

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



# Europe's Macro-Regions Integration through territorial cooperation

FORUM AT THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, BRUSSELS

13 April 2010

Conference Proceedings



# Europe's Macro-Regions: Integration through territorial cooperation

The development and implementation of macro-regional strategies was discussed by more than 400 regional and local representatives, experts, stakeholders and European officials at the Forum on Europe's Macro-Regions, held by the Committee of the Regions on 13 April 2010 in Brussels. The discussion focused on questions such as:

- Territorial cohesion: how does it link to macro-regional strategies?
- What lessons can be drawn from existing and emerging 'macro-regional strategies'?
- What is the role of local and regional authorities in developing and implementing 'macro-regional strategies'?
- How comprehensive can the concept of macro-regions be? Should it cover several policy areas?
- Should macro-regions become a means of delivering significant EU funding?
- What can macro-regions deliver in terms of economic and environmental benefits?

This was the first time that this new approach to territorial cooperation across existing and emerging macro-regions were discussed. Specific sessions were dedicated to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (adopted in 2009), the Danube strategy (due to be published by the end of 2010) and a possible strategy for the North Sea-Channel area. In addition to the opening and closing sessions, the Forum was split into three «macro-regional strands» of workshops and meetings focusing on the Baltic Sea, the Danube, and the North Sea-Channel regions. This brochure gives an overview of the contributions to these different sessions and the discussions they generated.

The Committee of the Regions would like to thank all speakers and moderators involved in the event for their enthusiasm. The rapporteurs, who contributed to this report were: Mona Odefey and Michael Läng, Hanse Office (Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein), Brussels; Lisa Belfrage, Region Västra Götaland, Sweden; Lenneke Joosen, Province of Zuid-Holland, the Netherlands; Constanze Ripke and Kathrin Hesse, Bremen Representation, Brussels.

Full speeches, presentations and a video clip can be found at:

[www.cor.europa.eu/macroregions](http://www.cor.europa.eu/macroregions)



## Opening Session

### What is the added value of macro-regions?

During the first part of the Opening Session, **Gerhard Stahl**, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, **Johannes Hahn**, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, **Isabel Moya Pérez** of the Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU, and Prof. **Martin Dangerfield**, University of Wolverhampton, opened the Forum with keynote speeches. A fifth statement by **Danuta Hübner**, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development, was available to participants, although Ms Hübner had been obliged to cancel her participation at short notice. The session was moderated by **Jacki Davis**, Senior Adviser at the European Policy Centre, Brussels.

In his statement, **Gerhard Stahl** highlighted the importance of macro-regional strategies. They have the potential to focus on neighbourhood issues and opportunities, with which the public is familiar, and can also respond to issues relevant to the European Union as a whole. Mr Stahl reminded the audience of the need for local and regional authorities to be full partners, during the strategies' development, implementation and monitoring too. He highlighted the example of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation as regards developing and implementing macro-regional strategies, and concluded with a number of open questions, specifically on the role these strategies could play in shaping EU cohesion policy post-2013. **Johannes Hahn** elaborated on the concept of existing and emerging macro-regional strategies and confirmed that the European Commission would favour ways of avoiding the creation of new institutions, legislation or funding. Instead, neighbouring regions should be supported in jointly identifying common problems and in using available resources more efficiently. Mr Hahn concluded that it is important to build on existing models but also to develop new ones. Ms **Moya Perez** outlined the Spanish Presidency's approach to



Opening Session audience

macro-regional strategies, confirming their value in conceptual as well as operational terms. She welcomed the fact that macro-regional strategies would refer to functional areas covering a number of administrative regions with a sufficient number of issues in common. Working on a series of common priorities and actions in the fields of environmental, economic and transport policies, the Spanish government appreciated the added value of existing and future macro-regional strategies. **Martin Dangerfield** spoke about the concept of macro-regional strategies and their impact on multilevel governance. He argued that they cannot necessarily be considered to be a completely new concept, given the tradition of 'sub-national' cooperation in Europe. In his view, such cooperation is of particular importance because it can enable the institutions involved to 'learn lessons'.

Following a debate with the audience, the speakers **concluded** that

- macro-regional strategies should be driven by a bottom-up approach involving regional and local authorities;
- flexibility regarding the concept is needed, because different macro-regions require different approaches;
- further evaluation, of governance structures amongst other things, would be required, to provide recommendations for future strategies.

Johannes Hahn



Gerhard Stahl



Isabel Moya Pérez



Martin Dangerfield



# The Baltic Sea Region

## Lessons from implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The workshop on 'lessons learnt' was chaired by **Pauliina Haijanen**, Member of the Regional Council of South West Finland and rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions' (CoR) Opinion on the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy. The speakers were **Merten Barnert** of the Brussels Representation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, **Thorsten Kohlisch**, Berlin Senate Department for Economics, Technology and Women's Issues, and **Rolf-Barnim Foth**, Office of the Mayor of the City of Hamburg.

