

Multi-level governance approach in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR): the analysis of the contribution of national stakeholders

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Dedication

For my family, especially for my parents, thank you for all the support you provided me!

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ABSTRACT

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE APPROACH IN THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IOANIAN REGION (EUSAIR): THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Zeljka Jancic

KEYWORDS: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region; EUSAIR; Macro-regional strategies; national stakeholders; multi-level governance approach

The purpose of the thesis is to find out the contribution of national stakeholders in the decision-making process of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Alongside other macro-regional strategies, EUSAIR is the recent strategy of the European Union which is characterized by multi-level governance, considering that the decision-making process involves different stakeholders from different level and sector.

The literature argues that the supranational institutions are taking a central part in the decision-making of EUSAIR, due to funding resources, however, the literature also confirms that the role of the national stakeholders is considered influential as well.

Even though the macro-regional cooperation is characterized by multi-level governance, which is involving different level actors in the process, the thesis debates that the national stakeholders are taking the essential part in the decision-making of EUSAIR through bargaining among national governments and further including more stakeholders from the NGOs and local society into taking an active role in the EUSAIR decision-making.

RESUMO

ABORDAGEM DA GOVERNANÇA MULTINÍVEL NA ESTRATÉGIA DA UE PARA A REGIÃO ADRIÁTICA E JÔNICA (EUSAIR): A ANÁLISE DA CONTRIBUIÇÃO DOS NACIONAIS ATORES

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estratégia da UE para a região do Adriático e Jónico; EUSAIR; Estratégias macrorregionais; atores nacionais; abordagem de governança multinível

O objetivo da dissertação é descobrir a contribuição das atores nacionais no processo de tomada de decisão da Estratégia da UE para a Região Adriática e Jônica (EUSAIR).

Juntamente com outras estratégias macrorregionais, a EUSAIR é a estratégia recente da União Europeia, caracterizada pela governança em vários níveis, considerando que o processo de tomada de decisão envolve diferentes partes interessadas de diferentes níveis e setores.

A literatura argumenta que as instituições supranacionais estão tendo um papel central na tomada de decisão da EUSAIR, devido ao financiamento de recursos, no entanto, a literatura também confirma que o papel das atores nacionais também é considerado influente.

Embora a cooperação macrorregional seja caracterizada por governança multinível, que envolve diferentes atores de nível no processo, a dissertação debate que as atores nacionais estão assumindo o papel essencial na tomada de decisões da EUSAIR por meio de negociações entre governos nacionais e incluindo ainda mais atores das ONGs e da sociedade local na participação ativa no processo de tomada de decisão da EUSAIR.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI-NURECC	The Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chambers of Commerce and Cities
BSR Innonet	Baltic Sea Region Innovation Network
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
EC	European Commission
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
EUSALP	EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
EUSBR	EU Strategy for the Baltic sea Region
EUSDR	EU Strategy for the Danube Region
HAL	Horizontal Actions Leader
INTERREG	Interregional cooperation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
LI	Liberal Intergovernmentalism
MAP	Mediterranean Action Programme
MLG	Multi-level Governance
MRS	Macro-regional strategy
MS	Member States

NCP	National Contact Points
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PAC	Priority Area Coordinators
PAFG	Priority Area Focal Group
PAP/RAC	Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre
R&D	Research and Development
SEA	Single European Act
SRG	Subregional groupings
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
UniAdrion	Association of Universities of the Adriatic-Ionian area
WBIF	Western Balkan Investment Framework

Introduction

Macro-regional cooperation is an example of multi-level governance, which is a process of decision-making that is characterized by the active involvement of different stakeholders at different levels.

This signifies that the involved stakeholders are not only the ones from governmental sector, but from the non-governmental sector as well, such as representatives of local authorities, NGOs, but also the civil society.

The objective of the macro-regional cooperation is to address the common challenges presented in the geographical region defined by the macro-regional strategy. It also aims to promote the growth of the region by strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion.

In the thesis, the research problem that needs to be answered is to find out the contribution of national stakeholders in the process of EUSAIR decision-making.

Interpreting the literature review of the macro-regional cooperation, more focus is led towards the involvement of supranational institutions, rather than the national stakeholders.

Aside from that, the literature regards the macro-regional cooperation as an exceptional model characterized by the involvement of different level actors efficiently achieving success in the Region.

It is important to mention that macro-regional cooperation is a more recent development of the European Union, therefore, there are gaps in research regarding the involvement of national stakeholders.

Hence, I aspire to lead research towards investigating the contribution of national stakeholders in the decision-making of the EUSAIR. The purpose of my research is to bring the new and significant understanding of contribution and motivation by national stakeholders through their participation in EUSAIR.

The structure of the thesis is organized in the following way:

In the first part of the thesis, I presented the theoretical framework, which is built of the theories of integration. Since this is a thesis in European studies, it was necessary to present the theories of integration, and use them as a baseline to answer the RQ. In this part, it was presented the theory of Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Multi-level governance model, and their linkage to the internal changes of the European Union occurring with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.

Considering the new governance model, the term has been explained and its implications in comparison to the term of government. Linking to this, in the second part of the thesis, the term of stakeholders and policy networks has been explained.

In part three of the thesis, it was necessary to introduce the historical background of the macro-regional strategies and their connection to the previous existence of sub regionalism in Europe. The chapter ended with the focus on the involvement of stakeholders in macro-regional strategies.

In the next part four of the thesis, the focus shifted towards explaining the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. Starting with the historical background, common characteristics to explaining in details the thematic steering groups of EUSAIR, but also focusing on the different stakeholders included in the process.

In the next parts V and VI of the thesis, the focus was on connecting the literature review to the research problem and using the obtained results from the questionnaire and participant observation as complementary arguments to support the statements.

Throughout the whole thesis, the aim was to bring meaningful data which will contribute to the research of involvement of national stakeholders in the macro-regional strategies, and I am expecting that this research contributes to an overall better understanding of the macro-regional cooperation.

Methodology

To answer the main research problem “*What is the contribution of national stakeholders in EUSAIR decision-making?*”, it was used the qualitative research methods.

The qualitative research methods consisted of literature review, while questionnaire and participant observation were additional techniques.

The questionnaire was made on an online platform. The list of participants was found on the official website of EUSAIR, but also the official website of other organizations related to EUSAIR, and through research papers of academia specializing in EUSAIR issues. Considering the four thematic steering groups of EUSAIR, stakeholders chosen for the survey are the ones who specialize in different areas of EUSAIR, such as the representatives of the European Commission DGs associated with EUSAIR, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Tourism and Ministries of Regional Development of countries involved in the strategy; also EUSAIR National Coordinators and Facility Point Partners.

The questionnaire consisted of six closed-ended 7 questions, with multiple choice; and two open-ended questions asking participants for their comments. It is important to mention that the questionnaire was anonymous to complete. The questionnaire was designed on an online platform, and the web link was sent to participants by University email in the middle of July. The total number of contacted participants was 116. Considering the questionnaire was anonymous to complete, the participants were only contacted once by email, and there were no reminders to be sent.

The other additional techniques used for the research was the direct observation, which was used at the 4th Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), held on May 2019 in Montenegro. Every year, in a different country that is participating in EUSAIR, the Forum is held to strengthen the cooperation among various stakeholders by focusing on common issues of the Region. Alongside EUSAIR, at the same venue, it was held the 2nd Annual Conference of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities, and Universities.

Using the technique of direct observation, I gathered significant opinions of major actors in the EUSAIR implementation, such as representatives of the European Commission, but also the Ministries of countries participating in the strategy, among other stakeholders.

Part I: Theoretical framework

From state-centric to multi-level governance model

In this part I of the thesis, I will start with the literature review of the theories of integration appropriate for the research problem of the thesis. With regards to the theories of integration, there are two different models of the European Union. The two models presented by Hooghe and Marks (2001) were: *state-centric governance* and *multi-level governance*.

On the one hand, *state-centric governance* presents “the national governments as ultimate decision makers, devolving limited authority to supranational institutions to achieve specific policy goals, which means that the decision making in the EU is determined by bargaining among national governments” (Hooghe, Marks, 2001: 2).

Further on, in their book, Hooghe and Marks (2001) make the connection between the state-centric model to certain authors who are considered intergovernmentalists, however it is important to mention that the state-centric governance is putting the focus on the state itself.

"On the one hand, Intergovernmentalists emphasized the centrality of states in the process, developing the concept of governments as gatekeepers able to resist unwanted consequences of integration; on the other hand, neofunctionalists claimed that governments were increasingly caught up in a web of interdependence that provided a role for supranational actors and organized interests in shaping integration; therefore the development of multi-level governance was part of a new thinking about the EU as a political system, rather than seeking to explain the process of integration" (Bache, Flinders, 2004: 2).

State-centric model and the Liberal intergovernmentalism

The theory of the liberal intergovernmentalism started developing from the period of 1960s, and according to Moravscik and Schimmelfenning (2009) “the liberal intergovernmentalism is a significant theory, often acting as a baseline theory for comparing it to other theories of integration.”

As this theory is serving as baseline theory to compare it to other theories, it is important to present it shortly in this chapter.

On the one hand, Liberal intergovernmentalism draws on insights from traditional schools in European integration studies that treat the EU (or regional integration) as a unique or sui generis activity; while on the other hand, Liberal intergovernmentalism is a grand theory that seeks to explain the broad evolution of regional integration.

“Liberal intergovernmentalism is based on two basic assumptions: the first one being that the states are the critical actors that achieve their goals through intergovernmental negotiation and bargaining, rather than through a centralized authority making and enforcing political decisions” (Moravscik, Schimmelfennig, 2009: 68).

“The second assumption of the Liberal intergovernmentalism is the view that states are rational, therefore the agreement to cooperate, or to establish international institutions is explained as a collective outcome of interdependent (strategic) rational state choices and intergovernmental negotiations” (Moravscik, Schimmelfenning, 2009: 68).

Hence, the main focus of the Liberal intergovernmentalism is on the state as being the main actor in the European integration process. Further, those actors are also responsible for dictating the pace of the integration.

The reference to the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism requires to mention the author Andrew Moravscik. Namely, in his book *“The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht”* (1998), the author described the evolution of the EU from 1955 to 1992 (From Messina to Maastricht).

Referencing to the title of the book, Andrew Moravcsik is linking the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism to the Pre-Maastricht period of the European integration.

In the Pre-Maastricht period, more precisely during mid to late 1980s when the agreement of the Single European Act (SEA) came into force in 1987, Bache and Flinders (2004) consider that “it accelerated deepening of the integration process in the period.”

“The SEA was ostensibly important in formalizing governments’ collective commitment to completing the internal market, which had been the aspiration of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the agreement to the increased use of qualified majority voting in place of unanimity across a number of policy areas was the starting point for the treatment of the EU as something with characteristics more reflective of domestic political systems than international organizations, therefore, theorizing the EU grew more concerned with issues of EU governance than with understanding it as an example of international cooperation" (Bache, Flinders, 2004: 2-3).

At the same time, the period of 1980s, it was also followed by the notion of the expansion of the EC, with the membership of Portugal, Spain and Greece.

“In order to complete the single market, and to assimilate Greece, Portugal and Spain better into the Community, the Commission together with the allies in the European Parliament won support from governments for a major reform of the structural policy in 1988” (Bache, Flinders, 2004: 3).

Bache and Flinders (2004) further explain that “the governments agreed to assist the development of disadvantaged regions by double allocations of structural funding which was followed by the Commission’s proposal that these funds be administered through partnerships within member states (representatives of national, regional, local) and supranational actors - the Commission.”

The signing of the Maastricht Treaty (officially known as the Treaty on European Union) which occurred in 1992 have brought major changes, not only in the European integration process, but in whole EC at the time.

Summarizing this part with the focus on different authors, during the Pre-Maastricht period, the state-centric was the main model of the EU. It implies that the state was responsible for all decision-making but at the same time responsible for the further process of European integration.

Multi-level governance model

In the previous chapter, it could be seen how during the Pre-Maastricht period, the focus of the EU was on the state-centric model, rather than multi-level governance model. Therefore, in this part, I will present the changes that occurred in the Post-Maastricht period.

"Throughout the post-Maastricht period, the EU has completed the transition from single market to monetary union and further expanded from 15 to 28 members, but also increased its involvement in socioeconomic governance and justice and home affairs" (Bickerton et. al.,2015).

"The EU now has a common foreign and security policy, its foreign policy representative and European diplomatic service, therefore from social policy to the environment, virtually all aspects of government policy in Europe today are shaped by the EU in some way" (Bickerton et.al.,2015).

"In the post-Maastricht period, both deliberation and consensus-seeking started to gain the focus as the main norms in the relations between the national actors, implying that integration since Maastricht has been pursued through the policy coordination between the Member States, which occurred at all levels, from heads of state or government in the European Council down to national experts in comitology committees" (Bickerton et. al., 2015).

Following all these changes, but also the development of the EU structural policy, the term of multi-level governance was first used by Gary Marks in 1992.

Gary Marks' definition of the multi-level governance is the following: "system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers - supranational, national, regional, and local" (Marks, 1993: 392).

Linking this to the beginning of the chapter, in which I introduced two authors, who presented the two models of the European Union, with regards to the first model – the state-centric governance has already been explained.

The second model, which is the multi-level governance is acknowledging the state as an important factor in policymaking, but at the same, this model acknowledges the role of the supranational institutions.

The two authors, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks discovered the three principles to describe the *multi-level governance model*.

The three main principles include: "First, decision-making competencies are shared by actors at different levels, rather than monopolized by national governments" (Hooghe, Marks, 2001).

"Supranational institutions - the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Court - have independent influence in policy-making that cannot be derived from their role as agents of national executives; the national governments do play an important role but, one must analyze the independent role of European-level actors to explain European policy-making" (Hooghe, Marks, 2001: 3).

Secondly, "collective decision making among states involves a significant loss of control for individual national governments" (Hooghe, Marks, 2001: 3).

Last, the third principle by these authors: "National arenas remain important for the formation of national government preferences, the subnational actors operate in both national and supranational arenas; national governments are an integral and powerful part of the EU, but they no longer provide the sole interface between supranational and subnational arenas, and they share control over many activities that take place in their respective territories" (Hooghe, Marks, 2001: 4).

Bache and Flinders (2004: 3) argue that "the multi-level governance concept contains both vertical and horizontal dimensions."

"Multi-level refers to the increased interdependence of governments operating at different territorial levels, while governance signals the growing interdependence between governments and nongovernmental actors at various territorial levels" (Bache, Flinders, 2004:3).

"Although the multi-level governance could not be a theory of integration, beside the fact of Marks's conception of sharing multi-level governance with neofunctionalism's view that supranational actors and interest groups were significant in shaping EC decisions" (Bache, Flinders, 2004).

Gary Marks (1993) considers that "the subnational actors were increasingly influential in decision making, so the EC decision-making could be described as multi-level, whereas previously only two territorial levels—national and supranational—had been deemed worthy of serious analysis in the debate between neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists."

It can be concluded that the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht brought major changes to the European integration process, principally the power of the state shifts to various national and supranational actors, who share the power in the decision making process in multi-level governance model.

The transition from *government* to *governance*

Simultaneously with the multi-level governance model in the EU, there is also a new term receiving more attention from the scholars of Political Science. The new term that I am talking about is the definition of governance.

Comparing it to the term government, which can be defined as: "the activity or process of governing, a condition of the ordered rule, meaning the people charged with the duty of governing or a method or system by which particular society is governed" (Finer, 1970: 3-4).

On the other hand, governance signifies “a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing, also it can be a changed condition of the ordered rule” (Rhodes, 1996: 652-653).

Rosenau (1992: 4) strongly argues that "governance is not synonymous with government, while both refer to goal-oriented activities and systems of rule, the government suggests activities that are backed by formal authority, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed formalities."

"Governance involves governmental institutions, but it also involves informal, non-governmental citizens and organizations" (Rosenau, 1992: 4).

Rosenau (1992) further argues whether "there is an appropriate way to formulate the concept of governance as it operates in world politics, and can governance be effective in the absence of central authority and to what extent is the stability of a global order dependent on the presence of governance?"

Is it even possible to have governance without government? In order to answer the question, Rosenau (1992) argues that "while governance can be seen as a system of rule that works only if it is accepted by the majority, whereas governments can function even in the face of widespread opposition to their policies, therefore it is possible to have the governance without government" (Rosenau, 1992).

