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2.2 The added value of macro-regional strategies from the perspective of spatial planning

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Background and introduction

This discussion paper was prepared as an input for the assessment of the added-value of European Union (EU) macro-regional strategies from the perspective of spatial planning. The European Council (Council 2011a) has invited the European Commission to ‘clarify the concept of macro-regional strategies, to evaluate their value added and submit the outcomes to the Council and the European Parliament by June 2013’. The assessment of existing macro-regional strategies should provide information on their effects to date and provide input for the further development of the macro-regional strategies.

Since its inception, there has been considerable interest in the concept of EU macro-regional strategies. The first macro-regional strategy – the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) - was adopted in 2009 (CEC 2009a, 2010a, b), followed by the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in 2011 (CEC 2010c, d). Others are under discussion, e.g. for the Adriatic – Ionian region. Of a somewhat different status, but relevant in a discussion on EU macro-regional strategies, are other integrated policy frameworks of a transnational dimension, such as the existing EU policy frameworks for the Northern Dimension¹¹ and the EU’s Integrated Maritime Policy¹².

The focus of macro-regional strategies has from the beginning been on making more effective use of existing funds, institutions / structures, and policies (local, regional, national, EU). No new funding, legislation or institutions were supposed to be created. A macro-regional strategy has been described as ‘an integrated framework’ (Samecki 2009: para 2.1), which is expected to allow ‘the European Union and Member States to identify needs and match them to the available resources through co-ordination of appropriate policies’ (CEC 2010a: 2). This formulation places the spotlight on the key ingredients of the EU macro-regional approach: the key actors (primarily the EU institutions and the EU member states, as EU decisions don’t cover other countries), a joint approach to identifying issues that require transnational cooperation, and the role of the strategy as a framework for coordinating policies and resources (including its governance arrangements for implementation).

Although EU macro-regional strategies have not been presented as spatial planning instruments (or as integrated *spatial development* frameworks), reflecting the long-standing debate over an EU competence in this field, their coordination objective and spatially-relevant goals and actions warrant this paper’s focus on their added-value from the perspective of spatial planning. The argument for considering whether macro-regional strategies offer added-value for spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region and Danube Region derives from the core of their rationale, i.e. that large-scale landscape features (the Baltic Sea, the Danube corridor), which each have their own very specific characteristics and challenges, require a coordinated approach. Coordination for such large-scale functional regions that cut across administrative boundaries implies considerable political and governance challenges, however, because of the great number of actors involved and because each issue addressed at this level

¹¹ http://eeas.europa.eu/north_dim/index_en.htm

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/publications_en.html

of scale may have a different functional ‘reach’ and therefore the boundaries of the macro-regions should be flexible in response to the issue addressed. From a spatial planning perspective, and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, this implies on the one hand that macro-regional strategies should focus on ‘transnational issues’ only, i.e. issues that countries or regions cannot address satisfactorily by acting alone. On the other hand, it means that numerous actors at different levels of scale will be involved in transnational spatial planning initiatives, and in different geographical compositions depending on the issue considered. This implies great complexity for governance arrangements in any policy area, but especially for an area such as spatial planning which is in many countries not strongly institutionalized at national level and where the argument for ‘upscaling’ a spatial planning perspective to the transnational level may therefore not gain much support. As this paper will show, indeed progress on injecting a spatial planning perspective into the macro-regional strategies has been modest to date, and the actual and potential added-value of macro-regional strategies for spatial planning therefore requires further discussion.

Objective of study and approach

The objective of this study is to assess the added value of macro regional strategies from the perspective of spatial planning. This is done through a review of publicly available documents such as action plans, communications from the European Council and the European Commission as well as other documents available on the EUSBSR and the EUSDR websites. The assessment also refers to the impact assessments that were completed prior to the launch of the two strategies.

The questions addressed in this paper are the following:

- What are the main achievements in implementing the macro-regional strategies and what contribution have they made to EU policies and targets; national, regional, sectoral policies? The question of the relevance of macro-regional strategies to EU Cohesion Policy¹³ and Europe 2020 Strategy objectives¹⁴ particularly should be addressed;

¹³ The EU Cohesion Policy for the programming period 2007-13 responded to the EU objectives as set out in the Lisbon-Gothenburg Agenda (2000/2001) and the relaunched Agenda in 2005, which put emphasis on directing EU funding programmes (including the Structural Funds) towards growth and jobs. For the 2007-2013 programming period, EU Cohesion Policy is organised in three ‘objectives’: the ‘convergence’ objective (for regions with a GDP per inhabitant of less than 75% of Community average), the ‘regional competitiveness and employment’ objective (for all other regions), and the ‘European territorial cooperation’ objective. The European territorial cooperation objective includes the former INTERREG Community Initiative programmes and has three strands: cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation. **According to the *Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007-2013*, all programmes had to earmark a certain proportion of the resources for investments linked to the Lisbon strategy for Growth and Jobs, such as research and innovation, infrastructures of European importance, industrial competitiveness, renewable energies, energy efficiency, eco-innovations, entrepreneurship and human resources.**

¹⁴ ‘Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ was adopted in March 2010 by the European Council (CEC 2010e), and was prepared in response to the economic crisis. It is the successor of the ‘Growth and Jobs Agenda’ and focuses on three key areas:

- **Smart growth:** developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation
- **Sustainable growth:** promoting a more efficient, greener and more competitive economy
- **Inclusive growth:** fostering a high-employment economy, where all communities and regions participate and flourish.

The EU 2020 strategy sets out five goals, which are to be broken down into national targets:

- 75% of the population aged 20-64 in employment
- 3% of the EU’s GDP invested in research and development
- Successful implementation of the EU’s environmental goals, i.e. a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions and a 20% increase in renewable energies
- A minimum of 40% of the younger generation to obtain a tertiary degree, and 10% fewer early school leavers
- 20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty

In the European Council conclusions (June 2010), it was expressed that ‘all common policies, including the common agricultural policy and cohesion policy, will need to support the strategy’. The EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 will be focused on the EU 2020 objectives.

