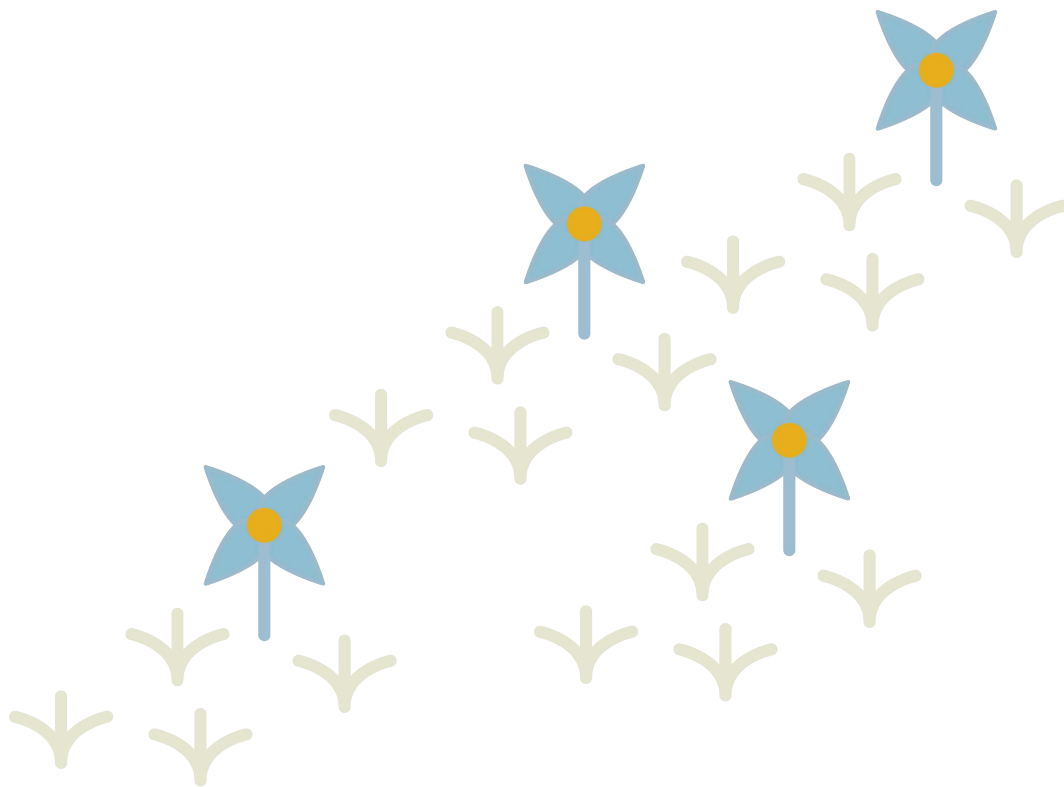


# Added value of macro-regional strategies

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**Project and programme perspective**  
**Final report of the study**  
**February 2017**



## Abbreviations

CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
EUSALP	European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
EUSDR	European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
R&I	Research and Innovation
SI	Swedish Institute

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**Publisher** Interact Programme / February 2017 **Publication Leader** Baiba Liepa **Study conducted by** Spatial Foresight GmbH – Maria Toptsidou, Kai Böhme, Erik Gløersen, Silke Haarich, Sebastian Hans

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## Foreword

The Interact programme has been providing support services to the EU macro-regional strategies since early 2010. During this time, Interact has followed the developments of macro-regional strategies, broadened its knowledge and has gained valuable experience. The programme has also, in cooperation with other macro-regional actors, looked for answers to a variety of open questions, such as:

- What is a macro-regional strategy?
- What are the roles of different stakeholders in the implementation of the strategies?
- How best to cooperate and coordinate activities?
- What tools and methods are envisaged for the coordination and cooperation across funding sources?
- What change can an Interreg project make for a macro-region?
- Why should one engage in macro-regional cooperation?

With the adoption of the Interact III Programme, the focus of our work has changed from support to individual macro-regional strategies to exchange of practices, approaches and experiences across macro-regions and to addressing the above-mentioned questions to wider regions.

In this context, Interact launched in early 2016 a study called ‘Added value of macro-regional cooperation: collecting practice examples’. The study aimed at collecting evidence on the benefits of working for a macro-region. The focus of the study was on projects implemented in the Baltic Sea and Danube regions as well as on their funding instruments, analysing where these projects and funding sources see the added value of macro-regional cooperation.

The framework of the study can be defined as follows:

- The analysis was done in the context of two older strategies: the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR);
- Projects implemented in three thematic fields relevant for both macro-regional strategies were considered, namely: research and innovation, environment and transport and navigation;
- A pool was built of the projects of different size, character and funding sources;
- The expected outcome of the study was to identify any potential actions to increase the benefits of the macro-regional strategies for projects and programmes.

Interact wishes to express its gratitude to the team at Spatial Foresight GmbH for their work in conducting the study.

Enjoy reading and do not hesitate to come back to us!

*Interact Programme*



## Summary

**Macro-regional strategies can be driving forces for change if the right momentum is achieved.** Macro-regional strategies are coordination and cooperation frameworks to implement shared priorities through various actions (processes) as well as projects and programmes. As such they have a wider regional impact, can contribute to processes and have the potential to become catalysts for institutional change in the future. To achieve the right momentum, macro-regional strategies have to become more appealing. They need to capitalise on the added value they can offer to processes, projects and programmes, so that the latter are interested in supporting actions implementing macro-regional strategies.

**As projects and programmes are tools for implementing macro-regional strategies,** the report looks at what's in it for them and what the macro-regional strategies offer to projects and programmes to stimulate win-win situations and push up the role of macro-regional strategies. The report provides insights of the current situation. Based on this, it discusses actions towards making macro-regional strategies more interesting for projects and programmes. In other words, the report is not about the added value projects and programmes bring to macro-regional strategies, but the other way around, assessing why they should be interested in contributing to the implementation of macro-regional strategies.

**Macro-regional cooperation can occur independently of the macro-regional strategies.** Concerning the projects, the macro-regional strategies are not necessarily a determining factor when it comes to generating cooperation at the level of a macro-region. As for the programmes, in most cases, their projects would not have looked differently if there was no macro-regional strategy in place.

**Projects and programmes are usually not aware of the macro-regional strategies.** Often, projects have only little or even no knowledge of the macro-regional strategy to whose implementation they contributed. Even where projects are aware of the strategy existing and the link of the project to it, the benefit of that link is not always clear. This is mainly due to the intangible nature of these benefits. Also, some programmes, especially regional or national European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programmes, are hardly aware of the macro-regional strategies, while others recognise that the programme priorities and the macro-regional strategy are closely aligned.

**Better capitalisation of project results is the most tangible benefit macro-regional strategies bring to projects and programmes.** Although macro-regional strategies bring benefits to projects throughout the different phases of their lifecycle, the most visible added value occurs at their final project phase. Macro-regional strategies not only offer networking opportunities, but they also increase the project results' visibility and dissemination, provide credibility and help in extending the project's life after the project lifetime (sustaining project results). Same for the programmes, which see the capitalisation of their project results as the main added value for them. Macro-regional

strategies can contribute to higher quality projects, as well as to developing projects which are more relevant within the programme objectives.

**Macro-regional strategies offer a strategic framework for projects and programmes to define priorities.** Macro-regional strategies can offer an agreed upon strategic framework of objectives and priorities of a particular macro-region. This is based on challenges which are relevant to the respective macro-region and can help projects to define and link their objectives, as well as programmes to align their programme objectives. In addition, macro-regional strategies can help projects in elaborating their project idea, the definition of actions or measures and the design of a project, as well as the identification of partners and stakeholders. This benefits the projects and programmes in setting priorities, focusing their work on the needs of the macro-region, and eventually working more efficiently and effectively as the priorities of the strategies provide them with guidance to support a targeted approach of high policy relevance.

**To generate the benefits for the post project / programme lifecycle, considerable efforts are needed during the project and programme implementation.** During the project implementation phase, macro-regional strategies may support and improve the work towards the tangible results of projects. Macro-regional strategies offer a structure for projects to share their knowledge and experience, increasing their networking opportunities, but also to explore funding possibilities and contribute to policy developments. Programmes also see an added value during this phase. Macro-regional strategies can be helpful in a better alignment of funding, to approach macro-regional challenges and opportunities in a more orchestrated manner going beyond the funding possibilities and geographic responsibilities of single programmes. However, as has been shown in other studies, only a few programmes actively do this.

**Macro-regional strategies need to be positioned stronger in the territorial cooperation arena and beyond.** Macro-regional strategies have to better differentiate themselves and advertise their comparative advantages and benefits. By having a clear focus on the challenges of a specific macro-region, they can bring together actors from different institutions and levels to be involved. These processes will then lead to actions (e.g. implemented through projects) which will contribute to change. This will build up a continuous circle with macro-regional strategies having a central role. Unfortunately, this is not the case at the moment as the benefits of the macro-regional strategies, apart from those mentioned in the study, seem often intangible or unrecognised.

**Three main actions for change to start now.** Some measures can be envisaged to further develop the macro-regional strategies and capitalise on their added value. First, the strategic framework of the macro-regional strategies needs to be further explained. Macro-regional strategies can be used for support in better defining priorities at programme and project level, but also join forces to address shared territorial challenges. Second, the platform benefits of macro-regional strategies have to be stronger employed. This can increase visibility and credibility for both projects and programmes. Last but not least, the 'symbolic' importance of macro-regional strategies has to be capitalised on. For this, the wider macro-regional context needs to be taken into account.

**The future of the macro-regional strategies is a shared responsibility of all its key implementers.** It lies in the hands of the macro-regional strategies' key implementers, in cooperation with other relevant actors, to enthrone macro-regional strategies post 2020. Actions can already start in the current 2014-2020 programming period and take off in the next. Since more macro-regional strategies are emerging, there is a stronger need for an enhanced exchange of experience across them. Increasing the ownership of the strategies at all levels of their implementation is a key starting point. In our increasingly interconnected world, most things we do in one place have an impact on the development in other places and vice versa. This requires that we constantly need to consider our actions and plans in a wider context and macro-regional strategies offer the framework for this.



## 1. Introduction

Today there are four European Union macro-regional strategies in place, the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). These strategies are policy frameworks which become alive through actions, processes and projects that help achieve their objectives. As the macro-regional strategies do not have their own means, they rely on processes and projects which either do not require funding or are funded by a variety of funding sources, such as Interreg, ESIF programmes, EU managed programmes or others. Consequently, macro-regional strategies need arguments to convince others to contribute to their implementation.

Although macro-regional strategies have a wider regional impact, this report sees what added value macro-regional strategies bring to projects and programmes. As projects and programmes are tools for the implementation of the macro-regional strategies, the latter needs to become more appealing for them. In other words, the report looks at the following questions:

- **What's in it for a project or programme if it contributes to a macro-regional strategy?**
- **What are the 'win-win situations' between macro-regional strategies and projects / programmes?**
- **How can projects and programmes make better use of the added values a macro-regional strategy offers?**

To answer these questions, 31 projects of different size, character and funding sources have been analysed covering three thematic fields:



Innovation and Research



Environment



Transport and Navigation

The focus is on projects within the EUSBSR and EUSDR, as due to their earlier start, these strategies are more advanced in their implementation and the selected thematic fields are relevant for both macro-regional strategies. Although macro-regional strategies are implemented i.a. by means of projects and processes, this study is particularly focused on projects. Projects of macro-regional relevance are projects that address common challenges or potential, and for which action across the countries in the macro-region is required. Often these projects have a direct link to a macro-regional strategy, as they e.g. are labelled as macro-regional strategy projects. A project can have a macro-regional dimension even if it is not directly linked to a macro-regional strategy or be labelled as a macro-regional strategy project. Even if a project is implemented regionally or nationally, it can generate impact on the wider region. An



example are transport projects, which in the case of small projects connecting two regions, the wider region may benefit from this connection.

This report looks at a range of projects to see what the projects gain from links to the macro-regional strategy. It also discusses what various types of funding programmes can gain from supporting projects and processes of macro-regional relevance. Indeed, a wide range of different funding sources contribute to implementing macro-regional strategies through the funding of projects, so the findings of the study are based on both project and programme insights. Finally, the report presents overall conclusions and recommendations on how the added value of macro-regional strategies for projects and programmes can be strengthened.

The 31 analysed projects are summarised at the end of the report.

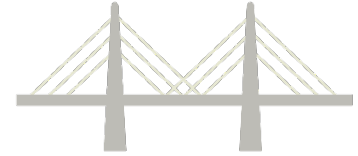
### **Understanding EU macro-regional strategies**

The Common Provisions Regulation (art. 2, § 31) clarifies that “'macro-regional strategy' is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.” In other words, the specific objective of the strategies is to establish a framework to address common challenges and deficiencies in governance structures to ensure that a range of strategic actions to deal with the challenges are implemented in the most efficient, effective and coherent way. Macro-regional strategies must be supported by ESI Funds as well as other EU policies and funding instruments and / or international financial institutions. Macro-regional strategies use different soft measures to support the already existing actors in their work. In the long-run and if they are achieving a larger momentum, they even hold the potential to become catalysts for institutional change in the region.

Macro-regional strategies' direct objective is to facilitate the performance of actions (process and/or project) in several sectors in a given geographical space, to ease necessary adaptation to changes and to improve the preconditions for joint action (better coordination, higher (cost-)efficiency, better quality). Indirectly, macro-regional strategies contribute to changes in socio-economic indicators in different areas (innovation, clean sea, energy efficiency). However, their role is rather inducing (not 'acting') as action is always channelled through other actors. As a result, the attribution gap hampers the tracing of its direct contribution to change.

**The EUSBSR**, adopted in 2009, is the first macro-regional strategy in Europe. The Strategy involves eight EU member states, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, as well as EU neighbouring countries (Norway, Belarus, Iceland and Russia). The Strategy has three objectives 'Save the sea', 'Connect the Region' and 'Increase Prosperity'.

**The EUSDR** is the second macro-regional strategy in Europe and was adopted in 2011. Nine EU member states are involved in the Strategy, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as five non-EU member states, Bosnia Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine. The Strategy is organised in four pillars, 'Connect the Region', 'Protecting the Environment', 'Building Prosperity' and 'Strengthening the Region'.



## 2. Why and for whom is the macro-regional context relevant?

In an increasingly interconnected world, most things we do in one place have an impact on the development in other places and what is done elsewhere impacts on the place we are living and working in. This requires that we constantly need to consider our actions and plans in a wider context.

In some cases, our actions become only meaningful in a wider context. In other cases, we might need to cooperate with people elsewhere to be able to achieve our objective and sometimes even agree on common objectives. Prime examples for this are environmental and climate change issues. To improve the environmental conditions in one location and efficiently address climate change, the coordinated action of many actors in different locations is needed.

This logic applies also to macro-regional areas, such as the Baltic Sea region or the Danube region. A macro-region is defined as an area which comprises territories from several different countries or regions, associated with one or more common futures and challenges. For some objectives cooperation across the macro-region is needed, and that is where EU macro-regional strategies come into the picture.

The basic idea is that macro-regional strategies address themes which are perceived as common and important to the participating countries. Their specific objective is to develop a framework for the individual challenges and address deficiencies in governance structures to ensure that a range of strategic actions to deal with the challenges are implemented in the most efficient, effective and coherent way. The elaboration and implementation of macro-regional strategies may generate thematic orientations with slightly different priorities compared to European or national policy agendas, but which address actual challenges of the region. It might even offer opportunities to become more concrete and address pressing issues (including conflicts of interest) which EU-wide strategies or strategies in the context of enlargement and neighbourhood policies do not address sufficiently because of the diversity of the EU, but which require the cooperation across national/regional borders.

In short, macro-regional strategies are integrated frameworks, which shall contribute to better governance of large territories and rationalise existing resources and use them more efficiently.

The *raison d'être* and main added value of macro-regional strategies is often seen in the integrated approach, i.e. a collective action that strives towards a common objective, providing a platform for bringing together various actors, policies and financial resources. From this perspective, macro-regional strategies will be efficient insofar as they manage to mobilise a broad range of actors and create a broad and shared ownership.

In that sense macro-regional strategies offer a platform for new pragmatic approaches to finding more efficient policy modalities and better coordination among existing institutions and resources. Macro-regional strategies aim at providing integrated governance approaches addressing a pressing issue of policy making in Europe: the

need for better policy coordination to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of policy making.

In other words, the coordination and governance dimension of macro-regional strategies is the key to their success. In this context a range of different coordination aspects need to be differentiated:

- **Transnational coordination.** Macro-regional strategies increase the transnational dimension in various policy sectors. They contribute to a better integration of countries covered by a macro-region as well as on developing joint approaches which are more efficient than approaches taken by single countries independently. The involvement of third countries is variable from strategy to strategy. Key words for the trans-national coordination are:
  - Broader geographical perspective of sector policies.
  - Contribution to working-level links with third countries.
- **Cross-sector coordination.** The multi-facetted policy platform provided by macro-regional strategies facilitates dialogue and mutual influence between different policy sector policies. Ideally, this may even go beyond their respective contribution to the development and implementation of a strategy and even result in mutual learning or dialogue with regard to other policy developments. Next to the wide governance arrangements used to develop and implement macro-regional strategies, also the lack of specific funds may play a crucial role for keeping different sectors on board and in dialogue with each other in order to continuously work on the implementation of the strategies. Keywords for the cross-sector coordination are:
  - Platform for stakeholders from different EU and national policy sectors.
  - Projects with macro-regional relevance funded by a large number of sector instruments.
- **Multi-level coordination.** Interaction between the European and national levels is central when it comes to identifying priority areas that are genuinely macro-regional, i.e. that require transnational cooperation but are not suitable for EU-wide policies. The regional and local levels are involved in a large variety of specific activities focusing on multi-level aspects of policy design and implementation in different policy/priority areas. Keywords used to illustrate the multi-level coordination are:
  - Key actors on a European and national level
  - 'Bottom-up' development of priorities
  - Regional and local level important implementers
  - Facilitating the implementation of EU policies
  - Improving European, national and regional policy processes.

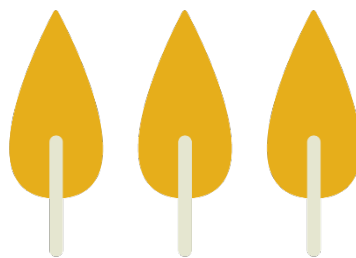
In general, governance arrangements used to develop and implement macro-regional strategies are based on a transnational, integrated (multi-sector, multi-level) and participatory approach to strategic planning. This makes them different from other forms of (bilateral) governance, and can be a starting point to understand what benefit they offer for different groups of actors – i.e. why macro-regional strategies are of interest or relevant for various actors.

In that sense, the relevance and potential benefits could be defined according to the three enabling functions of macro-regional strategies: functions for political decision-making, functions for cooperation and functions for implementation.

Turning to projects of macro-regional relevance, macro-regional strategies can provide an enabling environment and a policy framework indicating needs and priorities. In addition, it can also support the strengthening of cooperation and help to improve implementation. More details on these different aspects are provided in the following chapters.

The enabling role that the macro-regional strategies can offer to projects makes the strategies interesting for a wide range of key implementers of macro-regional strategies, as well as macro-regional actors. Among them are (a) those working with developments needs or challenges which best can be dealt with in a wider macro-regional approach, as well as (b) those who work on new tools and strategies which can be of relevance even in other parts of a macro-region.

With regard to the link the projects have to a macro-regional strategy a few different types can be identified (a), there are projects which are labelled as flagship or strategic by a macro-regional strategy; (b), there are projects that consider a macro-regional strategy as an interesting supporting framework and link their rhetoric and action to it; (c) there are also projects which actually do contribute to the achievements of the objectives of a macro-regional strategy but are not aware of the existence of the strategy. Projects belonging to these three types have been reviewed.