**Pauliina Haijanen** introduced the workshop by giving an overview of the CoR's draft Opinion on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. She stated that the CoR should encourage the Commission to coordinate implementation of the action plan and its evaluation. She stressed that regional and local players should be given a prominent role in implementing the strategy and that greater consideration should be given to issues related to the strategy's external dimension. In Ms **Haijanen's** view, the pilot-project nature of the Baltic Sea Region could provide an example and best practice for other macro-regions. **Merten Barnert** presented the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Region's experiences of implementing its tourism strategy. He underlined the difficulty of making structural funds available for the implementation of projects and concluded with the observation that a funding deficit might arise in the future. **Thorsten Kohlisch** gave an overview of the JOSEFIN (JOint SME Finance for INnovation) initiative. On the basis of 12 regions' experiences of jointly improving access to finance for SMEs, he stressed the need for trans-national approaches to supporting innovation. He also emphasised the importance of involving business partners, to ensure that the strategy's aims are put into practice. Ralf Barnim Foth spoke of the importance of macro-regions for European cities, giving the example of an interregional cooperation project between Hamburg,



Pauliina Haijanen

Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. He concluded by saying that the EU should encourage cooperation between all types of regional structures, including between metropolitan areas located at a considerable distance from one another.

The subsequent debate focused on the involvement of other regions, such as St Petersburg, the contribution of different stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region, the strategy's impact on other European policies and on the question of whether it created a hierarchy among projects. In their conclusions, the chair and speakers highlighted:

- the ability of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy to provide added value for the regions and for Europe;
- the need to cooperate with partners outside the Baltic Sea Region, in order to be able to brand the region worldwide;
- the need for more flexible cross-border funding in order to achieve the best outcomes for projects;
- project funding as a priority issue, including knowledge of how to use existing funds to implement macro-regional projects in the future;
- the importance of closely involving regional players in project implementation, to ensure that the strategy is universally accepted.

Thorsten Kohlisch



Merten Barnert



Rolf-Barnim Foth



David Sweet



## Challenges, vision and reality: the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region



Members of the Baltic Sea panel

Moderated by **Tuomas Muraja**, Brussels correspondent for the Turun Sanomat, Finland, a second workshop involved the following speakers: **Heinz Maurus**, State Secretary for Europe and Federal Affairs of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, and Member of the CoR, **Carl Haglund**, Member of the European Parliament, on behalf of the European Parliament's "Baltic Europe" Intergroup, **David Sweet**, European Commission, Adviser to the Director-General for Regional Policy, and **Rikard Bengtsson**, Lund University, Sweden.

**Carl Haglund** recalled the role of the EP as the initiator of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy and stated that the lessons learnt from its implementation so far should be taken into account. According to the EP, it was important that Russia be included in the strategy. **Heinz Maurus** thanked the EP for its pioneering role and described the consultation process in the drafting phase of the strategy as essential. He recalled the idea of a "New Hanse" as a possible element in the Baltic Sea Region. **David Sweet** said he was convinced that the Baltic Sea Region Strategy would be a success. He suggested implementing environmental protection activities and beyond, including resource management and regional policy. **Rikard Bengtsson** underlined the advantages of a joint strategy for the region's development. A wide audience could be reached, and a better presentation could be made of regional assets. Regionalisation

of the EU in general could be an advantage, as European integration could, in his view, be slowed down.

The subsequent debate with the audience addressed issues concerning regionalisation as a key element of European integration, the added value of the strategy, and its impact on the 'identity' of the people living in the region. In their **conclusions**, panellists and the moderator emphasised:

- that regionalisation is crucial, due to the variety of regional situations within the EU;
- the need to include Russia in the strategy;
- the responsibility of the regions for implementation;
- the potential loss of legitimacy in the event that the strategy's implementation achieves no or poor results;
- the possible development of a positive identity through the solution of common problems such as pollution of the Baltic Sea.

## A Baltic Sea Region Strategy beyond 2013

Moderated by **Uno Aldegren**, Member of the Executive Committee of Skåne Region, Sweden, and Chairman of the CoR's "Baltic Sea Regions" Intergroup. The speakers at this workshop were: **Radomir Matczak**, Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Region, Poland, **Haitze Siemers**, European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, **Pertti Joenniemi**, Senior Researcher, Danish Institute of International Studies, Copenhagen, and **Peter Schmitt**, Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio (Nordic Centre for Spatial Development), Stockholm, Sweden.

