



SPECIAL FOCUS ON EU MACRO- REGIONS

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Information about the proceedings of the Forum can be found at:

www.cor.europa.eu/macroregions

Information about the activities of the Zlín Region in Brussels are available at:
www.zlinregioninbrussels.eu

Editorial

Mattia Crosetto

Dear readers,

As it occurs in all enlarged families and communities, sometimes they appear problems that cannot be solved with individual approaches. Opposite, cooperation is needed.

Exactly in that perspective, the European "macro-regional strategies" aim at defining priority projects for groups of regions or countries which are sharing similar needs and facing comparable challenges.

Within the European Union, the most active macro-regional groups are those of the Baltic Sea region and now also of the Danube area.

The meeting that was organized by the Committee of the Regions on the 13th of April 2010 in Brussels was surely useful for an open discussion on how the EU could support the Regions of Baltic, Danube or North Sea in their development paths.

What was particularly good in the conference, in my opinion, was the approach of speakers, who have been capable of dealing with both the political dimension of macro-regional cooperation and with the practical aspects of specific projects.

In his intervention to the conference, the Vice President of the Zlín Region, Mr. Jaroslav Drozd – the only official speaker for the Czech Republic – followed exactly that line, resuming the political position of the country in respect of the overall issue of "macro-regions" and then analyzing needs, expectations and priority projects from the perspective of Central Moravia in general and of the Zlín Region in particular. In this part of his speech, Mr. Drozd highlighted specifically the necessity of completing the transport essential networks for the entire Region.

A contribution fully appreciated by the other participants and the public, with sound interest for the proposals put on the table.

As a result of the event, the "macro-regional" approach is now politically accepted and the technical discussion about the projects to be financed can start.

Sincerely,

Mattia Crosetto
The Head of Office
Zlín Region in Brussels

The EU Strategies for Macro-Regions

At the EU level, **macro-regions** are imagined communities which have no independent political status or no institutions and which do not overshadow other regional or national identities. The European Commission now describes a macro-region as **"an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges"**.

Although a macro-region can be identified by common features or challenges, its frontiers are not necessarily precisely defined. Physical boundaries may vary according to the type of problem being tackled at a macro-regional level. These regions might overlap, so a functioning region can be part of one or more macro-regions.

The creation of an EU macro-regional strategy stems from this definition.

The Baltic Sea Strategy, launched in 2009 by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in October 2009, is now regarded as a model for other potential macro-regional approaches. For a second region, along the Danube, the European Council asked the European Commission in June 2009 to present a EU strategy before the end of 2010. This development has inspired discussions in other regions too, such as the North-Sea-English Channel region, the Alpine region, the Adriatic and Ionian, and the Atlantic Arc. In addition, similar questions and approaches have been discussed with the Union for the Mediterranean.

According to present thinking about macro-regions, strategy implementation would not involve extra financial resources compared to what is already available in a region from various sources. Moreover, it would not involve setting up new institutions or extending the powers of existing administrative bodies. At the same time, it is important to establish responsibility and accountability and there are calls that the European Commission should play a facilitating role in EU macro-regional strategies.

The Danube Region

The Danube is one of the European continent's most important arteries, touching Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine. This makes the Danube area not only an important part of Europe economically and culturally, but also environmentally.

Since Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, the Danube has become an internal EU waterway. As one of the **"Trans-European corridors"** it represents a priority axis for inland waterway traffic across the Union. The **"Rhine-Danube corridor"** provides a direct link between the North Sea and the Black Sea. Improving navigability for cargo, in a more environmentally friendly manner, is an important challenge.

The Danube Basin is also rich in bio-diversity. Its wetlands host many breeds of wild birds and the islands provide rich habitats for many species. For instance, the Danube Delta is home to 70% of the world's population of white pelicans. However, the waters of the Danube are no longer quite as blue as the waltz suggests and pollution is a real threat to this wildlife. Efforts to establish new water treatment plants, with the support of EU funds, will contribute to the improvement of water quality.

The potential for economic development in the area is strong since the river provides a variety of resources for business in the form of transport and logistics as well as for tourism and culture. Trips down the Danube are proving popular with tourists and operators who are seeking to boost the region's profile. Tourist operators are considering developing a specific "Danube label", which will increase the visibility and attractiveness of the region.

