

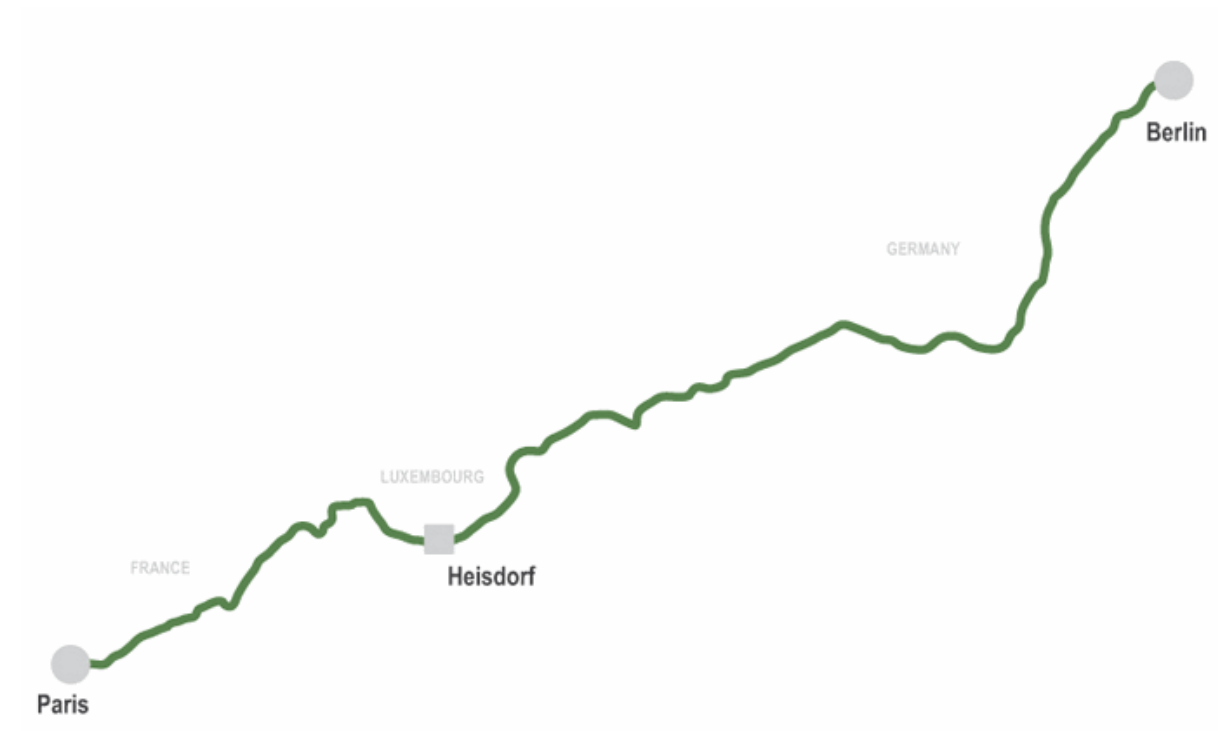
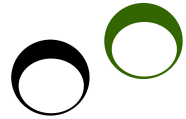


Spatial Foresight Brief 2013:3

**ADDED VALUE OF MACRO REGIONAL STRATEGIES:
A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE**

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BRIEF



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Added value of macro regional strategies: A governance perspective

This Spatial Foresight Brief derives from a background paper commissioned by the European Commission - Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy in spring 2013. It served as input for the preparation of the report concerning the added value of macro regional strategies (COM(2013) 468 final). The paper is also available as part of the Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document concerning the added value of macro regional strategies (SWD(2013) 233 final).

Some selected key findings deriving from this paper

- **Too young.** Macro regional strategies are still rather new and have not been around long enough to allow for solid conclusions about their actual added value.
- **Transnationality.** Macro regional strategies offer a new governance framework for approaching development challenges and potentials, which cannot be solved by the states (independently from each other) and are too specific for the macro region to be approached at EU level. However, there is a risk that the focus on issues specific for a macro region is weakened by an increasing attention to more general policy priorities.
- **Multi-sector.** Macro regional strategies offer a new governance framework for bringing together various relevant sector policies to approach joint challenges or potentials. Bringing together resources (financial and non-financial) of relevant sectors can contribute to more efficiently approach development challenges and potentials. However, there is a risk that the focus is rather on contributions in terms of funding single projects that can be linked (vaguely) to the macro regional challenges or potentials.
- **Complexity.** The governance frameworks set up for macro regional strategies are rather complex and rely on a wide range of stakeholders. The challenge is to keep all stakeholders committed and motivated in the long-run.
- **Political backing.** The high political profile and backing of macro regional strategies incl. attention at Council Level is an important asset with regard to their standing as a platform bringing together different policy sectors and levels.
- **Action.** Various flagship projects have been linked to macro regional strategies. Whereas some exist independently from the strategy, others show that stakeholders develop new activities inspired by macro regional strategies. A lot of the actual added value of macro regional strategies will be generated by their projects and their ability to stimulate projects which would not have come about otherwise.



