



# EU macro-regions and macro-regional strategies – A scoping study

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## The Nordic Council

is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic parliaments and governments. The Council consists of 87 parliamentarians from the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council takes policy initiatives and monitors Nordic co-operation. Founded in 1952.

## The Nordic Council of Ministers

is a forum of co-operation between the Nordic governments. The Nordic Council of Ministers implements Nordic co-operation. The prime ministers have the overall responsibility. Its activities are co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation, the Nordic Committee for co-operation and portfolio ministers. Founded in 1971.

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Swedish Presidency of the EU

# Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Scope and objectives of the paper	11
1.1 Method and material	11
<b>2 Processes of importance for the emergence of a macro-regional approach within the context of EU cooperation</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 The rise of large scale regional integration	13
2.2 Regional integration in the 1990s and after	14
2.3 Conclusions	15
<b>3 Definition and application of the concept of macro-region</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 What is a (macro-) region?	17
3.2 Macro-regions and international relations	18
3.3 Macro-region – trade as a functional relation	18
3.4 Macro-regions built on homogeneity	18
3.5 Macro-regions built on homogeneity and common challenges	18
3.6 The EU perspective on macro-regions at the turn of the century	19
3.7 Conclusions	19
<b>4 Macro-regions in EU policy documents: Continuity or interregnum in European policymaking?</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 White paper on European Governance (2001): Build a better partnership across the various levels	21
4.2 Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union (2005):	
4.3 Territorial Agenda of the European Union (2007): Effective instrument for promoting territorial cohesion	22
4.4 Green paper on territorial cohesion (2008):	
4.5 EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009): An integrated multi-sectoral strategy	23
4.6 White Paper on Multi-level Governance by the Committee of the Regions (2009)	23
4.7 Discussion paper by the European Commission “Macro-regional strategies in the European Union” (2009)	24
4.8 Main dimensions of macro-regions as a new policy object of territorial development policies	24
<b>5 What added-values may macro-regional strategies bring?</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1 Transnational and cross-border cooperation of actors: integration “in patches”	25
5.2 Addressing of joint challenges as a common denominator	25
5.3 A thematically focussed territorial cooperation	31
5.4 A new way of thinking: multi-level governance and subsidiarity	31
5.5 A globalisation strategy for European regions	32
5.6 Bridging the Neighbourhood and Territorial Development policies	35
<b>6 EU macro-regional strategies: potential fields of tension and their practical implications</b>	<b>39</b>
6.1 Potential fields of tension	39
6.2 Practical implications – Defining the “action capacity” within a macro-region	39
<b>7 References</b>	<b>42</b>



# Preface

During the work with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the concept of macro-regions and macro-regional strategies have been widely discussed. The EU Commission have declared that the BSR Strategy also could serve as pilot case for other macro-regional strategies to come.

Although the concept of macro-regions not is totally new there are a lot of questions on e.g. the delimitations and functionality of macro-regions as well as the rationale and added-value of development strategies in a macro-regional context. There is also a clear connection to other EU-processes such as the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion that constitutes a theoretical and methodological background for macro-regional strategies. With respect to that the aim of this working paper is to give a better understanding of the macro-regional concept, especially from a territorial point of view and in an EU-context.

The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications in Sweden commissioned Nordregio to work out the study during the Swedish EU presidency, the second half of 2009.

The report findings are the views of writers and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Swedish Government.

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# Executive summary

The launching of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in June 2009 saw the commencement of the first application of a macro-regional strategy within the context of European Union cooperation. This strategy may, moreover, be seen as a forerunner for the application of further macro-regional strategies across the European Union. Macro-regions may thus be seen to constitute a new strategic EU policy arena.

The aim of this scoping study is to discuss the understanding of the macro-regional approach now being developed within the context of EU cooperation from a territorial development perspective and in relation to transnational cooperation and territorial cohesion. Firstly, some of the underlying processes leading to the macro-regional approach are presented. In addition, examples of how the macro-region concept has been applied thus far in the scientific literature are also provided. In addition we also look at whether and how elements of the macro-regional approach have become increasingly visible in EU documents of relevance to EU territorial development. Finally, the added-value a macro-regional strategy may bring, in respect of the overarching policy goals such as territorial cohesion and transnational cooperation in particular, is addressed.

Since World War II the dynamic of regional integration within Europe has moved from an intergovernmental and geopolitical interpretation of security and international trading agreements to a more complex and open multidimensional structure. This type of cooperation is no longer based exclusively on trade concerns but now generally also covers a number of cooperation fields, encompassing for instance common challenges and interests such as environmental protection. In addition, cooperation today also includes several types of actors, state and non-state, public and private all of whom are equally interested in the process of regional integration and cooperation. This has led to the development of a multi-level cooperation structure with the involvement of different levels of governance, power, and resources the key to its success.

The political concept 'macro-region' has its origins in International Relations. There is now however a stronger focus on functional interactions. The traditional approach of grouping nation-states into macro-regions has been widened by also seeking to group sub-national units of countries. In addition, macro-regions are no longer only about grouping homogeneous territories together, instead this exercise can now also be based on heterogeneity.

Macro-regions and macro-regional strategies have not been mentioned explicitly in many of the recent documents of relevance for territorial development. Elements connected with this approach can however be found particularly in connection with the coherence of policy actions at different levels. The coordination of multiple sectoral strategies and financial instruments with territorial impacts represents an important message from the EU-level, while the emergence of a focus on common regional features and challenges as the unifying factor in transnational cooperation is also visible in the documents. In addition an emphasis on action-driven cooperation based on joint challenges and met on different geographical scales has been incorporated into the relevant documents. The positioning and integration of regions beyond the national sphere is also a ubiquitous message while the overcoming of administrative divisions and the fostering of regional networking are regarded as being crucial in fostering transnational economic synergies. Additionally, the increasing involvement of regional and local stakeholders in the implementation of European policies is an element now being stressed at the EU-level and is visible in the EU strategy for the BSR.

A macro-regional approach also generates potential added-value in a number of areas related to territorial development.

- It may contribute to the strengthening of the *transnational and cross-border cooperation* of actors within a region.
- Furthermore, it enables the use of *joint challenges as a common denominator*.
- A macro-region strategy may also be the foundation for a *thematically focussed process of territorial cooperation*.
- The new strategic macro-regional policy arena may also offer a *new way of thinking about multi-level governance and subsidiarity*.
- Macro-regional cooperation can also be seen as way to position the macro-region in the world and may be used as a *globalisation strategy for European regions*.
- Finally, a macro-regional strategy may function as a *bridge between the Neighbourhood and Territorial Development policies*.

A number of lines of tension can however also be attached to the development and application of macro-regional strategies.

- Firstly, there is a *thematic tension*, due to the many and partly overlapping policy agendas and objectives of the involved stakeholder within a potential macro-region.
- Secondly, there is an *institutional tension* due to the multiplicity of stakeholders and associations within a

potential macro-region.

- Thirdly, a *coordinating tension* may appear. In the Baltic Sea region the Commission seems to be the key player, but it remains to be seen whether other stakeholders will actually be committed in the implementation phase. This will however be essential for the successful application of the strategy to occur.
- Fourthly, there is an *instrumental tension* based on the diversity of instruments, policy tools and finally resources/programmes at hand for implementing macro-regional actions. This leads to the question of who are the donors and who are the recipients/addresses of the macro-regional strategy.
- Fifthly, tension emerges in terms of *power* (for instance legal, financial and communicative) covering the ownership and the application of the macro-regional strategy as well as the question of whether macro-regional strategies are developed from the top-down or the bottom-up.
- Finally, tensions relating to whether EU macro-regional strategies constitute the appropriate approach to improving transnational cooperation and 'Territorial Cohesion' at the European scale can also be discerned.

The Commission, moreover, states that there will be no new instruments, legislation or institutions (the 3 no's) in connection with the development and application of macro-regional strategies within the context of EU cooperation. Existing structures must consequently be used. In order to develop a macro-regional strategy and

an attached action plan it is necessary to map the action capacity within a potential macro-region. Such an exercise may include the following considerations:

- *What? What topics/themes would benefit from macro-regional actions?*
- *How? What are the instruments at the disposal of the actors for the implementation of the actions needed?*
- *Who? What organisational capacity is available in the region to help drive the process*

The territorial dimension of the macro-regional strategy will thus be based on the capacity to handle three sets of tasks; (1) *multi-sectoral*, many of the actions need to be based on the coordination of sectoral policies, (2) *multi-instrumental*, since the wide scope of actions makes it impossible to fund them solely through one instrument and (3) *multi-actor*, collaboration between different types of actors at various governance levels is needed to reach consensus and fine tune the actions.

In brief, macro-regional strategies may be seen as a tool of European integration and increased territorial cohesion. The elaboration of macro-regional strategies makes it possible to promote the territorial dimension of EU policies and cooperation. Tailor-made solutions for each macro-region are needed in order to ensure that the macro-regional approach delivers added-value and helps to release undeveloped potential within a macro-region.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Scope and objectives of the paper

In June 2009 the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was launched. This marked the beginning of the EU's implementation of a macro-regional strategy. It was subsequently also announced that this strategic policy paper for the BSR may be viewed as a forerunner for the implementation of further macro-regional strategies across the European Union. Macro-regions may thus be seen to constitute a new strategic policy arena within the context of EU cooperation.

Traditionally the *macro-region* concept has in the main been used in the context of international relations between nation states. But macro-regions may also be connected to the territorial and functional relations between other actors. Theoretical considerations in respect of this approach have thus far however been rather limited. Consequently, this brief study aims to discuss understandings of the notion of macro-regions in general and the intended creation of macro-regional strategies within the context of EU cooperation in particular.

We begin by seeking to derive the characteristic features of 'macro-regions' as such. This exercise includes an overview of the underlying processes which have led to the adoption of a macro-regional approach within the context of EU cooperation as well as an overview of how the macro-region concept has been applied scientifically. In addition we also look at whether and how macro-regional approaches and strategies have to date been visible in the various EU documents of relevance for EU territorial development policy.

Secondly, we look at their underlying premises in respect of strategic macro-regional policy-making from a functional and territorial perspective. This exercise includes a critical investigation of the potential added-values a macro-regional strategy may bring as regards overarching policy goals such as territorial cohesion and transnational cooperation and in how far a macro-regional approach could help to realise undeveloped potentials.

The main target groups of the study are national policy makers and civil servants of the EU member states, as well as those at the EU-level, with an interest in the conceptual notion of macro-regions and their potential added-value in achieving strategic policy goals at the transnational level.

## 1.1 Method and material

This paper constitutes an initial scoping study the methodology of which implies a rather rapid mapping of the key concepts within a research area and the main available sources and evidence. This method is often particularly useful where a complex area of investigation which has hitherto not been comprehensively reviewed is to be investigated (Arksey & O'Malley 2005).

To begin with we undertook a literature review of the existing studies dealing with macro-regions in a territorial and functional perspective. We then reviewed a number of EU policy documents and discussion papers (e.g. the *Green paper on territorial cohesion* and the Discussion paper *Macro-regional strategies in the European Union* prepared for the ministerial meeting of 17-18 September 2009) in order to investigate how the EU policy discourse addresses macro-regions and macro-regional strategies. Based on these exercises we subsequently developed a number of approaches to highlighting the added value of what a macro-regional strategy might comprise.

Finally, we also developed a number of concrete examples illustrating the potential added value of adopting a macro-regional approach. We used the Baltic Sea Region as the point of departure here. These examples are included as illustrations in respect of each of the developed tracks.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more extensive description of the performance of scoping studies see Arksey & O'Malley (2005)



## 2 Processes of importance for the emergence of a macro-regional approach within the context of EU cooperation

One of the simplest ways to understand the origins and evolution of macro-regional cooperation is to track the historical development of large-scale *regional integration* initiatives in the last 60 years as this process has been marked by the creation of a growing number of bodies and organisations aiming at furthering regional integration around the world. In the following section we briefly introduce the historical development of these processes and how they have been understood and adopted across different periods in time.

### 2.1 The rise of large scale regional integration

The first wave of large-scale regional integration in Europe emerged after the Second World War, especially in the period from the late 1940s to the mid 1960s as a result of significant concerns over international security issues. Simultaneously, the political model based on autonomous sovereign states was particularly questioned in Europe where nations realised that by binding their economies and societies together and pooling their sovereignty in certain areas with their geographical neighbours, they

could achieve more than by acting alone (Capannelli 2009). Specific examples here include the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950 and the Nordic Council in 1952.

A second wave of regional integration commenced at the end of the 1980s continuing into the 1990s under a fundamentally different rubric to that of its Cold War predecessor (Wunderlich 2008). Regional integration here emerged as a result of increasing international concerns in respect of trade and common political and economic development and began also to be progressively associated with the emerging concept of *globalisation* summarised by Hettne (1996) as the vision of a 'borderless world'.

Regional integration during this latter period generally developed on an intergovernmental basis, namely, relating to initiatives primarily concerned with geopolitical relations between nation states. This period was characterised by a general phenomenon denoting formal and often state-led projects constructed within the context of a top-down approach and including a number of norms, values, objectives and ideas (Wunderlich 2008) between

### Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region after the end of the Cold War

Until the fall of the Iron curtain in Europe, the various sub-regions of today's Baltic Sea Region remained fundamentally disconnected from each other in terms of regional cooperation. While Denmark and West Germany were the only Members of the EU in 1989, the Eastern half of the BSR was just coming out from the Communist era while the Nordic countries had already been engaged in a process of inter-regional cooperation – outside the EU framework - since the creation of the Nordic Council in the 1950s and subsequently the Nordic Council of Ministers in the early 1970s.

