project leader.

A project leader is assigned for each flagship project. In addition to the responsibility for project implementation, this project leader liaises with the respective Priority Area/Horizontal Action under which the project sorts. A variety of organisations can act as project leaders. For example, within the Priority Action "Tourism", the four flagship projects are respectively led by regional authorities (two projects), a cruise company and a University institute. Flagship project participants are typically public agencies, organisations, associations working active within the topic of each project.

In addition to flagship projects, other initiatives can address the challenges of the Strategy. Some of these projects that address issues that have a macro-regional impact are defined as "Contributing projects".

Investment banks play a role financing so-called “bankable” projects, i.e. projects generating income to pay back a loan. For this purpose, specific funds have been set up, such as the Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund (BSAP Fund), which is managed by NIB and NEFCO. While this fund has funded EUSBSR flagship projects, it was established independently of the Strategy.

For “non-bankable” projects, European sources of funding dominate, and in particular ETC programmes¹⁹. Different programmes and bodies are asked to get involved in the Strategy. The latter includes Programmes under objectives 1 (Convergence), 2 (Competitiveness and Employment) and 3 (Territorial Cooperation) of the EU Cohesion Policy, as well as the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) programmes.

A.1.2.3 Actor involvement and commitment: who is involved and how?

Involvement in decision-making

As shown in **Table A.1**, the division of Priority Area Coordination responsibilities in the first phase (i.e. before the revision of the Action Plan) reflects a relatively stronger involvement of Nordic Baltic Sea Region countries, considering the different sizes of involved countries and regions. Danish national authorities assume responsibility for 5 PAs (partly or entirely), while the corresponding figure is 4 for Sweden and Finland, 3 for Lithuania, 2 for Germany and Poland, and 1 for Latvia and Estonia. The health-component of Priority Area 12 is coordinated by the transnational Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and social well-being. After the revision of the Action Plan in February 2013, Swedish authorities assume the highest number of PACs, but closely followed by Denmark, Germany and Finland (4 each). Poland has also increased its participation with 3 PACs, while figures remain unchanged for other countries (**Table A.2**). The over-representation of small countries (except for Latvia and Estonia) reflects their general higher commitment to international cooperation within fields of specific interest.

In all countries, Priority Action Coordinators are typically sectoral ministries or public agencies, reflecting the interest of policy sectors in the Strategy. Similarly, about half of HALs are sectoral authorities, with the EC’s Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) assuming three out of eleven HALs (see **Table A.3**). However, after the adoption of the revised Action Plan, no Horizontal Actions are assumed by the EC. They are mostly coordinated by Baltic Sea Region transnational bodies (see **Table A.4**).

As illustrated by the notion of “integrated maritime governance”, the limit between sectoral and transversal policy action is increasingly blurred in the context of the EUSBSR. The increased awareness of cross-sectoral interdependencies, and the enhanced preparedness of authorities traditionally perceived as “sectoral” to assume a wider coordinating role appears as an important potential added value of the Strategy.

¹⁹ Savbäck, Böhme, and Johansson 2011.

Table A.1: Priority Area coordinator countries, initial Action Plan

Priority Area	Country of coordinator
1. Nutrient inputs to the sea	Finland/Poland
2. Natural zones and biodiversity	Germany
3. Hazardous substances	Sweden
4. Model region for clean shipping	Denmark
5. Climate change	Denmark
6. Internal market and cooperation in the customs and tax areas	Estonia
7. Research and innovation	Sweden Poland
8. Entrepreneurship, SMEs and human resources	Denmark
9. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Finland/Lithuania (rural development) Sweden (fisheries)
10. Energy markets	Denmark/Latvia
11. Transport links	Lithuania/Sweden
12. Education and youth, tourism, culture and health	Germany (education, tourism & others) Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and social well-being (health)
13. Maritime safety and security	Denmark/Finland
14. Maritime accident response capacity	Denmark
15. Cross border crime	Finland/Lithuania

Source: Spatial Foresight

Table A.2: Priority Area coordinator countries, revised Action Plan

Priority Area	Description	Country	Entity
PA Nutri	Reducing nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels	FI	Ministry of the Environment
		PL	Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection
PA Bio	Preserving natural zones and biodiversity, including fisheries	DE	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety National Secretariat for Helsinki Convention
PA Hazards	Reducing the use and impact of hazardous substances	SE	National Secretariat for Helsinki Convention
PA Ship	Becoming a model region for clean shipping	DK	Danish Maritime Authority
PA Market	Removing hindrances to the internal market	EE	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
PA Innovation	Exploiting the full potential of the Region in research and innovation	SE	Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications VINNOVA
		PL	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
PA SME	Promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the growth of SMEs	DK	Minister of Business and Growth Danish Business Authority
			Danish Ministry of Education
			Ministry of Employment

Priority Area	Description	Country	Entity
PA Agri	Reinforcing sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries	FI	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
		LT	Ministry of Agriculture
		SE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
PA Energy	Improving the access to, efficiency and security of the energy markets	DK	Ministry of Climate and Energy
		LV	Ministry of Economics
PA Transport	Improving internal and external transport links	LT	Ministry of Transport and Communications
		SE	Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications
PA Tourism	Reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism	DE	State Chancellery Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
PA Health	Improving and promoting people's health, including its social aspects	Trans-national	Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS) Secretariat
PA Education	Developing innovative education and youth	DE	Ministry of Schools and Vocational Training, Hamburg
		Trans-national	Norden Association
PA Culture	Developing and promoting the common culture and cultural identity	PL	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
		DE	Ministry of Justice, Cultural and European Affairs, Schleswig-Holstein
PA Safe	To become a leading region in maritime safety and security	DK	Danish Maritime Authority
		FI	Finnish Transport Safety Agency
			Ministry of Transport and Communications
PA Secure	Protection from emergencies and accidents on land	Trans-national	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat (CBSS)
		SE	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
PA Crime	Fighting cross-border crime	FI	National Police Board International Affairs
		LT	Ministry of the Interior

Source: Spatial Foresight

Table A.3: Horizontal Actions: Implementation leadership by country and by level, initial Action Plan

Horizontal action	Leader
Align available funding and policies to the priorities and actions of the EUSBSR	EC, DG REGIO
Cooperate on the transposition of EU Directives	EC, DG MARKT
Encourage the use of Maritime Spatial Planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a	Helsinki Commission

Horizontal action	Leader
common approach for cross-border cooperation	
Develop and complete Land-based Spatial Planning	VASAB
Transform successful pilot and demonstration projects into full-scale actions	
Use research as a base for policy decisions	EC, DG RTD
Build a regional identity	Baltic Metropolises Network Baltic Development Forum Helsinki EU Office
Develop integrated maritime governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region	EC, DG MARE
Define and implement the Baltic Sea basin component of the European Marine Observation Data Network (EMODNET) and improve socio-economic data	EC, DG MARE
Support for sustainable development of the fisheries areas	EC, DG MARE
Strengthening multi-level governance, place-based spatial planning and sustainable development	Regional council in Kalmar County Region Västerbotten

Source: Spatial Foresight

Table A.4: Horizontal Actions: Implementation leadership by country and by level, revised Action Plan

Priority Area	Description	Country	Entity
HA Sustainable development and bio-economy	Based on the overarching theme of sustainable development, Climate Change and promoting Baltic Sea Region as a Green Region. Develop cooperation across the Region and across sectors to become a leader in sustainable biomass production.	Trans-national	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat (CBSS)
		Trans-national	Nordic Council of Ministers
			Nordic Council of Ministers
HA Spatial	Encouraging the use of Maritime and Land-based Spatial planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation	Trans-national	Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)
		Trans-national	VASAB Secretariat
HA Promo	Boosting joint promotion and regional identity building actions Co-ordinated by Baltic Metropolises and Baltic Development Forum	Trans-national	Baltic Metropolises Network (BaltMet)
		Trans-national	Baltic Development Forum (BDF)
		FI	Helsinki EU Office
HA Involve	Strengthening multi-level governance including involving civil society, business and academia	SE	Region Västerbotten
		Trans-national	Norden Association
HA Neighbours	To increase the co-operation with neighbouring countries to tackle joint challenges in the Baltic Sea Region	FI	City of Turku
			City of Turku Baltic Sea House
		Trans-national	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat Baltic 21 Unit

Source: Spatial Foresight

Involvement in strategy implementation

Some BSR countries have demonstrated their commitment to the Strategy by establishing dedicated internal structures of coordination. Sweden has for example created a network of agencies to strengthen the implementation of the EUSBSR, bringing all 21 county administrative boards and 34 public agencies to come together and work actively on issues related to the Baltic Sea. The leadership is under the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth ("Tillväxtverket")²⁰.

Furthermore, beyond their formal role as EUSBSR activity leaders, many organisations have a wider involvement in the Strategy, including organisational contributions and actions to encourage cooperation across the Baltic. As examples of this one may mention:

- The UBC has defined participation in the EUSBSR implementation as its priority and thus is involved in many ways: Some of its members function as leaders in various priorities, horizontal actions or flagship projects; for example, the city of Turku is one of the HALs of the HA Neighbours, together Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat (CBSS) in Stockholm; as such, it plays a key role in exchanges between the EUSBSR and the neighbouring countries, Russia, Belarus and Norway;
- The BDF works together with the main regional partners to provide substantial input into the EUSBSR strategy and it is crucial to engage regional organisations and stakeholders to support the EC and the EU in defining the contents of a strategy for the Region; it also co-organised the 5th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR, together with the DG Regio and the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the City of Turku; moreover, the BDF is engaged in the ONE BSR flagship project, which aims to identify and produce elements for the Baltic Sea Region's and identity; BDF is responsible for two components of the project: The Baltic Sea Region Investment Promotion Agencies and NewsWave; BDF was a former HAL;
- The Euroregion Baltic strengthened its links to the EUSBSR in 2014, as its Task Force on EU Cohesion prepared a roadmap of current and further involvement in the implementation of the Strategy; the Task Force on Labour Cooperation is an observer at the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (EUSBSR Flagship), Euroregion Baltic Water Core Group has proposed that the WaterNets project becomes a EUSBSR flagship and Business Link Greater Copenhagen (Bornholm) are also in contact with relevant flagship projects regarding the Baltic Sea Cluster Development Centre; the Euroregion Baltic also financed the Youth Board's participation in the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Vilnius, 2013;
- The Swedish Institute (SI) centralises national funding lines targeting the wider Baltic Sea Region, including Russia and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries since 1st January 2012; SI is a government agency with the dual mandate to support the implementation of the EUSBSR and the EaP; it is the focal point for the Horizontal Action Promo;
- ScanBalt fmba is part of an open task force leading the EUSBSR flagship project ScanBalt Health Region together with BioCon Valley and the Lithuanian Biotech Association; however, it is also more generally an important stakeholder in the Horizontal Action "Baltic Sea Region Bio Economy Initiative" through its networking and promotion activities;

²⁰ <http://www.government.se/sb/d/13015/a/178493/pressitem/178493#anc178493>
and <http://www.government.se/sb/d/13012/a/178563>

- The Baltic Institute of Finland (BIF) is a leading collaborative body for the Baltic Sea Region in Finland and is among the leading project development organisations in the Baltic Sea cooperation networks; the BIF has been involved in the EUSBSR implementation and flagship projects; in 2013, it was leading the BSR InnoShip flagship and involved in three innovation and SME development-related flagships: BSR Stars, BSR QUICK and Baltic Supply; in the ESBSR PA Ship, the BIF was also in charge of a EC-funded project "Strengthening stakeholder engagement, dissemination and coordination of joint activities in the EUSBSR Priority Area 4"; it also contributes to European-wide promotion of the EUSBSR and dissemination of BSR good practices on innovation policies and instruments by collaborating in three EU Interreg IVC programme projects;
- The Baltic Sea NGO network co-ordinates together with the Region Västerbotten and the Regional Council in Kalmar County the HA INVOLVE; it aims at bringing NGOs from different Baltic Sea states together and has focal points in all BSR countries; as such, it contributes to the continued involvement of NGOs in debates over the EUSBSR and to promote awareness of the Strategy among NGOs.

A.1.2.4 Strategy content, foreseen added value and consensus

The initial central justification of the Strategy was to address the environmental and resource-management related challenges of the Baltic Sea. This was the main background for the Swedish initiative, as the only objective explicitly mentioned in the conclusions of the European Council of December 2007. The objective was progressively broadened to include the previously mentioned "four pillars"²¹.

The expectations with regards to the added value of the Strategy are formulated in terms of improvement of policy implementation rather than of social, environmental and economic achievements. The Strategy is expected to:

- Mobilize projects across borders and sectors;
- Serve as a catalyst for strengthening cooperation mechanisms within Member States and among countries in a region;
- Balanced regional development by involving all relevant policy areas and countries;
- Channel existing funding instruments so their potential can be fully utilised.

A.1.3 Implementation of the EUSBSR

A.1.3.1 Evolution Baltic Sea Region governance and of the internal governance setup of the EUSBSR

One of the reasons for which the EUSBSR was adopted as the first European macro-regional strategy is that cooperation among countries surrounding the Baltic Sea is well-established. Some forms of cooperation, such as city twinning agreement survived the Cold War period²². After the fall of the Iron Curtain, a number of cooperation structures were created in the Region; many of them were well-established and active when the EUSBSR was elaborated and adopted.

²¹ European Commission 2009a.

²² Kern and Gänzle 2013.

The EUSBSR sought to build an umbrella under which all these pre-existing and organised cooperation structures have the ground for a more structured dialogue on the Region's opportunities and challenges. These structures have not changed after the implementation of the Strategy, but rather been brought closer together and organised.

There is a wide consensus among representatives of these cooperation structures and other BSR stakeholders that the strategy contributed to raise interest in transnational cooperation in the Region. Stakeholders from different fields, regional or local authorities, companies and corporate interest groups, national sectoral authorities, NGOs are stimulated to attend the EUSBSR Fora and participate more actively. A recent example is the Baltic Sea Annual Forum held in Turku, where 1,200 stakeholders of different sectors, decision-makers and experts came together. Baltic Sea Region governance has therefore evolved as result of the Strategy, as a result of higher visibility for transnational initiatives, tighter and more regular interactions between stakeholders and wider involvement.

Adjustments in the internal governance setup of the EUSBSR were mainly triggered by an ambition to clarify divisions of responsibility and improve the strategic focus. The EC's report on macro-regional governance concludes that there is a need for "stronger political leadership and decision making" and "greater clarity in the organisation of work"²³. While these ambitions have already largely guided efforts to improve the internal governance of the EUSBSR, involved stakeholders highlight the need for further and continuous efforts. Four main aspects may be highlighted in this respect.

Commitment of actors at all levels

Political commitment is necessary to ensure that the Strategy keeps its momentum, both in terms of implementation and of continuous adjustment to changing framework conditions. Savbäck et al. (2011) point at the need for increased support and commitment by the Member States including a strengthening of their NCPs and the PAC e. g in terms of man power available to conduct their tasks linked to the EUSBSR. The Commission has also asked for a stronger participation of the Member States in the implementation of the Strategy. At the 5th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR in 2014, the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn emphasized that a larger part of Strategy coordination tasks should be shouldered by Member States.

Resources for new ideas and initiatives

While a large number of European, transnational, national and regional organisations contribute to the financing of EUSBSR projects, additional efforts proved necessary to stimulate new initiatives. The EC's Seed Money facility was established in early 2013. It is part of the technical assistance budget for the EUSBSR, but is managed by the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein. For the future calls, the budget for the seed money facility will no longer be available through the European Parliament's resources, but through the ETC Programme's budget.

This initiative comes in addition to other sources of seed money which can be tapped into for financing the development of projects implementing the EUSBSR. Among others, SI – the Swedish Institute, CBSS – the Commission of the Baltic Sea States, and the Nordic Council of Ministers offer different seed money facilities.

²³ European Commission 2014.

Limiting the complexity of internal governance

The appointment of the actors at the coordination level of the Strategy is sometimes complicated. For example, the appointment of the PACs is an outcome of negotiations among the different Member States of the Region. The Member States show their interest on relevant PAs, which they can represent, and after following mainly a “first serve first take” procedure the PAs are divided equally among the Member States. In some cases there are Steering Committees or networking structures established and under which representatives from all Member States of the EUSBSR can meet. This procedure allows for the allocation of more and more positions and roles in order to keep the consensus, interest and commitment among the Member States, though it lacks in agreement of doing.

In 2011, efforts of a higher involvement and participation of the sub-national (regional and local) level and existing cooperative structures in the Strategy were noted, the “sub-national level, individual Euro-regions, regions, countries and cities show(ed) strong commitment (and) the local and expert partners have been mobilized”²⁴. Despite that fact, the EC’s report on governance of macro-regional strategies points out the need of a “stronger involvement of stakeholders, including parliaments at different levels, regional governments and civil society”²⁵. Clear and efficient multi-level governance models therefore remain to be developed.

EGTCs could play a role in this respect. The idea of setting up an EGTC for implementing a macro-regional strategy has been aired in some informal discussions in order to manage the implementation of the Strategy. For the moment there is no EGTC in the Baltic Sea Region, although, some organisations such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States considers the option of signing up for this option²⁶.

The lack of local and regional level is also visible when one looks into the PACs and HALs, where only a few local/regional authorities are involved. The decision-making is mainly the role of the nation states, through their involvement as members of the HLG, while the PACs and HALs are mainly involved at the operation level of the Strategy. The EC also plays an important role, both in the policy as well as the coordination level.

Continued interaction with neighbouring countries

The Strategy welcomes the participation of neighbouring non-Member States countries, such as Russia, Norway and Belarus. Northern Dimension, which is a common policy between the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland “provides the basis for these external aspects of the strategy”. However, Russia has a limited participation in the implementation of the EUSBSR “either through specific projects or existing regional frameworks such as the Northern Dimension”²⁷. Exchanges with Russia on issues pertaining to the Baltic Sea have been significantly impacted by the current situation in Ukraine, especially at the EU and Member State levels. However, the prevailing view at the 5th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR in 2014 was that the dialogue with Russia should be maintained.

²⁴ European Commission 2011.

²⁵ European Commission 2014.

²⁶ INTERACT 2013.

²⁷ European Commission 2013a.

A.1.3.2 Coordination between the EUSBSR and ETC programmes

The ETC new regulations ask for more cooperation between the territorial cooperation Programmes and the macro-regional strategies. The eligibility area of the Baltic Sea Region ETC Programme largely corresponds to the area of the EUSBSR. The fact that in the case of the Baltic Sea Region, the Baltic Sea macro-regional Strategy Region and the transnational territorial Programme overlap, makes the funding allocation easier.

The Baltic Sea Region programme has played an important role as regards the funding of projects, “contributing 88 million Euros to flagship projects and targeted its fourth call specifically to promoting the Strategy”²⁸. The Programme is seen as the easy funding source, however other resources are also needed and the PACs should try to find other funding sources, too. Moreover, their interaction can be seen through their participation in different projects. A series of projects under the transnational cooperation programmes of the BSR have also been defined as EUSBSR Flagship projects. Such projects are PartiSEApate, MOMENT and Baltic Deal (under the objective “save the sea”), BSR Trans Governance, NEW BRIDGES and Ecovillages (under the objective “connect the Region”) and Stardust, Baltadapt and Best Agers (under the objective “increase prosperity”). The Programme is mainly responsible for the funding of these projects and for judging whether the project is suitable for funding, however it is not responsible for its content. The funding of these projects would not have been possible without the funding resources of the Programme.

The Programme’s ex-ante evaluation report²⁹, includes a priority focusing on the “Institutional capacity for macro-regional cooperation”. This priority 4 has two specific objectives: Specific Objective 4.1 focuses on the “seed money” and the preparation of projects under the PAs and HAs and 4.2 on the “coordination of macro-regional cooperation”. The latter objective focuses on increasing capacity of public administrations and pan-Baltic organisations for transnational coordination in implementing the EU Strategy and facilitating the implementation of common priorities with the neighbouring countries. Among its actions are the facilitation of policy discussions in the BSR, facilitation of development and implementation of actions and flagship projects, ensuring communication and visibility, maintaining a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementation, implementing a the Strategy Forum, including a platform of civil society.

As regards the OP of the 2014-2020 period, the fourth Investment Priority of the Programme on “Institutional capacity for macro-regional cooperation” is dedicated to Baltic Sea macro-regional Strategy. This is not related to the coordination of the activities but rather to support the PACs and HALs of the Strategy, related to the seed money facility and targeted general support and EUSBSR fora. A total of around 13 million Euros is allocated to this Priority.

Moreover, there has been an interaction of the Programme and the Strategy as regards the drafting of the OP. The PACs and HALs were invited to contribute in the drafting procedure, providing comments, however, not all PACs responded to the invitation.

The OP of the Central Baltic Programme³⁰ also takes the EUSBSR into account. This is reflected by its specific objectives, which are aligned on PAs of the Strategy. For example, Priority 1 on “Competitive economy” contributes to the objective “increase prosperity” of the Strategy, and to the PAs “SME”, “Education” and “Innovation”.

²⁸ European Commission 2013a.

²⁹ COWI 2014.

³⁰ Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 2014.

Moreover, Priority 2 on “Sustainable use of common resources” will contribute to the PA “Hazards”, “Agri”, “Tourism”, but also to the HA “Spatial Planning”, Priority 3 on “Well-connected region” contributes to the “connect the Region” objective and the PAs “Transport”, “Ship”, and “Tourism”, while Priority 4 on “Skills and socially inclusive region” contributes to the PAs “Education”, “Health” and to the HA “Involve”.

A.1.3.3 Strategy content and added value

Revision of Objectives, Priority Areas and Horizontal Actions

Environmental challenges of the Baltic Sea were the main initial justification for the Strategy. However, it soon became obvious that coordination could be of added value in a number of fields, as illustrated by the initial pillars and PAs listed in **Table A.5**.

After extensive discussions with Member States, stakeholders and relevant services of the EC, a revised Action Plan was published in early 2013. The objective with this revised Action Plan is to adopt objectives, indicators and targets that are fully in line with and contributes to the objectives Europe 2020 Strategy, to improve the strategic focus, to clarify the responsibilities of involved actors as well as the alignment of policies and funding.

As a result, the four pillars were replaced by three objectives in the EC’s 2012 communication on the EUSBSR³¹, in response to the conclusions of the General Affairs council meeting of November 2011³². These three objectives (“save the sea”, “connect the Region” and “increase prosperity”) largely cover the same thematic fields as the previous pillars, especially as maritime safety is covered under the objective “save the sea”, while fighting cross-border criminality is one of the PAs under “connect the Region”.

The ambition to improve the strategic focus materialised with slightly revised PAs. The Strategy now has 17 instead of the previously 15 PAs. The Priority Area “climate” was discarded, as the Action Plan points out that “change will be adequately included as a cross-cutting horizontal consideration”³³. Tourism, education and health were established as separate PAs, instead of being addressed jointly under the heading “attractiveness”. There was also a change of focus within previous Priority Area 14, (maritime accident response capacity), which based on recommendations from Member State civil protection authorities and preliminary results from the flagship project “Macro-Regional Risk Scenarios and Gaps Identification” now addresses land-based civil protection matters. Finally, a new Priority Area (“Culture”) was established with the objective to develop and promote the common culture and cultural identity of the Baltic Sea Region.

³¹ European Commission 2012.

³² Council of the EU 2011.

³³ European Commission 2013, p. 10.

Table A.5: EUSBSR Pillars and Priority Areas (between 2009 and 2012)

Pillar	Priority Area
1. To make the Baltic Sea an environmentally sustainable place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To reduce nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels; – To preserve natural zones and biodiversity, including fisheries; – To reduce the use and impact of hazardous substances; – To become a model region for clean shipping; – To mitigate and adapt to climate change
2. To make the Baltic Sea a prosperous place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To remove hindrances to the internal market in the Baltic Sea; – To exploit the full potential of the Region in research and innovation; – Implementing the small business act: To promote entrepreneurship, strengthen SMEs and increase the efficient use of human resources; – To reinforce sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fishery.
3. To make the Baltic Sea an accessible and attractive place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To improve access to, and efficiency and security of, the energy markets; – To improve internal and external transport links; – To maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region in particular through education, tourism and health.
4. To make the Baltic Sea a safe and secure place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To become a leading region in maritime safety and security; – To reinforce maritime accident response capacity protection from major emergencies; – To decrease the volume of, and harm done by, cross border crime.

Source: Spatial Foresight, based on information from the EUSBSR Action Plan (2009)

Table A.6: EUSBSR Objectives, sub-objectives and Priority Areas (from 2013)

Objective	Sub-objectives	Priority Areas
Save the sea	(1) Clear water in the sea; (2) Rich and healthy wildlife; (3) Clean and safe shipping; (4) Better cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agri: Reinforce sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries – Bio: Preserve natural zones and biodiversity, including fisheries – Hazards: Reduce the use and impact of hazardous substances – Nutri: Reduce nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels – Safe: Become a leading region in maritime safety and security – Secure: Protect from emergencies and accidents on land – Ship: Become a model region for clean shipping
Connect the Region	(5) Good transport conditions; (6) Reliable energy markets; (7) Connecting people in the Region; (8) Better cooperation in fighting cross-border crime;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crime: Fight cross-border crime – Energy: Improve the access to, and the efficiency and security of the energy markets – Transport: Improve internal and external transport links
Increase prosperity	(9) EUSBSR as a front runner for deepening and fulfilling the single market; (10) EUSBSR contributing to the implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy; (11) Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region; (12) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Culture: Develop and promoting the common culture and cultural identity – Education: Develop innovative education and youth – Health: Improve and promoting people's health, including its social aspects – Innovation: Exploit the full potential of the Region in research and innovation – Market: Remove hindrances to the internal market – SME: Promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the growth of SMEs – Tourism: Reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism

Source: Spatial Foresight, based on information from the EUSBSR Action Plan (2013)

The Horizontal Actions were reduced from 13 to 5. While Horizontal Actions previously covered sectoral issues such as “fisheries” and “broadband in rural areas”, the revised actions focus on transversal issues of general relevance for the Strategy:

- **Involve:** Multi-level governance in the BSR;
- **Neighbours:** Improved cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the EU in the BSR (Russia, Norway and Belarus);
- **Spatial:** Achieve a territorial cohesion perspective for the BSR in 2030, including the Maritime Spatial Planning dimension;
- **Sustainable:** Support the transition of the Baltic Sea Region into a sustainable and prosperous macro-region;
- **Promo:** Coordinate and support activities across the Strategy to boost joint promotion and regional identity building.