### 3. Added value of macro-regional strategies for projects

The benefits a macro-regional strategy brings to a project are not always obvious. Projects perceive the added value of macro-regional strategies differently, depending on their thematic focus and character. In many cases projects had very little or even no knowledge of the macro-regional strategy to whose implementation they contributed. Even where projects have been aware of the strategy and the link to it, the benefit of that link was not always clear. This is mainly due to the intangible nature of these benefits. Nevertheless, macro-regional cooperation can occur independently of the strategies. The macro-regional strategy is not necessarily a determining factor when it comes to generating cooperation at the level of macro-regions. Macro-regional cooperation also occurs when there is no awareness of the existence of the strategy. Macro-regional strategies bring benefits to projects throughout the different phases of their lifecycle, i.e. from project development, via project implementation to post-project life. The most visible benefits lie in the project development phase and post project life. However, to generate the benefits for the post project life, considerable efforts are needed during the project implementation.

The below information on the added values in the different phases are illustrated with examples of projects benefiting from the EUSBSR or EUSDR. The projects fall into three different thematic fields relevant for both named macro-regional strategies: (1) innovation and research, (2) environment and (3) transport and navigation. For each identified added value, the thematic field to which an added value is mostly visible is indicated by the following labels:



Innovation and Research



Environment



Transport and Navigation

#### Project initiation and development phase

A project may reap benefits from a macro-regional strategy at an early stage of its development. This includes the elaboration of a project idea, definition of actions or measures and design of a project process, as well as the identification of partners and stakeholders. Macro-regional strategies can provide a strategic framework to set priorities and help projects to focus their work on the needs of a macro-region. Eventually, this helps projects to work more efficiently and provide them with guidance contributing to a targeted approach of high policy relevance. At this stage of the project, awareness of macro-regional strategies among project initiators is particularly important.

Macro-regional strategies offer projects three concrete added values during the project initiation and development phase:

**Developing the project idea.** An in-depth knowledge of the macro-regional strategy can contribute to the development of project ideas. A good alignment of the project objectives to the particular strategy's objective also helps to ensure that the project is better integrated in its wider context.



- Some innovation projects address development challenges identified in the Action Plans of the macro-regional strategies. An example is the **Danube:Future** project. In this case, the adoption of the EUSDR Action Plan has given the impetus for the development of the project.

**Having a strategic framework to work more efficiently.** For some projects, the macro-regional strategy serves as a framework to work more efficiently and in a more structured way.



Macro-regional strategies help provide a common framework for a project and thus guide its action:

- This for example concerns the **i.e.SMART** project, though with respect to future development possibilities.
- Also for the **STURGEON 2020**, the EUSDR gave the support framework to realise the project and 'make things happen'.
- Having a framework and structures to work more efficiently would be the reason why the **Green InfraPort** project would encourage other projects to be better associated to the macro-regional cooperation and coordination dynamic.

**Defining actions during project development.** Macro-regional cooperation helps to design better projects when building upon experience and views from partners with different backgrounds. Macro-regional cooperation offers the grounds for learning from others' experiences as different people from different organisations and backgrounds would provide different solutions to common challenges and thus produce better project results. Furthermore, macro-regional strategies provide a context to support formulation of specific actions. Macro-regional strategies also help projects in identifying relevant partners and stakeholders.



- ➊ Going beyond learning from each other, some projects focus on bringing together competencies of different actors. Examples of such approaches can be found in the **BSR Stars**, **Baltic Science Link\*** and **i.e.SMART** projects. All of them help to bring together partners so that they may elaborate together coherent objectives and actions. This is a precondition for them to reach a critical mass in their actions and initiatives.
- ➋ Similarly, the link to the EUSDR helped the **i.e.SMART** project to identify partners.
- ➌ The **NEWS** project also managed to approach project partners thanks to its link to the EUSDR.

## Project implementation

During the implementation phase, macro-regional strategies may support projects in working towards more concrete and tangible results. Macro-regional strategies offer a structure for projects to share their knowledge and experience, increase their networking opportunities, but also explore funding possibilities.

Macro-regional strategies can offer projects four concrete added values during the project implementation phase:

**Aligning project priorities with political objectives.** Projects make use of the priorities and objectives of macro-regional strategies to better align their project ideas to current political agendas. Gaining political support can lead to greater visibility. Projects are, for example, invited to political forums, which can provide networking opportunities and improve visibility. Even more, the political support contributes to bringing project results to the policy discussion. They thereby establish a 'project-to-policy loop' which is the expression of the mutual exchange between projects and policies driven forward by macro-regional strategies.



In addition, being aligned with political objectives makes it possible to envisage a wider scope of funding opportunities, including national ones.

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\* This project is not analysed within the study.



- The macro-regional dimension is important to receive sufficient attention and responses by decision makers. Such a project rationale can be observed within projects such as **STURGEON 2020**, **SEE River** and **Act4myBalticSea**. In some cases, projects also aim to develop common transnational strategies, e.g. in the cases of **Baltic Deal** and **STURGEON 2020**.
- ❶ The macro-regional strategy supported projects in gaining a political dimension, gain support and get attention in the political agenda. Examples are the **Green InfraPort** and the **IRIS EUROPE 3** projects. This can benefit them in their future follow up plans.

**Provision of diversified funding opportunities.** Projects that have a clear link to a macro-regional strategy, e.g. called flagship projects or strategic projects, use the macro-regional label to attract funding. Projects with this label can get more attention and have higher chances of getting financial support from e.g. Interreg programmes or other EU funding programmes. In other cases, the acknowledgement by a macro-regional strategy helps to move from Interreg funding to mainstream funding sources. However, the official status as macro-regional project does not guarantee funding. Strategic and even flagship projects, as any other project, struggle to attract funding.



- ⚡ For many projects with macro-regional relevance the acknowledgement of the project by the macro-regional strategy implied easier access to funding. As a number of ESIF and other programmes assess projects with a macro-regional label more positively, there is a tangible impact. This has e.g. been experienced by **PROMISE**, **BalticlaB**, and **Danube:Future**.
- For example, the project “**Solid household waste management system in the Ventspils region**” underlined that the macro-regional strategy helped to mobilise additional international funding sources. Furthermore, cooperation among actors at different levels helped to increase efficiency in the project work. However, a clear link and even support by the macro-regional strategy does not guarantee easier access to funding. As experienced by the project **MareCap**, competition for funding is still high even with official support by the macro-region and its seed money facility.
- ❶ Although macro-regional strategies do not bring new funding, they may help to align different funding sources. Some projects have seen this opportunity as an advantage of their link to the macro-regional strategy, such as the **Green InfraPort** and the **MONALISA** projects. Macro-regional strategies have given the opportunity

to apply for different funding sources, which in the end made the realisation of the project possible.

### Networking and increased partnerships during

**implementation.** During their implementation phase, projects can benefit from networking events organised under the umbrella of macro-regional strategies. Similarly, the networks of key macro-regional strategies' actors may be mobilised.



This contributes to enhanced exchange of ideas and experience. In some cases, clusters of projects develop. There are for example links between the Baltic Deal and PROMISE projects, together with another project in the Baltic Sea region, the Baltic Manure<sup>1</sup> project. These projects address the same topics and information has been shared between them. The link between them has been mainly established by the partners of these projects. Networking activities or processes are the result from:

- initiatives by project partners that are involved in multiple projects or who have regular contact with organisations participating in other projects;
- initiatives by funding programmes, e.g. Interreg programmes, that seek to promote synergies and capitalise between projects addressing similar macro-regional challenges;
- initiatives from Thematic Coordinators (called priority, policy or pillar coordinators or action group leaders) of macro-regional strategies.

Macro-regional networking dynamics are therefore not necessarily initiated top-down.

- The platforms established in the sphere of a macro-regional strategy can offer important possibilities for projects and potential project partners to widen their networks. This aspect has e.g. been stressed by the project **PROMISE**. Similarly, the project **DO-IT**, linked to the EUSDR objectives, established networks which go beyond its macro-regional territory and encompass the Alpine region and the Adriatic and Ionian region.
- The link to a macro-regional strategy can help to get access to a wide range of thematic and policy networks. These networks can be important for identifying potential project partners, as well as for obtaining information. For example, in the case of the project **Baltic Deal** the link to the macro-regional strategy helped to obtain more data and include German and Russian farmer organisations. This made it possible for the project to enlarge its geographical coverage. In the **AQUABEST** project, the macro-regional strategy made it possible to bring together a wider range of players and develop a more cross-sectoral approach. In some cases, e.g. **Act4myBaltic Sea**, the platform provided through the macro-regional

<sup>1</sup> This project is not analysed within the study. <sup>2</sup> Thematic Coordinators: policy area coordinators or horizontal action coordinators of the EUSBSR and priority area coordinators of the EUSDR.

strategy served as a framework for validation, offering the possibility to verify and adjust actions and recommendations. In a similar way the macro-regional strategy provided a framework for the assessment of the "Solid household waste management system in the Ventspils region" project.

- ❶ The possibility of increasing networks and having a wider cooperation platform has been perceived as an advantage of the link to the respective macro-regional strategy for transport projects. For the **EfficienSea** project this has given the opportunity to better disseminate project results. However, not all projects shared this view, as some stated that they could also expand their partnerships and networks independently of a macro-regional strategy umbrella. This has been the case for the **Baltic Link**, whose partners' joint efforts are said to continue outside of the EUSBSR. Other projects seem not to be aware of the macro-regional strategy of their region and the opportunities it can offer. The **CESLA** project, for instance, did not initially see a link to the EUSDR, despite its good thematic alignment with the EUSDR objectives.

**Sharing knowledge and experience.** Exchanges of knowledge and experience between projects that aim to contribute to a macro-regional strategy are useful during all phases of the project lifecycle, and especially during both the project implementation and at the end of this phase, e.g. in view of identifying perspectives for follow-up activities. This knowledge exchange established under a macro-regional strategy umbrella helps projects to capitalise better on their results.



- ❷ Sharing good practice and organising result-oriented discussions addressing issues through different perspectives of different actors at the national level can be useful to better develop a project or activity. The sharing of experience can be organised in a variety of ways including events, networking activities and databases. Typical examples are **SEN-BSR**, **BalticlaB** or **Danube:Future**. In some cases, the exchange of experience dimension may be a side effect of project activities rather than an explicit objective. In the case of the **CCC** project, the experience and approach applied in Denmark has been inspiration for Polish partners when developing the cleantech clusters. Similarly, project partners in Sweden approached the Danish lead partner.
- ❸ Learning from each other, sharing experience and practices of how to reduce pollution or improve environmental management is an important step to see what more can be done and thus to improve the environmental situation locally. The dimension of mutual learning is e.g. present in the cases of the **Baltic Deal**, **MareCap**, **STURGEON 2020**. As well in the cases of **SEE River**, **SEERISK** and **AQUABEST** where the learning dimension is also translated into the development of new approaches and tools to be applied locally.

- ① Capitalising knowledge at the transnational level was seen in transport projects. A project can generate results in a wider territorial context and lead to the development of shared knowledge across the macro-region. The river information system developed under the **IRIS EUROPE 3** project can be used by shipping operators across the Danube region. Similarly, outcomes of the **EfficienSea** project such as the collected maritime safety information, the e-navigation trial zones or the simulation toolbox are useful across the Baltic Sea Region.

## Project closure and future

In many cases the added value of macro-regional strategies is most visible to projects in the post project life. Once the actual project activities are closed and the focus is on disseminating, capitalising and taking project results and ideas forward, macro-regional strategies offer great opportunities. Macro-regional strategies increase the project results' visibility and dissemination, provide credibility and help extend project's life after the project ends. Macro-regional strategies contribute to the capitalisation on the project results for further developments.

Macro-regional strategies can offer projects three concrete and important added values in the post-project life:

**Increased visibility of project results.** An important and widely acknowledge added value of macro-regional strategies is the enhanced possibilities to disseminate project results and to gain in visibility among the wider public. Enhanced visibility supports knowledge spreading on project outcomes and results. It also increases the potential use and impact, as more people are aware and may make use or refer to the results. In some cases it also helps the attraction of funding for follow-up activities.



- ② Macro-regional strategies can help in the project implementation and later dissemination of project results. It has been echoed by many innovation projects that the link to the macro-regional strategy helps to improve visibility and attractiveness. The **BSR Stars** projects pointed out that the main advantage of having a link to the strategy is to facilitate dissemination project results and to increase the visibility for project partners. Similar was the case for the **PROMISE** and **BalticlaB** projects. Also the **i.e.SMART** and **DANUBE-INCO.NET** projects underlined the benefits in terms of increased visibility both when it comes to the identification with the projects by the partners and the channels for dissemination activities.

- Towards the end of a project, macro-regional strategies are important levers. They provide a platform which allows making project results and outputs more widely known and receive attention by decision makers. The **AQUABEST** project is an example.
- ❶ Macro-regional strategies offer the ground for greater visibility of project results in transport projects. Relevant forums and presentations are organised where project results are presented. Examples are the **MONALISA** project, the **Baltic Link** project and the **EfficienSea** project.

**Increased credibility of project results.** In some cases the benefit of being labelled as flagship or strategic project not only improves general visibility but also increases credibility. In these cases project results receive more attention by decision makers or other actors, as the macro-regional labelling is considered as a sign of quality and relevance. Projects that are labelled as macro-regional projects are often better recognised by national/regional authorities and agencies across macro-region. In addition, projects labelled as macro-regional can often be an outcome of policy discussion across the macro-region or they can contribute to the policy discussion after their finalisation.



- In many cases, link to a macro-regional strategy is not only perceived as boosting visibility, it also adds credibility. Also in the case of the **AQUABEST** project, the link to the EUSBSR increased the awareness of national stakeholders.

**Better capitalisation of project results.** Support in terms of visibility and credibility also help to extend the life of a project and in particular its outcomes beyond the actual funded project lifetime. There are projects that are developed based on the outcomes of earlier macro-regional projects. This can be helpful to ensure more continuity especially in times when one funding period ends and a new funding period starts.



- ❶ A majority of projects manage to have a follow up of their project. This continuation is based on the results brought by the project. In some cases, projects continue with a follow up project, however, under a different funding source. An example is the **EfficienSea** project, whose initial funding source was the Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013 and later continued under the Horizon 2020 initiative.

## Conclusions on the project perspective

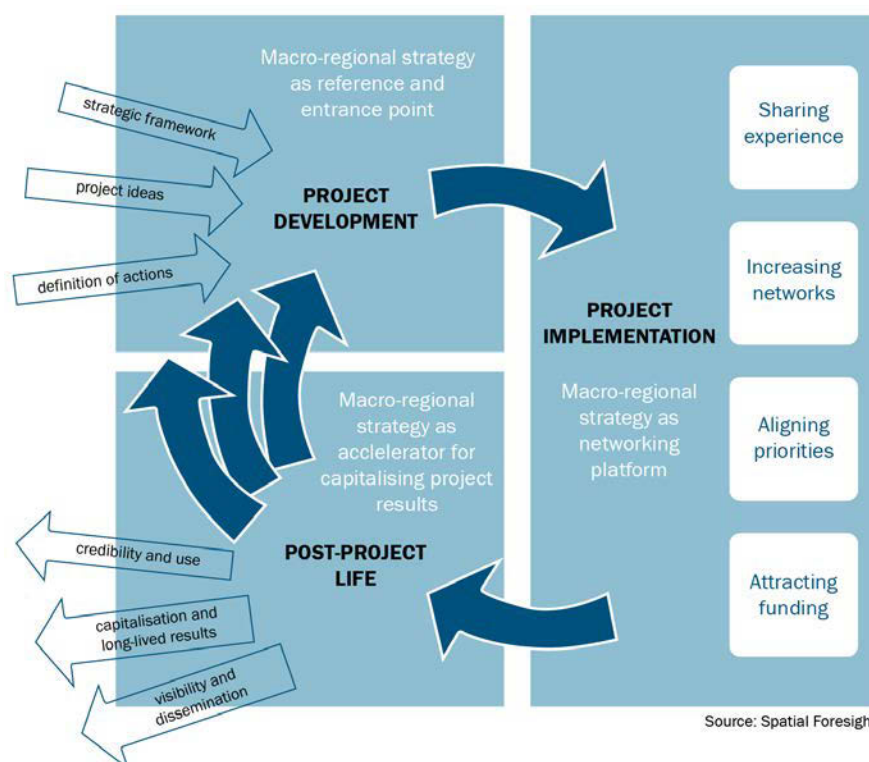
Actions and projects can benefit from links to macro-regional strategies throughout the project lifecycle. There are however considerable differences concerning the types of added values which can be provided in different project phases.

In the project development phase macro-regional strategies provide strategic frameworks and can serve as entry points and reference documents. This can guide projects with regard to topics and activities which policy makers considered as particularly relevant at the macro-regional level. Project proponents also often expect to gain easier access to funding by linking to a macro-regional strategy, which is not necessarily the case in practice.

In the implementation phase macro-regional strategies may serve projects as a platform for exchanges and networking. Although the direct benefits are often limited during the project implementation, integrating in wider macro-regional networks can be important in the long run.

The most important added value a macro-regional strategy can bring to a project comes in the post project life. Increased visibility, dissemination possibilities, awareness by relevant policy makers, contribution to policy discussion and capitalising possibilities – including possibilities for the continuation of projects (additional funding) – are widely stated benefits. In many cases macro-regional networking in the project implementation phase made it possible to generate such benefits.

**Figure 1.** Added values of macro-regional strategies throughout the project cycle



The figure sums up the overall key points on the added values a macro-regional strategy offers to a project in the different phases of the project cycle.

The added value a macro-regional strategy can provide also depends on the type of project and the topic it addresses. For each of the three topics addressed in the study, the below table provides the key aspects that can generate immediate benefits and are of relevance for the vast majority of projects.



### Research & innovation

- **Thematic focus** on (a) themes specific for the macro-region, or (b) themes where macro-regional actors have leading expertise.
- **Increase critical mass** in the macro-region to make better use of and further improve research and innovation.
- **Strengthen visibility** through links to the macro-regional strategy and a larger critical mass.



### Environment

- **Thematic focus** on (a) shared environmental resources, or (b) environmental issues specific for the macro-region.
- **Make use of macro-regional networks** both in the project development and implementation phase, e.g. for collection or validation of information.
- **Exploit leverage possibilities, by increasing awareness about and credibility** of project activities and results through links to macro-regional strategies and their forums.



### Transport & navigability

- **Thematic focus on transport** issues of macro-regional importance, e.g. networks or international hubs.
- **Improve links** between the macro-regional strategy and regional and national projects with macro-regional importance.
- **Support capitalisation** of project results beyond the lifecycle of a project.

### Horizontal actions

- **Create synergies** among projects and across themes addressed by a macro-regional strategy may help the capitalisation of the results.
- **Alignment of funding** initiated through macro-regional strategies can help projects to combine funding from different sources, or move from one source to another as the project advances.



Making use of the potential benefits macro-regional strategies offer to projects is a shared responsibility. In principle macro-regional strategies are mainly a framework which can guide and help projects, while the actual implementation of this framework lies with the projects. However, for the framework to become useful for the projects – and only then they will implement it – both project partners and macro-regional strategies' key implementers need to work on this.

The key implementers of macro-regional strategies, such as the Thematic Coordinators, can help projects in focusing on relevant macro-regional strategy objectives (in the project development and implementation phases), establishing links or coordinating between project and policy stakeholders of the strategy, as well among projects and between projects and funding bodies.

Project partners can benefit more from macro-regional strategies, if they use them as a framework to focus their activities and actively seek contact with other projects with macro-regional relevance as well as with the macro-regional strategy actors and their policy networks.



