

Guidance Note – EUSALP governance

Contribution for the Milano's SG meeting of 8 and 9 October 2015 –
UPDATE for Brussels's SG meeting 30/11 and 1 /12 2015, for Brdo's SG meeting 26/01/2016 and
for Executive Board meeting 19-20/04/2016

Selected abbreviations

AG	Action Group
AGL	Action Group Leader
AP	Action Plan
ASP	Alpine Space Transnational Cooperation Programme
EB	Executive Board
GA	General Assembly
NC	National Coordinator
OC	Objective Coordination

Background

The aim of the EUSALP is to enhance cooperation and investment to the benefit of all parties involved: States, regions, civil society stakeholders and European citizens. By building on the rich existing cooperation structures, and making better use of existing funds through improved coordination and cooperation within the existing legal framework, the strategy is intended to increase the attractiveness of the area in Europe, taking better advantage of its assets and seizing opportunities for innovative and sustainable development in a European context.

The strategy is still at an initial stage. Preliminary works for the preparation of an EU macro-regional strategy for the Alpine Region started already in 2012; on 28 July 2015, the EUSALP was launched in the form of a Communication and an AP. They take into account the results of the extensive online public consultation conducted between July and October 2014 as well as the conclusions of the closing high-level Stakeholder Conference in Milan on 1-2 December 2014.

The Communication and the AP were transmitted to the European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. On 27 November 2015 the strategy was finally endorsed by the Council of the European Union. The Launch Conference of the EUSALP on 25/26 January 2016 in Brdo, Slovenia, marked the move to the timely implementation phase of the strategy. The Joint Statement adopted at Brdo on January 25, 2016 by representatives of the National and Regional Governments of Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland set a basic multilevel governance structure. The constitutional meeting of EUSALP GA¹ confirmed political agreement on governance as shared process and that the implementation of the Strategy relies on a collective effort on the part of the participating actors in their different roles in the implementation of the Strategy. GA also confirmed political leadership and its own role, called for swift formation of the EB and endorsed AGLs.

¹ Brdo, January 25th, 2016

A critical aspect of the EUSALP is the current discussion on governance in order to build up an effective multi-level governance system. The term “governance” describes here the process to be addressed: how and by whom the strategies are implemented, joint actions initiated and financed.

The purpose of the note is to contribute to the current discussion on governance, taking account of the Commission's report on governance of macroregional strategies², and drawing on lessons learnt from other macro-regional strategies³. It summarises the key conditions that each of the three levels of governance – political, coordination and implementation – should comply with and describes the main tasks that should be fulfilled at each level.

Moreover, the multi-level governance system that underpins the strategy should fully respect the institutional architecture of the participating states and regions and the respective competences of their administrative structures.

1. Political Level: leadership, overall political steering and decision-making

Countries involved, at national and regional level, should **take general strategic leadership at ministerial level**.

A **GA** will gather the high-level political representatives of States and Regions involved in the strategy, the European Commission, and the Alpine Convention as observer.

The GA shall be composed of representatives from the participating States (according to each internal governance system) + representatives from all the Regions included in the strategy + EU Commission (as coordinator/facilitator) + Alpine Convention (as observer).

The GA should mainly be responsible for laying down the general political guidelines for the strategy. Furthermore, the GA has the possibility of organising ministerial meetings in order to create the necessary political awareness for the strategy.

The GA should be held on a regular basis, at least once a year. Decisions should be made by consensus, based on one voice for each country delegation. The European Commission will act as a facilitator and coordinator and will co-chair the meetings, without voting right. The Commission will confirm that decisions taken by the GA comply with EU legislation, when appropriate. The GA can also meet in an extended format open to all relevant stakeholders, for example at the Annual Forum.

In order to concretely fulfil their political commitment, participating States and Regions must take action and fulfil several tasks.

At country level, tasks of the participating State/Region³ include:

1. Ensuring that the strategy is implemented and has continuous political commitment to it by:

² COM (2014)284 final.

³ EUSBSR AP reviewed in May 2015, the EUSAIR joint statement of the representatives of the participating countries, Brussels, 18 November 2014, the joint statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the participating states of the EUSDR Brussels, 13 May 2015 as well as the working paper on governance for the EUSAIR.