**Uno Aldegren** introduced the debate by highlighting the fact that there this strategy was the first of its kind. He then gave the floor to the panellists for their initial statements, asking them about their expectations for a new Baltic Sea Region Strategy. **Radomir Matczak** presented the view from

Heinz Maurus



Rikard Bengtsson



Carl Haglund



Radomir Matczak





The EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region can provide added value for the regions involved

his region on territorial cooperation under the strategy. He focused in particular on the economic pillar and the need to promote active involvement in a 'Baltic knowledge market'. He also discussed innovation and research deficits, as well as the need for economic growth, particularly by expanding business contacts. **Pertti Joenniemi** considered the Baltic Sea Region Strategy to be a positive political vision. He assessed it within the context of territorial cooperation and cohesion policy and how the strategy could be taken forward, underlining that the Baltic Sea Region was one of the most powerful regions in the EU. The strategy should be considered in a wider context, particularly regarding the development of the EU as a whole. **Peter Schmitt** pointed out that the macro-regional approach in the Baltic Sea Region so far lacks a clear territorial perspective. The aim should be to make sense to the concept of territorial cohesion when applying the strategy in the future. This would require to 'coordinate' various actions/policies (and thus stakeholders) and to pinpoint also 'where' they should have an impact. Here in particular the existing territorial knowledge about this macro-region (e.g. as provided by the VASAB network or the ESPON community) has to be utilised in a better way. **Haitze Siemers** underlined the maritime dimension of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy. He presented a

number of common issues, such as maritime transport and clean shipping, the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and maritime governance.

After the subsequent debate, panellists and moderator **concluded on:**

- the importance of growth for the Baltic Sea region and its leading role as a model for other EU regions;
- the need to improve cooperation and implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy;
- the Baltic Sea Strategy as a framework for cooperation and development, whose success depends on the stakeholders;
- the desire to continue the territorial cooperation programme.

Uno Aldegren



Peter Schmitt



Haitze Siemers



Pertti Joenniemi



## The Danube Region

### Territorial aspects of cooperation in the Danube area

This workshop was moderated by **Peter Straub**, President of the State Assembly of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, and Chairman of the CoR's "Danube" Intergroup. The speakers were **Ion Prioteasa**, Leader of Dolj County Council, Romania, and CoR Member, **Jaroslav Drozd**, Vice-President of the Zlin Region, Czech Republic, **Gyula Hegyi**, European Commission, Adviser to the Commissioner for Social Affairs and former Hungarian National Coordinator for the Danube Strategy, and **Kurt Puchinger**, Group Director of Urban Planning, City of Vienna, Austria.

**Peter Straub** opened the session by giving a brief summary of the development of the Danube strategy. He singled out the 2008 Danube conference at the Representation of Baden-Württemberg in Brussels as a milestone in this process, at which the then-European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, first voiced the possibility of creating a macro-regional strategy for the Danube along the lines of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy. Since then, a great deal of attention and work had been devoted to this theme. In the Committee of the Regions this was reflected by the creation of an interregional group, which was involved in drafting the initial Opinion on the Danube region. Mr Straub stressed the importance of the Danube regional strategy for the EU as a whole. The Danube, he said, connected the West with the East, and now represented a region that had become a pillar of the EU enlargement process. **Ion Prioteasa** presented the experiences of Dolj County in Romania, which boasted a long history of territorial cooperation with adjacent districts in Bulgaria. In recent years, cooperation had intensified through the implementation of several common projects, focusing for example on improving cross-border transport links and infrastructure development. Talking about his expectations for the Danube strategy, Mr Prioteasa said that the joint fight against climate change made cross-border cooperation in the area of environmental protection an absolute necessity and that action should be



based on existing local and regional knowledge. **Jaroslav Drozd** outlined the Czech Republic's position on the Danube strategy. He underlined the need to make the instruments already in place in the region more efficient, and proposed that the new EU framework be harmonised with existing regional bodies, e.g. the Visegrad group, to avoid overlapping and competing organisations being created. As regarded the priorities of the Danube strategy, Mr Drozd outlined three pillars, namely environmental protection, socio-economic and cultural integration, and the creation of a regional transport network. **Gyula Hegyi** pointed out that cross-border cooperation in the Danube region was an old tradition, and that the main aim of the Danube strategy should therefore be to rebuild the close inter-regional connections that existed before World War I. He insisted that these connections should be physical, e.g. concerning the construction of bridges and transport links, as well as cultural, helping to overcome nationalist tensions, for example. To ensure the strategy's successful implementation, great importance should also be attached to relations with non-EU countries. **Kurt Puchinger** presented the position of the Austrian regions. Cities and regions surrounding the Danube face common challenges, he said, and he singled out the development of agglomeration networks that focused on "green technologies". A second priority concerned the development of multimodal nodes. In this context said the point was made that the Danube's ports should be upgraded, and closer transport links needed to be established, since accessibility was a key factor in any region's competitiveness.

Peter Straub chaired the workshop on the Danube strategy



Ion Prioteasa and Gyula Hegyi



Jaroslav Drozd and Kurt Puchinger



The **debate** with the audience addressed questions related to the environmental impact of proposed infrastructure projects, and to the need to develop an overarching vision for the Danube that would guide the implementation of individual projects. In this context, it was noted that a sustainable balance between transport needs and environmental protection should be sought. Participants also discussed the potential for creating a European identity in the region. Given the common historical background of the Danube countries, it was believed that the Danube strategy could provide an incentive for such an identity to develop. Boosting cooperation between young people was deemed especially relevant to this purpose.