A governance perspective

Macro regional strategies are integrated frameworks, which allow the EU and Member States to identify needs and match them to available resources through coordination of appropriate policies. The strategies shall contribute to better governance of large territories confronted with similar problems. The basic principle of macro regional strategies is therefore to rationalise existing resources and use them more efficiently.

The general objective of the strategies is to address macro regional challenges. The specific objective is to develop a framework for the individual challenges and address deficiencies in governance structures to ensure that a range of strategic actions to deal with the challenges are implemented in the most efficient, effective and coherent way. (see COM 2009/REGIO/02)

3 No's as framework conditions. From the beginning, three No's have been spelled out clearly (COM (2009) 0248 final), partly to avoid the risk of a high-spending, ineffective and 'vast contraption' once the first enthusiasm over a new strategy has faded:

- **No new EU legislation.** The driving moments are Action Plans which also underline developments and regular updates and adaptations to new developments. No additional new legislation is envisaged for developing and implementing macro regional strategies.
- **No new EU funds.** There is no own budget for macro-regional strategies. "Though this aspect maybe seen as a weakness, it seems to constitute an innovative factor, given that all actors are stimulated towards a greater degree of coordination and synergies of the various financial resources available at different levels." (Stocchiero 2010) The aim is to use existing funds more effectively and in a more coordinated way.
- **No additional EU formal structures.** Instead of creating new institutions, the macro regional strategies are to be supported by a multi-level and multi-actor governance approach.

These three No's are however not uncontested, and there are even proposals for a 'three yeses rule': more complementary funding, more institutional coordination and more new projects. (European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development 2011)

Integrated approach as potential. The added value of the macro regional strategies is often seen in the integrated approach, i.e. a collective action that strives towards a common objective, providing a platform for bringing together various actors, policies and financial resources. Consequently, the potential to mobilise a broad range of stakeholders and create a broad and shared ownership is a key strength of macro regional strategies.

It is argued that macro regional strategies offer a new pragmatic approach to finding more efficient policy modalities and better coordination among existing institutions and resources. Macro regional strategies aim at providing integrated governance approaches addressing a pressing issue of policy making in Europe: the need for better policy coordination in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of policy making.



Potential to reduce the costs of non-coordination? Robert et. al (2001) pointed at the costs of non-coordination of European policies. The question whether the integrated governance approach used for the macro regional strategies can reduce these costs would need to be subject to a specific study. This could investigate whether the costs of non-coordination could be reduced and what are the costs of the coordination procedures introduced by macro regional studies.

Macro regional strategies often are considered as an example of integrated (territorial) governance, even advocating the idea of place based policy making. The governance structures for drafting and also implementing the strategies are rather complex and involve a wide range of different stakeholders. The review of existing documents shows, that macro regional strategies have good potentials to improve policy coordination in three different ways, i.e. transnational (coordination between countries), multi-sector (coordination between sectors), multi-level (coordination between levels). However, there are also a number of obstacles, which suggest that these potentials are not fully realised.

Transnational coordination

Broaden geographical perspective of sector policies. Many development challenges and potentials cut across administrative boundaries and call therefore for joint approaches. There is an increasing demand for shared implementation mechanisms. Macro regional strategies stress the need to approach development challenges and potentials in a wider geographical context, as appropriate responses require joint approaches across national boundaries. This line of thought can enrich European and national policy developments and there are indications that the strategies function as ambassadors and manage to inspire other policy developments to transnational approaches. A few examples are mentioned in the below textbox as well as in other textboxes throughout this paper.

Examples: Strengthening transnational solutions

The vision of the Clean Water project is to create a vital Baltic Sea Region Clean Water Cluster, a cooperation platform of different clusters for interaction of all triple helix sectors in the BSR. The purpose of this platform is to develop water protection with new and innovative technologies, products and services. The cluster combines competences of BSR countries' innovation milieus, clusters and SME-networks around water protection (wastewater treatment, hazardous chemical substitution), to bring business opportunities and boost competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region. (Source: <http://www.bsrstars.se/project/clean-water/>)

"Develop and improve coordination and cooperation among Member States and stakeholders" on fisheries management in the Baltic Sea. A forum called Baltfish has been established to enhance collaboration among Baltic Sea Member States as a first step towards further regionalisation of fisheries management. The forum will elaborate with relevant Baltic Sea organisations including the BS RAC and HELCOM how integration of concerned stakeholders in fisheries management and policy implementation can be strengthened and the forum be developed further in this regard. (Source: SEC(2009) 712/2)



Dubois et al. (2009) go even one step further and suggest that macro regional strategies may help avoiding cannibalistic competition between regions, and rather foster competition on the basis of complementarities. To what degree this happens is hard to tell at present.

