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REPORT

on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies
(2017/2040(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Andrea Cozzolino

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS

Background

Macro-regional strategies (MRS) have gained importance in recent years as a platform for transnational cooperation between Member States but also with third countries. They provide an integrated framework to address mutual challenges and exploit common potential. In the 2014-2020 programming period, MRS have been incorporated in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) programmes.

Currently, four existing MRS (Baltic, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine) are bringing together 19 Member States and 8 non-EU countries. Some Member States participate in more than one MRS.

MRS are set within the boundaries of the “three no’s” principle: no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no new EU legislation.

Financial support does come in form of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) transnational cooperation programmes which are financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Four such programmes are supporting the implementation of MRS (total operational programme budget in brackets):

- Baltic Sea (EUR 333,414,456)
- Danube Area (EUR 262,989,839)
- Adriatic-Ionian (EUR 117,918,198)
- Alpine Space (EUR 139,751,456)

Countries are otherwise encouraged to use different funding sources (ESI Funds and other EU instruments, IPA, ENI, national, regional and local resources, private sources etc.) to contribute to the common goals outlined in the MRS.

As the Commission states¹, MRS are about more than just funding because they “bring citizens of different Member States together and improve their social and economic living conditions through trans-border cooperation.”

MRS have different governance structures and experience different challenges. Some problems are, to a varying degree, common, such as ensuring an adequate level of political commitment and making enough resources available.

The Commission has a coordination role in the implementation of MRS.

In 2010, the Commission, following requests from the Council, has set up a Macroregional strategies High Level Group with a mission “to assist it in the exercise of its powers and responsibilities concerning the operation of macro-regional strategies” and a specific task to

¹ Commission communication of 14 December 2015 entitled ‘Investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds’ (COM(2015)0639 final)

“advise the Commission on the coordination and monitoring of macroregional strategies”¹. Its members are representatives of Member States and non-EU countries participating in MRS. The representatives of the Committee of the Regions and European Investment Bank are also invited to attend the meetings as observers.

Future

Discussions about the post-2020 cohesion policy are well underway and it is high time to discuss the future of MRS in the context of this policy.

Several questions should be answered in respect of the future of MRS:

- ownership and political commitment - how to ensure that all participating countries invest enough resources in the MRS?
- result-orientation - are there opportunities to make the results of MRS more measurable?
- scope - are there reasons to expand the MRS concept?

The Council, while recognising the importance of MRS and reaffirming the “three no’s” principle, “remains open to examine any commonly agreed and mature initiative of Member States facing the same challenges in a defined geographic area aimed at setting up a new macro-regional strategy”².

The REGI committee will organise a workshop with experts on MRS in its meeting on 12-13 July 2017 in order to support the work on this implementation report. The findings will be reflected in the amendments to the draft report.

¹ Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities - Macroregional strategies High Level Group <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2455>

² Council conclusions on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/cooperate/macro_region_strategy/pdf/concl_implementation_macro_region_strategy_en.pdf

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (2017/2040(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and in particular Title XVIII thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (hereinafter ‘the CPR’)¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings³,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 25 April 2017 on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies,
- having regard to the Commission report of 16 December 2016 on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (COM(2016)0805) and the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2016)0443),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2009 concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (COM(2009)0248),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 December 2010 entitled ‘European Union Strategy for Danube Region’ (COM(2010)0715),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 June 2014 concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (COM(2014)0357),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 28 July 2015 concerning a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (COM(2015)0366),
- having regard to the Commission report of 20 May 2014 concerning the governance of

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

² OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 259.

³ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 303.

macro-regional strategies (COM(2014)0284),

- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 December 2015 entitled ‘Investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds’ (COM(2015)0639),
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 February 2011 on the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2012 on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2012 on the EU Cohesion Policy Strategy for the Atlantic Area³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 28 October 2015 on an EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2016 on an EU Strategy for the Alpine region⁵,
 - having regard to the study of January 2015 entitled ‘New role of macro-regions in European Territorial Cooperation’, published by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies,
 - having regard to the Interact report of February 2017 entitled ‘Added value of macro-regional strategies – programme and project perspective’,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure, and Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A8-0389/2017),
- A. whereas a macro-region can be defined as **a geographical** area including **regions** from a number of different countries associated with one or more common features or challenges⁶;
- B. whereas macro-regional strategies (MRS) have been established in areas representing the natural evolution of the EU in terms of cross-border cooperation; whereas they are important, as they are able to mobilise public and private actors, civil society and academia, and to mobilise resources towards achieving common EU policy goals;

¹ OJ CE 188, 28.6.2012, p. 30.

² OJ C 349 E, 29.11.2013, p. 1.

³ OJ C 353 E, 3.12.2013, p. 122.

⁴ OJ C 355, 20.10.2017, p. 23.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0336.