The 1995 and 2004 EU enlargements, the 1994 EEA agreement with Norway and Iceland plus the inclusion of the Baltic States (2004) and Poland (1999) in NATO constitute important steps towards a fuller process of integration for the region as a whole into the broader European context. Also the German re-unification in 1990 played an important role for the region. Under the EU framework, the implementation of the Interreg programmes opened the process of regional integration into a multi layered structure of cooperation (cross-border, transnational and interregional) focussed on a number of priorities, that in the case of the BSR includes environmental and climate change issues, internal and external accessibility, sustainable urban and regional development and the need for a stronger knowledge based society and innovation capacity. On the institutional side two features must be highlighted: first, the creation of a dense network of flexible intergovernmental organisations for regional integration trying to involve all BSR members states (i.e. the Baltic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council of Ministers); and second, the considerable number of different thematically-oriented and overlapping associations, conferences and research groups/institutions, that has seen the involvement of a variety of interested stakeholders (public and private, state and non-state) in the process of regional integration in the BSR.

It is precisely this variety of subsequent agreements, multi-levelled cooperation in strands and the broad participation of different types of actors that renders the Baltic Sea Region useful as a recipe book for other parts of Europe and indeed the World in respect of the desire to reinforce transnational cooperation (Christiansen 1997:287). However a need for further cooperation with the new EU Member states in the region and especially with Russia and Belarus remains as a priority challenge for the BSR. (COMMIN 2005)

geographically related nation states. This model of regional integration was inward-oriented and protectionist in economic terms as well as very specific with regard to its objectives. Some organisations were security oriented, while others were more economically oriented (Hettne 1996). In Europe the revival of the Single European Act (which came into force in 1987 with the respective subsequent amendments) marked an important step forward towards Europe's integration and latter establishment of the European Union. As a consequence, the creation of a customs union followed by a single market and a common currency later in the 1990s represented one of the world's most prominent examples and longest running experiences of these first waves of regional cooperation (Wunderlich 2008).

## 2.2 Regional integration in the 1990s and after

During the 1990s, the increasing importance of global flows combined with the important advances in Europe with regard to trade liberalisation and the establishment of a single market, created the preconditions for more robust integration. Simultaneously a new theoretical approach often labelled 'new regionalism' was developed as a framework to interpret and analyse the new forms of regional cooperation emerging at this time (Williams 2001).

Hettne (1996) defines new regionalism by making a comparison between the first two waves of regional integration described above (what he called 'old' regionalism) with the so called 'new regionalism' initiatives, highlighting first the *historical differences in which both processes*

*of regional integration were conceived*; that is going from a bipolar Cold War world scenario to a 'multipolar' world order as a result of the decline of US hegemony and the breakdown of the Communist sub-system.

'Old' or conventional regionalism was created from 'above' under a clear top down approach, while the 'new' one is conceived throughout as a more spontaneous process from within the regions. In simple terms the traditional process of regional integration up until the 1990s was about '*government*'. New regionalism is about '*governance*' as well as a combination of private, non-profit and public interests through the strategic sharing of powers and talents which will bring change (Elmaco 2008). This can also be complemented by the fact that 'old' regionalism was mainly associated with the process of relations between nation states, while new regionalism, though still involving nation states, also involves a variety of *non-state actors* such as private institutions, universities, organizations, movements, civil society actors, private firms or any other type of stakeholder able to promote regional integration and operate at several levels of globalisation. As stated by Elmaco (2008)

*"...it also presupposes the growth of a regional civil society, opting for regional solutions to some local, national and global problems. Under such circumstances not only economic, but also social and cultural networks are developing more quickly than the formal political cooperation at the regional level."*

Initiatives in the mould of this new regionalism are seen as 'open' and compatible with today's interdependent world economy and are being developed under a more *comprehensive and multidimensional type of process* in which not

### The Baltic Sea Region – a laboratory for transnational governance

Christensen uses the term *regionality*, often also referred to as "radical gradualism", in the "New Europe" to describe the reality that "the erosion of conventional state power" does not simply indicate that the 'old' system is being replaced by something fundamentally 'new'. Instead it could be seen as

*"an alternative avenue for a broad range of actors – state and non-state, East and West, 'inside' and 'outside' – for developing a more efficient mode of interaction. It is not that old-style politics is being forced to surrender before regionalist, but that they are subsumed into a broader range of activities within which they loose their centrality and exclusivity". (Christensen 1997:288)*

A new approach is thus that non-state actors are given a role in the implementation of macro-regional cooperation.

*"Regionality in the Baltic is, [...], not about hierarchical institutions, creation of borders and the establishment of a legal system, but about the empowerment of transnational networks, sub-national cooperation and the realisation of a common perspective on issues of relevance in the region." (Christensen 1997:289)*

Core elements for the *regionality* in the BSR stated at the end of the 1990s were:

1. Incapacity of conventional models of governance.
2. Emphasis on process over structure
3. Maintenance of flexible institutions

4. The proliferation of networks
5. The encompassing and overlapping membership of regional institutions
6. The inclusion of, and reliance on, non-state actors in region-building efforts

*The "list of crucial and defining elements of regionality in the Baltic Sea region might well serve as a recipe book for other parts of Europe and the World where traditional, state- and nation-based politics have run their course. In this sense it is temptingly easy to view the Baltic and its experience with regionality-based politics as a laboratory for transnational governance." (Christensen 1997:287-288)*

only free trade and economic development issues are dealt with, but where in addition environmental, social, cultural, political, democratic and security subjects are also taken as working fields. This implies the adoption of not one but *several strategic thematic pillars* addressing issues that are especially important to the actors involved, namely citizens, enterprises or any kinds of governmental or non-governmental organisations, and it suggests *a principle of cooperation* between the actors in favour of joint challenges and the implementation of mutually adopted decisions in favour of the particular region.

According to Hernandez *et al* (2009), it is precisely this new regionalism trend that has overseen the development of new structures of regional integration since the 1990s. For Gamble (2007:32)

*“The new order is a complex structure of political-economic entities: micro-regions, traditional states and macro-regions, with institutions of greater or lesser functional scope and formal authority, and world cities.”*

## 2.3 Conclusions

Since World War II regional integration has developed from reflecting a closed intergovernmental and geopolitical interpretation of security and international trading agreements into a more complex and open multidimensional structure influenced mainly by the process of globalisation. It has gone beyond exclusive trade concerns and has started to deal with a number of other fields of cooperation, as well as common challenges and joint interests such as environmental protection and economic growth. The (macro-)region has become a scenario in which several actors, state and non-state, public and private are equally interested in the process of regional integration and cooperation thus forming a new multi-levelled structure of cooperation that brings with it different levels of governance, power, resources and capabilities.



# 3 Definition and application of the concept of macro-region

In the following section we will provide some examples of how the macro-region concept can be defined and how it has already been applied in the existing scientific literature.

## 3.1 What is a (macro-) region?

The definition of a (macro-) region is related to the exercise of how to define a region regardless of the prefixes - macro, micro, meso, sub-national etc - used. Under current usage the term 'region' can refer to anything from an administrative unit to a functional area. Regions are consequently not pre-given as physical objects. Instead they are formed and framed through specific practices. They can be considered as products of intended actions by a set of stakeholders. The process of *regionalisation* itself can be viewed as a strategic and interest-led articulation of power. The strategies of the stakeholders can change, however, in the course of time, if established attempts at regionalisation are perceived as being no longer successful. Paasi (1986) emphasises that such a process is never complete. Regions (and inevitably also macro-regions) are continually re-produced through social communication. In this respect Weichhart (2000:550) underlines the temporary varying structures of the making of (new) geographies. Paasi (1986) claims that in this formation regional identity plays a critical role. It can either bring forward or restrain the process of the institutionalisation of regions depending on the legitimising power of different discourses, which are bound to specific cultural, mental, political and societal circumstances.

With regard to policy, it is critical how (macro-) regions are mobilised to assume (political) power in order to better shape and negotiate 'their futures'. In particular macro-regions demand the discursive negotiation of the required

coordinating and regulatory institutional arrangements as they offer a new scale for territorial governance. In other words, their production as new objects for policy attention challenges the installation of new modes of governance in order to literally fill the organisational and institutional vacuum that emerges once a new macro-region is produced (such as the Baltic Sea Region for instance). Such an installation of a new scale in the political multi-level system is, as Swyngedouw (1997:156) notes, normally a highly contested, deeply contradictory process and power struggle, which revolves not only around the content of this new scale, but also on the relation to existing scales and between different scales. Macro-regions can thus be considered as a specific interface between different established scales. Different kinds of political and organisational potentials and capacities have to be activated to push (or even initiate) the political bargaining process to install such a new scale. Once a macro-region that is capable of acting is installed and is used as a new channel to implement policies its maintenance and functioning might consume many resources at the expenses of other fields in politics and planning (Ossenbrügge 2003).

To sum up, regions are basically social constructs in the worlds of both science and politics. Regions are "constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through interaction between various actors in response to changes in their internal and external environment on the basis of what is most appropriate for the pursuit of their commonly held goals". (United Nations University) This implies that there are no pre-given conditions or criteria for what constitutes a region, including macro-regions – even though certain coherent structures and characteristics, be they political and/or geographical can help enormously to construct a (macro-)region (see below).

### Levels of regionness

In a study by Hettne 1996 different *levels of regionness* are presented in order to highlight how regions can be more or less *regionalised*.

1. Region as a geographical unit, delimited by more or less natural physical barriers marked by ecological characteristics.
2. Region as a social system implying the existence of trans-local relations between human groups. These relations are the foundation for a security complex, which the overall stability of the region is based upon.
3. Region as organised cooperation in any of the cultural, economic, political or military fields. The definition of the region is based on which countries are formal members of the specific organization.
4. Region as civil society develops when the organisational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and a convergence of values throughout the region.
5. Region as an acting subject with a distinct identity, actor capability, legitimacy and structure of decision-making.

These levels can be seen as an evolutionary logic. The process of becoming more regionalised, implying an increased level of regionness, is important in order to avoid stagnation, turbulence and even war within a region. But since this form of regionalism is a political project it may fail.

## 3.2 Macro-regions and international relations

The use and definition of the term *macro-region* has traditionally been in the hands of scholars working with international and transnational relations. In this context a macro-region can according to Nye be considered as a “limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence” (United Nations University). In this definition the states are the sovereign administrative units involved and both territorial and functional relations are included in the definition. The geographical dimension and the grouping of the administrative unit states are components also in a definition developed by Buzan: “A spatially coherent territory composed of two or more states” (United Nations University). The inclusion of “spatially coherent” sends a signal that a coherent area is of importance and that there are some factors that bind the area together in some way or another.

The origin of the concept in the field of International Relations may explain why the concept has traditionally been the preferred one for describing transnational cooperation areas within the EU cooperation processes covered by macro-regional strategies.

## 3.3 Macro-region – trade as a functional relation

One of the best examples of the utility of using a macro-regional approach is in describing *trade* as an example of a *functional relation* binding territories together. Petrakos (1997) looked at trade relations between the EU member state Greece and its neighbouring non-EU member states in the Balkan region. This study provides concrete input into what the added value of macro-regional cooperation may be, especially regarding trade relations. The removal of barriers, i.e. 40 years of separation by military blocs (as with the BSR) that have restricted trade in the region for decades, would imply a significant increase in economic and social interaction across the region. An emerging regional market in the Balkans will also allow specialisation and the possibility of using the benefits of comparative advantage more fully (intra-regional activities at the edges of the single European space). In addition the bridging metaphor linking EU and non-EU member states is also stressed.

*“Given that a Europe of macro-regions is slowly emerging, the attraction of the bulk of international mobile investment to the technologically advanced western European countries can only be balanced by the Balkan region on the basis of intensive relations, emerging markets opportunities and a strategic development plan that will reveal the new role of the region in connecting Europe with the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea countries.”*

Furthermore, it is stated that there is a need for cooperation among countries of geographic proximity,

common cultural or other characteristics and mutual trust. Such cooperation will result in growth and prosperity. In addition, it is stated that this regional integration takes place in parallel with an internationalisation process.

*“Observers of the international economic relations have noticed that the process of internationalisation and liberalization of the markets coexists with increasing trends of regionalization at all geographical levels” (Petrakos 1997)*

## 3.4 Macro-regions built on homogeneity

The adoption of the approach to defining macro-regions based on *common characteristics* can often be found in *socio-economic studies*. These studies look for similarities binding countries together in larger regions. An explicit macro-regional approach is for instance used in displaying macro-regional trends in global income inequalities 1950-2000. In this exercise the Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden end up in the same macro-region. The explanation of the different regional patterns can be traced back to the “the distinct macro-regional ideologies of ‘best practices’ of socio-economic development (Mann & Riley 2007

## 3.5 Macro-regions built on homogeneity and common challenges

That a macro-region may not only consist of nation-states is highlighted in Dieleman & Faludi (1998) following up on earlier statements by the Conference of Regions of North-West Europe (CRENWE) (Ley 1967). Inspired by Gottmann’s studies on the BosWash-megalopolis on the east coast of the USA from 1961, Dieleman & Faludi talk about one polynucleated macro-region cornered by the metropolitan areas of the Randstad, Rhine-Ruhr and the Flemish Diamond and make a claim for a concerted process to be put in place to help develop transnational strategic plans for this area. An initial such approach was indeed made during the mid 1990s and was initiated by the Dutch National Spatial Planning Agency in connection with the preparation of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). However, Dieleman & Faludi criticise this noting that the document falls short of being an “authoritative statement of government policy”. They do however state that there are many reasons for continuing with a transnational planning approach, particularly in respect of this poly-nucleated macro-region approach, as it would contribute to bolstering European competitiveness while helping also to preserve European culture. The Dutch initiative was not however developed further either by public regional or national actors or in the spatial vision for North West Europe (Spatial Vision Group NWMA 2000, Lambregts & Zonneveld 2003). To sum-up, the macro-region studied here was built on common characteristics and common challenges covering an area including three nation-states. The political

discourse needed to develop common strategic plans for this particular macro-region however proceeded in such a modest way that it never became political reality, at least not yet.

