

Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies: results and perspectives for the future

The [report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies](#), whose rapporteur is Andrea Cozzolino, was adopted on 1st December 2017 by the European Parliament. The objective of this report is to foster discussion on the future of macro-regional strategies (MRS) within the context of the post-2020 cohesion policy and to provide a contribution for the Commission's next report on the implementation of European MRS, expected in 2018.

The [report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies \(MRS\)](#) highlights the relevance of MRS as platforms for cooperation and coordination between Member States and suggests improvements for the four currently existing MRS: the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBR), the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP).

Each MRS is set within the boundaries of the “**three no’s**” principle: no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no new EU legislation.

1. Overall evaluation

The report is positive regarding the European MRS. The European Parliament (EP) recognizes that MRS make an “*invaluable and innovative contribution to cross-border, cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation in Europe*”, which help to boost connectivity and consolidate the economic relations between regions and countries. In addition, the report considers that the multi-level governance applied for the MRS with a proper role for the regions should be a cornerstone of any MRS from its inception, involving regional and local communities and public, private and third sector stakeholders in process.

Nonetheless, the report recognises that the quality of the implementation of the MRS depends largely on commitment, ownership, resources and governance.

2. Recommendations and improvements for EUSALP and EUSDR

The EUSALP and the EUSDR have an important part of their territories in mountain areas. The EP recognizes the **positive impact of these strategies and their achievements for territorial cohesion**. For instance, the EUSDR has had a positive impact on cooperation, by improving mobility and interconnections for all modes of transport, promoting clean energy, culture and sustainable tourism. Or, the EUSALP can be a good example of a template strategy for territorial cohesion, as it incorporates different areas, like high developed cities and mountain and rural areas, and it offers a platform for jointly addressing the challenges they face (such as climate change, biodiversity, migration,...).



Furthermore, the report highlights some gaps and remaining challenges; including the following:

For the Danube Region (EUSDR)	For the Alpine Region (EUSALP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Danube Strategy Point should be reopened. It could contribute to a smoother implementation of the strategy; • Supplementary joint measures to prevent cross-border pollution should be considered and that EUSDR Member States should prevent damage caused by flooding; • A high degree of political support is essential, so is the increase of resources and capacity of competent state authorities in order to tackle the remaining challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders should promote environment-related investments that address the consequences of climate change, including interrelated transport strategies; • To overcome borders for labour market or any economic activities; • The participating countries and regions should continue their commitment and support to EUSALP Action Group members and pay due attention to the use of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme in addressing common priorities

3. Which future of MRS after 2020?

The European Parliament’s report tries to answer to the following three questions:

1. How to ensure that all participating countries invest enough resources in the MRS?

The report suggests to:

- Implement an effective **exchange of information, best practices, know-how and experience** between macro-regions and their regional and local authorities; but also enhance the **visibility and public perception of the MRS activities**, such as promoting information campaigns, exchanges of best practices, online platforms and social networks
- Revise the objectives of the **MRS at the same time as the MFF** to strengthen their links with EU priorities and consolidate associated financial instruments
- Base the strategy **on a long-term vision** and on a shared long-term political commitment post 2020;
- **Make clear commitments**, for participating countries, **in terms of funding** and human resources for the implementation of the MRS from the outset;
- Promote good practices and to develop incentives **to encourage the active participation of and coordination between all parties concerned.**

2. What are the opportunities to make the results of MRS more measurable?

The report calls to **simplify the funds and the procedures** to increase the MRS effectiveness and to focus on **results-oriented and concrete challenges**, including in environmental protection.

3. Are there reasons to expand the MRS concept?

The report recognises that there is a call to develop such MRS strategies for the Carpathians, the Atlantic, Mediterranean or Iberian regions. It is not opposed to such idea directly. Nonetheless, the call for these new strategies should not divert attention from the primary objective of improved, deeper implementation of already existing MRS.

4. *Next steps*

The European Commission's next report on the implementation of MRS is expected in 2018.

In its report, the European Parliament calls upon the Commission to submit proposals **to promote a better implementation of MRS** and to **undertake a more in-depth analysis** on (a) the effectiveness of the European Territorial Cooperation programme, on (b) indicators which could be integrated in each MRS, on (c) measures to strengthen the link with EU priorities, on (d) the quality of the involvement of regional and local government in the implementation of MRS and on (e) the simplification of the implementation of funding schemes.

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