

Funding/Embedding in the framework of the MRS-SBS days

12 June 2024 - 14:00-15:30

Julie Thiran (REGIO) started the workshop

She welcomed warmly the participants and started the workshop explaining that the strategies have no own funding and the transnational Interreg programmes covering the area of a strategy alone cannot, by far, cover all requests for funding to implement the action plans of the four EU Macro-Regional Strategies (MRS).

In a similar vein, Sea-basin strategies do not have an earmarked funding apart from the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) support given the Assistance Mechanism supporting all existing three sea-basin strategies.

Therefore, it is important to mobilise existing EU funding instruments, especially ERDF regional programmes since they are key delivery vehicles in support of the implementation of both macro-regional and sea-basin strategies.

That is the reason why - in this thematic workshop we would like to go one step further by asking how to start a cooperation project involving more than one national/regional programme? And how to use best other funding opportunities for the MRS-SBS.

Julie Thiran gave then the floor to Ilze Ciganska (Interact)

Ilze said thanks to Julie for setting the scene and for introducing the main questions. Ilze continued the workshop moderating and explaining: *As it has been highlighted in the embedding discussion, MRS and SBS are best place to bridge silos between funds and programmes.*

The preparations for the 2021-2027 funding period saw an increased attention to planning support to MRS and SBS in the IJG and ETC programmes. This effort has resulted in clear references to the wider cooperation. Similarly, programmes have opened cooperation possibilities making it easier to build a wider response to challenges that know no borders. Since 2024 is the core period to initiate and work on cooperation initiatives in the EU macro-regions and sea basins, we would like to share some of the examples answering the questions posed by Julie:

- *how to best use other funding opportunities for the MRS-SBS,*
- *how to start a cooperation project involving more than one national/regional programme.*

Ilze gave then the floor to Miguel Avila (REGIO), who started presenting the first Embedding project

Miguel Avila Albez: Example with “mainstream” – Hydrogen Valley Südbaden , Project financed by the ERDF – Programme Baden-Württemberg including and financing partners from France and Switzerland

Georgios Emmanouil (REGIO) continued with the second example: Example with “coordinated calls” involving mainstream ERDF, IPA and Interreg funding, Prespa lake

Pauline CAUMONT (MARE) presented the last example: Blue economy sectors: Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network (AspBAN) project co-funded by the direct funding part of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund targeting the creation of an innovative network of Atlantic ports

What is new about this period:

- 1) Better recognition of MRS and SBS in funding programmes,
- 2) There is a much stronger support and coordination provided by the support units of the MRS by advancing embedding in each MRS,
- 3) More tools available provided by the Commission (Kohesio) and Interact (mapping done, coaching services available to support work on establishing cooperation actions going beyond borders)

Ilze asking Miguel: We already heard some of the examples, but could you briefly summarise the possible approaches to move from the planned cooperation to the implementation of cooperation actions?

Miguel: Recalls the possibilities – 1) Soft embedding: exchange of knowledge, exchange of practices, people, 2) coordinated calls 3) stay in the system and open to others, 4) financial transfer – top up for existing project, joint investments, common pot.

Ilze asking Miguel: Why do we return to this discussion about cooperation actions?

Miguel: Motivation – best time and year to do something (Calls have started, but still not all the money is committed)

MRS and SBS are best placed to draw political attention to challenges that need to be addressed jointly like green hydrogen in Alps, science cooperation in the Danube, work with skills and school dropouts etc. They can help to put e.g. common pot for cooperation on some strategic borders as well (e.g. Germany/Poland, France/Germany)

Transition to the table debate with all the colleagues involved

As the debate about Post 2027 is piking up the speed, it is essential to have the debate of the role of EU macro-regions and sea basins and ambition for embedding of both formats.

- 1) Discussions in smaller groups :

Group 1 questions concerning 21-27

- What works well
- What should be improved

Group 2 : Way forward post-2027

Group 3 : How to amplify the role and results of MRS-SBS

The idea was that for each group one person presents the main conclusions of each of the 3 discussion groups in 3 bullet points.

Result: This last part of the workshop was very successful, because here in this formal/informal part the people warm up and put questions forward from the other parts of the workshop. There was a lively discussion about the Embedding examples that were shown before and about the possibilities to copy them in other programmes.

In addition the different groups put some interesting ideas on the table concerning Post 27:

Better use of the individual projects for up-scaling and Interreg as a facilitator for Embedding.

Give political relevance to the Strategies, also outside the “Interreg world”

Raise awareness of EU funds & opportunities

Connect the Macro-regions including the Sea Basins

Connect EU and Non-EU countries (joint instrument)

Conclusions by Julie

Big thank you for all the participants, for their ideas, their interest and for coming in such a great number. For the next time – we need more time for discussion.