#### 4. Added value of macro-regional strategies for funding programmes

Funding programmes do not perceive the added value of macro-regional strategies in the same way as projects. Some programmes are not aware so far of the macro-regional strategies, as it is mainly the case for European-wide managed programmes, others recognise that the programme priorities and the strategy are very closely aligned, as is the case for some Interreg programmes, while others – although they benefit from the link as shown through the projects they fund – do not see an added value. In several cases, programmes' projects would not have looked differently if there was no macro-regional strategy in place. Taking a closer look at the level of funding programmes, one can identify different perceptions of the added value, with the latter it's not always clear.

##### **Better projects and wider partnerships via macro-regional strategies are endorsed by all funding programmes analysed**

**Contributing to better projects.** The development of better quality projects has been identified as a possible added value by the funding programmes. Projects to be funded under the seed money facility, for example, are preselected by the policy area coordinators / horizontal action coordinators of the EUSBSR and a close cooperation between the project partners and the Thematic Coordinators is in place. According to the Interreg Central Baltic programme, although most of the projects would not have looked differently without the link to the EUSBSR, the programme recognises that the benefit would be the focus on more politically relevant issues, while the flagship status could bring better visibility of the projects. Similarly, funding programmes such as TEN-T highlight that projects can take advantage from links to overarching strategies.

**Broader and more advanced partnerships** have been identified by a number of programmes as a possibility that macro-regional strategies offer. This has helped them sharing knowledge and expanding the connections and contacts giving a big boost in the projects they have funded, as has been the case or the **BalticlaB** project, funded under the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Swedish Institute (SI). Networks from the EUSDR, for instance, have been used to shape the composition of the **i.e.SMART** project. The Interreg Central Baltic programme also recognises that a link to the macro-regional strategy can attract new stakeholders in similar fields and create network opportunities. For the Interreg Central Europe programme, this would depend on the topic, rather than on the EUSDR as such. For water-related topics, where actors have been cooperating for a long time, the regional identity and cooperation trust already exists, which is not the same for innovation projects, where the geography can usually be wider.

Obviously, the wider partnerships, the networking opportunities, synergies, broader dissemination of project results and other added value elements that contribute in generating better projects, result in the development of better programmes, something that has been acknowledged by a number of funding programmes.

As with projects, macro-regional strategies also have the potential to bring benefits in different phases of the programme cycle, i.e. from the programme development / elaboration via the programme implementation / steering to the programme impact / evaluation. Again, there are more added values seen during the programming and the final programme phase, than during the implementation phase. However, efforts need to be taken at this stage too, to ensure the benefits at the later stages. For each added value, the type of programme for which the added value has been identified in the empirical work of the study is shown through the following labels.



ESIF operational  
programmes (excl.  
Interreg)



Interreg programmes



Other programmes and  
funding sources

Programmes can benefit from additional potential added values throughout their lifecycle, which are not exploited by the funding programmes so far, but have the potential to contribute to their different phases. These potential added values that can be expected for different types of programmes, are indicated by the lighter version of the labels, as shown below:



ESIF operational  
programmes (excl.  
Interreg)



Interreg programmes



Other programmes and  
funding sources

In this report, 'other funding sources' are funding sources outside ESIF such as TEN-T, LIFE or Horizon 2020.

### Programming phase

Already in the programme development / elaboration, macro-regional strategies can help in different ways to make the programming more efficient and effective. They can offer an agreed strategic framework of objectives and priorities of a particular macro-regional strategy and help in aligning that with the programmes' objectives. For some

programmes this has been more obvious than for others, while some realise the potential added value of macro-regional strategies in that phase.

Macro-regional strategies can offer programmes at least five added values during the programming phase:

**Facilitation of inter-sectoral programming** that is needed in certain relevant areas, such as bioeconomy, climate change and low carbon policies, sustainable transport, and renewable energies. Although it was not highlighted by the programmes, it is seen as an additional potential added value.



**Easier consensus in defining programme priorities and objectives between different actors.** Macro-regional strategies help in building easier consensus on the programme objectives and facilitate the decision on the programme priorities. Although this added value is stronger for Interreg and other funding sources outside ESIF, it has also been acknowledged by ESIF regional programmes.



**Strategic orientation for prioritising thematic area and areas of common needs as well as offering a strategic framework.** Macro-regional strategies often offer a strategic framework for programmes to shape their priorities and link with the overall macro-region. This has been already recognised by Interreg and funding sources outside ESIF. However, it can also be a potential added value for ESIF funded programmes (excluding Interreg).



**Easier alignment of funding EU-wide programmes** is another potential added value. It allows to pool resources addressing macro-regional needs and thus can create a stronger higher lever than what could be done by one single programme.



**Easier alignment of thematic and specific objectives of ESIF programmes and for ESIF implementation partnerships** through already existing strategic objectives in the macro-region.



It also creates the **potential for coordination** across programmes and an enhanced link between ESIF, EU wide and Interreg programmes.



## Programme implementation and steering

Some programmes have identified a possible added value of macro-regional strategies during their implementation phase. Macro-regional strategies can be helpful in a better alignment of funding, as there are more possibilities to do so under a macro-regional framework. There is a more orchestrated manner that goes beyond the funding possibilities and geographic responsibilities of single programmes. However, as has been shown in other studies, only a few programmes actively use this possibility.

Macro-regional strategies can not only contribute to higher quality projects, but also in developing projects which are more relevant within the programme objectives. One example of this is the seed money facility, which is a funding source created to support the starting phase of the EUSBSR projects, also embedded in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme.

Macro-regional strategies can offer programme bodies at least four added values helping them to implement and steer their programme:

**Easier dissemination and communication** through existing thematic networks in the macro-region. The link to a macro-regional strategy can help in building larger networks and find complementary projects and people with similar ideas, programmes to share their experiences with other programmes and see how others approach the same challenges. This has been the case for the **Baltic Deal** project. Through the EUSBSR, the CBSS found a new funding partner for the BalticaB project. Similarly, the link to the EUSDR helped the **i.e.SMART** project to identify partners, as well as the **NEWS** project to approach project partners.



**Better and easier coordination** with and across funding in the same macro-region during the implementation. Coordinating resources between programmes can increase the effectiveness of the spending of each single programme.



**Synergies and better coordination with similar networks** in other regions and member states within the macro-region.



**Organisation of several more efficient thematic networks and partnerships** in each transnational, cross-border or interregional area which is covered by an Interreg programme through the macro-regional strategies.



## Final programme phase / closure

Most tangible results are seen by programmes during the final programme phase. Especially Interreg and funding sources outside ESIF, realise the visibility benefits at this phase and recognise the added value of the macro-regional strategies when it comes to networking. This ex-post added value is usually being prepared during the implementation phase. It can be a natural consequence of the added value which already has been produced in earlier phases.

Macro-regional strategies can offer programmes at least three added values when it comes to the final programme phase and closure:

**Easier for ESIF programmes to show and document evidence that contributes to desired socioeconomic changes** if there is a macro-regional framework of general and specific objectives.



**Efficient dissemination of projects and programmes results, lessons learnt, new solutions and good practices.**

Programmes have identified that projects get more visibility and attention due to their link to a macro-regional strategy, while also project ideas and results can be easier communicated. Macro-regional strategies' forums and events have helped in disseminating the results of the projects.



**More effective communication of project activities and results, better overview of project results and benefits, better overview of projects and on-going processes within specific thematic fields** within the context of wider macro-regional (strategic) objectives and through the thematic networks developed in the context of a macro-regional strategy (macro-regional thematic areas).



### Networking of similar projects contributes to efficient dissemination of project results

Funding sources such as the Interreg Central Baltic programme, the SI, the CBSS have experienced such a contribution. This has been a boost for the **BalticlaB** project, funded under CBSS and SI, for example. In addition, this has helped in some cases to draw more attention of the political level to the programme itself, as the Interreg Baltic Sea Region has identified. Furthermore, the seed money facility recognises that the access of projects to policy discussions and their invitation to forums can benefit projects from political discussions and recognition. Networking opportunities have helped some programmes find other funding partners. That has been the case of the CBSS, which found another funding collaborator for their **BalticlaB** project during an EUSBSR event.

## Conclusions on the programme perspective

Funding programmes can benefit from a link to a macro-regional strategy. The below tables shows by type of funding programmes identified, and potential added value.

### Funding programmes



#### ESIF programmes

- Easier alignment of programme objectives with macro-regional needs.
- Easier programming and coordination across different sectors.
- Provision of framework for forming programme objectives.
- Wider dissemination of programmes' project results.



#### Interreg programmes

- Alignment of programme objective with macro-regional objectives for higher benefits in the region.
- Provision of a strategic framework for prioritising programme objectives.
- Better funding alignment.
- Increase networking opportunities and synergies across programmes.



#### Other funding sources

- Strategic framework for the development of priorities.
- Potential for creation of synergies, development of partnerships.
- Platform for project results dissemination.

#### Horizontal actions

- Create synergies among different funding sources.
- Provide a common overall strategic framework.
- Support in the integration process of non-EU member states.

## 5. Overall conclusions

**Macro-regional strategies focus on processes that can stimulate and bring change.** In this report, we have looked at a range of projects and programmes and the added value that macro-regional strategies can bring to them. Projects and programmes are tools for implementing macro-regional strategies. However, macro-regional strategies go beyond projects and programmes. They offer a framework for cooperation that focuses on processes which aim to bring change. Macro-regional strategies aim at addressing macro-regional challenges, participating in processes and thus through the projects and programmes contribute to change and impact. This potential of the macro-regional strategies is currently not fully exploited. Thus, coordinated efforts across all four existing macro-regional strategies should be made to lobby for macro-regional cooperation aiming at positioning them stronger post 2020.

**Macro-regional strategies can further improve policy-orientation, efficiency and coherence of projects and funding programmes.** The below figure 2 is a simplified interpretation of how macro-regional strategies can provide beneficial impulses at all stages of programmes and projects. The figure also shows that macro-regional strategies, programmes and projects are part of the overall environment of sectoral and integrated policies. This representation separates the three dimensions of macro-regional strategies:

1. A strategic framework, embedded in Action Plans accompanying macro-regional strategies, European Council or General Affairs Council conclusions and European Commission communications and reports;
2. Policy processes driven by Thematic Coordinators in interaction with National Coordinators, line ministries, national authorities and agencies as well as other relevant actors;
3. Policy implementation, e.g. through the macro-regional labelled projects and processes.

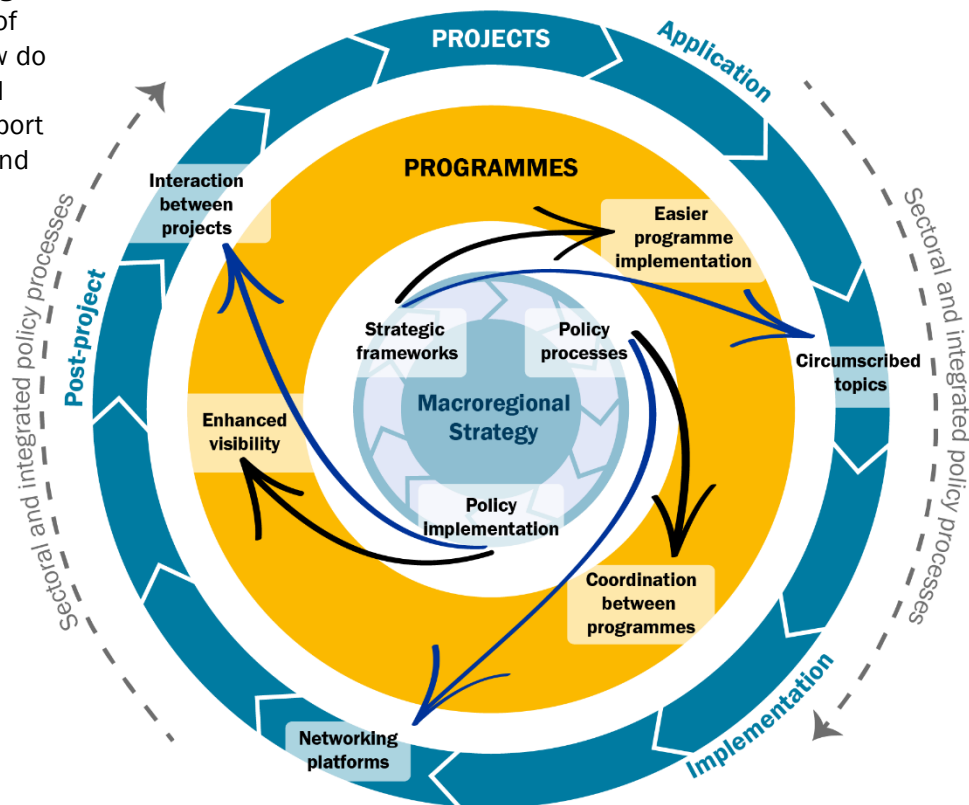
Macro-regional impulses associated with each of these dimensions are particularly relevant at different stages of the project and programme cycles: the strategic framework is particularly relevant for programme elaboration and project design/application; policy processes contribute to coordination and networking during the project and programme implementation; policy implementation measures increase the visibility of programme outputs and can help to ensure that results from one project are followed up in other projects.

As emphasised in the figure, there is a strong interlink between processes in macro-regional strategies, funding programmes and projects need to be highlighted: macro-regional strategies develop from one Action Plan to the next; programmes of one programming period lead to those of the next one; most new projects build on the achievements of past projects. Experience is accumulated and transnational communities are established through iterative interventions, which support the sustainability and capitalisation of their work. The overall movement can be described as a 'spiral of change' where the project results feed into policy discussion and bring

the change. However, there is a need for an enhanced conceptualisation of this ‘loop’ in the macro-regional context which is the expression of the mutual exchange between projects and policies.

Macro-regional strategies can play a key role in ensuring that this spiral keeps a steady direction, beyond short-lived ‘policy buzzes’ and that momentum is not lost. Key impulses of macro-regional strategies to programmes on the one hand, and to projects on the other, are illustrated below. Being part of the overall sectoral and integrated policies, key impulses of programmes and projects eventually feed back to the macro-regional strategies, however, this goes beyond the perspective of this study. The figure remains a simplified representation, as many other interactions can also be observed and/or emerge as desirable to promote. As shown throughout the report, macro-regional strategies can offer important added values before and after actual project or programme implementation, when future actions are designed and when one seeks to capitalise on past achievements. Structuring the different components of macro-regional strategies can make their added value more obvious to proponents of funding programmes and projects.

**Figure 2.** Macro-regional strategies as driving forces of changes – How do macro-regional strategies support programmes and projects?



Source: Spatial Foresight



Macro-regional strategies, as processes working for policy change, can be used as a framework for bringing together different actors from various decision making levels (national, local and regional), increasing their commitment and assuring their support to shared priorities. This can offer a basis to increase the coordination between the programmes, but also to boost the networking and capitalisation opportunities of the projects. This aspect also emphasizes the capacity of macro-regional strategies to enhance multi-level governance.

Macro-regional strategies implement their policies i.a. through their macro-regional actions, projects, and processes. The support of the macro-regional framework can contribute in enhancing the visibility of the programmes, but also increase the visibility and credibility of the projects, extending the life of a project and contributing in continuing the projects' actions after their lifecycle.

Some of these dimensions already take place, while others need to be further explored. The added values that macro-regional strategies bring to projects and programmes is mainly intangible and often not recognised. This conclusion holds for both the EUSBSR and the EUSDR. The benefits for projects and programmes from their link to a macro-regional strategy are seen differently by the different projects and programmes and are summarised as follows:

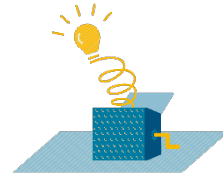
**Benefits projects have from linking to a macro-regional strategy** are not always seen by the project itself. Additionally, immediately available and potentially relevant benefits are in many cases not fully utilised. Among the most notable benefits identified in the study are:

- In the **project development phase** macro-regional strategies can function as strategic frameworks for projects. This allows them to circumscribe relevant topics better and to place the project idea in a wider (policy) context. In that sense macro-regional strategies can serve as entry points and reference documents. In addition, at this phase macro-regional strategies help in the identification of relevant project partners. Project proponents also often expect to gain easier access to funding by linking to a macro-regional strategy. However, in practice this is not necessarily the case.
- In the **implementation phase** projects may make use of the macro-regional strategies as a platform for exchanges and networking. The direct benefits that are generated in this way are often limited. However, integrating into wider macro-regional networks can be important in the long run.
- The most important added value a macro-regional strategy can bring to a project comes in the **post project life**. Increased visibility, dissemination possibilities, awareness by relevant policy makers, impact on policies and capitalisation possibilities – including possibilities for new projects (additional funding) – are widely stated benefits. In many cases macro-regional networking in the project implementation phase made it possible to generate such benefits.

The benefits for projects are rather universal and differ only in details between project types i.e. thematic orientation, funding source or macro-regional strategies.

**Benefits programmes have from supporting macro-regional actions** are difficult to observe. While a wide range of **potential benefits** of macro-regional strategy can be formulated, programmes hardly perceive macro-regional strategies to be currently helping them to achieve objectives and targets defined in their programmes. Examples of potential benefits of macro-regional strategies are:

- Macro-regional strategies can function as a **strategic framework**, making it easier to develop programmes and to agree on thematic objectives. However, they mostly failed to play such a role. As the reasons for that are mentioned: that the strategies are too broad and that they were adopted too late in the programming process.
- They can function as **wider coordination mechanisms** between different programmes, could support and contribute to the alignment of funding, through the funding sources, under a common strategic framework, provided by the macro-regional strategies, as well as the establishment of synergies between different macro-regional actors. This would help the programmes to **achieve their overall programme targets**, especially when they are measured using wider regional development indicators. Such a role of macro-regional strategies can be observed, but only to a limited extent.
- Programmes are often expected to make it possible to **elaborate better projects**, and to **implement** them **more efficiently**. This would in turn contribute to better programme results. This type of benefit is particularly relevant for trans-national projects funded by national and regional ESIF programmes (i.e. transport, energy). The macro-regional perspective makes the transnational relevance of their actions more obvious and visible.
- For programmes as well as for individual projects, macro-regional strategies help to **enlarge the audience**, **enhance visibility** and **extend the outreach** of programmes or projects to a wider range of public in the macro-region. In particular in the case of Interreg programmes, macro-regional strategies generated awareness about Interreg programmes to a wider audience.



## 6. Actions and pointers for change

Although the added value macro-regional strategies can bring to projects and programmes is often rather intangible, some concrete measures can be envisaged to develop this added value further. Based on the conclusions and figure above and keeping in mind that macro-regional strategies focus on processes that aim to changes, their benefits can be capitalised on. Three main fields of action can be identified at this stage:

1. **Exploit the strategic framework of the macro-regional strategies.** By providing a strategic cooperation framework, macro-regional strategies can support better defined priorities at programme and project level, but also join forces to address common challenges:
  - **Make better use of the macro-regional strategies' strategic advantages.** Programmes and projects can make better use of macro-regional strategies – as a strategic framework – to strengthen their policy relevance. This includes using macro-regional strategies as reference point to develop thematic focus and more easily reach consensus among relevant key actors around the thematic focus and gain political weight.
  - **Use the macro-regional strategies' framework to align efforts.** In many regards, projects as well as programmes are too small to really 'solve' the development challenges they address. This is partly because the answer to the challenge requires action beyond the geographic delineation of the project or programme area, and partly because the financial means available are too limited. A stronger macro-regional context helps to bundle forces and address the challenges more effectively. Macro-regional strategies help to construct policy responses at a territorial level that correspond to the functional areas within which the challenges and opportunities occur.
2. **Employ the platform benefits of the macro-regional strategies.** This increases visibility and credibility for both projects and programmes:
  - **Use strategies to increase outreach, critical mass and visibility.** Linking project and programme activities and outcomes to a macro-regional strategy increases the outreach and visibility considerably. Indeed, the strategies contribute to reaching out beyond the usual suspects. This can be e.g. through the annual conferences as well as the thematic networks. The increased outreach helps to better disseminate results, widen partnerships, increase networks etc. An increased (macro-regional) critical mass of stakeholders in a given thematic area could then also improve the orientation of ESIF programmes, adapting them better to the needs within the territory.
  - **Use strategies to capitalise results beyond project and programme lifetimes.** Clear links to a macro-regional strategy and its objectives increase the credibility of a project or programme activity. They can work as quality stamp

and also help ensuring that the project / programme lifetime is extended beyond the project or programme funding cycle. In this sense capitalisation of efforts leads to further development in addressing shared challenges in the macro-region.