Added-value

As previously mentioned (see section A.1.3.1), the first added-value of the strategy is in terms of increased interest in transnational cooperation and improved visibility for transnational initiatives. This improves the quality and efficiency of policies when they are relevant to address clearly identified transnational opportunities or challenges, e.g. eutrophication, maritime hazards and transport connections. Otherwise, most of the concrete achievements of Strategy concern the formulation of “Action Plans”, shared “Visions” and similar collaborative, cross-sectoral and transnational policy documents. The reasons for which it is difficult to ascribe socio-economic or environmental change to the strategy are twofold: first, many of the initiatives now included in the Strategy existed before its creation. The Strategy’s contribution to their improved design or implementation is difficult to assess. Second, the Strategy is still relatively new, and the process leading from the formulation of Action Plans and visions to policy measures is still on-going.

The achievement of producing policy documents reflecting new and enhanced levels of consensus among Baltic stakeholders should not be underestimated. The Baltic Transport Outlook (BTO) can for example contribute to the better planning and implementation of TEN-T frameworks. The BTO was designed and implemented as the central component of the EUSBSR transport component, with EU co-funding under the Trans-European network policy. The EUSBSR also managed to expand the concept of the ScanBalt Bioregion and take up the Nordic health and life science innovation strengths in the Estonian strategy for biotechnology, with networking to neighbours giving critical mass.

Greater coordination should also be recognized as an added value. In the Baltic Sea Region, there is an increasing joint work between Northern Dimension (ND), CBSS, Nordic Council of Ministers and other frameworks, mobilising together their structures such as HELCOM, VASAB for coordinated spatial planning, and the ND for Transport and Logistics. This coordination has made it possible to implement integrated approaches to issues of macro-regional importance, for example in the environmental field. Agnès Kelemen’s study of macro-regional added-value states that “the EUSBSR has enabled a cross-sectoral approach to environmental issues”.

This has helped address problems where previously Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), which has an environmental focus, has not been able to curb many of the sectoral interests (e.g. agricultural) which drive environmental issues (eutrophication)³⁴. However, according to Böhme (2013), the setup of the Strategy may encourage a tendency to focus on single projects that can be linked to macro-regional opportunities and challenges, and to neglect the “wider picture”. Both representatives from the PAs and the Territorial Cooperation Programmes agree that the cooperation in the area has increased, there is higher visibility of the projects and a prioritisation of the important activities, increased utilisation of projects’ results, while through the Strategy there have been better results, better target groups and better overall coordination. A lot of projects could also have happened in the absence of a macro-regional strategy, however, the Strategy gives a prioritisation to the issues, there are more concrete roles and concrete way of organising funding, under a better framework.

In terms of transport, shorter Plane Routes implemented through the establishment of “Functional Airspace Blocks” (FAB) in the Baltic Sea Region is one of few operational changes that can be ascribed the EUSBSR. Admittedly, the Strategy’s achievements include a series of significant plans, programmes and networks, e.g.:

- The TransBaltic project produced a macro-regional transport Action Plan, proposing a vision for the Baltic transport system in 2030 and a series of policy actions to reach this vision;
- The Scandria project has produced an Action Programme for developing a green and innovative transport corridor between the Baltic and the Adriatic Seas;
- The East West Transport Corridor (EWTC) II project has established an “EWTC Association”, which is a triple-helix organisation of stakeholders from the public, private, and the academic sector acting as a lobbying organisation promoting the EWTC concept with main mission to stimulate new business opportunities in the EWTC and profiling the brand of EWTC.

However, it is difficult to establish whether these projects would have run in the absence of the EUSBSR, or whether their activities and impact have been positively influenced by the existence of the Strategy. The difficulty of evaluating outputs and results of macro-regional strategies in comparison with a counterfactual scenario was already noted in the working document of the EC accompanying its report on the added value of macro-regional strategies³⁵.

Considering the EUSBSR’s more than 100 flagship projects, and acknowledging the fact that many of these would have been implemented independently of the Strategy, one notes that their geographical focus varies considerably depending on the issue at hand. In terms of reduction of nutrient inputs to the Sea, major investment projects have been concentrated in Russia and Belarus, funded in the framework of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. The projects supported by BSAP Fund, which is managed by NIB and NEFCO, are mainly located in Sweden and Russia. However, the benefits of these investments in terms of improved water quality are shared by all countries bordering the Baltic Sea. As far as transport is concerned, action and plans developed as part of the Strategy (such as those mentioned above) reveal a stronger focus on transport corridors in the central and eastern parts of the BSR. However, the strategy can generally be considered as having a balanced coverage, both in sectoral and geographical terms.

³⁴ European Commission 2013b, p. 46.

³⁵ European Commission 2013c.

A.1.4 Conclusions

The main findings of the case study are the following:

- **The European Commission has been the main driving force, in spite of the many well-established Baltic cooperation organisations**

The EUSBSR has been a source of inspiration for other macro-regional strategies. However, methods and solutions cannot necessarily be transposed to other areas, as they are adapted to specific transnational policy-making landscape, with a large number of organisations and a well-established habit of cooperation for many countries and with respect to a series of issues. It is noteworthy that the EC nonetheless had to play a major role ensuring that the strategy did not lose its momentum, and in the adjustment of objectives and targets. The active and strategic role of DG Regio has been seen necessary and in general as an advantage by the PACs, despite its limited expected role for the future.

The lack of involvement of Member States, and the limited commitment at operational level, are identified as key challenges by some PACs. The need for stronger and more reliable Steering Committees for each Priority Area has been recognized, as an instrument to encourage improved commitment of relevant bodies in each Member State. However, this can be challenging, e.g. in the case of Federal States such as Germany,

- **The EUSBSR has enhanced the visibility of Baltic cooperation and facilitated integrated, cross-sectoral action**

The EUSBSR has enhanced the visibility of Baltic cooperation, internally (within the BSR) and at the European level. This enhanced visibility can be capitalised upon by involved stakeholders to encourage individual actors to support projects addressing transnational opportunities and challenges.

The EUSBSR has also contributed to cross-sectoral measures, especially when it comes to addressing the environmental challenges in the Baltic Sea. The High Level political backing of the Strategy has encouraged e.g. actors from the agricultural sector and city authorities to develop pro-active policies to reduce emissions of pollutants.

- **Detailed assessment of EUSBSR added value remain difficult**

The EUSBSR functions as an umbrella for cooperation initiatives, most of which existed before the strategy was established. It is difficult to assess whether the Strategy has influenced the nature or extent of these initiatives. This would require a counterfactual evaluation of the Strategy's added-value based on extensive interviews with involved actors and in depth studies of individual processes.

- **The complexity of the Strategy's internal governance may jeopardize it on the long term**

The high complexity in the governance structure of the EUSBSR contributes on the one hand to a broad involvement of actors but may also cause some confusion and reluctance to get involved. Given the broad nature of the strategy and the absence of single institutions for their implementation, rather complex implementation mechanisms have been developed. These rely on a wide range of organisations that take over responsibilities and carry through coordination tasks.

The multiplicity of actors brings the risk that a strategy could lose (a) focus and (b) the ownership and responsibility felt by the single stakeholders. If the feeling of ownership and subsequently commitment and responsibility towards the strategy declines, the entire strategy is weakened.

This leads ultimately to the question whether the complexity needed for the elaboration and in particular for the implementation of the strategies is too high to actually being able to make use of the manifold potentials for better coordination offered by them. There are signs that the commitment is not always as high as might be desirable or needed.

- **Cooperation and exchanges in the Baltic Sea Region remain particularly dynamic**

Notwithstanding these internal governance challenges for the EUSBSR, the extent and vitality of cooperation and exchanges in the Baltic Sea is undeniable. The different seed money facilities are important to ensure that new ideas and initiatives are encouraged within these networks, so that they remain fully in phase with emerging transnational issues as well as with European and global policy agendas.

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A.2 European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)³⁶

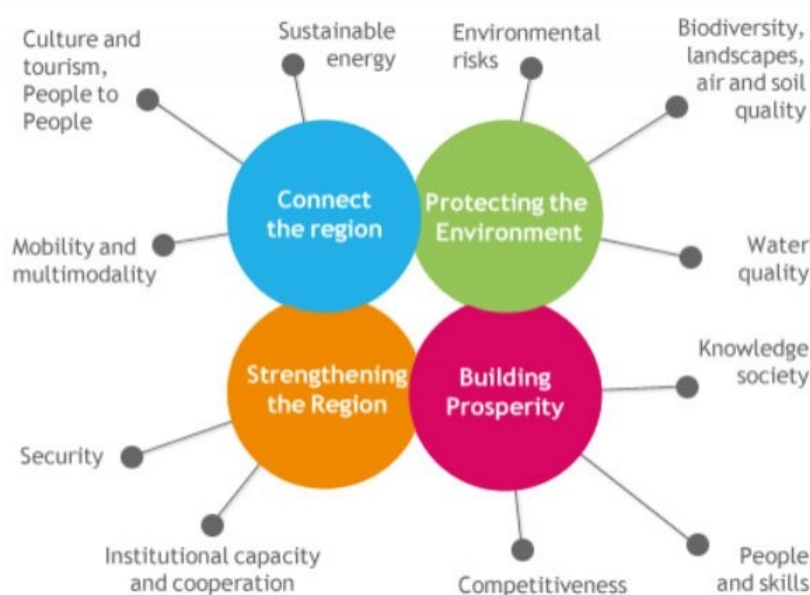
A.2.1 Introduction

At the end of 2010 the EC proposed a strategy to boost the development of the Danube Region and adopted the EUSDR which was endorsed by the Member States and the European Council in 2011.

The EUSDR is only the second macro-regional strategy after the EUSBSR. Initiated and lobbied for by Austria and Romania, the strategy was jointly developed by the Commission, Danube riparian states and stakeholders. The Strategy aims at addressing common challenges and is designed to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region.

The EUSDR addresses a wide range of issues which are divided among 4 pillars and 11 PAs as illustrated below:

Figure A.2: Pillars and priority areas of the EUSDR



Source: <http://www.danube-region.eu/about/priorities>

Apart from these thematic pillars, the strategy aims at strengthening cohesion in the Region and opening the EU to its neighbours. These aims play a vital role in a region, which has been strongly affected by turbulent political events in its recent past, the current crises in the Ukraine being one example. Several countries in the area joined the EU or are still in waiting. Today, the Region is comprised of EU Member States, potential Member States and third countries alike, with quite different socio-economic backgrounds. As mentioned above, the second aim is to use the location at the outer border of the EU, to build a gate to the Black Sea Region, the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

³⁶ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Erich Dallhammer, Max Kintisch, Arta Preku, Bernd Schuh, Joanne Tordy (ÖIR).

The case study at hand presents the creation and organisational setup of the EUSDR. It describes its implementation, focusing on governance issues and coordination between the EUSDR and ETC programme, highlighting the emerged needs, problems and opportunities.

A.2.2 The making and organisational setup of the macro-regional strategy

A.2.2.1 Process leading to the adoption of the European Union strategy for the Danube Region

Initial proposals for a EUSDR were first formulated within the regional cooperation framework of the **DCP**³⁷ and in the context of the **Danube initiative forwarded by the German Federal state of Baden Württemberg**³⁸ in 2008. In June 2008, Austria and Romania decided to launch a DCP initiative to recommend to the EC to prepare a EU Strategy for the Danube. This process further gained in momentum on a conference organised by the European representation of Baden-Württemberg in October 2008, when the Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hübner called for the Danube area to have a “*specific strategy comparable to the strategy (...) developing for the Baltic Sea Region*” (EC 2008). As part of the Danube initiative, Baden-Württemberg’s *Landtag* President Peter Straub further pushed for the creation of the Danube area interregional group in the Committee of Regions in November 2008, bringing together several regional and local actors from different Danube river basin states from a very early stage on.

Even if not initially conceived as such, these policy developments were quickly linked to the potential development of a macro-regional approach, prompting the Swedish Presidency to ask the EESC to explore the potential for rolling out the Baltic Sea Strategy to other areas in Europe, the Danube Region in particular (EESC, 2009). While several resolutions of the European Parliament (EP) before 2009 have addressed the importance of the Danube river as a “strategic transportation route” and the unique habitat of the Danube delta, it is notable that the EPs call on the Commission for a strategic approach to these issues has at this point in time formally remained anchored in the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy and a discussion around the future of the Black Sea Region (EP 2008, EP 2005). This is indicative of certain contrast with respect to the development of the EUSBSR, where the European parliament had taken strong initiative from a very early stage on.

The process leading to the adoption of EUSDR drastically gained in momentum when in February 2009, Austria and Romania formally presented their proposal to the EU Member States and the EC. In June 2009, the European Council reacted on this proposal by calling on the Commission to prepare an EUSDR before the end of 2010. Within a month of the European Council’s request, the Commission started a broad based consultation process to prepare the EUSDR, involving relevant Member States and including public consultation.

³⁷ The DCP Ministerial Meeting, held in Kyiv in June 2008, launched an initiative, originally driven by Austria and Romania, to recommend to the European Commission to prepare a European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (Danube Cooperation Process, n.d.).

³⁸ The former Minister president of the State of Baden Württemberg, Günther Oettinger issued the “Danube Strategy of the State of Baden Württemberg”, a Foreign Policy initiative based on the reinforcement of the integration: process of central and Eastern European Danube River countries, the positioning of Baden-Württemberg as a reliable partner in Eastern Europe, and aligning strategic ambitions of the Danube Regions with overarching EU goals. As part of this initiative, Baden Württemberg *Landtag* President Peter Straub pushed for the creation of the Danube area interregional group in the Committee of Regions in November 2008, bringing together several regional and local actors from different Danube basin states. (Baden-Württemberg, 2008).

Based on the model of the Baltic Sea strategy, the consultation process was founded on a scoping document suggesting the potential thematic pillars of a future strategy – to improve connectivity and communication systems (within and outside the Region); protect the environment; preserve water resources and prevent against natural risks; and finally, to reinforce socio-economic, human and institutional development. Between February and April 2010, the EC coordinated a series of five conferences in different cities of the Lower Danube. The objective of these conferences was to bring together all relevant stakeholders to discuss the strategic pillars to form the basis of a future Action Plan for the Region³⁹.

In the course of this four month consultation process, the public and major stakeholders were invited to submit written proposals to be published by the EC. A number of the 80 contributions received from 72 stakeholders were integrated into draft versions of a first Action Plan and presented at a final stakeholder conference in June 2010 held in Constanta⁴⁰. There have been mixed evaluations of this consultation process. While policy interlocutors generally welcomed the approach taken by the Commission, some actors have pointed to the fact that *“fundamental weaknesses and omissions were prevalent throughout the process. This concerned the participation in conferences by smaller or less institutionally well-equipped NGO-s because of their financial capacities. Other factors considered as structural disadvantages were the narrow margin of time given for the consultation/preparation period and the fact that the active participation was limited to a small number of speakers of which very few were representing NGOs, while the remaining ones were members of European and State institutions and international organisations”*⁴¹.

The consultation process resulted in the EC’s “Communication on the EUSDR” of 8th December 2010, leading to the formal adoption of the Action plan for the EUSDR. The EUSDR rests on four thematic pillars, three of which had already been featured in the scoping document for the consultation process (interconnection and communication – transport, navigation, support infrastructure and energy; environmental protection, risk prevention; socio-economic development and institution building) and one which was added as a result of this process (strengthening of regional cooperation).

Before its formal endorsement by the Council, the initial proposal by the EC has been reviewed and commented upon by the European Parliament, the CoR and the EESC as well as other stakeholders on the EU level. In a resolution passed on 21st January 2011 the European Parliament welcomed the development of a Danube Strategy on the model of the EUSBSR; and the resolution passed on 17th February 2011 positively assessed the approach taken by the EC during the consultation process. The resolution further underlines the importance of the transnational dimension of the EUSDR, emphasizing particularly the contribution of such strategy to the objective of territorial cooperation.

³⁹ This process was constantly assisted and influenced by the following stakeholders: the European Institutions themselves (European commission, Council, Parliament, Committee of the Regions), transnational organisations, the governments of the 8 EU Member States (in case of federal states their regions/lands along the river). Additionally the 6 third countries (i.e. non EU Member States) were also consulted, regions, counties, micro-regions, and settlements (cities) alongside the Danube, non-governmental institutions, for profit and non for profit associations, representative organisations of different (educational, economic, transport, etc.) entities. Moreover a group of 16 MEPs coming from the Central and Lower Danube area, used to meet regularly in Strasbourg to discuss and follow the EUSDR preparation process.

⁴⁰ European Commission 2010a.

⁴¹ Kodric (2011, p. 19) also criticises that “ (...) among the written proposals submitted to the Commission, very few came from non-EU States (4 out of 72).” Other complains expressed by some stakeholders in the surveys included: proposal not finding a place in the Action Plan; civilian, educational and social interests having been marginalized; lack of integrated approach among different sectors; the first drafts of the Action Plan not having been available to the wider public; an “almost zero” influence in decision-making despite active engagement in the consultation.” Ibid.

The document also stresses that the major added value of *"EU macro-regional strategies is seen in multi-level cooperation, coordination and better strategic investments using the available funding, not in additional allocation of resources"*⁴². In its Opinion of 2010, the CoR "very much welcomes the EUSDR"⁴³, and further underlines the importance of the strategy to the achievement of the territorial cooperation objective of Cohesion Policy. While the CoR principally accepts the "three no's rule" as a guiding framework of the macro-regional approach, it states that *"there should also be three yeses: jointly agreed application and monitoring of existing rules in the macro-region; creation – for which EU bodies should be responsible – of a platform, network or territorial cluster of regional and local authorities and Member States which also brings in stakeholders; agreed use of existing Union funding for developing and implementing macro-regional strategies"*⁴⁴. In a further opinion on the matter, the EESC has also underlined that *"the strategy does not have to be one of 'three nos'"*⁴⁵, suggesting amongst others giving Commission departments more resources in order to ensure that the Strategy is properly followed up.

In April 2011, the Council endorsed the Communication and its annexed Action Plan, which identifies concrete actions and examples of projects in eleven thematic PAs.

Just like in the EUSBSR, the Danube Strategy can build on a vast network of pre-existing transnational cooperation networks. However, as has been pointed out elsewhere, most of them have followed a sectoral logic so that horizontal partnerships have virtually been inexistent before the adoption of the strategy (Interview Lütgenau). A non-exhaustive list of these institutions can be found below:

- **The Stability Pact for SEE** (today the Regional Cooperation Council)
Launched in 1999, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is the first comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy of the international community, aimed at fostering peace, democracy, respect for human rights, economic prosperity and security in the countries of South Eastern Europe; over the years, the focus of the Stability Pact has shifted from confidence building among the countries torn by a decade of fighting as well as rebuilding the infrastructure destroyed by the conflicts, to a framework for regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe;
- **The SECI**
The SECI has been successful in providing stability in an unstable region and has found support in international organisations and countries; in 2009 SECI, has created a Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), owned and run by the countries in Southeast Europe aimed at strengthening peace, democracy and the economy;
- **The DCP**
From 2002-2009, The DCP was a regional cooperation process politically administered by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of different the Danube river basin countries – Austria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine; on 27th May 2002, the 1st Foreign Ministers Conference of the Countries of the Danube River Basin was held in Vienna, and the result was the formal launching of the Danube Co-operation Process (DCP); the initiators of the process were Austria, Romania, the EC and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe;

⁴² European Parliament 2011, p. 32.

⁴³ Committee of the Regions 2010b, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Committee of the Regions 2010b, p. 24.

⁴⁵ European Economic and Social Committee 2011, p. 82.

- ***International Commission for the Sava River Basin (Sava Commission)***
Following the support of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the four riparian countries of the Sava River Basin – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Republic of Croatia and Republic of Slovenia entered into a process of cooperation known as “the Sava River Basin Initiative”; the process resulted in the “Letter of Intent” on launching the joint activities in regard to the Sava River and its tributaries, which was signed in Sarajevo (Bosnia Herzegovina) on 29th November 2001, by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the four countries;
- ***The ICPDR***
The ICPDR is an international organisation consisting of 14 cooperating states and the EU; launched in 1998, the ICPDR “has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies of river basin management expertise in Europe” (ICPDR, n.d.); the ICPDR deals with the Danube and its river basin, which includes its tributaries and ground water resources; the ICPDR adopted the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) in December 2009 and the Danube Declaration “Danube Basin: Shared Waters-Joint Responsibilities”, presented and approved at the “Ministerial Meeting of States Parties to the Danube River Protection Convention” on 16th February 2010 in Vienna;
- ***The CEI***
Founded in 1989, the CEI is a regional intergovernmental forum committed to supporting European integration through cooperation among its Member States; it combines multilateral diplomacy and project management, both as donor and recipient, while bridging European macro-regions.

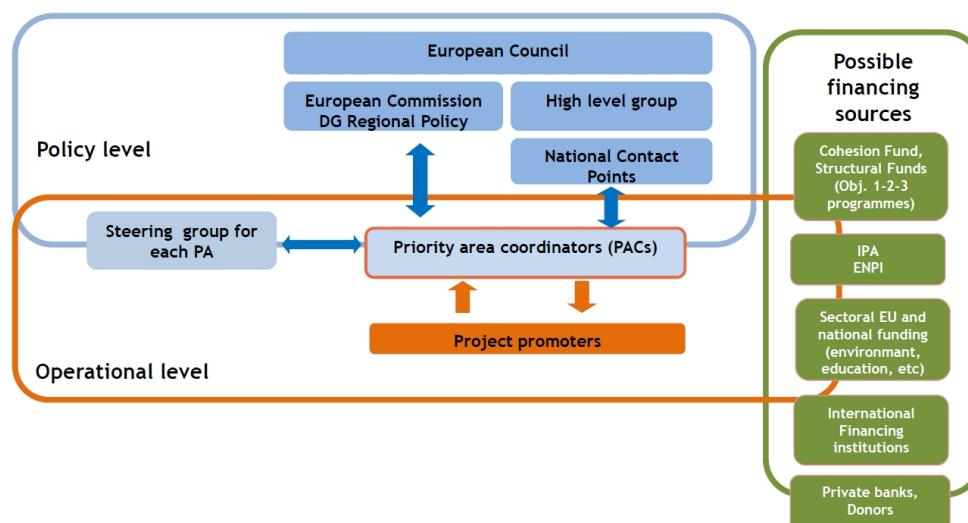
Other important actors were:

- The *Danube International* navigation; the *Corridor VII Steering Committee* in the area of transport and transport infrastructure;
- The *DTC* concerning the promotion of Danube tourism and the Danube as a brand tourist destination;
- The *Working Community of Danube Regions* (ARGE Donaulaender) concerning sub-regional territorial cooperation along the Danube;
- The *Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe* (IDM) concerning research, academic and cultural cooperation a/o.

A.2.2.2 EUSDR decision making and implementation frameworks

The Danube Strategy Policy and governance aspects are in great part built on the experience of the EUSBSR. The following list provides a description of the main layers of EUSDR governance.

Figure A.3: The governance model of the EUSDR



Source: EUSDR 2011

Overall coordination

For the coordination of each priority area the responsibility is of the EU Member States together with non-Member States, regions and relevant EU agencies or regional bodies. Non-members and regions are excluded from coordination at the EU level, actions considering security, serious and organised crime. An additional role in coordination is played by the NCPs which are monitoring the practical aspects of the actions taken. The Commission underlines that governance of the EUSDR should be trans-national, inter-sectoral and inter-institutional, which in principle indicates using a multi-level governance approach. (EC 2010b; EESC, 2011).

Member States

The Danube Region Strategy is implemented in 14 participating States. Among these, nine are EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), two are candidate Member States (Montenegro and Serbia), one is a potential candidate (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the other two (Ukraine and Moldova) are considered by the EU as neighbour countries.

National Contact Points

The **NCPs** coordinate and keep an overview of the participation of their country in the implementation of the EUSDR including all eleven PAs. The role of the NCPs is to promote the Strategy and inform relevant stakeholders on the national level of key developments. NCPs also assist the EC in its facilitation role⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ European Commission 2010b.

Policy level

Regarding the policy-level coordination, the Commission points itself, as a responsible unit. In this matter, the Commission is assisted by the HLG composed of one person from each Member State. Non-members are invited to the Group, when the consultation will include the issues concerned with their involvement. The main tasks of the Commission are to consult, modify the action Plan (when required), report and monitor⁴⁷.

European Council and Council of the European Union

The Council gave the mandate to the EC to prepare the Strategy, and endorsed it in June 2010.

European Commission

The EC coordinated the making of the policy in consultation with the HLG. As the executive of the EU, the **Commission** prepared the Strategy in 2010 in consultation with all partner countries. Regarding the implementation of the Strategy, the Commission helps implement the Strategy by facilitating and supporting actions of the participating countries. It coordinates the implementation at the policy level, assisted again by a HLG.