- What concrete progress has been made in the priority areas/horizontal actions/actions and flagship projects?
- Do Macro regional strategies have the potential to influence EU and national policy developments, e.g. through mobilization of existing funding, and alignment of funding and policies with EU 2020 priorities and programmes, and what evidence supports this?
- What is the added value of macro regional strategies in terms of coordination of activities between different actors; for example via cooperation between EU Member States and Third countries, through improved cooperation structures, development of new ways of cooperation or strengthening existing ones?
- What is the added value of the macro regional strategies in terms of improving governance structures for the achievement of overall objectives including interaction/links with other EU initiatives (such as the Northern Dimension, Eastern Partnership, etc.)?
- What are the main drivers to increase the added value of macro-regional strategies for spatial planning in their establishment and in their implementation?

The approach to this assessment requires setting out a few provisos. First, macro-regional strategies are still very young and therefore ‘work in progress’. The progress that has been made so far should be seen in this context, especially considering the complexity of the task. Cooperation structures need time to mature, so any assessment after a relatively short period of time can only attempt to point out areas which may require further attention in future, rather than allowing a comprehensive evaluation. Second, this study relies on published sources (action plans, reports etc) that were prepared by actors involved in the macro-regional strategies. While some critical issues come to the fore in these papers, they are nonetheless by definition to a certain extent self-referential and not based on external evaluation. Moreover, macro-regional strategies were not presented as *spatial* strategies, so the assessment of their added-value for spatial planning remains somewhat hypothetical as evidence is scarce (and indeed there are relatively few explicit references to spatial planning in the documents analysed).

Definitions and conceptual framework

For a discussion of the added value of EU macro-regional strategies from the perspective of spatial planning, it is important to provide some definitions and a conceptual framework. The traditionally land-based focus of spatial planning of EU member states has over the past years been complemented by EU initiatives in the field of maritime spatial planning (CEC 2008a). Maritime spatial planning is defined as ‘planning and regulating all human uses of the sea, while protecting marine ecosystems. It focuses on marine waters under national jurisdiction and is concerned only with planning activities at sea’ (DG Mare website), thus it does not cover management of coastal zones or spatial planning of sea-land interface. While ‘maritime spatial planning remains a prerogative of individual EU countries’ (ibid.), agreement at EU level should help to ensure that national, regional and local maritime spatial plans are compatible and that conflicts can be avoided and cross-border cooperation and investments are better coordinated. While EU competences for maritime spatial planning are as weak as for land-based spatial planning, the EU policy field has developed quickly and with considerable support from the member states. In contrast to the fierce debates over an EU involvement in land-based spatial planning since the end of the 1990s, seen as violating the sovereignty of nation-states and the subsidiarity principle, the interest of EU member states and regions in coordinated approaches to maritime spatial planning may at least be partly explained by the novelty of this approach and the fact that domestic institutions had not been well established (thus that resistance to change, as can be found in established policy communities, is low).

Reflecting the discussions about the role of the EU in land-based spatial planning, in the academic literature a distinction is now made between spatial planning at the supra-national scale (e.g. for transnational spaces) and spatial planning within nation-states, mirroring the distinction made between ‘spatial planning *for* Europe’, and ‘spatial planning *in* Europe’ (Böhme and Waterhout 2008). Spatial planning at a scale above the nation-state relies on different mechanisms for achieving its goals than spatial planning within countries and regions. Within nation-states, spatial planning is a sector of government activity alongside others such as transport, agriculture and environment, and seeks to manage and regulate spatial development and land uses in pursuit of agreed objectives. At European level, spatial planning refers to creating strategies and policies for the development of (parts of) the European territory. What has been called the ‘European spatial planning approach’ concentrates ‘on establishing better co-ordination of spatial policy: horizontally across different sectors; vertically among different levels of government; and geographically across administrative boundaries’ (Dühr et al. 2010: 32). As there is no explicit competence for spatial planning in the EU Treaties, and reflecting the subsidiarity principle, spatial planning *for* Europe focuses on the strategic dimension of spatial planning (as opposed to detailed land use planning), and has relied on intergovernmental cooperation and unanimous support of the participating governments for agreement on policy objectives and to achieve the common goals.

Spatial strategies for the EU (such as the ESDP, TAEU or TA2020) or for transnational territories (such as INTERREG IIC/IIIB transnational spatial visions) are thus by definition very different instruments than ‘spatial plans’ prepared within the established governance systems of sovereign nation-states. The scale, scope and range of interests involved are much more diverse at the transnational level than for the preparation of plans and strategies within member states. There is no law or guidance that specifies the characteristics or content of transnational strategies, nor are there clearly defined processes that would ensure their implementation. Given their usually non-binding nature, transnational spatial strategies are thus understood to function by ‘framing’ the understanding of actors involved (e.g. sectoral actors who may have much stronger powers of implementation) to particular problems and possible approaches, rather than prescribing solutions. Such a shared understanding about the need for collective action should then provide a lasting basis to ensure that the strategy and its principles are applied in policy- and decision-making processes (Dühr et al. 2010).

Given the lack of strong instruments, the communicative potential of transnational spatial strategies requires particular attention. To ensure their continuing support and use, transnational spatial strategies need to provide a vision ‘so powerful and attractive that all those whose support is needed willingly range up behind it’ (Needham et al. 1997). Given the multitude of actors and interests involved and the consensus-led process of preparing spatial development frameworks for the European territory, this implies that spatial concepts are needed which are ‘capable of papering over the cracks between the various views prevailing’ (Faludi 2002: 904).

Identifying issues for cooperation at the supra-national scale inevitably involves struggles about the prioritising of interests, rights and claims for policy attention. Yet the filtering is a crucial process, because if strategies are to inspire and motivate a range of actors over a long period of time, they need to be more than merely an aggregation of issues. Moreover, the experience with the transnational INTERREG programmes has shown that broad frameworks with largely generic funding priorities rarely result in projects of real significance for the transnational region (Panteia et al. 2010). It is therefore important that policy priorities and actions are specific to the macro-region, and not merely replicate EU policy objectives. Two types of truly transnational issues can be identified, which offer real value for an ‘upscaling’ of policy responses:

- Issues that are currently not dealt with appropriately within a country and by nation-states acting alone, and

- Issues that may in future not be dealt with satisfactorily by nation-states acting alone as a consequence of changing framework conditions (political, economic, environmental, social, or else).

