

## Jahresforum der EU-Alpenstrategie

24. November 2017, BMW-Welt, München

## Annual Forum of the EU Alpine Strategy

24 November 2017, BMW-Welt, Munich

### Workshop 6

#### Macro-regional strategies meet transnational EU programmes – practitioners' experiences and look ahead

- Aligning Macroregional Strategies and Transnational EU Programmes – Practical Recommendations

# Aligning Macroregional Strategies and Transnational EU Programmes – Practical Recommendations



During the First Annual Forum of the EU Alpine Strategy in Munich on 23/24 November 2017, the Bavarian EUSALP Presidency held a workshop on 24 November 2017 on how the political request of a better embedding of macroregional strategies (MRS) into the EU framework post 2020 could be implemented concretely.

In the course the workshop, practitioners working on macroregional strategies and the corresponding transnational programmes came up with the following conclusions and recommendations for the period post 2020 for funding instruments, MRS actors and the European Commission:

## Recommendations for funding instruments:

- Alignment of mindset: MRS and funding programmes should understand that they are ultimately all working toward the same goals for the same geographical area
- Alignment of strategic outlook: Identify common strategic goals and topics that are relevant for both the programme and the MRS
- Alignment of support: programme should support MRS both in terms of projects (e.g. networking and exchange between programme and MRS actors) and of governance (e.g. funding priority on governance in the programme)
- Exchange with and bring together all other actors working in the same cooperation area to identify specific support needs and potential for synergies, foster communication and best practice exchange
- Build trust and relationship between national coordinators of MRS and members of programme steering committees (e.g. regular meetings, regular visits of MRS coordinators to MRS participating states)
- Offer more flexibility within programmes for thematic fields, changes in the work plan and timelines: Due to fixed work plans and programming cycles, promising MRS projects often cannot be taken on board as new calls take place only every 5-6 years
- Invest in people: support peer learning, capacity building and training for MRS actors

- Closing/Avoiding time gaps during transition periods between two programmes where no activities can be funded
- Reserve budgets in the programs for implementing strategies and give incentives for projects which contribute to MRS implementation
- Programmes can provide support to MRS governance only within the existing regulatory framework, therefore project-based funding might not be the best tool to finance a long-term term MRS
- Monitoring: Move from project impact to process impact for a long-term approach (e.g. build cooperation platforms with stakeholders, develop new methods, include stakeholders in multilevel-governance of MRS)
- Provide higher share for technical assistance to be used for funding MRS governance.

#### **Recommendations for MRS actors:**

- Alignment of personnel: programme representatives may represent the respective MRS member within the MRS steering structures and working groups
- As the project format is not suitable for MRS implementation, other sources of funding in addition to transnational programmes and inventive long-term programme relationships should be explored, such as thematic partnerships
- Make use of existing external transnational supportive and coordinating structures (e.g. EUSBSR: Nordic Council of Ministers etc.)
- Improve communication on MRS successes: MRS as a laboratory on how to cooperate better in a multi-level governance structure – the national level needs to be convinced of the added economic and societal value of transnational cooperation, but the concrete policy impact of MRS is taking place at local and regional level
- Political momentum and cooperation between and within MRS countries and regions: closer dialogue between political and working group level, more commitment and dedication from all sides to communicate and cooperate (the decision to endorse a MRS by the European Council is made by Member States) but also to commit resources
- Establish networks of mainstream programmes in all MRS: it is necessary to tap into mainstream programmes in order to ensure long-term impact of MRS (e.g. EUSBSR network of ESF Managing Authorities): for that, investment in relation building is

necessary (mainstream programmes are not used to or competent for transnational cooperation)

### **Recommendations for the European Commission:**

- In assessing success and weaknesses of existing structures, move away from an indicator-based measurement of outputs to be delivered by a certain deadline (e.g. number of workshops held) towards a process-oriented evaluation to assess long term cooperation (e.g. is the project really helping to achieve the intended objective)
- MRS need to be strongly embedded, not only mentioned, in the operational parts of mainstream programmes
- Establish a central service organisation offering basic support services for MRS which are currently all dealing with the same problems
- Administrative burden reduction: too many implementing acts, over-complicated designation procedures, too much internal reporting, too many levels of control
- Build incentives for transnational cooperation: A portion of mainstream programme funds can only be spent on initiatives that are connected to or supporting a MRS or other territorial strategy
- Offer more flexibility: Higher national co-financing rates for more prosperous regions accompanied by more freedom to spend the money by cutting back on the levels of control mechanisms
- Establish accountability and responsibility of EU Members States for MRS implementation (e.g. reporting on MRS implementation within the European Semester process)
- Work towards MRS capitalization: MRS need a core support structure in the form of a specifically designated programme which coordinates all activities, offers more flexibility and openness for cooperation and also offer support in capacity building
- Programme funds should not finance things like travel costs for MRS actors, but only be used on projects and coordination and cooperation exercises
- Programmes supporting a MRS should be allowed a higher share of technical assistance for MRS governance support
- Establish the same co-financing rate for all MRS member countries, regardless of GNP (e.g. EUSBSR: 15% for all countries)