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THE GOA TOOL: ASSESSMENT OF MACRO REGIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

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BRIEF



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THE GOA TOOL: ASSESSMENT OF MACRO REGIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

This Spatial Foresight Brief derives from an in-house research project on macro regional strategies and effectiveness of multi-level governance systems.

Some selected key findings deriving from this paper

- **Macro regional strategies represent multi-level governance (MLG) systems:** Governance arrangements used to develop and implement macro regional strategies are supposed to offer an added value against other forms of (bilateral) governance, as they promote an transnational, integrated (multi-sector, multi-level) and participatory approach to strategic planning.
- **Pros and cons of multi-level governance:** It has the advantage that it can overcome some of the usual limits to efficiency and effectiveness of policy-making. On the other hand, multi-level governance is also extremely difficult to be put in practice and to be maintained over time. It adds an additional layer to existing administrative structures and requires additional capacities.
- **MLG evaluation requires a systems view:** Macro regional governance systems are able to develop specific functional and systemic capacities, beyond personal competences and organisational skills. These capacities are needed to be effective in making decisions and achieving goals. But this means that also the evaluation of these governance systems requires a systemic perspective and a focus on relationships, roles and functions.
- **GOA – new governance assessment tool:** This Brief proposes the Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA), a new method that acknowledges the complexity of transnational cooperation processes, providing at the same time a simple and handy enough tool to be used in the assessment of macro regional governance systems.
- **GOA benefits – opening the black box of multi-level governance:** The tool facilitates a more differentiated analysis of governance effectiveness in macro regional strategies. It helps to untangle the complex governance system and to detect more precisely the ineffective areas within the governance and implementation processes. GOA can help to compare and benchmark the development of governance within different macro regional strategies in Europe.



Introduction

Governance and institutional capacities are important elements in policy-making of public policy intervention. In macro regional strategies and other forms of multi-level governance, capacities to cooperate and to achieve common goals are crucial elements in order to enhance effectiveness. However, how the necessary capacities can be developed in a multi-stakeholder setting is still an open question. In this sense, a governance system is still a black box. The evaluation of governance performance is a new field that requires new and complementary evaluation tools which are able to establish comparable variables and normative guidance.

This brief first seeks to explain the characteristics and added value of macro regional strategies in the European Union. Second, it explores the specific challenges that arise from this kind of new and more complex types of multi-level governance, linking theoretical insights to practical requirements. Based on these assumptions, a new tool to map and monitor governance systems is presented: the Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA). This tool offers the opportunity to study in a more detailed and comparable manner different multi-level governance arrangements, thus drawing conclusions for future support to macro regional governance structures.

Macro regional strategies as examples of multi-level governance

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), better known as Interreg, is one of the two goals of cohesion policy and establishes the conditions for joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States.