Participants discussed the potential for creating a European identity in the Danube region

## The added value of an EU strategy for the Danube Region

**Zoltán Gyévai**, editor-in-chief at BruxInfo, Brussels, moderated this workshop, during which the following contributors spoke: **Silvia-Adriana Țicău**, Member of the European Parliament, **Gábor Demszky**, Mayor of Budapest, Hungary, **Ján Oravec**, Mayor of Stúrovo, Slovakia, and Member of the CoR, **Elisabeth Vitouch**, President of the Vienna City Council's European Affairs Commission, Austria, and **Johann Sollgruber**, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy.

**Zoltán Gyévai** opened the panel discussion by asking the panellists what issue they felt should lie at the heart of the EU Danube strategy. **Silvia-Adriana Țicău** answered that the challenge for the Danube strategy was to propose a new form of territorial cooperation under the Lisbon treaty, so that it could serve as a model for economic and social cohesion for the EU as a whole. For **Elisabeth Vitouch**, the challenge lay in developing competitiveness within the region as a positive driving force, thereby paving the way for future EU cooperation policy and avoiding a return to nationalist tendencies. **Gábor Demszky** identified building a new sustainable growth axis as the key issue. He added that this should be done by facilitating bottom-up cooperation among cities and local communities. **Ján Oravec**

thought that the Danube river itself should be at the centre of the debate, since this was what connected the countries in the region and offered possibilities in the economic and social area. For **Johann Sollgruber**, the Danube strategy should be viewed as a pilot project for testing new methods of coordinating existing instruments. In this way, he noted, the Danube strategy could become a force for renewed growth and a framework for leaving the carbon-based economy.

**Mr Gyévai** then asked panellists about the added value of the macro-regional approach and what could be achieved through the Danube strategy that could not be done by countries individually. **Mr Sollgruber** responded that nation-states were very good at solving problems within their borders, but that contemporary environmental and socio-economic challenges very often transcended these borders and therefore required a more regional approach. For **Mr Demszky**, the Danube strategy could form a way of redefining countries and regions within the European Union, based on the traditional interconnections and multiple identities across national boundaries that exist in the Danube region. **Ms Țicău** expressed her belief that the Danube strategy could be a better and more efficient way of allocating different resources to where they are most needed. **Ms Vitouch** said that the future would be marked by the

Ján Oravec



Silvia-Adriana Țicău



Elisabeth Vitouch



growth and convergence of cities and regions. Cooperation and exchange would therefore be needed, not just in the area of environmental protection, transport infrastructure and economy, but also for social and cultural initiatives. **Mr Oravec** noted that most initiatives in the past had been bilateral in nature and that none had addressed the issue of the Danube itself. The Danube strategy created this possibility and therefore represented a significant step forward.

**Mr Gyévai** then asked the panellists how conflicting ideas about the Danube's different roles could be reconciled. **Mr Oravec** said that today's technologies made it possible to improve the Danube's navigability without damaging the environment. **Ms Ťicǎu** added that any project should always take both environmental and economic factors into account. In **Mr Demszky's** opinion, it was important to start with those elements that unite the region rather than with those dividing it. He named biodiversity and water quality as two themes that everyone could agree on. Finally, **Mr Sollgruber** underlined the need for an integrated, rather than a sector-specific approach.

In the debate with the audience, the questions of communicating the Danube strategy and funding issues were discussed. **Mr Gyévai** concluded the session by asking the panellists what results they would like to see in the near future. Mr Sollgruber hoped to see a sustained consultation mechanism and thorough scrutiny of the impact of any potential projects. He also wanted to see effective communication to the public and hoped for long-term support from the EU institutions. **Ms Ťicǎu** wished to see the implementation of a common project with visible results in terms of improved water quality, protection of biodiversity, sustainable tourism and a regional disaster management system. **Mr Demszky** hoped that more exchange would lead to a better knowledge of languages in the region and to environmental protection in the context of climate change. **Ms Vitouch** said that the Danube strategy should become a model for other regions in Europe and thought that the internet could play a role in mobilising people. **Mr Oravec** expected the protection of the Danube river itself to form the centre-piece of the Danube strategy.



Meeting chaired by Penka Nedelkova Penkova (in the centre)

## Policy input and expectations for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

This meeting was chaired by **Penka Nedelkova Penkova**, Mayor of Lom, Bulgaria, and Member of the CoR, with the following speakers: **Aleksandra Gjoreska**, Executive Coordinator, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Vienna, Austria, **Antonella Valmorbida**, Director, Association of the Local Democracy Agencies, Strasbourg, **Andreas Beckmann**, Director, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme, Vienna, Austria and **Harald Kutzenberger**, International Association for Danube Research, Wilhering, Austria.