Despite the positive examples, one needs to remember that transnational and cross-border cooperation is not entirely new. Cooperation across national borders (not only in the meaning of Interreg) has been promoted for a long time in Europe and a range of institutions and platforms have been established during the past decades. In parts these sub-regional cooperation groups do also facilitate processes of European integration. In that sense macro regional strategies are nothing new, but rather offer a platform for improved cooperation between existing sub-regional groups or (as e.g. in the Alpine case) are perceived as giving new stimulus or momentum to existing cooperation areas.

Contributing to working-level links with Third Countries. With regard to cross-border coordination, the integration of Third countries is of particular interest (at least for macro regions going beyond the EU). Macro regional strategies are a flexible framework complementing existing EU and national policies. With relation to Third countries, they can be seen as a tool for bridging European Neighbourhood Policies and territorial development policies. The involvement of non-EU partners in macro regional strategies may facilitate (a) the collaboration between institutions and governments in and outside the EU, and (b) a gradually economic integration and make EU's external borders less of an obstacle to the flow of goods, services, capital and persons within a macro-region. (see Dubois et al. 2009).

Examples: Cooperation with Third countries

"Implement fully the EU – Russia Energy Efficiency Initiative", particularly the annual work programmes of the Joint EU – Russia Thematic Group on Energy Efficiency of the EU – Russia Energy Dialogue, to be implemented jointly by the EU and Russian side.

"Assessment of regional nutrient pollution load and identification of priority projects to reduce nutrient inputs from Belarus to the Baltic Sea", in particular in the context of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. The aim of this project is to reduce the nutrient inputs from Belarus to the Baltic Sea in the context of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, with particular consideration given to such key sectors and areas as agriculture, municipal waste water, industry, and the production and use of detergents containing phosphorus. So far, the terms of reference for an assessment and identification study have been developed by the Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources, the Ministry of the Environment, Finland, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and HELCOM, and agreed with the Belarusian Ministries of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services. (Source: SEC(2011) 1071 final)

"Monitor implementation of the priorities of the EU-Russia Strategic Framework for Customs Cooperation" for ensuring trade facilitation and the protection of citizens, and combating fraud. The Strategic Framework is based on three broad priorities: a) Safe and fluid trade lanes; b) Risk management and fight against fraud; c) Investment in customs modernisation. (Source: SEC(2009) 712/2)



At the same time, the Baltic Sea Strategy has been developed with focus on internal dynamics of EU integration and only little attention has been paid to external relations. Although Russia is an important player for various development in the Baltic Sea Region it is not part of the Strategy. The involvement of Russia runs via the involvement of Russian partners in flagship projects and existing frameworks such as the Northern Dimension. This imbalanced involvement of EU and non-EU Member States may weaken the Baltic Sea Strategy (see Dühr 2009 and Borg 2009). The situation is somewhat different in the case of the Danube Strategy. Also here non EU Member States are not part of the strategy, but play a larger role in the implementation activities, e.g. as priority coordinators and by involving funding sources targeting non-EU areas, e.g. WBIF¹ and ENPI CBC².

Overall, macro regional strategies seem to increase the transnational dimension in various policy sectors. They contribute to a better integration of countries covered by a macro region as well as on developing joint approaches which are more efficient than approaches taken by single countries independently.

With regard to the involvement of Third Countries, there are various flagship projects that address Third countries. The exact success is however hard to tell from available information. In any case, approaches to integrating Third Countries in the work on macro regional strategies need to be detached from sensitive diplomatic issues.

Cross-sector coordination

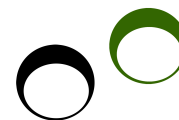
Platform for stakeholders from different EU and national policy sectors. Macro regional strategies aim at bringing together a wide range of different policy sectors and underline the necessity that different policy sectors need to cooperate in order to firstly define the most pressing issues for a macro region and thereafter develop and implement a suitable strategy. In that sense macro regional strategies are a valuable platform.

