



The RSA Research Network on EU COHESION POLICY

RSA workshop on the EU Cohesion Policy: Focus on The Territorial Dimension

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EUSAIR AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TERRITORIAL COHESION IN EUROPE

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Abstract

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was approved by the European Council and the European Parliament in October 2014. The strategy involves 8 countries, of which 4 EU Member States (Italy, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia) and 4 non-EU Member States (Albania, Bosnia – Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), which have as a common denominator the Adriatic and Ionian basin. The region involves a surface of around 700.000 sq. km and is home to more than 60 million people.

As the *6th report on economic, social and territorial cohesion* underlines the importance of reinforcing cooperation across Europe in the aftermath of the financial crisis, in particular improving good governance, sharing best practices and establishing mutually beneficial relationships, the paper aims at analysing how EUSAIR can be an *opportunity* for achieving territorial, economic and social cohesion in the area. It examines the current *challenges* and illustrates the *potential* of EUSAIR to become an answer to territorial cohesion for both EU and non-EU Member States.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key research question is: *'Can EUSAIR be an opportunity for territorial cohesion in Europe?'* In order to develop the study around this key question, the paper will be addressing five specific topics related to the area. First, the analysis will try to assess the level of the territorial cohesion of the EUSAIR area. Economic and social indicators will be analysed (income per capita, level of education, government effectiveness, human development index, commercial integration, etc.) for offering an overview of the state of play of the EUSAIR area in terms of territorial cohesion, also by considering the differences between EU member States and non-EU member States.

Secondly, the team of research will investigate and clarify what is expected by EUSAIR in terms of promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The EUSAIR key objectives in terms of territorial cohesion will be identified through the analysis of the EUSAIR key documents including the Action Plan, the supportive analytical documents, the EU institutions communications and conclusions.

The third focus of the study will be the role of the European Territorial Cooperation in the EUSAIR specific context and will involve a desk analysis on specific insights on the expected contribution of ETC by taking into

consideration the most relevant 2014-2020 ETC programmes in the EUSAIR area (in particular the Adrion transnational programme, the cross borders Italy-Croatia, Italy-Slovenia, Italy-Greece and Italy-Albania-Montenegro). The researchers will also capitalise the specific knowledge gained through their direct involvement (as evaluators) in the set-up of several ETC programmes in the area and as scientific experts in related projects¹.

The specific challenges related to the implementation of the territorial cooperation instruments in the EUSAIR area will represent the fourth specific topic and the bulk of the discussion. Desk analysis of KEEP database, of the implementation and evaluation reports of the 2007-2013 ETC/IPA programmes and of specific national strategies (e.g. Albanian strategy for tourism development and environmental cross-cutting strategy) will allow to identify the key challenges which can limit the impact of the EUSAIR implementation in terms of territorial cohesion.

Lastly, a proposal of the specific solutions adoptable for limiting/avoiding/overcoming these risks/challenges is presented. Based on specific experiences (see Espon projects, DG Regio pilot tests on indicators), the paper discusses possible solutions for the identified challenges regarding:

- the *ad hoc* monitoring of the targets of the pillars and of the resources allocated to EUSAIR;
- the promotion of in depth studies supporting the capacity building through EU programmes;
- the development of ad hoc studies filling the data gaps and supporting the decision-making process in the area.

METHODS

The methodology that will be used for the study consists in: document review and desk research, data analysis and matrix based techniques.

FINDINGS

EUSAIR is the only European macro-regional strategy at an implementation phase, whose participating countries are either EU member States or candidate and potential candidate member States. The territory is primarily composed of less-developed regions and high internal within economic and social inequality: EUSAIR can contribute to make EU Cohesion Policy more effective in this area.

INDICATIVE REFERENCES

European Commission (2014), *6th report on economic, social and territorial cohesion*

European Parliament (2015), *New role of Macro-regions in European Territorial Cooperation*

M. Prezioso (2014), *Espon italian evidence in changing Europe*

A. Gramillano (2013), *Options for building a Macro region – Scenarios for the development of the Adriatic – Ionian*, t33 Research Paper

ESPON (2014), *TerrEvi – Territorial Evidence Packs for Structural Funds Programmes – Final Report*

¹ ESPON Seminar “European Macro-Regions” <http://slideplayer.com/slide/5293878/>

ESPON TerrEvi – European Territorial Cooperation Programmes <http://espon-terrevi.t33.it/etcprogrammes/>

Adriatic Ionian Macroregional Platform paper: [http://www.aimacroregion.](http://www.aimacroregion.eu/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=file&id=6:option-for-building-amacroregion)

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