



STRONGER.TOGETHER
THE MAGIC OF MACRO-REGIONS
AN EU MACRO-REGIONAL CIVIL STRATEGY IN THE MAKING

THE WAY FORWARD

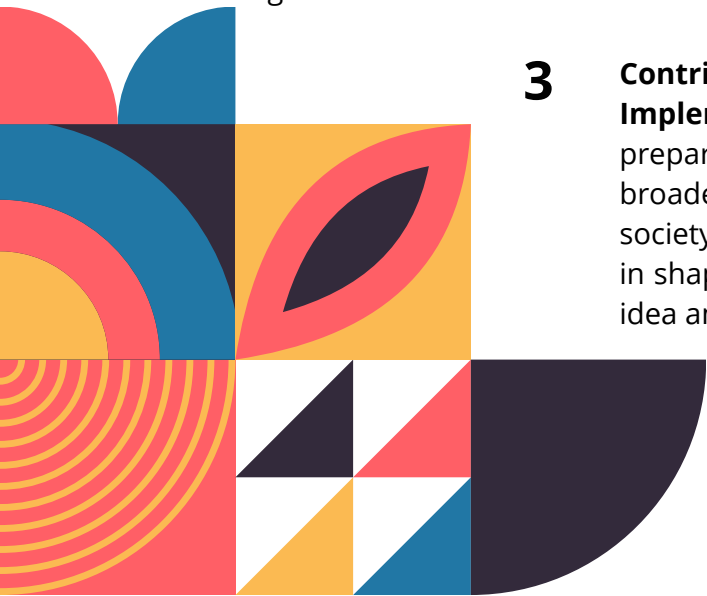
10 PROPOSALS TO ENRICH THE EU MACRO-REGIONS

Second Macro-Regional Citizen Agora

Brussels, 17 December 2024

Macro-regional strategies bring Europe closer to citizens

Macro-Regional Citizen Agora is the initiative of European House Budapest to bring together civil society organisations from the four EU macro-regions and even beyond. Argued for elaborating a macro-regional civil strategy, the First Macro-Regional Citizen Agora was held in Budapest in December 2023. The present proposals are based on the year long preparatory process in 2024 in the four macro-regions (Baltic Sea, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine) concluding in the Second Macro-Regional Citizen Agora held in Brussels on 17 December. This process for the first time brings together CSOs from the four macro-regions and reveals their still unused potential and commitment to shaping and implementing macro-regional strategies.

- 1 Partnership in practice:** Even if the macro-regional strategies are initially government-led initiatives, their success depends also on the involvement of the other stakeholders including civil society on a partnership basis. To achieve this a regulated and coordinated CSO presence in the governance structures and other working bodies should be made possible.
 - 2 Institutionalised dialogue:** To strengthen the ownership feeling of citizens and civil society organisations and promote regular consultations, we propose to establish a formalised mechanism of dialogue with citizens and their organisations across macro-regions.
 - 3 Contribution to and promotion of the Commission's Implementation Report:** The current practice of preparing the Implementation Report should be broadened by direct and organised contributions of civil society organisations; a Shadow Report 2.0 is a useful tool in shaping MRS policies and promoting the macro-regional idea among citizens.
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- 4 Macro-Regional Youth Summit:** To facilitate continuous dialogue and knowledge-sharing, we propose to organise an annual gathering of representatives of established youth structures from the four macro-regions. This innovation should be the result of a process led by relevant CSOs active in the field with the necessary knowledge, experience and commitment.
- 5 EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days:** As part of this flagship event civil society organisations should have the regular possibility to organise a dedicated session within its framework.
- 6 Piloting innovative solutions for cohesion:** Cohesion policy is one of the MRS priority areas for civil society organisations. Their potential to develop and test innovative and result-oriented approaches to address societal challenges should be systematically used. A position paper with concrete proposals for the post-2027 period is being developed focusing on the impact of Cohesion policy on everyday life of citizens.
- 7 Macro-regional CSO Network:** It is an open pro-European collaborative platform of registered civil society organisations currently with 41 members from the four macro-regions. With its advocacy function it strives to be recognised as the legitimate voice of CSOs on macro-regional matters. Communicating MRS to citizens should be a priority. The Network as an effective communication tool is ready to assist this process.
- 8 Macro-Regional Citizen Agoras:** This is a representative annual gathering of CSOs from the four macro-regions preceded by thematic preparatory meetings. As macro-regions stretch beyond Member States, these events serve as an instrument to promote the enlargement process including Ukraine. The Agoras also host the Annual Lecture by a high-level speaker.
- 9 Citizens' panel on cross-border issues:** As a follow-up initiative to the Conference on the future of Europe, a citizens' panel should be organised focusing on cross-border issues. As a pilot, an ECBA project could be an appropriate tool to identify and propose practical cross-border solutions in a macro-regional context.
- 10 Contacts with EU institutions:** Maintain and develop proactive and systematic dialogue with the European Commission (DG Regio), the European Parliament (Committee on Regional Development, REGI), the European Council with special attention to its rotating Presidency, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. To achieve this they should demonstrate the necessary openness and trust.

