

# The European Union's macro-regional strategies: concept, evolution and challenges

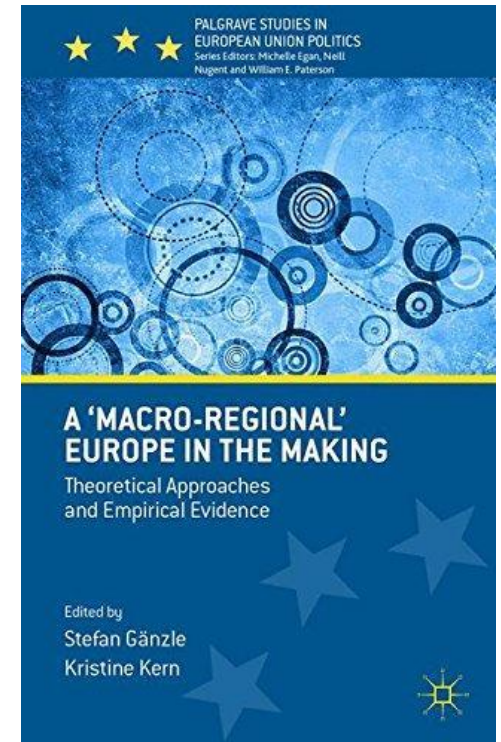
European Parliament  
REGI Committee Workshop  
12 July 2017

Stefan Gänzle  
Associate Professor  
University of Agder, Kristiansand (Norway)  
[stefan.ganzle@uia.no](mailto:stefan.ganzle@uia.no)



# The EU's macro-regional strategies – concept, evolution and challenges

- Introduction: Why bother?
- Definitions and concept
- Evolution, Impact, Challenges
- Conclusion and Recommendations
- Annex



## Why bother?

“[For] most environmental problems the EU is not an **optimal regulatory area**, being either too large or too small. In a number of cases – for example, the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea, or the Rhine – the scope of the problem is regional rather than EU-wide, and is best tackled through regional arrangements [...].”

*Giandomenico Majone, 2014*

“A Europe of the Regions has so far been envisaged and arranged on far too small a scale [...]. Regional associations (such as a Baltic Sea Union, an Alps-Adriatic Union) may revive the good old **principle of European federalism** – [...] they are also still near enough to the cultural characteristics and networks of the people of Europe.”

*Claus Leggewie, 2012*

## What are *macro-regions*?

- Concept construed, contested – and widely used
  - economic and political geography and spatial planning
  - political science, international relations (IR), and comparative regionalism
- Term has been used to depict both
  - globally significant groups of nations (the EU, ASEAN etc.)
  - groupings of administrative regions within a country
  - ‘an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges’ (EU Commission, 2009)

## What are EU macro-regional *strategies*?

- EU macro-regional strategy
  - ‘(1) is an integrated framework relating to member states and third countries in the same geographical area;
  - (2) addresses common challenges;
  - (3) benefits from strengthened cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion’ (European Commission 2013);
- Based on **five core principles** construed around the need to:
  - (1) integrate existing policy frameworks, programs, and financial instruments;
  - (2) coordinate between sectorial policies, actors or different tiers of government;
  - (3) cooperate between countries and sectors;
  - (4) involve policymakers at different levels of governance;
  - and, (5) create partnerships between EU member states and non-member countries

## What are EU macro-regional *strategies*?

- Based on 'three No's'
- Aim to mobilize existing actors and funding schemes, tapping on the expertise of existing epistemic communities and stakeholders from all tiers of the EU's multilevel system
- Seek to provide a strategic platform or reference framework for existing actors
- Refer to the objective of integrating different policy sectors that influence one another
- *Discursive action*: Frame 'the bigger picture', provide orientation for the future, 'sense-making' – and macro-regional identity
- *Systematic integration* into a comprehensive and evolving new governance architecture at the macro-regional level
- *Coordination* across different levels of a multi-level governance system