It is essential to stress on the fact that "governance without government does not require the exclusion of national or subnational governments from the analysis, it does necessitate inquiry that presumes the absence of some overarching governmental authority at the international level" (Rosenau, 1992: 7).

In this part of the theoretical framework, it could be seen the internal changes in the European Union with the transition from government to governance, but also the differences among theories of integration to explain those internal changes in the EU. Further on, as multi-level governance model involves various stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental sector, in the next Part II, the focus will be on literature review of the stakeholders' term, its usage in Political Science and the linkage to the policy networks.

Part II: The stakeholders and policy networks

Origin of the term stakeholders and stakeholders' position in multi-level governance

In this chapter, I will introduce the term stakeholders, as the main research problem is related to the term, the presented literature review will contribute to answering the research problem of the thesis.

The origin of the term of stakeholders leads to Freeman's definition of the stakeholders.

"Freeman didn't invent the term or concept of stakeholders, but he developed his view of the stakeholder concept from the perspective of the organization, and his contribution was to express the term stakeholder comprehensively, aiming for his arguments to be used to revise the entire view of the corporation" (Friedman, Miles, 2006: 25).

Considering the concept of stakeholders is developed from the perspective of the organization, Freeman's objective was to help organizations passing through difficulties to revise the entire view of the corporate sector based on his stakeholders' arguments.

In the past view years, the concept of stakeholders has boomed a lot and academics contributed various research papers regarding the topic.

"The term of stakeholders is widely used not only in the business and management fields but also in social sciences - historians, political scientists, economists, and political philosophers have been involved with the term, as well" (Freeman et. al., 2010: 41).

The traditional definition of a stakeholder states that: "a stakeholder in an organization is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984).

"The most common groups of stakeholders, are considered to be shareholders, customers, suppliers and distributors, employees and local communities" (Friedman, Miles, 2006: 13).

Additionally, (Friedman, Miles, 2006: 13-14) consider that "many types of individuals and groups to be considered as stakeholders":

- Stakeholder representatives such as trade unions or trade associations of suppliers or distributors
- NGOs or 'activists' that have been considered individually or as stakeholder representatives
- Competitors
- Government(s), regulators, and other policymakers
- Financiers other than stockholders (creditors, bondholders, debt providers)
- The media
- The public in general
- Non-human aspects of the Earth, the natural environment
- Business partners
- Academics
- Future generations
- Past generations (the founders of organizations)

Friedman and Miles (2006) argue "it is crucial to keep in mind that the number of categories of stakeholder groups identified depends on how the groups have been defined, but also on the subcategories of employees which may have different interests, identities, claims, and other characteristics."

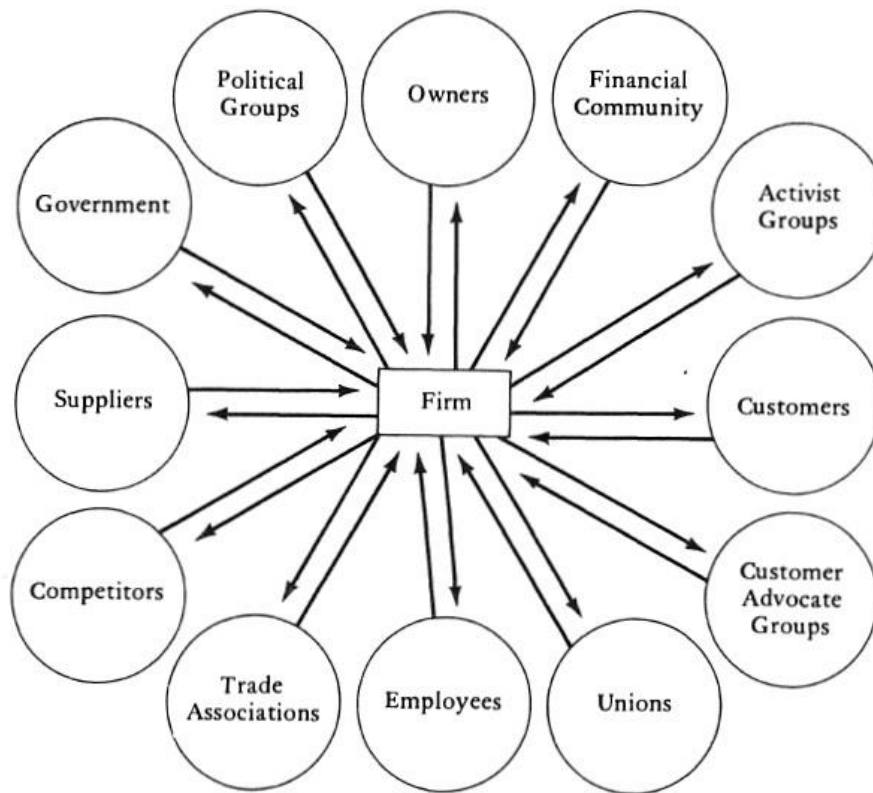


Figure 1: Stakeholder Map of a Very Large Organization. *Source: Freeman (1984)*

"The figure 1 above, presents how looks a stakeholder map around one major strategic issue for one very large organization, but it can also be used as a starting point for almost any issue of importance to the company, meaning that many large organizations have a stakeholder map and accompanying stakeholder chart is relatively similar to the above example, even though there may be variations among industries and companies at the specific stakeholder level" (Freeman, 1984: 54-55).

Shifting the focus of the term stakeholder to the social science field, precisely the political science field, Matsuura and Shiroyama (2018:17) argue that "the concept of stakeholders has been widely applied to a variety of policy-making efforts, and in particular, the stakeholder concept has been adopted in the shift from the government to the governance."

Matsuura and Shiroyama (2018) further argue that "in this new governance - focused system, stakeholders, instead of the government, undertake the public sector functions, meaning that stakeholders are the individuals and organizations that actively participate in policy-making processes and take appropriate responsibilities of implementing the policies."

Moreover, Matsuura and Shiroyama (2018) consider that "under the systems of governance, policies and strategies can be conceptualized as a kind of voluntary agreements among stakeholders, therefore, any stakeholder agreement must be accompanied by well-articulated mechanisms that prevent free riders from the framework."

It's necessary for the stakeholders to reach an agreement, as Matsuura and Shiroyama (2018) present two strong points: "firstly, the mutual dependence between stakeholders is important in the global economy, meaning that if they don't collaborate with other stakeholders it presents a huge risk, secondly, stakeholder collaboration can also be conceptualized as an opportunity for value creation – giving the example of involvement of NGOs."

"The problem can present that the governance concept is grounded primarily on voluntary agreements between stakeholders, which can be identified at any level" (Matsuura, Shiroyama, 2018: 23).

"International organizations and national representatives are key players in the governance at the global level - individual consumers, gas station operators, and even manual laborers are the key stakeholders at the local level, therefore at each of these levels, there have to be certain agreements among these stakeholders for these governance systems to sustain" (Matsuura, Shiroyama, 2018: 23).

Apart from the term stakeholders, there is a term multi-stakeholderism, which is also used in all disciplines.

Hemmati (2002) explains that "the term multi-stakeholderism describes processes aiming to bring together all major stakeholders in a new form of communication, but also the decision-making regarding the particular issue."

"These processes are based on recognition of the importance of achieving equity and accountability in communication between stakeholders, involving an equitable representation of stakeholder groups, and aiming to develop partnerships and to further strengthened the networks among stakeholders involved" (Hemmati, 2002).

Gleckman (2018) states that "the evolution of multistakeholder governance has occurred in parallel to the transformation of professional terminology in international affairs toward global governance."

Further on, Gleckman (2018) argues that "after 400 years of nation-state governance and over seventy-five years of contemporary multilateralism, the governance evolution toward multi-stakeholderism is occurring without any clarity about its working democratic standards or which global governance principles should guide decision-makers."

Policy networks in Multi-level governance

In relation to the term multi-stakeholderism, the term policy network is linked. The term policy network, preferred by academia of Political Science, has been applied to the EU by several authors.

The policy network can be described as "clusters of actors representing multiple organizations that interact with one another and share information and resources" (Jonsson et al., 1998: 326).

As Peterson (2009:105) argues, "the term network is frequently used to describe clusters of different kinds of actors who are linked together in political, social, or economic life, therefore the analysts of modern governance frequently seek to explain policy outcomes by investigating how networks, which facilitate bargaining between stakeholders over policy detail, are structured in a particular sector."

The Rhodes model of policy networks has been the most widely used in the literature. Therefore, this model assumes that there are three key variables which determine the type of policy networks that exists in a specific sector:

"Firstly, the relative stability of the network's membership - the question is if the same actors tend to dominate decision-making over time or is membership fluid and dependent on the specific policy issue under discussion?" (Peterson, 2009: 108-109).

"Secondly, the network's relatively insularity - is it a cabal which excludes outsiders or is it highly permeable by a variety of actors with different objectives?" (Peterson, 2009: 108-109).

"Thirdly, the strength of resource dependencies - the question is if the network members depend heavily on each other for valued resources such as money, expertise, and legitimacy or are most actors self-sufficient and relatively independent of one another?" (Peterson, 2009: 108-109).

"In multi-level governance, negotiation processes are central to the governance in the EU, but also the various stages of the EU negotiations involve different sets of actors that move between different levels"(Jonsson et al., 1998: 321-322).

"The main contribution of EU policy network analysis is theorizing about European integration and its emphasis on the Union's inescapable diversity and complexity - involving different kinds of actors who claim to be policy stakeholders which incorporates a rich variety of national systems of interest representation" (Peterson, 2009: 120).

In this part II of the thesis, the reader can see the linkage of the policy networks term to stakeholders, also to the multi-stakeholderism term, which is present in modern EU governance. In the next two parts of the thesis, the literature review will focus on the historical background of the macro-regional strategies and then the focus shifts to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Part III: The path to the macro-regional strategies

From sub regionalism to macro-regionalism

In part III of the thesis, I will introduce how it led to forming the EU macro-regional strategies. Looking at the historical background of macro-regional strategies, their historical background is linked to sub-regional groupings in Europe.

Dangerfield (2016) argues that “every state currently included in one or more of the three EU macro-regions presently in action – the Adriatic and Ionian, the Baltic Sea, the Danube Region or the Alpine Region – was and remains a partner in one or more SRGs (subregional groupings).”

Further on, Dangerfield (2016) debates that “while SRGs also occupied, in whole or in part, the same territorial spaces, the macro-regional strategies have been formed in territorial spaces based on a significant geographic or physical characteristic, for example, the Danube Basin and Baltic Sea.”

“On the other hand, the macro-regional strategies are linked to aspects of the European integration agenda such as the goal of territorial cohesion, but also in terms of the cooperation agenda’s substance and scope and terms of the resources, for example, the EU structural funds” (Dangerfield, 2016).

Further comparing SRGs to macro-regional strategies, “macro-regional strategies are also distinctly transnational in character, whereas SRGs are primarily intergovernmental arrangements, although non-state actors do deliver some of their agendas” (Dangerfield, 2016).

A numerous SRGs came onto the European scene after the fall of communism, as Dangerfield (2016) argue “in the mid-1990s, SRGs being developed along the old East-West dividing line.”

Below is the table of the main SRGs that were operating in and around the EU at the time of the launch of the macro-regional strategies. It can be seen that numerous states belong to two subregions and several (including Albania, Croatia, Moldova, among others), also while some

incorporate both EU member and non-EU member states, others aim to incorporate future EU members.

Name and founding year	Members 2014	Website
Adriatic–Ionian Initiative, 2000	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia	http://www.aii-ps.org/
Baltic Cooperation, 1992	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	http://baltasam.org/en/
Barents Euro-Arctic Council, 1993	Denmark, EU, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden	http://www.beac.st/in-English/Barents-Euro-Arctic-Council
Benelux Economic Union, 1944	Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands	http://www.benelux.int/
Black Sea Economic Cooperation, 1992	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine	http://www.bsecorganization.org/Pages/homepage.aspx
Central European Initiative, 1989	Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine	http://www.cei.int/
Central European Free Trade Agreement, 1993	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia	http://www.cefta.int/
Council of the Baltic Sea States, 1992	Denmark, Estonia, EU, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden	http://www.cbss.org/
Nordic Council of Ministers, 1952	Denmark, Finland, Iceland (plus the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland), Norway, Sweden	http://www.norden.org/en
GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, 1997	Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine	http://www.guamorganization.org/en/node

Regional Cooperation Council 2008	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey (and various other partners including the EU)	http://www.rcc.int/
South-East European Cooperation Initiative, 1996	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey	http://www.secinet.org
South-East European Cooperation Process, 1996	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey	http://rspcsee.org/en/pages/read/about-seecp
Visegrad Group, 1991	Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia	http://www.visegradgroup.eu/

Table 2: Sub-regional groupings in Europe. *Source: Dangerfield, 2016*

In the case of the Western Balkans, Dangerfield (2016) agrees that "with the diversity of 50 different organizations, initiatives, and networks, it can be agreed that in that region exists so-called "open regionalism" which consists of multi-actor and multi-scalar processes."

Europe of macro-regions: background and influences

In the previous chapter, it was presented the sub-regional groupings in Europe, which is linked to the formation of macro-regions in Europe. In this chapter, I will present how it led to forming specific regions in Europe, and what the EU internal changes also affected this process to make Europe of regions.

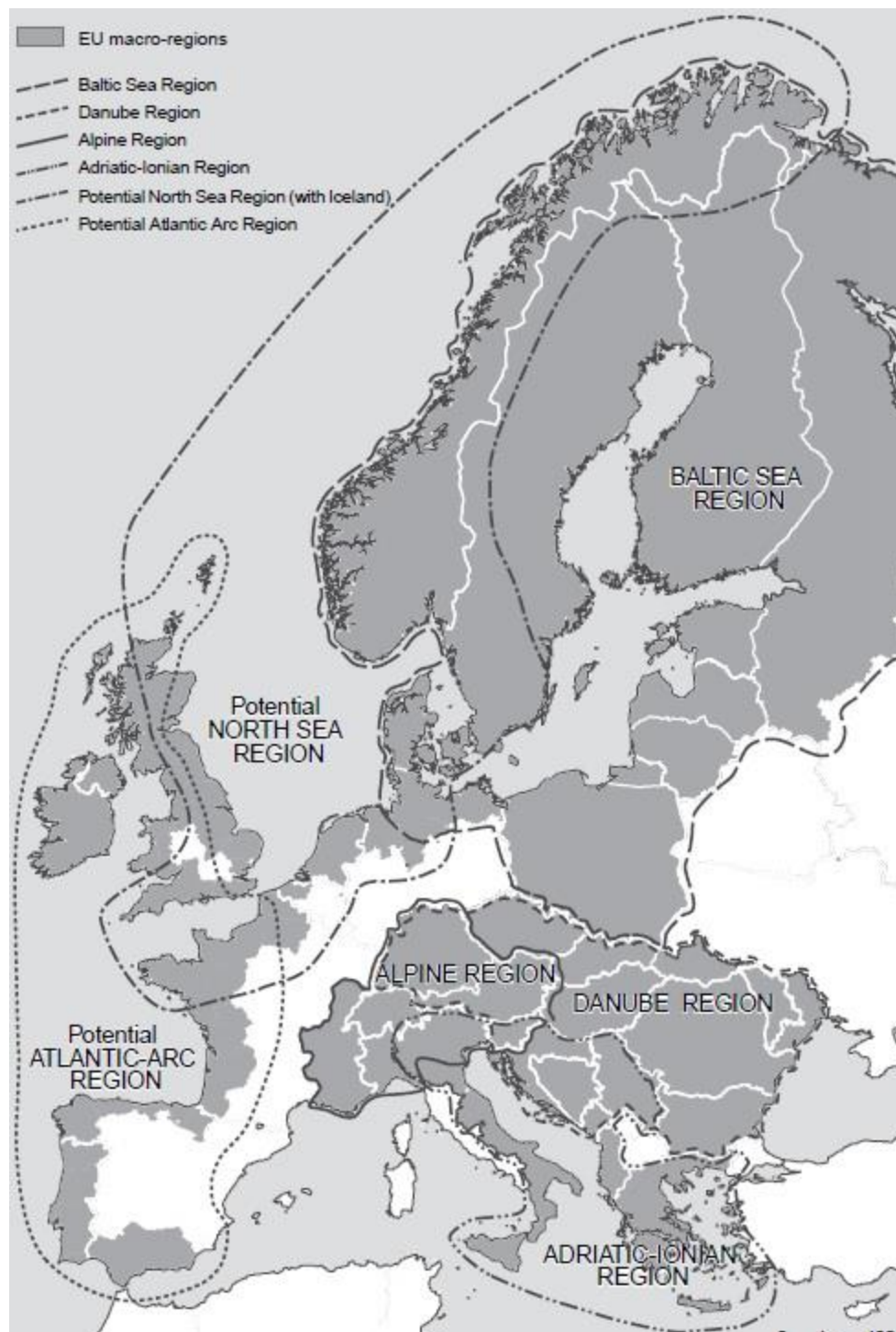


Figure 2: Overview of macro-regions. Source: EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries; Cartography: F. Sielker, University of Erlangen, 2015

“Firstly, the emergence of macro-regions in their current form has been prompted by several exogenous factors primarily beginning at the EU level, and at the level of the macro-regions themselves” (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 8).

