



RECENT AND UPCOMING EESC OPINIONS ON
**MACRO-REGIONAL AREAS
AND STRATEGIES,
AND RELATED HORIZONTAL MATTERS**

Key Points | October 2014



European Economic and Social Committee

Baltic Region

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Danube Region

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Adriatic-Ionian Region

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Mediterranean Region

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Horizontal Matters

- Governance of macro-regional strategies Page 8
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CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP BALTIC SEA REGION

Key points:

At the heart of the Baltic Sea Strategy is a simple view that in this region, serious problems such as maritime safety, environmental pollution and access ability can only be tackled and overcome through effective cooperation.

The EESC:

- sets out an argument that an effective way of strengthening civil society partnerships in delivering the Baltic Sea Region Strategy is through the implementation of the partnership principle as set out in the Commission's code of conduct partnership;
- recommends that the Baltic Sea Region Strategy could informally embrace the process outlined in the code of conduct and apply it to the ongoing evolution and implementation of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy;
- acknowledges that there is incomplete political support for the code of conduct among Baltic Member States and that the culture of partnership needs to be strengthened;
- stresses that there is sufficient organisational experience and competence in the Baltic Sea Region to build upon to undertake the enhanced monitoring role envisaged under the code of conduct.

Full details of the opinion [here](#)

See also:

- EESC opinion on [European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region](#)
- EESC opinion on [Macro-regional cooperation - Rolling out the Baltic Sea Strategy to other macro-regions in Europe](#)



EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

Key points:

The European Economic and Social Committee strongly supports the new approach to the European Union's macro-regional policy and the current proposal for a strategy for the Danube region.

The EESC believes that when formulating the strategy for the Danube, account should be taken of the role played by the Danube River in forming a common Danube consciousness and identity, in which intercultural dialogue and solidarity are key features. This is a regional contribution to the formation of a common European consciousness in the 8 EU Member States and 6 non-EU States through which the river flows.

The EESC calls for a clear, simple and transparent system of governance for the strategy's implementation, making it possible to advance successfully towards the goals set. Civil society must be actively involved by means of the Civil Society Forum foreseen in the Strategy's proposals, and in which the EESC and its national counterparts are called upon to play an essential role.

The Commission has drawn up the strategy around "three NOs". Even though:

1. it provides no new EU funds. There could be additional international, national, regional or private funds, although better use of existing funds is emphasised;
2. the EESC views coordinating financial resources in order to achieve the objectives set to be an improvement which, thanks to constant review, will make it possible to identify new funding options. It advocates setting up a specific fund;
3. it requires no changes to EU legislation, since the EU legislates for the EU27 and not for a macro-region alone; however, the EESC, as in its opinion on the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, suggests giving Commission departments more resources in order to ensure that the Strategy is properly followed up;
4. in the EESC's view, changes could, if agreed by actors in the reinforced territorial cooperation, be made at regional, national or other levels, in order to address specific objectives;
5. it creates no additional structures which are fundamentally different from those already existing in current EU practice. The strategy will be implemented using coordination structures which are new for the region and existing bodies, whose complementarity must be maximised;
6. the EESC feels that bureaucratic constraints should be minimised, and that a research group should be set up to scientifically analyse and discuss questions relating to the Danube strategy; a scholarship programme should contribute to the work of this group.

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Full details of the opinion [here](#)

See also:

- Exploratory EESC opinion on [The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region](#)

EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION (EUSAIR)

Key points:

The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), as it will help to promote and support the region's economic competitiveness and social cohesion.

The EESC

- maintains that during the different stages of the EUSAIR's implementation, public and private economic and social stakeholders need adequate guidance through ad hoc training programmes and organisational and technical support;
- welcomes the complementarity between the EUSAIR and the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas;
- notes that civil society involvement in the EUSAIR requires more attention;
- considers the EUSAIR's structure and objectives to be suited to helping partners in the region to address challenges that cannot be dealt with effectively through the usual means.

The region needs measures that promote easier access to credit for SMEs, private investment, participation in EU funding programmes and cooperation with research centres and universities.

The EESC believes that in order to promote research and innovation, the following priorities should be taken into account:

- setting up a transnational R&D&I (research, development and innovation) platform to improve SME competitiveness by transforming innovative ideas into market-ready products;
- developing transnational smart specialisation studies to identify innovation and business capacities;
- promoting more entrepreneurial involvement in deciding R&D&I policies;
- launching an "Adriatic and Ionian matchmaking platform" to make it easier for SMEs and young entrepreneurs to obtain innovation funding.

The EESC believes that the EUSAIR's social dimension must be integrated and strengthened by promoting social investment and the necessary modernisation of social protection systems.