- a. Intensifying actions to further enhance existing political support for the implementation of the strategy at all levels (EU, national, regional and local), particularly by making the strategy considered by all relevant fora.
 - b. Recognising the need to include the strategy on the agenda of the Council in its different formations and when appropriate to promote effective involvement of and closer links to relevant EU policies in the implementation of the strategy.
2. Ensuring that national and regional strategic planning, existing policies, programmes and financial instruments enable implementation of the strategy by:
- c. Coordinating and integrating relevant policies with the strategy.
 - d. Inviting line ministries and other relevant authorities to mobilise programmes /financial instruments to support the implementation of the strategy.
3. Supporting the role of NCs of the strategy and OC(s) in thematic and transnational implementation of the strategy by:
- e. Appointing one or several NC and supporting it in fulfilling its tasks, and a national coordination body to boost the effectiveness, synergy and sustainability of the results achieved.
 - f. Assuming responsibility for coordinating the policy area(s) concerned within its legal and political competences.
 - g. Appointing OC(s) and ensuring that there is adequate internal capacity to fulfil the role.
 - h. Appointing members for the different Action Groups who represent the State / Region in the respective Action Group and contribute to the implementation of the work plan of the Action Groups.
 - i. Maintaining adequate internal capacity to implement the EUSALP.

2. Coordination level

Coordination is a crucial level of governance in the implementation of any macro-regional strategy. It should ensure greater dialogue and cooperation across all decision-making levels, and sectors within each country as well as between participating states and regions, to reduce fragmentation, improve the realisation of actions and encourage effective participation of all relevant actors. It also requires the capacity to exchange information and to detect policy gaps when they arise.

It will be the duty of the participating countries to take care of the strategy's coordination mechanism.

Based on the experience with the other macro-regional strategies and in order to provide a more effective and efficient implementation, a **two-level coordination** built upon **NCs** – coordination inside each country and **OC** – coordination inside each thematic objective and across countries, is highly recommended.

Each country should appoint one or several NCs, ensuring a coordination function within the national government system with regard to the national, regional and local level, also involving civil society and other stakeholders.

NCs (represented by a national and / or regional government institution) should take the lead in strategic coordination and operational leadership at country level. They should regularly inform the line-ministries and government of on-going initiatives. In addition they should strive for the alignment of policies and funding across the selected priorities/objectives. National arrangements should facilitate this.

NCs should coordinate, at national level, with the "thematic" experts to ensure decisions lead to concrete action.

NCs should meet regularly within the EB to ensure continuous adequate coordination and good information flow. Meetings should be chaired by the country holding the rotating Presidency of the macro-regional strategy.

The relevant transnational cooperation programme (Alpine Space) and INTERACT should provide targeted facilitation to this key macroregional coordination within their possibilities. Tasks could include conceptual and further developmental work on projects (existing, on-going, planned, and proposed), funding sources, and targets. They should facilitate reporting and publicity, provided that the programmes foresee such activities.

The tasks of the NCs include:

- **At country level:**
 1. Seeking political continuous support and commitment to implement the strategy within the country; convening and preparing meetings at ministerial level, as appropriate, in close coordination with NCs from the other participating countries.
 2. Acting within the country as interface between the operational/managerial level (Policy area) and the political/ministerial level.
 3. Ensuring overall coordination of and support for the strategy implementation within the country by:
 - a. Ensuring information to and consultation with relevant institutions within the country regarding the strategy and seeking their involvement;
 - b. Organising and moderating opinion forming for the national EB delegation;
 - c. Facilitating within the country the involvement of other relevant stakeholders;
 - d. Encouraging dialogue within the country between relevant programmes/financial instruments and stakeholders for the alignment of resources.
 4. Encouraging the participation of relevant stakeholders from the entire country in the implementation of the strategy also with the support of the Stakeholders Platform; as well as ensuring coordination with existing regional cooperation organisations, when appropriate.

5. Promoting the visibility of the strategy within the country.
- **At macro-regional level:**
 1. Formulating and communicating country positions on the strategy and AP to the EB.
 2. Cooperating with the other EUSALP NCs to secure coherence and exchange of good practices.
 3. Supporting OC in implementing the strategy; through the EB, issuing strategic guidelines to the OC and ensuring linkages between the implementation of EUSALP objectives.
 4. Encouraging the participation of relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region in the implementation of the strategy also with the support of the Stakeholders Platform; as well as ensuring coordination with existing regional cooperation organisations, when appropriate.
 5. In close cooperation with the European Commission through the EB, participating in and proposing possible revisions of the strategy and/or the AP.
 6. Based on a sound monitoring and evaluation system, monitoring and evaluating the progress of the strategy within the EB and, on the request of the European Commission, itself dependent on Council formal requirements, reporting on the coordination activities taken in the implementation of the strategy.

OC should have the responsibility of thematic coordination across countries. In particular, as the objectives of the EUSALP will be implemented through several complementary actions, the OC should also ensure the coordination between different actions of the same objective.