⁶ Schmitt et al. (2009), ‘EU macro-regions and macro-regional strategies – A scoping study’, Nordregio electronic working paper 2009:4.

- C. whereas MRS provide a platform for deeper and wider interaction at cross-sectoral, regional and cross-border level between EU Member States and neighbouring countries for the purposes of addressing common challenges, joint planning and fostering cooperation between and improving the integration of different partners and policy sectors, including in the areas of environment and biodiversity protection, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, waste treatment and water supply, maritime spatial planning, and integrated coastal management systems; welcomes, in this context, the efforts made to promote cooperation between the ESI funds and the IPA;
- D. whereas macro-regions are involved in the implementation of relevant long-term, interconnected, cross-cutting political activities, as these macro-regions are linked to cohesion policy through the MRS objectives embedded in their OPs and set up projects through smart synergies; whereas macro-regions thereby contribute more effectively to achieving MRS goals, attracting private investment, demonstrating trust, and engaging in dialogue, cross-border cooperation and solidarity;
- E. whereas MRS are based on the ‘three no’s’ principle of no new funding, no new structures and no new legislation within the existing EU political framework;
- F. whereas pre-existing cooperation mechanisms at EU level and between Member States and regions facilitate the implementation of MRS, particularly in the early phases;
- G. whereas the Commission adopts a single report on the implementation of all four existing EU MRS every two years, mentioning their successes, as well as where further improvements need to be made, with the next report due by the end of 2018; considers, in this framework, that an assessment is needed of the aspects pertaining to the environment, as one of the pillars of sustainable development;

Macro-regional strategies as platforms for cooperation and coordination

1. The relevance of the MRS has been underlined by the globalisation process, which has rendered individual countries interdependent and necessitates solutions to the cross-border problems involved;
2. Recognises that – to a varying degree – elements on which the quality of implementation depends, such as commitment, ownership, resources and governance, remain difficult to overcome in achieving the pre-determined goals;
3. Stresses that MRS continue to make an invaluable and innovative contribution to cross-border, cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation in Europe, the potential of which has not yet been sufficiently explored, with a view to boosting connectivity and consolidating the economic ties and knowledge transfer between regions and countries; notes, however, that – as a result of the process of agreeing on joint actions at multi-level and multi-country/regional level – access to EU funds for MRS projects remains a challenge;
4. Considers that the MRS and associated environmental programmes are useful instruments for making the benefits of European cooperation visible to citizens, and therefore urges all parties to fully commit to the strategies and play their part in their implementation;
5. Is of the opinion that multi-level governance with a proper role for the regions within its

framework should be a cornerstone of any macro-regional strategy from its inception, involving regional and local communities and public-, private- and 3rd-sector stakeholders in the process; encourages the Member States and regions involved therefore to develop appropriate governance structures and working arrangements to facilitate cooperation, including joint planning, boosting funding opportunities and a bottom-up approach;

6. Encourages improved coordination and better partnerships, both vertical and horizontal, between the different public and private actors, academia and NGOs, as well as international organisations operating in this field, and the various policies at EU, national, regional and local level in order to facilitate and improve the implementation of the MRS and cross-border cooperation; calls on the Commission to encourage the participation of these stakeholders, inter alia, in the MRS governing boards, while respecting the general application of EU principles;
7. Emphasises the importance of sufficient human resources and administrative capacity for the competent national and regional authorities in order to ensure that the political commitment translates into effective implementation of the strategies; highlights, in this regard, the value of the Structural Reform Support Programme, which can provide assistance in capacity - building and effective support for the development and financing of MRS projects upon the request of a Member State; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to actively promote the dissemination and application of good administrative practice and experience from the successful implementation of MRS;
8. Underlines the fact that MRS must be flexible enough to be adjusted and respond effectively to unforeseen events and needs which may affect the regions involved, the Member States and the EU in general; considers that the implementation of MRS needs to take account of specific regional and local conditions; highlights the necessity of the Commission's coordinating role in this regard, also with a view to fine-tuning the specific objectives of each strategy;

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

9. Welcomes the results achieved since the launch of the strategy in 2009, particularly with regard to the cooperation mechanisms not only between (i.e. within the Council at the relevant ministerial meetings), but also within the regions and countries involved, such as within the parliament or government; notes that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is a stable cooperation framework with more than 100 flagship initiatives and new networks;
10. Underlines the remaining challenges, in particular those relating to the environment and connectivity; urges the participating countries to step up efforts to tackle the pollution (i.e. water and air quality, and eutrophication) of the Baltic Sea, as it is one of the most polluted seas in the world; notes that achieving a good environmental status by 2020 is one of the key objectives of policy actions here;
11. Attaches importance to the possibility of connecting the Baltic region to energy networks in order to reduce and eliminate energy poverty and to increase energy security and the security of supply;