### 3.6 The EU perspective on macro-regions at the turn of the century

A number of studies have recently been published dealing with macro-regions and macro-regional cooperation (for instance Salines 2009, Joenniemi 2009, Bengtsson 2009, and Schymik 2009). In these studies the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) with the attached Action plan is the object of investigation and is analysed as the most practical example of how an EU macro-region is being created. It is also interesting however to see that macro-regions were a frequently addressed object in scientific studies dealing with EU cooperation at the end of the 1990s. This may be related to the development of the EU transnational cooperation programmes for the programme period 2000-2006. Looking at those studies dealing with transnational cooperation within the context of EU cooperation some ten years ago it also becomes evident that the “macro-region” concept has actually replaced other concepts. In a study from the late 1990s looking at the Baltic Region, *meso-region* is for instance the term used to describe “the building up of intermediate structures between the state- and the European level” (Christensen 1997:263).

In Cappellin (1998) the notion of macro-region from an EU perspective is addressed. Here he states that the European territory can be seen as a set of overlapping transnational “macro-regions”. These macro-regions are characterised by co-operation between the various administrative regions included in the same macro-region and by competition with regions belonging to other macro-regions. The macro-region also represents “complex networks of urban centres which perform complementary and competing roles on the European scale”. He claims that the Mediterranean basin and Baltic basin are two such macro-regions, including both countries and regions outside and inside the European Union (at least when the article was written). Other examples given are the Alpine region, Central Europe, *Mittleuropa*, the Atlantic Arc and the capital regions in north-western Europe. These European macro-regions may be both “symbolic constructs” and representations of actual trends in the process of internationalisation. The latter implies new forms of interdependence between neighbouring areas. “Thus, macro-regions constitute a new framework for regulating the development of international relationships”. Contrary to those studies grouping homogenous areas, Cappellin claims that a macro-region may also be built on heterogeneous units. In addition, macro-regions may represent a “political space or forum for joint political action”, for instance aiming at stimulating “solidarity between the most developed regions in Western Europe

and the less developed regions in Eastern Europe”. The transnational basins or macro-regions are thus given a role as “bridges” between the most central regions of European Union and other groups of countries which belong to other parts of the European continent or to other continents. (Cappellin 1998)

Cappellin also notes however that cooperation within a macro-region is something more than just territorial and functional interdependence.

*“The process of cooperation is a learning process which may in the near future enable the European macro-regions to develop a sort of ‘soft’ identity or a sense of belonging which is the prerequisite of a common development strategy and common role in the European framework”.*

Macro-regional cooperation may consequently contribute to the establishment of some kind of regional identity (cf. Paasi 1986).

*“Thus, the experience of transnational cooperation in both Northern and Southern Europe indicates that the European macro-regions are different from cross-border agreements aiming at solving particular problems or reaching particular objectives. The defining characteristic of a macro-region is the existence of a common ‘soft’ identity determined by a sense of belonging to a common territory in a geographical, cultural and economic sense.”*

Cappellin also stresses that the boundaries of these macro-regions are not exclusive or fixed. Instead, the emergence of European macro-regions indicates that there will not be a “single” space in Europe but rather that it will be characterised by “interregional networking”. Cappellin claims that there will be overlapping networks and the existence of multiple ‘soft’ identities will be possible.

*“Thus, each region is linked both to its respective nation and to a transnational macro-region or even several macro-region”* (Cappellin 1998).

### 3.7 Conclusions

Reviewing the usage of the macro-region concept in the scientific literature some interesting features clearly emerge. The use of the macro-region concept has its origin in International Relations. This is also the role macro-regions have in the context of the European Union as it is often used in the field of transnational cooperation. The emphasis on macro-regions at the end of the 1990s may be related to the process of creating the transnational cooperation programmes for the programming period 2000-2006 (INTERREG IIIB and its forerunner INTERREG IIC 1996-1999). Similarly, the renewed focus on the macro-regional approach almost 10 years later may more helpfully be seen in light of the fact that this may be a way to develop transnational cooperation further within the context of EU cooperation broadly defined. The macro-region concept is still widely used in International

Relations but now with a stronger focus on functional interactions. Furthermore, the rather traditional approach of simply grouping nation-states into macro-regions has been widened. Looking at the examples of macro-regions given above it can be noted that these studies also deal with the grouping of cross-border sub-national units into macro-regions. Finally, it can be stated that macro-regions are not only about the grouping homogeneous territories. Indeed, this exercise can now also be based on heterogeneity. The role of identity in region building

and the share of e.g. social capital are certainly of central importance here, although this dimension remains, thus far at least, under-explored.

# 4 Macro-regions in EU policy documents: Continuity or interregnum in European policymaking?

Whereas previous sections investigated the development of the macro-Region concept in the scientific literature, this section proposes a chronological review of the development of macro-regional thinking in key EU documents linked to territorial development policies. While the multiple dimensions of macro-regional strategies are rarely mentioned explicitly they nevertheless underpin the development of the territorial perspective on EU sectoral and regional policies.

The use of macro-regions as a functional and territorial concept for the conception, implementation and monitoring of policies originating from within the EU political framework is rather new. Since the turn of the millennium, few of the main policy documents of the Community on Territorial Development have however explicitly used this concept in their argumentation. Yet, the screening of these documents makes it obvious that the concept of macro-regions and macro-regional strategies was, in fact, obviously present *between the lines*. Consequently, macro-regional strategies should not be perceived as a new cooperation or governance paradigm in the Union, but rather as representing continuity with, and a strengthening of, previous initiatives.

## 4.1 White paper on European Governance (2001): Build a better partnership across the various levels

The White Paper on European Governance does not explicitly refer to macro-regions. Yet, some of the dimensions it develops provide a framework for the development of the “macro-region” as a territorial governance principle.

The willingness of the European Commission, in their proposals for change, to (1) “establish a more systematic dialogue with representatives of regional and local governments through national and European associations at an early stage in shaping policy” and to (2) “bring greater flexibility into how Community legislation can be implemented in a way which takes account of regional and local conditions” makes clear, albeit implicitly, the debt owed to macro-regional thinking (p. 4).

Macro-regional strategies often relate in particular to the “principle of good governance”, as stated in the White paper, and also connect with the overarching principle of *subsidiarity* (p. 10). The increased territorial diversity within the EU which has occurred as a result of the recent

enlargements and the heightened cross-sectoral dimension of the various challenges facing Europe (Demography, Climate Change, Energy and Globalisation) confirms the need for *greater coherence* in respect of policy actions.

Moreover, macro-regional strategies might be seen as a way to increase the involvement of both regional and local actors in European policymaking. The White paper identified that “the way in which the Union currently works does not allow for adequate interaction in a multi-level partnership; a partnership in which national governments involve their regions and cities fully in European policy-making” (p. 12).

Finally, the development of macro-region strategies would enable a better connection to be made between European institutions and the regional and local networks that link businesses, communities, research centres and regional and local authorities together:

*“By making them more open and structuring better their relations with the Institutions, networks could make a more effective contribution to EU policies” (p. 18).*

## 4.2 Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union (2005): Common regional features in European macro-regions

The document *Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union* mentions the notion of macro-regions in its opening chapter linking to the argumentation presented on the need for a territorial approach. By stressing the need to identify *common regional features*, it is assumed that some territorial specificities are shared between regions belonging to a certain larger geographical zone, thus providing a certain territorial identity to this larger zone:

*“In addition, common regional features in European macro-regions – such as the Northern, the Central, the Eastern, the Alpine, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic one – as well as in micro-regions – such as numerous cross border ones – influence the territorial capital of a region” (p. 5).*

In addition, the issue of the *positioning* of the regions and the need to synergize regional territorial capital is perceived as an incentive to better integrate territorial development policies: “better positioning of regions in Europe, both by strengthening their profile and by trans-European

cooperation aimed at facilitating their *connectivity and territorial integration*” (p. 7). In concrete terms, it is implied here that regions cannot fully enjoy their own territorial capital if they are not integrated with their neighbours or other European regions: cooperation is not an end in itself but is necessary to achieve the overarching goals of the EU.

An underlying feature of macro-regions can be found in the acknowledgement of more *targeted, action-driven cooperation* between European regions and nations: “(...) identify issues for trans-European cooperation and synergies in investments” (p. 9).

In that regard, the role of the European level is to act as a catalyst for those processes:

*“A further task of the EU is to facilitate trans-European territorial integration, by stimulating the development or conservation of areas and networks of European importance, the trans-European structuring elements for the EU territory and their connection to secondary networks”* (p. 9).

Consequently, trans-European cooperation facilitates the introduction of *European added-value* into the national and regional development strategies.

Finally, the discourse on macro-regions in European policymaking processes cannot be disconnected from the *instruments* of the European Union and its Member-States (p. 10):

- the specific territorial instruments, especially the Transnational Cooperation Areas and Cross-border Cooperation Areas under the INTERREG programme;
- the EU instruments with a strong territorial dimension but with a primarily regional-economic or sectoral objective, for instance the TEN-T and TEN-E and various environmental directives;
- the EU instruments with strong territorial implications but a non-territorial objective, such as the internal market or the Neighbourhood Policy;
- the harmonization of national instruments and the continuation of national initiatives with strong territorial implications, especially transport planning, on both sides of a border.

### 4.3 Territorial Agenda of the European Union (2007): Effective instrument for promoting territorial cohesion

The *Territorial Agenda of the European Union* does not explicitly mention the notion of macro-regions either. Yet, in the paragraph on “New Challenges: Strengthening regional identities, making better use of territorial diversity”, the need for a better integration of EU policies in regional and local practices is mentioned. A stronger regional and local concern with European territorial development approaches

paves the way for the development of a ‘meso’ level of coordination, able to serve as a more efficient interface between the EU and the regional level (p. 3-4).

The Territorial Agenda also highlights the importance of *networking* as a new approach to territorial development. The networking of regions with “entrepreneurs as well as societal and political stakeholders” in the context of a “Europe-wide cooperation” is expected to “create conditions to allow them to benefit from global competition in terms of their development” (p. 4). Cooperation between regions is supported “at the internal borders and also beyond the external borders of the EU” (p. 5).

The identification of *common challenges* highlights the need for further trans-regional cooperation:

*“Joint trans-regional and integrated approaches and strategies should be further developed in order to face natural hazards, reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. (...) integrated trans-European and cross-border strategies (...) should be adopted, in cooperation with neighbouring countries”* (p. 7).

In order to efficiently tackle challenges which often have impacts beyond administrative borders, typically environmental issues, cooperation beyond administrative borders is necessary.

The *financial instruments* under the programme of European Territorial Cooperation (Objective 3) are presumed to have a key role to play in “strengthening European networks of cities and regions”. Finally, the development of “interregional, cross-border and transnational cooperation as an effective instrument for promoting territorial cohesion” should be supported by the European Commission and the Member States (p. 9).

### 4.4 Green paper on territorial cohesion (2008): Scale and scope for territorial action in pursuit of territorial cohesion

The *Green paper on territorial cohesion* does not explicitly refer to *macro-regions*, but does refer to the *Baltic Sea Region*, which has been flagged by the European authorities as a pilot case for developing macro-regions in the context of territorial development policies. The document acknowledges the fact that “issues such as *coordinating policy* in large areas such as the *Baltic Sea Region* (...) [are] associated with the pursuit of territorial cohesion” (p. 3).

The link between macro-regional strategies and the processes of contemporary economic globalisation is also palpable in the document:

*“Public policy can help territories to make the best use of their assets. In addition, it can help them to jointly respond to common*

*challenges, reach critical mass and realise increasing returns by combining their activities, exploit the complementarities and synergies between them, and overcome divisions stemming from administrative borders” (p. 3).*

The issue of identifying the responsibilities for each level of authorities, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, may be difficult to tackle for issues that do not consider national or regional borders: “Even problems perceived as purely local, such as soil pollution, often have their origins in much wider cross-border processes” (p. 7). The principle of subsidiarity also highlights the need to address not only the territorial impacts, but also the possible causes of such problems. In fine, it is acknowledged that dealing with such issues

*“requires a policy response on a variable geographical scale, involving in some cases cooperation between neighbouring local authorities, in others between countries, and in yet others between the EU and neighbouring countries” (p. 7).*

The Green Paper finally implies the rationale for developing macro-regions as a new precept for *territorial action*, “an integrated approach to addressing problems on an appropriate geographical scale which may require local, regional and even national authorities to cooperate” (p. 11).

## 4.5 EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009): An integrated multi-sectoral strategy

The *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region* is the only document that explicitly addresses territorial development strategies in a macro-region, in this case the Baltic Sea Region. It is thought to be a ‘pioneer’ document in the work of the European Commission towards greater territorial cohesion.

The BSR macro-regional strategy is not based on the idea that it is a homogenous region. Indeed, as acknowledged in the Strategy, it is a “highly heterogeneous area in economic, environmental and cultural terms” (p. 2). Yet, the strategy is based on the fact that the BSR countries and regions “share many common resources and demonstrate considerable interdependence” (p. 2). Moreover, a precondition for the Strategy is that “the Baltic Sea Region has an established history of networking and cooperation in many policy areas” (p. 11): the Strategy is not imposed on the stakeholders, but rather supplements previous and existing initiatives.