# What are EU macro-regional strategies?

## Evolution of EU macro-regional strategies

### Regional cooperation

#### 'Outside' EU

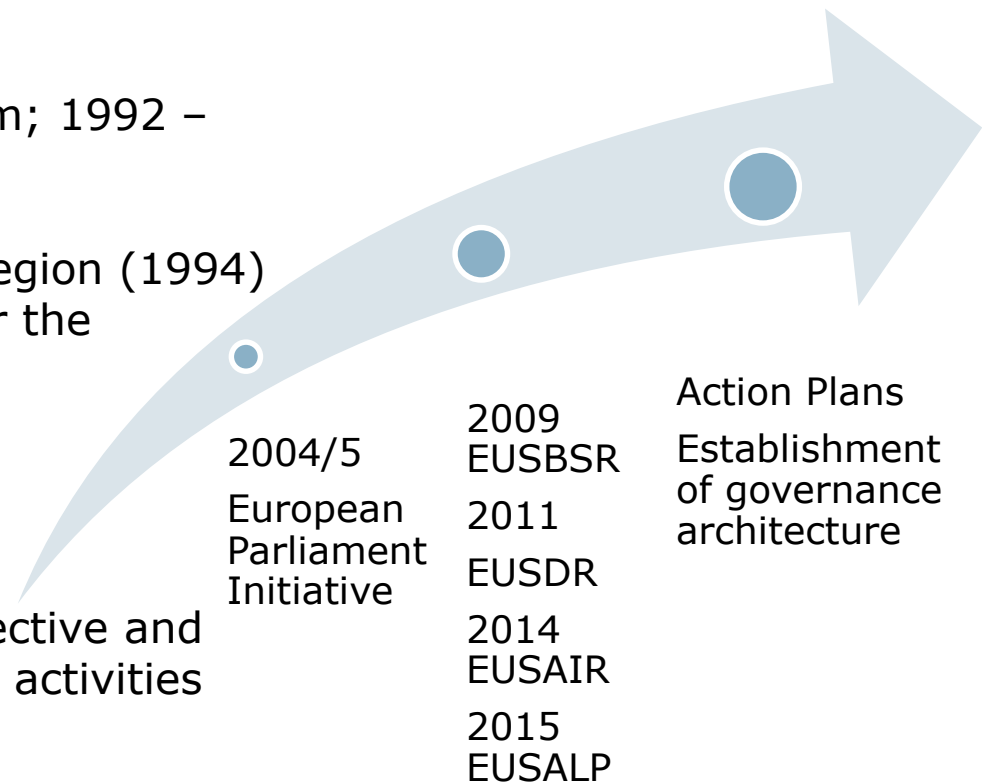
- e.g. Nordic cooperation
- Baltic Sea cooperation (1974 – Helcom; 1992 – Council of the Baltic Sea States)

#### European Union

- Union Approaches to the Baltic Sea Region (1994)
- Barcelona Process (1995) → Union for the Mediterranean
- Northern Dimension (1997/2006)

### Territorial cooperation

- European Spatial Development Perspective and other European territorial cooperation activities
  - INTERREG
  - Barca Report (2009)
  - EGTC (2006/09)
  - Urban Agenda (2015)