High-Level Group

In its conclusions about the EUSDR in 2011 the Council of the EU invited the Commission to set-up a High-Level Group of officials from all EU Member States in order to assist the Commission in the task of facilitating the implementation of the Strategy. Furthermore the Communication indicates that third countries participating in the EUSDR should be invited⁴⁸. Today the **HLG** on macro-regional strategies is made up of official representatives from all EU Member States. It assists the Commission in the policy coordination of the Strategy and is consulted for modifications to the Strategy and the Action Plan, as well as for reports and monitoring. The HLG also addresses policy orientation and prioritisation.

Steering Groups

The SGs, one for each Priority Area, are composed by the PACs, representatives of Ministries, NGOs, Members of the EC and project beneficiaries that are related to the thematic priority area and are responsible for coordinating the implementation of the actions from the Action Plan regarding their Priority Area. SGs are considered an innovation in the framework of MRS since they have not originally been part of the PAs in EURBSR.

Coordination level

Concerning the implementation process, all of the actions should be elaborated and transformed into concrete projects. The Commission makes States, regional, urban and local stakeholders responsible for this process. The essential part of coordinating the Strategy is reporting and evaluation. This should be done by the Commission in partnership with the PACs and other stakeholders. The reports should include (identified by the Coordinators), progress in relation to the implementation of the Action Plan⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Council of the EU 2011, point 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

In addition, in order to raise efficiency of the implementation of the Strategy, the Commission also organises an Annual Forum. Participators (national and regional authorities, the EU institutions, the private sector and civil society) are gathering to discuss, consult and revise actions.

Priority Area Coordinators

The strategy is organised in 11 PAs which are run by PACs, high-level officials of national and regional administrations, experts in their thematic areas. They ensure the implementation of the Action Plan defined for the Priority Area by agreeing on planning, with targets, indicators and timetables, and by making sure there is effective cooperation between project promoters, programmes and funding sources. They also provide technical assistance and advice. The coordinators work in consultation with the Commission, and relevant EU agencies and national/regional bodies⁵⁰.

Laboratory Group

The EUSDR Lab Group is another networking platform. It brings together representatives of EU Cohesion Policy programmes, EC representatives and interested PACs. The Lab Group, facilitated by INTERACT Point Vienna, provides a space for actors from different sectors to exchange ideas regarding operational aspects of the Strategy and discuss current issues⁵¹.

INTERACT point Vienna

INTERACT Point Vienna, having expertise in ETC in the Danube Region (ETC programmes as well as IPA-CBC programmes with accession countries), is involved in the promotion of the Strategy to ETC stakeholders as well as in the promotion of ETC in the EUSDR. INTERACT is also engaged in operational aspects of the EUSDR and supports the Commission in its coordination tasks of the EUSDR. In particular INTERACT is involved in facilitating interaction between various stakeholders, managing the EUSDR website, producing and disseminating information and publications, supporting exchange among PACs and NCPs in their tasks and promoting the Strategy predominantly at the European level. INTERACT draws ideas and solutions from the Lab Group discussion to produce guidelines for PACs⁵².

A.2.2.3 Actor involvement and commitment: who is involved and how?

Involvement in decision making

The process of designating PACs/HALs is based on the close interaction between Member States and the EC, with at times the Member States taking the initiative and/or the Commission asking some countries to take the lead on a number of specific areas. As can be seen from **Table A.7**, EU Member States play the most active part in the decision making process of EUSDR with Austria, Hungary Germany and Romania coordinating three PAs respectively. A second level of involvement in decision making is composed of the new Member States like Bulgaria, Slovakia and Croatia and the Candidate State Serbia which are involved in the coordination of two PAs respectively. Moldova is directly involved in the coordination of PA9. Ukraine and Bosnia Herzegovina are not involved in any form of coordination of the PAs. In contrast to EUSBSR, all PACs have been working in SGs from the very beginning to feedback horizontal topics to the national level.

⁵⁰ Danube Region Strategy, n.d.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

As outlined in **Table A.7**, an effort has been made within the distribution of PACs to involve most of the countries present in the strategy through a bi-national system of coordination. This allocation in tandems has been a benefit to the integration of new Member States and for the functional coordination of PAs. It allowed for objectives in PAs in the context of uneven distribution of resources and capacities for involvement amongst the EUSDR Member States. Yet, from the start there was a perception that SGs could be staffed with more competencies and decision-making powers, and that there is a need to ensure a constant level of participation (Interview Puchinger).

Table A.7: Priority area coordinator Countries

Priority Area	Coordinator Country/ies
Connecting the Region	
1. Improving mobility and multimodality	
A. inland waterways	A. Austria & Romania
B. rail road and air	B. Slovenia & Serbia
2. Energy	Hungary & Czech Republic
3. Culture and Tourism	Bulgaria & Romania
Protecting the environment in the Danube Region	
4. Water quality	Hungary & Slovakia
5. Environmental risks	Hungary & Romania
6. Biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils	Germany (Bavaria) & Croatia
Building prosperity in the Danube Region	
7. Knowledge society	Slovakia & Serbia
8. Competitiveness	Germany & Croatia
9. People and skills	Austria & Moldova
Strengthening the Danube Region	
10. To step up institutional capacity and cooperation	Austria (Vienna) & Slovenia
11. To work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime	Germany (Bavaria) & Bulgaria

Source: The Danube Alliance 2011, p. 20

As far as horizontal actions are concerned the EUSDR Action Plan lists a certain number of horizontal policies principles that are essential for the successful implementation and the coherence of the Strategy. However, there exists no similar denomination for the governance of these horizontal policy areas as in EUSBSR with designated HALs. As has been pointed out elsewhere, this may have to do with the absence of specific historic transnational links that are not that well established in EUSDR case. In the absence of this layer, certain PAs fulfil a more horizontal role than others – this is typically the case of PA10, which is working on governance and financial issues that are by their nature a horizontal issue.

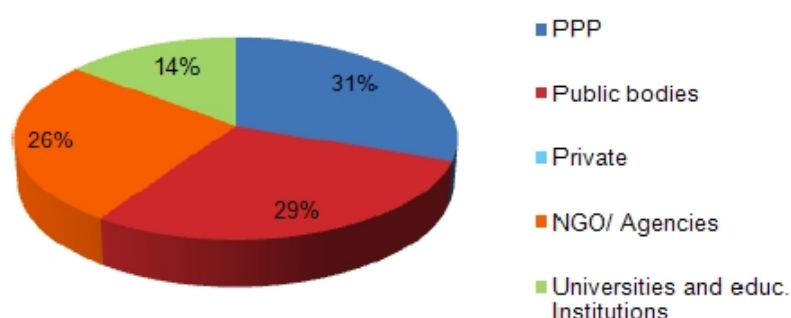
Involvement in Strategy implementation

The Danube Strategy develops into a wide-ranging cooperation platform to address the commonly identified challenges. 24 PACs and 14 NCPs drive the implementation forward, identifying key stakeholders in the Danube Region, defining roadmaps and targets, and advance concrete projects.

Over 400 projects have been identified in the frame of EUSDR, 150 of them are already in implementation. These are mainly large volume projects with a total value of 49 billion Euros. in the Danube area⁵³.

As can be seen from the figure below, about 30% of these projects have been governed by Private-Public Partnerships, 29% by public actors, 26% by NGOs and 14% by Universities and research institutions. One reason for the lack of private actor involvement is that as suggested "cooperation across national borders has been running along very different logic in the public and in the private sector and territorial cooperation programmes have been primarily geared towards the public sector"⁵⁴. The graphic shows that national and regional authorities took the leadership in the majority of flagship projects and implementation activities.

Figure A.4: Distribution of project beneficiaries by type



Source: metis 2012, p. 18

The involvement of the stakeholders, according to the annual report of EUSDR (2012) of the Danube Region, is guaranteed via thematic Working Groups which meet twice a year (or more often, if necessary) for a discussion of relevant topics on an expert level. Members of the SG are also participating in these events. Additionally, the stakeholders are also involved and informed via Annual Stakeholder Conferences. Civil society actors are included throughout the Strategy, in stakeholder seminars, SGs or the Annual Forum, and are addressed in particular in the Priority Area 10 on "Institutional Capacity".

Some countries have been more committed to adjust their strategic governance regime to the requirements of the macro-regional strategy than others. Austria has for instance set up a national coordination platform supported by representatives of relevant ministries, the federal levels, the social partners etc. to bring together the national stakeholders involved in the strategy from the chancellery to the ministry of foreign affairs etc.

A.2.2.4 Strategy content, foreseen added value and consensus

The initial motivation for creating the Danube Strategy was to address the environmental and transport related challenges of the Danube river, thus to tackle the floods and to improve the waterway transport. This was the main background for the Austrian/Romanian initiative stemming from the DCP in 2008.

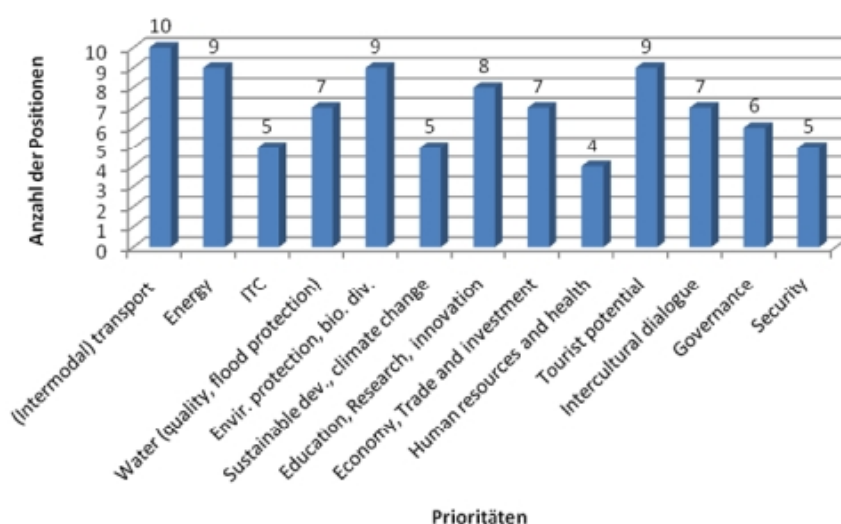
⁵³ European Commission 2013b.

⁵⁴ metis 2012, p. 18.

The EC's main motivation to promote the strategy was to strengthen the cohesion in the Region and open the EU to its neighbours. The strategy should help to overcome the Region's challenges by focusing on *"socio-economic development, competitiveness, environmental management and resource efficient growth (...) modernising security and transport corridors"*⁵⁵.

An analysis of the national position papers submitted in the making of the Danube Strategy reveals certain convergence and divergence tendencies regarding strategic content and foreseen added value from EUSDR. Intermodal transport, and here especially the improvement of the navigability of the Danube River, has by far been the most addressed issue of national interests, having featured in all position papers, followed by Energy, Environmental protection and Tourism. The Bosnia-Herzegovina paper, for example, points to the stagnation of navigation along the Sava River, noting a 20% decline in the use of water transport among Central and Eastern Europe, as contrasted with an over 10% rise in the EU. Issues related to ITC, Security and Human resources and Health have been comparatively low on the agenda of nation states. Serbia was one of the few states to have had proposed adding a security dimension to the strategy and the question of demining in the mine suspected areas of the Danube is an issue solely concerning Croatia. The theme of governance is seen by six countries as crucial for the development of EUSDR.

Figure A.5: Thematic priorities from first round of non-papers



Source: metis 2010, p. 7

The Action Plan incorporated the requests from the national position papers quite accurately: The transport and environmental issues are prominently positioned in the AP. Socio-economic development, education and capacity are also well represented. Notable are also the divergences. The AP conceded less significance to tourism but more to governance and security issues than the national position papers did. While tourism is "degraded" to a priority area, a separate pillar is dedicated to governance and security issues.

⁵⁵ European Commission 2010b.

A.2.2.5 Evolution of the Danube Region governance and of the internal governance setup of the EUSDR

The adoption of the EUSDR represented a turning point in the development of regional governance in the Danube area. While the strategy could draw upon important pre-existing transnational networks, many of these groups addressed a specific topic/sector relevant for the development of the Danube. The EUSDR can thus be conceived in the same light as the EUSBSR, as the formal initiative to bridge the gap between various fragmented stakeholder groups in the area. Coordination works beyond any legal grounding. Therefore macro-regional policy in the Danube area has varied greatly between different Member States – whereas in some countries PAs are seen as transnational organs without any direct accountability to national ministries, in others they are directly accountable to the national political layers.

In this context, the lack of overview and the fragmentation of roles and resources has made it difficult to organise coordinated efforts and sometimes allowed national interests to trump European ones. At the same time, the coexistence of the strategy and implementation characteristics of the macro-regional approach has also brought about certain changes in the pattern of EUSDR governance. The continuous evolution of the strategy might have two effects: firstly it brings confusion to the actors involved in the implementation of it but (on the other side) it leaves the way open to innovative models of governance. The heterogeneity and fragmentation of the EUSDR has resulted in a “productive unrest” characteristic of the development of its governance.

Given the short time period since the implementation process started, the following can only be considered a tentative resume of first implementation steps.

Commitment of actors at all levels

There is some evidence that SG members from countries which have already organised or will organise the Annual Forum are more committed to the Strategy and generally also state a higher degree of its visibility⁵⁶. In most countries, the EUSDR has been mentioned in the partnership agreements and is part of an on-going discussion process among civil servants, some of which are specifically appointed to the Strategy. At the national coordination level, Austria and Romania have been very much driving the implementation process of EUSDR. Austria is mentioned in the EC’s Report of 2014 as a good practice for creating a national coordination platform bringing together national/regional stakeholders to facilitate implementation⁵⁷ and it could also be added that the INTERACT Point Vienna has a key role in coordinating the Strategy. During the implementation phase other states and local actors could be highlighted as highly committed to the Strategy. Some are distinguished for good practices such as creating funding institutions for the Strategy (Baden-Württemberg), others because of their involvement in different infrastructure projects (Serbia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria). There has generally been a perception that the tandem allocation of PAs has overall been to the benefit of integrative efforts. The Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR) is another sign of active local actor involvement.

⁵⁶ EUSDR 2014d.

⁵⁷ European Commission 2014: p. 7

Set up as PA10 project, the platform “unites as many cities, city networks and associations in the Danube Region as possible in order to enhance their ownership within the implementation process of the EUSDR and gearing their joint efforts towards the targets of the EU2020 strategy and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”⁵⁸. Bringing together civil society actors and local authorities, the platform gives them a common voice within the EUSDR.

The European level has facilitated the implementation and the embedding of the strategy in EU policies, through continuous contacts to the main stakeholders in the Danube countries, by regular participation of the relevant Directorates General to Danube wide meetings, and through Technical Assistance provided for by the European Parliament and the EC to support the work of the Coordinators⁵⁹. In the case of EUSBSR, the development of each PA has been supported by a yearly sum of 120,000 Euros from the budget allocated to technical assistance by the European Parliament starting with 2011⁶⁰, and it is assumed that the same applies to EUSDR countries as well⁶¹.

The distribution of country representation in PACs/HALs, however, points to differential intensities of country involvement, especially to a gap between EU members and non-EU Member States, with the notable exception of Serbia and Croatia (now a Member State) which have been much involved from the very beginning of strategic discussions. According to Gänzle & Wulff⁶², 73% of PACs in the EUSDR interviewed are of the opinion that “non-EU countries have little influence on the PA/HA and SG decision-making process” compared to 20% in the case of EUSBSR. While the EC has pointed out that the EUSDR features “24 PACs (...) driving implementation forward”⁶³, representation within the SGs is not constant, mainly due to a lack of resources on the part of poorer Member States of EUSDR, but also to many politically induced changes to national bureaucratic apparatuses resulting in temporary vacancies of PACs. Changes to the staffing of SGs are seen as problematic because they to annul existing capacity development efforts, particularly impeding on the work of PA10 in this context. There is also a perception that SGs could be staffed with more competencies and decision-making powers.

In the implementation of the strategy, there was a perception amongst civil society and local actors that not enough is done to include them in official strategic coordination processes. While the Danube Civil Society Forum (DCSF) has since 2011 been a major platform for the exchange of civil society actors, these activities have for most part been taking place in the shadow of the Annual Meetings of the EUSDR. Commitment of these actors has been hampered amidst the perception on the part of civil society actors of a general lack of financial resources available for non-governmental activities. However, a breakthrough has been perceived in this regard at Vienna meeting in June 2014, where civil society actors were first formally integrated in the official agenda of the event with the organisation of the **1st Participation of the EUSDR**. In the resulting Eisenstadt Declaration on participation in the Danube Strategy, it was decided to launch the process towards a “EUSDR Road Map to Democracy and Participation” to be presented at the 4th Annual Forum in 2015⁶⁴.

⁵⁸ Urban Platform Danube Region, n.d.

⁵⁹ European Union Strategy for the Danube Region 2012, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Gänzle, S., Wulff, J. 2014.

⁶¹ In the report from the EC concerning the EUSDR (EC 2013, p. 7) it states, that “the EU budget can provide limited direct funding for the implementation structure until 2014”. The amount and exact purpose remains unknown.

⁶² 2014, p. 12.

⁶³ European Commission 2013a, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Urban Platform Danube Region 2014b.

Interestingly, these developments have been based on the strategic coordination of civil society and local and urban actors, with the activities of the Danube Civil society and organisations such as the CDCR working in close coordination. The resulting “local actor approach” to participation is considered one of the best working cooperation networks in EUSDR. Discussions have already taken place on how to make this approach replicable to other macro-regional strategies such as the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic strategy.

Resources for new ideas and initiatives

In the Danube Region there are a large number of different financial instruments that support the implementation of EUSDR projects such as non-repayable grants, repayable loans or guarantees. Most of the instruments are available on regional, national and EU-level. On the macro-regional level, i.e. projects with trans-national ownership, only very few instruments exist, these are primarily the ETC-programmes and some of the programmes on EU level such as the framework programmes for Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI). There are 38 financial instruments existing in the Danube Region and this number does not include the Structural Funds (like the ERDF) and their OPs which actually finances 74 programmes of relevance for the EUSDR and which in the 2003-2007 programming period amounted to 60.7 billion Euros⁶⁵. Next to the EU, the EIB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Fund (EIF) and Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) have also played an important role in financing the projects contributing to the EUSDR.

Regarding the distribution of the funding across different financial instruments, two things can be noticed. First of all, among the Pillars of the strategy, the ones which get more funds to finance their projects are “Building Prosperity” and “Connecting the Danube Region”, suggesting that infrastructure and labour market investments are the most important beneficiaries of funding instruments. The second distinction regards territorial coverage. Not all Danube Region Countries have equal access to all instruments. They can be divided in EU Member States and the Candidate States which have access to 34 respectively 25 financing instruments and third countries which have only access to 10 financing instruments. There is one last category, the Potential Candidate States which, in comparison to third countries, seem to be more targeted by the EU programmes (having access to 14 financial instruments) and therefore get more funds than the latter ones⁶⁶.

On average, only 52.8% of Cohesion Policy funds allocated per Member State were actually paid out in the Danube Region, whereas the average was about 61.2% in the total EU. This shows that there is a strong discrepancy in the absorption rates between the Danube countries: they vary from 36.9% in Romania to 64.9% in Austria. Out of the seven countries with absorption rates below 50%, five are from the Danube Region. In the 2014-2020 programming period, about 100 billion Euros will be allocated to the Danube Region (again excluding Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria). This is slightly more than in the previous programming period and accounts for about 28.8% of the total available budget for Cohesion Policy. Within the Danube Region, Romania will receive the largest share of the funds (23.0 billion Euros), followed by the Czech Republic (22.0 billion Euros) and Hungary (21.9 billion Euros) Compared to the previous programming period, funds are allocated slightly more evenly between the countries of the Danube Region. The most recent EU member, Croatia, will receive 8.5 billion Euros from the Structural Funds.

⁶⁵ metis 2012.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

The low absorption rates have generally been associated with two dimensions, human capital endowment and the quality of government (absence/presence of corruption and quality of administrative processes). In the case of the Danube Region, there is a strong perception among actors that low absorption rates relate to the degree of policy implementation of new Member States. Agreements have not been fulfilled; some actors have expressed the wish that some greater degree of conditionality is used in these agreements (Interview Puchinger).

Limiting the complexity of internal governance

Some see the main challenge of EUSDR implementation in ensuring better communication flows and, linked to that, the lack of personnel continuity as well as political recognition. Moreover, one key challenge has been stated in identifying appropriate funding to implement the Strategy's Action Plan. Awareness of the Strategy should be raised not only among the general public, but also among key stakeholders within the Danube country's administration. According to the Commission, the work of the NCPs, PACs and their SGs needs further embedding in political and administrative structures since with staffing and travel cuts, the frequent meetings (e.g. EUSDR priority area SGs) are not always well attended⁶⁷. Also the joint statement of the foreign ministers of the Danube Region of June 2014 recommends that: "Support for the participation of SG members from non-EU Member States should be provided via all instruments possible, including the Danube transnational programme"⁶⁸.

From the Priority Area Implementation reports it emerges that the Steering and the Working Groups are in the process of review and continuous improvement which consists in focusing in depth into fewer topics in order to obtain more productive results instead of the SGs addressing all the action fields as it happened at the beginning of the strategy when it was needed to get the EUSDR activities started⁶⁹. Therefore the Commission recommends the Member States and regions of the strategy to strengthen their internal implementation structures, providing adequate financial support, political backing, and increased institutional stability and to establish sustainable leadership and strategic planning for the Strategy. The implementation of the Strategy should be made more self sustaining with its structures ensuring continuity even if persons involved change⁷⁰.

Meanwhile the new ETC programme – the Danube Transnational Programme – for the funding programming period 2014-2020 is in progress. The EC anticipates raising the effectiveness of macro-regional strategies by transnational programmes covering exactly the same territory. Responsible for the preparation of the programme is the Danube Programming Committee (PC). The PC has already decided to use programme funds to directly support EUSDR governance, the earmarked sum is not yet published. In an interview with Imre Csalagovits (Office of National Economic Planning in Hungary and Director of Southeast Europe Joint Technical Secretariat) he mentions the proposed support instruments⁷¹:

- Facility for direct support to EUSDR governance: Each of the eleven priority areas of the Danube Region Strategy is managed by two PACs; the aim of this support will be to provide a stable source of funding for activities of the PACs in the long run;

⁶⁷ European Commission 2013a, p. 7.

⁶⁸ EUSDR 2014a, p. 1.

⁶⁹ European Union Strategy for the Danube Region 2013, p. 4.

⁷⁰ European Commission 2013b, p. 7-9.

⁷¹ Interact 2014, p. 10.

- Seed money/project development fund facility: This instrument will provide support to all project developers in the thematic fields of the Strategy; small scale financial assistance will be available for EUSD-relevant project ideas, regardless of its future funding source;
- The EUSDR Focal Point: This is an independent structure which aims to provide general and specific support to the work and cooperation of EUSDR stakeholders.

While the first two instruments have already been agreed upon by the PC, the decision on the proposed EUSDR Focal Point is pending⁷².

The model for the seed money/project development fund facility was the "START – Danube Region Project Fund". Coordinated by PAC10 this pilot initiative provides small organisations with early pre-financing to cover project expenses from the beginning. The total funds of START amount to 900,000 Euros.

Another body, the Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP) was launched in 2013 to provide technical assistance to potential projects in the Danube Region by helping them develop into "bankable/fundable" project concepts through specific consultant services and preparing them to apply for funding from public or private donors and/or to implement using their own resources. Consultant services will be provided free of charge to selected project applicants, up to a value of 25,000 Euros and for a duration of maximum 6 months.

In practice, the technical facility framework works as follows:

- The project ideas that might come from university students, think tanks, NGOs and other private/public actors can ask the **Technical Assistance Facility** to help them formulate and write the project;
- Once the project is ready, the project owners apply for a **recommendation letter** to the SG and the PAC of the PA concerned which evaluate it according to its contribution to the targets and the actions of the Priority Area and of the EUSDR in general and recommend it (or not) to be financed by the different Financing Instruments available;
- Once the project has a Letter of Recommendation, it is easier to apply for funding. The matching between project idea owners and the financing instruments available is made possible by a network called **the Danube Finance Dialogue**.

Steps (1) and (2) are not obligatory– if the project owner is confident enough to apply directly for funding, he is welcome to do so.

External dimension of the EUSDR

The external dimension of EUSDR is an important element of the strategy and probably one of the main differences with EUSBSR. Many of the countries of the Danube river basin are non-EU members – Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Many of the just mentioned third countries are either candidate countries for EU membership or potential candidates, with Croatia being the first country joining the EU within an existing macro-regional strategy.

⁷² Ibid.

The Danube Region has a strategic position, opening the EU to its neighbours, the Black Sea Region, the South Caucasus and Central Asia⁷³. The EUSDR is expected to deliver some form of regional stability through the fostering of soft forms of interaction between the participating states. In 2011 the Council of the EU *“acknowledges that the inclusion and participation of third countries is crucial if the desired objectives of the strategy are to be achieved”*⁷⁴. In a press statement by the former Foreign Minister of Austria, Michael Spindelegger, the EUSDR was mentioned as “Austria’s link to the future development area of the Black Sea” (10.04.2013), and particularly for Austria the instrument seems to have developed its potential as an instrument of Foreign Policy.