Action group members have the possibility to agree on and to develop together coordination mechanisms and arrangements, with a view to implementing their actions in a more efficient, structured and complementary way.

The tasks of the OC include:

1. Coordinating the work of the AGs in charge of implementation of each objective, through strategic guidance with respect to management and implementation of the EUSALP and its AP. To this end, representatives from the participating states and regions should be duly empowered by their respective Governments.
2. Facilitating the involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region.
3. Implementing and following-up the policy area against targets and indicators defined. Whenever relevant, proposing to the EB a review of the set indicators and targets; monitoring progress within the policy area and reporting on it to the EB.
4. Facilitating policy discussions in the macro-region regarding the policy area concerned.
5. Ensuring communication and visibility of the policy area in the whole territory of the macro-regional strategy.

6. Maintaining a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementing programmes/financial instruments on alignment of funding for implementation of the policy area in the whole territory of the macro-regional strategy.
7. Liaising and cooperating with other OC in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplicate work on the strategy implementation.
8. Reviewing the relevance of the policy area as described in the AP, on a regular basis.
9. Conveying the relevant results and recommendations of on-going and completed actions and projects to the EB. Proposing necessary updates, including the addition, modification or deletion of actions and more generally policy proposals and recommendations of revision of the AP.
10. Ensuring and enhancing ownership between the strategy implementation and the national/regional governance institutions within the AGs.

An **EB** will be put in place and will be in charge of the overall horizontal and vertical coordination of the EUSALP Action Plan. This includes inter and intra-objective coordination (which will be performed by the OC) as well as vertical coordination inside each country, (performed by the NCs).

Composition of the EB – The EB is composed of seven national delegations headed by the National Coordinators. Each EUSALP country shall appoint its EB delegation, including State and regional level, made of up to three representatives that shall become permanent members of the EB. The European Commission will act as an independent facilitator and coordinator. It will co-chair the meetings of the EB, without voting right, jointly with the rotating Presidency of the strategy, and will ensure that decisions taken by the EB comply with EU legislation, where appropriate. The Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space Programme, as well as OC as appropriate, will participate in the EB as advisors. Other stakeholders, such as AGLs, thematic experts or relevant institutions can be invited to the meetings on a permanent or on a case by case basis.

The Tasks of the EB include:

1. The EB endorses proposals of actions which need to be implemented in order to secure the effective implementation of the Strategy.
2. The EB also endorses the selection criteria, work plans and actions proposed by the AGLs.
3. The EB has to collect the reports of the AGs and monitor implementation.
4. The EB approves unanimously all proposals, e.g. on evaluation, monitoring and possible revisions of the strategy and/or AP, before they are submitted to the General Assembly.

In case decisions are to be taken, they will be made by consensus, based on one voice for each country delegation. The EB shall meet at least twice a year and shall adopt its own Rules of Procedures. To ensure coherence, the rotating chair of the EB will coincide with the presidency of the GA. Chair and Co-Chair of the EB will be responsible for the preparation of both the EB and the GA-meetings.

3. Implementation Level

The Implementation level is a key layer, as it is mainly based on the results of joint actions and projects completed at macro-regional level that better and informed decisions can be taken at political level to improve the efficiency of the policies concerned and to reach the objectives assigned to the strategy.

AGs and AGLs will be key actors in this process. AGLs should be the drivers of day-to-day implementation. Their role, capacities, resources and engagement is a key element to the success of the strategy.

The tasks of the AGLs include:

1. Actively initiating the AG by identifying – with consultation of the NCs – relevant stakeholders from the countries and regions; facilitating the involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region.
2. Organising the drafting of a working plan/programme for the AG, jointly with the members of the AG.
3. Developing specific criteria for the purpose of selecting actions/projects within its AG, jointly with the AG members and on the basis of the broad criteria included in the AP as further developed/complemented by the EB, as appropriate.
4. Identifying actions/projects to be included in the AP, ensuring that they comply with the EUSALP objectives, including with regard to cross-cutting and horizontal aspects as well as the current working plan of the AG.
5. Maintaining a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementing programmes/financial instruments including the relevant EU programmes managed directly by the Commission and identifying relevant funding sources for the actions/projects selected and facilitating and following up implementation of actions/projects, including monitoring and evaluation towards targets and indicators defined. Whenever relevant, reviewing the set indicators and targets set; monitoring progress within the action and reporting on it through the OC to the EB.
6. Facilitating policy discussions in the macro-region regarding the action concerned as well as ensuring communication and visibility of the action.
7. Liaising and cooperating with other AGLs, NCs and OC in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplicate work on the strategy implementation.
8. Reviewing regularly the relevance of the action as described in the AP. Proposing to the OC and the NCs necessary updates, including the addition, modification or deletion of actions; conveying the relevant results and recommendations of on-going and completed actions and projects to the policy level via the OC and the NC.
9. Submitting (via the OC where appropriate) to the EB policy proposals and recommendations, including for revising the Action Plan;

In case decisions are to be taken, they should be made by consensus. The AGs shall meet ideally at least twice a year. There should be one common framework set of Rules of Procedures for all EUSALP AGs.