**Penka Nedelkova Penkova** opened the meeting by presenting Bulgaria's views on the Danube strategy. She advocated a bottom-up approach that stimulated the involvement of NGOs, businesses and municipalities, and emphasised that there was a considerable interest in the Danube strategy among Bulgarian stakeholders. Deeming it important to know what the public thought on these issues, she also underlined the need to involve small municipalities in planning and implementation processes. **Aleksandra Gjoreska** said that macro-regional policy should play a major role in

Gábor Demszky



Johann Sollgruber



Aleksandra Gjoreska





Many stakeholders in the Danube Region view the macro-regional approach as an opportunity for peace, development and cooperation

the case of the Danube region, because it made it possible to address issues that could not be addressed at other tiers of government. She deemed the inclusion of non-EU actors in the region crucial in this context. Since a number of disparities remained between countries in the region, Ms Gjoeska underlined that the Danube strategy should be fundamentally based on a thorough assessment of existing instruments and projects. She also noted that, while cooperation in the field of environmental protection had been quite well developed, other sectors needed to be paid greater attention in the Danube strategy. **Antonella Valmorbida** presented the work of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), which was involved in local government capacity-building. In her presentation, Ms Valmorbida explained how the potential Danube macro-region was perceived by local stakeholders and what their expectations were. Stakeholders viewed the macro-regional approach as an opportunity for peace, development and cooperation, and expected it to reconnect natural areas and people who had been separated by national borders. From the presentation, it was also clear that ALDA values the importance of local governance and

citizens' participation. **Andreas Beckmann** gave a brief summary of the long-term environmental challenges that Danube ecosystems are facing, including the loss of 80% of the river's wetlands. He argued that the Strategy must respond to ongoing financial, economic as well as climate and environmental crises by promoting a green economy focused on a de-carbonised economy, and should be seen as an investment in the human resources and social infrastructure of the region — HOW it is implemented is at least as important as what it does. **Harald Kutzenberger** voiced the opinion that the Danube strategy should address issues other than infrastructure. While the debate on macro-regional cooperation had reached the medium government levels, it was also crucial to ensure the participation of local civil society groups, small businesses and municipalities. He suggested taking a small amount from existing funds and using this for a small project fund that was easily accessible to local actors.

Antonella Valmorbida



Harald Kutzenberger



Andreas Beckmann



## North Sea-Channel

### How does a North Sea-Channel Strategy meet the priorities of the "Europe 2020 Strategy" and cohesion policy after 2013?

This workshop was chaired by **Annelie Stark**, Member of the Regional Executive Board, Region Västra Götaland, Sweden, and Member of the CoR and of the North Sea Commission Strategic Committee. The panellists were **Michel Delebarre**, Mayor of Dunkirk, France, President of the CoR COTER Commission and of the Côte d'Opale-West Flanders EGTC, **Agneta Granberg**, Deputy Mayor and Member of the City Executive Board, City of Gothenburg, Sweden, **Gunn-Marit Helgesen**, President of the North Sea Commission and of Telemark County, Norway, **Jean-Marc Venineaux**, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, and **Ulf Savbäck** of the Swedish Prime Minister's Office.

**Annelie Stark** introduced the debate by stating that three parallel processes, macro-regional strategies, the new European strategy for jobs and growth and the debate on future cohesion policy, were strongly linked and would have a fundamental impact on the North Sea-Channel region during the coming decade and beyond. She then gave the floor to the panellists for their initial statements. **Michel Delebarre** shared examples of EGTC cooperation between the Côte d'Opale and West Flanders. Shipping, 'Motorways of the Sea', and safety at sea were examples for which Mr Delebarre saw the added value of a macro-regional strategy. Other areas were climate change, culture and research. Cooperation should be based on multi-level governance and the principle of subsidiarity. **Agneta Granberg** presented the views of the City of Gothenburg, which was located between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea. The City of Gothenburg believed that the strategic objectives of the "Europe 2020 Strategy" would only be achieved through a comprehensive system of multilevel governance, and that EU Cohesion Policy was an important instrument for achieving

the goals and priorities set by it. Ms Granberg also stressed that cities were essential to growth and development in the EU and its surrounding regions. She was convinced that Europe 2020 and a future macro-regional strategy for the North Sea needed to incorporate a strong urban dimension. **Gunn-Marit Helgesen** gave an overview of the North Sea Commission (NSC), which represented 57 regions in seven countries. She then presented the NSC's opinion on Europe 2020, which underlined the importance of the local and regional level when converting European initiatives into projects and examined how a macro-regional strategy could contribute to the design and implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. **Jean-Marc Venineaux** stated that building up a macro-regional strategy needs strong political commitment, at both national and regional levels, the readiness of good multilevel governance involving the relevant partners, and a certain intensity and maturity of cooperation in the area concerned. **Ulf Savbäck** shared some reflections from the newly published Swedish government communication on the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Region Strategy's "no's" (no new institutions, no new legislation, no additional funding) had provided the space to focus on content, Mr Savbäck said.