At the same time the enlargement perspective has opened up possibilities for new forms of interaction for third states. In contrast to EUSBSR, non-EU Member States can be invited to the HLG when appropriate. Furthermore, they have been placed side by side to Member States in the coordination of each priority area, with the exception of topics which are dealt at Member State level, such as security and organised crime. However, it will be important to stress that EUSDR is a priori not an egalitarian framework. While non-EU states are invited to participate in the strategy and have a say in its direction, the central element of the EUSDR is that it is a policy developed and led by the EU.

A.2.2.6 Coordination between the EUSDR and the ETC programmes

Transnational cooperation has a considerable tradition in the Danube area, reaching back to 1996 with the CADSES Programme. This was followed by CADSES II until 2007, when the SEE was set up with some geographical adjustments. From 2007-2013, the OP Central Europe and the OP South-East Europe have financed projects in the EUSDR. 15 ETC programmes are relevant for the Danube Region amounting to 1.15 billion Euros.

A major factor that distinguishes EUSBSR from the EUSDR is the use of ETC financial instruments which are directed to non-EU countries belonging to the Danube Region. There is the IPA and the ENPI. IPA has funded projects and initiatives such as the Western Balkans Investment Framework funded under the instrument of pre-accession give priority to strategy related projects.

For the period from 2007 to 2013, the EU has provided these IPA programmes with the following financial resources:

- **Bulgaria and Serbia**⁷⁵: total public contribution of about 25 million Euros and an EU investment of about 21 million Euros;
- **Slovenia and Croatia**: total public contribution of about 34 million Euros and an EU investment of about 29 million Euros;
- **Romania and Serbia**: total public contribution of about 42 million Euros and an EU investment of about 36 million Euros;
- **Hungary and Serbia**: total public contribution of about 40 million Euros and an EU investment of about 34 million Euros;
- **Hungary and Croatia**: total public contribution of about 45 million Euros and an EU investment of about 36 million Euros.

⁷³ 2013a, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Council of the EU 2011, point 14.

⁷⁵ Serbia alone earmarked 19 million Euros for strategy specific projects in the 2011 IPA cross-border cooperation.

In 2013 the EC introduced the concept of a transnational Danube programme for the 2014 – 2020 period. Geographically, the Danube Programme area overlaps with the territory addressed by the EUSDR and comprising also the Danube river basin. SEE can be considered as a direct predecessor of the Danube Programme. The SEE involved 16 participating countries, out of which several will not be a part of Danube Programme but will continue their cooperation in the frame of Adriatic-Ionian Programme (Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Italy). They will be replaced in the new period by the German Länder of Baden-Württemberg and Bayern and also by the Czech Republic. The Danube Transnational Programme may contribute to EUSDR by providing assistance to the governance of the strategy, either by supporting the activity of the PACs or by ensuring that proper quality, mature projects are prepared for the implementation of the EUSDR goals. Moreover, the programme can enhance the sense of ownership by providing the platform for communication among different stakeholder representing the regional governmental bodies and civil society.

At the PC meeting in Bucharest on 25th-26th June 2013 two options for the management structure were discussed: (a) creating an **EGTC** and (b) the traditional set-up, i.e. designating a Member State (Hungary) to have the MA in its national administration. They chose the traditional set-up but stated to “*further consider arriving at an EGTC managed programme as an objective in the medium term, and to promote EGTC oriented solutions in relevant cases*”⁷⁶. According to information from our interviews (Interview Arbter), the Hungarians suggested the EGTC to allow more political autonomy from their national political administration. This is in contrast to the EUSDR, where EGTC was never regarded as an option.

A.2.2.7 Strategy content and added value

Revision of objectives and Priority Areas

The objectives of the EUSDR was result of the identified major challenges considered so by the different stakeholders involved in the making of the strategy. They were included in an Action Plan which contains the pillars and the PAs of the strategy. A revision of this Action Plan is in an ongoing phase but since the strategy itself is rather new, this revision is not complete.

A first assessment report of the first phase of implementation was issued by the Commission in April 2013⁷⁷. It stated the need:

- To maintain political commitment and continuity through the process of changing governments and other public authorities staff;
- To concentrate on a more results-oriented structure based on appropriate targets, indicators, milestones and roadmaps;
- To reinforce coherence of the Strategy with EU programmes, policies and goals;
- Of further promotion and awareness raising of the Strategy, including an annual event to give strategic direction and streamline approaches.

⁷⁶ SEE n.d.

⁷⁷ European Commission 2013, p. 9f.

Added value

The EC⁷⁸ identified following fields in which macro-regional strategies in general and the EUSDR in particular create added value:

- Results in terms of projects, actions, decisions, networks;
- Improved policy development;
- Improved value for money;
- Greater integration and coordination;
- Tackling regional inequality and promoting territorial cohesion;
- Promoting multi-level governance;
- Improved cooperation with neighbouring countries.

In the context of the second Annual Forum of the EUSDR, Commissioner Hahn has mentioned the implementation of about 500 projects and a funding volume of about 49 billion Euros mobilized for these projects. Just like in the case of EUSBSR, it is difficult to assess the cost of non-intervention in this context, and it has been argued elsewhere that most of these projects would have taken place in the absence of the macro-regional approach.

Many projects are still in the conception or preparation phase. Yet, some examples of projects that have attributed to the strategy can be listed in the following:

- DANUBE FLOODRISK – addressing the flooding in the Danube Region (which is a major concern), by providing shared databases and flood mapping⁷⁹;
- NEWS – is developing technological solutions to renew the Danube fleet, with more competitive and environmentally friendlier approaches, e.g. through more efficient, cleaner engines, and better ship body design; this contributes to the overall goal to increase sustainable cargo transport on the river by 20% by 2020, compared to 2010⁸⁰;
- SHIPWRECKS are being removed from the Danube, Sava and Tisa, improving navigation and ecological conditions; the project to remove wrecks totalling some 15,000 tons, initiated by the Serbian Chamber of Commerce as part of the Strategy, also involves the private sector;
- THE DANUBE STURGEON TASK FORCE has been created to secure viable populations of this important fish in the river, facilitating projects, measures and initiatives for bringing sturgeon back; it promotes a cross-cutting approach, linking biodiversity to policy areas such as water quality, permeability of habitats, economic development, environmental education, and even prevention of crime (related to the illegal caviar trade);
- A POLICE CHIEF MEETING in January 2012 launched an initiative to intensify cooperation among police authorities in the Danube Region, improving measures against river-related crimes (including organised crime), and setting up a transnational law enforcement platform; in addition, EUROPOL has developed a specific project on threat analysis for the Danube Region;

⁷⁸ European Commission 2013b.

⁷⁹ European Commission 2013b, p. 4.

⁸⁰ European Commission 2013a, p. 3.

- THE SECOND BRIDGE crossing the Danube River between the 630 km long Romanian-Bulgarian border has been made possible by the Structural Funds;
- WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT in Budapest, ensuring better water quality throughout the Region has also been built by the Structural Funds⁸¹.

From the outset, there have been different expectations within certain PAs related to sectoral perceptions of the added value of the strategy. A classic conflict concerns the positions of naval traffic and environment. Transport and infrastructure related matters have for a long time driven the integration process in the Region, based on the conviction that the Danube could work as an important cargo and transport link between East and West. This is in stark contrast with ecological dimension fostered by organisations such as the ICPDR, which see the ecological dimension of water management as trumping over infrastructure related interests. Beyond these sectoral interests, there have been also important differences of perception between national authorities in the Region, which relate to differences in the development perspectives between EU members, new members and third countries.

However, there is a common tendency to identify the added value of macro-regional strategies in a better international coordination and in sustained international networking. Nevertheless, since there is no concrete funding, it might be challenging to create a continuous link between the political level and the project level, which is one of the key tasks of the PACs, with PAC10 having an even more integrated role related to horizontal issues and general topics of the Strategy such as governance and financing, but also the involvement of civil society. At this stage, the existence of the strategy and its overall acknowledgement can be considered to be a key-element to speed up certain discussions.

A.2.3 Conclusion

The main findings of this case study are the following:

- **The EUSDR has been the test-bed of new approaches to European integration.**

The replication of the PAC/HAL model from EUSBSR has been used as an interesting way to involve new Member States and third countries, mostly by establishing new networks where there were no prior. There is evidence that national coordination works better in countries that have set up inter-ministerial working groups for coordinating EUSDR.

However, the investigation has also very clearly shown that such strategy cannot do away with pre-existing regional disparities. The main reasons are to be found in the unequal access to resources, the differences in capacities and skills to make use of existing opportunities but also the contrasts in political cultures. The financial gap between the participating countries in the EUSDR causes irregular attendance of the Steering and Working Groups, the Annual Forum etc. It is crucial to integrate the Strategy in the 2014-2020 programme period and make best use of existing policies and programmes like European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the IPA, the TEN-T programme etc.

The models developed to address these issues are still relatively young, and it is difficult to assess whether they will prove to have an added value.

⁸¹ European Union Strategy for the Danube Region 2012, p. 8.

Major questions with regards to the replicability of the model to other strategies relate to how to shield macro-regional governance from electoral and political cycles, and allow for the better absorption of funds among new Member States and third countries as well as the spread of capacities and skills.

- **The EUSDR has been the laboratory for the experimentation of new forms of transnational participation and civil society networks.**

EUSDR has led to the successful combination of the agendas of different non-governmental interest groups. The resulting “local actor approach” to participation is considered one of the best working cooperation networks in EUSDR. Discussions have already taken place on how to make this approach replicable to other macro-regional strategies such as the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic strategy. But, civil society actors are still calling for national and regional structures to involve NGO actors in an open manner. This needs to be supported with a capacity building process and financial instruments that help actors to make use the macro-regional strategy.

In this context, it will also be important to state that there has been a general dissatisfaction with involvement of MPs both from the EP and national parliaments in meetings and processes of the EUSDR. Particularly from the vantage point of civil society actors a further involvement of parliaments in the process would be desirable to increase the accountability of the process.

- **The absences of strong pre-existing transnational linkages as well as the presence of stark regional disparities do not rule out the utilization of macro-regional approach, but call for a critical adaption of political expectations on value added.**

The translation of PAC/Hal governance generally worked in the case of EUSDR, and was supplemented by SGs as an additional governance item of the strategy.

The absence of a strong history of transnational networks in Danube Region (at least comparable to the level of EUSBSR) has influenced the self-perception of coordinating actors (most of them conceive themselves as state employees rather than transnational agents) and also their knowledge and capacity to make use of the EUSDR as a transnational strategy. This suggests that in the case of EUSDR, the added value of the strategy needs to be evaluated also in terms of the building up of such networks. PACs in the Danube area generally conceive network building as remarkable improvement in the way regional cooperation takes place as opposed to before.

The added value of macro-regional approaches seems to be given in this context, by simulating new soft forms of interaction, combining this Foreign Policy dimension with concrete operational steps. However, it has become clear from discussions that there exist no illusions concerning the differences in pace of regional development within the EUSDR alone.

- **The Commission has been the main driver of the EUSDR process.**

The experience of EUSDR has in many ways illustrated that the role of the Commission is an essential element. Without the Commission, macro-regional strategies are reduced to inter-governmental strategies. Member States want the Commission to remain more involved in the process.

If coordination works beyond any legal grounding, macro-regional policy varies greatly between different Member States – whereas in Austria PAs are seen as transnational organs without any direct accountability to national ministries, in a country like Hungary they are directly accountable to the national political layers.

The Commission has been present in all political, thematic and coordinating layers. The reason is that it is the only institution providing political backing for European cooperation. In a report on the governance of macro-regional strategies⁸², the Commission indicated that it wants to disengage from implementation and expects transnational programmes to support governance structures, PACs, Strategy point etc. The European Council has pushed for the creation of a Strategy Point as a coordinating layer that replaces the strong role of the Commission. For the Danube Region this means that Member States have to cooperate still more closely and take over stronger political leadership and responsibility.

A.2.4 References

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Name	Position	Date
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Stefan August Lütgenau	Foster Europe	08/08/2014
Kurt Puchinger	PA10 Coordinator Danube Region	23/07/2014

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⁸² EC 2014.

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A.3 European Union Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR)⁸³

A.3.1 Introduction

The EUSAIR was the third macro-regional strategy to be launched by the EC. The Strategy has the aim to improve cooperation and investment to the benefits of all the parties involved. Covering approximately seventy millions of inhabitants, the EUSAIR is intended to significantly contribute to the EU integration of the candidate/potential candidate countries in the Region.

The Adriatic Ionian Region is a functional area primarily defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas basin. Covering also an important terrestrial surface area, it treats the marine, coastal and terrestrial areas as interconnected systems. Ports play a dominant role throughout the territory due to the growing movements of goods, services and peoples owing to Croatia's accession to the EU and with the prospect of EU accession for other countries in the Region. Attention to land-sea linkages also highlights impacts of unsustainable land-based activities on coastal areas and marine ecosystems.

This study on the EUSAIR is significantly based on recent documents related to the launch of the Strategy by the EC.

A.3.2 The making and organisational setup of the macro-regional strategy

A.3.2.1 Process leading to the adoption of a European Union Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) finds its origins in the "Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII)"⁸⁴ established at the Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) on 19th/20th May 2000. The participants at the Conference were mainly Heads of States and Governments of Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia which by the end of the meeting, signed the "Ancona Declaration" in the presence of the President of the EC. The core issue of the Declaration was to highlight the fact that to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration, strengthening regional cooperation was an important step to achieve. In 2002, the Federative Union of Serbia and Montenegro joined the initiative, and after the referendum in Montenegro both States preserved the status of Adriatic Ionian Initiative participating countries. The Adriatic Ionian Initiative started out with the intent to provide common solutions to common problems, from fighting against organised crime to the need to protect the natural environment of the Adriatic-Ionian Sea. The most favourable solution was considered to be concerted cooperation, not only among countries, but also among local administrations, civil society, associations and all private and public stakeholders involved in the process of enhancing sustainable development in the Region.

⁸³ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Alessandro Valenza, Pietro Celotti, Nicola Brignani, Berardino Cristino (t33).

⁸⁴ <http://www.aai-ps.org/>.

Along with the change of actors involved, cooperation itself gradually assumed different forms, including the establishment of partnerships involving Adriatic Ionian networks and forums such as the Forum of the Adriatic Ionian Chambers of Commerce⁸⁵, the Adriatic Ionian Forum of Cities and Towns⁸⁶ or UniAdrion (the Adriatic Ionian network of Universities)⁸⁷.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (May 2010), the Adriatic Ionian Council (AIC) of the eight Foreign Ministers issued a "Declaration on the Support to the EUSAIR" which provided the future strategy with the necessary intergovernmental anchorage⁸⁸. Since then, every AIC has confirmed the commitment, cohesion and convinced political support of the eight Governments to achieve the common objective (Brussels Declaration under Montenegrin Chairmanship in 2011, Belgrade Declaration under Serbian Chairmanship in 2012 and Brussels Declaration under Slovenian Chairmanship in 2013). The European Council took note of these political indications in the Conclusions of the meeting of 22nd-23rd June 2011, when Member States were invited "to keep working in collaboration with the Commission at possible future macro-regions with particular reference to the Adriatic Ionian macro-region". In its Conclusions on the Integrated Maritime Policy of December 2011, the Council of the EU expressed support for the "on-going work of Adriatic and Ionian Member States to enhance maritime cooperation with non-EU neighbours in the area within the framework of a macro-regional strategy"⁸⁹.

On 30th November 2012 the EC published "A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas"⁹⁰. Through the document, the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian area, acknowledged to undertake a cooperation starting from the sea, their main common natural asset. Thus, needs and potential of sea-related activities in the maritime area were assessed, and a framework to move towards a coherent maritime strategy was established. This strategy was the first component of the Adriatic Ionian macro-regional strategy.

The process gained momentum when the European Council of 14th December 2012 asked the EC to present a new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region before the end of 2014⁹¹, "subject to the evaluation of the concept of macro-regional strategies" of June 2013⁹².

On 21st October 2013, the EC presented the Scoping Paper for the public consultation. The Scoping paper included four proposed pillars for the strategy, which later became the four pillars of the Action Plan adopted in June 2014.

From 25th October 2013 to 17th January 2014, the EC actively searched the contribution of all those interested (including Member States, non-EU countries, regional and local authorities, inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, public organisations, enterprises, civil society and general public) promoting a public consultation on the EUSAIR with the aim to reach relevant stakeholders and to gather their ideas in order to make sure that the Strategy is realistic in its starting point, appropriate in its objectives and responsive to the real needs of inhabitants of the Region.

⁸⁵ <http://www.forumaic.org>

⁸⁶ http://www.faic.eu/index_en.asp

⁸⁷ <http://www.uniadrion.net>

⁸⁸ Declaration of the Adriatic Ionian Council on the support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region. The 12th Adriatic Ionian Council Ancona, 5th May 2010.

⁸⁹ Conclusions on integrated maritime policy, 3139th ENVIRONMENT Council meeting, Brussels, 19th December 2011.

⁹⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas", Brussels, 30.11.2012, COM(2012) 713 final.

⁹¹ Conclusions of the European Council, point n. 26 (Regional Strategies), EUCO 205/12, 13th/14th December 2012.

⁹² "Report from the Commission concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies" (COM(2013) 468 final.

On the 21st and 22nd January 2014 in an Opinion adopted in the Plenary Session of the EESC, it was recognized/acknowledged the need to include a stronger social dimension in the EUSAIR, together with the importance of the security dimension for the progress and prosperity of the Adriatic and Ionian Region (the EESC calls on the Council to increase FRONTEX's budget and power to act). Moreover, it was underlined the fact that the Discussion Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (August 2013), "does not adequately address the issues surrounding irregular and illegal migration flows. The EU must make greater efforts in helping the Adriatic and Ionian Region to cope with the challenge of migration and to integrate immigrants into society"⁹³.

In June 2014 the EC presented three official documents relating to the Adriatic Ionian macro-region:

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the EESC and the CoR concerning the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region⁹⁴;
- Commission Staff Working Document – Action Plan⁹⁵;
- Commission Staff Working Document – Supportive Analytical Document⁹⁶;
- The Strategy was adopted by the General Affairs Council on 29th September 2014 and thereupon by the European Council on 24th October 2014.

A.3.2.2 EUSAIR decision-making and implementation frameworks

EUSAIR is a European macro-regional strategy featured by a significant participation of non-EU States, with great socio-economic disparities and evident imbalances in their institutional and administrative capacity, which require strong and clear coordination provided at the EU level, necessary to overcome diverging national interests. Given the strong predominance of differences and dissimilarities, the coordination of EUSAIR is a particular delicate process. A clear opportunity is represented by the lessons learnt from the previous macro-regional strategies (both EUSBR and EUSDR), summarised in the EC report on the governance of macro-regional strategies, published one month before the Communication on EUSAIR.

The role of the EC in EUSAIR will be of independent facilitator, providing EU perspective and guaranteeing a policy coordination. It is underlined that the initiative is financially neutral for the EC, as a proof that the macro-regional strategies do not imply additional costs. It is also specified that, in terms of staff, the coordination of EUSAIR is expected to require the work of 3-5 full time equivalents. The Lead DG is DG Regional and Urban Policy, in close cooperation with DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, in consideration of the experience gained through preparation of the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Seas. In the initial phase, the EC has ensured:

- Inter-service coordination within Commission Services: mainly DG Agriculture and Rural Development, DG Climate Action, DG Enlargement, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, DG Energy, DG Enterprise and Industry, DG Environment, the Joint Research Centre, DG MOVE, DG Research and Innovation and the Secretariat-General;

⁹³ ECO/359, Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) (exploratory opinion), point 1.6, Brussels, 21st January 2014.

⁹⁴ European Commission (2014b).

⁹⁵ Brussels, 17.6.2014 SWD(2014) 190 final.

⁹⁶ Brussels, 17.6.2014 SWD(2014) 191 final.

- An extensive consultation process: from the EUSBSR and EUSDR it is possible to notice that the political acceptance of the actions proposed was high, thanks to a wide and open consultation process. Therefore, the Commission used the same tools and the same approach when preparing the macro-regional EUSAIR, i.e. meetings with specifically-appointed NCPs, organising extensive stakeholder consultation, including on-line public consultation and inter-service coordination within Commission services;
- A Communication and an Action Plan: the structure and organisation of both documents reflects lessons learnt in the preparation and implementation of previous macro-regional strategies as well as main messages from the consultation process.

Below, are presented four options regarding the role of EC in the future coordination of the Strategy, starting from the assumption that ideally the EC should focus on ensuring coherence with EU objectives and providing expert EU thematic and policy support without dispersing energies in a day-to-day support:

- (1) The Commission is not involved (baseline scenario);
- (2) The Commission's role is limited to preparing and presenting a strategy;
- (3) In an initial phase, the Commission takes on a role as strategic coordinator and its role is reconsidered when support structures in the Region are further developed;
- (4) The Commission takes an active role in the strategic coordination of the strategy through a permanent secretariat facilitating the process.

A detailed analysis demonstrated that Option n°3, which foresees the Commission taking on the role of facilitator and strategic coordinator in an initial phase, while reconsidering it once the support structures are further detailed, should be considered as the most appropriate. In terms of staff resources, Option n°3 requires more commitment than the baseline scenario, but is less resource-intensive and less open-ended than Option n°4, which requires the creation of a permanent secretariat (or its equivalent) within the EC.

These roles should be performed in close cooperation with the participating countries, and with all relevant services of the Commission, especially those having gained experience from the EUSBSR and the EUSDR, and from sea-basin strategies. When performing these roles, the relevant Commission services will help participating countries to collect reliable and regularly updated data and will help them to set plausible targets and result indicators for the actions selected for implementation.

The EC will be supported by the HLG on macro-regional strategies, with representatives (NCP or equivalent) of all the 28 EU Member States and non-EU countries present. The task of the HLG should be to ensure coherence across macro-regional strategies, and with the EU overall actions and objectives. This group should share good practices on issues such as governance, the setting of targets and indicators, monitoring and evaluation, and on raising public awareness. It should be the forum where the approaches and practices in each region are compared, with a view to maximise leverage and impact.

Thus, while the EC guarantees the policy coordination, it will be the duty of the eight participating countries to take care of the Strategy's coordination mechanism. Each pillar of the mechanism should be made up by two coordinators from relevant line ministries and representing two countries (one EU and one non-EU), working closely with counterparts in the Region, in consultation with the Commission, relevant EU agencies and regional bodies.

This involves securing agreement on a plan associated to a timetable, and ensuring close contacts between project promoters, programmes and funding sources. It also involves providing technical assistance and advice as required. This work is expected to be transnational, inter-sectoral and inter-institutional.

This model of coordination, as proposed in the Action Plan, could be modified by the Council. A significant support by the EC in the coordination of the strategy is however expected in the final model of coordination.

As illustrated in paragraph 2.4, the Strategy consists of 4 pillars, mentioned below with their respective coordinators (according to the present proposal):

- Blue Growth. Coordinators: Greece and Montenegro;
- Connecting the Region. Coordinators: Italy and Serbia;
- Environmental quality. Coordinators: Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina;
- Sustainable tourism. Coordinators: Croatia and Albania.

The NCPs are expected to have the lead in the coordination and operational leadership. They will meet regularly to ensure continuous coordination and good information flow. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Serbia and Slovenia appointed one NCP, whereas Croatia, Italy and Montenegro appointed two NCPs, as shown in the table below.

Table A.8: EUSAIR National Contact Points

Albania	Mr Agim Pasholli	Head of Regional Initiatives Department and National Coordinator of Focal Point of Albania Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Bulevardi Gjergj Fishta, 6 Tirana, Albania	Tel.: +355 682084887	agim.pasholli@mfa.gov.al
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Mr Ivan Orlic	Ambassador MFA of Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Musala 2, Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	Tel.: +387 33 281-114, +387 33 281-331	ivan.orlic@mvp.gov.ba
Croatia	Mr Hrvoje Marušić	Assistant Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs	Trg N. Š. Zrinskog 7-8, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia	Tel.: +385 1 4569 850 Fax: +385 1 4569 972 Mob.: +385 0 99 2617 808	Hrvoje.Marusic@mvep.hr
Croatia	Deputy NCP Ms Sanja Novaković	Division for EU Institutions, Regional Policies and Projects, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs	Trg N. Š. Zrinskog 7-8, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia	Tel.: +385 1 4597 413 Fax: +385 1 4569 972	Sanja.Novakovic@mvep.hr
Greece	Mr Vassilios Tselios	Directorate C1 Ministry for Foreign Affairs Adriatic and Ionian Macro regional Strategy	Vas. Sofias 1, 106 71, Athens, Greece	Tel.: +30210 3684214	vas.tselios@mfa.gr
Italy	Mr Andrea Vitolo	Unità per i Paesi dei Balcani, InCE e IAI Direzione Generale per l'Unione Europea – DGUE Ministero degli Affari Esteri		Tel.: +39 06 3691 3944 Fax: +39 06 3691 3609	andrea.vitolo@esteri.it
Italy	Ms Rossella Rusca	Director for EU Regional Policies Italian Department for Development and Cohesion Policies Ministry of Economic Development	Via Sicilia 162/C 00187 Roma, Italy	Tel.: +39 06 4761 9941 Mob.: +39 320 4378647 Fax: +39 06 4208 6946	rossella.rusca@tesoro.it
Montenegro	Mr Damir Grbovic	General Director for Multilateral Affairs and Regional Cooperation – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration	Stanka Dragojevića 2 81000 Podgorica Montenegro	Tel.: +382 20 22 4989, +382-20 20 3211	damir.grbovic@mfa.gov.me
Montenegro	NCP assistant Mrs. Vana Vojinovic	First Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration	Stanka Dragojevića 2 81000 Podgorica Montenegro		vana.vojinovic@mfa.gov.me
Serbia	Mr Pavle Janković		24-26 Kneza Miloša st 11000 Belgrade, Serbia	Tel.: +381 11 3068722 Fax.: +381 11 3068430	pavle.jankovic@mfa.rs
Slovenia	Mr Gregor Krajc	National Coordinator for Western Balkans Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Prešernova 25 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia	Tel.: +386 14 78 20 68 Fax: +386 14 78 20 94 Mob.: +386 31 72 45 66	gregor.krajc@gov.si

Source: Author

In addition, the participating countries identified Focal Points with regard to specific sectors like Fishery; Maritime Affairs; Transport, Environment; Tourism; Regional Development; Spatial Planning; Science, Education and Sport; Competitiveness; Energy; Cultural Heritage; SMEs; Labour; Agriculture and Rural Development; Blue growth.

Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region would be monitored at three levels:

- The first level regards the putting in place of the necessary governance structures (e.g. thematic working groups, establishing responsible actors for the collection of data, establishment of communication arrangements within the Region and contact points for stakeholders);
- The second level consists of defining the targets for each action selected for implementation; to this end, it is mandatory first to define baselines; when evaluating the actual impact of the Strategy, a medium-term rather than a short-term perspective needs to be adopted;
- The third part relates to result indicators; in light of the baseline situation and the defined targets, results indicators will need to be worked out against which progress in achieving the Strategy's overall objectives can be evaluated; this will be a responsibility of the pillar Coordinators.

The participating countries will organise an Annual Forum in order to evaluate results and elaborate, when appropriate, new approaches. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism, however, is not sufficiently defined, yet. Some of the indicators (f.i. related to tourism) are clearly linked with the performances of the national and regional programmes. This is the reason why the external coherence of the national and regional programmes with the macro-regional strategy seems to be a crucial issue for the success of EUSAIR. On the other side, a contribution to the increasing of the administrative capacity in the macro-regional area is expected from the transnational Adriatic-Ionian Programme 2014-2020.

A.3.2.3 Actor involvement and commitment: who is involved and how?

The strategy appears as the product of a process having involved institutions and stakeholders of European, inter-governmental, transnational, cross-border, national, regional, local level. On the other side, the strategy was designed and finalised thanks to a fundamental role played by the European institutions. The role of the EC, as highlighted in the previous paragraph, is expected to be fundamental also in the implementation phase.

As highlighted in the beginning of paragraph 2.1, a clear institutional role in the strategy making was played by AII, which was established at the Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) on 19th/20th May 2000.

In terms of idea generation and consensus making, it is also important to mention the massive work carried out by the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and by the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, which include partners from seven countries (all EUSAIR countries apart of Serbia): Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia. In addition, UNIADRION, a university network across the Adriatic-Ionian Region, offers an academic platform to the Strategy, covering scientific areas like protection, cataloguing and promotion of cultural heritage, sustainable environment, cultural tourism and development, economy, communication, ports and economic relations.

Such a high level of involvement of institutional, territorial and sectoral stakeholders represents a good basis for the consultation, which was conducted between 2013 and 2014. Based on the Discussion Paper developed by the Commission in close cooperation with the NCPs from the eight participating countries, it included also an on-line consultation, launched by DG Regional and Urban Policy on 25th October 2013 and closed on 17th January 2014, with a total duration of 12 weeks.

The aim of the consultation was to gather ideas about the future actions and projects in the Adriatic and Ionian Region, which could benefit from a macro-regional cooperation approach. It was addressed to all interested parties including Member States, non-EU countries, neighbouring countries, regional and local authorities, inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, public organisations, enterprises, international organisations, financial institutions, the socio-economic partners civil society and general public.

The on-line public consultation was structured around a set of open questions regarding the Strategy. All the four themes – Driving innovative maritime and marine growth, Connecting the Region (transport, energy), Preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment, Increasing regional attractiveness (tourism) – were endorsed during the consultation process. Among many others, the following contributions were gathered:

- (1) On 14th November 2013, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, in cooperation with DG Regional and Urban Policy, organised a Stakeholder Seminar on “Boosting Blue Growth in the Adriatic-and Ionian Region: towards an Action plan for the EUSAIR”;
- (2) The Adriatic-Ionian interregional group, set up by the Committee of the Region, collected views and proposals from their members – through meetings and questionnaires – and forwarded their contributions to the Commission on 13th December 2013;
- (3) Upon request from the Commission, the EESC on 21st January 2014 issued an Exploratory Opinion based on the EUSAIR Discussion Paper.

The public consultation was divided into five parts. The first one concerned the gathering of general information about the subjects participating in the consultation.

The second part concerned the needs of EUSAIR. The aim of this part was the knowledge of the main topics (economic, environment and social) challenges and opportunities in the Adriatic and Ionian Region, which would benefit from a macro-regional approach. Another objective of this part was the understanding of what are the main administrative and governance challenges in the Region (in particular with focus on macro-regional cooperation), and how can the cooperation and coordination across national borders/at transnational level be improved in the Region. Moreover, this part aimed to understanding which were the needs in terms of funding and how to improve the use of the existing financial instruments to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

The third part concerned the EUSAIR solutions. In this part the questions are divided in referring to the 4 pillars. The objective of this part was to understand what were the main topics on which the EUSAIR should concentrate, which topics might benefit from being considered together in an integrated approach, what were the main concrete actions and projects, and which actions in the short to medium term, could contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the EUSAIR.

Moreover, this part was intended to understand which are the main actors in the Region that need to be involved in the implementation of the EUSAIR to ensure that it will run successfully (incl. issues such as relevant decision makers, project actors, financing sources), and how can the administrative and governance capacity in the Region be improved and what kind of governance arrangements are needed to implement the Strategy (partnerships, coordination mechanisms, monitoring & evaluation, communication & visibility, decision making on projects).

The fourth part of the public consultation concerned the EUSAIR added value. This section has been useful to understand how the Strategy contributes to improve the situation, what results are expected from its implementation, the individual actions to be taken at national or regional level, when policy design and implementation create added value, and which extra benefits there are at the EU level.

The fifth and last part was dedicated to collect any further comments of relevance for the development and implementation of the EUSAIR.

The results of the consultation were published in the website of DG Regional Policy.

Approximately one hundred authorities, institutions or individuals responded to the consultation and presented their views: academic/research institutions, private persons, public authorities, private enterprises, civil society, international organisations and other.

The main identified administrative and governance challenges in the Region were the following: differences in the economic and social development of the participating countries; poor coordination between regional and national levels; a top-down approach by national administration vs. social society; differentiate access to the EU funds; cultural, historical and linguistic barriers; lack of administrative capacity and of adequate human resources. As it will emerge from the following chapter, these elements are of crucial importance for the success of an ambitious strategy hinged on several pillars. In particular, the differentiate access to funds combined with the difficulties of coordination between the regional and national levels risk to affect the achievement of results, which strictly depend on harmonised and focused efforts made at all administrative levels.

In general terms, the results of the consultation allow to indicate some key orientations from the countries:

- Greece and Italy, the largest countries and oldest EU Member States in the Region, demonstrated a strong ownership of the Strategy; holding the EU Council Presidency respectively in the first and second semester of 2014, these countries have the potential to play a leading role in the implementation phase that will follow;
- Croatia and Slovenia expressed the expectation to gain a better policy coordination, also with regard to the maritime sector; a similar interest was expressed by Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro; Serbia demonstrated to be focused on Pillar 2, including both transport and energy;
- Non-EU countries interpreted EUSAIR as an occasion to gain better EU integration;
- All countries expressed high interest in the actions enhancing economic growth, whereas the protection of natural resources and ecosystems, including the Adriatic and Ionian seas themselves, were not considered with care.

At the conclusion of the consultation, the four proposed themes were transformed into pillars of the Strategy, and the cross-cutting aspects (Capacity building, including communication; Enhancing R&D, Innovation and SMEs) were confirmed, together with two additional aspects:

- Mitigation and adapting to climate change effect;
- Managing disaster risks.

A.3.2.4 Strategy content, foreseen added value and consensus

Strategy content

In June 2014 the EC, after the public consultation process, published the official Communication concerning the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region⁹⁷. The central justification of the Strategy is to promote sustainable economic and social prosperity in the Region through growth and jobs creation, and by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, while preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced marine and coastal ecosystems. Moreover, the EUSAIR is intended to significantly contribute to the EU integration of the candidate/potential candidate countries in the Region.

The strategy is focused on areas of regional mutual interest and it is structured around four interdependent pillars, all having as horizontal principles climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk management. The pillars are:

- (1) Blue Growth;
- (2) Connecting the Region (transport and energy networks);
- (3) Environmental quality;
- (4) Sustainable tourism.

Two cross-cutting aspects were also identified:

- Capacity-building, including communication, for efficient implementation and for raising public awareness and support;
- Research and innovation to boost high-skilled employment, growth and competitiveness. Cooperation within transnational networks can bring ideas to markets, and help develop new products and services.

The objective of the first pillar (Blue Growth), coordinated by Greece and Montenegro, is to drive innovative maritime and marine growth in the Region by promoting sustainable economic development and jobs and business opportunities in the Blue economy, including fishery and aquaculture. To this end, the strategy aims at promoting clusters involving research centres, public agencies and private companies. Coordinated fishery management will improve data collection, monitoring and control. Joint planning efforts and increased administrative and cooperation capacity will improve use of existing resources and maritime governance at sea basin level.

⁹⁷ European Commission 2014b.

The objective of the second pillar (Connecting the Region), coordinated by Italy and Serbia, is to improve transport and energy connectivity in the Region and with the rest of Europe. This pillar underlines the need to implement inter-linked and sustainable transport in the Region, through cooperation, in order to reduce bottlenecks, and develop infrastructure network and regulatory framework. Coordinated monitoring of maritime traffic and multi-modal transport will increase competitiveness.

The objective of the third pillar (Environmental quality), coordinated by Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, is to address environmental quality through cooperation at the level of the Region. Enhancing environmental quality. It will contribute to good environmental status for marine and coastal ecosystems, reducing pollution of the sea, limiting, mitigating and compensating soil sealing, reducing air pollution and halting loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems. The benefits of cooperation and joint action here are several: to preserve eco-regions spanning several countries, to ensure that infrastructure investments neither deteriorate the environment and landscapes nor increase pollution.

The objective of the fourth pillar (Sustainable tourism), coordinated by Croatia and Albania, is to develop the full potential of the Region in terms of innovative, sustainable, responsible quality tourism. Diversification of tourism products and services, along with tackling seasonality, is expected to boost business and create jobs. World-wide marketing of an Adriatic-Ionian "brand" of tourism products and services is expected to increase demand. In case of this pillar, the expectations of the stakeholder are high and the success of the actions seem to depend significantly on the national and regional programmes.

The consultation process also identified, within each pillar, a limited number of topics for the Action Plan as those needing urgent attention while gaining most from joint action. These topics are also relevant for EU policies and, in particular, those with a territorial dimension.

In June 2014, the EC published the Action Plan of the Strategy⁹⁸. The Action Plan, accompanying the EUSAIR Communication, describes the operational components of the Strategy and elucidates on the indispensable linkage between the objectives stated and concrete actions undertaken to achieve these objectives. Covering the four pillars and the related topics set out in the Communication, it lists a number of indicative actions and examples of projects assumed to contribute to meet the needs identified in relation to these topics. The Action Plan also underlines the importance of an integrated approach taking into account effects of each action on other policy fields. More concretely, when implementing these actions, broad consultation of the bodies in charge of other policy fields is required at all levels of planning and decision-making.

The Action Plan is conceived to be rolling. This means that new actions may be added as needs change over time while existing actions are adapted as they move closer to completion. It is structured so as to reflect the four pillars as well as the topics selected under each pillar. Accordingly, the Action Plan incorporates the following features:

- Pillars: these address the core challenges and opportunities identified as being of central importance for the Adriatic-Ionian Region;

⁹⁸ European Commission (2014c): *Commission Staff Working Document – Action Plan, Accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions" concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region*, {COM(2014) 357 final}, {SWD(2014) 191 final}, Brussels, 17.6.2014, SWD(2014) 190 final.

- Topics under each pillar: these represent the main areas where the macro-regional strategy can contribute to improvements (either through tackling the main challenges or through seizing the main opportunities);
- The support of the pillar to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

For each pillar, the coordinating countries identified specific objectives and topics. For each topic the Action Plan:

- Provides a list of indicative actions; an action is the intervention which countries and stakeholders carry out in order to address the different topics; it can be a new approach, an increased coordination in policy making, policy review, support to a process already engaged, a networking initiative, etc.; an action may not necessarily require financing; all actions should be understood without prejudice to existing EU competences and requirements of the EU acquis;
- Identifies, for each action, the indicative actors;
- Indicates, for each action, the examples of possible projects: the Action Plan is not meant to list specific projects; projects are presented by way of examples to stimulate further initiatives, as the Strategy progresses and as new ideas emerge, and to illustrate what is needed; concrete projects to be implemented have to be identified by the coordination mechanism of the Strategy; as a general rule, each project would have a lead organisation/country and a deadline;
- Provides examples of targets by 2020.

The Action Plan, accompanying the Strategy, shall be implemented by mobilising and aligning all available EU, international, national and private funding of relevance for the four pillars and the specific topics identified under each pillar. As anticipated in the previous chapter, the unequal access to funding and the difficulties in the integration of the national and regional policies represent critical factors for the success of the Action Plan. To enhance the monitoring, reposting and evaluation process, it should be established a database including existing projects and providing data, on the basis of which the necessity of possible projects can be justified. For the sake of comparability, monitoring of the Action Plan will preferably make use of available statistical indicators from the European Statistical System (ESS). If appropriate, statistical data collections and territorial analyses will furthermore make use of harmonised spatial definitions (e.g. NUTS) and existing typologies for coastal regions (based on NUTS 3 regions) and coastal areas (based on Local Administrative Units).

Result indicators should relate to entire segments of the macro-regional territory, should not relate to beneficiaries of the actions and projects alone. Often, results indicators relate to concrete achievements with a macro-regional or transnational impact. However, they may also relate to less easily quantifiable results (e.g. increased coordination of policies across national boundaries).

Targets are associated for result indicators in order to convey a sense of direction to the actions/project. However, these targets can be, at best, approximate estimates subject to regular revision and adaptation in pace with the implementation of the Action Plan. Equally to result indicators, they may be set in quantitative terms (e.g. attaching a quantified value or a range of quantified values to the change expected) or they may indicate, in qualitative terms, the expected direction and pace of change as compared to a baseline situation.

Foreseen added value

In the Commission Staff Working Document "Supportive Analytical Document" of the EC⁹⁹ of June 2014, an indication of the added value of the Strategy was provided, as follows:

- **Promoting a cross-sector approach.** The cross-sector approach allows to highlight possible complementarities and synergies between policies and programmes currently carried out in the Region by various existing cooperating structures, yet largely overlooked so far; by tying together the different policy areas covered by the four pillars, the Strategy can furthermore support territorially-coherent implementation of policies and programmes with a spatial dimension and can advance socio-economic convergence between participating countries and regions;
- **Moving from words to action: the Action Plan.** As documented by the EUSBSR and EUSDR, the Action Plan is one of the key elements of any macro-regional strategy; the Action Plan underlines the importance of an integrated approach taking into account effects of each action on other policy fields;
- **Mobilising the whole spectrum of relevant existing funds.** The actions and projects listed in the Action Plan are in principle eligible under many relevant funding instruments, whether anchored to EU or national budgets, whether provided by international organisations or stemming from the private sector; while no new EU funds are set aside for the EUSAIR, in order to improve value for money, the Strategy will strive to align EU programmes for which participating countries are eligible;
- **Supporting accession and exploiting synergies with other macro-regional strategies.** A feature peculiar to the EUSAIR is that it involves the same number of EU-countries and non-EU countries; this entails added value in terms of external policy and enlargement since it bolsters preparation for accession of participating candidate and potential countries; moreover, the Strategy will allow exploiting synergies notably with the EUSDR which includes five EUSAIR countries and addresses transport, energy and the environment as key fields of action;
- **Strengthening compliance with EU legislation and policies and governance for implementing the Strategy.** Through its four pillars, the EUSAIR can be expected to ensure better implementation of e.g. the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive, the Trans-European Transport Network, the Trans-European Energy Network and Environmental Directives such as the Habitats Directive, the Birds Directive and the Water Framework Directive; this section also points to (administrative and institutional) capacity building as an important cross-cutting aspect and as a pre-condition for improving policy development and implementation;
- **Improving coordination between existing cooperation mechanisms.** While existing cooperation structures in the Adriatic-Ionian Region pursue objectives in a range of activities pertaining to e.g. socio-economic and infrastructure development, protection of the environment, transport, etc., they would nonetheless benefit from a more integrated approach; the macro-regional approach can also be expected to strengthen cooperation between authorities within each country, thereby bolstering multi-level governance.

⁹⁹ Commission Staff Working Document, Supportive Analytical Document, Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region {COM(2014) 357 final} {SWD(2014) 190 final}, Brussels, 17.6.2014, SWD(2014) 191 final.

Considering the added value items analysed in the Commission's report concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies, it is worth noting that EUSAIR:

- Is a macro-regional strategy featured by considerable disparities (socio-economic and in terms of institutional and administrative capacity) and is aimed at representing **a tool tackling regional inequality and promoting territorial cohesion**, with special regard to an area only partially covered by the Cohesion Policy programmes;
- Is a macro-regional strategy originated by a rich and multifaceted **political process**, and is expected to express a strong potential in mobilising cities, regions, training bodies, social and economic stakeholders, and this after years of difficult political and economic circumstances in the area; this potential corresponds to high expectations by the stakeholders, and this could turn to be a problem of consensus for the Strategy in the upcoming years.

Consensus

EUSAIR attracted the attention of the CoR remarkably. It has been a long time since the Committee of the Region has supported the call for a new strategy for the area, as the unanimously adopted CoR opinion on "The Cooperation in the Mediterranean through the Adriatic Ionian macro-region"¹⁰⁰ demonstrates. In February 2014, the Working Document of the CoR on "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)"¹⁰¹ highlighted the need to make the macro-region more visible at a regional, national and European levels. According to the CoR, communication with the citizens seems to play an important role for the success of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region.

The public consultation on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region allowed to involve approximately one hundred authorities, institutions or individuals, preparing the ground for a shared implementation of the Strategy. Furthermore, local initiatives have contributed to increase the consensus on the macro-regional strategy. In June 2014, in the city of Ancona (Italy) regional and local stakeholders organised the first edition of the "Adriatic and Ionian macro-region Youth Games". This bottom-up initiative involved about thousand young athletes from the eight countries belonging to EUSAIR. Its aim was to increase awareness and sense of ownership of the Strategy (youth and students), sport associations and local authorities, through sport activities. Furthermore, the aim of this initiative was to identify good practices to be implemented every year in a different macro-region's country. This initiative also provided an opportunity to increase the aggregation among young people coming from the different states of the macro-region. In Italy, similar initiatives aimed at increasing public awareness, did not gain visibility when a particularly important political event occurred, the accession of Croatia to the EU in summer 2013. This fact seems to reveal a weak point in the consensus making process in the macro-region. On the other side, it is worth noting that in Croatia the coexistence of two strategies (EUSDR and EUSAIR) is considered as an opportunity, with special regard to the possibility for EUSAIR to learn from the previous experience gained by EUSDR, more than as a problem in terms of geographic overlapping and confusion in terms of ownership.

¹⁰⁰ Committee of the Regions, COTER-V-016, 92nd Plenary Session, 11th-12th October 2011, Own-initiative Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, Territorial Cooperation in the Mediterranean through the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region.

¹⁰¹ Committee of the Regions, Working Document, Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), COTER-V-047, Rapporteur: Mr Spacca (IT/ALDE) – President of the Marche Region, 19th February 2014.

At the same time, the already mentioned risks depending on the high expectations created should be considered. It is difficult for the stakeholders to realize that the achievement of the targets will mainly depend on the success of national and regional policies. An example referring to the fourth pillar can be provided. The increase of the attractiveness of the tourist offer in the macro-region as a collection of sustainable and high-quality tourist destinations is expected to create an all-year tourist flow to the broader area, also in a country like Albania with a modest access to financial tools. With respect to the contribution of the macro-regional strategy to the EU integration of candidate and potential candidate countries, the stakeholders' expectations are specific and concern, for instance, free tourists' movement (without visa) in the macro-region and equalisation of VAT for all countries of the macro-region regarding tourism operators. Finally, it has to be underlined that stakeholders tend to think that where a strategy is present, there will be more financial resources. When regional politicians and mass media actively contribute to strengthen this conviction, the popular comprehension of the nature of the macro-regional strategy, featured by the three no's rule, risks to be seriously affected. This could become, in the future, a serious problem for EUSAIR in terms of popular consensus.

A.3.3 Conclusions

EUSAIR is the first EU "macro-regional strategy" with such a **large proportion of non-EU countries** (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) cooperating with EU members (Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Slovenia). This is the main feature of the Strategy and represents an easily recognisable case of use of the "macro-region" paradigm. When candidate and potential candidate countries are concerned, a specific strategic tool enabling to involve at the same time Member States and non-EU States in a common perspective of policy seems to be necessary. Furthermore, the path followed in the identification and formulation of the Strategy is of interest. Even if the space is particularly fragmented, with countries having suffered very difficult political circumstances including cases of conflict, an intensive activity of networking was conducted since the end of the '90. This involved cities, chambers of commerce, universities and research centres. At the same time, a **clear commitment from the States** was evident when the Adriatic Ionian Initiative was launched, in 2000. In this space, featured by a process of continuous integration in the EU and recognisable in spatial terms because of the Adriatic and Ionian basin, there is therefore a clear need for coordination of existing cooperation instruments and the "macro-regional strategy", building on a previous maritime EU strategy having offered a good basis to the first pillar "Blue Growth", is the appropriate answer. It is worth noting that two Balkan countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo, are not involved in the Strategy. This point did not emerge from the official documents consulted. The Strategy, however, remains officially open to other partners in the Region.

As a consequence of the composition of the macro-region emphasized above, EUSAIR is necessarily featured by **considerable disparities both of socio-economic kind and in terms of institutional and administrative capacity**. This would request to consider with great care the difficulty to coordinate the existing policies and programmes at transnational, cross-border, national and regional level. The Strategy has a broad scope, and significant expected achievements depend indeed on the success of national and regional policies. On the other side, high expectations from the stakeholders can be observed. In the candidate and potential candidate countries the macro-regional strategy is considered as an instrument of regional integration, as an intermediate step towards European integration, significantly facilitating the compliance with the EU membership criteria. More in general, stakeholders tend to expect from the Strategy a higher availability of financial resources, and this could become a threat in terms of consensus in the mid-term.

With reference to the thematic content of the strategy, one could ask if the orientation of the Strategy presents the highest possible potential in tackling regional inequality and promoting territorial cohesion, with special regard to an area only partially covered by the Cohesion Policy programmes. On the 21st and 22nd January 2014, the EESC underlined the need to include a stronger social dimension in the EUSAIR, emphasising **the importance of policing and security for the progress and prosperity of the Adriatic and Ionian Region** (the EESC called on the Council to increase FRONTEX's budget and power to act) and the fact that the Discussion Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (August 2013), "does not adequately address the issues surrounding irregular and illegal migration flows".

Finally, when governance is concerned EUSAIR presents a clear structure with a **sufficiently defined role for the States** (Member and non-Member) and a **carefully balanced role designed for the EC**, which is responsible for strategic coordination and also facilitation and support in the initial phase. The mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy should be clarified, yet. It will be necessary to verify the final governance structure, after the endorsement by the Council on 24th October 2014.

A.3.4 References

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A.4 European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)¹⁰²

A.4.1 Introduction

The aim of the EUSALP is to enhance cooperation and investment to the benefits of all parties involved: States, regions, civil society stakeholders and European citizens. Built on the long tradition and co-operation in the Alps, the Strategy is not intended to duplicate existing co-operation structures, but to complement them, with the objective to enhance the attractiveness of the area in Europe (taking better advantage of its assets and seizing its opportunities for sustainable and innovative development in a European context).

Equally to the other macro-regional strategies already started (EUSBSR, EUSDR) or under preparation (EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region), this Strategy is based on the need to provide coordinated responses to issues which can be better handled together than separately. Thus, the Strategy seeks to release the potential of the Alpine Region, through the encouragement of participants to re-think new strategies to increase the available opportunities of their territory.

Currently, the strategy is still at its initial stage. Indeed, at the delivery of the case study (autumn 2014), the public consultation on the EU Strategy is still on-going. For this reason, it is not possible to take into consideration the implementation aspects or to assess the success of the strategy itself. However, through the elements provided, it should be possible to focus on the key concepts of the EUSALP, with particular regard to the capacity to address clear and key common challenges, and the opportunity to better integrate EU and non-Member States' policies.

A.4.2 The making and organisational setup of the macro-regional strategy

A.4.2.1 Process leading to the adoption of a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region

The first official document calling for a macro-regional strategy in the Alps is the declaration of Mittenwald, Germany, signed by eight Alpine Regions¹⁰³, in March 2010. The document, formulated in response to the growing European inter-dependency, was a means to express the need to integrate a Strategy for the Alps, not only in the strict Alpine domain, but also in its peripheral area, as well as in its relations with the extra-alpine large cities. Starting from this assumption, the document should allow to adopt the necessary measures at the appropriate level, while taking into account the diversity of city-countryside relationships.

¹⁰² This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Alessandro Valenza, Pietro Celotti, Nicola Brignani, Bernardino Cristino (t33).