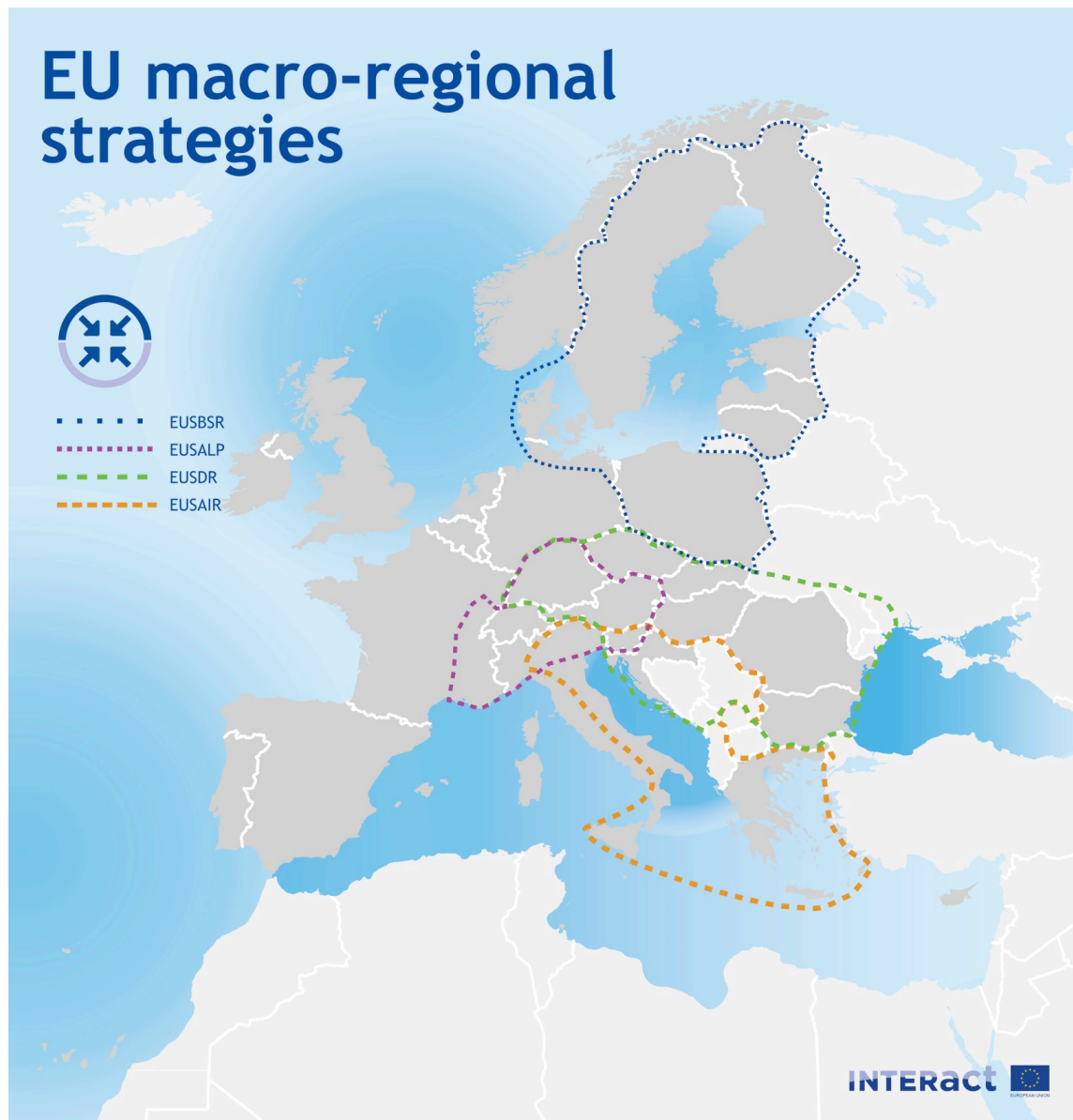
Macro regional strategies are a form of “grown-up” transnational cooperation programmes that may go beyond actions and objectives of transnational cooperation programmes but without replacing them. The first macro regional strategy in Europe, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) – adopted in 2009, was born out of a common interest to find a collective and more coordinated answer to environmental challenges in and around the Baltic Sea. Since then, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) was adopted in 2011. The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was endorsed by the European Council in 2012. In 2015 the European Commission adopted the Action Plan on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). Several other strategies are under discussion, although it depends on the Member States and relevant stakeholders (regional, local) to promote strategic cooperation in a given macro-region.

Macro regional strategies are considered “*an important innovation in territorial cooperation and cohesion*” (European Commission 2013). This innovation is being promoted and supported by the European Commission, for example, through its integration within the new Common Provisions Regulation for the ESIF framework 2014-2020 and by the overall support from INTERACT. It depends, however, on the bottom-up initiative of regions and Member States to define a macro regional strategy, an action plan and a coherent governance system.

There is no standard definition for a macro-region or for such a strategy. The concept as it is used in the EU integrates different key elements: it shall address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area; it looks for benefits from strengthened cooperation; it is based on a willingness to pool resources (based on European Commission 2013:3).



Figure 1: Macro regional strategies in Europe



Source: INTERACT (2016)

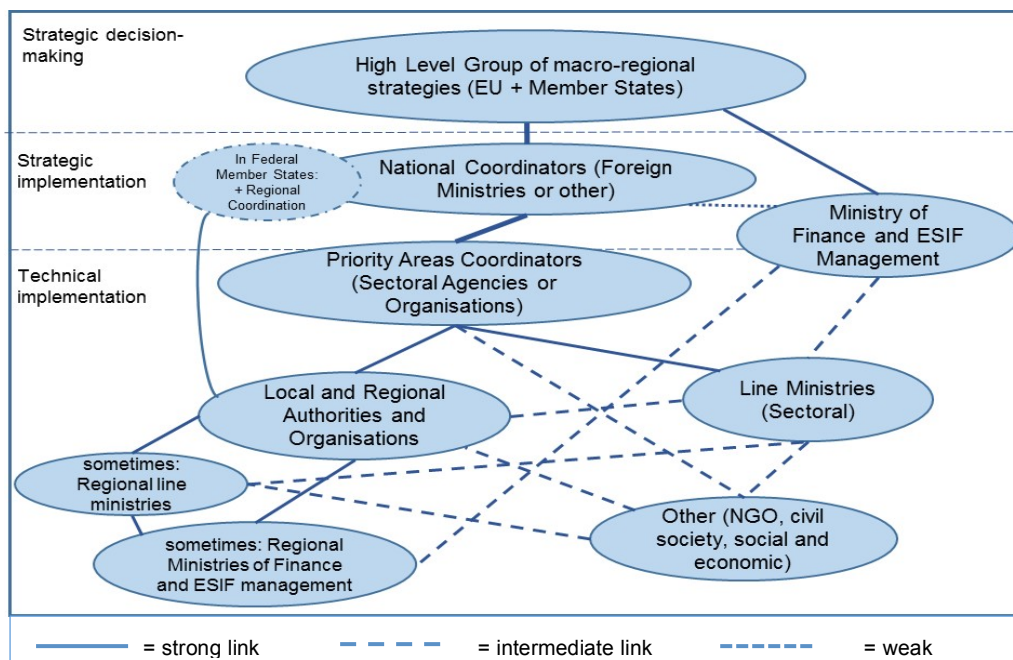
Macro regional strategies allow for bottom-up and participatory strategic planning and they are much more autonomous in selecting priority goals and areas than the well-known ETC programmes. In order to avoid bureaucracy, EU macro regional strategies are based on the principles of no specific EU legislation, no specific EU funding and no additional EU formal structures. These rules are decisive framework conditions for the governance perspective of the strategies (Böhme 2013). Thus, EU macro regional strategies are deliberately open to all kinds of funding (ERDF, ESF, ETC, national, regional etc.). In addition, they rely on existing formal structures for decision-making and implementation, generating rather flexible but complex governance systems, described also as “fuzzy governance arrangements” or “soft spaces” (Sielker 2016:94).



