



## **Draft Council conclusions on governance of macro-regional strategies (Draft 10-09-2014)**

“THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING the Council Conclusions of 22 October 2013 on added value of macro-regional strategies;

RECALLING, in particular, that the Commission was invited to facilitate the discussions on improving the governance of the macro-regional strategies and to report to the Council by the end of 2014, including streamlining the reporting, reviewing and follow-up;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Commission's Report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter: the Report) delivered on 20 May 2014;

RECALLING that the delivery of results of macro-regional strategies relies on effective governance model and efficient procedures for the implementation, which take into account the institutional architecture of the participating countries as well as the specificities and competences of their administrative structures;

REFERRING to the concept of macro-regional strategies as an integrated framework endorsed by European Council<sup>2</sup> and relating to Member States and non-EU countries in the same geographical area in order to address common challenges and to benefit from strengthened cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion and RECALLING that in further evolution of macro-regional strategies priority should be given to the issues of coherence and strategic relevance for the macro-regions concerned, providing genuine value-added in relation to horizontal community policies, in particular to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to result-orientation;

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<sup>1</sup> COM (2014) 284 final, of 20.5.2014, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies.

<sup>2</sup> Insert reference



RECOGNISING the potential of macro-regional strategies for contributing to the achievement of EU objectives, in particular to support growth and job, and for helping to adapt to future challenges facing the EU;

STRESSING that macro-regional strategies are of interest to all EU Member States and contribute – *inter alia* - to further integration of the internal market, to the stability of certain area, to foster cooperation between EU and non-EU countries, and to assist participating candidate and potential candidate countries on their path towards the EU;

RECOGNIZING that the macro-regional strategies should maintain the EU perspective and be aimed primarily at the development of EU countries but at the same time also contribute to the European integration while involving both EU Member States and non-EU countries in equal participation;

ACKNOWLEDGING that macro-regional strategies have to concentrate their actions within a specific geographic area, but they do not have to create new-barriers in the EU;

STRESSING that macro-regional strategies are based on the principles of no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no new EU legislation, and therefore that they call for optimal use of existing financial resources, better use of existing institutions and better implementation of existing legislation;

REITERATING the need for coordination between relevant EU policies as well as between EU and national, and regional and local policies having an impact on territorial cohesion, respecting the principle of subsidiarity;

STRESSING that the macro-regional strategies are not limited to the cohesion policy domain but at the same time TAKING NOTE that the 2014-2020 legislative package for cohesion policy paves the way for better embedding the macro-regional strategies in the programming and implementation of relevant EU policies;

RECOGNISING that the existing macro-regional strategies are proving their added value both strategically and politically;

RECALLING the debates on the implementation of macro-regional strategies which underlined weaknesses, obstacles and margins for improvements in the governance of the macro-regional strategies and ACKNOWLEDGING that for a better governance it is necessary to ensure a stronger political leadership and decision making as well as a greater clarity in the organization of the work;



WELCOMING the indications contained in the Report based on the experience gained from the existing macro-regional strategies and, in particular, the lessons learned from the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, notably the need to focus on a limited number of challenges and opportunities, to strengthen institutional and administrative capacity, and to secure ownership, commitment and leadership from participating countries as well as ACKNOWLEDGING that the Report does not intend to present a pre-defined model of governance and provides with options and recommendations to be taken into account in the context of reference;

ACKNOWLEDGING that governance involves three levels: (i) political leadership and ownership, (ii) coordination, (iii) implementation and that these levels are inter-related, in particular political leadership and ownership being a pre-requisite for effective coordination and implementation and ACKNOWLEDGING that these levels should be reviewed and strengthened in order to ensure that the implementation of the strategies brings clear impact and better results;

### ***General principles***

UNDERLINES that the governance is a shared process which describes how and by whom the strategies are implemented, joint actions initiated and financed and which involves the European Commission and the other European Institutions, the Member States at both political and administrative level, the stakeholders, thematic experts and implementers at all levels.

STRESSES that the governance is not a “one size fits all” model and RECOMMENDS that the governance of macro-regional strategies is built on the experience and practice of existing strategies and to consider adapting the governance to the specificities of the strategies and of the institutional and administrative structure of the countries participating in the strategy, with a proportionate and flexible approach, also open to further developments;

STRESSES that the governance and the related working method should avoid creating unnecessary administrative burdens and should aim at a streamlined process;

CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to refrain from setting up new additional structures and ENCOURAGES to better exploit and enhance existing structures;



STRESSES that the effectiveness of the strategies to deliver tangible results relies on both the Commission and the Member States and requires the involvement of EU and national Parliaments, including regional governments, as well that of the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, in order to ensure an adequate debate at EU 28 level; Being the Strategies also addressed to non-EU countries, INVITES the Commission to ensure their full engagement at the appropriate political levels, as well as the engagement of the Member States;

### ***Political leadership and ownership***

UNDERLINES the importance of responsibility and leadership of the Commission and INVITES the Commission to continue playing a leading role in strategic coordination of all key delivery stages of the macro-regional strategies, in partnership with the Member States and in accordance with the subsidiarity principle;