¹⁰³ Common Declaration Adopted during the Summit of Regions, Strategy for the Alps on 12th March 2010 at Mittenwald, Bavaria. Signed: Dr Markus Söder, Bavarian State Minister for the Environment and Health, Dr Michl Laimer, member of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Sued Tyrol, Remo Fehr, Canton of Graubünden, Walter Blachfellner, member of the Government of the Salzburg Land, Hannes Gschwentner, Vice-governor of the Tyrol Land, Alberto Pacher, Vice President of the Autonomous Province of Trento, Ing. Erich Schwärzler, member of the Government of the Vorarlberg Land, Silvia Jost, Federal Office for Territorial développement, Switzerland.

In this regard, it is acknowledged that, locally, very different conditions and potentials co-exist closely with prosperous regions having grown next to depressed areas. In the conclusions of this document it is written that *"this reality must be taken into consideration during the conception and the implementation of the Strategy for the Alps, and shall form the basis of the construction of a solidarity extending through the alpine space"*.

The period going from November 2011 and January 2012, saw the involvement of other regions at political meetings. A regional initiative towards a European Strategy for the Alpine area was launched. Subsequently, a joint initiative paper was adopted as the official contribution for the Alpine Regions to the debate, at a Conference of the Alpine Regions in Bad Ragaz, Switzerland.

In parallel, in mid-2011, the EU Transnational Cooperation Programme Alpine Space (Partner States: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland) started a strategy development process, with the aim to define medium and long-term strategic orientation and priorities for the Alpine area. The final report "Strategy Development for the Alpine Space", prepared by a group of experts guided by Erik Gløersen and issued in mid-2013, culminated with a chapter dedicated to the strategic perspectives for the future Alpine Space Programme and for an alpine macro-regional strategy.

The Alpine Convention is an international treaty between the Alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) as well as the EU, born with the aim of promoting sustainable development in the Alpine area and of protecting the interests of the people living within it. It embraces environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions. The XI Alpine Conference, held in 2011, set up a Working Group to consider a possible contribution by the Alpine Convention to the current debates on macro-regional strategies in the Alps. At the XII Alpine Conference in September 2012, Ministers and country representatives adopted an input paper specifying the contribution of the Alpine Convention to the process towards a macro-regional strategy for the Alps.

In October 2012, the Conference of Alpine Regions & States in Innsbruck, Austria, managed to raise awareness and attention of both national governments and the EC for the need of a common Alpine strategy. There, the French government offered to coordinate the different initiatives and steer the joint process. In October 2013, in Grenoble, a common intervention paper with a political resolution was co-written by the States and Regions of the Alpine Region.

On 23rd May 2013, the European Parliament called with a Resolution¹⁰⁴ "for a macro-regional strategy for the Alps to be the subject of a comprehensive evaluation by the Commission, based on objective criteria and measurable indicators".

On 17th December 2013, the participating actors and stakeholders took part at the conference "Towards an EUSALP" organised in Brussels. There, all the participants involved in the process claimed for a positive vote at the European Council two days later.

The European Council of 19th-20th December 2013 (point n. 50 listed under "Other items") invited the Commission, in co-operation with the Member States, to elaborate a EUSALP¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁴ European Parliament Resolution of 23rd May 2013 on a macro-regional strategy for the Alps (2013/2549(RSP)) P7_TA-PROV(2013)0229.

¹⁰⁵ European Council, Brussels, 20th December 2013, EUCO 217/13, CO EUR 15, CONCL 8.

On 1st and 2nd December 2014, the contributions were further discussed in the frame of the stakeholders conference organised in Milan, in order to support the preparation of the EUSALP. A Communication concerning the Strategy is expected to be adopted by the Commission during 2015.

On 3rd July 2014, the EC (DG Regio), issued a Scoping Paper as a basis for the public consultation on the EUSALP, open from 16th July to 15th October 2014. Member States, Regional and Local Authorities, Inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, Public Organisations, Enterprises, Civil Society and European citizens are invited to contribute.

The Scoping Paper is built on the agreements reached between Alpine States and regions of last October 2013. It analyses the Alpine context and sets up proposals on the way forward. In particular, it highlights that the main challenge of the strategy should be to tackle the economic, social and territorial imbalances existing in the Alpine Region. Furthermore, the paper includes three general action-oriented pillars for the strategy (see paragraph 2.4 on the strategy contents), which could become the three pillars of the Action Plan that the EC will prepare between January and May 2015.

On 10th July 2014, the CoR presented the Working Document "An Alpine macro-regional strategy for the EU" in occasion of the meeting of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy¹⁰⁶.

A.4.2.2 EUSALP decision-making and implementation frameworks

On 20th December 2013 the European Council mandated the EC to prepare, in cooperation with Member States, a EU Alpine Strategy by June 2015. Subsequently, the EC, States and Regions established a Steering Committee which would accompany the preparation of the strategy. As shown in **Table A.9**, the Steering Committee (SC) is equally composed of representatives from Alpine States and Regions, and chaired by the EC. Two international organisations/structures are in the SC as observers: the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space Programme.

Table A.9: Members of the Steering Committee¹⁰⁷

Country/ Observers	Surname	Name	Office
EC	RUIZ DE CASAS	José Antonio	EC – DG Regional Policy
	CARVALHO	Filomena	EC – DG Regional Policy
AUSTRIA	ALMHOFER	Werner	Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs
	ARBTER	Roland	Federal Chancellery
	MAYRHOFER	Wolfger	Land Tirol (representative of the Austrian Länder)
FRANCE	CHAUVIN	Xavier	CGET – Office of the Prime Minister
	PARIS	Céline	Région Rhone-Alpes
	COMBRISSE	Patrick	Région PACA (Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur)
GERMANY	VOLKMANN	Claudia	Federal Foreign Office
	KLINGER	Guido	Bavarian State Chancellery (representative of the German Länder)
	EGGENSBERGER	Peter	Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment

¹⁰⁶ Working Document, Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy, An Alpine macro-regional strategy for the European Union, COTER-V-050, Committee of the Regions, 23rd Commission meeting, 10th July 2014.

¹⁰⁷ As declared by the National Representatives in the Innsbruck Steering Committee Meeting, 3rd-4th April 2014. Update 30th June 2014.

Country/ Observers	Surname	Name	Office
ITALY	BRADANINI	Davide	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
	RUSCA	Rossella	Prime Minister Office, Agency for the Territorial Cohesion
	RAJA	Raffaele	Lombardy Region (representative of the Italian Regions – Coordinator)
	RUFFINI	Flavio	Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano (representative of the Italian Regions – Vice Coordinator)
LIECHTEN-STEIN	LOOSER	Remo	Ministry of Infrastructure, Environment and Sports
SLOVENIA	KRAJC	Gregor	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
	BARTOL	Blanka	Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning
	JOST	Silvia	Federal Government, Office for Spatial Development
	BATTAGLIA	Bianca	Canton Graubünden (representative of the Conference of the Governments of Mountain Cantons)
ALPINE SPACE PROGRAMME	SALLETMAIER	Christian	Managing Authority
ALPINE CONVENTION	ANGELINI	Paolo	Presidency (until DEC 2014)
	REITERER	Markus	Secretary General (permanent)

Source: Author

National Contact Points

In the meeting of the Steering Committee of the EUSALP held in Munich on 20th February 2014¹⁰⁸, following nominated NCPs were presented:

- Switzerland: Ms Jost (Federal Office for Spatial Development) nominated Graubünden Bianca Battaglia;
- Liechtenstein: ongoing discussion, probably Remo Looser;
- Austria: Danube Strategy model, Ministry of FA (Werner Almhofer) and Federal Chancellery (Roland Arbter) nominated; Tyrol: Wolfger Mayrhofer;
- Italy: Adriatic Strategy model, Ministry of FA (Andrea Vitolo) and Department of Territorial Cohesion (Rosella Rusca) nominated; Lombardy: Raffaele Raja, Bolzano: Flavio Ruffini;
- Slovenia: Gregor Krajc;
- France: still in process of discussion;
- Germany: Ministry of FA (successor of Mr Schoof, Ms Volkmann (working level)), Bavaria: Mr Klinger/Mr Eggensberger, Baden-Württemberg: not decided yet, probably Suzanne Neib or Christina Diegelmann.

A.4.2.3 Actor involvement and commitment: who is involved and how?

At the present stage, the Regions, the Member States (with France steering the joint process of formulation of the Strategy), the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space transnational cooperation programme have significantly contributed to the definition of the concept of the Strategy, whereas the European institutions have defined the steps for the finalisation and endorsement of the Strategy.

¹⁰⁸ http://www.alpine-region.eu/steering-committee/20Feb_2014/20-02-14.pdf

The public consultation, launched by the EC from 16th July until 15th October, is aimed at involving in this process a high number of significant actors, gathering the stakeholders' ideas and interests, in order to improve the capacity of the strategy to answer real needs.

The consultation is divided into four parts. The first one concerns the gathering of general information about the subject participating in the consultation. The second part highlights a series of key-questions asked on the general framework to understand:

- The ways to better exploit the potential of the Alpine Region;
- The main topics on which co-operation should be fostered that cannot be addressed adequately at present;
- The main challenges and the main concerns/obstacles to successfully address them;
- The most relevant policies and which EU policies should be prioritised;
- The ways in which the EUSALP could improve the Alpine Region's ability to act on common challenges, and exploit opportunities;
- The benefits derived from the EUSALP at European level.

In the third part, the questions are divided in referring to the 3 pillars (see chapter A.4.2.4 on the strategy content). The aim of this part is to acknowledge the main obstacles to overcome in the Region, in terms of mobility of workers, students and ideas; the main challenges to ensure that the Alpine Region remains competitive in the future; and the goals which cannot be achieved with existing structures and may instead be developed through a macro-regional integrated approach.

The fourth and last part of the public consultation regards the aspects that concern the drafting and implementation of the macro-regional strategy. This section serves to understand whether it is needed to improve the existing mechanisms of cooperation beyond national borders in the Alpine Region, and what are the obstacles to cooperation that a macro-regional strategy should try to overcome. The aim of this part is to understand how the coordination of various policies (EU, national and regional) should be managed and what governance structures should be provided in the Region, in order to ensure a more effective coordination between the parties involved.

Furthermore, the public consultation will be useful to identify the key actors concerned for better co-operation and coordination in the Alpine Region in the next years, contributing to clarify who should have, in the stakeholders' view, ultimate responsibility for achieving results under the new strategy, and who should be the key decision makers.

The contributions were discussed in the occasion of the stakeholders conference, which will be organised in Milan, on 1st and 2nd December 2014, and will support the preparation of the EUSALP.

A.4.2.4 Strategy content, foreseen added value and consensus

The initial central justification of the strategy was to *"ensure a sustainable development for the fragile biotope and the economic and leisure area the Alps represent. This Strategy for the Alps pursues the objective that the alpine regions assume their responsibilities in the future strategic orientation of such area and that alpine regions will be represented in an appropriated way in international agreements and programmes (i.e. Alpine Convention, drafting of strategic bases in the territorial development programmes)"*¹⁰⁹.

Progressively, the scope of the strategy was broadened. According to the mentioned Scoping paper published by the EC in the occasion of the public consultation of mid-2014, the main challenge of the strategy should be to tackle the economic, social and territorial imbalances existing in the Alpine Region. In turn, this would help stimulating an innovative and sustainable model of development, able to conciliate the promotion of growth and jobs, and the preservation of natural and cultural assets in the area.

The strategy will build upon three general action-oriented pillars:

- (1) To improve the competitiveness, prosperity and cohesion of the Alpine Region;
- (2) To ensure accessibility and connectivity for all the inhabitants of the Alpine Region;
- (3) To make the Alpine Region environmentally sustainable and attractive.

More specifically, since the Strategy will focus on defined areas of (macro) regional mutual interest, the PAs and specific objectives selected should reflect genuine commitment to working together to achieve common solutions to challenges, or unused potentials.

This will be attained through the following 3 thematic pillars:

Pillar 1. Fostering sustainable growth and promoting innovation in the Alps: from theory to practice, from research centres to enterprises.

The Alpine Region constitutes the largest European economic and productive hub, with a high potential for development. However, lack of economic, social and territorial cohesion is still an issue. The main challenge to enhance homogenous development is due to the presence of the imposing mountain range which favours disparities among different territories, making the gap between rural and urban areas extremely wide. For instance, access to social and economic services still remains quite difficult in rural areas at the core of the Alps, contrarily to surrounding urban areas which develop more easily. Thus, in order to bridge this gap and to improve cohesion, the strategy seeks to support innovative economic development in the Alpine Region. The benefits of engaging in a more balanced model of development through innovative approaches that take into account the diversity/specificity of Alpine territories are several, above which is the enhancement of the notion of sustainability. The goal of the strategy is indeed to show to Europe that a competitive economy can successfully combine prosperity, energy-efficiency, a high quality of life and traditional values. This is facilitated by co-operation embracing a variety of economic activities, in the domains of agriculture, industry, commerce, tourism and other services.

¹⁰⁹ Common Declaration Adopted during the Summit of Regions, Strategy for the Alps, Mittenwald, Bavaria, 12th March 2010.

The main priorities of this Pillar will be the following:

- To develop innovation and research capacity and transfer into practice;
- To improve and develop support for enterprises;
- To promote high levels of employment, with the aim of ensuring full employment in the Region.

Pillar 2. Connectivity for all: in search of a balanced territorial development through environmentally friendly mobility patterns, transport systems and communication services and infrastructures.

The Alpine Region is a major European crossroad. However, sustainable transport systems are a major challenge for the Region. Thus, a coordinated policy able to match the transport needs of the macro-region, population welfare and the equilibrium of (a particularly fragile) environment is a priority for this Strategy. The notion of connectivity does not only refer to transport systems, but it also embraces communication infrastructures and services (including tourism). Although citizens and business in the Alps are usually well connected, a higher accessibility to ICT could further bridge accessibility gaps remaining in the Region, as well as contribute to a more sustainable model of development.

The main priorities of this Pillar will be the following:

- To enhance overall transport systems in terms of sustainability and quality;
- To improve sustainable accessibility for all Alpine areas;
- To better connect society in the Region.

Pillar 3. Ensuring sustainability in the Alpine Region: preserving the Alpine heritage and promoting a sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.

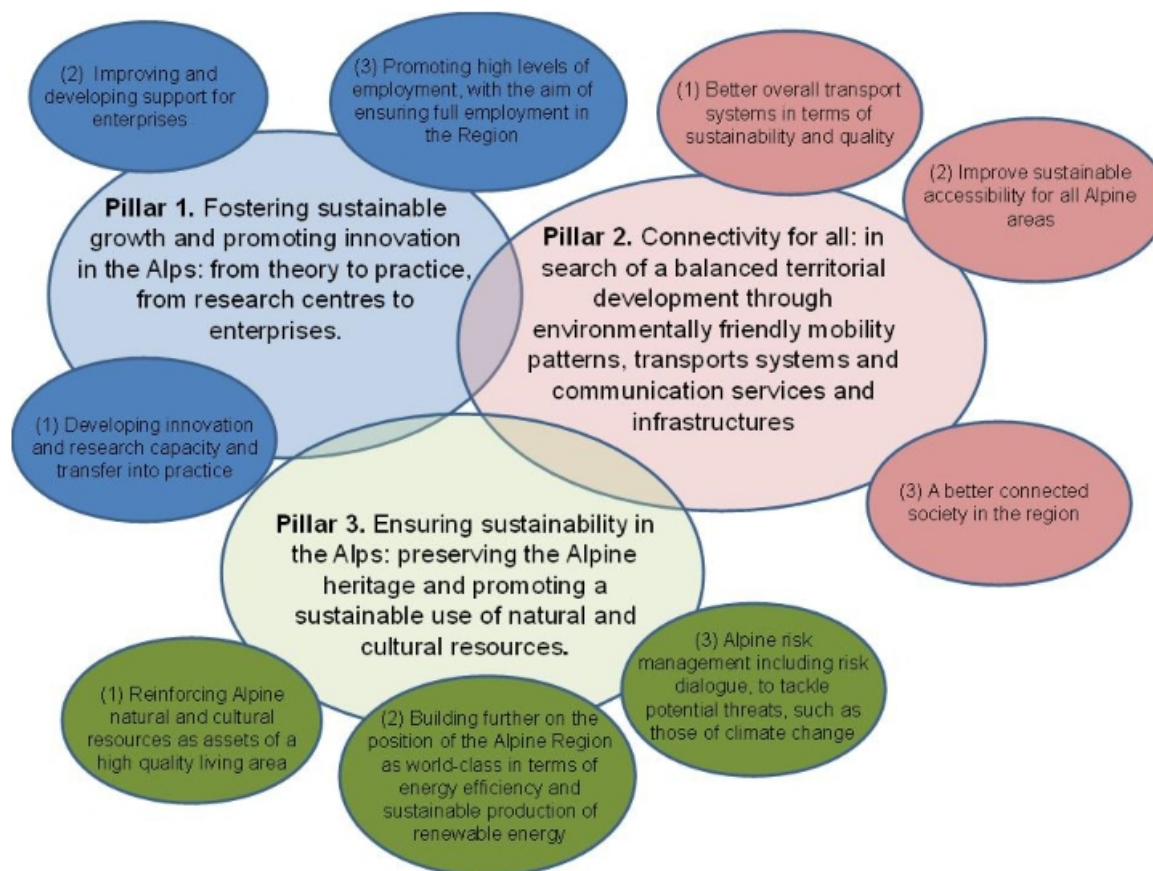
One of the main features of the Alpine Region is its outstanding natural and cultural heritage. Natural resources (in particular, clean and abundant water, minerals, a variety of landscapes and great biodiversity), and strong and diverse cultural life are major assets of this Region. However, the use of natural resources (like water or biomass), and the exploitation of their potential (such as energy sufficiency or regional capacity for energy storage) are not properly carried out in an environmentally friendly way. At the same time, climate change could particularly affect the Alpine Region in terms of availability of resources and threats to population. For these reasons, joint regional responses are necessary to establish efficient management systems.

The main priorities of this Pillar will be the following:

- To reinforce Alpine natural and cultural resources as assets of a high quality living area;
- To strengthen the position of the Alpine Region as world-class in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable production of renewable energy;
- To tackle potential threat, such as those of climate change, improving Alpine risk management including risk dialogue.

The following figure summarises the content of the strategy.

Figure A.6: The three thematic pillars and priorities



Source: ÖIR 2014

An indication of the possible added value of the Strategy was provided in the document “Macro-regional Strategy for the Alps – an Initiative Paper of the Alpine Regions”, delivered in the occasion of the Conference of the Alpine Regions in Bad Ragaz, Switzerland in June 2012. According to this joint initiative paper, adopted as the official contribution from the Alpine Regions to the debate, the Strategy:

- Provides a framework for joint efforts at all government levels in order to achieve tangible progress in the key issues concerning the future of the Alpine area;
- Allows for a more rapid and coordinated use of available resources at all levels and optimizes cooperation in the Alps by setting clear goals and identifying the key areas of intervention;
- Facilitates cooperation between EU and non-EU countries in the Alpine area;
- Helps achieving a stronger integration among the Alpine regions, from east to west and from north to south;
- Provides a framework for a more intensive and effective co-operation of existing Alpine organisations and institutions;
- Motivates all the stakeholders to keep working successfully for their homeland in the Alps.

Indeed, the Alpine strategy is expected to help addressing more successfully the following challenges:

- Expansion of the transport infrastructure: the fact that a macro-regional strategy can rely on a broad political consensus, can help coordinate existing programmes and plans for making Alpine transport more effective, environmentally-friendly and user-oriented, and facilitate their prompt implementation;
- Switch to renewables for energy generation: moving towards alternative forms of power generation in Germany and Switzerland would only succeed if a cross-border approach to energy generation, storage and distribution is adopted; the Alpine area enjoys favourable conditions for the generation and storage of energy from renewable sources, especially hydropower and timber; a coordinated energy policy is required to make an effective and sustainable use of these resources and to turn the Alps into "Europe's battery pack";
- Enhanced economic cohesion between northern and southern Europe: the Alpine arc represents a bridge connecting different economic areas (France, northern Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland and southern Germany); for this reason, it has the potential to be Europe's most innovative and export-oriented core;
- The Alps as the water reservoir of Europe: a responsible cross-border approach to water use has to be developed urgently, considering potential conflicts of interest in the use of water for energy generation, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, the supply of drinking water and the use of groundwater for heat generation;
- Protection of biodiversity and the variety of natural and cultural landscapes in the Alps: the sensitive Alpine ecosystem is what makes the Alps particularly attractive and ensures a high quality of life; the implementation of common adaptation strategies is essential to mitigate climate changes that are particularly intense in the Alpine regions; this should also help the Alps to remain an attractive place for recreation and for healthy standard of living.

The already mentioned final report "Strategy Development for the Alpine Space", prepared by a group of experts and issued by the Alpine Space Programme in mid-2013, allows to analyse the added value issue from different points of view. On one side, it recognizes the political profile of the macro-regional strategy and the potential in terms of coordination of existing policies and cooperation tools. On the other side, the study underlines that the strategy has no binding character and depends on the goodwill of the relevant protagonists as well as on the personnel and financial resources provided by partner institutions. More importantly, it is acknowledged and analyzed the risk of a not sufficiently distinct thematic focus. The scope covered by the three pillars and twelve thematic priorities demonstrates that this emphasis was correct. Finally, the study indicates an alarming scenario, with two parallel European Strategies (EUSALP and Alpine Space Programme) and instruments for the Alpine Space, rather than a programme and a macro-regional strategy fulfilling complementary roles.

A.4.3 Conclusions

Considering the initial stage of the strategy, the conclusions concern the concept of the EUSALP, without considering coordination and implementation issues nor capacity to achieve results.

The first element featuring a macro-regional strategy is the capacity to address common challenges, which clearly request a macro-regional approach. The main challenge of the strategy is to tackle the economic, social and territorial imbalances existing in the Alpine Region. The imbalances identified by the strategy depend on the territorial features of the Region, where mountainous and rural areas suffer of low population density and poor accessibility to services, whereas the lowlands urban areas benefit of high connectivity. The disparities between cities and rural areas in the Alps would, therefore, appear as a clear territorial key for the strategy. Being the consultation underway, it will be necessary to verify if this process contributes better to focus the strategy, or if the diverse stakeholders will push to adopt a thematically broader approach. It is worth mentioning that EUSDR required a review of the strategy, aimed at enhancing its focus. Now, in the case of EUSALP, the well established experiences of cooperation should allow to reduce the time needed to focus the strategy on definite issues of strategic importance for the macro-region, minimising the overlapping with existing cooperation tools. The existence of a transnational cooperation programme covering the area (Alpine Space Programme) requires indeed a particular attention in terms of avoiding any duplication of the strategic efforts.

Finally, the peculiar profile of the non-Member States involved in EUSALP has to be considered. On the one hand, since Switzerland and Liechtenstein are currently not candidates nor potential candidate countries, EUSALP is not expected to give a contribution to their integration in the EU, as it is the case of EUSDR and EUSAIR with Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. On the other hand, the level of political, social and economic cooperation is high. The already mentioned Alpine Space transnational programme includes all countries involved in EUSALP, and there are cross-border cooperation programmes covering Swiss territories: Alpenrhein – Bodensee – Hochrhein, France-Switzerland, Italy-Switzerland. Switzerland is the EU's 4th largest trading partner, while the EU is Switzerland's largest. It is worth mentioning that over 1 million EU citizens live in Switzerland, and another 230,000 cross the border daily to go to work, whereas some 430,000 Swiss citizens live in the EU. These figures demonstrate how the free movement of persons is a central pillar in EU relations with Switzerland, even if the Swiss referendum on mass immigration of February 2014 may have a profound effect on EU-Switzerland relations. These elements, however, ensure that the strategy relies on high administrative capacities and that it is provided with adequate financial tools, if compared with other macro-regions. On the other hand, they contribute to increase the expectations in terms of focus and capacity to generate a clearly recognisable added value.

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A.5 European Union Strategy for the Carpathian Region¹¹⁰

A.5.1 Introduction

In 2005 there was the first presentation of the concept of Carpathian Horizon 2020 in Brussels (meeting with the Commissioner of Regional Development – D. Hübner). In January 2013 the Karpacki Horizont 2020 Association drafted a Working Document regarding “The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy”. Yet, at the moment the European Commission sees no need for an EU strategy for the Carpathian Region. It recommends the Carpathian partners to make use of the EUSDR.

The Carpathian Region, featured by a large mountainous range represents, according to the “Atlas of the Carpathian macro-region” document, one of the most important biodiversity hotspots in Europe. If realized, the macro-region would include territories belonging to four EU countries (Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia) and to one non-EU country (Ukraine). In geographic and demographic terms, the neighbouring country Ukraine plays a very significant role in the potential macro-region. Its participation as an active actor is one of the crucial conditions in the process of development of the Region.