These governance arrangements are supposed to offer an added value against other forms of (bilateral) governance, as they promote a transnational, integrated (multi-sector, various actors and administration levels) and participatory (public, business, civil society) approach to strategic planning. Therefore, they are vivid examples of multi-level governance.

Apart from the fact that there is no unified denomination of the governance structures among the four existing macro regional strategies in Europe, on paper the elements of the governance systems are quite similar consisting of a high-level political body, a decision body deciding on strategic overall implementation (e.g. 'National Coordinators Group'), bodies responsible for the implementation (and coordination) in different thematic fields (e.g. 'Policy/Priority Area Coordinators'), bodies responsible for (pilot) project implementation, all other stakeholders in national treasury and line ministries, local and regional authorities and organisations, civil society, economic and social actors, NGO etc. (INTERACT 2015).

Figure 2: Model of the governance system of macro regional strategies



Source: Own elaboration

The simplified model in Figure 2 aims at depicting the complexity of macro regional MLG. In broad terms it is based on the description of governance systems of the EUSBSR and the EUSDR. It shows the main actors (nodes) and the main interconnections (ties) in the system. The strength of ties (strong= continuous line, weak = dotted line) is based on assumptions regarding the usual links among institutions, it does not refer to any specific case or country. Other types of linkages and exceptions are possible. Obviously, real-life governance systems are infinitely more complex, as other organisations and levels are involved (e.g. EU agencies) and each node does not represent only one institution, but different units and people with multiple linkages etc.



The National Coordinators (NC) and the Priority Area Coordinators (PAC) are supposed to have key roles within the governance system. The tasks for the NC are manifold, including “[...] *having an active political engagement, encouraging participation of stakeholders and ensuring the visibility of the EUSBSR within their countries*” (EUSBSR website 2016) or “[...] *coordinate and keep an overview of the participation of their country in the implementation [...], to promote the Strategy and inform relevant stakeholders [...], assist the European Commission in its facilitation role*” (EUSDR website 2016). Similarly, the role for the PAC within the governance system is challenging.

But even with this simple governance system model it is possible to see the limitations of NC and PAC to fulfil their multiple roles, as they are not connected to all relevant actors within the system. For instance, the link to the authorities in charge of budgeting is rather weak, so that the implementation level is almost disconnected from the access to resources. Secondly, links between the PAC and other potential actors to implement concrete projects are rather weak, in particular, if we consider that the number of actors multiplies at the local and regional level with the number of countries participating in the strategy.

The challenges for governance are numerous. Macro regional strategies are supposed to promote transnational solutions, even integrating third non-EU countries. They shall offer a platform for stakeholders from different policy sectors. Finally, they shall take on board regional and local actors and allow for a multi-level coordination. In short, they shall be vertically, horizontally and transnationally inclusive (see also Duehr 2011), which demands a balancing act between diplomatic exercise and concrete project implementation. The high number and diversity of actors and different roles involved adds further layers of complexity and communication becomes vague. *“The multiplicity of actors brings the risk that a strategy could lose (a) focus and (b) the ownership and responsibility felt by the single stakeholder.”* (Böhme 2013:11)

These challenges and the need to improve the governance arrangements have been recognised by several experts and the European Commission (2014). Some of the potential and actual governance weaknesses are: lack of political leadership and ownership, unclear responsibilities for coordination or implementation, integration of the regional and local actors, external communication, support to stakeholders to learn and improve (European Commission 2014), potential imbalances between more active countries and passive followers (Duehr 2011), different understandings of hierarchies and different modes of action in the involved countries (Sielker 2016).

Despite these reflections, analysis of macro regional governance systems is still blurred and rather descriptive. The open and flexible approach to governance seems to imply the impossibility to map and monitor the governance systems more precisely. Certainly, the fuzziness affects the formality of institutional relationships. Nevertheless, it does not limit the possibility to use a more standardised approach to examine, assess and recommend on the amendment of the governance system of macro regional strategies. But for that, one needs to understand better the systemic character of complex multi-level governance.