There are likely considerably fewer issues that are usefully addressed at transnational level than the long lists of actions and projects in the Baltic Sea or the Danube Region strategies would suggest. At present, both the action plans for the Baltic Sea Region and for the Danube Region list several issues that are of common concern or are not specific to the region.

The need for cooperation among countries to achieve effective coordination of all sea-related as well as land-based spatial planning policies at the different decision-making levels when preparing comprehensive and integrated plans is evident, and so is the link to the activities of EU macro-regional strategies. While EU involvement in spatial planning – certainly for the land-based component – has been critically viewed by some member states, the inclusion of the objective of territorial cohesion as a shared competence in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 has generally been interpreted as providing an alternative approach to bringing the spatial dimension into sectoral policy. However, there is to date no clear or politically agreed definition of the objective of territorial cohesion which would allow an assessment of whether the concept will be interpreted as a form of European spatial planning (in the meaning presented above) in EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 (cf. CEC 2008b).

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and spatial planning

Littoral countries of the Baltic Sea are eight EU member states (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Belarus and Russia. Since the 1990s, the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea have been cooperating at the transnational level. Besides the political forum of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS, also involving Norway and Iceland next to the littoral states), there are other well-established forums of cooperation with influence on policy- and decision-making, such as HELCOM¹⁵ in the field of environmental policy and VASAB¹⁶ for transnational spatial planning. Indeed, the ‘model’ for transnational spatial visions prepared in the context of the transnational INTERREG IIC and IIIB Community Initiative is commonly acknowledged to be the ‘Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010’ (VASAB2010 1994) document (Dühr 2011b). It was prepared by the ministries for spatial planning and development of countries around the Baltic Sea Region even before the INTERREG IIC initiative (which envisaged the preparation of ‘transnational spatial visions’) was launched. The VASAB vision sought to address shared concerns over environmental pollution of the shallow sea and to consider policy responses for the somewhat peripheral transnational region after the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’. An action programme, entitled ‘From vision to action’ (VASAB2010 1996) proposed measures for the application of the spatial vision. In 1997, INTERREG funding supported the process of updating of the VASAB 2010 strategy (VASAB2010+ 2001). In 2009, the ‘VASAB Long-term perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region’ (VASAB LTP 2009) was adopted and is intended to provide strategic direction until 2030.

Main achievements of the EUSBSR and contribution to EU, national and regional policies

It seems widely accepted that the EU macro-regional strategy has at least partly succeeded in overcoming the ‘stalemate’ of intergovernmental cooperation, given the high political profile and EU involvement in many activities covered by the EUSBSR (CEC 2010f). A report by the Commission (CEC 2011a: 1) identified ‘commitment of partners at national, regional, and civil society levels’. It

¹⁵ The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) is an intergovernmental organization (Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden) working to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea.

¹⁶ VASAB - Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea - is an intergovernmental network of 11 countries of the Baltic Sea Region promoting cooperation on spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region.

further noted as main achievements that ‘the Strategy has led to concrete action, with a more streamlined use of resources. New working methods and networks have been established, and many initiatives developed’, including the setting up of new projects (such as the designation of marine protected areas in the Baltic Sea) and providing new momentum to existing projects. The Commission report further finds that ‘the Strategy ... provides a common reference point for the many organisations in the Baltic Sea Region’. Examples given to support this observation are the new framework for the maritime community, which has brought together actors and initiatives around the EUSBSR; and that ‘transport ministries in the Region now plan infrastructure investments in a coordinated way’ (CEC 2011a).

Despite such positive signs, the Commission (CEC 2011a, b; CEC 2012a) highlights areas for improvement, including: the need to reinforce the integrated nature of the Strategy through closer alignment with the themes and flagships of Europe 2020; to assure the European nature of the Strategy through regular discussions of the Strategy at policy Councils; to establish targets to make the Strategy more focused; to maximise efforts to align Cohesion Policy and other funding sources in the Region with the objectives of the Strategy; to strengthen implementation structures both financially and in terms of staff; and to develop a “Communication initiative” to ensure broader participation in the Strategy, as well as understanding of its overall achievements.

A review of the Action Plan was published in late February 2013. The horizontal action on spatial planning (‘HA Spatial’) was maintained, although with a more explicit focus on maritime spatial planning. In comparison to the previous version, the new Action Plan has been broadened to include more actions that are not directly spatial in focus, nor specific for the macro-region. This implies a risk of watering down the initial intentions of the macro-regional approach, and will certainly present further challenges to applying a more explicit spatial planning perspective to the strategy, should this be envisaged in future.

Progress on the priority areas/horizontal actions/actions and flagship projects

While most of the priority areas in the Action Plan are not *explicitly* spatial in focus, many can be expected to either have direct, or at least indirect, spatial effects. There are isolated examples where a reference to spatial planning is being made under individual actions or flagship projects (e.g. Flagship project 2.1. (Fast Track) “Create marine protected areas” (Lead: Germany)’) (CEC 2012b: 14). To date, progress on land-based spatial planning within the EUSBSR in particular has been very slow, however. The implementation report (CEC 2011b) refers to the LTP process and ministerial and stakeholder meetings, and some relevant INTERREG IVB projects such as BaltSeaPlan, Eco-Region, New Bridges, Baltmet Promo, TransBaltic and Rail Baltica Growth Corridor. There is no clear evidence that these actions would not have taken place also without the EUSBSR, and the current added-value of the EUSBSR for land-based spatial planning is therefore doubtful. Furthermore, the question could be asked whether such largely ‘soft measures’ will be sufficient to achieve the ambition of providing horizontal coordination for the EUSBSR priority actions and projects through spatial planning. There has been some progress in the field of maritime spatial planning, with some projects (e.g. projects ‘Plan Bothnia’, ‘BaltSeaPlan Vision 2030’) completed, although only involving EU member countries besides some international and transnational organisations (CEC 2010f; CEC 2011b; Gee et al. 2011). The emphasis is on sharing data, establishing joint principles and setting cooperation platforms, and on supporting progress on national and regional maritime spatial plans.