The subsequent debate with the audience addressed issues regarding funding flexibility, how to engage the Member States and what priorities a strategy should focus on. **Concluding** the session, Ms Stark highlighted:

- the possible contribution of the North Sea-Channel Strategy to the three 'Europe 2020' priorities; Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Growth;
- the need for cohesion policy post-2013 to be designed in such a way that resources are made available for macro-regional strategies;
- the importance of involving local and regional authorities, not only in implementing strategies and programmes, but in the entire process, including development;
- the vital need to clearly define the objectives of a EU strategy for the North Sea-Channel Region including clear priorities.

Annelie Stark



Michel Delebarre



Agneta Granberg



Jean-Marc Venineaux



## Challenges for the North Sea Region: Adaptation to climate change and economic development

Moderated by **Lenie Dwarshuis-van de Beek**, Member of the Executive Board of the province of Zuid-Holland, and Member of the CoR, this session involved the following speakers: **Bas Eickhout**, Member of the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; **Wolfgang Gibowski**, State Secretary of Lower Saxony, Germany, and CoR Member; **Brad Watson**, Vice-President, Channel Arch Manche Assembly and Cabinet Member for Communications, West Sussex County Council, United Kingdom, and **Haitze Siemers**, European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

**Lenie Dwarshuis-van de Beek** opened the session by highlighting the mayor challenges facing the North Sea-Channel region, namely safeguarding a strong economy and a safe living environment while dealing with the real threats to security arising from the potential consequences of climate change. Cooperation on this issue is necessary and is already taking place in a number of ways. The discussion on a macro-regional strategy primarily needs to focus on the added value of such a strategy for the North Sea-Channel region. The panel was therefore asked to discuss the 'if and how' of a future strategy and 'what role' the regions should play in it. **Haitze Siemers** provided a short overview of the current state of affairs. He briefly discussed the European Commission's Blue Book for Integrated Maritime Policy. Mr Siemers indicated that the term 'integrated' referred to all aspects of the policy. In the case of the North Sea area, it covered all the different issues requiring attention. DG Mare was working on an overview of all directives, challenges and policies that were currently applicable to the North Sea-Channel area, and therefore recognised the importance of integrating this strategy with the coastal regions. **Bas Eickhout** considered that macro-regional strategies are a good way of better organising spatial planning at sea, which could be employed in particular in the area of climate change mitigation, as they are for the development of

offshore wind turbine fields. Regions could play a facilitating role, since they are more accustomed to cross-border cooperation than Member States. **Brad Watson** pointed out that the Channel united rather than divided the continent and mentioned the CAMIS (Channel Arch Manche Integrated Strategy) as a good example of cooperation, particularly in the field of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and in relation to combating climate change. Mr Watson considered it regrettable that there would be no separate strategy for the Channel, and therefore called on DG Mare to adopt it as a sub-strategy in both the North Sea and the Atlantic strategies. **Wolfgang Gibowski** estimated that it would take a long time to establish a North Sea strategy. He suggested that the regions engage in discussions with the Member States and the European Commission about the fact that a macro-regional strategy should primarily build on already existing initiatives and programmes. The strategy should focus on economic development, in particular of knowledge-intensive activities.

The debate focused on whether or not to include the Channel in a possible North Sea strategy. Other points related to the fact that the strategy should embrace more than just maritime aspects of the North Sea area, and should above all stimulate project development. In her conclusions, Ms Dwarshuis-van de Beek stated that research on the following issues was needed, on the basis that:

- a future strategy should provide added value for the region;
- a strategy should above all be based on existing cooperation structures, and not just provide yet another framework. Cooperation should perhaps take the form of a network body;
- a future strategy should be based on a bottom-up approach, stimulating project development between European regions;
- DG Mare and DG Regio should be involved in developing the strategy;
- the involvement of Member States remained an important point to work on.

Ulf Savbäck



Lenie Dwarshuis-van de Beek



Bas Eickhout



Brad Watson



## Towards an EU strategy for the North Sea-Channel area

**Jacki Davis**, Senior Adviser, European Policy Centre, Brussels, moderated this panel debate, with the participation of **Hermann Kuhn**, Member of the Bremen Regional Parliament, Germany, and President of the CoR's "North Sea-Channel" Intergroup, **Gunn-Marit Helgesen**, President of the North Sea Commission (NSC), Skien, Norway, **Ernesto Penas Lado**, European Commission, Director, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

**Hermann Kuhn** emphasised that cooperation between the states around the North Sea-Channel had recently gained importance in traditional economic sectors such as shipping, as well as on new issues such as the sustainable use of the seas and oceans. He pointed out that increased sea pollution and the impact of climate change would heighten the need for coastal protection. **Gunn-Marit Helgesen** gave an overview on the NSC opinion and emphasised that the way in which a North Sea-Channel Strategy is integrated would play an important role. In particular, she stressed the need for a discussion platform, to be set up by the European Commission, and better coordination of existing European funding instruments. **Ernesto Penas Lado** pointed out that an integrated regional approach of different policies would achieve better results than individual solutions. For him, the importance of closer cooperation in the North Sea-Channel area was important particularly in the following fields: Maritime strategy, energy development, transport, fishing policy, and maritime planning. A common approach on maritime policy would be beneficial and necessary, and he gave an assurance that the European Commission would support the development of maritime strategies.

