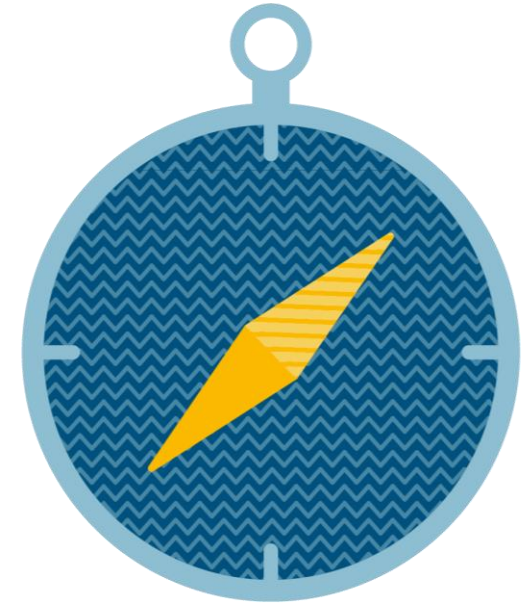


Embedding EU MRS and SBS: focus on implementation

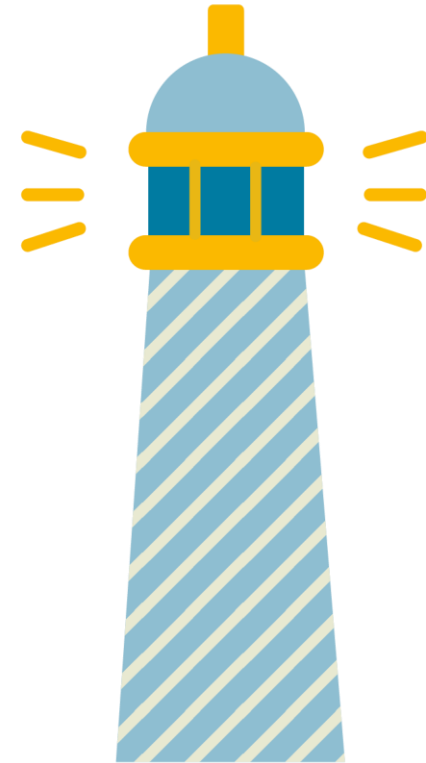
Webinar, 30 June 2022

Organised by the European Commission and Interact



Opening remarks

European Commission



Opening remarks



Sławomir Tokarski, Director for European Territorial Cooperation, Macro-regions, Interreg and Programme Implementation I, DG REGIO, European Commission

- The EU macro-regional strategies are about coordination of funds and actions and joining efforts bringing efficiency and assuring larger impact of investments and actions.
- Basis for this is art.22(3)(d)(i) of the Common Provisions Regulation stating that a programme shall set out for each specific objective the expected contribution of the actions to the relevant EU macro-regional strategy and sea-basin strategies where Member States and regions participate in such strategies.
- The Council, in its Conclusions to the Third Report on the implementation of the EU macro-regional strategies, emphasizes the importance of the embedding process.
- DG REGIO is there to help in this important embedding exercise, as facilitator (e.g. trainings/events, support to MA networks and liaison with other DGs, screening of programmes).
- DG REGIO relies on the EU macro-regional strategies implementers and their knowledge of the territories in order to monitor properly the embedding process during implementation.

Opening remarks



Christos Economou, Head of Unit of Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security and Acting Director of Directorate A on Maritime Policy and Blue economy, DG MARE, European Commission

- Embedding is a crucial process in the context of the EU Sea Basin Strategies (SBS) implementation.
- The stress on the geographical and thematic focus has been especially emphasized in the 2021-2027 funding period context. It is not only instrumental to boost embedding SBS priorities into the national/regional policies and programmes, but also to build synergies among funding instruments and national/regional authorities.
- SBS are better placed in the new programming period to further develop the embedding process. The 2014-2020 period experience provides a good basis for this work (e.g. PANORAMED work) and should be capitalized in the current programming period.
- We should continue regular exchanges on respective challenges and best practices on embedding both for the EU macro-regional and sea-basin strategies.

