

From the Shadow Report to an EU macro-regional civil strategy

Prepared for the High Level Group Meeting of the EU Macro-Regional Strategies' Week
Brussels, 28 April 2023

The story of the Shadow Report

A great example of the bottom-up approach and, at the same time, an excellent point of reference for an EU macro-regional civil strategy – this is the recently published Shadow Report, an initiative of the European House and 8 other civil society organisations, reflecting to the European Commission's report on macro-regional strategies. The real strength of the Shadow Report project lies in bringing together, for the first time, CSOs from the 4 macro-regions (the Baltic Sea, the Danube, the Adriatic-Ionian and the Alpine), giving them the opportunity to work together on specific issues well beyond the 'Brussels bubble'.

Organisations participating in this initiative provided their insights and concrete suggestions related to the European Commission's 3rd biennial Report on the implementation of macro-regional strategies covering the 2018-2020 period. All those observations based on the everyday lives and experiences of citizens living in the four macro-regions resulted in a document with stimulating ideas.

"As set out by the cross-MRS Shadow Report coordinated by the Budapest-based European House, civil society organisations play a vital role in contributing to better decision-making, in particular by bringing local and regional communities closer to the MRS."

From the 4th Implementation Report

The Shadow Report does not mean to compete in any way with the European Commission's document. It is not a political analysis, but rather a public reflection involving civil society organisations representing the macro-regions. The report addresses not only the topics covered by the Commission paper (green transition, digitalisation, enlargement etc.), but also brings in new elements: state of civil society, human contacts, solidarity, raising public awareness, increased ownership feeling and others.



TIMELINE

1 March 2020

Shadow Report project starting date

27 October 2020

Project kick-off event

January 2021 -
January 2022

Project consultation period with an online questionnaire

5 March 2021

Project presentation at the 2nd EUMRSWeek and its High Level Group Meeting

28-29 August 2021

Consultation for the EUSBSR at the Europe Festival in Mariager (DK)

31 May - 1 June 2021

Consultation at the EUSAIR Annual Forum

26 April 2022

Project closing event and presentation of the Shadow Report

25 November 2021

Voices from the Alpine region public consultation

4 March 2022

Mediterranean voices: an EUSAIR consultation in Palermo (IT)

28-29 September 2022

Distribution of the Shadow Report at the Annual EUSBSR Forum in Lappeenranta (FI)

18-19 February 2022

In focus youth - EUSDR consultation in Budapest (HU)

19-20 October 2022

Distribution of the Shadow Report at the Annual EUSDR Forum in Kosice (SK)

8 November 2022

Side event at the EWRC2022 in Brussels

15 March 2023

Networking table on the macro-regional civil strategy at the Let's cooperate! Interreg event on Stockholm (SE)

1 March 2023

Consultation on the macro-regional civil strategy at the EESC Civil Society Days in Brussels

14 April 2023

Preparatory event for stakeholders of the EUSDR in Vienna (AT)



Participating civil society organisations and citizens all around Europe were given the possibility to comment on a variety of topics. This made the Shadow Report a diverse and colourful document, revealing the different – and sometimes contradictory – approaches of the contributors. Direct quotes were included in order to make the report even more authentic and engaging. In addition, specific suggestions at the end of each chapter present useful ideas and pave the way for next steps.

It was a pleasure – and an honour – to see that the European Commission's 4th Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies specifically mentions the Shadow Report.

Fortunately the production of the Shadow Report is not a one-off event but the encouraging start of a process leading to the further integration of citizens and their organisations into shaping and implementing macro-regional strategies.



"The role of civil society organisations has been growing over time. However, it is still necessary to increase the involvement of these organisations in the MRS and more broadly to mobilise local stakeholders around common goals. The establishment of an institutionalised citizen's dialogue across macro-regions could help in this respect."

From the 4th Implementation Report

Beyond the Shadow Report: An EU macro-regional civil strategy in the making

Based on the positive results of the Shadow Report project and as a response to one of the conclusions of the 4th Implementation Report of the Commission emphasising the need of systemic involvement of regional and local communities on MRS the European House Budapest takes the initiative in the process leading to the elaboration of a proposal for a macro-regional civil strategy because

- even if the modus operandi of CSOs shows considerable differences in the macro-regions there is a general tendency of their involvement in the MRS;
- the recognition of importance and usefulness of citizen dialogues on macro-regional level is gaining ground;
- civil society organisations with their bottom-up approach and citizens' increased ownership feeling can contribute significantly to the attainment of macro-regional strategic objectives;
- a properly applied partnership and participatory principle greatly enhance coordinated civil contribution from the four macro-regions to address major current challenges including the energy crises, the Russian aggression against Ukraine or macro-regional identity;
- embedding citizen's driven innovative ideas into mainstream MRS processes has a value-added character;
- follow-up activities to the Conference on the future of Europe, the European Year of Youth 2022 together with a pro-European mobilisation of citizens at the 2024 European Parliamentary elections are also important field of actions of regional and local CSOs;
- „Vox Humana”, a citizen-centered communication is key to deliver a pro-European message in a macro-regional context challenging demagogic, populist tendencies and fake news.

Four preparatory in-person events are planned to develop the strategy: one in each macro-region. The first one was held in Vienna on 14 April 2023 and attended by participants from all the 14 countries of the EUSDR Region and even beyond where a concept note of the strategy served as a basis of the discussion.

Other meetings are planned in

Rome on 23 June for the EUSAIR

Switzerland in September 2023 for the EUSALP

Stockholm on 9 November 2023 for the EUSBSR

together with a parallel online consultation.

The concluding event of the process is a **Citizens Agora in Budapest on 7-8 December 2023** with the adoption of the planned EU macro-regional civil strategy.

What would you give up from your current lifestyle to make a personal contribution to the "Save the World" campaign? Every little counts.

Marja-Liisa, Finland
Citizen quote from the Shadow Report

For most people the macro-regions and the strategies are well-kept secrets. They are not known to the public. They are known to an inner circle of people working with them.

Kurt, Denmark
Citizen quote from the Shadow Report

Don't explain Europe abstractly but show the benefit of the EU macro-regional policy by means of specific projects.

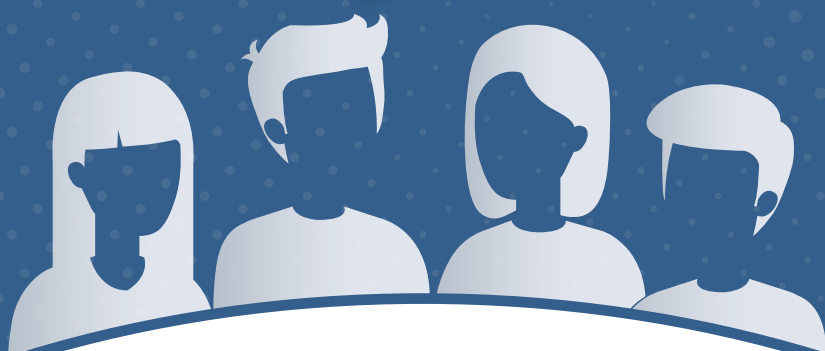
Sabine, Germany
Citizen quote from the Shadow Report

Youth involvement contributes to innovations and better mobility as well as to making positive change happen.

Stanka, Serbia
Citizen quote from the Shadow Report

The ongoing online platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe should be kept operational after the Conference. This would give citizens, representative associations and civil society the possibility to monitor the follow-ups of the Conference and react to the proposals.

Virgilio, Italy
Citizen quote from the Shadow Report



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