How to cope with complex governance systems – some theoretical insights

The more complex challenges become (climate change, migration, unemployment etc.), the more it is necessary to find coordinated and integrated forms of governance to deal with them. The concept of multi-level governance is generally known as coordinated action between the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities, according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, even



in cooperation with other private or non-governmental actors (Committee of the Regions 2011, Van den Brande 2014).

Multi-level governance is a recent form of governance that is “*heterarchic*”, “*opts for soft-law and flexible instruments and therefore embraces a weak conception of authority and uniformity in organisation and policy-making*”. Moreover, it “*privileges deliberative, consensus-based and reciprocal learning forms of policy-making and problem-solving*” (Bellamy et al. 2011:140).

Drawn-up to define policy goals and to implement policies, multi-level governance can take the form of ad-hoc arrangements and/or semi-institutionalised partnerships. Multi-level governance has the advantage that it can overcome the usual limits to efficiency and effectiveness of policy-making, i.e. lack of coordination, lack of communication and cooperation. On the other hand, multi-level governance faces some important challenges, such as the information gap, the funding gap or the lack of inter-sectorial coordination (Van den Brande 2014:10). It is also extremely difficult to be put in practice and to be maintained over time – e.g. resisting election campaigns, changes in governments and staff turnover. It adds an additional layer to existing administrative and decision-making structures. Although it has to rely on personal commitment and leadership, it also needs to find systemic procedures and techniques to withstand constant flows of people and knowledge.

Dealing with complex multi-level governance systems, i.e. macro regional strategies, requires a specific analytical perspective that focuses on the governance system rather than only on the individual elements within the system. In broad terms, a social system is defined by a boundary between itself and its environment. It consists of parts (persons, organisations, roles), the relationships among the parts (connections, communications), as well as of other elements which determine how the system works and develops (identity, content, functions, structures, procedures etc.). One distinctive feature of systems is that they are not static but adaptive, both to their environment and as a consequence of internal dynamic processes. Usually, systems tend to create new characteristics or functions that ‘emerge’ out of the system and are highly relevant for the system’s adaptive success. Examples for these emergent features are the invisible hand in market-based economic systems and the team spirit of successful sport teams¹.

Experts highlight that the effectiveness of a system is not the sum of the effectiveness of the individual parts of that system (Wilke 2000:195). In a system, new and different qualities emerge that add to already existing features in individual parts or sub-systems. Paradoxically, when a new system arises, during the initial stages the whole represents less than the sum of the individual capacities, because the individual elements first have to limit their options to act for the sake of coordination and common understanding. However, at later stages of development – and this is why multi-level governance requires time to evolve – the overall system, and therefore also the parts of the system gain in effectiveness, intelligence and ability to act and to grow (Luhmann 1984; Wilke 2000). As a consequence, when one wants to analyse and monitor governance systems, it is crucial not only to look at the individual parts (organisations or people), but especially at structures, processes, functional capacities and other systemic features that emerge as the system evolves.

Macro regional strategies are an important attempt to integrate relevant sub-systems (national, regional or sectoral) into one complex framework to blend highly-differentiated knowledge and expertise that normally stays within the boundaries of each of its sub-systems. According to Wilke (2000:224) this “*reintegration while maintaining high complexity and functional differentiation*” until now was only a theoretical possibility in societal development. In this context, macro regional governance

¹ For a more detailed descriptions of systems and their characteristics, please see Luhmann (1984), Wilke (2000), Morgan (2005) or Meadows (2008).

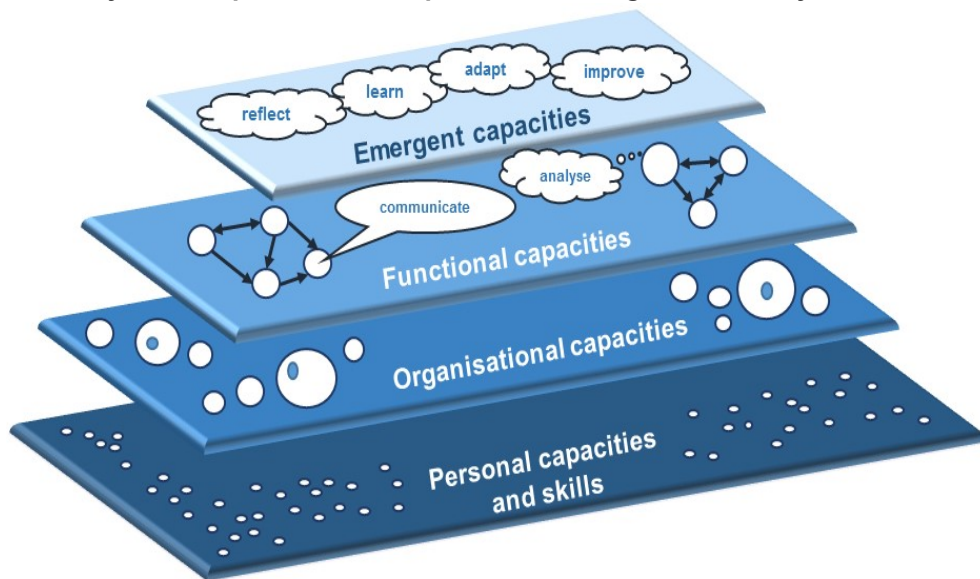


can be seen as a kind of reintegration of highly functionally differentiated policy systems into one complex and integrated governance system as envisaged by Etzioni (1968:582). It is also a kind of “*political multi-agent system*” (Floridi 2014:180) that mushroomed over the last decades as a consequence of new opportunities and challenges offered by the information society. However, compared to artificial multi-agent systems, as we find them in sophisticated computer programmes, real-world political multi-agent systems still struggle to become more intelligent than their autonomous elements.