3. **Capitalise on the ‘symbolic’ importance of macro-regional strategies.** For this, the macro-regional wider context needs to be taken into account:
  - **Use the possibility to position single programmes and projects in a wider context.** Transnational cooperation and other initiatives seeking to achieve structural change can be discouraging, as concrete effects are often difficult to observe in a short to medium time period. Macro-regional strategies reflect the commitment of European, national and regional authorities to pursue an ambitious and challenging long term agenda. They help to confirm the importance of actions, processes, projects and programmes that may individually be criticised for insufficient results, but that become more meaningful when considered in a wider context. Macro-regional strategies already help to motivate actors of ESIF programmes, e.g. within transnational Interreg programmes. This ‘motivating function’ of macro-regional strategies can be enhanced through awareness-raising actions.

Macro-regional strategies can thus function as the main gears to drive programmes and projects towards various decision making processes and policies, as shown in the figure below. In other words, macro-regional strategies can support projects and programmes in making a difference by feeding into various types of decision making processes.

### **What can be done to increase the benefits macro-regional strategies can have for projects and programmes?**

Drawing upon the overall conclusions, the pointers for action presented below focus on the perspective of the macro-regional strategies and what their key implementers can do. It is a shared responsibility of the key implementers of the macro-regional strategies to jointly work on making the macro-regional strategies more appealing for programmes and projects to ensure win-win situations. The pointers for action below are suggested to the different key implementers of the macro-regional strategies and concentrate on how they can take action to strengthen the role and position of the macro-regional strategies, so that programmes and projects can see the benefits and be more attracted to having a link with a macro-regional strategy. Exchange of experience and cooperation among the four existing macro-regional strategies is necessary for their next steps. Actions can already be taken during the current 2014-2020 programming period and enhanced post-2020 to increase benefits and also link the macro-regional project activities better to policy processes:

## All implementers of the macro-regional strategies

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen ownership of the macro-regional strategies among all implementers of the macro-regional strategy, i.e., those involved in their design and implementation at all levels, including different European Commission DGs, National Coordinators and Thematic Coordinators. This would increase awareness of the potential added-value of macro-regional strategies across ESIF and other European Union programmes, such as Horizon 2020, or other European Union institutions, such as the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>How to do this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness and capitalise the benefits of the macro-regional strategies.</li> <li>Focus on macro-regional challenges and raise the importance of their wider context.</li> <li>All four existing macro-regional strategies need to join forces and be more coordinated to show the benefits they can offer.</li> </ul>	

## European Commission

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consider already possible future roles of the macro-regional strategies, plan ahead.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strengthen the role of macro-regional strategies in the regulatory framework for the post 2020 period, also beyond ESIF.</li></ul>
How to do this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This could e.g. be done through including the contribution to macro-regional strategies in the performance framework, through the alignment of Interreg, ESIF operational programmes, other programmes and funding sources.</li></ul>

## National Coordinators of macro-regional strategies

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate efforts for capacity building of projects and programmes (not only ESIF) concerning the aim and potential benefits of macro-regional strategies.</li> <li>• Emphasise and clarify the macro-regional relevance, advocate the macro-regional 'branding'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the focus of macro-regional strategies e.g. on topics that require macro-regional solutions rather than on addressing communalities.</li> <li>• Identify future relevant trends, see their relevance to the region and focus on their joint solutions. These need to go hand in hand with an increasing 'ownership' of macro-regional strategies among the relevant key implementers of the macro-regional strategies.</li> <li>• Lobby for a stronger macro-regional dimension in the EU policies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to do this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show project examples which can have relevance for macro-regional strategies, despite their regional focus. Highlight the comparative advantages of them having a link to a macro-regional strategy.</li> <li>• Start a debate on which topics must be solved at macro-regional level and what shall be achieved in these fields through the macro-regional strategies, as preparation work for post 2020.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start working on identified topics relevant to be solved at a macro-regional level.</li> <li>• Search for project ideas that have macro-regional relevance.</li> <li>• Steer programming process and link it closely to macro-regional developments.</li> <li>• Bring up macro-regional strategies to the respective Council formations' agendas</li> </ul>

## Thematic Coordinators<sup>2</sup>

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise more awareness about the benefits macro-regional strategies can bring for projects. This may also include increasing network efforts including both project and programme partners and wider dissemination of project results.</li> <li>• Make a coordinated effort across macro-regions in supporting development and implementation of projects with macro-regional relevance.</li> <li>• Make an effort in bringing project results to the policy discussion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the macro-regional label into a real ‘quality stamp’. This will increase its attractiveness and therefore also its status and importance for generating long-term benefits for projects.</li> <li>• Support projects during their project initiation phase.</li> <li>• Work for better access to funding for macro-regional labelled projects.</li> <li>• Promote achievements of macro-regional strategies for evidence based lobbying of the framework.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How to do this?</b></li> <li>• Coordinate closer with project partners during the development of project applications.</li> <li>• Explain what a project of macro-regional relevance is.</li> <li>• Show examples where projects have gained more visibility and recognition due to their contribution to macro-regional strategy.</li> <li>• Show examples where project results contributed to policy development and impact at macro-regional level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider ‘awarding’ the macro-regional label first after a project has demonstrated clear achievements and apply clear and transparent criteria for this.</li> <li>• Award good projects and support their actions after the project lifecycle.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Thematic Coordinators: policy area coordinators or horizontal action coordinators of the EUSBSR and priority area coordinators of the EUSDR.



## Interact

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase communication and promote the benefits of macro-regional strategies so that projects can reap immediate results.</li> <li>• Promote good practices where programmes supported macro-regional projects or processes and processes, made coordinated efforts.</li> <li>• Share practices and experiences of projects and programmes contributing to and benefiting from macro-regional cooperation across macro-regions. Exchange practices where a project contributed to policy discussion and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise in connecting different macro-regional key implementers with actors of the programme level, regional or European level.</li> <li>• Use macro-regional strategies as potential tools in raising inter-programme capacity. Contribute to the development of potential new macro-regional strategies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to do this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop further promotional material, workshops and studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support capacity building among macro-regional strategy implementers.</li> <li>• Increase networking activities between project partners and the key implementers of the macro-regional strategies.</li> <li>• Ensure consistency and coherence among macro-regional strategies.</li> <li>• Ensure the coordination of the four existing macro-regional strategies.</li> </ul>

## Project partners

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Thematic Coordinators on what projects are necessary for the macro-region.</li> <li>• Share their experiences and present their project results, raising awareness about their experience of having a link to the macro-regional strategy.</li> <li>• Work towards developing project results that contribute to overcoming shared challenges for the macro-region.</li> <li>• Develop projects that contribute to policy discussion and development at a macro-regional level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with the Thematic Coordinators and exchange ideas on their project applications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to do this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in different forums, workshops.</li> <li>• Promote project results in cooperation with Thematic Coordinators</li> </ul>	

## ESIF coordination

2014 – 2020	Post 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperate closer with macro-regional strategies' Thematic Coordinators, where relevant, to establish interlinked projects.</li> <li>• Consider investing part of their funding for projects with macro-regional relevance.</li> <li>• Coordinate and capitalise on project results across programmes.</li> <li>• Promote practices and experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards a better alignment of programmes and macro-regional strategies, taking into account the benefits a programme can get from linking to a macro-regional strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>How to do this?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite National Coordinators and Thematic Coordinators of the relevant macro-regional strategies to meetings where strategic orientations of the programme are discussed.</li> <li>• Engage in dialogue with other programmes seeing where and how cooperation and cooperation could be built.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate macro-regional objectives and priorities into the Partnership Agreements and include possible entry points for each Thematic Objective for a possible use of transnational projects or action lines within regional or thematic programmes.</li> </ul>

**The future of the macro-regional strategies is a shared responsibility of all its implementers.** It lies in the hands of the macro-regional strategies' key implementers, in cooperation with other relevant actors and institutions, to capitalise on the benefits of the macro-regional strategies, define the role of the macro-regional strategies and position them stronger post 2020. In our increasingly interconnected world, most things we do in one place have an impact on the development in other places and vice versa. This requires that we constantly need to consider our actions and plans in a wider context. Macro-regional strategies have the potential to offer the framework for putting actions and plans in this wider context. To fully exploit the potential, the implementers of macro-regional strategies need to convince projects and programmes that there is a mutual benefit if they contribute to implementing a macro-regional strategy.

## 7. Project examples

On the following pages you can find the summaries of the following analysed 31 projects (in the order of presentation):

- **BalticlaB:** Bringing together creative young entrepreneurs in the Baltic Sea region; Funding source: SI and CBSS.
- **BSR Stars:** Changing the regional mindset via projects with macro-regional relevance; Funding source: National funding sources/Nordic cooperation.
- **CCC:** Regional projects can have a macro-regional impact for innovation networks; Funding source: ERDF operational programme Innovation and Knowledge, Denmark.
- **DanuBalt:** New approaches to tackle the research divide in the Danube and the Baltic Sea Region; Funding source: Horizon 2020.
- **DANUBE-INCO.NET:** Supporting research and innovation through policy dialogue, networks and analyses in the Danube region; Funding source: 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.
- **Danube:Future:** Strengthening interdisciplinary research cooperation to tackle the region's pressing environmental issues; Funding source: Multiple programmes; Flagship project of the Priority Area 7 of the EUSDR.
- **DO-IT:** Creating an inclusive innovation system in the Danube region through joint actions; Funding source: Multiple programmes: Interreg, Horizon 2020, ESF, Erasmus+ Programme.
- **National Authorities for Apprenticeship:** Introduction of Elements Dual VET Slovak Republic: Promoting Vocational Education and Training in the Danube; Funding source: Erasmus+ Programme.
- **PROMISE:** Macro-regional cooperation broadens existing networks in support of examining new ways to recycle nutrients; Funding source: BONUS.
- **SEN-BSR:** Sharing best practices at macro-regional level to support social enterprises; Funding source: Erasmus+ Programme
- **i.e.SMART:** Developing an entrepreneurial mindset in the Danube region; Funding source: Central Europe programme 2007-2013.
- **Act4myBalticSea:** Increasing visibility of the funding programme through the link to projects of the EUSBSR; Funding source: Central Baltic Interreg IV A programme 2007-2013.
- **AQUABEST:** Aquaculture growth with less environmental impact; Funding source: Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013.
- **Baltic Deal:** Joint efforts of farmers' organisations to tackle eutrophication in the Baltic Sea; Funding source: Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013.
- **Danube National Flood project:** Generating spill over effects in the Danube region through the improvement of flood management; Funding source: Cohesion Fund, Hungary.
- **STURGEON 2020:** Cross-sectoral and transboundary coordination for the revival of the Danube Sturgeon population; Funding source: Multiple programmes: LIFE programme, national funds, EIB, Seed Money EUSDR.
- **MareCap:** Protecting Marine Areas and ecosystems demands cooperation and networking; Funding source: EUSBSR Seed Money facility.
- **Restoration of the lower Morava floodplains:** Preserving biodiversity of the macro-region despite the limited project partners; Funding source: LIFE+.

- **SEE River:** An integrative management tool for international rivers that started in the Danube area; Funding source: South East Europe programme 2007-2013.
- **SEERISK:** A risk assessment methodology for the EUSDR area; Funding source: South East Europe programme 2007-2013.
- **Solid household waste management system in the Ventspils region:** Reducing the waste line: solid household waste management in the Ventspils region; Funding source: Cohesion Fund, Latvia.
- **Baltic Link:** Eliminating bottlenecks and improving intermodal transport chains, Funding source: Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).
- **CESLA:** Raising awareness on cross-border electric mobility; Funding source: Austria-Slovenia 2007-2013 Interreg IVA programme.
- **Coslariu-Simeria link:** Upgrading of the Rhine Danube Corridor railway connection; Funding source: Cohesion Fund, Romania, ERDF, Romanian national funds.
- **EfficienSea:** Making the Baltic Sea region pilot region for e-navigation, making maritime traffic efficient, safe and sustainable traffic; Funding source: Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013.
- **Green InfraPort:** Preparing projects with macro-regional relevance; Funding source: EUSBSR Seed Money facility.
- **IRIS Europe 3:** Harmonised Implementation of River Information Services on the Danube; Funding source: Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).
- **Kazlų Rūda-Kaunas link:** Improving connectivity in the Baltic Sea through the reconstruction of a small railway link; Funding source: Cohesion Fund, Lithuania
- **Maritsa Motorway:** The Danube connecting Europe to the Middle East and Asia; Funding source: Operational programme on Transport 2007-2013, Cohesion Fund Bulgaria.
- **MONALISA:** Improving maritime safety through innovative e-navigation; Funding source: Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).
- **NEWS:** Novel container ship for the increase of cargo transport on the Danube; Funding source: 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.



## Balticlab

**Bringing together creative young entrepreneurs in the Baltic Sea region**

**Project name:** Balticlab | **Funding source:** Swedish Institute (SI) and Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat (CBSS) | **Amount of funding:** N.a. | **Timing:** 2012 – ongoing | **Lead partner:** SI and CBSS Secretariat | **Project partners:** CBSS and SI | **Website:** <http://balticlab-online.eu/>

### Aim & rationale of the project

Balticlab supports creative young entrepreneurs in the Baltic Sea region in developing their project ideas. Therefore it initiated network-building among these people and organises meetings to support the exchange of experience and ideas. Balticlab furthermore supports the sustainability of the project ideas by mapping and discussing different funding possibilities.

### Achievements of the project

Balticlab is a gradually developing project. In 2012 the project was launched with a pilot to support young and creative entrepreneurs. At the end of 2013, Balticlab 2.0 was launched focusing on project development. In this phase, 35 participants went into 8 sub-groups developing ideas linked to their own interests in a regional context. Throughout spring 2014 the groups were provided with workshop facilities, mentors and inspirational talks from leading regional experts, who guided their project-development process. Balticlab 3.0 was launched at the end of 2014 and focused on providing space for building innovative ideas and project prototypes which span across disciplines, countries and gender. The current Balticlab 4.0 resulted in a manifesto for the Baltic Sea region, strengthening networking among creative minds.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Macro-regional cooperation has been relevant for the project development and implementation. In the development phase the project benefits from insights from multiple players from different countries of the Baltic Sea and with different tradition. The different views are useful to develop a project better and activities that serve the entire Baltic area. In project implementation the benefits are mostly felt at the level of the participants of Balticlab, who largely determine how the project develops. These participants learn from each other's experiences and ideas in the various networking events. As a side effect it also supports identity building in the Baltic Sea region, as these young entrepreneurs discover that peers in the area face the same challenges.

The involvement into the macro-regional strategy has provided the players with better networks and the possibility to develop innovative ideas. Sharing experiences among players also ensures that the resulting actions are more targeted to the local needs.

Having a link to the EUSBSR is important for the project. The link to the EUSBSR has been explicitly mentioned in the call for funding and the funding application, and the project has been labelled as flagship. Although without the EUSBSR the project probably would have not looked much different. The SI also offer other possibilities to fund these type of activities.

### Reflections

Balticlab aims to continue serving as an application for young entrepreneurs in the Baltic Sea region, where they can share project ideas and expand their contacts and networks. Clear communication and guidelines for organisations on how a link to the EUSBSR can be established would be helpful for projects which plan to contribute to the EUSBSR.



Courtesy of the CBSS secretariat ©



## BSR Stars

**Changing the regional mindset via projects with macro-regional relevance**

**Project name:** BSR Stars | **Funding source:** National funding sources / Nordic cooperation | **Amount of funding:** N.a. | **Timing:** January 2015 – December 2017 (current programme) | **Lead partner:** VINNOVA | **Project partners:** 18 project partners from Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Poland and Sweden | **Website:** <http://www.bsrstars.se>

### Aim & rationale of the project

BSR Stars has been initiated to boost innovation, find new market potentials in areas where the Baltic Sea is globally active and to work on societal challenges. BSR Stars functions as a portfolio of projects with concrete initiatives under it. The aim is to strengthen regional competitiveness through better coordination between cluster initiatives. It does so by facilitating exchange of experiences from cluster organisations and innovation agencies as well as from research institutes and companies.

### Achievements of the project

BSR Stars is a long-standing programme that has been sustained and developed since 2000 in other formats than flagship. Later it has been labelled as flagship or the EUSBSR. Due to this long history BSR Stars contributes to changing the regional mindset. By enhancing the network between different cluster initiatives, stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region have become more aware of the innovation, research and development possibilities. They are aware that testing facilities, funding opportunities and partners can also be found at a regional level rather than on a global level.

StarDust is a concrete project that can be seen as a result of the BSR Stars. StarDust (2010-2013) was the first step in achieving the long-term goals of the BSR Stars. It links strong research nodes, clusters and SME networks to work on regional societal challenges. The project was seen by the partners as an essential way to test and to learn more about what was needed for a full-scale implementation of BSR Stars. In total, StarDust mobilised 35 partners from the public and semi-public sector, supported by 43 associated partners from national, regional and local levels, while more than 850 SMEs and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) were engaged in the activities e.g. in match-making events or user-driven innovations camps.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Cooperation is seen as essential to increase the number of competencies that a single player does not have. The region is seen as a shared resource-base in which useful knowledge is available, one does not necessarily need to rely on non-EU resources to create knowledge. The EUSBSR inspired the project partners to join forces across different policy sectors, reaching a critical mass and increasing the impact of their actions.

The EUSBSR supports the cooperation by giving a framework of joint objectives. It provides the umbrella to justify the cooperation between different cluster organisations. The EUSBSR also facilitates the building of networks and projects. The StarDust contributes to the EUSBSR objectives through:

- Facilitating transnational networks partnerships and strategic alliances between cluster organisations, companies, universities, research centres and public authorities;
- Sharing, developing and utilising open and demand-driven innovation;
- Improving macro-regional innovation capacities to leverage specialised national assets;
- Strengthening the international visibility and attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region and its innovation capabilities.

The EUSBSR has helped to identify common challenges, issues and geographical matters of the region and has supported building a common identity by sharing experiences, knowledge and building trust. The main advantage of having a link to the macro-regional strategy is to easier disseminate project results and to increase visibility for key players. Having a flagship label supports the development of follow-up activities and continuity of the project.

### Reflections

Based on the experience of the StarDust, other projects can be motivated and convinced to work at the macro-regional level to join efforts and reach a critical mass for research and innovation. The macro-regional incentives can be either in the form of funding, good service, advice, visibility or a network – interaction with other partners. The latter can ensure reaching a critical mass to access funding from other and more ambitious sources, e.g. the Horizon2020 programme.



## CCC

### Regional projects can have a macro-regional impact for innovation networks

**Project name:** Copenhagen Cleantech Cluster (CCC) | **Funding source:** ERDF operational programme Innovation and Knowledge, Denmark | **Funding amount:** EUR 19 477 000 | **Timing:** September 2009 – September 2013 | **Lead partner:** Copenhagen Capacity | **Project partners:** 13 project partners from Denmark | **Website:** <http://www.copcap.com/set-up-a-business/key-sectors/cleantech>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The Copenhagen Cleantech Cluster has been established to combine different cleantech initiatives to leverage their impact and become a globally known cluster. The cluster has been successful through their “big bang approach”: All needs have been addressed at the same time from day one. This means a relatively large investment from the start of the project. Where most clusters grow gradually with support of contributions from its members, ERDF support made the big bang approach possible.