To a certain degree this approach has been successful as it has brought new stakeholders to the table and made them thinking about the development of the macro region outside their usual institutional context. Indeed, both at EU level and in some Member States, the elaboration of the macro-regional strategies implied major efforts of bringing together representatives from a wide range of different policy sectors. For the Baltic Sea Strategy, DG Regio coordinated the input of about 20 other DGs just at EU level, let alone the wide range of national ministries involved in various consultations.

However, it would be naïve to believe that this goes without any conflicts between different policy sectors and their ambitions to be the integrating or coordinating body. Borg (2009) points at the challenge of how to achieve more efficient cooperation in the case of overlapping policy agendas. One example from the Baltic Sea Strategy is the Integrated Maritime Policy, which – similar to macro regional strategies – aims at a better coordination of different policy areas, albeit with focus on a more coherent approach to maritime issues. Another example from the Danube Strategy concerns the work

¹ Western Balkan Investment Framework

² European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes



towards a more integrated approach to the Danube river taking into account both the Danube as transport axis and the environmental concerns related to the Danube river.

Overall, the multi-faceted policy platform provided by macro regional strategies facilitates dialogue and mutual influence between different policy sector policies. In the ideal case this may even go beyond their respective contribution to the development and implementation of a strategy and even result in mutual learning or dialogue with regard to other policy developments.

Next to the wide governance arrangements used to develop and implement macro regional strategies, also the non-existence of specific funds may play a crucial role for keeping different sectors on board and in dialogue with each other in order to continuously work on the implementation of the strategies.

Macro regional projects funded by a large number of sector instruments. Macro regional strategies have been successful in bringing on board other sector policies. This has been illustrated e.g. with regard to the funding sources used financing flagship projects of the strategies. The Action Plans provide examples of different financing sources that are used, and illustrate the potential of the strategies to contribute to a better coordination and alignment of funding. Next to ERDF³ programmes a wide range of other funding sources from other European sector policies as well as non EU sources contribute to funding flagship projects of macro regional strategies, e.g. ESF⁴, CPFI⁵, EIB⁶ & EIF⁷, TEN-T⁸, JRC⁹, FP7¹⁰ as well as national, regional and Nordic sources fund projects. The below box provides some examples on project funded via schemes from different EU sector policies. This shows that a wide range of different EU sector policies contribute with their respective funding instruments to implementing the macro regional strategy.

At the same time, experience from the Baltic Sea Strategy also shows that the contribution of the different financing sources differs widely. SWEKO (2011) underlines, that there is a concentration to a few of over 100 (theoretically) available funding opportunities: “The five most mentioned sources of funding were the following, starting with the most mentioned; Baltic Sea Region Programme, South Baltic Programme, TEN-T (different schemes), Central Baltic Programme, Nordic Council of Ministers (different schemes).” (SWEKO 2011, p. 12)

Whereas the strategies as such are multi-sectoral, the implementation projects usually focus on a specific issue within a specific policy sector in order to make progress on concrete implementation tasks. To what degree single projects influence other sectors than their own is hard to tell. In that sense one may conclude that although the strategies set out to integrate different (sector) processes, their orientation (in terms of projects) tends to remain rather sectoral. More attention could be paid to sector-integrating or cross-cutting tools and instruments. Nevertheless, going beyond single projects, macro regional strategies provide a platform where resources from different sectors are used to achieve common macro regional objectives.

³ European Regional Development Funds

⁴ European Social Funds

⁵ Civil Protection Framework Programme

⁶ European Investment Bank

⁷ European Investment Fund

⁸ Trans-European Transport Networks

⁹ Joint Research Centre

¹⁰ Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development



Examples: Sector policies strengthening macro regional approach

ESF. The Managing Authority for the European Social Fund (ESF) in Sweden will the coming years strengthen the transnational cooperation between projects funded by the ESF in the Member States. A particular focus will be on the cooperation between projects and stakeholders in the Member States in the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Network ESF project will serve that purpose, for Sweden as well as for the other Member States concerned. The intention is also to analyse the relation and linkage between the ESF and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Subsequently actions will be taken to encourage projects to be better prepared to support the implementation of the social dimension in the EUSBSR. A network of the Managing Authorities for the ESF between the Member States concerned – Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany - has been consolidated and a number of joint activities will be carried out: conferences, partner search forums and learning seminars in Sweden as well as in the other Member States. (Source: <http://www.inclusiveeurope.se>)

CPFI. The project 14.3 is financed with support from the European Commission through the EU Civil Protection Financial Instrument. The project aims to develop scenarios and identify gaps for all main hazards and the potential of such hazards in the Baltic Sea Region, in order to anticipate disasters, thus enabling a rapid and effective EU response through the Community Civil Protection Mechanism. The work will reinforce disaster prevention and response capacity as well as coherence and coordination between different institutions. (Source: <http://www.14point3.eu>)