“Secondly, severe budgetary constraints have fundamentally limited the assistance that the EU is willing to provide to macro-regions, while these constraints have primarily emerged from the ongoing economic and financial crisis afflicting the EU and its member states, at the same time, the crisis encourages greater efficiency in the use of resources through cross-policy coordination” (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 9).

“Thirdly, the EU enlargement in combination with a growing heterogeneity of the EU, as well as the increasing economic (inter)dependencies among the territories within any given macro-region, has further supported the emergence of macro-regional approaches which encompass old and new member states as well as non-EU countries, including candidate countries” (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 9).

“Fourthly, the EU macro-regional strategies provide a framework for pursuing strategic narratives of the EU, such as Europe 2020, but also testing a new governance architecture within the context of a functionally defined territorial scale below the EU level” (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 9).

In 2007, before the concept of the EU macro-regions has been introduced, the European Commission agreed on the implementation of The Territorial Agenda of the European Union: Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions.

As described in the Agenda, “Territorial Cohesion can only be achieved through an intensive and continuous dialogue between all stakeholders of territorial development; this process of cooperation is what we call territorial governance” (European Union, 2007: 2).

“The private sector, local and regional authorities, non-governmental organizations and different sectors need to act together to form higher use of crucial investments in European regions and contribute to confronting climate change” (European Union, 2007: 2).

At the end of the same year, the entrance into force of the Treaty of Lisbon brought more focus and attention to territorial cohesion.

The following year 2008, with the entrance in the force of the Green Paper on territorial cohesion, more focus has started to go in direction to regional cooperation.

European Commission (2008) reports that "many of the problems faced by territories cut across sectors and effective solutions require an integrated approach and cooperation between the various authorities and stakeholders involved."

In the Green Paper, the European Commission doesn't mention the macro-regions, only briefly touching upon the Baltic Sea region – as the first EU macro-region to be covered by the EU strategy.

Relating to the shaping of macro-regions, Gänzle and Kern (2016) presented several factors.

"Firstly, the emergence of actual macro-regions has been conditioned by the characteristics of these regions, particularly in the case of regional sea areas, river systems and mountain areas, which constitute common pool resources and so appeal to collective action in order to effectively govern a common pool resource" (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 9).

"Secondly, pre-existing common historical and cultural heritages of territories included within macro-regions" (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 9).

"Lastly, the strong, well-established and active subnational authorities, municipalities and/or civil society organizations take action at the macro regional scale in a bottom-up manner in a way that can encompass the entire macro-region" (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 9).

Gänzle and Kern (2016: 5) argue that "the regional building blocks aim to foster a genuinely transnational perspective, to draw functional cooperation and territorial cohesion closer together, but also to encourage collective action between public and private actors across all levels of EU governance in areas such as transportation, infrastructure, economic development, public health, and environmental policy."

"Macro-regionalization is a much more comprehensive approach across policy sectors, and as an EU-wide process, it can be conceived as a de facto prototype of territorial differentiation in European integration - however due to the composition and number of countries involved, macro-regional strategies differ quite significantly from each other" (Gänzle and Kern, 2016: 6).

Importantly, "to coordinate policy in large areas such as the Baltic Sea region needs to be promoted globally competitive and sustainable cities, but also to improve access to education, health care and energy in regions" (European Union, 2008: 3).

European Commission (2009) states that "while the Baltic Sea Region can present an extremely heterogeneous space in economic, environmental and cultural terms, nevertheless the countries involved share several common resources and demonstrate considerable interdependence."

In 2008, the Commission recognized the need to form specific strategies for those regions in Europe.

The first EU strategy for the macro-region was the EU strategy for the Baltic sea region. In the following chapter, it will be presented the literature review regarding the macro-regional strategies, and then the focus will shift on the EUSAIR.

The shaping of Macro-regional strategies

Further on, as presented in the previous theoretical framework chapter, with the transition from government to governance, it is strongly linked to researching further the macro-regional strategies.

Gänzle et al. (2018) confirm that "with the implementation of macro-regional strategies, the emphasis of the political science has been placed on theorizing new forms of government and governance, which is a starting point for considering and explaining the role and relations of actors at different levels in macro-regional strategies."

"However, in some academic literature, macro-regional strategies are discussed as a response to pan-European documents such as the Lisbon, Gothenburg and Europe 2020 strategies" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

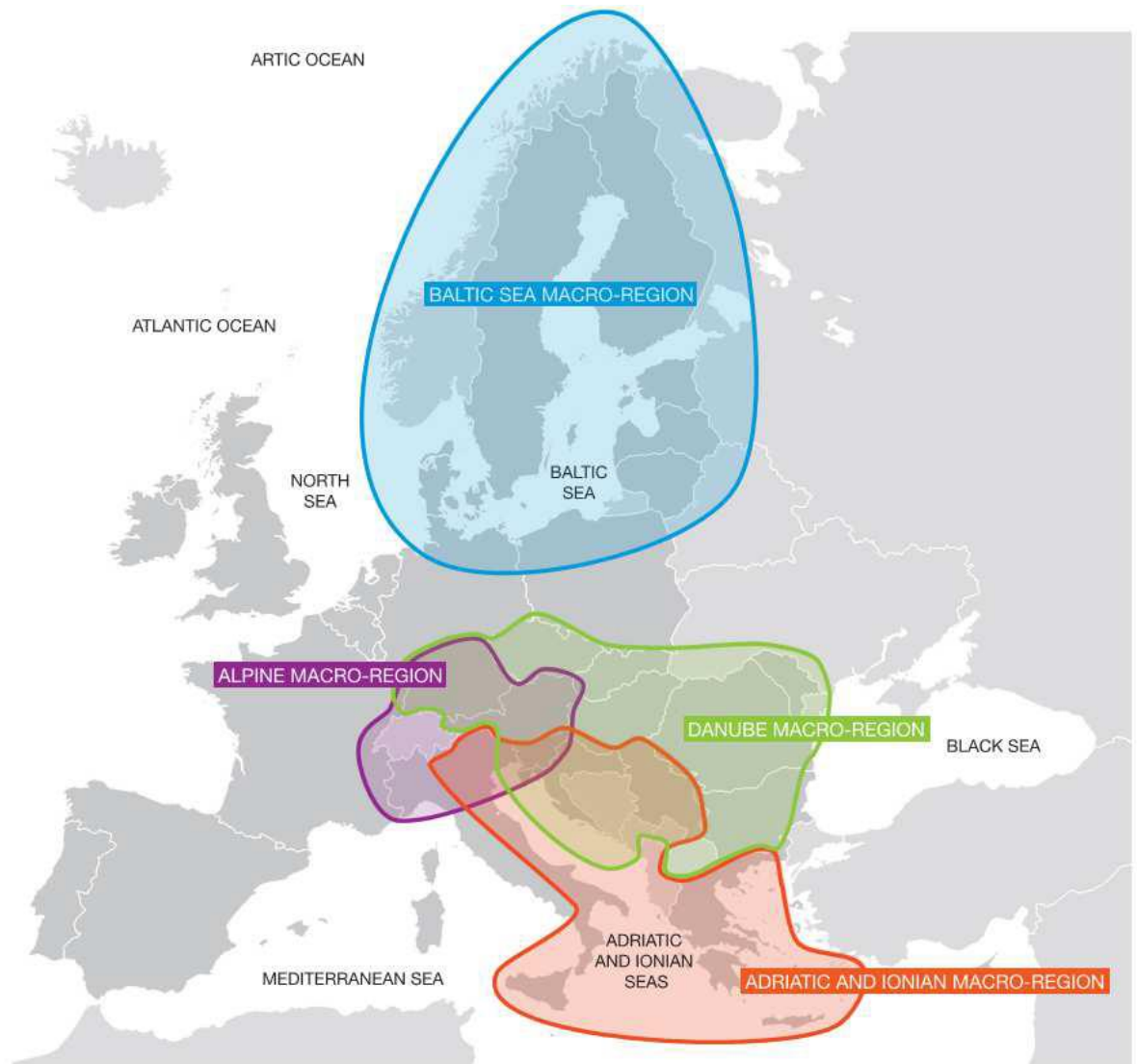


Figure 3: The map of macro-regional strategies. *Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, 2018*

"A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework relating to the Member States and third countries in the same geographical area while addressing the common challenges and strengthening cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion" (European Commission, 2013).

"In addition, the framework of the EU strategies also covers certain principles: integration, coordination, cooperation, multi-level governance and partnership" (European Commission, 2013).

INTEGRATION	COORDINATION	COOPERATION	MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE	PARTNERSHIP
Policy frameworks (EU, regional, national, local, pre-accession), Programmes (EU, country specific, territorial cooperation, sectorial), Financial instruments	Policies, strategies and funding resources should avoid compartmentalisation whether between sectorial policies, actors or different tiers of government	Countries should cooperate, and sectors also, across the region, changing the 'mind-set' from inward to outward-looking regional development ideas	Different levels of policy-makers should work better together, without creating new tiers of decision-making	EU and non-EU countries can work together on the basis of mutual interest and respect

Table 3: The principles within the framework of the EU strategies. *Source: European Commission, 2013¹*

As can be seen in the table 3 above, the macro-regional strategies are based on five principles, which can be applied in all MRSs. From the policy frameworks, to joint cooperation among both EU and non-EU countries, it can be stated that while macro-regional strategies cover different regions in Europe, they all share the same principles and the same objectives to be accomplished through their framework.

"The macro-regional strategies aim to coordinate the development of policy goals in an international context, and at the same time offer a governance structure to support implementation, also considering that macro-regional cooperation is based on a political strategy rather than a funding strategy" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

"However, it is important to mention that various institutional layers of cooperation existed prior to the establishment of the strategies, which include actor networks, cooperation arrangements, commissions, conventions, and political platforms, which is the reason why the macro-regional governance draws on these initiatives by, for example, including various actors from existing networks as observers" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

¹ See more at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0468&from=EN>

The cooperation arrangements in the macro-regional strategies vary from region to region, depending on the different priority of each, from political to geographical terms.

"The current EU macro-regional strategies: the Baltic Sea Region (2009), the Danube Region (2011), the Adriatic-Ionian Region (2014) and the Alpine Region Strategy (2015) build extensively on existing rules, governance arrangements and financial resources both nationally and internationally, as these four strategies encompass 19 EU member states as well as 9 non-members" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

"The first European macro-regional strategy to be developed was the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBR), which has since resulted in new projects and coordination processes particularly related to water" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

"The second was the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) which shows varying degrees of activity and commitment in the different themes that it addresses, along with a strong commitment to cooperation with non-EU member states" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

Similarly to the EUSDR, the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR) also involves cooperation with a large number of non-EU member states. "EUSAIR contains a strong emphasis on maritime issues, particularly on maritime spatial planning and the Integrated Coastal Zone Management" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

"The most recent EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) builds on substantial pre-existing cooperation arrangements, a major key of the strategy is involvement of regional and sub-regional stakeholders to influence the development of projects" (Gänzle et al. 2018).

Further on, examining the four macro-regional strategies, the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region can be considered as a base strategy for implementing the next EU strategies for the regions in Europe.

Using the example of the Baltic Sea region, Salines (2010) presents "four main factors for successful macro-regional cooperation, which are: common perception of interests, common identity, cooperation method and the EU involvement."

Common perception of interests	Common identity	Cooperation method	The EU involvement
The end of the Cold War, the fall of Iron Curtain in 1990s	The geography factor	Sui-generis method	The Baltic Sea Region Innovation Network (BSR Innonet)
The EU and NATO integration in 2004	Common historical and cultural roots	A strongly intergovernmental institutional framework	EU funding
	Identity and branding	The large involvement of stakeholders	

Table 4: The four main factors for a successful macro-regional cooperation. *Source: Salines, 2010*

As presented above in Table 4, in the part of Common perception of interests, in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War, but also the fall of Iron Curtain brought major changes to the Baltic region. The EU and NATO integration in 2004 led to the common perception of interests in the Baltic region which was led by political pretension to the Pro-West.

Salines (2010) considers "under the term of the common identity in the region, to be included the geography factor, as the region shares something in common: the Baltic sea."

"The analysis of two other geographical factors, the small size of the countries and their peripheral position, proves to be more relevant, as most of the countries are small, apart from Germany and Poland, therefore in economic terms these countries have small domestic markets and are dependent to a great extent on international trade and exports, but in political terms, they have a limited bargaining power, especially in an enlarged Europe" (Salines, 2010: 13).

"Additionally, by the common identity factor, it is also included common historical and cultural roots, identity and branding" (Salines, 2010).

In the third factor, which is the cooperation method, Salines (2010) presents "a sui-generis method which is a mix of intergovernmental and involvement of civil society, meaning that while exists a strong intergovernmental institutional framework, there is also a large involvement of stakeholders present through the Baltic region strategy."

Lastly, the fourth factor presented is EU involvement. "Apart from being directly involved in implementing the strategies, the EU takes the role through the funding sources, in order to accomplish the goals of the strategy through the desired projects - the example would be the Baltic Sea Region Innovation Network (BSR Innonet) which was one of the so-called 'INNONETs' projects supported by the European Commission" (Salines, 2010).

In the next chapter, the focus will shift towards explaining the stakeholders approach in the Macro-regional strategies.

The stakeholders involvement in macro-regional strategies

There are various stakeholders involved in decision-making process of the macro-regional strategies, so in this chapter the focus will shift towards explaining their involvement in MRSs.

"The general coordination of the EU policies (regional, cohesion, neighbourhood and enlargement) remains with the European Commission in coordination with the EU member states / non-EU member states, while the real implementation of those is in the hands of the national, regional and local level actors" (Lütgenau, 2016: 18).

European Commission (2009) confirms that "in order to ensure that the result would gain the full commitment of the widest possible range of actors, an exceptionally open consultation process was launched, specifically through stakeholder conferences and internet consultations, meaning that virtually all institutions and organizations who are active in the region were able to input to the process at an early stage."

European Commission (2009) further states "that it was recognized the absence of new money or legislative measures would limit the overt power of the Commission to impose specific content, meaning this absence was turned into a positive asset, instead."

Apart from this, the important point to be mentioned is the "Three No's". With the further development of the strategy, the European Commission (2009) reports that "the *Three No's* – no

new funds, no new legislation, no new institutions became a rather positive message, which led to better coordination of resources and coherent implementation of regulations and laws."

Namely, as Stead et al. (2016: 110) mention "the European Commission played an important role in the initial stages of developing macro-regional strategies, in terms of shaping the development of the documents, designing the governance structure of the regional organizations and providing advice throughout the consultation phase."

"The fact that macro-regional strategies were drafted by the Commission itself rather than by national experts, but on the other hand, the future (official) role of the Commission stays only through the coordination role" (Stead et al. 2016: 110)

"The Commission does not have an official and decisive role, but does occupy a central position in the decision-making process" (Stead et al. 2016: 110).

While the Commission may occupy the central role, the implementation of the macro-regional strategies requires cooperation among actors from different sectors and at different levels in the countries involved in the strategy itself.

Relating to the power of the EC, the European Commission (2009) further states "that it was recognized the absence of new money or legislative measures would limit the overt power of the Commission to impose specific content, meaning this absence was turned into a positive asset, instead."

Gänzle et al. (2018) debate that "all four macro-regional strategies rely on strong political leadership and commitment, but the representatives from all four macro-regions are concerned about the challenges to access funding instruments."

With regards to funding instruments, the linkage is to Regional and Cohesion Policy.