#### Achievements of the project

The activities included organising innovation and growth programmes for entrepreneurs, making more test & demonstration facilities available, matching researchers with companies, setting up industry-specific networks, adding to the understanding of what the cleantech industry is all about, and cooperating with international clusters and enhancing the international profile of this Danish cluster. The ERDF project resulted in:

- Creation of 1,089 jobs (goal: 1,000)
- Attracting 12 international businesses (goal: 25)
- Supporting 126 start-up businesses (goal 25)
- Creating 64 new research partnerships (goal: 30)
- Creating 38 new business partnerships (goal: 20)

Because of these achievements and the project’s aim to coordinate different cluster initiatives in support of cleantech, the project can have an impact and link to the EUSBSR objectives in the fields of research and innovation but also resource efficiency.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Cooperation remained mostly at the local level, where the cluster organisation stimulates cooperation between research and knowledge institutes and companies. At the same time the cluster aims to promote itself internationally as attractive cluster. For the latter players in the Baltic Sea region have approached the cluster organisation as well. The experience and approach applied in Denmark has been an inspiration for Polish players when developing their cleantech cluster. Also players from Sweden approached the Danish lead partner.

By the incorporation of the project in a larger context, it was easier to share experience. The involved project partners have shared expertise and learned from other. The project also benefitted from more visibility even on a global scale through international promotion.

For the CCC partners the Baltic Sea region was not a particular region of thematic focus, as research and innovation on cleantech has a global character. Therefore they did not restrict themselves by sharing the experience and learning they have gained to the Baltic Sea region. Furthermore the lead partner does not have a large network in other countries around the Baltic Sea. If this was present maybe more attention would have been paid to this region.

Other policy themes than research, innovation and cluster development are seen as more relevant at the macro-regional level. The lead partner stresses that there is a need for addressing common challenges at the macro-regional levels, such as environmental problems. Cluster development is perceived as being more relevant at the local and global level, since most of the players also act at these levels. The cluster organisation was not aware of the macro-regional strategy. If it were, it could have made the links to specific challenges of the EUSDR more explicitly visible.

#### Reflections

The CCC has been merged with a similar cluster initiative in Jutland (Denmark) into CLEAN in May 2014. The ERDF support from CCC boosted a strong start of the cluster. Due to this support the cluster organisation can now function independently, without further support from EU funding.





## DanuBalt

### New approaches to tackle the research divide in the Danube and the Baltic Sea Region

**Project name:** Novel approaches in tackling the health innovation and research divide in the Danube and Baltic Sea Region (DanuBalt) | **Funding source:** Horizon 2020 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 499 781 | **Timing:** January 2015 – December 2016 | **Lead partner:** Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum (SEZ) | **Project partners:** Six partners from Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Romania and an independent non-profit health organization established in the United Kingdom | **Website:** <http://danubalt.eu>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

A considerable divide between weaker performing and lead RDI regions exists in the Danube region. The Danube region generally falls behind the Baltic Sea region when it comes to innovation. DanuBalt addresses this divergence, focusing specifically on the health sector, and:

- Examines current health research activities in the less performing RDI regions/countries in the Danube and Baltic Sea region, looking into determinants influencing the health R&D performance;
- Defines health niche markets with regional unique selling points promoting partnerships with high performing regions and defines own regional or converging strategic research agendas;
- Identifies common patterns and individual differences within the regions in order to suggest recommendations and identify action plans;
- Implements transnational pilot activities showing a way forward to increase investments in health research and innovation projects.

#### Achievements of the project

A main outcome of DanuBalt is the macro-regional implementation action plan to increase the innovation performance of the Danube region. Four pilots are implemented as a test of the DanuBalt Action Plan. They will focus on topics such as talent attraction, SME business services, education and entrepreneurship, idea competition and transnational health projects. The pilot projects also aim to increase participation and make a more coordinated use of European Commission support programmes combined with national and regional public-private investments.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Overcoming regional disparities with regard to innovation performance within the Danube macro-region is one of the objectives of the EUSDR and also the main objective of DanuBalt. The project aims to reduce the diversity within health R&I and improve the innovation capacity of the EUSDR and the EUSBSR. The link of the project to the two macro-regional strategies has been seen as positive by the funding programme. Therefore, cooperation among several partners of different countries can prove necessary.

With the projects' primary focus on research in health activities, it provides various intersections with the overarching EUSDR priorities. Not only does the project enhance skills and knowledge inside the regions but in the end it contributes to better health of the population.

#### Reflections

Other than the four objectives, the project also contributes to the creation of short and medium term specific indicators to measure development with data. This data will be based on the amount of funding invested, number of projects supported and economic impact assessments. This initiative will provide the tools and services that can be used both by the EUSDR and the EUSBSR.



## DANUBE-INCO.NET

**Supporting research and innovation through policy dialogue, networks and analyses in the Danube region**

**Project name:** Advancing Research and Innovation in the Danube Region (DANUBE-INCO.NET) | **Funding source:** 7th framework programme | **Amount of funding:** EUR 2 276 279 | **Timing:** January 2014 – December 2016 | **Lead partner:** Centre for Social Innovation, Austria | **Project partners:** 19 partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Rumania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine | **Website:** <https://danube-inco.net/about/danubeinco.net>

### Aim & rationale of the project

The Danube region needs to strengthen its innovation capacity and boost cooperation in research and innovation. DANUBE-INCO.NET addresses research and innovation (R&I) cooperation in the Danube region through the organisation of joint events. It acts as a hub for the broad and targeted dissemination of information on events, publications and policy recommendations related to R&I cooperation. This is complemented by related background analysis and the elaboration and dissemination of surveys and studies on R&I stakeholders, projects and relevant results.

### Achievements of the project

The project helped to create and support the Danube network of technology transfer centres. The network highlights the sustainability of the project results. One of the main achievements of the project was the organisation of a joint EUREKA Danube Region multi-lateral call for cooperation projects targeted at enterprises that cooperate on the realisation of new, innovative products, processes or services.

The network is a unique example of good policy coordination between DG Regio and DG Innovation. It was thanks to this coordination that it could get funding for its project.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The project directly supports the implementation of the EUSDR in the field of R&I through policy dialogue, the creation of networks, analyses and support to R&I activities.

The project was developed in close coordination with the coordinators of EUSDR Priority Area 7 “Knowledge Society” and Priority Area 8 “Competitiveness of Enterprises”. This strongly shaped the project proposal and brought in several strategic partners, many of which are key stakeholders in the region such as ministries, international organisations, other relevant NGOs and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. The project was conceived as a project under the EUSDR and engaged in a number of coordination activities for the EUSDR such as organising Priority Areas and cross-Priority Areas working group meetings, etc. It was seen as an implementing instrument for the macro-regional strategy. At the same time, the project benefits from the progress that the EUSDR has already made in preparing cooperation among countries and institutions in the macro-region.

Having the European Commission as a partner in the project through its Joint Research Centre proved very useful for securing high-level support. The project was made possible thanks to good policy coordination between DG Regio and DG Research and Innovation, who included the Danube Region in the INCO call of the FP7 Capacities Work programme. The project also benefited from the impact-oriented management approach of FP7 that is rather flexible regarding the geography and changes to the project as long as results are delivered.

### Reflections

The project will look for a follow up under a different funding programme. To get a critical mass in the macro-region it is important to support the regional innovation players. The EUSDR has still potential to improve its coordinating role, as some Priority Area Coordinators need to become more proactive in promoting specific projects and programmes. The macro-regional strategy could be useful in facilitating support and giving guidance and visibility to networks in the region.

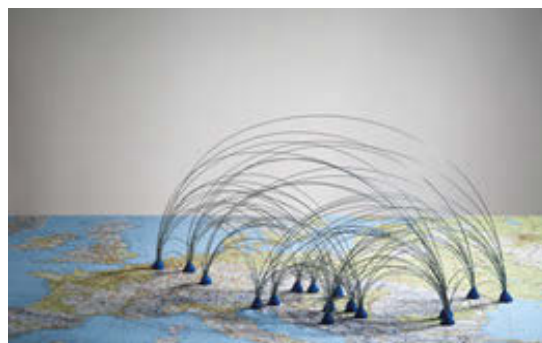


Photo by Florian Wachmann ©



## Danube:Future

### Strengthening interdisciplinary research cooperation to tackle the region's pressing environmental issues

**Project name:** A sustainable future for the Danube River Basin as a challenge for the interdisciplinary humanities (Danube:Future) | **Funding source:** Multiple programmes | **Amount of funding:** n.a. | **Timing:** January 2013 – December 2020 | **Lead partner:** Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria | **Project partners:** Five partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Serbia and Russia | **Website:** <http://www.danubefuture.eu/>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The Danube region copes with a legacy of pressing political and environmental issues which hinder the sustainable development of the macro-region. This can best be addressed through inter- and trans-disciplinary research and research cooperation in the region.

#### Achievements of the project

Danube:Future supports the sustainable development of the Danube region by providing knowledge-based services to the institutional actors in the region in the form of:

- an open-access knowledge base to which capacity building and research projects can contribute;
- own interdisciplinary research and
- capacity building programmes.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

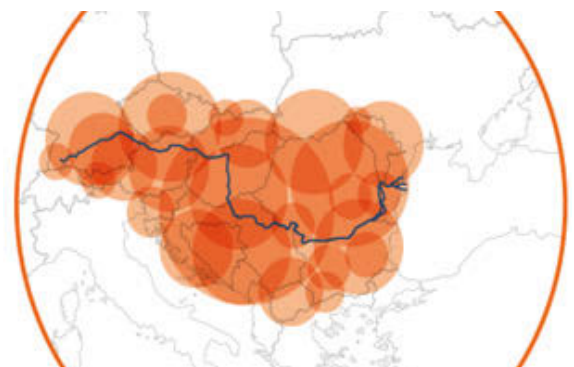
International research cooperation, knowledge management and sharing are essential to the scientific community. Danube:Future is a flagship project of the EUSDR and was endorsed by both the Alps-Adriatic and the Danube Rectors' Conference. The project directly contributes to EUSDR Priority Area 7 "Knowledge Society" and the objective "to strengthen cooperation among universities and research facilities and to upgrade research and education outcomes by focusing on unique selling points". Danube:Future provides the framework for this research cooperation to happen.

Despite the fact that the project is a EUSDR flagship, there were no real tangible advantages regarding the attraction of funding. The project suggests that the PA steering group needs to support flagship or strategic projects more actively in obtaining funding in order to improve the performance of individual projects under the EUSDR in the future.

The adoption of the EUSDR Action Plan has given the impetus for the development of the project. Danube:Future has gained from the strategic networking opportunities that came along with the status as the EUSDR flagship project. The project participated at a number of PA7 steering group meetings as well as other EUSDR-related events.

#### Reflections

The project currently suffers from a lack of external funding, despite the project being labelled as the EUSDR flagship project and can make reference to various declarations of intent from ministries and the endorsement of two rectors' conferences. The project suggests that the Priority Area steering group ought to support flagship or strategic projects more actively in obtaining funding. Currently, the project tries to put together a project under the Interreg Danube programme and also looks into the possibility to obtain national funding from a number of EUSDR countries.



Map by Divulgando srl ©



## DO-IT

### Creating an inclusive innovation system in the Danube region through joint actions

**Project name:** Danube Open Innovative Technologies (DO-IT) | **Funding source:** Several; Interreg, Horizon 2020, ESF, Erasmus+ Programme | **Amount of funding:** EUR 100 000 000 (budget estimation) | **Timing:** 2012 – ongoing  
**Lead partner:** University of Maribor, Slovenia | **Project partners:** the management board is comprised of six project partners from Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Serbia. There are several key partners at regional level as well from knowledge institutions, companies, support institutions and local communities

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The Danube region faces a number of societal challenges. These include disparities between the eastern and western part, low innovation potential and an ageing population. The DO-IT project is a response to these challenges and fosters a symbiotic relationship between research institutions, the economy, support institutions and local communities through open innovations and technologies.

Potential is seen through better use of cross-border cooperation, networks of R&D specialised centres and the recruitment of highly competent human resources. DO-IT aims at increasing the number of high-tech companies and SME competitiveness, creating new jobs and preventing brain drain in the region.

#### Achievements of the project

The project took many steps and provided achievements through the:

- Establishment of innovation support and Innovative Open Technologies entry points ('one-stop-shop')
- Establishment of R&D regional infrastructures
- R&D for the development of new higher value-added products and services

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The DO-IT project does not only address some of the main priorities of Horizon 2020, such as health, demographic changes and well-being, but it is also in line with the EUSDR objectives. DO-IT is labelled as one of the EUSDR flagship projects within Priority Area 7 "To Develop the Knowledge Society". The project aligned transnational R&I funding to activities in the Danube region.

Moreover, it established networks which go beyond its macro-regional territory and encompass the Danube region, the Alpine region and the Adriatic Ionian region. Being a project under the umbrella of the EUSDR gave DO-IT the opportunity to further capitalise its results, as it participated in the 4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR in 2015, representing the Priority Area 7 at the organised workshops. It can be assumed that the EUSDR provided the framework and ground for more meetings and networking opportunities.

DO-IT aims at increasing the number of high-tech companies in order to foster SME competitiveness, foster new jobs and to avoid brain-drain. The project features strong thematic intersections with Priority Area 7 of the macro-regional strategy designating it as one of EUSDR's flagship projects.

#### Reflections

Innovation benefits from wide networks and synergies. The DO-IT project has shown that macro-regional strategies can provide a base for networking opportunities and wider result dissemination in the region.



## National Authorities for Apprenticeship

### Introduction of Elements Dual VET Slovak Republic: Promoting Vocational Education and Training in the Danube

**Project name:** National Authorities for Apprenticeship: Introduction of Elements Dual VET Slovak Republic | **Funding source:** Erasmus+ Programme | **Amount of funding:** EUR 325 219 | **Timing:** 2014 – 2016 | **Lead partner:** Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic | **Project partners:** Seven partners from Austria, Germany and Slovakia

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The project is focused on the support for the solution of high unemployment of young people in the Danube region, in contrast with the shortage of a qualified work force. Both the demographic developments and the discontinuation work-based training models during the transformation period have led to a lack of replacement for qualified workers leaving the market.

The intention is to contribute to further modernization of the system of dual education in Slovakia and so to concede an impulse for other countries of the Danube region. The transfer of positive experiences from Austria and Germany (Baden-Württemberg) should be a contribution towards the creation of compatible systems of education in the Danube region.

#### Achievements of the project

One of the expected outcomes is the drafting of an action plan for setting up a Danube Academy, a competence centre for dual VET focused on education of teachers and in-company trainers / instructors of the Danube countries. Other expected outcomes of the project are:

- Promoting the national VET system reform in Slovakia.
- Development of a project vision for a competence centre, targeting the education of teachers and in-company trainers and instructors of the concerned Danube countries.
- Strengthening the support and mobilization of SMEs for VET.
- Experience exchange in the area of VET.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The targets of Priority Area 9 "People and Skills" of the EUSDR refer precisely to enhance the performance of education systems through closer cooperation of education institutions, systems and policies. Therefore, the creation of the Danube Centre as institution to enhance the exchange of knowledge across borders fits perfectly to this target. The various levels of governance involved (also different in each country) and the need to have the private sector on board offer good potential to the EUSDR to have a real added value in the implementation of this project.

Since the project is a flagship of the EUSDR, it also aims on giving a stimulus to the countries in the Danube region.

#### Reflections

Being chosen as a flagship, the national authorities or apprenticeship project aims at promoting vocational education in the Danube region enhancing the knowledge exchange across borders.



## PROMISE

### Macro-regional cooperation broadens existing networks in support of examining new ways to recycle nutrients

**Project name:** PROMISE | **Funding source:** BONUS | **Amount of funding:** EUR 465 000 | **Timing:** April 2014 – March 2017 | **Lead partner:** Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE) | **Project partners:** Four partners in Germany, Sweden and Finland | **Website:** [https://portal.mtt.fi/portal/page/portal/mtt\\_en/projects/promise](https://portal.mtt.fi/portal/page/portal/mtt_en/projects/promise)

#### Aim & rationale of the project

PROMISE aims to improve the utilisation of nutrient-rich by-products and to examine how to use these by-products in a safe way. The project searches for solutions on better ways of recycling urban and agricultural organic waste, for example, phosphorus. The project focuses on research activities in order to examine and test the re-use of phosphorus from different resources, by extracting it, for instance, from manure and sewage sludge.

#### Achievements of the project

The research is aiming at contributing to the production of safe recycled fertilizers including their handling and treatment procedures, which is e.g. challenged by the presence of organic contaminant, e.g. pathogens and antibiotics. High concentration of heavy metals in manures and sewage sludge, among others, restricts their full potential as fertilizers in plant production. PROMISE will help to estimate the development of phosphorus balances in the Baltic Sea region. The objective for the BONUS funded project is to develop new strategies for phosphorus fertilisation that will be used to enhance food safety and food security.

The preliminary results of the project show already promising results. Research studies and other results will lead to new and improved technical solutions such as thermal waste treatment. PROMISE will disseminate these results across the Baltic Sea region.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The objectives of the EUSBSR have been taken into consideration when applying for funding from the BONUS programme. One of the benefits of linking the project to the EUSBSR is to easier attract funding from transnational programmes like BONUS and to ensure national co-funding. A link to the EUSBSR is seen as evidence of being aware of important challenges defined at political level. It also ensures that the research supports applicable actions and is thus relevant for decision-makers.

The EUSBSR has helped the project to attract appropriate funding and has contributed to the enhancement of exchange among national project partners and involved actors.

Cooperation at macro-regional level supports the implementation and durability of the project by exchanging ideas and information. It also helps to broaden the network: The project partners found new players, which could be interested in future cooperation and research in the field. These networks benefit from proximity, the EUSBSR events, as well as past cooperation activities.

Project results are relevant for players inside and outside the Baltic Sea region. The research topic is globally relevant and does not restrict itself to the Baltic Sea. At the same time project partners organise meetings with local and regional decision makers to share their results and make sure the innovative ideas can be realised in actual processes and products. This happens outside the scope of the BONUS co-funded project on the initiative of the project partners, thus, producing important spill-over effects.

#### Reflections

The research outcomes will be published at the end of the project and will then be hopefully picked up and implemented by local, regional and national players to support the environment of the Baltic Sea region.





## SEN-BSR

### Sharing best practices at macro-regional level to support social enterprises

**Name of the project:** Social Entrepreneurship Network in the Baltic Sea Region (SEN-BSR) | **Funding source:** Erasmus+ | **Amount of funding:** EUR 160 118 | **Timing:** September 2014 – August 2016 | **Lead partner:** Social Innovation Centre, Latvia | **Project partners:** Seven project partners from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Poland | **Website:** <http://www.socialenterprisebsr.net/>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Social enterprises include innovative approaches supporting job creation and growth and finding solutions to social and economic problems. The Social Entrepreneurship Network for the Baltic Sea Region promotes this idea and has been established to address key challenges of the social economy, such as:

- Lack of visibility of social economy players;
- Lack of specialised training;
- Lack of a supporting network and infrastructure.

#### Achievements of the project

The SEN-BSR provides information, education and overall support for social entrepreneurship in the region. More concretely, the network mapped social enterprises around the Baltic Sea focusing on the players, educational support provided for them and impact of these enterprises. This supported the development of:

- Research of the social enterprise sector snapshot around the Baltic Sea.
- Guidelines to stimulate the social economy – informing local authorities and giving recommendations to stimulate the development of social enterprises;
- Education material for social entrepreneurship development in the Baltic Sea region as well as impact assessment methodologies to develop skills related to social impact analysis;
- Education material of social entrepreneurship development in the Baltic Sea region – focusing on business models, e.g. how to choose an adequate business model for social enterprises;
- An open education resource where all developed material is accessible;
- A networking tool promoting cooperation between social enterprise start-ups.