In the most recent action plan (February 2013), the 17 priority areas (PAs) and 6 horizontal areas (HAs) are shown as contributing (in various degrees) to achieving the three objectives (‘to save the sea’, ‘to connect the region’, ‘to increase prosperity’) with related sub-objectives, thus seeking to communicate the integrated approach. Indeed, Annex II of the Action Plan (CEC 2013: 191) shows that most priority areas that are presented as contributing to achieving the defined sub-objectives are either explicitly or indirectly spatial in focus (e.g. PA Ship, PA Transport, PA Energy, PA Nutri). This

would suggest that the HA on spatial planning would receive a more prominent role in coordinating these PA's and thus contributing to the objectives of the EUSBSR. On the contrary, however, 'HA Spatial' is only shown to contribute directly to sub-objective 'Connecting People' and to a lesser degree to the sub-objectives of 'Rich and healthy wildlife' and 'better cooperation'. In terms of contributing to the EU2020 strategy, almost all PA's and HA's are shown to have a relation. A notable exception is 'HA Spatial' which is not envisaged to make a contribution to any sub-objectives of objective 3 to 'Increase Prosperity', including the EU2020 strategy.

In comparison to the previous version of the Action Plan, which sought to give equal attention to maritime and land-based spatial planning, the 'HA Spatial' in the Action Plan of February 2013 almost exclusively focuses on maritime spatial planning. Land-based spatial planning is mentioned in relation to the work of VASAB, noting that 'the VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP) ... should be taken into account by the coordinators of other priority areas when they address spatial objectives, conditions and impacts of their actions' (CEC 2013: 170). It is doubtful that this reference will have the desired effect of better coordinating land-based spatial planning around the Baltic Sea, nor that it will achieve the overall goal of the horizontal action, stated as 'to achieve territorial cohesion perspective in the BSR by 2030, i.e. the region is a well-integrated and coherent macro-region, and it has overcome the socio-economic development divides between its individual parts and turned the global challenges into assets' (CEC 2013: 171). In the new Action Plan, targets are only defined for the drawing up of maritime spatial plans, whereas there are no indicators for land-based spatial planning. Accordingly, only one flagship project is identified, 'PartiSEApate – Multi-level Governance in MSP (Maritime Spatial Planning) throughout the Baltic Sea Region', led by the Maritime Institute in Gdańsk, Poland.

The updated action plan seems to illustrate a trend of marginalizing spatial planning further, rather than giving it a more prominent role by identifying the added-value for the macro-regional strategy by seeking also spatial coordination. This may be a flaw in the architecture, with allocating spatial planning to a 'horizontal action', which seems added-on to the main priority areas rather than being integrated throughout (something which would seem important to achieve the HA's ambitious goals). It may also be a problem of leadership and prioritisation, despite the existence of VASAB in the BSR, which prevents considering the role of transnational spatial planning for the BSR more explicitly, and especially so for the land-based dimension.

Evidence of the potential of the EUSBSR to influence EU and national policy developments

In terms of policy development and coherence in areas of relevance to this paper, the Commission report (CEC 2011a) takes positive notice of the link between the regional implementation of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy, and the progress on integration of maritime surveillance systems which has been made in the BSR. There is no evidence that the macro-regional strategy to date has provided any impetus for the review and coordination of land-based spatial plans in the countries and regions around the BSR, as it has for the development of maritime spatial plans. Indeed, the EUSBSR does not seem to have made any substantial contribution to the ongoing work of VASAB, nor does it seem to have revived the discussion on the role and objectives for transnational spatial planning in the BSR.

The need for a better alignment of funding remains a key concern, and this is also of relevance to the HA on spatial planning which may have fewer dedicated funding sources to draw on, given the integrated nature of spatial planning and the increasingly thematic orientation of many EU funding programmes (in pursuit of the EU's Growth and Jobs agenda). A recent study of 'needs for financial instruments in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region' (Savbäck et al. 2011: 3) concluded that 'the implementation of the EUSBSR is perceived as a major undertaking by the stakeholders. The development of partnerships and projects is time demanding and real implementation requires financial resources. There is still a certain hesitation regarding how the implementation is structured. Many activities are in the start-up or early implementation phase and have a preparatory or planning

character rather than “real” implementation. However, the implementation differs considerably between sectors as there are differences of maturity in transnational cooperation. Currently, more than 20 different funding instruments are used as sources of financing, not including national and regional co-financing sources. The implementation of most Priority Areas is to a large extent dependent on EU Structural Funds... Despite the large amount of available instruments it is clear that various financial and non-financial needs are not sufficiently met.’

The European territorial cooperation programmes, and especially the INTERREG IVB Baltic Sea Region programme, are of particular relevance for the EUSBSR. The transnational Baltic Sea Region Programme (INTERREG IVB) has contributed EUR 88 million to Flagship Projects, and targeted its fourth call specifically to promoting the Strategy (CEC 2011a). Yet, ‘when moving beyond projects covered by ETC programmes, all other available instruments are perceived as difficult and non-accommodating for transnational activities. This problem of funding is mainly related to structural challenges, as many programmes (EU-funded, national and regional alike) have difficulties to support transnational activities’ (Savbäck et al. 2011: 4)

In the Commission report (2011a), several improvements to better align funding to the EUSBSR are mentioned, including new selection criteria for several ERDF programmes in the BSR. The recent review of the strategy has clarified the availability of financial instruments for the main objectives (available as overview table on the EUSBSR website). The main focus is on Cohesion Policy programmes, but ‘other programmes, funds and institutions’ are also listed. The ‘fit’ of financial instruments with the EUSBSR has only been assessed in this table for the main priority areas, however, and not for the horizontal actions which have the most explicit focus on spatial planning. Yet, achieving spatial coordination through a horizontal action as in the EUSBSR would clearly benefit from some transparency about available funding.

Added value of macro regional strategies in terms of coordination of activities between different actors and links with other EU initiatives

Perhaps inevitably given its ambition, the EUSBSR is characterized by a complex governance structure, and in earlier reviews this prompted calls for an improved organization structure. Recently, the roles and responsibilities of the different actors have been clarified (Council 2012), and an overview made available on the website of the EUSBSR. However, the focus has been on listing contacts for (thematic) priority actions and flagship projects, rather than the cross-cutting, ‘horizontal’, actions, where arguably a stronger lead and visibility would be desirable.