McMaster and van der Zwet (2016:59) further argue that "without any designated funding, the macro-regional strategies could hardly achieve their goals."

"A range of funds is usually available from the member countries, the EU and other supranational or international organizations, meaning that macro-regional strategies partly seek

to coordinate policy activities and thus simply allocate existing funds more effectively than before" (McMaster, van der Zwet, 2016: 59).

"The implementation of the strategies is a highly complex undertaking, involving a great deal of ambiguity, and achieving results in such an environment requires awareness, engagement and adaptive capacity of all actors" (Bergström, 2016: 16).

"Macro-regional strategies are not only taking multi-level governance approach, but also a multi-sectoral approach" (Lütgenau, 2016: 18).

"On the one hand, macro-regional strategies are involving the existing international regional institutions and on the other hand civil society, non-state actors and businesses in the macro-regional strategy implementation, which means that macro-regional strategies can contribute to promoting social, economic, and territorial cohesion especially in the new member states" (Lütgenau, 2016: 18).

In the table 5 below, it can be seen the main actors/stakeholders of the EU macro-regional strategies and their responsibilities.

Actors	Responsibilities
European Council/MS	Provides mandate and endorses macro-regional strategy
Commission and High-level Steering group (officials representatives of all MS)	Preparing strategy (consultation) Promoting dialogue Coordinating at the policy level Dealing with policy orientation and prioritization Reviewing and updating action plans Monitoring
National Contact Points (NCP)	Promoting strategy, encouraging participation and ensuring visibility of activities Updating relevant stakeholders at national level of key developments Assisting Commission in its facilitation role
Priority Area Coordinators (PAC), Horizontal Actions Leader (HAL) and Priority Area Focal Group (PAFG)	Ensuring implementation action plan (targets, indicators and timetables) for a priority area Facilitating cooperation between projects, programmes and funding streams Providing technical assistance and advice Enhancing visibility of the strategy
Laboratory Group (think tank composed of members of national administrations, Political Action Committees, Commission and ETC programmes)	Facilitating exchange of ideas regarding operational aspects Advising and recommending how regional programmes can contribute to strategy
	Promoting strategy to ETC stakeholders

Interact	Engaging in some operational aspects Supporting coordination with Commission
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Table 5: The Governance Architecture of the EU macro-regional strategies. Source: *McMaster and van der Zwet (2016)*

"The rationales for involvement of stakeholders vary between policy fields and stakeholder types, meaning that in terms of stakeholder involvement, the relatively strong stakeholders have gained influence in steering groups by offering their expertise, which can be perceived that those strong stakeholders use macro-regional strategies as a means to gain an influence across different policy field" (Stead et al. 2016:110).

As can be concluded from this Part II of the thesis, all the macro-regional strategies are involving a various number of stakeholders from both governmental and non-governmental sectors. Generally, all macro-regional strategies are presented through the multi-level governance approach, with the Commission taking a central position, as observer of the process. However, equally important are the other stakeholders included in the process, especially the national ones. In the next Part III, I will introduce the EUSAIR, from its historical background to the stakeholders involved.

Part IV: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region (EUSAIR)

Historical background of the EUSAIR

Shifting the focus of the thesis to the main macro-regional strategy that is to be researched, it is important to first introduce the historical background of EUSAIR.

The origin of EUSAIR dates back to the 1990s. The 1990s uneased the stability in the whole of Europe, but particularly the political and economic situation in Eastern Europe was ripped with the fall of the communism. Besides, the region of the Adriatic which was part of Yugoslavia

suffered through the country's disintegration. The proclamation of new states kept rising tensions, and the role of the international powers was more than necessary to reach the signing of peace agreements to end the tremendous 1990s and to return the regional stability.

With the newly proclaimed states in the Adriatic region, it has to be noted that “the first transnational cooperation was launched with the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe in 1999 which aimed at establishing and strengthening peace, human rights and security in South-Eastern Europe and at creating transnational networks” (Council of Europe, 2018).

"Following this initiative, in 2008, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative was established during the conference on Development and Security in the Adriatic and Ionian in Ancona (Italy) to strengthen the transnational cooperation, the economic development, and the European cohesion" (Council of Europe, 2018).

With the tremendous 1990s, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative aimed to foster the development and cooperation among countries involved, and the initiative consisted of eight countries, four EU Member States and four non-EU countries. The EU Member States include Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia, and four non-EU countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

On the other hand, further observing the Adriatic and Ionian region, it can be agreed that the major focus of the Region is put on the seas.

"With the introduction of the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian seas, the focus shift towards the framework that will support all countries in delivering on the Europe 2020 objectives with regard to their maritime assets, their potential and sustainable use, and at the same time promote European integration and territorial cooperation" (European Commission, 2012: 713 final).

"In the case of the funding, maritime projects can be financed under various EU programs and financial instruments - for example, IPA funds need to be mobilized in order to involve candidate and potential candidate countries in future actions, also other potential sources of funding, such as the Western Balkan Investment Framework (WBIF), national, regional and local resources as well as private investors"(European Commission, 2012; 713 final).

European Commission (2012: 713 final) reported that "the Council expressed support for the ongoing work of the Adriatic and Ionian Member States to enhance maritime cooperation with non-EU neighbors in the area of the framework of a macro-regional strategy."

As can be seen in this chapter, it was necessary to introduce the historical background of the 1990s, and the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. In the case of EUSAIR, the major focus is put on seas, as the historical linkage of EUSAIR is to the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.

Following the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, "in 2012, the decision taken by the Foreign Ministers from the Adriatic and Ionian Region, the European Council requested the European Commission to present a new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) before the end of 2014" (Council of Europe, 2018).



Figure 4: The map of the Adriatic and Ionian Region. *Source: European Commission, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, 2014*

As can be seen in figure 4 above, the Adriatic and Ionian Region is an area that is primarily defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Sea basin.

"The region covers an important terrestrial surface area, which treats the marine, coastal and terrestrial areas as interconnected systems, home to more than 70 million people, this Region plays a key role in strengthening geographical unity in Europe" (Council of Europe, 2018).

"EUSAIR objective is at strengthening the trans-national and inter-regional cooperation of the eight countries involved in the strategy but also aiming to foster cohesion and competitiveness of the Adriatic-Ionian Region" (Council of Europe, 2018).

The thematic steering groups of the EUSAIR

Within the framework of the EUSAIR, there are four thematic steering groups (TSGs):

1. Blue Growth
2. Connecting the Region
3. Environmental Quality
4. Sustainable Tourism

Regarding these four TSGs, each of these four pillars is represented by two countries, one EU country, and one non-EU country.

Blue Growth Pillar

In the case of Blue Growth pillar, the coordinators are Greece and Montenegro.

"The first pillar - Blue Growth is a long term strategy for unlocking the potential of Europe's seas and coastal areas which covers such topics as blue energy, aquaculture, maritime, coastal and cruise tourism, maritime mineral resources and blue biotechnology, the Blue Growth

pillar increases the innovative maritime and marine growth in the Adriatic and Ionian Region by promoting sustainable economic development and job creation" (European Commission, 2014).

Within this pillar, the main focus is on three topics:

1. Blue technologies
2. Fisheries and aquaculture
3. Maritime and marine governance and services

"In order to improve the blue technologies in the Region, macro-regional research and development and innovation platforms in areas such as green sea mobility, deep-sea resources, bio-security, and bio-technologies will be developed" (European Commission, 2014).

"The idea of brain circulation - researchers moving between institutes, universities and companies will become a reality, but also the start-ups will be granted easier access to finance and promotion" (European Commission, 2014).

The other topic presented in the Blue Growth pillar is fisheries and aquaculture.

With regards to fishing, the European Commission (2014) presents "the aim to promote sustainable and responsible fishing practices which will provide a steady stream of income for coastal areas, and to be achieved by:

- improving fisheries data collection, including monitoring and control
- making fisheries management plans at sea basin level
- improving standards across the Region
- developing skills and capacity to comply with EU rules and standards
- developing the added value of local seafood value chains
- developing market intelligence and also more transparent marketing and processing."

On the other hand, the European Commission (2014) argues that "there are certain barriers preventing the development of the full potential of aquaculture in the Adriatic-Ionian Sea basin, such as:

- limited access to space and licensing
- industry fragmentation
- limited access loans for innovation
- time-consuming administrative procedures and red tape."

"Through the stakeholder involvement, the strategy proposes to promote sustainable aquaculture, introducing simplified procedures, as well as product diversification" (European Commission, 2014).

The last topic of the Blue Growth pillar is the maritime and marine governance and services.

The European Commission (2014) confirms that "the countries in the Adriatic and Ionian Region have differing administrative and political structures, but also government and governance systems, therefore training and better coordination of planning activities is needed for better marine and maritime governance and services, and that will be achieved through data sharing, joint planning and the coordinated management of existing resources."

In the table 6 below, it can be seen the different examples of projects in the Blue Growth pillar in all three topics.

BLUE GROWTH Pillar		
Blue technologies	Fisheries and aquaculture	Maritime and marine governance and services
<p>Research platform marine robotics</p> <p>To strengthen unmanned marine vehicles for underwater and seabed operations based on existing cooperation among stakeholders in the Region. This project can also contribute in developing platforms for macro-regional quadruple helix networks, linking research, business, public sector stakeholders and the civil society</p>	<p>Fish stock monitoring platform</p> <p>Performing regular stock assessments of fish in the Adriatic and Ionian Sea and evaluating the main elements for sustainable fisheries management</p>	<p>Coordinated Maritime Spatial Planning</p> <p>Ensuring a coherent legal framework for economic activities at sea by building on the work of the ADRIPLAN project and placing all waters under national jurisdictions through the process of Maritime Spatial Planning</p>

Table 6: Project examples of topics in the Blue growth pillar. *Source: European Union, 2014*

Connecting the Region Pillar

In the case of Connecting the Region pillar, the coordinators are Italy and Serbia.

"The Connecting the Region pillar aims to improve the transport and energy connectivity in the Region through strengthening maritime safety and security, but also developing a port system and creating reliable transport networks and intermodal connections with the hinterland" (European Commission, 2014).

Therefore, in this pillar, the three distinguished topics are:

1. Maritime transport
2. Intermodal connections to the hinterland
3. Energy networks

"Regarding the maritime transport, the North Adriatic ports are natural gateways to Central and Eastern Europe and therefore could have over 10 % share of the EU's container traffic market by 2030, if provided good railway access is granted to the hinterland" (European Commission, 2014).

"Boosting maritime transport is therefore crucial, as is the creation of efficient intermodal ports to integrate maritime transport with rail and road and overall improving connectivity within the Region, but also with the EU" (European Commission, 2014).

There are certain actions included under this topic.

"Clustering port activities and services through the Region through the frequent exchange of information between coastal countries in order to improve the safety and security of current

maritime traffic in the Region, but also developing ports and port terminals to boost maritime transport" (European Commission, 2014).

The second topic of the pillar, the Intermodal connections to the hinterland "needs to be upgraded to cope with increased maritime transport of goods and together with inland waterways, road and rail provide significant international connections within the Region" (European Commission, 2014).

"Developing the Western Balkans comprehensive network including rail, inland waterways, but also improving the accessibility of coastal areas and islands by optimizing the use of passenger routes and involving private and public stakeholders, developing motorways of the sea through improved road and rail infrastructure that links the port with the hinterland, and lastly providing better air transport links through the Region but also improving regional flight connections with foreign destinations" (European Commission, 2014).

The last topic of the pillar is the energy networks, which objective is "To achieve the three energy policy objectives of the EU – competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability and that can only be achieved through an interconnected and functioning internal energy market" (European Commission, 2014).

Additionally, the European Commission (2014) foreseen the following actions under the energy networks topic "improving cross border electricity connections, building a gas ring in the Region to enhance security of supply and promote market integration, introducing a well-functioning electricity market by setting up a Coordinated Auction Office that will provide increased transmission capacities to the market, and lastly the regulatory measures to remove the barriers to cross-border investments."

Below in the table are the project examples in Connecting the Region pillar.

Connecting the Region Pillar		
Maritime transport	Intermodal connections to the hinterland	Energy networks
<i>Improve and harmonise traffic monitoring and management</i> Upgrade the current Adriatic Traffic Reporting System (ADRIREP) in order to reduce administration and unnecessary duplication of data collected by Vessel Traffic Management Information System infrastructures	<i>Improve the accessibility of the coastal areas and islands</i> Promote cooperation between ship-owners, port authorities, public authorities, tourist operators and associations to improve maritime connections between neighbouring countries, islands and the mainland	<i>Remove barriers for cross-border investments</i> Coordinate and align permits and regulations

Table 7: Project examples of topics in Connecting the Region pillar. *Source: European Commission, 2014*

Environmental Quality Pillar

In the case of Environmental Quality pillar, the coordinators are Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Environmental quality is necessary for ensuring the economic and social well-being of the Region's inhabitants, this pillar addresses environmental quality through cooperation at regional level, and specifically it will ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment by 2020, help the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and improve waste management by reducing waste and nutrient flows to the sea and rivers" (European Commission, 2014).

The topics presented in this pillar are:

1. The marine environment
2. Pollution of the sea
3. Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity

In the marine environment, the greatest concern is regarding the coastal and marine biodiversity.

"The Adriatic and Ionian Seas are subjected to intense fishing activity, aquaculture and coastal development, which pose a threat to this natural habitat, also there is a general lack of information on small scale fisheries, illegal fishing gear is not uncommon, and monitoring and enforcement are insufficient" (European Commission, 2014).

Therefore, there are certain activities to be undertaken. The European Commission (2014) presented the following actions "increasing marine knowledge on maritime spatial planning, integrating coastal management, but also implementing the marine framework strategy Directive, exchanging best practices among managing authorities of marine protected areas, and implementing maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management."

Considering the second topic, the pollution of the sea which is "threatened by intense maritime transport, inevitably resulting in oil spills and noise pollution, also land pollution from rivers is caused by insufficient waste water treatment as well as excessive use of nitrates on agricultural lands, while causing significant costs for shipping, marine litter affects human safety and health, as well as marine wildlife" (European Commission, 2014).

The actions undertaken under this topic include: "coordinated investments in water and solid waste treatment plants, joint efforts to deal with entire life cycle of marine litter, shared planning and capacity building to prevent and react to oil spills and other occurrences, but also raising awareness among farmers of the negative impacts of excessive nitrate use" (European Commission, 2014).

The latest topic, the transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity present the "planning and capacity building to prevent and react to oil spills and other occurrences, also raising awareness among farmers of the negative impacts of excessive nitrate use" (European Commission, 2014).

Therefore, the specific actions foreseen under this topic, as European Commission (2014) presents are: "developing joint management plans for cross-border habitats and ecosystems, harmonization and enforcement of national laws with EU legislation, protection and restoration of coastal wetland areas and awareness raising activities on environmentally friendly farming practices."

In the table below are the examples of projects to be undertaken in the Environmental quality Pillar.

Environmental quality Pillar		
The marine environment	Pollution of the sea	Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity
<p><i>Exchanging best practices among managing authorities of marine protected areas</i></p> <p>Building on the work of the Adriatic Protected Areas Network (AdriaPAN), creating a network of managing authorities of Marine Protected Areas of the Adriatic and Ionian to exchange best practice and work on measures to improve the ecological status of the seas</p>	<p><i>Implementing a life cycle approach to marine litter</i></p> <p>Building on the CleanSeaNet project, which provides analyses of marine litter, cost-effective management measures and policy options for addressing the issue will be developed</p>	<p><i>Development of joint management plans for transnational terrestrial habitats and eco-regions</i></p> <p>Building on the BE-NATUR project, developing tools for better managing and implementing NATURA 2000 sites (rivers, lakes and coastal areas)</p>

Table 8: Project examples of topics in Environmental Quality Pillar. *Source: European Commission, 2014*

Sustainable Tourism Pillar

In the case Sustainable Tourism pillar, the coordinators are Croatia and Albania.

"In order to develop the Region's potential in terms of sustainable tourism it can be done by offering innovative and quality tourism products and services, also involving all actors in the sector is important; therefore, the main objectives of this pillar are to diversify the macro-region's tourism products and services, and tackle the issue of seasonal tourism by improving quality and innovative approaches" (European Commission, 2014).