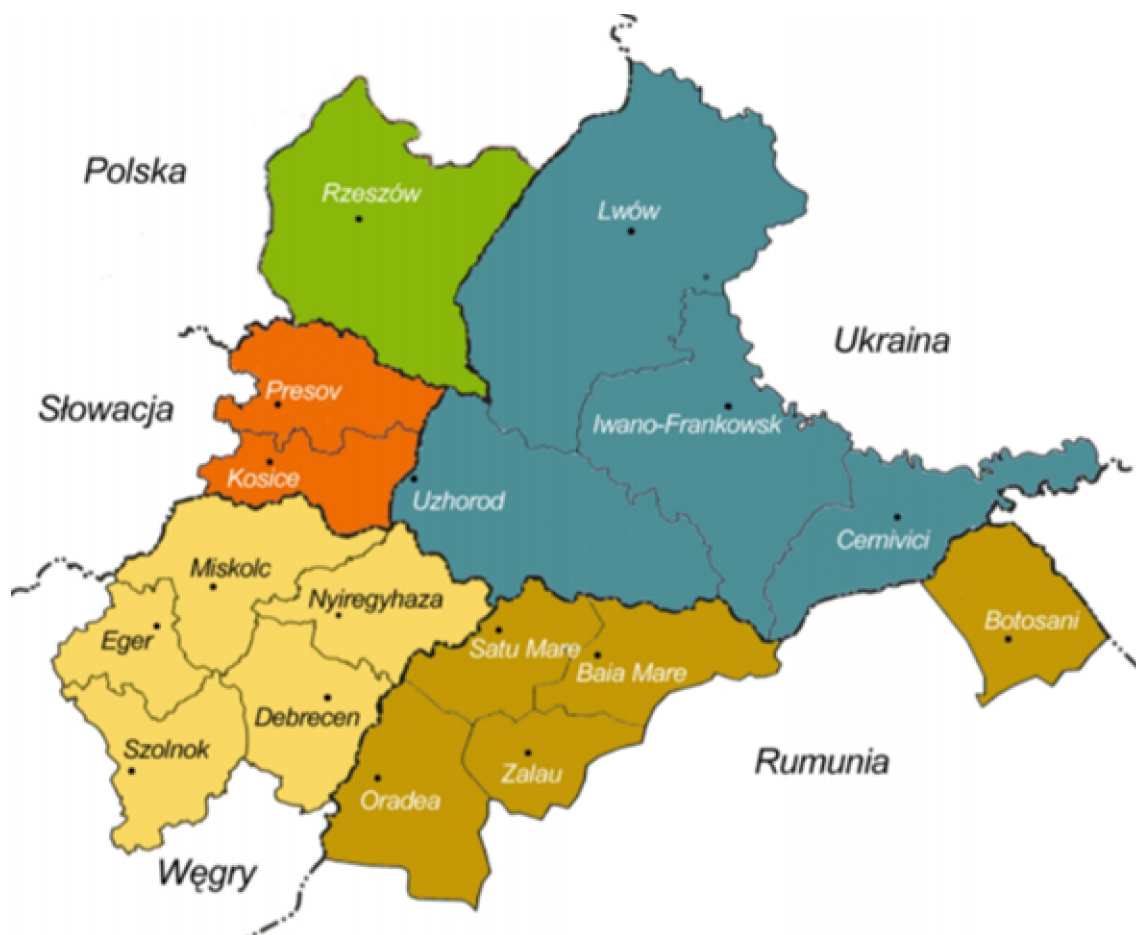
The Carpathian Region has a complex history. Under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this Region developed a moderately civic society and constructed a network of railroads, which resulted in a unified market in this area according to the demands of the entire Empire. However, the two world wars demolished this unified area. Socialist systems produced a small amount of cross-border exchanges only at the level of the party and administration. In summary, during the twentieth century, this area was governed by six different states (the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union and the Ukraine) with complicated and occasionally shifting borders.

In the five states, seven different nationalities live together. Approximately one sixth of the total population of 16 million people who live in this borderland belong to ethnic minority groups, when Ruthenia (about 1,200,000 people) and Roma (more than 2,000,000 people) are considered ethnic minorities. This heterogeneous area is also characterized by a mixture of more than six main religions (Orthodoxy, Greek Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Protestantism, Judaism and Roma). These characterize this area as “a mosaic zone of ethnicities, cultures and religions” and “a microcosm of new Europe”¹¹¹.

In 1993 the Carpathian Euroregion project started, as a political initiative supported by Ministries of International Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. After ten years, in May 2003 the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) was adopted and signed by seven Parties (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) in Kyiv, Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2006.

¹¹⁰ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Dominic Stead, Will Zonneveld, Bas Waterhout (Delft University of Technology).

¹¹¹ Tanaka 2006.

Figure A.7: Carpathian Euroregion

Source: Lasek 2013

The Carpathian Region, according to the working document regarding “The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy”¹¹² has three fundamental characteristics that partly define the purpose of a possible macro-regional strategy and its contents. “Firstly, its geographical, natural and cultural environment is determined by the fact that the axis of this area is constituted by one of the longest and highest mountain ranges in Europe. Secondly, all areas in this Region are peripheral in relation to development centres on the level of particular states. Hence, on internal level, it is an area sharing similar economic, environmental and cultural characteristics, whereas constituent regions have many common resources and demonstrate significant interdependences. Thirdly, the Carpathians to a large extent serve as border separating the European Union from the second largest neighbour of the EU in Europe in terms of size and population, i.e. the Ukraine. Its participation as an active actor is one of fundamental conditions as regards the development process of the Region.”

The Carpathian Euroregion comprises 19 administrative units of five countries from Central and East Europe, which are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. Its total area is about 154.000 km² and it is inhabited by approximately 16 million people.

¹¹² 2013: 3.

A.5.2 Trajectory towards EU strategy decision

The process followed these steps:

- In 1993 the Carpathian Euroregion project started, as a political initiative supported by Ministries of International Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Hungary and Ukraine;
- In May 2003 the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) was adopted and signed by the seven Parties (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) in Kyiv, Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2006;
- In 2005 there was the first presentation of the concept of Carpathian Horizon 2020 in Brussels (meeting with the Commissioner of Regional Development – D. Hubner);
- May 2011: Adoption of the “Strategic Action Plan for the Carpathian Area” at the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP 3);
- In January 2013 the Karpacki Horizont 2020 Association drafted a Working Document regarding “The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy”¹¹³.

A workshop “Towards a EU Strategy for the Carpathian Region” at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) has been organised on 28th May 2013 in Brussels. It was co-organised by UNEP Vienna – ISCC and EURAC in cooperation with the AEM (Association of Elected Representatives from Mountain Regions), AEBR (Association of European Border Regions), with the patronage of the President of the CoR, Mr Varcacel Siso. The Workshop aimed at promoting the development of a EU Strategy for the Carpathian Region (Carpathian Strategy) in order to further strengthen the cooperation and the coordination between stakeholders at different levels and to further reinforce the role of the Carpathians in Europe. Possible Priority Areas and actions/projects of the Strategy, other related projects initiatives, and next steps, such as a possible Opinion of the CoR supporting a Carpathian Strategy, were discussed among the Workshop participants. The latter include representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, Carpathian countries, regions, local authorities, NGOs and public associations acting in the Region.

Nevertheless, as indicated below, the European Commission is of the opinion that a EU strategy for the Carpathian Region is at this stage not necessary. As a result one of the strategies of the Carpathian stakeholders is to draw attention for their needs in the context of the EU strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

A.5.3 Stakeholders involved

The Working Document regarding “The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy” identifies four EU countries that could take part in the Carpathian Region: Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia. The Strategy for the Carpathian macro-region could imply an extended cooperation with one neighbouring country: Ukraine.

¹¹³ Working Document regarding The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy – “Carpathian Horizon 2020”, Rzeszów, 13th January 2013, Version 1.0 (for discussion).

Little is known about the positions taken by the individual Member States and regions. Yet, the “strategy is a bottom-up initiative taken by the actors from the Carpathian Euroregion”¹¹⁴.

The Carpathian Euroregion itself, which seems to be the driving force behind a EU strategy for the Carpathian Region, is an international association established after the social-political changes of the Eastern European countries on 14th February 1993, by the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Ukraine and Hungary in the city of Debrecen. This was the first Euroregion that embraced regions situated in peripheral territories in their own countries in the former socialist block where the inhabitants have a similar historical past, and traditions.

The Carpathian Euroregion comprises 19 administrative units in the five countries:

- Hungary: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties;
- Poland: Podkarpackie Region (Sub-Carpathian Region);
- Romania: Satu Mare, Maramures, Bihor, Suceava, Salaj, Botosani, Harghita counties;
- Slovakia: Kosice and Prešov counties;
- Ukraine: Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Transcarpathian counties.

Among the EU Member States Poland is regarded to take the lead. It is not totally clear if the Association Carpathian Euroregion Poland acts:

- (a) On behalf of the other regional associations of the area;
- (b) On behalf of the polish government.

As regards the European Union stakeholders the European Commission recommends to the Carpathian countries to make use of the EUSDR macro-regional strategy. It contends that at this stage there is no need to create a EU strategy for the Carpathian Region. Also, it recommends Poland, that is no part of the EUSDR, can benefit on a case by case base¹¹⁵.

Beyond the Carpathian Euroregion other cooperation forms can be found such as:

- The Carpathian Convention; Eastern Partnership (ENP Joint Initiative);
- Carpathian Region Business Network; Karpacki Horizont 2020 Association.

A.5.4 Themes considered

At the present stage, the concept of the strategy is not clearly related to definite needs or identified actors/sub-territories. On the basis of the Working Document regarding “The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy”, there are four key challenges:

- To create environment promoting innovation and enterprise development;
- To enable the development of social and human capital in the Region;

¹¹⁴ Working Document 2013: 3.

¹¹⁵ European Parliament debate, 24th October 2013 (Strasbourg), Item 8. Strategy for the Carpathian Region – Commission statement: (2013/2896(RSP)) (source: Egerer 2014).

- To enhance uniform development of all areas in the Region and improved access to it;
- To enhance institutional interrelations within the area and to increase movement of ideas and know-how.

Even if the official strategy has still not been presented, on the basis of the Working Document regarding “The Carpathian Euroregion Development Strategy” the strategy is expected to be focused on:

- Economics, to overcome the wide disparities (and hence realize the high potential) in research and productive innovation;
- Accessibility, with the improvement of networks, for ending the energy isolation of parts of the Region, and ensuring sustainability of transport modes and the sustainable development of the cities being sub-local development centres as well as rural areas;
- Creation and reinforcement of internal institutional relations between particular areas in the Region and actors, and stakeholders supporting the development of the Region.

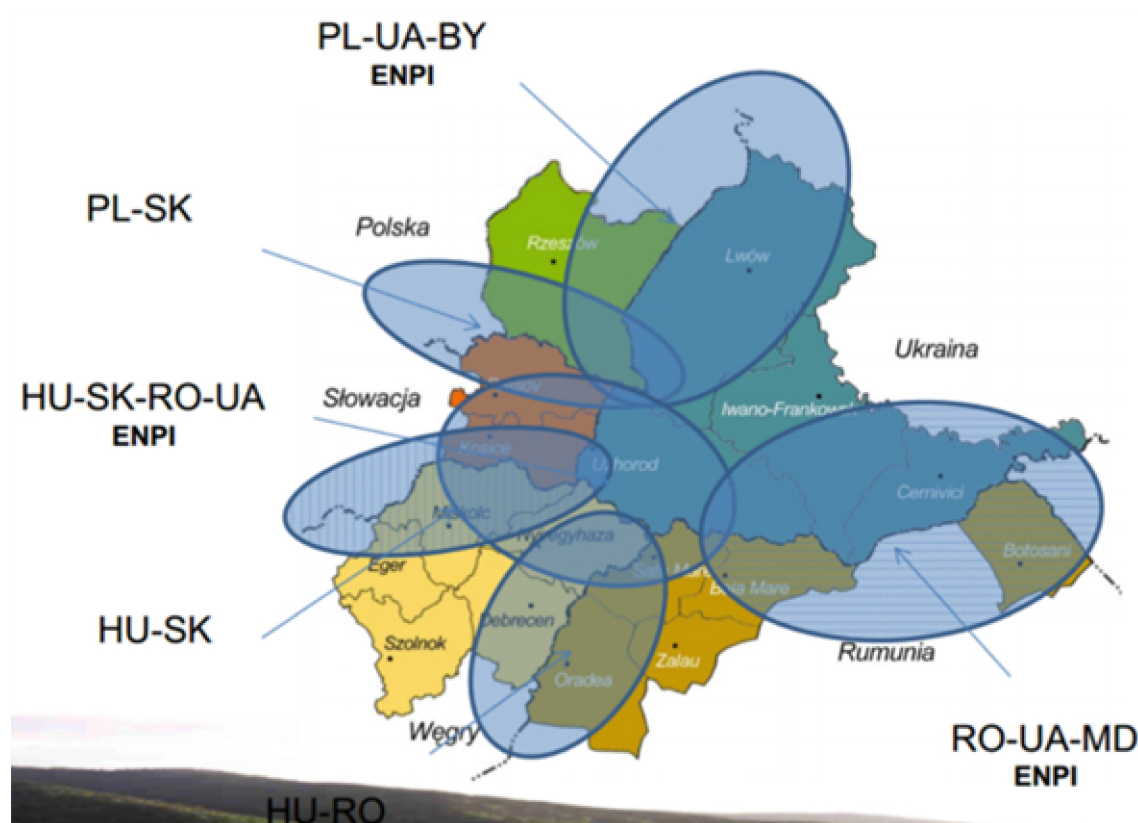
As has become clear this possible macro-regional strategy is based on an extended cooperation with an important neighbouring country, Ukraine, which is following a gradual progress towards political association and economic integration with the EU. This aspect could represent a specific element in terms of strategy’s added value.

The main challenge for the Carpathian Region is to manage those significant changes to achieve a sustainable economic prosperity without the loss of its natural and cultural characteristics.

A.5.5 Relation to EU funding instruments

The area benefits from various European funding programmes stimulating cross border cooperation among EU members and among EU and non-EU members. The programmes include:

- The Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Programme;
- The Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme;
- The Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova Programme (Land-Border Programmes);
- The Hungary-Romania-Programme;
- The Poland-Slovakia Programme;
- The Hungary-Slovak Republic Programme (Cross-border Cooperation Programmes).

Figure A.8: EU programmes 2007-2013

Source: Lasek 2013

A.5.6 References

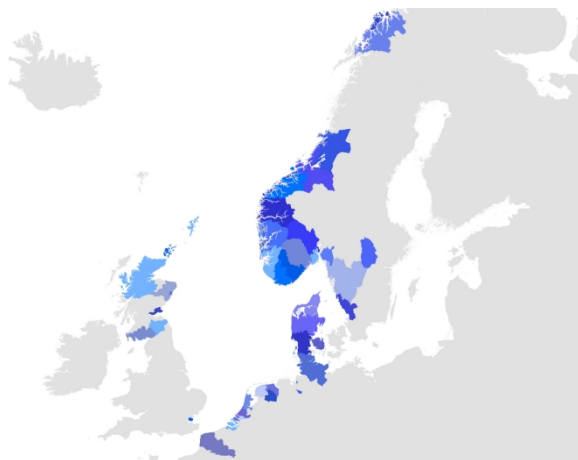
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http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/03%20Meetings%20and%20Events/Others/Danube%20Annual%20Forum_June%202014/Harald%20Egerer_Danube%20Annual%20Forum.pdf
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http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/03%20Meetings%20and%20Events/Working%20Groups/Spatial%20Planning/20130528_%20Workshop%20%E2%80%9CTowards%20a%20EU%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Carpathian%20Region%E2%80%9D/Carpathian%20Horizon%202020.pdf

A.6 European Union Strategy for the North Sea Region¹¹⁶

A.6.1 Introduction

It seems unlikely that a formal macro-regional strategy will be developed for the North Sea Region in the next few years¹¹⁷. If developed at all, the macro-regional strategy for the North Sea Region is likely to build closely on the “North Sea Region 2020” strategy that was published in 2011 and developed by the North Sea Commission which represents 34 member regions from 8 countries bordering the North Sea: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom (**Figure A.9**).

Figure A.9: Map of North Sea Commission member regions



Source: www.northseacommission.info/index.php/about/139-member-regions/297-nsc-map

Figure A.10: INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020



Source: www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/documents/document-library

¹¹⁶ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Dominic Stead, Will Zonneveld, Bas Waterhout (Delft University of Technology).

¹¹⁷ This is the opinion expressed in the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 (p.112), www.northsearegion.eu/files/user/File/NSRP_2014_2020/FINAL_COOPERATION_PROGRAMME_FOR_INTERNAL_M_S_CONSULTATION.pdf.

The themes of a possible macro-regional strategy for the North Sea Region are likely to mirror those contained in the INTERREG North Sea Region transnational cooperation programmes (IIC, IIIB, IVB). The area covered by the strategy is likely to be similar to the programming area of the INTERREG North Sea Region (**Figure A.10**)¹¹⁸.

A.6.2 Trajectory towards EU strategy decision

In 2010, the Committee of the Regions (in Opinion CdR 99/2010) called on Member States to task the European Commission with drawing up a strategy for the North Sea-English Channel area with an emphasis on Maritime Policy, the environment, transport, industry and science¹¹⁹.

In 2011, the North Sea Commission adopted the “North Sea Region 2020” strategy paper, developed in consultation with its members and stakeholders, and dialogue with the European Parliament. The strategy is implemented through an Action Plan and a number of workplans¹²⁰.

In 2013, the European Parliament approved a budget of 250,000 Euros for a “preparatory action” (13 03 77 14) beginning in 2014 to “analyse the Region’s growth potential with a view to investigate the added value of having a future shared macro-regional strategy for the North Sea area”. The “preparatory action” budget will be used finance a North Sea stakeholder conference scheduled for 2014¹²¹. A second stakeholder conference may be organised in 2015.

It should be noted that the “preparatory action” does not aim to establish a macro-regional strategy but only seeks to examine the areas and sectors of common interest and to explore and build commitment among stakeholders in order to provide a basis for decision on the future development and the creation of growth in the North Sea Region.

A.6.3 Stakeholders involved

One of the key stakeholders in the Region is the North Sea Commission (founded in 1989) which facilitates partnerships between regions connected with the North Sea and promotes the North Sea Basin as an economic entity within Europe. Unlike most international organisations, the members of the North Sea Commission are primarily subnational administrative divisions rather than states. The North Sea Commission represents regions in 8 countries (see above). However, it does not necessarily mean that all of these countries will be involved in the development of a macro-regional strategy: this is still to be decided. The majority of the members of the North Sea Commission belong to the European Union (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom). Only its members from Norway do not belong to the EU.

Many Member States are currently hesitant or neutral about committing to a macro-regional strategy for the North Sea Region. In general, national governments are less interested than regional authorities. There is some regional interest in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK (e.g. Scotland).

¹¹⁸ Boundaries of the INTERREG North Sea Region transnational cooperation programmes shifted between each of these programming periods.

¹¹⁹ <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/opinions/pages/opinion-factsheet.aspx?OpinionNumber=CDR%2099/2010> .

¹²⁰ www.northseacommission.info/index.php/strategy-and-development/north-sea-region-2020 .

¹²¹ www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/imco/dv/comreportbudget_/comreportbudget_en.pdf.

There is some support in Sweden but it is not such an active driver for the macro-regional strategy for the North Sea Region as it was for the Baltic Sea Region. Norway is generally positive towards a macro-regional strategy for the North Sea Region but is not an EU member.

Within the European Commission, DG-MARE is one of the most active DGs in promoting a macro-regional strategy for the North Sea Region. DG-REGIO had some early involvement in discussions. Some interest has also been shown by DG-ENER since energy is likely to be one of the key themes for the macro-regional strategy, if developed.

Alongside the North Sea Commission, there are some important foundations for cooperation in the North Sea Region:

- INTERREG North Sea Region transnational cooperation programmes (IIC, IIIB, IVB)¹²²;
- NORVISION – A Spatial Perspective for the North Sea Region, an advisory document which was prepared to try to influence spatial planning in the North Sea Region. The document was prepared by consultants (PLANCO Consulting, Germany) together with representatives from national and sub-national spatial planning offices and INTERREG IIC project leaders across the North Sea Region. It presented a vision that sought to: (i) identify the benefits of working together on spatial planning; (ii) demonstrate how principles of spatial development could be applied; (iii) provide a spatial context for inputs to the development of the INTERREG III programme; (iv) inspire regional planners in developing sustainable spatial planning policies; and (v) promote cross-sector co-ordination in the North Sea Region.

A.6.4 Key themes

Maritime cooperation and energy networks are currently considered to be two of the key issues. Other key issues may reflect the strategic priorities contained in the “North Sea Region 2020” strategy paper, which are:

- (1) *Managing Maritime Space*: maritime spatial planning; exploitation of marine resources; North Sea stakeholder forum;
- (2) *Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport*: promote development of multimodal corridors; optimise performance of multimodal logistics chains; clean transport; clean shipping;
- (3) *Tackling Climate Change*: climate change adaptation; low-carbon technologies and energy efficient/green technologies; renewable energy and North Sea energy grid;
- (4) *Attractive and Sustainable Communities*: competitiveness of sectors and enterprises (tourism and maritime); demography; development of skills and employability;
- (5) *Promoting Innovation, Excellence and Sustainability*: a horizontal priority (no specific policy issues identified).

¹²² Boundaries of the INTERREG North Sea Region transnational cooperation programmes shifted between each of these programming periods.

A.7 European Union Strategy for the Black Sea Region¹²³

A.7.1 Introduction

The Black Sea Region is a distinct geographical area rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. Given the confluence of cultures in the Black Sea area, growing regional cooperation could have beneficial effects beyond the Region itself. If developed, the macro-region should cover territories of three EU countries (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania) and of seven non EU countries (Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey).

After the "Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Cooperation Initiative" in 2007, the official process of developing a macro-regional strategy in the Black Sea Region started in 2011, when the EP adopted the resolution on an "EU Strategy for the Black Sea". In the last three years, the EU Black Sea strategy has not been elaborated, yet. Given the current tensions between Russia and Ukraine it is not to be expected that it will be developed in the foreseeable future.

Figure A.11: Black Sea Region



Source: CEC 2007: 13

¹²³ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Dominic Stead, Will Zonneveld, Bas Waterhout (Delft University of Technology).

A.7.2 Trajectory towards EU strategy decision

After the "*Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Cooperation Initiative*" in 2007¹²⁴, the official process of developing a macro-regional strategy in the Black Sea Region started in 2011, when the EP adopted the resolution on an "EU Strategy for the Black Sea"¹²⁵. In the last three years, the EU Black Sea strategy has not been drafted, yet.

A.7.3 Stakeholders involved

Three EU countries take part in the Black Sea Region: Greece, Bulgaria, Romania. The Strategy implies an extended cooperation with seven No-EU countries: Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey.

Although there was cooperation in the past, in the last three years the tensions between the countries (in particular between Russia and Ukraine) have seriously weakened the process of cooperation in the area.

Within the area the countries already do cooperate via the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). On 25th June 1992, the Heads of State and Government of eleven countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine signed in Istanbul the Summit Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement giving birth to the BSEC. It came into existence as a unique and promising model of multilateral political and economic initiative aimed at fostering interaction and harmony among the Member States, as well as to ensure peace, stability and prosperity encouraging friendly and good-neighbourly relations in the Black Sea Region.

Another cooperation vehicle concerns the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, or simply the Black Sea Commission. It is established in implementation of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (as defined in Article XVII, and is sometimes also referred to as the Istanbul Commission). The Black Sea Commission comprises one representative of each of the Contracting Parties (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine) to the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution. It is chaired on a rotation principle. The Black Sea Commission meets at least once a year and at request of any one of the contracting parties at any time.

Other relevant cooperation bodies concern the Association of the Black Sea Zone Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB).

Several initiatives have been developed that bind the regional stakeholders. They include: Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova Programme (Land-Border Programme), Black Sea Programme (Sea-Basin Programme), SEE programme (transnational programme), Greece-Bulgaria programme, Romania-Bulgaria programme, Bulgaria-Turkey IPA programme 2007-2013 (cross-border programmes).

¹²⁴ European Commission (2007): *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament concerning the Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative*, Brussels, 11.4.2007, COM(2007) 160 final.

¹²⁵ Strasbourg, European Parliament resolution of 20th January 2011 on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea – 2010/2087(INI).

A.7.4 Themes considered

The EP Resolution underlines that, given the strategic importance of the Black Sea Region for the EU and the rather limited results of the Black Sea Synergy, the new strategy for the Black Sea Region should be launched to enhance the coherence and visibility of EU action in the Region. This new strategy should be an integral part of the EU's broader foreign and security policy vision.

On the basis of the EP Resolution, the main objective pursued by the EU and the Member States in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region should be to establish an area of peace, democracy, prosperity and stability, founded on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and providing for EU energy security; the good governance, the rule of law, promotion of respect of human rights, migration management, energy, transport, the environment, and economic and social development should constitute priority actions.

In terms of the wider economic development of the area a recent study¹²⁶ notes that a strong concentration around similar and rather traditional activities can be observed the most relevant being: short-sea shipping; coastal tourism; cruise tourism; shipbuilding and ship repair; deep-sea shipping; passenger ferry services; and, catching fish for human consumption. This concentration appears to be typical for both the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, whereas other sea-basins tend to display a more varied and diverse. This limited variety and the focus on traditional maritime economic activities could be regarded as a possible sign of limited innovation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. In the Black Sea area, the shipbuilding and the oil & gas sectors are particularly relevant. Also, the Region is characterized by inland water transportation between the main maritime economic activities.

This area, however, has become particularly unstable with concrete cases of conflict between Ukraine and Russia. This matter of fact requests to reconsider the orientation of the EP Resolution, which indicates as main strategy's objective the establishment of an area of peace, democracy, prosperity and stability, founded on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and providing for EU energy security. In this view, the good governance, the rule of law, promotion of respect of human rights, migration management, energy, transport, the environment, and economic and social development should constitute priority actions. In the current geopolitical context, it seems necessary to assess with care if the macro-regional paradigm can still be considered as the most appropriate, or if it risks to be adopted at a too early stage.

A.7.5 Relation to EU funding instruments

Marine and maritime-related EU-funded projects can be found across various policy areas and are financed by various EU funds. Especially the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) provide financial support for actions in this Region.

The latter finances the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2007-13, which aims to contribute to a stronger and sustainable economic and social development of the Region.

¹²⁶ Ecorys et al 2014.