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

12. Highlights the positive impact the strategy has had on cooperation between the participating countries and regions by improving mobility and interconnections for all modes of transport,

promoting clean energy, culture and sustainable tourism and, in particular, enhancing direct contacts between people and achieving greater cohesion between the regions and countries participating in the strategy;

13. Considers the ‘Euro access’ project, the ‘Keep Danube clean’ initiative and the Danube Financing Dialogue clear positive examples of a way to overcome difficulties in financing the obstacles which projects of transnational and cross-border relevance often face; is of the opinion that, through this dialogue, the differences in development among regions in the Danube basin could be further reduced; considers, furthermore, that reopening a Danube Strategy Point could contribute to a smoother implementation of the strategy;
14. Stresses that preventing damage caused by severe flooding remains one of the great environmental challenges for the countries of the Danube macro-region; highlights that supplementary joint measures to prevent cross-border pollution should be considered;
15. Recalls the need for strategic projects and stresses that it is essential to maintain a high degree of political support and increase the resources and capacity of competent state authorities in order to tackle the remaining challenges; emphasises the need, therefore, to maintain the political momentum for the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and to ensure that the EUSDR Steering Group does good work;
16. Invites the participating countries, given the natural link between the Danube River and the Black Sea, to enhance coordination between the EUSDR and the Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation and to work closely to overcome shared socio-economic, environmental and transport challenges;
17. Stresses that a more integrated approach to mobility and multimodality in the Danube region would also be beneficial to the environment;

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

18. Highlights the distinct nature of the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) on account of the number of potential and candidate participating countries, and considers that this format of cooperation can be a great opportunity for the entire region; takes the view that EUSAIR could give an impetus to the enlargement and integration process;
19. Notes with concern the persistent problems as regards the lack of effective linkage between the availability of resources, governance and ownership, which are preventing EUSAIR’s objectives from being fully achieved; calls on the participating countries to provide the competent authorities with support and tailored measures to implement the strategy;
20. Stresses that the region has been at the forefront of the migration crisis in recent years; considers that EUSAIR could help address such challenges with the necessary instruments and resources; welcomes, in this context, the Commission’s efforts to find solutions for the mobilisation of financial resources for migration-related activities, including cooperation with third countries;
21. Considers the Sustainable Tourism pillar of the Adriatic and Ionian region to be a positive instrument to create sustainable economic growth in the region and raise awareness of environmental challenges and the MRS;
22. Calls on the countries concerned to give priority to capacity building for the EUSAIR key implementers and the programme authorities responsible for EUSAIR-related operational

programmes;

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

23. Considers the EUSALP as proof that the macro-regional concept can also be applied successfully to more developed regions; calls on its stakeholders to promote environment-related investments that address the consequences of climate change; points out, furthermore, that the Alpine region is an important regional transport hub and, at the same time, one of the largest unique natural and recreational areas which needs to be preserved; stresses, therefore, that sustainable and interrelated transport strategies need to be sought after;
24. Welcomes the governance structure of the strategy which is currently being put in place, as the first steps in the implementation of the strategy have proven difficult and were governed by different structures, frameworks and timeframes; calls, therefore, on the participating countries to continue their commitment and support to EUSALP Action Group members;
25. Stresses that the EUSALP can be a good example of a template strategy for territorial cohesion, as it simultaneously incorporates different specific areas, productive areas, mountains and rural areas and some of the most important and highly developed cities in the EU, and offers a platform for jointly addressing the challenges they face (climate change, demography, biodiversity, migration, globalisation, sustainable tourism and agriculture, energy supply, transport and mobility, and the digital divide); calls on the participating countries and regions to pay due attention to the use of the Interreg Alpine Space programme and other relevant funds in addressing common priorities;
26. Stresses that the Alpine region is delineated by many borders and that removing these barriers is a prerequisite for cooperation to work, especially for the labour market and economic activities related to SMEs; points out that the EUSALP can also provide the opportunity to strengthen transnational cross-border cooperation between adjacent regions, cities and local communities and to forge links and networks between people, also in terms of interconnections in transport and digital coverage; points, in addition, to the environmental fragility of this region;

Macro-regional Europe after 2020?

27. Points out that MRS bear fruit if they are rooted in a long-term political perspective and organised in such a way that all public, especially regional and local authorities, and private stakeholders and civil society are effectively represented from the outset, requiring an effective exchange of information, best practices, know-how and experience between macro-regions and their regional and local authorities; considers it necessary to strengthen the multi-level governance of MRS, which should be transparent, with more effective coordination and public communication mechanisms in order to make MRS known and for them to gain acceptance in local and regional communities;
28. Believes that strategy implementation can only be successful if based on long-term vision and efficient coordination and cooperation structures with the necessary administrative capacity, as well as on shared long-term political commitment among the institutional levels concerned and if it is backed by adequate funding; highlights, therefore, the need to increase the effectiveness of the investments through seeking alignment, synergies and complementarities of regional and national funding with existing EU funding instruments, which, in addition to

enhancing the ETC programmes, promote cross-border projects within the ESI funds and EFSI and also through direct funding;