In June 2009, the European Council formally requested the European Commission to prepare an EU Strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010.

The European Commission started a public consultation with relevant stakeholders, including regions, municipalities, international organisations, economic partners and civil society.

Initially, the Commission envisages three pillars for the strategy:

- to improve connectivity and communication systems (covering in particular transport, energy issues and the information society);
- to preserve the environment and to protect against natural risks;
- and to reinforce the potential for socio-economic development

In the past few years the CoR has repeatedly highlighted the particular importance of the Danube area in Europe and has called for the development of an EU Danube strategy.

The proposal of the European Commission is now under discussion and a final paper will be ready at the end of 2010.

The Forum on Europe's macro-regions Integration through territorial co-operation



On the 13th of April 2010, a high-level conference organised by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) occurred in Brussels to provide the first opportunity to fully approach the political debate about the "macro-regional" cooperation in certain areas of the European Union – notably the Baltic Sea and the Danube area - and examine the new concept of "macro-regional strategies" as a whole.

The new EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Mr. Johannes Hahn, joined more than 300 politicians and experts to debate the potential and limitations of existing and emerging macro-regional strategies.

Macr-regions: the present situation

In October 2009, the European Commission adopted a "EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region". This is the first official position of the EU in favour of a strengthened cooperation among large groups of regions around issues of common interests.

Now, the European Commission is expected to propose a "Danube Strategy" blueprint by the end of this year, as prompted by the Committee of the Regions.

The strategies are considered to be first two test cases for the macro-regional approach, which aims to set priorities for large European regions at EU level and define concrete actions for cross-border cooperation. The goal is to channel existing resources more effectively in order to improve, for instance, transport and energy networks or to tackle pollution, social development, immigration issues or security policy. The Forum at the Committee of the Regions was the first occasion to discuss the added-value of the macro-regional framework across the different regions of Europe.

Issues treated at the Forum

During the different sessions of the event, the following questions were addressed:

- What lessons can be drawn from existing and emerging macro-regional strategies?
- What is the role of local and regional authorities in the development and implementation of macro-regional strategies?
- To which extent can macro-regions be comprehensive in their approach, covering several policy areas?
- Should macro-regions become a means to deliver significant EU funding?
- What can macro-regions deliver in terms of economic and environmental benefits?
- Which projects could be financed by the EU funds in the frame of the macro-regions?

Contribution by the Zlín Region

The Zlín Region in Brussels contributed to the Forum on Europe's macro-regions by organising the participation of the Vice President of the Region, Mr. Jaroslav Drozd, who was present as the only speaker from the Czech Republic. He provided his direct contribution to the session focused on Territorial aspects of co-operation in the Danube area. The Office in Brussels managed the inclusion of Vice President Drozd in the list of speakers, dealt with the logistic issues and facilitated the presence of the Czech delegation representing national and regional interest of the Czech republic in the Forum.

Vice President Drozd started his speech by reminding traditions and experiences of territorial cooperation in the Czech Republic and outlined the area of Danube from perspective of the Czech Republic. Then, he resumed the contents of the position paper of the Czech Republic on the Danube Strategy. Finally, he focused his attention on the priority projects of the Zlín Region, such as the realisation of speedways R49 and R55, the regional airport in Přerov, the industrial zone in Holešov and the regional cultural and educational center in Zlín. As a conclusion, he highlighted the importance of the Baltic Adriatic Corridor as a connection for moving freights and passengers between some of the main port terminals of Europe.

They said ...



Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso (ES/EPP)

First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions and President of the Autonomous Community of Murcia

Mr. Valcárcel Siso welcomed the "added value" of a territorial approach whilst stressing the need to involve regional authorities from the very beginning in the development of a macro-region. He also called for a broader debate to avoid a "two-speed Europe" where parts of the continent benefit from macro-regional approaches and others don't, referring in particular to the Mediterranean basin.

Johannes Hahn,

European Commissioner for Regional Policy

"An integrated approach, with coordination of actions across policy areas will achieve better results than individual initiatives. Where groups of countries and regions choose to come together to achieve common goals, this will also strengthen EU cohesion

The European Union must make better use of territorial co-operation as a tool to foster cross-border and transnational integration. We should put in place an overall EU strategy to provide a framework for territorial cooperation activities of all kinds, including macro-regions. Approaches and objectives will vary from region to region, depending on the specific needs for strengthened cross-border cooperation.