Through the ERASMUS+ funding, SEN-BSR supported entrepreneurship and education objectives. It especially strengthened the development of quality education of social entrepreneurship in the regional and national context. Furthermore it supported the development of policy guidelines helping local governments better understand and support social enterprises.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Macro-regional cooperation benefited the implementation of the project by sharing best practices and result-oriented discussions addressing problems through the different perspectives of different national players. Other benefits beyond the achievements are a more focused learning from the partners about legal initiatives and specific support mechanisms in each country, but in the same socio-cultural and historic framework.

The EUSBSR has introduced a framework for exchange in which different actors get in touch and to know about legal initiatives and support mechanisms in each country.

Despite these advantages, which fit in the framework of macro-regional cooperation, the project might not have looked different without the EUSBSR in place. In fact, the project partners are only partially aware of the macro-regional strategy. Nevertheless, the project partners work with a macro-regional spirit and envisage continuing and strengthening their cooperation.

#### Reflections

Linking the project to the objective of the macro-regional strategy is considered as an asset to support future funding applications. The project partners constantly look for funding possibilities to continue and extend the network development.



## i.e.SMART

### Developing an entrepreneurial mindset in the Danube region

**Project name:** Smart training network for innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging sustainable economic sectors (i.e.SMART) | **Funding source:** Interreg Central Europe programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding (ERDF):** EUR 1 667 326 | **Timing:** July 2012 – December 2014 | **Lead partner:** European Office, Vienna Board of Education, Austria | **Project partners:** Total 12 partners from Austria, Italy, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary and Czech Republic | **Website:** <http://www.ie-smart.eu>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Central Europe and the Danube region see the number of jobs and growth in SMEs decreasing due to a lack of interest in business development and entrepreneurship, as well as a low survival rate of business start-ups.

i.e.SMART promotes SME development and growth by:

- Working within multidisciplinary teams across economic sector-specific borders.
- Training not only in classical business skills, but also in transformative business skills such as creativity, empathy, big picture thinking and intuition.
- Connecting emerging entrepreneurs, business coaches and experts.

#### Achievements of the project

i.e.SMART is a network of SME support agencies. 'SMART points' have been established in every participating region that implements the methodology and concepts developed by the project to motivate and provide trainings, counselling and other related support for emerging entrepreneurs. In Austria, this training concept was taken into primary schools; in Baden-Württemberg a new university master's programme on entrepreneurship was set up based on the i.e.SMART methodology. Among the many outcomes of the project is also a monthly i.e.SMART brunch in the Vienna SMART point. Local entrepreneurs and school children from schools that run their own business are invited and entrepreneurs tell the story of how they started their business.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Good institutional relations between the project lead partner and the Austrian Priority Area Coordinator 9 "Peoples and Skills" led to a number of synergies. The project took inspiration from the EUSDR, used the network established by the Priority Area Coordinator to identify project partners and made use of the opportunities to get engaged with the Priority Area working and steering group. The project helped to bring together partners with coherent objectives and actions, establishing a critical mass that had been difficult to reach for each national partner on his own.

There was some sort of symbiosis between the project and the EUSDR. The objectives of Priority Area 9 matched very well with the project's objectives and this link was used to identify partners, increase visibility and disseminate information.

#### Reflections

The project has produced valuable outcomes. However, the network partners wish to establish a better connection between projects, funding programmes (e.g. Interreg) and macro-regional strategies. The EUSDR could provide a common framework of understanding to guide action of projects and programmes. The link of the network with Interreg was already strengthened in the current programming period 2014-2020.



i.e.SMART trainers; photo by Johannes Lindner ©





## Act4myBalticSea

### Increasing visibility of the funding programme through the link to projects of the EUSBSR

**Project name:** Coastal Communities actions for a clear Baltic Sea (Act4myBalticSea) | **Funding source:** Central Baltic Interreg IV A programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 958 221 | **Timing:** May 2010 – December 2012 | **Lead partner:** Norrtälje municipality, Sweden | **Project partners:** Six partners, from Estonia, Finland and Sweden | **Website:** <http://projects.centralbaltic.eu/project/415-act4mybalticsea>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The coastal waters in the Baltic Sea have a bad environmental status. Act4myBalticSea developed new methods for public mobilisation, looked for solutions for automatic measurements of marine water quality and aimed at decreasing the quantity of wastewater from recreational coasts collected in harbours.

Through the programme, municipalities encouraged individuals to act more environmentally friendly. A positive effect on reducing water pollutants was the decrease of poorly cleaned and sewage water from vacation homes and private boats. Awareness raising on the influence of untreated waters as source of phosphorous and nitrogen in the Baltic Sea causing regular inter alia algae blooms was promoted. As the project responds to an aspect of which the countries bordering the Baltic Sea are concerned, collaboration was crucial.

#### Achievements of the project

The programme promoted various improvements toward increasing awareness on better water quality in the Baltic Sea region. The measures included:

- Regular water quality tests and the publication of results on different levels through various channels.
- Development of new approaches for public mobilisation and awareness rising.
- Increase of the quantity of wastewater collected from recreational boats in harbours.
- Implementation of websites and an app showing information about available and planned facilities for emptying lavatories in marinas in Estonia, Finland and Sweden.

Act4myBalticSea compared traditional municipal approaches with intensified, personalised promotional activities and direct interaction. These included the development of behavioural change processes and consultations provided by trained “change agents” from local interest groups. Additionally, partners presented local water quality data on a website in an easily accessible and informative manner for the public and players. The achievements of the cooperation programme are in line with several targets from the EUSBSR, primarily with improving the water quality and the environmental status in the Baltic Sea.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The EUSBSR helped to better adjust the territorial focus to the needs and objectives of Act4myBalticSea. It was possible to focus the programme on priorities that are relevant in a broader context for different types of players and thus introduced the feature of aligning funding on joint priorities inside the Baltic Sea region. By this, a leverage effect was induced that made the programme and the output more tangible and concrete. The EUSBSR also served as a framework for validation, as it was possible to verify and adjust actions.

The EUSBSR helped adjusting the territorial focus to the specific needs and objectives of the project.

Given the broad spectrum of the EUSBSR, it is generally difficult to indicate whether a project or a programme clearly contributes to the achievement of targets and objectives the EUSBSR. The macro-regional strategy however, in return can be seen as a framework for making some actions more concrete. Because of the link of the project to specific objective 2.4 of the Programme and its link to the objective ‘Save the sea’ of the macro-regional strategy, its visibility and credibility was increased while the networking activities were further enhanced among the involved project partners. Connecting the programme to the EUSBSR was seen as an effective way of attracting the attention of more people in the area. This illustrates the impact and relevance of smaller projects to the broad public which increases the understanding and conviction to change.

#### Reflections

The cooperation programme has illustrated that the macro-regional strategy helps to raise awareness for local projects. In return, more concrete projects can increase legitimacy for the EUSBSR in future, if the benefits are correspondingly communicated.



## AQUABEST

### Aquaculture growth with less environmental impact

**Project name:** Innovative practices and technologies for developing sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region (AQUABEST) | **Funding source:** Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 3 323 008 | **Timing:** June 2011 – March 2014 | **Lead partner:** Natural Resources Institute Finland | **Project partners:** 14 partners from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Sweden, Poland and Belarus. | **Website:** <http://www.aquabestproject.eu/>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Severe eutrophication in the Baltic Sea is a reason for limited aquaculture growth in the region, as aquaculture activities cause nutrient load. To date, very few measures are available to produce seafood with no negative environmental effects. AQUABEST demonstrated that aquaculture in the Baltic Sea Region has the potential to become a nutrient neutral food production system. The project provides practices to solve four specific problems in relation to aquaculture: regulatory constraints, gaps in spatial planning, gaps in the nutrient loop and lack of support to adopt eco-efficient technologies and practices.

#### Achievements of the project

AQUABEST provided hands-on examples on how to increase aquaculture production without negative environmental effects. Concretely AQUABEST has delivered:

- Regional descriptions and self-evaluations of environmental legislation including case comparisons.
- Pilots of spatial planning processes in Jämtland, Kalmar and Åland resulting in among others a new mussel farming project.
- Discussions on state-of-the-art technologies including publishing several reports on manufacturing and pilot farming.
- New knowledge on nitrogen removal from the Recirculation Aquaculture Systems (RAS) effluents, and how to use chemicals within the systems was developed and knowledge disseminated within the aquaculture sector.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The project is strongly interlinked with the EUSBSR objectives and has thus become more visible. Thanks to this link, the project initiated the discussion on the topic and its potential objectives and priorities.

The AQUABEST project raised the awareness of policy makers toward aquaculture and the potential dangers to the food chain due to eutrophication in the Baltic Sea. Increasing awareness of national actors towards the topic led to better tailoring of projects to address the needs of the region. Furthermore, the project benefited from extended participation of target groups and players and has therefore promoted a cross-sectorial approach that contributed to build up a cross-border identity.

The link to the EUSBSR increased the project's visibility and the awareness of policy makers toward aquaculture.

#### Reflections

Although the AQUABEST project activities have subsided, collaborative efforts to develop sustainable aquaculture in the region are still needed. For this, the further capitalisation of the AQUABEST results, such as the formed network of the project, its recommendations and project reports are necessary.



## Baltic Deal

### Joint efforts of farmers' organisations to tackle eutrophication in the Baltic Sea

**Project name:** Baltic Deal | **Funding source:** Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 3 768 105 | **Timing:** June 2010 – September 2013 | **Lead partner:** Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre | **Project partners:** Seven project partners and 30 associated partners | **Website:** <http://www.balticdeal.eu/>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The Baltic Deal project supported innovative cost-effective measures and actions to limit nutrient losses by farmers. Human activities in the Baltic Sea region are increasingly pressuring marine ecosystems. The continuing eutrophication of the Baltic Sea is a serious environmental challenge and difficult to tackle. Despite the decreased nutrient loads in recent decades, the eutrophication status of the Baltic Sea is still a threat for the natural ecosystem. The Baltic Deal addresses this challenge without impairing farmers' competitiveness or production.

#### Achievements of the project

The project was initiated to provide and exchange knowledge on agricultural practices and tools for farmers in the Baltic Sea region in order to make the treatment of nutrients more sustainable and environmentally friendly. The project achievements include:

- Creation of a strong co-operative platform between farmers' organisations and advisory organisations around the Baltic Sea.
- Development of a common strategy for the Baltic Sea region to strengthen the agricultural advisory services.
- Establishment of a demonstration farm network of more than 100 farms around the Baltic Sea.
- Demonstration of cost-effective and sustainable practices and tools for farmers.
- An increase in the speed of innovation and technology diffusion in agriculture across national boundaries.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The EUSBSR has provided an important framework for networking activities. First, EUSBSR as well as the funding programme offered linkages with other partners. Interdisciplinary networking activities have been beneficial for the project. Through close links to other projects, Baltic Deal could obtain more data and include German and even Russian farmers' organisations and farmers, enhancing the geographical coverage and the impact of the project. Furthermore, the Baltic Sea Region programme supported the networking and advisory services of the different farmers' associations. Third, working at macro-regional level helped the project partners to learn more and understand better differences in national measures, thus developing better practices and ways to engage and train farmers. Finally, another advantage of the link to the macro-regional strategy has been the focus on the project's design phase.

The development of the agricultural business, the production at farm level and environmental performance is generally directly interlinked. Smart solutions need to be tailored and based upon specific knowledge of the individual conditions and production systems. Profound advisory services and demonstration farms play an important role in supporting farmers with knowledge and suggestions for improving practices. Baltic Deal has contributed significantly to lift the agricultural sector around the Baltic Sea in this regard.

Without the EUSBSR more effort would have been necessary by the project partners in finding common ground and common objectives. The EUSBSR supported knowledge exchange among experts in the field and facilitated a common understanding. This helped in solving problems easier and developing new tools, for example, a common methodology to calculate nutrient losses. These actions collectively boosted the agricultural sector in the entire Baltic Sea region. In total the project identified around 50 different measures for farmers to limit nutrient losses. Through these achievements, the project contributed to the EUSBSR policy area "Nutri". It also supported the maintenance and further development of a common, transnational Baltic Sea region approach, with appropriate adaptation at national level in different countries.

#### Reflections

The Baltic Deal project has been prolonged with another project called Baltic Deal Bridge financed by the SI. Baltic Deal Bridge aims at developing a follow-up project Baltic Deal 2.0 that might continue with the support of the European programme Horizon 2020 and of national Rural Development Plans (co-funded by the EAFRD) in order to continue implementing activities at the level of the farmers. These national Rural Development Plans might also support other transitional activities, such as study trips to other farms inside and outside the country.



## Danube National Flood project

**Generating spill over effects in the Danube region through the improvement of flood management**

**Project name:** Danube National Flood project | **Funding source:** Cohesion Fund, Hungary | **Amount of funding:** EUR 106 979 707 | **Timing:** 2010 – ongoing | **Lead partner:** Central Directorate for Water and Environment, Hungary | **Project partners:** One partner from Hungary

### Aim & rationale of the project

A number of floods during the past ten years in the Danube have put at risk both human lives and properties. Action on controlling the floods in the region has been necessary. The Danube National Flood project aims to improve flood safety so as to reduce the flood risk in the Danube valley and thus protect the citizens. A number of infrastructure actions have taken place.

### Achievements of the project

To improve the flood security measures in the Danube valley, the project aimed at the construction of a myriad of new defenses against flooding as well as modernising existing structures, in addition to the existing 1 000 km of dykes in the area. Additionally it is expected to bring economic benefits. As business and potential investors feel protected against flood damages, they can invest more time and money in the region. Further developments concern the creation of 12 flood control areas and 14 flood control sections with an approximate length of 200 km of dykes. The modernisation of 25 minor and major structures, as well as the reconstruction of a dyke crest over a length of 125 km and the development of two flood control centres is also foreseen. The project achievements benefit not only the over half a million people, living in the area, but also several businesses operating in the Danube Valley.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The Danube National Flood project, funded under the Cohesion Fund in Hungary is in line with the priority on 'wise management of waters' of the Environment and Energy operational programme. The developments of the project contribute to boost the development of the Danube Region. The works are part of the EUSDR to boost the development of the Danube Region. Hungary is one of the countries coordinating the Priority Area 5 of the EUSDR "To Manage Environmental Risks". This assumes that national objectives are aligned to the macro-regional ones.

The project has introduced the protection of key areas from flooding. New defence lines, embankments are being constructed or reinforced. The impact of the reinforcements is of a macro-regional relevance.

Although the project has been of national focus, its macro-regional impact could not be neglected. Improving the flood security in one area of the Danube can generate spill over effects not only to other countries in the Danube Valley to take action individually, but also to serve as inspiration for initiating and continuing joint actions in the region.

### Reflections

The capitalisation of projects' results are important for generating further actions in environmental projects, the latter require joint initiatives and knowledge exchange for the improvement of the life of citizens.



## STURGEON 2020

### Cross-sectoral and transboundary coordination for the revival of the Danube Sturgeon population

**Name of the project:** STURGEON 2020 | **Funding source:** Different funding sources (e.g. LIFE programme, national funds, EIB, seed money EUSDR) | **Amount of funding:** EUR 6 800 000 | **Timing:** 2012 – on-going | **Lead partner:** International Association for Danube Research in cooperation with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF - a group of sturgeon experts, NGO delegates, representatives of the ICPDR, EUSDR and national governments) | **Project partners:** The programme comprises a series of international partners such as: IAD, WWF, ICPDR, WSCS etc. but also representatives of national authorities or local communities. | **Website:** <http://www.dstf.eu/>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

DSTF implements STURGEON 2020 to benefit the environment and the local communities along the Danube River through joint actions in the region. Sturgeon 2020 is a project based on the Sturgeon Action Plan adopted under the Bern Convention in 2005 (SAP). It aims at fostering the conservation of the sturgeon species in the Danube River and the Black Sea. DSTF also aims to support the fishermen of the region, who are currently the most affected group by the sturgeon fishery ban. The project supports the development of alternative income sources (e.g. eco-tourism, aquaculture, handicrafts production, local markets) for communities located along the Danube River.

#### Achievements of the project

The DSTF coordinates a basin-wide sturgeon policy and best-practice management, legislation and enforcement controls, conservation of populations, and protection, management and restoration of habitats. So far, achievements of the project are:

- Networks for sturgeon conservation initiated in some of the Danube countries;
- Raised awareness at public and political level on the need to protect sturgeons and their ecosystems;
- Extension of current sturgeon fishery ban in the Lower Danube countries (where wild stocks still exist);
- Start of a dialogue between different authorities and levels of competences (fishery, biodiversity/ environment and water) on sturgeon conservation.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The EUSDR gave DSTF and therefore STURGEON 2020 the support framework to make things happen. It put together a number of sectorial authorities (e.g. fisheries, water management, biodiversity, navigation) from the Danube countries that are now open to discuss the topic. The main advantage of the EUSDR is its integrated policy approach, which is particularly important in the field of ecosystem and biodiversity protection. This allows for harmonisation of measures between different areas. In the case of the STURGEON 2020, sectoral isolation often had negative impacts on the environment, particularly through projects for navigation melioration and hydropower. Now a joint dialogue is pursued to mitigate the environmental impact of major infrastructure developments on sturgeons' communities.

The project has largely benefited from the EUSDR, which fostered the transnational and trans-sectoral cooperation in all Danube countries.

Without the EUSDR, it would have been very difficult to implement STURGEON 2020 in a coordinated way in all Danube countries at the same time. Without political agreement among all countries only a limited progress for its implementation would be achieved. The project contributes to the achievement of the EUSDR Priority Areas 6 "Biodiversity" and 4 "Water Quality", and overall, to biodiversity conservation and the improvement of the environmental quality in the Danube countries. The integrative approach and the complex measures foreseen by this programme, combining environmental protection with economic development, require interlinkages with all 11 Priority Areas of the EUSDR. Thus, horizontal coordination is needed among the EUSDR pillars, as it is the case with STURGEON 2020. The project partners consider that macro-regional strategies are important in terms of harmonizing priorities and aligning funding for regional development, and hence, their implementation should be fostered.

#### Reflections

DSTF has still many things to do in future. The project promotes further action and also agreements at the political level. Considering the establishment of a macro-regional strategy for the Black Sea region it would be helpful to harmonize its priorities with the ones from the EUSDR. Project members consider that macro-regional strategies could be further improved by more awareness-raising, easier access and alignment of funding and link to the priorities of the macro-regional strategies.



## MareCap

### Protecting Marine Areas and ecosystems demands cooperation and networking

**Project name:** Marine Nature Capital (MareCap) | **Funding source:** EUSBSR Seed Money Facility | **Amount of funding:** EUR 49 844 | **Timing:** March 2014 – February 2015 | **Lead partner:** Baltic Environmental Forum, Latvia  
**Project partners:** Five project partners

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Marine areas in the Baltic Sea could benefit from better-aligned management plans. Marine areas are usually protected and managed by restrictions. However, there are also more proactive methods for building better ecosystems. A team of five partners aimed at assessing different management structures, test and promote a more efficient governance and management structure to protect marine habitats. The transnational team made use of the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility to support the development of a common project and funding application.

#### Achievements of the project

The project contributed to the sustainable use of marine resources by:

- demonstrating the economic potential of implemented management plans;
- assessing pressures on ecosystems and their management at local/regional level;
- analysing barriers and potentials to increase the acceptance of players; and
- linking the Marine Protected Areas assessment to the new approach of Good Environmental Status according to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The EUSBSR Seed Money Facility enabled the project team to meet twice to develop the project and a funding application. Due to organizational problems, the project is still under development and the financial support has not resulted in a concrete project up to date.