The debate addressed questions regarding the best time to launch a North Sea-Channel Strategy, the differences between a strategy of this type and the Baltic Sea and Danube strategies, and the role of the Member States and regions in implementing the strategy. Panellists and the moderator underlined in their **conclusions**:



The North Sea-Channel area could also develop a macro-regional strategy

- the urgency of implementing a North Sea-Channel Strategy; States around the North Sea-Channel region have to tackle common challenges and problems. There is no need to wait for evaluation of the first two "pilot projects";
- the significance of the "bottom-up" approach involving stakeholders and regional and local authorities at the very beginning of the implementation of a North Sea-Channel Strategy in order to comply with the subsidiarity principle;
- the strengthening of EU cohesion policy by defining macro-regions in order to achieve common goals through consensus-based decision-making;
- the differences between a North Sea-Channel Strategy and the Baltic Sea and Danube strategies. Therefore, a North Sea-Channel Strategy has to follow its own strategic priorities for its geographical area.

Ernesto Penas Lado



Hermann Kuhn



Gunn-Marit Helgesen



## Conclusions for moving forward with a North Sea-Channel Strategy

The concluding meeting for the North Sea-Channel Strategy was chaired by **Gunn-Marit Helgesen**, President of the North Sea Commission, Skien, Norway, and on the panel were: **Annelie Stark**, Member of the Executive Committee of Region Västra Götaland, Sweden, Member of the CoR and of the North Sea Commission's Strategic Committee, **Wolfgang Gibowski**, State Secretary of Lower Saxony, Germany, and CoR Member, **Rob Bats**, Member of the Executive Board of the Province of Drenthe, the Netherlands, and CoR Member, and **Eleni Marianou**, Secretary-General of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR).

**Gunn-Marit Helgesen** introduced the debate by stating that the discussion process on developing a North Sea-Channel Strategy had already started some time ago, in particular within the North Sea Commission (NSC). She asked the four panellists and the audience the following questions: Do we need a North Sea-Channel Strategy? How can such a strategy be a success? **Annelie Stark** summarised the conclusions of the workshop on the "Europe 2020 Strategy and cohesion policy after 2013?" as follows: (1) Cohesion policy post-2013 should make funding available for macro-regional strategies; (2) local and regional authorities must be involved throughout the process of developing and implementing strategies and programmes; (3) clear priorities and objectives for a North Sea-Channel Strategy must be identified for it to succeed; (4) a North Sea-Channel strategy should represent a new framework for existing cooperation. **Wolfgang Gibowski** presented the results of the workshop on "Challenges for the North Sea-Channel region: Adaptation to climate change and economic development": (1) A North Sea-Channel Strategy must have a bottom-up approach; (2) existing networks and cooperation must be used, developed and reasonably combined; (3) common priorities and objectives must be identified, where cooperation was useful and necessary for all partners, and have an added value; (4) the strategy should

concentrate primarily on the following items: Wind energy/offshore, climate change, and spatial planning. **Rob Bats** pointed out that the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy depended on local and regional authorities. They must aim to cooperate, in order to help implement the three Europe 2020 priorities: Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Growth. Cooperation between the North Sea-Channel regions must be prepared in the framework of a macro-region. In this process, the size of the macro-region is irrelevant. It must take a broad and comprehensive approach to ensure maximum effectiveness. The strategy must enable every region to enjoy increased prosperity and welfare. **Eleni Marianou** pointed out that the growing complexity and interconnections between the challenges facing the EU today require more complex solutions. The macro-regional approach should not be seen as an additional, artificial border in the EU but rather as a source of strategic opportunity. Only member states can decide to launch macro-regional strategies, as the European Commission provides a conceptual framework and identifies its possible links with post-2013 policy instruments. Regions have to show the relevance of a macro-regional approach in their area and must help the member states to identify policy needs and priorities.

The ensuing debate addressed questions regarding the added-value of a North Sea-Channel Strategy, the integration of macro-regions into the European political system, and the role member states play in implementing macro-regional strategies. In their **conclusions**, Ms Helgesen and the panellists emphasised that

- macro-regional strategies are needed because they give the EU project a more rooted aspect, which was currently lacking;
- a bottom-up approach to developing and implementing a North Sea-Channel Strategy is extremely important;
- only once its added-value is identified, will member states accept and support a North Sea-Channel Strategy.