In the pillar, there are distinguished two topics:

1. Diversified tourism offer
2. Sustainable and responsible tourism management

With regards to the first topic, the diversified tourism offer, "the tourism is already one of the fastest growing economic activities in the Region, and the joint cooperation at macro-

regional level will contribute to diversify tourism in a sustainable manner, to reduce the dependence of the sector on the seasonal model, and to limit its environmental impact" (European Commission, 2014).

In order to accomplish its goals, the European Commission (2014) considers that "the following actions are to be undertaken: build the Adriatic-Ionian 'brand', and ensure its values are in line with the Region's products and services, diversify and expand the cruise and nautical sectors into coastal hinterland economies, but also tourist routes for walking, cycling and sailing and embrace the Adriatic and Ionian cultural heritage by enhancing cooperation with the cultural sector."

The second topic, sustainable and responsible tourism management is important considering that "the sustainable tourism is not as developed as it should be in the Region, which can have a negative impact on the coastal, marine, but also hinterland environment" (European Commission, 2014).

Therefore, the European Commission (2014) presents the following actions to be undertaken under this topic: "creating a network of sustainable tourism businesses and clusters, to stimulate innovation and create synergies with complementary sectors, providing funding for innovative and sustainable tourism start-ups, SMEs and university spin-offs that will bring new products and services to the sector, but also promoting the Region through marketing and advertising and expanding the tourist season to all year-round, by positioning the Adriatic-Ionian as an excellent off-season destination for the older generation, conferences, etc."

In the table below, are the projects to be undertaken through those two topics of Sustainable Tourism Pillar.

Sustainable tourism Pillar	
Diversified tourism offer	Sustainable and responsible tourism management
<i>Brand-building of the Adriatic and Ionian Region</i> Promoting an Adriatic-Ionian 'brand' for diversified tourism products and services targeting global travel customer groups	<i>Facilitating access to finance for tourism start-ups</i> Expanding the 'Adriatic-Ionian Sustainable Tourism Financing' to develop innovative financing instruments to facilitate access to seed and venture capital

Table 9: Project examples of topics in Sustainable Tourism Pillar. *Source: European Commission, 2014*

Stakeholders in the EUSAIR

EUSAIR consists of four thematic steering groups and various topics are covered by this strategy, as can be seen in the previous chapter.

Considering this is such a diverse strategy, it is clear there are many multi-level and multi-sectoral stakeholders involved in the process.

According to the Action Plan by the European Commission (2014, 190 final) “extensive, bottom-up consultation process that involves a wide range of stakeholders from the Adriatic-Ionian Region who represent national, regional and local authorities, and equally important the private sector, academia, and civil society.”

“This approach allowed stakeholders at all levels to comment on and to endorse the selected four pillars, but also to point to actions or projects under each pillar that appeared promising to respond to challenges and opportunities shared by all participating countries” (European Commission, 2014).

“Identifying the actions to be undertaken under the strategy, the Commission stresses on the fact that all actions should be carried out with an intervention of stakeholders to address the different topics, but the action taken by stakeholders can be a new approach leading to an increased coordination in policymaking” (European Commission, 2014, 190 final).

On the other hand, “regarding the actions and projects, the agreement should be reached among countries and stakeholders, but also with the approval of the Commission” (European Commission, 2014, 190 final).

Regarding the governmental sector, EUSAIR governance is consisting of various stakeholders. In the table below, there is a list of stakeholders who are directly involved in the EUSAIR governance.

EUSAIR National Coordinators
EUSAIR Pillar Coordinators
EUSAIR Facility point partners
Ministers of Foreign Affairs of participating countries
European Commission (DG REGIO, DG MARE, DG NEAR, other DGs may participate too)
Representative of the European Parliament
Representative of the Committee of Regions accompanied by a representative of the Adriatic-Ionian Interregional group
Representative of the European Economic and Social Committee
The Permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
Representatives of the Managing Authority of the Interreg ADRION transnational cooperation programme

Table 10: EUSAIR Governance and Management structure. *Source: Adriatic and Ionian official website.*

It is important to mention that stakeholders involved in EUSAIR are not solely the ones presented in the governmental sectors, but there are various other stakeholders from non-governmental sectors involved, as well. In the table below, there is a list of stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved with EUSAIR, coming from both governmental and non-governmental sectors.

AI-NURECC Initiative (The Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chambers of Commerce and Cities)
Ministries of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Ministries of Infrastructure and Transport, Ministries of Science, Ministries of Mines and Energy, Ministries of Environment, Ministries of Rural Development, etc.
United Nations Environment Programme MAP
UniAdrion (Association of Universities of the Adriatic-Ionian area)
Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
PAP/RAC (Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre)
Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
Civil society

Table 11: The stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with the EUSAIR. *Source: Author's database from the EUSAIR forum 2019*

The conclusion from these two tables above presents EUSAIR as a macro-regional strategy involving numerous multi-level and multi-sector stakeholders who participate in its implementation. Linking back to the chapter of the theoretical framework, the term multi-stakeholderism is present in EUSAIR.

In the next part IV of the thesis, I will proceed with the chapter in which I connect the presented literature review to the research problem of the thesis. After that, it will proceed with a chapter presenting the results obtained through questionnaire and participant observation along with the discussion.

Part V: The connection of literature review to the research question

To answer the main research problem of the thesis which is: *“What is the contribution of national stakeholders in EUSAIR decision-making?”* it was necessary to present the following literature review:

In this thesis, the focus is on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, and importantly when analyzing a topic in the European studies, it was necessary to present firstly the theories of integration.

In this thesis, the two theories of integration presented are liberal intergovernmentalism and multi-level governance.

Further comparing the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism to the multi-level governance, there are certain differences in the internal changes of the European Union that occurred with the transition from the state-centric to the multi-level governance model.

On the one hand, the Liberal intergovernmentalism is often used as a baseline theory to explain certain phenomena in European integration, and the same has been done in the case of this thesis.

While the research question aims to find out more about the contribution of national stakeholders in EUSAIR decision-making, the liberal intergovernmentalism theory is indeed useful, particularly as it focuses on the states as the main actors.

On the other hand, the literature review of the multi-level governance puts the focus not only on the power of the state but on all actors involved in the process.

Hence, multi-level governance is focusing on the decision-making shared among stakeholders at different levels, from supranational institutions, national governments to non-governmental actors such as civil society.

In the case of this thesis and the focus on the specific macro-regional strategy – EUSAIR, which is a multi-sectoral and multi-level macro-regional strategy, it was necessary to present these two theories to understand the process of EUSAIR decision-making.

The literature review is putting the supranational institutions as taking a central role, especially in the beginning of drafting the strategy, while their role further on continues through guidance as observers of the process, however, the states are vital for successful process of the decision-making.

The decision-making process of the four thematic steering groups of EUSAIR requires all stakeholders from national, regional and local authorities to cooperate equally to achieve the objectives.

The equal involvement and commitment taken by all sides prove that EUSAIR is a result of effective multi-level governance approach, which is involving the states with the private sector to achieve success.

Moreover, as the research problem is directly connected with the national stakeholders in the Region, it was necessary to present the literature review regarding the term of stakeholders from the perspective of the corporation to political science field.

In Political science, the literature review put the term stakeholders in correlation with the transition from government to governance.

With the new governance, there is involvement of diverse stakeholders, among which there are representatives from the NGOs to civil society that take part in the decision-making process. To support this statement, the literature review of the thematic steering groups of EUSAIR is stating that non-governmental, private actors are necessary for the process of the decision-making.

Further on, the term of multi-stakeholderism which stands for bringing all major stakeholders in the decision-making process can also be used in the case of EUSAIR. Due to many different countries involved in the strategy, many important stakeholders take a vital role in the process of decision-making.

Concerning this, the term of policy network can be interpreted in the case of EUSAIR as well. As mentioned above, EUSAIR is a strategy that involves a cluster of actors/stakeholders from different sectors who are joined together in solving the common EUSAIR issues.

To answer the research problem that deals with the contribution of national stakeholders in the decision-making process of EUSAIR, it was necessary to present literature review regarding the historical background of macro-regional strategies, but also of EUSAIR.

The literature confirms that macro-regional strategies are linked to the sub-regional groupings in Europe, as they are also formed in areas with significant common geographical or physical characteristics. In the case of EUSAIR, the focus of the Region is on the seas – therefore maritime affairs. This signifies that the majority of stakeholders included in EUSAIR are also to some degree involved in the maritime issues in the Region.

Overall, obtaining a better understanding of macro-regional strategies is the crucial step for answering the research problem of the thesis.

Concerning the role of supranational institutions, the literature confirms that the Commission is taking a central role, especially through early stages of drafting the strategy, later on, the Commission's role passes as the observer of all process. But, the literature also confirms that real power through the process of the decision-making of the strategy is in the hands of national stakeholders.

In the case of EUSAIR, there exist certain obstacles, which are mostly linked with the lack of funding resources. Relating to this, the initiative of Three No's from the Commission is presented rather as an obstacle, as it gives more power to the Commission than to other stakeholders in terms of the funding resources.

Lastly, the literature review introduced the historical background of EUSAIR. The origin of the strategy dates back to the 1990s. Therefore, the presented literature review helps to understand the motivation of stakeholders, and their objectives to be accomplished through EUSAIR participation.

In the next chapter, it will be presented the results from the questionnaire and participant observation, which will be discussed and compared to the literature review.

Part VI: Results and analysis of the questionnaire and participant observation

In this chapter I will present the results of the additional techniques used for the thesis, which were the questionnaire and participant observation, and also interpret results and link them to the theory.

For the questionnaire, it was contacted a total of 116 participants, the total number of responses was 40, while the percentage of response rate was 34%.

The other additional technique used for the research was the participant observation, which was used at the 4th Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), held on May 2019 in Montenegro.

Firstly, in the questionnaire, to understand how successful it is considered a multi-level governance approach in the EUSAIR process, I proposed a question:

“Overall, how successful would you consider the Multi-level governance approach in EUSAIR?”

The majority of respondents agree that the multi-level governance approach is moderately successful.

Linking this to the theory, there is the same result, while the multi-level governance can pass some critics, this approach proves to be the most effective one to explain the process of EUSAIR.

However, the lack of effectiveness of multi-level governance model is presented by the initiative of “Three No’s”.

The “Three No’s” from the European Commission is giving the EC more influential role in the EUSAIR process.

This attribution of power to the European Commission is making a lack of effectiveness in the multi-level governance model, which is based on power-sharing among all actors included in the process.

While the literature review is presenting the EUSAIR as a promoter of cooperation and successfully putting together various stakeholders from different sectors, in practice, the questionnaire argues it is only moderately successful.

Moving to the second question of the questionnaire:

“Considering the Multi-level governance approach, how effective would you consider the cooperation of various actors for EUSAIR implementation?”

The majority of respondents chose the answer *moderately successful*.

While the literature review is presenting the EUSAIR as a promoter of cooperation and successfully putting together various stakeholders from different sectors, in practice, the questionnaire argues it is only moderately successful in achieving it.

Further through the questionnaire, the questions number three and four dealt with the role of stakeholders involved in EUSAIR.

The question number three states:

“Which of these stakeholders do you consider to be taking the most important role through the EUSAIR decision-making?”

The answer that most respondents chose was *Coordinators of the EUSAIR pillars*.

This question is directly related to the RQ of the thesis. My aim was to find out who the respondents are considering as the most important. In the coordinators of the EUSAIR pillars are representatives of various Ministries of countries involved in the strategy, from the Ministry for Transport and Rural Development to Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Relating to this, I argue that while supranational institutions are acting as over watchers of all EUSAIR process, giving assistance and support if needed, but the stakeholders who are the most influential in all of the process of EUSAIR are the National Coordinators and Pillar Coordinators.

Moreover, in the EUSAIR process, there are other important stakeholders, including the civil society.

In the next question, my aim was to find out in which of the four thematic steering groups of EUSAIR, the civil society is considered to be taking the most important role.

Therefore, the question number four:

“In which pillar of the EUSAIR, would you consider the role of civil society is the most important?”

The answer most chosen was the *Environmental Quality* – which is directly linked to the marine environment and biodiversity of the Adriatic and Ionian seas.

Linking this to the theory, as the most common characteristic of the Adriatic and Ionian Region is the seas, therefore the Strategy’s main focus is on maritime affairs. Considering this, it is rational that civil society is playing an important role through preserving the biodiversity and fighting the pollution of seas.

While the readers could consider that civil society is playing an important role in Blue Growth pillar – especially due to topics such as fisheries with the focus on small-scale fisheries and problem of illegal fishing in the area, none of the respondents have chosen that answer.

The same topic of Blue Growth has been discussed on the EUSAIR Forum, as this year's Forum focus was on Tourism and Blue Growth.

The discussion of the Forum was led towards establishing better cooperation and links between all sectors involved in small-scale fisheries.

Further on connecting to this is the fifth question of the questionnaire:

“As the EUSAIR consists of both EU and non-EU countries, would you agree that involvement in the EUSAIR helps the non-EU countries through the EU integration process?”

The majority of respondents chose the *strongly agree* answer.

The literature confirms that regarding each pillar there are two coordinators, one EU, and one non-EU country, and the aim is for those countries to work together to overcome the common issues.

According to the answer that the majority have chosen, the questionnaire confirmed that participation in EUSAIR is helping the non-EU countries through their EU integration process.

Also, as seen through the participant observation method at EUSAIR Forum, in the case of fisheries, there is a clear linkage between the EU and non-EU countries, as they are providing support to non-EU stakeholders in that domain.

The example is the case of Greece. Greece is a country which has good experience in managing the fish stocks, so the other countries that are part of EUSAIR can develop further their policies along with it.

As taken from the participant observation at Forum, at the panel discussion of Sustainable aquaculture and Fisheries in the Adriatic and Ionian region: challenges and opportunities, Mr. Christos Economou, Head of the Unit for Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security, DG MARE, European Commission states that:

“Regarding the topic of aquaculture and fisheries in the Region, it is necessary to first follow the guidelines from the European Commission, then the national guidelines; with regards to the non-EU countries, they need to adapt to the EU policies, and this adaption is done through the funds of pre-accession.”

With regards to Mr. Christos Economou argument above, it is linked to the literature which is putting the Commission in central position, as observer of all process. At the same time, there is a linkage to the critique of EUSAIR considering it as the enlargement strategy. With the presented argument, Mr. Economou confirms that through the pre-accession negotiations, the non-EU countries are adapting their policies to the EU ones, which in the end proves that the non-EU countries are benefiting greatly from participating in the strategy.

At the same panel discussion, the moderator Mr. Aleksandar Joksimovic, Scientific Advisor at the University of Montenegro, Institute of Marine Biology leads the discussion towards the small-scale fisheries. He states that:

“Illegal fishing is a big problem in the Region, but also the fishing activities should be taken with same responsibility from both EU and non-EU stakeholders.”

During the discussion, Ms. Olympia Teligioridou, Deputy Minister of Rural Development and Food in Greece, agrees that there exists a problem with illegal fishing and states that:

“Regarding the small-scale fisheries, Greece is a successful case, there is an income due to existence of trust of consumer.”

According to presented two arguments from Mr. Joksimovic and Ms. Teligioridou, this is linked to the questionnaire and literature review, which presented how the non-EU countries are adapting their national guidelines alongside EU countries involved in the Strategy. At the same time, the theory presents that all Regions share common issues, and in the case of EUSAIR, one of the issues presenting a big problem is the illegal fishing.

Mr Djuro Zugic, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Montenegro, compared the case of Greece to the case of Montenegro – as these two countries are coordinators for the pillar Blue Growth.

He states *that*:

“Even though Montenegro is having an exit to the sea, it is undeniable that less than 1% fisheries catch is in Montenegro, therefore it is necessary to develop the domain of fisheries, to use many resources, to make big plans and in cooperation with the successful case of Greece to adapt the national policies to reach our objectives; also, we want to bring benefits to all stakeholders on the Montenegrin coast, especially the fishermen involved in the process.”

As already stated before, the panelists share the view which corresponds to the theory and questionnaire, which is that non-EU countries should develop further their expertise in the field of Blue Growth alongside Greece, but also tackle together the issue of aquaculture.

Panelists admit that they need better cooperation, and should start to inspire young generation to undertake jobs in the aquaculture domain, which is missing the labor force.

The aquaculture domain is linked to the EUSAIR pillar Blue Growth, and the theory stated that involvement of all stakeholders is necessary for further developing the domain of aquaculture.