29. Believes that simplifying the funds and the procedures for their use within the framework of the MRS would increase their effectiveness;
30. Proposes that the participating countries make clear commitments in terms of funding and human resources for the implementation of the MRS from the outset; calls on the Commission to help to better coordinate inside the MRS, to promote good practices and to develop incentives to encourage the active participation of and coordination between all parties concerned, also with a view to strengthening the link between EU policies and implementation of MRS; encourages, moreover, MRS to make use of green public procurement in order to boost eco-innovation, the bio-economy, the development of new business models and the use of secondary raw materials, such as in the circular economy, in order to achieve higher levels of environmental and health protection and to foster close links between producers and consumers;
31. Stresses that greater result-orientation is required and concrete challenges need to be met, including in the area of environmental protection, in order to develop plans which have a real impact on the territory, and to justify the investment of resources, which should, for its part, be commensurate with the objectives set, and relate to the true needs of the territories concerned;
32. Calls for any questions about the MRS, such as on ownership and the necessary political incentives, to be addressed in accordance with a modus operandi that is agreed upon in advance by all the regions concerned;
33. Is of the opinion that the visibility and public perception of the activities of the macro-regions in the regions targeted, as well as the results achieved, need to be enhanced by carrying out information campaigns and exchanges of best practices, including through online platforms and social networks, thus making them easily accessible to the general public;
34. Emphasises that the next revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) constitutes an opportunity to revise the MRS objectives at the same time, in order to strengthen their link with EU priorities and consolidate associated financial commitments;
35. Calls on the Commission to submit, as part of its next revision of cohesion policy rules, proposals to promote a better implementation of MRS;
36. Calls on the Commission, as part of the next report on the implementation of MRS which is due in 2018, to undertake a more in-depth analysis, including in particular on:
 - a. the effectiveness of ETC transnational programmes in providing financing and strategic impetus to MRS;
 - b. indicators which could be integrated in each MRS in order to allow better result-orientation, monitoring and evaluation;
 - c. measures to strengthen the link with EU priorities;
 - d. the simplification of the implementation and mainstreaming of funding schemes;
 - e. the quality of the involvement of regional and local government in the

implementation of MRS;

37. Emphasises that a call to develop new strategies such as for the Carpathians, the Atlantic, Mediterranean or Iberian regions should not divert attention from the primary objective of improved, deeper implementation of existing MRS;
38. Supports the ‘three no’s’ principle for the MRS (no new EU legislation, no new EU funding and no new EU structures); suggests, however, that the Commission evaluate the impact of these ‘no’s’ on programmes under the ESI funds in its next implementation report on MRS;
39. Highlights the need for a territorial approach in relation to cooperation activities on a case by case basis, as MRS are geared towards addressing territorial challenges that can be solved more effectively together; stresses the importance of bringing about synergies and convergence between the different components of territorial cooperation in ETC programmes and the macro-regions in order to strengthen the impact of transnational programmes, pool resources, simplify the financing of MRS and enhance the outcome of their implementation and efficiency of the resources invested;
40. Reiterates the EU’s commitment to the implementation of the SDGs; stresses the importance of aligning the MRS objectives with the EU flagship initiatives, such as the Energy Union, the Paris Agreement on climate change and blue growth in marine macro-regions; draws attention to the management of environmental risks, such as preserving nature, biodiversity, and fishing stocks and combating marine litter, as well as developing sustainable and green tourism; encourages cooperation in the field of renewable energy; encourages, in this context, the use of smart specialisation strategies (S3), the strengthening of SMEs and the creation of quality jobs;
41. Stresses that Parliament from the very outset supported the macro-regions through pilot projects and preparatory actions; points, furthermore, to the experience accumulated by the Baltic Sea region which shows that long-term thinking should remain the basis for macro-regional cooperation;
42. Calls on the Commission to invite the Parliament to participate as an observer in the work of the Macro-Regional Strategies High Level Group;

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43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the governments and national and regional parliaments of the Member States and third countries participating in MRS.

