

Council Conclusions on the
Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European
Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of
EU macro-regional strategies

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- (1) WELCOMES the fifth report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies submitted by the Commission on 13 May 2025¹;
- (2) RECALLS the Council conclusions of 27 June 2023 on the fourth Commission report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (“Strategies”) from 9 December 2022;
- (3) RECOGNISES the valuable role of the Strategies in enhancing cooperation, trust, preparedness and resilience particularly in the face of current geopolitical and environmental challenges. INVITES the participating countries to reinforce their political leadership and ownership of the Strategies;
- (4) TAKES NOTE OF the recently concluded review of the action plan of the Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in order to update its objectives after a decade marked by several crises, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. WELCOMES the introduction of the new social pillar and EU enlargement as a horizontal topic of the revised Action plan;
- (5) RECOGNISES the need expressed by the Commission for the Strategies to constantly adapt to a changing environment and to new emerging needs and challenges in their respective areas, and ENCOURAGES adjusting the action plans of the Strategies where appropriate;

¹ 8906/25 + ADD 1.

- (6) AGREES with the identified need for the Strategies to add, where appropriate, more emphasis on competitiveness of the European economy and just energy transition, as well as to add a focus on resilience and security and ENCOURAGES the Commission to facilitate such a process. Similarly, HIGHLIGHTS the need to pay attention to the demographic transition;
- (7) ACKNOWLEDGES the findings of the report and the role of the Strategies in advancing the green transition. ENCOURAGES further contributions of the Strategies to the digital and fair transitions and further efforts to maintain the competitiveness of the EU, while ensuring a good quality of life for people in Europe;
- (8) RECOGNISES the role of Strategies as key instruments for mutual learning, knowledge exchange and institutional cooperation between the EU, candidate countries and third countries. HIGHLIGHTS the possibility the Strategies offer to candidate countries to work on an equal footing with EU Member States, thus accelerating the process of understanding of and adapting national legislation to the EU acquis, building administrative capacity on various EU policies, including cohesion policy and the principle of shared management, and supporting the enlargement process;
- (9) APPRECIATES the initiatives that have been taken for a closer cooperation between the countries participating in the Strategies and Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and the Western Balkan countries, supporting their path to EU accession. VALUES in particular the support shown since February 2022 to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees and the concrete actions taken in this regard;
- (10) RECOGNISES the contribution of the Strategies to tailoring the specific needs and priorities of the participating regions, in line with the objectives of cohesion policy, and with the place-based approach, as well as the role of the Strategies in bridging the gap between local and regional actions, and European political priorities;

- (11) REAFFIRMS the importance of continuous improvement of governance support structures and administrative capacity at both national and subnational levels, and of the continued support to the governance and administrative capacity by the Commission and its relevant services. REAFFIRMS the need for optimal use of existing financial resources, better use of existing institutions and better implementation of current legislation, based on the three prerequisites for these Strategies;
- (12) ENCOURAGES stable participation and full engagement of stakeholders in all groups relevant for the implementation of the Strategies. REAFFIRMS in this regard the importance of Strategy implementers to be empowered with clear mandates, effective decision-making capacity and a clear vision that places their work in the broader policy context in the Strategies' participating countries and in the EU;
- (13) ENCOURAGES concrete actions to facilitate active engagement of civil society organisations, local communities, youth, academia and businesses in the implementation of the Strategies. SUPPORTS the work of macro-regional youth structures;
- (14) ENCOURAGES the Commission to continue supporting Member States and non-EU countries in their efforts to participate in Strategies and HIGHLIGHTS the Commission's high-level commitment, which contributes significantly to effective long-term strategic direction and to effectively linking the work of the Strategies to EU priorities;
- (15) APPRECIATES that the possibilities provided by embedding the Strategies in both relevant cohesion policy programmes and programmes directly managed by the Commission are gradually being taken up, enabling financing and implementation of the Strategies' priorities. RECOGNISES the special contribution of the INTERREG programmes in the embedding process; CALLS on the Strategies themselves, managing authorities and the Commission to continue facilitating this embedding process throughout the whole funding period;

- (16) RECOGNISES the continuous work being carried out to establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems for the Strategies, including through updates to action plans, and WELCOMES the work of relevant Strategies' technical support structures and units in monitoring and evaluating the Strategies. WELCOMES also initiatives such as that under the Interact Interreg programme aimed at supporting that work;
- (17) APPRECIATES the reinforced communication activities both at Strategy-specific level and in common events. HIGHLIGHTS at the same time the importance of continuing to implement strategic communication and increasing further the public's knowledge of the mainstream programmes and strategies and the visibility of their impact and results;
- (18) CALLS on the Commission to review progress on the strategic and operational objectives outlined in these conclusions in the next report on the implementation of Strategies by the end of 2027.
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