TEN-T. The flagship project conducted a feasibility study on LNG infrastructure for short sea shipping was financed via TEN-T. The purpose of the project was to develop recommendations for how to establish an infrastructure facilitating the use of LNG as a ships' fuel. However, other important areas have also been identified. The project's recommendations concentrate on five main areas: Bunkering of ships with LNG, Economic and financial conditions, Safety, Technical and operational conditions and finally Permits for an infrastructure ashore. (Source: SEC (2009) 712/2 – status February 2013).

JRC. The Joint Research Centre has launched an initiative to provide scientific support to the Danube Strategy, in cooperation with key partners from the Region. Work has already started on the setting-up of Danube-wide reference scientific data sets, which will allow policy makers and other stakeholders to access comparable and **harmonised data on common challenges, such as water and soil quality, or landscapes.**

FP7. The 7th Framework Programme for Research has launched three calls specifically addressing Danube Region challenges.

Regional Example. The state of Baden Württemberg has set aside funds to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, with a special focus on providing support for the initial phase of projects with an explicit macro-regional impact.



Multi-level coordination

European and national level key players. Macro regional strategies aim also at bringing together stakeholders from different policy levels. The work with macro regional strategies relies on the capacity to bring together different policy levels and funds from different policy levels in a transnational approach. When it comes to strategy development, mainly the European level and the Member States are involved. Overall, closer and better coordinated action at various levels of governance is seen as a positive step towards further deepening of EU integration process. (see Katsarova 2009, and Cugusi & Stocchiero 2010).

“Bottom-up” development of priorities. One important aspect of the multi-level coordination is the development of thematic orientations of a macro regional strategy. Macro regional strategies focus on themes identified in a “bottom-up” process, where various consultations process and in particular national representatives play an important role. The basic idea is that macro regional strategies work on themes which are perceived as common and important to the participating countries. The “bottom-up” approach may generate thematic orientations which are not (as highly ranked) on European or national policy agendas, but which address actual challenges of the region. It might even offer opportunities to become more concrete and address pressing issues (incl. conflicts of interest) which in EU-wide strategies might be covered by rhetoric because of the diversity of the EU. (see Böhme & Zillmer 2010)

Regional and local level important implementers. There is a certain criticism that the local and regional level is not sufficiently taken on board when it comes to the development of the strategies. At the same time stakeholders from the local and regional level can play a substantial role when it comes to the implementation of the strategies, although not all are interested. On the one hand regional stakeholders are e.g. involved in the implementation structures of macro regional strategies, e.g. by taking on responsibilities as priority area coordinators. On the other hand, regional stakeholders are involved in concrete projects. A wide range of projects bridges local or regional action/responses with national policies in the countries involved and development challenges or potentials at macro-regional level or even EU wide policy approaches.

Facilitating the implementation of EU policies. Macro regional strategies comprise among others flagship projects with a focus on improving or furthering the implementation of EU policies in the countries or regions covered by the strategy. There are e.g. projects linked to the EU chemicals regulation REACH (1907/2006/EC), European Transport Networks (TEN-T), the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EG), as well as to the agreements within the Helsinki Convention on the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP).

Informing European, national and regional policy processes. A wide range of projects also aim at providing new evidence relevant for improving policy making at various levels of decision making. Examples can be found with regard to many different policy fields and the envisaged actions roughly be grouped in three categories (a) providing new information through studies or monitoring exercise, (b) informing relevant stakeholders, and (c) setting up transnational networks for increasing information flows and efficiency by sharing resources.



Examples: Implementing and improving EU policies

The project “Reduce the Use of the Substances of Very High Concern in the Baltic Sea Region” aims at including substances relevant for the environment in the Baltic Sea region, such as the recommendations made through the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), to the REACH candidate list. Selected substances will be assessed to see whether they fulfil the REACH criteria of SVHCs. If that is the case, the substances will be incorporated into an extended SIN-list and work for their later inclusion in the candidate-list will be carried out. (Source: <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu>)

The project “Implementing European space for maritime transport without barriers in the Baltic Sea Region” addresses several legislative measures, including a proposal aimed at simplifying administrative formalities based on Community regulations and recommendations to the Member States for reducing the administrative burden imposed on shipping companies. (Source: SEC(2009) 712/2)