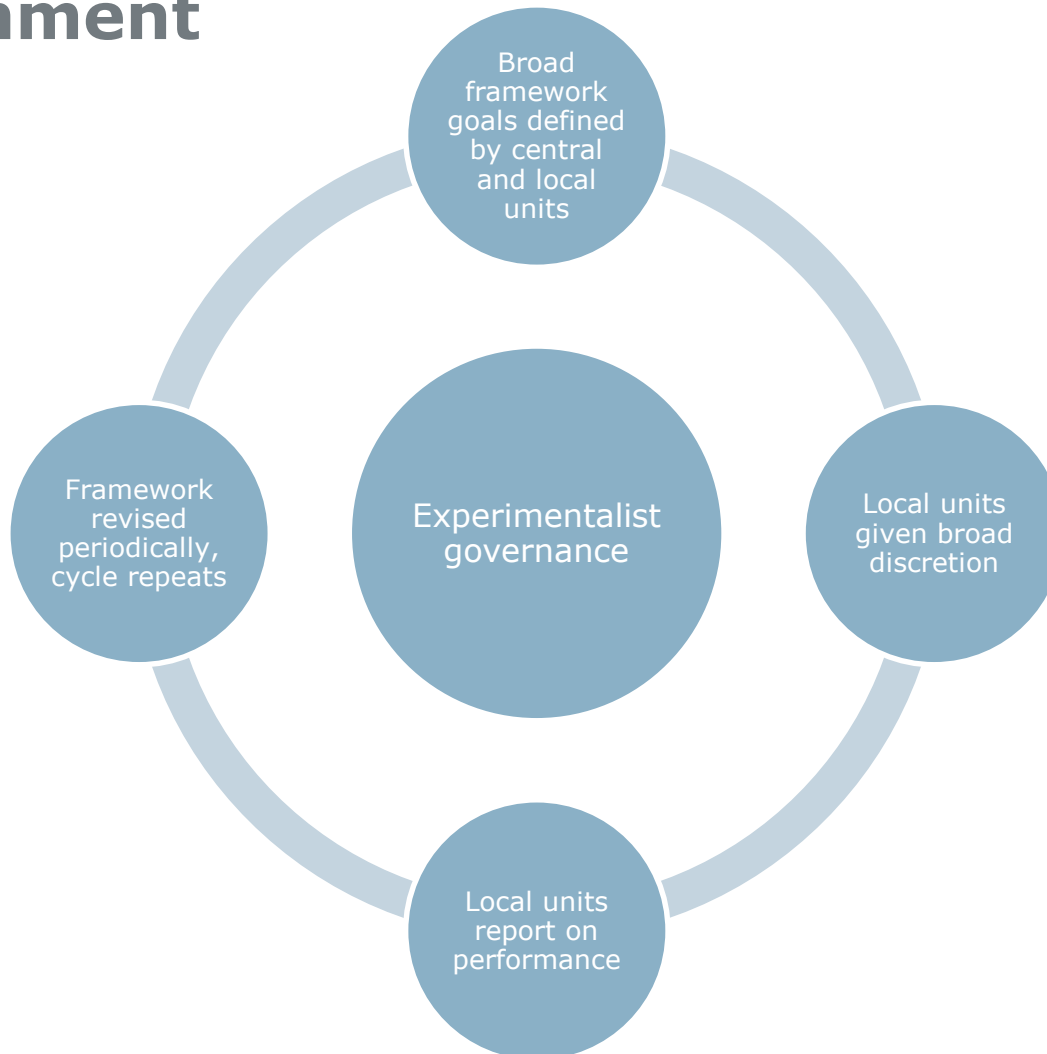




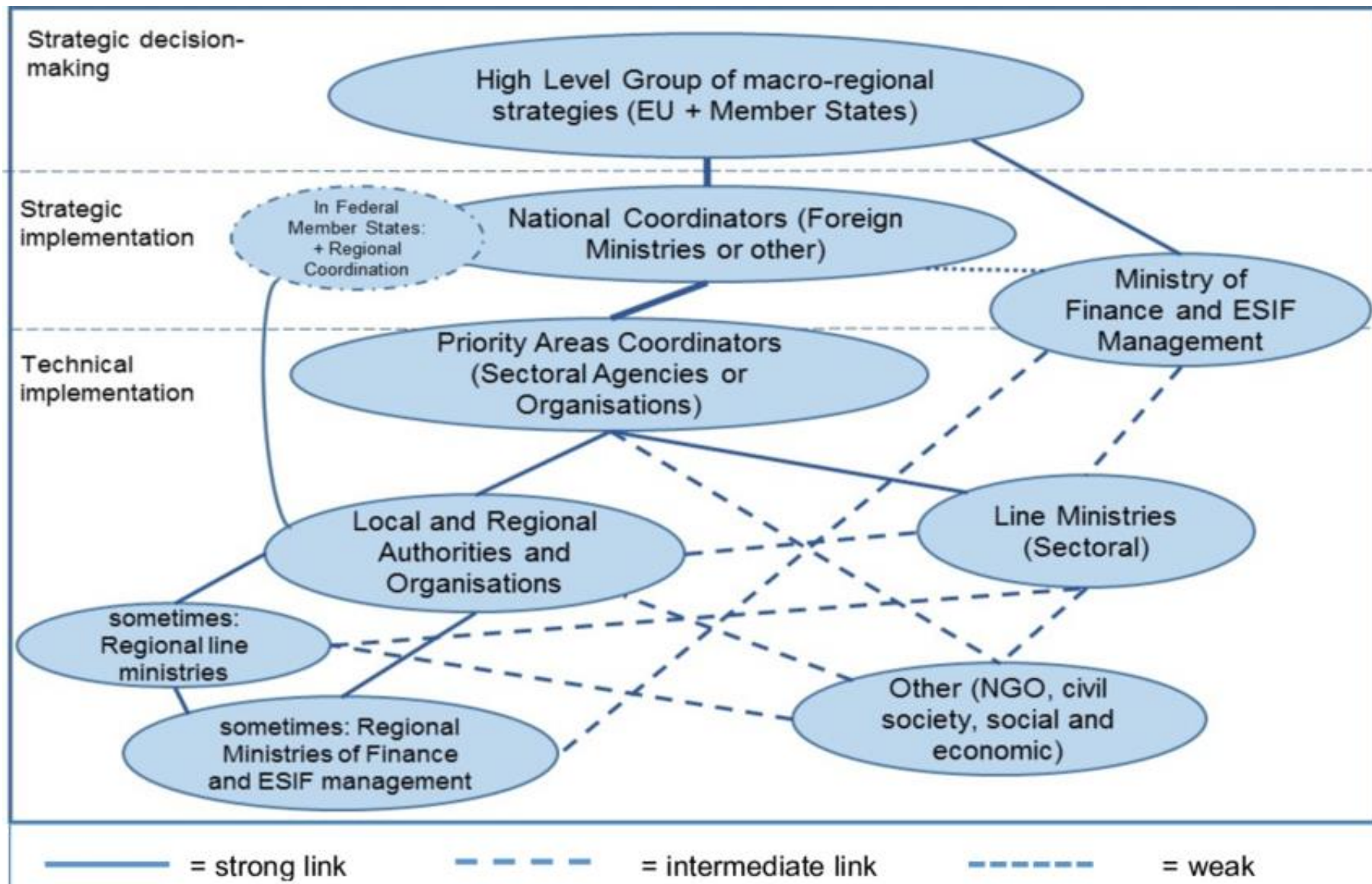


# What are EU macro-regional strategies?

## Experimentalist governance in a multi-level environment



# Governance Architecture (I/II)



# Governance Architecture (II/II)

PROSPERITY			
EUSBSR	EUSDR	EUSAIR	EUSALP
Innovation			
<b>PA Innovation:</b> Exploiting the full potential of the region in research, innovation and SME, utilising the Digital Single Market as a source for attracting talents and investments	<b>PA7:</b> To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies  <b>PA8:</b> Competitiveness	<b>1.</b> Blue technologies  <b>3.</b> Maritime and marine governance and services  <b>7.</b> The marine environment  <b>Cross-cutting aspect:</b> Strengthening R&D, Innovation and SMEs	<b>A1:</b> To develop an effective research and innovation ecosystem  <b>A2:</b> To increase the economic potential of strategic sectors
Security Crime			
<b>PA Secure:</b> Protection from land-based emergencies, accidents and	<b>PA11:</b> To work together to promote security and tackle organised		

## Impact of EU macro-regional strategies (I/II)

- Many effects of macro-regional strategies are the subject of conjecture
  - The European Court of Auditors' 2016 Special Report on combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea noted that 'EUSBSR's impact on Member States' actions to reduce nutrient inputs into the Baltic Sea is difficult to assess'
- Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum has been transformed into a permanent fisheries forum
  - that 'is embedded into the everyday cooperation work of the Ministries of the region ... thus [representing] ... a permanent change brought about by an EUSBSR Flagship' (EUSBSR Policy Area Bioeconomy n.d.)

## Impact of EU macro-regional strategies (II/II)

- Mainstreaming in other EU programmes (often only on paper so far), i.e. ESIF, IPA, ENPI
- Coordination 'challenge' inside the European Commission and member/partner states
- Integration of external partner into MRS governance architecture
  - Different scope of MRS with regards to partner countries
  - EUSDR Priority Area 9 'Investing in People and Skills' coordinated by Austria and the Republic of Moldova; Priority Area 7 'To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)' coordinated by Slovakia and Serbia
  - EUSBSR: Council of the Baltic Sea States
- Political will of participating countries decisive

## Conclusion: EU macro-regional strategies

- Are experimental – can be captured as instances of experimentalist governance ('diagnostic monitoring' remains a challenge)
- Contribute to reframing, reinstating and harmonizing patterns of regional cooperation
- Differ from multilateral strategies of regional cooperation while drawing regional and territorial cooperation closer together
- Make regional cooperation 'comparable' across macro-regions to allow for mutual learning and exchange of best practice (e.g. the horizontal role of the Interact programme or 'Participation Day')
- Seek to support the regionalization of several EU policies via the activation and mobilization of relevant stakeholders and actors (co-optation)
- Provide a 'script' that allows actors to coordinate across levels

## Recommendations (with regards to post-2020 Cohesion Policy)

- Avoid (re-)silo-ization of EU macro-regional strategies (in transnational programs)
- Strengthen role of policy coordinators and steering groups
- Involve and clarify role of ministries and agencies
- Discuss link between Cohesion Policy and EU macro-regional strategies
- Involve the European Parliament more (e.g. Danube Parliamentary conference, Annual Forum or Participation Days)

**Thank you for your attention!**

**Contact:**

Prof. Dr. Stefan Gänzle

Department of Political Science and Management  
University of Agder

Gimlemon 25 H

4606 Kristiansand (Norway)

[stefan.ganzle@uia.no](mailto:stefan.ganzle@uia.no)



# Annex

- Table: Macro-region: 'between' territorial and functional regions
- Further Reading Suggestions

## Macro-region: 'between' territorial and functional regions

	Territorial	Functional
Type of Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Territorial</li><li>• Defined by political and administrative territories</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Functional</li><li>• Defined by functional relationships</li></ul>
Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distinct and stable</li><li>• Shift of competencies between levels (devolution, decentralization)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shifting and fuzzy</li><li>• May differ from territorial boundaries</li><li>• Intersecting memberships</li></ul>
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multi-functional</li><li>• Tasks and responsibilities clearly defined</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Task-specific</li><li>• Institutions may differ between policy areas</li></ul>
Institutional design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traditional forms of regional governance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New forms of regional governance such as public-private partnerships</li><li>• Inter-municipal and interregional cooperation (within and beyond nation-states)</li></ul>

## Suggestions for further reading

- Börzel, T.A. (2012) "Experimentalist governance in the EU: The emperor's new clothes?" *Regulation and Governance* 6, 378-384.
- European Court of Auditors (2016) "Combating Eutrophication in the Baltic Sea: Further and More Effective Action Needed", *Special Report* Nr. 3, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Gänzle, S. (2017) "Macro-regional strategies of the European Union (EU) and experimentalist design of multi-level governance: the case of the EU strategy for the Danube region", *Regional & Federal Studies*, 27:1, 1-22.
- Gänzle, S. (2017): "The European Union's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR): improving multilevel governance in Baltic Sea cooperation?", *Journal of Baltic Studies*
- Majone, G. (2014) *Rethinking the Union of Europe post-Crisis. Has Integration Gone too far?* Cambridge: CUP.
- Sabel, C.F. and Zeitlin, J. (2012) "Experimentalism in the EU: common ground and persistent difference", *Regulation and Governance* 6(3): 410-26.