The approach developed by the Commission is to take a thematically-targeted, geographically-variable perspective to the strategy: the strategy “covers” the macro-regional territory, but “extent depends on the topic”. Cooperation should be motivated by a specific action, and should not be

implementation for its own sake. The inclusion of Russia, Norway and Belarus in the approach thus depends on the particular challenge addressed.

As the document suggests, it does not merely address the Cohesion Policy and its instruments (Structural Funds). Indeed, the multi-territorial aspects (EU, national, regional, local) are as forthrightly emphasised as the multi-sectoral dimension of the strategy. Consequently, the strategy aims to coordinate those European policies and initiatives which have an important impact on the Baltic Sea Region and those instruments which have a strong potential leverage effect in the region: Environmental Policy, Neighbourhood Policy (Northern dimension), Fishery Policy, Maritime Affairs, Common Agricultural Policy, Single Market policies as well as transport and energy policies through the TEN-T and TEN-E initiatives.

The Strategy intends to ground a set of principles for a better coordination of policies and cooperation between actors in the Baltic Sea Region. The Strategy also aims however to foster cooperation between Member States and Regions on *concrete measures*. This is why the document has been drafted with an Action Plan, which is set out to highlight some potential avenues through which the Strategy could be achieved. The Action Plan makes it possible for the regional, national or even transnational stakeholders to participate in the implementation of the Strategy. In this regard, “implementation on the ground” is seen as the “responsibility of the partners already active in the region”, whereas the Commission is “responsible for co-ordination, monitoring, reporting, and facilitation of the implementation and follow-up” (p. 10).

## 4.6 White Paper on Multi-level Governance by the Committee of the Regions (2009)

For the Committee of the Regions, the success of macro-regional strategies as a way of driving European affairs should be anchored in the concerns for “European governance, the development of territorial cooperation and the objective of territorial cohesion” (p. 30). This “innovative approach” requires a high level of coherence in its design” and should be supported by appropriate governance mechanisms:

*“a form of multilevel governance which defines a new type of partnership bringing together the strategic approaches of the internal and external policies of the Union” (p. 30)*

As examples of macro-regional strategies, the White Paper mentions the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as well as the upcoming Strategy for the Danube.

## 4.7 Discussion paper by the European Commission "Macro-regional strategies in the European Union" (2009)

The discussion paper *Macro-regional strategies in the European Union* has been prepared by the European Commission in order to serve as an input to the discussion on the development of macro-regional strategies during the Swedish Presidency of the European Union 2009. The paper highlights the main elements of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the main lessons that can be drawn for the adjusted replication of this process in other parts of the Union.

The paper characterises a macro-region as "an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges". This territory should not have locked borders: the territoriality of the collaboration should be adapted to the issues at stake. A macro-regional strategy is, on the other hand, "an integrated framework" that provides the necessary policy support to achieve this cooperation. Third countries should be associated with the macro-regional process.

A macro-regional strategy adds up to the principle of *subsidiarity*: it aims at solving issues that cannot be dealt with by countries or regions on their own. The relatively small number of countries and regions involved in cooperation for each issue increases the possibility of reaching a consensus rather than simply overseeing a compromise. A macro-regional strategy promotes cross-sectoral initiatives in order to optimize the impacts of European spatial policies on territories.

A macro-regional strategy cannot be elaborated without a sound *Action Plan*. This Action Plan should be elaborated through a process of consultation with the relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local levels, under the initiative of the Commission. These macro-regional strategies are the responsibility of the European Community, but national, transnational and regional stakeholders will have a key role in its conception and implementation.

The Action Plan should be implemented through projects funded through existing European, national or

regional funding schemes. The synergies of various funding instruments create new possibilities for implementing and achieving the prioritised projects. Yet, the Action Plan should be seen as an implementation framework that can be amended and improved, in order to focus on projects with the highest added-value for the macro-region as a whole. The decision on the priorities for action should be directed by the 'market failure test' (intervention that cannot occur through market processes) and the 'indispensability test' (identification of the EU and macro-regional added-value of each project). This process should occur through consultation.

Finally, under the headline of the *Three No's* (no new funds, no new legislation and no new institutions), the Commission acknowledges the idea that macro-regional strategies entail a real measure of continuity with previous actions and initiatives rather than a completely 'New Deal' in Territorial Development policy-making.

## 4.8 Main dimensions of macro-regions as a new policy object of territorial development policies

The screening of recent key policy documents on the European Union's territorial development policies has revealed the potential dimensions covered by macro-regional strategies:

- Coherence of policy actions at different levels
- Increased involvement of regional and local stakeholders in the implementation of European policies
- Common regional features and challenges as unifying factors
- Positioning and integrating regions beyond the national sphere
- Action-driven cooperation grounded in joint challenges and met on a variable geographical scale
- Better coordination of the means and impacts of territorial financial instruments and initiatives
- Foster networking of regions as a new approach to territorial development
- Overcome administrative divisions and the fostering of transnational economic synergies
- Coordination of multiple sectoral strategies with territorial impacts
- Macro-regional strategies are a tool for European integration and increased territorial cohesion 'in patches'

# 5 What added-values may macro-regional strategies bring?

Based on the overview of the scientific literature and of the relevant EU policy documents conducted above, a series of *possible avenues of investigation relating to* the added-value macro-regions and macro-regional strategies produce have been elaborated. After identifying each avenue we provide a number of concrete examples in respect of the added value generated by the adoption of a macro-regional approach for the Baltic Sea Region.

## 5.1 Transnational and cross-border cooperation of actors: integration "in patches"

Macro-regions provide a new policy framework which may help to speed the process of the spatial integration of the regions in the European Union. This process is intrinsically functional in its approach: it is based on the identification of common challenges and joint potentials and shaped by the formulation of joint responses. Yet, macro-regional strategies should not be conceived as uniform in nature: such an approach is not based on the search for a compromise between all actors, but rather for a consensus between the actors directly concerned by the issue in hand. Consensus between actors across the border on a case-by-case basis suggests the need for the adoption of a more operational manner to ensure greater coherence in respect of the impact of policies and practices at the local level, while bearing in mind the desire for European 'added-value'.

Regions within a macro-region should be integrated *in patches*. This means that macro-regional strategies should not necessarily aim at integrating all parts of the macro-region at once, but should rather seek to develop exchanges and cooperation on lower trans-regional scales, such as those at the cross-border level. Cooperation across the border will help develop larger projects with larger macro-regional added-value. Such cross-border cooperation may also enhance the diffusion of policy best practices across regional and local actors. Moreover, the greater integration of, to date, fragmented areas would result in the creation of larger regional economies and labour-markets, thus enhancing regional competitiveness and the potential for growth. A necessary precondition for further integration within the macro-region however is the removal of barriers to exchange whether they are administrative, cultural or infrastructural.

## 5.2 Addressing of joint challenges as a common denominator

A macro-region may be seen as a *means to define, coordinate and implement a variety of common actions* oriented to fulfilling particular macro-regional *common challenges* and/or needs by exploiting its joint opportunities on the bases of cooperation and integration between all actors involved (regions, state, non-state, public, private, entrepreneurs, citizens, political or societal stakeholders, etc). A macro-regional strategy may also successfully undertake actions with the support

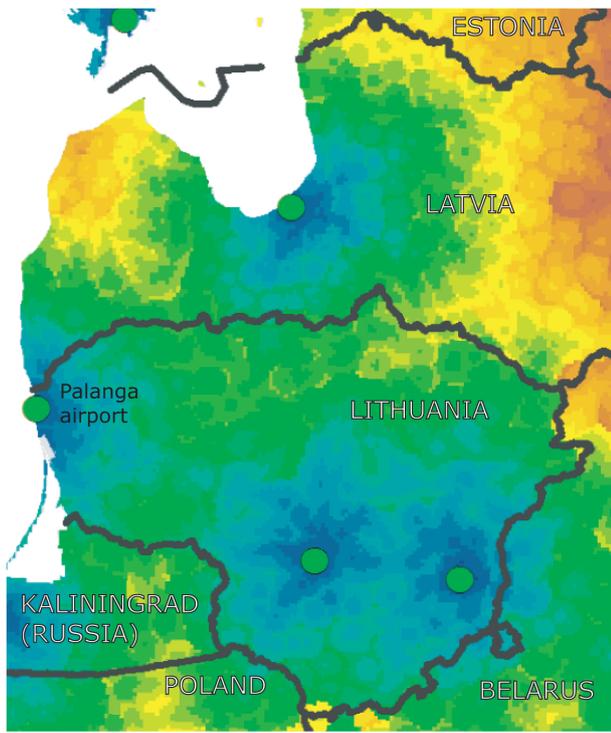
### Further cross-border cooperation as a way of releasing untapped potential across the BSR

A macro-regional strategy provides the necessary framework for the implementation of cross-border territorial development policy initiatives. Cross-border cooperation should thus be thought of as the spatial dimension of European integration.

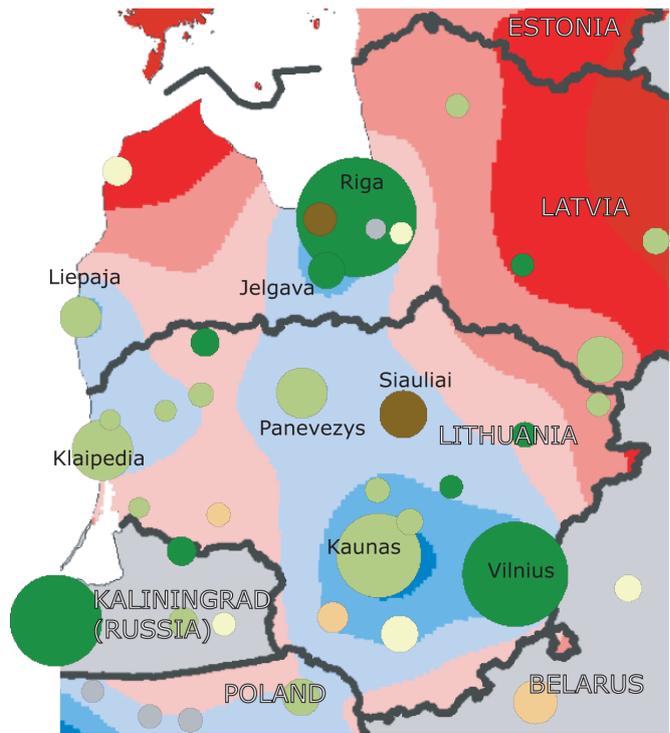
In functional terms, national borders are still an obstacle even within the EU. Communities located in close proximity to the internal borders of the EU are still predominantly focused towards the national market, rather than on the development of interactions across the border. European spatial policies thus continue to be dominated by the national component.

A focus on the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea Region highlights the potential benefits from developing functional cross-border strategies (Figure 1). The international airport of Palanga, Lithuania, is located between the Lithuanian city of Klaipėda and the Latvian town of Liepāja, which also has its own airport (mainly national). The cross-border region is still poorly integrated despite showing a rather high potential for spatial integration (potential accessibility to population above the EU average). This high potential for integration and the creation of a larger cross-border urban area however remains under-exploited. Such a development would facilitate the bringing together of the local communities through the integration of the regional economies and labour-markets, thus drawing on higher agglomeration economies and complementarities.

The area between Riga (Latvia) and Vilnius and Kaunas (Lithuania) with the cities of Panevėžys, Šiauliai (Lithuania) and Jelgava (Latvia) also displays promising potential for further spatial integration. Yet in order to achieve this potential, substantial investments in transport infrastructure are still needed as a vector for the mobility of persons, services and goods across the border.

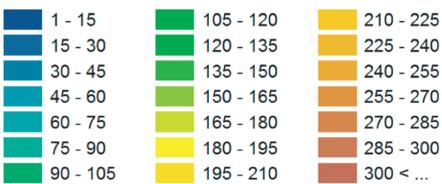


Data & Computation: RRG Spatial Planning (2007)



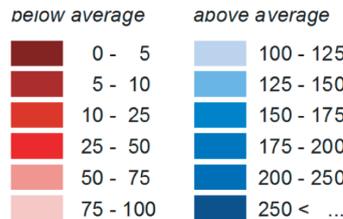
Data & Computation: RRG Spatial Planning (2007)  
Nordregio

Car Travel times to Commercial Airports (min)



● Commercial airport

Potential Accessibility to population (BSR average = 100 = 605,449)



Change in employment per town, 2002-06, annual average in %

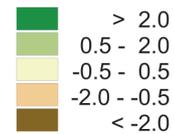


Figure 1: Potential for developing cross-border strategies in the East Baltic Sea Region

of a common network of thematically oriented organisations, stakeholders able to cover a sufficient number of activity fields. Networks as such demonstrate interdependence between the different actors in the macro-region and are a precondition for the development and implementation of macro-regional strategies.

In all cases, macro-regions may exist regardless of strictly defined boundaries and potentially involve disparate territories in terms of socio-economic indicators and third countries as long as the challenges remain common and relevant themes or topics are addressed. The degree of disparity varies according to the individual circumstances (historic, economic, political, etc) of each of the members. But a key issue in the building of a macro-region is precisely its ability to deal with inequalities between the different participant territories in the bloc (Hernandez et al 2009).