In the end, all the panelists came to the conclusion that due to the problems of plastic in the seas, illegal fishing, and variable difference in fisheries expertise, it is needed to develop a good plan to include all countries to use all opportunities of this Region.

Besides, the theory presented the project examples regarding all four thematic steering groups, whose aim is to improve the Region cooperation and sustainability.

Regarding the cooperation of the EU and non-EU stakeholders in the EUSAIR pillars, the EU country which is responsible as coordinator of the pillar is rather a country that has expertise in the topic. Hence, while these observations confirm my critic that EUSAIR is considered as an enlargement strategy, there is no doubt that EUSAIR is also beneficial for promoting the growth of the Region.

The open-consultation method is giving a unique opportunity for non-EU stakeholders to discuss with experienced stakeholders from the EU on adjusting their national policies to meet the EU terms.

Hence, EUSAIR is bringing more perks to the non-EU countries, permitting them to adjust their national policies to the EU ones, which is encouraging them on the path to the EU membership.

I would say the supranational institutions have done this on purpose. It gives a more active role to national and pillar coordinators of EUSAIR – in other words, the representatives of the Ministries of countries involved in the Strategy.

Besides, it is important to mention how this strategy is encouraging more countries in the Region to join EUSAIR.

Namely, during the EUSAIR Forum 2019, during the official opening of the IV EUSAIR Forum, the European Commission invited over the video message the two countries: North Macedonia and San Marino to become members of EUSAIR in the near future.

As regards with two invited countries, technically both are belonging to the Region of Adriatic-Ionian, even though in the case of North Macedonia there is no exit to either Adriatic or Ionian seas, but is rather a hinterland country as the case with Serbia.

Also, considering the recent events with North Macedonia, a country that recently changed its official name due to dispute with Greece, North Macedonia is set up to finally start the negotiation process for the EU membership, and being member of EUSAIR will only bring the positive assets, as the case with other non-EU countries.

At the same official opening, Mr. Rudolf Niessler, Director for Smart and Sustainable Growth and Programme Implementation, European Commission, DG REGIO, concludes that:

“Macro-regional strategy is a powerful tool to unite the Region, but also to include more stakeholders; and we will continue implementing the strategy and strengthening it.”

Linking the argument from Mr. Niessler to the theory, it is the part of the Commission acting as observer of the process, giving recommendations on the policies to be implemented.

Further, linking to the previous arguments of helping non-EU in the Pre-accession negotiations to the EU, the following argument is important to be mentioned:

During the official opening of the EUSAIR Forum, Ms. Ida Simonella, Secretary-General of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities, states that:

“Considering this strategy started from 2000 Adriatic Ionian Initiative, nowadays I would say EUSAIR has brought much development to the Region. Also for the countries who are going through the EU integration process, I think EUSAIR helps them through Pre-accession negotiations.”

Additionally, the argument given by Ms. Simonella confirms that the EUSAIR is accomplishing its objective in developing the Region.

With regards to the four thematic steering groups of EUSAIR, the objective of the strategy is to improve the research in the Region, and to work on the initiative of so called “brain circulation”, which allows researchers to move between universities and institutes in the Region.

As Mr. Danilo Nikolic, President of UniAdriatic states:

“Governments of Adriatic and Ionian region need to work together in research projects and to develop research centers; there are many common issues to be tackled and research needs to be further developed.”

EUSAIR is composed of various stakeholders, among which academia is also playing an important role. Therefore, based on multi-level governance approach, the active role of academia is more than necessary for successful implementation.

Further moving to the topic of growth in the Region, the literature review confirms that EUSAIR is bringing benefits and improving growth in the Region.

Relating to that, in the questionnaire, I proposed the question number six:

“To what extent the EUSAIR contributes to increasing the regional cooperation and growth of the Region?”

The majority of respondents chose the answer *moderately*. The second most chosen answer was *a little*, while the answer *a great extent* was chosen by only five of respondents.

It can be stated that EUSAIR is helping the Region’s growth, however not to such a great extent, but moderately instead. Relating the question number six of the questionnaire to the following argument:

At the EUSAIR Forum, Ms. Eleni Marianou, Secretary of Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, states that:

“EUSAIR objective is development of region and people, and here can be seen regional and macro-regional cooperation between Western Balkans and the EU; and the same process can be seen in the Baltic sea Region.”

The presented argument by Ms. Marianou is connected to the theory how all macro-regional strategies are formed on the same principle, and even though they have different geographical or other characteristics, in the end they all aim to promote both regional and transregional cooperation.

On the other hand, there are certain weak points in EUSAIR. The biggest one is regarding the funding for the strategy. As seen through the literature review, there are various funding sources, specifically the ones for non-EU countries, but even still, there are not enough funds for all projects to be implemented.

In order to test this argument, and to understand the point of view from stakeholders, I proposed a seventh question of the questionnaire:

“Could you please indicate what do you consider to be the biggest obstacle for the EUSAIR implementation?”

As expected, the majority of the answers dealt with funding problems, and lack of funding instruments for the implementation of projects.

Therefore, the majority of respondents are considering the funding resources to present the biggest obstacle. Relating this to the literature, the same argument is perceived there, as lack of funds is directly linked to the process of decision-making.

Apart from the financial obstacles, some of the answers focused on the initiative of the Three No's by the Commission, seeing it as an obstacle, while others argue that the EC should take more active role. Linking this to the literature review, it confirms that the role of the EC in the EUSAIR is central, but through the observer position. Hence, literature also mentions the initiative of Three No's which is giving more power to the EC.

Further on, the other comments included the views that the states are lacking in their commitment to the strategy, but also that during each EUSAIR presidency, every country is giving priority to its own national objectives, and not the objectives covered by the strategy. Relating to this, each country is approaching different possibility and priority through the EUSAIR participation.

The other obstacle for the EUSAIR implementation presents the differences among 8 countries involved in the strategy. Also, since the literature review presented the changes and the turbulent 1990s of the Region, the obstacle lays in the unresolved regional issues, as one respondent commented.

Lastly, one respondent shares the view that the obstacle is in the slow decision-making process, while one considers that the EUSAIR is taking rather the intergovernmental approach, than the multi-level governance one.

To further support and examine the comments above, it is necessary to introduce the notes taken at the plenary session of Integration for the people, development for the region at EUSAIR Forum, the panel discussion was among 8 Ministers from countries involved in EUSAIR, but also representatives of the European Commission and North Macedonia as special guest.

At the same panel discussion was also present Mr. Jean Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit for Macro-Regions, Transnational/Interregional Cooperation IPA, Enlargement – DG REGIO and Mr. Colin Wolfe, Head of Unit for Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes – DG NEAR.

During the panel discussion, Mr. Srdjan Darmanovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro states that:

“This one year of presidency helped us to gain experience in EUSAIR process, but also get more experience in multilevel governance approach; this year we were taught experience which will help us to progress in the EU integration process; also, during Montenegrin’s presidency of EUSAIR, we are happy that during our presidency, the EC invited the North Macedonia and San Marino to be future members of EUSAIR.”

Discussing this statement by Mr. Darmanovic, and considering the theory presented how *“non-EU countries are learning from EU countries to adapt their policies to the EU ones”*, This statement proves that through open-consultation process, the non-EU countries are benefiting from participating in the strategy. To further contribute to regional growth of other countries not involved in the strategy, the EC aims to include more countries in the Region to be part of strategy.

In addition, this argument is proved by the statement of Mr. Igor Crnadak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who states that:

“Through participation in EUSAIR, Bosnia and Herzegovina have seen the development in its national policies.”

This argument by Mr. Crnadak is also linked to the above mentioned comments by respondents in the questionnaire, who considered that each country is working towards its national objectives.

The next statement is by Ms. Jadranka Joksimovic, Minister of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia, who states the following:

“We will take the EUSAIR presidency on the 1st June; along with North Macedonia and San Marino we are hinterland countries; through our presidency, we will focus on better usage of

funds, work towards having equal funds for EU and non-EU countries, so to overcome the current imbalance of funds; apart from that, our focus of will be on improving infrastructure.”

Further on, linking this argument to the previous one, while EUSAIR presidency is changing yearly, each country seems to aim to accomplish the objectives of its national guidelines. Linking to the theory regarding the EUSAIR pillars, Serbia is a hinterland country, and a national coordinator for Connecting the Region pillar, alongside Italy.

In addition, as the theory presented and confirmed by statement of Ms. Joksimovic, the lack of funds is representing a big obstacle for implementing the strategy. Hence, according to this statement, the national stakeholders should take active role to contribute to successful EUSAIR decision-making process, including solving the issues of funding resources in national territories, if possible.

Ms. Andreja Metelko-Zgombic, State Secretary for European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia states that:

“During their presidency, the focus will be on improving cohesion policy.”

As earlier stated, each country is presenting different objectives to be accomplished during their presidency of EUSAIR, which is affecting the multi-level governance approach in the whole strategy.

On the other hand, Mr. Giorgos Katrougalos, Alternate Minister for European Affairs of the Republic of Greece states that:

“In Blue Growth, in which Greece is one of coordinators, it is lacking cluster, so it is necessary to make the link between research and cooperation better.”

Mr. Katrougalos puts the focus on multi-level governance approach and aims to include more actively the academia in the process.

The other two arguments, by Mr. Cardi and Mr. Bergant from Italy and Slovenia confirm that EUSAIR is needing more work, but also more focus on the sea, as presented in theory, the main focus of the strategy is on the seas.

Mr. Sebastiano Cardi, Director General for Political Affairs and Security of the Republic of Italy states that:

“More work is needed to be done in EUSAIR.”

Mr. Damjan Bergant, Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia Slovenian states that:

“There should be more synergies present and therefore more focus to be put on the sea.”

Interestingly, the next argument is by Mr. Nikola Dimitrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia who states that:

“Considering we have just received the invitation to join EUSAIR, I think the focus need to shift towards improving transport and infrastructure; and our participation in EUSAIR will help Region in terms of connectivity and transport.”

North Macedonia is a hinterland country, and the country has not been put as coordinator of any pillar of EUSAIR yet. Considering this argument, the country will end up alongside Italy and Serbia for the Connecting the Region pillar.

The representative of the European Commission, Mr. Jean Pierre Halkin, from DG REGIO, states:

“The satisfaction with this year presidency of EUSAIR, there has been seen success, and that strategy is going on the right path; he also confirmed that the invitation to future members of EUSAIR will prove to be successful for the Region, and overall the positive message will be taken to Brussels.”

The above argument is very important, as it confirms the statement from the theory. Through the argument of Mr. Halkin, from the European Commission, there is a confirmation on practical field of the Commission being an observer of the process, responsible for further recommendations regarding the strategy.

The other representative from the European Commission, Mr. Colin Wolfe, from DG NEAR confirms that:

“Involvement of non-EU countries in EUSAIR is showing successful regional cooperation.”

Linking this argument to the previous one, and confirming the theory presented, the Commission aims through the observer role to improve the cooperation in the Region, especially focusing on the cooperation of non-EU and EU countries, which is also linked to the argument given that EUSAIR can be considered as an enlargement strategy.

Taken from the Ministries panel, one can assume that each country is focusing on its own objective to be accomplished through the EUSAIR participation. While the hinterland countries will focus on infrastructure, rather than maritime affairs, in the case of Greece and Montenegro, the focus will be on developing the fisheries and aquaculture domains.

Relating to the research problem of the thesis and comparing the results of questionnaire and participant observation alongside literature review, it can be concluded that regarding the contribution of the national stakeholders in EUSAIR decision-making, the national stakeholders take a vital role.

Linking to the above statement, after analyzing the literature review and results obtained from questionnaire and participant observation, the national stakeholders are the ultimate decision-makers in the strategy. There is a limited authority to supranational institutions, which is mostly through the available funds and the Three No's initiative, but the national stakeholders are critical actors to achieve the goals through bargaining among national governments.

While the literature review argues that macro-regional cooperation should be a process of decision-making involving different stakeholders, which is also linked to the new form of governance in Europe.

Further on, the EUSAIR presidency changes yearly, therefore each year another country is taking a central role to lead the intergovernmental negotiations. Besides, the motivation of national stakeholders is to rather achieve its national objectives and to reach the national benefits, rather than the objectives covered by EUSAIR.

Therefore, in the case of EUSAIR, a multi-level governance model is not as strong, considering the strategy is also taking an intergovernmental approach, in which states are responsible for dictating further the pace of decision-making, with the supranational institutions as observers of the process.

To further support this, at the EUSAIR Forum, precisely at the Ministries panel, each Ministry presented different objective and goal to be accomplished during their presidency, which lays in benefiting their national needs.

Relating to the critic that the EUSAIR is considered as enlargement strategy, the supranational institutions seem to give power to national stakeholders, allowing them through

bargaining among national governments to adapt their policies, promote regional cooperation and achieve better results on the European integration path.

As the questionnaire presented, the most influential stakeholders through the EUSAIR decision-making are considered to be Coordinators of the EUSAIR pillars – which is composed of representatives of Ministries of countries involved in the strategy.

Therefore, to answer the main research problem, “What is the contribution of the national stakeholders in the EUSAIR decision-making?” the answer is that the national stakeholders are the main actors responsible for bargaining among national governments, dictating the pace of the further development of the strategy and responsible for including local stakeholders to take active role in the decision-making of the strategy.

It can be concluded that the contribution of national stakeholders in EUSAIR decision-making is essential, without their active involvement and cooperation in both regional and local sector, the EUSAIR decision-making is turning to slow process with little percentage for success.

As the comments from the questionnaire confirmed, the countries need to have aligned objectives and commitment to meet success in EUSAIR.

Further on, while national stakeholders, in this case, the states are serving as a “link” between supranational institutions and civil society, responsible for bargaining among national governments, dictating the pace of the decision-making, and further including other local stakeholders to take active role in the decision-making process, it is important to discuss the comment that EUSAIR is taking intergovernmental approach.

The macro-regional cooperation is best characterized by multi-level governance, which is involving different actors from different levels and sector.

However, in the particular case of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, there is rather a mixture of both intergovernmental and multi-level governance approach.

Comparing the literature review along with additional results from questionnaire and participant observation, while the supranational institutions are taking a central part due to funding resources, the states are also taking the vital role in the decision-making process.

It is important to keep in mind that the macro-regional strategies are more recent development of the EU, therefore the strategies are not yet properly formed to be conceptualized by the multi-level governance model, but rather a mixture of both intergovernmental and multi-level governance approach.

It means that on the one hand, the intergovernmental approach is putting the states as the main actors in the further progression of the development of the strategy, as can be seen through their bargaining and the willingness to expand the strategy with the approval of the Commission -“limited authority to supranational institutions”.

On the other hand, the multi-level governance approach is characterized by involvement of different regional, national and local stakeholders in the strategy, as presented in the four thematic steering groups of EUSAIR.

Even though, the respondents do agree that the multi-level governance model is moderately successful in the Region and that the Region is benefiting through EUSAIR.

However, with the recent invitation to the two more countries to join the strategy, I am expecting it will help to balance the differences among countries involved in the strategy and to help to include more actively the other stakeholders in the decision-making process, with the focus on the local ones.

Conclusion

The research undertaken in the thesis aimed to find out more about the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, namely the contribution of national stakeholders through the decision-making of the strategy.

To answer the research problem of the thesis, the appropriate approach was to use qualitative research methods. The main focus was on the literature review, with additional techniques of questionnaire and participant observation.

In the end, the results obtained through these techniques served to answer the research problem.

Comparing the results of questionnaire and participant observation alongside literature review, it can be concluded that regarding the contribution of the national stakeholders in EUSAIR decision-making, the national stakeholders are the main actors responsible for bargaining among national governments, dictating the pace of the further development of the strategy and responsible for including local stakeholders to take active role in the decision-making of the strategy.

Throughout the thesis, there is a critic that EUSAIR is rather a mixture of both intergovernmental and multi-level governance.

This critic is based on the fact that there are various level and sector actors involved in the strategy, but the states do play a more influential role.

Also, as presented in the discussion chapter, the states are rather focusing on their national objectives through the EUSAIR participation, rather than the objectives of the strategy. Therefore, their motivation through EUSAIR participation is to achieve its national objectives and improve its policies, rather than contribute to the objectives defined by the strategy.

Hence, the research took clearly illustrates the important role taken by national stakeholders.

The literature review was focusing more on the multi-level governance, and how different actors from different level and sector are working together towards achieving the common goals, I am expecting that this research contributes to the better overall understanding of macro-regional cooperation.

