



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 15 October 2013  
(OR. en)**

**14745/13**

**FSTR 125  
FC 72  
REGIO 225  
SOC 804  
AGRISTR 122  
PECHE 452**

**"I" ITEM NOTE**

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From: Presidency/General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee

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No. Cion doc.: COM(2013) 468 final  
No. prev. doc.: 11915/13

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Subject: EU Macro-regional Strategies  
- Endorsement of draft Council conclusions

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1. A "Macro-regional Strategy" is an integrated framework, endorsed by the European Council, to address common challenges in a given geographical area where both Member States and third countries are located. The objective is to strengthen cooperation in order to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion.

2. At this stage, the Union has initiated two Macro-regional Strategies. Thus, the European Council endorsed the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in October 2009<sup>1</sup> and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in June 2011<sup>2</sup>, respectively. In addition, the European Council has invited the Commission to present an EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region by end 2014<sup>3</sup>.
3. The 2009 EUSBSR was initiated in light of the environmental deterioration of the Baltic Sea. The progress achieved is summarized in the Commission 2011 report on the Implementation of the EUSBSR<sup>4</sup>.
4. The 2011 EUSDR aimed at contributing to further integration of the internal market and to economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Danube region. In addition, an objective was to enhance cooperation with candidate and potential candidate countries in the Danube river basin on their European path. In line with the Council's invitation, the Commission presented in Spring a report concerning the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region<sup>5</sup>.
5. According to the December 2012 European Council conclusions, the Commission presented in June 2013 a report concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies<sup>6</sup>. A Friends of the Presidency (FoP) working party on macro-regional strategies was set up<sup>7</sup> in order to analyse that report and with a view to drafting a set of Council conclusions on the concept and value added of macro-regional strategies, analysing the lessons learnt during the implementation of the EUSBSR and EUSDR as well as giving recommendations and ideas on the future prospects of the concept.

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<sup>1</sup> 15265/1/09 Rev 1 - reference to Council conclusions in 13744/09.

<sup>2</sup> EUCO 23/1/11 - reference to Council conclusions in 8743/1/11 Rev 1.

<sup>3</sup> EUCO 205/12.

<sup>4</sup> 12048/11.

<sup>5</sup> 8509/13.

<sup>6</sup> 11915/13.

<sup>7</sup> 12032/13.

6. The FoP has met several times, most recently on 11 October 2011 where a broad degree of consensus was reached. A subsequent "silence procedure" ending on 14 October was not broken by any delegations. On this background, a draft set of Council conclusions, as prepared by the FoP, is set out in the Addendum to the present note.
  7. The Permanent Representatives Committee is therefore invited to recommend to the Council (General Affairs Council meeting on 22 October 2013) to adopt the draft Council conclusions in the Addendum to the present note.
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