Based on a learning process as regards regional cooperation, the existence of a common identity was envisaged by Cappellin as one of the pre-requisites that a European macro-region should develop. A macro-region with a certain degree of what he called 'soft' identity is able then to define a common development strategy and a common role in the European framework. As a defining characteristic for a macro-region, the existence of a 'soft' identity determines also a sense of belonging to a common territory not only in a geographical but also in a cultural, social and economic sense that goes beyond cross border agreements oriented to the solving of particular problems or the reaching of particular objectives (Cappellin 1998:324).

## Socio-economic heterogeneity in the BSR: a joint challenge

The BSR lacks the common denominator of socio-economic homogeneity at least based on data displaying GDP *per capita* and unemployment data. Looking at GDP *per capita* 2005 (figure 2) the east-west divide within the region is evident. The Nordic countries have a GDP *per capita* around the EU27 average. On the Eastern side there are regions that only have a GDP *per capita* corresponding to 25-50 percent of the EU27 average. However, some regions, mainly capital areas, on the Eastern side of the Baltic Sea match the level of the Western part. Furthermore, some areas belonging to the non-member states in the BSR, Russia and Belarus, have rates however even than 25 percent of the EU27 average. This fact stresses like no other the socio-economic heterogeneity of the region.

Employment data at the regional level for BSR countries from 2005 (Figure 3) also points to a divided macro-region in socio-economic terms. Differences both within and between countries can be observed here. North West Russia and some Polish regions in particular stand out here with employment rates well below the EU27 average.

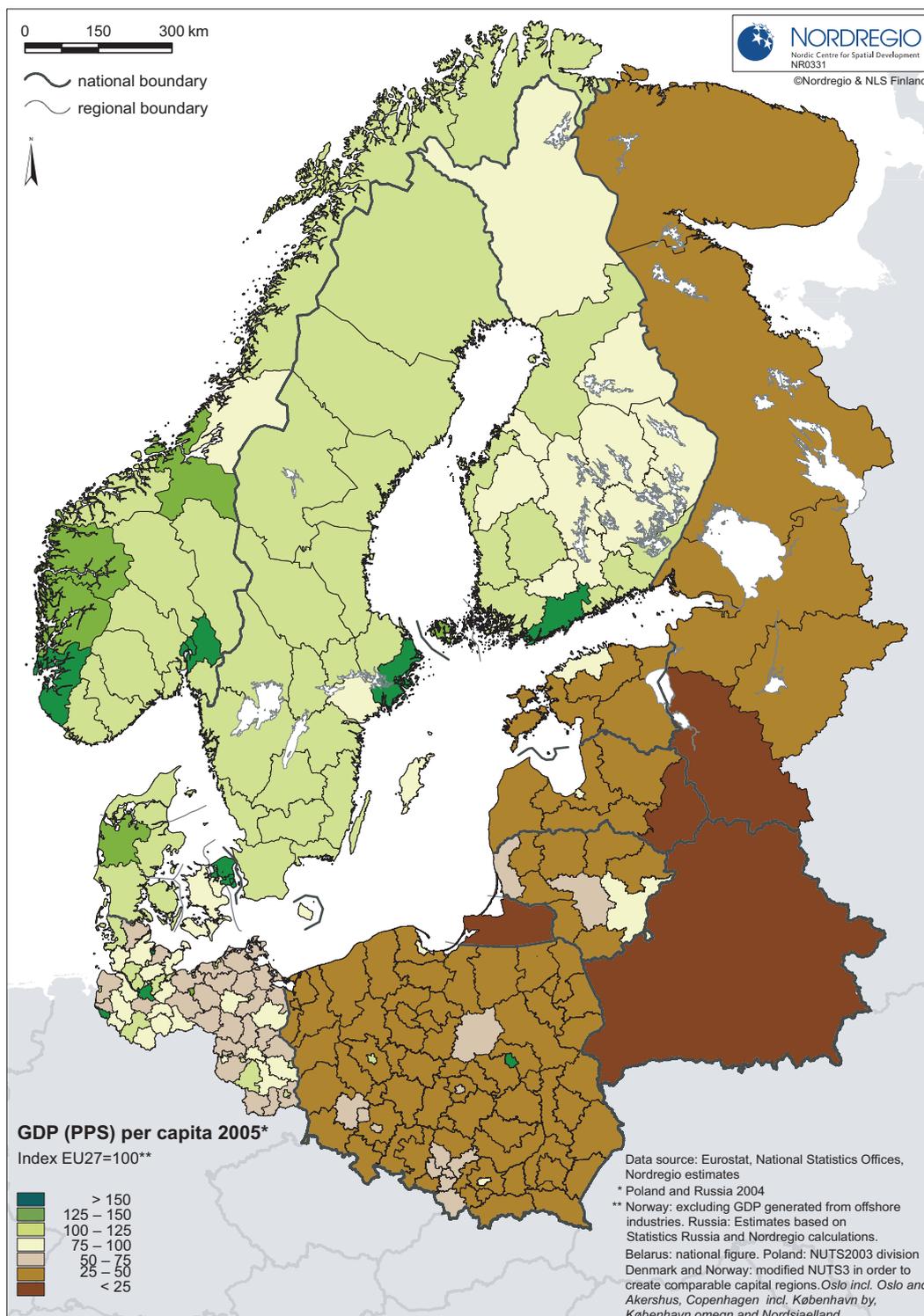


Figure 2: GDP (PPS) per capita (2005)

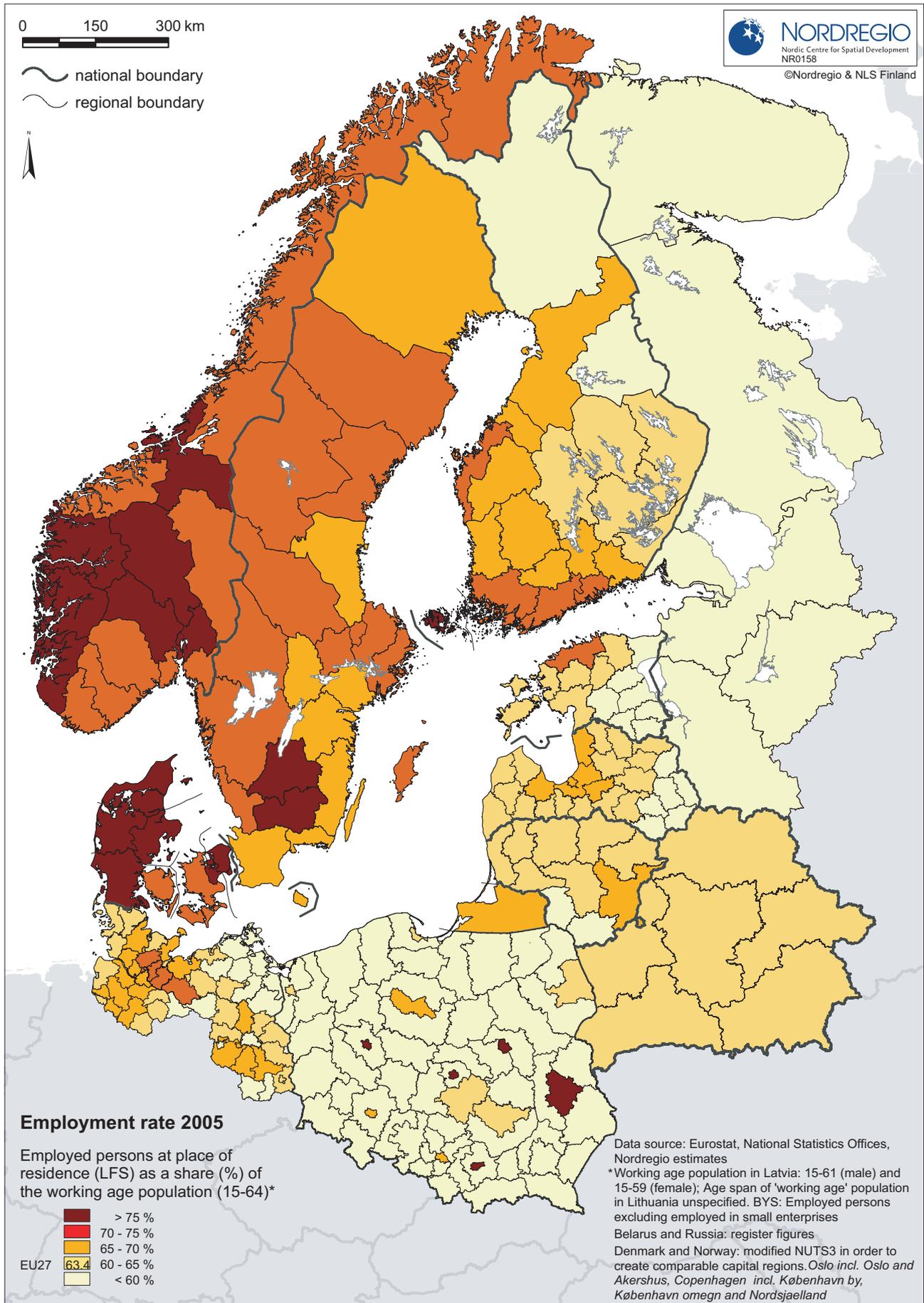


Figure 3: Employment rate in the BSR at the regional level

## The pollution of the Baltic Sea as a common denominator

The Baltic Sea is Europe's biggest geographical inland water body and the main geographic common denominator of the Baltic Sea region. The EU Strategy for the BSR has already defined common specific actions focussed on the protection of its marine environment, regardless of any type of socio-economic disparity that may exist between members around it. These activities are complemented by the existence of stakeholders thematically oriented to environmental issues such as HELCOM and different instruments such as the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) or the designation of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Area (PSSA) by the International Maritime Organisation in 2005. This illustrates the importance of tackling common environmental problems and challenges around the Baltic Sea involving both cross-border and transnational cooperation between regions and countries without distinction.

Looking at the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (EUWFD) as an environmental policy also highlights the need for cross-border and transnational cooperation regarding water management issues and the protection of the Baltic Sea. Within the EUWFD it is stipulated that river basin districts are to be established based more or less on river basins regardless of whether these basins cover more than one country. Here we can see a discernable shift from a territorial to a functional logic. For the transnational river basin districts common river basin management plans (RBMP) are to be developed in order to ensure good water management leading, ultimately, to good water quality.

In figure 4 the river basin districts in the BSR and the eutrophication levels of the Baltic Sea are displayed. The level of eutrophication is classified according to the HEAT tool (HELCOM Eutrophication Assessment Tool) in which a total of 189 'areas' (a mix of stations, sites or basins) have been classified as either 'areas affected by eutrophication' (yellow, orange and red - moderate, poor or bad status) or areas not affected by eutrophication (green or dark green - high or good status). Eutrophication represents an important and common environmental issue around the Baltic Sea as it arises when excessive amounts of nutrients (mainly nitrogen and phosphorus build up in aquatic ecosystems) cause accelerated growth of algae and plants often resulting in undesirable effects (HELCOM 2009). The water quality of the Baltic Sea is thus a question that must be connected to land-based activities such as agriculture and urban settlement. Furthermore cross-border or transnational solutions are required since the river basins stretch over national boundaries. Furthermore, cooperation with non-EU member states (especially with reference to the situation in the Gulfs of Helsinki and Riga) is necessary to ensure efficient water management leading to good water quality in the region and throughout the Baltic Sea.

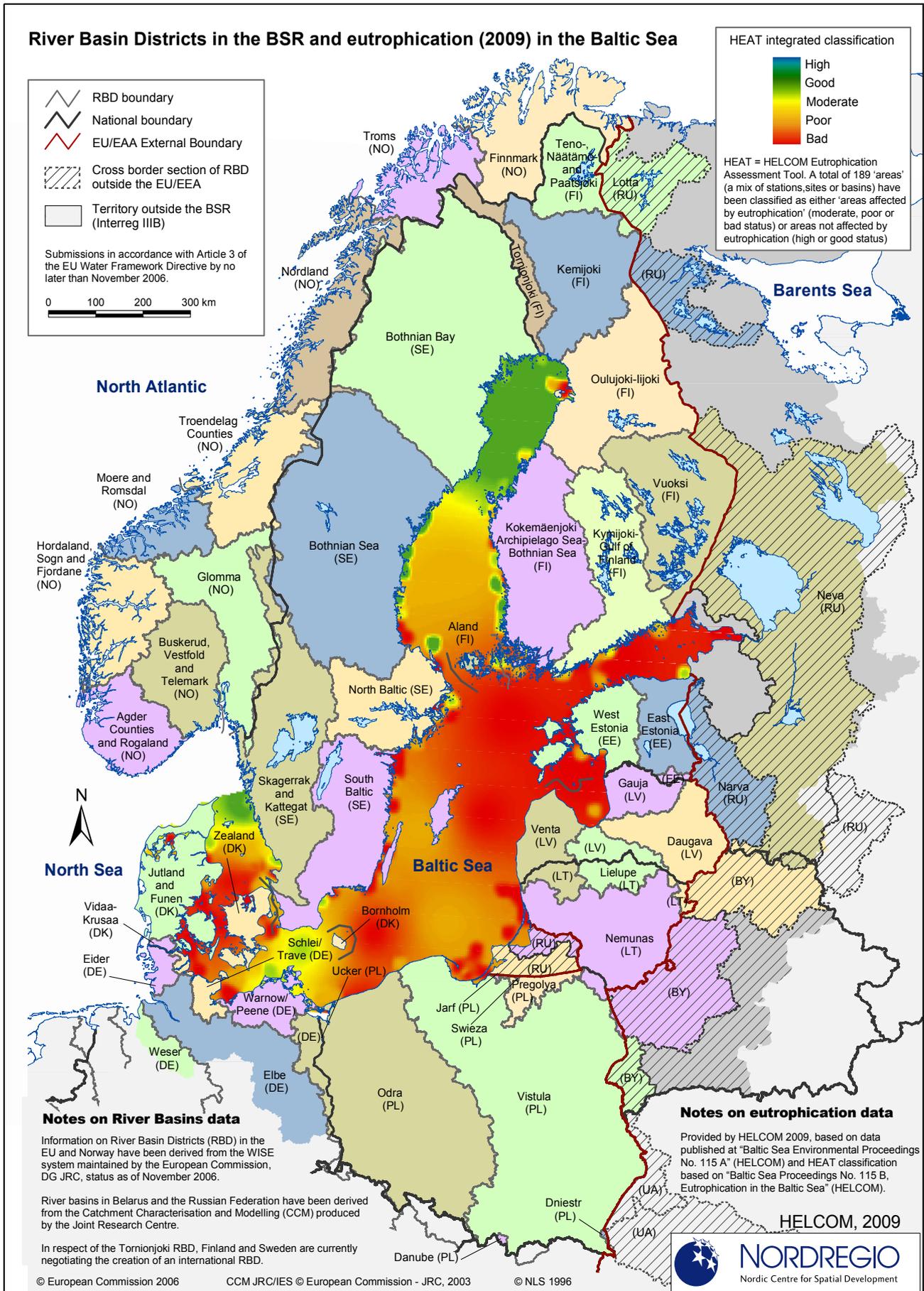


Figure 4: River Basin Districts in the BSR and eutrophication levels in the Baltic Sea

### 5.3 A thematically focussed territorial cooperation

Macro-regional strategies can perhaps best be seen as thematically focussed territorial cooperation. The development and implementation of macro-regional strategies can be understood as a focussed and prioritised use of existing European, national, regional and even local policies, i.e. cohesion policy and sectoral policies (environment, transport, energy etc), when there are barriers or common development challenges (see i.e. Territorial Agenda) that span national borders and where coordinated actions are needed. The themes addressed may imply that a multi-sectoral approach is needed.

