

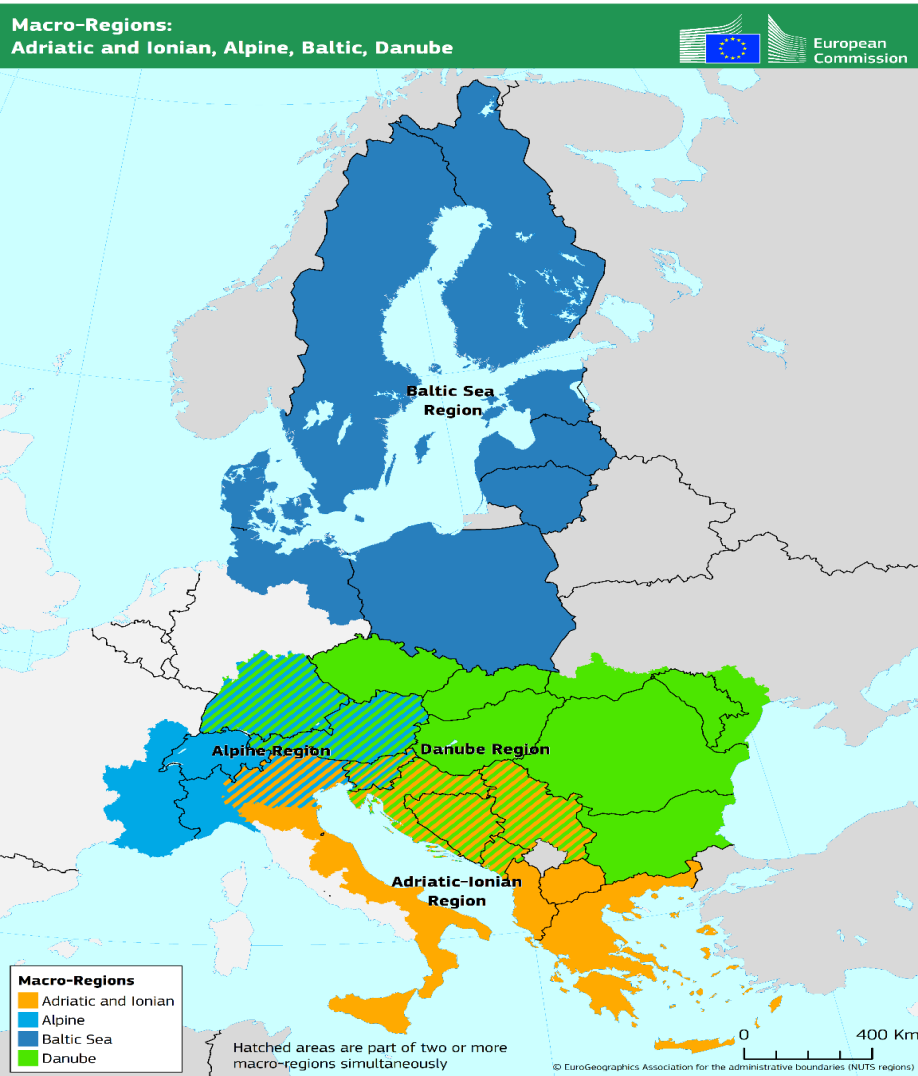


16th Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin

5th Commission report on the implementation
of EU macro-regional strategies

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Context

5th biennial report, covering the period from mid-2022 to mid-2024, on the implementation of the four EU macro-regional strategies, involving 19 EU countries and 10 non-EU countries:

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
- EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

Background

- From 2016, every second year the Commission has published an implementation report covering the four strategies.
- Released during a time of global instability and when Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine has been going on for more than 3 years.
- Prepared in a context where a new Commission with renewed priorities has taken up its duties.

What differs from the 4th Report?

- Stronger focus on how macro-regional strategies can help to facilitate EU enlargement.
- Assesses the long-term development of the macro-regional strategies in the light of ongoing action plan revisions and updates.
- Includes a detailed discussion on governance issues, notably on how to secure a stronger commitment at the level of thematic priorities.

Structure of the report

- Long-term development of macro-regional strategies
- Delivery of EU political priorities
- Facilitating EU enlargement, response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine
- Governance, funding, monitoring & evaluation, communication
- Conclusions

The report is accompanied by a Commission Staff Working Document with more detailed information on each Strategy

Strategy long-term evolution

- Need to review strategies and adjust their action plans to reflect a changing environment and to adapt to new emerging needs and challenges.
- Macro-regional strategies have taken their revision processes forward in different ways (incremental – more radical updates).
- No formal rules for such revisions, each strategy has developed its own procedures.

Facilitating EU enlargement

- Council conclusions on the 4th implementation report encouraged all stakeholders to further explore the use of the macro-regional strategies to facilitate EU enlargement.
- Macro-regional cooperation offers candidate countries the possibility to work on an equal footing with Member States.
- It helps to accelerate the process of adapting national legislation to EU law and facilitates institutional capacity building at all administrative levels
- Of particular importance in the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube Strategies.

Delivering on EU political priorities

- From the beginning, sustainability has been a prominent theme of all 4 macro-regional strategies (green transition and environmental sustainability, the circular economy, addressing environmental risks and climate action).
- Support the development of digital infrastructure, skills and services to improve connectivity, competitiveness and efficiency.
- Help to ensure a fair transition with the most vulnerable people, companies and regions in mind through initiatives in the social and economic fields.

Conclusions

- If macro-regional strategies are to play an active role in building a prosperous, sustainable and secure Europe, they must further develop the ability to constantly adapt to a changing environment.
- More focus on issues such as energy transition, European economic competitiveness, risks and security, and on addressing demographic challenges.
- Involve all key stakeholders in the work, including local and regional actors, young people and underrepresented groups like civil society organisations, academia, businesses and clusters.

Thank you

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