Moreover, the governance arrangements are EU-centred, with scope for involving non-EU members and other EU initiatives at the operational level (programmes, Flagship project leaders) and the coordination level (Priority Area Coordinators, Priority Area Focal Points, Horizontal Action Leaders), but not at the policy level (Council, Commission, High Level Group). As an EU initiative, the Strategy does not commit non-Member States. Existing transnational bodies in the BSR, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Nordic Council of Ministers or the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) or VASAB, have well-established (intergovernmental) forms of cooperation between EU and non-EU countries. The fact that the macro-regions are strategies of the European Union has from the beginning put much weight on the need to establish constructive cooperation with the external partners in the region, and in particular Russia (CEC 2012b). The Northern Dimension, a common policy of the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland, provides the basis for these external aspects of the strategy. However, Russia continues to seem to have limited involvement in the implementation of the Strategy, either through specific projects or existing regional frameworks such as the Northern Dimension.

The implementation of the Strategy through actions and projects is predominantly the task of national ministries, national public agencies or transnational bodies, as Annexe 1 shows. The Commission report notes efforts to involve more sub-national actors and existing cooperative structures in the

EUSBSR (CEC 2011a). Moreover, differences in the level of ambition (and achievements) across the priority areas, depending on existing networks and the maturity of cooperation arrangements on which the implementation could draw, has been noted before (CEC 2010f). This may at least partly explain the differences in achievements in relation to maritime spatial planning on the one hand, and land-based spatial planning on the other.

Main drivers to increase the added value of macro-regional strategies in their establishment and in their implementation

The Commission Communication (CEC 2012a, later adopted by Council (2012)) proposed the following key areas for improvement:

- Improvements to the strategic focus, by defining three key objectives for the EUSBSR and by aligning the Strategy more clearly to the Europe 2020 objectives.
- Alignment of policies and funding, with a better coordination through the Common Strategic Framework 2014-2020. ‘There must be a stronger transnational dimension to national and regional programmes, as relying on territorial cooperation programmes alone will not suffice.... When developing partnership contracts and operational programmes, at the regional, national, cross-border and transnational levels, macro-regional objectives and priorities must be present’ (CEC 2012a).
- Clarification of responsibilities of different actors and improved governance arrangements. The Strategy should be included on the agenda of the Council of Ministers in its different formations as appropriate. Strategy considerations should be reflected in budget and other discussions. Regional and municipal actors must be more involved. Political commitment must be translated into administrative commitment, with sufficient staffing and continuity of personnel. Involvement of other stakeholders, including the private sector, and of third countries should be improved.
- Better communication by promoting awareness of the Strategy and its results. Setting indicators and targets and evaluating progress will be given increasing attention.

While all of these suggestions are sensible, they will arguably do little to strengthen the coordination role of the horizontal action on spatial planning, given the apparent focus on the main priority areas in clarifying the governance arrangements and aligning funding. A closer connection to the EU2020 objectives, which are very thematic and largely non-spatial, will provide further challenges for making sure the horizontal action on spatial planning can live up to its stated goals.

Overall, the added-value of macro-regional strategies for spatial planning has been modest and variable to date. An added-value is apparent for the area of maritime spatial planning: as a new policy field both at EU level and in most countries, and with a clear transnational focus on the maritime environment of the Baltic Sea, the EUSBSR appears to have supported a constructive and cooperative process for joint databases and cooperation on maritime spatial plans. These may not be groundbreaking results yet, and have mostly been agreed between EU member states only, but given the novelty of the EUSBSR they are a promising start. This is especially so given what appears wide support by many actors in the region (even if at present mostly from the EU), which may provide a lasting basis for future (and more far-reaching) action. The same cannot be said for land-based spatial planning, however. Indeed, the EUSBSR so far does not seem to have brought any added-value to the work of VASAB. Given the EU-focus of macro-regional strategies on the one hand and lack of EU competence for spatial planning on the other, an intergovernmental approach such as pursued by VASAB may seem more appropriate than a macro-regional strategy focused on spatial planning. However, there are strong arguments for reconciling the maritime spatial planning approach and the land-based dimension to a more comprehensive and integrated approach, and the current trends in the

BSR suggest that there may be a danger of their lasting separation into different policy communities. Spatial planning should be given a much more central role in the EUSBSR if such cross-sectoral and multi-level governance coordination is to be achieved. The coordination ambitions of the EUSBSR would make a case for more closely involving VASAB and national and regional spatial planning ministries in the actions and projects of the EUSBSR. Political commitment and appropriate administrative capacity will be important to ensure EUSBSR initiatives on spatial planning are well coordinated with those within the countries. First, however, a clear definition of spatial planning (land-based and maritime, also in relation to the EU objective of territorial cohesion) is required for a discussion on the role of spatial planning in the BSR.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and spatial planning

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region covers eight EU countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania) and six non-EU countries (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova). While international cooperation bodies exist for river basin management (e.g. the Danube Commission and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River), there is no transnational spatial planning institution for the Danube comparable to VASAB for the BSR.

The EUSDR (CEC 2010c: 6) places ‘emphasis on an integrated place-based approach. Good links between urban and rural areas, fair access to infrastructures and services, and comparable living conditions will promote territorial cohesion’. Based on the many suggestions from the initial consultation (cf. CEC 2010g), four pillars were defined to address the key issues for the region, with together eleven thematic priority areas (see Annexe 2). There is no dedicated priority or action for spatial planning, but it is mentioned in relation to some initiatives such as the river basins management plan for the Danube (prepared under the Water Framework Directive).

Main achievements of the EUSDR and contribution to EU, national and regional policies

In the First Annual Forum on the EUSDR in November 2012 (Bayrische Staatsregierung 2012), it was emphasised that the Strategy has strengthened cooperation in the region and at all levels, and that numerous meetings and conferences were held. To date, over seventy new projects have been recommended for funding, and several other projects have been identified by the Priority Action Coordinators (PACs) as contributing to achieving the targets of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (see EUSDR PA reports 2012). The reports note achievements in terms of facilitating cooperation on concrete infrastructure investments (e.g. finalisation of the Calafat-Vidin Bridge, Bulgaria-Serbia gas interconnector project), and other spatially-relevant projects. For example, the DANUBE FLOODRISK project is listed as having produced a ‘Manual of harmonized requirements on the flood mapping procedures for the Danube River’, which should provide the basis for a shared database.