From the systemic perspective, a governance system has several layers (Figure 3). At each level capacities are needed to make governance work, to guarantee the effective work of the system and to activate the potential to become more intelligent than the individual parts. Capacity is defined, in this context, as the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner (UNDP 2010:2).



Figure 3: Layers of capacities in complex multi-level governance systems



Source: Own elaboration

Most experts recognise the need to stimulate the development of functional and emergent capacities in governance systems. Also, in most reflections on multi-level governance, the challenges to achieve these systemic capacities are adequately defined. However, there is little research on how to map and monitor this kind of systemic capacities or how to stimulate their development. Not only the intangible character of the systemic capacities makes it difficult to focus on them. Also, data collection and analysis techniques and methods reach their limits if qualities (identity, ties, functions, processes), rather than quantifiable objects are examined. In general, research designs struggle with the fact that they should investigate “the system” rather than aggregating individual opinions or observations.

There are some successful examples of how to measure intangible assets². In particular, in the field of development cooperation more and more attention is paid to systemic capacities (Baser and Morgan 2008; UNDP 2010; Dugdale et al. 2012). Nevertheless, most approaches are based on complex scientific methods, requiring time-consuming field work and analysis, which makes them less useful as a tool to be applied in policy practice.

Following these limitations in capacity measurement, also today’s capacity development schemes are widely biased towards the personal layer of skills and capacities and based on group training approaches. However, it is rather questionable if group training in itself can have an impact on the development of functional or emergent capacities of a governance system. As can be observed in figure 3, the layer of personal capacities is not directly connected to the layers of functional or emergent capacities. In addition, individual trainings still face the challenge that with the replacement of people in organisations or committees the accumulated personal knowledge vanishes and new capacities have to be built up again. A more comprehensive and differentiated approach to capacity development, which embraces all layers of governance and supports the creation of structures, processes and content that might overcome staff turnover and other external influences, seems necessary.

² A collection of approaches and methods is presented in Haarich 2014.



A tool to map and monitor governance systems: the Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA)

As could be observed in Figure 2, the complexity together with the informality or ‘fuzziness’ of the general governance system of macro regional strategies tends to weaken network structures and therefore affects functions and effectiveness negatively. In addition, the emergence of functions that would add value to governance systems is not supported but hampered by the weak structures. But, how can the system be strengthened and functional and emergent capacities be stimulated under the premise that there should be no formal structures, no new legislations, no new funding? The answer is that the weak structures need to be compensated for by other system elements, such as identity, content and processes. However, in order to be able to strengthen the governance system in such a way, detailed information is required regarding the performance of the functional capacities and the specific gaps that need to be corrected.

The Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA) allows mapping and monitoring multi-governance capacities that cover political, managerial and coordinative functions as well as the governance environment.

The GOA tool offers several advantages: it covers different dimensions of governance; the operationalisation with standardised variables and the measurement method facilitates comparability of different governance systems and traceability of gaps and weaknesses over time. The tool includes a scorecard to visualise the results in a summarised form. Its easy application supports self-assessment, for instance, within annual reporting processes.

For its application in the area of macro regional strategies, a specific GOA model has been developed. Its main features are presented below.

The GOA tool focuses on the different functions of a governance system and seeks to examine the situation of different functional capacities that are needed in the different governance dimensions: political decision-making, implementation and cooperation as well as in the overall environment of the governance system.

The variables to be analysed for each functional capacity are: structure (as fixed bodies or roles within the governance system), content (reports, documents, symbols or stories) and process (procedures, protocols and informal routines). This method has its theoretical foundation in Luhmann’s theory of functional differentiation of social systems (1984). It also builds on the definition of functional

