



Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC 21–22 January 2018, Sofia

Background Information

Session 3 - The role of EU macro-regional strategies for sustainable development, stability and security

According to the EC's definition, a 'Macro-regional strategy' is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area which thereby benefits from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Four EU macro-regional strategies, covering several policies, have been adopted so far:

- **The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** (2009)
- **The EU Strategy for the Danube Region** (2010)
- **The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region** (2014)
- **The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region** (2015)

All adopted macro-regional strategies are also accompanied by a rolling action plan to be regularly updated in light of new, emerging needs and changing contexts. The four macro-regional strategies concern 19 EU¹ Member-States and nine non-EU countries.²

Session III of the COSAC Chairperson's meeting will focus on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the Black Sea Synergy.

1. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EUSBSR, was adopted in 2009. The Strategy is an agreement between the Member States of the EU and the European Commission to strengthen cooperation between the countries bordering the Baltic Sea in order to meet the common challenges faced by these countries today. The Strategy's main goals are "saving the

¹ Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine.



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sea”, “increasing prosperity” and “connecting the region”.

Besides issues related to the Baltic Sea itself, the Strategy covers many other common challenges and opportunities. The starting point is always the same whether the issue concerns transport solutions, joint education ventures or the environment. The Strategy concerns mainly the EU Member States in the Baltic Region: **Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark**. However, some countries outside the EU also participate actively in projects under the Baltic Sea Strategy. **Norway** and **Russia** are also often involved, as an important partner countries, as well as **Iceland** and **Belarus**.³

2. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region

A strategy to boost the development of the Danube Region was proposed by the European Commission on **8 December 2010**⁴. Member States endorsed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region at the General Affairs Council on **13 April 2011**⁵.

The Danube region covers parts of nine EU Member States⁶ and five non-EU countries⁷.

The region is facing several challenges, such as environmental threats (water pollution, floods, climate change); untapped shipping potential and lack of road and rail transport connections; insufficient energy connections; uneven socio-economic development; uncoordinated education, research and innovation systems; shortcomings in safety and security etc.

Better coordination and cooperation between the countries and regions is needed to address these challenges.

The **people living in the Danube Region** could benefit from **faster transport** by road and rail; **cleaner transport** by improving the navigability of rivers; **cheaper and more secure energy** thanks to better connections and alternative sources; a **better environment** with cleaner water, protected biodiversity, and cross-border flood prevention; a **prosperous region**, through working together on the economy, education, social inclusion, and research and innovation; **attractive tourist and cultural destinations**, developed and marketed jointly; a **safer and well-governed region**.

3 <http://www.balticsea-region.eu/news-room/documents-materials?task=document.viewdoc&id=26>

4 Commission Communication - EU Strategy for the Danube Region

5 Council Conclusions

6 Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia

7 Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova



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The EU has identified 12 priority areas, which will focus the improvement of:

- **transport** connections
- **energy** connections
- **the environment**
- **socio-economic** development
- **security**

The Strategy does not come with extra EU finance but it is supported from the resources already available according to an integrated approach. Countries may also make use of the funding they receive through EU cohesion policy, other EU programmes and financial instruments, and various international financial institutions.⁸

3. Black Sea Synergy

The Black Sea Synergy initiative was proposed by the European Commission in a Communication to the Parliament and the Council in April 2007. The European Parliament highlighted the importance of strengthened cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the region in its Resolution of 17 January 2008. The Black Sea Synergy was formally launched at a joint meeting of European Union and Black Sea Foreign Ministers in Kiev in February 2008. In June 2008, the European Commission released a report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy. The report described the progress achieved in implementing the tasks set by the 2007 Communication and produced a number of forward-looking proposals, including the establishment of three sectoral partnerships: environment, transport and energy. Since then, the environmental partnership has produced tangible results in a number of focus areas, while new areas of cooperation such as the cross-cutting integrated maritime policy have emerged. Since 2009, the European Union (EU) has invested nearly 140 million euro in the region. The European Parliament in 2011 adopted a second Resolution calling for the further development of the EU's policies towards the Black Sea region.⁹

The Black Sea Synergy is essentially a regional initiative, open to all Black Sea States. It has the very specific objective of identifying and supporting what the partners in the region want to do together. It is about projects and activities and its centre of gravity is

8 http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/bg/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube/#2

9 https://blacksea-horizon.eu/object/document/318/attach/swd_2015_6_en.pdf



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in the Black Sea region. It is based as much as possible on initiatives taken in the region, and will support objectives that the Black Sea countries have already subscribed to.

The Black Sea Synergy is the expression of the EU's commitment to the Black Sea region, and to the shared objective of bringing concrete improvements that can benefit the region through cooperative approaches. The EU wants to give reality to this initiative by establishing sector partnerships in three crucial sectors: environment, transport and energy. These sectors have been chosen because it is hard to question their importance to the region. Improvements in these sectors will have direct effect in the whole wider Black Sea region.¹⁰

In conclusion, the added value of macro-regional strategies is characterised by its cross-sectoral approach, its transnational dimension (including the participation of non-EU countries) and its contribution to better multi-level governance. This is an ambitious concept that needs time to be consolidated and to bear fruit.

¹⁰ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-10-78_en.htm?locale=en