The *thematically focussed territorial cooperation* implies that it is not necessary to work within already homogenous macro-regions. Instead the way is opened for strategies focusing on more heterogeneous regions relating, for instance, to environmental standards and socio-economic development with common regional features of any kind. The focus on themes can also be seen as a concrete example of the so called “*comprehensive and multi-dimensional process*” which includes cooperation in respect of traditional issues such as free trade and economic development but also environmental, social, cultural, political, democratic, security and safety issues. As mentioned in the *Green paper*

*on territorial cohesion* macro-regional cooperation is action-orientated and “territorial actions” are to be implemented. The themes are united in several strategy pillars. The objective of the macro-regional strategy may be to make a heterogeneous region more homogenous in respect of environmental standards, socio-economic development, etc.

### 5.4 A new way of thinking: multi-level governance and subsidiarity

The existence of today’s multi-level structures with several actors involved in regional integration and cooperation processes, presupposes the existence of different strands of governance, which has commonly now referred to as multi-level governance.

According to Lähteenmäki-Smith *et al.* (2005), the concept of multi-level governance represents a new and more flexible system of governance, able to provide a better tool to conceptualise and analyse the various processes of integration and the implications inside both the territorial scope and EU governance structure, creating for example *further possibilities for sub-national and transnational actors*. Laffan (2004) makes reference to the concept in the way that ‘multi-levelled’ and ‘multi-layered’ governances are

### BSR Maritime spatial planning as an example of thematically focussed territorial cooperation

The Baltic Sea is shared by a number of states and regions displaying multiple socio economic disparities. As the Baltic Sea is the main common feature of the macro-region it is subject to many different interests for instance offshore activities such as fisheries, aquaculture and energy, maritime transportation, the shipping sector, tourism, seaport development and environmental and climate change concerns.

The Baltic Sea is the main channel for trade in the BSR; close to 50% of all intra-BSR trade and up to 76% percent of all extra BSR trade is carried from Baltic Sea ports to the rest of the world (Sjöfartsverket 2006). This implies a progressive growth in existing trade flows, a further environmental pressure on the sea itself and a major role for the extensive network of seaports that shaped the various maritime corridors. According to the Baltic Maritime Outlook 2006, transport by sea in the Baltic is therefore expected to grow considerably more than land transportation quantities at the intra-BSR level (by 83% compared with a moderate 33% growth in road & rail) as well as on the extra-BSR level (by 53% compared with only a 23% growth in road & rail). These indicators display a variety of themes relevant for maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region including logistics development, capacity building and research, maritime safety, urban maritime network development and intermodal systems development. Regarding the latter, the *Motorways of the Sea* project, (the biggest of the TEN-T priority axes) should be highlighted as an example of an intermodal maritime development project with macro-regional coverage.

Maritime spatial planning is then necessary to conciliate and balance these varied sectoral interests and to act as a tool in the promotion of a more rational use of the resources of an already limited and fragile ecosystem such as the Baltic Sea. Thus, maritime spatial planning is very challenging because of the interrelations between maritime and terrestrial activities (pollution from land based activities such as agriculture, urban settlements and industries) which impact the water quality. In addition, maritime planning has to penetrate national, regional and local borders and functionalities. Maritime spatial planning should then become a process helping to identify challenges and needs, and be able to involve not only state or regional actors but also all sorts of interested and/or specialised stakeholders with a common goal oriented to a sustainable and balanced development of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea Region. A macro-regional strategy such as the EUSBSR may help to set priorities and allocate resources in such a process.

generated after the existence of emerging overlaps between competencies across different levels of governance in Europe throughout history, and new multi-level policy networks in which national governments were no longer the only mediator between its level and the European one. It is also highlighted by Graute (2006) as the result of efforts to move from government to governance planning, becoming on a day-by-day basis more process-oriented dialoguing activities between public and private actors.

Interestingly, one of the main goals of the EU Community Strategic Guidelines (2005) refers specifically to the inclusion of different stakeholders which presupposes the encouraging of multi-levelled structures of governance. It mentions the *promotion of partnerships between all stakeholders*, including those at the regional and local level, as well as the promotion of public-private partnerships and interaction between and within communities and citizens.

The latter is complemented by the importance of applying the principle of subsidiarity, which ensures that

*“...decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made as to whether action at Community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. Specifically, it is the principle whereby the Union does not take action (except in the areas which fall within its exclusive competence) unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level” (EU’s ScadPlus).*

However the complexity of multi-level governance as a concept is aptly illustrated by Lähtenmäki-Smith *et al.* (2005) in their attempt to define the various difficulties potentially arising from its different dimensions, namely:

1) in the vertical one, where there could be a mismatch between policies and stakeholders across all levels and scales.

2) in the horizontal one, where divergence could emerge between sectors located at the same level seeking to achieve and implement common policies and ideas; and

3) going beyond governance sectors and interactions overall, the results on policy making and implementation are greatly dependent on coordinating relationships between the public, private and other sectors involved, which is not always easy to achieve. Indeed this represents a challenge for any type of macro-regional framework and should undoubtedly be carefully approached.

The processes of today’s regional integration, of which the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region is an example, call for 1) cooperation in all strands possible, taken as a tool to facilitate all sorts of channels of cooperation between all interested actors, combined with 2) an efficient multi-level governance approach, used as the method to achieve better and more efficient results along the cooperation processes between the different actors.

## 5.5 A globalisation strategy for European regions

Globalisation is not something that is ‘out there’, disconnected from the concerns of European citizens and regions. As stated by the UN University, each region forms a part of a global system and needs to be understood in a global perspective. Thus, globalisation acknowledges the fact that people and economies around the world are becoming increasingly interdependent. Yet, if countries and regions are ever more tightly connected to other entities worldwide, this process is much less substantial than the increase in the social, cultural and economic interdependencies developed between neighbouring countries and regions. This process is called regionalization.

### Multi-level patchwork of institutional layers in the BSR

The Baltic Sea region represents a macro-regional scenario where various actors at different levels (Figure 5) have been progressively interacting with each other especially over the last decade:

- At the top level, the EU and its various territorial strategies of intervention such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the ESDP or the various INTERREG Programmes and their different strands (cross-border, transnational and interregional).

- The various national states belonging to the BSR including both EU and non EU members.

- A considerable number of transnational associations which may cover the whole of the BSR (such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States or the Baltic Sea States Sub- Regional Cooperation), transnational cooperation associations covering major sub-areas (such as the Nordic Council of Ministers), as well as several transnational bodies thematically oriented to a diversity of subjects including environmental issues, economic development, culture & heritage, policy making, tourism, education, biotechnologies and health.

- Plus the different regions and active cities as well as e.g. NGOs in the BSR, involved in transnational projects i.e. INTERREG that are trying to scale-up in the political bargaining process.

The idea of a macro-regional framework and a macro-regional strategy as proposed in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region aims at providing a non-imposing framework able to efficiently coordinate and facilitate the dialogue between all these multi level’s initiatives (EU, national, regional, local) working with already existing structures.

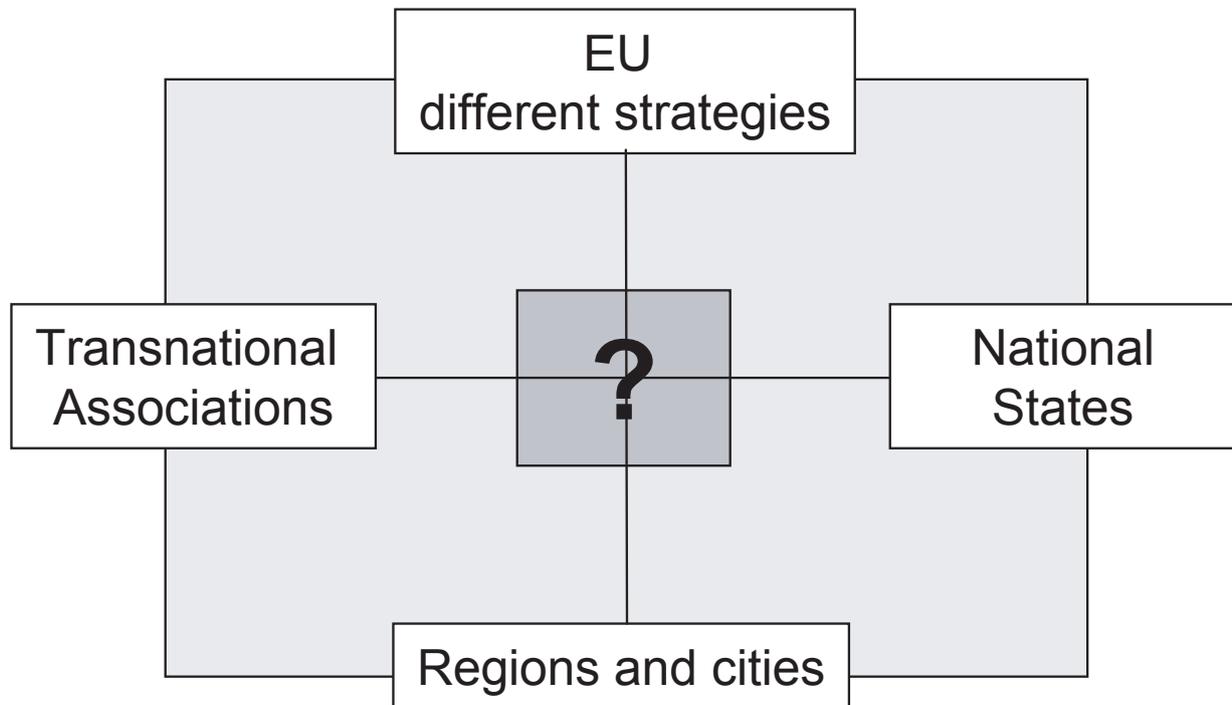


Figure 5: Illustration of actors generating and implementing the macro-regional strategy in the BSR

These enhanced interdependencies between neighbouring regions and countries necessitate joint strategies: the development of each entity is thus a matter of common good as it impacts the capacity of others to develop. Consequently, macro-regional strategies enable us to avoid cannibalistic competition between regions, and rather foster competition on the basis of complementarities. Interdependencies are based on the mobility of workers, capital and knowledge.

interdependencies developed between regions, so that it does not 'cut out' any region from its 'natural' markets. Furthermore, the grouping of regions and countries, especially the smaller ones, into macro-regions would enhance their joint visibility on the global market, and increase their ability to attract capital and investment.

The establishment and delimitation of macro-regions within Europe should take into consideration the economic

## Economic interdependence in the BSR

The trade interdependencies between countries of the BSR have markedly increased since the 1990s. Nowadays, the economies of the BSR countries are tightly integrated (Figure 6). This integration makes the region more visible as a whole in the global arena, but it also implies that the welfare of each country is dependent on the welfare of its neighbours. The recent global economic crisis that hit the Baltic States very hard has underlined the knock-on effect of this integration as Nordic banks were deeply involved in the financial fluctuations experienced by the Baltic economies.

The degree of interdependence in respect of each BSR economy is greatly dependent on the size of the national economy. Between 10% and 15% of the trade of Germany and the Russia Federation is undertaken with other BSR economies. Those two countries are the only ones that do not have their entire territory located within the BSR. In addition, both belong to the G8, and are thus seen as the 'global giants' of the BSR, given their large population size and their access to technology and/or energy resources. For the Nordic countries, trade with the other BSR economies represents approximately 50% of their total trade. Those medium-sized economies specialise in knowledge-intensive industries (e.g. telecoms), but also have a long tradition of industrial production (e.g. the automobile industry) and also have access to natural resources of global significance (oil, ores, paper and pulp). Finally, for the Baltic States, trade with other BSR countries represent approximately 75% of their total trade. These small economies showed strong vitality before the recent global economic crisis, with yearly growth rates between 5 and 10%.