MareCap aimed at applying for the Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Subsequently the team applied for funding from the LIFE Programme, but had to change slightly the project objectives to adapt to LIFE funding requirements. The first LIFE application has not been rewarded, but the team is currently working on a second funding application for this scheme.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The link to the EUSBSR is perceived as being important for the project. Cooperation and joint actions at a macro-regional scale and across sectors are important to support the management of Marine Protected Areas and to enhance the level of protection in the Baltic Sea region. MareCap identified a need to cooperate and coordinate the single marine protection actions. The project is in line with the EUSBSR objectives, even if addressing these objectives is not a prerequisite for funding.

Seed money ensures that different partners are committed to contribute to the funding application and to support the general objectives of the envisaged project by contractually committing the partnership.

The EUSBSR offers a network function which is beneficial for project applications and for the project implementation. The EUSBSR objectives help to think at a macro-regional level and put the project idea into context. This is particularly important in the field of environmental protection, where project designs and planned actions need coordination and joint support towards common targets. Even if the project partners consider that the envisaged project would not have looked different without the EUSBSR, the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility offered an important starting point to define a common project with partners from many different countries.

#### Reflections

For the future the MareCap team is applying for LIFE funding and hopes to implement the project soon in line with the EUSBSR objectives.





## Restoration of the lower Morava floodplains

**Project name:** Restoration of the Lower Morava floodplains | **Funding source:** LIFE+ | **Amount of funding:** EUR 3 491 774 | **Timing:** October 2011 – October 2019 | **Lead partner:** viadonau | **Number of partners:** Three partners from Austria | **Website:** <http://www.life-march.at/fakten.html>

### Aim & rationale of the project

Preserving biodiversity and endangered species and habitats listed in the EU Habitats and EU Birds Directive in the Danube area has been the main objective of the Restoration of the Lower Morava floodplains project. The project has restored floodplains and introduced land-use practices, such as grazing. Today the riverbed of the Morava river, a tributary of the Danube, is regulated, the connection of many oxbows to the river is cut off and 75% of the banks are reinforced.

### Achievements of the project

The project measures aim to improve the conservation status of seven habitat types and 11 species included in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive, and 15 species listed in the EU Birds Directive in an area of at least 200 ha. These measures include the:

- renaturalisation of the river banks, where potential areas for characteristic river bank formations such as sandbanks, escarpments, and alluvial forests will be generated;
- improvement of cross-linking of areas through the removal of barriers;
- protection of floodplain water bodies in the outer floodplains
- reintroduction of grazing management, which constitutes a pilot project for the improvement of habitat structures;
- control of invasive plants;
- information and environmental education in four municipalities to increase acceptance of conservation measures and the involvement of local players in the project implementation.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Despite the efforts and the possible benefits of a cross-border cooperation with Slovakia, the project involved only Austrian partners. There was a lack of common strategic understanding of the two countries regarding the future development perspectives of the Morava river. Despite the transnational management plan for the Natura 2000 site "Morava-Dyje floodplains", and the management strategy of the nature reserve "Lower Morava floodplains", there is no mutual agreement as to future plans for the Morava river. While the Slovak Republic wants to establish navigation on the river, connecting the Danube with the Elbe-Channel, and has several plans for hydropower plants along the river, Austria wants to focus on the restoration of the river and on the near-natural management of the floodplains. This lack of strategy coordination and disagreement led to delays and changing of plans during project implementation. Nevertheless, the project results are of benefit for the wider macro-regional territory in terms of sustainability and environmental protection.

This Austrian project would have gained strongly from cross-border cooperation with Slovakia and from a common strategic understanding of the two countries regarding the future development perspectives of the Morava river.

### Reflections

A better linkage of the project objectives with the macro-regional strategy's objectives should be envisaged. The project started in 2011, before the EUSDR was adopted. This resulted in linking the project to the EUSDR Priority Area 5 "To Manage Environmental Risks". However, the project would have benefited more from establishing a link to Priority Area 6 "Biodiversity and Landscapes", which captures better the project's aims.



Photo by Franz Steiner ©



## SEE River

**An integrative management tool for international rivers that started in the Danube area**

**Project name:** Sustainable Integrated Management of International River Corridors in SEE Countries (SEE River) | **Funding source:** South East Europe programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 2 107 354 | **Timing:** October 2012 – September 2014 | **Lead partner:** Institute of Water of the Republic of Slovenia | **Project partners:** 26 partners from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia | **Website:** [www.see-river.net](http://www.see-river.net)

### Aim & rationale of the project

The SEE River project aimed at developing a joint management tool for rivers with a cross-border or transnational element. Such a tool would allow all stakeholders to be involved in the relevant aspects of river management, related both to environmental and economic development issues. The need for this kind of tool originated after the Drava River Vision Symposium (Maribor, Slovenia, 2008), organised by LIFE project "Life Vein Upper Drau River" project partners. Project partners and other attendees of the symposium, agreed that the mentioned efforts are to be formulated and clarified within a special project.

The main objective of the project was to empower the multi-sectoral stakeholders sharing the territory of an international river corridor to gain knowledge on river corridor management, exceeding sectoral, local and national interests in order to ensure good water status and flood protection, preserve nature, biodiversity and ecosystems, and to enable development at the same time.

### Achievements of the project

The SEE River project successfully developed an integrative management tool for international river corridors, applicable to any international river corridor. During the project implementation, it had one 'teaching' river (Drava) and six pilot rivers (Bodrog, Neretva, Prut, Soča, Vjosa and Kolubara), all with a cross-border or transnational element. It is an innovative tool, based on local and international experience that outlines a new direction and represents a good basis for the future sustainable use of river corridors. The toolkit promotes techniques for communication, dialogue and facilitation.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

At the time of the preparation of the project, the partners knew about the drafting of the EUSDR and they fine-tuned the project in accordance to the EUSDR. Therefore, the project tried to adapt to the EUSDR from the beginning. At the time of applying for funding at the South East Europe programme, they received one of the Letters for Support of the EUSDR, but the project never knew if this Letter helped them in getting the funding. SEE River would have taken place as a project even if the EUSDR would not exist. Probably, the drafting would have been different, as they would have not taken into consideration the EUSDR. However, the project 'lost trace' of the EUSDR during the implementation of it. Only after the project was ended, they were invited as speakers in one EUSDR-related event.

SEE River brought a lot to EUSDR, but the lack of resources and the non-binding nature of the EUSDR make it difficult to have a real impact on projects

SEE River followed the directions of the EUSDR as for the management of rivers when it was being prepared and therefore tried to be 'strategic'. The SEE River project considers it brought a lot to the development of the contents of the EUSDR, but did not get much from the EUSDR in return.

### Reflections

An exceptional project both in terms of quality of the implementation (including the durability of the outcomes and applicability of them) and the strategic orientation towards the EUSDR. However, it is hard to anticipate what could have been the added value of the EUSDR towards this project.



Photo by [www.see-river.net](http://www.see-river.net) ©





## SEERISK

### A risk assessment methodology for the EUSDR area

**Project name:** Joint Disaster Management risk assessment and preparedness in the Danube macro-region (SEERISK) | **Funding source:** South East Europe programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 1 974 605 | **Timing:** July 2014 – December 2014 | **Lead partner:** National Directorate General for Disaster Management | **Project partners:** 20 partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia | **Website:** [www.seeriskproject.eu](http://www.seeriskproject.eu)

#### Aim & rationale of the project

In the Danube area, the frequency and seriousness of extreme climatic events is increasing due to climate change. Even though climate change affects countries, territories and localities differently, there are common and typical challenges. SEERISK took into account specific risks and these common challenges as well. A low level of awareness about the effects of climate change, inadequate preparedness, institutional gaps and weak territorial planning were common, horizontal challenges in South-Eastern Europe.

#### The objectives of the project were:

- Formulate a common methodology for the local assessment of natural hazards;
- Reveal the similarities and distinctions between the institutional frameworks dealing with risk assessment and disaster management;
- Implement the European Commission risk assessment guidelines locally;
- Reveal the gap between the real environmental risks and the communities' awareness of the same;
- Close the gap between risk exposure and preparedness of the communities.

#### Achievements of the project

A specific risk assessment methodology was created and used even by the European Commission. The South East Europe programme considers the performance of the project as excellent and going beyond what was expected.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The topic and relevance of the project are clearly connected to Priority Area 5 'Environmental Risks' of the EUSDR. When considering the various environmental risks, the SEERISK project takes into account the whole macro-regional area (reflected for example in their promotional material, see Sources). The EUSDR played a major role in raising the activities of the SEERISK project and the project has been invited at the quarterly meetings of the Priority Area "Environmental Risk". The EUSDR has also helped mobilising the policy support in the member states to consider climate change in disaster management planning. Last but not least, once the project finished, the EUSDR also contributed in the project promotion in the context of the new Danube programme.

The project assessed specific climatic risks and horizontal challenges in South-East Europe. The project fosters the joint preparedness for these risks in order to enhance the quality of decision making processes in case of natural disasters.

#### Reflections

The wide coverage of countries in the area (nine countries), the variety of risks and the need to take into account a number of governance levels, made this project a perfect test to see the potential of the EUSDR in addressing the priorities of the area.



## **Solid household waste management system in the Ventspils region**

### **Reducing the waste line: solid household waste management in the Ventspils region**

**Project name:** Solid household waste management system in the Ventspils region II | **Funding source:** Cohesion Fund Latvia | **Amount of funding:** EUR 6 579 722 | **Timing:** December 2010 – December 2014 | **Lead partner:** Ventspils Labiekārtošanas kombināts (Ventspils industrial complex for improvement of urban areas) | **Website:** <http://vlk.lv/projekta-2-karta/>

#### **Aim & rationale of the project**

The waste treatment system of the Ventspils region in Latvia did not reach today's standards. Therefore, the Ventspils regional waste management project aimed to create a modern and innovative waste management and disposal system for the region. Thereby, a reduction of waste ending up in landfills should be achieved.

To reduce waste going to landfills, the new system introduced changes such as the 'polluters pay' principle, increased coverage of the waste management system and improvement in waste registration. It also built up waste sorting and recycling points as well as a new system for sanitary landfill management.

#### **Achievements of the project**

The achievements of the project reach from organisational innovations and changes, such as a new level of reach out for waste collection system, to physical infrastructures, such as pre-processing and sorting facilities, gas collection systems and flare combustion constructions. More achievements of the project are:

- The closure of 13 existing dump sites.
- Reduction of 34% less waste going to landfill
- No biodegradable waste going to landfill
- A reduction in risks for humans, animals and water, air, soil and plants.
- Additionally many small scale effects, such as a reduction in odour, noise, air pollution, etc.

The national interests and the underlying strategy are aligned with EU objectives, including the macro-regional strategy.

A reduction in landfill and a more effective way of treating waste decreases water pollution in the ground waters in the areas of the dumpsites. This will eventually have an impact on the water quality of the Baltic Sea since less pollutants and hazardous substances reach the sea. Latvia features a strong national interest in improving its waste management system. The national interests and the underlying strategy are aligned with EU objectives, including the EUSBSR. All projects under the national framework thus contribute indirectly to the achievement of the objectives set out in the EUSBSR.

#### **Relevance of macro-regional cooperation**

The EUSBSR provides a separate framework for assessment of the project through featuring specific valuation criteria in the operational programme. It also permits to measure from the programme level up to the Baltic Sea area to provide concrete evidence of change and / or progress made through the use of aggregate indicators.

For the Ventspils regional waste management development stage II and its successor stage III, the macro-regional strategy was important to set wider project targets. In addition, it usually gives the possibility to mobilise alternative funding sources other than national contributions (e.g. Horizon 2020 for research on innovation, financial instruments, ESIF). Also, the increased cooperation among stakeholders of different levels gives the possibility to decrease the costs of the output and has thus increased efficiency.

#### **Reflections**

The stakeholders involved proposed to make the macro-regional strategy as part of sectors that are aligned with EUSBSR targets, thematic ex-ante conditionality assessment criteria, stipulating realistic assessments of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each region towards the EUSBSR targets.



## Baltic Link

### Eliminating bottlenecks and improving intermodal transport chains

**Project name:** Baltic Link Motorways of the Sea Gdynia-Karlskrona (Baltic Link) | **Funding source:** Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) | **Amount of funding:** EUR 85 454 000 | **Timing:** January 2009 – October 2013 | **Lead partner:** Regional Council of Southern Småland | **Project partners:** Nine partners from Sweden and Poland | **Website:** [www.balticlinkmos.com](http://www.balticlinkmos.com)

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The Baltic Link Motorways of the Sea project addressed a missing link in freight transport from Sweden to Poland and beyond. The Port of Karlskrona had limited capacity to receive and handle rail-bound cargo due to an inadequate link to the national rail track. Conversely the Port of Gdynia had a more extensive capacity. This infrastructure project proposed measures to equalize this imbalance, improve freight rail links and increase the proportion of intermodal goods travelling via Karlskrona-Gdynia.

#### Achievements of the project

The TEN-T funded project was based on two prior projects. (SEBTrans and SEBTrans-Link). Interreg projects have paved the way to make the investment on the railway and in the harbour of Karlskrona. The infrastructure investment was a logical step after mapping the transport flows, defining the problem and possible solutions in the Interreg projects. The investments included:

- Improving rail connections;
- Improving the terminal / hub function of Alvesta;
- Improvements in the harbour of Karlskrona.

The Baltic Link delivered high-quality infrastructure and services by combining rail and sea modes of transport. These investments contributed to the improvement of modal shift, avoiding road congestion. The project resulted in an increase of the intermodal share of the corridor from 3% in 2009 to 10% in 2015 and 36% in 2025.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The Baltic Link supported the implementation of the TEN-T Motorways of the Sea programme in the Baltic Sea Region. The project was supported by the TEN-T programme and by the Polish Cohesion Fund. The different projects have been coordinated via management resources from the TEN-T project. The Motorways of the Sea Network in the Baltic Sea, led by the Baltic Motorways of the Seas Task Force was marked as a flagship project in the EUSBSR.

Implementing a project with several inter-national partners increases the likelihood of acquiring funding from different sources.

Having a bigger geographical scope, for instance, within a macro-regional strategy, offers possibilities to develop a common understanding of problems and needs that go beyond national boundaries. This is especially important in the field of transport. Being part of a macro-regional strategy also helps to facilitate sharing of data and information as well as disseminating project results. Even though not all project partners were fully aware of the EUSBSR they see benefits of having common goals and a network to address these. The TEN-T Motorways of the Sea programme also functions in a larger framework and offers the possibility to exchange experience with other projects.

Infrastructure investment projects face often very specific challenges, so the exchange of experience with other projects is perceived as limited. Nevertheless the project supported better and sustainable transport links to central and western Europe.

#### Reflections

The project has been finalised in 2013. Although there is no direct follow up project, other transport projects within TEN-T and the macro-regional strategy complement the benefits of the Baltic Link project and continue accomplishing the overall objective of a more sustainable transport in the region.



Photo by Olof Löfberg, project leader Baltic Link ©



## **CESLA**

### **Raising awareness on cross-border electric mobility**

**Project name:** Cross-border implementation of environmentally friendly ultra-light vehicles in Slovenia and Austria (CESLA) | **Funding source:** Austria-Slovenia 2007-2013 Interreg IVA programme | **Amount of funding:** EUR 871 588 | **Timing:** May 2009 – October 2012 | **Lead partner:** TECES, Research and Development Centre for Electrical Machines | **Project partners:** Six partners from Austria and Slovenia | **Website:** [www.cesla.eu](http://www.cesla.eu)

#### **Aim & rationale of the project**

Non-sustainable transport and mobility of urban, sub-urban and rural areas of the Slovenian and Austrian NUTS-3 regions was the starting point for the CESLA project. Citizens and tourists favoured the use of cars instead of environmentally friendly public transport or zero-emission vehicles.

CESLA presented the advantages of ultra-light electric vehicles by creating and developing a supportive environment for their implementation in the cross-border region Slovenia/Austria. It was one of the forerunning electric mobility projects in Podravje, Carinthia and Styria.

#### **Achievements of the project**

A wide mobilisation was achieved by the CESLA project in the cross-border area. The dissemination of project materials, the high number of presentations in different fora and the workshops organised allowed the involvement of more SMEs than expected and the creation of new networks and projects. Focus was given on initialising region-specific and professional networks by conducting a series of local events and presentations, which have been identified as the optimal opportunity for building-up real-life concepts for sustainable (e-)mobility in the target regions and market opening activities. CESLA raised awareness and reinforced the cooperation on the two sides of the border among research institutions, SME tourism entities and interest groups in the field of light vehicles.

#### **Relevance for the macro-regional cooperation**

It is not clear neither for the Austria-Slovenia cooperation programme nor for the lead partner itself what is the link to the EUSDR. When the project started in 2009, the EUSDR was not established yet and was therefore not possible to link it to its priorities.

CESLA would have the characteristic of being placed among the EUSDR flagship projects, given that its actions are in line with its objectives. Nevertheless, even if a project is rather regionally focused it can have an impact and benefit to the broader region.

During the implementation of the project, the players involved were aware of the creation of the macro-regional strategy. The EUSDR was present among the players but no closer links were established.

#### **Reflections**

An earlier approach by the EUSDR of projects at their implementation stage would be helpful, so that the macro-regional strategy can be more of help for the project itself. As in the case of CESLA, which could be promoted at a more strategic level. That would help eventually for a follow-up of the activities, for the durability of results etc.



Photo by TECES ©



## **Coslariu-Simeria link**

### **Upgrading of the Rhine Danube Corridor railway connection**

**Project name:** Refurbishment of railway line will speed up journeys through central and western Romania – section Coslariu-Simeria | **Funding source:** Cohesion Fund Romania, ERDF, Romanian national funds | **Amount of funding:** EUR 644 262 622 | **Timing:** 2012 – 2015 | **Lead partner:** Căile Ferate Române (Romanian National Railway Company)

#### **Aim & rationale of the project**

The lack of maintenance of the railway lines and the inappropriate facilities and poor condition of the stations (platforms height and width, inadequate waiting rooms, obsolete passenger information systems and ticketing system, precarious water supply and sanitation, lack of facilities for persons with reduced mobility) were affecting the attractiveness of railway services.

The project of refurbishment of the railway section Coslariu-Simeria is a phase of an overall project for the upgrading of the Brasov-Simeria line, which is also a phase of the programme for the rehabilitation and upgrading of the Rhine Danube Corridor (former northern branch of railway Corridor IV in Romania).

#### **Achievements of the project**

A very active economic area with lots of foreign investments will have a better transport system along the Danube. The long-distance travelling from Constanta (at the Black Sea) and Budapest will be made easier both for passengers and freight transport. The forecast made for 2020 is to have 1,7 million passengers and 1,9 million tonnes of traffic on that railway line.

These achievements are very much in line with priority axis 1 of the operational programme for Large Infrastructure 2014-2020, and also with the Partnership Agreement of Romania.

#### **Relevance of the macro-regional cooperation**

This project and the overall Rhine Danube Corridor fit perfectly with the Priority Area 1b "Rail, Road, Air" of the EUSDR. In fact, one of the actions of Priority Area 1b is to bring completion to the TEN-T Priority Projects crossing the Danube region, overcoming the difficulties and the bottlenecks including environmental, economic and political, particularly in the cross-border sections.

The long-distance travelling from Constanta (at the Black Sea) and Budapest will be made easier both for passengers and freight transport.

#### **Reflections**

Even though the Partnership Agreement of Romania mentions clearly the link between the EUSDR and transport infrastructure, this link is not explicit in the rest of the strategic documents (for example in the operational programme or the Romanian General Transport Master Plan). The link to the EUSDR is also not explicit at project level. However, the expected outcomes of the project will link perfectly with the priorities of the EUSDR and will connect the macro-region better.