Figure 4: The advantages of the GOA Tool

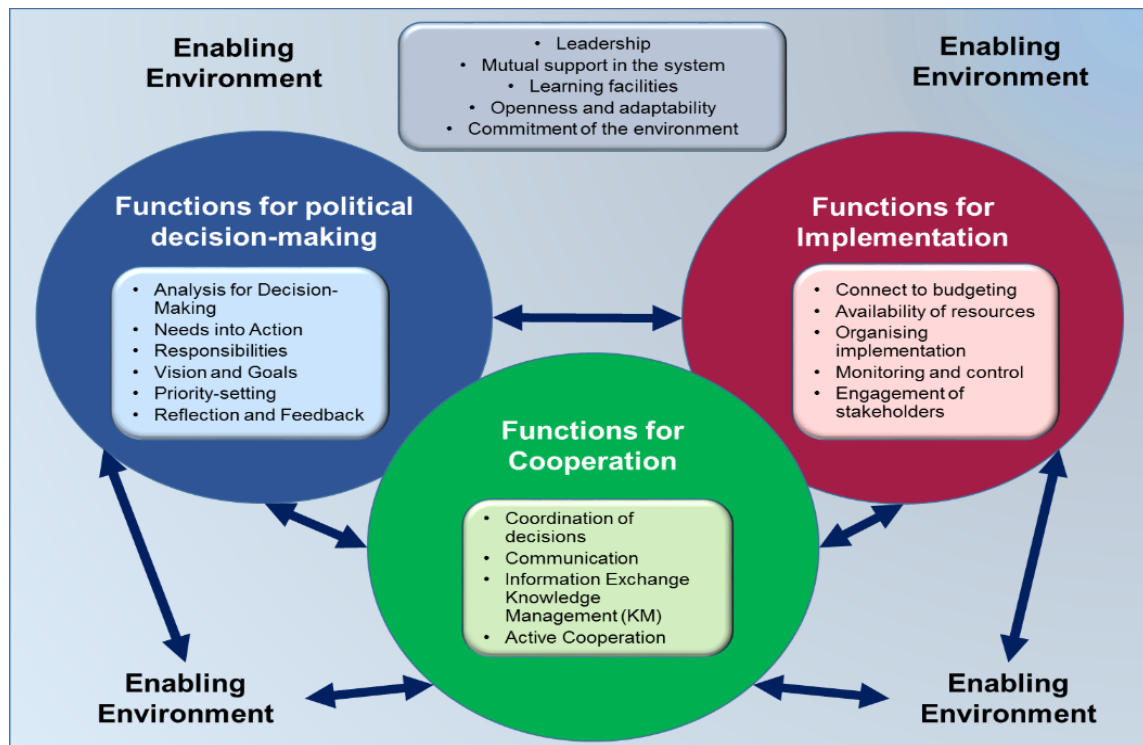


Source: Own elaboration



development capacities, as proposed in the UNDP framework (2008), and on core capabilities, as introduced by Baser and Morgan (2008).

Figure 5: Functional capacities for a macro regional governance system



Source: Own elaboration

The notion of functions helps to get to grips with the systemic nature of the study object. Not only the element in itself (e.g. group of National Coordinators) has to be analysed, but rather the effectiveness of the function within the governance system (e.g. priority-setting). The function can be (and usually is) distributed between various elements within the system and their relationship among them. The focus on functions rather than on structural elements helps to identify gaps without automatically blaming a specific element of the system.

The GOA tool analyses functions and capacities that are relevant for institutional performance (UNDP 2008, Baser and Morgan 2008) and make governance less prone to failure (Jessop 2000).

In the centre of the method is the diagnostic tool, based on variables and research questions that should be answered through a combination of methods: desk review (for documents and written evidence), interviews to key stakeholders (looking for informal structures and processes as well oral content) and a survey to different stakeholder groups (group view on structures, content and processes). The diagnostic phase starts with a thorough assessment of the object of governance, e.g. the macro regional strategy and details of its implementation. Ideally, this examination is accompanied by an indicator-based monitoring system of the strategy that defines details on objectives, expected results, baseline and target values for each of the prioritised policy areas. At this stage starts the evaluation of the effectiveness of macro regional governance: what has been achieved, where and by which partners? Did integration of political decision-making and implementation take place, in which areas, in which countries, at which administrative levels?



Figure 6: The Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA) – Diagnostic Tool