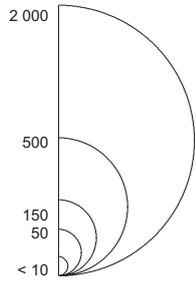
The strong interdependencies shown by the BSR economies provide a natural incentive for the creation of a joint macro-regional strategy. By making the region stronger as a whole all its constituent countries and regions will gain. Moreover, a macro-regional strategy for the BSR will facilitate the removal of the functional obstacles that still exist and prevent the smooth transit of goods, services, capital and persons across the borders.

# Trade between the Baltic Sea Region Countries\*, in 2006

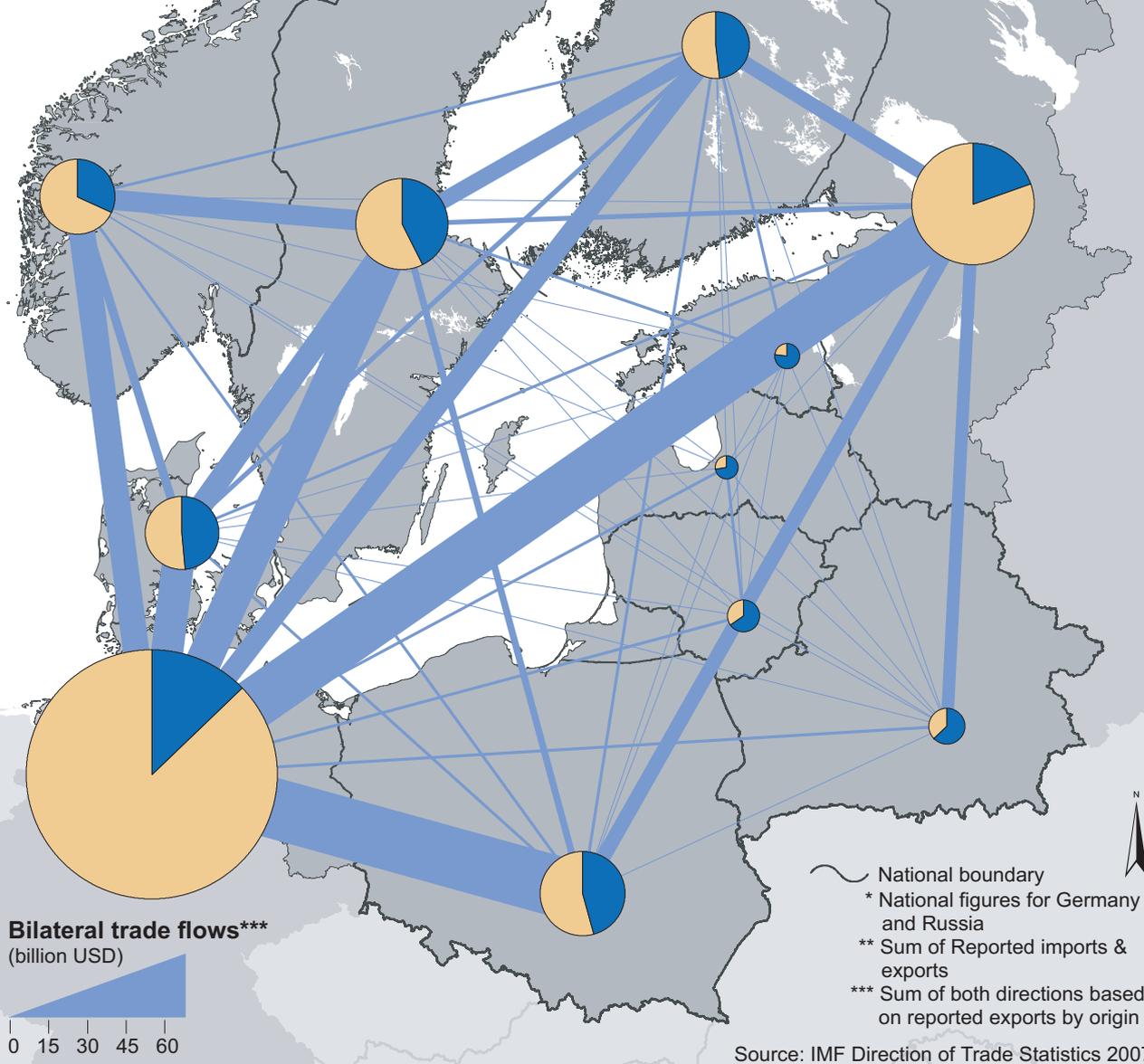
0 150 300 km



Total value\*\* of trade  
(in billion USD)



with:  
■ BSR countries  
■ All other countries



Source: IMF Direction of Trade Statistics 2007

Figure 6: Trade between the Baltic Sea Region countries in 2006

## 5.6 Bridging the Neighbourhood and Territorial Development policies

Furthermore a macro-regional strategy can be seen as a means of bridging the *Neighbourhood and Territorial Development policies*. The integration of regions belonging to non-EU members into the macro-region facilitates the bridging of the gap between the need for collaboration between the institutions and governments of EU's neighbouring countries, as well as those of gradually integrating these neighbouring regional economies with their EU neighbours. If integration is successful the EU's external borders become more porous to investment and less of an obstacle to the flow of goods, services, capital and persons within a macro-region.

The inclusion of non-EU member states in such macro-regions becomes clearer when we look at how the term was discussed at the end of the 1990s (see for instance Cappellin 1998 and Petrakos 1997). Here macro-regions were given the explicit role of bridges between the most central regions of the European Union and other groups of countries which belong to other parts of the European continent or even to other continents. A macro-regional strategy may also be used to accelerate the 'catching up' phase between the new and old member states.

### The railway transport system – a missing bridge in the BSR

The railway transport system in the BSR, especially on the Eastern side of the region, undoubtedly represents something of a missing bridge. Looking at the existing railway transport network across the BSR we readily see what can only be described as a rather unbalanced system. The rather limited accessibility of the railway both in terms of routes (figure 7 and 8) and physical infrastructure on the Eastern side implies a significant obstacle to the further integration of BSR countries and regions. On the Eastern side of the Baltic Sea the railway system – for obvious historical reasons - centres on Russia. There are for instance no direct trains linking Warsaw, Vilnius (or Kaunas), Riga and Tallinn. Due to the existence of different railway gauge sizes there is also a distinct lack of cross-border interoperability among the various national railway networks. This implies limitations in respect of the mobility of both people and goods.

The railway system offers a link with *neighbouring areas*. The further development of the railway transport system across the BSR would thus create a new bridge between the Neighbourhood and Territorial Development policies, since it would imply a physical link between “continental Europe” and Russia. Further development of the railway transport system would also include a *transcontinental dimension* since it could entail improved access to growing markets and could help to position the BSR between the main Western European and Asian markets. Such a development could also enhance the opportunities for the BSR macro-region to act as a global player.

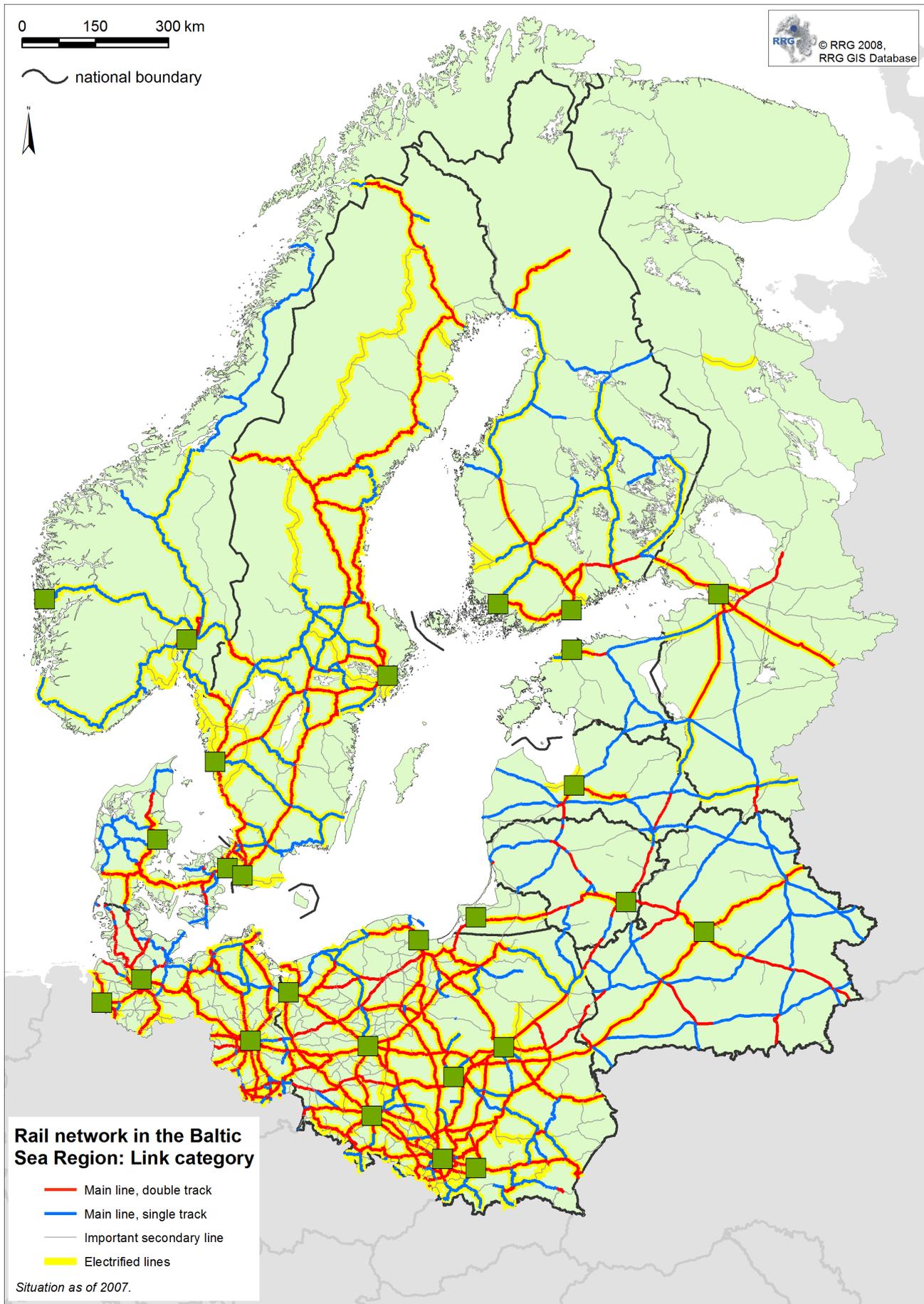


Figure 7: Existing rail network  
Source: RRG Spatial Planning Database.

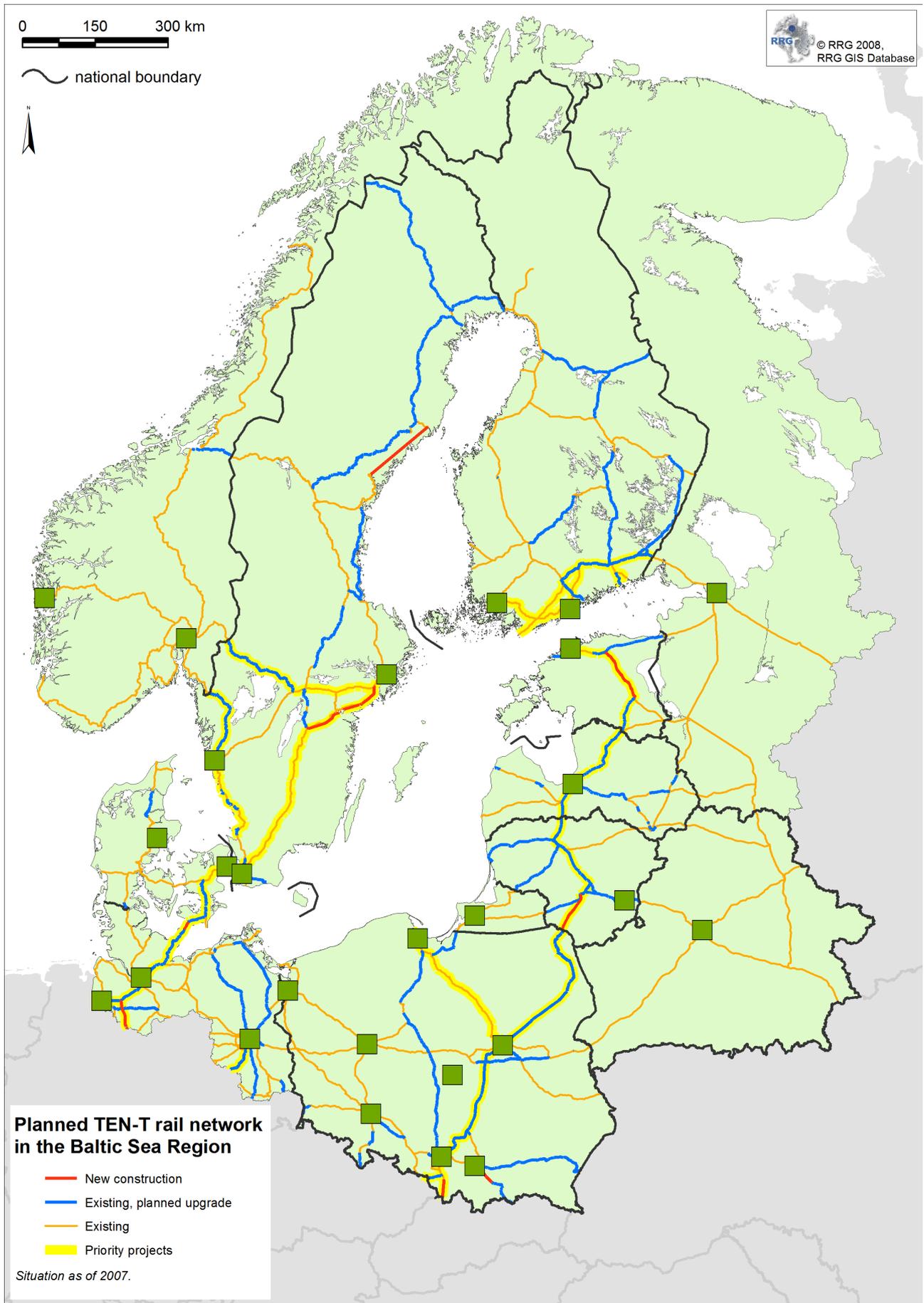


Figure 8: Planned TEN-T rail network in the Baltic Sea Region  
 Source: RRG Spatial Planning Database.



