Chairpersons of the National Coordinators Groups of the EU macro-regional strategies (4 TRIO MRS Presidencies) and the European Commission

Guidelines for cooperation

The meetings of the 4 TRIO Presidencies of EU Macro-regional Strategies (MRS) are a cross-MRS cooperation format led by the presidencies of macro-regional strategies. These meetings offer an exchange platform for incumbent MRS TRIO presidencies. The following guidelines aim at further exploring development of the MRS TRIO Presidencies cooperation format.

**Background**

The MRS TRIO Presidencies group as a cooperation format was initiated by Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2020 and the Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The first meeting of Chairpersons of the National Coordinators groups (TRIO Presidencies) of EU Macro-regional Strategies (MRS) and the European Commission was held on 20 February 2020 within the EU Macro-Regional Strategies Week organised by the European Commission.

The mission of the MRS TRIO Presidencies cooperation format was defined as aiming to enhance structured and continuous exchanges among Chairpersons of the National Coordinators groups (MRS TRIO Presidencies) of the MRS and the European Commission to strengthen political leadership of the MRS towards internal governance and implementation of MRS and towards outside stakeholders. Moreover, the format seeks to enhance coordination and streamline approaches to processes and horizontal topics relevant to all macro-regions. Besides, the meetings are to reinforce the strategic coordination of actions towards the EU, national and regional institutions.

In its first meeting, MRS TRIO Presidencies agreed on the following topics as points of interest for joint cooperation within the MRS TRIO format: (I) political commitment, (II) governance support, (III) embedding process, (IV) capacity building and (V) communication.

**Basic concept and mission**

The common goal is to secure continuity and joint commitment towards cross-MRS cooperation – as also highlighted by the 2020 Council conclusions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (03/12/2020). As follow up, it is hence necessary to further explore ways how to implement this joint endeavor and provide a solid yet flexible cooperation framework for this cross-MRS cooperation format.

To enhance the effectiveness and coherence of MRS TRIO Presidencies meeting format, and following the joint MRS will for closer cooperation with maximum flexibility, it is suggested that future meetings lay focus on:

* Creating a long-term vision for cross MRS cooperation among TRIO Presidencies of the MRS.
* Defining common strategic topics for exchange and cooperation relevant for all MRS.
* Providing objectives and expectations for the meetings.
* Agreeing on a system of accountability, while providing flexibility by not creating additional structures and administrative burdens.
* Establishing coherence and continuity principles.

The existing mission of the format of Chairpersons of the National Coordinators Groups of the EU macro-regional strategies (4 TRIO MRS Presidencies) and the European Commission can be defined as follows:

"The 4 MRS TRIO Presidencies format is the main platform for the EU MRS Presidencies and EC for a structured and continuous process of exchange and capacity building towards a set of commonly defined topics. It also aims at cooperation towards MRS strategic governance and coordination between the MRS and external stakeholders."

**Operational principles**

Towards the 4 TRIO MRS Presidencies format, each EU MRS is represented by the incumbent Presidency of that particular EU MRS, during its entire mandate, accompanied by its past and future Presidencies.

The Incumbent Presidencies of EU MRS represent the whole macro-regional strategy and speak on behalf of the TRIO, unless otherwise agreed by the all four EU MRS Presidencies.

MRS TRIO Presidencies shall be duly empowered by their MRS governance structures to represent the view of the Strategy. They will report to their respective EU MRS governance structures on the outcomes of the meetings of 4 TRIO MRS Presidencies.

The meetings of MRS TRIO Presidencies are organised at least once per year. More meetings may be organised, if necessary and agreed upon among the 4 TRIO MRS Presidencies format.

Pursuing a rotation principle, each MRS Presidency is encouraged to organise one 4 TRIO MRS Presidency meeting.

The meetings are chaired by the EU MRS Presidency that organises the meeting. The MRS TRIO Presidencies shall be represented by the National Coordinators of the countries representing the TRIO Presidency in each EU MRS.

The meetings can be attended by the Representatives of the European Commission, Representatives of EU MRS Governance support structures and the Interact Programme. Upon proposal of the EU MRS Presidency organising and chairing the meeting, other external stakeholders may participate in the meetings as guests.

Agenda of the meetings shall be prepared by the chairing MRS Presidency

Each chairing Presidency prepares, a report of the meeting together with operational conclusions. Presidencies participating in the meeting can submit their comments to this report.

Izola, 20 September 2023