28.9.2017

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies
(2017/2040(INI))

Rapporteur: Biljana Borzan

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recognises the importance of EU macro-regional strategies, namely the 2009 EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the 2011 EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the 2014 EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), and the 2015 EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP); notes that macro-regional strategies are being consistently integrated into policy planning at EU level, but more sporadically at national and regional level; welcomes the Commission's report but considers that further assessment was needed regarding the implementation of the existing macro-regional strategies, and especially of aspects pertaining to the environment, as one of the pillars of sustainable development; urges the Commission to focus in particular on the results of projects under the macro-regional strategies in forthcoming reports;
2. Recognises the importance of macro-regional strategies in providing a single integrated framework and fostering coordinated action for addressing the common challenges faced by different actors in a defined geographical area encompassing Member States and third countries, which benefit in this way from strengthened cooperation contributing to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion; calls on the Commission and participating countries and their regions to develop synergies, and to further integrate macro-regional strategies into EU sectoral policies, particularly in the areas of environmental and biodiversity protection, climate mitigation and adaptation;
3. Underlines the potential benefits of collective action in the framework of macro-regional strategies with regard to environmental issues, including but not limited to those of a cross-border nature, such as the reduction of greenhouse gases and pollutant emissions, biodiversity and environmental protection, as well as ecosystem-based climate change

adaptation strategies; considers that the strategies could be even more effectively administered as regards sustainable development, climate change, renewables and the blue economy; believes that policy coordination among regions is an effective approach for finding lasting solutions to environmental challenges; calls for the concept of environmental integration to be mainstreamed into the design and implementation of various cross-sectoral policies for the current and future macro-regions;

4. Encourages the expansion of conservation areas to protect the environment and halt biodiversity loss, particularly through the enhancement of the Natura 2000, Emerald networks, and the LIFE programme;
5. Considers that the macro-regional strategies and associated environmental programmes are useful instruments for making the benefits of European cooperation visible to citizens, and therefore urges all parties involved to fully commit to the strategies and play their part in their implementation;
6. Calls for the timely adoption of maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management strategies by the Member States as well as coastal candidate and potential candidate countries;
7. Points out that in rural areas nature is the economic base for many inhabitants and that environmental programmes can only be successful if supported by the local inhabitants; stresses, therefore, that in order to deliver on environmental protection goals such projects must take full account of the long-term economic interests of locals;
8. Urges all stakeholders to pursue climate change policies encompassing production and consumption patterns that are in line with the principles of the circular economy, environmental and health protection and shorter cycles in the food supply chain, and to place the emphasis on the rational use and reuse of local materials and natural resources, insuring non-toxic material cycles, including wastewater and agricultural waste, and to foster close links between producers and consumers at local level; encourages all macro-regional strategies to apply a policy of green public procurement in order to boost eco-innovation and the development of new business models;
9. Calls for the enhancement of a marine NATURA 2000 network, and a coherent and representative network of marine protected areas under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive by 2020;
10. Stresses the importance of stakeholder dialogue and public communication of the macro-regional strategies to make them known and gain acceptance in the local communities; considers this a key element to lead the macro-regional strategies to success;
11. Calls for the specific synchronisation and better coordinated use of existing funds at all levels to reach macro-regional objectives, and to unlock the potential of macro-regional strategies; recommends that the experiences gained from macro-regional strategies be used to improve the effectiveness of the relevant Union financial instruments; takes note that Union funding is usually linked to defined projects whereas environmental challenges require a long-term approach; highlights the need for the Commission, Member States and competent authorities to consider this long-term perspective in the funding of projects and in the design of future funding programmes and to coordinate more effectively the

resources available for funding the particular environmental goals of the macro-regions and to tailor their use towards political priorities;

12. Stresses the importance of developing monitoring and evaluation tools for various indicators in order to better measure the achievement of environmental targets without creating an unnecessary administrative burden for project partners and stakeholders;
13. Calls on the stakeholders of the macro-regions to use European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) and other Union funding to promote environment-related investments that have climate change mitigation among their objectives;
14. Calls on stakeholders in the macro-regions, in addition to the funds relevant to macro-regional strategies and the instruments for the financing of particular environmental objectives, to also consider using the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI);
15. Points out that the sea of the Adriatic and Ionian region is threatened by various sources of pollution, including untreated waste, marine litter, untreated effluent and eutrophication from agricultural runoff and fish farms; calls therefore on the participating countries to further step up their efforts in tackling these environmental challenges; stresses the importance of introducing for this purpose a proper system for the treatment of waste and effluent and the protection of water supplies;
16. Points out that the Adriatic Sea, due to its semi-enclosed nature, is especially vulnerable to pollution and has unusual hydrographic features – its depth and the length of its coastline vary considerably between the north and south of the region; welcomes the fact that all four pillars of the Adriatic and Ionian region are designed to contribute to sustainability goals;
17. Believes that completion of road and transport infrastructures and measures to realise the immense untapped potential of renewable energy sources are essential conditions for achieving environmental sustainability goals in the macro-region;
18. Points to the need to ensure environmental sustainability in the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region by means of specific environmental protection measures, including projects for the launching of surveys and the prevention of subsidence;
19. Recalls its previous position as set out on its resolution of 3 July 2012 on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean; points out that the Mediterranean is a coherent whole, constituting a single cultural and environmental area, and sharing very many characteristics and priorities common to the ‘Mediterranean climate’: the same crops, abundant renewable energy sources, particularly solar energy, the importance of tourism, the same natural disaster risks (fires, floods, earthquakes, water shortages) and the risks from human activity, particularly maritime pollution; reaffirms once again its support for the implementation of a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean basin, so as to offer an action plan for addressing the common and problematic challenges facing the Mediterranean countries and regions and to give structure to this key area for Europe’s development and integration, and calls on the Council and the Commission to act quickly on this matter;
20. Calls on the Commission to ensure that third countries involved in projects in the macro-