# 6 EU macro-regional strategies: potential fields of tension and their practical implications

In the following section we try to summarise the findings of this paper by pinpointing six potential 'fields of tension' in view of current EU macro-regional approaches. Based on this we proceed to highlight some of the key implications this understanding implies for the development of *macro-regional strategies* in general and the attached *action plan* in particular.

## 6.1 Potential fields of tension

The macro-regional approach now being manifested in the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region can be related in particular to the EU discourses on *transnational cooperation* and *territorial cohesion*. In addition, it relates to (or partly overlaps with) a number of more sector-oriented EU policies and instruments, notably, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the regional policy agenda with the structural funds in general and the INTERREG programme and its transnational foci in particular.

Various political resources as well as individual capacities have to be activated to initiate the process the construction of a macro-region strategy within a multi-cultural setting implies. The construction of a macro-regional strategy, as well as its implementation, implies a negotiation process in respect of what a potential future could look like for the macro-region. This negotiation process includes the identification of trade-offs among a bundle of stakeholders representing different levels (or scales – from the EU down to the local level) of responsibility and diverging interests. It is, however, unlikely to meet these interests on the same level. One possible result of such a negotiation process may be that one stakeholder profits from specific policies more than others. This is of course a sensitive issue. In particular if the overall goal is to reach an improved level of territorial cohesion. As such, it has to be communicated that a macro-regional strategy can only be based on long-term considerations. An attempt at agenda-setting is thus required which ensures that the macro-regional strategy at hand will take care of numerous issues in the long-term but can just as easily tackle more immediate concerns. This may help to avoid potential conflicts from the outset since some stakeholders may feel being excluded or passed over as such policies are by their very nature rather selective.

Once a common rationale, objective and territorial shape for the particular region has been mutually developed, the thorny question remains to install a *new mode of governance* that is efficient in negotiating, directing, implementing and developing policies on the one hand and that does not harm the existing modes of governance and government on the other.

Having said this, we can identify *six potential fields of tension* in view of the successful elaboration and implementation of a macro-regional strategy. We term them fields of tension, since we believe that within them various kinds of contested debates have room to emerge. The overall goal within each of these debates should be to identify and agree upon common solutions; otherwise the approach of applying a macro-regional strategy might not be pursued in an efficient manner:

1) A *thematic tension* due to the multitudinous and often partly overlapping policy agendas and objectives of the involved stakeholders in respect of developing the macro-regional strategy.

2) An *institutional tension* due to the multiplicity of existing stakeholders/associations etc., in a macro-region.

3) A *coordinating tension* since it seems that the EU wants to be the key player, though it remains to be seen whether other stakeholders are ready to enter the field and engage in fruitful collaboration or whether (at least) some of them try to defend their specific area of responsibility (or the area in which they feel that they are the key player).

4) An *instrumental tension* based on the diversity of instruments, policy tools and finally resources/programmes which leads to the question of who are the donors and who are the recipients/addressees of the macro-regional strategy.

5) A *tension of power* covering both the ownership and the implementation (here legal, financial and communicative power) of the macro-regional strategy as well as the question of whether macro-regional strategies are better developed top-down or bottom-up.

6) A *tension in view of other superior EU goals* relating, for instance, to improving transnational cooperation and 'Territorial Cohesion'.

## 6.2 Practical implications – Defining the "action capacity" within a macro-region

From the *Three No's* – no new legislation, no new institution, no new instruments - expressed in the recent communication of the European Commission, it becomes evident that the elaboration of macro-regional strategies needs to fit into the existing dynamics and initiatives within the macro-region as well as the EU's policy framework. However, discussions have now begun in respect of whether a specific budget line of the EU budget can be allocated to macro-regions in the programme period starting from 2014. For the stakeholders concerned, this means that a thorough evaluation of the state of affairs in the macro-region is a necessary first step.

Indeed, as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region recently exemplified, one should bear in mind that the most promising added-value of a macro-regional strategy lies not much in the main lines of argumentation of its 'strategic' focus, but rather in the identification and prioritisation of the concrete actions that would potentially have the biggest impact on the state of the macro-region.

This is evident in the case of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The four claimed priorities - to enable a sustainable environment, to enhance the region's prosperity, to increase accessibility and attractiveness, and to ensure safety and security in the region - are already in line with the overarching goals of the European Union and thus do not provide a strong case for strategic macro-regional

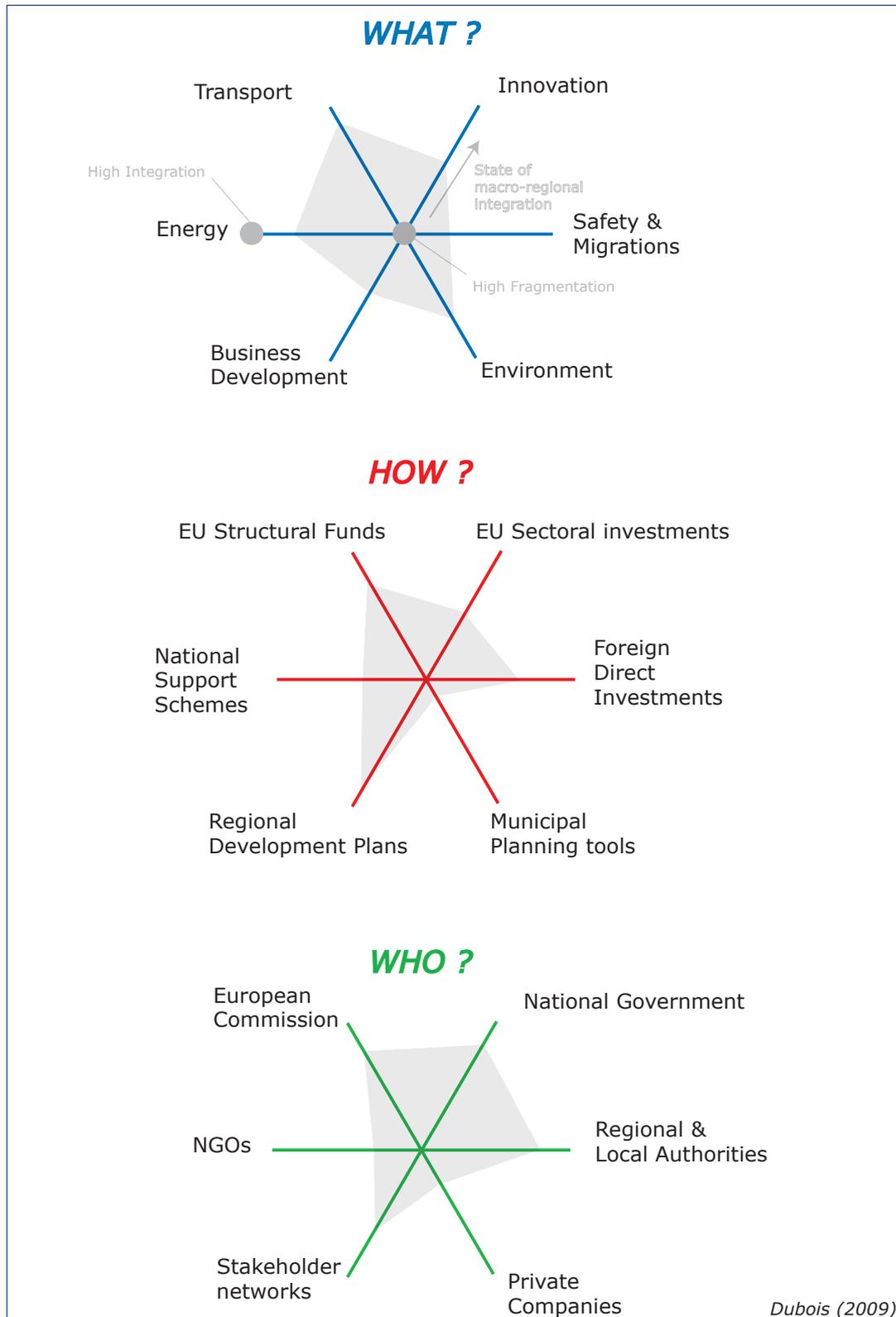


Figure 9: Spider diagrams evaluating the three main dimensions to consider prior to the elaboration of the macro-regional action plan; Topic or sector for high priority action (WHAT?); Capacity of existing instruments to support the prioritized projects (HOW?); Capacity of the actors involved to implement the project (WHO?).

thinking as such. Yet, the Action Plan that accompanies the Strategy provides concrete proposals for addressing the macro-regional challenges faced. Consequently, the goal of the Strategy, despite its name, should not be misinterpreted: it is driven by the need for concrete actions rather than for further policy frameworks. Indeed, it is important to understand here that in the early stages of the elaboration of macro-regional strategies it is the degree of inter-dependence of the territories that is at stake. By thoroughly assessing the latter it thus becomes possible to identify the main rifts which need to be overcome in the macro-region.

As a matter of consequence, and before the identification and prioritisation of the projects themselves, a core task in the making of the macro-regional strategy is the assessment of the macro-region in accordance with three main aspects (Figure 9):

- *what topics/themes receive a measure of added value from macro-regional actions (WHAT?):* in the macro-region, one needs to evaluate the main lines of integration/fragmentation in respect of the concerned macro-region, i.e. the current status of macro-regional integration/fragmentation according to the 6-8 major dimensions at stake, for instance, transport, environment, business, employment, innovation, energy etc.
- *what instruments are at the disposal of actors to help them implement the actions (HOW?):* no new source of funding implies that the projects need to be financed through existing financial instruments. In some regions (e.g. the new Member States) the level of Structural Funds is often higher than the funding available from national schemes. Consequently, projects can often draw on different sources of funding.
- *what organisational capacity is available in the macro-region for driving the process (WHO?):* a macro-regional strategy is a mixture of top-down and bottom-up approaches as it involves authorities and organisations with different levels of responsibility/power. An important point here is to identify not only the actors who have the legitimacy to act (e.g. national governments), but also the ones that have the competence to achieve the designated tasks most efficiently.

The delimitation of the three components (what, how & who) enables the macro-regional stakeholders to frame an understanding of the main obstacles to territorial cohesion that can be found in their macro-region. The territorial dimension of the macro-regional strategy lies thus in the capacity of these actors to handle the three issues that are inherent to its elaboration:

- *multi-sectoral*, as some actions need to be grounded in the coordination of sectoral policies (i.e.: reduction of sea pollution);

- *multi-instrumental*, as the wide scope of most actions makes it impossible for them to be solely funded through one instrument (i.e.: the completion of the road infrastructure has impacts at the local, cross-border and transnational levels); and

- *multi-actor*, as the collaboration between different types of actors through various levels of governance is needed to reach consensus and fine tune the actions (i.e.: the role of stakeholder networks in the BSR).

To sum up, we argue that the success of a macro-regional strategy is basically dependent on a) the capacity to identify and realise tailor-made solutions within the 'six fields of tension' discussed above and finally b) the elaboration and implementation of the *Action Plan*. In both cases the organisational capacity and willingness to cooperate of the various stakeholders involved will play a crucial role in ensuring that the macro-regional approach can deliver a measure of 'added-value' as described in chapter 5.

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# EU macro-regions and macro-regional strategies – A scoping study

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This scoping study discusses the understanding of the macro-regional approach now being developed within the context of EU cooperation from a territorial development perspective and particularly in relation to transnational cooperation and territorial cohesion.

The process of regional integration has implied that a broader scope of themes is included in EU transnational cooperation. The macro-regional approach includes several types of actors, state and non-state, public and private all of whom are equally interested in the process of regional integration and cooperation. Macro-regional cooperation can be based on heterogeneous structures where shared challenges are the common denominator.

In brief, macro-regional strategies may be seen as a tool of European integration and increased territorial cohesion. A certain amount of added-value can be foreseen from the development and implementation of macro-regional strategies. The message from the Commission that work must take place within the existing structural framework as regards the development and application of the strategy, moreover, implies that three fundamental questions must be posed in order to develop a successful strategy. On what themes can added-value be gauged in the development of macro-regional actions? What are the instruments at hand for implementing these actions (how)? What organisational capacity (who) is available for driving the process within the macro-region concerned? A macro-regional strategy thus needs a multi-sectoral, multi-instrumental and multi-actor approach in order to ensure that the novel use of existing structures helps to release undeveloped potential within a macro-region.



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