4. Stakeholder Platform and civil society involvement⁴

For the involvement of civil society into the strategy a set of instruments will be developed, reflecting the different scope of interests, skills and resources, languages and depth of required involvement (information, communication, consultation, participation and collaboration).

The strategy's annual forum will be a cornerstone of civil society involvement.

Other tools and formats on national and transnational level will be developed and implemented by the EB and its Members on national level.

A stakeholder platform will be created, in close collaboration with AlpGov project partners, as one important tool in order to enhance an appropriate representation of relevant actors and generate a public debate among European citizens.

This platform could be an on-line/off-line platform ensuring stakeholders (civil society, regional and local organisations, municipalities, economic and social actors, NGOs, etc.) involvement during all stages of implementation.

The main aim will be to strengthen the involvement of civil society, including cooperation of consultative networks or platforms already in place as well as bringing new ideas and knowledge of local needs into the process of implementation of EUSALP.

Therefore, the platform will be embedded in a broader concept of measures to involve European civil society and public into the working processes on the strategy actions. The overall strategy will consider common obstacles of effective involvement, such as language, level of knowledge and particular focus of interest as well as desired level of activity (information, consultation, participation).

It is advised that the Stakeholder Platform is overseen by the same entity that will manage the website, given the close connections between the two actions.”

⁴ See also the Concept Note on the Stakeholder Platform.

5. Role of the Alpine Space Transnational Cooperation Programme

Operational and administrative support is of outmost importance for an effective and efficient performance of the functions attributed to the GA, the EB, the OC (as appropriate) and the AGLs.

The Alpine Space Transnational Cooperation Programme (ASP) should be regarded as an important support instrument of the EUSALP. In particular, it shall support the governance and implementation of the EUSALP. To this end, the ASP includes, amongst other priorities, a Priority Axis 4 “Well-Governed Alpine Space” aiming to support the governance of the EUSALP i.e. key EUSALP governance actors and stakeholders in their respective roles.

Close cooperation between the EB and the Programme Committee of the ASP is required in order to make the best possible use of this Priority Axis 4, as well as the other Programme priorities, to support the EUSALP governance.

ANNEX – Structures of the four macroregional strategies



Sharing Expertise



MACRO-REGIONAL VOCABULARY as of June 2015

What does it mean? ¹	EUSBSR	EUSDR	EUSAIR	EUSALP [*]
GENERAL TERMS				
<i>Official name of the strategy</i>	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region	EU Strategy for the Danube Region	EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region	EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
<i>Documents which describe the strategy, its aims, objectives and content</i>	- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (concerning the) European Union Strategy for ... - Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication - Action Plan			
STRUCTURE				
<i>What does the strategy want to achieve?</i>	Objectives Sub-objectives	Pillars	Pillars	Objectives
<i>In which (thematic) fields does the strategy see need for action?</i>	Policy area ²	Priority Areas	Topics (per pillar)	Actions
<i>Which are the overarching horizontal issues to be tackled?</i>	Horizontal Action	No Horizontal Actions as such, but Priority Area 10 (Stepping up institutional capacity and cooperation) of horizontal nature	Cross-cutting issues + Horizontal principles	No Horizontal Actions as such but Objective 4 - Governance of horizontal nature
<i>What are the example projects/actions to tackle the core issues?</i>	Flagships ³	Indicative actions with examples of projects	Indicative actions - examples of projects	Indicative actions - examples of projects
ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS				
<i>The highest body established for all macro-regional strategies together advising the European Commission on the strategies' implementation and providing opinions on the review of the strategies</i>	High-level Group ⁴			

¹ This vocabulary is only about the wording, not about the content/tasks. It hence does not include any information on e.g. how many objectives or pillars the strategies have. ² Earlier called Priority area.
³ Earlier called Flagship projects. ⁴ For EUSALP there will be also an overall political body called "General Assembly" gathering high level political representatives of States and regions involved in the Strategy, which is in charge of the political steering of the Strategy.
^{*} This is a provisional terminology as of May 2015 as the EUSALP Communication and Action Plan are not yet adopted. Hence there might not yet be an official term for all different issues in this table.