The programme's three specific objectives are:

- Promoting economic and social development in the border areas;
- Working together to address common challenges;
- Promoting local, people-to-people cooperation.

A.7.6 References

- CEC, Commission of the European Communities (2007): *Communication entitled "Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative"* (COM(2007)0160).
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- Ecorys, S.Pro & MRAG (2014): *Support activities for the development of maritime clusters in the Mediterranean and Black Sea areas*, Final Report under FWC MARE/2012/06 – SC D1/2013/01.
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- European Parliament resolution of 20th January 2011 on an *EU Strategy for the Black Sea* (2010/2087(INI)).

A.8 European Union Strategy for the Atlantic Arc Region¹²⁷

A.8.1 Introduction

The European Atlantic Arc is an extensive geographical area covering territories of five EU countries (Ireland, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal) and four non-EU countries (Iceland, Norway, Greenland, Faroe Islands). The area is characterised by a long period of intensive cooperation finding its origin in the shared geographical characteristics of its regions at the maritime rim of the EU and often in a relatively peripheral position in their respective country. This led to the establishing in 1973 of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR).

Figure A.12
Impression of Atlantic Arc Cities and Transnational Cooperation Area 2007-2013
Atlantic Coast



Source: <http://www.atlanticcities.eu/index.php?lang=en>

Figure A.13
Members of the Atlantic Arc Commission



Source: <http://arcatlantique.org/index.php?act=1,2,4>

At the moment the area is characterised by a number of overlapping cooperation networks. The Faro declaration of 1989 translated in practical terms the intention of the Atlantic Regions to cooperate, in order to address common challenges and define an identity based on their maritime and peripheral characteristics.

¹²⁷ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Dominic Stead, Will Zonneveld, Bas Waterhout (Delft University of Technology).

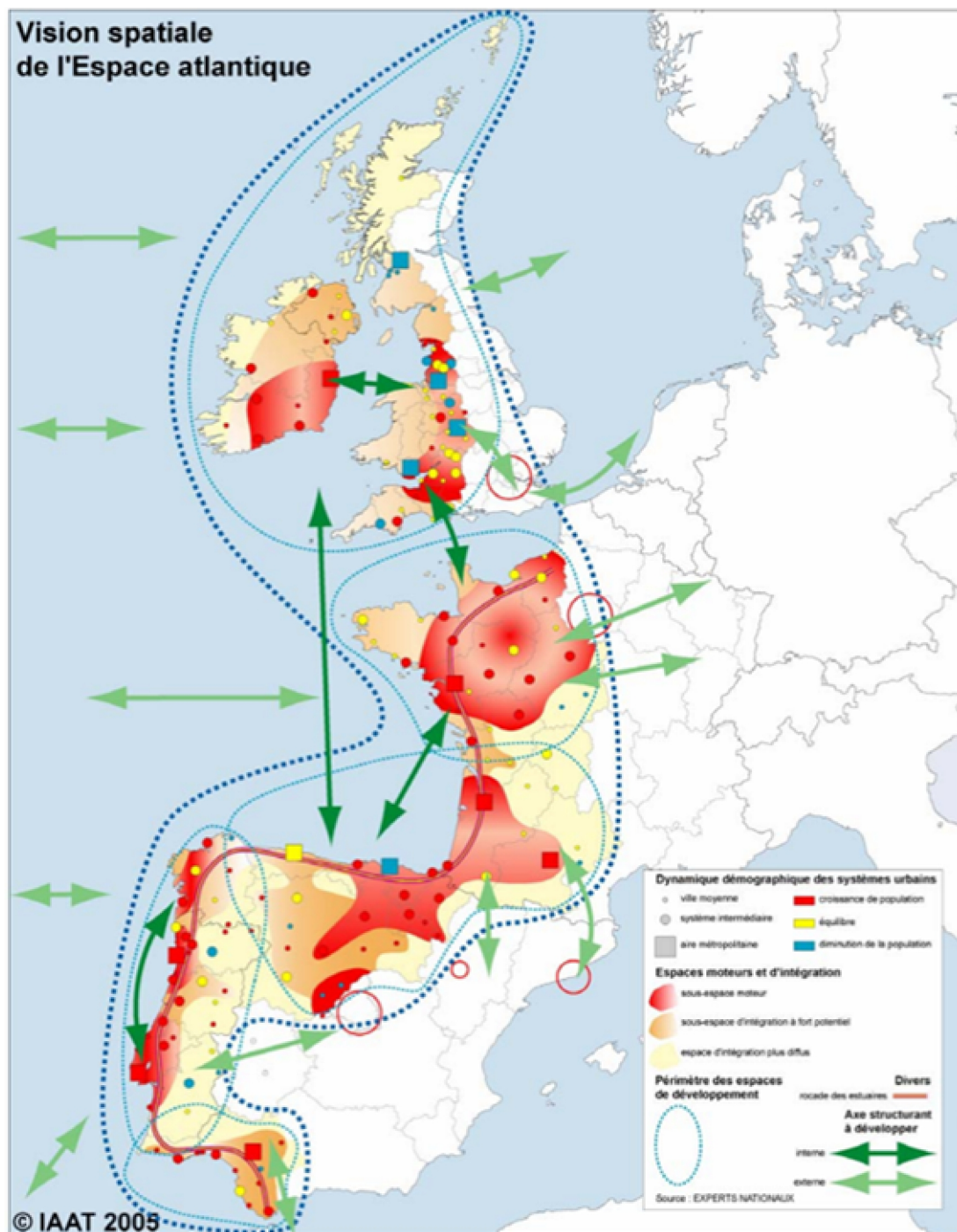
This led to the creation of the Atlantic Arc Commission in the CPMR. Ten years later, the cities decided to create a network, in order to enhance the local dimension of this form of cooperation. The Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities was therefore created (Rennes, 2000).

The Region is known for having an interest in developing spatial strategies and 2005 saw the publication of the Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective (ADSP). It was the joint product of 20 partner regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission and coordinated by the CPMR. Cooperation experiences under the Interreg II C programme and the run-up to the Interreg III B “Atlantic Area” programme, formed the main rationale to embark on developing the perspective. With the firm belief that that the development of the Atlantic regions needs to be considered within a European perspective, the Atlantic Arc Commission decided to put spatial planning in the Atlantic Area at the top of its agenda. The ASDP “...confirms the need to concentrate future Atlantic-based cooperation actions on the maritime dimension in its broadest sense, and to think in terms of more operational projects. Safety and transport and coastal management are indeed issues that can only be addressed at transnational level”¹²⁸.

Figure A.14 presents the spatial vision developed in the ADSP.

In terms of a macro-regional strategy an Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic Area has been published in 2013. Yet, according to the regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission this Action Plan is not sufficiently bottom-up. A particular complaint is the lack of a territorial dimension as illustrated by a number of thematic areas that the regions would like to see addressed (see below). Whereas there is general and principal support for developing a macro-regional strategy for the Atlantic area proper, the actual decision seems to depend on arriving on a better balance between the European Commission’s top-down approach and a desired bottom-up involvement of the regions and Member States.

¹²⁸ CPMR 2005: 1.

Figure A.14: Spatial vision of the ASDP

Source: CPMR 2005: 137

A.8.2 Trajectory towards EU strategy decision

Several steps have been taken into the direction of a macro-regional strategy for the Atlantic area. Most notably the trajectory towards a maritime strategy have to be mentioned.

On 21st November 2011, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee on the "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Developing a Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area".

In 2012, at the 481st plenary session, held on 23 and 24th May (meeting of 24th May), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the opinion called "EU Strategy for the Atlantic Region" by 151 votes to 2, with 5 abstentions.

The possible contents of an Action Plan has been discussed in a series of major workshops (September 2012 to March 2013) within the context of the so-called Atlantic Forum.

On 13th May 2013, with the "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area – Delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", the Commission invited the European Parliament and the Council to endorse the Action Plan for the Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area.

"In 2014, a series of events took place in the five countries of the Atlantic Arc so as to clarify and define the contents of this Plan. At the same time, Member States were discussing with the Commission how to integrate this Strategy in their Partnership agreements.

However, even if the topics correspond to the ambitions of the Atlantic territories, there is still a significant absence of an urban dimension or a risk of "only coastal" development. Therefore, the territories envisage a broader plan for the Atlantic Arc¹²⁹ and had not left down the idea of a complete macro-region, similar to the initiatives currently run in the Baltic or the Danube"¹³⁰.

A.8.3 Stakeholders involved

Five EU countries take part in the Atlantic Arc Region: Ireland, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal.

The Strategy implies a cooperation with: Iceland, Norway, Greenland, Faroe Islands. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) opinion underlines that although the North Sea Regions have common interests in the Atlantic area, in future they could develop their own strategy.

At the present stage, the concept of the strategy is not clearly related to definite needs or identified actors/sub-territories, even if the EESC opinion underlines that the maritime dimension could be a key feature of this area. Its shared economic, technological and cultural heritage includes indeed activities such as fishing, shipbuilding, the metallurgical industry, engineering, research and science, ports, trade and maritime transport.

¹²⁹ CAAC 2013.

¹³⁰ Guirao-Espineira 2014.

In particular, the EESC opinion considers that the Atlantic area comprises a variety of regions with their own development challenges, whose unity and specific features are rooted in their maritime nature and global outreach and their lack of connections with the European economic and political centres.

It must be noted, however, that the Atlantic Area is featured by a significant level of cohesion, even if some disparities emerge when Portugal is considered. Finally, as this possible macro-region includes only one candidate country (Iceland), its contribution to the enlargement policies has to be considered as not particularly high.

Around the Action Plan for the Atlantic Strategy a platform has been created, the Atlantic Strategy Group (ASG), where the European Commission represented by lead partner DG MARE another EU institutions, the Member States and the Atlantic Arc Commission meet and discuss progress.

In terms of ambitions the five Member States have shown some diverse opinions within the context of "Developing a Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area" and the drawing up of an "Action Plan for the Atlantic Strategy"¹³¹. In particular where the scope of projects is concerned there is disagreement whether the focus should be on large (Portugal) or smaller (medium sized – Ireland, or modest – England) and feasible projects. More concrete a project for developing LNG terminals as promoted by Portugal is turned down by England, France and Ireland. Similarly, the topic of Maritime Spatial Planning is deemed to be too political (France, Ireland, England)¹³².

Regions within the area are organised via several networks of which the Atlantic Arc Commission, as one of the six Geographical Commissions of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), is the most important. Established in 1989 in Faro (Portugal), the Atlantic Arc Commission is a network that currently brings together 21 Regions situated along the Atlantic seaboard of the European Union (EU).

Whereas the CPMR and the Atlantic Arc Commission by their very nature do support the idea of an ambitious vision for the Atlantic macro-region, it raises concerns about the possibilities to participate in its development. In the perspective of the Atlantic Arc Commission the current generation of EU macro-regional strategies (referring in particular to the EUSBR and EUSD) have too much a top-down character. It is proposed to merge the top-down approach by the European Commission with the bottom-up style of the Atlantic Arc Commission¹³³.

A.8.4 Themes considered

During the development of the Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy opinions diverged as regards its thematic focus. The regions as united in the Atlantic Arc Commission proposed a different focus than the European Commission. In particular they argued for a more territorial emphasis.

¹³¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Developing a Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area, Brussels, 21.11.2011, COM(2011) 782 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area Delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM/2013/0279 final.

¹³² Atlantic Strategy Working Group presentation: CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission: A new step for the Atlantic Strategy?, Brussels, 19 November 2014.

¹³³ Contribution from the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission to the European Commission's call for suggestions concerning the priorities of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan – Approved by the Atlantic Arc Commission Political Bureau held in Nantes (Pays de la Loire-France) on 13 February 2013.

Their list of priorities was as follows:

- (1) Accessibility and transport in the Atlantic area;
- (2) Economy and maritime industries;
- (3) Climate and environment;
- (4) Research and Innovation;
- (5) Attractiveness of the territories.

The current Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy, adopted a few months after the Atlantic Arc Commission's proposal presents four priorities:

- Priority 1: Promote entrepreneurship and innovation;
- Priority 2: Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment;
- Priority 3: Improve accessibility and connectivity;
- Priority 4: Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development.

Yet, despite the priorities and common issues, also a more geographical perspective can be presented. The joint policy paper¹³⁴ of the Atlantic Arc Commission and the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities in 2010 mentions the following:

- **The sea:** this is the element that unites the Atlantic territories; it offers assets that can all be transformed into development opportunities for the regions; however it is also a fragile area that requires protection; there are therefore great demands to promote a truly sustainable development model;
- **A peripheral area** but with an even and close-knit network of Atlantic territories: this structuring of the territory offers the opportunity to develop a dynamic area located far from the centre of the EU, which is based on an interconnected urban network and the link between land and sea (agricultural activity and local economy, link between ports and hinterland, etc.); the accessibility and connectivity of territories is therefore an extremely important factor;
- **"Sub-areas"** with specific issues to be addressed: these are mainly sub-basins such as the English Channel or Irish Sea, land-based or maritime cross-border territories, as well as the outermost regions of Macaronesia; these territories face their own challenges and are developing strong cooperation activities between themselves such as the Arc Manche, Eixo Atlántico or the Working Community of the Pyrenees; these need to be taken into account when drawing up an Atlantic strategy.

These specific characteristics give rise to issues that transcend national borders and for which political responses need to be sought at European level. Contrary to the approach adopted for the Baltic Sea Strategy, it is contended that an integrated strategy for the Atlantic Arc should therefore focus on a limited number of issues with a genuinely transnational dimension.

¹³⁴ CAAC 2010.

A.8.5 References

- CAAC, Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, Atlantic Arc Commission, *Proposed guidelines for an integrated strategy for the Atlantic Arc, 2010* seen at <http://www.atlanticcities.eu>
- CAAC, Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, *Contribution of the Atlantic Cities to the call for suggestions on Key investment and research priorities – Atlantic Forum 2013*, seen at <http://www.atlanticcities.eu>
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- Guirao-Espiñera, Tamara (2014): *The Atlantic Arc: New translations for an old identity*, Debater a Europa (ISSN 1647-6336), Numero 11 Jul-Dez 2014: pp. 309 – 326.
<http://www.europe-direct-aveiro.aeva.eu/debatereuropa/images/n11/tespinera.pdf>

A.9 European Union Strategy for the Western and Eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea Region¹³⁵

A.9.1 Introduction

On 22nd May 2012 (17 years after the Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of November 1995) Andreas Mavroyiannis, Deputy Minister to the President for European Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, requested the EESC, on behalf of the forthcoming Cyprus Presidency, to draw up an exploratory opinion on: "Developing a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean – the benefits for island Member States". At its 485th plenary session on the 12th December 2012 the EESC adopted the opinion by 147 votes to 1 with 5 abstentions¹³⁶.

In parallel, in the same year 2012, the EP approved the Report of EP Member François Alfonsi on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies, entitled "Present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean". The report endorses the macro-regional approach to territorial cooperation policies between territories belonging to a services and working area, emphasizes the importance of the Mediterranean as a decentralised area of cooperation, and indicates the option to design three distinct macro-regions: one in the western Mediterranean, another in the central Mediterranean — known as the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region — and the third in the eastern Mediterranean. A structured mechanism for coordination between these possible macro-regions is also proposed.

In the last two years the building process of the Mediterranean macro-region seems to mark a slowdown, probably due to the fact that the Mediterranean Region remains a breeding-ground of political instability and armed conflict, with undesirable loss of life, destruction of property, and consequences for business and trade, as well as for the environment.

The Mediterranean Region is bordered by over twenty countries and a large part of the Mediterranean Sea remains outside national jurisdiction.

As a result, the starting point to strengthen cooperation in this area could be the improvement of the management of maritime activities, the protection of the marine environment and maritime heritage, the prevention and fight pollution, the ensuring of a safer and more secure maritime space.

A.9.2 Trajectory towards EU strategy decision

As of recently a lot of political pressure has been executed in particular by the Inter-Mediterranean Commission to raise attention for developing Macro-Regional Strategies for the Mediterranean Sea. Twelve Mediterranean Regions met in Barcelona last 11th December 2013 for the Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC) Working Group on "Territorial Cooperation and Macro-regional Strategies". The aim of the meeting was to monitor the implementation of the WG Action Plan for 2013-2014 and to focus in particular on a road map for Macro-Regional Strategies in the Mediterranean.

¹³⁵ This chapter is mainly based on the input of the case study authors Dominic Stead, Will Zonneveld, Bas Waterhout (Delft University of Technology).

¹³⁶ ECO/332 A macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean, Brussels, 12 December 2012 "OPINION of the European Economic and Social Committee on Developing a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean – the benefits for island Member States (exploratory opinion for the Cyprus Presidency)".

Amongst others the following steps have been taken towards a decision on developing macro-regional strategies:

- The ARLEM (Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly) report of 29th January 2011 on the territorial dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean – recommendations for the future;
- 27th June 2012: European Parliament Resolution on the “Evolution of the macro-regional strategies of the EU: current practices and future perspectives, especially in the Mediterranean” (2011/2179/INI) A7-0219/2012, Committee on Regional Development, Rapporteur: François Alfonsi;
- 12th December 2012: EESC adopted opinion on “Developing a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean – the benefits for island Member States”;
- Mediterranean Integrated Strategy of the IMC CPMR (2012);
- IMC CPMR Action Plan 2013-2014;
- Political Bureau of the CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission: DECLARATION OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU – PATRAS 2014 – “Towards a road map for Macro-regional strategies in the Mediterranean” 13th March 2014 – Patra (Western Greece);
- 13th March 2014: Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC) of the CPMR “A road map for Macro-regional strategies in the Mediterranean”.

This latter document proposes the following road map for developing macro-regional strategies in the Mediterranean Sea basin. Importantly, rather than promoting one strategy, it differentiates between various geographical parts. This is referred to as the ***variable geometric approach***:

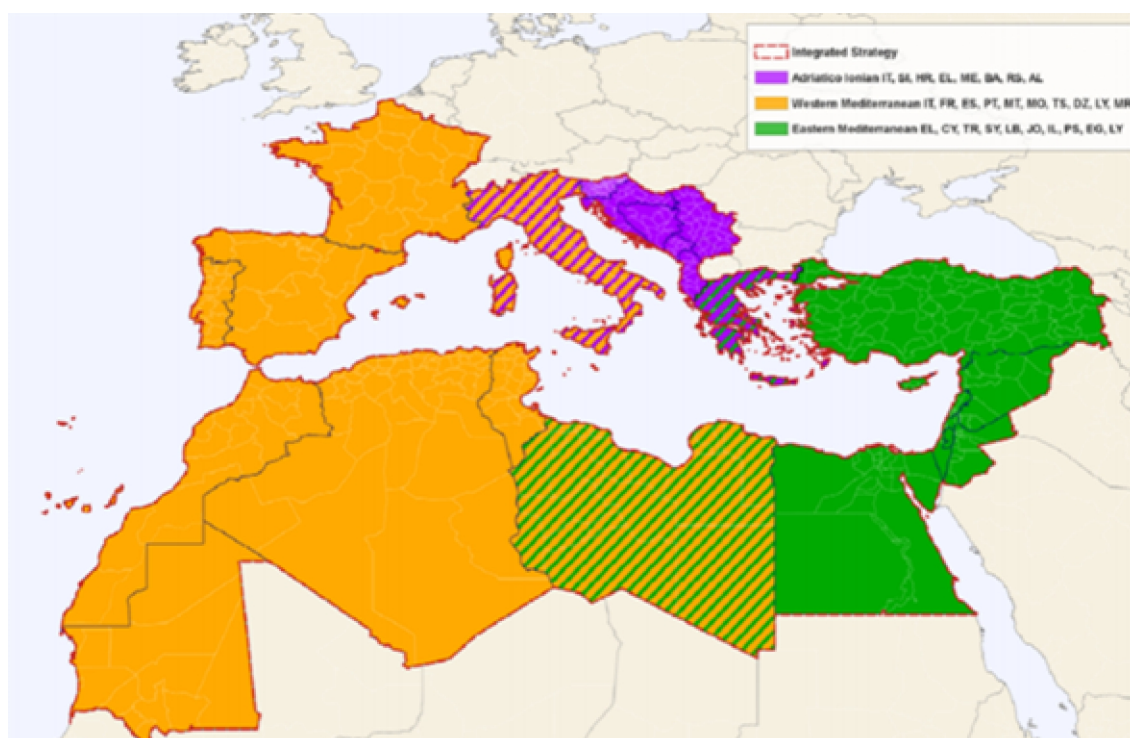
A global Integrated Mediterranean Strategy to be developed in the mid-long term perspective – EUSMED (Global draft Action Plan by 2017 during the Maltese presidency, to be updated every 3 years starting from 2020) that should include three interconnected strategies:

- The Adriatic-Ionian Strategy – EUSAIR (ongoing pilot. Action plan by 2014);
- The Western Mediterranean – EUSWEST Med (Action plan by 2016);
- The Eastern Mediterranean – EUSEAST Med (Action plan by 2020)¹³⁷.

In this order it is contended that the EUSAIR could work as a pilot for the other strategies.

¹³⁷ Inter-mediterranean Commission (IMC) of the CPMR “A road map for Macro-regional strategies in the Mediterranean”.

Figure A.15: Impression of the variable geometric approach and the various macro-regional strategies for the Mediterranean Sea



Source: Political Bureau IMC, 2014

A.9.3 Stakeholders involved

Nine EU countries take part in the EU Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea Region: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia and Malta. The Strategy implies an extended cooperation with thirteen neighbouring countries: Montenegro, Albania, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

On the basis of the EESC opinion, Cyprus and Malta could play a particularly important role in any new strategy framed by the EU.

At the level of the European Commission the lead is with DG Regio in cooperation with the European External Action Service and DG Mare.

There are various cooperation bodies in the Mediterranean Region.

At a political level there is the Inter-Mediterranean Commission, which resides under the CPMR. The Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC) of the CPMR was created in Andalusia in 1990 to express the shared interests of Mediterranean regions in important European negotiations. The mission of the IMC developed to encompass the issues raised in all the regions bordering the Mediterranean Sea, in particular after the 1995 Barcelona declaration. Today, the IMC has fifty member regions in 10 different countries (Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia). Its purpose is to be open to all the different sub-national levels in all Mediterranean countries. The regions identify themselves with the geopolitical entity they belong to, the Mediterranean basin.

It is their bond, a bond of peace, stability and development between three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia¹³⁸. The IMC seems to be the main driver behind the development of Macro-regional Strategies for the Mediterranean Sea.

The ARLEM, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly, and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) both are political bodies that have a key role when gathering the interests of the Local, Regional and National actors of the southern and the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.

As regards economic cooperation there are the ASCAME (Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and the ANIMA Investment Network (multi-country cooperation platform for economic development in the Mediterranean).

Also there is a host of several other organisations formed by local authorities (Arc Latin, Med-Cités, the UCLG Med Commission, Arab Towns Organisation).

A.9.4 Themes considered

Even though in theory the Integrated Strategy EUSMED could address – in a coherent perspective – a relatively wide set of pillars in the long term, the main stakeholders united in the IMC contend that each eventual strategy should reflect its own priorities. The chosen priorities should present a special added value in order to be addressed at macro-regional level and not only through other ways or already existing cooperation frameworks.

Pillars identified include¹³⁹:

- (1) Environment, Climate Change and Energy;
- (2) SMEs, Training, Research and Youth employment;
- (3) Blue Growth and integrated maritime policies;
- (4) Improving Inter-Territorial Accessibility, Interconnections and Migratory flows;
- (5) Democratic governance, support for decentralisation and high quality public services.

The cross-cutting element foreseen relates to: Innovation in processes and networking, in projects, initiatives and cooperation partnerships, in developing new technologies, in using existing technologies.

Following the IMC the "...key actors involved will have to choose the concrete priorities and key initiatives for each strategy, including the integrated one (e.g. decontamination of the Mediterranean sea, fight against climate change in coastal areas, efficiency energy and renewable energies in Buildings, maritime transport/safety, management of migration fluxes, among others)"¹⁴⁰.

The Mediterranean area is featured by dramatic inequalities, which are clearly represented by the evident phenomenon of migration, including illegal immigration with related health risks for the migrants and significant security problems for the European countries.

¹³⁸ <http://www.medregions.com/index.php?act=1,2,2>

¹³⁹ In Annex II of the ARLEM Report for the Integrated Strategy.

¹⁴⁰ IMC 2014: 3.

Some countries are experiencing dramatic conflicts (e.g. Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Israel), and others present unstable political conditions (e.g. Egypt), with the evident difficulty to design a macro-regional prospect. According to the experience gained in EUSBSR and EUSDR, the participation in a macro-regional strategy requires indeed not only peaceful conditions, but also a good level of institutional and administrative capacity. On the one hand, the great demographic and economic potential of the Mediterranean area suggests to explore new forms of cooperation in the area. On the other hand, it seems that a macro-regional project can be designed only in the long term.

The objective of this strategy, or strategies, should be to create policies helping countries in the Mediterranean Region to strengthen their economic and social relations, and to cooperate in resolving common problems, allowing the Region to become internationally competitive, prosperous, safe and environmentally sustainable. Such a macro-regional strategy should also coordinate all the policies, objectives and measures of EU bodies with those of the Member States, the regions, local economic and social councils, and all stakeholders in the Mediterranean, in particular small and isolated island Member States in the Region.

A.9.5 Relation to EU funding instruments

A variety of EU funded programmes can be found in the Mediterranean Sea basin. This includes: MED Programme (transnational ETC), ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Programme (Sea-Basin Programme), Italy-Tunisia Programme (Sea-crossing Programme); Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (formerly known as the Barcelona process).

A.9.6 References

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