CALLS on the Commission to ensure that the governance of the strategies is coherent and in line with the implementation overall of EU policies;

INVITES the Member States to reinforce the political leadership and ownership of the macro-regional strategies as well as to maintain their political commitment in the long term and translate their commitment into institutional and administrative support in order to ensure effective delivery of the strategy, in particular by clearly identifying institutional and administrative responsibilities in relation to the themes covered by the strategies, and the actions to be implemented;

INVITES the Member States to ensure that political guidance to the operational level is from their political representatives who provide overall direction, set priorities and take decisions and that the responsible for embedding the implementation of the Strategy within existing plans and programmes, for evaluating progress, guiding implementation and seeking breakthroughs when stalemates and deadlocks occur are formally recognised on both trans-national and national level, in order to ensure an effective and systemic linkage between the political level and coordination and implementation;

INVITES:

1. the Commission and the Member States to strengthen policy-level discussions by to reinforce the strategic role of the High Level Group and the National Contact Points to ensure strong leadership and ownership;
2. the Commission and the Member States to better use the existing Annual Fora and to ensure that those are concrete occasions where decisions are taken and the consequent implementation of the decisions is monitored;
3. the Commission and the Member States to liaise with and to ensure the involvement of the EU and national Parliaments, including as appropriate the regional political level ;
4. the Commission and the Member States to reflect on better involvement of relevant Council formation, to ensure regular and structured debate on macro-regional strategies;

### ***Coordination***

#### **INVITES:**

1. the Commission to play a key role in the coordination aspects;
2. the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the political dimension and the decisions taken are implemented through a strong and effective coordination, formally recognized, among the relevant authorities and including cross-policy and cross-sectoral coordination;
3. the Member States to provide with professional management to ensure coordination and operational guidance, reporting and evaluation of results, cooperation with macro-regional organisations; to this aim to set out a clear breakdown of competencies and tasks of their authorities at both national and macro-regional level;
4. the Member States to empower the National Contact Points for a stronger management, coordination and monitoring and to reinforce the role of the National Contact Points in bringing together national/regional stakeholders to facilitate the implementation;
5. the High Level Group to ensure coordination among the macro-regional strategies;
6. the Commission to take the macro-regional strategies into account in relevant policy initiatives and programmes to ensure the added value of the strategies;
7. the Commission to ensure regular coordination among all its relevant Services;
8. the Commission and the Member States concerned to encourage their authorities responsible for the management of different financing instruments to align existing EU

and other funds and instruments to the goals of the macro-regional strategies where appropriate;

9. the Commission and the Member States to ensure the coordination with the partnership agreements and the programmes co-financed by the ESI Funds and the embedding of the macro-regional strategies in the implementation of the programmes, especially in cases where ESI Funds represent the main financing source for investments for growth and jobs, and to this aim enhance the coordination role of the managing authorities of the programmes co-financed by ESI Funds in the framework of the strategies' implementation;
10. the Member States to better exploit the potentials in the coordination role of the transnational cooperation programmes, where relevant;
11. the Commission and the Member States to ensure that adequate coordination is established among existing and future macro-regional strategies, in particular to ensure that projects and partnerships can be developed across macro-regional strategies as appropriate and where relevant, also reflecting on whether and how the role of INTERACT could be enhanced;

### ***Implementation***

#### **INVITES:**

1. the Commission to provide expertise and to actively facilitate the implementation of the agreed actions and the coordinating of existing EU funds and instruments, to cooperate closely with the relevant financial institutions necessary for the realisation and funding of the Strategy as well as to safeguard the involvement of stakeholders concerned from all levels;
2. the Commission and the Member States to align available financial resources at the EU, national and regional level with the objectives, roadmaps and implementation plans of macro-regional strategies consistent with the needs of the programming areas as identified by the Member States,
3. the Member States to make full use of thematic experts and steering groups to drive implementation;
4. the Commission and the Member States to improve publicity and communication to raise awareness on the objectives and opportunities of the strategies;



5. the Commission and the Member States to fully explore the concrete application of the provisions for the ESI Funds, in particular those related to financing operations outside programme area;

ENCOURAGES:

1. the Member States to reflect on an appropriate engagement of the private sector;
2. the Member States and other relevant authorities concerned to embed these objectives into the programming documents of the new 2014-2020 programming period in a coordinated way taking into account possibilities foreseen in the Common Strategic Framework for 2014– 2020 inter alia by cooperative governance arrangements and specific mechanisms such as giving priority in the selection process to the operations deriving from these strategies or organising specific calls for them;
3. the Member States to support National Contact Points key implementers of the Strategy, also using the institutional and capacity-building support of transnational programmes 2014-2020 upon decision of related managing authorities and monitoring committees;

CALLS ON:

1. the Commission and the Member States to ensure appropriate monitoring, reporting and evaluation, based on realistic indicators and targets;
2. the Member States to a strong involvement of civil society and consultative networks or platforms in the project activities, taking in consideration the importance of civil society and consultative networks or platforms in ensuring good quality projects;

INVITES the Member States, Commission and other interested stakeholders to take into account these Conclusions while implementing the existing macro-regional strategies and when preparing the future strategies.