

## **Basic Necessities and Recommendations for Participation in EU Macro-Regional Strategies**

### **Framework**

**EU Macro-regional Strategies (MRS)** is a policy framework that allows countries located in the same region to jointly tackle and find solutions to problems or to better use their potential. Against this background, MRS are built on **multi-level governance** with a **multi-stakeholder and place-based approach**. By definition, MRS are performed with participation of Civil Society as a constitutive element.

According to Art 11.2. TEU, **Participation of Civil Society** is *an open, transparent and regular dialogue*. As MRS are planned and implemented on all levels (local, regional, national, supra-national), participation of Civil Society must be implemented on all levels accordingly.

Participation of Civil Society in MRS is still a work-in-progress that needs to be developed and deepened in quality and quantity. Developing processes and methods of Participation of Civil Society is a matter of participation itself.

Since Civil Society is an important implementor and actor of MRS on the ground, incorporating Civil Society in the MRS governance is an imperative and a logical consequence in order to make MRS a success.

### **Challenges to Participation**

Participation of Civil Society in MRS is a demanding and highly challenging endeavour. Human and financial resources, special skills and continuity are needed to engage in a sustainable supra-national, multi-level and multi-actor process. While MRS are a relatively new tool in EU Cohesion Policy (partly including Enlargement and Neighbourhood Affairs), Participation in these processes have to be learned and exercised by both state and non-state-stakeholders simultaneously.

#### **Establishing Civic Space**

The imperative for *an open, transparent and regular dialogue* can be best implemented by a structured dialogue on equal basis encompassing all levels. This structured dialogue fora are established in the EUSDR and the EUSBSR, among others with the Participation Days concept. Unfortunately, this key structures for Participation of Civil Society in the MRS are partly performed by the MRS but not yet incorporated in the governance of the MRS. Participation Days (national and MRS-wide) rely on third party and private funding so far.

#### **Capacity Building**

As participation of Civil Society in MRS is a mutual learning process, few sources of capacity building are provided to further Participation in quality and quantity and to provide know-how or to organise and capitalise of participation in MRS.

#### **Resources**

While the EU MRS areas are blessed with an active and interested civil society, engagement in MRS itself requires financial and human resources that are not or only partly present both on the state and the non-state level.

#### **Information**

Quality of participation of Civil Society is highly depending on the quality of information available timely.

## Basic Recommendations

### **Co-designing & co-creating Governance**

The **structural dimension** of *an open, transparent and regular dialogue* with Civil Society on all levels needs to be accepted and incorporated in the strategies' governance.

The **existing platforms for Civil Society Participation** (such as the Participation Days et al.) need to be secured for the next phase of EU MRS (revised action plans and new MFF).

**Member states** must become more active in providing regular dialogues in fora like the National Participation Days.

The **governance structures** of the EU MRS (PAs, HAs, TSGs/Pillars, AGs) must be opened for active and/or observing Civil Society participation.

### **Capacity Building**

**Capacity building** for participation of Civil Society is needed both, for state and non-state actors.

### **Small-scale funding**

**Financing** for MRS has to meet the needs and necessities of Civil Society. Civil Society is plentiful, diverse, active, qualified and generally small-sized. There adequate funding for Civil Society needs to include micro funding ( $\leq$  € 100.000).

### **Information**

The flow of **quality and timely information** among stakeholders on all levels and between state and non-state actors in MRS is essential to enable quality participation. MRS shall safeguard open and transparent information for open and transparent dialogues.

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