Opening remarks



Jader Canè, Senior Expert, DG EMPL,
European Commission

- Territorial strategies provide orientation for more effective cooperation and investments to deliver greater impact in the regions sharing similar challenges and needs.
- The work on finalizing 2021-2027 period programmes is still ongoing paying special attention to scrutinizing the planned embedding activities.
- Embedding should not be seen as another regulatory burden but rather as an opportunity. It is important to take this mentality onboard in the work of authorities.
- The work with macro-regions enrich ESF and ESF+ programmes, e.g., by conveying European Social Fund priorities to a larger audience. They also help to improve the efficiency of funding by allowing pooling of resources to jointly tackle societal challenges. MRS also help to reach out to a wider group of stakeholders. MRS help to go beyond the impact and the scale of single projects.

Opening remarks

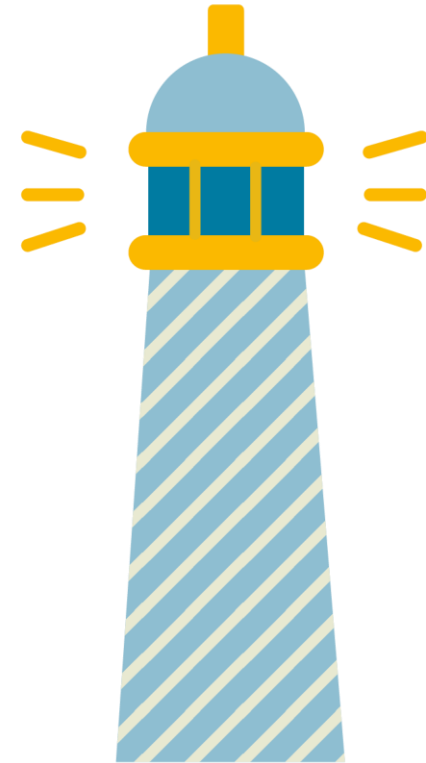


Ana Pires, Acting Head of Unit of
Coordination of financing instruments -
performance, results and evaluation, DG
NEAR, European Commission

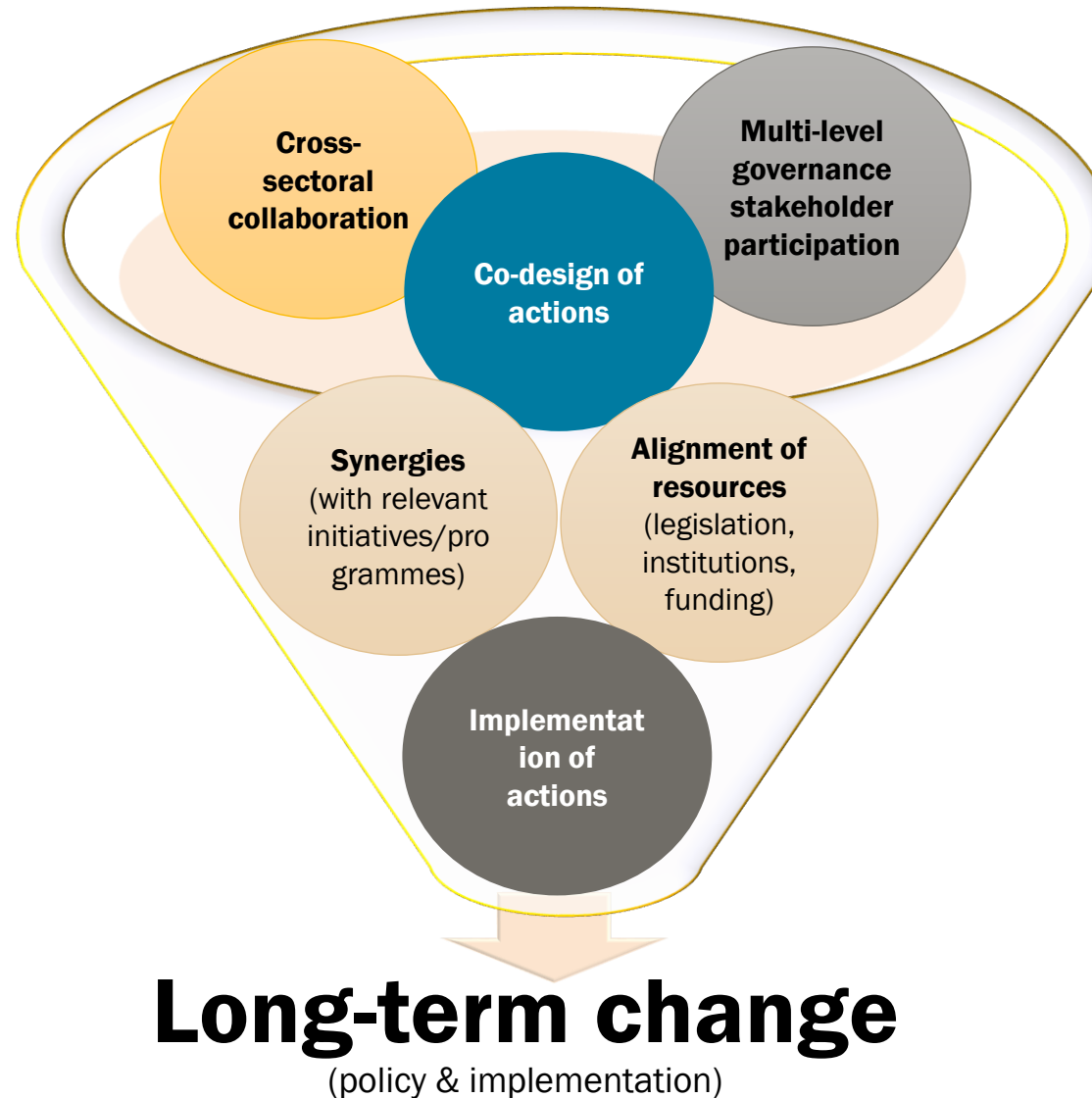
- Macro-regional and sea basin strategies are entwined in the EU enlargement and neighborhood strategic documents.
- Embedding helps to deliver on shared EU policies as well as enlargement and neighborhood priorities in a coordinated way.
- Addressing challenges that know no border requires closer complementarities and synergies between actions.
- Macro-regional, and sea basin strategies have gained an important geopolitical role. The added value of this common agenda is the possibility to engage the EU member states, future member states, and neighboring countries and jointly design the future of Europe.

Embedding practices in 2014-2020 period

Ilze Ciganska, Interact



Added values of the macro-regional, and sea basin strategies



Embedding practices 2014-2022

1. Specific selection criteria benefiting MRS/SBS relevance (Extra-points attributed to projects of MRS/SBS relevance)
2. Targeted calls
3. Participation of key implementers in programme monitoring committees
4. Inclusion of transnational component allowing approved projects to engage partners from another country in the MRS once the project has been launched
5. Alignment of call timelines to allow synergies between similar initiatives
6. Pooling of resources (rather on thematic action/priority/pillar level or beneficiary side)
7. Coordinated parallel calls

*Overview of measures planned in the 2014-2020 OPs are available [here](#). See also Guidelines on Cooperation under IJG goal 2020+ [here](#).

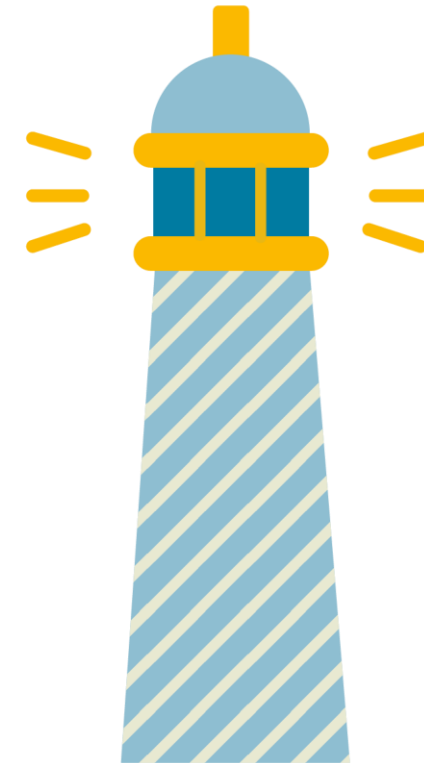
Way forward to 2021-2022 period

1. Different level of contribution to MRS/SBS:
 - **Thematic alignment:** funding programme objectives are aligned with the MRS thematic priorities but there is no interaction with the stakeholders,
 - **Projects implementing strategy priorities:** contribution to MRS/SBS is addressed throughout the project selection (e.g., special fields dedicated to MRS contribution in the application forms, linked assessment criteria) and project implementation.
 - **Targeted support to MRS/SBS initiatives:** projects specially selected to implement strategies initiatives.
2. Stronger focus on joint and/or coordinated implementation

Innovation Express 2021

A joint call between four regions of the Alpine, Danube and Baltic Sea macro-regions

Judit Schrick-Szenczi, Ministry for Economic Affairs,
Labour and Housing Baden Württemberg, Germany



Innovation Express 2021 – a joint call as response to COVID 19 challenges

- The primary guiding principle leading the work on this joint initiative was to keep it as simple as possible for the authorities and beneficiaries.
- After screening the existing programmes for the SMEs support which could be used to build the joint initiative, two topics were selected: digitalization and artificial intelligence.
- A pilot call was launched involving four regions: Salzburg (AT), Canton Fribourg (CH), Brandenburg (DE), and Baden-Württemberg (DE). It was based on the existing regional SMEs support programmes, using the existing procedures and documentation. In addition, joint three-page guidance document was developed to support partners, and a coordination body was established. Regions also invested in a matchmaking tool to support potential partners.
- The application had to involve partners from at least two participating regions. But each partner applied separately to its regional funding programme. As project partners had to use own regional programmes, there were no language barriers.
- The most time-consuming activity was to find the partners interested in building the joint call. Partners could benefit from the existing experience in the EUSBSR.
- Once the 2021-2027 period programmes will be approved, negotiations about the next possible calls will be launched

More about Innovation Express 2021 you may find [here](#).

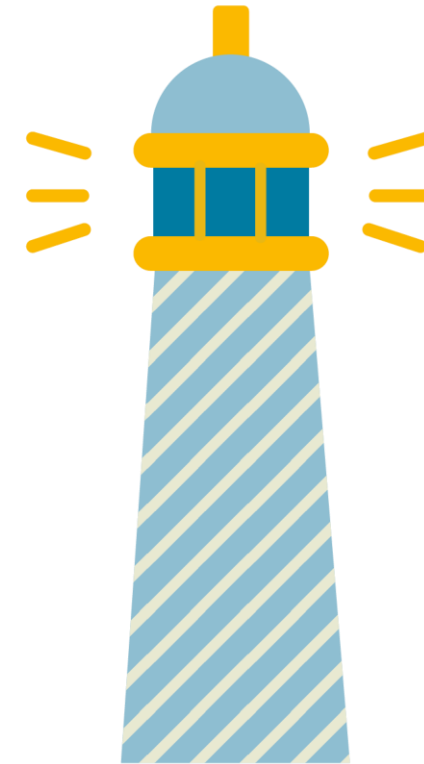
Embedding the EU macro-regions

Jan-Hendrik Kathmann, Land Brandenburg, Germany, EUSBSR
ERDF MA Network

Claudia Singer, Coordinator of the EUSDR Priority Area 10
„Institutional Capacity and Cooperation“, EUSDR ESF MA
Network

Milos Mugosa, Facility Point project partner for Montenegro,
EUSAIR Financial Dialogue Meetings in IPA countries

Benoît Garrigues, EUSALP Technical Support Structure, EUSALP
Financial Dialogues



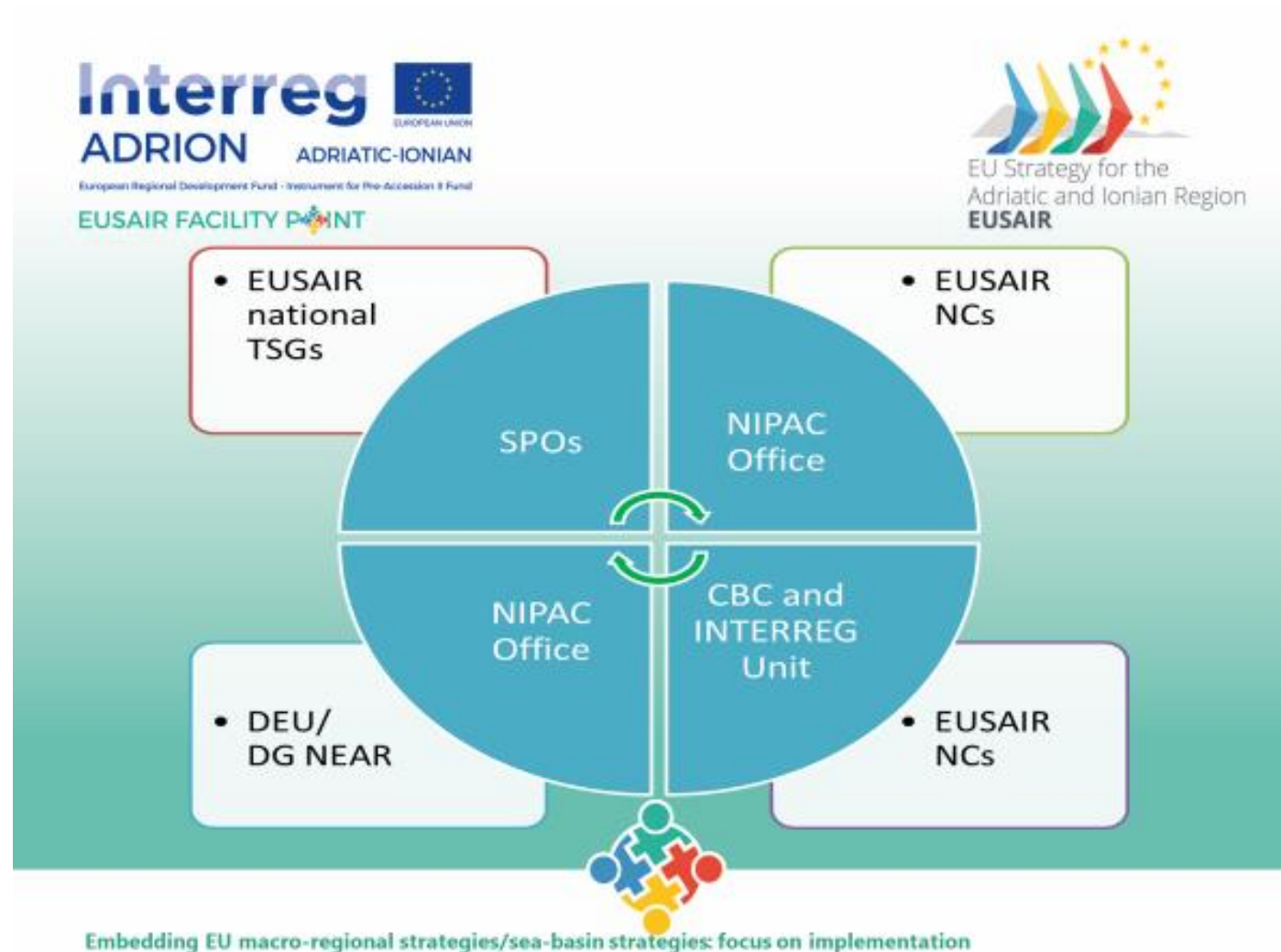
EUSBSR ERDF MA network

- The ERDF network in the Baltic Sea Region was established in 2016 and it involves all eight member states. Germany is represented by the involved regions (i.e. Land Brandenburg).
- The aim of the network is to seek and implement joint actions mainly focusing on the EUSBSR but not only, as well as enable mutual learning and exchange of experiences.
- Discussions leading to 2021-2027 programme development:
 - Comparable provisions to be included in the programmes,
 - Transnational cooperation component is included in each specific objective. Following programme approval, further discussions on the partners and types of actions to build the links will be discussed.
 - Efforts to streamline monitoring and evaluation.
- Not all MRS actions can be supported as they do not always fit the ERDF programme interventions. Therefore, the focus is on a more limited number of interventions and priorities based on the commonalities of the programmes in the involved countries.
- Preparing cooperation actions take time (whom to involve, scope, how to implement, how to organise management and control, how to promote and attract partners, which incentives will you include for beneficiaries etc.), therefore, priority is given to the common topics where implementation and coordination efforts would be the easiest.
- The coordination requires effort and a certain structure (incl. statutes). In addition, support is needed for the implementation, incl. administrative support and guidance from the EU Commission. The network should also have an official role in the Strategy context (e.g., clear and approved ToR guiding the work of the network).

EUSDR ESF MA network

- The ESF MA network is operational since 2015. The main conclusions from the network's work can be summarised under three keywords:
 - **Be concrete** – before starting the work on the 2021-2027 period, the network agreed on a [vision paper](#) stating the expectations and goals. This helped then to agree on the topics for cooperation, as well as develop shared provisions to be included in the programmes.
 - **Be open** – the network is a community of practice where involved authorities and partners can openly discuss the needs, challenges, and failures, and discuss how to move forward. It also helps to build a common language between the MAs and EUSDR stakeholders.
 - **Be realistic** – MRS are seen as experimental governance aiming to make better use of existing resources through comprehensive coordination and therefore, are seen as more flexible in the implementation format. At the same time, MAs are bound to a stricter regulatory framework and thus have less flexibility. Therefore, the network looks for innovative but feasible ways to improve cooperation and coordination to have a bigger impact on social policies, and at the same time safeguard a solid and sound programme implementation.

EUSAIR Financial Dialogue in IPA countries



EMBEDDING EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES/SEA-BASIN STRATEGIES: FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTATION

JUNE 30, 2022

EMBEDDING EUSALP -
REGION SUD - EUSALP Technical support structure
Benoît GARRIGUES

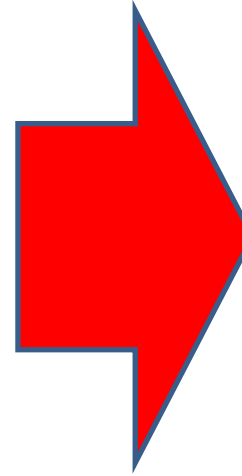


EMBEDDING EUSALP – WHAT WE DID

Joint meeting of Alpine managing authorities and EUSALP key implementers

Brussels, 19-20 February 2020 with:

- Regional Programmes Managing Authorities and Interreg Programmes Managing Authorities from EUSALP States and Regions
- Representatives of direct managed programmes (EC directorates and agencies): LIFE, Horizon Europe, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), European Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development (EAFRD)
- **Others MRS representatives to share experience of embedding**



Creation of 3 thematic Financial Dialogue Networks to establish a permanent embedding link

- Energy transition – Hydrogen
- Sustainable mobility
- Digital technology



EMBEDDING EUSALP- NEXT STEPS

Objectives pursued

- To influence the policies and financial programmes at European, national, regional levels with relevant projects results from the Alps (namely EUSALP 9 Action Groups)
- To help financing the projects that 9 Action Groups have to implement according to their Work Plan

Embedding event in September 2022

- Italian Presidency, with the support of the Action Groups involved in the Financial Dialogue Networks

Foster Financial Dialogue Networks dynamics/meetings

- Action Groups with the operational support of EUSALP Technical Support Structure
- Create others Financial Dialogue Networks?



EMBEDDING EUSALP- ACHIEVEMENTS & LESSONS LEARNT

FDN on Energy transition – Hydrogen

Implementation of an Hydrogen Task Force cross - Action Groups 2 (Strategic sectors), 4 (Mobility), 9 (Energy)

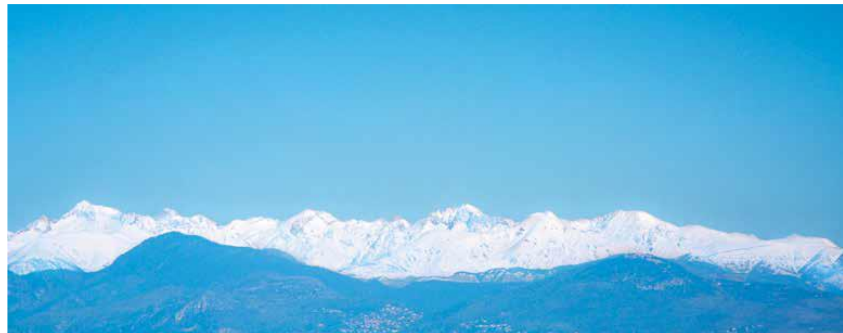
Political commitment for green Hydrogen : **letter of intent signed by 10 Regions.**

Possible collaboration for a **CEF (Connecting Europe Facility)** project application.

FDN on Sustainable mobility

Action Group 4 (mobility) **labelling process:** 14 projects labelled in 2020, 6 in 2021

Labelling is a very good basis for a financial dialogue with MA. It identifies clearly alpine regions priorities, needs and key projects. The process highlighted the **funding needs of alpine secondary line.**



FDN on Digital technology

Workshop on Digital innovation and smart lands within the 2nd EU MRS week (march 2022).

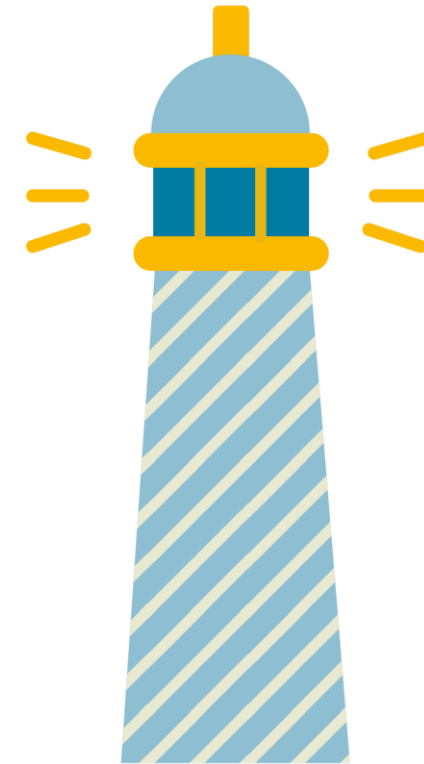
=> Definition of specific priorities in Digital Technologies taking into account the consultation of the Managing Authorities, for embedding activities of EUSALP.

Embedding the EU sea basins

Marta Pascual, Spanish National Hub, Atlantic strategy

Monica Bellisario, Presidency of the Council of Ministers,
Department for Cohesion Policy, Italy, WestMed

Alexandra Bogdan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania -
Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea



Atlantic strategy: Embedding process – lessons learnt

- The Atlantic strategy involves only the EU member states (France, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain) which eases the embedding process.
- Since the SBS does not have its own funds, to advance the strategic objectives set in the Atlantic strategy and achieve sustainable blue economy, funding programme priorities have to be aligned with these strategic objectives.
- Special attention is needed to enable a regular exchange and dialogue between funding authorities and the authorities involved in the SBS implementation to build a mutual understanding and cooperation mindset.
- Not all topics covered by SBS can be easily transferred to the programmes. For example, in the Atlantic strategy renewable energy and support to ports are well covered, but blue skills and environmental topics are less straightforward and require more intensive negotiations to find a funding solution.

WestMed: Embedding process

Main challenges affecting the embedding process:

- Embedding of the SBS such as WestMed requires coordination between different policies, SBS led by DG Mare, and cohesion policy coordinated by DG Regio. This constitutes one of the biggest governance challenges and affects the embedding process.
- Impact evaluation is another point where additional discussions and efforts are needed, including, joint work with the EU Commission colleagues.
- Geography: WestMed territory does not benefit from a transnational Interreg programme that would fully coincide with the WestMed territory and as such profit from the Interreg resources dedicated to the embedding.

Positive achievements:

- Technical Assistance mechanism financed by DG Mare has been instrumental in setting up processes, e.g., networks, leading to bigger WestMed recognition in the region and beyond.
- Embedding has been included in the Italian Partnership agreement, assuring the recognition of the mandatory nature of the embedding. A dedicated project has been set up to support the mainstream programmes with the embedding process and the work with the cooperation actions.
- Pilot initiative: Multiprogramme coordination mechanism among Interreg programmes to support sustainable tourism benefitting also WestMED: currently 3 Interreg programmes (Italy France Maritime, Euro-MED, NEXT-MED) joined.

Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea

- With the adoption of the Common Maritime Agenda in 2019 the Black Sea was the last to set up a basin-wide initiative for more sustainable economic growth. This gives an important tool for the involved countries, funding authorities, and donors to align funding with the region's most pressing needs.
- Interreg NEXT Black Sea programme is one of the important tools to support the implementation of the Common Maritime Agenda through concrete projects. The new programme is fully dedicated to the implementation of the Common Maritime Agenda.
- The programme has been developed in close cooperation with the SBS steering group assuring a strong correlation between the programme objectives and priorities set in the SBS.
- The programme applicants will be required to demonstrate how their application contributes to the implementation of the Common Maritime Agenda.
- In addition, the SBS assistance mechanism and national hubs play an important role in assuring embedding also in the national programmes.