Progress on the priority areas/horizontal actions/actions and flagship projects

In the Impact Assessment, albeit in a footnote, the European Commission referred to spatial planning as an important means to achieve the objective of territorial cohesion within the EUSDR. The report argued that ‘given the wide scope of these objectives [of territorial cohesion], it requires a framework of multi level governance for the integrated development of the area (namely through spatial planning), horizontal coordination between sectoral plans and agendas (so as to assure a coherence of sectoral policies); and vertical coordination between levels (European Union, Member States and regional and local authorities)’ (CEC 2010g).

While this consideration given to territorial cohesion and spatial planning has not resulted in a dedicated priority (or horizontal action, as for the EUSBSR), there are several actions with a spatial planning component (both maritime and land-based) listed in the Action Plan under different priorities (CEC 2010d). These are:

- Priority 4) TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF WATERS: Action - “To further strengthen Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) practices on the Western shores of the Black Sea” In the PA 4 progress report (EUSDR PA4 2012: 17), progress in the implementation of the action was reported as follows:
 - Development of specific project regarding the improvement of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Black Sea Region: in progress, waiting for approval.
 - Provide contribution to the development of the ICZM Strategy for the Black Sea coordinating with the Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission and its Advisory: by 30 November 2013.
 - Development of a project proposal concerning Black Sea marine environment protection including the planning of fishery, energy and transport activities: by 30 March 2013.
- Priority 5) TO MANAGE ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS: Action - “To develop spatial planning and construction activities in the context of climate change and increased threats of floods”, covering both coordination and data exchange as well as coordination of land uses (also taking account of expected climate change impacts). In the progress report on PA5, it is reported that ‘No progress has been made under this Action. We are looking for an organisation that can execute this Action.’ (EUSDR PA5 2012: 12)
- Priority 6) TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPES AND THE QUALITY OF AIR AND SOILS: Action - “To develop green infrastructure in order to connect different biogeographic regions and habitats (incl. Natura 2000 sites)”.
- Priority 6) TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPES AND THE QUALITY OF AIR AND SOILS: Action - “To prepare and implement transnational spatial planning and development policies for functional geographical areas (river basins, mountain ranges etc.)”. An example of a project for this action is: “To implement the VASICA - Visions and Strategies in the Carpathian area” (led by Carpathian Convention UNEP Office).
- Priority 10) TO STEP UP INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND COOPERATION: Action - “To ensure sufficient information flow and exchange at all levels”, including cooperation between planning institutes through the development and implementation of cross-border cooperation in settlement and regional planning. An example of a project that could be developed under this action is mentioned: ‘To establish common guidelines for improving spatial planning’ in order to ‘advise the local authorities on best practices for the human settlements in the Danube Region and on the way to prioritise infrastructure and other investments’ (CEC 2010d).

This overview shows that consideration of spatial planning as a coordination instrument is rather selective under individual priorities, rather than consistently across the EUSDR, and that progress have been variable to date. The approach taken does not appear to lend itself to comprehensive spatial coordination and remains partial. Indeed, the potential value of a stronger spatial planning dimension in the EUSDR, or in any case the need for better coordination of the spatial impacts of actions under different priorities, shines through in several of the PAC progress review reports. Here it is acknowledged that ‘the cross-sectoral cooperation between the different Priority Areas (e.g. transport

and environment) has just started in the first year of the EUSDR's implementation, but a more comprehensive cooperation form between the PACs still needs to be developed' (EUSDR PA1a 2012). Moreover, a need for 'reliable and comprehensive data overview about planned, on-going and existing projects along the Danube which allow to identify the implementation status of the EUSDR's PA 1a actions (including gaps)' has been identified (ibid.). For PA 1b, it is noted that 'the most important lesson so far is a general understanding of the contribution of the EUSDR. It is important to coordinate activities beyond the actual activities on the ground which has been initiated within different national policies. As a critical element for the further work a need for the common picture on the transport system in the region (common transport vision) was identified. This picture should give a basis to the group to identify critical projects for the region and to assure coordination with other priority Areas' (EUSDR PA1b 2012: 3). Already work has begun on mapping the transport infrastructure system of the Danube region (EU and non-EU Member States) in order to identify bottlenecks and missing links (ibid.).

Evidence of the potential of the EUSDR to influence EU and national policy developments

The alignment of funding has also appeared to be difficult for the EUSDR, and may have been even more complicated by the later start of the Strategy, when 'most of the main funding programmes are exhausted or were undergoing or preparing their last calls for projects, for which in many cases it was too late for new project developments. As a consequence, main attention to align funding to labelled projects had been given to the well known EU funding programmes, mostly the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes in general and here the South East Europe Programme as the most prominent one' (EUSDR PA6 2012: 13; see also EUSDR PA5 2012: 5-6). Moreover, 'national budget restrictions in several EUSDR countries' have been identified for some priority areas as presenting considerably challenges (EUSDR PA1a 2012).

In the Annual Forum (Bayrische Staatsregierung 2012), several initiatives to better align existing funding to the EUSDR were reported. For example, the two transnational cooperation programmes, South East Europe and Central Europe, have financed five new Danube Strategy projects, with an overall budget of over EUR 10 million. The Danube River is considered in its full length in the revised guidelines for the Trans-European Transport Networks, allowing for funding in the TEN-T programmes. However, it is emphasized that EU funding for the 2014-2020 should be better aligned with the Danube Strategy (Bayrische Staatsregierung 2012). The Commission proposals to modify the current geography of transnational cooperation programmes within the Structural Funds, in order to create a future transnational cooperation programme for the Danube Region (rather than two INTERREG 'B' programmes as currently) is welcomed in the region, as it promises added value through 'concrete financing of Danube Region projects, as well as in providing technical assistance to the governance structure of the Strategy' (Bayrische Staatsregierung 2012).

