









Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2017/2040(INI)	Procedure completed
Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies		
Subject 4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	 COZZOLINO Andrea	06/02/2017
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 BOGOVIČ Franc	
		 POREBA Tomasz Piotr	
		 JAKOVČIĆ Ivan	
		 ŠKRLEC Davor	
		 D'AMATO Rosa	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		15/03/2017
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	3531	25/04/2017
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Regional and Urban Policy	CREU Corina	

Key events			
16/12/2016	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2016)0805	Summary
16/03/2017	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/04/2017	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
23/11/2017	Vote in committee		
01/12/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0389/2017	Summary
15/01/2018	Debate in Parliament		

16/01/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
16/01/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0002/2018	Summary
16/01/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2017/2040(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Implementation
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/8/09434

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2016)0805	16/12/2016	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE604.868	20/07/2017	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE610.660	18/09/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	ENVI	PE602.971	28/09/2017	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0389/2017	01/12/2017	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0002/2018	16/01/2018	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2018)139	24/04/2018	EC	

Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies

PURPOSE: to assess the state of progress of the implementation of the Union's macro-regional strategies.

BACKGROUND: several EU countries and regions have introduced macro-regional strategies to complement their traditional national policies for territorial management. These strategies are designed to address common challenges, such as innovation-driven growth, environment or climate change. Reducing regional disparities is part of their objectives, as is the synergies they create for growth and employment in the regions concerned.

The four macro-regional strategies developed so far concern:

- the Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR) (2009);
- the Danube Region (EUSDR) (2011);
- the Adriatic and Ionian Sea region (EUSAIR) (2014)
- the Alpine Region (EUSALP) (2016).

These strategies, which involve 19 EU Member States and 8 third countries, are now an integral part of the Union's strategic framework. They reinforce the synergies between the various instruments and policies of the Union and add value to the cooperation dimension of cohesion policy. They can be supported through programmes under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), and in particular Interreg.

Macro-regional strategies have become an important instrument in relations between the Member States and neighbouring countries, both with the accession countries and with those benefiting from the Neighbourhood Policy (Eastern Partnership), the northern periphery and of the Arctic region.

CONTENT: this report assesses progress in the implementation of these strategies, takes stock of the main findings and presents recommendations on possible further developments in the light of future cohesion policy.

The report concludes that although macroregional strategies have delivered their first results, they have not yet shown their full potential. Efforts are needed to ensure the effectiveness of governance systems and to focus on results, funding and the relationship with third countries. The Member States which have initiated the cooperation processes should also assume greater responsibilities.

The main recommendations contained in the report are as follows:

Better policy-making and planning: these strategies are gradually being taken into account in the EUs strategic fields, for example, research, climate and the environment. However, they are integrated to differing degrees in national or regional programmes, especially in programmes financed by the ESI Funds.

The strategies have strengthened cooperation in certain strategic areas, such as the Danube Navigability Master Plan or the extension of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan.

However, the report calls for better coordination within and between the countries involved in order to produce the expected results, stressing that collective steering and a common sense of purpose based on a long-term perspective should remain the basis for macro-regional cooperation.

Improved governance: the strategies involve a governance structure at three levels: policy-making, coordination and operations. They emphasise the optimal use of existing financial sources (e.g. ESI Funds, Horizon 2020, COSME and LIFE), the better implementation of existing legislation and the better use of existing institutions.

The success of the strategies depends on their satisfactory implementation in the coming years, as well as their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, for example, the migration crisis. More progress needs to be made in the governance of macro-regional strategies to improve their effectiveness. This supposes :

- the regular assessment of the effectiveness of the governance systems of each strategy to make the necessary adjustments;
- sectoral ministries make a stronger commitment to achieving the objectives of the macro-regional strategies, which implies a periodic rotation of the thematic area coordinators;
- close cooperation between the steering group members and the programme management authorities supported by the ESI Funds or other instruments;
- the strengthening of the links between macro-regional strategies with support from the EUs INTERACT programme.

Focussing on results: in the absence of clearly defined indicators and objectives, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the planned objectives have been met.

The report calls for a robust monitoring system based on results-oriented action to enable each strategy to be measured, directed and summarised in order to guide decision-making. It is also necessary to: (i) improve the quality of projects and processes and ensure the sustainability of their results, as well as the link between project results and policy actions; (ii) increase awareness of the value-added and outcomes of strategies for critical review; (iii) further explore thematic platforms in order to strengthen strategies thematic focus.

Better use of funding mechanisms: where strategies do not have a specific budget, there is a need for better coordinated use of the funding mechanisms available at different levels.

The report recommends continuing the dialogue between ESI Fund programme authorities and those responsible for the implementation of macro-regional strategies in order to adapt funding in the most appropriate and cost-effective manner possible. In general, the Commission believes that macro-regional strategies call for the creation of closer links between the EUs strategic areas and its funds.

Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Andrea COZZOLINO (ALDE, IT) on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (MRS).

It recalled that such strategies have been established in areas representing the natural evolution of the EU in terms of cross-border cooperation. They are based on the three nos principle of no new funding, no new structures and no new legislation within the existing EU political framework.

Members felt that MRS continue to make an innovative contribution to cross-border, cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation in Europe, the potential of which has not yet been sufficiently explored. They noted, however, that as a result of the process of agreeing on joint actions at multi-level and multi-country/regional level access to EU funds for MRS projects remains a challenge. They also remarked that to a varying degree elements on which the quality of implementation depends, such as commitment, ownership, resources and governance, remain difficult to overcome in achieving the pre-determined goals.

The report encouraged Member States and regions involved, therefore, to develop appropriate structures to facilitate cooperation, including joint planning, boosting funding opportunities and a bottom-up approach. It stressed the importance of sufficient human resources and administrative capacity for the competent national and regional authorities.

The report examines the MRS currently in place:

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR): Members noted that this is a stable cooperation framework with more than 100 flagship initiatives and new networks. They urged participating countries to step up efforts to tackle the pollution (i.e. water and air quality, and eutrophication) of the Baltic Sea, as it is one of the most polluted seas in the world. They also pointed to the importance of connecting the Baltic region to energy networks.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR): the report highlighted the positive impact of the strategy in improving mobility and interconnections for all modes of transport, and promoting clean energy. It pointed to the success of the Euro access project, the Keep Danube clean initiative and the Danube Financing Dialogue and emphasises the need, therefore, to maintain the political momentum for the EUSDR.

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR): Members felt that this format of cooperation could give an impetus to the enlargement and integration process. However, they were concerned about the lack of effective linkage between the availability of resources, governance and ownership, which are preventing EUSAIRs objectives from being fully achieved. EUSAIR could also help address migration challenges with the necessary instruments and resources.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP): the report welcomed the governance structure of the strategy which is currently being put in

place, as the first steps in the implementation of the strategy have proven difficult and were governed by different structures, frameworks and timeframes. The EUSALP could be a good example of a template strategy for territorial cohesion, as it simultaneously incorporates different specific areas, productive areas, mountains and rural areas and some of the most highly developed cities in the EU.

Macro-regional Europe after 2020: currently, financial support comes in form of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) transnational cooperation programmes which are financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Countries are otherwise encouraged to use different funding sources (ESI Funds and other EU instruments, IPA, ENI, national, regional and local resources, private sources etc.) Members felt that simplifying the funds and the procedures for their use within the framework of the MRS would increase their effectiveness. They proposed that the participating countries make clear commitments in terms of funding and human resources for the implementation of the MRS from the outset.

Lastly, the report pointed out that the next revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) constitutes an opportunity to revise the MRS objectives in order to strengthen their link with EU priorities and consolidate associated financial commitments.

Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies

The European Parliament adopted by 580 votes to 62, with 34 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (MRS).

Such strategies have been established in areas representing the natural evolution of the EU in terms of cross-border cooperation. They are based on the three nos principle of no new funding, no new structures and no new legislation within the existing EU political framework.

Macro-regional strategies as platforms for co-operation and co-ordination: Parliament stressed that the MRS continue to make an innovative contribution to cross-border, cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation in Europe, the potential of which has not yet been sufficiently explored. It noted, however, that access to EU funds for MRS projects remains a challenge. It also noted that elements on which the quality of implementation depends, such as commitment, ownership, resources and governance, remain difficult to overcome in achieving the pre-determined goals.

Parliament therefore insisted on the need to:

- develop appropriate governance structures and working arrangements to facilitate cooperation, including joint planning, boosting funding opportunities and a bottom-up approach;
- improve coordination and better partnerships, both vertical and horizontal, between the different public and private actors, academia and NGOs, as well as international organisations operating in this field, and the various policies at EU, national, regional and local level in order to facilitate and improve the implementation of the MRS and cross-border cooperation;
- ensure that relevant national or regional bodies have sufficient human resources and administrative capacity;
- **ensure that MRS are flexible enough to be adjusted and respond effectively to unforeseen events and needs.**

The resolution examined the MRS currently in place:

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Macro-regional Europe after 2020: Members stressed that the implementation of shall be based on a long-term common political commitment between the institutional levels concerned, and be provided with appropriate financial means. They therefore stressed the need to:

- establish synergies and complementarities between regional and national funding and Union financing instruments and to simplify the use of funds and procedures;
- encourage participating countries to make clear commitments in terms of human and financial resources from the outset;
- adopt a more results-oriented approach and concrete challenges, including in the area of environmental protection; MRSs are encouraged to make use of green public procurement in order to boost to eco-innovation.

Lastly, Parliament emphasised that the next revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) constitutes an opportunity to revise the MRS objectives at the same time, in order to strengthen their link with EU priorities and consolidate associated financial commitments.