The EESC advocates identifying ad hoc indicators to enable the monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the EUSAIR's programmes and measures.

Full details of the opinion [here](#)

See also:

- Exploratory EESC opinion on [EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region \(EUSAIR\)](#)

EU STRATEGY FOR THE ALPINE REGION

Ongoing exploratory opinion

In July 2014 the Commission services issued a core document on "*An EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)*" to facilitate the public consultation of 16 July to 15 October 2014. As an exploratory opinion was required by the Commission, the EESC is currently working on drawing up an opinion on the issue at stake.

In December 2014 a conference will be organised by the Commission to present the results of the consultations and assess the state of the Strategy. The EESC rapporteur will present the EESC opinion on this occasion.

Further details of the ongoing opinion [here](#)



EU STRATEGY FOR THE ATLANTIC REGION

Key points:

The EESC

- welcomes the European Commission's proposal for the Atlantic under the European Integrated Maritime Policy;
- proposes a more ambitious approach, however; a macro-regional strategy which, in conjunction with the maritime pillar, incorporates the territorial pillar, taking account of the experiences of the Baltic Sea and Danube regions.
- underlines that the EESC position is supported by the position of the European Parliament, the governments of the regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission, the Economic and Social Councils within the Transnational Atlantic Arc and a number of civil society stakeholders (business leaders, unions, chambers of commerce, towns and cities, etc.).
- believes that the Atlantic Forum provided for by the Atlantic maritime strategy is a first step towards transforming the Atlantic maritime strategy into a macro-regional Atlantic strategy.
- as member of the Atlantic Forum leadership group, has proposed that the Atlantic Transnational Network (ATN) of Economic and Social Councils participate in the Forum.
- finds that the priority objectives of the Atlantic macro-region should be based on the thematic pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- recommends that in future, macro-regional policies have appropriate legislation, their own funding and the necessary administrative structures.

Full details of the opinion [here](#)

See also:

- EESC opinion on [Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area](#)



TOWARDS A STRATEGY TO DEVELOP COHESION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Key points:

The EESC believes that the Mediterranean Region needs a Macro-Regional Strategy (EU MMRS) to help the regions face challenges that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by single regions or countries through the usual means. Such a strategy would help the regions concerned to address the causes of uncertainty that dominate the Mediterranean region by increasing the value-added of the positive achievements of the initiatives already launched and the Europe 2020 goals.

The EESC notes that the governance structure of the EU MMRS should be based on a multilevel approach involving regional, national and European institutions and should not be seen as an additional activity or effort of the said institutions.

The Committee believes that the fundamental principle of the implementation of the EU MMRS is the integrated approach. This approach would be strengthened by the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Macro Regional Forum to promote the full involvement of all institutional actors and civil society stakeholders and to combine existing policies with functional objectives in order to shape a common and shared policy.

The EESC also believes that it is strategically appropriate for the EESC and the CoR to host and provide leadership of the Mediterranean Macro-Regional Forum.

Full details of the opinion [here](#)

See also:

- Exploratory EESC opinion on [Macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean](#)



GOVERNANCE OF MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Key points:

The EESC believes that:

- The Commission's Report is timely, and gives some important guidance for improving the framing of such strategies and governance of their implementation.
- It is disappointing though that in the Report the concept of "governance" is confined to political, institutional and administrative/organisational cooperation. The "partners" are only given a very subordinate role.
- This is a particularly serious problem when it comes to implementation. To a large extent, effective and efficient implementation is contingent on prior involvement of partners. Therefore a new model of governance should be developed, with the involvement of economic and social partners.
- Bodies with composite membership at various levels, together with specific forums, could considerably help to strengthen the European identity of civil society, and of economic, social and political players. This could significantly contribute to further development of a European model, deliberately based in part on a "bottom-up" approach.
- It would make a big difference if development policy at macro-regional level became an integral part of pan-European policies. For this to happen, European-level evaluation is needed of "existing" macro-regional links which work well from territorial and sectoral perspectives.
- Taking stock of macro-regional challenges and opportunities could help to foster development initiatives along the lines of "Connecting Europe", thus strengthening European integration.
- The analysis does not address issues which are essential in calculating investment returns and thus demonstrating added value. One of the tasks of the "technical points" could be to set up a uniform monitoring system and prepare ex-ante and ex-post evaluations.
- A more precise definition in legal and institutional terms is needed of "governance" in relation to the framing and implementation of macro-regional strategies.
- The "three no's" no longer apply: there is funding, an administrative institutional system is being developed to assist with implementation, and necessary rules are set out in the common strategic framework.

Full details of the opinion [here](#)

See also:

- EESC opinion on [Evaluation of macro-regional strategies](#)