region comply with the relevant Union acquis, in order to guarantee the sustainable exploitation of the Union's resources, in particular the Marine Strategy Framework, the Water Framework, Urban Waste Water, Nitrates, Waste, Birds and Habitats Directives and the Green Infrastructure Strategy; recommends that agreements and conventions be used to involve countries outside the EU in EU environmental projects;

21. Considers the Sustainable Tourism pillar of the Adriatic and Ionian region as a positive instrument to create sustainable economic growth in the region as well as raising awareness for environmental challenges and the macro-regional strategies;
22. Points out that the rich biodiversity of the marine-coastal areas of the Adriatic-Ionian region is a major draw for tourism, recreational and fishing activities, and contributes to the cultural heritage of the macro-region; considers, therefore, the lack of habitat maps unfortunate; calls on the participant countries to undertake mapping actions within the framework of the EUSAIR;
23. Emphasises that an ecosystem-based approach to the coordination of activities is needed within the framework of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), in order to ensure the sustainable use of resources, as both frameworks are important stimulants for trans-boundary collaboration and stakeholder cooperation across different coastal and maritime sector activities, and have the potential to bring together ecosystem services and Blue Growth opportunities in a sustainable way;
24. Calls for the establishment of a coordinated monitoring system and database on marine litter and marine pollution, including the identification of sources and types of litter and pollution, as well as a geographic information system (GIS) database on the location and sources of marine litter;
25. Calls for the drafting and implementation of a joint contingency plan for oil spills and other large-scale pollution events, building on the work of the sub-regional contingency plan developed by the joint commission for the Protection of the Adriatic Sea and its Coastal Areas, and the Barcelona Convention protocols;
26. Calls on the countries involved to give priority to capacity-building directed at the EUSAIR key implementers, as well as at programme authorities responsible for EUSAIR relevant operational programmes;
27. Stresses that preventing damage caused by massive floods remains one of the great environmental challenges for the countries of the Danube macro-region; highlights that supplementary joint measures to prevent cross-border pollution should be considered;
28. Notes with appreciation the implementation of projects such as DANUBEPARKS 2.0, STURGEON 2020, SEERISK, CC-WARE and the Danube Air Nexus cluster in reaching the EUSDR environmental goals;
29. Welcomes the Danube region project 'EuroAccess' as a tool to make available funding more accessible and encourages other macro-regional regions to consider this as a best practice;
30. Calls on the Commission to commence the development of an Iberian Peninsula macro-

region meeting the challenges of conducting a properly planned forestry policy in line with climatic requirements, in a bid to remedy rural depopulation, desertification and soil erosion through the proper ecological management and diversification of forests, planting native deciduous trees that are more fire-resistant, thereby helping to reverse the massive fire damage sustained by forests every year in Portugal and Spain;

31. Welcomes the setting up of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme as a tool for providing support to its governance, and highlights its direct contribution to the strategy's implementation as being one of the most visible results of the EUSDR;
32. Stresses that a more integrated approach to mobility and multimodality in the Danube region would also be beneficial to the environment;
33. Stresses that the Commission should rapidly initiate studies for the development of an Iberian macro-region in view of the major cross-border challenges arising in connection with climate change, environmental protection, risk prevention and management, the efficient use of resources, nature conservation, biodiversity, shared water resources and exploration of the potential of the blue economy and of renewables;
34. Welcomes the setting up of the Danube Strategy Point as a new body for facilitating the implementation of the EUSDR, and encourages the involvement of all parties concerned and potentially interested actors;
35. Notes with concern that, compared to the first years of its activity, the EUSDR now seems to have been given a lower priority slot in the political narrative at national level in those countries involved; emphasises the need to maintain the political momentum since the commitment by countries directly affects the availability of human resources in the national and regional administrations, and this is crucial for the smooth functioning of the strategy, and for working towards a consolidation of the progress made and results achieved so far;
36. Calls on the participant countries to ensure an adequate participation of national representatives in EUSDR Steering Group meetings on priority areas, and to consider reducing the number and scope of current priority areas if sufficient resources are not allocated within well-defined timeframes;
37. Highlights the issue of numerous sunken ships in the Danube that present a navigational and ecological danger, especially where water levels are low; points out that sunken wrecks contain appreciable amounts of fuel and other substances that pollute water constantly, while the rusting metal of the ships generates pollution on a continuous basis with serious repercussions; calls for the mobilisation of EU funds for tackling this problem and greater co-operation in the framework of the EUSDR;
38. Calls on the stakeholders of the Alpine macro-region to use ESI Funds and other Union funding to promote environment-related investments that have climate change mitigation and adaptation among their objectives; welcomes, in particular, the region's integrated approach to align the preservation of the environment and ecosystems with the pursuit of economic and social prosperity;
39. Underlines that environmental policy is of a cross-cutting nature and that the favoured