GOA - Governance Assessment Tool		GOA Government Assessment Scorecard - Diagnostic Tool			
D1	D1 - Capacities for Political Decision-Making				
ID	Functions	Structure	Content	Process	
1.1	Analysis for Decision-Making	Structures and bodies in charge of analytical work to support decision-making on objectives / implementation?	Documents and reports that reproduce the outcomes of analysis for decision-making on objectives / implementation?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate that there is analytical work that supports decision-making?	
1.2	Translation of needs into action	Structures and bodies that translate (transnational) needs into objectives / action?	Documents and reports that reflect how the analysis of needs links to decision-making on objectives / action?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate that analytical work is fed into decision-making?	
1.3	Responsibilities	Structures and bodies are clearly defined with regard to their responsibilities?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reflect how responsibilities are distributed and what they imply?	Procedures and protocols are in place to support the assigned responsibilities and related processes?	
1.4	Vision- and Goal-setting	Structures and bodies in place to create common visions for the future and link them to operational goals and actions?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reproduce the common visions and operational goals of the system?	Procedures and protocols are in place to build and update common visions and goals for the system?	
1.5	Priority-setting	Structures and bodies in place to prioritise goals and actions according to objective criteria?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reproduce the priorities and decisions to prioritise actions and goals?	Procedures and protocols are in place to take decisions on priorities and to find objective criteria to prioritise ?	
1.6	Reflection and Feedback	Structures and bodies in place to reflect on achievements and performance and to feed reflections into decision-making?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reproduce reflections on achievements and performance?	Procedures and protocols are in place to support evaluation, reflection, and feedback into decision-making?	
D2	D2 - Capacities for Implementation				
ID	Functions	Structure	Content	Process	
2.1	Connection to budgeting	Structures and bodies in charge of implementation and budgeting are connected?	Documents and reports that reflect the decisions on budgeting (earmarking) in line with objectives / implementation?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate connecting decision-making with budgeting and earmarking?	
2.2	Availability of resources (human, technical, financial)	Structures and bodies that make resources available, raise funds and spread the knowledge about it?	Documents and reports that contain information on available resources or commitments to make them available?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate that resources are made available and that knowledge about it is spread?	
2.3	Organising implementation	Structures and bodies that organise implementation or support implementation?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that state how implementation is organised or supported?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate the implementation and the support to the implementing actors?	
2.4	Monitoring and control mechanisms	Structures and bodies that are in charge of monitoring and control of projects and implementation?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that inform about the implementation progress (monitoring)?	Procedures, indicators and protocols that facilitate the monitoring and control of projects and implementation?	
2.5	Engagement of stakeholders	Structures and bodies that are in charge of engaging other stakeholders in implementation?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that inform about the engagement of other stakeholders (who, how, why)?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate the engagement of other stakeholders (local, private, other countries)?	
D3	D3 - Capacities for Cooperation				
ID	Functions	Structure	Content	Process	
3.1	Coordination of decisions	Structures and bodies in charge of coordinating decision-making are in place at the different levels?	Documents and reports that reflect the coordination of decisions (processes, outcomes)?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate the process of coordinated decision-making at the different levels?	
3.2	Communication	Structures that facilitate internal and external communication between stakeholders are in place?	Documents and reports that reflect the conditions for communication and communication outcomes?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate internal and external communication between stakeholders are in place?	
3.3	Information exchange	Structures and bodies that facilitate the exchange of relevant information at the different levels are in place?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reflect the exchange of information at the different levels?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate the process of information exchange at the different levels are in place?	
3.4	Knowledge Management (KM)	Structures and bodies in charge of organising and managing the shared information are in place?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reproduce and inform about the knowledge management?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate knowledge management at the different levels are in place?	
3.5	Active cooperation in policy-making and implementation	Structures and bodies in charge of active cooperation (joint implementation) in policy-making and projects?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that inform about active cooperation (joint implementation) in policy-making and projects?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate active cooperation (joint implementation) in policy-making and projects?	
D4	D4 - Enabling Environment				
ID	Functions	Structure	Content	Process	
4.1	Leadership	Structures and bodies that support and promote leadership within the macro-regional governance?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reflect the leadership within the governance system?	Procedures and protocols that support and promote leadership within the governance system ?	
4.2	Mutual support (within the system)	Structures and bodies that facilitate mutual support within the macro-regional governance?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that inform about mutual support within the governance system?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate mutual support within the governance system?	
4.3	Learning facilities in the system	Structures and bodies that facilitate learning within the macro-regional governance?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reflect learning (processes, results) within the governance system?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate learning and development within the governance system?	
4.4	Openness and adaptability (learning from others)	Structures and bodies that facilitate openness to the environment and adaptive change as a response to external influences?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that reflect openness to the environment and adaptive change as a response to external influences?	Procedures and protocols that facilitate openness to the environment and adaptive change as a response to external influences?	
4.5	Commitment of the environment	Structures and bodies that invite/ incentivise external actors to commit to the macro-regional governance?	Documents, reports and knowledge (stories) that report on the commitment of external actors to the macro-regional governance?	Procedures and protocols that invite/incentivise external actors to commit to the macro-regional governance?	

Source: Own elaboration



Figure 7: The Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA) – Visualisation Tool (example)