Photo from project ©





## EfficienSea

**Making the Baltic Sea region pilot region for e-navigation, making maritime traffic efficient, safe and sustainable traffic**

**Project name:** Efficient, Safe and Sustainable Traffic at Sea (EfficienSea) | **Funding source:** Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 | **Amount of funding:** EUR 6 403 113 | **Timing:** January 2009 – January 2012 | **Lead partner:** Danish Maritime Authority | **Project partners:** 16 partners from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Poland, Sweden, and Norway | **Website:** <http://www.efficiensea.org/default.asp>

### Aim & rationale of the project

EfficienSea aims to enhance maritime safety and prevent accidents in the Baltic Sea. The project provides an experimentation area where components of an e-Navigation concept can be demonstrated and evaluated prior to full-scale implementation. EfficienSea provides a comprehensive best practice demonstration of the e-Navigation concept to facilitate further development and full-scale implementation of it for the benefit of the Baltic Sea region and the international maritime community.

### Achievements of the project

EfficienSea prepared for the establishment of e-navigation trial zones and started working on developing prototypes for e-navigation services. A number of prototype services, including provision of meteorological and oceanographic data on route, maritime safety information presented in the nautical chart and route exchange facilities have been developed. This will allow the mariner to be notified directly, for instance, if a lighthouse is unlit, a buoy is out of position or if the waves reach a certain dangerous height. The prototype also offers route exchange, allowing two vessels to exchange planned routes, which reduces the risk for collision at sea while also increasing authorities' possibilities to foresee and warn the vessels against dangerous situations.

The project has fostered synergies among the actors involved which has increased the quality of the final results of the project. Additionally, it was highlighted that the project should have the opportunity to actively shape the EUSBSR by influencing its targets and objectives.

EfficienSea has developed a toolbox for simulation of effects and risks of increased maritime traffic. The toolbox is expected to improve risk management capabilities. EfficienSea has also developed risk identification algorithms or Decision Support System tools aiming at improving the continuous traffic safety evaluations made by Vessel Traffic Service operators, and enabling operators to communicate more with vessels in specific need of information or assistance. The dynamic risk tools were coordinated with the e-Navigation development of services and software.

### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013 has labelled the EfficienSea project as a "strategic project". This gives the project among others a preferential position to apply for funding and to continue its implementation in an additional period of up to two years after the project is completed. Its promotion as a strategic project helped to develop a common understanding on the topic and specific needs, not only at project level, but also among the relevant players at a general macro-regional level.

Macro-regional cooperation offers better access to funding, as there are already established partnerships or, at least, the knowledge of relevant partners. The broad network and collaboration between the partners and with other projects was seen as a result of having a link to the EUSBSR. Partnership and networking in EfficienSea were especially relevant for sharing important data on pilot projects and experimentation with new technologies, as well as for disseminating the project results and follow-up activities.

### Reflections

EfficienSea continued as a Horizon 2020 project. This funding source fitted better when the project became more mature. Where INTERREG supports projects that involve experiments and testing, Horizon 2020 offers the possibility to continue funding and developing products and services, in this case to bring e-navigation tools to the market. During its follow-up project, the partnership as well as the scope of the project have been expanded. Most of the partners are still based in the Baltic Sea region but with the inclusion of more shipping companies the focus has become more European/global. Shipping companies act at a global scale rather than at macro-regional or continental levels. The perspective is to continue working in this area in order to keep promoting safe navigation in the Baltic Sea region.



## Green InfraPort

### Preparing projects with a macro-regional relevance

**Project name:** Green InfraPort | **Funding source:** EUSBSR Seed Money Facility | **Amount of funding:** EUR 46 140 | **Timing:** April 2016 – April 2017 | **Lead partner:** Baltic Port Organisation (BDO) | **Project partners:** Three project partners from Poland and Sweden | **Website:** <http://seed.eusbsr.eu/index.php/fudi-ng-decision-4th-round/s90-green-infraport>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

The main objective of the project Green InfraPort is to reduce the impact of shipping and ports on the environment. Ports need proper planning and investments to adjust to the new environmental regulations and policies. Some actions have already been taken in the region, through the increasing use of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) or the installation of scrubbers to limit sulphur emissions in marine fuels. The Green InfraPort presents options and opportunities for more coordinated and joint actions.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The strategic and thematic relevance is usually the most important criterion for a project selection. The fact that Green InfraPort is a project funded under the seed money facility pre-supposes its alignment to the EUSBSR objectives. For this, the project aims to improve the environmental impact of ports and shipping in the Baltic Sea region, through:

- Planning and construction of waste water reception facilities in ports;
- Facilitating the reception of waste from scrubbers in ports;
- Optimizing the energy use in ports and onshore power supply;
- Using LNG as an alternative fuel for ships and source of energy for terminal vehicles.

The project is thematically aligned with the EUSBSR objective to make the Baltic Sea region a model region for clean shipping. Green InfraPort benefits from the seed money facility can be manifold. Access to policy discussions, political recognition, close cooperation with the players, (the policy area coordinators and the horizontal action leaders), as well as better access to other partners are among the most important.

The EUSBSR Seed Money Facility as a funding instrument supporting the preparation of the Green InfraPort project also received more recognition from the extended contact with coordinators. What the macro-regional strategy can add in the already existing cooperation in the region is the political and strategic dimension to it. All projects can benefit from the political recognition that the EUSBSR offers. In addition, the link to the EUSBSR helps working more efficiently and structure in a clear framework, as well as help finding co-financing and visibility of results especially if project receives the flagship status

The projects benefit from the political recognition that the EUSBSR has to offer. Furthermore, the connection of the projects to the macro-regional strategy assists to work more efficiently and to structure it based on a clear framework. Also, it helps to find co-funding and to achieve visibility of the attained results especially in the case a project receives a flagship status.

#### Reflections

The Green InfraPort project has been successful at a strategic and thematic level. Currently it is working on enlarging its partnership. As the project also deals with investments, it plans to apply for funding from the Connecting Europe Facility and considers the Interreg South Baltic and Interreg Baltic Sea Region programmes as well. Macro-regional strategies can offer better solutions for issues that need joint actions. Regional programmes need to be more involved in contributing to the EUSBSR. For this, the results of the EUSBSR need to be capitalised on and benefits promoted. Clearer communication of the objectives of the EUSBSR to the potential beneficiaries could be helpful for a larger involvement.



## IRIS Europe 3

### Harmonized Implementation of River Information Services on the Danube

**Project name:** Implementation of River Information Services in Europe (IRIS Europe 3I) | **Funding source:** Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) | **Amount of funding:** EUR 10 460 000 | **Timing:** January 2012 – December 2014 | **Lead partner:** via donau – Österreichische Wasserstrassen-Gesellschaft mbH, Austria | **Project partners:** Seven partners of Ministries of Transport of Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania | **Cooperation partners (no funding):** Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Serbia and Ukraine

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Technical, legal and organisational barriers impede the harmonisation and interoperability of the River Information Services (RIS) and international data exchange. This regards countries that have a share of the international inland waterways in Europe, a large part of which are in the Danube region.

IRIS Europe 3, the follow up of IRIS Europe II, successfully piloted the international data exchange, defined quality criteria for the data to be exchanged, and developed a mobile application for shipping operators that is now widely used.

#### Achievements of the project

The project directly contributed to the EUSDR Priority Area 1a "Waterways Mobility" aiming at implementing a harmonised RIS on the Danube and its navigable tributaries and to ensure the international exchange of RIS data. The establishment of intelligent infrastructure on European rivers has also been an objective of the TEN-T programme since 2002.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

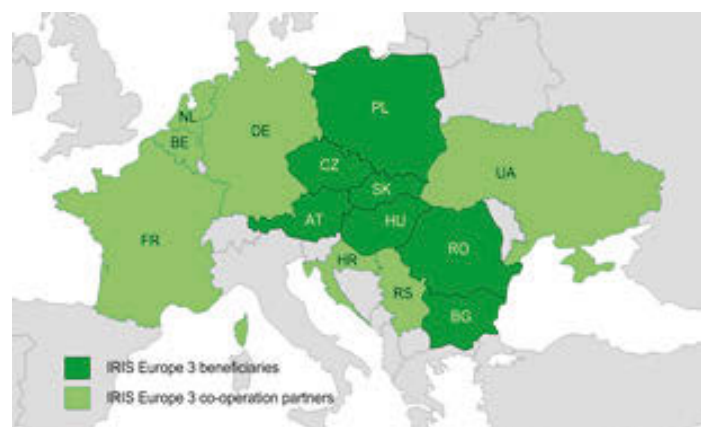
Contributing to a higher political goal did have an impact on the support the project received from national ministries. Project partners found it easier to secure the necessary national match-funding and get the legal agreements needed to enable the international data transfer concluded. The EUSDR also gave the topic additional weight and provided the project lead partner with better bargaining power towards the project partners. It had also some impact on the project's visibility towards the broader public. In addition, the link to the EUSDR has been seen as positive by the funding programme, even though it was not decisive for the funding decision.

The direct contribution of the project to the EUSDR objective led to stronger commitment from the political level.

Given the transnational character of river information services, the success of the project depends on the wide participation, either as beneficiaries or associated partners, of all the European countries connected to the international inland waterways. IRIS Europe 3 managed to get all countries on board, looking for a Europe-wide cooperation beyond the macro-region.

#### Reflections

Thinking about the future, a persistent challenge for projects contributing to the EUSDR is the fact that for many funding sources, non-EU countries are not eligible for funding and do not have the necessary financial capacities to participate. This was also the case under the TEN-T programme, but with the successor programme, the Connecting Europe Facility, partners from non-EU countries are also eligible for funding. For a project such as IRIS Europe 3, having countries like Serbia or the Ukraine on board enhances project benefits and increases the level of success of RIS.



Map by Mario Kaufmann ©





## Kazlų Rūda-Kaunas link

### Improving connectivity in the Baltic Sea through the reconstruction of a small railway link

**Project name:** Existing railway reconstruction Kazlų Rūda -Kaunas (Kazlų Rūda-Kaunas link) | **Funding source:** Cohesion Fund, Lithuania | **Amount of funding:** EUR 141 237 692 | **Timing:** June 2013 – November 2015 | **Lead partner:** Lithuania Railways | **Project partners:** Republic of Lithuania and JSC Lithuanian Railways

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Improving the railway connections across EU member states is the main objective of the TEN-T programme. The reconstruction of the existing railways line between Kazlų Rūda to Kaunas is part of the Rail Baltica axis: Warsaw-Kaunas-Riga-Tallin-Helsinki. The link is the only railway link that connects the three Baltic states with each other and to Poland and the rest of the EU. The aim of the project is to improve interoperability in the north south direction of the line.

#### Achievements of the project

The expected achievements of the project include the 1 520 mm gauge railway reconstruction and the 1 435 mm gauge railway construction in the section Kazlų Rūda-Kaunas. The modernisation of existing signalling is also envisaged. In addition, work includes reconstruction of railway bridges over the rivers and the modernisation of railway stations at Jure, Mauručiai, Jiesia and Kaunas. Various platforms, pedestrian walkways, road crossing, culverts and animal crossings are built or revamped as part of the programme of works.

All these aim at increasing the capacity of the rail transport infrastructure, improving the speed, saving travel time, decreasing noise and pollution and enhancing traffic safety. Enabling passengers and freight to travel to and from Lithuania without the need to change trains looks set to save time and money. By 2018, the project is expected to help increase rail's share of local freight traffic by 20 %, which will also help cut greenhouse gas emissions that would be otherwise generated by polluting road traffic. For business travellers, the new track contributes to shortening journey times – especially on the route between Vilnius and Warsaw.

Making train travel more attractive and competitive should take pressure off the local road network, which has seen a huge increase in use since Lithuania joined the European Union. This situation has led to congestion and a rise in accident rates on the Via Baltica road between Lithuania and Poland.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

Although not directly linked to the macro-regional strategy, the project has the potential to contribute to the EUSBSR objective on 'Connect the region', helping make the Baltic Sea region an accessible and attractive place and remove its remoteness to the rest of Europe. Although the reconstruction of the existing railway regards only a link between two cities of one country, Kazlų Rūda-Kaunas, it contributes to a bigger scope and the added value it will have once completed can have impact on the entire macro-region.

Even though the project does not link directly to the EUSBSR, it helps improving the connectivity among the concerned areas.

#### Reflections

Transport projects can generate added value to larger territories, despite their sometimes small focus of infrastructure needs. Joint actions under macro-regional strategies can contribute in making this impact greater and improve connectivity modes.



## Maritsa Motorway

### The Danube connecting Europe to the Middle East and Asia

**Project name:** Construction of Maritsa Motorway LOT 1 and LOT 2 | **Funding source:** Cohesion Fund, Bulgaria | **Amount of funding:** > EUR 203 000 000 | **Executor:** Cooperativa Muratori e Cementisti – Cmc di Ravenna | **Timing:** 2011 – 2013 | **Project partners:** N.a.

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Lots 1 and 2 of the Maritsa Motorway are part of the implementation of the Trans European Transport Networks (Pan-European Corridor IV which starts in Saxony and leads to Istanbul) and connects Central and Eastern Europe with the Middle East and Asia. Heavy traffic and old infrastructure were the main problems that the project intends to tackle. Besides easing the traffic, it will also prevent noise and pollution in the towns along the old road. The motorway has a checkpoint (Kapitan Andreevo) at the border between Bulgaria and Turkey.

#### Achievements of the project

The outcome of the project is the construction of a 65.620 km stretch of a new dual carriageway motorway from the road junction "Plodovitovo" at 5.000 km to Harmanli at 70.620 km, completing the missing part of the Maritsa Motorway.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The project fits with the EUSDR Pillar 'Connect the region' and its Priority Area 1b Air, Road, Air-Mobility". More specifically, the first action of Priority Area 1b is to bring completion to the TEN-T: "To bring to completion the TEN-T (rail and road) Priority Projects crossing the Danube Region, overcoming the difficulties and the bottlenecks including environmental, economic and political, particularly in the cross-border sections". The construction of the motorway aims at better connectivity in the region. Despite the small link, the impact this connection might have in the region can be big and improve the overall transport connections in the macro-region.

The full potential of implementing the project in a broader regional context will become apparent when the project is about to steam up.

#### Reflections

The full potential of the EUSDR in the context of this project is about to be deployed and experienced when various countries will need to work together to complete this specific branch of the Trans-European Network for Transport.



Photo [www.api.bg](http://www.api.bg) ©



## MONALISA

### Improving maritime safety through innovative e-navigation

**Project name:** Motorways & Electronic navigation by intelligence at sea (MONALISA) | **Funding source:** Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) | **Amount of funding:** EUR 22 400 000 | **Timing:** September 2010 – December 2013 | **Lead partner:** Swedish Maritime Administration | **Project partners:** Seven project partners from Denmark, Finland and Sweden | **Website:** <http://www.sjofartsverket.se/en/MonaLisa/>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Maritime transport is an overarching theme for the Baltic Sea region. MONALISA contributes to the efficient, safe and environmentally friendly maritime transport in the region. This is supported by the development and dissemination of innovative e-navigational services to the shipping industry which can work as a base for future international use.

#### Achievements of the project

Several achievements took place under the four main activities of the project:

- Dynamic and proactive route planning – “Green routes”: Under the first activity, the project has developed a close cooperation with WWF, which assists in the maritime spatial planning information, while an Application Programming Interface connection has been established with the HELCOM server over biodiversity areas. Due to the increased interest there have been further discussions on extending the test bed of MONALISA to the Mediterranean Sea.
- Verification system for officer certification: Several studies have been carried out under this activity. A robust hardware and software have been developed. Also, the idea of introducing a personal smart card for the containers officer has been discussed which will increase safety, as all data on the ship command will be included.
- Quality assurance of hydrographic data: Baltic Sea depth data models have been developed to improve the safety of ship routes in the Swedish and Finnish waters.
- Global sharing of maritime information: Actions have been taken in developing a functional demonstrator system so as to extend the sharing of the maritime information beyond the Baltic Sea region.

MONALISA is inline with the Motorways of the Sea, the maritime pillar of the TEN-T, objective on clean, safe and efficient transport systems.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The MONALISA project directly contributes to the EUSBSR Policy Area ‘Safe’ on the maritime safety and security. It is also labelled as a Flagship Project and had the chance to participate in a number of forums and events. The Flagship status has helped to ensure communication and visibility of the project and its results and to establish and maintain cooperation with other relevant Flagship Projects of the EUSBSR, in order to ensure coherence, exchange information and avoid duplication of efforts. According to the funding programme, the TEN-T label also helps in attracting additional funding, in which is also an outcome of the macro-regional cooperation.

MONALISA has directly contributed to the Policy Area ‘Safe’ on maritime safety and security and connects to the maritime pillar of TEN-T objective on clean, safe and efficient transport.

#### Reflections

The project has been followed-up by MONALISA 2.0. This three-year project funded also under TEN-T uses the results and experiences from MONALISA 1.0 and takes them one step further by deploying the actions defined. The test area has also expanded and includes the regions Baltic Sea, North Sea and Mediterranean Sea. Knowledge sharing and result dissemination have been a key in the improvement of maritime safety.



Photo from Monty Rakusen ©



## NEWS

### Novel container ship for the increase of cargo transport on the Danube

**Project name:** Development of a Next generation European Inland Watership and logistics system (NEWS) | **Funding source:** 7th Framework Programme | **Amount of funding:** EUR 2 241 872 | **Timing:** March 2013 – August 2015 | **Lead partner:** Vienna University of Technology, Austria | **Project partners:** 10 project partners and 10 associated partners, from Austria, Germany, Romania, Serbia and Switzerland | **Website:** <http://www.news-fp7.eu>

#### Aim & rationale of the project

Central European inland waterways are presently underutilised. Shipping agents assume that forwarders on inland waterways are more flexible than on roads or railways, schedules may not be followed reliably due to altering water-levels. Waiting times at locks or inland ports might cause critical delays. Companies operating inland waterway transport can be characterised by an over-aged fleet, eroding profit margins, a high dependency on fuel costs and/or infrastructural bottlenecks causing delays in running-times.

NEWS addresses these bottlenecks by:

- developing and validating a novel multi-purpose inland vessel that is more cost-, time- and ecologically efficient than existing models;
- tailoring an integrated logistics system to better integrate waterborne transport into the EU transport and logistics chain.

#### Relevance of macro-regional cooperation

The project contributed directly to the EUSDRs target to increase cargo transport on the Danube river by 20% by 2020 compared to the year 2010. The EUSDR was crucial in the development of the project idea as it provided both a connecting point and argument for the need of the project. Having a concrete target to contribute to strongly shaped the formulation of the project idea and project proposal and was an important motivational factor for the project team.

The EUSDR supported the project in all phases and opened up opportunities to meet relevant actors which, otherwise, might have been more difficult to approach. Concretely, the EUSDR provided the project with a Letter of Support to the FP7 programme, helped establish contact with existing networks in the Danube region and relevant actors. This proved useful for approaching (associated) project partners, but also for contacting relevant actors for expert interviews in the scope of the project. Throughout the project lifetime, the project was invited to dedicated working group meetings under Priority Area 1A and the EUSDR supported the project's dissemination activities.

The target of the EUSDR to increase cargo transport on the Danube river by 20% until 2020 as compared to 2010 has started and influenced the project idea.

The specific nature of the project asked for a macro-regional approach. The project researched into water-bound transport axes and transport flows and developed liner services on the Danube (Enns-Rotterdam, Enns-Constanta) with stops in each country along the Danube.

#### Reflections

Clear articulation of programmes on whether they value projects with a link to a macro-regional strategy is needed. Currently, EU funding programmes like FP7 or Horizon 2020 do not clearly communicate to applicants whether a link to a macro-regional strategy increases the chance of project approval. A clearer commitment to funding projects under a macro-regional strategy would increase the number of projects with a macro-regional focus.



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