

## Information on the

# Stronger.Together - the magic of EU macro-regions 2023 project

### Background. What is the EU macro-regional strategy?

The macro-regional strategy (MRS) is a relatively unknown field of EU policy-making. The core MRS idea is to provide a collaborative framework for EU Member States and other countries from a defined geographical area to address today's common complex challenges by strengthened cooperation. This approach contributes to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Today there are four EU macro-regional strategies: the Baltic Sea Region established in 2009, the Danube Region (2010), the Adriatic and Ionian Region (2014) and the Alpine Region in 2015. They cover 19 Member States and 8 other countries. Each MRS has its own programme and organisational set-up.

### The challenge

The whole construction is characterised by a top-down approach: it is decisively dominated and run by governments and their institutions. All other actors including social organisations have only a complementary role even if there are noticeable differences among the macro-regions. There are no systemic links among the civil society organisations active in the different MRSs.

### European House Budapest gives an answer

European House Budapest as a pro-European civil society organisation combines efforts with like-minded social actors to prove that with their bottom-up approach they can make a significant contribution to the attainment of the macro-regional idea. This attitude corresponds to the EU policy orientation: let's have a citizen's Europe.

It is in this spirit that we have organised several supportive programmes during the last years including a "Shadow Report" on the implementation of MRS. These activities clearly demonstrated that civil society organisations have a huge and unused potential and are ready to contribute to the promotion of the European project.

### The way forward

Based on our positive experience we have initiated the elaboration of a proposal for a macro-regional civil strategy bringing under one roof interested social actors from the four macro-regions. With an intensive programme in 2023 we have had preparatory meetings in Vienna for the Danube, in Rome for the Adriatic-Ionian, in Lyon for the Alpine and in Stockholm for the Baltic Sea Region. The culmination of this process is a concluding conference in the form of a citizen agora in Budapest on 7/8 December 2023 when a document arguing for a macro-regional civil strategy will be adopted. Simultaneously we establish a supportive civil network across macro-regions and in the form of a pilot project continue our work in 2024. Because we are Stronger.Together.