Rob Bats



Wolfgang Gibowski



Eleni Marianou



## Closing Session

### Macro-regions: Territorial cohesion, multilevel governance and European integration

In his opening remarks **Senator Alfredo Mantica**, Secretary of State at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reflected on the concept of macro-regions and presented the perspective of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, an intergovernmental cooperation network, the presidency of which is currently held by Italy. He agreed with the recent EU approach on macro-regions and was convinced that the European Commission had to play a decisive role in this process and show wisdom and impartiality amongst the various actors involved. Senator Mantica concluded by saying that, as experiences with the strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Sea confirmed, regions were often able to operate more effectively on implementing projects of specific interest to their citizens, while also ensuring that these projects were consistent with national development policies.

During the following debate, which was moderated by Jacki Davis, **Uno Aldegren**, Member of the Executive Committee of Skåne Region, Sweden, and Chairman of the CoR "Baltic Sea Regions" Intergroup, stated that the Baltic Sea Region Strategy was based on a strong political will and the involvement of regions and countries, a common agenda and objectives, and the coordination of available funding. **Hermann Kuhn**, Member of the Bremen Regional Parliament, Germany, and Chairman of the CoR "North Sea-Channel" Intergroup, considered that a new institutional level might be useful for coordinating existing initiatives. Moreover, he expressed his belief in the possibility of learning from others, including NGOs, which were already cooperating on a number of issues in cross-border regions. **Renzo Tondo**, President of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region and President of the Alps-Adria Working Community, confirmed that to ensure the efficient redistribution of resources, no additional legislation would be needed. **Peter Schmitt**, Senior Research Fellow, at Nordregio, Stockholm, reiterated the relationship between the EU's strive for territorial cohesion and the introduction of macro-regional strategies. Regarding the latter it is central to clearly define the responsibilities (the who), the objectives (the what), the processes and available instruments (the how), and finally 'where'



Uno Aldegren (2<sup>nd</sup> left) shared his views on the creation of the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

the intended actions and projects shall take place. Only then macro-regional strategies can help to support territorial cohesion within macro-regions.

In his remarks closing the forum, **Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso**, President of the Spanish region of Murcia and First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions, highlighted the added value of the existing Baltic Sea and Danube macro-regional strategies, while stressing their role as a potential tool for achieving the broader objective of 'territorial cohesion' as defined by the Lisbon Treaty. He welcomed the fact that the Committee of the Regions would contribute to a debate across existing and emerging macro-regional strategies through this event and other activities and continue to cooperate with the regions and the EU institutions on impact assessments. In President Valcárcel Siso's view, macro-regional strategies would have to employ the multilevel governance approach favoured by the Committee of the Regions, while avoiding any attempt, for example, to renationalise cohesion policy, whose success would continue to depend on local and regional implementation. The concept of the «three no's» (no institutions, no legislation, no funding) as expressed by the European Commission would require further investigation, in particular because the process of reforming EU Cohesion Policy would move on in the near future. He then elaborated on the ongoing development in the Mediterranean, which could form another test-case for macro-regional strategies. The Mediterranean region offered great potential for economic, social, territorial and political development, on maritime, sustainable energy, transport and accessibility issues, amongst others. Mr Valcárcel Siso concluded by highlighting the need for close cooperation between European, national, regional and local institutions on assessing and developing macro-regional strategies further.

Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso



Alfredo Mantica



Renzo Tondo



# Europe's Macro-Regions Integration through territorial cooperation

13 April 2010, Committee of the Regions, Rue Belliard 101, Brussels

## Europe's Macro-Regions: Integration through territorial cooperation

The development and implementation of macro-regional strategies was discussed by more than 400 regional and local representatives, experts, stakeholders and European officials at the Forum on Europe's Macro-Regions, held by the Committee of the Regions on 13 April 2010 in Brussels. This represents the first discussions of this new approach to territorial cooperation across existing and emerging macro-regions. In addition to the Opening and Closing Sessions, the Forum was organised along three "macro-regional strands" of workshops and meetings focusing on the Baltic Sea, the Danube, and the North Sea-Channel regions. This brochure gives an overview of the contributions to these different sessions and the discussions they generated.

More information: [www.cor.europa.eu/macroregions](http://www.cor.europa.eu/macroregions)

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged  
Photo credits: Committee of the Regions and European Commission,  
Fotolia/Jakub Niezabitowski: p.2, Heinz Dieter Galonska: p.6  
Conference proceedings  
2010 – 16 p. – 21x29,7 cm  
Printed at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, Belgium

EUROPEAN UNION



**Committee of the Regions**

Published in May 2010

Committee of the Regions  
Directorate for Communication, Press and Protocol  
Rue Belliard 101  
B-1040 Brussels  
[www.cor.europa.eu](http://www.cor.europa.eu)