Besides, this research serves as a critique that both Commission and national stakeholders should seek to involve actively local stakeholders, with the focus on non-governmental sector.

While the EUSAIR is still a recent strategy, it is needed much more focus and equal commitment taken by all stakeholders to achieve the objectives defined by the strategy.

The literature review alongside results presented various existing differences among countries involved in the strategy, and I am expecting that with the newest invitations to North Macedonia and San Marino, the strategy will overcome those differences and further be strengthened.

Moreover, further research is needed to be undertaken to examine the bargaining among national stakeholders in the decision-making of EUSAIR, and the appropriate qualitative method would be face-to-face interviews.

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
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Appendices

Appendix 1: The questionnaire and its results

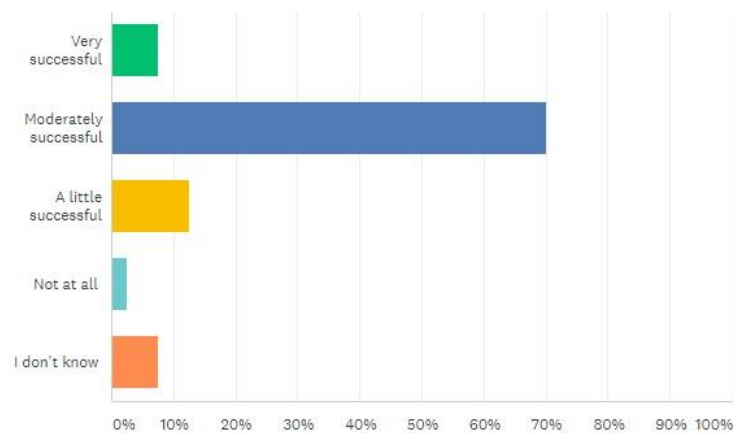
Figure 1: The first question of the questionnaire and the answers

Q1

 Customize  Save as ▼

Overall, how successful would you consider the Multi-level governance approach in the EUSAIR?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very successful	7.50%	3
Moderately successful	70.00%	28
A little successful	12.50%	5
Not at all	2.50%	1
I don't know	7.50%	3
TOTAL		40

Figure 2: The second question of the questionnaire and the answers

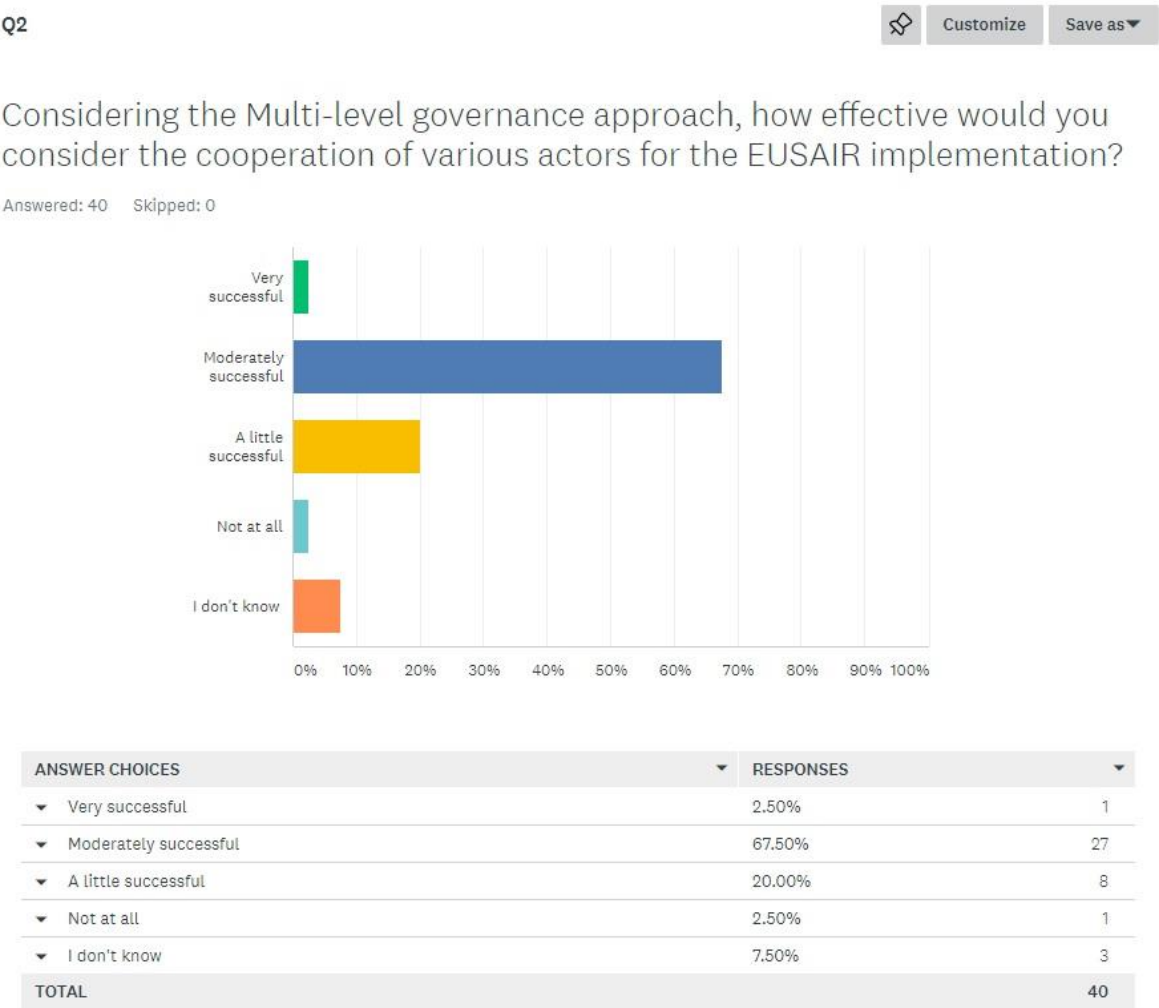




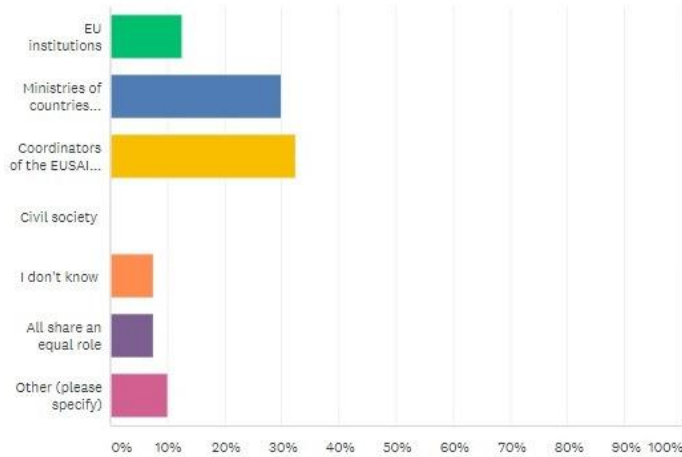
Figure 3: The third question of the questionnaire and the answers

Q3

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Which of these stakeholders do you consider to be taking the most important role through the EUSAIR decision-making?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ EU institutions	12.50%	5
▼ Ministries of countries involved in the EUSAIR	30.00%	12
▼ Coordinators of the EUSAIR pillars	32.50%	13
▼ Civil society	0.00%	0
▼ I don't know	7.50%	3
▼ All share an equal role	7.50%	3
▼ Other (please specify) Responses	10.00%	4

RESPONSES (4) [WORD CLOUD](#) [TAGS \(0\)](#)

 Sentiments: OFF 

☐ Add tags ▼ [Filter by tag ▼](#)

Showing 4 responses

☐ None, lack of clear decision making powers is a EUSAIR governance handicap

8/5/2019 2:18 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags ▼](#)

☐ All should share an equal role.

7/25/2019 7:59 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags ▼](#)

☐ Pillar Coordinators and National Coordinators.

7/24/2019 7:08 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags ▼](#)

☐ Coordinators of Pillars and EU Institutions

7/22/2019 11:11 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)



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TOTAL

40

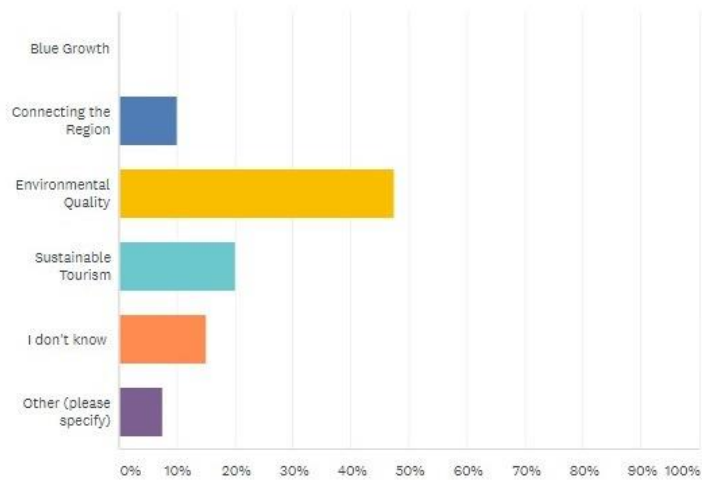
Figure 4: The fourth question of the questionnaire and the answers

Q4

 Customize  Save as ▼

In which pillar of the EUSAIR, would you consider the role of civil society is the most important?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Blue Growth	0.00% 0
Connecting the Region	10.00% 4
Environmental Quality	47.50% 19
Sustainable Tourism	20.00% 8
I don't know	15.00% 6
Other (please specify)	7.50% 3

RESPONSES (3) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

 Sentiments: OFF ☐ Add tags ▼ Filter by tag ▼Search responses  

Showing 3 responses

☐ all of them

8/6/2019 2:59 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)[Add tags ▼](#)☐ in all

7/25/2019 7:47 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)[Add tags ▼](#)☐ all of them

7/18/2019 2:33 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)[Add tags ▼](#)

TOTAL

40

Figure 5: The fifth question of the questionnaire and the answers

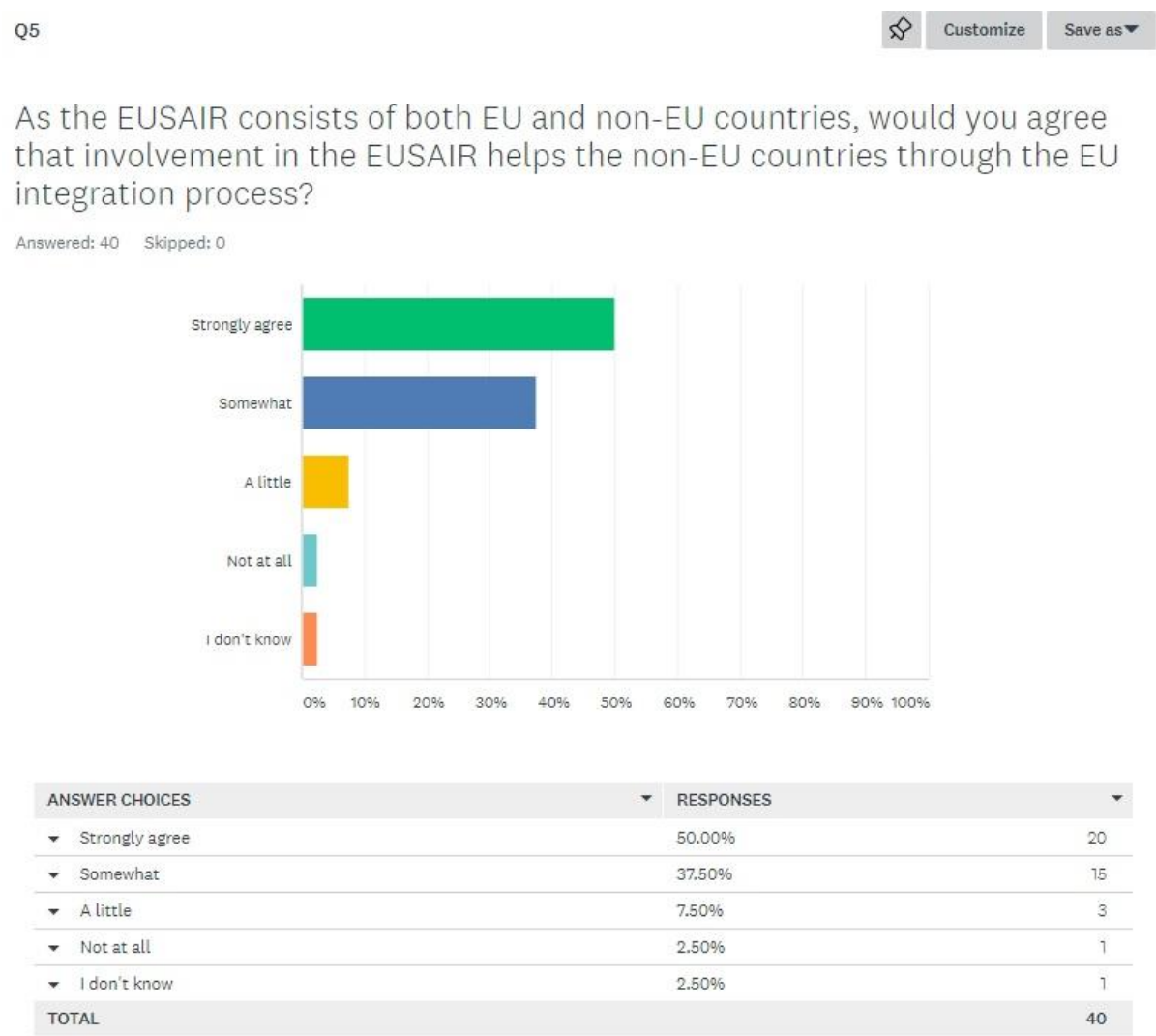




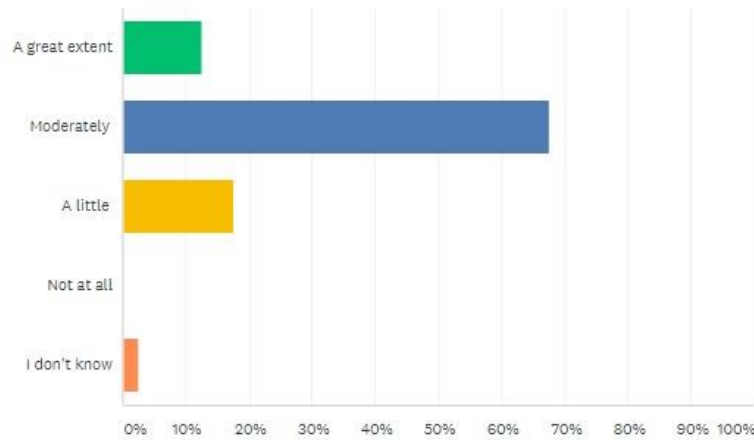
Figure 6: The sixth question of the questionnaire and the answers

Q6

 Customize  Save as ▼

To what extent the EUSAIR contributes to increasing the regional cooperation and growth of the Region?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ A great extent	12.50%	5
▼ Moderately	67.50%	27
▼ A little	17.50%	7
▼ Not at all	0.00%	0
▼ I don't know	2.50%	1
TOTAL		40

Figure 7: The seventh question of the questionnaire and the answers

Q7

Save as

Could you please indicate what do you consider to be the biggest obstacle for the EUSAIR implementation?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 11

RESPONSES (29) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Sentiments: OFF