options in Alpine strategy fields must reconcile environmental sustainability and economic development; points out that the Alpine region is an important regional transport hub and, at the same time, one of the largest natural and recreation areas, and one of the most attractive tourism regions in Europe; notes however that, because of its particular geographical and natural conditions, access to parts of the region is a challenge; considers that, in order to preserve the Alps as a unique natural area, it is vital to create sustainable and interrelated transport strategies and take into account climate change mitigation and biodiversity preservation policies, such as habitat connectivity, to allow species migration;

40. Is concerned that climate change can give rise to hydrogeological instability and threaten biodiversity in the Alpine Region; underlines that rising temperatures are a serious threat to the survival of species' populations living at high altitudes, and that the melting of glaciers is a further cause for concern, as it has a major impact on groundwater reserves;
41. Stresses that the Alpine region's tourism and agricultural sector are key stakeholder for the regional sustainable development and therefore should be integrated at all stages of the implementation of environmental projects;
42. Notes that the first steps in the implementation of the EUSALP strategy have shown that its integration into the existing programmes has proven difficult, as they are governed by structures, frameworks and timeframes which are often incompatible with the needs of a macro-regional strategy;
43. Calls on the participant countries to reinforce their commitment, continuity, stability, empowerment and support to the EUSALP Action Group members who will represent them, and to make sure that all Action Groups are adequately represented;
44. Welcomes the implementation of environmentally beneficial projects in the Baltic region, such as BLASTIC to reduce marine littering, the Climate Dialogue Platform to strengthen an integrated response to climate challenges and PRESTO to improve water quality; considers however that further efforts are needed to tackle the environmental challenges faced in the Baltic macro-region, and in particular as regards eutrophication, better protection of the sea itself, air quality and pollution;
45. Points out that the environmental state of the Baltic Sea has remained the main focus of the EUSBSR since its launch in 2009;
46. Recalls that the Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world; stresses the importance of cooperation to improve the state of the Baltic Sea; calls for neighbourhood programmes to continue throughout the Baltic Sea catchment area and to include in them funding by means of which the state of the environment can be improved throughout the catchment area;
47. Notes that achieving a good environmental status by 2020 is one of the key objectives of policy actions in the Baltic Sea Region;
48. Considers it deplorable from the point of view of the marine macro-regions that ships can discharge untreated effluent into the sea if they are more than 12 nautical miles (approximately 22 km) from the coast and that treated effluent can even be discharged

into the water three nautical miles (approximately 5.5 km) from the coast; calls for funding to be provided to increase the reception capacity for effluent at ports so that all passenger vessels can treat their effluent as required by the revised Annex IV to the MARPOL Convention;

49. Calls on all stakeholders to organise more frequent and regular political discussions on the EUSBSR at national level within the parliament or government, and also within the Council at the relevant Ministerial meetings;
50. Welcomes, from the point of view of the Baltic macro-region, the Sulphur Directive adopted by the EU and the decision by the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) of 27 October 2016 to designate the Baltic Sea and the North Sea an NO_x Emission Control Area (NECA); recalls that the unclean fuels used by vessels are still resulting in the emission of large quantities of nitrogen and sulphur into the air, from where they fall into the sea;
51. Notes that the EUSBSR is a stable cooperation framework with more than 100 flagship initiatives and new networks; nevertheless, urges stakeholders to maintain its momentum and to improve policy coordination and content by building on project results;
52. Considers it important to review the permission for users of open-loop sulphur scrubbers to discharge sulphur-scrubbing water back into the sea; observes that effluent from closed-loop sulphur scrubbers has to be delivered for treatment, but that effluent from open-loop scrubbers is discharged directly back into the sea, creating a greenwash operational model, in which sulphur is removed from the air but ends up in the sea;
53. Recalls the importance of safety at sea, particularly in the Baltic; stresses the importance of cooperation among the countries of the Baltic region in order to tackle the challenges arising from the growing volume of maritime transport and particularly conveyance of oil and hazardous substances;
54. Recalls that Blue Growth in marine macro-regions is based on sustainable use of the potential of the seas, which means that the environmental aspect must be taken into account in all activities; recalls that, within the framework of the Blue Bioeconomy, it is possible to find new products and services and to develop and cultivate know-how based on them in order to promote employment; stresses that sustainable use of natural resources and favourable status of aquatic and marine environments create a strong foundation for the Blue Bioeconomy;
55. Stresses the significant shift towards the bioeconomy and the circular economy in economic thinking, modes of action and methods, which can help to tackle the environmental challenges in the Baltic; recalls the opportunities for exploiting renewable energy and improving energy efficiency in the Baltic region;
56. Attaches importance to the possibility of connecting the Baltic region to energy networks in order to reduce and eliminate energy poverty and to increase energy security and security of supply.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.9.2017
Result of final vote	+: 59 -: 1 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Pilar Ayuso, Zoltán Balczó, Ivo Belet, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Birgit Collin-Langen, Mireille D’Ornano, Seb Dance, Angélique Delahaye, Bas Eickhout, Arne Gericke, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Jytte Guteland, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Jean-François Jalkh, Benedek Jávor, Josu Juaristi Abaunz, Karin Kadenbach, Kateřina Konečná, Urszula Krupa, Jo Leinen, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Rupert Matthews, Valentinas Mazuronis, Gilles Pargneaux, Piernicola Pedicini, Bolesław G. Piecha, Pavel Poč, Frédérique Ries, Michèle Rivasi, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Davor Škrlec, Renate Sommer, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Ivica Tolić, Nils Torvalds, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Damiano Zoffoli
Substitutes present for the final vote	Guillaume Balas, Jørn Dohrmann, Eleonora Evi, Christofer Fjellner, Elena Gentile, Anja Hazekamp, Merja Kyllönen, Ulrike Müller, Stanislav Polčák, Gabriele Preuß, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Matt Carthy, Olle Ludvigsson, Bernard Monot, Jens Nilsson, Marita Ulvskog