The project “Complement the agreed priority transport infrastructure” addresses a number of TEN-T priority projects in the Baltic Sea Region. To the target group to be addressed by the project belong national long-term infrastructures planners in the Baltic Sea region, national, regional and local politicians, governments and governmental agencies, public and private stakeholders in the transport sector and transport networks in the Baltic Sea Region (Sources: SEC(2009) 712/2 and <http://www.baltictransportoutlook.eu>)

Overall, macro regional strategies strengthen multi-level coordination in different ways. When it comes to strategy development a key aspect is the interaction between the European and national level and potential to identify genuine priority areas that require transnational cooperation but are not suitable for EU-wide policies. Looking at single project, there is a large variety of specific project activities focusing on multi-level aspects of policy design and implementation in different policy areas. At this stage also the regional and local level is included.

Specific & focused or broad & inclusive ?

There are a number of aspects which may hamper a clearer added value of macro regional strategies. Overall, macro regional strategies have a tendency to focus very broadly at a better coordination between sectors, levels and across countries. This integrated approach to providing a new governance platform for better policy coordination comes at a cost: complexity.

Complex structures and risks of fading ownership. Given the broad nature of the strategies and the absence of single institutions for their implementation, they develop rather complex implementation mechanisms. 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.



Potential stronger links between macro regional strategies and ETC or EGTC

Both cases are rather risky. Many involved stakeholders may see them as opportunities to be freed from their responsibility and obligations to contribute to the (implementation of) macro regional strategies. Consequently, macro regional strategies would be downgraded to the level of the spatial strategies which were elaborated as guiding documents of transnational cooperation 10 to 15 years ago. (see also Zilmer et al. 2012)

“Interreg solution”. The transnational dimension of macro regional strategies implies that transnational cooperation programmes often are seen as the most natural funding opportunity. Such a development risks that many other funding actors will reduce (their partially already low) engagement / contribution to implementing macro regional strategies and leave it all for transnational cooperation programmes. This in turn will weaken the cross-sector coordination dimension of the strategies as the implementation will be dominated by the Interreg Community. Furthermore, territorial cooperation programmes might not be financially strong enough to support all kinds of activities (e.g. infrastructure investments) needed to achieve the aims of the strategies, nor is it guaranteed that all themes of the macro regional strategies are eligible for territorial cooperation. Instead of giving the impression that transnational programmes will be the main implementer of macro regional strategies, efforts are needed to increase the ownership and contribution of other sectors and their funding sources (incl. other Structural Funds programmes). (see also Zillmer et al. 2012)

“EGTC solution”. The idea to set up an EGTC for implementing a macro regional strategy has been aired in some informal discussions. Indeed, it may have the charm that there would be finally a single body clearly responsible for driving the processes and could possibly keep the momentum in the implementation. However, this would be a clear deviation from the announced “No” to new institutions. Furthermore, it would bring about multiple questions as concerns the financing of such an EGTC, as well as the membership and its implications for the broad governance approach on which the strategies are currently based.

There are signs that the commitment is not always as high as might be desirable or needed. SWECO (2011) points for the Baltic Sea case towards the need for increased support and commitment by the Member States including a strengthening of their National Contact Points and the Priority Area Coordinator. Along a similar line stakeholders involved in the Danube case point out that they need further political support from the European Commission to activate relevant national or regional stakeholders (see e.g. Summary of the 3rd meeting of the EUSDR Contact Points and Area Coordinators, or EUSDR Report June 2012 Priority Area 10 Institutional capacity and cooperation).

High-level political backing. In comparison to other policy fields, macro regional strategies can refer to a strong political backing. They are not just agreed and dealt with at informal ministerial meetings, or meetings of transnational monitoring and steering committees. They do have the attention and backing at the level of the European General Affairs Council. This is an important asset with regard to their standing as a platform bringing together different policy sectors and levels. What ever is to be done in future, it should be ensured that this high-level political backing remains and is not downgraded.



Between unique focus and collecting pond. There is a constant criticism that the strategies are thematically too broad and not focused enough. Whereas a broad thematic approach is seen as an advantage with regard to the possibility to involve a wide range of different sectors, it may also be a hinder when it comes to actually developing into a powerful tool. As outlined above, one strength of the strategies is seen in the fact that they manage to point towards real development challenges (which require joint action) in the respective geographical area. At the same time there are also expectations that these strategies reflect better the Europe 2020 aims and targets and cover most aspects which are perceived as policy relevant. The question is to what degree this suits a clear focus of the strategies on specific needs of the region.

Overall, the governance approach used for macro regional strategies focuses on a broad involvement. This comes with a number of challenges and not all of them seem to be solved at present. However, a quick fix and simple solution to solving these governance challenges risks to become the beginning of the end of macro regional strategies.