The common principle should be to add value to existing activities.



Jaroslav Drozd

Vice President of the Zlín Region

"The Czech Republic as a whole has welcomed the upcoming strategy for the Danube Region. This is a concept that can help strengthening existing ties, overcome specific problems and develop an already sound potential."

For the Czech Republic, and for Moravia in particular, connectivity is the key issue within the Danube Strategy. This frame should finally provide the opportunity for solving the problems of still missing infrastructures and removing present bottlenecks. In fact, our contribution reserves great attention to the issue, by highlighting the importance of completing the TEN-T corridors and other priority connections.

We have already identified a series of strategic projects, selecting them by applying criteria of feasibility, impact and timing for execution

The proceedings of the EU Forum on macro-regions are available on the official website of the Committee of the Regions, at:

www.cor.europa.eu/macregions

Mission to Brussels for the Forum on macro-regions Side events organised by the Brussels Office

R49-R6 project

13 April 2010, Brussels, European Commission, DG Mobility and Transport

Meeting with Mrs. Judit Bertrand, Coordinator for TEN-T Projects for the Czech Republic

On the morning of the 13th of April 2010, the Representative Office of the Zlin Region in Brussels organised a meeting at the European Commission, Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) between Vice President Jaroslav Drozd and the Coordinator of TEN-T projects for the Czech Republic, Mrs. Judit Bertrand.

The delegation from the Zlin Region included Mr. Peter Hunak, Head of the Department for the External Relations, Mr. Milan Filip, Head of the Department for Strategic Development, Mr. Mattia Crosetto and Ms. Petra Janoskova from the Representation in Brussels.

The meeting was characterized by an atmosphere of full cooperation among parties.

Mr. Drozd resumed recent decisions at national and regional levels in the Czech Republic about updated transport schemes and highlighted the priority recognised to the R49/R6 project in that frame. Mrs. Bertrand welcomed provided information and reacted by ensuring that the dossier will be treated by DG MOVE in the perspective of the revision of the TEN-T schemes.

The meeting ended up with the agreement that the Office of the Zlin Region in Brussels will stay in contact with Mrs. Bertrand for the results of the internal evaluation by DG MOVE on the R49/R6 project.

R55 project

13 April 2010, Brussels, European Commission, DG Environment

Meeting with Mr. Ladislav Miko, Director of Directorate B - Nature

In the afternoon of the 13th of April 2010, Vice President Drozd met the Director of the Directorate for Nature at the DG Environment of the European Commission.

In the agenda of the meeting, the presentation of recent agreement among interested parties for the solution of the R55 dossier.

R55 represents one of the main road connection between the Zlin Region and the way to borders with Slovakia and Austria. However, the realization of the project had to take into account main environmental concerns, notably in the section involving a Natura 2000 site. The exercise for searching the most suitable solution has engaged the Zlin Region together with 20 municipalities, the South Moravia Region and the Ministries of both Transport and Environment.

After careful studies, by initiative of the Zlin Region, all involved parties met on the 30th of March 2010 in Uherske Hradice and approved a common position, together with a cooperation scheme for realising the project.

On that basis, the Zlin Region in Brussels organised the meeting at the European Commission to present the agreed solution to competent EU Authorities.

First results have been fully positive and the Office will maintain close contacts with the EC for all future evolutions of the dossier.

Networking with other Regions

13 April 2010, Brussels, Committee of the Regions

Informal meeting with Mr. Renzo Tondo, President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region

On the occasion of the Forum on macro-regions, the Representative Office of the Zlin Region in Brussels organised with the cooperation of the Office of Friuli Venezia Giulia, an informal meeting between Vice President Drozd and the President of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (Italy). A good occasion for discussing about cooperation in transport and put the basis for an exchange of visits for political delegations.

Photogallery of the mission to Brussels, 13.4.2010



Europe's Macroregions: Panel of the Forum focused on territorial aspects of cooperation in the Danube area. From left: Kurt Puchinger, Jaroslav Drozd, Peter Straub. Participants on the Panel.



Meeting with the president of Friuli Venezia Giulia. From left: Giorgio Perini, Renzo Tondo, Jaroslav Drozd, Petra Janoskova.



Meeting with European Commission – DG MOVE. Judith Bertrand and Jaroslav Drozd.

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