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

59	+
ALDE	Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Valentinas Mazuronis, Ulrike Müller, Frédérique Ries, Nils Torvalds
ECR	Jørn Dohrmann, Arne Gericke, Julie Girling, Urszula Krupa, Rupert Matthews, Bolesław G. Piecha, Jadwiga Wiśniewska
EFDD	Eleonora Evi, Piernicola Pedicini
GUE/NGL	Matt Carthy, Anja Hazekamp, Josu Juaristi Abaunz, Kateřina Konečná, Merja Kyllönen
NI	Zoltán Balczó
PPE	Pilar Ayuso, Ivo Belet, Birgit Collin-Langen, Angélique Delahaye, Christofer Fjellner, Jens Gieseke, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Stanislav Polčák, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Renate Sommer, Ivica Tolić, Adina-Ioana Vălean
S&D	Guillaume Balas, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Seb Dance, Elena Gentile, Jytte Guteland, Karin Kadenbach, Jo Leinen, Olle Ludvigsson, Jens Nilsson, Gilles Pargneaux, Pavel Poc, Gabriele Preuß, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Marita Ulvskog, Damiano Zoffoli
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Bas Eickhout, Benedek Jávor, Michèle Rivasi, Davor Škrlec

1	-
ENF	Mireille D'Ornano

2	0
ENF	Jean-François Jalkh, Bernard Monot

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	23.11.2017
Result of final vote	+: 34 -: 1 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Pascal Arimont, Franc Bogovič, Mercedes Bresso, Rosa D'Amato, John Flack, Iratxe García Pérez, Michela Giuffrida, Krzysztof Hetman, Ivan Jakovčić, Marc Joulaud, Constanze Krehl, Sławomir Kłosowski, Martina Michels, Iskra Mihaylova, Andrey Novakov, Younous Omarjee, Konstantinos Papadakis, Stanislav Polčák, Monika Smolková, Maria Spyrali, Ruža Tomašić, Monika Vana, Matthijs van Miltenburg, Lambert van Nistelrooij
Substitutes present for the final vote	Daniel Buda, Viorica Dăncilă, Raffaele Fitto, Elena Gentile, John Howarth, Ivana Maletić, Demetris Papadakis, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Bronis Ropė, Damiano Zoffoli, Milan Zver
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Olle Ludvigsson

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

34	+
ALDE	Ivan Jakovčić, Iskra Mihaylova, Matthijs van Miltenburg
ECR	Raffaele Fitto, Sławomir Kłosowski, Ruža Tomašić
EFDD	Rosa D'Amato
GUE/NGL	Martina Michels, Younous Omarjee, Dimitrios Papadimoulis
PPE	Pascal Arimont, Franc Bogovič, Daniel Buda, Krzysztof Hetman, Marc Joulaud, Ivana Maletić, Andrey Novakov, Stanislav Polčák, Maria Spyrali, Milan Zver, Lambert van Nistelrooij
S&D	Mercedes Bresso, Viorica Dăncilă, Iratxe García Pérez, Elena Gentile, Michela Giuffrida, John Howarth, Constanze Krehl, Olle Ludvigsson, Demetris Papadakis, Monika Smolková, Damiano Zoffoli,
VERTS/ALE	Bronis Ropė, Monika Vana

1	-
NI	Konstantinos Papadakis

1	0
ECR	John Flack

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention