

Alignment of Policymaking

capacity building programme for strengthening the national implementation
Progress report June 2020

In essence, macro-regional strategies are referred to as "implementors" of the EU Cohesion policy in the four European macro-regional strategies¹. Until their emergence, the role of "implementors" was played by *projects* of various sizes and scopes. Judging by the fact that the lion share of the EU funding is allocated in national and regional funds, cohesion was assumed to be assured through raising living standards *within national borders* and by *implementing sizeable projects*. In reality, most of the challenges pressing European development today are much wider in geography and much more complex in scope and impact than any nation alone can manage. Certainly, approaching such challenges requires "implementors" with a much higher impact potential than any project regardless of its size.

The revision process of Action Plan clearly underlines that national implementation needs to be strengthened. One direction is to develop further the capacities of the Steering Groups in Policy Areas and the other one is to have better national coordination system.

The capacity building programme "Alignment of Policymaking" is designed to strengthen the national implementation structures of the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea region and to contribute with hands on results on existing implementation.

HA CAP team can differentiate two relevant tasks for national level:

- 1. Policy coordination – by sustaining and deepening generative, multi-stakeholder policy dialogues between Member States and the thematic policies. Here the countries provide their guidelines and interests which are the basis of the macroregional collaboration*
- 2. Promoting the implementation of the EUSBSR in the respective countries by mobilising stakeholders at national, regional and local level. This task is kind of facilitation role when stakeholders are connected to the operative implementation of EUSBSR through the involvement in project processes or flagships.*

1. BACKGROUND

Since the launch of the EUSBSR in 2009 the focus has been to implement a macro-regional strategy by prioritizing the macro-regional implementation through Policy Area Coordinators (PACs) and Horizontal Action Coordinators (HACs). Through considerable capacity building investments Policy Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Coordinators have made a considerable development in their roles. An

¹ See i.a. Council of the European union 9101/2019, European Commission 2018 Macro-regional strategies and their links with cohesion policy, European Commission 2016 /805 final etc.

important development took place in 2014 with the emerge of flagships understood as developmental, collaborative environments / processes designed to enact larger policy impact on selected macro-regional issues, within the thematic areas. The first idea came from the ESF MA-network and it was further developed by PACs/HACs in EUSBSR. With flagships EUSBSR got their own implementation format different from programmes and designed to meet the needs of macro-regional strategies.

2. CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME: “ALIGNMENT OF POLICYMAKING”

In 2018 it was decided to set up a new capacity building programme on “Alignment of Policymaking” focusing on the national implementation of the EUSBSR. The programme on “Alignment of Policymaking” was launched in spring 2020 and focusing on Policy Area Focal Points/members of steering groups. The programme also involves Policy Area Coordinators (PACs) and Flagship leaders and National Coordinators² (NC) have been invited to programme.

The reasoning behind this capacity building programme is a need to improve the structures, methods and linkages within the macro-region as part of implementing the Strategy (EUSBSR). This entails understanding the complex web of stakeholders that are active on different levels and in different countries. Each stakeholder plays an important part in enabling policy development and policy impact in different thematic areas and on different governmental levels. However, this multilevel playing field is complex and challenging. Even though the EUSBSR is continually performing better, **national support structures need to be further developed and clarified.**

The guiding objectives of the entire programme are to:

- Develop a structure for policy dialogue in Member States, linking EUSBSR processes to processes in Member States enabling policy impact on multiple levels.
- Contribute to defining roles and responsibilities for Policy Area Focal Points/members of Steering Groups including stakeholder dialogues and multilevel governance.
- Design a capacity building programme for Policy Area Focal Points/members of Steering Groups.

The following outputs are expected from this programme:

1. A **structure and method** for securing the national implementation through providing well-functioning alignment of policymaking between the EUSBSR and the Member States.
2. A proposal for a revised **definition of the roles** of the Policy Area Focal Points/members of Steering Groups, as well as their responsibilities and accountability. This will serve as input to the revision of the Action Plan.
3. A standard **capacity building programme**, targeting all Policy Area Focal Points/members of Steering Groups of the Policy Area, developed on the base of this pilot and ready to be implemented from 2021.

² A few of them registered to the programmes learning portal and can follow the development of the programme.

The programme includes four modules, each lasting for approximately two days. The programme will be implemented in 2020 with a selected number of Policy Area Focal Points/members of Steering Groups, National Coordinators, Policy Area Coordinators and flagship leaders. At present over 40 participants are in the programme consisting of Policy Area Coordinators, Policy Area steering group members/Policy Area focal points and flagship leaders. Participants represent thematic policy areas Bioeconomy, Culture, Health, Hazards, Education, Energy, Innovation, Nutri, Safe, Ship, Spatial Planning, Transport and Tourism. All Member States are represented.

a. Outline of the programme

Policy Area Focal Points/members of Steering Groups are appointed by the Member States. They represent line ministries with a clear purpose of supporting the process of macro-regional implementation of the EUSBSR within a certain thematic area of policy work (PA/HA). Thus, it is essential that a Policy Area Focal Point – *both as a national institution and an individual* – is committed to working **for the macro-region**, bridging the gap between national, regional and local agendas and the macro-regional strategy.

The primary operational environment of Policy Area Focal Points should be a well-functioning system of several interacting stakeholders/actors:

- Policy Area relevant stakeholders in the Member State,
- National Coordination body in the home country,
- Members of Flagships in home country,
- Members of Steering Groups.

The Policy Area Focal Point represent the **EUSBSR by one of the thematic Policy Areas** in their own country. They facilitate the information flow on relevant policies in their own country with the PAC. They also work in the other direction as they disseminate information on policy proposals and new methods developed in the EUSBSR to relevant actors in their own country.

Guided by the principle of **Multi-Level Governance (MLG)**, Policy Area Focal Points connect stakeholders in their own country with PAC and flagships, and vice versa.

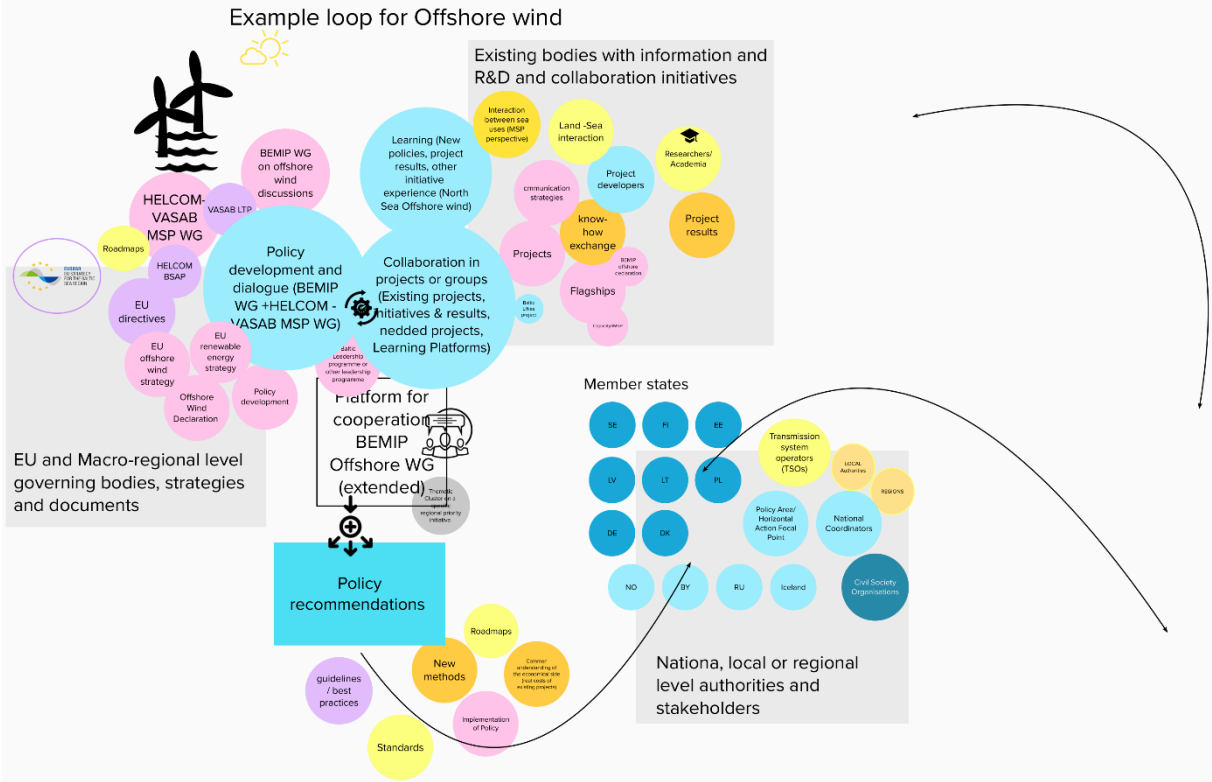
This programme will increase personal and institutional capacities for navigating the structure and working within the macroregional strategy. Furthermore, the programme will result in extended networks and the opportunity to exchange experiences and develop a deeper understanding of policy impact in an EUSBSR context.

b. The policy loop defined - influencing and co-creating policy

In the context of the EUSBSR, a policy loop signifies the interchange and flow of information within the EUSBSR between a PA/HA (including flagships and projects) and decision-makers in the Member State. The policy loop serves to inform and disseminate as well as to influence and even co-create policy.

A policy loop could be established between a specific PA/HA and the national level of the Member State, or between a flagship and the national level. Each PA/HA or flagship should develop and facilitate policy loops with each Member State.

The design of a policy loop would look different depending on the thematic context (the policy field) as well as on the stakeholders involved. In other words, there is not one template that will fit all contexts, rather a policy loop needs to be developed in line with the needs and prerequisites of a specific case.



Developed by participants from PA Energy and HA Spatial Planning

c. Policy Area Focal Point: capacity needed to perform the role

Policy Area Focal Point's strategic capacity

A Policy Area Focal Point is to be seen as both an institution and an individual, and attention is to be given to development of capacity of both. Some Policy Areas are built on existing institutions with established international / macro-regional cooperation practice, and even EU-level regulations/international agreements³. Other Policy Areas have no such prerequisites, and a basic institutional collaboration structure and strategic priorities need to be built before such a PA can deliver on policy impact⁴.

Strategic capacity within the Policy Area should be informed by seeing the macro-regional strategy as a complex, interconnected, evolving system, and being aware of **the value added** that the PA in question brings to the implementation.

Policy Area Focal Point operational capacity

Staying conscious of the strategic direction of the Policy Area, the Policy Area Focal Point targets their effort to facilitate the "policy loop", linking stakeholders and policy

³ Referred to as 'brownfield Policy Areas' within the EUSBSR (from EUSBSR SUPPORT)
⁴ Referred to as 'greenfield Policy Areas' within the EUSBSR (from EUSBSR SUPPORT)

development in their own country with the Policy Area (PAC and flagship leaders) and vice versa.

The Policy Area Focal Point support the development of the Policy Area as such, by mobilizing external actors (with MLG as the guiding principle), channels them to existing flagships/processes and initiates new formats/flagships.

d. Content of the programme

The programme consists of four modules offered online. Two Modules in spring 2020 and two in autumn 2020.

Module 1 (21-22 April 2020)

Aims

To understand EU macro-regional strategies, how they are implemented and what role Policy Area Focal Points/ members of steering groups have in supporting the process of macro-regional implementation.

Content

Module 1 “zoomed out” and discussed the role of macro-regional strategies at large, with questions such as WHY do we need them? WHAT do they address? HOW are they implemented? Participants visited five thematic sessions for discussing these topics such as added values in EUSBSR, collaboration formats, key stakeholders, existing structures in my country and innovative instruments in a macro-regional cooperation.

Furthermore, a discussion was initiated on the roles and responsibilities of PAFP/members of steering groups in “the bigger picture” with questions such as HOW to organize policy dialogues? HOW to reach stakeholders? HOW to reach policy impact?

Module 1 consisted of three webinars: (1) Making sense of EUSBSR, (2) My role in the EUSBSR and (3) Policy loops and policy impacts.

Results

The expert participants recalled the importance of well-established multi-level structures in the member states as local and regional actors are the key implementers of transnational cooperation. Participants pinpointed that actors under the national level have great interest in participating in the EUSBSR and these actors are crucial for the operative implementation. Some best practice examples for pan-Baltic and national coordination were presented. In this regard policy areas especially energy, health, innovation, education and spatial planning could demonstrate active subnational networks and policy development approaches by providing guidelines and recommendations to the macro-regional level.

Module 2 (smaller workshops during W23-24 + one joint webinar on 16 June 2020)

Aims

To understand policy loops and how to design them.

Content

Module 2 consisted of a series of small group workshops and a final joint webinar. The module was spread out over the first three weeks of June with one workshop/ webinar per week. Participants were divided into clusters according to already existing PA/HA collaboration. These were the four clusters:

1. PA Innovation, PA Culture, PA Bioeconomy and PA Tourism
2. PA Health, PA Hazards, PA Education and PA Nutri
3. PA Energy and HA Spatial Planning
4. PA Transport, PA Ship and PA Safe.

The workshops were all structured in the same way with the ultimate aim of designing/modelling policy loops. Participants agreed on a possible joint flagship/case to work on as a part of designing policy loops. Using flagships as examples made the "policy loops" more concrete. Later on the design of the "policy loops" will be made on the level of Policy Areas.

Until Module 3 the working groups got a homework to share their policy loops in their networks and get feedback.

- Share your policy loops with your Steering Group & Policy Area Focal Points
- If relevant, also consult other stakeholders such as: Flagship leaders, other PA/HA, etc.
- Collect feedback & input
- Summarize the input & feedback and present it during Module 3 in September (9-10)

Participants were given these guiding questions for the communication with stakeholders:

1. Any missing parts/level in the loop? For example, EU-level or international level.
2. Any missing stakeholders? For example, social partners or businesses.
3. Any missing policy processes/strategic development to be considered? For example, strategic development on local level, in municipalities or within civil society organisations.

Results

This part has not been evaluated yet, still in process. See homework above.

Participants have received a general understanding of policy loops, how they are designed and who needs to be involved. **Well-functioning policy loops are prerequisites for a successful implementation of EUSBSR.**

Module 3 (9-10 September 2020)

Aims

To understand how to engage stakeholders, whom to invite and how to engage. To have a better knowledge about roles and responsibilities and how different stakeholders are interrelated

Programme

Participants will work with practical cases from several Policy Areas where deliverables are policy briefings, new methods or new structures that should be channelled to the own country. Participants are also invited to bring with them examples of new strategies or methods developed in the own country where they see an added value to feed into one or more Policy Areas/flagships.

Module 4 (3-4 November 2020)

Aim

To design and develop a capacity building programme targeting the Policy Area Focal Point/members of steering groups.

Programme

The different action modes included in the role as Policy Area Focal Point/member of steering groups, for example stakeholder engagement, will be defined and the capabilities to enhance the action will be discussed.

3. POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

The next steps will be dependent on needs identified following an evaluation of the current programme. This programme is a start of a longer capacity building process. The evaluation will show the needs of further capacity building activities, such as:

- reaching policy impact – different channels/methods,
- promoting the Strategy and engaging different groups of stakeholders, nationally, regionally and locally in Member States,
- designing capacity building for national implementation and adopt it to the need of each country.