Apply to selected Filter by tag

Search responses

Showing 29 responses

- ☐ lack of capacity for non EU members, and lack of strategies and priorities.
8/20/2019 1:00 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ 1. The Strategy is not yet popular among national stakeholders. 2. The lack of a dedicated financial instrument supporting EUSAIR labelled projects
8/13/2019 1:51 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ There should be more cooperation.
8/7/2019 11:19 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ creation of internationally agreed projects of strategic importance is very complex and long lasting process. But once agreed these projects are much better and with significantly higher value added when implemented. This fact should be recognised when accessing funds. Pre-agreed transregional projects should be treated favourably when allocating funds as they are for benefit of all, accepted by all stakeholders and as EU MRS project also in line with EU acquis. As this is not (yet) the case access to funds for EUSAIR projects is biggest obstacle.
8/5/2019 2:18 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ lack of own funds to implement the strategy
8/5/2019 2:18 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ At the moment, the biggest obstacle is traducing concepts and project ideas in real implementation, to kick off the process concretely. Resources are becoming available (through INTERREG programmes and the Facility Point activity), however these must be more channelled towards the objectives of the EUSAIR Action Plan.
8/5/2019 12:04 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Lack of dedicated (i.e. ad hoc) financial resources. Weak political support. Action Programme of 2014 in need of updating, while EUSAIR organisation is becoming slow and rather bureaucratic.
8/1/2019 5:06 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ 1) The coordination process for the projects implementation in EUSAIR countries.
7/27/2019 10:28 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ The biggest obstacle are financial recourses taking into account that there is no special fund/financial instrument dedicated to EUSAIR projects.
7/24/2019 7:08 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ it simply just takes time to overcome the differences among the countries (2 very traditional big countries, 2 small new members, 3 candidate countries, 1 non candidate). The development stage in this countries differ very much. It takes a lot of time to build individual and institutional capacities and trust among the stakeholders.
7/24/2019 6:25 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ 3xNO
7/24/2019 6:16 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Coordination issues as well as at times political problems related to unresolved regional issues
7/23/2019 5:00 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Intergovernmental approach
7/23/2019 4:29 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Lack of financial resources dedicated to the initiative
7/23/2019 2:37 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Every presidency give main emphasis to their own priority. They do not stick to the main focus of the strategy. EU institutions could steer the process more effectively.
7/22/2019 3:09 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ commitment from country authorities
7/19/2019 10:31 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)

- ☐ different priorities and possibilities of countries/national bodies involved especially with the lack of DIRECT funding for specific macro-regional projects that could be financed on equal terms(as project, regardless of the MS status)
7/26/2019 1:14 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Lack of national dedication on the governmental level.
7/25/2019 7:59 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ The willingness to cooperate, The EC must be more present at the meeting and also in the coordination process. The Countries involved will not cooperate if the EC do not make the path or way to go.
7/25/2019 7:47 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ 1. Funds for implementation macro-regional projects
7/25/2019 6:54 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Lack of financial resources for its implementation.
7/24/2019 2:05 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Decision making
7/24/2019 10:26 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ The lack of substantial financial resources to support the implementation of the strategy.
7/24/2019 9:33 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ The 3 NOs and the difficulties in the governance system of EUSAIR as achieving a common understanding between 8 different Countries is very difficult. There is however significant Progress since the start of the strategy.
7/24/2019 8:22 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Supporting financial resources are missing.
7/19/2019 8:11 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Lack of a funding source only for EUSAIR projects.
7/19/2019 7:54 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ All countries should be equally committed (to the possible extent) to EUSAIR implementation and use it as one of the most important initiatives for the implementation of the UI and EU obligations, such as Barcelona Convention, EU directives and others.
7/18/2019 2:34 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ slowness of the decision-making process
7/18/2019 2:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- ☐ Budget and unclear actions (no concrete deliverables) to reach the objective.
7/18/2019 1:11 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)

Figure 8: The eighth question of the questionnaire and the answers

Q8

Save as

Lastly, do you have any comment or something to add?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 25

RESPONSES (15) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Sentiments: OFF

Apply to selected Filter by tag Search responses

Showing 15 responses

<input type="checkbox"/> It is great macro-regional approach to identify and find a best solutions for the some problematic issue in cooperation between EU and non-EU countries 8/20/2019 1:00 PM	<input type="checkbox"/> I firmly believe that multi level governance approach, and macro regional level of cooperation is one the unique approach and has special regional dimension. 7/24/2019 7:08 AM
<input type="checkbox"/> n/a 8/13/2019 1:51 PM	<input type="checkbox"/> I still think the region in on the right way and even not very sucessful yet, there is improvement shown. 7/24/2019 6:25 AM
<input type="checkbox"/> EU MRS are because of their multi level governance the tool at our hands that can provide answers to numerous questions of todays EU where politicians failed (Brexit). So political ownership of EU MRS should be strenghtened. Instead of inventing new solutions we should use what we have in our hands and fully use the potential of EU MRS 8/6/2019 2:59 PM	<input type="checkbox"/> good luck with your research 7/24/2019 6:16 AM
<input type="checkbox"/> More power to EUSAIR structures, more flexibility in new decisions, quicker implementation. 8/5/2019 2:18 PM	<input type="checkbox"/> --- 7/23/2019 2:37 PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Why Malta which is on the Ionian sea can not be Member to EUSAIR? 8/1/2019 5:06 PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Best wishes for your work. 7/22/2019 3:09 PM
<input type="checkbox"/> -More cooperation btw all the stakeholders involved for the implementation of the strategy. - More authority from the National Coordinators in their domestic environment to get the things done. - More support from the national government that the political will to be dismantled into concreat results from the Strategy. 7/27/2019 10:28 PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Regional and sub-regional cooperation is of crucial importance for the sustainable development at national, regional and global level. 7/18/2019 2:34 PM
<input type="checkbox"/> I must admit I have never heard of EUSAIR.... Why did you not explain what it is about? 7/25/2019 8:38 AM	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a 7/18/2019 2:33 PM
<input type="checkbox"/> no 7/25/2019 6:54 AM	

Appendix 2: The program of the 4th Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and list of participants



Montenegro
Prime Minister's Office
European Integration Office



Montenegro
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Programme

Version 02

IV FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

<Integration for the people, development for the region>

6-8 MAY, 2019

Budva (Hotel Splendid), Montenegro

The 4th EUSAIR Forum jointly organized by Montenegro and the European Commission and with the support of the strategic project EUSAIR Facility Point will take place in Budva, Montenegro on 7 – 8 May 2019. Before its official opening a series of side events will be organized on 6 May 2019. For the purpose of greater visibility and in order to gather a wide number of participants from the Adriatic and Ionian Region, Montenegro organises the 4th EUSAIR Forum in coordination with the 2nd Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities. The two events represent joint effort of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Integration Office and Chamber of Commerce. There will be a great and unique opportunity for promotion of deeper and wider cooperation between EUSAIR-EU member states and candidate/potential candidate countries participating in the EUSAIR with special focus on the fields of Blue Growth and Tourism.



This event is co-funded by the European Commission

6 MAY 2019, MONDAY	
Side events	
11:00-14:00	ERASMUS Young Entrepreneurs <i>Venue: Hotel Montenegro (Tara Conference room)</i>
10:00-13:30	EUSAIR Facility Point Workshop For Young Journalists <i>Venue: Hotel Splendid (Glass room)</i>
09:00- 17:30	ADRION Programme Annual Event <i>Venue: Hotel Splendid (Balšić Conference room)</i>
15:00-18:00	AI NURECC SEMINAR on “Skills Development and Training Action to promote access to EU programmes/funds focused on Industrial Transition and Entrepreneurial Discovery within the Smart Specialisation Strategies” <i>Venue: Hotel Montenegro (Zeta Conference room)</i>
15:00-16:30	Cultural Routes in the Adriatic and Ionian Region <i>Venue: Hotel Montenegro (Tara Conference room)</i>
16:00-19:00	Sightseeing – field trip to Kotor (Boka Bay) <i>Starting point: in front of Hotel Splendid</i>
16:00- 19:00	Meeting of the All Committee of Senior Officials
19:30 – 21:30	Welcome cocktail <i>Venue: Hotel Splendid</i>
7 MAY 2019, TUESDAY	
08:00-08:30	Registration for B2B Venue: Hotel Montenegro
08:30-11:00	B2B meetings <i>The B2B session aims to facilitate meetings and exchange between SMEs, universities, chambers of commerce, clusters and other stakeholders in the Adriatic and Ionian Region with the objective to find partners for new projects and/or explore new business opportunities.</i> <i>The session will be organised by Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), Ministry of Economy of Montenegro in cooperation with DG GROW.</i> Venue: Hotel Montenegro (Tara Conference room)



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09:30-11:00	<p>Pillar Session A: EUSAIR Pillar III Environmental Quality <i>Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) as a cross-cutting theme of the TSGs of the EUSAIR</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Mitja Bricelj, EUSAIR Pillar 3 Coordinator, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Government of the Republic of Slovenia • Mr Senad Oprašić, EUSAIR Pillar 3 Coordinator, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina • Ms Ivana Stojanović, Advisor in the Directorate for Climate Change and Mediterranean affairs, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Montenegro • Mr Giacomo Luciani, European Commission, DG Environment, Directorate E - Implementation & Support to Member States • Ms Silvia Sartori, Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea • Mr Emiliano Ramieri, Coherent Network of MPAs in the Adriatic • Ms Marina Marković, PAP/RAC (Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre) • Mr Francesco Fatone, Università Politecnica delle Marche • Mr Ilias Mavroeidis, United Nations Environment Programme MAP • Ms Anuška Štoka, TSG 3 EUSAIR, monitoring and evaluation, external expert of Municipality of Izola <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid (Panorama Conference room)</p>
10:00-11:00	Meeting of the All Committee of Senior Officials (if needed)
From 08:00	<p>Registration during the whole morning Venue: Hotel Splendid</p>
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE IV EUSAIR FORUM	
11:00-12:30	<p>Welcome/opening speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Duško Marković, Prime Minister of Montenegro • H.E Ambassador Aivo Orav, Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro <p>Moderator: Ms Milica Pavićević, Journalist</p> <p>Keynote addresses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Corina Crețu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy (Video Message) • Mr Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (Video Message) • Mr Vlastimir Golubović, President of the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro • Mr Rudolf Niessler, Director for Smart and Sustainable Growth and Programme Implementation, European Commission, DG REGIO • Ms Mirjana Čagalj, President of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce • Mr Danilo Nikolić, President of UniAdriion • Ms Ida Simonella, Secretary-General of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities • Ms Eleni Marianou, Secretary General, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>



This event is co-funded by the European Commission

12:30-14:00	<p>Plenary session I: Sustainable aquaculture and Fisheries in the Adriatic and Ionian region: challenges and opportunities</p> <p><i>Panel discussion</i> Moderator: Mr Aleksandar Joksimović, PhD, Scientific Advisor, University of Montenegro-Institute of Marine Biology Kotor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Đuro Žugić, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro • Mr Mate Franjičević, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relation, Bosnia and Herzegovina • Ms Olympia Teligiordou, Deputy Minister of Rural Development and Food, Greece • Mr Christos Economou, Head of Unit for Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security, DG MARE, European Commission <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
14:00- 15:00	<p>Networking Lunch Venue: Hotel Splendid (restaurant)</p>
15:00-16:30	<p>Plenary session II: Tackling seasonality in the Adriatic-Ionian Region through development of sustainable and high-quality tourism product</p> <p><i>Panel discussion</i> Moderator: Ms Sanja Čizmar, PhD, Hotel and Destination Consulting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Pavle Radulović, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Montenegro • Mr Blendi Klosi, Minister of Tourism and Environment, Albania • Ms Eva Štraus Podlogar, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Slovenia • Mr Jean Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit for Macro-Regions, Transnational/Interregional Cooperation IPA, Enlargement – DG REGIO <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
16:30- 17:00	<p>Coffee break</p>



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17:00- 20:00	EUSAIR Pillar Sessions
17:00-18:30	<p>Session B:</p> <p>EUSAIR Pillar II Connecting the region, Energy Networks sub-group <i>How can EUSAIR contribute to the integrated energy and climate plans: challenges and future steps</i></p> <p>Chair: Ms Mirjana Filipović, Secretary of State, Ministry of Mines and Energy, Republic of Serbia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Nebojša Nakićenović, Deputy Director General and Deputy CEO, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Laxenburg, Austria • Mr Eleftherios Antonopoulos, Policy Officer, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Greece • Mr Alberto Biancardi, Director, International Relations, Energy Services Operator (GSE) Italy • Ms Dubravka Bosnjak, Regional Project Manager, GLZ, Bosnia and Herzegovina • Mr Sergio Garribba, Coordinator, EUSAIR Pillar 2, Sub-Group on Energy Networks, Italy • Ms Nora Nikolopoulou, International Relations & Exports Office, Chamber of Achaia, Greece <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
18:30- 20:00	<p>Session C:</p> <p>EUSAIR Pillar II Connecting the region, Transport sub-group <i>How can EUSAIR contribute to the extension of the TEN-T networks towards south-East Europe: challenges for the EUSAIR masterplan and future steps</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Alain Baron, European Commission, Directorate General for Mobility and Transport and Transport Community Treaty • Mr Pierluigi Coppola, TSG 2 Pillar Coordinator, The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport • Mr Andrea Mosconi, Chamber of Commerce Ancona • Mr Athanassios Pallis, University of Aegean • Mr Albert Koljgeci, European Commission, Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
18:30	<p>Official dinner of ministers of foreign affairs hosted by H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs Prof. Dr. Srdan Darmanović (format 1)</p> <p>Venue: Hotel Aman, Sveti Stefan</p>
20:30	<p>Cultural event with dinner for all participants Venue: Hotel Splendid</p>



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8 MAY 2019, WEDNESDAY	
08:30–10:00	<p>Session D:</p> <p>EUSAIR Pillar I Blue Growth <i>Small scale fisheries in the Adriatic and Ionian Region: challenges and opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Slavica Pavlović, Director General for fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro • Mr Luca Bolognini, Researcher at National Research Council (CNR), Institute for Biological Resources and Marine Biotechnologies (IRBIM) • Mr Christos Economou, Head of Unit for Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security, DG MARE, European Commission • Ms Anna Carlson, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations General Fisheries Commission For The Mediterranean • Ms Maria Oikonomou, Directorate-General for Fisheries Department for Capture Fisheries Management • Mr Aleksandar Joksimović, PhD, University of Montenegro, Institute for Marine Biology • Mr Mato Oberan, Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts <p>Venue: Hotel Montenegro (Tara Conference room)</p>
08:30–10:00	<p>Session E:</p> <p>EUSAIR Pillar IV Sustainable Tourism <i>Skill gaps and weaknesses of the tourism labour market – how to match skills to sectors needs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Jean-Pierre Halkin, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, Head of Unit Macro-regions, Transnational/Interregional Cooperation, IPA, Enlargement • Ms Blanka Belošević, TSG 4 Pillar Coordinator, Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Croatia • Mr Ray F. Iunius, Lausanne Hospitality Consulting, Director of Business Development • Ms Silvia Barbone, Managing Director, Jlag and Fest / Head of EU Projects and Partnerships at Federturismo Confindustria • Ms Panagiota Dionysopoulou, Ministry of Tourism, Director General for Tourism Policy, Greece • Ms Đurđica Perović, University of Montenegro, Faculty for Tourism and Hotel Management • Ms Ivana Živković, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Department for European Territorial Cooperation • Mrs Sandra Čanić, Human Resources Manager, Radisson Blu & Resort & Spa, Split <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid (Panorama Conference room)</p>
09:50-10:00	<p>Family photo (ministers only) Format: Heads of Delegations/Special guests</p>
10:00- 12:00	<p>Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR ministerial meeting (delegates only)</p>



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10:30-12:00	<p>Plenary session III: Science, Innovation and Growth: A vision for the Adriatic-Ionian Region</p> <p><i>Panel discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Sanja Damjanović, PhD, Minister of Science of Montenegro • Mr Aleš Gnamuš, PhD, Joint Research Centre European Commission • Mr Darko Petrušić, PhD, Directorate General for Science and Research, Montenegro • Ms Nina Radulović, PhD, Adviser to the Minister of Science and Member of the Council for Scientific Research Activity, Montenegro <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
12:00-12:30	Coffee break
12:00-12:30	Art exhibition with presence of ministers and young artists from the Adriatic and Ionian countries
12:30-12:50	Press Conference (Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, European Commission)
12:30-13:00	<p>Report from the EUSAIR pillar and B2B sessions</p> <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
13:00	<p>Plenary session IV: Integration for the people, development for the region</p> <p><i>Panel discussion</i> Moderator: Ms Jelena Otašević, journalist RTCG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 ministers/high level representatives of EUSAIR countries + North Macedonia (special guest) • Mr Jean Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit for Macro-Regions, Transnational/Interregional Cooperation IPA, Enlargement – DG REGIO • Mr Colin Wolfe, Head of Unit for Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes – DG NEAR • Handover of the Chairmanship to Serbia • Closing remarks: H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs PhD Srđan Darmanović <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid, Conference room Dinastija</p>
14:00	Official lunch hosted by H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs Prof. Dr. Srđan Darmanović (format 1)
14:30	<p>Farewell Lunch for all participants</p> <p>Venue: Hotel Splendid</p>



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