Conclusions

The task of this paper was to provide input to a discussion on the added value of macro regional strategies from a governance perspective. The following will shortly summarise some key points.

Main achievements. Macro regional strategies have the potential to contribute to improved coordination between different policy sectors and policy levels and they also do allow for increasing the efficiency of policy implementation by strengthening transnational solutions.

Whereas macro regional strategies have potential at the level of the strategy itself the main contributions are made at project level. As the strategies are still rather young it is too early for counterfactual assessments. At present it is difficult to tell to what degree various projects would have been implemented even without the existence of macro regional strategies.

Dubois et al. 2009 argue even that macro regional strategies may also be used to accelerate the 'catching up' phase between the "new" and "old" Member States.

To further strengthen the role of macro regional strategies, it is necessary to continue encouraging all EU funding sources in their geographical areas to contribute to them. Otherwise, there is a risk that it will be mainly EU Cohesion Policy and in particular territorial cooperation programmes that take the strategies on board. This would certainly weaken the potential to contribute to a better coordination of different policy sectors.

Influence on EU and national policy development. Macro regional strategies have a potential to influence both EU and national policies. EU policies could be influenced e.g. by the macro regional themes which are identified bottom-up and therefore could also inform EU policy making with fresh ideas. At the same time various flagship projects of the strategies focus on EU policies and on informing policy design or improving policy implementation.



As for national policies it seems the main power of influence comes with the various flagship projects which inform and improve policy development and implementation in the countries and regions involved. This is done using different types of funding. Furthermore, the strategies encourage stakeholders in sector policies which usually operate at national or regional scale to consider a transnational approach and investigate whether there are efficiency gains by cooperating transnationally (see examples in textbox).

Examples: Influencing national policy making

The MIMIC project has comprehensive, holistic approach to risks related to maritime oil transportation in the Baltic Sea. The final task of this project will be carried out in order to consider how the scientific findings of the other WP's and tasks could be implemented, in practice, in the society. Possible new elements to legislation or international agreements are recommended. Also the potential improvements of both safety and security related monitoring systems (hard data, interviews, etc.) are suggested. In practice, a comprehensive seminar for all managing organisations will be held during the project. In addition, workshops will be organised: possible improvements to risk communication will be discussed between managers. The risk model will also be discussed in a workshop with the related actors (e.g. universities, Finnish Environment Institute, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Transport and Communications, and maritime safety authorities). (Source: <http://www.merikotka.fi>)

BRISK, a flagship project under Priority Area Major Emergencies and co-financed by the Baltic Sea Region programme, made headlines in both leading newspapers and TV news programmes in Denmark in late September. The project findings addressed the lack of response capacity in case of, for instance, oil spills in the Baltic Sea. In this respect, the Danish Defense Minister Nick Hækkerup has promised that this topic gets top priority in discussions on the future Danish defense. (Source: EUBSR News November 2012)

Coordination between different actors. Macro regional strategies stress and support increased cooperation between different stakeholders in order to increase the efficiency of public policy making. In some cases this makes use of existing cooperation patterns and ways, and in others new cooperation patterns emerge. Again, the strategies are too young to engage in a counterfactual debate allowing to pinpoint details.

With regard to Third countries, macro regional strategies offer platforms for increasing cooperation and reducing barriers at working level.

Improving governance structures. Given the high complexity it also appears that the governance approach for macro regional strategies does not necessarily serve as role model for integrated policy making. At the same time, macro regional strategies are a first step to improving the coordination of policy development and implementation and may in the long-run also contribute to developing improved governance structures going beyond single projects.

There is a range of projects that for concrete purposes and tasks work on establishing joint solution across countries (and sometimes even across sectors). Some of them may result in stable new governance structures.



Main drivers. At the level of the strategy the main driver – next to the need to collaborate at macro-regional level in order to solve certain challenges – seems the enthusiasm for something new, at least in the beginning. In the long-run however, it appears that the main drivers are the European Commission and a few stakeholders in some Member States. There is a risk that the interest and engagement of many national and regional stakeholders declines over time.

The projects create added value driven by single project partners. At large, three different types of projects can be identified (a) strategic policy development projects with rather broad and intangible impacts, (b) explorative pilot projects often focusing on developing and testing new approaches and tools, and (c) policy implementation projects e.g. focusing on how EU policies can be better implemented in EU Member States.

Overall, challenges that only can be solved jointly at macro regional level are the key driver.