GOA - Governance Assessment Tool		GOA Government Assessment Scorecard			
		Strong = Well developed, addressed, documented, defined Weak = partially developed, addressed, documented, defined Not developed= NOT identified or addressed, NOT defined or documented			
	Rating	Not developed = 0 Weak = 1 Strong = 2	Not developed = 0 Weak = 1 Strong = 2	Not developed = 0 Weak = 1 Strong = 2	
	Functions	Structure	Content	Process	Functional Sub-Score
1.1	1.1 Analysis for Decision-Making	0	1	1	2
1.2	1.2 Translation of needs into action	1	0	0	1
1.3	1.3 Responsibilities	2	1	1	4
1.4	1.4 Vision- and Goal-setting	2	2	2	6
1.5	1.5 Priority-setting	1	0	1	2
1.6	1.6 Reflection and Feedback	0	0	0	0
D1 Sub-Score	Capacities for Political Decision-Making	6	4	5	15
2.1	2.1 Connect to budgeting	0	0	0	0
2.2	2.2 Availability of resources (human, technical, financial)	1	0	0	1
2.3	2.3 Organising implementation	2	1	1	4
2.4	2.4 Monitoring and control mechanisms	0	0	0	0
2.5	2.5 Engagement of stakeholders	1	0	0	1
D2 Sub-Score	Capacities for Implementation	4	1	1	6
3.1	3.1 Coordination of decisions	2	0	0	2
3.2	3.2 Communication	2	1	1	4
3.3	3.3 Information exchange	2	0	1	3
3.4	3.4 Knowledge Management (KM)	0	0	0	0
3.5	3.5 Active cooperation in policy-making and implementation	1	1	1	3
D3 Sub-Score	Capacities for Cooperation	7	2	3	12
4.1	4.1 Leadership	2	0	1	3
4.2	4.2 Mutual support (within the system)	2	1	1	4
4.3	4.3 Learning facilities in the system	2	1	0	3
4.4	4.4 Openness and adaptability (learning from others)	0	0	0	0
4.5	4.5 Commitment of the environment	1	0	0	1
D4 Sub-Score	Enabling Environment	7	2	2	11
Total Score	All Dimensions	24	9	11	44

Source: Own elaboration



In a second step, the GOA tool will help to analyse the efficiency of the governance system. Based on the collected data, the development level of each function will be rated, using the variables of the structure-content-process (S-C-P) grid. The proposed rating method for new governance systems is a 1-3 rating scale (not developed, weak, strong); for mature systems a 1-5 rating scale (not developed, basic, intermediate, advanced, full) is recommended.

For macro regional governance systems both, the strategic coordination level and the implementation level should be examined, as they both contribute to the governance functions. The tool enables a generic assessment, but also a more in-depth study of different thematic policy areas. It helps to differentiate efforts and achievements in the various policy domains and to detect good practices.

During the rating process it should be made clear that the goal is not to reach the highest score in each and every one of the S-C-P fields, but rather to see where governance functions are attended and capacities are in place. As mentioned before, deliberately weak structures can be replaced or complemented by content or processes.

The tool has been designed to support the analysis and improvement of governance systems as part of an on-going learning process. Therefore, it is extremely useful to visualise and communicate the results (Figure 7) of the assessment in order to raise awareness within the system and as a necessary condition to build up new capacities. The analysis can be carried out from within the governance system as a part of a self-evaluation and development process. However, for the first application external supervision and guidance is recommended, in particular to preserve a certain neutrality and distance to other stakeholders.

The tool helps to focus the debate on specific functions of governance that do not work as well as they should, without the need to blame specific roles or people. The GOA tool rather supports the reflection from a systemic point of view on how different elements within the system can be better integrated, improve their communication or be supported through additional content and processes.

Conclusions

This brief has introduced the Governance Assessment Scorecard (GOA), a new method that acknowledges the complexity of transnational cooperation processes, providing at the same time a simple and handy enough tool to be used in the assessment of macro regional governance systems that will allow its continuous development and improvement. Furthermore, the tool can help to compare and benchmark the development of governance within the different macro regional strategies in Europe.

The tool is thought to be an analytical tool that might offer new insights into how multi-level governance in the case of macro regional strategies is structured. It is a complementary tool to the evaluation of results and impacts of macro regional strategies. Where a proper evaluation will focus on questions such as 'What has been achieved?' and 'Was it effective?', the GOA tool, considering that governance is an important factor to influence effectiveness of macro regional strategies, would complement the analysis looking for answers regarding the 'How?' and 'Why (not)?'. Learning about these mechanisms will help to shorten the natural learning curve needed to improve decision-making and implementation in macro regional settings.

Still, there are several limitations to GOA that might be overcome through further research and practical use of the tool. First, even if operationalisation is rather strict, the qualitative assessments might vary from one person to the other, from one case to the other, reducing comparability. Second, without an additional impact analysis GOA does not indicate which weaknesses are having which



impact. Thus, it does not allow for prioritisation of weaknesses to tackle. Third, the tool gives only generic hints on how to overcome weaknesses and strengthen the governance system.

There is no unique standard for quality in multi-level governance. The dependence on larger cultural or historic context or the previous experience with MLG is so diverse in Europe, that it is difficult to establish one ideal blueprint for governance capacities. This would contradict also the decentralised approach to let macro-regions organise and evolve themselves. Rather, the tool should support internal reflection processes on the capacities and functions needed to achieve the goals of macro regional strategies. It helps to untangle the complex governance system and to detect more precisely ineffective areas within governance and implementation processes. The tool facilitates a more differentiated analysis of governance effectiveness in macro regional strategies.

Unquestionably, there is still a lot to be developed in relation to governance assessment. But, at least now it has become possible to open the black box of macro regional governance systems and to take a closer look at what is (or is not) inside. Hopefully, this might contribute to a debate on the adequateness of current governance models and on possible improvements of functions, structures and processes within macro regional frameworks.

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