Added value of macro regional strategies in terms of coordination of activities between different actors including interaction/links with other EU initiatives

In the Action Plan for the Danube Region Strategy, non-EU countries are listed as co-coordinators for several of the priorities (see Annexe 2), suggesting a more equal involvement of all countries along the Danube than is currently the case for the EUSBSR. Yet, also the EUSDR is faced with governance challenges. The reports from the PACs highlight that participation in the Steering Groups varies considerably and has not been satisfactory in several PAs, and that more political and administrative support will be needed to ensure a representative and stable cooperation (Bayrische Staatsregierung 2012). Moreover, it is rarely senior-level administrators from the responsible ministries, able to take important decisions, who participate in the meetings (EUSDR PA8 2012). The embedding of the EUSDR in national settings reportedly varies considerably and it has been noted that 'national coordination works better in those eight countries which have installed an inter-ministerial working

group for coordinating Danube work at the national level. An even stronger support is assured in those three countries that have introduced an additional coordination platform at the highest political level, with a technical secretariat supporting this work' (ibid.). The implementation of the Strategy requires 'ownership on national and regional level' although it remains a challenge 'to motivate stakeholders to taking over responsibilities' (EUSDR PA10 2012). This seems to be also a particular problem for actions in the field of spatial planning. The level of international and transnational cooperation has been reportedly difficult to increase also in some priority areas related to spatial planning, including the field of biodiversity and nature protection (cf. EUSDR PA6 2012). Partly this may be a consequence of the lack of political support in some countries, and resulting weak capacity to strengthen cooperation in the required areas related to spatial planning.

Main drivers to increase the added value of macro-regional strategies in their establishment and in their implementation

The main barriers that stand in the way of a better implementation of the EUSDR seem to be in relation to better alignment of funding, and to ensure better political support for the EUSDR in general and more coherently across all priority areas. In terms of the role of spatial planning, while there are several relevant actions in the Strategy across different priorities, these are rather dispersed, progress has been modest to date and especially slow for land-based spatial planning initiatives. A debate on the role of spatial planning in the context of the EUSDR would therefore be useful, on which basis the various calls for a better and more integrated and coordinated 'spatial vision' may be considered.

EU macro-regional strategies and spatial planning: concluding reflections and recommendations

The EU macro-regional approach appears to have helped to revitalise the process of transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, and offered a platform for coordinated action in the Danube Region. It has provided a forum for EU and national actors to discuss those actions that groups of countries in both regions need to jointly undertake, though this may have come at the expense of closely involving non-EU members. Yet tensions and challenges remain, and these will also determine the potential role of spatial planning in these regions which remains strongly dependent on the support of nation-states and regions. The challenge of reconciling the ambitions of the strategies to address functional relations with the reality of the political commitment of actors that often remains focused on their administrative territories may not easily be resolved. Given the long time-scale of spatial developments and the need for continuing political support, further institutionalisation at the transnational level might be required to ensure that macro-regional strategies can offer an added-value for spatial planning in future. Prioritisation is another test for consensus-led processes, as will be the identification of spatial impacts of different sector policies and at different levels of scale in the macro-regions, which would benefit from spatial planning coordination.

So far, thus, the added-value of macro-regional strategies for spatial planning has overall been limited. It has been almost non-existent for land-based spatial planning, although there has been more enthusiasm and progress for maritime spatial planning for the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. There are hardly any maps available for the two strategies, neither to show an analysis of the current situation and trends or to map proposed actions (e.g. transport infrastructure investments), nor in the sense of policy proposals or seeking to provide a coordinated view on the spatial effects of all the actions and projects envisaged under the MRS's. The strategies, thus, are at present largely non-spatial, which seems to be a shortcoming given the evident spatial dimension of many of the proposed initiatives.

In the EUSBSR, the understanding of spatial planning seems to be increasingly that of maritime spatial planning alone, while the consideration of land-based spatial planning is overall weak and seems to be diminishing. Indeed, there is no evidence of added-value of the EUSBSR to the ongoing initiatives under VASAB. Also for the EUSDR, although more recent and therefore more difficult to

assess its progress, the spatial planning contribution in the EUSDR seems to be understood largely in terms of data sharing and soft coordination. Especially for land-based spatial planning initiatives it has been difficult to find relevant lead organizations that would be able to coordinate at transnational level. The slow progress on spatial planning in both strategies stands in contrast to their rhetoric that attaches great value to the coordinating powers of spatial planning, but it may suggest that there is not currently a clear and shared understanding in the two regions of what the role of transnational spatial planning could be, and in particular within the context of the macro-regional strategies.

Yet while at the moment the added-value is limited for spatial planning (possibly because so far most energy went into setting up the more thematic actions in the macro-regional strategies, where also better established policy communities are able to drive progress), it may be useful to consider whether there could not be a stronger added-value for spatial planning from the macro-regional strategies in future. After all, many proposed actions and projects have either explicit or at least indirect spatial impacts. The considerable energy that goes into setting up coordination mechanisms and multi-level governance arrangements for the two strategies suggests that there would be synergies in applying a spatial perspective to the actions pursued, and to prioritise the transnational spatial issues that would benefit from cooperation in the future. Before this may be achieved, a number of key questions need to be addressed, however. Besides a clear prioritisation (and political agreement) on transnational spatial issues, these refer to the understanding of spatial planning at this level of scale; the architecture of macro-regional strategies and the role of spatial planning within; and the question of leadership on transnational spatial planning (both land-based and maritime).

In the first instance, a discussion on the added-value of macro-regional cooperation for spatial planning is needed among the actors in the regions, which should result in an identification of the issues that require spatial coordination at the transnational level. Despite the work of VASAB in the region, it is not clear from the documents reviewed whether there is indeed a shared understanding of what transnational spatial planning in the BSR, and in the context of the EUSBSR in particular, should deal with. While the spatial impacts of EU sector policies seem to be widely recognized, and are indeed a key driver for many actions in the two macro-regional strategies, this does not seem to have led to clear action on how to better coordinate spatial planning activities of the involved countries.

In terms of the role of spatial planning within the MRS's, for the EUSBSR there is a cross-cutting action on spatial planning, but arguably this does not result in more attention to spatially-relevant coordination within the different priority areas than in the EUSDR, where spatial planning is considered under individual priorities. While placing spatial planning in a 'horizontal action' may have great appeal as it suggests a more cross-cutting approach, in practice it seems to increase the coordination burden and (in the case of the EUSBSR) seems to effectively marginalise spatial planning.