Recommendations

Contributing to EU2020 objectives as part of the hierarchy of policies

Following the above, macro regional strategies can work as a catalyst for improving the implementation of European policies, directives and regulations in an area. This can certainly also be true with regard to the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, at the same time the text argues for a stronger focus of macro regional strategies towards issues that require cooperation at macro regional level, as they cannot be solved by each Member State individually and are too specific to be solved by a EU-wide approach. Putting too much emphasis on macro regional strategies as an instrument for achieving the Europe 2020 objectives might contradict the need for a stronger focus.

Building blocks in reaching European objectives

Macro regional strategies can fill a vacuum between the Member State level and the European level which is perceived by some people as the EU has grown large and distant with 28 Member States. There are various different ways in which macro regional strategies can function as building blocks in reaching European objectives:

- Macro regional strategies can be important platforms for solving challenges and utilising developing potentials more effectively than could be done individually by each Member State or at EU level.
- Macro regional strategies can function for increasing European integration, by increasing the number of stakeholders and policy sectors that work at a geographically wider scale than their usual national or regional level.
- Macro regional strategies can also facilitate the implementation of European policies, directives and regulations in the Member States.

Levels of intensity in macro regional cooperation

The overall question is whether different levels of intensity in macro regional cooperation are a problem, or not. Given the broad and inclusive character of macro regional strategies and their implementation work there will always be variations as concerns intensity and commitment. This



becomes problematic if the intensity and commitment for important parts of a strategy decline to a degree that the implementation is at risk. To minimize this risk, a stronger leadership and/or a stronger focus of the strategies may help. A stronger leadership can help to keep a minimum of intensity and commitment for all parts of a strategy, while a stronger focus may help to reduce the complexity of the implementation mechanisms (as less it might require the involvement of fewer stakeholders).

Leadership question and improving resilience

To increase leadership and reduce the fragility of the currently complex implementation structures of macro regional strategies, two different options can be imagined:

- **Parametric Governance Power.** Keeping the wide range of themes and stakeholders involved it seems necessary to point out one “coordinating organisation” which gets a clear mandate to push stakeholders that have taken over responsibilities where necessary. To do this a clear and simple monitoring system would be needed at two levels:
 - **Priority area level.** For all priority areas targets and related indicators need to be developed into realistic and easily measurable targets (e.g. comparable to the Europe 2020 headline targets or ERDF programme indicators). The indicators presently used are only partially suitable as clear measures on what progress has been made. The development with regard to these targets needs to be monitored on annual basis and the results need to be presented to the general public in an easily understandable and communicative way.
 - **Stakeholder level.** To strengthen the leadership and individual responsibility of every stakeholder involved, there should be clear and measurable targets what each stakeholder should achieve in each reporting period (e.g. year). These targets have to be agreed upon with the stakeholders and should be developed based on each stakeholder’s specific role in the implementation process (see e.g. document such as one on rules and responsibilities developed for the Baltic Sea Strategy).

For both monitoring levels, the “coordinating organisation” should regularly collect information on the progress made to achieving the set targets, and remind or encourage stakeholders to work towards their targets. By regularly publishing the progress made on the website and pinpointing who has made good progress and who not (naming, shaming and blaming), there would be a certain pressure / incentive for everybody to try to work towards their targets. One may even consider particular actions /penalties for stakeholders who have not achieved their targets. This approach would follow the idea of parametric governance or the open method of coordination.

- **Exclusivity Driver.** Alternatively, one might consider to reduce the number of stakeholders included in the implementation, and make it a rather exclusive club. The rationale behind this would be that if it is difficult and exclusive (honourable) to become part of the club of stakeholders directly working with the implementation, this might motivate as well as ensure commitment and efforts in the long-run.



Recommendations for future work

Overall, there are three main recommendations for future work that can arrive from the above:

- **Focus.** As mentioned several times, it might be wise to focus the strategies towards issues where there is a genuine need or added value to cooperation at macro regional level (instead of any other level). If it is necessary for political reasons to also include other, broader policy fields, efforts should be undertaken to identify within these policy fields particular actions with a clear macro regional rationale.
- **Coordination & monitoring.** Given the complex implementation mechanisms, it might be wise to appoint for each strategy one stakeholder with a stronger coordination and monitoring responsibility and the necessary resources, i.e. a “coordination organisation”. The monitoring should also involve the activities carried out by the various stakeholders, and the “coordinating organisation” needs to have the standing to publicly present which stakeholders achieved a lot and which did not.
- **Political backing.** The high political profile and backing of macro regional strategies incl. attention at Council Level is an important asset with regard to their standing as a platform bringing together different policy sectors and levels. The high level political backing should be maintained.

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