

Extract of the EESC opinion ECO/609 on the 4th EC report on EUMRS

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EUSDR PA 10, Steering Committee meeting
Belgrade, 06-07. 06. 2023.

Approach, main statements

The EUMRS and the Strategic Macro-Regions

- Play a key role in the territorial economic and social cohesion of the regions
- Are promoting the coexistence between the national and the cooperational interests
- Contribute to tackling the health crisis and the Ukrainian war (mainly EUSDR and EUSBR)
- Efforts should be more oriented towards
 - The 2030 Agenda
 - A balanced promotion of economic-social-environmental-cultural values

Transversal features of the MRS

- 4 MRS, of which 19 EU-MSs + 10 non-EU states, with overlappings
- Common strategic priorities:
 - Increase prosperity
 - Connect the region
 - Save/protect environment
- Interreg funding programmes drop by 15-20 % from 2014-20 to 2021-27
- Seeking for outreaching to other EU funds, mainly under the Cohesion Package and local-regional-national resources
- Consolidating/focusing actions by reducing the items in the action plans

The role in the Ukrainian war

- 2 MRs with „direct influence” and helping links between Ukraine and the European Union
 - **EUSDR:**
 - Helping and integrating refugees
 - Creating safe freight corridors
 - Supporting the Ukrainian EUSDR presidency’s efforts
 - **EUSBR:**
 - Refugee and freight support
 - Suspending links to Russia and Belarus
 - (opening cooperation with Norway + Iceland)

Main recommendations -1

- Reinforce the capacities for sectoral policy implementation, both in EU- and non-EU regions
- Smart specialisation and clustering approach
 - (producing „better” not „more”, less waste, strategic autonomy)
- More involvement of the civil society and territorial governance for a higher sense of program ownership
- Training, up-skilling and exchange programmes for civil servants in an Erasmus-like way

Main recommendations -2

- Increase the awareness of MRS by better communication and visible benefits of succesful cross-border + regional programs
- Besides the political coordination via Foreign Ministries, involve the operational level via Ministries of EU Affairs/Funds
- Systematic development of actions' funding by aligning them with the project-type approach and „banking-comform/-t/ management of financial funds
- The conditions became ripe for launching a new MRS in the western Mediterranean regions