



Ideas for cross-macro- regional strategies' water collaboration

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Cooperation so far

- 1st macro-regional workshop on water
- Study on “Water related themes in EU macro-regional strategies”
- Background paper „How to organise and maintain cross-macro-regional strategies’ water collaboration (platform)”

Main conclusions so far

- EU strategy regions share similar professional, institutional and financial challenges, perform similar activities, gathered experience
- Water is a key priority topic in all
- There is a lot of room and untapped opportunity for future cooperation

Opportunities

- Dissemination of best practices/solutions for specific water related problems and also for other issues like governance, institutional issues, communication - learn from each other's solutions
- Influence / increase visibility in policy making and in public – develop common visions (MRS weight)
- Cooperation in common problematic areas: capacity, data availability, funds availability (amount, structure and time)
- Increase cohesion in EU and in non-EU countries
- Integrated management of freshwater and seas
- Saving resources, better partnerships, better information dissemination and communication with decision makers and stakeholders
- Cooperation can increase efficiency and reduce costs, increase knowledge and experience as well as give an opportunity to create common standpoints

Potential topics of cooperation (I)

- Water quality and availability; more specifically, pollution control (nutrients, plastics, hazardous substances) and integrated and smart water resource management
- Environmental risks related to waters such as droughts and water scarcity; floods; prevention, forecast techniques or eco-friendly solutions
- Water in support of biodiversity: ecological state of waters; water-related ecosystems and migratory fish species
- Climate change adaptation, research, planning
- Policy-making and planning ((integrated) policy formulation; spatial planning /land use /landscapes /rural areas; River Basin and Coastal Management Plans; flood management plans)
- Focussing on spaces: wetlands, coastal areas; connecting ecosystems / blue corridors, floodplains
- Maritime issues and interdependencies between freshwater and seawater matters

Potential topics of cooperation (II)

- Nutrient load reaching the waters from agriculture or poor sewage/waste water treatment
- Contamination of waters with hazardous substances (e.g. plastics and pharmaceuticals)
- Impact of water pollution on water-based ecosystems
- Increased risk of water related hazards due to climate change (floods, droughts)
- Development needs of water transportation

The mainstreaming of water issues into other thematic areas and policies like climate change, agriculture, nature conservation, tourism, fisheries, hydrography and transport were also considered important.

Potential other areas of cooperation

- Efficient governance, implementation processes, funding issues, stakeholder involvement and harmonisation of policies
- Governance matters, like setting up and maintaining thematic steering groups for the MRS implementation; stakeholder involvement; addressing drivers and barriers in the MRS delivery; cooperation between supranational organisations and thematic coordinators of the MRS; moving from national perceptions of the shared challenges to international/macro-regional thinking etc.
- Implementation processes, questions and approaches at thematic priority level, e.g., exchanging practices on the thematic coordinators' work; sharing lessons learnt and developing further ideas on how to move from implementing projects within the MRS to working with macro-regional processes; capacity building; stakeholder involvement; how to ensure more policy impact through the macro-regional work; funding; cross-thematic cooperation within the MRS, etc.

Relevant priority areas



EUSAIR:

7. The Marine environment; 8. Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity

EUSALP:

A6: To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources; A7: To develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory; A8: To improve risk management and to better manage climate change, including major natural risks prevention

EUSBSR:

PA Hazards

1. Prevent pollution and reduce the use of hazardous substances; 2. Mitigate and remediate contamination

PA Bio-economy

PA Nutri

1. Managing nutrients more efficiently; 2. Improving waste water treatment; 4. Improve nutrient load data; 6. Investigate cost-efficient nutrient reduction mechanisms

PA Secure

1. Develop a joint macro-regional prevention and preparedness approach towards major hazards and emergencies

EUSDR:

PA4 To restore and maintain the quality of waters; PA5 To manage environmental risks; PA6 To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils

There are other areas indirectly related to water or key in mainstreaming water issues in those policy areas including agriculture, fisheries, climate change, transport, energy, tourism.

Ways of cooperation

The 1st macro-regional workshop on water identified some ways of potential future cooperation:

- a) thematic coordinators may consider participation in steering group meetings of another thematic area within the same MRS or beyond;
- b) for the sake of information exchange across the MRS, the thematic coordinators could share information provided in various reports;
- c) meetings for the MRS thematic coordinators could be organised back-to-back or jointly with other MRS events, e.g. Annual Forums or common events of the four MRS;
- d) more regular exchange of information/opinions across the MRS or among the thematic coordinators of the same MRS could be ensured, e.g. on policy/EU directive reviews; implementation and updates on Climate adaptation strategy; EU supervision surveys; by identifying transferable topics and knowledge across the MRS, etc.
- e) Thematic coordinators, respecting different environments they operate, look for solutions to implement the MRS most efficiently.

Potential objectives of cooperation

- 1) Sharing knowledge and experience on water related issues among professionals
- 2) Establishing common initiatives or projects
- 3) Increasing influence on EU level strategy formulation and programming by e.g. developing common policy papers

Proposals for next steps

- Background paper „How to organise and maintain cross-macro-regional strategies’ water collaboration (platform)’’: additional time for commenting to MRS coordinators and other interested partners after the workshop.
- Taking into account the conclusions from the 1st meeting, it can already be proposed to continue exchange on specific thematic within an MRS Water Task Force to be set up by the EUSDR PA4. The Task Force should first meet in 2020 on the occasion of one of the common events of the four MRS. Interact could facilitate the exchange. Cooperation needs would be further clarified in writing before the first meeting of the MRS Water Task Force.
- Based on needs identified, thematic meetings / information exchange on specific topics could be organized among the relevant priority area coordinators with the leadership of a volunteer coordinator.