The question of leadership on spatial planning action is a challenge which will be difficult to address, as even intergovernmental bodies (such as VASAB) still rely on the support of the cooperating nation-states and require the backing of powerful sectoral ministries, while in many countries national spatial planning is not strongly developed. After identifying the key issues for transnational spatial planning in the regions (e.g. inter-regional transport and energy connections, large-scale agricultural and environmental issues – including those where pollution sources have distant effects; large-scale economic effects through trade corridors, R&D networks etc) and identifying the need for spatial coordination on these issues, it may be useful to identify strong lead actors (possibly from sectoral ministries) who can pursue such coordination in a more integrated way throughout the strategy. Other governance arrangements, e.g. a central coordination unit which can ensure dialogue with key actors on spatial impacts and across different priorities, may be worth considering (although this would imply a departure from the 'no new institutions' rule of EU macro-regional strategies).

For both existing strategies, it would be important to give a stronger focus to land-based spatial planning, alongside maritime and coastal zone management, in order to provide a more comprehensive

spatial development perspective for the entire region. After all, many land-based activities also have an impact on the marine or fluvial environments (e.g. run-offs from agricultural land uses or transport links), and spatial planning activities on the territories of the countries around the Baltic Sea and along the Danube should thus also be coordinated and the maritime and land-based dimensions of spatial planning be reconciled. While the added-value of a maritime spatial planning approach for the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea seems to be more widely accepted, and progress may be facilitated by the fact that this is a new policy area and therefore not yet firmly institutionalized in most countries, there would also be value in coordinating the spatial impacts of sector policies across different levels of governance and across administrative borders on land. Mapping the proposals under the different priorities may be a first start to better understand the spatial implications of all activities and projects proposed under the macro-regional strategies, and to identify the areas that would require or benefit from better spatial coordination.

For new EU macro-regional strategies, it should be recommended that they are selective in their choice of joint actions at the macro-regional scale, and that they prioritise those that clearly require transnational cooperation and are specific to the particular region. Identifying key actors who would be able to ensure coordination from a spatial planning perspective, and to preferably do so for the maritime and land-based spatial planning aspects in an integrated way, will be important. It would be useful to 'build in' spatial planning as a central consideration in future strategies from the beginning, as retrofitting such an important coordination task to ongoing actions and projects seems to be a major challenge. For future macro-regional strategies it could even be considered to start arranging macro-regional strategies from a spatial planning perspective, by identifying the large-scale spatial development trends and transnational spatial impacts of sector policies, and agreeing on joint action on this basis. This would ensure a stronger focus and clearer prioritization of the actions and projects, and ensure that the transnational spatial dimension is the key driving force.

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Table 1: Priority areas (PA's) and Horizontal Actions (HA's) of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Priority areas	Coordinator(s)	Number of actions	Number of flagship projects (incl. Potentials)
PA Agri – Reinforcing sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Finland / Lithuania / Sweden	7	11
PA Bio – Preserving natural zones and biodiversity, including fisheries	Germany	2	4
PA Crime – Fighting cross-border crime	Finland / Lithuania	2	4
PA Culture – Developing and promoting the common culture and cultural identity	Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) / Poland	5	13
PA Education – Developing innovative education and youth	Hamburg (Germany) / Norden Association (in Sweden)	7	11
PA Energy – Improving the access to, and the efficiency and security of the energy markets	Denmark / Latvia	2	9
PA Hazards – Reducing the use and impact of hazardous substances	Sweden	4	6
PA Health – Improving and promoting people's health, including its social aspects	Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being	3	6
PA Innovation – Exploiting the full potential of the region in research and innovation	Sweden / Poland	1	6
PA Internal Market – Removing hindrances to the internal market	Estonia	3	4
PA Nutri – Reducing nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels	Finland / Poland	6	7
PA Safe – To become a leading region in maritime safety and security	Denmark / Finland	7	8
PA Secure – Protection from emergencies and accidents on land	Sweden / the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat	3	6
PA Ship – Becoming a model region for clean shipping	Denmark	1	6
PA SME – Promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the growth of SMEs	Denmark	4	9
PA Tourism – Reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	2	5

	(Germany)		
PA Transport – Improving internal and external transport links	Lithuania / Sweden	4	5
Horizontal Actions			
HA Involve – Strengthening multi-level governance including involving civil society, business and academia	Region Västerbotten and Kalmar / the Baltic Sea NGO Network	8	5
HA Neighbours – To increase the co-operation with neighbouring countries to tackle joint challenges in the Baltic Sea Region	City of Turku (Finland) / the Council of Baltic Sea States Secretariat	8	14
HA Promo – Boosting joint promotion and regional identity building actions	Baltic Metropolises Network / Baltic Development Forum	2	2
HA Spatial Planning – Encouraging the use of Maritime and Land-based Spatial Planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation	VASAB / HELCOM	(not further specified)	1
HA Sustainable development and bio-economy	Council of Baltic Sea States Secretariat for sustainable development / Nordic Council of Ministers for bio-economy	3 for sustainable development, none further specified for bio-economy	10 for sustainable development, 3 for bio-economy

Source: based on CEC 2013

Table 2: Pillars and priority areas of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Pillar/priority area	Coordinating country/-ies	Number of actions	Number of projects
<i>Pillar A: Connecting the Danube Region</i>			
1. To improve mobility and multimodality	Inland waterways transport: Austria, Romania	10	9
	Rail, road and air transport: Slovenia, Serbia, (Interest: Ukraine)	7	6
2. To encourage more sustainable energy	Hungary, Czech Republic	17	10
3. To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts	Bulgaria, Romania	14	20
Pillar B: Protecting the environment in the Danube Region			
4. To restore and maintain the quality of waters	Hungary, Slovakia	14	7
5. To manage environmental risks	Hungary, Romania	8	11
6. To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils	Germany (Bavaria), Croatia	16	13
Pillar C: Building prosperity in the Danube Region			
7. To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies	Slovakia, Serbia	8	12
8. To support the competitiveness of enterprises, including cluster development	Germany (Baden-Württemberg), Croatia	7	10
9. To invest in people and skills	Austria, Moldova	8	7
Pillar D: Strengthening the Danube Region			
10. To step up institutional capacity and cooperation	Austria (Vienna), Slovenia	9	8
11. To work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime	Germany, Bulgaria	11	10

Source: Dühr 2011b, based on CEC 2010d